

FILM IN POST-WORLD WAR II AMERICAN FICTION

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RAMSAY WISE

Dr. Andrew Hoberek, Dissertation Supervisor

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the thesis entitled

FILM IN POST-WORLD WAR II AMERICAN FICTION

presented by Ramsay Wise

a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

and hereby certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

Associate Professor, Andrew Hoberek

Associate Professor, Samuel Cohen

Assistant Professor, Joanna Hearne

Associate Professor, Nancy West

Associate Professor, Bradley Prager

For
Keaton Adeline

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INTRODUCTION

Close-Reading the Intertext



Binx Bolling is reminded of a movie he saw last month. Slothrop is enveloped in the paracinematic Zone. Rio and Pucha discover America in the Cinemascope and Technicolor of Douglas Sirk. William studies Japanese cinema in order to realize the American dream.

Intertextuality: Expanding on Trends in Adaptation Studies

In his introduction to “Part IV: Text and Intertext” from *Film and Theory: An Anthology*, Robert Stam—building from Julia Kristeva’s translation of the Bakhtinian notion of “dialogism”—argues the advantages, and expansiveness of an intertextual approach to film and other textual interpretation. He writes that:

In the broadest sense, intertextual *dialogism* refers to the infinite and open-minded possibilities generated by all the

discursive practices in culture, the entire matrix of communicative utterances within which the artistic text is situated. . . .The intertext of a work of art, then, may be taken to include not just other art works in the same or comparable form, but also all the “series” within which the singular text is situated. Or, to put it more crudely, any text that has slept with another text has also slept with all the texts that the other text has slept with. (154)

PSA connotation aside, Stam’s conception of intertextuality might seem entirely reasonable, particularly given the contemporary context of accelerating media saturation within which we all seem to embrace, and participate in, the hypertextualizing of information via the internet. But for Stam, intertextuality has a number of advantages over other analytical rubrics—for instance structuralist, poststructuralist, generic or other categorically imperative analytical rubrics—because it “is less interested in essentialist definitions than in the active inter-animation of texts. . . .[it] implies a more dynamic relation to the tradition [of genres]” because “the artist actively orchestrates preexisting texts rather than simply following a formula.” In addition, intertextuality “allows for dialogic relations with other arts and media, both popular and erudite” (154). Or to put it crudely, to follow Stam’s STD metaphor, texts are promiscuous and intertextuality is the most expansive diagnostic rubric available.

Although the advantages of intertextuality which Stam outlines above are offered immediately in relation to the study of genre films, they are applicable to all textual interpretation. He embraces this notion, extrapolating his conception

of the intertextuality of genre to a wider applicability in his introduction to *Literature and Film: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Film Adaptation*. After meticulously delineating the history of trends in adaptation scholarship, Stam concludes that:

If adaptation studies at first glance seems a somewhat minor and peripheral field within cinematic theory and analysis, in another sense it can be seen as quite central and important. . . . While adaptation studies often assumes that the source texts are literary, adaptations can also have subliterary and paraliterary sources . . . The point is that virtually all films, not only adaptations, remakes, and sequels, are mediated through intertextuality. (45)

Building again on Bakhtin's "dialogism" and Kristeva's "intertextuality," Stam suggests that in the broadest sense the majority of texts in one sense or another are in dialogue with other texts—explicitly or implicitly—making them in some manner adaptations (or remediations) of other texts. In this sense parody and allusion can be viewed as types of intertextuality and, for Stam, adaptation.

As a means of further establishing his emphasis on intertextuality, Stam offers Gérard Genette's concept of "transtextuality" as a potentially more inclusive term which Genette subcategorizes into five types. 1) "Intertextuality"—referring most generally to the co-presence of two texts. Stam provides the example of the Exodus story in *The Grapes of Wrath*, "or of all the comic/satiric variations on Christ's Last Supper" (27) from Bunuel, to Mel Brooks, to, I would add, Robert Altman's *M*A*S*H*. 2) "Paratextuality"—which includes the totality

of a literary work between the text proper and all its prefaces, epigraphs, illustrations, book jackets, film posters, DVD special features, etc. For instance, Samuel Cohen's "*Mason & Dixon & the Ampersand*," which takes as its jumping-off point the hardcover edition's book jacket design for Thomas Pynchon's *Mason & Dixon*. 3) "Metatextuality"—which suggest "the critical relation between one text and another, whether the commented text is explicitly cited or only silently evoked" (28), as for example, in the case of Bob Rafelson's remake of *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (1981) which is inescapably in dialogue with Tay Garnett's 1946 version, as well as James M. Cain's 1934 source novel which was also adapted by Luchino Visconti as the 1943 film *Obsession*.¹ Or, to exemplify the "silently evoked," *Clueless* (Amy Heckerling, 1995) is an example of an unstated version of Jane Austin's *Emma*. 4) "Architextuality"—"the generic taxonomies suggested or refused by the titles and subtitles of a text. For example, Francis Ford Coppola's renamed adaptation of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, *Apocalypse Now* (1979), a title "clearly a twist on the Living Theatre's counter-cultural *Paradise Now*" (30). 5) "Hypertextuality"—which Stam suggests might be the most immediately relevant to adaptation studies, "refers to the relation between one text, which Genette calls the 'hypertext,' to an anterior text or 'hypotext,' which the former transforms, modifies, elaborates, or extends" (31). For example, the "hypotexts" of Joyce's "hypertext" *Ulysses* would include *The Odyssey* and *Hamlet*. Or more central to my purposes, the "hypotexts" for Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow*'s would include *King Kong* and *The Wizard of Oz*.

Genette's hyper-categorization underscores the expansive, encompassing potential for an intertextual rubric. And although I am appreciative of Genette's categorical specificity on the matter, I am, for my purposes and for the sake of simplicity, simply going to call all of these examples of intertextuality. This attitude I think intersects with Stam's line of thinking where as he concludes that an intertextual approach can not only reconfigure adaptation studies but is applicable in the broadest sense of textual analysis. He writes that:

By adopting an intertextual as opposed to a judgmental approach rooted in assumptions about a putative superiority of literature, we have not abandoned all notions of judgment and evaluation. . . .We can still speak of successful and unsuccessful adaptation, but this time . . . always take into account very different media and materials of expression.

(46)

In other words, approaching texts as always interconnected to other texts can provide not only a richer understanding of both the primary text and its para-meta-and-hypertexts, but can shed new light on lines of dialogue across historical demarcations and artistic media.

This dissertation is foremost an exercise in intertextual analysis. However, instead of working from literature to film, or even film to film, as Stam proposes, I will be working from film to literature. My basic goal is to extrapolate larger meaning from the formal and referential use of film in selected American novels published after the Second World War—specifically Walker Percy's *The Moviegoer* (1961), Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973), Jessica

Hagedorn's *Dogeaters* (1990), and Han Ong's *Fixer Chao* (2001). Each of these novels, published over a span of forty years, employ film and a central narrative and structural resource. It is the task of this dissertation to identify, itemize, and analyze film as an intertext for these works in an attempt to better situate them as American novels of the post-World War II era. I argue that these novels are best understood not only within their literary context, but also when situated within the context of the films that they reference and film history more generally. To this end, I treat not only specific films and techniques of filmmaking as a source intertext for these novels, but film history as a source context. I close-read the specific uses of film in each novel and through doing so map these novels onto a cinematic timeline rather than a literary one.

The crux of my argument is that a close-reading of the film references and film form of these novels informs not only our understanding of them as individual texts, but offers insight into the changing status and on-going re-conceptualization of the American novel after the Second World War. To this end, I discuss the first two novels in part against the backdrop of the film era in which they were written: the transition of Old to New Hollywood in early 1960s for *The Moviegoer*, the rise of New Hollywood, the American New Wave and the American auteur in the 1970s for *Gravity's Rainbow*. For *Dogeaters*, I examine Hagedorn's use of the historical timeline and critical trajectory of melodrama from the 1950s through the early 1980s as a means of establishing narrative continuity. For *Fixer Chao* I address cinema's association with the concept of the American Dream through films from the Old Hollywood era through contemporary blockbusters and, ironically, canonized Japanese filmmakers.

In addition to the novels themselves I look at a number of films and/or film personalities either directly referenced or evoked given historical context. These include: for *The Moviegoer*, *Stagecoach* and William Holden: for *Gravity's Rainbow*, *King Kong*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *M*A*S*H*, Fritz Lang, and many others: for *Dogeaters*, Douglas Sirk, *All That Heaven Allows*, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*, and *Querelle*: and for *Fixer Chao*, Akira Kurosawa, Yasujirô Ozu, *Hud*, *The Lady Eve*, and *Jezebel*. As a means of underscoring the importance of intertextuality, I have also included still images and photos where they concern my analysis.

As a means of establishing further historical breadth, I include below a brief literary review tying my intertextual analysis of film in the postwar novel to that of the modernist era.

Bridging Modernism and Postmodernism

Through its intertextual approach, and as an additional jumping-off point, this dissertation suggests that the postwar novels I investigate can be linked to a larger tradition that reaches back to the modernist era. Although differing greatly in historical context and style, novels as disparate as Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922), Dos Passos' *The 42nd Parallel* (1930), Nathanael West's *The Day of the Locust* (1939), F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Last Tycoon* (1941), *The Moviegoer*, Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969), *Gravity's Rainbow*, Salmon Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1980), *Dogeaters*, and *Fixer Chao*, regardless of their modernist or postmodernist distinctions, can be grouped together by way of their

intertextual use of film as a literary device. In other words, film offers a new perspective on how these novels might be organized based on a cinematic timeline rather than a literary one. I argue that this intertextual approach provides a clear link between these selected postwar novels and a series of modernist ones. The novels I look at in this dissertation constitute, in this sense, a continuation of a literary trend that precedes World War II, and as a means of establishing this, I will very briefly review a selection of criticism on cinematic novels from the interwar era.

In *The Cinematic Imagination*, published one year before *Gravity's Rainbow*, Edward Murray investigates cinematic elements in both drama and the novel. Murray discusses Joyce, Woolf, William Faulkner, Fitzgerald, and West among others. Interestingly, however, the epigraph for the book stretches even further back and is taken from Tolstoy, somewhere around the turn of the century:

You will see that this little clicking contraption with the revolving handle will make a revolution in our life—in the life of writers. It is a direct attack on the old methods of literary art. We shall have to adapt ourselves to the shadowy screen and to the cold machine. A new form of writing will be necessary. I have thought of that and I can feel what is coming. But I rather like it. The swift change of scene, the blending of emotion and experience—it is much better than the heavy, long-drawn-out kind of writing to which we are accustomed. It is closer to life. In life, too, changes and

transitions flash by before our eyes, and emotions of the soul are like a hurricane. The cinema has divined the mystery of motion. And that is greatness.

Tolstoy's prescience is remarkable, prefiguring not only how film editing would impact the modern novel, but even, in its way, anticipating Walter Benjamin's "The Work of Art on the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1936) in his characterization of "the cold machine." With Tolstoy as a lead-in, Murray addresses how cinematic form has impacted literature from George Bernard Shaw to Alain Robbe-Grillet, from the stream-of-consciousness novels of Joyce, Woolf, and Faulkner, to the camera-eye of Dos Passos, and Hollywood-themed novels by West and Fitzgerald.²

Much of the history of criticism, Murray's book included, regarding the influence of film on modernist era fiction writers—particularly Joyce and Dos Passes—is concerned primarily with film editing techniques, mostly those relating to montage. In *Joycean Frames: Film and the Fiction of James Joyce*, Thomas Burkdall argues that there is a strong link between the effect on the construction of narrative time and space made possible through film editing and the modernist use of stream of consciousness narration, a narrative style most effectively, and famously, realized in Joyce's *Ulysses*. Burkdall writes that "Joyce and the other modernists experienced a revolution in perception that arrived contemporaneously with the advent of the cinema" (98) and that film history and theory are an important, if not crucial aid for understanding modern literature. For Joyce specifically, Burkdall continues, "the society in which he lived underwent a transformation; . . . the introduction of new machines such as

telephones, phonographs, subways, and typewriters revolutionized early twentieth century urban life.” This revolution in perception, this “burgeoning modernist sensibility,” as Burkdall describes it, significantly influenced the writers of the era, not the least of whom was Joyce.

The influence of cinema on Joyce’s work was something not lost in fact on contemporary filmmakers of the era, particularly those pioneering techniques in intellectual montage in the Soviet Union. Murray and others acknowledge this fact as well, and Burkdall writes that:

The connection between Joyce’s fiction and the cinema does not represent a new idea; the works of James Joyce have been called “cinematic” often enough to consider this pronouncement a critical commonplace. . . .Sergei Eisenstein declared that “what Joyce does in literature is quite near to what we do and even closer to what we have intentions of doing with the new cinematography. (xi-xii)

According to Eisenstein, Joyce was achieving on the page a sort of cinema that filmmakers were still working to realize on the screen. Eisenstein’s admiring assessment of Joyce’s use of cinematic-style editing in his fiction is especially significant given his own landmark works arising out of theories in film editing and montage—*Strike* (1925), *Battleship Potemkin* (1925), and *October* (1927)—produced in the wake of Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1921).³ And it is Eisenstein—along with D.W. Griffith, who himself greatly influenced Soviet work in editing by way of his mastering of cross-cutting and other conventions of editing technique and

cinematic language—who is most often proffered as a key filmic influence on modernist writers, in particular John Dos Passos.⁴

In her article “John Dos Passos’ Use of Film Technique in *Manhattan Transfer* and *The 42nd Parallel*,”⁵ Gretchen Foster applies the same editorial or montage-based approach to literary structure, arguing that:

More than any other American writer of his generation, John Dos Passos responded to and adopted the new ways of telling a story which filmmakers were developing in the early twentieth century. . . . Dos Passos carried montage and fragmentation to an extreme. By the time he wrote *The 42nd Parallel*, he had learned a good deal about controlling his use of film techniques. (186)

Elsewhere in her article, Foster notes that Dos Passos had voiced his admiration for the films of Griffith and Eisenstein, and although it is unlikely that he saw Eisenstein’s first directly montage-based masterpiece *Battleship Potemkin* until after the publication of *Manhattan Transfer* (also 1925), filmmaking, especially the newsreel, had a profound effect on the novel and much of Dos Passos’ subsequent fiction. “The montage framework in *Manhattan Transfer*,” writes Foster, “pervades the book, determining its structure and its meaning” (187). The issue of meaning that is key to our understanding of how and why montage appears in books by Joyce and Dos Passos (and later, in works by Pynchon and Ong). As Foster puts it, “Dos Passos replaces all traditional narrative links with montage. He sets images, characters, and events side by side, leaving the reader

to fill in the spaces” (187). Here we see the essence of montage theory at work in fiction.

Although a relatively basic historical and terminological point of film study, it might be useful to nonetheless be clear about what we talk about when we talk about montage theory, particularly as applied to Joyce and Dos Passos whose fictions were constructed contemporaneously to such editorial efforts in cinema. As established by Lev Kuleshov’s filmic experiments in the early 1920s, the theory of intellectual montage is predicated on the belief that:

The material of cinema [is] the celluloid film strip—pieces of film. Film art consisted of putting these pieces together to create, through montage and the spectator’s perception, a cinematic composition or idea. . . .The Kuleshov effect [is a] phenomenon whereby shots acquire their meaning only in relation to other shots. (Sklar 136-7)

Sklar—though his summation of the Kuleshov effect is entirely adequate—does not emphasize enough the importance of the audience in the ultimate realization of montage. Any meaning that montage might have relies on the audience’s perception and interpretation of the edited material it views. Just as the reader is left to “fill in the space,” in Dos Passos, the reader of *Ulysses* is likewise challenged to play an active role in the creation of meaning through montage. As Burkdall notes, *Ulysses* depends upon abstract concepts being “created by the reader as a part of the process of artistic perception” (52). These abstract concepts constitute the 3 in what is sometimes referred to as the $1+1=3$ equation of montage theory. In other words, the filmmaker (or author in these cases)

juxtaposes two shots (1+1) that possess only their own singular meaning distinct from one another—or in Joyce’s case, words that “clash to communicate ideas that one word alone cannot express,” for example “clipclaps glovesilent hands” (Burkdall 52)—and the meaning (the 3, if you will, in the equation) is created through the perception and interpretation of the juxtaposition or association of the two otherwise distinct shots. Although the artist may intend a specific association or interpretation, montage nonetheless requires the audience’s active participation as a means of synthesizing meaning. This recalls Tolstoy’s comment that in life “changes and transitions flash by before our eyes,” which suggests that cinema has the edge on fiction when it comes to recognizing more keenly and efficiently the power of audience perception.

In “Writing the Jump Cut: *Mrs. Dalloway* in the Context of Cinema,” Lia M. Hotchkiss expands on this montage-based approach to the use of film in the fiction of the modernist era, arguing that Virginia Woolf employs discontinuous forms of film editing, for instance the jump cut, in her fiction. Discontinuous editing is, in essence, related to montage—two shots are juxtaposed and as Hotchkiss puts it, “juxtaposition . . . establishes a relation” (135) regardless of the content or form of those shots. However, she suggests that discontinuity editing differs from montage in that it

Actually plays discontinuities against continuities rather than simply juxtaposing completely dissimilar shots.

Whether the differences or the similarities between the shots have the greater prominence depends in part on the context and the filmmaker’s or author’s purpose. In *Mrs. Dalloway*,

for example, discontinuity editing not only allows the narrative to move from one character's perspective to another's but, more importantly, to construct a bridge between the "shots" and hence suggest a formal unity in tension with separation and diversity. (135-6)

Although Hotchkiss' differentiation of montage from the more general concept of discontinuity editing is valuable, the use of these filmic techniques in modernist fiction boils down to two primary concerns (at least for my purposes here): 1) that film significantly influenced the fiction of the modernist era, and 2) that this influence and the formal manifestations of this influence can be uniquely linked to the era in question recalls Burkdall's statement that "Joyce and the other modernists experienced a revolution in perception that arrived contemporaneously with the advent of the cinema." In other words, the use of film in fiction at this time can be directly linked to what was being done and theorized in the cinema of its day. This, I argue is true of cinematic novels after World War II as well, particularly *The Moviegoer*, *Gravity's Rainbow*, *Dogeaters*, and *Fixer Chao*.

Echoing Hotchkiss' point, Keith Cohen writes in *Film and Fiction* that early cinema affected the modernist novel by way of its "spatial configuration of the flow of time, . . . [its] perpetual shifting of point of view, and [its] vivid discontinuity of the narrating material" (208). What resulted by way of this filmic influence, to paraphrase Cohen, was a challenge to narrative conventions in the form of *simultaneity*, *multiperspectivism*, and discontinuous disposition in the novel (208, his italics). Claude-Edmonde Magny concurs, stating in *The Age*

of the American Novel, for example, that “Dos Passos was able to avoid the fragmentation of his book into a series of scenes without continuity by using methods of the cinema, thus restoring to a complex narrative [a] basic cohesion” (80). Similar to Dos Passos, *Gravity’s Rainbow* and *Fixer Chao* employ film editing and montage.

As for less technical more referential movie-culture uses of film in literature there are critical antecedents as well. Murray addresses *The Day of the Locust* and *The Last Tycoon*, for instance, both of which take up film culture as their narrative crux, rather than film form as their structural basis. All the novels I investigate in this dissertation use the form, history, and culture of film in their intertextual design. All are influenced both by film’s reconfiguration of the design of written narrative and the thing of movies and movie culture. They depict movies for the sake of movies, but in fiction. Furthermore this dissertation fits into the larger scheme of academic discourse on the matter as illustrated by Cohen’s conclusion that:

The cinematic precedence for the classic modern novel, therefore, deserves prominence as a primary example of one art technologically ahead of its time that shocked another art into the realization of how it could align itself with the times. It was as though the cinema had become a huge magnet whose field exerted on the other arts like the novel an attraction as powerful and as ineluctable as gravity. The enormous exchange of artistic energies continues and has yet to be measured definitely. (210)

Close-Reading the Intertext

This is, therefore, a contribution to the ongoing intertextual study of the influence of film on the American novel. For each chapter, I begin by offering critical context for my analysis and outline the steps I will take in examining film referentiality as both a means of better reading the form and themes of each novel and as an alternative means of historicizing post-World War II American fiction.

In Chapter One, “*The Moviegoer* and Transitional Hollywood,” I argue that the era of transitional Hollywood—that is between Old and New eras—provides not only backdrop, but functions as an analogue for Binx Bolling’s existential limbo. Binx’s transitional, existential phase is, in effect, mirrored by the contemporaneous moment in film history. To this end, I consider Binx’s moviegoing as not only a means by which he identifies himself and those around him, but as the basis for his voice, narrative style, and his sense of self-awareness about form and social performance. In addition, when we consider his television viewing on top of his ritualistic moviegoing, it is suggested that Binx has an intuitive understanding of the cinematic transition, malaise or limbo, occurring simultaneous to his own. Therefore, as a means of offering a potentially more unifying approach to Percy’s film intertext I focus on three interrelated groupings of film motifs within the context of midcentury transitional Hollywood as they relate to form and themes in the novel. First, I will look at moviegoing, genre, and rotation/repetition. Second, the presence of television as it relates to transitional Hollywood. And third, performance and authenticity as they relate

to film acting. By mapping the novel onto a film historical timeline rather than a literary one I hope to provide a more thorough investigation of Percy's use of film as intertext and an alternative means by which to situate *The Moviegoer* within the literary canon. In other words, this chapter historicizes Percy's cinematic references as a means of illustrating their importance to the form, characters, and themes of *The Moviegoer*. Recognizing these references as such offers an alternative way to place the novel within literary history.

Gravity's Rainbow is by far the most encyclopedic example of a cinematic novel. No single chapter could encompass the entirety of Pynchon's cinematic landscape. Therefore, as a means of consolidation, Chapter Two, "*Gravity's Rainbow* and the New Hollywood Auteur" attempts to situate Pynchon's use of film within the context of the Hollywood New Wave, arguing that his comprehensive knowledge and application of things cinematic demonstrates a similarity to/affinity with the New Hollywood auteur. To this end, using the New Hollywood auteur as an analogue, I investigate Pynchon's self-conscious use of film, his encyclopedic range of film references, and his countercultural themes. To support my labeling of Pynchon as an auteur, I close-read both his use of editing and camera angle as well as his gestures to German Expressionism, Fritz Lang, *King Kong*, and *The Wizard of Oz*, among other films and film personalities. In addition, as a cinematic and historical parallel to *Gravity's Rainbow*, I analyze Robert Altman's *M*A*S*H*.

For Chapter Three, "*Dogeaters* and the Vernacular of Melodrama," I offer an alternative to prevailing criticism on Jessica Hagedorn's use of film. Although the critical works I survey are thoughtful and illuminating in their treatment of

Hagedorn's use of film, they fail to make key moves that can better evaluate the novel, and its subsequent adaptation for the stage. In effect, I argue that Douglas Sirk and Rainer Werner Fassbinder have not been adequately dealt with as film intertexts. Hagedorn's use of Sirk and Fassbinder impacts her novel significantly both in terms of those director's' respective uses of the cinematic mode of melodrama and their historical proximity. As a means of illustrating the manner in which Sirk and Fassbinder affect the form of Hagedorn's novel I close-read scenes and images from their films—*All That Heaven Allows* and *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*—as they correspond to the form and themes of *Dogeaters*. Additionally, I use Hagedorn's adaptation of her novel to the stage as a way of emphasizing the importance of Fassbinder where the themes of sexuality in both the novel and the play are concerned. To this end, I also look at Fassbinder's final film, *Querelle*, in an effort to completely historicize Hagedorn's film referentiality as literary device. Ultimately, I argue that Hagedorn uses Sirk and Fassbinder as visual and thematic models for her own melodrama and as a means of providing a historical chronology for her otherwise nonlinear narrative.

Chapter Four, "*Fixer Chao*, Cultural Performativity, and the American Dream" argues that Ong presents film as an ineffective model of identification within the context of the pursuit of cultural capital and personal identification. Using Pierre Bourdieu's "The Aristocracy of Culture" simply as a jumping off point—particularly his assertion that, "Knowledge of directors is much more closely linked to cultural capital than is mere cinema-going" (27)—I examine Ong's use of film form and history as it relates to themes of racial and sexual performativity. I suggest that Ong's intertextual use of film—from montage-style

reconstructions of bathroom stall hustling, to the use of Yasujiro Ozu and Akira Kurosawa as cultural capital, to the rebellion against social conformity presented by *Jezebel* and *Hud*—builds on Bourdieu’s models of cultural, social, and economic capital, where it examines cultural performativity as it relates to the American Dream. For the character William, film is carried through the novel as a source of identification despite the fact that in the end his cinematic self-awareness seems only to amount to a profound racial and sociological ambivalence. Although this chapter deviates from the others in that it presents less of a historicizing of Ong’s referentiality within a particular cinematic era, it contributes to my larger argument that the use of cinema as a literary device spans the twentieth century and offers an alternative configuration to the exhausted models of modernist versus postmodernist at least as they pertain to cinematic intertextuality.

In an epilogue to this dissertation I briefly turn to Don DeLillo’s *Underworld* (1997)—a novel whose context is the rise of American independent cinema during the globalizing era of the 1990s and which gestures back to both mid-century film as well as the works of Sergei Eisenstein, in a sense bringing us full-circle. For DeLillo the film camera is a gun which shoots, captures, and fixes within our collective memory the often violent history of the twentieth century. Film is therefore the device, the medium, and structuring aesthetic principle behind what we envision when we visualize history. It is on this point that the epilogue offers suggestions on how the dissertation might move forward.⁶

CHAPTER ONE

The Moviegoer and Transitional Hollywood



***Stagecoach* (1939)**



**William Holden and Erich von Stroheim
Publicity still for *Sunset Boulevard* (1950)**

“It reminds me of a movie I saw last month.”

“Toward her I keep a Gregory Peckish sort of distance . . .

She nods. Her agate eyes watch me. I think it over Gregory-
Peckishly . . . a Gregorish Peckerish idea pops into my head.”

“The movies are onto the search, but they screw it up.”

Looking back from 1971 in “The Pilgrimages of Walker Percy,” Alfred Kazin characterized Percy’s novel thusly: “*The Moviegoer* was in any event a book difficult to place. It was a lean, tartly written, subtle, not very dramatic attack on the wholly bourgeois way of life” (81). Echoing perhaps something in John W. Aldridge’s suggested claim fifteen years earlier that novels set in the

well-off suburban milieu will not suffice given the lack of the social differences that mark the novel as such, Kazin's cautious acknowledgment of Percy's engagement of class suggests that although Percy's novel is a recognizable accomplishment, it is nonetheless hard to categorize based on prevailing rubrics.⁷ Kazin's carefulness speaks to a certain difficulty in situating Percy's novel in the literary canon, its receipt of the National Book Award in 1962 notwithstanding. Along these lines William Rodney Allen argues in "Self-Deception and Waking Dreams in *Gentilly*" that the novel

did not have the "feel" of a typical Southern novel, and reviewers used to southern writers who sounded like Faulkner not surprisingly found the book hard to place when it appeared without fanfare in 1961. . . . Thus Percy's philosophical, unassertive, highly allusive fiction was enigmatic yet strangely compelling to his early readers. (20)

Allen suggests that Percy's "fusion of the American idiom with the European existential perspective" (21)—as influenced by Kierkegaard, Camus, Sartre, and Dostoevsky—contributed at the time to the elusive nature of the novel and in turn the manner in which it resisted easy categorization.

Moreover, the feature that Allen suggests most eluded readers and critics at the time of the novel's publication is its fundamental irony. He argues that "Kazin's remark that *The Moviegoer* was a 'not very dramatic attack' on bourgeois America is a clue to the nature of Percy's method" (21). From Binx Bolling's methodically recounted vignettes to his seemingly passive engagement of consumerist and social rituals, the tone of Percy's novel belies its social

commentary. Allen writes that “Percy’s ironic and even bitter attack on what Robert Lowell⁸ called the ‘tranquilized 50s’ was misread when it was published because it appeared to be the standard Sinclair-Lewis-style⁹ anti-consumer novel depicting a protagonist lost in a dull, philistine world” (21). To the contrary, and toward the prevailing wisdom regarding Binx’s narrative voice, Allen writes that:

Superficially, *The Moviegoer* is about just such a man as he lives the most ordinary life imaginable—whiling away his time watching movies, having inconsequential affairs with his secretaries, visiting relatives, making money. But the difference is that Binx does these things ironically, and the “understated,” “undramatic” way described by Kazin and [Martin] Luschei in which this irony arises reflects the complexity and difficulty of Percy’s art, which was missed by his early readers. . . .Consequently, he has his protagonist appear to be the quintessential conformist, living a life of despair unaware of itself, as foreshadowed in the novel’s epigraph. (21)

To support this assertion that Binx is only superficially a paradigm of 1950s conformity—that he is instead an ironic, self-aware, philosophical conformist cognizant of his own despair—Allen looks to Binx’s misleadingly laconic tone, his essay-like voice¹⁰, and, as Martin Luschei’s would have it, Percy’s “elliptical approach and the language of understatement”¹¹—the latter of which takes up film technique directly as a model for evaluating Percy’s style which is a perspective which I will return to later in this chapter.

There is little doubt that *The Moviegoer* is widely regarded as one of the most distinguished American novels of the twentieth century,¹² nonetheless the conflict still remains concerning exactly how to classify or situate the novel in the literary canon, other than by awards and literary rankings. To restate, or reframe the canonical conflict, *The Moviegoer* is a southern novel that does not read like a southern novel in part due to its narrator's voice and misunderstood passivity and in part due to the fusion of European existentialism with the American idiom. It is a midcentury novel lacking the usual class divisions yet it nonetheless is a critique of consumer and conformist culture, assuming that we accept Binx's bourgeois conformism as ironic and his transformation as authentic. I would suggest that these conflicts about canonicity, historical placement, narrative voice and existential themes, can be reconciled through an investigation of Percy's use of film. In effect, film provides *The Moviegoer* a structural and thematic model, a specific era in film history as analogue, and situates it with the larger intertextual trend in twentieth century literature.

Although a body of illuminating criticism has built up around Percy's use of film in the novel—some of which gestures toward a better understanding of the place of the novel within its historical and literary context—there lacks a unifying rubric under which to best identify his intertextual use of film and how it might provide a larger literary link. I suggest that the manner in which we can best address the form and themes of the novel as well as reconcile any conflict over how to situate it historically is to approach it from its specific contemporaneous cinematic era—the transition between Old and New Hollywood in the late 1950s and early 1960s. I argue that the era of midcentury transitional Hollywood

provides not only a backdrop, but functions as a sort of analogue for Binx Bolling's existential limbo. Binx's transitional, existential phase—his extended “dissolve” as Luschei would have it—is mirrored by the contemporaneous moment in film history. Binx's moviegoing is not simply that of a consumer in the economic sense, nor is it merely an escape from daily realities. Binx's moviegoing is a means by which he identifies himself and his relationship to those around him. In turn, moviegoing accounts for Binx's voice, his narrative style, and his sense of self-awareness of film form and his own social performance. In addition, when we consider his television viewing on top of his ritualistic moviegoing, it is suggested that Binx has an intuitive understanding of the cinematic transition, malaise or limbo, occurring simultaneous to his own.

Therefore, as a means of offering a more unifying approach to Percy's use of film intertext I will—while utilizing and expanding on other critical works that examine film in the novel— focus on three interrelated groupings of film motifs within the context of midcentury transitional Hollywood as they relate to form and themes in the novel. First, I will look at moviegoing, genre, and the question of rotation/repetition. Second, I will examine the presence of television as it relates to transitional Hollywood. And third, I look at film acting as it relates to issues of performance and authenticity. By mapping the novel onto a film historical timeline rather than a literary one I hope to provide a more thorough investigation of Percy's use of film as intertext and an alternative means by which to situate *The Moviegoer* within the literary canon.

Moviegoing, Genre, and Rotation/Repetition



Red River (1948)



The Ox-Bow Incident (1943)

To best assess the function of film in *The Moviegoer* it is beneficial to compartmentalize specific cinematic motifs. The title of the novel, of course, offers the central film motif, that of actual moviegoing, theaters and spectatorship. Simply, Binx Bolling goes to the movies often and his film knowledge informs his personal narrative at times very directly and at times more subconsciously. In “*The Moviegoer* as Dissolve,” Martin Luschei addresses how film technique functions both formally and metaphorically in the novel. He states that “what Binx sees is molded and tinted by his moviegoing, which Percy astutely plays upon to explore his own existential themes” (24). Luschei uses as a jumping off point a line early in the novel in which Binx characterizes Mercer, Aunt Emily’s black butler: “Mercer has dissolved somewhat in recent years” (23). At once intrigued and yet, I think, somewhat defensive about Percy’s use of cinematic form,¹³ Luschei argues that

Percy adapts various techniques of film art, presenting his fictional world through fades and filters, superimpositions and intercuts, an occasional jump cut or zoom, and focusing effects both sharp and soft, along with tantalizingly nascent dissolves foreshadowing what is to be, or not to be. In this bag of filmic tricks the most important is the dissolve, for virtually the entire novel is structured as a lingering dissolve, a pleasantly painful transition between two phases of Binx Bolling's life. And as we watch one scene slowly fade out while another fades in over it, we realize that the dissolve is theme as well as technique in *The Moviegoer*. (25)

Luschei does well to extrapolate from Percy's use of the word dissolve—whether used “by design or by chance,” (25)—an illuminating structural and metaphorical study of Binx's narrative style and existential search. The film dissolve viewed as literary device helps account for Percy's “highly elliptical” (34) method and provides a model for, as Luschei describes them, readers who “have often been unable to follow Binx to his new habitation, the nature of which cannot be suggested by any spatial metaphor” (34). In other words, according to Luschei, when we arrive at novel's end, Binx's Little Way—his past manner of navigating life—completes its inevitable dissolve, thus revealing Binx's new state of being.

In addition, Luschei couples his concept of the novel as dissolve with another film technique/metaphor: lenses and focus as they relate to changing degrees of narrative and spiritual clarity. He writes that, “Metaphorically, the search may be described as a lens capable of an absolute clear, sharp focus” (31)—

the implication being, of course, that the opposite is sometimes true as well. To expand this further, as Binx takes us through his search—which for Luschei argues ends in “the clear lens of faith” (35) —his narrative is presented as a series of vignettes (shots, scenes), essay-like musings (as a voice-over narrations, to follow the film logic), and digressions (flashbacks, intercuts). Like a film director, Binx points his inner-camera lens at what he wants us to see, or what suits his fancy, and in one manner or another constructs that image through various cinematic techniques that in turn shape how we see as well. Between Luschei’s overarching dissolve and a variety of other editorial techniques, the representation of Binx’s search is rooted in the language of film—a language that any moviegoer might intuit or understand subliminally, but which Binx employs self-consciously.

If we accept that film technique, which Binx is ostensibly proficient in as a consequence of his ritualistic moviegoing, works as a structuring principle for his narrative style, I would suggest that Luschei’s notion of the novel’s dissolve macrostructure —as analogue for Binx’s extended philosophical, spiritual transition—can be extrapolated to provide a larger contextual parallel. If the language of the medium self-consciously informs Binx’s representation of himself, it stands to reason that film history would be a functioning component of his cinematic knowledge as well. For instance, Binx not only references current cinematic moviegoing, but often holds those movies up against those from throughout his long past of moviegoing, thereby providing historical scope to his spectatorship and expansive film knowledge. This slow dissolve from one Binx to the next, or rather from Old Binx to New Binx, mirrors the novel’s

contemporaneous cinematic era. Luschei hits on this when he states that the dissolve structure presents “a pleasantly painful transition between two phases of Binx Bolling’s life.” One might similarly describe the era of transition from the Old Hollywood studio system to New Hollywood.

