

Film Theory: A Review
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Film Theory
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Drawing on prior experience from literary theory in my undergraduate studies as well as theory touched upon in the MALS Seminar, I will focus on certain schools of thought in regard to film. My specific concentration will be on the beginnings of cinema and film theory to give a base to the rest of the study from which I will branch out into Auteur Theory, Structuralism and Semiotics, Psychoanalytic Theory and Ideology and lastly Spectatorship and Intertextuality. Utilizing Robert Stam's *Literary Theory: an Introduction* and Robin Wood's *Hitchcock Revisited*, along with the Oxford *Film Theory and Criticism* (Baudry, et al.), I will review the ideas around film and screen films in order to apply those theories.

Much like Robert Stam, my approach to film theory draws on several schools. He states the reason for doing this best when he says "If I am a partisan of anything it is of *theoretical cubism*: the deployment of multiple perspectives and grids" (Stam, 1). From the start of my higher education, I have been unable to ally completely with any one school of thought, but find that if I apply perspectives from several, that the text I am reviewing, literary or cinematic, tends to open more clearly and in a more meaningful and thought provoking way. In discussing ideas, I may tend to avoid naming names, as I agree with Stam that this pigeon-holes theorists into one school or another, whether warranted or not (for example Bazin who Stam explains is "reduced to a theorist only of realism" by other critics who frequently quote him either in support or opposition to their ideas) (77). He also adds that, "a real dialogue depends on the ability of each side to articulate the adversary's project fairly before critiquing it" (7). So it is important for theorists to understand that "theories of art are not right or wrong in the same way as scientific theories" (8). Furthermore, one should keep in mind that "theories do not supersede one another

in linear progression” and “become interesting as they *mate* with other theories” (9). And, Robin Wood is quick to add that bias will play a role: “so much for the notion of unbiased *objective* criticism or interpretation: there is simply no such thing” (233). With all these things mashed together, I find it far more important to think on the ideas presented through theory than with whom they are associated.

Firstly, I would like to briefly cover the beginnings of cinema (or film). What was the setting for its birth? Were there implications to that? How was it styled? Did it follow existing traditions in art? “The beginning of cinema...coincided precisely with the very height of imperialism” (19). This did have an impact on what film was made and how. “The most prolific film-producing countries of the silent period – Britain, France, the USA, Germany – also *happened* to be among the leading imperialist countries...the cinema combined narrative and spectacle to tell the story of colonialism from the colonizer’s perspective” (19). Film was immediately utilized as a propaganda tool while cloaked in the guise of entertainment. The use of film in such a manner gave a sense of nationalism to the people it was aimed at and helped to justify social policies in the name of patriotism. Using film in such a manner can have both positive and negative results, such as spreading a stereotype or exposing it.

The early age of cinema was marked by “theoretical experimentalism” as it critics shifted to reflect on a growing “anxiety about the social effects of mass media” (67). According to Stam, “film theory is an international and multicultural enterprise, yet too often it remains monolingual, provincial and chauvinistic” (Stam, 4). This gave rise to the belief that a “fiction feature film *à la* Hollywood is...the ‘real’ cinema” and was also used in the beginning to define what cinema is (no matter what nation or person was trying to claim it for their own, it was the same idealism) (5). Theoretical experimentalism came in a number of forms throughout this period. In

attempting to approach this new art with what tools critics and theorists had at the ready, film theory “inherited the history of reflection on literary genre” (13). As upsetting as this could be for some supporters of what was termed high art, others saw how “film forms an ideal site for the orchestration of multiple genres, narrational systems, and forms of writing” (12). There were those against using literary theory who felt that “usually associated with written texts, narrative could not provide the basis for the construction of a purely visual art form” (37). None the less, film theory “bears the traces of earlier theories and the impact of neighboring discourses” (10).

Another of the earlier theories is the philosophy of aesthetics. Stam tells his readers that “aesthetics...emerged as a separate discipline in the eighteenth century as the study of artistic beauty and related issues of the sublime, the grotesque, the humorous and the pleasurable” (10). Questions that arose around film regarding aesthetics ask “is *art* an honorific to be attributed only to a few films or are all films works of art simply because of their institutionally defined social status ...Is there an ideal style...To what extent are aesthetics linked to larger ethical and social issues?” For example, “can fascist or racist films...be *masterpieces* in artistic terms and still be repugnant in ethical/political terms?” (11).

There was also opposition to cinema being art at all, calling it “an amusement for the illiterate” or worse (65). Much of the dismay surrounding film considered as art can be found in the struggle to define it. What is *Cinema*? Cinema is quite often defined “in terms of other arts – *sculpture in motion...music of light...painting in movement...and architecture in movement*” (33). Though this attached cinema to other art forms, it also “[posits] crucial differences...movement...light” (33). Some theorists “saw cinema as rooted in photography and its registry of the indeterminate, random flow of everyday life” (80); “*photogenie* was thus that ineffable quintessence that differentiated the magic of cinema from the other arts” (34).

(Photogenie being a style or set of paradigms.) Without a paradigm of its own, film wandered the wasteland of disciplines being welcomed and dismissed in each (literary studies, sociology, historical studies and even fine art departments).

Voices in support of film as art attempted to carve out a paradigm or set of structured ideas by which to show that film was in fact art, if not above all other art forms. For example, “Louis Delluc in his *Cinema et Cie* (1919) spoke of the cinema as the only truly modern art because it used technology to stylize real life” (35). Later, Walter Benjamin echoed these sentiments in his work “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” (65). He went further, attempting to impart the value of cinema by saying “that its productions were multiply available across barriers of time and space, in situation where easy access made it the most social and collective of the arts” (65). He saw this as a tool to “transform and energize the masses for purposes of revolutionary change” (66). Stam mentions how theorists examined sequences of frames and how they felt that cinema alone was capable of such devices to tell its story, “bringing new range to dramaturgy” which should be considered a benefit to that particular discipline (35-36). Yet, dissention continued.

At the advent of sound in film, some theorists attempted to mark “silent cinema as the definitive, paradigmatic form of the seventh art... [saying] sound detracts from visual beauty” (59). The fear was that sound would make film recorded theater and whatever ground gained in trying to define the discipline would be swept away (58). However, “film discarded the basic formal principles of the stage” (61). “When and how did cinematography turn into a specific independent art employing methods sharply differing from those of the theater and using a totally different form-language?” Bálázs, who asked the question, suggested that montage was the moment and all of the varying shots and methods it undertakes to *speak* (60-61). Such theorists

insisted that “by bypassing the mimetic portrayal made possible by the mechanical apparatus, film establishes itself as an autonomous art” (60). Photography experienced a similar judgment, because some critics felt that it merely captured a moment and was merely documentary. The argument against this dismissal is that there is a great deal of artistic purpose that goes into framing a scene and all the other steps in creating a complete film.

Following the addition of sound (talkies) came the commodification of art, which coincided with the Cold War (68-69). Marxist ideas led to labeling this period of filmmaking with such terms as the “culture industry” (68). The period was marked by what some described as “commercial films {that} were simply mass-produced commodities engineered by assembly-line techniques, products which themselves stamped out their own passive, automatized audience” (69). Much of this could still be said to be true of today’s media and industry driven cinema.

A more positive side of the developments in cinema are that techniques and theories have led to innovations and experiment, such as adding sound, different shooting techniques (angles, shots, timing), widescreen, 3-D and even Virtual Reality (75). In the midst of all this, a number of theorists left their mark on the study of cinema. What follows here is a review of the theoretical topics that most apply to my *cubist* focus in the area. Those topics will reach into the suspense or thriller films of Alfred Hitchcock, examine realism, auteur theory, structuralism and semiotics, psychoanalysis and ideology, as well as spectatorship and intertext.

Robin Wood is an invaluable source for looking at the suspense or thriller genre brought to us by the auteur Alfred Hitchcock. For purposes of my research, Hitchcock and his associated criticisms seemed the most likely source for growing an understanding about the genre. I will mention him in future sections (auteur, psychoanalytic and ideology), as there is overlap. The

two films I chose to view in regards to Hitchcock were *Rope* (1948) and *Strangers on a Train* (1951).

So what makes a suspense film suspenseful or tense? Wood runs through several ideas of what Hitchcock has done to create tension. Hitchcock suspense appears in both his method and his themes, as they interplay and strengthen the message of the director and his film. However, Wood is quick to add, “*suspense* belongs more to the method of the films than their themes” (Wood, 66). Without the methods, the uncomfortable themes may not generate enough tension to be considered suspense. For example, “the cross-cutting between the tennis match and the murderer’s journey to deposit the incriminating lighter in *Strangers on a Train*...the most complex reactions are evoked in the spectator, who cannot help responding to the effort of *both* men”(69).

Wood describes *Rope* as “one of the most cinematic of films, carrying one of the defining characteristics of the medium—its ability to use the camera as the eye of the spectator, to take him right into an action, show him round inside it as it were—to its ultimate conclusion” (78). As Hitchcock uses the camera so that it “becomes the spectator’s eyes, we must add that it is an eye that sees only what Hitchcock wants it to see, *when* he wants us to see it,” he is purposefully creating tension for the viewer (78). Other methods listed by Wood are: use of lighting to highlight or obscure (88-90), “the camera used constantly to link one action or gesture or glance to another” and “the ten-minute take” (78). Framing, lighting and timing are all tools in the director’s arsenal that can be used to evoke a certain reaction within the viewer (I will discuss more on this in my section on semiotics). If we look at the initial scenes of *Strangers on a Train*, the comparison of the men’s feet, them sitting in silence across from one another, “gives us, from the outset, the sense of something not quite natural, not quite explicable link between the two

men” (86). We’re set on edge right away without a single word. Is the meeting on the train coincidental or planned? All of this is intentional. Hitchcock is making use of the viewer’s psyche to complete a circuit between him or her and the narrative (psychoanalytic theory, ideology, intertext and spectator theory can all be cited in making such a circuit).

In *Rope*, the interaction of the characters and the setting help to build the tension. At the party, Rupert appears to pick up on the change through Phillip. A siren goes off while he ‘interrogates Phillip, who responds with “stop playing crime and punishment,” while he plays *Perpetual Movement No. 1* on the apartment’s piano. Rupert starts the metronome ticking, and it gives the sense that time is running out. The sound creates a terrible tension, and causes Phillip to speed up his speech and playing. In another scene, Brandon ties the books he is giving David’s father in the rope with which he strangled David. The maid clears the meal from the trunk where David’s body is hidden, then piles up the books left behind by his father, intending to put them inside. The camera is focused on her every step, like a pendulum, swinging closer and closer, each passage like the metronome, building tension. In the background, the guests discuss where David could be and both Phillip and Brandon appear unaware of the Maid’s course.

During all of this, the expression on Rupert’s face, and the thoughts in his eyes betray that he is piecing the bits together. He is suspicious of the young men, knowing them very well and having a sense that something is amiss. As he leaves, the maid inadvertently hands him David’s hat, showing the initials to the camera and perhaps to Rupert. All of the guests leave and the young men are left to revel in what they have done right under their noses. Phillip continues to fall apart, knowing they still need to move the body from the trunk to the car and dispose of it without being seen. Before they can do so, Rupert calls on the phone to say he’s left his cigarette case. At no time was one shown to be set down anywhere by him, until he comes back and plants

it. The observant watcher would have known he did not leave it behind. He's using it as an excuse to gain admittance back in the apartment and face the men alone. The audience will, of course, be quite worried about Rupert, who is now alone with two murderers, one scared to death of being found out and the other so unstable as to be bragging about his accomplishment. They will also recall the gun in Brandon's pocket and the bullets in the tumbler. Following a volley of hypothetical scenarios, in which Rupert spills all that he has surmised, Phillip finally breaks down and confesses. He gets hold of the gun to make his escape by removing the obstacle now in his way. Rupert and he struggle, the gun goes off. This struggle brings the height of tension to the film, but it is not the crescendo. The audience is still hanging.

