p.o.v.

A Danish Journal of Film Studies

All correspondence should be addressed to:
                  Richard Raskin
                  Department of Information and Media Studies
                  Niels Juelsgade 84
                  DK-8200 Aarhus N, Denmark

                  e-mail: raskin@imv.au.dk

All issues of p.o.v. can be found on the Internet at:
                  http://imv.au.dk/publikationer/pov/POV.html

The contents of this journal are indexed in the MLA International Bibliography, the Film Literature Index and the International Index of Film Periodicals.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The principal purpose of **p.o.v.** *is to provide a framework for collaborative publication for those of us who study and teach film at the Department of Information and Media Studies at the University of Aarhus. We will also invite contributions from colleagues in other departments and at other universities. Our emphasis is on collaborative projects, enabling us to combine our efforts, each bringing his or her own point of view to bear on a given film or genre or theoretical problem. Consequently, the reader will find in each issue a variety of approaches to the film or question at hand – approaches which complete rather than compete with one another.*

Every March issue of **p.o.v.** *is devoted to the short fiction film.*

p.o.v.

Number 12, December 2001

CONTENTS

Introduction

This issue was near completion well before the terrible events of September 11th reshaped the entire world's perception of the U.S. Almost all of the articles were turned in before that date, and the interviews had been done between May and August. The reader is kindly asked to keep in mind that some of the characterizations of American culture contained in these pages, might be formulated differently today than they were just a month or two ago.

The idea of devoting an issue of **p.o.v**. to comparisons of American and European filmmaking and practices in other media, came in two stages: first when I found references to "a European feel for paradox and mystery versus an American urge to explain" in a recent book by Charles Drazin on *The Third Man*, discussed in detail in an article on pp. 91-100 below; and second, when I saw a televised interview with Jeremy Irons who, in answer to questions put to him by Gitte Nielsen, said the following:

> [I had just seen] *Goodfellas*, Scorsese's movie. I thought: Well that's great. He's a great movie-maker, knows how to use light, how to use the camera, how to tell a great story. And yet I don't *feel* anything. I don't *feel* anything. And I thought: *some* American movies – I know, it's a generalization – are like really good hookers. You know, they're expensive, they look great, they'll do anything you ask them to do, they'll give you a great time. And at the end of it you walk away and you think, [he makes a belittling gesture]. The other sorts of women are real women who maybe don't look as good as a hooker, who have their own ideas, who won't do everything you ask, who maybe don't cost you so much. But who you spend time with. And when you leave them, you can't get them out of your head.

−men når du går fra dem,
kan du ikke glemme dem.

The Jeremy Irons quote clinched it. An issue of this journal *had* to be devoted to comparisons of that kind.

It is gratifying that a variety of points of view are represented here, and that the reader will find in these pages a broad spectrum of opinions as to how European and American storytelling and media practices might best be compared, as well as whether or not such comparisons can be made at all.

Finally, I wish to thank all of the contributors to this issue, as well as Patricia Lunddahl for help with proofreading.

Richard Raskin, Editor
30 September 2001

Art vs. McBurger dramaturgy
An interview with Jon Bang Carlsen

Mette Madsen

Jon Bang Carlsen, born in 1950 and graduated from the Danish Film School in 1976, is one of Denmark's leading directors. His feature films include: *Next Stop Paradise* (1980), *Ophelia Comes to Town* (1985), *Time Out* (1988) and *Carmen and Babyface* (1995), while among his documentaries are: *Hotel of the Stars* (1981), *First I Wanted to Find the Truth* (1987, Silver Medal at Chicago Film Festival), *It's Now or Never* (1996, Grand Prize at the Odense International Film Festival), *How to Invent Reality* (1996), *Addicted to Solitude* (1999, Grand Prize at Nordic Panorama), *My African Diary* (1999) and *Portrait of God* (2001). [RR]

How would you characterize European films in general?

"European" is a difficult word. My films are produced outside of Europe or on the periphery, and when making them, I don't really consider the audience as something apart from myself. I can make my films very "egocentrically" because I measure the world against myself, just as someone writing a novel or working on a painting would do. I don't necessarily regard film as mass culture, but then again, that may just be self-deception on my part. Obviously it would be stupid to make a film that no one would want to see. On the other hand, my films are seen over a number of years, in contrast to American films which have to cover their total costs within two months.

Then there is the classic difference: the film environment is director-controlled in Denmark and producer-controlled in America. Many European directors are shocked when they go to the States and suddenly find that they are nothing but employees, with a producer breathing down their necks. And the producer has the

power to say: "Put some more light on her face," or "That needs to be more dramatic," or "That is too sad." What is at stake here is the freedom to make artistic choices. Final cut or not.

Then again, if I had a few million dollars of my own money in a film project, I wouldn't just let someone do whatever he wanted to [*laughter*]. I would definitely interfere in some way. Generally I have the advantage of both producing and directing my films, but sometimes the producer and director in me have things to discuss. I think in some ways this double role has been very good for me. For instance I haven't made a film that has gone over budget since I became my own producer [*laughter*].

How would you characterize European film with respect to storytelling?
Among the most inspiring films I grew up with are those by the French director Alain Resnais, such as *Last Year in Marienbad*. And of course guys like Truffaut and Godard and other New Wave directors. Most likely they would never have stood a chance in the States because they portray our existence as something that is sometimes inexplicable.

In the States they try to make more of an adrenaline injection of drama to get you hooked for an hour and a half; but right after that, you are supposed to be ready for the next film, so they want you to digest what you just saw rapidly to be ready to buy tickets for a new movie. That is my big problem with American films. They easily make me cry, but once I leave the cinema it never really touches me or connects with my life. It doesn't teach me anything. It never broadens me as a person. It's pure junk. Of course there are some grand artistic films made in the States, but even the great human

films made there are extremely calculated, and I am sick and tired of always crying when I see these films, because my tears are fake. It makes me feel very uncomfortable – in a way almost raped. They are good at it – the rape business.

They know what buttons to press?
Completely. We have talked about this a lot in Denmark. When we analyze our manuscripts, I have trouble with guys who say: "Now we want structure here," "This works," "Here is a plot point." I'm sorry if this sounds pretentious, but first of all I have my own intuition. My daily struggle is to have a lot of discipline but also to follow my intuition. No good would come of only following my brain. First, things have to be experienced, to be felt. If the brain were to calculate something beforehand and emotions were thrown in afterwards, the film would simply die. Film has to have some sort of unpredictability. An organic touch is a precondition for the film to really get in contact with the deeper layers within ourselves. The other stuff is nothing but McBurger dramaturgy.

   I've been working in South Africa for some years. The entire burger culture has had a brutalizing effect on the desperately poor townships. It is so easy to grab these new pre-packaged dramatic items. Just wait two minutes and you'll get everything wrapped and it's cheap. It really has brutalized the socially very vulnerable environments in post-apartheid South Africa. They never analyze the pain. They never tell about the pain or the losses or the loneliness after an act of violence. They use the violence because it is junk, addictive. It's where the rush of adrenaline lies. Drug-dealing on a cultural level.

You can't avoid considering the ethics here. I think it is a very important part of our trade. We have to ask ourselves this very simple question: "Would you want your children to see this film?" Just as the architect should ask himself when building a house: "Would I want my wife and children to live in this house or should I stay in the perfect idyll in the Birkerød neighborhood while the Turkish kids can move into a concrete-block apartment?"

We may be jealous of the Americans for having a big audience and they sure know their basic dramaturgy in a way that makes it possible for them to communicate with almost anybody, from Eskimos to Hindus [*laughter*]. But then again, people all over the world use the same narcotics. We have to consider morality and in one way or another, to make sure our television and films stay in touch with the underlying ethical issues.

American films push certain buttons in you. What makes French films important to you?

Well the best make me sense the person behind the film and I see that the person has been honest about his own insecurity, his own confusion and his own doubts. And doubts in particular are a very big issue, no matter what we do. It may even be one of the most nurturing aspects of expression. When creating, we need some kind of shape, and the easiest thing to do would be to eliminate all doubt, all of the question marks. A film that has a shape but is also porous, so that the shimmering colors, the colors of doubt, become apparent, is a film that really stands out and makes a difference. Films like that are really difficult to watch the first couple of times. For instance Tarkovsky's and Fellini's films. I always fell asleep watching them. I

think they make direct contact with my dream world. I had to see them about ten times before I stayed awake during the entire film. But at the same time, those films really mattered to me, absolutely. The other films, with the correct basic dramaturgy, are long forgotten. Like people who always behave as they think other people want them to.

I try for some kind of shape in my own work. Naturally, I too would like a bigger audience but it really is difficult to unite those two aspects. It is not interesting for me to make a film if it is pure calculation. The joy would be lost. I am a very visual person. I see things in images and it is very easy to become too sectarian, too much of a navel gazer. It is a matter of balance. I am not very mainstream. I would like to be but it just so happens that I am not. And even in the mainstream film, there has to be an inner honesty. Take a film like _Italian for Beginners_ which is mainstream. It has this inner honesty and is therefore a sweet movie which at the same time communicates broadly. It is a really good example showing that it can be done.

Can you think of an American film that in some way made a difference to you?

Well once you have kids you don't get to the cinema all that often, but there are a lot of American films that meant a lot to me. When I was growing up there were a lot of avant-garde films. There was Andy Warhol who had some fun and the entire film environment surrounding him. And of course _Stranger Than Paradise,_ the Jarmusch film which is both very European _and_ very American, a truly great film. But I am also a great fan of _Gone with the Wind,_

which I think is a wonderful film […] which tells both a relevant and a touching story. At the same time, none of the characters are simple. Take for instance the female character who has such hatred for her own child. She is a tremendously complex character, perhaps one of the most complex in film history.

We all grew up with American film. I also grew up with *Zorro* and other films of that type, but the older we get the more annoying mainstream American films become. One thing that really gets to me is that all good non-American stories have to be played by American actors, just to squeeze out the last drop of profit. Generally I think it is a big mistake that all our great stories have to be told by American actors. All kinds of French stories, African stories are being delivered in that Kansas City language [*laughter*]. It's pure cultural imperialism.

How do you feel about attempts to differentiate between European and American filmmaking?

Not everything made with a camera is a film. Many American productions are nothing but fairground fun. They are like going to an amusement park and riding the roller-coaster; it's fun and there's nothing wrong with fun. But it's an entirely different discipline. When some artist creates something new, uses himself and his soul, really risks something, exposing himself; that is something completely different. There is no reason at all to mix those two disciplines. We have to stop doing that.

Sometimes the right-wing parties accuse Danish filmmakers of catering to the few and not trying to reach a bigger audience. All this in comparison to American film. But there is no basis for

comparison, and to draw such parallels is both simplistic and problematic. What we need is to strengthen our distribution networks. The French have a sensible way of resisting the dominance of American distribution, while at the same time supporting their own films. The Americans are really tough when it comes to distribution. In order to get one good American film, you also have to accept eight crap films. We have to find a way to stop that. It is not in our own interest to put up with that. In addition to entertaining, a film also has an important cultural and educational role to play. And in Europe we produce these good films but we sadly lack the American talent of promoting them.

In a way, I think we Europeans are about to rediscover our origins, and the tendency to look up to the American way is slowly diminishing. It would be nice if the same tendency applied to film audiences as well. They should be seeing more European films, which provide a more sophisticated and deeper interpretation of their everyday life than is the case with the American roller-coaster films, which are very charming but don't have the first thing to do with reality as we live it in Europe.

You speak of the danger of comparing European and American films, but at the same time you speak of a lot of differences between the two. Would you say that one can generalize about those differences?

Yes, I think you can. Strangely enough, I think the tradition of personal storytelling still exists in Europe, whether in Finland or in Portugal. In America I sense a tendency to throw all films in a big pot and they all seem to come out the same. In Europe we have so much more respect for the author. A respect for the old way of

storytelling, dating from the time when stories were told from farm to farm. And obviously there is quite a distance between Scandinavia and Sicily.

Curiously enough I find that many countries try to make those great American productions and they all more or less turn out the same. They lose their edge, their sensitivity, and their charm – the very things that are after all what European productions have to offer as their selling point.

Only Americans have that brilliant ability to make some really corny crap and still entertain people. That is admirable. Take for instance *Erin Brockovich*, which on the one hand is socially engaged, but at the same time it's the worst sentimental crap. Real Hollywood. That guy with the motorbike taking care of her kids is so stereotyped, so cartoonish. But these films have a devilish, muscular vulgarity that impresses you and in some remarkable way seems refreshing […]

Sometimes we Europeans are locked up in a tower of self-centeredness. We still live in our little villages and think that way too. We think it's a disaster that we are not able to build up a film industry that can really compete with the Americans'. We should be able to. We have so many skilled directors and a highly developed industry, and we have most of the stories. Most stories that succeed in the States are originally European…

But what stops you from combining your way of making films with mainstream characteristics?

Well, if I were to tell your story and you were devastated about something, I would tend to leave you sitting over there, looking the

other way, so that one could get just a little glimpse of your unhappiness, and from a distance […]

Americans, on the other hand, would slam a camera right up into your face and make you explain why you are so unhappy and make you cry. That's the American scenario: the no-compromises-telling-everything-explicitly-crap.

I have tried to do that a couple of times but I seem to lose honesty, to lose layers and depth. It becomes too one-dimensional. Maybe because I, like most peasants, am a little shy, I prefer to explore life from a distance. And I think memory is a part of every instant of my life. I not only exist in this instant, I also simultaneously remember this instant. This is how I perceive life. And even though the stories in American films go back to the Middle Ages, what these films provide is purely a sense of the present. In many ways, that's a strength since it demands much less of the audience. European films make demands on the audience. And if the audience is willing to invest what it takes to open up and become a co-narrator, the film will have a far greater significance in their life. But the directness of American films impresses me, also in American culture. And the ability to go right in and cut the bullshit impresses me too. We can learn from that.

At the same time I find in American films a very dangerous lack of love, even though they talk about love constantly. That is one of the reasons I am so sick and tired of those little, semi-intellectual college kids writing those violent films. Those guys have never been exposed to all the bad things going on. If they had been, they could never write the way they do. If they had suffered or their loved ones had suffered, they would never write these banal, bloodsucking

screenplays. They would have respect for the pain. People who have actually been through the pain and sorrow describe their experience in a brighter way. Those who really know the pain don't just stare into the dark, because that would kill them. They have to find that little ray of light that gives them a reason to live on.

When experiencing it one knows sorrow is not just black or white?
Yes exactly. But also because sorrow is so tremendous in itself. The classic situation is when someone not involved tries to analyze something. For instance when academics analyze. The film *Man of Iron* is one of those classic American documentaries about the wild west of the fishing environment in Ireland – about those rough men. It is so obvious that the director got the idea while sitting at his disk in his New York office. Those silent men with their wives in dark aprons standing beside them, with never a smile or a light-hearted remark or anything of that sort. It's all the struggle against the elements. Sinister faces in howling wind. I have lived in Ireland and happen to know that place. The film is nonsense. The fishing environment is probably one of the funniest and one of the richest environments in the way people speak because they lead such a hard, extreme life that it has to be that way. They have to keep a distance from the difficulties and daily dangers of their existence. They say those extremely funny things and it really is a grand environment for fun in many ways. In that respect the film is a lie. It is nothing but the middle-class's own idea of hardworking, silent fishermen as seen from the well-to-do suburbs of the middle-class intelligensia. Again, it's about respect for things and when it comes down to it, it is only a matter of insufficient research – and because

it is easier. The film is brilliantly made. But the director actually forced the fishermen to sail out into the storm. They would never do such a thing in real life, but he thought it would look great and he forced them to go out. He almost got them killed [*laughter*] and now his name has gone down in history as the great portrayer of Irish folk-culture. But that's show-biz, just another romanticized portrait reflecting how the middle-class wants to see the working-class. It all becomes show-biz on one level or another. And that's o.k. with me. We paint on our own shadows.

How would you sum things up?
Well, there is no doubt at all that Hollywood consists of a great mass of talent. They have something we definitely can be envious of: namely a large-scale industry – not just a small film studio in Lyngby or at Zentropa, but a huge industrial complex. They have thousands of directors, thousands of actors, multitudes of talented film crews. They have great, skillful screenwriters who have probably written many wonderful stories, but then the calculating enters the arena and tries to arrange the sweets to sell them as quickly as possible. Often it's a massacre where the life-blood is sucked out of the stories and the potential of the films is crippled, which is very sad because the performers in front of and behind the camera are so talented.

We see some of the same tendencies here too. DR is enjoying success at the moment but how did they get it? By lowering standards. You always have to consider what price you are willing to pay for the higher ratings. Fortunately we have the other channel, DR2, which is really good. We have to be very careful not to throw

the baby out with the bath water. We have to hang on to our own artistic way of storytelling, artistic courage and artistic honesty. It would be a crime to lose it to the calculations. Everything is so thoroughly calculated and we have to be aware of all the side effects that come with it. All the additives that are used in everything and are also thrown into the world of film. In the end it could all become terribly uninteresting and yet the audiences are still sitting, gazing at stories as exciting as the next cigarette. The tough call would be to uphold our own traditions and even strengthen them, while at the same time strengthening the distribution networks. That would be really something… Finally to learn how to distribute the wonderful films that we have been doing for years.

15 June 2001

Wherever I lay my hat
An interview with Ole Michelsen

Mette Madsen

Ole Michelsen, born in 1940, is Denmark's best know film reviewer. Since 1985, his TV program "Bogart" has played an important role in shaping Danish film culture, and keeping it open to outside influences. He has written two books: *Film skal ses i biografen* (1997) and *Den dansende demon* (1999). [RR]

How would you characterize European film production today?

One thing about European film is that it's not as commercialized and developed as a product, as is the case with American film. European film suffers from terrible conditions marketwise. We have very poor opportunities for selling our films compared to the Americans, who can sell all over the world and within their own country. That is what many Europeans have become aware of today. The problem is complicated though, because in one way or another the Europeans would like to do well in marketing and economics... speculation regarding film production. On the other hand, they won't sell their souls... to put it crudely.

And then again, what is European film anyway? We have to make a distinction. For instance, can we talk about Dogma film as a Danish phenomenon? Are certain kinds of cartoons and certain kinds of cynical art film a French phenomenon? Are certain kinds of social realism a British phenomenon? The answer is not clear-cut.

One thing about European film, though, is the ancient tradition of the old Greek theater... and of the time when the great authors or playwrights of Romanticism were the leading artists. The director is

identical with the author, and is the person behind the film production. Americans do not appreciate this. They develop products as they do modern industries, just as it's done in the modern Danish business community. So in that sense you can say that the American film industry is a business community and operates accordingly. It has always built it's industry on the contributions of a number of parties that each play a role, which has resulted in a bigger sale and better economy, but at the same time the product is exactly that: a product. The personal touch is gone. European films on the other hand are far more personal, broadly speaking, because you can feel the touch of the director! But to finish answering your question, what is characteristic about European film is that it is European. It is not American.

It's more about soul, then?

The point is that we drag around this old European understanding of film as a work of art, while to the Americans it is merely a product for entertainment. They would only use the term *art* on very special occasions or ceremonies. They are not infected with it as we are. We've got the infection and it's both a burden and something very positive because we can still make very personal films in Europe... and we can make very personal films in Denmark. And thank God for that. What we now need to ask ourselves, in the situation we are in today, is how to maintain the European way.

Danish film is enjoying success at the moment. Is it possible to say, for instance, that the French are good at certain things? Is it possible to pinpoint given characteristics from each country?

No it is not. That would be a rather difficult subject to get into. I for one am not competent enough to really speak of French film. Possibly somewhere around a hundred to a hundred and fifty French feature films are made every year. If I am lucky I get to see perhaps ten of them. I do not know the first thing about all the others. We have to stop pretending we know the film productions of the various nations. We don't. It's nonsense.

When I am out giving a talk, I say: "You people sitting down there with all of your prejudices... you try and define French film." Then everybody just sits real quiet because they don't know. They are prejudiced about me only liking French films which is ridiculous. But I think it's an illusion that we can define a nation's characteristics, that a given nation has one particular mode of expression or particular kind of film production or a particular cinematic language. It's just not true... not today at any rate. For many years now, countries like France, Holland, Italy, Spain, Belgium, Germany and England have been making co-productions. Latin co-productions are a reality but we never really talk about it. A French film could have Italian investors and actors from different countries. This way the story is not just French and in that sense you can say it's European. Co-production is an old phenomenon.

In Denmark we can define what is happening in Danish film at the moment. But if we move one step further and ask what is happening in Finish film, I don't know. I don't have the time to go back and forth to Finland. I, too, am a commercial slave of the things brought up in *Bogart*. I see and talk about commercial films that sell in the cinemas. All the rest I don't see... end of story.

Do you regret that? Would you prefer that DR gave a higher priority to the less commercial kinds of productions?

Well no. That would be hopeless. Our position is very clearly defined. We reflect what is shown in the cinemas – those films that have a chance to survive financially. If we started to import more films from Iran, such as *Black Board* or other films of that kind, they would most likely result in a deficit. On the other hand if that's the kind of policy we want then we'll have to redefine our existing policies on that area. And even though I always say that films should be seen in the cinema, the question is whether it wouldn't be just as good for people to get those films on VHS or DVD. At athe moment, those kinds of films are very expensive when it comes to distribution, and especially when it comes to translations. But all that will most likely change once digitalization becomes a reality everywhere. That way, it'll become easier to get by.

You asked whether I regret that *Bogart* isn't less commercialized. Again our position is well defined. As someone interested in film, as a person involved with culture, as a mediator, I regret that I don't get to immerse myself in the strange, unique films that are produced, often in an incredibly high quality. We are united in ignorance when it comes to those films. There may be four or five originals in this country travelling around to all kinds of obscure film festivals... and sometimes at the night film festival, those unique films sporadically turn up. Unfortunately Danish TV shows no knowledge of or interest in this kind of film.

The popular is dominant?

It's mainstream to the extreme. It's just too much. Everything is so simplified, so banal. It's a very predictable experience to watch feature films whether in the cinema or on TV… it's practically the same everywhere. Now this of course is a general rule. Obviously there are exceptions.

But we do have DR2?

Yes well… maybe they show films that tend to be a little better than on the other channels. But for instance they never decide to broadcast let's say three weeks of only Hungarian films. Hungary's film history is magnificent. Or they could show films from the Soviet Union from before and after the fall of the Iron Curtain. No one would even consider that. It has to do with the fact that this country practically hasn't any film culture at all. Unfortunately […] I have this package of several TV channels, but there is not one really exciting channel among them. They show mainstream as well as old Danish films and old American films, and that's just fine with me. But there is not one channel specialized in European film culture or Indian or Asian film culture. Maybe in time and with digitalization, it'll become reality one day. And then again is it conceivable to watch Japanese or Chinese films with English subtitles? I think there would be only a very small percentage of the Danes would be in the audience. But it would be really nice to have access to such films.

Yes, well, there isn't really any access today.

No. Where do you go if you want to see an Asian film? Generally, for someone with my taste, the opportunities are far too limited. There are simply not enough exciting films. But my argument very

quickly falls flat, because I don't call the video rental stores and ask the owners to import this or that experimental French film, or some Spanish or Hungarian film about World War II, if I know in advance the owner will loose money on the deal. I don't have the arguments because I know it's an incredibly expensive medium. I quietly accept the way things are. Money talks and I stay quiet.

You have given examples of some of the strengths in European film production. Aside from the issue of distribution and marketing, what do you see as the weaknesses of European film productions?

But that's exactly the weakness as I see it. The Americans spend billions of dollars promoting new films. They sometimes spend as much money on the marketing as the production cost of the film itself. I have a good example. Film critics and film journalists are part of a prostitution industry that the Americans invite all of us to participate in. I don't want to be a part of it. I have been for many years but I'm not up to it anymore. Young journalists find it to be one of the most thrilling things in the world. To come to a big film rendezvous for launching a new film in Paris or in London. They invite all these people to come and pretty much everything is free. No expenses unless if you have to get a cab from the airport. This kind of prostitution is exclusively for the promotion of American films. And the Americans know exactly what they get in return. They'll get a bunch of enthusiastic journalists from Madrid or Copenhagen or any other place... from all over, praising a new Julia Roberts film. In *Bogart* we try to be critical but with only about only ten minutes available, there's a limit to how deep we can go. But still we are also part of all that. The Americans are good at this. Europeans simply don't do this. Not because we don't want to. It's a

matter of money. If we invested and did the same thing maybe we could turn the situation around by inviting all American film journalists to Europe and showing them, say, the last four or five Dogma films. We could give them a long spring weekend in Copenhagen, taking them to *Tivoli* and really giving them a treat and at the same time showing them our films. But then the newspapers would complain about spending the tax-payers' money. But this issue is one of the major differences between American and European film. Then of course, a decisive factor is the matter of language. There are many European films that I find fascinating. I like them amongst other things because of their special glow, which partially comes from the spoken language. I love listening to Hungarian and Russian and all the other beautiful languages on film. But they're just not popular on the world film market. The official language is English. If you want your films to go further than your own little society, or further than maybe a kind neighboring country which only buys your film because of financial support, you have to make your film in English. Just take a look at all the Danish directors. All the great ones now produce in English. To turn that around, more money needs to be invested. Not just in Denmark but in all of Europe.

Some countries have tried to make big film productions but have failed. What goes wrong?
It simply isn't good enough to make one European super production a year. You have to keep in mind that in one year, the Americans make about twenty or thirty super productions. They have directors like Kubrick and Spielberg. They have *Bond* and *Star Wars* and so on. At least four or five of those will succeed. The one

super production the French have made just isn't good enough to hit the world market. And again it's a matter of where the money is. It's not in Hungary or Iran. The film market is American, and it's pretty much impossible for Europeans to become a part of it. We are only in there a little bit because we're tolerated. Then we receive an *Oscar* every now and then. And I've noticed that even when European films won awards, they weren't seen in the States. The Americans simply won't go to see the kind of films we make. Of course there's an intellectual elite in America that appreciates our films but it doesn't make all that much difference. Not in terms of economics. The explanation is partly that Americans do not like to see new faces. They want to see their own stars. They want to hear their own language. With this in mind I think we have to drop the illusion of entering the American market. We'll never get in there. Now we hear that *Italian for Beginners* is to be reproduced in America [laughter]. It will most likely be *The Night Watch* all over. And what will come from it? Nothing but our own national chauvinistic bragging. But when it comes to the financial issue we hardly get anything. European films will not enter the American market. Period. Forget it. But develop the European film market and consider a kind of modesty to go with that. Anyway, who says the only criterion for success is how much they sell? We have become infected with a commercialized way of thinking. Everybody seems to agree that if a movie doesn't make any money then it's probably just not a very good film. That's really nonsense. It doesn't have to be bad just because only fifty or a hundred thousand people see the film. Lots of film festivals have a small intelligent audience and what's wrong with that? But it seems that the only thing film

journalists are interested in these days are the numbers. They are totally obsessed with them. Even very professional people who should know better than that. It's really sad.

Now you've talked a lot about how the Americans are good with money. Couldn't part of their success be about the American way of telling a story?
Yes. No doubt. The Americans are excellent film-makers. And they really know how to tell a story. Their mainstream films always have this great white hero. They fulfill a human need. But there are other needs as well. And I think the Dogma phenomenon has proved that we too can tell a story. In that sense, Dogma has become the antithesis of all those technically difficult films like the American science fiction film.