As Thomas Schatz notes in *The Genius of the System: Hollywood Filmmaking in the Studio Era*, the decline of the Old Hollywood studio system was already being felt in the early 1950s. Schatz’s book is in part an attempt to answer legendary screenwriter Ben Hecht’s question posed in 1954: “What had Hollywood been?” (4). As Schatz argues, although the “big companies like MGM and Paramount and Warner Bros. continued to survive, of course—indeed they flourished in the age of television and the New Hollywood” (4), the old studio system which structured the industry changed significantly. Continuing, Schatz characterizes the decline of Old Hollywood as such:

Things had changed since the halcyon era when [David O.] Selznick and Hecht and [Louis B.] Mayer were making movies. Gone was the cartel of movie factories that turned out a feature every week for a hundred million moviegoers. Gone were the studio bosses who answered to the New York office and oversaw hundreds, even thousands, of contract personnel working on the lot. Gone was the industrial infrastructure, the “integrated” system whose major studio powers not only produced and distributed the movies, but also ran their own theater chains. Something was “over and done with” in the early 1950s, all right, but it wasn’t the

movies. It was the studio system of moviemaking and the near-absolute power that the studio system wielded over the American movie industry. (4)

Despite Schatz's tone of lament, he does touch on the idea of transitional Hollywood as an era—to borrow from Luscchi—of pleasantly painful transition between two phases. He notes that although the old system and its form of control had all but disappeared, the movies had not. There was no shortage of films for moviegoers to see, but the industry itself was experiencing its own sort



**"The Shakespeare of Hollywood,"
Ben Hecht**

of existential malaise. As viewers were drawn away to television the industry was forced to adapt rather than mandate. Arguably as many great works in cinema were produced during this transitional era¹⁴ as were before it and yet the sense of systemic continuity provided by the studio system infrastructure was no more. In this sense, akin to Binx's search, Hecht's question "What had Hollywood been?"

takes on an introspective, even philosophical tone born out of a sense of uncertainty in both the present and future of the industry. Early in the novel Binx notes in regard to a moviegoing experience that "the theater was almost empty, which was pleasant for me but not for [the theater manager]" (5). Here Percy links Binx's moviegoing specifically to the era of Hollywood transition marked by declining theater attendance during the era.

Among the most distinguishable features of the Old Hollywood studio system are the classical genre films that were the industry's bread and butter. Binx relates most to genre films from the studio era proper, the 1930s and 1940s.



Dana Andrews in *The Best Years of Our Lives*

Through genre, we see that Binx is self-conscious not only of the form of film, but of its history and historical context as well. Most of the films he references are from before Old Hollywood's decline and they present a sort of

alternative historical, personal

timeline. For instance, he references three war films which span conflicts of the first half century: *All Quiet on the Western Front* (Lewis Milestone, 1930), *The Best Years of Our Lives* (William Wyler, 1946) —by references to Dana Andrews and Fredric March—and *There Shall Be No Night* (George Schaefer, 1957). The first film is a World War I combat, anti-war film and the second is a home front drama set during World War II, the war that took his father's life. The third film is a made for television feature based on the 1940 play¹⁵ by Robert E. Sherwood that depicts a Finnish family's plight in the build up to Finland's Winter War with the Soviet Union during World War II. For the 1957 television film version, however, the time and setting are changed to the 1956 Soviet invasion of Hungary, therefore providing Binx a Cold War era reference more closely related to his own experience serving in the Korean War.

In a sense, film provides Binx with historical and personal continuity and introspection that other mediums do not. Film not only distracts him from his existential angst, but also reflects and informs something central in his understanding and performance of social and interpersonal interactions. Literature, for instance, is not adequate for Binx. He states that, “Until recent years, I read only ‘fundamental’ books, that is, key books on key subjects, such as *War and Peace*, the novel of novels; *A Study of History*, the solution of the problem of time; Schrodinger’s *What is Life?*, Einstein’s *The Universe as I See It*, and such” (69)—all of which do well to explain history and the universe for Binx, but, as he states, “The only difficulty was that though the universe had been disposed of, I myself was left over” (70). In effect, literature and science provide Binx an understanding of things as satisfied by facts and scientific analysis, neither of which remedy his personal angst. They satisfy, as Binx labels it, a vertical search, that is to say the search for higher knowledge. But Binx’s search necessitates a horizontal search that he equates to stepping out and away from books and into the city streets and movie theaters. “What is important,” he confesses, “is what I shall find when I leave my room and wander in the neighborhood. Before, I wandered as a diversion. Now I wander seriously and sit and read as a diversion” (70). In other words, Binx’s wandering the streets and theaters supersedes literature and the scholarship of science in that the streets provide for him a structural, sociological, and historical landscape upon which he can make sense of himself. To use his terminology, he can achieve a vertical understanding of the universe via literature and science, but not the horizontal understanding of himself that he seeks. Moreover, Percy’s choice of terminology

is apt given the transitional Hollywood context: in 1948 the Supreme Court ruled vertical integration—the Old Hollywood model which allowed studios to own all means of their industrial interests from production, to distribution, to exhibition—illegal which paved the way for horizontal integration, ownership across multiple industries, by which New Hollywood flourished.

In addition to offering an alternative historical timeline and functioning as a diversion from his malaise, film often displaces Binx's personal memories. In fact, Binx claims that he has no memories of his own but only memories of movies. He confesses that

Other people, so I have read, treasure memorable moments in their lives: the time one climbed the Parthenon at sunrise, the summer night one met a lonely girl in Central Park and achieved with her a sweet and natural relationship, as they say in books. I too once met a girl in Central Park, but it is not much to remember. What I remember is the time John Wayne killed three men with a carbine as he was falling to the dusty street in *Stagecoach*, and the time the kitten found Orson Welles in the doorway in *The Third Man*. (7)

Film provides a surrogate form and history upon which Binx can map his own life. It allows for a certain emotional distance and intellectual engagement which he in turn applies to his actual life. To this end, Binx finds classical genre films the most applicable to his search, because they present clear structural paradigms and satisfy his viewer expectations through both adherence and departure from

convention. In effect, they provide him with an alternative source for rotation and repetition.¹⁶

As evidenced by the quote above, there are two classical genres that are important to Binx's experiencing of rotation and repetition: the western and the crime film. Most reflective of Binx's state of transition—his search—is the western. The western is the quintessential Old Hollywood genre and in its classical form it relies on a clear structural paradigm, making it suitable grounds



The Wild Bunch

for Binx's existential motifs of rotation and repetition. Arguably no other genre reflects the transition from Old Hollywood to New more so than the western. From

the classical era's masterpieces *Stagecoach* (John Ford, 1939) and *Red River* (Howard Hawks, 1948), to the revisionist and existential westerns of the 1950s—Ford's *The Searchers* (1956) and *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962), and the works of Anthony Mann—to the dominance of the western on 1950s and 1960s television,¹⁷ to the genre's violent, auteurist, self-reflexive reincarnations in the New Hollywood—the works of Sergio Leone, *The Wild Bunch* (Sam Peckinpah, 1969), *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (George Roy Hill, 1969), and *Little Big Man* (Arthur Penn, 1971)—the trajectory of the western follows that of Hollywood's transition from the studio era to the New Hollywood.

In a conscious attempt to create a repetition, Binx decides to go to a specific theater in which he had seen *The Ox-Bow Incident* (William A. Wellman, 1943)—another film starring Dana Andrews—some years earlier. Interestingly, the theater is not showing *The Ox-Bow Incident* but another unnamed western, thus underscoring the suitability of classical genre for Binx’s experiments in rotation and repetition. He recognizes that based on their allegiance to a structural paradigm, any western from the Old Hollywood era will suffice. He describes the experience as follows:

Fourteen years ago, when I was a sophomore, I saw a western at a movie-house on Freret Street, a place frequented by students and known to them as the Armpit. The movie was *The Oxbow Incident* and it was quite good. . . .Yesterday evening I noticed in the Picayune that another western was playing in the same theater. So up I went. (79)

Again it is not *The Ox-Bow Incident* specifically that functions in the repetition, but the adherence to generic conventions and expectations. This is a point that Pamela Freshney misses in her article “*The Moviegoer and Lancelot: The Movies as Literary Symbol.*” She mistakenly notes that, “At one point Binx undertakes a deliberate repetition by attending the same movie, at the same theater, in the same season, fourteen years later” (721). This is clearly not the case, and so it is therefore evident that the focus of Binx’s repetition is not the specific film, but its genre.

In addition to the western, the other classical genre Binx is drawn to as a part of his search for rotary and repetitive experiences, is the crime film,

specifically *film noir*. *Film noir* is the genre, or cycle of films, most distinctively associated with the initial post-World War II period. In fact, the prevailing critical and historical consensus is that the *film noir* proper basically ends with Old Hollywood—most argue that the classical cycle of these films runs from 1941 to at the latest 1958. Steeped in darkness, social and political intrigue, paranoia, and an overarching sense of despair and postwar existential malaise, it stands to



Panic in the Streets

reason that Binx would be drawn to these films. The two films that Binx makes particular note of are *Panic in the Streets* (Elia Kazan, 1950), which was shot in New Orleans, and *Dark Waters* (Andre De Toth,

1944), which is set, in part, in the Louisiana swamps. Both of these films provide Binx a sense of place given their settings, and in the case of *Panic in the Streets* they offer him an example of what he calls “certification”

In “The Dream Screen in *The Moviegoer*,” Lewis Lawson argues that although *Panic in the Streets* offers Binx a sense of certification—that is, it validates a sense of place and meaning thereby quells his sense of alienation—the relief it provides is nonetheless fleeting and not significant enough to cease Binx’s search for rotation and repetition for very long. Quoting both Binx and from

Percy's essay "The Man on the Train," from the collection *The Message in the Bottle*,¹⁸ Lawson writes that:

In [*Panic in the Streets*] Richard Widmark plays a public health inspector who discovers "that a culture of cholera bacilli has gotten loose in the city. . . . There is a scene which shows the very neighborhood of the theater" (63). Such a movie, focusing upon the objective-empirical world, emphasizes the values of its worldview, to see the familiar represented by a visual apparatus is to see heightened reality. Such a movie would seem to hold no promise for Binx, but there is that phenomenon of—to borrow the language of "The Man on the Train"—"the triumphant reversal of alienation through its representing" (93). Binx calls this "phenomenon of moviegoing . . . certification" (63).

. . . As a curative for emptiness—malaise, "the pain of loss"—such a reversal is, however, a Band-Aid. Alienation endures. (31)

In other words, the representation of their neighborhood on screen has the effect for Binx of certifying a sense of place, validating, at least momentarily, that he is, as he says, "Somewhere and not Anywhere" (63). Or as Phillip E. Simmons argues in decidedly postmodernist terms, "an experience is not 'real' until it has been commodified as an 'image.'"¹⁹ Either way, Binx realizes universal validation, however fleeting, through an occurrence of metacinematic acknowledgement.

In a sequence later in the novel, the western and *film noir* are juxtaposed as Binx describes two significant experiences of rotation. In *Fort Dobbs* (Gordon Douglas, 1958)—which Binx sees at The Moonlit Drive-In with his date Sharon and his stepbrother Lonnie—Binx finds another solitary wanderer with whom to identify. He describes the scene and the resulting rotation as such:

Fort Dobbs is good. . . . There under the black sky rides Clint Walker alone. . . .

[He] rides over the badlands, up a butte, and stops. . . . A few decrepit buildings huddle down there in the canyon. We know nothing of him, where he comes from or where he goes.

A good night: Lonnie happy (he looks around at me with the liveliest sense of the secret between us; the secret is that Sharon is not and never will be onto the little touches we see in the movie and, in the seeing, know that the other sees—as when Clint Walker tells the saddle tramp in the softest easiest old Virginian voice: “Mister, I don’t believe I’d do that if I was you”—Lonnie beside himself, doesn’t know whether to watch Clint Walker or me). . . .

A good rotation. A rotation defined as the experiencing of the new beyond the expectation of the experiencing of the new. For example, taking one’s first trip to Taxco would not be a rotation, or no more than a very

ordinary rotation; but getting lost on the way and discovering a hidden valley would be. (143-4)

Here, the experience of rotation comes for Binx through the recognition of an unexpected novelty within an experience of the new. In this sense, I would argue



Fort Dobbs Publicity Still

that his rotation is somewhat ironic given the fact that *Fort Dobbs* is a much later western (1958), released, as I address above, during an era of change for the genre, and yet it fits the mold of *Stagecoach* in its clichéd scenarios and phrases. For example, as in *Stagecoach*, the Cherokee are depicted as the sort of anonymous hoard of collective baddies that are characteristic of the classical genre. In this manner, I would suggest

that Binx experiences rotation ironically via *Fort Dobbs* because his expectations of the film are not that of classical genre and so when the film unfolds in classical fashion Binx experiences a successful rotation. In other words, his routine requires that he go see the new western *Fort Dobbs*, but the form/style of the film surprises Binx, satisfies his cinematic self-awareness, and thus provides him a rotation.²⁰

Then in a wonderful recognition of metacinema, Binx offers the only other experience of rotation (and repetition) he remembers as comparable to that provided to him by *Fort Dobbs*. *Dark Waters* (1944), a now long lost *film noir*—

which, as I note above, functions as another source of certification of place given its setting in the Louisiana swamp—certainly fulfills Binx’s other connection to film genre, despite its slippage into horror/thriller. Like the western, classical *film noir* offers a clear generic structural paradigm through formal and thematic tropes and works based on the satisfaction or disruption of audience expectations as such. However, in this instance, *Dark Waters* offers Binx both something he did not anticipate, a surprise like the unanticipated discovery of a hidden valley while en route to a predetermined location, and a meta-cinematic realization of repetition in the sense of a film within a film. He writes:

The only other rotation I can recall which was possibly superior was a movie I saw before the war called *Dark Waters*. . . .In the movie Thomas Mitchell and Merle Oberon live in a decaying mansion in a Louisiana swamp. One night they drive into the village—to see a movie! A repetition within a rotation. I was nearly beside myself with rotary emotion. (144)

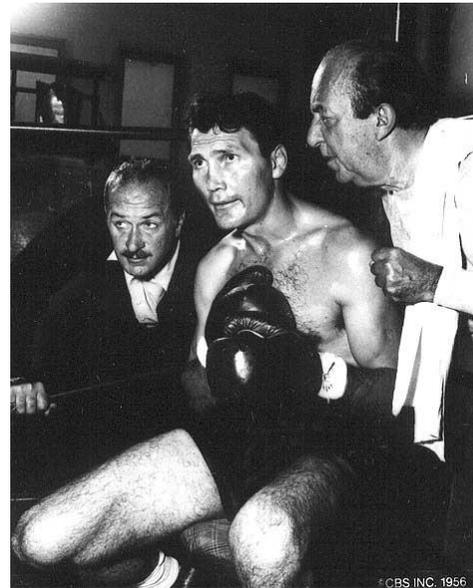
Here Binx, in exclamatory fashion, expresses his reverie in the rotary and repetitive capability of film by way of a moment of metacinema. The rotation provided him by the form of film, and the image of Thomas Mitchell, are clear, but the film within a film moment is something new for Binx. What he is recognizing, in a way presciently, as rotary and repetitive experience is an obtrusive sort of self-referentiality that will become commonplace in New Hollywood. Given his proclivity for ritualistic moviegoing and his encyclopedic

film knowledge, Binx shares a kinship with the midcentury film students who will become the major filmmakers of the New Hollywood era.

Television and Transitional Hollywood



The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet (1952-1966)



Keenan Wynn (left) with Jack Palance and Ed Wynn in *Requiem for a Heavyweight (Playhouse 90, 1956)*

The next way by which Binx's transitional phase is linked to that of Hollywood is through television. Binx is not just a theatrical moviegoer, but a television viewer as well. "I own a first-class television set," (7) he brags early in the novel as testament to his carrying out the duties of citizenship. Schatz states that, "Television was obviously a mixed blessing for Hollywood, revitalizing studio-based production but bringing a decisive end to the studio system as Hollywood had known it" (482). Television was a part of the disruption of the

Old Hollywood order. At first it presented a direct economic challenge to cinema as more and more people stayed home and ticket sales declined. But then slowly over the course of the 1950s, television, ironically, became an important facet of Hollywood's transition from the old studio model to something new. With the addition of television to Binx's ritual consumption of film, Percy further establishes a metaphorical link between Binx's transition and that of Hollywood—that is, further maps Binx onto his contemporaneous film era. In addition, whether through particular programs or actors, each of Binx's television references in one way or another acknowledges or draws attention to the function of television in the era of Hollywood transition. By close-reading the television references as well as actors referenced, the link between Binx and transitional Hollywood becomes clear.

For Binx, television seems to be a lesser medium than film, because he never admits that it fits into his search or that it provides him any rotary or repetitive experience, although this isn't exactly true, as I will discuss below. Superficially, TV offers game show contestants, facsimiles of the American Dream in *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*, and a means by which he can substantiate his ironic consumer status. Nonetheless, based on historical context and by referential association, Percy presents television as another aspect of the film history analogue for Binx's malaise and search. Binx's first reference to a specific television viewing experience establishes the function of the medium during the transitional Hollywood era.

Last night I saw a TV play about a nuclear test explosion.

Keenan Wynn played a troubled physicist who had many a

bad moment with his conscience. He took solitary walks in the desert. But you could tell that in his heart of hearts that he was having a very good time with his soul-searching. (8)

The film referenced here is *Shack Out on 101* (Edward Dein, 1955). Despite the fact that Percy, or Binx, gets the reference wrong—the film actually stars Wynn as George the café owner and Frank Lovejoy as Professor Sam the scientist—the film is a characteristic example of television programming in the transitional era.



Keenan Wynn in *Once Upon a Time in the West* (Sergio Leone, 1968)

Shack Out on 101 was a feature film—not made for TV—the likes of which was common as second-run material on television during

the 1950s. As Schatz notes, television did revitalize studio-based production as networks began to churn out their own brand of genre entertainment—the sitcom, the western, soap operas, etc., but it also became a distribution outlet for both second-run feature films and made-for-TV films. The networks, looking for as much programming as possible, would often raid the backlog of Hollywood films from the 1930s and 1940s. Similarly, renting a film like *Shack Out on 101* to television for a second-run became something of a move of economic self-preservation for some studios during the era.

In addition, the nod to longtime character actor Keenan Wynn also works as an acknowledgement of the transitional context, because Wynn, like many,

found work in TV during the declining years of Old Hollywood. Television became a new venue for Old Hollywood talent, particularly through programs like *Gunsmoke* and other westerns which served in great part to perpetuate the genre in the new medium, and *Playhouse 90*, *Hallmark Hall of Fame*, and the



Thomas Mitchell in *High Noon*

like, which became outlets for original features created specifically for the small screen. Character actors like Wynn found consistent work in television throughout the transitional era. Likewise, Thomas Mitchell, who

Binx cites often in the novel, was known for *Gone With the Wind* (Victor Fleming, 1939), *Stagecoach*, *It's a Wonderful Life* (Frank Capra, 1946), and *High Noon*, but did television almost exclusively after 1952 and until his death in 1962. The aforementioned Ben Hecht, as well, found work writing for television—in fact, he had his own show in 1953: *Willys Theater Presenting Ben Hecht's Tales from the City*. Wynn—who was nearly ever present on *Playhouse 90* and *The Dick Powell Theatre*, and appeared on *Combat!* from 1962-66—is unique in this, because he was able to transition from Old Hollywood through television and into New Hollywood in pictures like *Once Upon a Time in the West* (Sergio Leone, 1968) and *Nashville* (Altman, 1975).

Although Binx expresses less than reverence for the medium, it does, at least in the above example, nonetheless provide him a momentary reflection of his search and self-awareness. He writes that the scientist, burdened ostensibly by the weight of his dealings in universal cataclysm, “took solitary walks in the desert. But you could tell that in his heart of hearts that he was having a very good time with his soul-searching.” Binx sees in the character’s philosophical walks a reflection of his own “wonder” and “wandering.” Binx too takes to wandering the city and in and out of movie theaters as a sort of philosophical sojourn.

Interestingly, *The Moviegoer* is prescient with respect to its inclusion of television as a marker for the transitional Hollywood era. Not only was television a venue for Old Hollywood talent, but it also became training ground for new talent, and many of its stars would become central figures in New Hollywood. This too is reflected in the types of programs and actors Binx references directly and alludes to. For example, Robert Altman directed episodes for *Bonanza* and *Combat!* and Sam Peckinpah for *The Rifleman* and for *The Dick Powell Theatre*, a show Binx watches at one point in the novel—“I switch on television. . . .A play comes on with Dick Powell” (78). In fact, Dick Powell was a sort of pioneer in his move from film to television in the 1950s and his show mined new talent coming out of acting programs and the theater. Among a slew of Old Hollywood actors, Binx references Paul Newman who appeared in several television movies before making the transition to the big screen. Newman, like Marlon Brando, who Binx also references, would not only become an A-list movie star during the transitional era, but would successfully parlay his fame and talent into New

Hollywood. By probing Percy's references to Newman, Brando, and many others, I will in the next section explore how film actors function intertextually in *The Moviegoer* and how designating specific film actors relates to issues of authenticity and anticipates New Hollywood.

Performance and Authenticity



Marlon



Clark

Actors and acting are of particular interest to Binx Bolling as he attempts to identify himself within the world. He is drawn to movie actors for their representational capabilities and screen personae and he often transposes their art and images onto his own social and interpersonal relationships. From Rory Calhoun to Marlon Brando, the personae of particular actors constitute, at times, a sort of playbook for Binx's sexual conquests and social performance. It is important to distinguish personae from person, because we are talking about

cinema and its culture which often conflate the two. As Percy himself notes in an opening disclaimer to the novel, evocative of the sort of disclaimers which normally appear at the end of a movie:

What follows is a work of the imagination. Every character, except movie stars, and every event without exception are fictitious. No resemblance to real persons is intended or should be inferred. When movie stars are mentioned, it is not the person of the actor which is meant but the character he projects upon the screen.

Percy makes two key assertions here about how the reader is to understand the references to film actors in the novel. First, he makes the distinction that every character “except movie stars” is fictitious, which means that within the world of Binx Bolling film actors constitute references to the real world. Second, Percy writes that the reader need understand that it is not the person, but the persona, “the character he projects on screen,” that should come to the mind of the reader when particular references are made. In this sense, Percy’s use of film actors takes on an historical dimension. The reader is meant to conjure, for instance, the persona of Humphrey Bogart as it developed over time through different roles and different genres. Therefore, just as actors constitute the real, their careers on screen provides an historical reference point for the novel.

Percy’s use of film actors as an intertextual source of personal identification for Binx—actors functioning as models for Binx’s performance of his Little Way, as he dubs his own system of navigating life—underscores Binx’s changing understanding of his own performative authenticity. In addition, the

specific actors he references are evocative of the transitional Hollywood context, further underlining its analogous relationship to Binx's own transitional phase. As a means of better illustrating how the actor/acting intertext functions in *The Moviegoer*, I will address how Binx comes to use actors as a model of performance, itemize the acting references, and then address how acting style—classical and method—works as a transitional era marker, a site for Binx's self-conscious search for authenticity, and, on the part of Percy specifically, an intuitive anticipation of New Hollywood.

Although Binx's self-conscious use of actors as models for his own interpersonal and social performance is often playful—for instance, when he keeps a “Gregory Peckish sort of distance” in wooing a woman (68)—it has a darker origin going back to his childhood. When Binx is eight years old, his older



Gregory Peck

brother dies from pneumonia. Aunt Emily tells him, “Now it’s all up to you. It’s going to be difficult for you but I know you’re going to act like a soldier”—to which Binx writes in retrospect, “I could easily act like a soldier. Was that all I had to do?” (4). This is a formative moment for Binx because it is the root of his ability to distance himself emotionally and self-consciously perform

his life, his Little Way. This is, in turn, Binx's problem as he searches for a more authentic existence and engagement of the world around him.

When we step back and look at the sum of actors referenced in *The Moviegoer*, we can start to form a more nuanced understanding of Percy's appeal

to—Binx’s self-awareness of—acting styles and the manner in which they relate to authenticity and the transitional Hollywood era. Comprehensively these references include: Thomas Mitchell, Rory Calhoun, John Wayne, Clark Gable, Clint Walker, Keenan Wynn, William Holden, Gregory Peck, Dana Andrews, Akim Tamiroff, Orson Welles, Richard Widmark, Mickey Rooney, Charles Boyer, Adolph Menjou, Dick Powell, Tony Curtis, Gary Merrill, Audie Murphy, William Powell, George Brent, Charley Chase, Humphrey Bogart, Montgomery Clift, Paul Newman, and Marlon Brando. Admittedly acting style is not something that can be quantitatively defined—where emoting begins and sense memory ends is not something that can necessarily be verified, theoretically or historically. However, the bulk of these actors are generally of the classical, traditional sort in terms of their approach to performance. Only Tamiroff, Clift, Newman, and Brando are actors widely associated with “the method.” This is notable because the rise of “the method” coincides with the decline of Old Hollywood and becomes a significant feature of the early years of New Hollywood by way of a new generation of actors like Jack Nicholson, Al Pacino, Robert DeNiro, and Dustin Hoffman, among others. Percy’s recognition of film performance and the rise of the method during the transitional Hollywood era underscore Binx’s use of actors as a source for his own performing as well as his struggle with actualizing authenticity.



Adolph Menjou’s Mustache

Percy's juxtaposition of classical acting style with that of the method as a means of speaking to the theme of authenticity and as a marker for the historical context of transitional Hollywood is seen most directly in his references to *Red River*, but also in his aping of Brando, and his admiration for Paul Newman and, with remarkable foresight, William Holden. For instance, in another example of film creating for Binx a sense of place, of certification, he recalls seeing a rerelease of *Red River*. However, within his description of a moment of certification, Binx off-handedly makes derisive comments about a scene involving the film's generationally and stylistically opposed stars. He writes:

It was here in the Tivoli that I first discovered place and time, tasted it like okra. It was during a rerelease of *Red River* a couple of years ago that I became aware of the first faint stirrings of curiosity about the particular seat I sat in . . . As Montgomery Clift was whipping John Wayne in a fist fight, an absurd scene. (75)

Although Binx doesn't elaborate on this comment, it is reasonable to assume, given his affinity for Old Hollywood if nothing else, that the absurdity he finds in



the image of Clift whipping Wayne has to do as much with Wayne's generic iconicity as it does with the actors' differing physical statures. However, I think Percy's choice of *Red*

River—Clift's first film—has greater implications in terms of Binx's self-conscious

appropriation of film acting. The fact that Percy references the film as a rerelease rather than during its original theatrical run—1948—is a key point in that the film’s original theatrical run predates the watershed year for the method, 1951. Binx is reviewing the film based on a screening from roughly 1958 or 1959 and so he would have a greater recognition of the impact of the method on transitional Hollywood. In 1951, the method was effectively introduced en masse to American audiences by Marlon Brando in *A Streetcar Named Desire* (Elia Kazan) and Clift—whose screen debut had been *Red River*—in *A Place in the Sun* (George Stevens). Maybe not at the time of release, but in retrospect, *Red River* is a film that offers an early example of contrasting acting styles in a major Hollywood release.

Furthermore, I would suggest that for Binx, Clift’s more naturalistic style of acting juxtaposed with Wayne’s classical style and his bigger than life persona which effectively embodies the western genre, disrupts the sense of certification the genre would normally provide him. In fact, instead of the film/genre itself providing him a distraction from his malaise—as is the case with *Fort Dobbs*, for example—it is the physical space of the theater. The lack of plausibility which Binx finds in the image of Clift whipping Wayne is an early indicator that he is becoming increasingly cognizant of performance as a concept or style. In effect, the method, which purports to access a means by which to present a more authentic interpretation of the character, becomes just another style or mode of performance.

The juxtaposition of classical style and the method also plays out in Binx’s appeal to Clark Gable and Marlon Brando as models for seducing women.

Although not couched within the context of the method and its part in transitional Hollywood, Richard Pindell nonetheless arrives at a similar conclusion regarding acting and authenticity. In “Basking in the Eye of the Storm: The Esthetics of Loss in Walker Percy’s *The Moviegoer*,” he writes that

The world of *The Moviegoer* is a bazaar of lifestyles, a costume room. There is an attire for every enterprise. Need a seductive voice on the phone with your ex-girlfriend’s roommate? Try on “Old confederate Marlon Brando—a reedy insinuating voice, full of winks and leers and above all pleased with itself” (320). Need the right pose for supervising a construction project? Consider the “old Gable: . . . he knew how to seem to work and how to seem to forget about women and still move in such a way as to please women: stand asweat with his hands in his back pockets” (95). To act like Brando or Gable is to act like someone who is also acting. It is to be the shadow of a shadow. (106)

One might argue that Brando is more naturalistic than Gable, but Binx recognizes an affectation in his voice which suggests a performativity, not really very different from Gable’s swagger. As Pindell argues, regardless of the approach to acting, whether the approach realizes something more naturalistic or theatrical, Binx’s use of film actors as a model for himself raises significant questions about performative authenticity. Binx comes to this understanding, in part, by way of the rise of the method as a supposedly more authentic acting style, a style which

telegraphs its emotional authenticity, concurrent with his own transitional phase. In other words, Percy again maps Binx's transition onto that of Hollywood.

As a means of further underscoring Binx's increasing self-consciousness about performance and authenticity, Percy inserts a very quick reference to Akim Tamiroff as a means of establishing a longer historical timeline for the method.

Later in the novel, Binx entertains Lonnie with his imitation of Tamiroff, a talent for which he picked up during

his last year in college. "I must get those plans" (165), he

mimics in what we can assume to be—although it is not

described as such—caricatured Armenian/Russian-accented

English. Tamiroff, like Wynn



and Mitchell, was a character actor of great longevity in Hollywood. Known primarily for his performances as Pablo in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (Sam Wood, 1943), the strangulated Uncle Joe in *Touch of Evil* (Orson Welles, 1958), and a long line of television roles, Tamiroff was prolific in his ability to embody a variety of ethnic characters. Tamiroff brought to life characters of Russian, Spanish, Italian, and Chinese origin, all the while hardly altering his Armenian accent.²¹ And yet he was always affective, Oscar nominated, and became a part of Orson Welles' troupe after they met on the set of *Black Magic* (Gregory Ratoff, 1949). But what is most interesting is Tamiroff's connection to the history of acting. At age 19, just a year after the Revolution, he began studying acting at the

Moscow Art Theatre under the auspices of Constantin Stanislavski, whose system of acting would become the model for the method as directed by Lee Strasberg and Stella Adler in the United States.

Percy's inclusion of Tamiroff points out that although the method became high profile and more widely influential—thanks to Brando, Clift, and Paul Newman, among others—in Hollywood during its transition from Old to New, it nonetheless had its roots in an older tradition. Stanislavski's system, which sought "spiritual realism" or "theatrical truth," was the foundation upon which Strasberg later established the method and its use of sense memory as a means of



Constantin Stanislavski

achieving psychological realism.

Like Stanislavski's Moscow Art Theater, Strasberg's Actor's Studio provided a structure and training ground for an internal—as opposed to the externality of classical acting—approach to performance.

Yet, Percy suggests by linking the method to its larger historical tradition, that despite its appeal to authenticity and its supposed revolutionizing of stage and screen in the late 1940s and 1950s, it is essentially just another style of performance and representation. As Pindell suggests above, the juxtaposition of Gable's external style with Brando's ostensibly more naturalistic and internally manifested affectations evidences Binx's realization that film acting is a fundamentally inauthentic model for personal identification.

In a sense, Binx's coming to terms with film acting as an inauthentic model for his life functions as a catalyst for the undoing of his ironic, self-aware moviegoing as both a means of distancing himself and as a distraction from his malaise. Per this point, Luschei, working again from his metaphor of the cinematic dissolve, writes that "[Binx's] *Little Way*, like the movie roles he plays so self-consciously, is ineffective and inauthentic, but it shows just how precarious his sense of self is" (32). It is as if his growing acceptance of his inauthentic life as pursued through cinema turns the irony back upon himself, or at least affected his behavior more than superficially. Despite the self-consciousness of his use of film acting as a model for his navigation of personal and social behavior, Binx comes to understand that he can no longer manage his inauthentic adherence to film as an individual model.

Furthermore, the absence of any film references (to actors or otherwise) in the epilogue to *The Moviegoer* reinforces the fact that Binx must abandon film in his search for authenticity. With Marlon Brando, the poster child of the method, and his reedy insinuating voice—and a quick nod to Archie Moore's mustache—Binx effectually ceases his appeal to film as an agent of personal performance and reference point for historical location. It is at first a little off-putting that Binx abandons cinema entirely at the end of his narrative. One might expect, given his personal narrative that Binx would seek an analogy for his new life from a film reference, but he does not. Simply, film has become for Binx an inauthentic model for the self-referential and inauthentic performance that has been his life so far and in turn a catalyst for his malaise, his despair. As Allen encapsulates it, "Despair, a favorite term of the existentialist, paradoxically arises not only out of

man's awareness of his absolute freedom, but from his concurrent denial that he possesses it. The 'authentic' man fears the burden of his freedom while the 'inauthentic' man hides from it; yet both are in despair" (21-2). Binx's search for authenticity is not just about who he has been and seeks to be, but how he has obfuscated his own understanding of himself. He understands, ultimately, that he can no longer hide behind or live through film personae if he is going to realize an authentic self.

In something of a separate case and with remarkable foresight, Percy situates Paul Newman and William Holden within Binx's historical spectrum of acting influences and transitional era analogs in a manner that, I would suggest, anticipates the respective actors' successful transition to New Hollywood. Following that the transitional era between Old and New Hollywood provides Binx an historical analog for his existential malaise, his search for authenticity, and given his ultimate discarding of cinema as an adequate model for his new self, it is notable that Percy includes Newman—by way of Binx's recognizing in Newman's performance in *The Young Philadelphians* (Vincent Sherman, 1959) something of an existential kinship—and Holden who is the only film personality to actually, corporeally appear in the novel, and who provides not only a significant moment of certification, but with critical hindsight a very rare example of an Old Hollywood, pre-method star transitioning to New Hollywood sans television and all the while retaining his A-list status. To conclude this chapter, I will briefly address how these two movie stars and their respective personae function somewhat differently within Percy's novel as both models for

Binx and final evidence of the importance of the transitional Hollywood era as contextual analog for Binx's self-examination.



**Newman as Alan Seymour with
Ralph Meeker and Janice Rule in the
Broadway Staging of *Picnic***



***Picnic* Film Publicity Still**

Among all the actors referenced in the novel, Paul Newman and William Holden stand out as rare examples of a major movie star successfully transitioning from Old Hollywood to New.²² These two coeval actors (born only seven years apart)—one (Newman) whose career was launched after work on stage and in television, associated with the method, and the other (Holden), who achieved stardom under Old Hollywood proper, with classical acting style—each transitioned from the Old Hollywood studio system to New Hollywood all the while retaining their A-list stardom, and they did so with little or no roles in television subsequent to their achieving A-list status. Beyond being concurrent movie star heartthrobs during the 1950s, the professional timelines of Newman

and Holden intersect anecdotally during the transitional era and collaboratively in the era of New Hollywood. Newman’s big break was in 1953 as Alan Seymour in William Inge’s *Picnic* on Broadway—a play for which he also understudied the lead role of Hal Carter. His performance in the play led to his signing (a contract,



an Old Hollywood standard) with Warner Brothers. Holden (who signed with Paramount in 1939) would play Hal Carter two years later in the hugely successful film adaptation of the play. Smash cut to the New Hollywood era and we see Newman and Holden co-starring in two Irwin Allen monstrosities—one good, one not so much—*The Towering Inferno* (John Guillermin, 1974) and *When Time Ran Out* (James Goldstone, 1980).

Percy’s reference to Newman underscores the transitional Hollywood context through his association with the method and his early work in television. Newman studied with Strasberg in the early 1950s and in 1955 he played Billy the Kid in *The Philco-Goodyear Television Playhouse*’s “The Death of Billy the Kid,” an hour-long episode penned by Gore Vidal. He also appeared in the *United States Steel Hour*’s 1954 production of Mark Harris’ *Bang the Drum Slowly*.²³ In 1958, Newman starred in *The 80 Yard Run*—shown on *Playhouse 90*—a feature-length film directed by Franklin J. Schaffer.²⁴ The same year he appeared on screen in *Cat On a Hot Tin Roof* (1958) and the rest was history. Arguably more

so than Brando, and certainly Clift, the beginning of Newman's career is thus exemplary of the transitional Hollywood era.

The transitional era context provided by film actors is iterated in Binx's description of going to one of his favorite old movie houses to see a contemporary film, *The Young Philadelphians*. Here Old Hollywood figures are juxtaposed with an arguably anticipated New Hollywood, represented by Newman. Binx writes:

Back to the Loop where we dive into the mother and
Urwomb of all moviehouses—an Aztec mortuary of funeral
urns and glyphs, thronged with the spirit-presences of
another day, William Powell and George Brent and Patsy
Kelly and Charley Chase, the best friends of my childhood—
and see a movie called *The Young Philadelphians*. Kate
holds my hand tightly in the dark.