Further dialogue follows in which Brandon's confesses and Rupert comes to understand how he is possibly guilty in some way by seeding the idea in Brandon's head during their many discussions when he was their philosophy professor. Hitchcock is warning viewers that they must take care of what they say, because meanings are not static. Unable to reconcile himself with his role in the crime, Rupert attempts to exonerate himself by accusing Brandon of being already bent toward committing some terrible evil. Rupert insists he only postulated in a philosophical manner and was not serious. It was meant to provoke thought not action. The ending is silent but for the gun shots, the growing crowd of voices beyond sight, and the nearing sirens. This allows the viewer to digest what has played out in front of them and reflect on the implications. To say that Hitchcock preys on his viewer's fears to build up tension is a bit harsh, but I feel that it is quite accurate. He chooses from a number of variables, predicting what reaction his combinations will evoke, until he has optimized the narrative for effect.

The same message exists in *Strangers on a Train*, as does the use of signs and psychology. Guy tells Ann he'd like to strangle his wife; his voice obscured by a rushing train. She has found out about his intentions with Ann and refuses to grant a divorce. The idea of *be careful what you ask for* can be seen in Guy's expression, as the train reminds him of Bruno's proposal. Events are about to become as unstoppable as a steaming train. Unspoken messaging like this also comes in the form of Bruno's Mother's painting. It may be a confession of how she truly sees her husband (like the monster her son Bruno insists he is) or it may indicate familial madness. When Bruno stands in the middle of a cheerful carnival where he has followed Guy's wife (Miriam), he pops a kid's balloon, fully displaying his vindictiveness. His pursuit of Miriam is tense and disturbing, because the audience already knows the plan and has seen how completely capable he is of cruelty. The scenes of Bruno up to this point impart the idea that he is not stable. Through Miriam's murder and escorting the blind man across the street, we come to see that Bruno views himself as the gatekeeper of good and evil. He wants to be in control of granting death or sparing life, as if it is a game, a tennis match of sorts. Bruno manipulates Guy with fear of implication and loss of his future plans (marrying Anne and entering politics), much like how Brandon dominates Phillip. Following the murder of his wife, Guy is watched by police and Bruno is always somewhere nearby threatening to reveal their connection and destroy the only thing that keeps Guy safe from being implicated. This appears to amuse Bruno a great deal and he draws closer into Guy's circle to enjoy taunting him more.

Another source of tension is between Bruno and the innocent Barbara (Anne's younger sister). Young Barbara is a doppelganger for Miriam. She haunts Bruno, plucking at his fears of either being found out or realizing his madness. Similar to Rupert in *Rope*, Barbara is seeing pieces of the puzzle and trying to put it together. However, it is her sister who figures out what

the connection is, because of one tiny clue: eye glasses. She faces Guy with the question making him divulge his secret, though it has the power to end their happiness. He tries to explain how Bruno is controlling him. This adds greater tension for Guy, and hence the audience who has been carefully guided to feel sorry for him. He has more to lose though he is guilty of wanting the act done, because Ann is now an accessory to murder and her well-being is threatened through the danger to her sister.

Another great suspense building scene is when Guy and Bruno face off at the Carousel. Bruno is there to plant evidence to implicate Guy in the murder of his wife. A fight between them ensues on the carousel which manages to send the machine spinning out of control with innocent riders (women and children) on board. An old carnival man crawls beneath the runaway carousel, a boy laughs with joy at the out of control ride he is on, and his mother bawls in worry. The music increases in amplitude, the background is a whirl of confusion, women are screaming for help and clinging to their carousel horses for dear life. Lastly, the carousel crashes apart as the old man finally emerges in its center and throws the switch. It is reflective of how Bruno's plans have swung out of control and fallen apart, and also reflective of his life and madness. With Guy's lighter in his hand, the evidence he was going to plant, he dies, still the gatekeeper of guilt and innocence.

Mixing in the thematic elements strengthens the tautness of the films. "Hitchcock's complex and disconcerting moral sense, in which good and evil are seen to be so interwoven as to be virtually inseparable, and which insists on the existence of evil impulses in all of us" and "his ability to make us aware...of the impurity of our own desires...this disturbing quality is frequently associated with the Hitchcockian *suspense*" (67). After Bruno murder's guys wife, he "increases pressure on Guy to murder his father" (92). "These scenes work beautifully in terms

of suspense, but here as elsewhere it is necessary to ask, of what does his suspense consist?” (92). What Guy struggles to hold as a secret is slowly being exposed, threatening to condemn him though he is not guilty of an action but merely a suggestion that led to the action (92-93). The audience is set in the middle, not only trying to figure out who’s side they would take, acting as jury, but also placing themselves in Guy’s shoes to do so. The idea of “the falsely accused man” is something many audience members can easily relate to and would easily make them feel a little uncomfortable or tense (241). It leads the viewer to understand this could happen to them. At the zenith of the action, unlike in other Hitchcock films, “the forces of good and evil are...separate and clearly aligned,” helping the viewer to *root* for a side as each man dangles on the edge threatening to fall over to their doom (97).

The themes in Hitchcock’s work are reflections of the real world. Wood suggests, “form and style do not exist in and for themselves but have always a sociopolitical significance” (xxxiii). “*Rope* [creates] much of the fascination from the equivocal relationship between the two murderers (the whole action can be seen as a working out of suppressed homosexual tensions). ..*Strangers on a Train* would be more completely satisfying were its central love relationship more fully realized” (66). Troubled relationships and obstacles are common experiences that any audience can relate to, see themselves in and connect.

In the film *Rope*, Wood suggests the opening scene can be interpreted as the consummation of Brandon and Phillip’s intimate relationship. The conversations take on an undertone that plays like the parody of pillow talk. The murder of David is like the murder of society’s ideal man, or the murder of their heterosexual identity. Aside from the connotations of homosexuality likened to murderous depravity and destruction, the men are shown in a dominant versus submissive dichotomy. Brandon is enjoying his pseudo coming out or acting upon his

desires, while Phillip seems reluctant and guilty. The party that takes place over the bulk of the film is a way for Brandon and Phillip to flaunt their consummation without really coming out openly to their friends or to society. Phillip seems nothing but regretful. It could be said that Phillip was led astray by Brandon and feels he will now pay the sins of the depravity he took part in. This interpretation shows the homophobic sociopolitical attitudes of the 1950s.

The sociopolitical implications can lead to other viewings that concentrate on the historical and life-like aspects of a film. This is what has been labeled as Realism.

“Realism...rooted in the classical Greek conception of *mimesis* (imitation), gained programmatic significance only in the nineteenth century, when it came to denote a movement in the figurative and narrative arts dedicated to the observation and accurate representation of the contemporary world” (Stam 15). Stam explains that for theorists (and probably filmmakers as well) “within a kind of transcendental iconophilia, the cinema was envisioned as delivering up life itself in its felt presence and immediacy” (35). To them, “film’s artistic specificity (and its social *raison d’être*) was to relay truthful representations of everyday life” (72). The medium of film has a “natural vocation for realism” (78). Those who supported realism “called for annihilating the distance between art and life” and that “no subject was too banal for the cinema” (73). Such films are marked by minutiae of detail and dramatizing of the mundane. Directors working under this school invented “the long take” (76). And, the dialogue is mostly conversational, like something you would hear at a bus stop or by the water cooler at work.

Other “overall argument[s] interestingly displace the question of realism onto another level, whereby films are seen as representing, in an allegorical manner, not literal history but rather the deep, roiling, unconscious obsessions of national desire and paranoia” (78). Those who did not agree with either school of thought felt that filmmakers “waste their energy in

constructing a recognizable world, while neglecting the spectacular power of the fragment... Germain Dulac foresaw a cinema freed of the responsibility of telling stories realistically reproducing *real life*" (37). Yet, there were and still are films produced that have realism as their central thrust, *Umberto D.* (1952) and *All the President's Men* (1976).

Umberto D. is an Italian film about the title character Umberto Domenico Ferrari, an elderly man retired from civil service who faces difficulty in maintaining respect of himself by others, and who's only task is in the care of his little dog Flike. The film goes into great detail of each moment, displaying the mistreatment of the elderly by the state, family and people in general. Pensioners are derided for asking for a decent amount to live on. Deemed no longer useful, they are made out to be a burden, childish and selfish, and they are gleefully despised for it. After we follow Umberto, spiraling through his fall and eventual redemption, we find that there is no resolution at the end. The issues presented persist, even though Umberto appears revived by a new found happiness in failing at killing himself. He has found new purpose in his responsibility to his dog.

Nearly twenty years later, the historical drama *All the President's Men* proposed to document the inner workings of a real world newspaper as the reporters at the time uncover one of the greatest scandals of the twentieth century. The Watergate Conspiracy sets the tone of the film. This event places it in a very specific time and place, full of very divisive ideas and conclusions about what happened. The film is based around the Washington Post Reporters (Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward) who broke the story, sharing information with the public before the FBI could even get a hold of it, aided by their iconic informant *Deep Throat*. At the time, the head of the paper, Benjamin C. Bradlee, had a reputation for being difficult for politicians, which was documented in the film. The sets and actions are all done to show the real newsroom in real

context: Dialing of rotary phones, dialogue of the actors when on calls, the interview of the office girl with its flirty-conversational tone and a plane overhead that makes her shout back her answers, the sound of the actors flipping through the request cards at the library. There is one scene in particular that caught my attention. An editor is questioning the young reporters, Bernstein and Woodward. Bernstein is sitting on the back of the boss's couch, smoking. Some ashes fall onto the seat cushion. Several moments later, Woodward, set on the far arm of the couch reaches over and brushes the ashes away. It is not a matter of continuity. The scene is intended to be one long take with real action and reaction. Another excellent scene that displays realism is in the phone calls between Woodward and the men he interviews. Between calls, the scene doesn't cut to anything. The camera remains on him, typing up his story.

The difference between the two films is not the treatment of realism, but the historical significance of the subject: how we treat or feel about the material presented. It is the impact that a particular sliver of life has had on its viewer or even the people making the film. Realism is a way to document something in this format that would otherwise not be on film. It is reenacting, but it can also be revision. Realism could be misused by disreputable filmmakers to take a moment in time and spin the understanding around it to suit their desired perspective. Under positive uses, realism can provide a window on events and help open up discourse about difficult topics or topics that have gone ignored. Documentaries make the greatest use of realism techniques to present their information.

Film is a collaborative art, utilizing the talents and skills of many to make a final product. Yet, there are still aspects that seep through and leave something like a fingerprint. For instance, the elements that make up auteur theory can be summarized in the "idea of the *camera pen*" (Stam, 83). The director sketches a story on film. Auteur theory came about during the 1950s-

1960s and auteurists saw cinema as a form of “expression analogous to painting or the novel” (83). Some theorists saw this as a means for “introducing the idea of the creative personality into the Hollywood cinema,” or any cinema for that matter (Baudry, 601). In other words, the style of a film would reflect the “auteur” or creator, usually the director but not always (Stam 84; Baudry 590). “Strong directors...will exhibit over the years a recognizable stylistic and thematic personality” (84).

Cahiers du cinéma was the publication that initially promoted the idea of auteur (85). These French critics placed an “emphasis on style as creative expression: *the way a film looks and moves should have some relationship to the way a director thinks and feels*” (89). They even devised a checklist for discerning if a director was an auteur: “(1) technical competence; (2) distinguishable personality; (3) interior meaning arising from tension between personality and material.” There has been much debate over the value of all of the items in this list, especially the last (Stam 89-90; Baudry 586-587). Although this seems well organized, the truth is that the theory “grew up rather haphazardly; it was never elaborated in programmatic terms, in manifesto or collective statement. As a result, it could be interpreted and applied on rather broad lines; different critics developed somewhat different methods within a loose framework of common attitudes” (589). According to Andrew Sarris, “there is no definition of the *auteur* theory in the English language, that is, by any American or British critic,” but then he goes on to say that “the director is the author of the film, the person who gives it any distinctive quality” (Baudry, 585). Robin Wood says of auteur theory: “in its heyday, [it] concentrated attention exclusively on the fingerprints, thematic or stylistic, of the individual artist” (Baudry, 475). Although there was a proposed check list of requirements, most theorists did as they pleased, in an effort to “attempt to claim artistic origins and...show that film could transcend its artisanal, industrial form of

production and incorporate a singular, signed vision” (86). Auteur theory which “sprang from the conviction that the American cinema was worth studying in depth” (Baudry 589) would also give film what it needed to be taken seriously. It had authorship and was created by an artist.