So you feel that Dogma has put the essentials back on the agenda?
Yes. Everything unnecessary has been cut out, unfortunately including the music, which I appreciate a lot. But in that way the story stands out. It's a terribly revealing style, and fortunately they have been talented enough to pull it of. Otherwise the Dogma phenomenon would have been forgotten by now. Dogma as a product is terribly ugly, discount, unaesthetic, confusing, where even beautiful people become ugly. And at some point we'll get tired of it. But it's a brilliant way of telling a story all unpackaged... with no makeup to cover things up. Hopefully we'll grow from there. With Dogma, the Danes have focused on the marginalized extremes. One way to portray people in a modern society. But Dogma is just a very small part of the picture. We have directors like Bille August and Gabriel Axel and Ole Bornedal who have been a great inspiration for many of the new directors. And the strength, in

Danish films specifically, is their breadth. To me it's a great pleasure that a woman makes *Italian for beginners* and adds soft values to the idea of Dogma. Then we have a man like Per Fly who has made a fantastic film about an alcoholic... the film *The Bench.* That's part of what I've been longing for. Where has the Danish reality been? Ole Christian Madsen tried a little in *Pizza King*. And it makes me ask where are all the second-generation immigrants and all the burning problems of this society? Where are they in all the films that are being made?

Do you think there's a fear of social realism?

Generally speaking there is a tendency to fear – or at least a kind of reluctance with regard to – those kinds of film. As if there's some politically or socially negative side to it. But if there really is a problem one could and should bring it up. Obviously not as propaganda, but instead of always making farcical, unrealistic films like *Flickering Lights*, which is funny, charming and completely irrational but has nothing to do with Danish society. *The Bench* on the other hand is really... wow! Here you can talk about what is actually happening. This is a film about human relations, about people you meet every day! Another excellent film is *A Place Near By* or *The Magnetist's Fifth Winter*. They're all examples of the breadth that Danish film has to survive on. The explanation is partially to be found in our national film school and at the same time there's no doubt that the success we have at the moment has some sort of self-reinforcing effect. Success breeds success. The Golden Palm Awards or the Oscars which have been given to Danish films can and should be used both politically, financially and esthetically. So far so good. At some point

we will have a down-hill period. That always happens. Maybe the Swedes will be the next to have success. It changes all the time.

For a long time Danish film was pretty much non-existent. Speaking of having a down-hill period!
Yes, as an old film editor I remember long depressing periods in Danish film history. That makes it all the more wonderful to note this golden age. But at the same time, sadly enough, it also involves a loss. We hardly ever speak of the films our neighbors make. We don't really know what they are making in Sweden these days or in Norway or Finland for that matter. And we don't know East European films at all anymore. There's so much we miss out on, and in many ways we've become poor. Then again should we even care? What we don't know we don't miss. No... it really is one of the unfortunate aspects of the present development.

What part do you play in all this?
I speak for what I stand for. I am a mediator of cinema films in Denmark. My job is to speak to people in Hjørring as well as to people in Aarhus and so forth. I have to have this kind of attitude or I wouldn't survive in the kind of program I do. I would have been fired many years ago. If the ordinary entertainment film didn't interest me at all, which it does, I would only have a small, exclusive audience. I am aware of the "dumbing" effect, but I also enjoy a film like *The Mexican* with Brad Pitt and Julia Roberts and other films of that type. They're fine. The American films get most hats, but they'll never receive three hats. The product itself is well done and works, so forget all élitist opinions for a while. If I only showed what I'd prefer, all the cinemas in the country would have to close. Only art houses like *Cinemateket* and *Øst for Paradis* would survive and only

because of subsidies. We show what people want to see. I don't know whether it makes people happier.

To me Bogart is a guide I rely on. If you praise a film I'm not afraid to risk wasting time or money on it.

If you've seen enough of our programs, you'll know when a film would please you or not, because you are familiar with our way of evaluating films. This also applies if you like a film that we don't. We show pretty long clips which give you a fairly good impression of the film. You'll know exactly what you're about to see and that's what's important to us. That seems to work.

Jeremy Irons uses a metaphor comparing American film to a glamorous prostitute and European film to a woman with a mind of her own. Do you find that comparison to be applicable, for example to Wings of Desire *and* City of Angels?

I don't really know. Those two films in particular are kind of difficult for me to compare that way. Actually I find Wim Wenders a bit boring so in this case I would almost become Americanized. This is more a typical example of how connected European and American films are to each other. Without doubt Wim Wenders is a great film-maker, a good thinker also in a filmic kind of way. But he is very clearly tied to the American film. Truffaut or Renoir or Ken Loach and people like them have a clearly European approach to their films. At the same time they have great love for the American film. You have to remember that these men became directors thanks to their film culture. Not because of how society works or which government is in power. They became directors because of their love for film. And you cannot love film and *not* love American film.

But still you speak of differences between American and European film?

Well there's a tendency to speak of a higher intellectual level in certain European films. The films of Buñuel, for one, demand concentration of the audience. But then again you can certainly find American films on a high intellectual level. And also you have to be aware of the comparison you make. It would be unfair to compare an experimenting Spaniard influenced by surrealism to Martin Scorsese or another of the new American directors. But there probably is a tendency in European film to claim the attention of the audience in a different way than is the case in American film. They tend to leave more unsaid. Anyway it's typical for some French directors and maybe for Wim Wenders to do just that. I liked *The American Friend*. It was a good film but if I saw it today I'd probably fall asleep three times before the end. I think that one could say Wim Wenders is a typical example of a German director who has tried very hard to be accepted in the American film world whereas a man like Claude Chabrol or Gabriel Axel or many other good directors say: "Free me from American films. We'd prefer to make them here in England or Germany any day." They're simply not fascinated by the same things.

While seeing Wings of Desire, *it occurred to me that Wim Wenders may have deliberately put in elements the viewer would be unable to understand. Maybe in an attempt to remind the viewer that not everything makes sense!*

Well the viewer is not supposed to get meaning out of everything. Speaking of specific films, this could be an interesting observation. But you can't say that it's European. If you say Wenders, I reply David Lynch's *Lost Highway*. What is going on in that film? Let's try to interpret that film! Again we have to free ourselves from these

geographical and national concepts. We should get back to discussing film as a piece of work related to other films. Woody Allen for example cannot be understood only from the fact that he is from New York or is Jewish. It doesn't make any sense to try and understand him without mentioning his sources of inspiration, like Bergman. Here is a Swedish man inspiring a great American humorist. And really his background isn't the interesting part. His films are. We have to look at the work itself. There is of course such a thing as mainstream. But then we have Americans such as David Lynch who isn't mainstream... and Kubrick isn't either. In any attempt to analyze which nation makes what kind of film, there's a risk of putting limits on ourselves. Five years ago, if you had asked anyone with the slightest knowledge of film whether they could imagine a Danish film being made as a musical, taking place in America and recorded on location in Sweden, they would have considered it insane. None-the-less, Lars von Trier has done it. So we don't know... do we? And films should be unpredictable. They're supposed to surprise you... no obvious solutions. In other words the Europeans probably should still stay away from Star War films. But at the same time not limit ourselves. Never speak of what we cannot do but keep our minds open. In principle we can make whatever we want…

April 25, 2001

"No, but I *like* American films – doesn't everybody?" An interview with Mark Le Fanu

Mette Madsen

Mark LeFanu, born in 1950, teaches film history at the European Film College in Ebeltoft. He has contributed to a number of periodicals, including *Positif, Sight & Sound, Prospect*, and *p.o.v.*), and is the author of *The Cinema of Andrei Tarkovsky* (BFI Books, 1987) and of a forthcoming study of the films of Kenji Mizoguchi.

What classic films do you introduce when teaching?

I am pretty conservative. People have come to a consensus that directors like Renoir, Eisenstein or Hitchcock are great for certain reasons. Usually those reasons stand up. But one's always open. Some so-called famous classics are a total bore. Other films aren't supposed to be classics at all – and you find yourself really liking them: you grasp that they have extraordinary qualities. I am not against what it says in the history books, but of course with qualifications and with one's own taste coming into the matter. Any teaching is very subjective… one's private enthusiasm is always important.

What kind of films do you make at the European Film College? Are they European films?

It would be a bit pretentious to qualify them as being European films or Scandinavian films or any other kind of films. They are student films… they are the films that students make with their degree of experience and culture.

But if you look at a narrative perspective, do the students prefer to make for instance a Spielberg-type film, or is Lars von Trier more their model?

The answer is both I would say. As far as the College is concerned, we definitely don't have a line one way or the other. At different times we have had a Russian woman and a young American teaching script-writing. But anyway the students make up their own minds.

When I interviewed Jon Bang Carlsen, he said that Europeans had a kind of artistic courage.

I am a big fan of Jon Bang Carlsen. He is a friend of the college and comes here quite a lot. What he is getting at there is an old distinction between serious art on the one hand, which goes deeply into things and on the other hand a cinema which is more entertainment-oriented. This is of course the classic distinction between European films and Hollywood pictures – between "cinema" on the one hand and "movies" on the other. Everyone who is in the slightest way involved in either film-making or commenting on film knows this distinction. The question is whether it is true. To mention American exceptions, there are of course high profile *auteurs* such as Scorsese, Coppola or John Sayles. And then there are the young American "indies" – the sort of people who get their films shown at Sundance. They could be just as "European" as some European directors, in the sense that they are not interested in making entertainment but in mining their own experience.

So it's not a completely neat distinction, but on the other hand it's a true distinction… it does exist. It is true about the way that films are made and seen. Speaking for myself, I am rather on the

European side of the equation. I tend to like really long, slow, boring films that most people have given up on ages ago. There's been a shift in perception that I've experienced in my own lifetime. There was a great period of *auteur* film-making when I was growing up, from the late 1950s into the 1970s. It was the epoch of Antonioni, Fellini, Bergman and all those other great guys. From about the end of the 70s and into the 80s, a lot of people decided that these movies were rather self-indulgent and weren't working any longer. They stopped going to see such films. A new orthodoxy established itself saying that if Europe wanted to have any movies at all in a few years time, then it should get cracking and learn from the American model. Films should be more "entertaining". Many initiatives arose at this time concerned with the Media Programme in Brussels to try to reschedule European film in this direction. I myself have always felt that European films were in a way different in kind from their American counterparts and therefore simply to change the package would be as futile as the leopard changing his spots. Or as I sometimes say: "You shouldn't throw out the baby with the bath-water."

I've forced myself to get acquainted with some of the old French and Italian directors, and some of them really bore me.

People are very different. They come from different places. What is boring for some is sheer pleasure for others. I wrote a book about the notoriously "difficult" film director Tarkovsky because I'd always felt, watching his films, that they spoke to me in a very transparent way. I felt that I understood them. But maybe to others he's totally opaque. All works of art that are worthy of the name

have an ambition to communicate. They don't *want* to be obscure or if they are obscure it's only to tease us in the way that art should tease us. Incidentally, I want to be clear that in praising European films I don't disparage American film history. Some of the most beautiful films ever made come from Hollywood. But I'm sorry you don't like the old French directors. You should persevere a bit – try them again when you feel in the mood for it.

You have already talked about it but would you try to pinpoint a few words that describe typical European films?

I think you yourself probably know the distinctions. European films tend to avoid the genre formulas that American films are so good at (Westerns, musicals, horror films and so on). The classic European film tends to be much more focussed on the psychology of the characters. Then again, Europe doesn't have the star system as America does, and there are good and bad things that follow from that. Some of the best European films are with actors you've never seen before. And they are good precisely because you *don't* recognize them. In a way that makes them more real. You're not thinking *Oh this is just Cary Grant acting.* One can make a more serious shot at realism in this way. But the main difference, surely, is that American pictures are geared towards entertainment and therefore for selling as widely as possible to as many people as possible. European films on the contrary have not been frightened of being a bit élitist and of going for stories that are darker and more difficult. A good comparison that I sometimes come back to is between Woody Allen and Ingmar Bergman. As a matter of fact, Allen likes Bergman a lot, as he likes European films in general. He

is not a New York intellectual for nothing! Many of his films are dotted with references to famous European art house movies. But for all that, Woody Allen and Bergman are very different animals. I think that no matter how much Woody Allen admires Bergman, his own movies are never in quite that league. They are too much on the surface… they are verbal and witty, but they don't have the psychological depth that a Bergman film has. I suppose in a way I am begging the question, because of course Woody Allen's films are comedies so almost by definition he's not going into areas where Bergman is exploring. He did once, with a film called *Interiors*, but it was the most frightful flop.

In this comparison would you say the phrase Don't tell it – show it *is mainly an American or European phenomenon? The Americans tell rather than show, whereas European cinema wants to "show" the whole time?*

That's an interesting distinction to try and tease out. You might be tempted to turn it around and say that what's distinctive about European films is that they're not frightened of talk. There's a lot of "telling" in such films. Take a director like Eric Rohmer. A man and a woman sit in a room talking about life and philosophy… it's fascinating!

Or they sit in a café and talk?
Yes, they sit in cafés and bedrooms and it's all very erotic, though slightly "in the head". If you don't like talk you don't like those kinds of films! At the same time, when you look at a Rohmer film it is a real film, not just a piece of television. He has an "eye"… people who don't know or don't like Rohmer think that he only has

dialogues, but it isn't true; it's dialogues *plus* the visual thing that make a Rohmer film so beautiful.

What about Wim Wenders? One of his films, Wings of Desire, *was remade in Hollywood as* City of Angels. *So there ought to be a good comparison there.*

Yes, of course it is an interesting example. The one film is a homage to the other: the one set in Berlin, the other in Los Angeles. But the Berlin setting, in Wenders's film, isn't just arbitrary; it brings in the whole dimension of history – the divided Germany and so on: the weight of the past. There's none of that reflection on history at all in the remake, which is simply a romantic comedy with death thrown in, as it were. It simply doesn't have the artistic element that Wenders' film has. Comparisons between other films are more interesting perhaps. Godard's *A bout de souffle* was remade about fifteen years later as *Breathless* by an American independent film maker called Jim McBride, with Richard Gere and Valerie Kaprisky. I have to say I quite like the remake. On a certain humanist level concerning relationships and the tenderness of relationships, I think that the McBride film is as good as the Godard. Godard's film is spoiled for me by its rather crude beginning. If you remember, Belmondo shoots a policeman and the scene is treated in the Godard style of those years which is tremendously joky and postmodernist. In the same scene handled by James McBride, when Richard Gere shoots the cop there is a kind of genuine regret about it. He cradles the dying man in his arms. I don't believe it's sentimental, just an acknowledgement that when you shoot a pistol and there's a bullet in it, real blood comes out. However, some people say that the

Godard version is much *better* because it's joky and artificial, so you can decide either way…

It sounds as if you're objecting to Godard's morality?

In a way yes, but of course it isn't that simple. Cinema is the art form that is closest to dreams, and dreams are anyway immoral. *Pulp Fiction* for example is an extremely immoral movie, but it also has a kind of grotesque humour, like an amusing and scary nightmare. Similarly with a director like Bunuel. His films are immoral but they're also very funny and you wouldn't want, as a critic, to be moralistic about them. On the other hand there are certain films that are just irredeemable. I can think of examples from both Europe and America which fit into that category.

Let's change the subject. In order for the European film market to have a future, the chains of distribution have to be strengthened and widened but at the same time European film makers have to keep the courage of honesty, as Jon Bang Carlsen puts it. Where do you see European film in ten to fifteen years from now?

The subject is very complex. There are three main interests involved, which each need a slice of the financial cake – the producers (i.e. the film-makers themselves), the distributors and the exhibitors. How do we divide the profits up evenly? What is a fair ratio of risk to reward? How, specifically, can we arrange things to keep producers and distributors in business? In Europe it is very difficult because, as you know, the art house market is shrinking. People tend more and more to get their dose of "foreign subtitled films" at a single swallow at festivals, rather than the whole year round. And then there's the famous rise of the multiplex which has had the effect of drowning out the small artistic movie (the kind of movie you *don't*

eat popcorn at). Nor is television buying as many films as it used to, or paying the same price for the ones that they do buy. So it is very difficult to be a distributor. Margins differ, of course, from film to film. A movie like the brilliant Turkish film *Clouds of May* (which won last year's FIPRESCI prize for best European film) cost considerably less than a million dollars to make. But art house movies of the kind we all like can cost up to five million dollars, and with these, the margins for profit are very dicey. To be quite honest, nobody really knows how it all works. I've met film producers who don't even know if their films made a profit or not. But the films seem to keep coming in! It's almost remarkable how many good films *do* continue to get made… not just more films than anyone can see, but more *good* films than anyone can see. Whether it will be like this in ten year's time is anyone's guess. But I hope so.

August 23, 2001

Looking for male Italian adulthood, old style

Francesco Caviglia

The Italian writer and film critic Marco Lodoli has compared the vitality of American cinema with the allegedly unresponsive Italian version:

> I have a confused memory of a story from Ancient Rome: the barbarians, young and victorious, having just arrived at the *caput mundi*, run to the Senate where senators are gathered and sit, mute and impassive, full of dignity. The invaders mistake those immobile beings for statues of marble, until a Hun decides to pull one of the old men's beards, the latter slaps him in the face and sets off the whole city's reaction. Now, I believe that American youngsters pull our beards every month, they blow all their vital lack of prejudice on our wrinkled faces, but we don't see many reactions. Our old senators are like polished and often bulky marble blocks, while our young people waddle like lazy indifferent pigeons around those monuments, or else make fools of themselves by pathetically trying to mimic the winning eagles. Unnoticed, we feel also envious toward America and its tireless faith in the scandal of regeneration.[1]

Elsewhere, Lodoli underscores the frequent lack of adulthood in contemporary Italian cinema:

> If I remember authors from the '50s, I see them as eternal adults, men and women wrestling with the world, looking history in the face with a certain untamed boldness, persuaded that that they could change the course of events with their work. I see them stern, hardened by war, ready to discuss and to pound on the table. Even the most desperate had to come to terms with adulthood, to obey a graying God that called for adult answers. My generation, instead, has usually stopped at adolescence. There is melancholy and dreaminess, a feeling for the infinite and an agonizing attitude of impotence. There is unfulfilled love and there are shadows

---

[1] Marco Lodoli, *Fuori dal cinema* [outside the cinema] (Torino: Einaudi, 1999), pp. 210-111, commenting *The opposite of sex* (1998) by Don Ross and the performance by actress Christina Ricci.

fraught with hopes that are too grand to descend to the howling arena of real life existence.[2]

Marco Lodoli not only worships old European and Italian cinema, he also keeps a very attentive eye on more recent productions: his statements should also be taken as the complaint of an often frustrated lover, ready to forget any past disappointment for even a brief moment of happiness. However, I think the comparison he draws does hit the target. In this paper, I will elaborate briefly on the paradox that Italian-American directors Scorsese and Coppola and actors like Robert De Niro and Al Pacino paint, in my opinion, the most vivid image of a certain kind of old-time Italian.

Cultural change and its representation

A few months before his death in 1975, intellectual and film director Pierpaolo Pasolini wrote some "Notes for a film script about a policeman" as a comment on a true story: a young policeman had committed suicide after being tricked by a prisoner who escaped on the pretext of a brief private encounter with his girlfriend during a jail transfer. According to Pasolini, the tragedy had its origin in the "anthropological shift" that he saw in Italy between the mid '60s and the mid '70s: an old morality with its codes of honour (e.g. obedience or keeping one's word) was being replaced by modern consumerism (e.g. the 'right' to sex) and the policeman – whom Pasolini imagined to be from a poor, unschooled peasant background – got caught half-way between the two worlds. Pasolini was well aware of the shortcomings of old-fashioned morality, as witnessed by his long-time commitment to enlightening Italian

---

[2] *Ibidem*, p.85, commenting *L'estate di Davide* [Davide's summer] (1998), by Carlo Mazzacurati.

readers and viewers, but he felt the old morality and its contrast with the new should have been paid a tribute – thus adopting Gramsci's idea that popular art "is in the best position to represent contradictions in the historical development of existing customs."[3]

In my view, Italian cinema lived up to the task of discussing cultural change until the '60s. For example, Burt Lancaster played a memorable role as Prince Don Fabrizio Salina in Visconti's *The Leopard* (1963) and, in an entirely different social setting, the same Visconti showed the clash of old and 'modern' life-styles brought about by immigration in *Rocco and His Brothers* (1965). Both films are about people who face a new world to which their virtues and values are increasingly unadapted, which gives a conflict situation of high dramatic potential. In the same period, the *commedia all'italiana* was parodying characters who represented old values, especially in the realm of sexual morality – e.g. the fathers and mothers in Pietro Germi's *Divorce, Italian Style* (1961) or *Seduced and Abandoned* (1964). This happened at a time when the model ridiculed on film was still strong in real life.

But in the '70s Pasolini didn't have the time to make a film about the unfortunate policeman,[4] and in the following years Italian cinematography would increasingly develop the kind of situation that Marco Lodoli describes. This is not to say that no Italian film-maker has tried to portray the old-fashioned mentality. My point, elaborating on Lodoli, is that after the '60s, Italian films failed to create a convincing model of the old world and its values, with powerful characters and stories that might have become part of a

---

[3] Antonio Gramsci, *Quaderni dal carcere* [The prison's notebook], Q.21, § 6.
[4] The story eventually became a TV-film in the '80s, but I have not been able to find the title.

shared memory and identity. For example, most characters in *My Father, My Master* (1977) and *The Tree with the Wooden Clogs* (1978) are definitely set in older times and ring true, but both films have always been too distant in space and time for most viewers: both of them were hard to connect with past experience in true life or in a fictional tradition. Also Bernardo Bertolucci's *1900* (1978) – the film that made its director into one of the "monuments" Lodoli was referring to – today looks rather schematic: again, just as in *The Leopard*, Burt Lancaster puts his figure and charisma into the role of an old patriarch, but the character in the story basically represents a world that deserves to vanish, and will not be missed.

If an Italian moviegoer is looking for more recent pictures of what it means to be an old-fashioned Italian, I think the choice is to turn to the other side of Atlantic and see Scorsese's *Mean Streets* (1973), *Raging Bull* (1980) and *Goodfellas* (1990), Coppola's *Godfather* trilogy (especially the first two episodes, 1972 and 1974), and more recently, Al Pacino's performance as small-time hood Lefty Ruggiero in Mike Newell's *Donnie Brasco* (1996).

In the next section I will exemplify some characteristics that I regard as typical of this "old-time culture," while in the conclusion, I will propose a hypothesis as to why Italian-American film-makers, rather than Italians, paid a not-too-nostalgic tribute to tradition.

Some traits of old-fashioned Italians

The traits examined here concern the relationship of the characters with themselves, their families and the outside world.

Self-denial

The ability to make sacrifices was a valued asset in the morality of earlier times. *Raging Bull* (1980) brings self-denial to paroxysm. De Niro/La Motta refrains from sex, and asks his brother to hit him in order to learn how to endure grief. De Niro even decides to share the attitude of the character he plays by first submitting himself to lengthy training in order to act credibly in the ring, and then to a special diet in order to gain weight for the role of the retired boxer. Self-denial may be portrayed as a negative model that a father tries to impose on a son, as in *My Father, My Master* (1977) and *Dead Poets Society* (1986), or lend itself to low-key representation as modest/feminine virtue, as with Celia Johnson in *Brief Encounter* (1946), or else can be brought to greater heights in connection with an American (and artistic) dream of success, as in *The Red Shoes* (1948). The latter is the choice of Scorsese, who had been deeply impressed by the Powell & Pressburger masterpiece,[5] and with *Raging Bull* gives us a character with a vision that is the American dream plus more archaic Catholic overtones, with sins that have to be atoned for somewhere, and suffering as a way to redemption. *Raging Bull* shows how far – both in success and in misery – self-denial can lead.

Moral and amoral familism

In the same film, the family is the only positive pole in Jack La Motta's life, with Joe Pesci playing a great role as the faithful brother. I would like to elaborate briefly on this point. "Amoral familism" is an expression first invented to explain the economic

---

[5] S. David Ehrenstein, *The Scorsese Picture: The Art and Life of Martin Scorsese* (New York: Birch Lane Press, 1992), p. 34.

underdevelopment in a Southern Italian village as a consequence of the inability of its inhabitants to act together for the common good; this once hotly debated explanation has since become a fairly common way of looking at the role of family for Italians.[6] Coppola in *The Godfather* trilogy has been most effective and influential in putting epic and tragic dimensions into this model and then exposing the hypocrisy of the American scorn for the model itself, as exemplified by this exchange between the young boss and his WASP wife, complaining about the lifestyle of the "family":

> MICHAEL CORLEONE: My father is no different than any powerful man, any man with power, like a president or senator.
>
> KAY ADAMS: Do you know how naive you sound, Michael? Presidents and senators don't have men killed!
>
> MICHAEL CORLEONE: Oh. Who's being naive, Kay?

On the other hand Scorsese, who, ever since he was a student of film, wanted to do away with filmic stereotypes of Italian Americans,[7] chooses a different, lower key – truer, in my view – and represents family and family bonds as the most decent asset in a difficult world. For Scorsese, "family" is not at all a metaphor, while Michael Corleone could only see his WASP *consigliori* played by Robert Duvall as his "true" brother. Only the family represents support and safety for Jack La Motta, who goes to pieces after breaking the family ties; in Scorsese's other Italian-American films,

---

[6] "Amoral familism" was first proposed in Edward Banfield, *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society* (New York: The Free Press, 1958). A reappraisal of this concept and its connection with "clientelism" in today's Italy in Paul Ginsborg, *L'Italia del tempo presente (1980-1996)* (Torino: Einaudi, 1998), pp. 132-179 (significantly, in a chapter with the title "legacies of the past"); an updated English edition is in press as *Italy and Its Discontent (1980-2000)* (London: Penguin, 2001).

[7] Scorsese scorns at what he calls "the 'Mama mia!' school of Italian acting," in Ehrenstein, *cit.*, p. 41.

the family scenes are the ones that make the characters into fellow human beings, even when they are nasty, borderline personalities like Joe Pesci in *Goodfellas*. In Scorsese's films set in Little Italy, there is nothing unusual or wrong in the family itself – at least not worse than in other ethnic groups: the problem lies in relations to the external world.

Violent jealousy

Jealousy is a great subject for narration and a nasty reality, remaining to this day a relatively frequent cause of assault on women.[8] A man's complete control over the "virtue" of his wife and daughters was, and in some societies still is, a requirement for being a respected member of a community. For Italians this condition hopefully changed around the time of the "anthropologic shift," probably with the contribution of *commedia all'italiana*, that constantly depicted violent jealousy as a synonym of backwardness. Today it still happens that men assault or kill their ex-wives and girlfriends, but the social stigma on violent jealousy is so firmly established that such occurrences are seen by the press – and sometimes by juries – more as a psychiatric than as a cultural problem.[9] Accordingly, in Italian cinema in the last 30 years jealous husbands do suffer, but don't play Othello.[10] Italian- America film-

---

[8] Martin Daly & Margo Wilson, *Homicide* (Hawthorne, NY: Aldine de Gruyter, 1988).

[9] A law explicitly prescribing lighter sentence for people killing to defend their honour, was abolished in Italy in the '70s; this rule is the focus of the plot in *Divorce – Italian style* (1962). Divorce was first introduced in Italy in the '70s. Some reflections on "honour" in today's Italy in Francesco Caviglia (ed.), "Valori degli italiani: un percorso intorno alla famiglia." *(Pré)publications* 177-178 (September 2000), also on the Internet at <http://www.hum.au.dk/romansk/tidsskrift/pages/oversigt_177.html>.

[10] In *Ecce Bombo* (1976) and *Per amore, solo per amore* [For love, only for love] (1993) – the latter about the story of Joseph and Mary – the supposedly betrayed husbands merely cry. In *Senza pelle* [No skin] (1994), where a mentally disturbed young man falls in love and starts following a married woman, the husband eventually turns out to be quite understanding.

makers feel more free to connect jealousy with characters enjoying heroic status. Michael Corleone/Al Pacino acts in the cruelest way to avoid being abandoned by his woman, an event that would destroy his credibility to himself and others. Scorsese himself acted a monologue – which now feels a bit stereotypical – as a betrayed man waiting to kill his wife in *Taxi Driver* (1976) and later once again brought the theme to its dramatic peak in *Raging Bull*, where paranoid jealousy is shown in all its destructive power, but associated with a character that has his grandness.