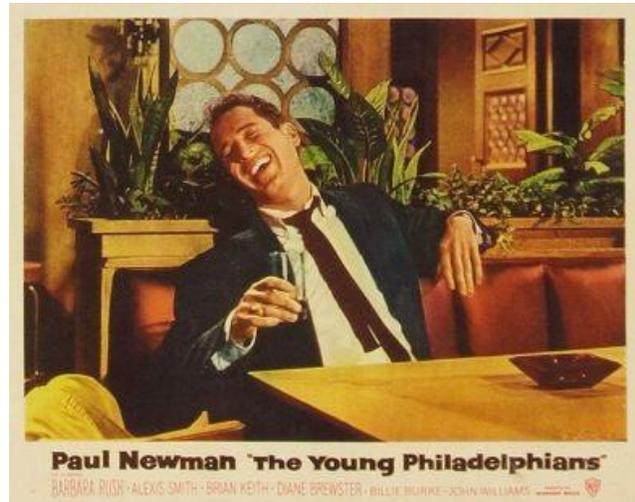
Paul Newman is an idealistic young fellow who is
disillusioned and becomes cynical and calculating. But in
the end he recovers his ideals. (211)

Here Binx ambivalently mixes his metaphors, jumping from maternal imagery—the movie theater as a womb-like space of safety and puerility and nostalgia—to images of death and the afterlife—a different sort of nostalgia of funeral urns and the ghosts of Hollywood past which intermingle with the present. For Binx the Old Hollywood movie house is both womb and tomb—always at once nurturing the new and lamenting the old. And it is at this intersection of past and present,

this sort of purgatorial limbo that Binx finds himself, with great ambivalence, searching out his future.

Beyond being another source of historical context and evidence of a transitional era analogue, Newman in *The Young Philadelphians*²⁵ presents Binx with a clear moment of identification, which is in turn belied by his dismissive summation of the film's main character arc. In the film, Newman plays Tony Lawrence, a young man of working class progeny who nonetheless carries a surname of privilege thanks to a bit of upwardly mobile opportunism on the part of his mother.²⁶ Like Binx, Tony is capable of traversing two social milieus. To his mother's chagrin, Tony works construction (unknowingly alongside his birth father) while completing his law degree. He is equally as able to navigate the world of hardhats and tuxedos. Binx, despite his family's social standing and possibly because of it, insists on

and is quite effortless in chatting up the employees at each theater he frequents. Unlike Binx, Tony has to unscrupulously drive himself up the social ladder and is then left with a moral dilemma of whether to reveal the nastiness



of the Philadelphia elite or preserve the inauthentic successes of his own life, his own identity. For Tony, boozing and womanizing and the willingness to work backroom deals provide entree into a higher social standing. For Binx, whose social standing is his birthright, womanizing and playing the money game is

simply a way for him to spiritually tread water until he decides to seek out something more authentic.

However, Binx's summarizing of the film as "Paul Newman is an idealistic young fellow who is disillusioned and becomes cynical and calculating. But in the end he recovers his ideals" (211) is telling both for its conflation of Newman with the character of Tony and its almost dismissive tone in regards to character arc resolution. Normally when we analyze a character in a film we take them as autonomous entities, as, well, characters. But Binx fixes his analysis on Paul Newman not Tony Lawrence. This slippage is evidence of Binx's changing attitude toward the authenticity of performance and the reliability of cinematic conventions as a source of identification, as I have discussed above. And as an extension of this, Binx's tone is that of a viewer who has seen something so many times before that it has lost all meaning. Binx moves on so quickly from his summation of the film, in his own essayistic style that has, as I have discussed above, frustrated critics over time, that we can only assume that Percy is suggesting that Binx's cinematic self-awareness is more of a burden at this point than an agent of revelation. Here, *The Young Philadelphians* offers Binx a clear cautionary tale about the dangers of localized high society, familial obligations, and personal authenticity. And yet, Binx sums it up in a manner that belies any recognition of its relevance and therefore—given that the reference appears late in the novel—works as evidence of his moving away from cinema, its actors and conventions as sources of identification.

Just as Newman's presence in the novel functions on two levels—as a unique transitional era referent and a representative of class conflict as played

out on screen—William Holden constitutes one of the most significant moments of certification for Binx and is the final key to the film history timeline which provides *The Moviegoer* and Binx his context. As briefly introduced earlier in this chapter, and in a decidedly postmodern reading of the novel and the moment of Holden’s appearance, Philip E. Simmons argues in “Toward the Postmodern Historical Imagination: Mass Culture in Walker Percy’s *The Moviegoer* and Nicholson Baker’s *The Mezzanine*” that

To Bolling, one of the positive values of the movies is their ability to confer a special sense of reality on what would otherwise be ordinary experience. Seeing the actor William Holden on a New Orleans street, Binx remarks that “an aura of heightened reality moves with him and all who fall within it feel it” (20). The movies’ power to strengthen one’s sense of reality also takes the form of what Bolling terms “certification.”

. . . Bolling’s “certification” also offers a precursory instance of what will become a postmodern commonplace: an experience is not “real” until it has been commodified as an “image,” a paradox which threatens the classical separation between the real and the imaginary, and which reproduces on a different level the collapse of the distinction between depth and surface. (616-7)

I am hard pressed to disagree with Simmons’ reading as such and I think it fits well alongside my own terminological rubric of authenticity versus inauthenticity

as determined by the progression of Binx's use of film actors throughout his search. I think Holden as object of certification is well covered by critics of the novel. Binx makes Holden's appearance as such very clear in the first few pages of the novel. What is overlooked by critics and, I would suggest, implied by Percy is the value of Holden's historical and professional status outside the novel.

Percy asks us to regard his referencing of film actors in *The Moviegoer* in a particular manner—that is that our understanding of these reference should entail the bulk and breath of their personae and careers—and so I offer that as much as Holden functions as an object of certification he provides the last overarching evidence of Percy's appeal to the era of transitional Hollywood as a



Holden in *Stalag 17*

context for Binx's search. Something that has been overlooked by critics is that Holden is unique amongst Percy's network of film references in that he "actually" appears in the novel. Holden is the only film actor that corporeally exists within Binx's

world, if for only a brief moment walking down the street. Every other referent, to follow with Simmons' line of thought, is a reproduction or recollection or otherwise a simulacrum. The question then is why corporealize Holden and not the rest? As actors constitute the real, what about the totality of William Holden as actor, persona, and historical figure need we take into consideration in regards to our understanding of Binx?

If, as I suggest, Holden is the only Old Hollywood contract star to truly make a successful transition to New Hollywood stardom, then I submit that his professional arc, at least in hindsight, offers Binx an example of professional, if not exactly personal, transcendence—Holden’s a career that navigated the classical industrial model, midcentury industrial turmoil, trends in approaches to acting, the ebbs and flows of stardom, and the implementation of a new



Network

industrial model. In a broad stroke, Holden signed to Paramount in 1939, won the Oscar for Best Actor during the early years of the transitional era for *Stalag 17* (Billy Wilder,

1953) and was nominated as such for *Network* (Sidney Lumet, 1976) at the height of New Hollywood. And there were of course *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (David Lean, 1957), *The Wild Bunch*, and *The Towering Inferno* in the interim. Given his unique career trajectory, it is prescient that Percy would employ Holden as such a singular source of certification for Binx, as a moment of clarity and validation amongst the malaise, because Holden, in a way, transcends era, exists outside any specific historical context, or to put it differently, is a vital entity along a continuum of personal, historical, and industrial uncertainties. Likewise Newman, and maybe more so, given that he continued making films into the 2000s, and was Oscar nominated as late as 2002 for *Road to Perdition* (Sam Mendes).²⁷ And so is it possible that in Newman and Holden Binx could

have found more than superficial models for bagging ladies and placating clients and something more in the mode of personal and professional growth. But that is just fictional speculation.

Even if we allow for Percy's anticipation of the successful transitions of Newman and Holden and how their personae should have impacted him differently, Binx nonetheless abandons film which, as he says, is onto the search but always falls short. And yet Binx falls short of his search as well, in fact abandons it as well and although prevailing critical wisdom has it that Binx has moved on from his Little Way and somehow succeeded, I would argue that he has just traded one malaise for another. In the end, Binx superficially seems at peace, to have moved on from his Little Way for the better, and yet is it not just a new despair? His marriage is kindred but passionless, and more important it satisfies social norms. His venture to medical school is certainly nobler than his stock market past, but also satisfies neatly his Aunt's, his family's wishes. And worst of all, he gives up on his search. As Luschei would have it as a part of his dissolve metaphor: "Tone and technique establish Binx's state of being as now authentically his own; he is at one with his existence. The lens through which he sees is there too for the reader who elects to use it—the clear lens of faith" (35). This reading would have that Binx embraces not only his family obligations but Catholicism as well, and maybe that is so. In my mind, Binx has just traded off the despair of ironic conformity and existential distraction for a kind of mirror image despair made manifest by a not really so significant marriage to Kate's "womanish" whims and the familial acquiescence entailed in his studying to becoming a doctor.

In the end, Percy sets up a sort of matrix of film references that provide Binx Bolling and *The Moviegoer* their historical and literary context. And although, as Binx states, movies are onto the search, but invariably fall short, they nonetheless reflect more accurately his fluctuating sense of self than literature does. To this end, Percy uses film as analogue and the film timeline provides a place for the novel within a larger literary tradition from Joyce to DeLillo. In this sense, by mapping the novel onto a film historical timeline rather than a literary one I provide a more thorough investigation of Percy's use of film as intertext and as an alternative means by which to situate *The Moviegoer* within the literary canon.

CHAPTER TWO

Gravity's Rainbow and the New Hollywood Auteur



THE CASINO—*King Kong* (1933)



THE ZONE—*The Wizard of Oz* (1939)

“The screen is a dim page spread before us, white and silent.”

Although *The Crying of Lot 49*, the published precursor to *Gravity's Rainbow*, is great Borgesian genre work, a filmic mystery working its self-reflexive labyrinthine noir through the mirrors of Welles' *The Lady from Shanghai* (1957), the shadowy politics of Frankenheimer's *Manchurian Candidate* (1962), and the something more playful in filmic espionage and deceit like Hitchcock's *39 Steps* (1935), *Notorious* (1945), etc., it is not Pynchon's most filmic novel. *The Crying of Lot 49* is great genre work, but *Gravity's Rainbow* is Pynchon's (ironically un-filmable)²⁸ cinematic masterpiece, an epic wartime entanglement of Selznickian, DeMilleian proportions—yet cheekily Altmanesque with a similar sense of scatological humor à la *Brewster McCloud* (Altman, 1971). Pynchon establishes his almost liturgical preoccupation with cinema in *Gravity's*

Rainbow in encyclopedic fashion.²⁹ And it is here that he aligns himself as an author more with a contemporaneous cinematic historical moment than that of literature. The novel does everything, for instance, that Auteur Theory, the French New Wave, or most importantly, the Hollywood New Wave,³⁰ the New Hollywood Auteur, would ask it to do. It confronts the audience with a personal, reflexive style, pursues idiosyncratic tropes, some of which are initiated in earlier works, rejects or at least calls attention to classical cinematic narrative conventions, and takes up cinematic form and cinema history as the cliff from which the reader must jump into the encyclopedic literary abyss. For its part, *Gravity's Rainbow* takes up cinema as both literary fetish and design. To this point, Bertram Lippman states in "The Reader of Movies,"

[*Gravity's Rainbow*] is the final coming together of the movies and the novel. . . . You cannot go four pages in this book without some direct reference to movies, movie techniques, movie history, movie business. Movie language and the whole art of movie-making pervade the fabric of the novel. (17)

Indeed, it is hard to argue with Lippman's assessment given Pynchon's considerable preoccupation with cinema in *Gravity's Rainbow* and although some work has been written about how his use of film both formally and narratively relates to larger themes in the novel, no effort has been made to fit Pynchon's use of film into the context of the cinematic era in which *Gravity's Rainbow* was written. Set in a World War II grotesque, yet published during the latter years of Vietnam, the incipient years of Watergate, and at the height of the

New Hollywood Auteur, Pynchon intertextualizes, if you will, the form, history, and industrial and socio-political context of European cinema (German Expressionism, Weimar era, Ufa, and the émigré in Hollywood) and the Hollywood New Wave (the “film school generation,” the era of the director/auteur in charge of the asylum) into the form his novel. If you don’t know movies you will never know *Gravity’s Rainbow* and you will find no soft landing nor parachuted phallus banana into The Zone (The Oz) of the novel’s “paracinematic” (388), oneiric narrative. His referential obsession with cinema—sometimes direct, sometimes obtuse, sometimes anachronistic, sometimes fictitious—speaks not only to the dilemmatic theme of interpreting and reconciling appearance versus reality, fact versus fiction, in the context of war, but to the difficulty in literarily categorizing his novel’s style and its place in twentieth century literature. Therefore, as a means of actively alternating from literary history and its exhausted categorical rubrics of modernism and postmodernism when working with *Gravity’s Rainbow*, I suggest that the novel is better mapped onto a film historical timeline as a means of best understanding its literary design.³¹ Although difficult to categorize and qualify within a specific literary rubric, other than just relegating it postmodern or metafictional (both of which it probably is), I argue that *Gravity’s Rainbow* can be best understood as *the* novel of the cinema of the New Hollywood Auteur.

The Hollywood New Wave, or the New Hollywood, as it is more commonly referred to, is generally considered to span the early to mid 1960s (as early as 1958, by some) to the late 1970s (also arguable)—let’s say roughly *Shadows* (John Cassavetes, 1959) through *Nashville* (Robert Altman, 1975) and then *Jaws*

(Steven Spielberg, 1975) and *Star Wars* (George Lucas, 1977) both of which brought us to the blockbuster era we still reside in as an aftermath of the New Hollywood moment. This widely diverse “movement,” or more accurately, “period” in Hollywood cinema—made manifest in great part due to the decline of the Old Hollywood protocol and production code and the resulting ratings system—can be assessed by way of a number of characteristics.

For our purposes here I will focus on the three characteristics of the New Hollywood Auteur that are most distinctive and pertinent to Pynchon’s novel. First I will address self-conscious film style. Influenced by directors of the French New Wave, Jean–Luc Godard and François Truffaut in particular, the New Hollywood Auteur exploded the Hollywood tradition of unobtrusive



Easy Rider

cinematography and continuity editing that was the hallmark of classical Hollywood realism from the 1930s through the 1950s to today. For example, *Easy Rider* (Dennis Hopper,

1969), influenced by Godard’s *Breathless* (1950), employs the jump cut and the flash-forward, both of which establish the film’s obtrusive self-awareness.

Another example of this is Altman’s use of the loudspeaker during the credit sequence for *M*A*S*H**, which I will discuss further below.

Secondly I will take up the New Hollywood Auteur's encyclopedic knowledge of film history, a characteristic Pynchon relishes in. Most of the directors of the Hollywood New Wave were/are well versed in the history of cinema. This can be attributed to the fact that many, most notably Francis Ford Coppola and Martin Scorsese, were trained in university film programs. Others, such as Peter Bogdanovich, worked as film critics. Others came from television, such as Robert Altman and Sam Peckinpah. Hal Ashby started out in a printing press job at Universal Studios, later working his way into editing, for which he would ultimately win an Academy Award for *In the Heat of the Night* (Norman Jewison, 1967), and then into directing. These filmmakers either learned in school or on the job the lexicon of American and international cinema. Their encyclopedic knowledge is evidenced by a tendency toward quotation and allusion, and an impulse to create "important," and often intensely personal, sometimes idiosyncratic, films of lasting social and cinematic value. Furthermore, this encyclopedic knowledge is, in part, reflected in an interest in revisiting, reengaging, or revising the classical film genre.³²

In kind, Pynchon's self-reflexive uses of film appear in two basic forms: self-conscious, obtrusive formal style and an encyclopedic range of film reference. First I will focus on his self-conscious style: Pynchon uses the language and visual conventions of film as his literary technique. These come in the form of analeptic montages, disjunctive editing, the use of camera angles, close-ups, and various other film terminologies and techniques—for example his use of wide-angle lens in Reel 3: Scene 25. Second I will address his encyclopedic range of film references, both his fictional and historical ones. First are his fictional

references. Pynchon creates convenient surrogates, analogies, for the cinema of the temporal era of the novel primarily as a gesture backward to the Weimar and



Betty Grable pin-up

Ufa era of German Expressionism of the 1920s as well as the émigré influence on Hollywood cinema of the 1930s, but also forward, to the *film noir* and westerns prevalent in the 1940s and 50s in Hollywood. Examples include: the film director Gerhardt von Göll, his films *Alpdrücken* [*Nightmares*], *Das Wütend Reich*, *Good Society*, and works-in-progress *Martín Fierro* and *New Dope*, and the films *Doper's*

Greed and *Weisse Sandwüste von Neumexico* (*White Sands, New Mexico*).

Second are his historical references. These examples represent by far Pynchon's most extensive and encyclopedic use of cinema in the novel. They include direct and implied references to actual films³³—most importantly, structurally and thematically, *King Kong* (Ernest B. Schoedsack and Merian C. Cooper, 1933), and *The Wizard of Oz* (Victor Fleming, 1939)—filmmakers—Fritz Lang, Georg W. Pabst, F.W. Murnau, and Cecil B. DeMille—and film personalities like Betty Grable, Clark Gable, Don Ameche, Cary Grant, Dennis Morgan, Marlene Dietrich, Greta Garbo, Henry Fonda, Errol Flynn and Van Johnson. Through these self-reflexive uses of film Pynchon offers film technique and film history as one of the most important access points to the kaleidoscopically challenging literature of *Gravity's Rainbow*. It is a lens through which we can better understand not only the form, narrative, and themes—fragmentation, reality verses dream image,

etc.—of the novel, but also find a possible way by which to better contextualize the novel and its place in the twentieth century canon.

Lastly, Pynchon aligned himself with the New Hollywood Auteur's emphasis on alternative points of view and/or subversive attitudes toward social institutions. Responding to a general climate of disillusion in the 1960s and early 1970s, many of the films of the Hollywood New Wave assert countercultural ideas and often critique, or outright reject, conventional ideas about cultural issue and prevailing norms.³⁴ This extends to pushing the boundaries of content as well with regards to sex, violence, language, drug use, etc. Even the leading men associated with the Hollywood New Wave—Dustin Hoffman, Jack Nicholson, Donald Sutherland, Eliot Gould, Gene Hackman, Robert De Niro, etc. (as opposed to Cary Grant, Clark Gable, Van Johnson)—were, in effect, challenging (anti-heroically) the conventional perception of what a leading man should be (tall, handsome, and WASPy-white, forward moving toward an easily identifiable goal, etc.). Pynchon's own Slothrop falls into this anti-heroic category. And as a case in point, all of the above characteristics of the New Hollywood Auteur are at work in Robert Altman's anti-war comedy *M*A*S*H*, which will function here as an analog to Pynchon's novel. In other words, I will map Pynchon's use of cinema onto the characteristics—first the self-reflexive examples of self-conscious style and encyclopedic film knowledge, and then later subversive or countercultural themes—of the contemporaneous New Hollywood Auteur as means of establishing Pynchon's auteurist approach to the form of *Gravity's Rainbow*.

Self-Conscious Use of Film Form

Pynchon's use of film might appear at first to be just another playful facet of the broader encyclopedic nature of *Gravity's Rainbow* and that might be true superficially of some of its individual references to cinema, but his self-conscious use of film form is a significant aspect of the literary style of the novel and carries a great deal of thematic weight. John R. Holmes' "A Hand to Turn the Time': History as Film in *Gravity's Rainbow*," and Thomas Moore's "A Decade of *Gravity's Rainbow*, the Incredible Moving Film," both make the case for Pynchon's use of film as a metaphor, like calculus and Puritanism, for, as Holmes argues, the relating of "finite and infinite, flux and stasis, being and becoming" (5) or, as Moore puts it, the "imposing [of] a set of artificial stills on life, . . . [the] mechanical imitation or parody of the world's raw continuity" (87). In other words, because film or the "motion picture" is based upon a fallacy of motion—being in actuality still photography projected at 24 frames per second which gives the illusion of motion—it is therefore analogous to calculus which breaks time into a succession of moments and Puritanism which involves a similarly human construction of time, space, and reality (i.e. predestination).³⁵

It is in this sense that Pynchon's formal use of film becomes especially significant and, by comparison, considerably more structurally direct than the formal use of film by modernist writers. Consider, as Moore suggests, that *Gravity's Rainbow* is not divided into four parts or sections or chapters, but rather four reels—"the spool," as Robert Sklar defines it, "on which film is wound for projection."³⁶ Also, a unit for measuring duration: in early decades, projection

reels held 1,000 feet of film; since projection speeds varied in the silent era, film length was often stated in number of reels” (563). Accepting this conceit, it is then reasonable to treat Pynchon’s sectioning of the text as edited scenes— (Steven Weisenburger, missing the point, dubs them “episodes”)—within each reel, or more technically, sequences made up of sentence-shots constructed from the *mise-en-scène* of words. It is interesting to note that in the Penguin paperback edition of *Gravity’s Rainbow* these scenes are separated (edited) by a line consisting of seven blocks that together bear a resemblance to a strip of film.³⁷ This visual evocation of film initiates Pynchon’s filmic metaphor; it calls attention to the strip of film, the material of film, the frames of celluloid upon which the image is captured, which can be run back and forth through the Moviola³⁸—Pynchon’s *hysteron proteron* motif—juxtaposing the previous with the now and future and backward again. For example, in Reel 1: Scene 8 the narrator offers this query:

Imagine a missile one hears approaching only *after* it
explodes. The reversal! A piece of time neatly snipped out . . .
a few feet of film run backwards . . . the blast of the rocket,
fallen faster than sound—then growing *out of it* the roar of its
own fall, catching up to what’s already death and burning . . .
a ghost in the sky . . .(48)

Pynchon is, in effect, employing filmmaking in its most essential sense: the physical material of film, the captured still-images on celluloid, and the cutting of that material into a visual sequence. In this way, Pynchon’s use of film complicates the usual modernist versus postmodernist distinction in that it uses

film form in similar fashion to Dos Passos and Joyce. In other words, Pynchon folds the form of cinema into his novel in a not so dissimilar fashion as the modernists. So, it should be stated that treating Pynchon's use of film as simply a postmodern gesture is not an adequate assessment given the greater timeline of the literary use of film in American literature. As with the arguments concerning Joyce, Stein, and Dos Passos, Pynchon's use of film functions as an important literary motif for his themes of fragmentation, both temporal and spatial, and the real versus the imagined, and it ultimately sets the stage for his satirical take on the Vietnam era by way of World War II. Film, for Pynchon, is not simply a passing referential fancy, but provides the crux of his literary form.³⁹

In Reel 4: Scene 12, as a sort of a bookend to the above example, Pynchon again invokes film as substantiation for his *hysteron proteron* motif. In this instance Pynchon substantiates his use of film in the form of his novel through, ironically, through another novel: Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*. In this example, the narrator explains Gerhardt von Göll's unfinished film *New Dope*:

Part of a reverse world whose agents run around with guns which are like vacuum cleaners operating in the direction of life—pull the trigger and bullets are sucked back out of the recently dead into the barrel, and the Great Irreversible is actually reversed as the corpse comes to life to the accompaniment of a backwards gunshot. (745)

The nebulousness of temporal and spatial reality in *Gravity's Rainbow* is certainly a trope Pynchon takes pleasure in extrapolating. In this passage he again engages in the *hysteron proteron* motif, one in which Weisenburger is

particularly interested. Weisenburger, in his *A Gravity's Rainbow Companion*, correctly refers readers to Vonnegut's similar use of *hysteron proteron*, but in doing so also misses the point. I suggest that Pynchon is not just making a similar rhetorical move, but is directly extrapolating Vonnegut's self-conscious, literary use of film here. The passage in question from *Slaughterhouse-Five*, which I will quote at length, is as follows:

[Billy] went into the living room, swinging the bottle like a dinner bell, turned on the television. He came slightly unstuck in time, saw the late movie backwards, then forwards again. It was a movie about American bombers in the Second World War and the gallant men who flew them. Seen backwards by Billy, the story went like this:

American planes, full of holes and wounded men and corpses took off backwards from an airfield in England. Over France, a few German fighter planes flew at them backwards, sucked bullets and shell fragments from some of the planes and crewmen. They did the same for wrecked American bombers on the ground, and those planes flew up backwards to join the formation.

The formation flew backwards over a German city that was in flames. The bombers opened their bomb bay doors, exerted a miraculous magnetism which shrunk the fires, gathered them into cylindrical steel containers, and lifted the containers into the bellies of planes. (93-4)

Pynchon may be directly quoting Vonnegut here both in terms of the content of the images—“bullets are sucked back out of the recently dead into the barrel” and “sucked bullets and shell fragments from some of the planes and crewmen” respectively—and in terms of the use of film in conjunction with the *hysteron proteron* motif. As Weisenburger notes, “there [in Vonnegut] the scenes are naturalized as a reversed film” (373). His implication is that here in Pynchon they are not as such “naturalized,” but of course this is incorrect. It is true however, that Vonnegut’s use of film in this instance is something of the exception that proves the rule. Although Vonnegut’s use of prolepsis/analepsis is the primary formal conceit of his novel, he doesn’t necessarily use film to justify it—despite the fact that he does so in this instance—instead substantiating his fragmentation of time either through Billy’s traumatized psyche and/or a science-fiction context. Pynchon, on the other hand, uses film and not genre or psychic abstraction as the foundation of his prolepses/analepses.

Pynchon also demonstrates a self-conscious use of film form as a method of fragmentation by way of camera movement, insert shots, and analeptic montage. Reel 1: Scene 14 is the most significant, virtuosic example of film form in *Gravity’s Rainbow*. It opens with Katje Borgesius (a nod to Borges? She is a labyrinthine girl)⁴⁰ captured in a camera movement: “In silence, hidden from her, the camera follows as she moves deliberately nowhere longlegged about the rooms” (92), followed by lens and lighting choices: “Widest lens-opening this afternoon, extra tungsten light laid on” (92), then a close-up in parenthetical: “(In close-up her skin, though nearly perfect, is seen to be lightly powdered and rouged)” (94), and then a series of analepses peppered with references to Ufa,

Fritz Lang via his film *Destiny* [*Der müde Tod*] (1921), Bela Lugosi in *White Zombie* (Victor Halperin, 1932), *Dumbo*⁴¹, Georg Wilhelm Pabst, Ernst Lubitsch,



and Pynchon's own Gerhardt von Göll; and then ultimately "The reel is threaded, the lights are switched off" (113) and our attention is redirected toward the screen upon which, in circular completeness, "The camera follows as she moves

deliberately nowhere longlegged about the rooms . . ." (113). Weisenbuger, although more interested in its potential unifying circularity, à la *Ulysses*, than in its filmic fragmental bliss, offers a usefully concise outline of Pynchon's analepsis in this scene:

It opens at Pirate Prentice's London maisonette with Katje Borgesius standing before the lens of Osbie Feel's movie camera; the first analepsis, focalized through Katje, discloses Blicero, Gottfried, and Katje at the rocket battery in Holland; the second, focalized now through Blicero, takes us to South-West Africa during the Herero insurrection of 1922; we return momentarily to the second-order time (at the Holland rocket battery) in order to begin a third analepsis, this time focalized through one of Katje's seventeenth-century ancestors, Frans van der Groov, on the island of Mauritius;

and the narration ends by cycling readers back to the original base time, with Katje standing before the camera eye. (9)

This is montage. This is the filmic technique Pynchon makes literary in that it, as Weisenburger phrases it, “involves shifts in focalization, all without any of the spatiotemporal markers by which writers conventionally signal them to readers.” In other words, it is the language of cinema not literature that substantiates Pynchon’s narrative structure in this instance.

Working toward a cursory assessment of Pynchon’s self-conscious use of film form, Weisenbuger continues his pursuit of circular wholeness in Pynchon, but misses the cinematic link that might further unify that design. He writes that

Everywhere in *Gravity’s Rainbow* the parabolic arch symbolizes disease, dementia, and destruction. Its counterpoint is the circular mandala, a symbol of opposites held in delicate equipoise. In the novel drinking games and dances move in circles. . .and in every episode are windmills, buttons, windows, eyes, Ferris wheels, roulette wheels, rocket insignia, and other cast-down indexes of the novel’s grand cycling. (10)

What Weisenburger misses in this equation is the film reel, the distinguishing artifact of film’s technological form, the notched celluloid strips spooled around the spoked metal reel. This circulatory object, the film reel, is arguably the twentieth century’s most profound disseminator of ideas, illusions, ideologies, mythologies, dreams. And Pynchon embraces this fact nearly page by page in his attempt to blur the lines between or fragment what is real, constructed, imagined.

To this end, Pynchon also evokes *Citizen Kane* (Orson Welles, 1941)—a film ubiquitously studied for its formal technique and one of cinema’s most celebrated, self-consciously stylized, and, notably, fragmented films—in his description of Slothrop’s cluttered cubicle and personal belongings:

Slothrop’s is a godawful mess. It hasn’t been cleaned down to the original wood surface since 1942. Things have fallen roughly into layers, over a base of bureaucratic smegma that sifts steadily to the bottom, made up of millions of tiny red and brown curls of rubber eraser, pencil shavings, dried tea or coffee stains, traces of sugar and Household Milk, much cigarette ash, very fine black debris picked and flung from typewriter ribbons, decomposing library paste, broken aspirins ground to powder. Then comes a scatter of paperclips . . . an empty Kreml hair tonic bottle, lost pieces to different jigsaw puzzles showing parts of the amber left eye of a Weimaraner. (18)

These paperclips and other particulates of a larger office space narrative constitute the scattering of images Pynchon is interested in—the minutia and malaise brought to for by the camera eye and its editor. Although on the one hand the literal pieces of a jigsaw puzzle (of a Weimaraner no less; more on this dog will be discussed below), on the other the metaphorical pieces of one and Pynchon’s implied *Citizen Kane* reference, which Weisenburger misses. The jigsaw puzzle provides Welles his ultimate metaphor. In *Citizen Kane*, the jigsaw puzzle is the metaphor that most viewers unconsciously sublimate to the sled—

which *The Simpsons* accurately, and with their imitable irony, interpret as “the symbol of lost youth and innocence.”⁴² This sled is actually irrelevant, a

Hitchcockian MacGuffin. The “real” story or metaphor of *Kane* is the structure of its cinematic and narrative design. The jigsaw puzzle trumps the sled as the essence of the film, in the sense that it suggests that one thing cannot define a person’s



Puzzles in *Kane*

life, just as one facet of a larger whole, one frame of a moving image, cannot give representatively encapsulate an historical event such as World War II. Of course, *Citizen Kane* suggests that the opposite may hold true as well, as evidenced by Susan Alexander’s obsession with jigsaw puzzles as means of ameliorating her marital malaise. The whole, once its pieces are reassembled, might not provide adequate meaning or resolution either. This example of cinematic irony suits Pynchon’s design in that it self-consciously underscores the nebulousness of time and space, reality and imagination, as they relate to narrative, historical representation.

In another example earlier in the novel, this blurring of the real and the imagined through the invocation of film form occurs when the narrator contemplates Pirate Prentice, beneath the visage of the coming V-2 Rocket—the image of which he knows: “He had seen it in a film, just in the last fortnight” (6)—and his role as manager of other people’s fantasies. Here Pynchon conjures an early Hollywood icon and hints at future film references in the novel:

He will then actually *skip* to and fro, with his knees high and twirling a walking stick with W.C. Fields' head, nose, top hat. . . . Accompanying will be a phantasmagoria, a real, one, rushing toward the screen, in over the heads of the audiences . . . the images often changing in scale so quickly, so unpredictably that you're apt now and then to get a bit of lime-green in with your rose, as they say. The scenes are highlights from Pirate's career as fantasist-surrogate . . . He has known for a while that certain episodes he dreamed could not be his own. (12-13)

In effect, Pirate conflates his own images of reality and dream with cinema, be they images of the V-2, the slapstick Teddy Bloat slipping on a banana peel, himself as a bibulous W.C. Fields (from *My Little Chickadee* for instance) leading his men in a tropical breakfast, and yet he acknowledges these images are not wholly his own. He is a "fantasist-surrogate," a conduit for Pynchon's amalgamation of real, oneiric, and cinematic images throughout the novel. Further, this passage presages two significant filmic aspects later in *Gravity's Rainbow*: the climactic "Descent" of the V-2 into the movie theatre and the use of the colors green and red—"a bit of lime-green in with your rose"—via *The Wizard of Oz* in The Zone.

Not limited solely to the editorial and fragmentation analogue, Pynchon employs—as hinted at by the above example's close-up: "In close-up her skin"—cinematographic techniques as well. In one instance, a camera angle from Reel 2: Scene 4: "From overhead, from a German camera-angle, it occurs to Webley

Silvernail, this lab here is also a maze” (229).⁴³ Although implied, it is reasonable to assume that Pynchon is evoking, for instance, the opening shot from Fritz Lang’s *M* (1931) which utilizes the high-angle shot characteristic of German



Opening Shot from Lang's *M*

Expressionism and all of its descendents, most significantly Alfred Hitchcock. For *M*, the opening high-angle shot provides the psychological perspective of a child predator and the vulnerability of the children/prey. The opening shot of *M*, in fact, might be the most

famous high-angle shot ever filmed. The Expressionist filmmakers of the Weimar and Ufa era, Lang, Pabst, Murnau, etc., are responsible for much of the expressionistic use of cinematography in 1930s and 40s Hollywood cinema, an influence manifested most clearly in horror films and *film noir*. Pynchon is playing on this oceanic influence that. His seemingly nonchalant implementation of a filmic technique, the high-angle shot, exactly correlates to his themes of fact versus fiction, image versus reality, and fragmentation. Evoking the aesthetic, psychoanalytically driven choice of the “German camera-angle,” the high-angle shot, Pynchon calls attention to the image as construct, as aesthetic and psychological construct—history and reality as an assortment of images based on a perspective. He also offers analogously both the viewpoint of the descending V-

2 or bomber pilot and their helpless—infantilized in the context of global war—victims obliviously embracing a soon to be obliterated reality.

It is in fact sometimes difficult to at all distinguish portions of *Gravity's Rainbow's* literature from filmmaking. Ultimately Pynchon blurs textual distinction completely:

The screen is a dim page spread before us, white and silent.
The film has broken, or a projector bulb has burned out. It
was difficult even for us, old fans who've always been at the
movies (haven't we?) to tell which before the darkness swept
in. . . . And in the darkening and awful expanse of screen
something has kept on, a film we have not learned to see . . .
it is now a closeup of the face, a face we should all know—
(760)

Here Pynchon collapses the self-conscious use of film form in fiction into something entirely new, a hybrid, something truly intermedial. The page *becomes* the screen, or vice-versa—the screen, in turn, becomes that page upon which we project the realities, or fictive realities, or historical fictions that the novel offers. The reader now sits in a theatre and is asked to decipher the images, the words and sentences, in montage flickering before them. And yet Pynchon complicates this further by then putting us in darkness facing a white and silent screen/page (due to technical difficulties). The flickering rhythm of historical and fictional information has ceased to be visually represented and we are left in darkness to anticipate what of the ceaseless historical narrative we are missing. No other author has so directly and sophisticatedly conflated film and fiction. To

play fast and loose with André Bazin, reality can only be achieved through artifice.⁴⁴ Here, Pynchon asks, *what's the difference?* If our history is to be told to us through filmic images, and filmic images are inherently constructed, then



Richard Milhous Nixon

aren't the real and the artificial, the truth and the representation, indelibly blurred, or even acting in concert? Pynchon also suggests, by his anachronistic Richard M. [Milhous] Zhubb working at the theatre, “who is

fiftyish and jowled, with a permanent five-o'clock shadow. . .and a habit of throwing his arms up into an inverted ‘peace sign’” (755), that this screen upon which the World War II of *Gravity's Rainbow* is projected is the same screen upon which we were/are projecting the truth and the representation of Vietnam—the first televised war, though not the first brought to the cinema through propaganda models East and West—the theater of war via the theater of war.