Stam frames auteurism as “a response to (a) the elitist putdowns of the cinema... (b) the iconophobic prejudice against cinema as a *visual medium*, (c) the mass culture debate which projected the cinema as the agent of political alienation; and (d) the traditional anti-Americanism of the French literary elite” (87). To help them anchor cinema as an art, theorists were making sure auteurism stemmed from a traditional belief set because “the perennial characterization of the cinema as the *seventh art* implicitly granted film artists the same status as writers and painters” (85) and allowed cinema in the hallowed halls of fine art. They insisted that “a director spends his life on variations of the same film” and hence had an individual style (Baudry, 588). For auteurists, this proved that film was art and deserved respectful consideration as such.

However, auteur theory was not the perfect theory described by its champions. “Auteurism, it was argued, downplayed the collaborative nature of filmmaking” (Stam, 90). The auteur doesn’t “always run true to form” (585). It also revealed itself as “less a theory than a methodological focus” (Stam, 91). In applying auteur theory to films, Stam warns against misplacing the label of auteurism, because “a mediocre director... might vividly capture a historical moment, without qualifying as an authentic auteur” (88). Other theorists advise that it “claims neither the gift of prophecy nor the option of extracinematic perception,” meaning that it doesn’t always help to open up a film to greater insights (585). This is due to it being “ambiguous, in any literary sense, because part of it is imbedded in the stuff of the cinema and cannot be rendered in noncinematic terms” (587). A study of film under “auteur theory involves

a kind of decipherment, decryptment” from what some critics call “noise” (599). The noise being the fingerprints of all the other hands in the filmic pot, from actors to grips (599).

“Auteurism clearly made a substantial contribution to film theory and methodology. Auteurism shifted attention from the *what* (story, theme) to the *how* (style, technique), showing that style itself had personal, ideological and even metaphysical reverberations. It facilitated film’s entry into literature departments and played a major role in the academic legitimization of cinema studies” (92). Another intriguing statement about auteur theory is as follows: “It can be argued that works are of especial interest when the defined particularities of an auteur interact with specific ideological tensions and when the film is fed from more than one generic source” (Baudry, 479). There is vast ground to dig into, which should interest a great many theorists.

In reflecting on the readings of this section, I immediately thought of Christopher Nolan and his *Batman* series alongside *Inception*, Guillermo Del Toro’s *Hellboy* pairing alongside of *Pan’s Labyrinth*, as well as John Hughes’ teen film favorites of the 1980s and Terry Gilliam’s catalog. However, I wanted to look at more unfamiliar territory to see if my understanding could be applied. The first two films viewed for this section were: Luis Buñuel’s *Los Olvidados* (The Forgotten Ones) (1950) and *El* (1953) to fulfill that desire. Along with these, I also viewed the familiar films of John Ford: *The Quiet Man* (1952) and *The Searchers* (1956). Then I moved on to compare the films of Howard Hawks: *Only Angels Have Wings* (1939) and *His Girl Friday* (1940), where I was familiar with only the later of the two films. This set of films provides various vantage points to test from.

Buñuel’s work, as I stated above, was unfamiliar to me prior to watching these two films. I found that the style of the director did stretch across both pieces. The images in *Los Olvidados* display the poverty of Mexico, but present it in a stylized manner. *El* also had a stylized

presentation, reflecting the culture and time of its release. I also picked up on the nuances of avant-garde influence in the presentations. Part of what clued me into the avant-garde was his use of the stylized images. Buñuel is weaving narratives, but he is reaching for a more artistic presentation in the effort. Of this artist it is said: “Buñuel was an auteur even before he had assembled the technique of the first circle” (Baudry, 587). I would have to agree with that statement, after only viewing two of his films, because, if you set these two films end to end, they can be viewed as volumes of a single, larger story.

A few other fingerprints that I found were the similar shooting styles where there were few if any close ups, surrealism used to indicate madness or display dreaming (perhaps even the inner thoughts of a character), the reuse of actors (the blind man from *Los Olvidados* was Pablo in *El*), the design of the credits and even the music were similar. The brutality on display in the films is portrayed with a comical air. The children are terribly cruel to one another, but it feels cartoonish like *The Little Rascals*. The gangs of children on the street look up to the older boys. One of these boys is of special interest to them, as he has spent time in prison. He glorifies his experience, imparting how it teaches one to be a man and understand what is needed to survive. The spousal abuse in *El* is treated just as lightly, placed there to give credence to Francisco’s loss of control and ground him as a satirical character.

The theorists who wrote about Buñuel in the readings, pointed to his use of surrealism and fetishism as his most perceptible fingerprints (85). Buñuel was against realism and even too much use of the avant-garde, hoping instead to use cinema for its “subversive potential (56). His style is thus marked by surrealism, where he shot some sequences in slow motion, or semi-slow motion. He also used odd and misplaced images, along with jerky movements, and strange sound effects like wind and incongruous music. Examples that come to mind are the chickens in

Pedro's dream and the flip-flopping of the laughing and somber faces of the parishioners as Francisco finally loses all control. In *El*, the fetishism of the feet shows another way that this director uses objects to convey meaning (Stam, 16, 56-57). Under the teachings of a "utopian misreading of Freud," this was all in an effort to "unleash, rather than tame, the anarchic, liberating energies of the Unconscious" (57). "Buñuel was one of many Surrealists concerned with the relation between film and other state of consciousness" (57). These two films did not disappoint in showing his art bent in that direction.

Moving on to John Ford, I found that there was a stylistic nuance here as well. The vistas that take up linking shots, display the land as a prominent theme or even a background character. The scenery tells part of the story in Ford's films. He uses the natural setting of story to ground if not guarantee a certain mood (consequently both were filmed in the actual place of their setting). Ford was a director who I feel crossed partly into realism to create his art. The films are products of their times, reflecting the values and understandings of the period in which they were made (Stam, 140). Ford uses historical imagery as set dressing, creating a pseudo-realism steeped in stereotypes (the Native American savage and the drunk lyrical Irishman) and romantic notions attached to them (123, 140-141). He doesn't entirely escape the dominant ideology of his time, as some would like to believe (141). However, it may simply be that Ford created films which "at first sight seem to be under the sway of the dominant ideology but which also throw it off course, where filmic disjunctions expose the strains and the limits of the official ideology, and where and oblique, symptomatic reading can reveal, underneath an apparent formal coherence, ideological cracks and faultlines" (141). In other words, Ford was delicately pointing out the weaknesses of the dominant ideology in such a way that it could be swallowed by the viewing public.

While traditions and values drive the characters, they also hobble some of them. The hero in both stories has a past which he struggles to leave behind. The hero is determined to abide by rules of honor, holding to some vow, but it only serves to hold him back from accomplishing his goals. Most often, those ideas of honor and vow-making can be seen as derived from the importance placed on rigid gender roles: big boys don't cry (123). Watching these films today, the viewer may be struck by the attitude displayed toward women (striking, dragging and even pitching them around at will), but, if some critics are correct in their reading of the films, Ford is satirizing traditional notions of gender. Today, these images can give the impression that they are windows on bygone days. Common as they are to films of Ford's lifetime, such caricatures emphasized notions of *a time when men were men* and women needed a good slap to set them right. However, it just as likely showed how absurd it was to think so. This is not said to negate or inflate the existence of abuse in those times

In addition, Ford often taps the contrast between the home and what is beyond the borders of what is familiar. This theme may have been very close to the director's heart, as he created a sort of family around him in his crew and troop of players, which he used from film to film. However, it is important to keep in mind that "the home/wandering opposition...is not central only to Ford or even to the western; it structures a remarkably large number of American films" (Baudry 478).

The opposition of home and wandering comes up in a pair of films by Howard Hawks: *Only Angels Have Wings* (1939) and *His Girl Friday* (1940). Geoff (*Angels*) and Walter (*Friday*) are both 'wandering' away from home. It is not a coincidence that Hawks also used this staple Hollywood dichotomy and is seen as having a definitive style. Critics widely agree that "the test case for the auteur theory is provided by the work of Howard Hawks...Hawks is a director who

worked for years in the Hollywood system” (591). His work reduced “the genres to two basic types: The adventure drama and the crazy comedy” (591). This was due to his stylistic fingerprint on each of his films, or how he handled the material in production. It aligns very well with the checklist critics and theorists can use to determine auteurism.

Other elements I noticed in Hawk’s two films were the lively banter and use of slang. In the films, the group of background male actors (the reporters and the fliers) all delivered up witty lines, quick and flashy. The background of both stories holds some ominous event (Kid’s brother and the man about to be hanged). It is encased in a threat to the precarious balance of life, whether it be the threat of death in just doing one’s job or in working with your ex-husband at the detriment of losing your new fiancé. Speaking of backgrounds, the setting and lighting of both films is somewhat dark even when portraying the middle of the day. It has a somber, muted feel. The imagery is gritty, shadowy, somewhat like a noir; yet, the action is lighter almost comical. A minor element was the use of a story statement at the beginning of each film to introduce the audience to the narrative.

There is also the prolific use of tobacco smoking. It seemed as if everyone was smoking all the time. The fliers seem to use it to project their masculinity, while it also served to convey the sense of stress they were under. The same is true for the reporters. Smoking was an acceptable thing at this time, even thought to be good for you. I want to say that it is normalized in these films, but I also feel that it stood out to me as society moves to the other end of the other end of the spectrum rejecting tobacco. Perhaps, this element was a means for Hawks to convey some other meaning symbolically or in semiotic terms.

Semiotics and structuralism is another set of theories which are closely interrelated. Semiotics is a very difficult approach because it deals with cinema as a language unto itself.

Depending on your experience, this could be as difficult as attempting to read Mandarin without a single lesson. I approached them by trying to understand how they came into being. For instance, structuralism had its “ long-term historical origins in a series of events that undermined the confidence of European modernity; the Holocaust (and in France the Vichy collaboration with the Nazis), and the postwar disintegration of the last European empires...Structuralists codified, on some levels, what anti-colonial thinkers had been saying for some time” (102). In this post World War II world, theorists were moving into a new stage of understanding, fed by anti-colonialism that had been gaining credence. This meant that they viewed film as a stratified structure, reflecting colonial (Eurocentric view of the colonizers) thinking (103). “In a first stage, Saussurean structural linguistics provided the dominant theoretical model.” as theory shifted toward a paradigm where art is language (103-104). To put it a bit more simply, “structuralism was concerned with the immanent relations constituting language and all discursive systems” (105). This comparison of relations between language systems came to be called semiotics (104). So, therefore, “the over arching meta-discipline of semiotics, in this sense, can be seen as a local manifestation of more widespread *linguistic turn*, an attempt...to *rethink everything through again in terms of linguistics*” (104). World War II had brought on a need to rethink everything over again. How it works is that “within structuralism as a theoretical grid..behavior, institutions and texts are seen as analyzable in terms of an underlying network of relationships” (105). All of these relationships make up a readable *sign language*. “A sign’s value...depends in part on those features that distinguish it from the other signs within its system” (Silverman 11). Or, as linguistics teaches, “the signifier stands in for the absent subject (i.e. absent in being) whose lack it can never stop signifying” (199). For example, the word dog and all things that suggest or deny dog, but not the actual dog itself. This theory also states that “language finds its locus only in

memory not so much in any single memory as in the memory of culture” (Silverman, 11). What a dog is is defined in both individual understandings of dog as well as culturally shared understandings of dog. Silverman goes further to state that “semiotics involves the study of signification, but signification cannot be isolated from the human subject who uses it and is defined by means of it, or from the cultural system which generates it” (3). Again, dog does not mean the same thing to every person, but holds a general shared meaning in a cultural system. Such as, Dogs are beloved members of the family in America, while in China they are widely seen as a food source, something Americans find taboo. It is these relationships that semiotics and structuralism propose to examine.