A hierarchical and hostile outside world
As a last archaic trait that Italian-American films depict more vividly than Italian films, I would mention the obsession with hierarchy and power relations, or 'honour'.

Whether among small-time hoods in *Donnie Brasco* or high-ranking figures in *The Godfather*, the characters are always concerned with their status, with the need to show and be shown respect accordingly, and with the imperative of never losing face. This trait has quite deep cultural roots and it is interesting to read in the memoirs of Italian-American undercover agent Joe Pistone – on which *Donnie Brasco* is based – how motivations of work and personal pride sometime overlap in explaining his concern about his own rank among mobsters, as when he still resents offences he had to tolerate in the line of duty.[11]

---

[11] Joseph D. Pistone, *Donnie Brasco: My Undercover Life in the Mafia* (London: Sidwick & Jackson, 1988), for example p. 119. Obviously, personal pride and ambition are functional assets for an agent who has to endure six years under cover in the Mafia.

[12] Ginsborg, *cit.*, pp. 60-68, points out that in comparison with other Western countries, Italy has a rather well-defined social hierarchy combined with low social mobility.

As with violent jealousy, obsessive concern for one's status has not disappeared from the real world at all, but hierarchy has become less fashionable and less overt in large parts of contemporary Western culture. However, it is interesting to note that a prevalence of "vertical relationships" among citizens is today still considered a factor hampering the growth of civil society and social capital in Italy.[12]

Conclusion: identity as shared memory, plus a project

Why have Italian-American filmmakers been more successful than Italian ones in building a shared narrative about some traits of old-time culture? I will propose an explanation encompassing both historical and artistic reasons.

Italian-Americans have both a shared memory of immigration and a shared project of earning a portion of the American dream for their community and for themselves; this condition has prompted a few Italian-American directors to fulfill their own American dream by developing a successful foundation myth about the place of their community of origin in American history. Then, as it happened earlier with Westerns, films taking place in Little Italy have developed into a genre, which gives the filmmaker and the viewer alike a framework for free variations on a theme. Not least, the Mafia in the USA has been actively fought and defeated in the courts and increasingly perceived as a defeated cultural model.

Identity in Italy is a trickier issue.[13] A shared project is sorely missed, after the severe blows that collective hopes suffered in the

---

[13] A review of the debate on Italian identity can be found in Giovanni Gozzini, "L'identità introvable." *Passato e presente* XVII, n. 47 (May-August 1999), pp. 15-30.

'70s and '80s, and things look even worse in the perspective of memory. Most periods and events in the history of Italy in the 20th century, from the two world wars to the economic boom, are still objects of divided memory and any recollection is subject to harsh debate, especially when it touches open wounds. This condition usually requires that any Italian film which doesn't stick to the present, as does the *commedia all'italiana*, explicitly take a position, and explain too much to the viewer. I cannot think of an historical time or ambience that can produce in the viewers the "participative distance" that Westerns or Little Italy prompt for an American audience. In other words, bad guys or old-time figures are not perceived in Italy as remote or defeated, and are therefore not suited to making into "heroic" characters.

I think that Italians' difficulty in establishing a shared identity is the main reason why I cannot remember any recent Italian films which effectively represent a cultural shift, as portrayed for example in John Ford's late Westerns, *The Searchers* (1956) or *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962). To depict cultural change, filmmakers and viewers have to acknowledge the views of "other" Italians. Until now, I know only of a comedy that has explicitly embraced this attitude.[14]

To make an Italian dramatic movie with a hero who belongs to the culture of an earlier time, I expect it would be necessary to pick up one of the few shared areas of collective memory, such as sports. But in that case, the film would have to compete with *Raging Bull*. No easy feat.

---

[14] *Feria d'agosto* [August Vacations] (1996), by Paolo Virzì.

For Ever Godard
**Two or Three Things I Know
About European and American Cinema**

Peder Grøngaard

In the book *Hollywood Voices*, Andrew Sarris describes one of the differences between Hollywood directors and European directors:

> [...] the Hollywood director is still taken less seriously than his foreign counterpart, and, in interviews, he generally regards himself with the same lack of seriousness. Part of his problem is the Hollywood ethos of the "team"; part is the tendency of Hollywood movies to conceal the inner workings for the sake of popular illusionism. Audiences are not supposed to be conscious that a movie is directed; the movie just happens by some mysterious conjunction of the players with their plot. [...] Consequently, there has been a tendency to overrate the European directors because of their relative articulateness about their artistic "Angst", and now a reaction has set in against some of the disproportionate pomposity that has ensued (Sarris, p. 14).

In the following discussion, I want to elaborate on Sarris's precise characterization of one of the fundamental differences between the American and European film cultures, in terms of the film director's attitude to the audiences, with the visible director in many European films on the one hand, and the invisible director in most Hollywood films on the other. In order to do this, I have chosen to compare the self-aware cinema of the mythopoeic French film director Jean-Luc Godard with the almost anonymous storytelling in the majority of American films.

The aim is to expose the role of the artist in two different film cultures: Europe versus Hollywood – represented by Godard as the sometimes difficult to comprehend "film auteur," and the seductive Hollywood storyteller who hides himself behind his narration. This

is characteristic of American film history, from the genre traditions in the 40s and 50s, to contemporary Hollywood productions in the 80s and 90s. Hollywood never did stop making films based on plots and genres, and will never renounce traditional storytelling based on these aspects. Film modernism exists in Hollywood, but more as the exception that proves the rule.

The Writing Camera

In his famous article from 1948, "The Birth of a New Avant-Garde: La Caméra-Stylo," the French critic and film director Alexandre Astruc characterized the film medium as follows:

> "The cinema is quite simply becoming a means of expression, just as all the other arts have before it, and in particular painting and the novel. After having been successively a fairground attraction, an amusement analogous to boulevard theatre, or a means of preserving the images of an era, it is gradually becoming a language. By language, I mean a form in which and by which an artist can express his thoughts, however abstract they may be, or translate his obsessions exactly as he does in a contemporary essay or novel. That is why I would like to call this new age of cinema the age of "caméra-stylo"" (Monaco, p. 5).

Astruc continues his presentation of the new status of cinema in the era of "The Camera-Pen" by saying that: "The creation of this language has preoccupied all the theoreticians and writers in the history of cinema." But a lot of film directors who were active in the 50s and 60s were also preoccupied with this vision of a cinematic language, "by which an artist can express his thoughts" – primarily European directors such as Antonioni, Bresson, Fellini, Bunuel, Resnais, Rohmer, Truffaut, Chabrol, Rivette and Godard. For these directors cinema was more or less a language, a personal means of expression. This is particularly true of Godard, whose film career

has been a passionate study of how to express oneself in a language – in paintings, poems, novels, music and films.

Language is the House Man Lives In

From 1959 to 1966 Jean-Luc Godard made 13 feature films, all of which explored the conditions for making art. What is art? What function does art serve? And last but not least, what is cinema? A number of answers to these fundamental questions about art and artistic language are given below. Two or three things I know about Godard's conception of (film) art from his first period, or the so-called Karina years. Godard married Anna Karina in 1960, and divorced her again in 1965.

The meaning of language is an important issue in Godard's cinematic philosophy, as seen most directly in *My Life to Live* (1962), in the scene between Nana (Anna Karina) and the linguistic philosopher Brice Parain (playing himself) where they converse about language and the necessity of talking. Sitting in a café, they discuss the nature of words and speaking. Nana prefers not to talk, longing for a life in silence without words. Because the more you talk, the less the words mean, she explains. Words should express exactly what you want to say. But they don't. They betray us, she argues. Parain understands Nana's longing for a wordless life in silence, but as a linguistic philosopher he does not agree with her.

According to Brice Parain, you cannot live without thinking. You have to think, and in order to think you have to speak. Thinking demands words, because you cannot think in any other way. Such is human life, concludes Parain in his lecture on our dependence on language as human beings.

And such is life for a filmmaker, one might add, with reference to Godard's numerous reflections on the essence of the cinematic language in his articles, films and interviews. "Language is the house man lives in", as Juliette (Marina Vlady) says in *Two or Three Things I Know About Her*. About thirty years later, Godard repeats this linguistic reflection in *JLG/JLG – Self-Portrait in December* (1995) as the narrator of the polyphonic inner dialogue in his film: "Where do you live? In language, and I cannot keep silent. When I am talking I throw myself into an unknown order for which I then become responsible. I must become universal."

In the late 40s and early 50s, Godard studied anthropology and ethnology at the Sorbonne, and also read a lot of linguistic subjects, including the linguistic philosophy of Brice Parain. Parain already appeared in one of Godard's first articles, "Towards a Political Cinema," in September 1950. In this article Godard quotes Brice Parain: "The sign forces us to see an object through its significance." According to James Monaco, Parain's phrase ("Le signe nous oblige à nous figurer un objet de sa signification") became Godard's motto as a filmmaker ten years later: "[...] it urgently wants to state a basic axiom: that there is no way we can sense the objective world without first understanding how our systems of signs – our

languages, both verbal and non-verbal – "signify," what they mean, and how they thereby change our perceptions. Godard's career can be seen as a long struggle to work out the multiple possible meanings of Parain's deceptively simple sentence. He began this work in his criticism" (Monaco, p. 105).

Godard is a kind of linguist, looking for the common denominator in all forms of expression: language, signs and meaning. Linguistic philosophical reflections appear in many of his films, often as a kind of key to his artistic universe. Sometimes very poetically, as in *Pierrot le Fou* (1965), where Ferdinand (Jean-Paul Belmondo) explores the meaning of words in his literary diary. And sometimes very specifically, linguistically so to speak, as in *Two or Three Things I Know About Her* (1966), where Godard reflects on the scenes we are looking at in 28 off-screen commentaries. The scene with a close-up of a coffee cup with froth swirling round on the surface is a particularly good illustration of the linguistic aspects. On the soundtrack we hear Godard's voice:

> But where to begin? But where to begin with what?... We could say that the limits of language are the limits of the world... that the limits of my language are the limits of my world. And in that respect, I limit the world, I decide its boundaries (Monaco, p. 183).

This is apparently a philosophy that makes the artist master of reality. The director creates the world through his language and consciousness, brings into the world a collection of signs and meanings that change our perceptions. But it is at the same time a linguistic philosophy, giving the artist a bit of a problem with his spontaneous experience of reality. Just listen to Godard's later off-screen commentary:

> "Words and images intermingle constantly. [...] Why are there so many signs everywhere so that I end up wondering what

> language is about, signs with so many different meanings, that
> reality becomes obscure when it should stand out clearly from
> what is imaginary?" (Godard 1975, pp. 153-155).

Thus, *Two or Three Things I Know About Her* ends up with an insight into the dialectics and nature of language that is quite similar to Brice Parain's lesson to Nana in *My Life to Live*. Nana wants to live in peace without using words that betray her, but learns that she cannot live without talking. She has to communicate to get in touch with reality. Godard confronts himself with the same dilemma: on the one hand he is searching for a spontaneous perception of reality outside of language, and on the other he recognizes that the limits of his language are the limits of his world. The world both appears and disappears when he uses his camera. But he has to use it to stay in contact with reality. He has to bring words and images into the world as a filmmaker.
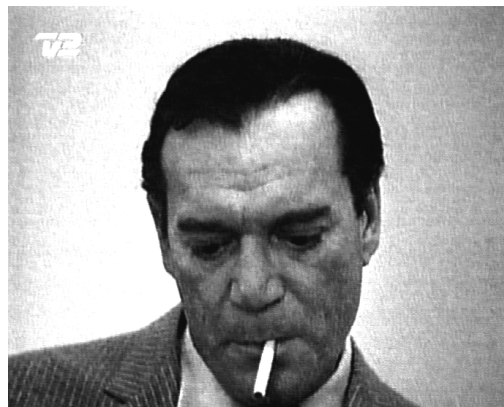
The Cinematic Essay

According to Godard, "there are two kinds of cinema, there is Flaherty and there is Eisenstein. That is to say, there is documentary realism and there is theatre, but ultimately, at the highest level, they are one and the same. What I mean is that through documentary one arrives at the structure of the theatre, and through theatrical

imagination and fiction one arrives at the reality of life. To confirm this, take a look at the work of the great directors, how they pass by turn from realism to theatre and back again" (Mussman, p. 82).

The same applies to Godard's films, which oscillate between the genres of fiction and reality. A genre mixture which Louis D. Giannetti describes as follows: "Many of his movies cut across "genre" distinctions, combining documentary realism, stylised tableaux, propaganda, whimsical digressions on art, culture, and sociology in a bizarre and often bewildering mixture" (Giannetti, p. 20). This kind of cinema is incompatible with conventional storytelling and plots, creating quite another narrative style. Or as Godard proclaimed in an interview: "The Americans are good at story-telling, the French are not. Flaubert and Proust can't tell stories. They do something else" (Narboni, p. 223).

What he said in 1965 about Flaubert's and Proust's inability to tell stories and interest in doing something else, was also aimed at Godard himself: "I don't know how to tell stories. I want to cover the whole ground, from all possible angles, saying everything at once" (Giannetti, p. 19). So he tried something else in the late 50s and early 60s, when he entered the film arena with his world of controversial, paradoxical, and poetic fragments. Gradually, he developed the cinematic essay for his own purpose: creating the artistic freedom to express oneself on all levels, by using all kinds of artistic expressions, all kinds of narrative structures and genres. In 1962, after having made four feature films, Godard described as follows his approach to the double role of a critic becoming a filmmaker:

> "As a critic, I thought of myself as a film-maker. Today I still think of myself as a critic, and in a sense I am, more than ever before. Instead of writing criticism, I make a film, but the

> critical dimension is subsumed. I think of myself as an essayist, producing essays in novel form, or novels in essay form: only instead of writing, I film them. Were the cinema to disappear, I would simply accept the inevitable and turn to television; were television to disappear, I would revert to pencil and paper. For there is a clear continuity between all forms of expression. It's all one. The important thing is to approach it from the side which suits you best" (Narboni, p. 171).

A famous, but still very provocative and astonishing statement, expressed with Godard's characteristic sense of paradox: a critic, a filmmaker, an essayist, and a novelist, all at the same time. But of course, this is not enough for him. He also regarded himself as a painter: "I am a painter with letters. I want to restore everything, mix everything up and say everything" (Brown, p. 95). According to Giannetti, "an essay is neither fiction nor fact, but a personal investigation involving both the passion and intellect of the author" (Giannetti, p. 26). So the cinematic essay gave Godard a kind of artistic elasticity that suited the kinds of films he wanted to make.

"Audiences are not supposed to be conscious that a movie is directed; the movie just happens by some mysterious conjunction of the players with their plot," Sarris wrote in his portrait of the style in Hollywood movies. In contrast, Godard wants audiences to be conscious of the actual filmmaking. In 1966, after his thirteenth film, *Two or Three Things I Know About Her*, he described this in more detail: "Basically, what I am doing is making the spectator share the arbitrary nature of my choices, and the quest for general rules which might justify a particular choice. Why am I making this film, why am I making it this way? [...] I am constantly asking questions. I watch myself filming, and you hear me thinking aloud. In other words it isn't a film, it's an attempt at film and is presented as such" (Narboni, p. 239).

Thus, in Godard's first thirteen films one can detect a dialectical search for a cinematic style enabling him to investigate and improvise – an attempt to deconstruct fiction and reality, and assemble all the fragments into new artistic units. First chaos, then cosmos. Godard's films are neither fiction films nor documentaries, but passionate essays including both genres, filtered through his nostalgic and romantic artistic soul. Or, as Godard puts it in his paradoxical style of writing: "Generally speaking, reportage is interesting only when placed in a fictional context, but fiction is interesting only if it is validated by a documentary context. The Nouvelle Vague, in fact, may be defined in part by this new relationship between fiction and reality, as well as through nostalgic regret for a cinema that no longer exists. When we were at last able to make films, we could no longer make the kind of films which had made us want to make films" (Narboni, p. 192).

The Plotless Cinema

What Godard is referring to by "nostalgic regret for a cinema which no longer exists," is The New Wave's great admiration for a special group of Hollywood directors: Howard Hawks, Fritz Lang, Samuel Fuller, Orson Welles, John Ford, D.W. Griffith and Alfred Hitchcock; and also an admiration for the American genre films based on carefully prepared plots, and precise and economical narrative structures. François Truffaut, Jacques Rivette, Eric Rohmer, Claude Chabrol and Jean-Luc Godard were – in their articles published in "Cahiers du Cinéma" in the 50s and the 60s – obsessed by the American genre tradition, but at the same time they had to recognize the difference between the European film culture and the American film culture. Godard could admire Hitchcock's logic and

stringent construction of the plot, but he would never dream of copying Hitchcock's narrative style. Watching Hitchcock's or Lang's films as a critic made him want to make films, but not that kind of cinema.

Godard developed his own film genre: the cinematic essay and the plotless cinema. In doing so, he became present in his own films, almost visible as the director behind the films. A person who could express himself and comment on his own filmmaking. When making *Breathless* (1959), Godard used many of the conventional props and clichés of the gangster movie: guns, cars, cigarettes, and the characters' way of dressing and talking – imitating all the outward characteristics of the genre. But this did not make it a real gangster film, because the logical storyline was missing in *Breathless*,

and the plot was "rather rambling compared to most American thrillers" (Giannetti, p. 22).

In spite of the fact that *Breathless* was clearly indebted to American genre films as a kind of gangster film, it is not an American genre film, but a typical Godard film inscribed in a European cultural tradition. It is a plotless film compared to Hollywood movies, trying out all the different means of expression using cinematic language, and inventing new means of expression: the famous jump cuts, the fragmentation of the plot, the use of a hand-held camera with edgy camera movements, long unbroken takes, tracking shots, the use of natural light, shots taken on location, and the hero Michel Poiccard (Jean-Paul Belmondo) speaking directly to the camera, so that we cannot forget the fact that we are watching a movie.

Godard's rage of expression can be seen most clearly in his taste for quotation: "People in life quote as they please, so we have the right to quote as we please. Therefore I show people quoting, merely making sure that they quote what pleases me" (Narboni, p. 173). So Godard quotes what pleases him, taking what he can use from the variety of artists and works of art he loves and admires. Robin Wood describes Godard's passion for cultural references and quotations as follows:

> "[...] in *A Bout de Souffle* [...] there are visual, aural or verbal references to Bach, Brahms, Chopin, and Mozart; Renoir, Picasso, and Klee; Shakespeare, Cocteau, William Faulkner, Rilke; the Arc de Triomphe, the Eiffel Tower, Notre Dame de Paris; Humphrey Bogart, Robert Aldrich, Budd Boetticher, "Cahiers du Cinéma"; and doubtless several more I've overlooked" (Mussman, p. 179).

In this way, Godard's first film intended to make a break with Hollywood's traditional storyline, and attack the conventional ways of handling a plot: "What I wanted was to take a conventional story and remake, but differently, everything the cinema had done. I also wanted to give the feeling that the techniques of film-making had just been discovered or experienced for the first time" (Narboni, p. 173).

The following twelve films intensified this approach to film history and filmmaking, creating Godard's very distinctive dialectic narrative style by focusing on the relationship between documentary and fiction. His films were plotless compared to Hollywood movies in general. They rejected an advancing and continuous cinematic language based on logical plots and psychological delineations of character, as it is known from most American films, and replaced it with a discontinuous and fragmentary narrative style that breaks up time and space, thereby forming a collage of letters, words, images, sounds, music, voices, paintings, quotations, and references to art and cinema.

Godard integrated all these expressive aesthetic fragments into his films in an attempt to create a new order of totality, harmony and beauty out of chaos: a union of all the arts. Godard has always been a bit of a romantic, looking for the continuity between poetry, music, literature, painting, dance, architecture, theatre and cinema. He adopted a new way of writing about films, a new way of making films, and a new way of describing the work of the film director in all his interviews, which diverged completely from the Hollywood tradition. As an artist he broke all the existing rules and conventions in filmmaking – like Fellini, like Bergman, like Resnais, and like

Antonioni – all those famous "modernists" in European cinema of the 60s.

The Cinema of Comment

As demonstrated by Andrew Sarris, "the difference between American movies and European films [...] is that American movies tend to correspond to reality while European films tend to comment on reality. It might be said, admittedly with a degree of oversimplification, that in the cinema of correspondence, the image precedes the idea, while in the cinema of comment, the idea precedes the image. American critics who ask plaintively why American filmmakers cannot make a *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* or a *L'Avventura* are actually grappling with the first principles of the Hollywood ethos. "Hiroshima" is inconceivable in America because there is not enough plot, *L'Avventura* because the plot makes no sense" (Mussman, p. 61).

In Godard, "the idea precedes the image". His films do not correspond to reality. He has to comment on reality, constantly asking questions – thereby transforming it into something else, filtered through both verbal language and cinematic language. His

aphoristic narrative style violates the traditional Hollywood storyline with its carefully devised plots, established genre conventions and narrative continuity. "Movies are a world of fragments," as Godard once said. He could agree that a film should have a beginning, a middle, and an end, but not necessarily in that order, as he claimed in one of his famous paradoxes, in an attack on Aristotle's classical trisection of a drama or story.

He prefers paradoxes, aphorisms and proverbs to storytelling: "To me, style is just the outside of content, and content the inside of style, like the outside and inside of the human body – both go together, they can't be separated" (Giannetti, p. 13). In an interview in the French magazine *Lire*, Godard described the particular nature of the aphorism as follows: "It is a different kind of thought to the thought with a beginning, a middle and an end. It doesn't tell a story, it is a small part of the story" (Assouline, p.35). This was said in 1997, as proof of the older Godard's loyalty to the younger Godard's concept of storytelling.

Generally speaking, American cinema is based on storytelling and the development of plots, on physical gestures and actions, on fluent dialogue, on charismatic film acting, and on genre traditions. Godard's cinema is the opposite of American cinema, or as Andrew Sarris puts it in his review of *A Woman Is a Woman* (1961):

> "Godard is thoroughly European, as are Renoir, Dreyer, Rossellini, Antonioni, Bergman [...]. He [...] realizes that his intellect must intervene between the reality he confronts on the streets of Paris and the illusion he renders on the screen. There can be no direct correspondence" (Mussman, p. 62).

Jean-Luc Godard is the incarnation of the introspective European artist, and the self-conscious film director par excellence. A

linguistically oriented film philosopher extremely familiar with classical music, literature, poetry, painting, philosophy and film history – a cultural heritage constantly referred to in his films. His tribute to composers, writers, poets, painters, philosophers and film directors is obvious.

As a film critic at *Cahiers du Cinéma* during the 50s, before he became a filmmaker, Godard loved all kinds of cinema, not forgetting the Russians, the Americans, the neo-realists and Dreyer. He was a film enthusiast ("cinéphile"), admitting that he knew nothing of life except through the films he saw and wrote about: "I mean that I didn't see things in relation to the world, to life or history, but in relation to the cinema" (Mussman, p. 82). And in relation to art, philosophy and language, one might add. His films are, in a way, "documentaries on the making of a film. Godard's interest in the cinema is such that his work can have no other subject" (Braudy, p. 365).

This attitude might explain his untameable urge to make references to artistic and cultural subjects. All of his films, his articles and the numerous interviews he has given throughout his career are, without exception, full of suggestive references to art, culture and cinema – and full of paradoxical statements. In *A Married Woman* (1964) there is a defence of the paradox in the monologue by the French film director Roger Leenhardt (1903-1985), playing himself like Brice Parain did in *My Life to Live*. His speech praises intelligence and the paradox as a philosophy, probably on behalf of Godard:

> "Intelligence is to understand before affirming. It means that when confronted with an idea, one seeks to go beyond it... To find its limits, to find its opposite... [...] the essence of the

paradox is, in the face of what seems a perfectly self-evident idea, to look for the opposite" (Godard 1975, p. 87).

Coutard's Light of Day

There are several governing ideas that run throughout Godard's unique work with film, namely those mentioned earlier: linguistics, the development of the cinematic essay, the plotless cinema, the cinema of comment, the rage of expression, Godard's taste for quotations, and all the paradoxes. Furthermore, there are two other important aspects I would like to mention. The first is the photographer Raoul Coutard's hand-held Arriflex, especially his black-and-white images, which evoke Godard's special universe, and the second is the numerous close-ups of Anna Karina, Godard's star and wife during the first half of the 60s. Raoul Coutard describes his collaboration with Godard as follows:

> "To keep the natural beauty of real light on the screen, whatever movements Anna Karina and Belmondo may make around the room in "Pierrot le Fou" – that's the cameraman's job. That is what Godard was asking for when he said, in his usual hesitant way, "Monsieur, we are going to be simple". Godard himself isn't exactly simple. [...] He wants to shoot without lights: he's thinking of a shot in a Lang film which he saw six months ago, and of the left half of a shot by Renoir... he's no longer sure which one, and he can't really explain any further, but really it

wasn't at all bad. Then after having told me this, he sends me off the set, me and everyone else, while he thinks about the way he's going to do it. And when I come back, I find that it's no longer the same shot. And anyway, he would rather like that very white light which lit up the end of a table in a shot (unhappily a very short shot) from a Griffith film, and he has always wondered whether perhaps that very white light didn't really come from the developing processes used in the Griffith laboratories, which must have been quite different from any other... and so on, and so on. No, Godard isn't simple" (Mussmann, pp. 233-234).

- A little anecdote which emphasizes both The New Wave's preference for using daylight shots, and Godard's boundless admiration of three of the great directors in the history of cinema: Fritz Lang, Jean Renoir and D.W. Griffith.

A Story of a Film Being Made

Godard's great admiration for Fritz Lang, who played himself in *Contempt* (1963), telling the story of a film being made, a story of the world of Homer directed by Fritz Lang, and with Godard as his assistant, is made very clear in this quote from an interview with Godard in 1963:

"[...] he represents the cinema, for which he is both the director and the voice of its conscience. From a more symbolic point of view, however, particularly since he is shooting a film on the

"Odyssey", he is also the voice of the gods, the man who looks
at men. [...] Just by his presence in the film, anyone can have the
idea that the cinema is something important; and if I played the
role of his assistant, it was out of respect, so that I wouldn't lend
him shots – as short as they may have been – that weren't his
own" (Brown, pp. 38-39).

Godard was once asked why he used a strange quotation from
Hölderlin spoken by Fritz Lang in *Contempt,* and he answered:
"Because it is a text called "La Vocation du Poète," and Lang in
Contempt symbolizes the poet, the artist, the creator. It was good
therefore that he says a line of poetry from the "Vocation of the
Poet". [...] I chose Hölderlin because Lang is German and also
because Hölderlin wrote a number of poems on Greece. (Three-
quarters of the people who see the movie do not know this). But I
wanted it to imply something on *The Odyssey* and Greece. I chose
Hölderlin because of the fascination that Greece and the
Mediterranean had for him" (Mussman, pp. 149-150).

This answer shows Godard's defence of European culture from
Homer's *The Odyssey* to Friedrich Hölderlin (1770-1843) and Paul
Eluard (1895-1952), who is mentioned later on in Godard's answer.
It is obvious that Godard identifies with the spirit and essence of
this culture, whether it is Homer's classic story, Hölderlin's romantic
longing for ancient Greece, or Eluard's modernism. A significant
identification that indirectly describes the substance of Godard's
artistic universe: an exciting mixture of classicism, romanticism and
modernism. In any case, the longing for a new Renaissance is
obvious.