Likewise, as Pynchon uses World War II as context for his Vietnam era satire, Altman's *M*A*S*H* is a Vietnam satire set during the Korean War. And similarly, Altman uses self-reflexive motifs in order to establish a satirical tone of self-awareness. With *M*A*S*H*, released three years before the publication of *Gravity's Rainbow*, Altman achieved his first international success as a filmmaker and established a distinctively self-conscious cinematic style that fits the first characteristic of the New Hollywood Auteur. Altman's style is, simply put, one of meticulously prepared for spontaneity. Visually, Altman relies on

long lenses, a restless pan-and-zoom camera style, abrupt cutting, and a mural-like or painterly approach to the widescreen frame. Although deliberately stylistic, Altman's camera and editing appear random, unpredictable, and,



Altman with Gould and Sutherland on the Set of *M*A*S*H*

ironically, take on an almost realistically documentary quality as if the camera is simply capturing what is taking place in front of the lens as we would take in events happening before our eyes (reality through artifice—the line between representation and reality as both theme and aesthetic). The effect of this style is similar to that of stream of consciousness in that it actually presents the narrative subjectively and self-consciously and challenges the audience's conventional notions of cinematic/narrative form.

The characteristic that arguably most distinguishes Altman's style, however, is his pioneering work with overlapping sound. In *M*A*S*H*, characters mumble, interrupt each other, talk simultaneously, and often find themselves drowned out by background noise. The result is a highly realistic use of audio where concurrent conversations among groups of people fade in and out as they would in any real setting of that kind. This approach to sound also works hand-in-hand with Altman's method of using the camera and of working with actors. By using long and zoom lenses, Altman allows himself the freedom to

move from a wide shot to a close up and back to a wide shot during the same take, the actors are never quite sure if the camera is on them at any given moment, and each actor must keep the flow of dialogue going at all times whether they are in frame or not. This is all characteristic of Altman's emphasis on improvisation and his idiosyncratic approach to realism. What may appear to be chaotic at first is actually a highly self-conscious, deliberate film style that challenges narrative and filmic conventions as well as the audience who are asked to decipher what it views (and hears). As Vincent Canby said of the film in 1970, the "film is so full of visual and aural detail (each frame is packed with images from foreground to back; the soundtrack is so busy it sometimes sounds like three radio stations in one)" (*M*A*S*H* notes). This expansive coverage of both the image and sound also lends itself to ensemble work, for which Altman is known and which correlates well with the ensemble-like aspects of *Gravity's Rainbow*.

Gravity's Rainbow is also similarly "busy" and self-consciously challenging and this is part of its literary and pop cultural legacy. *Gravity's Rainbow* is deliberately encyclopedic, at times bewildering, and begs rereading.⁴⁵ And like Altman, Pynchon revels in his audaciously self-conscious and idiosyncratic style, presents scenes and characters subjectively and often without clear markers for who, where, why, and how we are where we are at any given moment. Akin to Altman's multivocal soundtrack, which challenges conventional cinematic form, Pynchon's idiosyncratic literary design challenges conventional literary form.

Altman's and Pynchon's self-conscious approach to narrative form are also apparent in moments of metacinema or metafiction. Near the end of *Gravity's Rainbow*, Pynchon the writer, the self-evident creator of images, begins creeping into the text in the form of claw hammer asides to the reader. For example: “[Yes. A cute way of putting it. I am betraying them all . . . the worst of it is that I know what your editors want, *exactly* what they want]” (739), and “There ought to be big dramatic pauses here” (757). Pynchon is ripping back the curtain to reveal the Wizard here. Yes this is all artifice, it has always been artifice. And yet unlike the Wizard of Oz, Pynchon never really pretends otherwise. Similarly, Altman ends *M*A*S*H* with a montage of the film's ensemble cast put to, in a moment of the truest metacinema, a voiceover announcement emanating from the camp's loudspeaker:

Attention. Tonight's movie has been *M*A*S*H*. Follow the zany antics of our combat surgeons as they cut and stitch their way along the front lines. Operating as bombs [pause], operating as bombs and bullets burst around them. Snatching laughs and love between amputations and penicillin. Follow Hawkeye, Trapper, Duke, Dago Red, Painless, Radar, Hot Lips, Dish, and Staff Sergeant Vollmer as they put our boys back together again. Staring Donald Sutherland, Eliot Gould, Tom Skerritt, Sally Kellerman, Robert Duvall, . . .

In Altman's case, he is both in charge of his brigade and aloof. Through this metacinematic gesture, he announces a reluctance to present an objective

narrative façade, instead opting for a subjective, self-conscious representation.⁴⁶ In both cases of Altman and Pynchon the effect is a heightened awareness of the audience, of artifice, and the role artifice plays in the creation and perception of reality and history and the psychology of war. To remind the audience that they are watching a film, or reading a book, is to both embrace and critique art and the process by which it is created—the audience/reader is, again, challenged to participate in both the embracing and critiquing of the artifice and the conventions that shape our reception of narrative.

In another self-reflexive moment, Altman introduces a diegetic camera into *M*A*S*H* as we see, through a news camera's P.O.V., a brief encounter and interview with Hawkeye who has accompanied the drafted Ho-Jon to Seoul. Standing in a jeep in a crowded alleyway this discourse is shot as an intercut panning shot. Although the revelation that Hawkeye's mother is dead and his almost adolescent plaintive to his father are touching, the real crux of the moment is that it is caught on camera and therefore as an audience we are asked to reevaluate our relationship with the film image—to take into consideration how, when, why, and most importantly how moving pictures are constructed for our viewing. Altman effectively conflates the Korean and Vietnam wars here through this self-conscious, metacinematic move. Vietnam is famously the first televised, "living room" war in that its coverage hit television first (and exclusively) instead of being filtered through the theatrical newsreel editorial process of World War II and, at least the early years of, the Korean War. But more importantly he differentiates these wars in satirical fashion. The American war effort is no longer amenable to the idyllic, often propagandistic

representations of the studio enlisted John Fords and John Hustons during World War II, and it is better served by a complicated, divisive, fragmented representation, the images of which are taken from the point of view of any number of handheld 16mm cameras on the shoulders of any number of journalists on the ground in Vietnam.

Pynchon suggests the same sort of reevaluation of images for his reader and does so in great part through his literary employment of film form. Like the New Hollywood Auteur, Pynchon's self-conscious use of film form when combined with his conflation of film and the written form, provides him a literary structure for the dissolution of narrative pretense. He gestures toward this early in the novel through Vanya:

. . . look at the forms of capitalist expression. Pornographies: pornographies of love, erotic love, Christian love, boy-and-his-dog, pornographies of sunsets, pornographies of killing, and pornographies of deduction—*ahh*, that sigh when we guess the murderer—all these novels, these films and songs they lull us with. (155)

Like Altman and other New Wave auteurs, Pynchon's self-reflexivity appeals to a less emotion, more critical engagement of narrative form. Gesturing at the countercultural ideals which inform and contextualize *Gravity's Rainbow*, Pynchon takes to task the commercially perpetuated images systematically promulgated—as any self-respecting paranoiac would have it—by Hollywood. The viewer/reader is implicated as such in the dissemination of images, be they cinematic or literary. In fact, Pynchon expands his intertextual scope beyond

film and literature to include songwriting as well—a medium arguably most effected by and instrumental in the countercultural movements of the era. This suits Altman well given his “Suicide is Painless” theme song for *M*A*S*H*, which I will discuss below.

Some may find this level of self-reflexivity ironically distancing. Neither *M*A*S*H* nor *Gravity’s Rainbow* offer much in the way of an unmediated examination of human nature, but instead, are something of the referential and lexical meandering of virtuoso auteurs, which is in itself intellectually satisfying, if not always emotionally so. Essentially, both works are comedies, and yet when their formal conceits are placed within the context of the Vietnam War, both *M*A*S*H* and *Gravity’s Rainbow* become poignant cinematic satires.

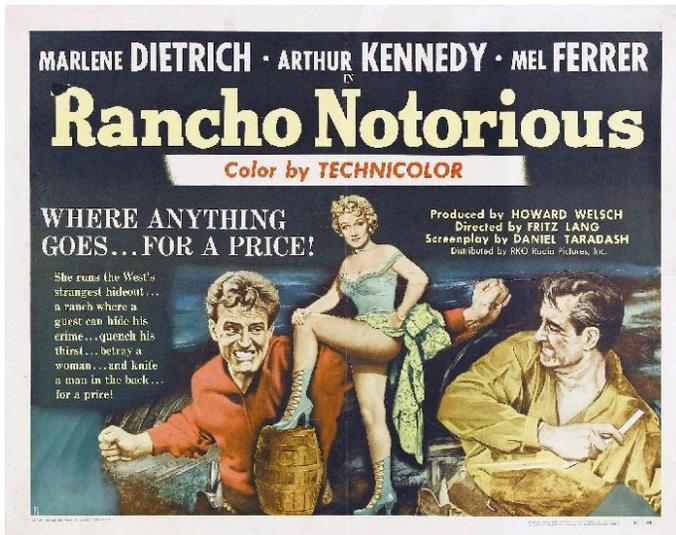
Encyclopedic Range of Film Reference

As an illustration of the New Hollywood Auteur’s penchant for demonstrating an encyclopedic knowledge of film history, Pynchon’s use of fictional film references in *Gravity’s Rainbow* primarily take the form of individuals and films that function as surrogates for the filmmakers, actors, and films of the interwar, Weimar era, movement of German Expressionism and its subsequent influence on Hollywood cinema. Given that German Expressionism is a movement characterized formally by expressive mise-en-scène, chiaroscuro lighting, and, at least by its major works, themes of dystopian future, folkloric darkness, and vampiric murderers—providing perhaps a catharsis amid the real horror and paranoia of the post-World War I Germanic malaise—this is an

appropriate choice for Pynchon both formally and thematically. It is also appropriate given the inexorable influence of German Expressionism on the Hollywood genre films of the 1930s and 40s—gangster films, horror films, *film noir*, and even westerns, all of which Pynchon is preoccupied with. In this sense, his fictional use of film provides a convenient segue between his self-conscious formal use and his encyclopedically historical referential uses. By tracing the pioneering form of German cinema during the Weimar/UFA era, prior to Hitler’s rise to power, to the émigré influence on prewar, wartime, and postwar Hollywood, Pynchon effectively maps his wartime saga onto a distinct film history timeline. Toward a discussion of his encyclopedic range of film knowledge, I will discuss Pynchon’s fictional use of film as it relates to his larger historical referential framework—that is, I will take up his fictitious examples first in conjunction with his references to the films and figures of the German Expressionist era, and work towards Hollywood.

As a means of conjuring a sort of surrogate or parallel for Weimar era cinema, Pynchon’s fictional film references—which often come as a barrage—include Osbie Feel as a secret cameraman for ACHTUNG who later writes the film *Doper’s Greed*, Greta Erdmann, also know as Margherita or Gretel who was a star in “dozens of vaguely pornographic horror movies” (393) during the UFA era and also worked in Hollywood on such films as the western *Weisse Sandwüste von Neumexico*, Max Schlepzig a former German film star and temporary alias for Slothrop, the filmmaker Gerhardt von Göll (or “Der Springer”) who made, among many other films, “the immortal *Alpdrücken*” (387); and lastly the film *Rancho Peligroso* [*Rancho Dangerous?*—possibly an

hallucination anachronistically extrapolated from Howard Hawks' *Red River* (1948) which gestures to the Fritz Lang directed Hollywood westerns such as *The Return of Frank James* (1940) and more directly *Rancho Notorious* (1952).



References to actual German cinema of the era are far more extensive and include filmmakers Fritz Lang, Robert Wiene, Ernst Lubitsch, Georg Wilhelm Pabst, and F.W. Murnau, actresses Marlene Dietrich, Brigitte Helm, and

Asta Nielsen and actor Rudolf Klein-Rogge, and a slew of canonical films.⁴⁷ From the expansive list of referenced films, a Fritz Lang motif becomes clear. Lang certainly appears to be the most important individual filmmaker in terms of Pynchon's filmography, and Gerhardt von Göll appears to be a sort of bastard cousin, or perverse surrogate for Lang. But before delving into their respective roles in Pynchon's intertextual design, let's first look at the fictional Osbie Feel's *Doper's Greed*—Osbie, whose favorite films include *White Zombie* (Victor Halperin, 1932) with Bela Lugosi, *Son of Frankenstein* (Rowland V. Lee, 1939), *Freaks* (Tod Browning, 1932)—each influenced in some way by the German Expressionist mode—*Flying Down to Rio* (Thornton Freeland, 1933), “and, perhaps *Dumbo*” (106). Osbie's film influences are akin to Pynchon's.

In fact, Osbie Feel's *Doper's Greed* functions as a sort of microcosmic referentially encyclopedic gesture for Pynchon. In Reel 3: Scene 23, having

discovered Osbie Feel's screen test for *Doper's Greed* spliced onto the end of the edited footage taken of her in Pirate's maisonette (Reel 1: Scene 14 referenced above), Katje comes to the realization that someone has planted the footage as a coded message for her to find. The screen test consists of Osbie improvising a scenario for the film, a western complete with a Nelson Eddy sung theme song. After the opening song, Osbie sets the scene:

“Now into town ride two trail-weary cowboys, Basil Rathbone and S.Z. (“Cuddles”) Sakall. At the entrance to town, barring their way, stands the Midget who played the lead in *Freaks*. The one with the German accent. He is the town's sheriff. He is wearing an enormous gold star that nearly covers his chest. Rathbone and Sakall rein up, with uneasy smiles on their faces.” (534)

What follows is an hour and a half of conversation, which will presumably comprise the length of the film, between Rathbone and Sakall debating whether or not “the Midget” is real or a hallucination. “[They] agree that the only way to settle the argument is to kill the Midget, who gathers their intention and runs off screaming down the street. Sakall laughs so hard he falls of his horse into the horse trough, and we get a final closeup of Rathbone smiling, in his uncertain way” (535). Osbie then begins to explain that the element of *Greed* must be worked into the plot somehow, but the film runs out mid-thought. Much like Katje, we are faced with the intertextual task of deciphering Osbie's/Pynchon's references—a sort of six degrees of Osbie. There are five referential components to Osbie's fictional film from which we can extrapolate larger meaning. I will list

these in Pynchonian fashion: 1) Nelson Eddy, for his crooning in, for instance, the western *The Girl of the Golden West* (Robert Z. Leonard, 1938) and also for appearing in at least five films directed by W.S. Van Dyke—*Rose-Marie* (1936), *Rosalie* (1937), *Sweethearts* (1938), *Bitter Sweet* (1940) *I Married an Angel* (1942)—who directed both *Tarzan the Ape Man* (1932) and *Manhattan Melodrama* (1934), the last film John Dillinger ever saw—more on that later. 2) Basil Rathbone, *Karenina* to Greta Garbo’s *Anna Karenina* (Clarence Brown, 1935), the son of *Son of Frankenstein* (1939) with Boris Karloff and Bela Lugosi,



Rathbone

the heavy in both *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (Michael Curtiz and William Keighley, 1938) with Errol Flynn, and *The Mark of Zorro* (Rouben Mamoulian, 1940) with Douglas Fairbanks, Jr.—all of which and whom Pynchon references elsewhere in *Gravity’s Rainbow*—most memorably as Sherlock Holmes in numerous films throughout the 1930s and 40s. 3) S.Z.

Sakall, the Hungarian born and veteran actor of German cinema who successfully immigrated to Hollywood and is most widely recognized in his role as Carl in *Casablanca* (Curtiz, 1943). 4) *Freaks* (1932), Tod Browning’s beautifully grotesque follow-up to *Dracula* (1931) and a hallmark of the early thirties Hollywood, Expressionist-inspired horror film. 5) *Greed* (1924), Erich von Stroheim’s masterpiece adaptation of Frank Norris’ *McTeague* (1899). Let’s start at the end and work backward.

Osbie invokes Stroheim's *Greed* here in an attempt to legitimize the artistic worthiness of his otherwise improvised and drug-inspired western. For Pynchon's part, *Greed* is famous, in particular for the cuts made by studio executives, as the masterpiece that is and never was. Weisenburger insightfully, though implicitly, suggests that as the film runs out during Osbie's *Greed* epilogue,



Greed

Pynchon conjures Stroheim's ten-hour version of *Greed*, the one pared down systematically at MGM, a quite faithful screening of Frank Norris' novel edited down to a bare minimum by studio executives (281). In this sense, Pynchon calls



Sakall

attention to both the industrial realities of Hollywood as well as, possibly, the voluminous nature of his own novel. But more to the point, both *Greed* and MGM fit into Pynchon's recurring motif of blurring the lines between the real, constructed, and imagined as they pertain to a sort of mutability in history and identity.

In this case, there is not one *Greed*, but many, as the film was pared down from 10-hours to 4-hours to 140 minutes.⁴⁸

"The Midget" from *Freaks*, S.Z. ("Cuddles") Sakall, and Basil Rathbone all function as well to blur the lines of identifiable reality. Notice that Osbie casts not the actors Rathbone and Sakall in roles as cowboys, but rather the cowboys *are* Rathbone and Sakall. But, of course, these are not the individuals, the men

themselves that Osbie imagines in his film, but their screen personae. In other words, Rathbone and Sakall are not playing cowboys, but rather are playing their own cultivated screen personae as cowboys. Likewise, Osbie casts not Harry Earles—the actor who played Hans in *Freaks* and, not so coincidentally, also was a Lollypop Guild member in *The Wizard of Oz*—but “the Midget who played the lead in *Freaks*.” In other words, rather than wanting Harry Earles to play the sheriff, he wants *that* “Midget,” *that* performance of *that* character from *Freaks* transposed into his film as the sheriff. Again, Osbie is not interested in the actors’ representation of original characters or in the creation of an original screen reality, but in the evocation of existing fictional entities for the purposes of realizing a hallucinatory scenario. In a sense, this is exactly Pynchon’s filmic enterprise, the encyclopedic amalgamation of a representational history mapped onto a fictionalized reality.

As there are multiple *Greeds*, there are multiple Rathbones, Sakalls, and Earles. Likewise there are multiple Slothrop. He is both a “real” character within Pynchon’s fiction—he is Tyrone Slothrop, the fictional creation of Pynchon who is real within the narrative façade of *Gravity’s Rainbow*—and a performer, a shape shifter, who assumes both real/fictional identities and fictional/real identities. That is to say that he assumes the identities of both those created by Pynchon, for example Max Schlepzig who is a “real” German film star within the novel’s reality, and those created outside Pynchon, for example Rocketman who is a fictional reality outside the diegesis of *Gravity’s Rainbow*. All of this lends itself to the hallucinatory and oneiric tone of the novel. Add Nelson Eddy crooning atop and the “dream factory” of Hollywood is in full effect, producing

illusions of distraction, propaganda, and catharsis during a wartime malaise. To extend this, von Göll, for his part, is responsible for his frequently referenced *Alpdrücken* which translates roughly to *Nightmares*.

The German Expressionists were in great part interested in visualizing human psychology and representing dreams or at least an oneiric aesthetic, but in a very different sense than, for instance, Irving Thalberg at MGM was interested in the representation of a dream world. By its title alone, Gerhardt von Göll's *Alpdrücken* appeals to this difference. If Old Hollywood was the “dream factory” then Expressionism was its somnambulist cousin—if *Ulysses* was the waked walk of Dublin, then *Finnegans Wake* was the sleeper sojourn. Pynchon gives us glimpses of von Göll's purported, and likely perverse in one manner or another, masterpiece only in superficially, peripheral fragments. In fact the title of the film itself arises out of Pynchon's fragmenting of Reichssieger von Thanatz Alpdruken, [roughly translates to “champion of the death nightmares”—which absolutely has to be the name of a band immediately] the Nazi hound champion Weimaraner—a breed Pynchon chooses obviously for its nomenclatural connection to the Weimar Republic—of 1941. As Weisenburger delineates it:

The dog's name will fragment, its parts metamorphosing into *Alpdrücken* (but note that Pynchon doesn't use the unlauted “u” in the dog's name), a (fictional) film by Gerhardt von Göll (the title of which means “nightmare”) that links together many of the novel's characters. (100)

Actually *Alpdrücken* is better translated in the plural rather than the singular, which suits Pynchon's multitudinousness. More important than the origin of the

film's title or even the film's content, however, is the film's analogous function. Pynchon positions, ironically perhaps, Gerhardt von Göll's *Alpdrücken* as a contemporary masterpiece of the Weimar and UFA era of German Expressionism—alongside, one must suppose, Weine's *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, one of the first horror films, with its legendary jagged set design and pioneering chiaroscuro lighting, Lang's *Destiny*, with its candlelit hand of Death, and his dystopian science-fiction masterpiece *Metropolis* starring Brigitte Helm, Pabst's *Joyless Street* starring Asta Nielsen, one of the first of the Expressionist subgenre of “street films” which, along with Lang's *M*, look toward, and in effect create, Hollywood *film noir* two decades later, and even a later film like Josef von Sternberg's *The Blue Angel* starring Marlene Dietrich. In effect, Pynchon sets up von Göll and his *Alpdrücken* as a sort of foil for the masterworks of the era.

Pynchon makes most of these connections clear in Reel 3: Scene 10 through the eyes of Slothrop and the remembrances of the fictional actress Greta Erdmann. Slothrop, apparently waking from another Sodium Amytal-induced episode, “finds himself in a dilapidated old studio, dark except where yellow sunlight comes through small holes in the overhead” (393). Even Pynchon's lighting choice here recalls Expressionism in its high-contrast design. As Slothrop continues through the studio, he describes the burnt out shell of what once was: “Dust has drifted into corners, and over the remains of other sets . . . tenement courtyards in stark Expressionist white/black, built to no human scale, all tapered away in perspective for the rigid lenses that stared here once” (393). “Built to no human scale, all tapered away in perspective” is clearly a reference to Weine's *Caligari* sets which are a hallmark of German Expressionism in their

jaggedness and psychological derangement. Nonetheless this studio, albeit an abandoned one, is still a quite different milieu than say the “dream factory”



The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari

depiction of a silent era Hollywood studio in *Singin' in the Rain* (Stanley Donen and Gene Kelly, 1952). Here, the dream is more nightmare and yet equally cinematic in its construction.

Pynchon establishes his analogy here within the dusty

darkness, beneath girders 50 feet overhead lost in shadows, when Slothrop meets Margherita Erdmann and through her reminiscences gives us a few more fragments of *Alpdrücken*.

Through the twenties and thirties she worked as a movie actress, at Templehof and Staaken, but this place was always her favorite. Here she was directed by the great Gerhardt von Göll through dozens of vaguely pornographic horror movies. “I knew he was a genius from the beginning. I was only his creature.” Never star material, she admits freely, no Dietrich, nor vamp à la Brigitte Helm. . . . “I always had to be chased, by monsters, madmen, criminals. . . . When I wasn’t running I was usually strapped or chained to something.”

(393-4)

Both Pynchon's encyclopedic approach and wit are on display here. As Weisenburger notes via Siegfried Kracauer's monolithic work on the period, *From Caligari to Hitler*, which can be safely assumed was a source for Pynchon, "after World War I the German film companies were first established at Neubabelsberg and Tempelhof (the correct spelling: the text gets it wrong), both Berlin suburbs. Later, in the early thirties, the great director Fritz Lang moved his studio to Staaken, another Berlin suburb" (231-3). In other words, Margherita, despite never being star material worked not only for von Göll at Neubabelsberg, but also for Lang at Staaken. Although apropos for the latter and anachronistic for the former, she being neither a bitch nor a Brigitte Helm-like vamp, she was nicknamed "the Anti-Dietrich: not destroyer of men but doll—languid, exhausted" (394)—in other words, attractively ineffectual. Not so ineffectually, however—"God, Erdmann was beautiful. How many other men, shuffling out again into depression Berlin, carried the same image back from *Alpdrücken* to some drab fat excuse for a bride?" (397)—as Greta leads Slothrop into what's left of the torture chamber, all the while reminiscing:

"This was the set for *Alpdrücken*. Gerhardt in those days was still all for exaggerated lighting. . . .Like this," raising her arms, insisting he fasten the tin manacles to her wrists and ankles. "The light came from above and below at the same time, so that everyone had two shadows: Cain's and Abel's, Gerhardt told us. It was at the height off his symbolist period. Later on he began to use more natural light, to shoot more on location." (394)

Here Pynchon places his von Göll—as a “fantasist-surrogate” like Pirate—securely within the timeline of German Expressionism. His early pictures emphasize the



manipulation of light and set design as the aesthetic and thematic premise which was best accomplished through studio shooting. With his later films, as Greta indicates, he moved outside the studio, shot on location, and, it can be inferred, started to integrate something of the realistic into his

films. This is exactly the trajectory of many German Expressionists, Lang in particular⁴⁹, whose films after sound—that is after the Expressionist period proper—moved to the streets, first with *M*, and then later, in Lang’s case specifically, to the desert in Hollywood westerns, with *The Return of Frank James* among other. And yet this doesn’t come close to encapsulating Lang’s role in the novel.

In Reel 3: Scene 29, through Franz Pökler’s obsession with film and idolizing of the actor Rudolf Klein-Rogge, Pynchon goes on something of a filmic stream-of consciousness rant, underscoring Lang in his Expressionism-Hollywood referential trope. Klein-Rogge appeared in numerous key Expressionist era films—*The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, *Destiny*, *Dr. Mabuse: The Gambler*, *Kriemhild's Revenge* [*Die Nibelungen: Kriemhilds Rache*], *Siegfried* [*Die Nibelungen: Siegfried*] (Lang, 1924), and *Metropolis*. Slothrop seeks

information about Laszlo Jamf—who still might be just a figment of his unusually fragmented psyche—from Pöcker. Pöcker, himself blurry when it comes to the line between the real and the fictional, provides him an increasingly digressionary response. “Pöcker does manage to tell a little about Laszlo Jamf,” the narrator assures us, “but keeps getting sidetracked off into talking about the movies, German movies Slothrop has never heard of, much less seen” (577). As Pöcker recounts his mentor Jamf’s concept of “the lion” as personal directive—“The lion does not know subtleties and half-solutions. He does not accept *sharing* as a basis for anything! He takes, he holds! . . . You will never hear relativity from the lion” (577). From this mentorial decree, Pöcker puts a face—“a movie face natürlich [translates to “of course”]”—to “the lion” in the form of Rudolf Klein-Rogge:

Klein-Rogge was carrying nubile actresses off to rooftops when King Kong was still on the tit with no motor skills to speak of. Well, one nubile actress anyway, Brigitte Helm in *Metropolis*. Great movie. . . . Klein-Rogge playing the mad inventor that Pöcker and his codisciples under Jamf longed to be. . . . Klein-Rogge is remembered most of all for his role as Dr. Mabuse. . . . vital and proud against the gray forces surrounding him, edging toward the doom he must’ve known he couldn’t escape, the silent inferno of guns, grenades, streets full of troops attacking his headquarters, and his own madness at the end of the secret tunnel. . . . And who brought him down but matinee idol Bernhardt Goetzke as State

Prosecutor von Wenk, Goetzke who played tender, wistful
bureaucratic Death in *Der Müde Tod* [*Destiny*]. (578-9)

Pynchon uses Pölker's Rudolf Klein-Rogge idolatry as a means of further substantiating his literary evocation of Lang's narratives and form. He is utilizing the iconography of specific actors, Klein-Rogge, Brigitte Helm, etc., and is folding it all into his intertextual design. He is also juxtaposing Expressionism as its descendant Hollywood, and referring to *King Kong* specifically. It should be noted, with relation to the importance *The Wizard of Oz* will play elsewhere in the novel, that Klein-Rogge's role as Rotwang, the inventor in *Metropolis*—not to mention his ubiquity in Lang's oeuvre—is akin to Frank Morgan's multiple roles as Professor Marvel, the Gatekeeper, the Carriage Driver, Omby Amby, and Oscar Z. Diggs, The Wizard himself in *The Wizard of Oz*. Klein-Rogge and Morgan, as Rotwang and The Wizard, represent characters that play at being God. And furthermore, they each embody multiple roles, identities—Klein-Rogge within the films of Fritz Lang and Morgan within *The Wizard of Oz* itself as well as the nearly 100 films he appeared in during his Hollywood career which spanned the silent era until 1950. In addition, Oscar Diggs' full name is as follows: Oscar Zoroaster Phadrig Isaac Norman Henkel Emmannuel Ambroise Diggs [OZ PINHEAD if you follow its acronym]. This is arguably a source for Pynchon's Adenoid Hynkel which is linked to Nixon (more on this below). In this sense Pynchon suggests a connection between Lang, Klein-Rogge, Morgan, Nixon, and possibly Pynchon himself as puppet-masters of narrative design. Like Klein-Rogge and Morgan, we have men playing at God. Only in the cases of Lang, Pynchon, and Nixon, they do so as themselves: Lang as master filmmaker

designing a cinematic world, Pynchon as writer designing a literary world, and Nixon as President of the United States designing an historical world—each, I think Pynchon would argue, extrapolate reality and are artificial in their own ways.

Despite his adept use of the form of film and his ability to extrapolate from film history his own fictional filmic entities, Pynchon's most encyclopedic, kaleidoscopic, and I think virtuosic use of film is his ever recurring referencing of actual European and Hollywood cinema. This is not to say that it takes a virtuoso to reference a movie in a book. It is to say, however, that Pynchon *knows* the cinema he evokes and employs it in such away that it is part and parcel of both the form and thematic scope of his literature. As quoted above, Lippman: "You cannot go four pages in this book without some direct reference to movies, movie techniques, movie history, movie business. Movie language and the whole art of movie-making pervade the fabric of the novel" (17). Although used in very specific ways, these iconographic references to films and film personalities together constitute a sort of historical timeline for the novel as well as function as a self-reflexive commentary on the artificial construct of literary characterization (a motif akin to the theme of fact versus fiction, image versus reality). Pynchon uses film both as an historical/cultural touchstone and as an imaginary reality. In other words, his film references are both grounded in historical fact and at the same time exemplify the alternative reality of artistic creation.

Although I would like to discuss Mickey Rooney⁵⁰ and his association with Judy Garland, as well as Henry Fonda and any number of Hollywood icons as



Mickey and Judy from *Babes in Arms* (1939)

they play out in Pynchon's novel, I will for the sake of brevity not focus on Pynchon's use of Hollywood icons (both large and small) but continue my focus on generic exchange. Given

that Fritz Lang is Pynchon's primary German referent and arguably *the* poster child for German Expressionism and the Hollywood émigré, it is clear that Pynchon's preoccupation with the German cinema of the interwar period as evaluated above is directly related to his interest in the entirety of interwar, wartime, and postwar Hollywood cinema. What I mean by that is that his references to particular Hollywood genres all correlate with either a German aesthetic influence or émigré involvement. This is evidenced, for example in the classical Hollywood horror films, crime films, and even westerns.

As I began addressing above, German Expressionism is greatly responsible for both the visual style and thematic content of what would become the classical Hollywood horror genre, a connection Pynchon makes clear in both his use of Fritz Lang as a the bridging émigré and his inclusion of *Dracula*, *The Bride of Frankenstein*, *Freaks*, *Son of Frankenstein*, *White Zombie*, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (Victor Fleming, 1941), Bela Lugosi, and Boris Karloff into his referential

spectrum. In a novel that takes World War II as its stage, the exchange of cinematic artistry and commerce seems an appropriate metaphor. At one point early in *Gravity's Rainbow*, Pynchon references the quota film, for instance:

So Franz and Leni were very hungry or a time, with Ilse growing in her belly each day. . . .

He'd been out all day, the proletarian husband, out pasting up bills to advertise some happy Max Schlepzig film fantasy, while Leni lay pregnant . . . It was well after dark and bitter cold by the time his paste bucket was empty and the ads all put up to be pissed on, torn down, swastikaed over.

(It may have been a quota film. (160))

Here is the economic, if not the artistic, bridge between two cinemas—actually in this case three. The “quota film” is a historical term associated particularly with the first half century of global cinema industry. When, as early as the late 1910s, but especially during the 1920s with Charlie Chaplin, Hollywood cinema began to dominate international screens, foreign industries began setting distribution and exhibition quotas for domestically produced films. Often these quota films emphasized, mimicked the form of mainstream, escapist Hollywood commercial cinema. A case in point would be the so-called “white telephone” films in Italy of the Mussolini era, which the Italian Neorealist of the postwar era directly worked against. In doing so the Neorealists influenced the French New Wave’s rejection of the “Tradition of Quality” in France which in turn influenced the Hollywood New Wave in their resistance to the Hollywood studio establishment. Pynchon here finesses a subtle *Bicycle Thieves* (Vittorio De Sica, 1948) reference by way of

Franz's job pasting bills of a German quota film. In *Bicycle Thieves*, Antonio takes a job, legendarily contingent on his access to a bicycle, pasting posters.

While pasting a poster, among others, of Rita Hayworth in *Gilda* (Charles Vidor,



Hanging a *Gilda* Poster in *Bicycle Thieves*

1946)—very much *not* a quota film, but rather an example of the Hollywood films that would have dominated postwar Italian screens—Antonio's bike is stolen and so ensues the very non-Hollywood classical narrative of De Sica's film. This is not to

suggest that De Sica is criticizing *Gilda*, a great example of the *film noir* era, or that he is at all rejecting Hollywood cinema, but rather that he is announcing his neorealist intentions to revitalize a decimated Italian film industry through a different aesthetic and narrative lens. In fact, as the passage continues, Pynchon suggests something of the relationship between the postwar era and the disruption or reevaluation of cinematic classicalism as well as the effect of war on the whole of Hollywood and European cinema:

(It may have been a quota film . . . But when he arrived at the theatre on the date printed on the bill, he found the place dark, chips of plaster littering the floor of the lobby, and a terrible smashing far back inside the theatre, the sound of a demolition crew except that there were no voices, nor even any light that he could see back there . . . he called, but the

wrecking only went on, a loud creaking in the bowels behind the electric marquee, which he noticed now was blank. . .).

(160)

Pynchon suggests metaphorically something of the physical and industrial upheaval and sometimes outright devastation of European cinema contingent with Hitler's rise to power and World War II. And yet, as Pynchon implies by his carefully chosen spectrum of references, this wartime and postwar upheaval which indelibly alters film history is essential to understanding the interplay of film history and his literary design. While German Expressionist filmmakers, such as Lang, were compelled to flee Nazi Germany prior to the war, and Goebbels set about redesigning the German film industry around lame, thinly veiled propagandistic melodrama, Hollywood welcomed the émigré influence on its genre films. Out of Italian resistance, to both Mussolini and his "white telephone" films, arises Neorealism. In France, the Nazi ban on Hollywood cinema during the war results in an influx of a 1930s and 1940s backlog after liberation which in turn inspires Auteur Theory and the French New Wave. Extend this historical chain to the concurrence of Vietnam, the dissolution of the Old Hollywood studio system, the rise of film schools during the early 1960s, and you arrive at the historical moment of Pynchon's novel: the Hollywood New Wave and its auteur aesthetic.

In fact, early in the novel, Pynchon embodies the scourge of both Nazism and Western foreign policy through filmic reference, thereby underscoring his conflation of the history of the war and film history. In Reel 1: Scene 1, as Pirate's oneiric ramblings continue, a monstrous allegorical manifestation, a Golem or

Moloch or Kong or anachronistically a Godzilla or Blob from the postwar era, makes its brief appearance in *Gravity's Rainbow*. This “*giant Adenoid*” (14) represents many things for Pynchon. “This lymphatic monster had once blocked the distinguished pharynx of Lord Blatherard Osmo, who at the time occupied the Novi Pazar desk at the Foreign Office, an obscure penance for the previous century of British policy on the Eastern Question” (14). This giant cinematic Adenoid creature—movie poster tagline included: “At least as big as St. Paul’s and growing by the hour. London, perhaps all England, was in mortal peril!” (14)—is a manifestation of both a self-suffocating British bureaucratic nebulosity, an ironic comeuppance in the face of a millennially imperialist British foreign policy brought to a head by Hitler’s expansion over Europe and subsequent bombings of London, and Hitler himself. And this monster Adenoid keeps growing, feeding: “Before long, top hats are littering the squares of Mayfair, cheap perfume hanging ownerless in the pub lights of the East End as the Adenoid continues on its rampage, not swallowing up its victims at random, no, the fiendish Adenoid has a *master plan*, it’s choosing only certain personalities useful to it.” (15) As Hitler, Pynchon’s Adenoid is not simply monstrous, but fiendish like Rudolf Klein-Rogge’s Dr. Mabuse and Rotwang. In effect, the Adenoid embodies the most villainous aspects of German Expressionism and the 1930s Hollywood horror cycle it influenced—both the supernatural or scientifically manifested such as Golem, Moloch, Kong, Frankenstein’s Monster, Nosferatu, Dracula, even Death himself, and the fiendishly human such as Dr. Mabuse, Rotwang, Dr. Frankenstein, and Hans Beckert, the murderer from *M*. However, these filmic analogs and a fiendish *master plan* are not the only

connection between Hitler and the Adenoid. Pynchon's choice of the adenoid is a direct reference to Chaplin's *The Great Dictator* (1940) in which he plays



Chaplin as Adenoid Hynkel

Adenoid Hynkel, his not so thinly veiled parodic indictment of Hitler and Nazism, and for that matter an implied critique of the United States government which had to enter the war. Quoting Charlie Chaplin is entirely appropriate for Pynchon given his use of slapstick, cartoonish characterization, and satire.