What is important about the examination of relationships instead is that, “in the terms of film, the structural approach implied a move away from any evaluative criticism preoccupied with exalting the artistic status of the medium or of particular filmmakers or films” (106). It took the stress that some theorists found in trying to apply the “four structural properties of the novel – time, tempo, space, and angle of approach – [as they are] difficult to *translate* into film” (82). This ‘translation’ idea is also where semiotics enters the discussion. Translation implies language. In that connection, the idea of cinema as a language came about: “it took 1960s semiotic theory to suggest that *essence* and *specificity* were not coterminous, that the cinema could have some dimensions that were *specifically cinematic* without those traits dictating any single style or aesthetic” (59). The ideas solidified into several terms: the language of film, or film semiotics, or even filmolinguistics. “The core of the filmolinguistic project was to define the status of film as a language” (107-108). The questions this angle of study asked were: “Is there any equivalent in the cinema to the linguistic sign? What is cinema’s *matter of expression*? How

do films produce meaning? How are films understood (108)? Is the answer in the shots, framing, lighting, mood, etc.?

Shots and framing are indeed ways of producing meaning and perhaps the equivalent of the linguistic sign. If one studies cinema, it becomes apparent that this is true, because “the basic figures of the semiotics of the cinema—montage, camera movements, scale of the shots, relationships between the image and speech, sequences, and other large syntagmatic units—are on the whole the same in *small* films and in *big* films” (169). This implies a language of cinema. “A language, by definition, is a semiotic process through which thought may be conveyed, but a language system (or linguistic system) enables a response to that thought using the degrees and kinds of signs and signifiers produced by the language” (Mahfood, 1). Other words that might form “filmic language—[are] the close-up, the pan shot, the tracking shot, parallel montage, and interlaced, or alternative, montage” (170). Also, one should take note of how “the cinema explores and reappropriates the signs of reality...[and] reworks the common patrimony of human gestures and actions” (113). A glance or gesture can be far more meaningful than just the face value. Movements and expressions can tell part of the story more effectively than words and more economically. From all of this “film became a discourse...organizing itself as narrative and thus producing a body of signifying procedures” (114). This meant that much like the novel, film has a specific form and set of linguistic tools and procedures, and could be pulled apart and studied thusly. Stam lists the procedures (Syntagma or syntactic element – of or relating to the rules of syntax¹) as *autonomous shot, parallel syntagma, bracket syntagma, descriptive syntagma, alternating syntagma, scene, episodic sequence and ordinary sequence*” (Stam 116; Baudry 172)). To better understand, think of the “spatial and temporal articulations between

¹ Webster’s Dictionary Online, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/>.

shots” (Stam 118). All of the shots and scenes, their transitions, have meaning.

Mahfood, in his explanation of semiotics raises the difficulty presented in making cinema a language of its own. “The language of cinema...cannot be answered by the language of literatures because the two systems use different modes of expression” (1). And he reminds us that, everyday language is a “system of signs” from which common communication occurs, but in film the language “allows only for deferred communication” (3). We must first translate the seen sign of the cinema into something else, at which point, as with all translations, some meaning is lost.

In addition, “the semiotics of the cinema can be conceived of either as a semiotics of connotation or as a semiotics of denotation...versification, composition, and tropes in the first case; framing, camera movements, and light *effects* in the second” (171). This is where interpretation of filmic language takes place. The viewer has to pick up on the connotation and denotation (often housed in suggestions, nuances and subtexts), interpret what they have noticed, and complete the circuit of communication in their mind. Watching a film is thus very active, though most do not realize or consciously process a film this way, the mind is in constant process. Other “artistic effects...constitute another level of significance” (172-173). For example, “*filmic punctuation*...optical procedures separate large, complex statements and thus correspond to the articulations of the literary narrative” (177). This is a familiar format for the average viewer. It corresponds to prose and poetry structure. This is important because, “shot relationships are seen as the equivalent of syntactic ones in linguistic discourse, as the agency whereby meaning emerges” (200). Thus shots give film the equivalent of grammar, again lending a familiar format from which to work out meaning from. For example, “The shot/reverse shot formation is ideally suited” to demonstrate what is meant by language through cinematic

technique “since it alerts the spectators to that other field...while at the same time linking it to the gaze of a fictional character” (202). A shot such as this tells the viewer that the character is looking at the object which the shot goes to before returning to them. It can read as the character is thinking of the object or will interact with it, but that this object has significance and should be noted. This is one “device among many for encoding anticipation into a film” (208).

This field is not without pitfalls either. A large problem looms for anyone attempting to delve into such theory practices, as “elements of a proper semiotics...remain scattered” (177). Due to this scattering, it is often difficult to utilize the theory effectively. Despite the warning of difficulty, I viewed the films *Top Hat* (1939), *Brazil* (1985) and *The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus* (2009) with this approach in mind. What came out, I hope is a clearer understanding of the premise of film semiotics and structuralism.

In the film *Top Hat*, the transitions between scenes communicate a temporal shift. For example, the maid knocking the vase on the trash can cuts to the conductor snapping his wand before an orchestra. It tells the audience that a change of time as well as space has occurred, providing a transition like the change of a chapter or section in a book. We may also assume the transition signals the viewer that it is now later in the evening. Another of these transitions comes when Astaire’s musical number ends with a lowering curtain and the sudden switch to a resort (which we know is Italian from the dialogue between the men before the musical number). There is also this brief almost imperceptible moment just before speaking dialogue turns to singing. Each song or dance is marked by this subtle introduction, which most audience members recognize, whether they realize it or not.

Furthermore, the language of the musical is different from other fiction films, as it is broken up by sequences of song and dance among other regular scenes as if this were normal to

everyday life. While the story rolls along, each of these out of the ordinary sequences *punctuates* a theme. For instance, Rogers and Astaire dance in the gazebo, this punctuates the beginning of their relationship or bond, moving from acquaintances to lovers. Another punctuation happens toward the end, when they regain this status. There are also shots that mark out scenes like chapters, much like the fade in and fade out transition. For instance, there are a pair of shots of an airplane flying in the sky that bookend a dialogue within the plane between Astaire and Horton.

Setting is also a way of creating meaning. We know that Astaire is in a plane by what we see and hear: the shot of the plane from outside, then inside and back out. In Gilliam's *Brazil*, the setting tells the viewer this story takes place in the future. Likewise, the opening sequence, lighting and the exploding TVs tell us something is different, if not all together wrong with this world. The scene is gritty and dirty, so we are made to understand this is a bleak future. We see everything in a multitude of grays, where the world has been mechanized and industrialized to the fullest extent. The clattering of pipes and wires is contrasted by the bureaucratic paperwork piling up everywhere. In addition, the tightly crowded buildings, high population, filth and fake food emphasize a very dreary world. Everything is automated, with an overabundance of electronics. Cold steel and hospital-like settings mixed with familiar items to the time period it was released in, creates a more plausible future, but one that always reflects the darker possibilities. It is a future where conformity, reflected in the bureaucracy and costumes of the cast, is the only choice left. The televisions are also symptomatic of a universal connection if not shared illness of obsession within the culture shown, perhaps commentary on the downfall of culture in reality and what will be to blame for it.

In the beginning of the film, there are several transitions made using televisions as the focus. It is as if the director is flipping channels to introduce each of the groups of players that will be involved in his tale. The way in which the director shows his story, the extreme close-ups, odd angles and over expression of emotion, tells the audience that the story is a comedy, despite the weight of the material. This is emphasized in the dream sequences of the film's main character Sam Lowry, and how they border on the ridiculous.

An undercurrent of the film is a theme that says, "the truth shall make you free." This sentiment is mirrored in Lowry's dreams of flying and their theme of rescuing a woman in distress, the statue of the eagle clutching a human like figure as it sits over the words, and in his journey of discovering another choice for his life. Instead of seeing the hero through to the expected end where he is set free, in the end Gilliam leaves Lowry a prisoner. This may also be commentary on falling victim to our desperate wishes and desires while ignoring an important truth.

Gilliam continues to explore the ideas of wishes and truth in *The Imaginarium of Dr. Parnassus*. The setting behind the mirror starts out as stage props then changes to a fantasy land created by the entrant. The entrant must make a choice, either damning themselves to hell or releasing them to truth and beauty. Colors and lighting, surreal images and camera angles combine to tell the viewer whether they are behind the mirror or in the real world. They also mark out stages of the film, such as the beginning which is very dark contrasted with the middle where Tony has taken over the presentation of the side show. The change in lighting at the end of the film, when Parnassus disappears from the inner world to the waking world, is the brightest and this confirms that something has changed, that a new stage has been reached. Other markers come in the form of the tarot cards that Dr. Parnassus draws from time to time.

This film is also a classic battle between good and evil (the Devil and Job) with the world of men hung as the prize in the middle. This is a common theme in the cinema. Yet, Gilliam makes use of the uncommon. He contrasts elements that seem to contradict one another. For example, the setting is modern England but the cart of Dr. Parnassus is a relic from another time, even drawn by a horse. Mr. Nick, who Parnassus has made a terrible deal with to obtain the love of a mortal woman, is dressed in the garb of a man from the turn of the twentieth century. Parnassus himself is a relic of another time. The quirky sets meant to show the inside of the mirror are fun and carnival like, but they can also be dark and seedy. Each of these contrasts do not necessarily represent what is the traditional meaning behind their symbolism. It puts the audience off balance and forces them to watch more closely to try and work out the signified meanings.

Each of these highlighted elements is like a tell in a poker game. It doesn't say exactly what it is per se, but it guides the viewer along to an understanding of what is signified. This is the closest to defining semiotics as clearly as one can get. The ambiguity encountered in semiotics is its leanings on other theories such as psychoanalysis. Reading the cinematic language is often a trip into the mind of the filmmakers while simultaneously walking through the mind of a viewer, drawing on ideology, spectatorship and intertextuality.

Stam clarifies the connection between psychoanalysis and semiotics: "Semiotic discussion came to be inflected by psychoanalytic notions such as scopophilia, voyeurism, and fetishism," as well as "the mirror stage, the imaginary, and the symbolic" (reflexivity) (Stam, 159). Much of the language used by Stam here is deeply connected to psychoanalysis. Scopophilia for instance is about the pleasure of looking, and is usually attached to a male perspective. It is closely related to voyeurism and fetishism, a familiar topic in psychoanalytic

readings, where one explores the ideas of the sexual gratification derived in watching someone unseen. "The focus of interest, in the psychoanalytic phase of semiotics, shifted from the relation between filmic image and reality to the cinematic apparatus itself, not only in the sense of the instrumental base of camera, projector, and screen, but also in the sense of the spectator as the desiring object on which the cinematic institution depends as its object and accomplice" (160-161). Semiotics was not interested alone in the person viewing or creating the film. It turned its attention to the apparatus (machinery) of film itself, to see if there could be a psychology discovered and other layers of meaning derived from it. It was seen that the cinematic machine was created under specific ideologies and psychologies and to serve those purposes. "Linguistics and psychoanalysis were not chosen for arbitrary voguish reasons but because they were seen as two sciences that dealt directly with signification as such" (161). Trying to uncover meaning from signs in film and fill out a semiotics of film, it was easiest to make use of these two already established theories. "Linguistically oriented semiology was giving way to a *second semiology*, where psychoanalysis became the preferred conceptual grid" (158-159). Stam neglects to mention the closely knitted study of ideology that also enters in at this moment, and can be picked out of a film using semiotics. The multitude of theories used to analyze film cannot be ordered in a timeline. They each inform the other and grow in and out of advances made from questions and concerns that arise during their use. They never address all things at all times.