In spite of its apparently classical Hollywood-like style, "Con-
tempt" is a thoroughly European film, dealing with the problems of
art, the problems of creating, and the problems of finding an ade-

quate language, an artistic style. According to Godard, style is the most important thing for an artist, and he undoubtedly found this adequate artistic language in the world of Hölderlin and Lang, which is why they both appear in Godard's meta-film on the shooting of a film. *Contempt* is a fictive documentary on the production of a film, just like Federico Fellini's *8 1/2* (1963), Ingmar Bergman's *Persona* (1966), Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *Beware of a Holy Whore* (1971), François Truffaut's *Day for Night* (1973), Bo Widerberg's *Love 65* (1965), and Nils Malmros's *Aarhus by Night* (1989). A collection of meta-films that constitute a typically European genre, focusing on the genesis of the work of art, thereby rendering visible the fact "that a movie is directed."

The Many Faces of Anna Karina

In a speech delivered at the Cinémathèque Française on the occasion of the Louis Lumière Retrospective in January 1966, Godard praised Henri Langlois for his management of the museum: "The whole world, as you know, envies us this museum. It is not in New York that one can learn how Sternberg invented studio lighting the better to reveal to the world the face of the woman he loved. [...] It is here" (Narboni, p.236). A poetic statement referring to the famous Hollywood couple, Marlene Dietrich & Josef von Sternberg, who collaborated in seven films where von Sternberg directed and his wife had the leading role as the glamorous star: *The Blue Angel* (1930), *Morocco* (1930), *Dishonored* (1931), *Shanghai Express* (1932), *Blonde Venus* (1932), *The Scarlet Empress* (1934), and *The Devil Is a Woman* (1935). This collaboration lasted five years, just like the collaboration between Anna Karina and Jean-Luc Godard from 1960 to 1965.

There is no doubt that in his statement about Sternberg-Dietrich, Godard was also indirectly referring to his own relationship with Anna Karina, as her husband, and as her director in six films portraying the many faces of Anna Karina playing: Veronica Dreyer in *The Little Soldier* (1960), Angela Récamier in *A Woman Is a Woman* (1961), Nana Kleinfrankenheim in *My Life to Live* (1962), Odile in *Band of Outsiders* (1964), Natacha von Braun in *Alphaville* (1965), and Marianne Renoir in *Pierrot le Fou* (1965). Thus, in a slight paraphrase of Godard's comment on von Sternberg's invention of studio lighting, one might say that Godard invented natural lighting "the better to reveal to the world the face of the woman he loved". Still, Godard's attitude to Karina is different from von Sternberg's to Dietrich, especially in his portrait of Nana in *My Life to Live*.

In twelve episodes, or tableaux, Godard's camera catches Nana's figure – her face, her eyes. Filmed on location, in daylight and evening light without using artificial light, from behind, from in front, from the side, from below, and from above – from all sides and angles, as a declaration of love from the director in love. Impressive close-ups of a sensitive face with shy and wary eyes. A face with black hair and effectual makeup. The camera follows her gestures when she is walking in the street, talking with the linguistic philosopher Brice Parain, smoking a cigarette, writing a letter, embracing a customer at the brothel without kissing him, or dancing on her own. The camera adheres to Nana's face to catch her soul behind her hiding look, at the same time as it gently caresses her smooth skin, forcing her to lower her eyes in front of the camera. It is Nana's face that steals the picture. The story about prostitution could be a pretext for telling the story of the beauty of her face.

So in many ways, *My Life to Live* is a tribute to the many faces of Anna Karina: her sad face, her melancholy face, her smiling face, her face with tears in the cinema, watching the suffering face of Falconetti in Carl Th. *Dreyer's The Passion of Joan of Arc* (1928), her face when she is smoking a cigarette, drinking a cup of coffee, or selling a record in the record store where she works before becoming a prostitute – filmed in Coutard's light of day, "the better to reveal to the world the face of the woman" Godard loved. His film is a documentary of all those faces, a catalogue of the different facial expressions of Anna Karina. "When you photograph a face... you photograph the soul behind it... Photography is truth... and the cinema is the truth twenty-four times a second" (Monaco, p. 115), as the reporter and photographer Bruno Forestier says in *The Little Soldier*. This is one of the most commonly cited Godard quotes.

But at the same time, Godard breaks the illusion by commenting on the scenes in the film, and on his job as the director of the film. There is another side to the portrait of his wife, which appears in the scene between Nana and her lover, the young man Luigi, where he reads aloud from Charles Baudelaire's translation of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Oval Portrait," "a story about an artist engaged in paint-

ing a portrait of his wife; he strives for the perfect likeness, but at the moment he finally achieves it his wife dies" (Mussman, p. 98). In parallel with his documentary portraits of Anna Karina, Godard stands out as the maker of his own film, underlining the resemblance between the artist and his wife in Poe's "The Oval Portrait" and his own portrait of his beloved. Godard is present in the film through his voice, which is used when Luigi reads aloud. Thus, Godard recognizes his responsibility for Nana's death at the end of the film. Von Sternberg would never have done this. He would never have demonstrated how art steals the beauty of life for its own purpose, thereby killing life itself. Something like that would have been unthinkable in Hollywood.

In *My Life to Live* Godard constantly reminds us that we are in the process of watching a film. He starts with a proverb by Montaigne: "Lend yourself to others but give yourself to yourself." He reveals himself to us as the director of the film by lending his voice to the young man's reading of Poe's story about the oval portrait, and then he sends his compliments to Truffaut, by letting the moving camera pan over a queue in front of a cinema in Paris that is showing *Jules and Jim* (1961). He also experiments with the sound, changing demonstratively between silent scenes and scenes with sounds, just as he lets Nana look into the camera. All of these things deviate from Hollywood's storytelling technique where the director hides behind the story. In contrast, Godard makes his presence felt all the time as the person behind the film, thus breaking Hollywood's unwritten rule about not revealing oneself as the director. He never lets us forget that we are in the process of seeing a film.

Et ansigt er et ansigt.

Godard's Significance in Film History

The exciting thing about Jean-Luc Godard is that, as well as having made a large number of feature films, of which several can be considered as pioneering masterworks in terms of film history, he also forces the audience to take a stance on the entire history of film, with all its numerous genres and changing styles. What is documentarism? What is fiction? What is montage? What is language? What is consciousness? What is Hollywood? And what is the difference between European cinematic art and Hollywood? All of this has to be addressed and studied in more detail if we want to understand both Godard and film, and who does not want to do that? Reference could also be made here to his gigantic work

"Histoire(s) du Cinéma" (1988-1998), a video series in eight parts, which reviews the entire history of film as seen from Godard's personal point of view.

Godard, or Hans Lucas as he called himself in a period as a critic in the 50s, himself often answers all the questions one can ask of his films, and of cinematic art and art as a whole, in his films, articles and interviews. Occasionally he can be caught in nonsensical contradictions and completely unintelligible formulations, but as a rule he is accurate and penetrating in his interpretation of things. Sometimes seductive, at other times poetically subdued, but always relevant and challenging in his cinematic art and as a writer. Godard always has an opinion about this or that, possessed by an undiminished rage of expression over the years: an opinion about the metaphysical, melancholy and magical tone of Mozart's clarinet, or about Griffith's genius. The most recent reference to Mozart was in the film *For Ever Mozart* (1996).

In 1959 Godard proclaimed: "[...] I think one should mention Griffith in all articles about the cinema: everyone agrees, but everyone forgets none the less. Griffith, therefore, and André Bazin too, for the same reasons [...]" (Narboni, p. 135). And this is what he did in many of his writings. "All you need for a movie is a gun and a girl," is another of Godard's proclamations, referring to Griffith's simplicity in his early experimental cinema, consisting of hundreds of short films made between 1908 and 1913. And this: "My grandmother knew Mozart but not Griffith. Nor my sister. In thirty years all the world will know Griffith because he will be in all the textbooks" (Mussmann, p. 145). This is a funny and poetical statement, but also an eloquent one, especially when you know that Mozart

and Griffith are two of the artists Godard admires most. For ever Mozart. For ever Griffith. For ever Godard.

NB. The stills appearing in this article were taken from *My Life to Live* and *Alphaville*.

Bibliography

Assouline, Pierre. "Entretien – Godard Jean-Luc." *Lire* (Mai 1997), pp. 30-37.

Braudy, Leo and Morris Dickstein (eds.). *Great film directors : a critical anthology*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1978.

Brown, Royal S. (ed.). *Focus on Godard*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972.

Giannetti, Louis D. *Godard and others: essays on film form*. Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1975.

Godard, Jean-Luc. *2 ou 3 choses que je sais d'elle*. Paris: Seuil. Avant-Scène, 1971.

Godard, Jean-Luc. *A woman is a woman; A married woman; Two or three things I know about her : three films*. London: Lorrimer, 1975.

Grøngaard, Peder. "Godards paradokser." *MacGuffin* 18 (1976), pp. 24-42.

Grøngaard, Peder. *Fra Eisenstein til Truffaut: teorier om filmen som kunstart*. København: Akademisk Forlag, 1981.

Monaco, James. *The New Wave : Truffaut, Godard, Chabrol, Rohmer, Rivette*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1976.

Mussman, Toby (ed.). *Jean-Luc Godard: a critical anthology*. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1968.

Narboni, Jean and Tom Milne (eds.). *Godard on Godard: critical writings by Jean-Luc Godard*. London: Secker & Warburg, 1972.

Roud, Richard. *Jean-Luc Godard*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1970.

Sarris, Andrew (ed.). *Hollywood Voices.* London: Secker & Warburg, 1971.

What you see is what you get
Reflections on European and American film practices

Edvin Vestergaard Kau

> To speak of cinema, then, is to speak of the unique way that the cinematic process uses the film material. […] The essential cinematic operation is this sequential linking of spatial images.
>
> Gerald Mast, 1977

Pride or Prejudice?

One way of comparing European and American film could be by examining production methods, company policies, the distribution business, the national and worldwide fate of films in the market place, the competition between Hollywood and smaller national industries, etc. Prototypically, that is. In this vein, we are used to seeing American, commercial products compared to more artistic European works. But, are there not artistic American and commercial European films? So-called independent American experimental efforts versus European-produced speculation in the lowest common denominator? Of course there are.

Then again, one could argue that the market place, distributors' business methods and strategies, and theatres' programs are dominated in many places, not just in the US, but in Europe and on other continents as well, by Hollywood-produced mainstream entertainment, while other national cinemas fall more or less behind at the box office.

It seems that one can detect opposing tendencies everywhere, and not only as a schism between American and European cinema. Certainly, one can see aspirations directed in different directions

along a continuum of film production, with a wide span of mixed grey scale in between. On the one hand, people making films at least primarily motivated by an interest in the medium as an art form, and on the other, people primarily releasing films in the name of the market economy, free enterprise, and unholy greed.

So, either way, comparisons run the risk of merely exercising commonplaces from a familiar, traditional discussion, which has been going on for almost all of the hundred years the film medium has been in business. Nowhere do any of the clear-cut extremes dominate on their own. For instance, artistic ambitions are not the main interest of the American film industry – and commercial enterprise not that of the European.

But what about the films of the two cinemas? How can we make a comparison, while both maintaining characteristics rightly attributed to the films by standard descriptions – and at the same time introducing nuances and some less conventionally focused analyses, that can draw attention to interesting features of both kinds of feature-film fiction? Through a brief discussion of some examples, I will propose some ideas about what is at stake in the grey zone mentioned above, thereby hopefully contributing to a little more confusion – and perhaps reflection – instead of the easy solutions of charting everything in black and white.

Continuity editing. Safety-first within the tradition

What does conventional film language, as seen in mainstream productions, look like? One thing, often mentioned and well known, even in early descriptions by people like Eisenstein, Bazin, and others, is a practice utilizing different ways of securing the coherence of space and chronology within scenes. Developed as a

set of rules of thumb, this approach has been labeled 'continuity editing' or 'seamless editing'. Tradition has it that this has been developed and refined as an editing principle in classic Hollywood cinema, with D.W. Griffith as one of the pioneering figures. These efforts to avoid confusing the audience as to the geography of a scene and the position of things and characters in it are described with great clarity in the book *Film Art. An Introduction* by David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson.[1]

Briefly, it can be summarized as follows. The so-called 180° system calls for the filmmaker to keep the camera solely on one side of the 180° line or axis of action, for instance, the line between two people talking to each other. If the camera (while cutting back and forth between the two) is moved from the half circle or 180° line on one side of the people to the other, the result may look as if one of the characters has turned his back, leaving the other – and confusing the audience. The key concepts of continuity editing, as described by Bordwell & Thompson, can be listed like this: 1. Establishing shot (the room or other space of action is defined, including the position of characters). 2. Shot/reverse-shot (cutting back and forth, e.g., depicting dialogue). 3. Eye-line match (cut from one shot to another, motivated by direction of the character's gaze in the first shot). 4. Match on action (cut motivated by direction and continuity of action between two shots). 5. Match on sound (off-screen sound causes characters to turn in the direction of the sound, and a cut is made to a shot showing the source of the sound). 6. Analytical editing (this very method of choosing parts of what is shown within the established space of action and putting them together in the kind of

---

[1] New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 2001; 6th edition, pp. 262-69.

puzzle described). Finally, we may list as a 7th element the possible cycle of establishing, breaking down, and reestablishing (the established scene is broken down in parts, which are edited together as described, and as another person enters, the characters are redistributed/reestablished in the room, whereupon a new breakdown with an editing series may begin).

Continuity editing's visual style is a kind of stylistic backbone in the greater part of American mainstream film output. If not invented in American cinema, at least it has been cultivated in American studios and used throughout mainstream film narration. At the same time, this is a principle of orchestrating elements of the diegetic worlds of films that has become common practice, certainly in mainstream film, in most countries. Of course it is not only used in dialogue scenes, but in car chases, all kinds of outdoor scenes, in cities as well as in mountains or prairies, etc. In Europe we see it in popular, entertaining movies such as *Germinal*, *Manon des Sources*, *Jean de Florette* (Claude Berri), or *Pelle the Conqueror* (Bille August) to name but a few of the thousands of possibilities. Also, this practice has been developed into assembly-line routine in television sit-com production, soap operas and other types of TV series, because it has clear guidelines and is unmistakable to production people as well as to their audiences.

Traditional practice in experiments

But, perhaps surprisingly, this "safety first" kind of representation is not only characteristic of traditional movies, but very much at the core of editing practices in many films that are otherwise seen as art- or even experimental movies. A few examples: In *The Celebration*

(Thomas Vinterberg, 1998), Helene is reading her dead sister's suicide letter aloud at the dinner table. After this final disclosure of his sexual abuse of his own children, her father demands some wine in order to toast his daughter. This becomes an emotional peak of the movie, because of the rejection and contempt he is confronted with through the silence of the guests as well as his family. The building up of this moment and its tension is thoroughly controlled through the editing practice that meticulously coordinates establishing shots, matches on eye-lines, matches on sounds, shot/reverse-shot directions, a whole range of analytical editing devices.

This is also the case in most of the other scenes. The hand-held dogma footage is held together by artful and very clever editing, to which it owes its impact. The conventional belief in the illusion of realism is abstracted into this editing principle, which may even say more about the artificiality of this illusionist view than about the film itself. Another film that not only plays with the tradition, but also relies, even heavily, on it, is *Pulp Fiction* (Quintin Tarantino, 1994). Every scene in it is edited in accordance with the classical tradition's rules of thumb, and – while also playing around with the narrative patterns – it relies heavily on precisely the knowledge that the audience will put traditional fabula elements in place.

Dancer in the Dark (Lars Trier, 2000) is an avowedly melodramatic story, clearly aiming to stir up the emotions of the audience. This movie being (a kind of) a musical, the interesting thing in that respect is that emotional qualities may not be found in the most elaborate or greatest scenes, or in the dance sequences (musical and

traditionally melodramatic elements). Instead, they are to be found in the more intimate scenes between Selma and other characters. An example would be her relation to the female warder in the prison. But then again, these intimate dialogue scenes belong to the more traditionally edited portions of the film, e.g., with close shots and "naked" voices.

In relation to what has been said above about shot directions, their combinations, and eye-line matches, it is also interesting to note that the editing practice (that is, the manner of telling its story) of this film is almost obsessed with direction of attention. The way both the attentions of the characters and of the camera are foregrounded almost dictates the attention of the audience (or tries to). The camera work and editing are organized around a special variation of continuity, namely the combinations of the directions of the characters' eye-lines as well as their movements, *in spite of* jump cuts, hand-held shaking, violations of the 180° rule, etc. This obsession with attention (the characters', the camera's, the movie's) may even be that which defines its own kind of unity and what it aspires to in its direction of emotional intention and desire.

Telling more through rebellious – as well as traditional – style

On the other hand one can find variations or violations of the rules in traditional films. In *The Maltese Falcon* (1941) John Huston violates the 180° rule if it will add the right mood or suggestion of tension to a scene – without confusing the audience. The experienced film artist is able to articulate the cinematic material in ways that transcend safety-first traditions. Directors such as Dreyer, Kurosawa, and Godard all add to the reservoir of cinematic

potential through their experimentation with editing. People like Melville, Kitano, and Jarmusch sometimes create almost geometrical patterns within their stylized diegetic worlds. Worlds that can only tell their stories because they look the way they do. *Ghost Dog* (Jim Jarmusch, 1999) and *Le Samourai* (Jean-Pierre Melville, 1967), and *Sonatine* (Takeshi Kitano, 1994) all have their own logic and spatial definition. They are unique spatio-temporal constructions (just like movies of the continuity model, as the constructs they are, have their own artificiality, or artfulness, if you like). Most importantly, these very consciously stylized films create a kind of audio-visual aesthetics with its own spatio-temporal logic that demonstrates a vision of the world in which Ghost Dog and Jeff live (not just presenting plots in the form of events as narrative elements).

Even an old classic like *Casablanca* (Michael Curtiz, 1943) uses the continuity editing, the seamless editing, that is supposed to be "invisible," in ways which precisely convey *more* than the mere plot event (the fact that this or that actually happens in the plot line). Take the roulette scene at Rick's Café Américain: if the filmmakers were only interested in relating the fact that Rick helped the Bulgarian couple to win the money for their escape on number 22, it would have been sufficient to show the scene in a long shot, which would give a good view of all the characters involved, and allow us to follow their action and dialogue. But, instead, we are shown a piece of very elaborate analytical editing, with rather sophisticated combinations of pans and trackings, medium and close shots, etc., making the so-called invisible style all but invisible. The way this is told produces levels of psychology that are both something else and

something more than an event you could have read as a description in a synopsis. Thus, even seamless editing can be practiced with a sophistication that makes it do more than ensure a continuity that will not confuse or distract the audience. As William Rothman writes, the meaning of style is the object of investigation:

> The time has come for a re-examination of the whole idea that classical narrative continuity is "illusionistic."[2]

In the classic style, as well as in more experimental or artistic practices, whether in the US, Europe, or elsewhere, it's interesting to examine the cinematic ways of producing meaning, and of capturing and fascinating audiences through controlled patterning of aesthetic choices and emotional engagement in cinematic practices. To find out how this is done in different kinds of films, it is my belief that it is necessary, in Stefan Sharff's words, to examine "uniquely cinematic elements of structure."[3] He also talks about "the primacy of form in cinema as the foremost means of expressing content" (ibid.). To further this inquiry and to better understand some of cinema's "laws of aesthetic organization" (ibid.), he points out on the one hand what is surface, and on the other hand what is in a way superficial, and what is the important object of interest in this respect. To find out how *strictly cinematic elements* are used in movies, it is necessary to view films "in a way which penetrates the *surface components of plot* to delve into the strata of structural elements, the bricks and mortar of cinema." (ibid.; my italics). This is

---

[2] Gerald Mast, "Against 'The System of the Suture,'" in Mast, Cohen and Braudy (eds.), *Film Theory and Criticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 194.
[3] Stefan Sharff, *The Elements of Cinema. Toward a Theory of Cinesthetic Impact* (Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 1.

the center of interest in European popular cinema as well as in American art movies, and vice versa. So, if you look closely: what you see is what you get.

Literature

Bordwell, David & Thompson, Kristin. *Film Art* (6th edition). New York: McGraw-Hill, 2001.

Kau, Edvin. *Dreyers filmkunst*. Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1989.

Mast, Gerald. *Film/Cinema/Movie. A Theory of Experience*. New York: Harper & Row, 1977.

Mast, Cohen & Braudy (eds.). *Film Theory and Criticism* (4th edition). Oxford University Press, 1992.

Sharff, Stefan. *The Elements of Cinema. Toward a Theory of Cinesthetic Impact*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1982.

Always Leave'em Wanting More

Ray Keyes

'Always leave'em wanting more' is the hidden ethic of American cinema (established some time after the maxim, "There's a sucker born every 90 minutes.") and is the result of a tragicomiculture, a culture that identifies with the tragicomic, in which closure is next to impossible (-- is in fact, literally, absurd); such an obsession with ends, end results, bottom lines that nothing can end and everything takes on soap opera-like continuity; and the principle of a curious mechanism that belies the machine, more is less: more fancy footwork, less meaningful discussion afterward leads to a craving for even more fancy footwork. More of almost anything addictive leads to higher tolerance and greater craving; more of anything essentially empty is less than what you will ultimately need.

To address a point made by actor Jeremy Irons, that American films, like expensive prostitutes, offer many things save feeling and true human contact, some American films make one feel too much – that one's feelings are being manipulated. Emotional exploitation and overblown sentimentality, especially with respect to Americana, is Steven Spielberg's trademark and goes all the way back to Frank Capra, and probably farther, but one important thing to note is that Spielberg and Capra are much welcomed, much celebrated anomalies on the American cinematic scene. They are anomalous because their films are so bereft of the near-standard tragicomic irony characteristic of the typical American movie (though there really is no typical American movie as each tragicomic American movie is tragicomic after its own fashion), perhaps exemplified most recently

by the work of the Coen brothers, Joel and Ethan, not quite so recently by the ultra-violent Quentin Tarantino, and assorted creators of edgy, offbeat comic dramas. What makes Spielberg's syrupy sentimentality stand out so much against these is their common distrust of feeling, lack of feeling, subversion of the expected reactive emotions and with it the undercutting of stances, vision, and finality, in the sense of a final statement.

Now irony, while on the surface ruthlessly unfeeling, can run deep, be very real, and very much a part of humanity as well as reality. And a keen sense of irony, or an affinity for it, may be inevitable in a culture that is so new, yet has undergone so much social upheaval; is so full of political correctness and democratic privilege and legally enforced balances, yet fraught with racial tension and class divisions and de facto inequality; has found itself to be the reigning superpower as if by accident, as if it were an undue honor. After all, the United States has no singular cultural roots, only founding fathers together with a few exceedingly high-minded ideals, and is beyond multicultural at this point. So what of its essence can take credit for its outrageous fortune but its ideologies, which have worldly clout and presence only as long as they serve well or remain relevant to the world at large? If success cannot be accounted for or accredited to an innate quality or state of being, it becomes suspect, dubious; achievement is tainted as though there may be some great ironical joke behind it.

What is really ironic though is that a culture so ill-disposed to closure should focus so concertedly on ultimate ends and that that should work to prevent endings altogether and encourage continuity.

An American movie is not a work to be completed but a production. The end results involve, potentially, sequels, videotapes, novelizations, awards, TV movies, made-for-pay-TV series, bankability, advertisability, stars as vehicles, vehicles for stars, reviews and interviews. Now, not to say it is all purely a money machine, there is a tremendous interest these days in the making of movies, in acting techniques, in the creation of scenes and characters, in scripts, but it does not appear to be a terribly artistic interest. More, the interest appears to be in success itself, talent itself, greatness however defined or perceived; that is, in the ends themselves, the ultimate goals or ideals. Whether by watching James Lipton interview Julia Roberts or Christopher Walken on *Inside the Actors Studio* or Oprah Winfrey, Americans search for the keys to that final door to human perfection, or achievement. For this same reason, reality TV shows, like *The Real World*, *Blind Date*, *Big Brother*, and *Survivor*, and pseudo-documentary films like *25 Dates* are watched for other than their voyeuristic value and soap opera-like formula of continuous *Sturm und Drang* and melodramatic cliff-hanging. Often the overall sense may be that there is no door, that it is sealed shut, or that human achievement is oxymoronic, but there seems to be a tremendous need for re-affirmation, relearning, rediscovery of this negation.

Or there could be an extremely positive effect: the contemplation of paragons and epitomes, whether they exist in one instance or another, whether something is or isn't the ultimate in whatever, which is a typically American preoccupation. But this is not fodder for mature discussion at all but the germination of contentions of belief. There is no room for ruminating over gray areas; there are no gray areas and everything is geared toward shutting down discus-

sion by counterexample or disbelief, unless there is some underlying agreement.

Viewing movies as a conversation with an audience, American film accommodates the American mode of discussion, or non-discussion, and gives the audience what it wants: paragons of craft, epitomes of attitude, style and ideology, clashes of opposites, more extreme opposites, more action, more bedazzlement, more and more artistic realism, more and more of whatever can be ratcheted up. Viewers' cravings and tolerance rise and everything is collaborated to death, as no single vision could meet such a series of mechanically incremental demands. It is a mad science of drama, from sequel-producing blockbusters featuring action heroes to the almost embarrassingly large-scale scapes of *Titanic, Saving Private Ryan, The Matrix*, and Oliver Stone. Even the pop-sensational HBO series *The Sopranos* is bursting with layers and conglomerations of conspicuously achieved effects, an orchestrally human, artistic, gritty, humorous, panoramic and exploitative treatment of a crime family, full of excess. Like a drug, people can never get enough, and yet the primary discussions that have sprung up concern the success of the series. More is inexorably less.

This is not a living cinema. It is a dead mechanized hulk. Here, there are no renderers of the inner mind or heart, only knowing engineers of composite dreams, collective consciousness, and fanciful illusions and would-be architect-inventors of themselves.

European versus American storytelling: the case of *The Third Man*

Richard Raskin

In a recent and exceptionally informative book on *The Third Man*,[1] Charles Drazin describes what he sees as a parallel between the American-versus-European polarity within the story told by the film and an opposition of American and European ways in the stormy relationship between its co-producers: David O. Selznik, providing Hollywood stars and money for the production, and Sir Alexander Korda, whose British-Lion company actually made the film, with Carol Reed directing.

---

[1] *In Search of The Third Man* (London: Methuen, 1999).

Ultimately the present article will focus specifically on the ways in which Drazin characterizes the American and European approaches to storytelling, respectively embodied by Selznik and the Korda-Reed team. But before examining and questioning those characterizations, I would like to show briefly how Drazin admirably turns the tables on Carol Reed, and sets the story straight as to the role the much maligned Selznik actually played with respect to the incomparable ending of *The Third Man*.

THE ENDING REVISITED

At the conclusion of Graham Greene's original treatment, Martins and Anna leave the cemetery together, arm in arm, which inspires the narrator (Calloway) to remark that Martins had a way with girls.[2] The film, of course, concludes with a remarkable shot lasting over a minute, with Martins leaning against a wagon in the left foreground as Anna approaches from a great distance, getting progressively closer, and – without so much as a glance in his direction – finally walking past him and out of frame, with the strains of Karas's zither music heard throughout the shot.

Initially, Graham Greene was opposed to this change in the ending of the story, which he believed to be entirely Carol Reed's brainchild.[3] And Reed himself had no qualms about taking full credit for it in an interview he gave in 1974 when he stated:

> At one time it was thought that every picture must end with an embrace so that the audience could go out happy, but I don't

---

[2] Graham Greene, *The Third Man and The Fallen Idol* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, n.d.), p. 119.

[3] "One of the few major disputes between Carol Reed and myself concerned the ending, and he was proved triumphantly right. I held the view that an entertainment of this kind was too light an affair to carry the weight of an unhappy ending …" Preface to *The Third Man*, in Greene's *Ways of Escape* (London: The Bodley Head, 1980), p. 124. A less complete version of this text is included in 1950 Heinemann and subsequent Penguin editions of *The Third Man and The Fallen Idol*.