And given that Chaplin's satirical

reproach of Hitler came before the United States entered the war, before Hollywood in tow became involved in the war effort, this reference says something about Pynchon's political intentions for *Gravity's Rainbow* especially when we consider the historical context within which the novel was written and within which the narrative historically culminates. For instance, the Adenoid appears again only once in a flash-forward to roughly 1973—during the rocket's climactic descent upon a movie theater—effectively book-ending the novel as we are introduced to Richard M. Zhubb:

LOS ANGELES (PNS)—Richard M. Zhubb, night manager of the Orpheus Theatre on Melrose, has come out against what he calls “irresponsible use of the harmonica.” Or, actually, “harbodica,” since Manager Zhubb suffers from a chronic

adenoidal condition, which affects his speech. Friends and detractors alike think of him as “the Adenoid.” (754)

Nixon is the Adenoid! World War II British bureaucracy, Hitler, American’s initially reluctant involvement all likened to the Vietnam era via Mr. Zhubb. Or—looking ahead to more of the conspiratorial—as Patrick McHugh, in his “Cultural Politics, Postmodernism, and White Guys: Affect in *Gravity’s Rainbow*,” states: “A Nazi Rocket is shot in 1945 is descending in 1970 upon a movie theater, its audience, and its manager . . . In allegorical terms, the fascist legacy at the origins of the Cold War looms apocalyptically while the preterite are contained, manipulated, and anesthetized by the cultural industry and its politicians” (14). As McHugh would have it the rocket’s leap in time effectively collapses 25 years of the Cold War culture and the politics of paranoia.⁵¹ And yet Zhubb is only a manager of a theater, a cartoonish player in a larger film, far removed from the theater of war or surgical operation à la *M*A*S*H*.

For his part Altman’s encyclopedic knowledge of film history is established through the recurring loudspeaker announcements that function as a narrative thread through the otherwise episodic film narrative. As Sklar notes, *M*A*S*H* “reflexively comments on its own genre through loudspeaker announcements promoting World War II film screenings at the hospital camp” (396). For example, immediately preceding the first meeting between Hawkeye and Hot Lips an announcement states that, “This week’s movie will be *When Willie Comes Marching Home* [John Ford, 1950], the biggest parade of laughs of World War II. All the loves, laughs, and escapades of the Willies who came marching home.” The reference to this rather obscure Ford film functions as a critique of the sort of

banal, patriotic, B-movie war comedies turned out by Hollywood during and in the decade following WWII, and in turn calls attention to Altman's own revisionist approach to the war genre. This sort of quotation or reference can be linked to both the film's form and Altman's larger thematic intentions. Implicit



in Altman's self-referential moment is the suggestion that *M*A*S*H* is to be what the Hollywood war-comedy has never been. *M*A*S*H* simultaneously satirizes both the American and Hollywood war efforts. And this is exactly the sort of satire Pynchon engages in throughout *Gravity's Rainbow*. It was said that during the early years of the New Hollywood Auteur the inmates were running the asylum.⁵² Through his similar use of cinematic intertextuality, Pynchon demonstrates an affinity with the era's filmmakers.

Elsewhere in the film, Altman's loudspeaker announces viewings of *The Halls of Montezuma* (Lewis Milestone, 1950) and *The Glory Brigade* (Robert D. Webb, 1953), both action-adventure war films—the latter set in World War II and the former in Korea—which extend Altman's encyclopedic range of film reference in characteristically mischievousness, even snarky fashion and gesture toward the countercultural. In an announcement that is later mimicked in Altman's closing credit sequence addressed above, the screening of *The Halls of Montezuma* is relayed to the *M*A*S*H* unit thusly:

Attention. Attention. Colonel Blake has secured for us *The Halls of Montezuma*. [In monotone and as if reading from a

movie poster] So big, only the biggest of the screen can bring it to you all. Technicolor. Tell it to the Marines, those loveable lugs with wonderful mugs so we now love more than ever. Tell 'em they're still the greatest guys in the world. Follow Lieutenant, Punchy, Limey, Babyface, Doc, The Poet, Pretty Boy and Slattery through some of the most interesting war films yet created [sic].

The Halls of Montezuma is an example of a typically bombastic, mainstream, but nonetheless uninspired war film from the immediate postwar era. Although it



The M*A*S*H 4077 Loudspeaker

touts names such as Richard Widmark, Jack Palance, and Karl Malden, and is Lewis Milestone directed, the film

works primarily as a sort of rallying-cry for American involvement in Korea via a standard, action-centered World War II narrative. Altman's intertextual use of this film offers a counterpoint to his own film's design and exemplifies his contempt for the cavalier treatment of war in Hollywood cinema. Altman's seeks to depict war differently, to suggest arguments about the circumstances and reasons for war and depict the repercussions of such engagements in kind. Altman's choice of a Lewis Milestone film from this period is especially poignant, given that Milestone directed arguably the first masterpiece of anti-war cinema: *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930). Altman suggests that to go from, in

Milestone's case, *All Quiet on the Western Front* to *The Halls of Montezuma* is both a digression unfitting of Milestone's earlier accomplishment—just as *When Willie Comes Marching Home* is unworthy of Ford's directorial talent—is emblematic of Hollywood's pat exploitative depiction of war—at best, for empty laughs, at worst, for glorification.⁵³ For Altman, *Montezuma* is Hollywood propaganda cloaked in generic escapism and he would possibly know best: he served in World War II. Someone in his position would have likely been asked to watch films more like *Montezuma* than *All Quiet on the Western Front* during his preparation for service. Film lore has it that, *The Halls of Montezuma* was employed as a Marine recruitment film during the Korean War with the cooperation of Twentieth Century Fox—this stands to reason given that the title is taken from the opening line of the Marines' Hymn. Regardless, Altman is intertextualizing this film as a means of satirizing such digressive studio war films. Furthermore, I suggest that Altman blames not Milestone or Ford for their digressive war films, but focuses his satirical critique on the studios that perpetuates such cinematic treatment of war.

In a third loudspeaker film reference, Altman cites *The Glory Brigade*, a film actually set during the Korean War, and in-turn completes a three-pronged attack on the studio-driven representation of war by way of indicting the very studio producing *M*A*S*H*: Twentieth Century Fox. The announcement is as follows:

Attention. Attention. Friday night's movie will be *The Glory Brigade*. Rock'em sock'em kisses you never got. It's Uncle Sam's combat engineers charging side by side with Greek

handbags. Showing the world a new way to fight as they use bulldozers like bazookas, bayonets like bazooka—bullets.

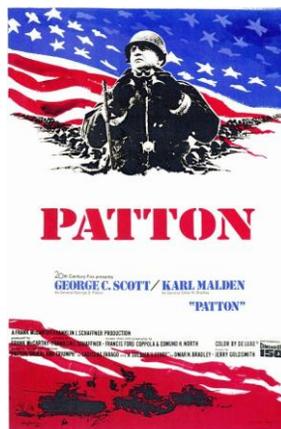
Starring Victor Mature. That is all.

Although *The Glory Brigade*, which takes up the conflict in Greece concurrent to the Korean War, gestures toward a more nuanced treatment of race and global politics, it is in the end another saccharine action film. But the successes or shortcomings of this specific film, or the others Altman “calls out” on his loudspeaker, are not his primary focus here. *When Willie Comes Marching Home*, *The Halls of Montezuma*, and *The Glory Brigade* were all produced by Twentieth Century Fox, the very studio producing *M*A*S*H*. Again, working from the countercultural attitudes of the era, which I will discuss further below, Altman chooses three past films from the studio producing his own film upon which to focus his derision as a means of satirizing the Old Hollywood’s lack of authenticity in depicting war.

To further contextualize how Altman’s referential content informs his conceptualization of his own film’s form, it should be noted that two other war pictures were being produced by Twentieth Century Fox during the production of *M*A*S*H*. First is *Patton* (Franklin J. Schaffner, 1970), a prestige film which went on to win Oscars for Best Picture, Director, Screenplay, etc., and *Tora! Tora! Tora!* (Richard Fleischer, 1970), an ambitious lavishly photographed, but emotionally and financially disappointing film. Altman, while describing his cinematographic concept for *M*A*S*H*, hints at a sort of derision for each of these competing productions as well as for the generic expectations of a “war comedy”:

We had fog filters on this lens and did everything to make it look kind of dirty and not crisp and clear and Fox, Twentieth Century Fox who made this film, they had two other wars going on. They had *Tora! Tora! Tora!* and *Patton* were being shot at the same time and we were a little low budget film and we were out on the backlot and my attitude was to all of our company was that we should stay under budget and we don't do anything to call attention to ourselves and we may get away with this.⁵⁴

Altman's shooting "dirty" is in direct conflict with the studio norm and he knew it. Rejecting how war comedies were to be shot was essential to Altman's



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commentary both on war and on the cinematic representations of war, comedic and dramatic. The same can be said of Pynchon who eschews conventional literary structure as a means of establishing his irreverence toward the sort of protocol depiction of war both in film and literature. Characteristic of the film era of *Gravity's Rainbow*, in this sense, Pynchon "shoots dirty" too. Like Altman,

he obfuscates narrative continuity and generic convention and in turn calls attention to both as a means of arriving at his own idiosyncratic war satire.

King Kong, The Wizard of Oz, and Counterculture

As outlined above, Pynchon's referencing of film history in *Gravity's Rainbow* is linked to larger issues of form and theme. The two most significant overarching film references come in the form of epigraphs for Reels 2 and 3. The fact that these quotations are presented between reels rather than incorporated into the text of the narrative makes them roughly analogous to Altman's use of the loudspeaker as a link between scenes. Although the loudspeaker announcements are presented as diegetic sound, they were in fact written entirely in post-production and therefore take on, in a sense, non-diegetic qualities because they originate from an authorial space outside of the on-screen narrative. Likewise, Pynchon locates these quotes outside of the narrative itself as a sort of authorial prompt for the formal and thematic elements of the reels that they precede.

The first epigraph reads: "You will have the tallest, darkest leading man in Hollywood."—Merian C. Cooper to Fay Wray" an invocation of *King Kong* that has formal and thematic implications for Pynchon. *Kong* the film is a sort of touchstone of interwar Hollywood cinema—an action-adventure, special effect laden, black and white, B-movie masterpiece that addresses man's physical and economical subjugation of the natural world and the western colonial impulse.

More important, however, *Kong* is so iconic as to represent cinema—and possibly Hollywood’s colonialist impulse—itsself. In *Gravity’s Rainbow*, in the form of a poem, Ann Darrow (Fay Wray’s character in *Kong*) describes her experience on



the island that
Denham, the fictional
film director in the
film, has brought her
to: “[. . .] I was
thinking/Of
Denham—only him,
with gun and
camera/Wisecracking

in his best bum actor’s way/Through Darkest Earth, making the unreal reel/By shooting at it, one way or the other—” (689).⁵⁶ Here, as Weisenburger suggests, Pynchon echoes the “French director Jean Cocteau’s famous paean to film: ‘Long live the young muse, cinema, for she possesses the mysteries of a dream and allows the unreal to become reel’” (290). By changing “real” to “reel,” and employing the double-connotation of “shooting”—which effectively evokes other quasi-violent cinematic euphemisms such as “captured” (on film), “cut,” “action,” and “boom” (mic)—Pynchon at once celebrates the cinema for its revolutionary, to keep up the militaristic tone, upheaving of conventional thought on narrative and form and admonishes it as yet another tool by which human beings attempt to order the natural and economic world. Cinematic language, for Pynchon, takes on the characteristics of warfare, and its history is in turn indelibly linked to the

history as such—German Expressionism rises out of the rubble of World War I, Intellectual Montage out of the Soviet Revolution, Old Hollywood exploits, expurgates, and propagandizes World War II, a war which brought about the guerilla-style inception of Italian Neorealism. Similarly, *M*A*S*H* and *Gravity's Rainbow* adhere themselves to the timeline of war, displacing Vietnam onto Korea and World War II respectively. Both Altman's and Pynchon's referential scopes follow this sort of cinema/warfare timeline analogy. Pynchon, however, expands this intertextual analogy to situate *Kong* as central to character motivation as it relates to the themes of isolation and identity and anti-authoritarianism in reaction to the systemic socio-economic realities of wartime Europe.

To this end, Kong the beast serves Pynchon as a metaphor for both Slothrop and the V-2 rocket and suggests the novel's countercultural ideals. While in the Casino Hermann Goering—the Reel introduced by the *Kong* epigraph—Slothrop, forced into a new environment, discovers he is under the control of an economic and bureaucratic system for which he has no understanding. His instinct then, like Kong, is to escape, to reject the system and its authoritative structure. Likewise, as Weisenburger states, Kong “originates from a South Seas place called Skull Island. The V-2 rocket originates from Peenemünde, an island off the Usedom coast of northern Germany glimpsed (on maps from Pynchon's sources) as a skull—for so the narrator remarks” (7). Pynchon therefore uses the Kong analogy to reinforce his phallic-banana connection between Slothrop and the V-2—cheekily insinuating the banana/ape association as well—and by doing so implicates mankind as the threat the two

beasts ultimately represent. The danger that Kong and the V-2 rocket pose to humankind are realized only when mankind removes the beasts from their secluded islands and introduces them to the masses. The violent repercussions of warfare, for Pynchon, are to be blamed not on the component of destruction itself, but the political mechanisms and individuals that bring that component to bear—Slothrop and the V-2 are not to blame, but Denham the director, and MacArthur and Eisenhower and Truman, and this follows suit in the colonialist present of Vietnam. This sort of countercultural, anti-authoritarian attitude parallels that of Altman, particularly in the context of war, which I will discuss further below.

Near the end of Reel 2, Pynchon reinforces the analogous relationship between Kong, Slothrop, and instruments of aerial assault in the form of a humorously self-reflexive bit of concocted film criticism. During a paranoiacs' "holiday by the sea," Pointsman, Roger Mexico, Jessica, Dennis Joint, and Katje argue inanities and hallucinations. Jessica draws attention away from the conversation as she goes "into her Fay Wray number. . . . for the Fist of the Ape, for the lights of electric New York white-waying into the room you thought was safe, could never be penetrated . . . for the coarse black hair, the tendons of need, of tragic love. . . .(275). Prompted by, though basically unconcerned with, Jessica's pining at tragic love, the conversation and narration turns back to *Kong* and a fictionalized critical reading of the film:

"Yeah well," as film critic Mitchell Prettyplace puts it in his definitive 18-volume study of *King Kong*, "you know, he did love her, folks." Proceeding from this thesis, it appears that

Prettyplace has left nothing out, every shot including out-takes raked through for every last bit of symbolism, exhaustive biographies of everyone connected with the film, extras, grips, lab people . . . even interviews with King Kong Kultists, who to be eligible for membership must have seen the movie at least 100 times and be prepared to pass an 8-hour exam. (275)

[For the sake of brevity, and acknowledging the implication of Pynchon's anticipating, calling for? my own academic specificity, I will skip over Pynchon's interim invocation of Murphy's Law, Gödel's Theorem, and the fabricated *Things That Can Happen in European Politics* by Ernest Pudding, and pick up as the narration circles back to Kong]

So when the laws of heredity are laid down, mutants will be born. Even as determinant a piece of hardware as the A4 rocket will begin spontaneously generating items like the "S-Great"⁵⁷ Slothrop thinks he's chasing like a grail. And so to the legend of the black scapeape we cast down like Lucifer from the tallest erection in the world. (275)

In addition to functioning as a revocation of *Kong* as self-conscious cinematic/literary reference, Pynchon's concocted academic reference provides a sort of meta-commentary on the novel's intertextual form. Prettyplace's "exhaustive" treatment of *Kong* suggests the sort of attention to the cinematic minutia Pynchon asks his readers to take up in order to access the form of *Gravity's Rainbow*. But of course this is also a self-reflexive joke at the expense

of, for example, myself who “proceeding from a thesis” has “raked through every last bit of symbolism” in both Pynchon’s novel *and Kong*—not to mention *Oz*, Altman, Lang, Henry Fonda, and Audie Murphy and Bob Eberle and a slew of other “raked bits” that will never make it into this chapter. However, this is not merely intertextual play, but is another example of Pynchon’s accordance with the characteristics and historical context of the New Hollywood Auteur—a filmmaking moment, like its French New Wave predecessor, significantly engaged in the critical and academic analysis of film, as addressed above.

As with his aforementioned use of cinematic techniques that self-consciously confront his audience, Pynchon’s citation of Prettyplace’s critical reading of *Kong* suggests that as audience/reader we need to be aware not only of *Kong* as a basic cinematic intertext, but also to appreciate a basic critical reading of the film as an allegory and evocation of interwar imperial despair. As Prettyplace argues it, Kong “the black scapeape we cast down like Lucifer from the tallest erection in the world.” The Empire State Building was, of course, from its completion in 1931 until 1972, with the completion of the World Trade Center’s North Tower, was the tallest man-made erection on the planet.⁵⁸ The western imperial impulse is thoroughly infused not only in the visage of Kong’s blackness and his bondage and exploitation at the hand of white western capitalists, but through his demise, under aerial assault, as he plummets from a phallic metaphor for western economic might. Prettyplace even allegorizes Kong in the biblical sense in that he argues that Kong, like Lucifer—who it is said tried to make his throne higher than the clouds—rebelled against an authoritarian system and was cast downward as punishment. As a scapegoat “scapeape” upon

whose head we purge our implicitness in the western imperial doctrine, Kong and Lucifer, like Slothrop's V-2, are propelled downward to Earth in a contradictory gesture of persecution and catharsis.⁵⁹

Pynchon's second film-related epigraph, which introduces Reel 3, has even wider formal and thematic implications and reinforces Pynchon's counterculture ideals. It reads: "Toto, I have a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore. . . ."—Dorothy, arriving in Oz." Again Pynchon invokes a classical Hollywood film from the interwar era, *The Wizard of Oz*, one of the most beloved and pop-culturally ubiquitous films ever made and possibly the most famous dream narrative constructs ever committed to celluloid. At this point in the novel Slothrop has escaped Casino Hermann Goering and entered The Zone—occupied Germany after V-E Day. *Oz* provides Pynchon a multitude of metaphorical correlations from Dorothy and Slothrop's journeys of self-discovery, issues of identity and



self-knowledge, fantasy, the potentiality of freedom and escape, man verses technology, and even defeating the literal and metaphorical Wicked Witch.⁶⁰ Most important is his use of

color, or lack thereof, which directly relates to *Oz*, a film wherein black and white⁶¹ cinematography is used to represent the "real world" and color

cinematography is used to represent the world of fantasy. One would be hard-pressed to find a film, or novel, for which color was more important than *The Wizard of Oz*—the yellow brick road, the ruby slippers, the witch’s green hue, the red poppies, the Emerald City. Generally, Pynchon associates black, whites, and grays with the preterite, vibrant color with the world of the elect—black and white with the historically encyclopedic—the litany of interwar German cinema, for example— and color with the new and now and current fantastic world. In this sense, *Kong*, shot in black and white and associated with the Casino, is the reality and escape, *Oz*, is the fantasy. Therefore color, for Pynchon, embodies the anticipated or hallucinated future/present beyond the black and white or sepia of the nostalgic past. Pynchon gestures toward to this chromatic distinction between *Kong* and *Oz* in the opening to Reel 2:

The sea in shades of gray under gray clouds, the Casino
Hermann Goering flat white and the palms in black
sawtooth, hardly moving . . . But this morning the trees in
the sun now are back to green. . . .the houses and villas there
baked to warm rusts, gentle corrosions all through Earth’s
colors, pale raw to deeply burnished. (181)

Pynchon’s attention to color here is directly related to the cinematic legacy of his immediate film referents. The black and white of the Casino Hermann Goering, its “shades of gray under gray clouds” milieu is the black and white of *Kong* and its Expressionist ancestors. It suggests the representational history of an interwar Germany and a cinema of the past, before the war. But as Slothrop

anticipates escape, which comes via hot air balloon no less, color seeps into the frame in the form of greening trees and rusty Earth.

Pynchon's associational use of *Oz*'s color-scheme sets the stage for Slothrop's escape from The Casino into The Zone. Yellows, reds, and greens, are peppered throughout Reel 3, but most importantly when Slothrop's meets Schnorp—the Frank Morgan/Professor Marvel to Slothrop's Dorothy.⁶² When “[Schnorp] takes Slothrop out in the back of the house, and here in the middle of a sloping green field is a wicker gondola beside a great heap of bright yellow and scarlet silk” (332). Pynchon's attention to yellows, greens, and reds are in line with the color-scheme of *Oz*—it's yellow brick road, multiple greens, and red poppies. He continues this connection to *Oz* and color, with a gesture toward drug use and hallucinogens, two scenes later in the “Doper's Greed” song:

All the trees was a-bloomin' with pink 'n' purple pills,
Whur the Romilar River flowed by,
To the magic mushrooms as wild as a rainbow,
So pretty I wanted to cry.
All the girls come to greet us, so sweet in slow motion,
Morning glories woven into their hair,
Bringin' great big handfuls of snowy cocaine,
All their dope they were eager to share.
Well we dallied for days, just a-ballin' and smokin',
In the flowering Panama Red. (369)

Taking the rainbow reference as a given, the flowering Panama Red, a cannabis popular during the 1960s and 1970s, provides a hallucinogenic analogy to the

poppies that Dorothy succumbs to when approaching Oz. But of course Glinda the Good Witch provides great big handfuls of snow to awaken Dorothy. I am mixing my drug metaphors here as Pynchon deliberately does. Nonetheless, in “Doper’s Greed” he goes from pills to mushrooms to coke to smoke. The “pink” in the first line the upper, methamphetamine, the “purple” the downer anesthetic. This attention to marijuana and cocaine also harkens back to the zoot-suited “Red” Malcolm X from earlier in the novel effectively enveloping 1920s drug and Chicago gangster culture into the picture as well. But before we broach the subject of drugs directly, Pynchon offers another subtler *Oz* connection which brings to for as well his interest in gangster films and mustaches.

Pynchon goes so far as to sneak in implied color references to *The Wizard of Oz* via John Dillinger whose presence in the novel relates both to the film gangster genre and Pynchon’s sub-trope, if you will, of mustaches. Dillinger is referenced several times in the novel as a continuing re-evocation of Chicago and the gangster film—the genre Lang would move toward along with the Western during his émigré Hollywood years.⁶³ As an example, “The Doper’s Greed” song quoted above is being performed by an American sailor with a guitar in a club of called The Chicago, the walls of which are adorned with “oversized photos of John Dillinger, alone or posed with his mother, his pals, his tommygun” (368-9). Weisenburger correctly notes specific links between Dillinger and cinema: his “Public Enemy Number One” status, which was exploited for the title of the Cagney film of 1931, and his death outside the Biograph Theater, Chicago July 22, 1934.⁶⁴ What he neglects to note is that the film playing the night of Dillinger’s

death was *Manhattan Melodrama* (W.S. Van Dyke, 1934) a gangster film starring the similarly mustached Clark Gable.⁶⁵ And this is a surprising annotative omission given Pynchon's/the narrator's remarks later in the novel:

John Dillinger, at the end, found a few seconds' strange mercy in the movie images that hadn't quite yet faded from his eyeballs—Clark Gable going off unregenerate to fry in the chair . . . even as bitchy little Melvin Purvis, staked outside the Biograph Theatre, lit up the fatal cigar and felt already between his lips the penis of official commendation. (516)

Pynchon clearly is alluding to *Manhattan Melodrama* and directly referencing Gable.⁶⁶ In fact, the film could not have been more apropos for Dillinger that night. With a plot taken all but directly from *The Public Enemy*, Gable plays Blackie Gallagher, a charismatic, ruthless, rags-to-riches killer who is pit against his childhood friend who has grown up on the other side of the law. Ultimately brought to justice by his diligent—Melvin Purvis-like, as Pynchon suggests—pursuer (William Powell), Blackie is sent to the electric chair.⁶⁷ With this, Pynchon reinforces his cinematic and intertextual use of Dillinger as both historical figure and cinematic influence. He reasserts the gangster film as a motif toward his themes of anti-authoritarianism and bureaucratic skepticism. As with all gangster films, our hero is the villain and we are asked to question the role of licit authority. The same is true of Slothrop as hero as he navigates through aliases and other permutations the licit and illicit in heroism.

In addition, Weisenburger, for all his exhaustive and often indispensable annotation of Pynchon's novel, misses the chromatological back story regarding

Dillinger's death which I argue functions to reaffirm Pynchon's *Oz* intertext as well as his entire intertextual conceit. That night, Dillinger's real life femme fatale was his date Ana "Anna Sage" Cumpanas, who was dubbed by the media



"The Woman in Red."⁶⁸ Through Anna we get

Oz's green and red evoked through yet another layer of film related intertext.

Thusly, *Oz* is sub-referenced, if you will, through color by way of Dillinger's death.

Dillinger is, therefore, not only connected to film history through his death outside the

Biograph and his occasional Clark Gable-style mustache, but by Pynchon's own arguably perverse association of his death with both *The Wizard of Oz* and *Dumbo* (as I mention above). Throughout all this, of course, Pynchon asks us to engage in the same sort of exhaustively intertextual accumulation of literary, historical, and pop-culture knowledge that he has taken up as the formal crux of his novel.

Furthermore, as a perpetuation of previous themes, Dillinger's facial grooming and Anna Sage's multiple-personae—prostitute, girlfriend, informant—like Frank Morgan's and Slothrop's multiple personae—Pynchon gestures again toward the instability of identity, for Slothrop in particular, whose sometime moustache seems to resist categorization: "Some think he is Don Ameche, others Oliver Hardy. . . . I'm that Errol Flynn" (381) Pynchon asks us to consider not only alternative reality, but also layered and intertextual truth. Analogous to Slothrop's mutable identity, Pynchon offers Dillinger the historical figure—going

under the alias Jimmy Lawrence in Chicago at the time of his death—along with his numerous cinematic incarnations, most importantly Cagney in *The Public Enemy* (William A. Wellman, 1931), Gable’s Blackie, and projecting ahead in film history, the first overt treatment of Dillinger on film in 1945’s *Dillinger* (Max Nosseck), released roughly in the historical moment of Slothrop. It should be noted as well that Dillinger was reengaged as a cinematic subject of generic interest during the New Hollywood Auteur with *Dillinger* (John Milieus, 1973) produced the same year as *Gravity’s Rainbow*’s publication, again reinforcing Pynchon kinship with the contemporaneous New Hollywood Auteur.

It stands to reason that a real-life character like Dillinger would appeal to the New Hollywood Auteurs both because of his association with classical film genre and his status as countercultural rebel, anti-hero. In this sense, Dillinger’s association with the criminal element of the prohibition era and all of its conspiracies, as well as his “Robin Hood” [played similarly mustached by both Douglas Fairbanks and Errol Flynn, both of whom Pynchon notes] mystique within the context of 1920s and 30s gangster culture, provides Pynchon an appropriate analogy for both the prohibition of marijuana and LSD during the counterculture era concurrent with the publication of *Gravity’s Rainbow* as well as the conspiratorial climate of the early 70s. Thusly, with Dillinger’s gangster legacy and *Oz* association established, Pynchon pursues the *Oz* thread as an apt referential touchstone for two of his essential countercultural components: conspiracy and drugs.

Dorothy becomes unavoidably, and by little fault of her own, involved the politics of *Oz*, a city governed by, of course, an all-powerful wizard who, for

Pynchon, embodies the authoritarian, arbitrary mid-century political zeitgeist. Upon returning to The Wizard, expecting him to make good on his promises to her and her friends, she discovers that The Wizard is not an omniscient, godly being, but instead an image manipulated merely by a man behind a curtain. Though not directly in reference to Dorothy's realization or the famous line "pay no attention to the man behind the curtain," the epigraph is in implicit accord with Pynchon's penchant for political conspiracy and paranoia. Like film, calculus, and Puritanism, paranoia is another means by which humans attempt to order and assign meaning to the world in which they live.⁶⁹ Like film directors or novelists we seek out and often construct formal continuity in an attempt to make sense of the otherwise chaotic reality before us—we paint with color, to continue the *Oz*/fantasy, *Kong*/reality chromatological analogy, as a means of glossing over the black and white. Although the hope that there is a "man behind the curtain" provides structure to an otherwise chaotic existence, this hope is, of course, nonetheless a human construct. Pynchon is being characteristically playful here—*Oz* is a film (film being by its nature an illusory construction of motion, of reality) that thematizes conspiracy (conspiracy a means by which humans apply order to intangible reality, construct reality).

In tandem with the reality verses illusion trope, *Oz* also provides Pynchon a cinematic analogue for his Sodium Amytal. In *Oz*, of course, a field of red poppies delays Dorothy and her fellow travelers momentarily from reaching the Emerald City. Although Dorothy doesn't necessarily "trip" nor have a hallucinogenic vision stands to reason given that she is currently living within a larger dream. Interestingly, given Pynchon's obvious interest in the drug culture

his own era, it should be noted that the opiate poppies put Dorothy to sleep—which recalls her actual state within reality and, within the Pynchonian context, underscores the nebulous relationship between reality and illusion—and only the snow, the cocaine stimulate in this analogy, as provided by Witch Glenda cancels out its debilitating properties enabling Dorothy to awake and get after her goals again. For Pynchon’s part, the hallucinogenic drugs are a recurring feature in his fiction of the 1960s and early 70s—an era when hallucinogenic drugs first entered and then became a prevalent part of American popular, social, and media (film) culture. The drug counterculture of the 1960s and its connection to both the popular culture and political activism of the era significantly influence Pynchon’s work. It is this same countercultural milieu that coincides with the rise to the American New Wave and concurrent subversive attitudes toward social norms and social institutions.⁷⁰

However, hallucinogenic drugs are not simply a narrative feature of *Gravity’s Rainbow*, but also influence much of its form. In the novel, Slothrop experiences the hallucinatory effects of heavy intravenous doses of Sodium Amytal during which the color red serves not only as a foreshadowing or reminder of *Oz*’s presence in the novel, but is almost often associated with drugs as with the aforementioned “Panama Red.” Early in the novel in Reel 1: Scene 10, Pynchon presents a scene involving a young Malcolm X, Boston’s Roseland Ballroom men’s room, and Slothrop, under the effects of Sodium Amytal, working himself head-first into a toilet chasing his lost harmonica, with his “virgin asshole” (65) vulnerable to the “Negroes around” (64).⁷¹ As presented

here, these seem like outtakes from an acid trip gone horribly wrong. And yet *in* context these outtakes play out in even *more* hallucinogenic fashion:

Follow? Red, the Negro shoeshine boy, waits by his dusty leather seat. The Negroes all over wasted Roxbury wait.
Follow? “Cherokee” comes wailing up from the dance floor below . . . the thousand set of feet where moving rose lights suggest not pale Harvard boys and their dates, but a lotta dolled-up redskins. . . . “Yardbird” Parker is finding out how he can use the notes at the higher ends of these very chords to break up the melody into *have* mercy what is it a fucking machine gun or something man he must be out of his *mind*
32nd notes demisemiquavers say it very (demisemiquaver)
fast in a Munchkin voice if you can dig *that*. (63)

These images are, as Wiesenberger states, the “hypnotic vision” (51) of a Sodium Amytal affected Slothrop while he was serving as a testing subject at St. Veronica’s Hospital in London prior to American involvement in the war. I would offer that “hypnotic vision” is much too mild given the scene’s racial and sexual paranoia and nightmarish scatology. Shit notwithstanding, the immediately pertinent items of note here are Malcolm’s youthful nickname “Red,” the Jazz/Beat conflation, and Pynchon’s suggestion that we say “demisemiquaver” like a Munchkin. Again, as with *Doper’s Greed* above, I will begin at the end and work via *hysteron proteron*, if you will.

Pynchon’s use of “a Munchkin voice” foreshadows both his use of *Oz* and Osbie’s hallucinogenic western *Doper’s Greed*. In the film, after Glenda, the first

people Dorothy meets upon her “trip” into the fantasy world of Oz are the munchkins with their characteristic high-pitched, nasal voices. Of course, the word Munchkin is solely associated with *Oz* and also understandably calls to mind cinematic midgets. In this sense, when Pynchon asks us say “demisemiquaver” like a Munchkin, he effectively piggybacks on *Oz* using Munchkins as both a sort of hallucinogenic landmark and a gesture toward *Doper’s Greed* and its own hallucinatory cinema. In *Doper’s Greed*, as discussed



Earles in *Freaks* and Oz

above, Rathbone and Sakall ride into town only to be confronted by a sheriff played by “the Midget who played the

lead in *Freaks*,” Harry Earles, who, as discussed above was a member of the Lollypop Guild in *Oz*, and he had participated in greeting Dorothy. What follows this confrontation with sheriff Harry Earles, or rather Sheriff Midget from *Freaks*, is an hour and a half of conversation between Rathbone and Sakall debating whether or not “the Midget” is real or a hallucination. Furthermore, as a means of tying Pynchon’s Munchkin reference back to the scene at hand, it should be noted that Slothrop’s Sodium Amytal induced episode at the Roseland, according to Weisenberger’s chronology, takes place in December of 1939, which would place it three months after the release of *The Wizard of Oz*. (55)

In Reel 1: Scene 10 Pynchon also employs the sort of syntax of the stream-of-consciousness beatnik weed and heroin influenced jazz bebop of the Roseland era in question as a means of reinforcing his own associational stream-of-

consciousness style. Although the above quote hints at this in its use of jazz lingo and a sort of bemused rambling on Charlie Parker's use of time signature, the subsequent whole of the scene rushes forward with seemingly no regard for the orientation of the audience: From "Red" Malcolm, the song "Cherokee," which promulgates "white crimes" (I will come back to color), the toilet and the anus as ominous scatological entryways, sexual lubricant "chevroning the hairs along like topo lines up a river valley," (64) river valley beginning the collapse of the jazz/gangster context into a western one as Slothrop works his way into and out of the shit at the end of the toilet and onto a desolate street at either "dawn or twilight" (67). Pynchon is sort of riffing in this scene like a jazz musician. He just follows his own—or rather Slothrop's Sodium Amytal induced—associational stream-of-consciousness. In this sense, drugs affect Pynchon's form. This is not to suggest one way or the other about Pynchon's drug use, but rather that he, befitting his cinematographic era, makes formal use of drugs—the clearest analog for this would be Hopper's New Orleans cemetery acid-trip sequence in *Easy Rider* for which he employs jump-cuts, lens flares, and a fishbowl lens as a means of expressionistically representing the character's drug-induced psychological state.⁷²

Also demonstrative of this associational style in this scene is his use of the color red which works both to foreshadow *Oz* and establish Pynchon's use of red as a drug and countercultural trope. The use of red in this scene progresses as follows, again in accordance with Slothrop's drug-induced associational logic: First initiated by way of Roseland shoeshine boy Malcolm Little's hair and corresponding nickname, it quickly moves to the song "Cherokee," a song about

white on “red” racial injustice which Parker is playing in the club downstairs. Pynchon then paints a drunken portrait of Harvard boys, who we can assume are requisitely dressed in red, dancing in the “rose lights” and therefore looking less than white and instead like “dolled-up redskins” (63) as the meaning of the song and the ironic lighting is lost on them. In effect, Pynchon connects the color red here to both drug culture—by way of *Oz*’s poppies and Roseland jazz—and centuries of racial otherness and white injustice from the black and American Indian perspectives. Africans displaced to this land and American Indians from it. In this Pynchon suggests red as a color of counterculture and subversive attitudes toward the established power structure and elite.