Psychology and ideology are very powerful tools to use in making film as well as interpreting film. Psychoanalytic theory was constructed around the teachings of Dr. Sigmund Freud. "Freud first used the term *psychoanalysis* in 1896, just one year after the first screenings of the Lumière films in the Grand Café" (Stam, 159). The Lumière films are considered the inception of film or the cinema. The reason psychoanalysis was so attractive to theorists is that

“Freud’s theory of the unconscious had been a means of freeing people from the categorization of being innately *mad*, as we are seen to all have unsavory desires in [the] unconscious mind and that madness may be cured” (Dooley, 5). It was a theory that excused behaviors and absolved people of responsibility for some of the horrible things they did. This school of thought opened the door to dismiss “irrational or unexplainable behavior” as nothing more than “a result of unconscious desire” (5). “Psychoanalytic criticism also prolonged earlier work of the relation between film and dream,” because of Freud’s book about dreaming, and it “formed part of many subsequent movements such as film feminism and post colonialism” (Stam, 166, 169). The premise of seeing film as a dream and not representative of reality explains the viewer’s ability to suspend belief while taking in a film. They don’t ask why something happens, they simply accept it, as if in a dream state where anything is possible and not at odds with what is understood. The idea of crawling into the mind of the viewer, screenwriter or director and finding meaning that was unconscious was also very exciting. It reveals the depths to which ideology and experience affected perspective and story telling.

For example, “it is not really paradoxical that Hitchcock’s art is usually at its most creative when his material permits or encourages the most complete immersion in the abnormal” (220). And that, “as soon as one begins to contemplate Hitchcock’s work thematically, it becomes evident...they are determined, in other words, not simply by conscious commercial strategy but by powerful internal drives and pressures of the kind that never operate exclusively on a conscious level” (Wood 217). In other words, “we cannot step outside of ideology since it is only inside of it that we find our subjectivity and our social reality” (Silverman 31). Ideology is strongly driven by an individual’s psyche and vice versa. “Ideology [is] inherent in perspective” (Baudry, 304). Hitchcock’s films, though directed by him, do not just contain the director’s

perspective, but that of the machine that created it (the film industry or Hollywood) and the culture it was cultivated in and presented to. Though a person has an individual psyche (or psychology), it has been shaped and honed by that individual's social settings, while at the same time his or her behavior has acted to affect those same groups in return.

Continuing with Hitchcock, I return momentarily to the films *Rope* and *Strangers On A Train*. "It has been often noted that the figure of the psychopath that recurs throughout Hitchcock's works is sometimes coded...as gay," as in *Rope* (Wood, 336). "The falsely accused man films move unanimously toward the protagonist's rehabilitation/restoration to society...as he remains essentially unregenerate," as in *Strangers On A Train* (242). Both of these occurrences should give a glimpse to the viewer or theorist of Hitchcock's ideology and his psyche. For example, one theorist states "the Hitchcockian dread of repressed forces is characteristically accompanied by a sense of the emptiness of the surface world that represses them" (483). This could tell us what Hitchcock feared or sensed about the world, or what he surmised society feared and felt about the world. At the time of these films, homosexuality was widely repressed by society, only spoken of in coded terms. Theorists have surmised from their readings of the films that Hitchcock himself was homophobic or anti-gay, though that may be true, it is also a symptom of the society he lived and worked in. None of his films can escape that influence. A theorist may then want to ask, was Hitchcock making people question their own ideologies and psychologies?

Another example of ideological affect on film reading can be found when Wood explores the character of Bruno: "Everything gravitates toward Bruno as the film's magnetic center of attraction: He becomes not only its most complex and detailed character but also its most vulnerable, in his struggle for control and the escalation of his failure to maintain it. I find it

difficult to decide exactly how much this has to do with Hitchcock's fascination with sexual/gender ambiguity and how much with the failure of the scenario to provide opportunities to develop an effective counterweight or counter identification" (348). Wood is aware of the multiple implications a film can have. The most ready answer is not enough for Wood. He wants to look deeper to see what is happening in the film, and attempts to see it from more than one perspective. I believe that this also shows how the ideology of the reader can affect the reading, which I will get to later when I cover spectatorship (although, it grows difficult at this point to separate these avenues while exploring cinema). "The ideology of representation...and specularization...form a singularly coherent system in the cinema" (Baudry, 311). However, this system relies on a multitude of others to inform it.

As I have mentioned before, some theorists feel that the machines and industry of film can carry its own ideology or psychology. The mechanisms and machines that make film possible "have been protected by the inviolability that science is supposed to provide" (Baudry, 303). This is to say that because they are unemotional things that they are objective. Some disagree, asking "do the instruments (the technical base) produce specific ideological effects, and are these effects themselves determined by the dominant ideology?" (303) Is the apparatus truly objective or is it subjective by its nature? The theorist goes on to answer the question by saying: "whether this be that of a god, or of any other substitute, it is an apparatus destined to obtain a precise ideological effect, necessary to the dominant ideology: creating a phantasmization of the subject, it collaborates with a marked efficacy in the maintenance of idealism" (311). Adding, "the ideological mechanism at work in the cinema seems thus to be concentrated in the relationship between the camera and the subject. The question is whether the former will permit the latter to constitute and seize itself in a particular mode of specular reflection" (311). The

apparatus was invented by a society for a certain purpose and may not be free of ideological purpose. It was, after all, constructed for a certain purpose.

In order to discover these things, the use of reflection (or reflexivity) is necessary, because “cinema is more perceptual...than many other means of expression” (731). Taking ideological and psychological perspectives into account, one can begin to perceive the images on the screen, interpreting them to make meaning. The meaning making occurring in the process is ideologically based and influenced by the psyche of the individual viewer. It is argued that “the practice of the cinema is only possible through the perceptual passions: the desire to see (= scopophilic drive, scopophilia, voyeurism), which was alone engaged in the art of the silent film, the desire to hear which has been added to it in the sound cinema” (741). These desires have been traditionally associated with a male psyche and ideology, whereby the perspective of the lens is sexualized. Thus, women have been cast aside in considering readings of films. For women, viewing the film is from the start technically impossible. According to many feminist theorists, the woman must put herself aside and identify with a male gaze. This can in essence cause a sort of transvestitism on her part. (746-772). A great deal of theorizing has been done on this topic in both ideology and psychoanalysis.

For instance, the film *Bringing Up Baby* (1938) can be viewed as setting up the male/female roles in an ideological presentation. The film is a comedy, so it makes a farce out of the clearly defined roles, driving them to extremes to highlight the inherent silliness in them. The film showcases Susan as a modern man hunter, hence her association with Baby the leopard and the dog, George. She becomes like the goddess Diana. Yet, she's set up to appear a hopeless screwball. But, is Susan a screwball or is she a clever hunter, setting a trap? For instance, the nod of satisfaction she gives when she leaves David at the hotel. This is not a gesture of fool

tripping along unaware. Later, Susan reveals to her Aunt that David is the only man she's ever loved and refuses to lose him. A reason I call Susan a *modern* hunter can be summed up in Dooley's statement: She "may destroy all sense of order. Nevertheless as David and Susan are settled on the scaffolding at the end, the film is clearly intended to offer the possibility of a new way of seeing the world" and a more modern role of woman (4). Susan is not a traditional female figure, quietly waiting to be pursued by the man she intends to land. Instead, she goes out and hunts him and traps him. It's not necessarily a positive image, but it removes woman from passive object acted upon to active object acting out. It sets up a far more modern role for woman.

Another role for women is presented through Alice, who can be labeled as the ice queen, a clinical and cold woman, with no sexual desire. She places herself in position of arbiter of David's future career and that is the highest place she can accept as women (pushing her man ahead to glory). This is a traditional option for women. Contrasted with the huntress Susan (a woman of her own mind, who is energetic and full of desire), the pair make a parody of the womanly roles in society, the limited choices of either or.

The female roles are contrasted by the male roles, not just each other. David, the psychologist and the hunter are each parodies of male role choices. David is the quarry for Susan, but he is also the malleable male. He is a more modern version of what it is to be a man in American society. He stands back and allows the woman who has hold of him lead the way. He's not like the hunter Aunt is associated with, or Susan's brother. However, David is associated with the museum and dinosaur bones, which Dooley suggests are symbols of patriarchy (3). He spends all day assembling them into what he thinks is their traditional relationships. He contradicts himself in his chosen role as paleontologist against the role chosen for him by the

women, a malleable male. David is not set in stone, though he fumbles to make sense of fossils.

Why I say he is malleable is that in several scenes of the film, we see his *image* altered or questioned. Susan takes David's clothes and forces him to put on her very feminine robe, like wrapping him up in herself, trapping him in feminine bonds, or gender switching (2). David then dons a riding outfit, too small and clownish, which keeps him from regaining his power, while Susan subdues him. It keeps him childlike and helpless, much like how feminists have seen the role of women in respect to husbands and marriage. He is also quite a fish out of water with the women, losing his ability to be assertive or control the situation. It is a typical role reversal tale that could be reflecting a shift in the ideology of traditional male/female roles at the time.

In a Freudian respect, David is searching for his masculinity or personality while he goes through these alterations. "In *Bringing Up Baby* the professor David (Cary Grant) spends the majority of the film searching for a bone, an obviously phallic symbol, Susan (Katharine Hepburn), on the other hand is closely identified with her aunt's leopard, Baby, that eats everything it sees" and reminds the psychoanalyst of the male fear of being castrated by the jealous woman (1). Dooley also suggests that the moments where David is in women's clothes, it is like Susan has "metaphorically castrated" him (3). Other phallic symbols can be found in David's hunt for the bones, and the dinosaur fossils in the museum. David is constantly in search of what it means to be a man, to have a phallus. Susan constantly denies him that until she has him where she wants him.

Through all of this, the director Howard Hawks mocks the psychiatrist (2). One has to wonder how intentional all of this is. The psychological symbolism is clear and easy to see, laid out like a trap for the viewer. Also, the psychiatrist is displayed as somewhat of a bumbler. The caricature may be a statement on the field of psychology at that time, but it also sets up the

viewer to think in a more psychoanalytic way by laying the suggestion of the theory in the viewer's mind. The comedy is successful because it pokes fun at established ideology, presenting the audience with a chance to think of an alternative or at least see the absurdity of the status quo, and does so at a safe distance.

Psychology and ideology take on a more sinister turn toward women in the film *The Unborn* (2009). Essentially the story is about a young woman, Casey, who is haunted by the ghost of an unborn or deceased child. The film is shot in washed out dim tones, meant to set a sinister daydream-mood for the viewer. It may be a reflection of depression in Casey or communicating that we are in her nightmare, observing her fears.

The opening sequence of *The Unborn* shows a city scape and freeway which communicates to the viewer that they will witness something strange. Casey runs across a bridge, as if crossing a temporal gateway toward something different, a visual indication of growth and change. On the other side, she stops and turns to see a child watching her. Then it changes to a dog wearing a mask. The mask hides something, but like Alice in Wonderland, Casey is drawn after it in curiosity. The mask wearing dog guides her into the woods, an uncharted place. She sees the mask beneath a pile of leaves and tries to dig it out. There she uncovers a womb buried in the ground complete with fetus. It is symbolic of Mother Earth, the greatest mother in our known catalog of symbols. This symbol is at once dangerous and our salvation. Casey bolts awake from this dream, but the mood remains through the whole film.

Psychoanalytically, it appears Casey is afraid of her power to bear children and that she views pregnancy as possession by some foreign entity. She flat out fears childbearing. Casey is in her prime childbearing years (twenties). She is shown to us as healthy and normal, someone who enjoys their youth by having fun and indulging in youthful distractions. But, is the

perspective of the film Casey's? The film reflects a patriarchal mistrust of the female, through ideological symptoms. For instance, the idea of child rearing holds a deeply male perspective. The film displays the fear that life will be over once family begins and shows unborn children as demonic hauntings. It also shows how in society, women are feared for their child rearing abilities. An underlying theme also hints at abortion, because a woman who is young should only want to have fun and not tie herself and a man down with a child. She should want to be rid of it. It seems that the male perspective of the film is trying to make women afraid of their child rearing ability, and hence their unique power. In the least, it communicates the fear and misunderstanding of the process.

Other examples of this male perspective show themselves in the changes that overcome Casey during the progress of the film. It seems to say, once your wife or girlfriend gets pregnant, or starts thinking about it, she'll change and not for the best. For instance, Casey's eyes change color from brown to blue. The change is apparently brought on by a pregnancy, from some inherited trait she had from being a twin. She finds out that her umbilical cord strangled her brother in the womb, killing him. Her mother went mad while she was a young girl. This states that women go from fun, sex objects meant to please men to untouchable cursed beings once they have a baby. This builds up the ideology of inherent evil in women and that when women have children they utterly change for the worse. It cries: Beware! Underneath every fun loving girl is the real woman waiting to reveal herself: a dangerous mad, hysterical thing that will destroy men.