> think that's what it did. A picture should end as it has to. I don't think anything in life ends 'right'[...] In *The Third Man*, Graham Greene wanted Joseph Cotton to overtake Valli in that car; then the film would finish with the couple walking down the road. I insisted that she pass him by. David Selznick had some money in the film (I think it took care of Cotten and Orson Welles' valet). I must say he was very nice and appreciative about the picture as soon as he saw it, but he said, "Jeezes, couldn't we make a shot where the girl gets together with the fella?" "It was in the original script," I said. "We chucked it out." "I'm not sure. It was a good idea." But I mean, the whole point with the Valli character in that film is that she'd experienced a fatal love – and then along comes this silly American![4]

Widely quoted by virtually all subsequent commentators on *The Third Man* (including myself[5]), this statement led people to believe that the London production team, headed by Reed and Korda, *intelligently* understood that the story required an unhappy ending, while Selznik, as though deliberately living up to a vulgar Hollywood stereotype, *inanely* pressed for a happy one.

And this is where Drazin's research set the record straight. He read Carol Reed's two-page summary of the so-called "Bermuda meeting" which took place on that island in May of 1948, when *The Third Man* was still in pre-production. The purpose of that meeting, in which Selznik, Korda and Reed participated, was to reach agreement on the story and various production issues. With respect to the ending, Reed himself wrote in his notes:

> [Selznick] felt that it was a great pity that at the end of the story Rollo [the original name for Holly Martins] and the girl Anna should finish together; we should go from the cemetery scene to Anna going a way by herself.
>
> Selznick felt this very strongly, that Anna's love for Harry Lime should be fatal, especially since it seems

---

[4]Charles Thomas Samuels, *Encountering Directors* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1974), pp. 169-170.

[5] Richard Raskin, "Closure in *The Third Man*: On the Dynamics of an Unhappy Ending." *p.o.v.* number 2 (December 1996), pp. 101-119.

> impossible for her to be with Rollo immediately after the shooting of her lover.[6]

And so it turns out that the American producer, David O. Selznik, was the one who first suggested that Holly *not* get the girl at the end, though Reed would later claim credit for that idea and depict Selznik as foolishly opposed to it.

Drazin deserves great appreciation for setting the record straight, and giving credit where credit is due, especially since Reed's remarks on the ending can be taken to imply that underlying the disagreement as to how the film should conclude, was *an opposition between American simple-mindedness and European sophistication*.

Yet, with regard to other aspects of *The Third Man*, as I would now like to show with two concrete examples, Drazin himself buys into that same caricature of American-versus-European approaches to storytelling.

THE FIGURE IN THE DOORWAY

One of the most memorable entrances of any film character, is the shot of Harry Lime (Orson Welles), suddenly illuminated as he stands in a doorway, across from Anna's apartment, about an hour into the film. In the screen-play, there is no explanation as to why Lime is standing there at that moment, and this bothered Selznik who

---

[6] Drazin (op. cit.), p. 23. These notes are on file in the British Film Institute Library Special Collection of the Carol Reed Papers.

went to great lengths to patch up what he perceived to be holes in the story. Harry Lime turning up outside Anna's apartment building, his face suddenly lit up in a doorway, may have provided one of the greatest entrances in movie history, but Selznick wanted to know what he was doing there. He suggested that some explanatory dialogue should later be added in the Great Wheel scene:

MARTINS: What were you doing outside Anna's house?
LIME: Well, I've always had a secret spot in my heart for Anna. I miss her.
MARTINS: That doesn't go down with me, Harry. You were going to turn her over to the Russians, weren't you?
LIME: Yes, as a matter of fact I was.[7]

So far, so good. It is instructive to know about such discussions along the way. But let's take a close look at the far-reaching conclusions Drazin draws from this suggestion made by Selznik:

In this prosaic exchange, which would of course be left out of the final film, there lay a fault-line between two cultures – a European feel for paradox and mystery versus an American urge to explain. In this Cinema of Answers, there must be no scope for ambiguity, the heroes must be heroes, and the villains clearly villains (p. 36).

Without defending Selznik's suggestion, though I doubt acquiescence to it would have damaged the film in any way, I would like to point out that there is an odd disproportion between the minor addition Selznik wanted in this connection and the invective Drazin feels justified in directing at American culture, on the basis of that suggestion.

I am not suggesting that Drazin should have kept his views to himself or that he did not have every right to express them as he saw fit. My point is that the scope of his reaction is incommensurate with the shortcoming at hand (assuming that Selznik was wrong),

---

[7] Drazin, p. 36.

and that the very disproportion between the two is itself a sign worth taking into account.

THE OPENING VOICE-OVER

The Third Man that was released in the U.S. in February 1950 was not identical to *The Third Man* that had opened in London in September of 1949. The main difference lay in the opening voice-over. In the European version (which today is the only one available in the U.S. as well), the text is spoken by Carol Reed, while in the American version, a slightly modified text is spoken by Joseph Cotten. Here are the two versions of the voice-over text, aligned for easy comparison:

EUROPEAN VERSION
Carol Reed voice-over

I never knew the old Vienna before the war with its Strauss music, its glamour and its easy charm. Constantinople suited me better. I really got to know it in the classic period of the black market. We'd run anything if people wanted it enough – mmm – had the money to pay. Of course a situation like that does tempt amateurs. But, well, you know, they can't stay the course like a professional.

Now the city, it's divided into four zones, you know, each occupied by a power, the American, the British, the Russian and the French. But the centre of the city, that's international, policed by an international patrol, one member of each of the four powers. Wonderful. What a hope they had, all strangers to the place, and none of them could speak the same language, except a sort of smattering of German. Good fellows on the whole, did their best you know.

AMERICAN VERSION
Joseph Cotten voice-over

I never knew the old Vienna before the war with its Strauss music, its glamour and its easy charm. I really got to know it in the classic period of the black market. They could get anything if people wanted it enough. Of course a situation like that does tempt amateurs. But you know of course they don't last long, not really, not like professionals.

Now the city's divided into four zones, you know, American, British, Russian and French. But the center of the city, that's international, policed by an international patrol, one member of each of the four powers. Wonderful. You can imagine what a chance they had, all of them strangers to the place, and no two of them speaking the same language. But they were good fellows on the whole and did their best.

Vienna doesn't really look any worse than a lot of other European cities, bombed about a bit.	Vienna doesn't look any worse than a lot of other European cities, bombed a little of course.
Oh, I was going to tell you, wait, I was going to tell you about Holly Martins, an American. Came all the way to visit a friend of his. The name was Lime. Harry Lime. Now Martins was broke and Lime had offered him some sort, I don't know, some sort of a job. Anyway, there he was, poor chap, happy as a lark and without a cent.	Anyway, I was dead broke when I got to Vienna. A close pal of mine had wired me offering me a job doing publicity work for some kind of a charity he was running. I'm a writer, name's Martins, Holly Martins. Anyway down I came all the way to old Vienna happy as a lark and without a dime.

Once again, it may well be that the original text is superior to the modified one, though the differences between the two are hardly earth-shaking. The fact that only the British version has survived would certainly suggest that it was the better one. But look closely at the extensive conclusions Drazin draws from the minor differences between the two:

> Now [in the American version] everything is established, and all mystery eliminated, as Holly Martins takes control of his own story. The worldly unknown British voice with a dubious past becomes the known and down-to-earth American one. You can't imagine Holly Martins ever having been within a million miles of Constantinople. Oklahoma suited him better. A startling, offbeat and ironic beginning becomes a humourless and conventional opening to a Hollywood thriller, with no more purpose than to establish the scene. Everything is just what it is. To Holly Martins the military police in Vienna really are 'good fellows on the whole doing their best'. The ambiguity and delicious mischief of the original are lost. Anything irregular or slightly irreverent is straightened out. The insouciant understatement of 'bombed about a bit' becomes the prosaic 'bombed a little of course'. Even the casual, conversational tone now seems false. For there's nothing spontaneous about the introduction now, it's just the hero telling his story.
>
> The British introduction opens up the imagination; the American one closes it down. The changes are very small – just the odd rephrasing here and there, a few words cut – but they reflect the vast gulf between British irony and the Hollywood need for clarity and reassurance. In the American version you know that Martins is going to be around in the end. In the British one, there's every possibility that he might not be (pp. 125-126).

CONCLUSIONS

The changes in the voice-over text which Drazin acknowledges to be "very small," are nevertheless ascribed a vast scope of meaning, totally out of proportion with their importance.

The following table summarizes some of the differences they – as well as Selznik's suggestion concerning the "figure in the doorway" scene – represent for Drazin:

American cinema	European cinema
Closes down the imagination Urge to explain Cinema of Answers All mystery eliminated Everything established Everything is just what it is Heroes must be heroes and the villains clearly villains	Opens up the imagination Feel for paradox and mystery Scope for ambiguity Room for uncertainty, for the unknown
Hollywood need for clarity and reassurance	British irony Understatement
Prosaic, humourless, conventional	Startling, off-beat, ironic
Anything irregular or slightly irreverent is straightened out	Room for the irregular and irreverent, for delicious mischief

That this paradigm for contrasting styles of cinematic storytelling could be disengaged from the minor differences on which it is based – such as "bombed a little of course" instead of "bombed about a bit" – is indeed extraordinary, and suggests that the paradigm was there to begin with, and that differences were subsequently found to justify it as best they could. That is, after all, the way cultural stereotypes generally work.

Instead of taking the overall stance that *The Third Man* became a great film despite the interference of a meddling American

producer, and that European storytelling is exciting while American storytelling is pap, I would suggest that among the reasons for which *The Third Man* is in fact a masterpiece, is the interplay within the film of the best of American and European storytelling, the best of American and European acting, and even the best of European and American production styles and values.

Here, as is so often the case with narratives of any kind, a model which allows for the dynamic interplay of opposite approaches may have more to offer than one which defines alternate approaches as mutually exclusive and promotes one at the expense of the other.

Bibliography

Adamson, Judith. *Graham Greene and the Cinema*. Norman, Oklahoma: Pilgrim Books, 1984.

Adamson, Judy and Philip Stratford. "Looking for the Third Man on the Trail in Texas, New York, Hollywood," *Encounter* (June 1978), pp. 39-46.

Clem. "The Third Man," *Variety* (7 September 1949).

Carpenter, Lynette. "I Never Knew the Old Vienna: Cold War Politics and *The Third Man*," *Film Criticism* (1978),

Cook, Christopher. "Hijacking *The Third Man*," *Listener* 116, 2991 (18-25 December 1986).

Cotten, Joseph. *Vanity Will Get You Somewhere*. 1987.

Crosby, John. "The Second Man," *Observer* (1 June 1969).

Crowther, Bosley. "The Third Man," *New York Times* (3 February 1950).

Denby, David. "Night World" in *Favorite Movies. Critics' Choice*, ed. Philip Nobile. New York: Macmillan, 1973, pp. 87-96.

Drazin, Charles. *In Search of The Third Man*. London: Methuen, 1999.

Driver, Paul. "A Third Man Cento," *Sight and Sound* 59, 1 (Winter 1989/90), pp. 36-41.

Falk, Quentin. *Travels in Greeneland. The Cinema of Graham Greene.* London & New York: Quartet Books, 1990; orig. pub. 1984.

Gomez, Joseph A. "*The Third Man*: Capturing the Visual Essence of Literary Conception," *Literature/Film Quarterly* 2, 4 (Autumn 1974), pp. 334 -340.

Greene, Graham. "Sir Alexander Korda," *Sight and Sound* 25, 4 (Spring 1956), pp. 214-215.

Greene, Graham. *The Third Man* and *The Fallen Idol*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, n.d.

Greene, Graham. *The Third Man*. London: Faber and Faber, 1988; orig. pub. 1973.

Greene, Graham. *The Third Man*. New York: Bantam Books, 1962; orig. pub. 1950.

Greene, Graham. *Ways of Escape*. London: The Bodley Head, 1980.

Lambert, Gavin. "The Third Man," *Monthly Film Bulletin* 16, 189 (September 1949), p. 159.

Man, Glenn K. S. "*The Third Man*: Pulp Fiction and Art Film," *Literature/Film Quarterly* 21, 3 (1993), pp. 171-177.

Manvell, Roger. *The Film and the Public*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1955.

McFarlane, Brian. "*The Third Man*: Context, Text and Intertextuality," *Metro Magazine* 92 (Summer 1993), pp. 16-26.

Moss, Robert F. *The Films of Carol Reed*. London: Macmillan, 1987.

Palmer, James W. and Michael M. Riley. "The Lone Rider in Vienna: Myth and Meaning in *The Third Man*," *Literature/Film Quarterly* 8, 1 (1980), pp. 14-21.

Parkinson, David (ed.). *Mornings in the Dark. The Graham Greene Film Reader*. Manchester: Carcanet, 1993.

Pogue, Leland. "*The Third Man*" in *International Dictionary of Films and Filmmakers*, vol. 1: *Films*. Chicago: St. James Press, 1984; pp. 891-2.

Raskin, Richard. "Closure in *The Third Man:* on the dynamics of an unhappy ending," *p.o.v. – A Danish Journal of Film Studies* 2 (December 1996), pp. 101-119.

Raskin, Richard. "On the Unhappy Ending of *The Third Man*," *The University of Aarhus Yearbook 1996-1997*, pp. 3-5.

Samuels, Charles Thomas. *Encountering Directors*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1974.

Sarris, Andrew. "Carol Reed in the Context of His Time," *Film Culture* 3, 1 (1957), pp. 11-15.

Sarris, Andrew. "First of the Realists. An Analysis of Carol Reed's Work for the Cinema (Part I)," *Films and Filming* 3, 12 (September 1957), pp. 9-10, 32.

Sarris, Andrew. "The Stylist Goes to Hollywood. An Analysis of Carol Reed's Work for the Cinema (Part II)," *Films and Filming* 4, 1 (October 1957), pp. 11-12, 30.

Taylor, John Russell (ed.). *The Pleasure Dome. Graham Greene: The Collected Film Criticism 1935-1940*. London: Secker & Warburg, 1972.

Van Wert, William F. "Narrative Structure in *The Third Man*," *Literature/Film Quarterly* 2, 4 (Autumn 1974), pp. 341-346.

Voigt, Michael. "Pictures of Innocence: Sir Carol Reed," *Focus on Film* 17 (Spring 1974), pp. 17-34.

Wapshott, Nicholas. *The Man Between. A Biography of Carol Reed*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1990.

Winner, Michael. "Every Shadow Tells a Story," *Independent* (7 October 1994), p. 24.

Wright, Basil. "A Study of Carol Reed" in *The Year's Work in Film 1949*, ed. Roger Manvell. London: Longmans, Green, 1950; pp. 11-22.

Guilty Pleasures[1]

Niels Weisberg

> ...when I saw *Lilith* I said to my wife, "We've just seen Robert Rossen's last film. When a man achieves that degree of perfection, he has to die. As Becker did after *Le Trou*." And now he is dead. When I told Lino Ventura that Rossen was a little old man over sixty years old, he just couldn't believe it.
> "What? The man who made *The Hustler*?" He was right, of course: *The Hustler* was the work of a thirty-year old.
>
> Jean Pierre Melville (1968)

> …*Vincent, François, Paul et les autres* is life; and Claude Sautet is vitality.
>
> François Truffaut (1974)

In the introduction to their recent book, *European Cinema*, Jill Forbes and Sarah Street deal with aspects of the relationship between European and American cinema. They admit that their undertaking is complex: "…the central question which this book raises but naturally does not answer: What, if any, are the common features of European cinema?"[2] And they ask other questions, e.g. "Is European cinema a collection of national cinemas, some more vibrant and successful than others?… (D)oes the more open narrative often

---

[1] The title of this article on two of my favourite movies is taken from *Film Comment*'s series of articles by various people writing about their favourite movies.

Being an elderly, happily married man I shall refrain from commenting on Mr. Irons' sexual observations as printed on p. 5. However, should an innocent young student happen to read this issue of *p.o.v.*, may I point out that Mr. Irons's parts in rather dubious film productions such as Malle's *Damage*, Cronenberg's *M. Butterfly*, and Lyne's *Lolita* do not necessarily vouch for sound judgement.

[2] Jill Forbes & Sarah Street (eds.), *European Cinema. An Introduction*. Palgrave 2000, p.xii f.

favoured in European cinema allow for more mobile conceptions than elsewhere?…Is it, as Nowell-Smith suggests, wedded to realism?"

Two years earlier in his introduction to *Hollywood & Europe*,[3] Geoffrey Nowell-Smith had argued that post-war European cinema, threatened by the fact that Hollywood was (and is) the biggest fabricator of fantasy, had responded by offering counter-fantasy (e.g. comedies, horror), but more often than not

> realism, a commodity deeply rooted in European culture and well adapted to the circumstances in which the industries found themselves. It could be inexpensively improvised. It suited a tradition in which artists were respected as individual purveyors of truth, and it offered a national-cultural distinctiveness, a mirror of everyday reality not provided by the fantasy factory.

(Besides realism, Nowell-Smith argues that European cinema offered "an alternation between modernism and "heritage" filtered through the classics of European literature.")

In the post-war decades, the European art film with its loose narration, ambiguous characters and open ending was seen as more realistic than Hollywood's classic norm: tight, goal-oriented, cause-effect narration. The art film had subjects from everyday life, ordinary people in unglamorous, ordinary settings, often (relatively) unknown actors enacting parts as anti-heroes rather than traditional heroes, engaged in realistic (i.e. uncensored) sexual relations.

The art film was only a part – and a small part – of European film production, since the popular genres attracted a bigger audience, but the art film was better subsidized by the state, promoted at festivals and exported.

---

[3] Geoffrey Nowell-Smith & Steven Ricci (eds.), *Hollywood & Europe. Economics, Culture, National Identity 1946-95*. British Film Institute 1998, p. 13.

And this has led to the assumption that art cinema is too heterogenous to be considered as a genre analogous to the tradional ones; perhaps it is better to explain it as a marketing device, played in art cinemas, and seen due to its foreignness, so much more as "it is perfectly possible, indeed quite common, for a film which is sold as "popular" in its home territory to be designated "art" when exported."[4]

Two more factors – which could be termed cross-fertilization – complicated the relationship between the two continents further: there has been a steady influx of European film-makers to Hollywood since the 1920s – and many American film-makers have acknowledged their inspiration from European cinema.

Thus the division of Europe into a number of national states, each with its own cultural characteristics, and the low distribution of European films in Europe itself (only 10 per cent of European films are screened in another European country) make a definition of *one* European cinema too diffuse and heterogeneous in the attempt to characterize the relationship between Hollywood and European cinema in any other way than already stated – in other words: industrial big business film production versus small, craft-based productions partly seen as "an artistic alternative to crass commercialism."[5]

Instead I will draw attention to two movies, sadly neglected in Anglo-American film literature.[6]

---

[4] Jill Forbes & Sarah Street (2000) p. 40.
[5] Ibid., p. 42

Vincent, François, Paul et les autres **(Claude Sautet, France 1974)**

This film is about three middle-aged men, all facing a mid-life crisis. They are frustrated by how badly they have realized themselves – and by how frayed their friendship has become in spite of their mutual Sundays together.

Vincent (Yves Montand) owns a small machine shop, but faces bankruptcy. His young mistress leaves him, and his wife, from whom he is separated, wants a divorce (the film is somewhat ambiguous about the cause, though most certainly he is the one to blame).

François (Michel Piccoli), a doctor, lives in a chilly marriage with his wife and children; she openly cheats on him, and his reserve and cynicism, a cover for his trading the ideals of his youth for money, put a strain on the friendship.

Paul suffers from writer's block after his first successful novel and now makes a living by writing second-rate articles.

So they all try to adapt to what they have become and the uncertain future ahead of them – by accepting their tragic shortcomings and by admitting that they must give up their hopeless struggles.

Their wives all seem much stronger and wiser than they are (a theme which Sautet returns to four years later in *Une histoire simple*).[7]

Paul is the only one of the friends who has a warm, solid relationship with his wife, and therefore (or is it the other way

---

[6] Neither film is included in the BFI 360 classic films list. In recent Danish film literature Chr. Braad Thomsen includes *The Hustler* in his book *Drømmefilm*, Gyldendal 2000, p. 171-174.

[7] Could this be Sautet's comment on the 70s as the decade of masculinity in crisis and of emerging feminism?

round?) he confides his failure as a writer to her, and she accepts it without reservations.

François's wife leaves him because their marriage is beyond repair and because she falls in love with another man, but François, accepting his failure, slowly opens up to his friends and places new confidence and strength in their friendship.

Before his final decision to sell his machine shop, Vincent visits his wife – almost by instinct as a last way out. Though she refuses to resume their marriage, she offers him financial help.

Failure, in one way or another, is common to all three friends – old age is just around the corner, and real happiness is only a memory. In a brilliant scene Vincent looks at an old photograph of the three friends, young and smiling, dancing with their wives, and for a glorious moment the black-and-white photo becomes alive – with music. But the next moment, after an ugly cut, Vincent – and we – are back in troublesome everyday reality.

This melancholic, episodic, slice-of-life film ends in a beautifully relaxed and somewhat optimistic tone: without money and his machine shop, without his wife or his mistress, without any guarantee of seeing the next morning dawn (a heart attack was a warning) Vincent gives up fighting against his hopeless situation, against time.

Instead he decides to live – with his friends and with the small though somewhat unrealistic hope that one day his wife may return to him: because – in the words with which Sautet has him end the film – "On ne sait pas, avec la vie" (You never know, about life).

The Hustler **(Robert Rossen, USA 1961)**

The structure of this film is organized around a number of pool games – five altogether – that turn out to be decisive for Fast Eddie Felson (Paul Newman). They demonstrate his obvious talent for playing pool, but at the same time they reveal his (lack of) character. Like a classical drama, the film can be divided into five acts, each ending with a game of pool.

The main theme of the film is a young poolplayer's ambition for success, for becoming the best, and for earning big money. The consequences of his ambition are the loss of friendship (Charlie/ Myron McCormick), the loss of love (Sarah/Piper Laurie) and finally his dehumanization (Bert/George C. Scott).

Sarah and Bert become the expression of two opposing instincts – or forces – in Eddie's life, and in the way it solves the conflict the film demonstrates that those instincts cannot be reconciled. Thus the film is in line with a great many American films having the same theme/conflict. Most often the films will focus on the "winner" and the consequences of success and money that he (very seldom *she)* suffers as a result, namely loneliness, insecurity, and grief.

The opposite of this is the happiness that the individual may obtain through a modest (bourgeois) life, based on love, compassion, and frugality. This conflict/contradiction is a classic in Hollywood ideology: it serves as compensation and comfort for everyone who has not obtained the wealth and success which is invariably shown as the greatest goal in life – the fulfillment of the American Dream.

By definition, as it were, the "winner" must be a bad guy, for only through recklessness and callousness can material goals be reached. Paradoxically, some "winners," namely the nice heroes (e.g. Eddie),

actually can obtain success while simultaneously remaining decent human beings. This conflict /contradiction is – like the myth of the poor rich villain – also a staple in Hollywood ideology. A case in point is the Western hero who even though he may be forced into becoming a murderer, and as such adopting the methods of the villains (but being better than them, of course) still remains ″innocent″. His moral integrity is not tainted by murder since he fights for the common good!

In *The Hustler*, Bert Gordon is the classic ″winner″ – and thus also ″loser″ in terms of humanity. As arch-villain, he alone bears all the blame. He is the embodiment of the struggle for power, the power of the game, over other human beings, the power that money can buy. He is the brutal ringleader, the capitalist who uses other men's talents and creativity for his own personal ends and economic gain. His impotent relationship to other people is evident in his apparently joyless seduction of Sarah and in his insecurity when confronted by Eddie with her suicide during his final game against Minnesota Fats (Jackie Gleason).

Sarah, his opposite, represents the love and humaneness that perish when confronted with him. In one of the only scenes set in outdoor surroundings, far above the city, Eddie has just had the plaster removed from his hands, and here Sarah shows her understanding of how important it is to Eddie to reach for the top as a pool player: She alone sees his enthusiasm at mastering the art of playing as something which is valid in itself because it gives life meaning.[8]

---

[8] In the same scene Rossen expertly suggest that their affair is doomed: in the beginning of the scene they are shown *together* in two-shots, but from Sarah's line ″You're not a loser, Eddie. You're a winner,″ Rossen cuts between them in

In contrast to Bert, however, she is not characterized as being unambiguously "good"; her loneliness in the small, cluttered apartment, her fondness for drinking, her life-lies (e.g. about the wealthy lover) and her latent self-destruction (which manifests itself after she has given herself to Bert) turn her into a character more complex than the stock "innocent" heroine. Her physical handicap, her limp, becomes the symbol of her existence. Contrary to the male protagonists who are mentally handicapped, her handicap is visible. But her deep understanding of Eddie and her exposure of Bert gives her superiority over them, just like her ambition of becoming a writer establishes her as their opposite. However, she does not have the strength to go against their male world, and her final message, written in large letters on the mirror: *perverted, twisted, crippled* is both a verdict on herself as well as on the world that Bert represents.

Through Sarah's death, Eddie – who throughout the film constantly has been called a "loser" by Bert – wins a victory which raises him above the traditional "winner-loser" level. The victory at pool over the old master Minnesota Fats reestablishes his status as a true Hollywood hero: by withdrawing from the game as the master he may, almost magically, retain his innocence – after having regained it. Neither his status as hero nor his role as redeemer of the inherent contradictions of the myth will ever be questioned.

Obviously Bert Gordon plays a crucial role in Eddie's life, but other men play important roles too, especially Minnesota Fats, Eddie's great idol. In spite of the fact that he has sold his soul to Bert, Minnesota Fats still emerges as a positive figure because of his humanity, his fair-play attitude and his prowess at pool. Charlie,

---

single close-ups – and they are not shown together in the same frame any more in this scene.

Eddie's first teacher and "manager," is a discount version of Eddie with regard to talent and ambition, and in the film he is one of the "costs " of Eddie's striving for success. He – as well as Bert – may be interpreted as *father figures* , but primarily Minnesota Fats is such a figure (Cf the anagram Fats-Fast! ("Fast Eddie")). Eddie must beat this father figure in order to be able to develop as a human being, as a man, and as a player. The game against Findley in Louisville can be interpreted as the final step but one in his progress towards male independence. The homoerotic tendencies of the character of Findley are hinted at, e.g. through the decor of his billiards room and through his southern accent, which also connotes decadence. Eddie's victory over him represents victory over the "feminine" side of Eddie's personality (in the terminology of the film: the loser side). Eddie has passed his rite of initiation and his final victory over Minnesota Fats is the logical confirmation of this. He is able to break loose from the corrupt/corrupting world of pool, and his subsequent exclusion from this world is thus not necessarily tragical.

The world of pool is an extreme male universe – complete with homosexual overtones, as mentioned above – and with its underlining of traditional male values: competition, the importance of winning (cf the popular saying "Winning is not important… it's everything"!), the respect paid to professional skills, but also the acceptance of "hustling" as a legitimate behaviour.

The closed world of pool is a sports world in which the inherent ideology is (male) competition as the foundation of life, and victory as its highest goal. The sports world becomes a metaphor for American capitalist society. All through the film Bert is the evil capitalist – and in the end he becomes even more disgusting by

banning Eddie from all big pool halls in the USA (for life) – the capitalist has also become an imperialist. In her showdown with Bert at the hotel in Louisville, Sarah remarks that Bert was "a Roman." Thus Eddie's struggle for independence becomes a political, democratic struggle, worth fighting, even though the ending very realistically – and pessimistically – shows us that the struggle has very high costs.