As the scene and Slothrop’s trip progresses the red metaphor jumps race to film genre to ideology as demonstrative of Slothrop’s hallucinatory, and Pynchon’s literary, logic. Segueing from the jazz/gangster milieu to a western one, Pynchon recalls Malcolm’s “Red Devil Lye” and introduces a change of musical accompaniment, from 1930s jazz to 1930s western genre Americana as in the harmonica—which of course is the very instrument Slothrop followed down the toilet in the first place—accompanied song “Red River Valley” (notice the beatnik syntax giving way to that of the rural American west): “Down this toilet they say you are flushin’—/Won’tchew light up and set fer a spell?/Cause the toilet it ain’t going nowhar,/And the shit hereabouts shore is swell” (68). With this little ditty, Slothrop is now in a western with Crutchfield, the westwardman, with his bandanas, “of the regulation magenta and green,” (69) and talk of his impending showdown with Toro Rojo (“Red Bull”). However, though Pynchon has brought Slothrop into a film genre almost exclusively associated with the

Nineteenth Century American frontier, he makes a specific point to ground the genre in its Twentieth Century context, its classical period being that of the 1930s as contemporaneous to the original gangster films, the Roseland, and the ideological paranoia of the immediate prewar moment:

Oh, it's the Red River all right, if you don't believe it just ask
that "Red," wherever he may be (tell you what Red means,
FDR's little asshole buddies, they want to take it all away,
women all have hair on their legs, give it all to them or they'll
blow it up round black iron in the middle of the night
bleeding over Polacks in gray caps okies niggers yeh niggers
especially . . .) (68)

Here Pynchon's conflation of the drug-addled associational meanings of the color red comes to an ideological and historically temporal head. In accord with his ongoing stream-of-consciousness structure, red becomes momentarily emblematic of a different sort of subversive counterculture, that of leftist ideology, or rather the reactionary accusation toward such ideology, particularly of the era of the film genres previously established. While further stressing racial paranoia and now reactionary politics—even anachronistically toward 1970's era feminism which follows suit when coupled with "Nixon's" theatrical demise at the end of the novel—Pynchon's chromatological use of red permeates Slothrop's Roseland to western "trip" and serves Pynchon as an associational marker for his otherwise bewildering prose.

For Altman's part, I would argue that his use of drugs in *M*A*S*H* not only aligns the film with the contemporaneous counterculture stateside—as Pynchon does with psychedelia—but calls attention to the increasing use of



Standard-issue/Standard Rations

dangerous drugs, opium and heroin in particular, by soldiers serving in the Vietnam War as a means of escaping the burdens of their ongoing realities. Anesthetics, Papst Blue Ribbon, and martinis aside, drugs don't seem to have much to do on the surface of *M*A*S*H* until you remember the "black capsule" given to Painless, the joints smoked

during the climactic football game, the injected sedation of an opposing football player during the game, the gassing of military authorities in Japan—all of which are played on the surface for laughs—and Ho-Jon's use of speed as a means of avoiding military service—which marks a decidedly more serious realization. Given these instances, *M*A*S*H* becomes something much more of a counterculture drug film. In accordance with its larger countercultural scope, the film's attitude toward drug use is nonchalant at best and—as opposed to Pynchon and with the exception of marijuana—decidedly not-psychedelic and more directed toward depressants and amphetamines, the latter long a mainstay of wartime recreational distraction, the former famously administered to combat fatigue during World War Two and subsequent wars. Obviously there would be alcohol in the Korean theater, but a personal martini still within "The Swamp"

barracks demonstrates an absolute sanction of alcohol as an escape for servicemen. The fact that servicemen/football players⁷³ openly smoking marijuana⁷⁴ on the bench suggests something of the film's war allegory—that is to say that the open use of pot effectually displaces Korea onto Vietnam. However, the seemingly unconscionable use of more dangerous drugs such as speed and, in extracurricular fashion, ether and sedatives, amounts (to parody the film descriptions over the loudspeaker) to a subversive commentary on wartime realities on the ground, in the bunker and in the barracks. The implication is that drug use has become so pervasive as to be a commonplace and functioning cog in the wheel of war, particularly by the time of the latter years of the Vietnam War. However, Altman is working toward much larger targets than drugs which constitute just one facet of a larger countercultural, anti-establishment project wherein equal irreverence is applied to, for example, the question of obscenity, bureaucracy and military authority, religion and extramarital, casual sex.

A jugular spurting blood or tits and a huge dick? One of Altman's most pointed formal elements of satire and commentary in *M*A*S*H* is his confrontation of the audience with the question of what is obscene given the context of war. By juxtaposing graphic operating room scenes with broad comedy and anatomical humor, Altman effectively parallels the deliberately crude nature of some of the film's humor, the moments of "obscenity"—*M*A*S*H* offers female nudity, lore of Painless's huge dick, extramarital sex, and was the first R-rated film to include the word "fuck"—with the obscene, crude, and gory nature of war not often depicted on screen. The first of these juxtapositions cuts from a nudie-mag and the prospect of Ho-Jon engaging in self-pleasure directly

after his bible reading with Burns (more on religious irreverence and Burns' puritanical hypocrisy below), to a slow tracking shot along the operating theater revealing the "meatball surgery" and white scrubs blood splattered beneath



glaring lights. And later, while amputating a leg, the sounds of the hacksaw shaving bone can be heard,

and Hawkeye mundanely asks the nurse for a clamp . . . to scratch his nose. This sort of nonchalance toward violence calls into question Hollywood's acceptance of violent imagery and uneasiness with sexual imagery. Altman suggests that amongst tits and dicks and the word "fuck," the true obscenity of warfare are the soldiers on the operating table, the tubes running in and out of them, the old blood and new blood needed for resuscitation, the sutures, sowing of flesh and the administrative decisions that got them there. In effect, Altman is asking the audience and possibly the censorial bodies to reevaluate their criteria on obscenity given the contemporary context of Vietnam. Likewise, Pynchon incorporates slapstick, scatology, and sadomasochism amongst the bombings and warfare as a means of pulling back the curtain on traditional narrative content of the war novel. Both embrace countercultural content as a means of satirizing the American war effort during the era of Vietnam.

Further illustration of the Pynchon/Altman synchronization is found in Altman's extension of his disposition on drugs and obscenity to a healthy

disrespect for military bureaucracy and authority. After the opening credits, a brief introduction to the Colonel Henry Blake to Corporal “Radar” O’Reilly dynamic—which is essentially that Radar presupposes, comprehends ahead of time, or intuits, or something, all of commanding officer Blake’s orders rendering the fly fishing Blake benevolently oblivious and irrelevant—and a studio mandated “disclaimer” of sorts which makes explicit Korea as the location for the film, Altman offers two epigraphs to *M*A*S*H*, both of which introduce his irreverence toward military authority and American warfare. Both appear on screen as Hawkeye exits the Officer’s Latrine. The first from General Douglas MacArthur reads: “I have just left your fighting sons in Korea. They have done their best there, and I can report to you without reservation that they are splendid in every way. I now close my military career and just fade away. An old soldier who tried to do his duty as God gave him the light to see that duty. Good-bye.” This is immediately followed by Dwight D. Eisenhower’s⁷⁵ statement: “I will go to Korea”—a reference to his 1952 speech “I Shall Go to Korea,” wherein he, more forcefully than MacArthur, invokes God in the form of calling American involvement in Korea a crusade. The music, composed by Johnny Mandel, playing under these epigraphs is something of the rallying Hollywood war film fare and actually opens, I would suggest, with a few bars that mimic the 20th Century Fox theme. This use of music underscores Altman’s antiauthoritarian attitude toward military officials and protocol. The implication is that these statements, by two of the most lauded American military figures of the Twentieth Century, demonstrate an administrative aloofness and detachment from the realities on the ground so profound as to be both a common understanding—

certainly by Vietnam—and a thing of assuaging ridicule amongst the active soldiers. But again, more importantly it establishes Altman’s antiauthoritarian trope.⁷⁶

Subsequently and via stolen jeep, Hawkeye and Duke arrive at the 4077 where they meet the film’s emblem of military and religious protocol Major Frank Burns, who serves Altman as a sort of military (and Christian)⁷⁷ establishment



golem and point of counterculture catharsis in that he is ultimately sent to the fire (Burns burns) as a sort of ideological purging.⁷⁸ From the moment they meet Burns until he

is carted off in a straightjacket, Hawkeye and Duke and Trapper have his number. He is a true believer and a hypocrite and they make it their business to ridicule and oust him by any means necessary—first by their displacing of his Bible with porn as mentioned above, and later by their mocking of his prayers—because as they see it, his zealotry, religious and military, is to the detriment of a functioning hospital. Consistent with this point, Burns is shown to be a model military surgeon only on paper. His incompetence and unprofessionalism in the actual theater is brought to bear when he unnecessarily blames an orderly for the death of a patient. Trapper witnesses this, encounters Burns afterward, and punches him in the jaw. At this exact moment, Blake walks in as he is giving the newly deployed O’Houlihan a tour of the camp.⁷⁹ Blake, in a feeble attempt to present himself as an authority figure in front of his new head of nursing, calls for

Trapper's arrest. Trapper responds dismissively with, "Henry, are you kidding," and brushes past the soldier ordered to arrest and confine him to his quarters with "come on, cut it out." Trapper unequivocally dismisses Blake's military authority, by addressing him by his first name if nothing else, and the military protocol he tries to enforce. In other words, the model of military medical protocol is revealed as incompetent, even cruel, and the antiestablishment element (Trapper) not only calls him on it but does so by violating military protocol on two fronts: he punches him as retribution for his misdeed(s) and disregards in kind any administrative repercussions for such an action.⁸⁰

Couched in Altman's treatment of Burns as the ham, the butt of an antiestablishment motif is a larger religious and sexual irreverence that, beyond the hypocritical doings of Frank Burns, provides Altman the platform upon which to stage a meticulously constructed "Last Supper" set-piece as the climax, pun intended, of subversive religious and sexual satire. Picking up from and following through with the theme of religious and sexual hypocrisy, Altman appropriately begins Captain "Painless" Waldowski's "Last Supper" narrative arc immediately after Burns' ousting from the camp in a straitjacket. Painless, the camp dental surgeon, prolific lover, and renowned owner of a huge penis, experiences an identity crisis of sorts in the form of an occasion of impotence which he mistakenly deciphers as a sign of homosexuality and he therefore decides to end his life rather than to live with such personal, sexual disappointment. Painless expresses his intentions to a flummoxed Hawkeye, who, it should be noted, is called as counsel specifically as an alternative to religious counsel. In fact the camp's benevolently inept religious proprietor Father John "Dago Red" Mulcahy,

whose clerical ineffectualness in the theater of war—“There are some things that absolution just . . . uh . . . well, . . .”—is brought to bear in this circumstance, himself enlists Hawkeye’s services. Despite Hawkeye’s attempt to console him with the standard truth that “it happens,” Painless reasons that he is latent homosexual and that suicide is the only answer, in effect registering homosexuality above suicide on the mortal sin-o-meter. Later, when Painless seeks the advice from Hawkeye and his clique on the best way to commit suicide, Trapper trumps all suggestions with the fictitious “black capsule”—playing along with this ruse the rest of the clique fall in. Cut to Hawkeye and Dago Red as Painless’ “suicide” is being elaborately staged:

DAGO RED: “Uh, Hawkeye I really must, I really should, speak with the military’s vicar’s office. You see I cannot give absolution to a man who is about to commit suicide, it’s a mortal sin . . .

HAWKEYE: Look Dago, he is not committing suicide, he is only *intending* to commit suicide so you are not dealing with an act but an *intention*. And if it works, if what we’re doing works, he will not commit suicide so therefore you are preventing a mortal sin, okay?

DAGO RED: Well I should check on it . . .

HAWKEYE: You go check on it . . .

Having assuaged Dago Red, Hawkeye then rushes to his place in their careful recreation of Leonardo Da Vinci’s “Last Supper,” which situates him as James to Painless’ Jesus—the glaring operating light over his head serving as a halo—

Trapper as Thomas, and Duke as John (or Mary depending on your particular *Da Vinci Code* inclinations). And it is from this set piece that Altman makes his most religiously and sexually subversive gesture.

For Altman, Christ's volunteering for certain death is akin to the American soldier—enlisted and drafted—whose service could be construed blasphemously as suicide, though Christ is heralded and the other taken for granted. As



Hawkeye breaks bread he states it very clearly: “Nobody ordered Walt to go on this mission. He

volunteered for certain death. That’s what we award our highest honors for. That’s what being a soldier is all about.” If we take the Christ analogy at face value here, Christ was of course ordered by God to volunteer for certain death and the American soldier, by Altman’s satirical analogy, was thusly ordered by the American government. Given the Christian rhetoric—the crusading Eisenhower as implied by the film’s second epigraph—used by the American government during times of war, Altman argues that that same rhetoric need not simply be a lens through which we are meant to perceive the reality of American involvement in war, but can be a mirror upon which we can reflect and dispel piousness and insincerity and hypocrisy and possibly depict something more truthful about war. In other words, if “They,” the faceless bureaucracy insists on

employing Christ as a justification for international bloodshed, Altman will mock in kind that same Christ as a sort of historical and ideological corrective.⁸¹

Extending this religious satire to libidinal freedom as a countercultural marker of the era, Altman resurrects Painless through casual, extramarital sex and gestures back to self-conscious form earlier discussed.⁸² After taking the “black capsule” sleeping pill and being hoisted in a wooden coffin by his disciples, Painless’ body is taken to his “tomb”—which looks more like a movie version of a New Orleans brothel, a silken bed lit in red—to await his sexual resurrection. Enlisted for the task is the appropriately, or inappropriately, depending on your religious favor, named Maria with whom Hawkeye has been having an affair, and who is leaving for home the next day. Hawkeye coaxes her into bed with Painless as an act of mercy to restore his manhood and in effect save his life. Reluctant at first, Maria agrees once she sees what awaits her under the sheets. The following morning, Hawkeye checks on Painless who is finishing breakfast in the mess hall and acts as if none of it had transpired at all: “Slept like a doll last night. . . .” Cut then to Maria in a helicopter via zoom lens with a blissful trancelike look on her face. As the helicopter rises, in another of Altman’s self-reflexive gestures, Maria looks directly into the camera and smiles, her eyes and smile saying something like “can you believe we just did a whole last supper suicide huge dick joke?” Here Altman collapses the New Hollywood Auteur countercultural ideology and the New Hollywood Auteur aesthetic. Maria’s obtrusive violation of the forth wall not only winks at the audience in a manner that suggests a dirty joke, but rewards the audience for being movie savvy, for recognizing the potential subversiveness of a self-awareness of film form.

Therefore what Altman provides us, as a key functionary, if you will, of The New Hollywood Auteur era, is a context both stylistic and thematic within which to situate Pynchon's novel historically and stylistically. More than simply referential fetish, although it is that as well, film works as a sort of organizing principle for Pynchon's literature. And as a result *Gravity's Rainbow's* use of film raises questions about the effectiveness of the literary rubrics of modernist or postmodernist. If we accept that there is actually a discernible difference between the two—that is, besides the historically convenient nuclear “Mason-Dixon” line of 1945—then that difference might amount to a belief in an achievable coherent wholeness of literary form on the modernist side versus a hesitation to such a potentiality, or an outright resistance to it, on the postmodernist side (at least as the traditional talking-point distinction would have us believe).⁸³

Pynchon's endlessly circulating tropes—be they astrological, atomological, resurrectional, Teutonic—appear to coalesce, often in conjunction with his cinematic design, which would lend itself, in one understanding of it as such, to a modernist wholeness. Yet the grotesquery through which the novel attempts to unravel the images of war and the creation of images of war and the creations of images of anything, for that matter, suggests a reluctance to believe in images at all, suggests that all images are self-conscious and self-negating a such, which ostensibly lends itself to the postmodern. Furthermore, *Gravity's Rainbow* is very much a postwar *Ulysses* not merely for its comparably challenging size and shape, but even in terms of the use of film, as I found to my initial dismay and subsequent delight, because although Joyce's implementation of film is

significantly more indirect or sublimated, it is there nonetheless, thereby dispelling any preconception (along with works by John Dos Passos, Nathanael West, and others) that the literary use of film is somehow solely the milieu of postmodernism. Therefore these categorizations do not suffice in situating *Gravity's Rainbow* into a literary tradition, nor will any established theoretical or generic approach (psychoanalytic, Marxist, satire, etc.) provide appropriate classification. Thusly I turn to Pynchon's filmic intertext and offer that *Gravity's Rainbow* is a better fit historically for the cinema of the American New Wave than any literary category, in that this loosely defined movement embraces both of these centennial impulses, the modernist and the postmodernist, and does so in an appropriately self-conscious and yet un-canonical way, as does Pynchon. In a way, the dilemma of historicizing and navigating personal identity within an increasingly dehumanizing cultural context is exactly the subject of *Gravity's Rainbow* and Pynchon uses the cinematic tropes of his contemporaneous moment as a means of illustrating, facilitating his literary project.

CHAPTER THREE

Dogeaters and the Vernacular of Melodrama



All That Heaven Allows



Fear Eats Soul

“He would see anything: comedies, Tagalog melodramas, westerns, musicals, and religious extravaganzas like *The Ten Commandments*, which played to packed houses in Manila for what seemed an eternity.”

“I shut my eyes and the movie projector goes off in my head.”

“The mirror is the imitation of life. What is interesting about a mirror is it does not show yourself as you are, it shows you your own opposite”—Douglas Sirk

Although considerably more compact than *Gravity's Rainbow*, Jessica Hagedorn's *Dogeaters* is, in its own way, just as expansive, episodic, disjunctive, and cinematic. Her novel has been described as "discontinuous" and "collage" (Lowe 161), as "historical pastiche" (Mendible 290), and as "cinematext" and "quasi-surrealistic montage" (San Juan 8, 11). And although her use of cinema as a literary intertext is not as pervasive or encyclopedic as Pynchon's, it is nonetheless made essential to her narrative design in the first chapter, the first passage, of *Dogeaters*. Immediately and without ceremony she ushers the reader into an air-conditioned seat in the darkness and voyeuristic escape of the Avenue Theater in Manila with its smells of flower, sugar, cigarette, and sweat. While Pynchon's novel abstractly, surrealistically ends in a movie theater, *Dogeaters* literally begins in one—in this case, a theater exhibiting a very specific film, exemplary of a very specific cinematic mode that will bookend the novel in its penultimate chapter. The novel opens thusly:

1956. The air-conditioned darkness of the Avenue Theater smells of flowery pomade, sugary chocolates, cigarette smoke, and sweat. *All That Heaven Allows* is playing in Cinemascope and Technicolor. Starring Jane Wyman as the rich widow, Rock Hudson as the handsome young gardener, and Agnes Morehead as Jane's faithful friend, the movie also features the unsung starlet Gloria Talbott as Jane's spoiled teenage daughter, a feisty brunette with catlike features and an innocent ponytail. (3)

With this Hagedorn introduces *Dogeaters* as a cinematic novel, a literature reliant on and employing to great degree film as a part of its narrative design. Hagedorn chooses not Shakespearean reference—Lady Macbeth’s “unsex me here,” for instance, or maybe *Twelfth Night* or *The Tempest*—nor another literary intertext to provide thematic weight to her study of gender politics, class disenfranchisement, and postcolonial search for personal identification, but cinema, the ubiquitous Twentieth Century artistic commodity. Film is the first and central intertextual motif of her novel.

Hagedorn’s meticulous attention to the details of her cinematic timeline is foregrounded in this opening passage as well. *All that Heaven Allows* was released in the United States in 1955 and therefore it is reasonable to assume that the film would not play in “Manila’s ‘Foremost! First-Run! English Movies Only!’ theater” until 1956 (3). As a western export, *All that Heaven Allows* exemplifies both the economic intrusion of Hollywood and United States foreign policy in the neocolonialist era. But also detailed here are the film’s stars, co-stars and, as Rio continues her remembrances, even the film’s visual style and generic tone as a “corny love story.” The surface material and spectacle of Hollywood cinema is valued as such, in spite of its possibly more insidious ramifications. However, these problematic aspects are less striking than the glaring omission of Douglas Sirk.

As chapter one continues, Hagedorn further establishes the presence of Hollywood cinema in the lives of her characters and her literary design. As Rio and Pucha bandy discussion of “Jane Wyman’s soft putty face” and “Rock Hudson’s singular pitying expression,” Kim Novak, Ava Gardner, Debbie

Reynolds, Rita Hayworth, and Elizabeth Taylor and Montgomery Clift in *A Place in the Sun* (George Stevens, 1951) find their way into the conversation and cinematic landscape as well, primarily as childhood touchstones in the form of



A Place in the Sun

dream-like representations of American culture. Hagedorn uses all these cinematic details both as a means of historical context and, for Rio, a method for identification and remembrance. Sans something historically, even familial, substantial to cling to, Rio finds in

Hollywood a *mélange* of formative touchstones.

Film was, in fact, one of the few conceptual certainties Hagedorn had when starting *Dogeaters*. When asked about any self-consciously constructed narrative perspective for the novel, Hagedorn comments, in a 1995 interview for *The Missouri Review*, that although she planned very little of the novel beforehand, she “knew it was going to open in a movie theater” (103). In the same interview she goes on to assess her literary use of film thusly:

For other people perhaps it was something else that brought them to certain conclusions about their lives and their identities. But, for me, film was truly one of the more powerful sources of entertainment, enlightenment, disillusionment. . . . In the writing of *Dogeaters*, especially,

the movies were there because they were absolutely part of
the fabric of my memory. (108)

For Hagedorn, film offers both historical context and narrative perspective for *Dogeaters*. This use of film as a muse for her literature recurs in much of her



Still from Hagedorn's Film Trailer for *Toxicology*

subsequent work. Her novel *The Gangster of Love* (1996), for example, employs Elvis Presley in *Blue Hawaii* (Norman Taurog, 1961), Samuel Fuller's *Pickup on South Street* (1953), Marlon

Brando in *The Wild One* (Laslo Benedek, 1953), Marlene Dietrich, and Greta Garbo as sources of character identification.⁸⁴ *Dream Jungle* (2003) includes an egomaniacal film director Tony Pierce and his *Apocalypse Now*-like Hollywood production of the Vietnam War epic *Napalm Sunset*. And for *Toxicology* (2011), Hagedorn not only opens with the tragic death of a young Hollywood actor before centering the novel around two women, one of whom is a filmmaker, but also co-directed, with Angel Velasco Shaw, a short experimental film to serve as a trailer for the novel. In addition, Hagedorn transposed *Dogeaters* into a play in 1998 which, as I will discuss below, further pursues the cinematic elements of her source novel.

Although some critical attention has been given to Hagedorn's use of film in *Dogeaters*, most notably by Myra Mendible, Lisa Lowe, and Rachel C. Lee—whose arguments I will outline below—the reading of Sirk's role in the structure

of the novel has not been thoroughly explored. This is due in great part to the fact, I suggest, that each of these critics miss the other side of Hagedorn's Sirkian intertext: Rainer Werner Fassbinder. It is on this point that the novel lends itself to a reexamination of its use of film. By making Fassbinder's role in the structure of the novel clear we can see that Hagedorn not only employs the form and politics of melodrama in a more complicated manner than has been argued, she effectually uses these two filmmakers as means of providing a historical chronology for her otherwise nonlinear narrative.

The basic line of critical thought concerning Hagedorn's use of cinema in *Dogeaters* centers on its relationship to historical and personal representations of gender, racial, and national identity in a colonial and neocolonial context. As Myra Mendible writes in "Desiring Images: Representation and Spectacle in *Dogeaters*," the novel

reflects the conditions of its own production by incorporating postmodern features such as disruptive intertextual dialogues, temporal and causal dislocations, unreliable subjectivities, and historical pastiche. The story unfolds through an array of speakers, various textual fragments, and seemingly disconnected scenarios and events. (290)

In other words, and not entirely unlike Pynchon, the novel unfolds as a sort of filmic montage. And this montage, as Mendible would have it, "dramatizes the confusion and complexity of a nation poised in the balance of postmodern and postcolonial conditions" (290). The cinematic style and content of *Dogeaters* is a

means by which Hagedorn attempts, Mendible argues, to represent “a kaleidoscopic view of a Philippine society shaped by radically, conflicting social, political, and economic interests”—a society for which “Mass-produced images provide the stuff of collective dreams, cultural memories, and political control” (290).

In a similarly postmodern and equally provocative reading of Hagedorn, Lisa Lowe argues that cinema is both a literal example as well as apt metaphor for colonialist—and by extension neocolonialist—means of personal and societal repression. In “Memories of Colonial Modernity” she writes that

In a sense, *Dogeaters* thematizes how U.S. colonial rule in the Philippines involves not merely brutal military occupation and economic exploitation, but is enacted as well through the installation of popular culture and the adoption of its roles, desires, and narratives of resolution. Hollywood film and Filipino radio melodrama are key media through which Filipinos identify and disidentify with the romantic narratives of the colonial genre; within this, the ritual performance of masculinity and femininity are thematized as forms of colonial subjugation. (163)

Dogeaters certainly lends itself first and foremost to such postmodern and postcolonial readings and although I tend to agree with Lowe’s assessment here it misses one significant complicating factor: Douglas Sirk. Lowe conflates Hollywood film and Filipino radio melodrama, the hugely popular *Love Letters* program in the novel, and although that might generally be reasonable,

Hagedorn's choice of Sirk's *All that Heaven Allows* specifically undermines that equation particularly when we consider Fassbinder's transposition of Sirk's film for *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* (1974) and Laura Mulvey's work on the relationship between the two filmmakers in her article "Sirk and Fassbinder."

Mendible also misses pursuing this distinction or differentiation between Sirkian melodrama and that of Tagalog radio and film. She writes that in addition to Rio's experiencing of "life as a series of film clips," (293) her "narrative is also interrupted by passages that encapsulate the latest episodes in the week's radio drama. These episodes invariably appeal to the impoverished female listener who defer their own misery by vicariously experiencing the misfortunes of the gentle heroine" (295). Rio's father says, as Mendible cites, that *Love Letters* "appeals to the lowest common denominator" (11) and Rio explains that "Just like our Tagalog movies, the serial is heavy with pure love, blood debts, luscious revenge" (12). But this sort of melodrama, however cathartic and subjugating it may be is not, I would argue, Sirkian, because it offers little in terms of counterpoint or social commentary.

Likewise working within the postcolonial, gender studies rubric, Rachel C. Lee offers a decidedly more nuanced, if ambivalent, treatment of Hagedorn's use of film and yet not only also neglects the importance of Sirk, but seemingly misses the Fassbinder connection entirely. Her essay, "Transversing Nationalism, Gender, Sexuality in Jessica Hagedorn's *Dogeaters*," aptly uses the opening *All That Heaven Allows* passage as a jumping off point for her argument defending Hagedorn against the criticism that she "misrepresents Manila by overemphasizing a colonized mentality" (73). She writes that, "By illustrating the

seductiveness of American film, Hagedorn challenges her audience to sympathize with the journey toward political ‘awakening’ and the colonial mentality that both precedes and coexists with it” (73). This is an entirely reasonable, yet I think incomplete reading of film in the novel. Lee—like Mendible and Lowe—neglects to take up Sirk’s film specifically, instead simply treating it as an ipso facto representative of “American film.” However, if Hagedorn simply wanted to evoke the emotionally captivating and generically manipulative Hollywood cinema of the 1950s era she could have chosen another film—*The Last Time I Saw Paris* (Richard Brooks, 1955) or *Rhapsody* (Charles Vidor, 1954), for example. Instead she chooses Sirk’s *All That Heaven Allows*. Although the film was derided as vapid entertainment by many critics at the time, it nonetheless experienced a high profile critical revival during the 1970s thanks to critics like Mulvey, Thomas Elsaesser, and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, as well as filmmakers like, most famously, Fassbinder whose 1974 film *Fear Eats the Soul* is in part a remake of *All That Heaven Allows*. It is safe to assume that Hagedorn is aware of the critical evolution of Sirk and his melodrama given both her interest in issues of cinema’s relationship to gender politics and her choosing Sirk, but especially in including the character of Rainer in the novel as well. And this brings us back to Hagedorn’s opening passage and the omission of Sirk’s name in the first place, as well as her denotation of Fassbinder only as Rainer.

On the one hand, the omission of Sirk is reasonable given the fact that our narrator for the opening chapter is Rio rather than the third person narrator located elsewhere in the novel. One would not necessarily expect an average moviegoer, even and avid one, to necessarily take notice of a film’s director.

However, I would argue that this omission on the part of Hagedorn more significantly establishes a very specific intertextual use of film in her novel. In effect, Sirk becomes the unmentioned intertextual elephant in the room which can be coupled with the fact that Rio, who despite being enamored by the surface image of cinema and its stars, nonetheless wants to “make movies” not act in them as Joey and Romeo aspire to (241). Rio is subject to the image and yet is intuitively drawn to something beneath that image. With this Hagedorn calls attention to the meaning beneath the surface image, to the artistry that creates the ironic images of Sirkian melodrama.

The importance of the Sirkian intertext becomes particularly clear after we are introduced to the German director Rainer, in town for the First Annual Manila International Film Festival⁸⁵—whose full name Hagedorn withholds along with any mention of his film titles—later in the novel. Rainer, though Lee and others miss it, or neglect to follow the referential linkage, is Rainer Werner Fassbinder. This is validated later by Hagedorn’s own theatrical adaptation of the novel—which I will come back to—in which Rainer’s character is designated with humorous specificity: “Rainer Fassbinder—German filmmaker, age thirty-seven years old.” In effect, by *not* explicitly delineating Sirk and Rainer Werner Fassbinder Hagedorn ironically singles them out as key against a backdrop of otherwise very specific cinematic representations in the novel.

Lee, for all her astute treatment of film in the novel, even citing Laura Mulvey’s work on the “male gaze” as a part of her analysis, seems to miss the Fassbinder and the Sirk/Fassbinder connection altogether and it is on this point that I would suggest a closer reading of both filmmakers. I argue that Sirk and

Fassbinder, particularly in conjunction with the work of Thomas Elsaesser and Laura Mulvey, hold a unique intertextual value for Hagedorn that is overlooked by critics—one of social critique and empowerment rather than representational neocolonialist subjugation. To this end, I propose a close reading of *All That Heaven Allows* and *Fear Eats the Soul* as they relate stylistically and thematically to *Dogeaters*. Like Pynchon’s invocation of German Expressionism, by way of Fritz Lang and *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, etc., Hagedorn asks us to bring Sirk and Fassbinder work to bear on the form of her novel. For Hagedorn, Sirk and Fassbinder exemplify the use of melodrama as a mode of cinema that primarily uses *mise-en-scène*—for my purposes here particularly use of color, framing, and mirrors—as a means of calling into question the authenticity of the surface image and in turn questioning social norms. In effect, she piggybacks on Sirk and Fassbinder—and I would suggest the scholarship surrounding the two filmmakers—as a means of substantiating her own uses of melodrama. Furthermore, Sirk and Fassbinder by nature of their places in the cinematic timeline help substantiate, provide markers for, the novel’s careening between the 1950s and 1980s—as Hagedorn herself puts it: “[The novel] goes around and around. I go back and forth between the fifties and the eighties, quite comfortably I think” (Bonetti 108). It is, I would argue, these specific cinematic intertexts that essentially provide her nonlinear, collage-like approach to narrative and time a sense of temporal cohesion.

SIRK AND FASSBINDER AND HAGEDORN

The Vernacular of Melodrama



Douglas Sirk



Rainer Werner Fassbinder

In the early 1970s Thomas Elsaesser helped pioneer a sort of rediscovery of Sirk's melodramas along with those of Vincente Minnelli and Nicolas Ray. Elsaesser argued that such family melodramas were notable for their ideological contradictions and subversive critique of postwar American society which are expressed in great part through *mise-en-scène*. In "Tales of Sound and Fury: Observations on the Family Melodrama," Elsaesser argues that unlike the more forward-moving, action oriented genres such as the western and the crime film, wherein the hero is allowed to "express his existential revolt in strong and antisocial behavior" (364), the hero of the family melodrama are forced by social pressures as well as through a more circular cinematic structure to continually turn inward. As a result,

The telling impotent gesture, the social gaffe, the hysterical outburst replaces any more directly liberating or self-annihilating action, and the cathartic violence of a shoot-out

or a chase becomes an inner violence, often one that the characters turn against themselves. . . .The characters are, so to speak, each others' sole referent; there is no world outside to be acted on. . . .In Sirk, of course, they are locked into a universe of real and metaphorical mirrors. (365)

In other words, Elsaesser argues that the inner violence of characters, lacking any real agency, is represented not through direct, purifying action, but through regressive behaviors and in the cinematic image itself. The *mise-en-scène*, the composition of color, light, expressive objects and décor, framing, mirrors, etc., become the tableau upon which Sirk constructs his subtext. Furthering this point, Elsaesser explains that

The melodramas of Ray, Sirk, or Minnelli do not deal with this displacement-by-substitution directly, but by what one might call an intensified symbolization of everyday actions, the heightening of the ordinary gesture and a use of setting and décor so as to reflect the characters' fetishist fixations. Violent feelings are given vent on "over-determined" objects. (366)

In this sense, the exaggerated, heightened, even ironic use of *mise-en-scène* in the Sirkian melodrama functions as an expressionistic mode for the representation of domestic angst, sexual anxiety, and social critique. It is on this point that I would argue Hagedorn finds kinship with Sirk and the Sirkian mode. *Dogeaters* entertains melodrama as a stylistic mode, admittedly as a part of a decidedly more historical scope. But as a metaphor Sirk provides a context for the need for

a more critical engagement of surface images, those perpetuated by Hollywood, sure, but also those perpetrated on the national public under the Marcos regime.

Expanding on Elsaesser, Laura Mulvey, in “Notes on Sirk and Melodrama,” argues that Sirk’s use of *mise-en-scène* as an ironic manifestation of sexual and social repression functions as a sort of “corrective” for masculine



The Television at Once an Expressive Prop and Interior Frame in *All That Heaven Allows*

genres like the western and crime film. For Mulvey, “Melodramatic characters act out contradiction to varying degrees and gradually face

impossible resolutions. . . . However, the implications and poignancy of a particular narrative cannot be evoked wholly by limited characters with restricted dramatic functions” (41). Instead, “the formal devices of Hollywood melodrama . . . provide a transcendent, wordless commentary. . . . *Mise en scène*, rather than the undercutting of the actions and words of the story level, provides a central point of orientation for the spectator” (41). In this sense, the Sirkian image, the ironic façade, is the mode, is the message. As an example of such “wordless commentary” or expressive *mise-en-scène*, Mulvey offers the following reading of Sirk’s use of light and color:

Lighting style clearly cannot be recognized within the diegesis, and in *All That heaven Allows* it illustrates the basic

emotional division which the film is actually about: Cary's world is divided between cold, hard light (blues and yellows) of loneliness, repression and oppression and the warmer, softer light (red/orange) of hope, emotional freedom and sexual satisfaction. (42)

Mulvey argues thusly that Sirk uses color in his *mise-en-scène* as a means of representing, expressionistically, the psychological and social subtext that is the essence of his melodrama. And it is on this level that Fassbinder discovers and embraces Sirk in the early 1970s as Mulvey acknowledges in the subsequent passage writing that "it is impossible to better Rainer Werner Fassbinder's plot synopsis of *All That Heaven Allows*"—referring to his "Six Films by Douglas Sirk" essay in which he expresses his epiphanic awakening to Sirk's films.

Mulvey work on Sirk and the Sirk/Fassbinder connection has become essential to the study of both filmmakers' work. In her essay for the Criterion Collection restoration of *All That Heaven Allows*, Mulvey expands on her treatment of color above, listing what she sees as key Sirkian tropes: "light, shade, color, and camera angles combine with his trademark use of mirrors to break up the surface of the screen." In addition, she addresses the relationship between Sirk and Fassbinder in her aptly named "Sirk and Fassbinder" wherein she discusses Fassbinder's "transposition" of *All That Heaven Allows* into his own *Fear Eats the Soul*. Therefore, taking Elsaesser and Mulvey as a lead and as a means of correlating Sirk, and later Fassbinder, with Hagedorn, I want to look at two interrelated elements of *mise-en-scène*—"bad painting composition" and mirrors, both of which employ metaphorical uses of color and interior framing

and relate to this issue of the authenticity/irony of the surface image—as they appear in *Dogeaters*, Sirk, and Fassbinder. I will also expand this to look at Hagedorn’s play adaptation of *Dogeaters* as a means of further establishing the importance of the Sirk/Fassbinder intertext in her works.