The ghost is like the proverbial ticking clock, following her everywhere, reminding her of her 'ability' or 'duty.' Behind this is the ideology that young women, driven by their biological clock turn from wanting to have sex for pleasure to having it for procreative reasons that are

destructive to a young man's need to have fun and not be tied down (like a form of castration through female control of the male's penis). It also puts blame on the child, viewing them as evil, twisted, untrustworthy figures that enter your life and change things forever, for the worst. Support for this can be seen in how the character Casey views the couple she babysits for. She disparages them with her friend over the phone. She is in a relationship with someone and may see her own life taking that turn and it frightens her to think she may become average, dull and overweight. Marriage and family is something for boring, fat old farts and not young vibrant, attractive women.

One can also see that the film is from a male perspective in how the film fetishizes the female form. The actress playing the part of Casey moves awkwardly, as if constantly striking a model's perfect sexualized pose. The filmmakers attempt to negate this perspective by using a professor in one of Casey's classes. He presents the idea of 'imponderables' to make us believe that this story is just from Casey's eye and her ideology of womanhood. It attempts to say this is her ideology she is working through. It also attempts to show that the perspective is from an informed or progressive ideology. However, the reality is that it's just a traditional patriarchal perspective, trying to use science as unquestionable fact in a male ideology of womanhood.

The end of the film sees Casey as momentarily safe from the change. But this is a questionable safety as she has destroyed the lives of a dozen people (including her boyfriend) in the transition. Then, she finds out she is pregnant with twins. So, in fact, she has not escaped the change, but the whole tragedy that takes place around her is a result of it having already begun. The film ends abruptly, suggesting there is more terror to come from this pregnancy.

The film was not very successful with moviegoers and I think the reason is obvious. The ideology behind it demonizes pregnancy and family and puts the woman at the center of that

destruction. It plays on psychological fears of the male that the female will destroy him and that children are not to be trusted, because they only help the woman in her efforts. Yet, the drive to nurture and raise a family is seemingly universal regardless of sexuality. I think that it is here that the film mostly fails with the audience.

The Plague (2006) also demonizes children to make its point. The premise of the film is that a global virus hits all children of the world under nine, making them catatonic with two daily seizures. After ten years, the children, now teens, wake from their state. Tom Russell, the main character, reenters this world at this time. He walks into frame with a paperback of *The Grapes of Wrath* in his back pocket and we soon find out he was in prison for killing someone in a fight.

A battle between adults and the teens ensues, beginning with Tom's nephew. After killing his father, Tom's nephew turns on him. Tom has trouble battling off his nephew, from fear of repeating what put him in prison, but his brother in law sweeps in to do it for him. This keeps Tom from having to commit what would feel like infanticide to him and subsequently suffer castration in the form of guilt over committing such an act, or the castration of being jailed and made powerless again.

The children operate on a collective consciousness, which could be interpreted as a view of how adults see a younger generation, moving in a cohesive mob, or subversive sub-culture. Youth culture is often seen by the dominant culture as threatening to take over and destroy what was set up by an older generation. "Don't let them take my soul," is the first information we are given to determine what is going on with the teens, and it also reflects this fear of takeover.

This line also asks the question, is this really a virus or is it something otherworldly? Are they possessed by some entity or force that drives them to murder the adults? Are they sent to make judgment for some deity? With a title *The Plague*, we are carefully guided to infer biblical

themes. So, as God is dragged into the conversation, it is then apparent that the film is speaking of the fear of the father and the oedipal fear of castration. With images of the cross cropping up, a view of the town church in the opening sequence, and even the title, it is a likely inference. We should not ignore that this castration could be a threat to both the teens and the adults. The children are acting in tandem to subvert the order and fulfill their desire to take power from the adults and appropriate the world (Mother Earth).

Returning to the line “Don’t let them take my soul,” we eventually surmise that someone must volunteer to give up their soul to make the plague stop. Would the self-sacrifice be permanent or a temporary neutering? It is hard to decide in the coded ending, but Tom is not there.

Other biblical themes rise up in the form of Kip and Claire. The evidence is in their status as non-viral teens, and their wounds. They both die from gun shot wounds in their sides, reminiscent of the rib wound of creation. This also repeats the need for a sacrifice, as it is reminiscent of Christ’s wound from the lance. An ideology of redemption through sacrifice winds its way all through the film. It is typically a Christian ideology, and the main tenet of the religion. Someone must sacrifice their worldly being to save the people.

The film also echoes *The Grapes of Wrath* though loosely. Tom Russell is Tom Joad, returning home after a jail sentence to find the world turned upside down. He rejoins his family hoping for a new life, but ends up having to sacrifice his to make a better life for others. This is actually a good example of intertextuality and spectatorship.

Intertextuality and Spectatorship are closely intertwined much like Ideology and Psychoanalysis. Spectatorship deals with the reception of a film by the audience. A limitless fountain of information can feed the reading of a film, as the spectator reflects on his or her own

ideology and psyche along with his or her life experience. This is not a new concern for theorists or filmmakers. "Film theory has *always* been concerned with spectatorship" (229). It is how theorists do what they do and it is something taken into consideration by filmmakers during production. It takes into account everything from their personal experience and educational level to the arrangement of the seating toward the screen and the ornamentation of the theater. The physical elements of the cinema (the space of the theater, the screen, seating and lighting) all play into setting up the spectator to receive the message presented in the film (Baudry 355-361). It has a direct effect on how well they can be immersed in the text and experience the *dream*. In order for the audience to *buy into* what they view, they must identify with someone on the screen, because "the spectator is absent from the screen" (734). Stam agrees with this statement when he says, "spectatorial response to the cinema depends upon identification" (Stam, 227). "In apparatus theory the cinema becomes a very powerful machine which transforms the embodied socially situated individual into a spectatorial subject" (163). The apparatus also "insist[s] on the role of monocular perspective (hence of the camera) and the 'vanishing point' that inscribes an empty emplacement for the spectator-subject" (Baudry 735). Obviously, "the spectator has the opportunity to identify with the *character* of the fiction" (733). Yet, there are multiple perspectives for him or her to identify with. (737-740). Cinema is highly effective because it uses the space and time similarly to the human mind: "the pictorial reflection of the world is not bound by the rigid mechanism of time. Our mind is here and there, our mind turns to the present and then to the past; the photoplay can equal it in its freedom from the bondage of the material world" (358-359). Through the spectator's mind "the act of perception...makes this secondary identification possible" (Stam, 165). There are a number of mental acrobatics the spectator goes through in receiving a film and they are assisted in this by the film itself through the apparatus of

the cinema. The film often makes use of familiar symbols and signs to anchor the spectator to it (helps them identify).

The phenomena of identification explains some interesting things, such as, why “the spectator is not amazed when the image *rotates*” (736). However, such “identification...tells us nothing about the *place of the spectator's ego* in the inauguration of the signifier” (734). If they become whoever or whatever the eye of the camera is, another silent character in the film perhaps, where then does the real person go? In the cinema, do we become the ego, observing a world on the screen, much like an individual’s psyche peers from the eyes to observe the real world? Picture if you will, a person seated in the dark expanse of the mind before the openings of the eyes. Stam suggests an answer when he says, film “flatter[s] infantile narcissism by exalting the spectatorial subject as the center and origin of meaning” (162). The person is still there. He or she just becomes witness or an addition to the action of the film, like inserting their persona into it, an idea backed up by film semiotics. This has an ego inflating effect.

“The framing of shots and their sequencing, the repetition of setups, the position of characters, the direction of their sequencing...the direction of their glances--can be taken together as...showing an action to a spectator” but more importantly they help define the “*position of the spectator*” (Baudry, 210). Framing and shots help to define a more physical location of the spectator (in front of , behind or above, for example). Yet, there is another meaning of placement: “the spectator's place...is a construction of the text which is ultimately the product of the narrator's disposition toward the tale” (221). “Consequently, the place of the spectator in his relation to the narrator is established by...identifications with characters and the views they have of each other” (222). This is to say that the imagery “declare[s] a psychology of intractable situations” (216). “Masking and displacement of narrative authority are thus integral

to establishing the sense of the spectator *in* the text, and the prohibition to establishing the film as an independent fiction" (223). This is to say that the spectator is still inserted into the film, but with a predetermined judgment on the action, that necessarily alters their ideology or even psyche to view the presentation in a fixed manner. It sets up the spectator to judge the viewing in a certain way, a very different perspective on placement that is wholly mental. *Masking* the narrator's opinion helps to place the meaning that is derived by the spectator in their own judgment. Combined, these two forms of placement help fulfill an illusion for the viewer, effectively immersing them in the film.

These ideas on placement can suggest that the spectator is a very passive figure in the puzzle, someone who has a film *happen* to them. This inference is misleading, because "the spectator has to work at reading the text" (603). This is the moment where intertextuality plays a big role in film theory. Stam believes that "semiotic analysts prepared the way for a notion of intertextuality that went beyond the old philological conception of *influence*" (Stam, 201). Because of semiotics, intertexts act as signs. They have special meaning and stand in for those meanings. They are no longer just influencing, like how Shakespeare has influenced generations of writers in penning their tales. Stam also states that "the decline of the text as an object of study in the 1980s coincided with the ascendance of the intertext" (201). This was a shift from bland influence between texts.

To understand intertext more easily, think of the linguistic term: quotation. This "quotation can take the form of the insertion of classic clips into films," the soundtrack, and sections of dialogue (207). "Even a cinematic technique can constitute an intertextual allusion" such as: the slow motion close up of a projectile (a bullet) and following its trajectory (207). An observer should keep in mind, however, "the concepts of intertextuality are not reducible to

matters of influence or sources of a text" (202). "Intertextuality is more active; it sees the artist as dynamically orchestrating pre-existing texts and discourses...it allows for dialogic relations with other arts and media, both the popular and erudite" (203). There are several pieces to intertext that form the whole of the idea. They are: Paratextuality ("accessory messages and commentaries which come to surround the text"), Metatextuality ("critical relation between one text and another"), Architextuality ("generic taxonomies suggested or refused by the titles or infratitles of a text"), and Hypertextuality ("relation between one text ...*hypertext*, to an anterior text or *hypotext*, which the former transforms, modifies, elaborates, or extends" (209). These layers of intertexts have a broad range. Intertextuality can be limitless in the scope of interwoven meanings. Under this approach, the filmmaker is seen as a collage artist.

In speaking about *Strangers on A Train*, Robin Wood declares that "Hitchcock's finest work is flawed by compromises that, in an artist free of *commercial* constraints, would appear neurotic, the result of a reluctance to allow certain disturbing implications to be fully explored, but which Hitchcock encourages us...to regard as the result of external pressures, fears of alienating his audiences" (Wood 219). This shows how an audience is assumed to perceive certain meanings that may be displayed in a film, and how that assumption has an enormous effect on what is finally produced. Therefore, ideology, psychology and sociology are all concerns of the filmmaker. He must gage the cultural temperature toward the material he proposes to present. This is why cultural studies can provide a well spring for seeking intertext and spectator theory. "Cultural studies is notoriously difficult to define due to its deliberately eclectic and open-ended method" (224). Much like intertextuality, cultural studies draws on so many avenues that it can end up at innumerable destinations. The best definition for cultural studies can be found in the attempt to explain what it does: "offering itself as an alternative to

what it sees as the ahistoricity of both structuralism and psychoanalysis, cultural studies explores culture as a site where subjectivity is constructed" (225). Cultural studies concentrates on "social and institutional conditions under which meaning is produced and received," while also having "an interest in the processes of interaction between texts, spectators, institutions, and the ambient culture" (225). It takes into account sub cultures and groups, and the reception of mass market objects by those groups. Do they openly accept things or resist them? If they resist them, do they attempt to change things? For instance, the youth culture attempting to *correct* or *alter* what the older generations have historically upheld. "A key issue in cultural studies is the question of agency: whether resistance and change are possible in a mass-mediated world" (227). It is believed that "resistant readings...*primes* the spectator to read critically" (234). However, it is unclear if this breeds conformity or change. It seems that it does a little of both.