This denunciation of American ideology no doubt reflects Rossen's important position as one of the key screenwriters of Warner Brothers' social-problem pictures of the 30s, which were critical of the economic and social injustice of contemporary society, and his subsequent personal involvement in the HUAC hearings.[9]

Son of *The Hustler.*

European art cinema has a certain tendency toward social-critical films, but more as the works of a group of directors (e.g. Visconti, Godard, Widerberg, Loach) than as a general tendency. Hollywood producers focusing on the bottom line have almost suppressed left-wing tendencies,[10] and the man to follow in Rossen's footsteps must surely be Oliver Stone. In what other American mainstream directors' films can you find lines like: "The richest one-per-cent of this country owns half our country's wealth" (*Wall Street*) and "You're not naive enough to think we're living in a democracy, are you?" (*Wall Street*) and "The government tricked them (the soldiers) into going 13,000 miles to fight a war against a poor peasant people with a proud history of resistance, who have been struggling for their own independence for a thousand years. I can't find the words

---

[9] Cf Alan Casty, *The Films of Robert Rossen*. Museum of Modern Art, 1969, pp. 28-32.

to express how the leadership of this government sickens me…"
(*Born on the Fourth of July*).

Robin Wood, in an (as always) excellent article,[11] has stated
about Stone:

> (I)n the most literal sense, his work so far is structured precisely
> on the absence of an available political alternative, which could
> only be a commitment to what is most deeply and hysterically
> tabu in American culture, a form of Marxist socialism. There is a
> curious paradox here which Americans seem reluctant to notice:
> Lincoln's famous formula, supposedly one of the foundations of
> American political ideology, "Government of the people, by the
> people and for the people," could only be realized in a system
> dubbed, above all else, "un-American" (American capitalism, as
> Stone sees very clearly, is government *by* the rich and powerful
> *for* the rich and the powerful).

To reserve the term "art cinema" for European films alone is totally
misleading, if by art is meant an artistic standard. What is important
is the relevance of a film's message and the craft with which this
message is told by its director and crew.

---

[10] Rossen wrote, directed and produced *The Hustler* on the East coast.
[11] Robin Wood's article on Oliver Stone in Nicholas Thomas (ed), *International Dictionary of Films and Filmmakers*, vol. 2, (2. Edition), London, St James Press, 1991, p. 808-810. Cf also the expanded version, "Radicalism and Popular Cinema – The Films of Oliver Stone" in *cineACTION* no. 23, Winter 1990-91, pp. 60-69.

Entertainment Talk on Television

Hanne Bruun

The entertainment talk show has been thriving on Danish television since the deregulation of television systems all over Western Europe in the late eighties. This deregulation brought about the creation of new television channels, and competition, as well as a change in scheduling and programming on Danish public service television (H. Bruun 2000). The emergence of a multi-channel environment and the changes in public service television have been widely discussed in the public debate as well as analyzed in media research (H. Søndergaard 2000). The changes in scheduling and programming are often seen as a result of the commercialization of television in Denmark, and commercialization is in turn often equated with an Americanization of television.

Another way to describe the development in scheduling and programming, not so charged with a negative view operating according to a single logic, is offered by the British media researcher Paddy Scannell. In his analysis of British broadcasting he uses the term *the communicative ethos*, and the term is used to describe a development over the years towards an increasingly genre-conscious and medium-conscious television and radio production in Great Britain (Scannell 1996:20).

In particular, this development has resulted in changes in the way the audience is addressed in broadcasting. Commercialization and the influence of American television are of cause acknowledged in Scannell's analysis, but so are the development of professional skills

and the changes from a paternalistic to a much more egalitarian tone in public service broadcasting as well as in society at large.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the term communicative ethos is also applicable to the changes that have taken place in Danish television. The influence and inspiration from American entertainment talk shows like *Johnny Carson*, *David Letterman* and *Jay Leno* is clearly discernible in the various ways in which the communicative ethos of Danish public television has changed. Nevertheless, there are significant differences between American and Danish entertainment talk shows. In the following, these differences will be investigated in some detail, in an effort to clarify the process of adaptation whereby the American form has become part of Danish public service television.

Broadly speaking one could say that while these shows clearly portray the characteristics of the American entertainment talk show, they are also marked by traditional journalistic ideals, mostly applicable to news journalism, and they are marked by a tradition of broadcasting portraits of celebrities instead of talk shows. To exemplify this process of adaptation I will take a close look at a short interview from a *David Letterman Show* and compare its characteristics to those of Danish entertainment talk shows like *Meyerheim after Eight* (TV 2 1993-94), *Jarl's* (DR 1994), *Dario's Joint* (TV 2 1998), and *Bertelsen* (DR2 1999-2000).

In his useful and insightful book on television genres, the American media researcher Brian G. Rose focuses specifically on the entertainment talk show (Rose 1985). Since the early days of television in the USA, the entertainment talk show has been popular. Rose points to its defining features: it is either live or live-on-tape; the show takes place in a television studio before a studio

audience as well as before the television audience; the entertainment talk show features a studio host and celebrity guests; and the content of the show is dominated by talk, with the interview being the way in which most of the talk is managed. Rose goes on to consider why the genre has been able to gain such popularity over the years when it is so extremely simplistic compared to other television genres. Of the various explanations that Rose gives, two in particular are worth highlighting: the sense of immediacy and the feelings of sociability that these shows offer their viewers. The shows are about personalities in a staged atmosphere of politeness and geniality and the relationship between the host and his guests is easily compared to a light-hearted conversation at a party. Familiarity, cheerfulness and pleasantry as well as a mildly teasing tone underlining an informal and unplanned keying of the interaction, are typical of the entertainment talk show.

How these qualities become entertaining for the viewers, and not just boring superficial pieces of interaction between a host and a celebrity guest can be illustrated by an interview in a *David Letterman Show* broadcast on the Danish channel 3+ on February 13, 1998. The guest in the interview is the young American actor Ethan Hawke, and his presence on the show is motivated by his leading role in a then newly-released film based on Dickens' novel *Great Expectations*. But even though the guest is a well-known actor, the host of the show, David Letterman, is extremely important, and he is the major source of the entertaining qualities in the show – not the various guests. Letterman and his staging of the predictable elements of the show create the entertaining qualities. In addition to the band leader with whom he has a kind of love-hate relationship Letterman makes use of a range of other devices that add

entertaining qualities, such as the comic monologue opening each show. All these elements contribute to the entertainment value of the show. But Letterman's most important tools by far are his own personality, his looks and his facial expressions, in all of which Letterman's past as a stand-up comedian can clearly be seen. Indeed, his ironic and sometimes sarcastic attitude when looking into the camera and commenting on American political and social issues makes it important to not just listen to Letterman, but to look at him as well. The guests on the programs are in many ways secondary to the host because of these characteristics. Even though the show seems so very host-dominated, the talk show is still a profitable way for the entertainment industry and its celebrities to cooperate with the television industry in order to create television content and commercials rolled into one.

In the interview with Ethan Hawke, Letterman turns the marketing strategy of the film industry into a funny and benevolent verbal competition between himself and his guest. The fun is created through the way the interview is staged and from what lies between the lines in the interaction between the two men. Taken on the surface, the interview is dull and is mostly about Hawke's wife, the actress Uma Thurman, and how Hawke met her, and a little bit about the film. I would like to describe Letterman's interview strategy as one of 'non-verbal subtitling,' the source of which is Letterman's approach to Hawke, in which he utilizes two conflicting elements. First of all, Hawke is a man who looks extremely young, and he behaves as if he is rather nervous. But secondly, Hawke is actually famous, and he is also going to marry a famous actress with a sophisticated image, and furthermore they are expecting a baby.

The interview is therefore really about the following themes which, however, are never directly addressed:

• The first theme is *potency*: Letterman tries to cast Hawke in the role of a child, certainly not a grown man who is sexually active and appreciates women in the same way Letterman does. On the whole, Hawke is not to be regarded as a rival. The theme emerges from Letterman's giving the impression that he is very, very fond of Hawke's partner Uma Thurman by wanting to talk about her most of the time. Furthermore, he is eager to talk about all the (real) men interested in Uma Thurman, and how Ethan Hawke feels about that, for instance Mick Jagger's phone calls to Thurman. The potency-theme underlies Letterman's reactions to Hawke's narrative of how he met Uma Thurman in which Letterman directs attention to the fifty-year old man that she was with at that time.

• The second theme is that of *power*: Letterman is much older than his guest, and the age difference is used by Letterman to cast himself in the role of a moral authority on correct behavior, with Hawke in the role of an inexperienced boy who still has to be morally guided and corrected in an exaggerated patronizing way. Letterman calls his guest 'son' several times, and an example illustrating this subtitle is shown in the following pictures and verbal interaction from a clip where Letterman talks to Hawke in this avuncular manner, using the power-subtitle:

Letterman: Uma Thurman has
been on the show many, many
times…

…and by the way, when she is
here, she sits up straight!

(Loud applause and laughter
from the audience.)

The conflict between Letterman as libertine and as guide to correct
behavior is obvious.

• The third theme is that of *status*: Letterman is the host and in
charge of the show, but he is perhaps also more famous and there-

fore of a higher status than Hawke. Instead of being polite, as might be expected of a host in a position like that, Letterman is deliberately insensitive toward his guest. For instance, his frequent underlining of how often Uma Thurman has been a guest, while this show is Hawke's first appearance, is an example of the status theme in the short interview. In this way, Letterman indirectly positions Ethan Hawke as a lower-ranking person, and himself as snob.

The three subtitles are simultaneously present in the interaction, and the guest plays along, accepts the casting, and fights back, winning some of the verbal battles with the host. An example is a sequence where the two men are talking about Hawke and Thurman not being married, though expecting a baby. Letterman says "I just assumed that since you are having a baby, you were married?" and Hawke replies "Yes you... and my father!" with an eloquent look at the studio audience. Hawke responds both to the power theme and to the potency theme in his little remark, and Letterman gets cast as the old-fashioned moralizer as well as an old man, indirectly a sexually unimportant man.

The interview strategy of 'non-verbal subtitling' and the way the guest plays along, turn the short interview into a piece of lively, unpredictable interaction in the otherwise perhaps all too predictable structure of the entertainment talk show. The talk gives the impression of being spontaneous, is full of irony and a tone of mutual friendly teasing and respect. In many ways the interaction has qualities quite similar to the fast verbal humor of the situation comedy. The point is that the fun in the interviews of the *David Letterman Show* (if you find it funny) is typically a result of

Letterman's non-verbal subtitles in the interviews and the guests' ability to respond to them.

The interview strategy of the Danish entertainment talk shows like *Meyerheim After Eight* or *Jarl's* has typically been rather different from the characteristics illustrated by the interview in the *David Letterman Show*. The host will play a much more subdued and traditional role as the journalistic interviewer, and his personality is not the main source of the entertainment.

In many ways the hosts of the Danish entertainment talk shows have been marked by the journalistic ideal of focusing on the *issue* rather than on the personality of the presenter or on the interaction in itself and the relationship with the viewers. This has been the style of the Danish shows even in a program like *Dario's Joint* (TV 2 1998), hosted by the well-known stand-up comedian Casper Christensen. In short: all the important elements of the American shows are toned down in the Danish shows. Because of the staging of the hosts, the celebrity guests on the Danish shows are to deliver the entertainment, and the shows typically contain a lengthy narrative about the life history of the celebrity guest.

In short, the guest's personality and life story are almost the sole content of the show, not the interaction between the host and the guest as in the American entertainment talk show. The Danish entertainment shows, in contrast to their American counterparts, offer portraits of the celebrity guests. In this respect the Danish shows draw on a long public service television tradition of broadcasting portraits of celebrities. Whether the narrative is funny and entertaining or not, is not the responsibility of the hosts, but of the celebrity guests: if the guest is funny and entertaining, the show

will be too. The entertainment is not the task of the personality of the host or of the interview-strategy.

In combining some of the characteristics of classic American entertainment talk shows with a more traditional journalistic interviewer portraying the celebrity guest, the Danish entertainment talk show has run into some problems. Due to the relatively small number of celebrities as well as the limited size of the entertainment industry in Denmark, the 'sources' of this kind of talk show are in constant danger of dying out. It thus seems even more important to find talk show hosts capable of delivering the entertaining qualities themselves.

If the host is the most important content of the show, *dependency* on the guests will be much less, and the kind of guests *usable* for the entertainment talk show will increase. At the moment, these problems in Danish television are pushing the genre in two different directions.

An example of the first direction is Danish television making an entertainment talk show and taking into account all the characteristics of the American versions in its staging of the host and the interview style. The show was called *Bertelsen* (DR2 1999-2000), and in many ways it points to future Danish entertainment talk shows developing in the direction of the classic American form.

Another line of development, however, involves trying to hold on to the tradition of the television portrait. Recently, TV 2 in particular has been dealing with the shortage of good entertainment talk show hosts by combining the entertainment talk show with the game show in the two very successful programs, *Den Store Klassefest* (*The Class Reunion*) and *Venner for Livet* (*Friends for Life*). In both shows, the game provides a portrait of the celebrities from new

angles, thus avoiding the problem of the audience's having repeatedly heard the life story of all the celebrities in Denmark.

To conclude: the adaptation of the entertainment talk show is not a simple story of the Americanization of Danish public service television, but of a national adaptation of an (in many ways) international television genre, much to the benefit of the viewers of entertainment television.

Literature
Bruun, Hanne. "Eleva2ren – TV 2 og talkshowet" in H. Bruun (ed.)
    TV 2 på Skærmen – analyser af TV 2's programvirksomhed.
    Copenhagen: Samfundslitteratur, 2000.
Rose, Brian G. "The Talk Show" in Brian G. Rose (ed.) *TV Genres. A
    handbook and reference guide*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press,
    1985.
Scannell, Paddy. *Radio, Television and modern life*. Oxford: Blackwell,
    1996.
Søndergaard, Henrik. "TV 2 som hybridkanal" in H. Bruun (ed.) *TV
    2 på Skærmen – analyser af TV 2's programvirksomhed*. Copenhagen:
    Samfundslitteratur, 2000.

Radio With Pictures

Nancy Graham Holm

European television news is fundamentally different from North American. Canadians and Americans believe they have a superior model and they look disdainfully upon Europe's old-fashioned style as "radio with pictures." Behind the cosmetic and technical differences, however, lies a significant question. How much consideration should be given to *fascination*?

The Early Industry

During the years prior to World War Two, television news was invented by a group of Englishmen at the BBC. They came from a broadcasting industry world famous for its free press radio journalism and throughout the 1930's they expanded and developed their craft by adding pictures. People normally like to do what they do well and since reading aloud was their talent, they now linked pictures together and read over the top, calling the new technique a "voice-over" or VO. The war itself accelerated this new form of popular communication and thousands of British citizens flocked to movie theaters to watch newsreels of distant battles and political negotiations. The same development occurred in America and anyone born before 1950 can well remember "Movietone News." Deep resonant "radio voices" read bulletins while black and white pictures flashed across the screen and dramatic music bridged the segments.

The post war generations continued to develop television news. During Europe's economic recovery, other nations established their

own industries and by 1960, most European cultures had some form of TV news. The BBC in England set the standard and until the middle 60's, most modern industrialized nations simply copied its style. "Rip and read" was common in many newsrooms as wire copy was torn from the machines and handed to the announcers who read over the top of pictures. Eventually, new styles were developed and journalists started producing stories from research. New techniques for shooting pictures were made possible by the replacement of fixed lenses with the variable lens. The development of the film industry influenced editing styles and new ways were invented to cover edits in interviews. Slowly and gradually, television journalism invented itself.

Public Service or Commercial Sponsorship?

Most European nations adopted the public service model of television programming. Production costs were paid by the taxpayer and broadcasting was perceived as a service to the public on behalf of the government. Across the Atlantic, the very word "government" was controversial in a nation that prided itself on rugged individualism, minimal government and laissez-faire capitalism. The majority of Americans didn't want broadcasting to be a public service. They wanted both radio and television programs to be commercially sponsored and independent of government "control." This attitude is the fundamental reason that American TV news is different from European. When programs are commercially sponsored, viewers become consumers and rating points dictate the price of airtime. Pleasing the audience becomes the major consideration. Getting and holding their attention means catering to their tastes. It is not surprising that American broadcasters are

continually experimenting with new production ideas to win audiences from their competitors.

As commercialization enters the broadcasting profession throughout Europe, many of the traditional public service practices are changing. English independent broadcasters such as Sky Television, for example, have adopted many of the American practices. In Germany, both commercial stations have adopted American practices and TV news in Germany looks very similar to what you see in the USA.

What Are the Differences?

I. Pictures and Sound

Television is a visual medium and there are two ways that pictures can be used. The most obvious way is to use pictures as an illustration of the same words that are used to tell the story. A second way is to have the pictures themselves tell the story. In Europe, pictures are used to illustrate. In addition, ever since the invention of the variable lens, a majority of the pictures in most European countries are shot in pans and zooms.

American TV journalists, however, often work with pictures that are shot in sequences using cinematic grammar of an establishing shot, a series of medium shots and inter-cuts to close-ups. Before writing the script, the following questions are asked: what do the pictures say? What do the pictures *help me* to say? What do the pictures *force me* to say? Pictures give *what*. Words give *why*.

Two other differences are obvious. In European news, the pictures used to illustrate words are often without sound. Airplanes, automobiles, heavy machinery and crowds of people in a street are

dead silent. Only the visual part is used. Secondly, the "voice-over" narration from the journalist is descriptive, wordy and often redundant. *"The general stepped out of the helicopter and was greeted by a cheering crowd."* Wordy VO's require time to speak them. Consequently, the reading tempo is usually exceedingly rapid, what Americans call "machine gun" reads. This is especially true of French, Italian and Spanish VO's and also in Slovakia and The Czech Republic. There is no discernible tempo and most words receive equal emphasis.

In American news stories, natural sound is always present. Dogs bark, doors slam, engines roar and lightning crashes. The VO is *minimal*, written to support the pictures. Pauses of natural sound are used to give texture and emotion. Journalists do not speak rapidly but in a conversational style. Instead of linking pictures first and then talking "over the top," the pictures are edited *to* the audio track, matching energy on word emphasis and picture change while allowing for pauses of natural sound.

Many European TV news producers are well aware of this style but resist the model as "too American." Traditionally, a nation's educated elite manages public service broadcasting and these policy makers are suspicious of emotions in a news story. Many TV managers come from the print media and they know intuitively that words are intellectual while images and sound are emotional. In spite of the fact that television *is* a visual medium, they philosophically favor words over sounds and visual impressions. This attitude has prevented European television news from using the medium's true potential.

II. The Use of the Interview

Another major difference between European and American news styles is in the use of the on-camera interview. Europeans tend to use lengthy segments from interviews, often running from :25 to 1:30. This is another practice from radio journalism and precludes the journalist from telling the story. In contrast, American TV news uses the interview first as research and then as *documentation*. After an assertive statement, a "sound bite" is used either as support or color, limited to :05-:15. The first documents the statement made by the journalist. The second adds feeling and emotion. Veterans of European TV journalism detest the "sound bite" because it is inherently superficial.

Historically, European newspapers represented different political parties. When broadcast news was developed, European TV journalists became neutral "information facilitators," presenting one side and then the other through lengthy interviews. Like postmen delivering letters, they merely delivered the story. Americans want their journalists to take responsibility for the story by *synthesizing* and *interpreting* the information accumulated through research interviews. "Interpretation" is not acceptable for many European TV journalists.

III. News Formats

Television newscasts are produced with a variety of formats. (1) a "reader" is a story that exists simply as a script *without pictures* that the newscaster reads live from the television studio. (2) a VO SOT is a news report composed of a voice-over narration with visuals followed by a pre-recorded interview and then more videotaped scenes. (SOT is an abbreviation for "sound on tape.") (3) A

"package" is an edited, self-contained report with pictures, a voice-over narration, edited sound bites and natural sounds. (4) an "intro to a live shot" is similar to a "reader" and is used to link the studio to a reporter who is at a remote location.

In Europe, newscasts are composed of readers, VO SOT's and intros to live shots using satellite technology that link the studio anchor to the field journalist. There are also ENG (electronic news gathering) stories that are field produced but they are, by American standards, incomplete. With the two exceptions of Germany and Great Britain, the concept of "the package" is not known in Europe. On the contrary, European newscasts often use the studio anchor to tell 15-25% of a story before the field report is even introduced. The taped story abruptly ends and it is the studio anchor who finishes the report. Americans invented the "package" to maximize the use of pictures and natural sound. They believe that using a studio anchor to tell a "television story" is a wasted opportunity to use visuals; another form of "radio with pictures."

The "package" is a used for both hard news stories and soft features and is usually 1:30-3:00. Hard news is the standard *who, what, when, where,* and *why?* A feature is a "soft" story of human interest, designed to entertain viewers and distract them momentarily from the serious facts of hard news. As a format, "the package" is a demanding piece of work requiring production time and teamwork between the journalist, photographer and editor. It also requires "information handling" by the assignment editor and newscast producers who must decide which story deserves a "package" and which ones do not.

The whole story is presented as a self-contained "package" from which it gets its name and it has a distinctive form with four parts. It

starts with natural sound as a "hook," following with a presentation of the "context" and then an "unfolding" in which the facts of the story are revealed. It finishes with a "wrap" or recapitulation of the main points and the consequences of the problem. The journalist frequently gives the "wrap" in a "stand-up" to camera. The studio anchor does not tell the story but gives a provocative introduction and perhaps one or two new facts at the end of the story, if an update is necessary. America's regional TV organizations usually have 4-6 newscasts a day. Each newscast is designed to meet a particular audience based on marketing research. Early evening newscasts are often 50-60% packages with a minimum of VO SOTs and an increasing number of "live" remotes. Later news programs between 21:00 and 23:00, have fewer packages and more VO SOTS.

The "package" is used extensively in Great Britain and Germany but not universally. German television news is produced on both commercial and public service channels. The commercial stations have adopted many of America's formats and some observers say they are now "more American than America."

IV. Other Formats

A. *The Narrative*. Hard news and soft features are only one type of TV journalism. Within the last fifteen years, a new form has developed in America called "the narrative" story. Championed by the National Press Photographers Association and taught every March in Norman, Oklahoma, this type of TV journalism follows the structure of a screenplay instead of the traditional basic news model developed by the BBC. The narrative story uses character, plot and motivation allowing the viewer to *experience* the story. For example, the story "fog at the airport detains travelers" is told through impa-

tient unruly children, tired adults and bored passengers who try to find ways to pass the time. The narrative model is used effectively in a newscast as a follow-up story and it is not intended to be a substitute for hard news. Compared to a news story, it runs long: 4:00-6:00. This narrative form is virtually unknown in Europe with the exception of Denmark where it was adopted in the mid 90's. It requires skill, however, and early attempts have been clumsy, often resulting in a confusing blend of two forms. The Danish School of Journalism teaches the narrative model and eventually it will become standard practice in news magazine programs.

B. *TV Editorial.* This is an opinion piece and the TV counterpart to the leaders that appear on the opinion page of a newspaper. It is the opinion of the broadcast management of the station and usually given by the General Manager or the Editorial Director. It is produced like a "package" and invites rebuttals of alternative points of view. Many regional American TV stations produce editorials but it is an endangered species. Editorials are never sponsored and sales departments lust after the 1:00 spots, feeling that it is lost revenue to the station. The TV editorial is never done in Europe and is sometimes criticized by European journalists as "propaganda."

C. *The TV documentary.* Originally produced on 16mm film and now on videotape, this is the long format of TV journalism and the highest expression of information programming. Filmmaker, Haskell Wexler is, perhaps, one of America's most famous documentary makers and his 1969 *Medium Cool* is an American classic. Today, Wexler and others are appreciated more in Europe than in America where the documentary is not just an endangered species but a dead one.

America's Public Broadcasting System (PBS) gives airtime to various documentaries but they are not seen by more than a minuscule of the viewing audience. Americans are just not interested in this long format, claiming that they are categorically boring. In contrast, Europeans still like the documentary and it is not unusual for them to be scheduled during prime time on major stations. One possible explanation for this is that American documentary makers tend to be intellectuals, disdainful of techniques that are used to make TV "popular." Often their production techniques are "old fashioned" and information intensive, the very opposite of that which makes American TV news different from European.

V. The Role of the Journalist

There are four ways a TV journalist can appear on-camera. (1) in a "stand-up," i.e., talking directly to the viewer. (2) as a listening shot to cover a jump-cut in an interview. (3) as a participant in the interview by asking a question that is then edited into the story. (4) in a set-up shot, walking with the interview subject on camera.

America's on-camera reporters frequently appear inside TV packages: in "stand-ups," in walking n'talking set-up shots, asking on-camera questions and in cut-way listening shots. If the stand-up comes at the end of the package, the journalist signs off with his or her name. Focus groups and other marketing research confirms that Americans like to have favorite reporters and loyalty to certain programs are determined by the ability of these performers to form relationships with the viewers. The celebrated news and public affairs program "60 Minutes" uses the journalist extensively and Europeans often criticize this practice, calling it excessive, unnecessary and even "absurd."

While it's possible to generalize about visuals and interviews in European TV news, generalizations are not possible about the role of the TV journalist. How much and how often a journalist appears on camera are culturally determined and Europe's nations have different cultural values. Until recently, for example, modest Danes wanted their TV journalists to be invisible. In Denmark only the studio anchor appeared on the screen and field journalists were considered egotistical if they appeared in stories. Today, you can see the reporter in a Danish news story but only if he or she is reporting from a foreign country.

In nations where modesty is not a cultural value, the situation is entirely different. In Italy, France, the Netherlands, Great Britain and Spain, for example, TV reporters frequently appear in stories. This is also true in Central European cultures such as Slovakia or The Czech Republic where reporters are *always* seen, sometimes more than once. In England, the "stand-up" is called "piece to camera" and it is used either to finish a story or as a bridge between story segments. Likewise, the cut-away shot of the journalist listening has been widely used and the British call it a "noddy" because the person's head usually nods while listening. In addition, it is not unusual to see a British journalist walking to establish location or asking an on-camera question. England's reporters always sign off with their names. On Germany's commercial channels, TV reporters appear in stand-ups, reverse listening shots, on-camera questions and sign off with their names. On the older, more conservative public service channels, however, German on-camera reporters appear only in stand-ups and the never "sign off" using their names.

The cosmetic appearance of European TV journalists is also culturally determined. In Holland, for example, it is not particularly important for on-camera reporters to be well groomed. The Dutch enjoy "casual appearances," feeling that journalists should look like "real people." This is also true in Denmark. On-camera performers often look haggard and excessively casual. Inside the studio, technicians light space not people and women and men who are handsome in person can look surprisingly unattractive on-camera and older than they are. In the Mediterranean cultures, however, *bella figura* is important. Both men and women must be well dressed with stylish hairstyles, attractive accessories and television makeup. Italians love beauty and it violates their cultural sensibilities to look unkempt and sloppy casual. Inside the studio, technicians light for faces and anchors are "beautiful people."

In America, the TV journalist is a magnet for viewers. On camera presence, style and behavior are an essential part of a TV journalists's training and no one is allowed to appear on camera without performance skills. Commercially sponsored news programs rely on these individuals to attract viewers and they are often carefully promoted through advertising and public service campaigns. Websites for different TV stations include profiles of their reporters and their extraordinary salaries reflect their status and contribution to the station's ratings. In this way, America's TV journalists are "media stars" and their on-camera presence is often more important than their journalism skills. In the 1987 film, *Broadcast News*, Holly Hunter played a smart behind-the-news field producer to the cosmetically appealing but not so smart William Hurt. Many broadcasting stations use these intelligent and competent field producers behind the scenes when they lack camera presence.