Hagedorn’s first touchstone for Sirk is color and the painterly image or what I like to call the “bad painting composition”—the sort of painting you would see in a hotel room or over your grandma’s couch. After the opening passage of *Dogeaters*, Rio continues her enamored description of *All That Heaven Allows*:

Rock Hudson’s rustic gardener’s cottage stands next to a frozen lake. The sky is a garish baby-blue, the clouds are ethereal wads of fluffy white cotton. In this perfect picture-book American tableau, plaid hunting jackets, roaring cellophane fires, smoking chimneys, and stark winter forests of skeletal trees provide costume and setting for Hollywood’s version of a typical rural Christmas. (3)

Here Rio describes the garish use of color and the Sirkian composition of the bad painting image. These sorts of painterly tableaux recur often in *All That Heaven*



Allows. On the surface these images seem beatific, idyllic, their use of color richer than real life—so much so that, as Elsaesser reads them, their

authenticity becomes questionable. On shot in particular from the film—which is

a matte shot and so it literally, in part, a painting—is an extreme long shot of Ron’s farmhouse rendered in such bucolic lushness as to become, as Pucha argues, “corny,” or as Elsaesser and Mulvey argue, ironic. Particularly when coupled with Frank Skinner’s sweeping, beautifully overwrought score, this image—as is the opening establishing shot of the film in which an immaculately realized suburban façade is introduced through manicured foliage and symmetrical houses—an exaggerated, superficially constructed image that functions as an ironic counterpoint to the personal, psychological, and social

turmoil the characters are experiencing.



Fassbinder Gestures at the Sirkian
"Bad Painting" in His *Mise-e-scène*

In *Dog eaters*, Hagedorn makes a couple key gestures toward this Sirkian trope of the bad painting composition. Firstly, juxtaposed with Sirkian imagery and the radio melodrama *Love Letters* in the first chapter, Rio offers the

following description of the décor of her grandmother’s room:

On the wall above her bed hangs a large crucifix, with the tormented face of Christ rendered in bloody, loving detail. Russet ringlets of horsehair hang from Christ’s bent head, crowned with a miniature wreath of thorns. Next to the crucifix hangs a framed painting on velvet of the Madonna and Child. (10)

The vividness and violence of the color red in this description owes something to the intensity of Sirk's use of the color, but the painting is most remarkable.



Image from *Fear Eats the Soul*: an Influence on *Grandma Lola's Décor*?

Although arguably of a different sort, nothing says bad painting like something rendered on velvet and nothing bespeaks ironic valuation like a velvet painting of Madonna and Child—the seriousness of the artwork's subject belied by its medium. Nonetheless,

Hagedorn's use of the velvet painting, as Rio presents it in her montage of childhood memories, functions as an analogue for the Sirkian bad painting composition which is an image at odds with its resonating meaning.

Hagedorn furthers her acknowledgement of this Sirkian trope later in the chapter as Rio circles back to her memories of *All That Heaven Allows* and knowingly or not begins to come to a certain understanding of the irony of the surface image. Describing possibly the film's most famous "bad painting" moment, Rio recalls the film's final image:

Jane Wyman bends over a comatose Rock Hudson. She tells him she loves him, she will be with him forever in the rustic cottage by the frozen lake. He finally opens his eyes. A deer wanders up to the picture window. Sentimental music interrupts the pastoral silence, swelling to a poignant crescendo as the closing credits roll along. (16)

Although Rio does well to describe the image, its sublimity is such that you have to see it to believe it—the precise arrangement of the tree and snow as framed in



the multi-paned picture window, Ron supine, Cary watching over him, the quick gate of the deer ushered on-screen, posing on cue as “The End”

appears. And it is with this image that Hagedorn first begins to gesture, implicitly, to Fassbinder and his connection to Sirk’s and specifically *All That Heaven Allows*. Rio follows her reverie in the ending of the film by trying to imagine the scenario as applied to her own family. Stripped away are the calmness, the sublimity, and the color:

I try to imagine *Lola* Narcisa bending over my grandfather’s bed like Jane, an angel of mercy whispering so softly in his ear. . . . He barks like a dog, grunts and sputters like an old car. My grandmother wipes the drool from the corners of his mouth while my Rita Hayworth mother, . . .stands as far away from her father’s bed as possible. She seems terrified and bewildered by this image of her dying father. . . .

He shrieks, as if someone or something has finally caught up with him. The anguish in his voice, in the way his body twists and jerks epileptically on the hospital bed, is unbearable. The anxious American doctors have been

waiting for a sign. They rush into the room, trailed by eager nurses ready with gleaming, stainless steel bedpans, ominous catheters, and intravenous attachments bursting with glucose and pints of fresh black blood. (16)

Here Rio intuitively begins to understand that the image offered by Sirk is not one of reality, but a façade, one she happily engages as contrast to her own reality. But through Rio's recognition Hagedorn offers her own understanding of Sirk's irony and Fassbinder's transposition of this irony as such. Here in her own manifestation, extrapolation of Sirk's image, Rio intuitively begins to strip away color—"stainless steel bedpans" and "pints of fresh black blood"—as a means of realizing its superficial exaggeration and ironic subtext. She notes, struggling to come to terms with the magnitude of cinematic composition, that she is "confused by the thought of Elizabeth Taylor's one violet eye luminous in black and white, the pristine illusion of elegant deer peacefully grazing outside Rock Hudson's picture window. In this hospital room, there is only our sense of foreboding, heightened by the grayness of bedsheets . . . the dim fluorescent lights" (17). For Rio, the personal, familial distress is manifested not through a calmly ironic displacement onto a composed image, but in the very real physical, verbal anguish of a man dying in a cold hospital room.

And it is with this that Hagedorn gestures toward Fassbinder as Rio's description recalls Fassbinder's revision of the ending of *All That Heaven Allows* for *Fear Eats the Soul*. Fassbinder's final scene opens showing—as reflected on a mirror, another favorite Sirkian trope—Emmi sitting over Ali in his hospital bed as he suffers from a stress induced, so the doctor tells us, chronic ulcer in part a

manifestation of social repression. Not only is Sirk's final image revised, transposed here, but Fassbinder's transposition of Sirk's title becomes clear as well. As Sirk's deer in the window functions ironically, so too does the title *All*



That Heaven Allows—it might seem to resonate the potential for freedom and liberation, but really encapsulates limitation as repression. Or as Fassbinder would have it with imitable directness:

fear and inner turmoil. Sirk's ending seems like a happy ending, Cary and Ron are together despite the odds, the music compels closure. Not so for Fassbinder, whose ending, despite Emmi and Ali being together against all odds, feels very unresolved. In addition, the warm blues and yellows that evoke Sirk's ending are nonetheless disrupted by the cold steel of the bedrails and the bleached white sheets. Fassbinder's ending is more empathic and is essentially, even literally, a mirror image of Sirk's, the reversal, in this case, being that color and irony are stripped away.⁸⁶

For Hagedorn, the irony of Sirkian “bad painting composition” when juxtaposed with Fassbinder's stark, more direct image provides her a visual analog for her combining of melodrama and historical realism in the style of her novel. For example, she conflates Sirk and Fassbinder in her own painterly image near the end of the novel:

In my recurring dream, my brother and I inhabit the translucent bodies of nocturnal moths with curved, fragile wings. We are pale green, with luminous celadon eyes . . . We are drawn the same silent tableau: a mysterious light glowing from the window of a deserted, ramshackle house. The house is sometimes perched on a rocky abyss, or a dangerous cliff overlooking a turbulent sea . . . We flap and beat our wings in our futile attempt to reach what surely must be heaven. (247)

Falling tonally somewhere between Sirk and Fassbinder, Hagedorn's "silent tableau" is gaudy and earnest, ironic and authentic. Her colors are glazy, but muted. The house is intensified but not romanticized. And yet the image is certainly overwrought—the moths fluttering, the rocky abyss and turbulent sea brings to mind something in a Thomas Kinkade puzzle.⁸⁷ And the obvious psychoanalytic connotations and superficial earnestness of the final line call into question the authenticity of the image. Hagedorn has, it seems, composed her own Sirkian "bad painting." Her and her brother's futile lepidopteral search for an ironic heaven underscores this Sirkian connection. Heaven is out of reach and even if it weren't it wouldn't look like this.

In addition, the "bad painting composition," for both Sirk and Fassbinder, is a device of *mise-en-scène* that is used in conjunction with interior framing, particularly as employed through windows and mirrors. We see this respectively in each of the directors' ultimate and penultimate images above: Fassbinder shoots into a mirror, the frame of which is visible within the larger cinematic

frame, and Sirk creates an almost web like series of internal frames through the larger window frame which is then fragmented by a number of smaller panes. This use of interior framing is in the tradition of both the German Expressionists and the earlier Hollywood melodramas, or “woman’s films,” such as *Possessed*



Marion contained within an interior frame as the men discuss her future in *Possessed*

(Clarence Brown, 1931), and is employed as a visual manifestation of character psychology and social restriction. For example in *All That Heaven Allows*, Cary is frequently caught within the interior frames of window panes and mirrors, and often

cornered by door frames or other décor as a means of expressing her personal and sexual repression as a result of her familial and societal restriction.

Similarly, Fassbinder uses interior framing as a means of suggesting a sort of emotional and psychological paralysis that both Emmi and Ali experience as a result of externally oppressive provocation.

For Hagedorn, it is the use of mirrors specifically that reveals her formal incorporation of the visual style of Sirk and Fassbinder. For both directors, the mirror is an expressive object, a type of interior frame that fragments the surface image, disrupts the continuity of the *mise-en-scène* and therefore calls attention to the construction of the cinematic image. Furthermore these mirrors call into question not only the authenticity of the cinematic image but of the internal and external identities of the characters on screen. As Sirk once said, “The mirror is the imitation of life. What is interesting about a mirror is it does not show

yourself as you are, it shows you your own opposite.” This expressionistic use of mirrors fits well with Hagedorn’s themes of domestic, racial, sexual and national



identity in that they suggest a disruption to the continuity of the characters’ external modes of identification—the devices of melodrama functioning as

counterpoint to domestic and social unrest. And this is true of both the characters within the narrative and the audience, who are asked to engage the image intellectually rather than emotionally.



For her part, Hagedorn uses mirrors in two key scenes in *Dogeaters* which parallel such usages in Sirk and Fassbinder both in terms of their function in the décor of domestic melodrama and their expressionistic value.

First involves Rio’s description of her mother’s room as a sort of personal and feminine sanctuary:

I love my mother’s mysterious mauve rooms, so cool and softly lit. Whenever she looks in any of her mirrors it is always night and she is always beautiful. She designed the rooms herself, the dressing room with its floor-to-ceiling closets for my father’s wardrobe and hers; the special shoe racks and tie racks and drawers just for stockings and lingerie, the closet doors with their full-length mirrors.

The windows are boarded up . . . There is never any sense of day or night . . . I spend hours there, watching her dress and undress, talk in hushed tones on the telephone . . . I perch on the velvet-upholstered stool in front of her vanity table, mesmerized by her perfumes, her jars of creams and ointments, her gleaming tubes of lipstick in red and lavender shades, her jewelry boxes inlaid with pearls and carnelian, her tortoise-shell combs and brushes, the round boxes of scented talcum, and a black lacquered music box from Japan. (84)

Rio description of her mother's room could be lifted straight out of Sirk—the descriptive “softly lit” alone begs cinematic comparison. The attention to mirrors and well as additional objects, those that seemingly define an excess of femininity and beauty (shoes, perfumes, and other glassy items) are recurring tropes of melodrama. Rio's description recalls very clearly an early scene in *All That Heaven Allows* in which Cary's children visit her in her bedroom as she is readying for a date. Prominent in the mise-en-scene are her vanity table and mirror—see picture on page 23—vases and perfume bottles and other feminine accoutrements. Cary is in the process of presenting herself, of expressing externally her latent sexuality, although her children quell this burgeoning independence, a point which I will come back to. Essentially, the images Rio presents echo Sirk and offer a sort of romanticized femininity that begs a Sirkian reading. The room is so lavishly gendered, so romanticized as to question its surface meaning. In this sense, her mother's soothing space becomes ironic in

the Sirkian sense. Nostalgically Rio's misremembers, or maybe never consciously recognized, the insular nature of the room, the emptiness of its excesses.

In addition, Rio's mother's assertion that her room is soothing "like a womb," to which Uncle Panchito replies, "like a tomb," references *All That Heaven Allows* in two specific ways (86). Firstly, as Cary readies herself for her date, her daughter Kay, in reference to Cary's widow status as well as the bedroom décor offers the following bit of pseudo-analysis:

KAY: Personally, I've never subscribed to that old Egyptian custom.

CARY: What Egyptian custom?

KAY: Oh walling up the widow alive in the funeral chambers of her dead husband along with his other possessions. The theory being that she was a possession too. She was supposed to journey into death with him. The community saw to it. Of course it doesn't happen anymore.

CARY: Doesn't it?

Here Sirk, self-referential about the gender implications of his *mise-en-scène*, acknowledges his cinematic irony. Kay, for all her intellectual, academic pontification, is nonetheless oblivious to the actual analogy she is making between Cary's bedroom and an Egyptian tomb. But Cary is not. She understands the implications of such an analogy, as does the audience who are aligned with Cary from the beginning of the film. In this sense, Sirk is gesturing his audience toward a more analytical engagement of the film image, if ever so subtly.

The second way in which Rio's mother's "womb/tomb" recalls *All That Heaven Allows* is in the *mise-en-scène* of Kay's room as she breaks into tears



over her mother's relationship with Ron. In this scene Kay's room is dominated by a color-wheel window which functions as a sort of prismatic exaggeration of her own self-

interested psychoanalyzing of her mother. The room takes on a womb-like, almost psychedelic glow. Cary consoles her and acquiesces, promising to stop seeing Ron as a means of preserving the family's, and thus Kay's, social status. In the first scene Cary is attempting to break out of her assumed social role, as defined by her domestic space, by donning a red dress, much to her son's Oedipal dismay (or so suggests Kay). Then later in Kay's room, bathed in a prism of pastels and low-key lighting, she is forced to abandon her hope for a new life and sexuality and accept her sole station in life as a mother. Kay is consoled by both the womb-like safety of her childhood bedroom and her mother's decision to sacrifice her own individual and sexual needs for the sake of her maternal duty.

Taking a cue for Sirk, Rio's mother's room speaks to a central theme in *Dogeaters* which is concerned not only with the conflict between female sexuality and maternity, but with larger issues of gender performance as well. Rio notes her "Rita Hayworth" mother's obsession with beauty: "My mother uses cold creams, moisturizers, takes daily naps with masks of mashed avocado, mashed *sinkamas*, and red clay from France smeared on her face. She is a beautiful

woman who works hard at it” (82). Her room functions as a sort of shrine to a certain concept of female beauty. Full of creams and ointments, perfumes,



A Series of Fragmenting Mirrors Underscores Erwin's/Elvira's Transitioning Gender in Fassbinder's *In a Year with 13 Moons* (1978)

clothing and shoes, and of course a number of mirrors through which to assess ones external self. But like Sirk and Fassbinder, Hagedorn's use of mirrors suggests not verification of realized beauty but the

superficiality of it as such. It is not intrinsic beauty, but an objectifying construction, a performance of a certain ideal of external feminine beauty. This is further underscored by the fact that Rio's mother shares her beauty accoutrements with Uncle Panchito a multiple “Most Original” award winner at local transvestite beauty contests—a

different milieu for performing a similar construction of female beauty. To paraphrase Lisa Lowe, the drag queens do not passively submit to ritual gender roles, but rather they perform the extravagances of femininity. And it is in relation to gay culture in *Dogeaters*



Fox and His Friends

that we find another moment in which Hagedorn features mirrors.

Mirrors are a key feature in Hagedorn's bringing together of “the German director” and Joey. While in town for the first annual Manila International Film

Festival, the filmmaker, designated only as Rainer in the novel, is taken to club CocoRico where Joey is Deejaing. Joey describes their first encounter thusly: “The German spots me right away, spinning my records. He is intrigued, watching me dance with myself in front of mirrored walls. . . I’m on display. The German is watching me from the bar” (131). Setting aside for the now the issue of Rainer actually being Rainer Werner Fassbinder, a fact which is implied, not made explicit in the novel but is a point driven home by other evidence in the novel as well as Hagedorn’s own play adaptation, all of which I will discuss at length below, here Hagedorn gestures toward Fassbinder’s own transposing of the Sirkian mirror as an expressive prop of female objectification. Always interested in employing the reflective surface as a visual motif in his cinema, Fassbinder, in films after *Fear Eats the Soul*, begins transposing the psychological and feminine uses of mirrors to homosexual and transgender characters—*Fox and His Friends* (1975), *In the Year of 13 Moons* (1978), and a film I will come back to below, *Querelle* (1982).

In a sort of twist on Laura Mulvey’s “male gaze,” Fassbinder often uses mirrors in his *mise-en-scène* as both a gesture toward Sirkian melodrama and as a means of transposing Sirk’s usages for a gay context. In effect, gay characters become the focus sexually objectification and social marginalization.⁸⁸ For Hagedorn too, the mirrors represent the conflict between sexual performance and marginalization of both women and homosexuals in the sense that they call attention to the surface image and metaphorically beg psychological interpretation. Hagedorn hints at Fassbinder’s twist on the “male gaze” as well, not only in the fact that Joey is self-consciously on display in front a wall of

mirrors, but in his own big-screen ambition in which he casts himself as “the strong young animal—I’m the panther. Or else I’m the statue of a magnificent young god in a beautiful garden” (132). And as the scene continues, Chiquiting,



Querelle

in an attempt to schmooze with Rainer, says to him, “I saw one of your movies in Tokyo . . . the one about the blonde girl and the Negro.” Rainer then asks if he liked it. “I was terribly moved,”

Chiquiting replies, “even though I didn’t understand a thing” (133). Although this is the only moment in *Dog eaters* that suggests a reference to a specific film by Fassbinder, the film is nonetheless *Fear Eats the Soul* which again is a sort of remake of Sirk’s *All That Heaven Allows*. What is interesting is Chiquiting’s misunderstanding that the movie was about the blonde girl and the Negro. The blonde girl being, I assume, the German bartender with whom Ali has an affair. I would suggest Hagedorn is making a little joke at Chiquiting’s expense: even a homosexual moviegoer is so conditioned by the conventions of narrative cinema and the “male gaze” that he interprets or misremembers the beautiful blonde as the lead actress when clearly it is the older, less cinematically attractive Emmi whose relationship with Ali provides the story of the film. And although also humorous, Chiquiting’s admission that she was terribly moved by the film despite the fact that she didn’t understand any of it, suggests something about Fassbinder’s combining of the melodramatic mode with his own more ambiguous, esoteric approach to film

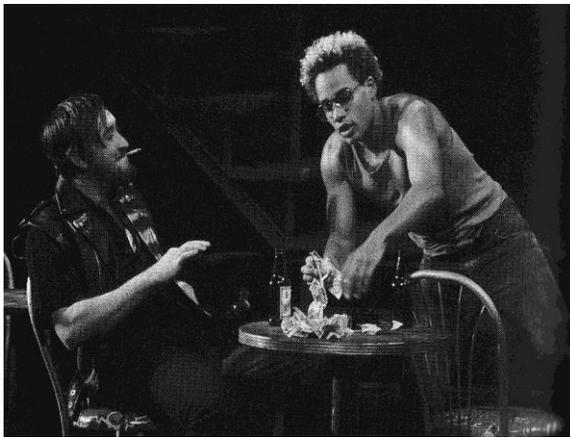
narrative and style—the most extreme example of this realized in his final film *Querelle*, a film that becomes a more direct intertext for Hagedorn when she adapts *Dogeaters* into a play.

RAINER IS FASSBINDER (of course)

Hagedorn's Staging of the Cinematic *Dogeaters*

Hagedorn's adaptation of her own novel for the stage shares something with Fassbinder's rendition of Sirk's *All That Heaven Allows* as *Fear Eats the Soul*. As Mulvey argues it, Fassbinder transposes Sirk's original text rather than remakes it. That is to say he takes its basic narrative and formal style and its basic ironically manifested sociopolitical commentary and extrapolates it into something new. As a means of turning *Dogeaters* into a play, Hagedorn relies even more heavily on film as a structural and narrative component. In her "Notes on Setting," she describes the play in a manner that would easily apply to Sirk and Fassbinder. "The world that this play inhabits," she writes, "is sometimes grim and stark, sometimes beautiful and lush, but always volatile. The culture is a wondrous bundle of contradictions." And as a means of conveying the dizzying array of contradictions and historical scope of her novel on stage she employs the sound of film projectors and radio melodramas, montage-like staging of multiple scenes on a multileveled stage, and, throughout the play, rear projections screens which take on slides and light in multiple and split screens ostensibly as a potential means of representing historical and contextual information as well as

project color and light for setting and flashbacks. The inclusion of such a cinematic component in her play underscores the importance of film for her as a structural and historically unifying literary device. However the most revealing addition or revision made in transposing the novel to the stage involves the German director Rainer who, in the list of characters is designated as follows: “Rainer Fassbinder—German film director; thirty-seven years old.” Dispelling any possible misunderstanding, critical or otherwise, about whether or not Rainer in the novel is meant to simply evoke the likes of Rainer Werner Fassbinder or that rather he is actually the man himself, Hagedorn updates the character in a very specific manner. Not only does she use his surname, something she doesn’t do in the novel, she specifies his exact age, something she doesn’t do for any other character in the play. This specificity reinforces, for



Still From the Play *Dogeaters*

Hagedorn, the importance of Fassbinder to a literary intertext for *Dogeaters*.

Fassbinder is important for Hagedorn as a cinematic companion to Sirk, of course, but beyond *Fear Eats the Soul* she is interested in a

very specific Fassbinder, a later one who is implied in the novel and made explicit in the play. In the novel Rainer is characterized by Joey as being “around forty, who knows. Pale and flabby, baggy clothes, a drooping moustache and the smell of cigarettes,” (132) he downs shot after shot of chilled vodka, his films full of unhappy people and not enough action—and later his handbag full of powerful

coke. And although *Fear Eats the Soul* is referenced, no mention is made in the novel of what film he is in town to screen at the 1982 Manila International Film Festival. This is in part due to the fact that, according to Hagedorn's "Philippines: A Personal Chronology" included at the end of the published play, very few locals could afford to attend the festival (120)—and Fassbinder certainly prefers to mingle with the marginalized rather than the elite for various reasons of personal lifestyle. By specifying Fassbinder's exact age and changing the setting of his meeting with Chiquiting and Joey to Studio 54 Manila, Hagedorn pinpoints not only a much more specific Fassbinder, one within 10 days of his death— Fassbinder was born May 31, 1945 and died June 10, 1982—but also is able to fold into her intertextual landscape his final film *Querelle*.⁸⁹

By moving the location of the scene from club CocoRico to the more trendy, upscale Studio 54 Manila, Hagedorn is able to have Fassbinder mingle and dialogue with not only Chiquiting and Joey (transvestite and homosexual) who would likely not have access to the festival's screening, but with Tito Alvarez (action movie star) and Lolita Luna (soft-core porn movie star) who would have been festival attendees. This allows Hagedorn to preserve Chiquiting's line about being moved by but not understanding *Fear Eats the Soul* (which he saw in Hong Kong—Tokyo in the novel) and add a line from Lolita: "I loved your movie. Very avant-garde and . . . deep" (54). Based Lolita's description of the film as avant-garde and on Hagedorn's revisionist timeline placing Fassbinder's festival visit in early June 1982, it is reasonable to assume that the film he has come to screen at the festival is *Querelle*.⁹⁰ So the question then is, why *Querelle*?

Based on the 1949 homoerotic novel *Querelle de Brest* by Jean Genet, Fassbinder's film tells the story of a French sailor, thief, and murderer Querelle who arrives in the port city of Breast and begins frequenting a local bar and brothel ("the raunchiest in the world") where his brother Robert is the lover of the Madame Lysiane (played by Jeanne Moreau, barking into mirrors, made up like a drag queen color outtake from *Whatever Happen to Baby Jane?* [Robert Aldrich, 1962]). Querelle takes advantage of his attractiveness to both sexes (Lysiane and her husband Nono alike, among others) as a means of manipulating nearly everyone and his homosexual encounters devolve into drug-smuggling and murder. Through chance and circumstance, and further sexual manipulation, Querelle is able to avoid any repercussions to his murderous behavior and he returns to his ship. The film follows its filmmaker's Sirkian influence, but in a more exaggerated and stylized way. It is saturated with violent reds and languid yellows, like a sweaty, hallucinogenic *Meet Me in St. Louis*. The interior framing and mirrors are nearly ever present as an exaggeration of an already excessive cinematic trope. Moving away from Sirk, in a twisted new sense of irony, Fassbinder employs both a voiceover narration akin to that of nature documentaries, which navigates the viewer through the film's homosexual and criminal ecosystem, and a choir score evoking György Ligeti but lacking any Kubrickian evolutionary epiphanies. *Querelle* anguishes in its own cinematic form, extrapolating from the gay sailor fetish a sort of psychedelic nightmare of the melodrama that is the darker male psyche.

Querelle is, in its way, as despondent a film as any Fassbinder ever made and Hagedorn is utilizing it as such. The film sometimes seems malicious and

self-hating in its depiction of homosexuals. The film suffers from incoherencies that might on the one hand offer a fractured portrait of the sexually marginalized and on the other suggest Fassbinder's accelerating drug use. There is a sense of



despair and psychological anguish to the film that is made manifest in its set design—which owes more to the silent German Expressionist tradition than that of Sirkian melodrama. *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* is all over this movie as an addition to Fassbinder's more

contemporary expressionistic, Sirkian tendencies. And then there are the

penises. *Querelle's* *mise-en-scène* is filled with penises, expressionism giving way to the literal. The film is dedicated to El Hedi ben Salem m'Barek Mohammed Mustafa (Fassbinder's former lover who played Ali in *Fears Eats the Soul* and who killed himself in



a French prison after being arrested for drunkenly stabbing three people). There is something violent in Fassbinder's understanding of his own sexuality.

Fassbinder is a rebel, a walking contradiction. Openly gay, he married twice, cruising bars, sex and drugs, his films sensitive to the alienated and the socially marginalized, yet born into a bourgeois family, he demonstrates a hatred for institutional violence and yet is brutal to others . . . a flawless work ethic by day, wildly self-destructive by night. He seems to have spiraled both upward and

downward into *Querelle*, a film which transcends Sirk and delves further into the abyss of sexual despair.



In the novel, Hagedorn hints at the pornographic, despondent, even violent sexual imagery that Fassbinder realizes in *Querelle*. After a frenzied night of cocaine and panic, still paranoid after robbing Rainer of his drugs and fearful for his life that Uncle will report his whereabouts, Joey wakes up “in a pool of sweat . . . In Uncle’s hot, windowless room”:

He sat up panting heavily, jolted from his dreamless sleep by the dog’s incessant barking outside the door. [His] head was still sore, a dry metallic taste in his mouth. Unbearable thirst. . . .

He looked slowly around the room, trying to remember and rearrange events in his dazed mind. A collage of pornographic centerfolds covered Uncle’s walls, making the room feel even smaller and more claustrophobic. Joey shut his eyes to close out the sprawling, leering images of painted girls and blank-eyed boys with erect penises fondling each other without enthusiasm. 203)

Then in fit of paranoia, fearing for his life, Joey ransacks the room looking for drugs and money. He uncovers only a switchblade knife which he uses, as a means of sending a message to Uncle that he is not to be messed with, to stab Uncle's dog to death with horrifying brutality. "Joey kept stabbing the animal, the queasiness in the pit of his stomach rising to his throat. . . .He began to weep, furious with the dog for not dying quickly. His anguished cries and the animal's became one" (207). The portrait of the hustler underworld in *Dogeaters* mirrors that of *Querelle* in that it presents an environment, fueled by drugs and crime, home to the sexually and racially marginalized, where every interaction, every movement is fraught with the potential for sexual, even murderous violence.

For Hagedorn, *Querelle* is a film that aestheticizes the psychological severity and cruelty inherent in the subjugation of sexuality. The film is a reflection of Fassbinder's own inner turmoil. And yet it is Fassbinder who can be credited with expanding on Sirk, making his style and gender politics applicable to stories about queer culture. As Lisa Lowe writes in "Memories of Colonial Modernity,"

Like in the novel, *Dogeaters* the play hardly suggests a utopian resolution to the violent predicament of neocolonialism. In scene after scene, gay, *bakla*, and transgendered communities are spatialized themselves within the complex stratifications and distinctions that are the legacy of colonial and neocolonial subjugations. (164)

This lack of resolution as it pertains to social marginalization and psychological and sexual violence is relatable to the use of space, community space, or space

within the *mise-en-scène*, in melodrama. It is Sirk and Fassbinder that provide Hagedorn not only a visual template, an analog in the melodrama mode for her study of gender and neocolonialism, but also provides for her nonlinear, collage-like approach to Filipino history a sense of temporal cohesion, a cinematic timeline from 1956 through 1982 upon which her literary one can be mapped.

CHAPTER FOUR

Fixer Chao, Cultural Performativity, and the American Dream



“Like a fucking Joan Crawford movie.”



“Do you know the work of Yasu-jeer-o Oh-zoo?”

“The people in so many Hollywood movies seemed to go in and out of a series of carpeted rooms.”

“He wanted to discuss the movie”

In “The Aristocracy of Culture,” from *A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, Pierre Bourdieu differentiates cinema-going from what he refers to as “the propensity and capacity to accumulate ‘gratuitous’ knowledge, such as the names of film directors” (26). For Bourdieu, the ability and inclination to

accumulate knowledge of the more esoteric aspects of cinema, such as the names of directors—and to extend this I would include dates, awards, and other



Burt and Kirk in *Corral* Publicity Still

cinematic minutiae—is “more closely and exclusively linked with educational capital than is mere cinema-going, which is more dependent upon income, place of residence and age” (26). Thus, Bourdieu argues that, “Knowledge of directors is much more closely linked to cultural capital than is mere cinema-going” (27). In other words, to use one of Bourdieu’s examples, to say you’ve

just seen a particular Western starring Burt Lancaster is different than saying you’ve just seen an early John Sturges film—*Gunfight at the O.K. Corral* (1957) is the film he is referring to, though he doesn’t cite it directly. Or, to offer an example more directly related to *Fixer Chao*: to say you’ve just seen a Paul Newman movie is different than referring to *Hud* as Martin Ritt’s revisionist take on the western genre. The knowledge of and ability to engage in a discourse about specific filmmakers, as opposed to films, can function, therefore, as a form of cultural capital—as a means to a higher social class.

Bourdieu’s assessment of the relationship between cinema-going, that is the mass-cultural consumption of cinema as entertainment, and cinema-knowledge, that is the accumulation of an otherwise trivial lexical or referential knowledge of cinema, as they relate to issues of cultural capital is specifically applicable to the gender and economic issues in *Fixer Chao*. The novel tells the

story of William Narciso Paulinha, a Filipino street hustler who while trying to reform himself is lured into a confidence scheme of sorts by Shem C., a frustrated writer out for revenge against the New York literati which he surmises has rejected him. Under Shem's tutelage William becomes Master Chao, a revered Feng Shui expert from Hong Kong, the center of the pair's plot to scam the Manhattan social elite. No matter that William is Filipino, he is Chinese enough. Along with similarly marginalized and disillusioned characters such as Kendo, Preciosa X, and Jokey—all equally enamored by cinema, the latter two aspiring actors—their scam becomes the jumping off point for the novel's examination of race, class, and cultural identity.

Like Pynchon's, Ong's use of film consists of an intertextual configuration of film form and references both Hollywood and international. His use of the techniques of cinematic form, which I will begin with below, is introduced early in the novel and functions in conjunction with, even as a manifestation of, both his referencing of actual historical Hollywood films and personalities—ranging from the Hollywood studio era to contemporary blockbusters and genre films, most notably the action subgenre disaster film—and fictionalized representations of contemporary Hollywood. Actual films directly referenced in the novel include: *The Little Foxes* (William Wyler, 1941), *Double Indemnity* (Billy Wilder, 1944), *The Bride of Frankenstein* (James Whale, 1935), *King Kong* (Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack, 1933), *The Lady Eve* (Preston Sturges, 1941), *Jezebel* (Wyler, 1938), *Hud* (Martin Ritt, 1963), and, more generically, MGM musicals of the 1950s. Films indirectly referenced, or implied as a point of reference for Ong's fictionalized *SuperPigeon*—a steroidal reimagining of

Hitchcock's *The Birds* (1963)—are those produced during the mid-1990s resurgence of the disaster film which, as a subgenre of the action/adventure film, first became a fixture of mainstream studio releases in the 1970s thanks to the success of *Airport* (George Seaton, 1970) and producer Irwin Allen's *The Poseidon Adventure* (Ronald



The Birds

Neame, 1972) and *The Towering Inferno* (John Guillermin and Irwin Allen, 1974). The films of this sort that immediately precede the publication of *Fixer Chao* include: *Independence Day* (Roland Emmerich, 1996), *Twister* (Jan de



Sidney Toler as Chan

Bont, 1996), *Volcano* (Mick Jackson, 1997), *Deep Impact* (Mimi Leder, 1998), and *Armageddon* (Michael Bay, 1998), among many others.

Similarly, Ong's fictionalized bank heist film is, I would suggest, a contemporaneous allusion to films such as *Heat* (Michael Mann, 1995) and *Dead Presidents* (The Hughes Brothers, 1995),

though the heist film has an even longer backstory than does the disaster film. In addition, Ong directly references Hollywood film stars/icons past and present including Bette Davis, Barbara Stanwyck, Joan Crawford, Paul Newman, Warner Oland and Sidney Toler (both of whom played

Charlie Chan), Will Smith, and Susan Sarandon. On the whole, these references concentrate on the Old Hollywood era and the post-New Hollywood, or contemporary era and provide an historical scope to Ong's cinematic motif and William's catalogue of Hollywood identification.

Alongside Ong's Hollywood referential landscape, his aforementioned fictionalized films are, for my purposes here, primarily important to his establishment of a technical use of film form. These fictionalized representations come in the form of *SuperPigeon*, Ong's version of a "destruction-of-the-earth picture" (155), and another film described as a "bank heist gone wrong" (376) story, as well as in the trajectory of aspiring actor Jokey whose nascent Hollywood career progresses ironically as a series of death scenes—the further along he gets professionally, the later his character dies in the film. Also ostensibly fictionalized is a film about "Chinatown gangsters" to which Kendo takes William midway through the novel. Subsequently, this cinema-going experience, as I will discuss below, informs William's developing narrative of his second identity as Master Chao. In this instance, though more subtly than with his incorporation of film terminologies—"Cut a montage this way" (12), "Jump cuts like a staccato radio beat: again and again the door opens to reveal yet another version of the first guy" (12), and "Cut a scene this way" (133) —all of which I will discuss at length below—Ong's referential use of film is applied to the literary form of the novel. In other words, in these instances, film is not just historical or thematic intertext, but actually shapes the novel at the narrative level. William's creation of his second identity is shaped by the form of film, and

elsewhere in the novel we see other examples of film form as the representative formal structure in relation to issues of cultural performativity and identity.

Lastly, and possibly most relevant to Bourdieu's claims, Ong employs a few of the great canonical works of Japanese cinema as a means of illustrating his cultural satire and ironic depiction of the immigrant experience. Specifically he



Yamada in *Throne of Blood*

focuses on Kenji Mizoguchi's *Sisters of the Gion* (1936), Yasujiro Ozu's *Tokyo Story* (1953), and Akira Kurosawa's *The Lower Depths* (1957) and *Throne of Blood* (1957)⁹¹—all four of which star the actress Isuzu Yamada who serves as

namesake and cinematic doppelgänger for William's primary mark (and Kendo's mother) Suzy Yamada. Given the Bourdieuvian logics enacted in the novel, Japanese cinema provides Ong a satirical and absurdly hierarchical irony. For example, in order to better assimilate his Master Chao identity into the milieu of Manhattan's social elite, William must accumulate knowledge of Japanese cinema. In other words, the lowly Filipino immigrant posing as a master of Chinese Feng Shui from Hong Kong, who in preparation has sought guidance in the novels of Agatha Christie, is asked to learn Japanese cinema in order to prove his Asian-ness to his American marks who seem not to know the difference.