For instance, think back to that moment in childhood when you found out Bugs Bunny wasn't a real talking rabbit. Cartoons became just drawings, not living beings. Also, think of the African American viewer who sees the racist figure of the maid in *Tom and Jerry*. After that moment, watching the Warner Bros. or MGM cartoons is no longer the same, the spectator has changed perception. This is due to the inevitable fact that the spectator you are when watching a film for the first time, in your youth or prior to self-awareness of one's ethnicity will not be the same spectator you are watching the same film after multiple viewings and experiences years later (231-232). The understanding of these cartoons has no doubt changed along with the culture since their release, as reception of the information presented (such as black face) becomes intolerable to the culture. "Neither text nor spectator is static...spectators shape and are shaped by the cinematic experience with an endless dialogical process" (231). This is because "the spectator is necessarily active, obliged to compensate for certain lacks" in the film (230). It is also because

"spectatorial positions are multiform, fissured, schizophrenic, unevenly developed, culturally, discursively, and politically discontinuous, forming part of a shifting real of ramifying differences and contradictions" (233). Race and ethnicity are not the only differences that have shifted in the perception of a film. "Spectatorship is also sexualized, classed, raced, nationed, regioned, and so forth" (232). This is because "mass-media texts do not have an univocal meaning but can be read differently by different people, depending not only on their social location but also on their ideologies and desires" (230). The spectator's position is so powerful that "the traditional rationale for the presentation of imagery is often stated by the camera's relation to the spectator" (211). This suggests that the viewer shapes the meaning of a film without having yet seen a single frame. The positioning of the camera was thought out with the spectator in mind before they took a seat to view the shot.

Spectatorship can also be problematic. "Theories of female spectatorship are rare, and when they are produced, seem inevitably to confront certain blockages in conceptualization" (Baudry, 761). This is a subject akin to the discussion of psychoanalysis and women. Just as I stated before, women are placed in a position of "*over identification* with the [film] image" (764). "The result is a tendency to view the female spectator as the site of an oscillation between a feminine position and masculine position, invoking the metaphor of the transvestite" (765). This does not even mention the implications of voyeurism in the perspective of the spectator. In some movies more than others, this can be an uncomfortable experience. If the lens is male, the female must make herself male before meaning can be made. In the presence of voyeurism, this becomes complicated further. Not only does the film manage to lull the spectator "into a false sense of security by the apparent legality of his surrogate, sees through his look and finds himself exposed as complicit, caught in the moral ambiguity of looking," but it also creates a sexual

metamorphosis for women viewers who must switch gender to participate (756). Then, again, with so little explored on the subject, perhaps something else entirely is the case.

Another issue is that most films "assume spectatorial competence in diverse generic codes; they are calculated deviations meant to be appreciated by discerning connoisseurs" (211). The less your spectator knows, the less they will understand or appreciate in their viewing, so viewing a film can have an elitist twist to it, which helps to feed the ego of certain spectators. Less negatively, it allows for multiple fruitful viewings of the material.

Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter (2012) is a very recent film that suits the exploration of intertext and spectatorship. The film is an epic romp through a fictional tale about a well-known historical figure. It is very successful in setting you up to question the history you believe you know as it tries to fit in an alteration by adding new information. The filmmakers make use of the historical figure and quirks of the real man, to anchor this story in *truth* with authority. The imagery of the axe that historically represented Lincoln's strength and nobility is reappropriated as the righteous axe he uses to kill vampires. It is still strong and noble, but now holds that meaning tenfold, playing on a sense of American nationalism, the intended spectators for the film. The filmmakers were even sure to cast a man in the part of Lincoln who looks very much like the former president. The illusion is continued with his lank figure under realistic costuming, complete with a tall hat. They also use the relationship between Mary Todd and Lincoln to further weave history with the fiction. It lends authority and credence to this preposterous fantasy.

The lore of the vampire is also part of weaving fact and fiction. Having roots in ancient folklore, this boogey man figure is well known throughout multiple cultures. Vampires are also popular in current culture (*Twilight*, *Underworld*, etc.), extending the expected number of

audience members who will be familiar with the legends and many incarnations. Just like other modern tales of this cultural boogey man, the lore of the vampire is modified to suit the response the filmmakers wish to receive. For example, the vampires can make themselves invisible. This ability plays out during altercations between them and Lincoln, building audience anxieties built on the platform of the prehistoric human fear of the unseen.

Other culturally popular images are the use of slow motion in the action scenes to draw out the strike moment (when the bullet, fist or axe hits its target) for the viewer's optimum enjoyment. The grand finale of explosions and mayhem comes in the form of a fight on a train roof. This immediately reminded me of the film *Priest* (2011) and *Indiana Jones* (1989). It also calls up every train confrontation in every western, and all the edge of your seat fight scenes in all the actions films ever made. It is not just to copy, or to pay homage, but shows a style that is popular in filmmaking in the current time that has evolved out of all the others before it, and stands in contrast to those that will come after. It shows how filmmakers creatively make films that can be seen as collages of other material.

Within the background of this film, the issues of slavery and the United States Civil War drive some of the plot and become the main imagery toward the end. The onscreen displays of the battles are breathtaking, but also unnerving as soldiers are dying in the spectator's field of vision. Who is the spectator identifying with and at what cost? Blue or gray, vampire or living man? Do they identify with Abraham or do they identify with Adam? (These names also hint at intertextuality within the film that is an aside, but can set up the answer to these questions. "No longer shall your name be called *Abram*, but your name shall be *Abraham*; For I will make you the father of a multitude of nations." This is quoted in the beginning of the film. Adam, of course, who it is implied has been around for eons, possibly the first vampire, father of vampire

kind.) Are the audience members enjoying the carnage and how do they view their psyche if they realize that they do? Do they draw the line between vampires and the humans, only enjoying when the perceived bad guy gets his? If so, do they recognize their desire to win against those who oppose them?

Aside from these very male perspectives of identity found in the male characters, there are options for the women, though limited. They can choose between Mary Todd or Vadoma (the sister of Adam and one gets the impression she is also his queen). The choice is limited because it falls between two very old variants recycled for years: the virtuous mother who stands behind her man and advances her family's legacy or the free-willed incestuous man-eater, who thwarts the legacy of men by her refusal to accept the traditional female role. The connotations of this could be seen as purposeful to suit the time period that the film was set in, or it could be seen as symptomatic of inequality still within the society that produced it. If it is symptomatic of the society it shows the limited roles available to women and the judgment cast unyieldingly on them (such as the free-willed woman can only be evil, an incestuous creature that enjoys destroying men and children). It also shows how ingrained such roles are in society, as they are so solidly defined, overtly used and consistently reused.

Societal influence shows up in every film. Many filmmakers, like novelists, are not just telling a story in their respective medium, but commenting on society. *Metropolis*, a silent film from 1927, is a good example of how long this has been happening. The film opens with: "The mediator between the head and hands must be the heart – Epigram." It is supposed to be the year 2026. The classes of people are separated by tangible barriers that separate the worlds they share, those above, those below and those caught between. Though the images presented are heavily industrialized with machinery and computers everywhere, the laborers (blue collar) who create it

are kept underground and out of sight. The upper classes live above ground and are seemingly free of labor. They work at occupations deemed more prestigious, such as scientists, administrators and managers (white collar). The above ground dwellers insist everything be run on clock perfect time, but contribute nothing to that effort and benefitting the most from it.

To further separate the two factions, the audience is presented each in turn. Laborers are dressed in the same uniform overalls, boots and caps. They switch in shifts, en masse, dull and dirty, heads bent as they avert their eyes. They seem to be wasting their lives with no quality compensation. Where they live is a former underground lake that has been damned up, the water re-routed. They are under constant threat of death, whether working or resting. Above grounds, the upper class enjoys libraries, schools, stadiums, and has leisure. They breathe the free air and they play in the sun. Everything is glittering and good. However, this vision is merely a mask, disguising a true ugliness.

Miracle of the Eternal Gardens is a place filled with women for the pleasure of men. These women wander the gardens wearing runway fashion lingerie of the era, like art pieces offering themselves as distractions. It is a thinly disguised brothel or harem used by the upper class men. Between these worlds also exists a no man's land where independent wanderers work. It is located at the foundation of the high rises of the metropolis. The dwellers of this area move between the two levels, but belong to neither. Rotwang, an inventor or conjurer, is one of these wandering men. He is a mixture of mysticism, old wizardly and modern invention. He creates the robot, meant to replace the woman both he and Jon Fredersen loved (Freder's mother) and who is now dead. He is a man in exile.

Freder, Jon Fredersen's son and an above ground dweller, goes into the depths in search of Maria. While frolicking in the gardens, Maria brings the laborers' children out to show them

the garden. “Look these are your brothers!” splashes on the screen. Maria captures Freder’s gaze and heart. He pursues her. In the realm of the laborer, Freder sees firsthand what is happening below his utopia, the poor of society used as forced labor. In his anxiety, he imagines them being sacrificed to an angry gaping-mouthed deity, who is not sated. Freder realizes that without the laborers the city above and everything he knows would cease. His kind and their great city is the deity that is endlessly hungry. Freder is changed by his love for Maria and comes to understand that this arrangement is unsustainable.

Meanwhile, the inventor and Freder’s father conspire to stop Maria from waking the laborers to their own plight. Jon Fredersen makes Rotwang take Maria and use her likeness on the robot he has built (they call it a man-machine instead of robot or android). He does so and loses the monster on the city. The Robot poses as Maria, making it seem that this saint has become a lewd nightclub performer. Her subsequent acts of deviance and vice are all meant to destroy Maria’s reputation. Her bizarre dances make men uncontrollable and they fight each other to possess her, victims of her unnatural command. These scenes are montaged with Freder’s fever, as if he knows something has befallen the real Maria and she is being harmed. Goaded by the machine who poses as Maria, the workers rise up in anger instead of love and almost ruin everything Maria has tried to make for them. Their underground town is flooded, and they nearly lose their children. However, Freder sweeps in and saves the day, with the real Maria at his side.

The film is a statement on where the economy was going to lead humanity under its arrangement at the time. There was a large push toward communism at this time. Far left teachings made their way quite often into the films of Germany, as well as their theater and Cabaret (Jelavich, 211-214). Maria is the embodiment of leftist activism at the time. We see

embedded in the imagery, right versus left and the division of labor ideologies, along with society's idea of what values were acceptable and beneficial to it. Germany was sinking in debt and restrictions from the first World War, and a film such as this would play well with a German audience.

Throughout the film, you come to see the laborers as the hands and those who represent the head are in the upper city. The heart that must mediate to bring them together to work fairly for each other is the heart, embodied first by Maria but ultimately she cannot carry this torch and must hand it over to a man, Freder. Not only is there sexism, but a deep sense of ageism. Only the youth rebel against the status quo. It is the old and established men who have kept things the way they are and created this division of labor and class. It is also the old who demand it stay that way, with threat or use of violence. In the text, youth is vital and strong and can overcome the establishment. They are not yet indoctrinated. The older men are broken, made fearful of shaking the tree.

The film also makes use of Biblical imagery, in using a sequence featuring the seven deadly sins, placing Maria before a line of crosses as she preaches to her followers (she is lit as if she has a halo), Rotwang's laboratory has a pentagram emblazoned on the wall (as well as on doors and in other places), and the robot in the wild dancing scenes is shown as the Whore of Babylon. Freder's journey could also be likened to *Dante's Inferno*, or even to the journey of Christ, as he saves the persecuted from earthly damnation. However, this use can also be inferred as a source for the friction, that the upper class uses religion to justify their separation from the laborers.

Metropolis was a groundbreaking film and was considered one of the most influential from its time. The art deco style was the top of fashion and architecture in the 1920s. It was a

style believed to be futuristic and modern; the best style man had achieved and ever would.

When Rotwang implants Maria's appearance on the robot, the montage of shots should remind the viewer of much younger sci-fi works. Also, due to the quality of the shots or the techniques, the film appears much younger than it is, lending a measure of timelessness. The mechanics and approach of the filmmakers was before its time.