Information, Identification and Fascination

Traditional European TV journalism focused primarily on informa-
tion. The old guard at the BBC were information masters and they
believed that they knew best what people needed to know. Today,
modern Western societies are more democratic and people need to
identify with the information that is given to them. News is no
longer elitist but popular. What the Americans did was add a third
element: *fascination*. Sometime in the 1960's they learned that ordi-
nary people respond to sight, sound and movement and when TV
stories are fascinating, they watch and they remember.

Fascination developed through a more cinematic use of pictures
and natural sound; by shortening interviews; by developing new
formats that allowed for flexibility and creativity; and by using on-
camera personalities to attract viewers. As a result, American jour-
nalism today is often confused with *infortainment*. Europeans are
skeptical and rightly so. The issue is not fascination, however, but
the *types* of stories that are told.

The decisions start at "the morning meeting" and the assignment
desk. When important stories are not produced because they're
boring issues, citizens are cheated out of information they need to
know. On the other hand, when "boring but important" stories are
included in the newscast but not told with fascination, people do not
pay attention and even when they do, they don't remember what
they learned. The challenge is to learn how to produce TV reports
with as much fascination as possible while retaining a high content
of information. It can be done. European TV news doesn't have to be
"radio with pictures."

Transatlantic Blues, Music Across the Divide(s).

Cultural appropriation or the communication of essentials?

Henrik Bødker

Comparisons of cultural products are usually undergirded by notions of center and periphery. When an American version of a European film is found lacking, it is arguably because its authentic core of complex human nuances of behavior and expression is thought to have been watered down, thinned out and brutalized by a (much more) commercial mode of production, catering to a (much wider) audience, capable only of digesting something written in capital letters. The European center's auteur and his artistic endeavors have been torn apart on the periphery´s assembly line and focus group. This move from emotional and artistic content to presumed impact is thus simultaneously a move from one notion of reception to another.

When it comes to comparisons of popular music, the situation is somewhat similar, yet also rather different. Not only is the core of authenticity here often located within the US, but the actual divisions underlying the comparison are more complicated than something that can simply be conceptualized along a Euro-American scale running from notions of romantic/individual artistry to commercial speculation.

While most (if not all) transatlantic cultural issues relating to the US and Europe in one way or another are deeply enmeshed in the trappings of race, this is an especially pointed question when it comes to popular music, and even more so when one focuses upon the blues genre. Although the North-Atlantic as a cultural divide

plays into this discussion, the major division underlying comparisons is often one of color, experience, and history. This is mainly so for two reasons: firstly, because the blues almost invariably is identified as a specifically African-American cultural form; and secondly, because music in general (and perhaps blues in particular) is thought to be an emotional form of expression, deeply linked to feelings of communion and/or community. Although cultural comparisons often focus on the actual cultural artifacts, i.e. the productions, the two reasons listed here also direct our attention towards processes of reception. Thus, rather than comparing, for instance, B.B. King and Eric Clapton, the following is an attempt to sketch in rather broad terms the cultural issues arising from non-African-American, i.e. Euro-American or European receptions of blues music.

Seen from this perspective, the first of the two reasons listed above points towards the notion of appropriation and/or projection, while the second points towards notions of communication. Given the complexities and historical specificities of such cross-cultural productions and receptions, it must be pointed out that this (almost classical) hermeneutic opposition is merely applied as a heuristic device, meant to structure the ensuing discussion. Obviously, such a question can only be answered with any precision with regard to specific contexts and usages. Such local explanations will, however, in turn be highly dependent upon how one perceives the nature of the underlying racial, cultural and commercial divides. Hopefully, the following may help in charting some of these.

Basically the projection/appropriation position argues – in the words of Daniel Lieberfeld – that "[b]ecause of blues culture´s commercialization and accompanying loss of social context, the

white imagination ignores or romanticizes the poverty, violence and endurance that bred and fed the blues."[1] From this perspective, the "cross-over" from local, specific communities to the (white) mainstream is interpreted wholly in terms of loss and damage.[2] While denying and/or romanticizing the original context, many blues lovers simultaneously adhere to a liberal notion or ideal of color-blindness. What has been rightfully stressed is that the "common" and the "color-blind" often have been and are heavily instilled with an unspoken normative that may be termed "whiteness," i.e. the "unmarked category against which difference is constructed": "whiteness never has to speak its name, never has to acknowledge its role as an organizing principle in social and cultural relations."[3]

Thus, while the ideal of color-blindness can serve as an admirable goal, it is simultaneously – or can be – a denial and/or confusion. "[M]uch is overlooked," says Patricia J. Williams, "in the move to undo that which clearly and unfortunately matters just by labeling it that which 'makes no difference.'"[4] There is of course a big difference between saying that it ought not to make any difference and saying that it makes no difference. And it is obviously much easier to adhere to the notion of "no difference" if one´s daily social

---

[1] Daniel Lieberfeld, "Million-Dollar Juke Joint: Commodifying Blues Culture," *African American Review*, vol. 29, issue 2 (Summer 1995), p. 220.

[2] The title of Reebee Garofalo´s article "Black Popular Music: Crossing over or going under?" basically refers to the projection/communication dichotomy upon which I structure my essay. For more on the "cross-over debate," see Garofalo in Tony Bennet et al. (eds.) *Rock and Popular Music: Politics, Policies, Institutions* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 231-248.

[3] George Lipsitz, "The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: Racialized Social Democracy and the 'White' Problem in American Studies," *American Quarterly*, Vol. 47, No. 3 (September 1995), p. 369.

[4] Patricia J. Williams, *Seeing a Color-Blind Future: The Paradox of Race* (New York: The Noonday Press), p. 4.

experience does not contradict that. It is, in other words, fairly easy to claim a common humanity and no difference as a white blues-lover living in Europe, while simultaneously adhering to notions of solidarity excluding any complicity in actual racial power relations. "[W]e can all," says Williams, "be lulled rather too easily into a self-congratulatory stance of preached universalism."[5] In other words, "the racial specter" lies underneath, or is the "common-sense opinion that what distinguishes the musically racial from the non-racial is as simple as telling the difference between black and white."[6] The (color-blind) romanticization is consequently connected to what Daniel Lieberfeld calls the "fantasy element" of white attraction to the blues, and which "shows up a desire for limited contact with select decontextualized aspects of African-American culture, rather than with all its complexity and internal diversity," an argument also made by George Lipsitz.[7]

The various strands of the appropriation argument indeed highlight important (ethical) implications of cross-cultural (media) consumption, aspects that often have remained unquestioned in broader cultural settings outside academia. What might be questioned, however, is the underlying normative "mode" of reception in which a cultural product or artifact should be appropriated with "all [the] complexity and internal diversity" of its underlying culture, as Lipsitz argues. Seen from this perspective, there is a correct as well as a range of incorrect readings of the blues: the correct one is a nuanced historical/sociological/contextual

---

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 5.
[6] Ronald Radano & Philip V. Bohlman, "Introduction: Music and Race, Their Past, Their Presence," in Ronald Radano & Philip V. Bohlman (eds.), *Music and the Racial Imagination* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 1.
[7] Lieberfeld , *op.cit.*, p. 219.

(academic) reading (often an ideal of objectivist hermeneutics as well as the pragmatics of communication), while the wrong ones are cultural and contextual uses serving contemporary individual or group needs. The division that Lipsitz falls back on here is in many ways similar to the workings of what has been called the rock ideology (or polemic) and in relation to which – in the words of Keir Keightley – rock fans´ "claim to 'superior' musical taste involves making serious judgements about popular music, drawing on an awareness of that music´s social contexts. [And] this awareness is seen as lacking in the fans of other mainstream music."[8] This form of exclusivity is indeed an ethical judgement based upon superior knowledge (and pleasure?).

It is still, of course, understandable that many African-Americans, who have lived very closely with blues music – in both a historical and contemporary sense – should feel that its appropriation by whites is degrading, misleading and a theft of both recognition and money, especially considering that the genealogy of African-American music is – in the words of Kalamu ya Salaam – a "nonverbal language" expressing "our worldly concerns, as well as our spiritual aspirations" outside the standard language dominated by whites. Indeed, if blues and other African-American "'music' is where our [African-American] soul is," as Salaam continues, and "African-American music... is like a flag nation for black Americans" (as Henry Daniels points out), no wonder that strong proprietary feelings abound.[9] It is uncertain, however, how precisely

---

[8] Keir Keightley, "Reconsidering rock," in Simon Frith, Will Straw and John Street (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Pop and Rock* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 111.

[9] Kalamu ya Salaam, "It didn´t Jes Grew: The Social and Aesthetic Significance of African American Music," *African American Review* , vol. 29, issue 2 (Summer,

this usage is affected by the appropriation by the surrounding society. Surely the (mainly recorded) music used by whites is different, and of course partly made precisely for that very market. In other words, how does the appropriation reflect back upon the communities in which the blues have a historical anchoring?

Although the historical and social relations underlying the appropriation argument are fully understandable, one should not forget that the (post-)modern world of globally distributed popular culture, in which cultural artifacts become increasingly deterritorialized, looks and functions very differently from settings in which certain musical styles were organically embedded in bounded communities. In a global setting, actual day-to-day readings of popular culture may be very far from the contextual and sociological readings called for by Lipsitz, for instance. How many can attest to a continuous process where they appropriate Hollywood movies through a thorough knowledge of the historical complexities of the multifarious power relations characterizing that production milieu? Surely not many. For the majority of users of popular culture, there are other things on the agenda. And this leads us to the question of communication.

First, we have to consider the argument (which goes together with the notion of appropriation) that the blues – like other African-American musical genres – were "developed as a language of communication and cultural affirmation among ourselves and specifically for ourselves," but simultaneously embodied an "outward" message of resistance, opposition and negation. The question is thus whether any cross-racial communication is possible beyond such

---

1995), pp. 352-353; Douglas Henry Daniels, "The Significance of Blues for American History," *Journal of Negro History*, vil. 70, issue 1/2 (Winter-Spring,

"cultural warfare," and if so, how may we describe it.[10] It might be inserted here that, unless one adheres to a notion of unhindered, one-to-one communication, there will always be a measure of projection and/or contextual reading in any act of communication. Obviously, the stark contrast in living conditions, culture and consciousness between an African-American living in Chicago and a blues-lover in Copenhagen cannot be evened out by a three-minute blues-track. But does that exclude any form of communication? Obviously, in order to answer that in the affirmative, one has to relinquish the ideal of a nuanced sociological reading, and for that matter, the ideal of a reconstruction of the actual individual experience underlying the music. But what is left if we do that?

Looking at music as a language of communication, one could argue – along with Anthony Storr – that what matters in music is the "general state of arousal and its simultaneity" rather than specific emotions.[11] In fact, Storr argues that arousal is not specific to particular emotions. Arousal can thus be both pleasurable and the opposite, and part of the musical "experience is likely to be derived from the projection [of the listener´s] own emotions rather than being solely a direct consequence of the music."[12] Yet evidence shows, says Storr, that the "general emotional tone of a piece of music will probably be similarly perceived by different listeners."[13]

Thus, if we take the various characteristics of African-American music that Salaam outlines – loud (disruptive), raw, bluesy and iconoclastic – as the "tone" of the arousal, one could argue for a non-

---

1985, p. 14.
[10] Salaam, *op. cit.*, p. 354.
[11] Anthony Storr, *Music and the Mind* (London: HarperCollins, 1992), pp. 30-31.
[12] *Ibid.*, p. 70.
[13] *Ibid.*, p. 30.

African-American reception by analogy or homology, in which known emotions are projected unto and/or recognized in the actual musical expression. If music is basically thought of as a "means of sharing emotion through physical arousal," what is shared is, at one level, a range of emotions within the receiving community as well as some basic tone of arousal with the originator or originating context.[14] This does of course not mean any objectivist/essential hermeneutic move in which the suffering and hardships of Robert Johnson, for instance, become available in some phenomenological way. What it means is that the actual "feel" of the music, the very physicality of the music – that which had developed against a more "refined," dominant music – has constituted the very axis of communication. In terms of communication, rhythm is rooted in the body and therefore recognizable, says Storr.[15] And it is indeed ironic that rhythm, which in the words of Salaam, became "one of the major cultural battlegrounds," was the very characteristic that initially paved the way for white appropriation of the blues.

It was thus partly some basic commonality of shared feelings of entrapment, chaos and opposition to convention – a youth-based notion of "marginality" – as embodied in both the listeners and the music (the ways it was ingrained in the musical tone) that allowed the blues to cross boundaries. The two questions with which I started can therefore not be separated, in the sense that it was the very success of the music as communication that allowed its appropriation; these two aspects were thus intricately linked right from the start. The very form and texture of the music, its physical nature, rooted in rhythm, rawness and loudness, secured it a place among

---

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 5.
[15] *Ibid.*, p. 32

white adolescents, who on this level could successfully "recognize" the music and its feel and drive, while simultaneously being largely unaware of its deeper social implications. However, says Keightley, "[t]his sense of difference, of 'otherness', allowed youth to imagine affinities with the cultures of disempowered minorities" and "rock processes each [perceived marginality] as a surface sign of distinctive difference, to be grafted onto the mass marginality of youth."[16]

But this does not necessarily make white experiences of black music inauthentic or superficial. Obviously, as Lipsitz argues, the "current commercial value of the crossroads story [in relation to Robert Johnson] depends in no small measure on the ways it erases its cultural origins and suppresses its original social intentions;"[17] but so does almost any 'commercial value,' and that underlying many whites' appropriation of (African-)American 'authenticity' is no exception. The various mechanisms that eventually have brought a range of American commodities within the reach of European consumers are premised on a suppression of 'cultural origins' and 'original social intentions' – anything that reaches so far can hardly retain its original 'grounding.'

What this means is that the usage of blues by whites – in the US and Europe – in a sense is both appropriation and communication. The very emotions instigated by the music are real and authentic, in the sense that they speak to actual problems and experiences. Against this Lipsitz argues, with regard to the white romanticization of black blues, that white

---

[16] Keightley, *op.cit.*, p. 125.
[17] George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment: How White People Profit from Identity Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), p. 119.

> [a]udiences and critics want to 'own' the pleasures and powers of popular music without embracing the commercial and industrial matrices in which they are embedded; they want to imagine that art that they have discovered through commercial culture is somehow better that commercial culture itself, that their investment in the music grants them an immunity from the embarrassing manipulation, pandering, and trivialization of culture intrinsic to a market society.[18]

And there is certainly some truth to such arguments, although one should be careful not to fall back upon romanticized notions of authenticity existing solely outside economic transactions. In continuation of that, one might even accuse such an argument of being rather condescending in its positing of a personal, privileged access to expressions denied others (like the "authentic" traveler versus the manipulated tourist). Lipsitz, secure in his ethically grounded and portrayed "knowledge" of the actual conditions surrounding the appropriation of the blues, thinks himself in a position to degrade those who *think* themselves immune from commercial manipulation – obviously, in contrast to Lipsitz himself, who *knows* his immunity, an immunity granted through "knowledge." What appears to be at stake here is sthe cult of authenticity, or the polemic of rock, in the second order. In any case, such attempts to explain a whole range of elaborate processes simply by reference to mono-causal aspects of the market are indeed too shallow. However, I wholly agree with Lipsitz´s wider cultural argument that the "very existence of racism add[ed] to the mystery, distance, and inversions of prestige enacted in the reception of blues music," and that "the consumption of black culture salves the alienation and identity problems of European Americans."

---

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 122.

   In relation to that it is indeed interesting that, since "the passing
of civil rights legislation in the 1960s" and, one might add, since the
whole-sale appropriation of black music that took place at the same
time, "whiteness dares not speak its name, cannot speak on its own
behalf but rather advances through a color-blind language."[19] To
what extent the appropriation of black music has played into this
process – or vice versa – is certainly a question that requires further
study. Has the projection of a dominantly white generational/
cultural divide onto one of race somehow put that fault line under
erasure? Has the felt "commonality" of that musical communica-
tion/appropriation caused a false belief in actual equality and the
non-existence of white privileges? Looking at contemporary
communications/appropriations, however, the "difficulty" remains,
as Shelley Fisher Fishkin highlights via Roedgier, "of determining
the ultimate social consequences of contemporary white youth´s
attraction to African-American popular culture."[20]

   While Lieberfeld, whom I quoted above, bases his arguments on a
reading of the up-market House of Blues in Harvard, and Lipsitz his
on the promotion of the crossroads myth of Robert Johnson in
Mississippi, there are surely other and less phony ways in which
white people can appropriate the blues and other African-American
cultural forms. Thus, in order to understand the real processes of
appropriation and communication, we must move closer to the
actual musical experiences in a variety of settings (and at both ends
of the commodity chain). Dismissing it all as a projection of white
fantasies is obviously very easy, not very controversial, but certainly

---

[19] Lipsitz 1995, *op.cit.*, p. 369.
[20] Shelley Fisher Fishkin, "Interrogating 'Whiteness,' Complicating 'Blackness':
Remapping American Culture," *American Quarterly*, Vol. 47, Issue 3 (September,
1995), p. 441.

not very nuancing or informative, either. Undoubtedly there is a large measure of that taking place; yet, as an inroad into actual experiences, that may not be the most productive starting point.

Fishkin´s argument does seem more apt here: "[g]iven the world-wide popularity among young people of rap, braids, and the blues" she says, "scholars´ insights into these forms of African-American expressive culture may help elucidate the dynamics of international youth culture in the future."[21] Part of this obviously means moving beyond the (theoretical) opposition between pure roots music and wholly white (dominating) audiences. One should indeed be very careful not to lump together all musical performances and experiences.

And here it is worth pointing out, as Fishkin does, that certain white influences on black cultural practices were ignored in the essentialist 1970s and 1980s. "Understandably," she says, "certain categories of people and certain forms of writing were privileged as implicitly more authentic and therefore more worthy of study" and as an example she mentions "blues singers and the blues"; the question is, she goes on to ask, whether such studies and practices "promoted a brand of essentialism."[22] And one could certainly argue that part of the appropriation-argument is somehow premised upon notions of a "pure", authentic blues located in some pre-commercial (almost mythic) landscape, which writes off more detailed studies of contemporary, very different, much more mixed, and commercial expressions.

Part of the process through which black communities have responded to the appropriation by whites, has been to develop new

---

[21] *Ibid*., p. 453.
[22] Fishkin, *op. cit*. p. 448.

genres out of the various lived contexts music plays into. In that sense it could be argued, as Salaam does, that the blues as an expressive form is dead; it has been wholly appropriated by whites. Yet, as a sensibility, the blues lives on in the genre of rap. The dilemma is, as with most sub-cultures, the need for affirmative and functional expressions that are visible, yet not too easily appropriated; yet as long as black cultural expressions somehow serve a need for many white listeners, the mechanisms of the market will constantly seek to milk various functional expressions springing up in more secluded communities. The added dilemma is, of course, that commercialization here often means appropriation by an almost wholly white corporate system. Perhaps the Internet, as some have suggested, may provide an alternative system of cultural dissemination and cohesion, somehow hovering between community and market?

In any case, a deeper understanding of these processes necessitates a closer look at the actual processes of appropriation, both for the communities "losing" a cultural form and those gaining one. The focus needs to be on what Fishkin (in a different context) calls the "complex blend of appreciation and appropriation of black culture…"[23] Surely the history of Euro-American consumption of American popular music is full of "white niggers," but we need more complex studies, looking at actual usages of music, especially since "musicological reception studies still remain largely limited to presentist constitutions of art and modes of experience based in the narrow subculture of the concert hall."[24] In a complex and global setting where music is becoming increasingly deterritorialized,

---

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 435.
[24] Radano and Bohlman, *op. cit.*, p. 3

studies must move beyond such narrow settings while arguments will have to be more nuanced than simple, one-sided assertions of appropriation and commercialization.

Formats in Radio Broadcasting
– the American-Danish connection

Per Jauert

Radio Broadcasting Systems

Radio broadcasting on both sides of the Atlantic became institutionalized during the 1920s. While North-American radio after a few years became commercialized, based mainly on popular programs (i.e. daytime soap operas), news and sports, produced with the clear intention of attracting large audiences on a liberal, though regulated, market basis, European Radio was developed from the BBC conception of public broadcasting and public service principles. In most European countries, radio became a monopoly institution within a regulation system where radio was considered a vital part of national cultural policies – an instrument meant for enlightenment and public discourse. Entertainment and popular programs in general were inferior until the 1950s and 1960s, when a deregulation process provided the audiences with commercial broadcasting alternatives, the Scandinavian countries being the more modest in this process. Not until the mid 1980's was commercial radio introduced, mainly on a local basis.

The modernization of Denmark's Radio began in July 1959, when the traditional Danish Broadcasting Company (from 1964: Denmark's Radio (DR)), covering both radio and television) was challenged by a private, commercial radio station, Radio Mercur, which broadcast its programs from an old ship, anchored in international waters between Denmark and Sweden, and covering the eastern part of the country, including Copenhagen, with a fourth

of the total population. Radio Mercur was not a pirate radio in a strict legal sense. It did not violate any Danish law, since it used a frequency not assigned to Denmark. But it was a challenge to the dominating opinion among politicians and DR, based on a strict, paternalistic interpretation of public service. More specifically, it questioned the view that radio broadcasting should not primarily be devoted to entertainment, and therefore should not allow popular music, rock and pop charts, fast-talking DJ's, or commercials. The widespread post-war fascination with popular American consumer culture was replaced by skepticism and anxiety, at least in the older generation and among the guardians of the public service values. For them, radio was first and foremost enlightenment, promotion of high cultural core values, and objective or neutral news programs, which until 1964 were edited and controlled by the Association of Danish Newspapers, as agreed on in the early days of radio, on the grounds that public radio should not compete with the newspapers.

The Danish government struggled for four years before a new law was passed, making Radio Mercur illegal (Jensen, 1997, II: 182). But the Danish radio audience had tasted the forbidden fruit, and anxiety among the politicians grew when audience research proved that the listeners preferred Radio Mercur to the two DR channels (P1 & P2). A third channel was planned for, and in 1964 DR launched P3 -The Music Channel. It had 14 hours of daily broadcasting, and the programs were mostly DJ presentations of popular music, including rock and pop, charts, Top 20, etc., and special afternoon programs for teenagers: "After schoolhours." Before that, the only opportunity to listen to that kind of programming had been provided by Radio Luxembourg. In spite of the popularity of the English-American language and life styles, these program types had greater powers of

penetration in a Danish setting. But for many years to come, the Music Channel was to be considered an enclave among DR's radio channels. Certainly, it was popular, but exactly how popular is difficult to say, because audience research was rare, almost non-existing. Radio broadcasting was defined on the premises of the sender, not the audience, and consequently a more comprehensive redefinition of public service values and a reform of the channel system were not implemented until the end of the 1980s.

But the seed of a slow process of reform was planted in 1964. During the sixties and early seventies the cracks in the walls around the traditional concept of public service broadcasting widened, making way for changes in the definitions of the broadcaster's roles and concepts of the audience.

When local radio stations made their entry onto the Danish radio scene, they were not considered a serious threat to the nation-wide public service institution, Denmark's Radio (DR). They were regarded not as competitors, but as a supplement, provided by local, idealistic radio enthusiasts. But this understanding of the situation changed in the course of just a few years. When commercials were permitted in 1988, and approx. a dozen larger commercial local radio stations expanded and established full professional coverage in 'provincial' western Denmark, the DR-management realized that the time had come for more radical changes in the former monopoly: in policy, organization, production procedures, programming and approaches to the audience (Hujanen and Jauert, 1998:114).

At first the problem could be considered a crisis of legitimacy. Previously, DR could claim a unique position as a provider of culture, news, information and entertainment to the Danish public.

Apart from television broadcasts from neighboring countries, there was no competition on the Danish broadcasting market until the end of the 1980s. But now DR's legitimacy could be questioned. How much of the market share would it be acceptable to lose in relation to which part of the population before it would be reasonable to argue for cut-backs in the license fee? The pressure from the liberal opposition was immediate, and in the late 1980s, DR was, in fact, forced to face minor reductions in its budgets. The license fee for DR (both radio and television) was approximately 2 billion DKK per year ($250 million (in 2001 dollars)): approximately 1,500 DKK per year per household. DR had to initiate reductions in staff, to redefine its organization – and to manage on a smaller income. This resulted in periodically recurring internal crises and spells of paralysis (Sepstrup 1994:226).

The situation was not as serious for radio as for television, but it was nevertheless a surprise for the management to see the rapid growth and popularity of the commercial local radio stations. The number of local radio stations has been fairly constant since 1987 – around 250, half of them commercial. Approximately 35 stations can be considered fully professional, with a solid economic base. The local radio turnover for commercials has not yet exceeded 2% of the total advertisement turnover, and at the beginning of the 90s it was about 120 million DKK (Jauert & Prehn 1995:122).

Audience interest in the new local radio varied in different parts of the country. Table 2 shows average figures. Local radio's market share was approx. 20% – in 2000 35%.

The New Radio

First of all, the commercial radio channels were formatted. The program flow was aimed at the specific audience available at any given time of the day and ready to listen – or 'tune in'. The style of music, DJ performance, the 'pulse' or 'beat' of the channel soundscape could change during the day – and in most cases it had to change, because of the limited transmission area – max. 300,000 people – and the transmitter's limitations – max. 160W to 3kW. Only in the two or three biggest cities was it possible to establish local radio aimed exclusively at teenagers. Within a relatively broad musical concept, i.e. European Hit Radio as the most common, you could vary the style of music in the course of the day and place enclaves with 'oldies' or 'classic rock' or similar more specialized musical formats. After a few years, some of the stations introduced music management, the music no longer being selected by the DJ. This had been a well known phenomenon in the USA for many years, but was considered a revolution in the Scandinavian countries around 1990. Now it is considered a normal routine, and even though the resistance among DJ's and journalists in Denmark's Radio was very strong, it was introduced in 1992 in P3, and has slowly spread to the other stations.

Secondly, the local atmosphere and community spirit in the programs was a main factor in contributing to their popularity. In contrast to the more 'official' language policy in Denmark's Radio, the language heard on local radio was the dialect actually spoken in the respective areas. The issues in the programs were rooted in the local area, and the listeners were offered various services useful in their daily life: traffic, weather, local events, etc.

Thirdly, the contact between local radio and listeners was more direct, varied and sometimes even almost intimate. The number of phone-ins exceeded by far what was previously the case in DR, and quizzes, debate programs and night-hawk talk radio grew very popular, contributing to linking listeners to the station. The local station became 'our radio' – in contrast to DR, which was identified with the atmosphere of the capital and highbrow paternalism. (Jauert & Prehn, 1995: 63)

In these respects the commercial local radios represented a serious threat to the old monopoly radio and its program policy and practice. The need for reform in DR was evident.

A new public service concept

An era of more radical changes, including a channel reform, was initiated in DR from 1988. From top to bottom, the institution became involved in the development of 'the new radio'. In organizational and strategic terms it was a very deliberate action on the part of management, because the operation was not just an adjustment of old routines. The aims and goals, as well as the general organization of program production and program policy were to be reformulated and restructured.

The old radio had mainly been organized as a production and broadcast institution, and it considered itself primarily a provider of cultural commodities, news and information, mainly fulfilling the function of public service in the sense of "serving the public sphere, the public life" (Syvertsen 1992). A new attitude towards the audience was searched for, but the aim and goal was still to maintain key functions from what has been called the second era of public service principles.

After two years of internal discussion and restructuring, a 'constitution' for the new radio was formulated in 1990. If you look behind the official, formal wording of the new general policy for modernized radio, it becomes evident that the audience is more in the focus of the institutional agenda, e.g., in the phrase: "... [DR must] show respect for the audience, be open towards its criticism and engage it in the programs."

Programs – and /or formats?

The general deregulation process and the struggle for justification and legitimization prompted the managers of Scandinavian broadcasting companies to seek inspiration abroad, primarily in the North American radio markets (Kemppainen 1998). The term 'format radio' was introduced to the Scandinavian broadcasting vocabulary, amongst other concepts inspired by the American radio producer and consultant, George Burns. In his capacity of Director of Burns Media Consultants, he visited Europe several times around 1990 and was on one of these occasions keynote speaker for the European Radio Directors in EBU (European Broadcasting Union) in Heidelberg in 1990 (Leif Lønsmann 1990 – and interview March 8, 2001 with Leif Lønsmann, former Head of Radio Development in DR, since 1999 Director of Radio, DR).

The obvious inspiration from American/Canadian/Australian commercial format radio marked the transition from block radio to an adjusted version of flow radio and format principles. But a format radio in a strict sense or pure version was not yet introduced.

Block radio is the program-essence of the old radio, representing the sender perspective of broadcasting. Block programming consists of separated, single programs, each with its own title, form, subject

and producer, often produced and presented without any relation to the previous program or to the one that followed (Lønsmann 1990:2).

Block programming represents a concept of radio as a medium for listening in – for a "lean-forward" listening approach to this specific radio program. It presupposes the full attention and presence of the listener, as opposed to flow radio, which underlines the function of the radio as a companion to the everyday activities of the audience.

The construction principles of flow radio had already been introduced in 1964 when the Music Radio (P3) was launched, while the original block radio principle continued on the two other channels, P1 and P2, until the reform period 1988-1992.

Channel Reforms

In 1992 the channel reform was completed, and DR's radio now had four radio channels on three frequencies (Table 1.). With this expression DR wished to emphasize a protest against what was considered an obstruction of its endeavor to meet the new demands of the competitive radio market. Since 1982 it had been possible to launch a fourth nation-wide FM station, but politicians had not subsequently been able to decide whether to assign it to DR, to another public service provider (i.e. TV 2), or to a commercial company, similar to the nationwide, commercial station, P4 in Norway, launched in 1994.

Table 1

Channel reform

begun 1988, completed 1992.

P1 – Channel 1 *Narrow* *Content-defined*	The channel for culture and the spoken word. Focus on national culture, enlightenment, talk and radio documentary, features and fiction
P2 Music – Channel 2 *Narrow* *Content-defined*	Classic radio. Focus on Danish music and orchestras, Danish presentation and co-operation with the national music scenes.
P2 The Denmark Channel-Channel 2 *Music and age format*	Nine regional radios, partly networking; a full service channel for the mature audience (+40) with a music format accordingly.
P3 – Channel 3 *Music and age format*	A 24 hour full service channel for the young audience, 12-40 with news, journalism, service – with a music profile aimed at the younger generation

The main idea behind the new channel construction was still to meet the demands dating from the historical heritage of the public service era, i.e. to maintain the function as a provider of content for the public need, for the audience in its capacity as citizens, but at the same time to comply with the demands of the market, and to widen the possibilities for serving the public in its capacity as consumers.

The new channel structure cannot be considered a completed reform along the lines of the principles of modern format radio, due to the specific market situation with limited audience groups, and due to the political demand for only a modest redefinition of the

public service principles. Simultaneously, DR was supposed to present more program diversity, attract larger audiences, and serve small target groups with specific interests. The 1992 channel reform was merely an adjustment to the new competitive environment rather than a radical change.

P1 represents DR tradition, focusing on information, current affairs, culture, talk, fiction, drama and documentaries. The essence of this channel is program diversity, and the criterion for success is not a large share of the audience, but a high reach in the course of the week, indicating that a lot of different target groups have found something useful or interesting. In reality, the listener's profile is quite advanced in years, and for many years this tendency has increased.

P2 Music is a very specialized channel for small target groups, but the real legitimization of this channel is linked to decade-long investments in the DR Symphony Orchestra and other orchestras (incl. a Jazz Big Band) and their involvement in Danish music life in general. In this respect, this specific public service obligation is part of a general, cultural, publicly supported, music policy.

The newly formatted channels, The Denmark Channel and P3, represent the new radio. In the commercial, US-inspired sense of the notion of 'format radio', both channels signify modifications. With regard to age, the audience target groups are too wide. P 3 cannot appeal to a teenager of 14 and a mature grown-up of 35 at the same time, neither in music preferences nor in spheres of interest. The same goes for P2, The Denmark Channel. It has proven rather difficult to combine an interest in local political, cultural and social issues with the music profile.

For both formatted channels the results after 1992 were that the audience groups changed during the day to a higher degree than intended, and that many younger listeners switched, especially from P3 to the commercial local stations.

In general the channel reform did not result in clearly profiled, format-defined channels. In reality the organization was torn between sympathy for some parts of the old routines and production values on one hand, and on the other hand a clear vision of the growing necessity of modernizing the program production processes, the program content and the structuring of the channels. Those conflicts grew stronger during the 1990s, as market competition intensified.

New channels, new formats, new programs

This year, DR was supplied with a new, nationwide fourth channel and was now able to fulfil a vision developed during the past two decades. During 2001 programs are being restructured, developed and transformed into new contexts, shaping two music-formatted channels (P3 and P4) and two content-formatted channels (P1 and P2).

In order to prevent further loss of younger audiences, DR has intensified strategic program planning and launched several new program strategies, especially on P3 and P4, which most directly face competition from the commercial stations. In spite of these new initiatives, e.g., formatted news for young people on P3, no changes in audience patterns can be traced. It seems that DR as a public service radio is facing a severe generation problem, both in reach and share of the radio market.

Recently – during the last few years – DR has tried to strengthen its capacity as a media content provider, rather than 'just' a public service radio, through its declared intention to be present on all distribution platforms:

• analogue broadcast radio, where the content provider (DR) still composes the program output

• digital audio broadcasting, where the EPG will develop a mixture of pull and push program-deliveries; the listener will be able to compose his/her own program menu during the day and combine radio output with written, supplementary information

• radio on the www, where the listener will be able to compose different media elements from the DR website: parallel 'broadcasting' of the analogue DR channels, DR web-radio, DR streaming audio (music, jukebox function), supplementary written information, video clips, etc.

DR's market position is still very strong and its management has so far been successful in its attempt to strengthen the position of public service media by gaining political and economical backing from Parliament. But the essential problem to be dealt with within the next few years will still be related to the younger generation's attraction to or rejection of DR as a public service institution.

REFERENCES

Hujanen, Taisto and Per Jauert. "The New Competitive Environment of Radio Broadcasting in the Nordic Countries." In: *Journal of Radio Studies*, vol. 5, no. 1 (Winter 1998), pp. 105-31.

Jauert, Per and Ole Prehn. *Lokalradio og TV. Nu og i fremtiden*. Copenhagen, 1995.

Jensen, Klaus Bruhn. *Dansk Mediehistorie* I-III. Copenhagen: Kulturministeriet:, 1997.

Kemppainen, Pentti. "The Channel Reform of Public Service Radio in the Nordic Countries." In *Journal of Radio Studies*, vol. 5, no. 1 (Winter 1998), pp. 132-49.

Lønsmann, Leif. *Radio ifølge Burns*. Copenhagen: Danmarks Radio, 1990.

Sepstrup, Preben. *TV i kulturpolitisk perspektiv*. Aarhus: Kliim, 1994.

Syvertsen, Trine. *Public Service in Transition*. Oslo: NAVF, 1992.

European and American Press Photography

Søren Kolstrup

Eugene Smith and Joachim Ladefoged.

On April 9 1951, Eugene Smith (1918-1978) published his reportage, *Spanish Village*, in *Life*. This series contains several of the best and most famous documentary photos ever made. Smith had an incomparable sense of composition. The people in his pictures form coherent groups that can be inscribed in geometrical figures, giving one an illusion of depth and volume which few other photographers have been able to create. Even Cartier-Bresson, with all his sense of texture, light and composition, fails at times to match Eugene Smith in his sense of rhythm and volume. This is clearly sensed if you look at one of the pictures in Smith's reportage, *Spanish Wake*.

Drawing after Smith's *Spanish Wake*

The composition is triangular, with the dead person's head forming the left angle, the two other angles being placed in the upper and lower right corners of the photograph. The light, a classic use of chiaroscuro, comes from above, and models all the faces except that of the woman in the upper right corner. The five other women form a very solid group, a geometric 3D shape. Four of them are completely lost in their thoughts; their eyes look at nothing, even though their faces are turned in the direction of the dead. But the fifth, a girl placed in the middle, looks gravely at the dead, thus stressing the movement from the right to the left. The scene is depicted with graphic simplicity; the emotional impact is enormous. It is a modern replica of all the paintings showing the women and St. John mourning Christ, the lamentation motive. In 1998, the Danish photographer Joachim Ladefoged won all three prizes for singles in the World Press Photo contest category *People in the News*, as well as the first prize for stories in the same category. This picture similarly shows some women mourning a dead person, but there is no clear composition. There are ten mourners and they do not form a whole; they are looking in different directions. The light is a daylight that does not model the faces or the bodies, which remain flat. Ladefoged's contact-copies show (and he has told the story himself) that a person was coming in from the left and that Ladefoged continued to take photos until the person came into the picture, forming a *repoussoir* in the left margin of the photo. It is obvious that this person saved the photo from being incoherent and unbalanced. Nevertheless, from a compositional point of view, there is a gap between the Danish photo and the 46-year older American version of the lamentation theme.

In the following year, 1999, Canadian Roger Lemoyne won the second prize in *People in the News*, *stories*: now the dead person is from Kosovo, and there are fourteen mourners around the coffin. Each person has an expressive face, but the dead person is seen from an impossible angle, his face being foreshortened in a way which lends it a wicked expression. Only the Italian Renaissance painter Andrea Mantegna has ever been able to use this angle in an appropriate way, and only Smith could use light and geometry to give the impression of eternal rest!

American Traditions

What are the reasons for Smith's superiority? Was he a genius, in contrast to the Dane and the Canadian, both good artisans but hardly more? Is the training of photographers from America (= USA) better? *Life* was an inspiring forum, but was it as good as all that? Did the American photographic tradition stress solid artistic principles involving geometry, light and visual interaction between the people in the picture?

Smith was a man of principle, artistic as well as social. He began his carrier during the epoch of the Farm Security Administration, which produced some 270,000 clichés, some of which have become icons.[1] The Farm Security Administration achieved, in fact, as much for the recognition of photography as an art as did Stieglitz by publishing "Camera Work" from 1903 to 1917. The FSA photographers definitely differed greatly, but they had social engagement and an artistic use of photography in common.

---

[1] The FSA was a federal organisation created by the Roosevelt administration in order to help farmers who had been forced off their land by the crisis. The main task of the photographers was to provide documentation required for federal intervention.

Does this mean that the American press or documentary photo could be characterized by this combination of artistic value and social engagement? Is this too idealistic?

Methodological Problems

However, can one compare the press and documentary photo in the USA and in Europe at all? There are methodological as well as empirical implications in such comparisons.

The structures of the press. How do the structures of the printed media in the USA and in the different European countries compare? What are the importance and the functions of the press in the USA and in the different European countries? Are there differences between national and local press? Do all countries have a national press (take, for example, Germany and the USA!)? What is the relative importance of quality newspapers and popular newspapers in the USA and in the different European countries? What is the importance of all these questions for the functions and the aesthetics of press photography?

The problems of representativeness and the evaluation of qualities. The problems are overwhelming. Should we compare a representative number of newspapers of different types on the basis of their quantitative and qualitative use of photos? How should we define qualities to compare? Can one measure or count aesthetic qualities at all? Can one measure or count communicative qualities?

Unfortunately, there are greater differences in photo policy and photo aesthetics between, say, a French local newspaper like *Le Dauphiné Libéré* and the Parisian *Libération* than between *Libération* and *Washington Post*.

When talking about the role of the FSA, I was obviously referring to one of the highlights of the world's history of photography. A true comparison of USA and Europe, however, is not to be seen in highlights, but is concerned with the everyday use of photos, even in humble commercial and local papers. But who ever looks at a local paper from Cleveland, Pittsburg, Toulouse, Nizhni Novgorod, Florence or Tampere?

The moral of all this, of course, is that this hypothetical comparison of European and American photography implies the use of large scale qualitative as well as quantitative investigations and a historical survey covering all the different European countries. And this is impossible! Nevertheless the questions raised by the contemplation of Smith and Ladefoged's two photos may provide an answer, however provisional and tentative, if one looks at the photos of the World Press Photo contest.

The World Press Photo

Each year the World Press Photo exhibits the highlights of photo production from more than a hundred countries. Is it possible to find some kind of aesthetic difference between the photos from the countries present in this contest, or has the internationalization of photo production abolished national differences?

Alternatively, are there specific national themes that can only be depicted by representatives from the particular nation? Can only Americans make good photos of a gay rodeo (WPP 1998)? Is the decay of Italian aristocracy (this Welt von Gestern) only a matter for Italian photographers (WPP 1998)? But political events in a given country must necessarily be covered by photographers from foreign countries. This is fundamental to press photography, involving the

risk of photographers becoming tourists in horrors and social problems, especially when they go to the third world, where they sometimes seem to see nothing more than they already *knew* before going there.

I have evaluated a small number of aesthetic and communicative qualities in the 1998 – 2001 catalogues of World Press Photo by asking some simple questions:

- Is the photo characterized by some kind of geometric order, or is there no organizing principle (=disorder)?

- Is the meaning of the photo a result of construction (internal montage in Eisenstein's sense), or is the meaning based on anecdotal human-interest features?

- Does the photo produce an unforeseen representation of reality, or is it a predictable representation, using well known, pre-established schemata?

Geometry – Disorder

To what extent does the photographer inscribe the elements (persons or objects) of the events photographed in a geometric shape, like the ones to be found in paintings before the collapse of central perspective?

The American photographers of the WPP seem in many respects to follow Eugene Smith. Their photos are constructed according to a kind of geometric principle or visual pattern that assures the coherence of the photo. This organizing principle enables the creation of elements in the picture that can function as metonymies (see next section).

American Press photography follows a path that was established long before Smith and the FSA by Goya in his *Disastres dela Guerra*,

etchings showing the French soldiers' atrocities during Napoleon's occupation of Spain in the beginning of the 19ᵗʰ century. We see the same horrors as shown in press photos from the Balkan, the Caucasus or Afghanistan.

Here are a few examples from the four collections of pictures.

Wendy Sue Lamm's picture of the clash between Israeli soldiers and Palestinians took first prize in the category *Spot News, singles,* in 1998. The photo is divided by a pillar in the middle, both halves form a triangular shape. You see three Israeli soldiers forming a group that shows the phases of stopped movement: the one to the left is leaning forward, the one in the middle has stopped and the one to the right is leaning back. The left-to-right movement stressed by the direction of the Israeli guns is stopped not only by the soldier leaning back, but also by the beginning Palestinian attack, coming as a movement from the right. Both groups are inscribed in a triangular shape; both shapes express movement, but in different ways.

The same year, Judah Passow got the second prize for *People in the News, singles* and *stories* (using almost the same theme as Sue Lamm), by showing the same tendency to concentrate a maximum of meaning into a simple geometric shape. Where Wendy Sue Lamm uses metonymy, however, Judah Passow drifts towards a metaphorical use of the photos.

In 2001 the first prize in the category *Sports, singles* was won by two Americans, Bill Frakes and David Callow, who show Marion Jones winning the 100-meter sprint at the Sydney Olympics. It is the most extraordinary photo in the four years from 1998-2001. The illusion of movement, the coherence, and the speed of the group of pursuers, with the winner stopping her motion after the victory,

exhibit every imaginable device that can be used by picture makers to create the illusion of movement.

Let us take a look at European photographers. The Danes, who for the last four years have won many prizes, even first prizes, normally display little sense of geometric shape and coherence. Nor do they show the same sense of isotopy (redundancy from picture to picture) displayed in the stories of the Americans. The best examples of this coherence are the first and third prizes in the category of *Spot News, Stories* 2000.

Only the Russians seem to be able to compete with the Americans in their sense of unity in each picture and in their sense of giving a specific tonality to the stories (visual isotopy) from picture to picture. The Russians (the winners!) use a restricted scale of colors: brown, gray, and olive. They use texture in a way that suggests that men (soldiers), tanks, and mud are identical (visual isotopy within the individual photo). Especially Kozyrev (first prize for *General News, singles* and third prize for *General News, stories* 2000) knows how to inscribe complex actions into simple geometric shapes.

It may be concluded that photographers from the USA and Russia display an extraordinary sense of construction: geometric coherence and texture creating pictorial unity.

Anecdotal sense or meaning produced by construction?

The meaning of the pictures can be the result of the clash between elements on the picture plane, thus creating a general moral. However, the sense can also be the simple result of a specific story about a specific person whom we may know beforehand. This is anecdotal meaning. Once again, the first case is illustrated by the etchings of Goya. The second case can be illustrated by all the

sentimental pictures of Princess Diana: magnificent examples of anecdotal stories, from which no general moral can ever be extracted. The clashes between elements can be illustrated by Wendy Sue Lamm's winning picture, where an underlining geometric shape created a strong metonymy, and similarly by Kozyrev's pictures of frightened Russian soldiers. The press photo is totally dependent on the use of metonymy. Metonymies are realistic. Metaphors are normally linked to fiction, and thus they invite anecdotes and sentimentality. This is what one finds in media like women's magazines and television (soap-operas). My prejudices predicted that the sentimental, anecdotal human-interest story would also be important in American press photography. I still assume that such pictures would be found if one had access to the entire collection of USA photos in the WPP contest, but the jury found better photos in the American stock.

Nevertheless, in this specific chapter it is difficult to find a clear distinction between European and American press photos. Take the *Portraits* 2001, be it either singles or stories. There is no sentimentality whatsoever in these portraits of people, nor would one be able to see that the first prize for singles and the third prize for stories were produced by Americans, whereas the third prize for singles and the first and second prizes for stories were by Europeans!

The second prize for singles in the category of *Daily Life*, shot by Ed Kashi, shows an old woman dying in her bed, while members of her family are sitting around her. They try to comfort the dying woman and her husband. If any scene could be an invitation to sentimentality, this is surely the one. *Instead,* it is harsh realism. There is no beauty in the dying woman, and no God to receive her

soul. This is how we die. The photo is in the FSA tradition, and constructed according to the rhythmic and geometric principles of Eugene Smith!

Still, of course, anecdotal, human-interest stories, in fact, ironical ones, do appear! Look at the second prize for *Sports, singles*, William Frake's photo of the winner of the 100-meter world championship, Maurice Green, sticking his tongue out at his opponent, Donovan Bailey. This is amusing; in a way the photo questions the serious façade of modern sport.

Foreseen and Unforeseen: the Ambiguous Message

Photo-journalism is not creative art; photo-journalism has never felt the need to transgress aesthetic rules, or to attain absolute originality. Photo-journalism is not dictated by an ideology of art inherited from the romantic era. Photo-journalism presents reality; it has journalistic ideals: to be at right place at the right moment, and to be a witness, not a picture creator. Yet within this framework, photo-journalists all over the world try to find a new angle, some new aspect of the well-known themes they present. This also inevitably means that some photographers do not find any new angle, any new aspect, any surprising quality.

The American press photos of those four years do find new aspects, new combinations of well-known elements. More than the Europeans have done in this respect? Probably. Wendy Sue Lamm's clash between Israeli soldiers and Palestinians is an example of such a new aspect of an old story; it stops the Israeli soldiers in an ambiguous pose; are they aggressors or the objects of aggression? Carol Guzy's third prize in *Portrait, singles* 1998 (Muhammad Ali) is an intense new interpretation of that living myth as leaving this

world and his past through the right bottom corner of the photo! Stanley Greene got the third prize in *Portraits, stories* for his series on Chechnyan refugees in an Ingushetian asylum for mentally disabled children. It is a terrifying story because of the ambiguity; is this person a refugee turning mentally ill or is he simply ill? The spectator is bewildered; what is the truth of the horrors? How should he or she interpret all this? Using simple procedures and very calm photos (no action) Greene succeeds in destroying our whole conception of what is normal and abnormal. European photographers, of course, can be just as free to see new aspects. Kozyrov's Russian soldiers is an example, and the Frenchman, Thomas Coëx, with his *Spot News, story* (third prize in 2001) is another. His story about the Palestinians and the Israeli Police is told as the clash between small human individuals (in the foreground of the picture) against impersonal black cars (in the background), and is seen from the Palestinian point of view in the literal sense of the word. The differences in color (black cars versus vivid red-and-green clad young people, the whole on a harmonious, colored background!) create a surrealistic effect. However, the majority of European photo stories show what one expects to see. The Danes are good at doing this. Fuglsig's story (first prize in the category *Nature and Environment, stories*, 1999), about the nuclear pollution of Muslumovo in Eastern Russia, gives what one would expect, what one knew beforehand: the well-known picture of Russian pollution and general decay, presented in an artistic way. Subsequently, there has been much discussion about Fuglsig's story. Some of his pictures have been slightly re-arranged, and some have been processed (in brightness with specific contrasts) without using electronic devices. All this is forbidden in the photo-journalistic ideology, but that is

not the problem. The problem is that Fuglsig adds nothing to what we already knew, and that every arrangement and enhancement in the production of his photos conforms to a pre-established scheme.

Conclusion

It is, in fact, difficult to decide whether there are differences between European and American press photography! It is easy to decipher some differences in TV and film production, but the press photo has always been *inter*national and not *trans*national. One finds photographers from the USA working for French agencies, who sell the photos to France, Germany or the USA, and there are other European photographers working for American agencies. Where does the work of an English photographer working in the UK for AP, with the USA as its main market, belong? Just make a list of the photographer's nationality, his or her company's "nationality," the medium's "nationality" and the consumer's. It is a strange inter-national world. Magnum was created by a Hungarian, by an American and by a Frenchman. A photographer who joins Magnum has a Magnum identity as well as a national identity. At the level of those who are awarded the WPP prizes, and those who submit their production to the WPP, there can only be few differences from nation to nation. The aesthetic differences discussed above are examples, but at the local level, the world of the press is full of differences. Local material is illustrated by local photographers and is consumed locally, while the local photos are seldom of the same quality as the more international photos. Normally local photos are there to give a visual identity, such as the endless, boring group portraits in French local press. Some papers pay enormous attention to pictures (*Providence Journal, Libération, Bild*) others have no

pictures or, if at all, then few and small (*Le Monde*, *Wall Street Journal, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*).

There are some differences between European and American press photography at the level established by the jury, the aesthetic level. The FSA heritage is strong in the pictures selected by the jury, but not every American photographer has this combination of artistic values and social engagement! The differences are mostly to be found as differences in social level. The similarities are to be found within social levels, but …

We are back where we began.

CANADIAN JOURNAL OF FILM STUDIES
REVUE CANADIENNE D'ÉTUDES CINÉMATOGRAPHIQUES

Scholarly articles in English and French on theory, history and criticism of film and television; book reviews; rare and archival research documents.

VOLUME 10 NO. 1 SPRING 2001

Charles R. Acland on the National Film Society, the Canadian Film Committee, and the National Film Board of Canada

Kristian Moen on the NFB's *Drylanders*

Margot Francis on Richard Fung's *Dirty Laundry*

William C. Wees on Avant-Garde Film in the Eighties

Keewatin A. Dewdney on Discontinuous Films

A Brief History of FSAC • ACEC 1976-2001

Plus reviews of books on intercultural cinema; early American movie audiences; the body in the films of Keaton, Bresson and Cassavetes; fashion and femininity in 1930s Hollywood; Danish film directors; the films of Jean Cocteau.

Contributors

Hanne Bruun
Born 1963, Ph.D. in Media Studies, M.A. in Nordic Languages and Literature, associate professor at the Department of Information and Media Studies, University of Aarhus. Teaches audience studies and textual analysis. Has published several articles and books including "Talkshowet. Portræt af en tv-genre" (1999) and "Ricki Lake i Danmark" (2001). hbruun@imv.au.dk

Henrik Bødker
Born 1962, Ph.D. in American Studies, assistant prof. at the Department of Information and Media Studies, Aarhus University. Teaches audience studies. Has contributed to a number of collections in American Studies as well as to the journal *Culture and Technology*. hbodker@imv.au.dk

Francesco Caviglia
Born 1961, Genoa. Teaches Italian history, culture and language as foreign lecturer at the Department of Romance Languages, University of Aarhus. Is currently writing a Ph. D. dissertation on teaching in the human sciences. romfrc@hum.au.dk

Peder Grøngaard
Born 1945. M.A., senior researcher in the field of film and television studies and Danish media research, State and University Library, Aarhus. Has written books and articles on film history, theory, and analysis; television drama. Books include: "Claude Chabrols filmkunst" (Claude Chabrol's Film Art, 1977), "Fra Eisenstein til Truffaut: Teorier om filmen som kunstart" (Theories on Film as Art, 1981), "Det danske TV-spil" (The Danish Television Drama, 1988), and ed. of "Nordisk filmforskning 1975-1995" (Nordic Film Research 1975-1995, 1995). pg@statsbiblioteket.dk

Per Jauert
Born 1949. Associate professor, Department of Information and Media Studies, University of Aarhus. Teaching and research in media sociology, media history, audience studies, and radio. Has contributed to the recent Dansk Mediehistorie I-III (1997), [Danish Media History] and has published articles in English about radio and local media in *The Nordicom Review*, in *Journal of Radio Studies* and in *The European Journal of Communication Research.* pjauert@imv.au.dk

Nancy Graham Holm
Born 1942, Denver, Colorado. M.A. History, UC, Berkeley. Television journalist since 1970. Since 1991 departmental head, Danmark School of Journalism. Publications include: "Amerikansk indflydelse på dansk tv-journalistik" in *Nye nyheder* (1999) and "Power to the People Through Television: Community Access in a Commercial System" in *The Lost Decade: America in the Seventies* (1996) and book reviews for American Studies in Scandinavia. ngh@djh.dk

Edvin Vestergaard Kau

Born 1947. Ph.D., assoc. prof., Department of Information and Media Studies, University of Aarhus. Teaches film and television theory and media analysis. Has written books and a number of articles on literature, multimedia, film history, theory, and analysis. Books include *Filmen i Danmark* (Danish film industry from the advent of sound till the 80s, with Niels Jørgen Dinnesen, 1983), and *Dreyer's Film Art* (1989). ekau@imv.au.dk

Ray Keyes

Born 1966. MFA in creative writing. He has published stories in several literary magazines and teaches at the Coalition School for Social Change in New York City. He has recently completed his second novelistic book of aphorisms. E-mail: <R. Keyes - Taipei/Toronto> jufeng@earthlink.net

Mette Madsen

Born 1971. Studied Nordic Language and Literature, and now engaged in Media Studies. Teaches drama and has a special interest in film production. Is a member of the Hadsten City Council and of a number of boards. Runs own company designing team-building and leadership courses. Co-founder of the new short film association at the Department of Information and Media Studies, dedicated to the making and promotion of short film. mette.madsen@city.dk

Richard Raskin

Born 1941, New York. Ph.D. and Dr.Phil., assoc. prof. Teaches screenwriting and video production in the Department of Information and Media Studies, University of Aarhus. Books include: *The Functional Analysis of Art* (1982), *Nuit et Brouillard* (1987), *Life is Like a Glass of Tea* (1992), *The Art of Storytelling in the Short Fiction Film* and *Kortfilmen som fortælling* (both forthcoming). Has served as jury president at international film and video festivals in France, Belgium and India, and as "grand témoin" at Clermont-Ferrand. raskin@imv.au.dk

Niels Weisberg

Born 1944. M.A. in Latin. Teaches classical civilization and Latin at a gymnasium/senior high school – and film history in the Department of Information and Media Studies, University of Aarhus. weisberg@post3.tele.dk