Being a German film from 1927, the connotations in hindsight can be a little disturbing. For instance, the condemnation of religion as the source of the problem in the film, or justification for the class stratification, as religion was becoming less desirable in comparison to reason. Judeo-Christian traditions are intertwined with mysticism and Nordic Arian tradition (the Pentacle or pentagram, the old style cottage with old dusty books, the alchemist) and shown to cause nothing but trouble, a sentiment strongly held by the National Socialist Party. Also, the division of labor appears much like the final solution enacted just a decade and a half later. An ideology of supremacy, where one group is above all others and those deemed inferior are only fit to work and die.

In addition to this, if the actors and director are researched, one finds that Gustav Fröhlich (Freder) served in the Wehrmacht in both World War I and II. Bridgette Helm's (Maria) career ended soon after Hitler became involved in the German film industry. Helm was type cast as a vamp and really did not like making films. Fritz Lang, the director, came to the United States to avoid the Nazis, and came to be considered one of the greatest directors of all time. Lang was also a World War I veteran. (Biographical information from www.IMDB.com). If a viewer has this knowledge, they will tend to regard the film with a perspective much different than someone who does not. For instance, the influence of the growing National Socialist Party would not be visible in direct terms, but may manifest itself as something else, like a simple

conservative versus liberal conflict. Fascism and communism may not even come to mind.

Because *Metropolis* is silent, I believe that the work of the audience to interpret the material is more difficult. There are a number of intertexts to mentally navigate as the viewer pulls the narrative together, and no dialogue or sound to guide the interpretation. The same is also true in a film that has strange imagery and language or imagery and language that is temporally out of place. Such imagery can be found in the films *Titus* (1999) and *Romeo + Juliet* (1996). At the same time, the imagery can be what makes the narrative understandable. A degree of interpretation comes from the context of images, because both films stuck with Shakespeare's old English. The language can be difficult to understand as some pronunciations, words and phrases are no longer in use. However, the pictures that coincide with the lines can help to interpret that language, with the absence of either the narrative could remain an enigma.

At the opening of the film, the viewer is shown a masked child who acts out violent play with action figures and what appears to be his breakfast, followed up with a march of the army bringing home their dead and a sacrifice of the enemy captive's eldest son. The imagery changes to a parade of two factions, running for the office of emperor. From the outset, we are aware that this rendition of the play is not set in ancient Rome, but a manufactured future version of it. The filmmakers produced the piece in and around historic Roman sites that have survived into the modern era. They also made use of images from the World War II era. These include the parade vehicles, Saturnine's colors of black and red contrasting with his brother's colors of white and pale blue. Saturnine's flag is a reversed German flag and he sports an Adolf like haircut. He speaks into an old style microphone with the letters SPQR above it. The big band music of the orgy scene along with the dance style of the background actors also reflect the 1940s. This was intentionally done, because Taymore wished to make the film a fantasy where the Roman

Empire had survived into the future. (*Titus*, DVD)

The future Taymore predicts for this play is a violent one. “Taymore does not deconstruct violence by subverting its values and then pointing out alternative discourses or new patterns of interaction, but by reproducing it as a symptom of a larger, cultural reality” (August 57). Titus drew blood for Rome as his *job*. It seems that the play is warning about the debt such a life can build and the price one will eventually pay; violence begets more violence. It shows that the culture she presents her film to has a desire to participate voyeuristically in violent activities. Taymore is making the spectator face and acknowledge these desires, hoping that a new discourse will emerge after the spectator has left the cinema.

Romeo + Juliet follows a similar track with its display of young male characters in gangs. It is hinted that this violence has been generational, like the mafia, and the younger men have taken over where their fathers left off. Old wounds are still sore among the older men, and they hold grudges. So their past actions have led to the moment and precipitate the deaths of their beloved children. The violence steals away that which they most love, as if to make them face and pay for it.

Romeo + Juliet evokes the images of an MTV culture (blaring music and televisions, the astronaut) that evolved from the 80s into the 90s and was at its height when the movie was filmed. Titus uses more gritty and stylized images made popular in videogames at its time (58). There is, however, a pair of sequences where Lavinia communicates to her father who has maimed her and the sequence just before, where we are shown Chiron and Demetrius’s den. Both of these sequences play like music videos: the surreal images of Lavinia as a doe in the woods, hunted by tigers and the brothers drunk and high on drugs as they play pool and videogames, dance, drink and smoke.

Taymore chose to have some of the characters deliver their soliloquies directly to the camera. As they address the audience, they involve them in the violence as if they are another character taking part. Clare Escoda Agust says that “showing violence on screen is therefore, an ambivalent act, since violence must first be framed, and thus, partly legitimized, in order to be subsequently questioned and deconstructed” (63). Taymore frames and legitimates the violence on the screen but it is up to the spectator to take this up and question it. The film “uses violence as much as it interrogates it and grants the audience a significantly greater degree of control over contemporary anxieties” (57). The spectator can comfortably play the voyeur, experiencing the violence at a safe distance. Why it happens and how challenges the spectator to think on the violence. It opens the conversation, but does so in a controlled, equitable manner. This is done to guide the spectator toward a determined viewing, but relies on the spectators ability to be guided.

Turning to a lighter film, *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?* (1988) makes vast use of intertextuality and its innumerable implications. For instance, the paratextuality that can be found in the interactivity of the DVD and the extras that are packaged with it (in my case I also received autographed photos from Roger and Jessica, and a booklet that resembles a private detective’s leather bound notepad). This helps to sustain the idea that these characters are real living beings. It also extends the Noir theme. The film also contains hypertextuality in the form of the familiar characters in ToonTown, and Jessica Rabbit’s lingerie store that once resided on Pleasure Island, in Walt Disney World’s Orlando Park (complete with a giant Jessica sitting on the roof swinging her leg). It even extends to the architextuality of the title layout (specifically the lettering) that has become synonymous with this film. Plus, there is the metatextuality of a book from which the story was taken (*Who Censored Roger Rabbit?* By Gary K. Wolf). The subject of the novel is far more adult than the film dares.

This film enjoys taking the spectator along on a ride where filmmaking takes a look at itself. Some scenes take place on a film set, at a film studio or in a cinema. It lies to the viewer, in order to make the *dream* believable by suggesting that animation consists of real live actors, though they are cartoons, and cartoon-like props. The effort to set the viewer up that this is real continues with the subtitle: “Hollywood 1947,” which gives the film a temporal anchor in a real place and time. But, this film isn’t realism of the real world, but realism of the filmmaking world circa 1947, and if cartoons were real people. Eddie Valiant riding the trolley tail and smoking, recalls images of kids doing such things in old films or photographs, and serves to feed this illusion. Other images, such as the Clover Leaf symbol which is reminiscent of a fly-over of the Los Angeles highway, all work to make this fake realism viable for the viewer. It is similar to what the filmmakers did with *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter*.

Roger Rabbit is continually using reflexivity to build momentum and keep the audience engaged along the plot. The kitschy lingo is typical of the late 40s noir. The dialogue quotes songs, such as *There’s no Business Like Show Business*. The nightclub features famous animated characters: Duelling Ducks (Daffy and Donald), penguin waiters from Disney’s *Mary Poppins*. They also use characters that have never been in person before: Marvin Acme, the man whose name is on every cartoon gag and Mr. Maroon of Maroon Cartoons, who has been personified in such statements as “What a maroon” and the titles of numerous shorts. In reflexively viewing itself, they bring back Betty Boop to sell cigarettes in the club, “work’s been slow since cartoons went to color.” This line invokes the change from silent to talking films and the inception of full color film. Jessica recalls *Swing shift Cinderella*, *Slue Foot Sue*, and pin ups from the time period that showed up in a number of war films (either on the side of planes or barracks walls). Just about everyone knows the Betty Grable pin up GI’s had. Jessica often strikes that over the

shoulder pose.

The stage revue nightclub is also reminiscent of film, having been a staple of many musicals and even rearing its head in Noir (*This Gun for Hire*). One cannot forget the ubiquitous car chase and sight gags (like body print holes, the endless pictures in a wallet, black holes, squeaky shoes, hand buzzers, shadows on the window, dropping safes, etc.). The film ends, paying homage to one of the greatest films of all time, *The Wizard of Oz* (1939). Judge Doom is melted in a puddle of his own dip, deflating to nothing in his black robes, just like the Wicked Witch of the West.

The same thing that makes us titter at *patty-cake* as the euphemism for cheating is the same thing that makes us feel badly when the toon shoe gets dipped by Judge Doom. It is the combination (or cubist) application of all the theoretical avenues that I have discussed from the start of this research and review of Film Theory. Within a few seconds, the spectator is purposely engaged by the filmmaker to pull at their emotions by picking on predictable responses, which the cultural ideology and psychology tell them will work. Years of trial and error, through the successes and failures of other filmmakers have informed the approach and inspired it.

Those years have also supplied the filmmakers and the spectators with a cinematic language based on culture and experience, and so many other things that the head spins trying to think of all the possibilities. For example, the gang of weasels that works for Judge Doom. Aside from these characters having shown up in the Disney classic *Wind in the Willows* where they first earn their reputation for a hard partying gang of bad guys, they are surrounded by many layers of meaning that go beyond that one instance. First, there are the zoot suits and then the accents that meander between the barrio, little Italy and ghetto stereotypes. The leader carries a switchblade (reminiscent of *West Side Story*) and smokes. To top it off, he wears an outlandish zoot suit. The

idea that they are meant to represent the Mafioso or gang member is quite clear. With their brown color, this is only enforced. In the classic films of Hollywood, good and bad were often divided by the symbolism of color, black and white. The viewer may ask why or how they got away with such racist images, but one may also come to realize that this film is reflecting cinema as it was in the late 1940s. In so doing, it may be asking us to rethink and discuss such images.

Other examples of this multilayered display of meanings can be found in the story itself. The narrative follows Wolf's premise, which was to see Hollywood animation as real beings in a 1940s noir setting. It was a book geared toward adults, with very adult themes. Some of the adult themes are alluded to through Jessica Rabbit and her embellished figure, as well as other character's interaction with her (Eddie bumping his head on her breasts, playing patty-cake with Acme). The lighting of the film, camera angles and settings invoke the quintessential Noir, drawing from all aspects of the genre. It's nearly always dim, the shadows hide lurking danger, and long shots with strange angles play with perspective. There's a seedy side to every moment. The reference to Noir doesn't stop there. Eddie is the typical anti-hero of the genre. He's an alcoholic and has a ruined reputation. The cops scorn him. Yet, he has a reason to be so miserable in the death of his brother. Just like many other films of this kind, the hero has to journey from the hell he's sunk into and redeem himself. Eddie is the anti-hero. Common and vulgar, he gives the audience someone to attach to.

There is also the contrast of the female roles. Dolores and Jessica provide the usual dichotomy of the good girl versus femme fatale. Dolores isn't squeaky clean either. She's labeled on a photograph as a floosie and runs a bar frequented by the undesirables of the city. But, she truly loves Eddie and that is the essential difference between these two. Dolores offers her heart and hand, whereas Jessica offers whatever it will take to "help her little honey bunny." She offers

sex and a hand with a loaded gun. This contrast is typical of the female roles in classic Noir films.

For someone unfamiliar with the Noir classics, these tropes may not be clearly defined as originating in or taking from a specific genre. It is still possible that the viewer would understand them from some other cultural reference. Because of the interwoven complexities of meaning that can be found within a culture, it is almost impossible not to step on something that can be seen as referencing something else. For instance the female roles can be said to be taken from the early medieval work Beowulf (Grendel's mother as Jessica and Hildeburh for Dolores). The comparison is not exact, but the inspiration can be linked.

Intertextuality studies these phenomena. It is an unavoidable eventuality in current art, but not one that should depreciate the value of said art. Intertextuality seeks to reassess and add value to an analyzed work by making connection and marveling at the artist's creativity in making use of them. It can be small amounts of inspiration that erupt into mountains of text (novels or films) or mountains of inspiration that result in a small text (song lyrics). Intertextuality is a deep well from which to analyze texts.

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