As this suggests, Ong's multifarious film references collectively represent an inclination toward class performativity, or as Bourdieu would have it, are in

one way or another related to the process of accumulating cultural capital—a process that for Ong perpetuates disillusionment and demoralization in his status-seeking characters. To illustrate this, I will first examine his technical uses of film form, and then close read selected films as they pertain to the themes of the novel. In doing so I intend on the one hand to establish a better understanding of Ong’s intertextual use of film in *Fixer Chao* and on the other to better illuminate his examination of the imbrications of class and identity politics. It is through Ong’s use of film—its form, Hollywood mode past and present, and specifically Martin Ritt’s *Hud*, Yasujiro Ozu’s *Tokyo Story*, and Akira Kurosawa’s *Throne of Blood*—that *Fixer Chao* extrapolates Bourdieu’s basic models of cultural, social, and economic capital toward an examination of cultural performativity as it relates to the American Dream.

In each instance, film offers William different models of performativity in pursuit of the American Dream—first in his montage-style reconstruction of bathroom stall hustling, then in the use of Japanese cinema as cultural capital, and then in the rebellion against social conformity presented by *Jezebel* and *Hud*. In the end however, Ong seems to suggest that all of these models fail William in one manner or another leaving him a sort of racially ambiguous ghost walking through shopping malls and in and out of clichéd movies. Ultimately, the line between William’s use of film for cultural capital and self-making becomes blurry and leaves him numb and absent a concrete sense of racial identity and personal identification.

“Cut a montage this way”:

Ong’s Use of Cinematic Form

Similarly to Pynchon, Ong employs film terminology and technique as an intertextual literary device. In doing so he evidences both his own cinematic prowess as an author and William’s as “autobiographical” narrator. In addition, given the Bourdeuvian assessment of accumulated knowledge of film directors, it stands to reason that a technical knowledge would offer one cultural capital as well. Early in *Fixer Chao*, Ong uses film language as a means of establishing William’s back story. Now 30 and trying to leave his delinquent days behind him, William describes his not so distant hustler past thusly:

Cut a montage this way: Bathroom stall door in the men’s room of the Port Authority Bus Terminal. Let it be a plain door, black or some blacklike color with the nickmarks of time cut into it. Door opens, a portly white gentleman, with a bald spot in the middle of his head, walks out. A silver flashes between his exiting figure and the slowly closing door to reveal a young boy of twenty-one, -two, wearing a tight white T-shirt and blank painter’s pants. That’s me! Jump cuts like a staccato radio beat: again and again the door opens to reveal yet another version of the first guy; they all make quick exits, adjust their zippers on the way out. (12)

In this instance, Ong uses film editing as literary analepsis. The montage that William cuts here and the use of jump cuts within the montage, as a means of conveying in rapid succession a series of repeating images, constitute a cinematic flashback, rather than the traditional literary technique. It is specifically film technique that allows Ong's narrator to compress temporally a series of historical events into a short expository sequence of images—providing an external analepsis to William's past. But this cinematic flashback differs from the usual external analepsis in literature which often comes in the form of a first person narrator's digression to an entirely separate self-contained linear narrative. This separate linear back-story is followed through to an end point and then reintegrated into the frame story or primary chronology of the novel. For example, in *The Great Gatsby*, Nick Carraway, spurred ostensibly by “the arrival of an ambitious young reporter” (103) one morning at Gatsby's door, details to the reader some of the truth of the past of Jay Gatsby and his association with Dan Cody through whom he began his con artist sojourn into the circles of the social elite:

“James Gatz—that was really, or at least legally, his name. He had changed it at the age of seventeen and at the specific moment that witnessed the beginning of his career. . . . He told me all this very much later, but I have put it down here with the idea of exploding those first wild rumors about his antecedents” (104-7).

Here Carraway takes “advantage of this short halt” (107) to clear up a few misconceptions about Gatsby's past based on information Gatsby provided him

later in the chronology of the novel's primary narrative. Like in Ong's novel we have a first person narrator offering us an external analepsis. However, Fitzgerald accomplishes this in a conventionally literary manner. That is, upon establishing a digressional cue, he—Carraway, Fitzgerald—offers a short self-contained linear narrative back-story as a means of nuancing our understanding of the title character. For Ong, the result might superficially be the same, in terms of a first person narrator offering an external analepsis for the purposes of character background—in this case the narrator's own background rather than that of a third party—but the style is significantly different. Ong's analepsis doesn't offer a separate and linear narrative, but instead fragmented and repetitive images from William's past. Instead of an expository literary digression, Ong encapsulates William's past through the editorial conventions of cinema.

Of course, William's cinematic envisioning of his past offers us psychological access to character as well and this aspect of the literary flashback is not without its pre-cinematic antecedents. For example, in *The Scarlet Letter*, as Hester is escorted in "The Market-Place" toward the scaffold, Hawthorne offers her back-story as a sort of psychological manifestation:

Yet there were intervals when the whole scene, in which she was the most conspicuous object, seemed to vanish from her eyes, or, at least, glimmered indiscreetly before them, like a mass of imperfectly shaped and spectral images. Her mind, and especially her memory, was preternaturally active, and kept bringing up other scenes. . . . Reminiscences, the most

trifling and immaterial, passages of infancy and school-days,
. . . intermingled with recollections of whatever was gravest
in her subsequent life. (59)

In this case, Hawthorne's third person omniscient narrator, privy to Hester's inner thoughts, offers us an assortment of images from her past as he posits they passed through her mind. This sort of psychological access to character by way of a third person narrator—ostensibly objective, but with subjective insight—is another common incarnation of the literary analepsis. The literary convention of the third person omniscient perspective allows us access to Hester's psychology and back-story. *Fixer Chao* however, as a first person narrative, a faux-memoir of sorts, cannot wholly substantiate objectivity in its delineation of events or psychological analysis. Sans the expected convention of third person omniscience, or the believably objective distance of a first person narrator examining a third party, in the case of *Gatsby*, Ong instead uses cinematic technique to interject images of William's past. In this sense, Ong's use of cinematic flashback mingles aspects of both these examples of literary analepsis: we get both the objective information of William's past and a psychologically interpretative depiction of that past. This is accomplished, however, not through the eye of literary omniscience, but through the camera eye. It is Ong's camera, his internal lens that provides the external perspective for his flashback and in turn furthers his Bourdieuan trope of cinema as an avenue to personal and cultural identification and performativity.

Per this point and sustaining the cinematic motif, William continues his cinematic envisioning of his own past with "Another montage." Here, William

ups the comedic and psychologically self-elucidating ante through a directorially suggestive use of film editing:

. . . a love chorus. Though one long sentence, attribute each segment to a separate talking head, forming a comic chain:
Yeah suck that dick, come on fuckhead, that's it, take daddy's juicy dick in your mouth, isn't daddy's dick juicy, come on, yeah yeah yeah.

Sometimes the montage is interrupted by an errant scene, but whatever its nature, make sure to always run comedy through it. . . .

Say someone comes in who really needs to shit, and seeing that all three stalls are taken up by two pairs of feet. . .

Or say a policeman does a random sweep. . . .

Also cut in a brief scene at the sink. Stand the young boy there, washing his mouth out, gurgling discreetly as if the locale had shifted to some high-class place. (12-3)

The jump cuts continue as the primary editorial feature of William's ongoing montage. Just as the previous montage characterizes his johns as a specific type—white, fat, bald—the above sequence further conflates his johns by way of juxtaposing their comically routine sexual banter. But what is particularly interesting about this depiction of William's past is the directorial rather than authorial connotation of his prose. Although he begins by describing the scene as “one long sentence,” Ong quickly moves to suggest not how the audience should read these events, but how she or he should edit them into a cinematic sequence.

This “one long sentence” thereby becomes an unbroken dialogue played over a “comic chain” or montage of shots, ostensibly medium close-ups of white, fat, bald, men’s faces (each of “a separate talking head”) saying the things they say. This montage constitutes the overarching editorial structure of the sequence. Ong then offers to the reader suggestions on how to break up that montage by inserting other parallel footage—“Sometimes the montage is interrupted by an errant scene.” And then directorially, Ong edits and composes the *mise-en-scène* very clearly: “Also cut in a brief scene at the sink. Stand the young boy there, washing his mouth out, gurgling discreetly as if the locale had shifted to some high-class place.” Here, Ong furthers his integration of film form into his literary enterprise and also underscores the role of film in his larger class satire. Through film montage—images of johns juxtaposed with William rinsing his mouth out as some sort of self-preservation ritual—Ong depicts both his sleazy past and his upwardly-mobile aspirations. Furthermore, to bring it back to Bourdieu, William’s adherence to cinematic language for his own literary analepsis reinforces the importance of film as a resource for his performance of self—and representation of identity.

Later in the novel, Ong makes a somewhat subtler gesture of integrating what at first is a referential use of cinema-going into the fictional form of William’s continuing creation of himself as Master Chao. In this scene, William describes the circumstances of seeing a film at the urging of Kendo—a film “about Chinatown gangsters, peopled with extras from a Michael Jackson video” (227). His self-conscious analysis of the ostensibly fictional film’s relationship to issues of cultural performativity is presented with a sort of intellectualizing hindsight.

William presents himself as a savvy, self-aware cinema-goer as it pertains to trends in racial representation on screen. What he seems less conscious of, however, is how his cinema-going experience gets subsequently folded into his own ongoing narrative of his other self—his performance of himself as Master Chao. To this end, I will quote two passages at length:

After dinner, he mentioned a movie. There was this flick that purported to take up history's cycle where it had left off, which went something like this: First Asians had been wily, made mysterious by shadows falling on the planes of their flat faces; and then, after the hard work of revisionism that followed the civil rights movement, a curtain parted and out they came fully lit and ready to be appreciated for their true dignified, stoic, and hardworking natures. And now, this new movie was upending the established morality by giving back to Asians the right to be "bad" once more. . . .

So Kendo took me. But you could tell even before he saw anything that he was already a customer. (226-7)

There is a lot to unpack here, of course, not the least of which is William's very succinct, satirical, microcosmic trajectory of cinematic racial depiction in a post-post-civil-rights context. William's sense of racial self has to tend not only with ostracizing or marginalizing images, but the recognition of a circular pattern of purported racial progress. Based on the above logic of cinematic trends in Asian representation, the natural progression of racial representation, after having gone

through and come out the other side of a period of revision or correction, is to circle back to villainy or simple caricature.

This irony of returning to the villainous depiction of the previously ostracized other underscores William's own arbitrary use of racial stereotypes. And that is the crux of William's recollection of going to the cinema with Kendo,



Michael Jackson's "Bad" Video (Martin Scorsese, 1987)

who economically privileged, ironically longs to be a lowly gangster.⁹² From this, Ong sublimates William's seeming self-awareness and critical eye and transposes this cinema-going experience into his recapitulation of himself as Master Chao.

Shortly after seeing the film with Kendo, William meets another mark and starts to better formulate his own sense of his other self:

I gave her my fake history about having had to flee my father's enemies in Hong Kong.

There was a momentary flash in the middle of this—like a preview of real life—when I heard myself say: Footprints had to be removed. I had to become this new person so wholly, so completely, that in the very likely instance that these people sent scouts to track me down, I would not be found in the places that someone like me . . .

would be. I needed to reinvent myself so totally that I would become untraceable.

How had my father made enemies in Hong Kong? . . .

Seeing her desire for more, I embellished, leaning in to whisper in her ear: Also there was some trouble with the Hong Kong mafia. (236)

William ingratiate himself by way of cinematic appropriation. His cinema-going experience with Kendo now informs his creation of his second self. William transposes trouble with the Hong Kong mafia from the screen into his backstory for Master Chao. It is a matter of ironic self-preservation. To protect himself William must best articulate and perpetuate an alternative identity and he does so through cinema. Here we see William's reliance on cinema as a resource for cultural performativity. In this sense he is already working on a different level than Kendo who already has preferred social status and seeks a sort of degradation through the catharsis of cinema. William, on the other hand, employs cinema as a tool of ascension. And this is exactly the Bourdeuvian trope: William initially, as a means of accumulating cultural, social, and even economic capital, exploits the arbitrary value applied to furniture placement and cinema knowledge.

Ong furthers his formal use of cinema later in the novel by introducing voice-over to his already established editorial conceit as William recounts yet another Master Chao scenario within the domicile of a hapless well-off mark. Here, Ong edits both the image and the soundtrack:

Cut a scene this way: In between bouts of pretend-wisdom which he declaims with folksy gravity to the owners, have the young man, physically unrecognizable from his former life, have this new young man, in a voice-over, wonder which of the several items he sees in these various houses he could safely make away with to sell later on . . . And then crosscut the various homes . . . with the pawnshops in and around Times Square where he goes to hock his goods . . . Crosscut too the faces of the residents of each environment to see these two poles of New York made flesh.

(133-4)

Ong employs the cinematic techniques of parallel editing and voice over narration, both of which constitute a literary use of cinematic form as a means of establishing William's montage-like retrospective of his former Chao self. Again cinematic knowledge is used as a model of self-identification. However, in this instance William's use of cinema extends beyond the Bourdieuvian model in that his appeal is not to his Feng Sui marks, but to the reader. Rather than as means of cultural capital, William's use of cinema here is literary in that it attempts to use the style of film as a means of identifying and constructing his examination of himself for the reader. In turn Ong, and his surrogate narrator William, begins to complicate the relationship between film and issues of cultural performance and personal identification. Possibly as a means of getting beyond Bourdieu, William turns to classical Hollywood.

“. . . it's like a fucking Joan Crawford movie.”:

Ong's Hollywood Intertext

Ong's first historical reference to classical Hollywood film comes during a trip to the library at Lincoln Center by William who finds a sort of hustler's refuge in the female-driven melodramas of classical Hollywood. He writes: “I was able



Stanwyck in *Double Indemnity*

to rescue two that I thought Preciosa wouldn't mind seeing or—as was usually the case—reseeing: *The Little Foxes*, with a nasty Bette Davis; and *Double Indemnity*, with a nasty Barbara Stanwyck”

(34). Both *The Little*

Foxes and *Double Indemnity* were produced during the height of the Old Hollywood studio system era (the 1930s and 1940s), both exemplify classical Hollywood style, both were shot in black and white (as were all of Ong's directly references films, Hollywood and otherwise), both were mainstream commercial releases, both feature *femme fatale* or *femme fatale*-like female protagonists/antagonists. Both are critiques, in their own way, of the rich. Both feature actresses who would later become gay icons, a point that makes the reference to Joan Crawford later in the book—in a passage that invokes her

performances in *Mildred Pierce* (Michael Curtiz, 1945) and *Johnny Guitar* (Nicholas Ray, 1954)—all the more pertinent.

But it is Davis and Stanwyck who are expressly featured in *Fixer Chao*, both for their status as Hollywood stars and gay icons, and for their recurrent screen personae: “nasty” as William says. Later in the novel, William notes:

Back at Lincoln Center checking out movies. Barbara Stanwyck and Bette Davis. Movies Preciosa enjoyed so much she insisted on seeing them again. Two actresses Preciosa could've easily been next in line to. Stanwyck playing a cardsharp's daughter in *The Lady Eve*, and Davis a willful Southern girl in *Jezebel*. How had these two actresses sustained the energy to keep playing at badness? I myself was tired out from having to dupe all those people. At some point, it was no longer enough to hate them for their wealth.

(220)

Stanwyck and Davis represent, for William, the dubious power of class performativity. In *The Lady Eve*, Stanwyck plays Jean Harrington, a con-woman who, by way of falling in love with her mark, ends up taking on the persona of an upper-class English woman, Lady Eve Sidwich, in an attempt to both toy with and re-entice her now love interest, Charles Pike, played by Henry Fonda.⁹³ Jean is a woman who makes her living by “playing” people, a con artist, just as William is a con artist. He has been “playing” people, specifically people with money and therefore of a class above, by way of his and Shem's Feng Shui scam. The con artist, or the con, or at the very least financially motivated deceit, is at the heart of

many of Ong's film references. The plot of *The Little Foxes*, for example, revolves around such financially motivated manipulation. In the film Davis plays Regina Giddens, a woman whose ruthless ambition and greed comes, more often than



The Lady Eve

not, at the expense of the men around her. Furthermore, as is the case with *The Lady Eve*, manipulation and deceit are often tied to class and the performance of class. Stanwyck's con artist is a performer in much the same way William is. She assumes the persona of an upper-class English woman in order to manipulate her

rich love interest, just as William assumes the role of Master Chao as a means of manipulating his upper-class clients, or marks. In order to gain entrance to the higher class he uses not only his race as cultural capital, but art as well. Agatha Christie novels, for instance, provide him with a sense of upper-class manners and discourse. And, I would argue, his interest in film, which reaches beyond mere cinema-going, as Bourdieu would have it, functions, as directly as Agatha Christie, as a way of accumulating cultural capital as well. This is made more apparent with regards to Japanese cinema, which I will address below.

Also representing a conniving, vengeful female, *Jezebel* stars Bette Davis as Julie Marsden—a role for which she won the Oscar—a selfish and, as William characterizes her, willful Southern belle who out of spite for her fiancé, Preston Dillard, again played by Henry Fonda, breaks social convention by wearing a red

dress to a formal ball in the film's most famous moment. Her actions and the film's portrayal of race provides a particularly interesting intertext for Ong when we consider Richard Dyer's reading of the film in his seminal article "White." As Dyer delineates it, "*Jezebel* depicts a white society characterized by order and



Bette Davis Framed by Obscured Black Characters in *Jezebel*

rigidity, here expressed principally through codes of behavior and rules of conduct embodied in set-piece receptions, dinner parties and balls" (831).

This white society is nonetheless, Dyer argues,

defined in many ways by its

juxtaposition to blackness. Fitting within the basic colonialist rubric, it is the racial other that is more emotional, spiritual and therefore more connected to, associated with "Life," the body, the sensual. In this sense, it is fitting that William would be drawn to the film based on the inherent ambivalences in its depiction of race. The racial other is at once both marginalized and fetishized. "Jezebel," Dyer argues, "explores the ways in which whiteness is related to blackness, materially and emotionally dependent on it yet still holding sway over it" (831). As Master Chao, William finds himself in just such a position. The New York elite enlist his Feng Sui prowess ostensibly as means of material and emotion gain, and while they celebrate him as a racial other in tune with

something spiritual and non-western, it is an exploitation, a fetish, rather than a true embracing of his humanity.

To extrapolate this further, *Jezebel's* racial politics are, as Dyer argues it, conflated with gender politics, which makes it more so an appropriate intertext for William and Ong. In the film's most famous moment, Julie wears a red dress to a society ball at which her engagement is to be announced. This, Dyer suggests, aligns her with color, the life and sensuality of the racial other. I would argue that her gender defiance aligns her not only with racial otherness, but sexual otherness, which would appeal to William as a marginalized homosexual. And yet, William is neither black nor woman and so in these images he finds only surrogate identification. And the repercussions offered cinematically for such insurgent behaviors, racial and sexual, differ. Julie's cruelty toward her fiancé is remedied as she comes to acknowledge her mistreatment of him and her misguided violation of class mores, and atones by nursing him back to health after he contracts yellow fever.

Double Indemnity, on the other hand, offers no such redemption for its conniving female lead. Stanwyck, as Phyllis Dietrichson, one of cinema's great *femme fatales*, coaxes Walter Neff (Fred MacMurray) into killing her husband ostensibly so they can collect the insurance money and run away together (to a better life, the American Dream, as it were). She double crosses him, of course, and gets a bullet in the belly for her misdeeds. Ong's juxtaposing of these very different repercussions speaks to William's own worries about what will become of him given his misdeeds. Will he repent and find redemption, or take a bullet in the gut? This *femme fatale* thread running through Ong's film references is

not limited to Hollywood, however. In *Throne of Blood*, which I will discuss below, Isuzu Yamada plays Lady Asaji Washizu a character who is based on literature's archetypal *femme fatale*, Lady Macbeth.

Hud, a film the novel references only once and seemingly in passing, stands out amongst the otherwise female dominated film references in *Fixer Chao*, both because of the film's male protagonist and because of the questions the film raises about the mythology of the American dream and the issues of individualism that that dream entails. Late in the novel, William, referring to the article written by Shem C., writes that:

In the article, he'd cited *Hud*, the Paul Newman movie, as my favorite: the story of a young boy and his strut. The lie was so left field it left me scratching my head for days. And then I just simply enjoyed the fact that detectives from all over, plus those that I'd scammed, would be scouring every frame of this movie—which I hadn't even seen, much less loved!—for clues to my character, my motives. (367)

Hud's performative "strut" withstanding, Ong's choice of *Hud*, over, say, *Cool Hand Luke* (equally strut-worthy), or any other iconic mid-century Paul Newman—also somewhat of a gay icon, for *Cat On A Hot Tin Roof* (Richard Brooks, 1958) if for no other reason—movie, functions as a particularly meaningful intertextual referent for the novel. As prompted by William, I will now "scour" a few frames from the film to find "clues" to Ong's "motives."

Ong's incorporation of *Hud* draws primarily on the film's revisionist take on the western, a genre indelibly linked to issues of the American Dream from

both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁹⁴ For its part, *Hud* tells the story of a fighting, womanizing, and entirely self-interested young Texan, identified more with the automobile than the horse, a fact which puts him at odds with his



Hud

rancher father and the traditional values he represents. Hud is not an easily likeable human being, nor is he entirely unattractive. In fact his unlikeable behavior might make him all the more attractive. This is in part due to the casting and performance of Newman and in part due to the vicarious pleasure one takes in watching a

character do and act as he or she pleases, regardless of the moral or ethical implications of those actions (much like Davis and Stanwyck in many of their roles). Like William, Hud is, in his own way, a hustler—a young buck using others to benefit his own social progress. In “*Hud: The American Dream and the Void*,” Walter Poznar argues that *Hud* was “the first serious American film to give a definitive expression of what has so often been described as an existential view of life” (230). I’m not sure Charles Foster Kane or Scarlet O’Hara would agree with Poznar, but nonetheless, the significance of Ong’s use of *Hud* has, I think, more to do with the broader concept of the American Dream than it does Existentialism, though each are, by their own measure, concerned with individual identity within a social, universal context. *Hud*’s portrayal of the American

Dream, through its contemporaneous use of the conventions of the western, seems more immediately applicable to William, particularly given his status as immigrant and as pursuivant of upward mobility (which maybe sets him apart from Hud or Kane or Scarlet, but certainly situates him within the milieu of the western). As Poznar writes:

If the American dream means anything, it means the fulfillment of the individual, the belief that life can somehow be fashioned to enable each person to achieve selfhood, joy and worth. What *Hud* the movie suggests is that this is sheer illusion, the notion that fulfillment is possible if only certain things happen, if the social environment is improved, if human relationships are clarified, if compassion and courage are reaffirmed. (233)

For Poznar, the American dream is distinctly linked to individualism and the pursuit of, as he puts it, selfhood. Hud, like William, takes to illicit means, dating married women and such, when he chooses, arbitrarily in pursuit of his selfhood and identity.

This is illustrated early in the film when Hud is called to the ranch to attend to a dead heifer. Separated in the frame by a branch, covered in buzzards, stretching from lower middle to upper right, are Patriarch Bannon's horse screen left and Hud's arrival screen right in a truck. After a faceless ranch hand inveighs "been trying to keep them birds away, had to use the flashlight most of the night" Hud turns to the truck, pulls out the shotgun and fires several more rounds into the off-screen space. With a cut we see that the birds barely respond, the natural

world unresponsive to such youthful aggression, most remaining perched on the dead branch.

HUD: Ah, look at d'em buzzards. . . .You couldn't scare them with artillery.

HOMER BANNON: I wish you wouldn't do that Hud, they keep the country clean. Besides, there's a law against killin' buzzards.

HUD: I always said the law was meant to be interpreted in a lenient manner. That's what I try to do; sometimes I lean to one side of it, sometimes I lean to the other.

And this is where William and Shem C. are at: breaking the law in a lenient manner to serve their own self-preservation in response to the negative waves of racial and economic otherness. And this gets us to another important aspect of the mythology of the American Dream: that America is a classless society and that economic mobility is simply a matter of self-making—the western embodies and perpetuates such ideals. This concept is of course not a Twentieth Century invention. The great potential of the American Dream mythology has its roots in the westward expansion of the Nineteenth Century and the myth of the frontier. In “The Death of the Western Hero: Martin Ritt’s *Hud* and *Hombre*,” Gabriel Miller writes that, “In the character of Hud [Ritt] explores the characteristics of isolation and individualism, and he finds selfishness and immorality. Modern Western society, here associated with the macho individualist rather than being an entity he is separated from, is seen to be as greedy and corrupt as its ‘hero’ himself” (37). In other words, *Hud* is essentially a revisionist western that

attempts to demythologize the western hero, the cowboy of the nineteenth century version of the American frontier, and replace him with the Western hero, or anti-hero, as it were, the twentieth century American male faced with the task of reconciling the conflicting forces of individualism and modernity.

Like William and Shem C., Hud's upward mobility is thwarted in part due to his own actions and in part due to the fact that he has nothing left to offer the social structure: he has no capital and no cultural capital. In effect, the American dream of individualism and self-creation has died with the death of the frontier and been replaced by an effort toward an assimilative simulacrum. For William, in other words, self-creation becomes assimilation as it does for Hud. *Hud* does not, however, memorialize the past, nor does it celebrate a dream that once was. Instead, much in the way *Fixer Chao* addresses the issue of identity, the place of the immigrant, the Americanization of the immigrant, the film simply acknowledges the American dream for what it is: a mythic construct. In the end Hud is left alone, yet in charge of the family farm—isolated, yet in control of, in a sense, his future, and yet not himself anymore, his selfhood ultimately dictated not by individual self-creation but assimilation into an external socio-economic construct. Although William's journey inevitably takes him West, the storied direction of the American dream, his conclusion moves beyond *Hud's* twentieth century western ambivalence to full blown irony. He writes:

. . .until finally one day a thought succeeded in forming itself:
that what had been a lifelong irritant—that I walked around
the world unseen, as if invisible—had now become a strange
and beautiful blessing, freeing me to live my life all over

again, as if the previous one had only been a rough draft, a vague outline to be crossed over, exceeded, to be transcended, as if that life was the earthly life and this one, the California one, with myself benumbed and calm and floating inside the bubble of mall after white mall . . . as if this life, finally, was the heavenly one. (377)

This rebirth by way of moving West, of creating oneself anew, is the American dream both of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. When considering *Hud*, and all that William had done and been through back East, Ong's deliberately beatific tone serves as ironic acknowledgement of the myth of the American dream—that someone can still pick up and move west and recreate himself. This is further amplified if we look at a meta-cinematic moment from *Hud*.

In a self-reflexive gesture which reinforces *Hud's* ambivalence toward the American dream, the farmer patriarch Bannon, living out the long since waned nineteenth century frontiersman context, takes Hud's nephew, who is positioned attitudinally between the patriarch and the son, to see a movie. Seated amongst the letter-jacketed townies with their poodle-skirted girl friends and women in hats, they commune alike singing in unison to the animated overture of the nineteenth century folk ballad "Oh My Darling, Clementine." Inextricable from the American Dream mythology, the verse and refrain Mr. Bannon and Lonnie sing along with are as follows:

In a cavern, in a canyon,
Excavating for a mine
Dwelt a miner forty niner,

And his daughter Clementine

Oh my darling, oh my darling,

Oh my darling, Clementine!

Thou art lost and gone forever

Dreadful sorry, Clementine

Because the song tells a tale of nineteenth century western expansion, that of the Gold Rush and the pursuit of individuality and financial mobility the era represents, it resonates with the entire audience more than 100 years later, as they sing along enthusiastically. The song is a dirge of sorts for the lost daughter of a '49er miner. It underscores the dangers of a working-class pursuit of riches, the American dream, and individuality in the face of economic hegemony. And, in this sense, *Hud* provides an apt cinematic analogue for William's circumstances, and a reflection of his own realization of the potentially negative effects of the American dream mythology on personal identity and social relationships, familial and otherwise.

“Do you know the work of Yasu-jeer-o Oh-zoo?”:

Japanese Cinema and Cultural Appropriation

Ong's use of Japanese cinema in *Fixer Chao* is more explicitly linked to cultural capital in that the crux of William's and Shem's con, and in turn William's entrée into a higher class, is the commodification of his Asian-ness—his

immigrant status thus becoming a form of economic, rather than racial identity. This connection between Japanese cinema and cultural capital is made apparent by William's and Shem's first mark. After some initial Feng Shui consultation by William, Lindsay S. asks:

Do you know the work of Yasu-jeer-o Oh-zoo?

Who? I asked.

Yasujiro Ozu, echoed Shem. The Japanese director?

The greatest, replied Lindsay. The most sublime of all moviemakers.

No, I had to admit. I stole a nervous glance at Shem:

Was this part of what I had to master as an Oriental as well?

It occurred to me that I just might have revealed a chink in an otherwise smooth performance. (79)

There are a few things going on in this passage. First is Lindsay's stereotypically American conflation of Asian culture. Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino: it all registers as Oriental, as Asian, a conflation of East-ness. This tendency is of course exactly what Shem is capitalizing on. Second, to bring us back to Bourdieu, is Lindsay's dropping of a director's name as a cultural reference point. As Bourdieu says, "Knowledge of directors is much more closely linked to cultural capital than is mere cinema-going." Therefore this is not, in fact, a racially or culturally—in the sense of national origin—motivated question on the part of Lindsay, it is, whether he is conscious of it or not, an economic question. The third revelation in this passage is William's self-acknowledgement of his performing of class: "a chink in an otherwise smooth performance." Ong's

implied double connotation of “chink” here provides a link between film and cultural performativity in the novel. As William recognizes a flaw in the performance of his new self which constitutes a flaw in his Asian-ness in this context, he has also offered a remedy: cinema.

Kurosawa and Ozu, the Japanese directors who together constitute much of William’s source material nonetheless seem to resonate differently in the Bourdieuvian sense. Later in the novel after William has taken Lindsay’s advice and gone to see a showing of Ozu’s most famous film, at least to Western audiences, *Tokyo Story*, he writes of the film:

It had been the slowest thing I’d ever seen. Nonetheless, I’d stayed, hoping for its uneventfulness to turn instructive. The main lesson it turned out to impart was the “secret smile” which, Mona Lisa-like, has settled on the faces of various characters, . . . giving them the appearance of keeping enlightenment to themselves. This I copied for my consultations. (141)

And when he expresses his disinterest in Japanese film, Shem, aghast, asks, “Even Akee-ra Kurow-sah-wah?” To which William replies, “Who?” Shem: “You gotta be kidding. . . .He made *Throne of Blood*.” Given that Ong so intently singles out these two Japanese filmmakers and their films, it is necessary that we should take a closer look at them.

Tokyo Story is, more often than any other film by Ozu, listed amongst the greatest cinematic masterpieces. The dominant assessment of Ozu’s contribution to world cinema, at least by Western critics, centers almost exclusively on aspects

of style. Ozu is utterly non-Western in his directorial approach, particularly with regards to his use of the camera, which almost never moves. *Tokyo Story*, for instance is shot almost entirely from a waist height point-of-view, meaning that if an actor stands the audience can no longer see his or her face. This is in stark contrast to the classical Hollywood style in which the camera would rise along with the actor so as to not in anyway alienate or distract the viewer from the narrative. And it is for just this reason that Ozu is so attractive to a high art-minded Western film critiques. His style is provocative because it challenges our notions of what the cinematic experience can and should be. As Robert Sklar notes, Ozu's minimalist style is not simply a visual conceit. He writes that:

This camera style is deployed in the service of the narrative in which, in the conventional sense, very little happens. . . . In [*Tokyo Story*], generally regarded as Ozu's greatest film from [the postwar period], an elderly couple visits their children in Tokyo. The parents get in the way, go home, the mother sickens and dies, and everyone regrets that busy, cramped, and narrow lives impinge on family relations. The combination of Ozu's style and subject is both distancing and intimate. (299)

Despite its stylistic differences, the generational conflict in *Tokyo Story* corresponds nicely to that in *Hud*. Hud has no use for his father's sense of tradition, for the past. He rejects Homer and what he represents as any type of guiding presence in his life. In *Tokyo Story*, issues of the past and present, and the generational divide center on pre- and postwar Japan. The younger

generation, consumed by the surging modernization and rebuilding of the country after the war, is indifferent and ungracious toward their elders and in turn Japan's past.⁹⁵

What is interesting is that although Ozu was, and most certainly still is, revered by Japanese critics, his work and this film are not necessarily characteristic of the whole of Japanese cinema. Yet, when William is asked about



Tokyo Story

Japanese cinema and replies that he doesn't care for it, the *it* is not Japanese cinema, but rather one film, *Tokyo Story*. By the same token, when Lindsay

asks William if he knows Ozu, he is in fact not only conflating all things Asian, he is conflating Japanese cinema through the figure of Ozu. This makes it all the more humorous when Shem, in shock, asks, "Even Akee-ra Kurow-sah-wah?" because the only Japanese filmmaker more famous in the West than Ozu is Akira Kurosawa.

Far more widely distributed and seen—and aped by Western filmmakers—in the West than Ozu, Kurosawa's name is nearly synonymous with Japanese cinema. As Brian Parker writes in "Nature and Society in Akira Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood*," "[Kurosawa] has often been called the 'most Western' of Japanese film directors (and is certainly the best known of them in Europe and America)" (508). But again this demonstrates a misunderstanding of not only of

Japan's rich cinematic history, but also their rapacious postwar consumption of American film. Japan is one of Hollywood's largest foreign markets and has been for quite some time. To say that Kurosawa represents the whole of Japanese film culture is to not only an oversimplification but wholly misrepresents both their filmmakers and audiences. Nonetheless, even the everyday cinema-going—as Bourdieu would have it—in the West and particularly in America has seen Kurosawa though they may be unaware of it. If you've seen Clint Eastwood in *A Fistful of Dollars* (1964) (the first film in Sergio Leone's "The Man with No Name" trilogy) then you've seen, at least in a form, *Yojimbo* (1961). And if you've seen *Star Wars* (George Lucas, 1977), then you've seen, again in an appropriated form, Kurosawa's *The Hidden Fortress* (1958)—all of which is the sort of intertextual baggage Ong would hope the reader would bring to his novel.

Ong chooses *Throne of Blood* as his representative Kurosawa film, an appropriate choice given the film's source material and its narrative and thematic



Throne of Blood

correlation with the representation of gender in the aforementioned classical Hollywood films. *Throne of Blood* is *Macbeth* set in medieval imperial Japan. *Macbeth*, of course, presents a classic story of greed, manipulation, and social ascension, not to mention one of

literature's most willful and influential female protagonists. Lady Asaji Washizu is, in a sense, Lady Eve Sidwich, is Regina Giddens, is the Jezebel Julie Marsden,

and is the *femme fatale* Phyllis Dietrichson. And when, in William's words, "Isuzu Yamada had sent someone to kill me but had instead sacrificed her own son. . . . Reality [extended] from the geometric perfection of the Japanese movies I'd studied, in which she'd been the star, the black shining star" (345), the play, the performance, the con has been realized in the direst of actions. The formal perfection of Kurosawa's cinema is therefore belied by the actions of real life. William begins to recognize the faulty model of a manufactured truth, an image, the cinema, and a constructed self. And it is *Throne of Blood* that should have clued us in on the resultant tragedy, if indeed Kendo's death constitutes tragedy.⁹⁶

But for all of their narrative correlations, Ong's film references, both Hollywood and Japanese, function as representations of cultural capital and as an avenue for class performativity. If we believe Bourdieu that "knowledge of directors is much more closely linked to cultural capital than is mere cinema-going" then it seems a logical extension of this assessment that the more arcane or esoteric ones knowledge of directors is, the greater cultural capital said knowledge would hold. And to relate this to the hierarchy of cultural capital presented in the novel, Lindsay's Ozu trumps Shem's Kurosawa.

Ultimately however, Japanese cinema—regardless of what either directors' work has to say about issues of class and gender—simply provides William a cultural capital and potential for upward mobility and the American Dream which is only temporary, detrimental to his sense of racial identity, and leads, when coupled with the novel's Old Hollywood references, to a profound sense of ambivalence. By the end of the novel, as if taking his cue from Horace Greeley

and the Hollywood western, William has gone west to California as a means of finally escaping drugs, hustling, and crime. And although he appears to be enjoying his recovery, his description of it as such appeals more to acquiescence than empowerment, of shedding racial and individual identity for anonymity. He writes:

Walking the malls of L.A., I felt that I was truly a changed person. It was only a matter of time before I began not looking Chinese, or even Filipino. I didn't know how it happened. Living in the sun, I turned darker by the day. Most times, people mistook me for John Wayne Indian. Sure, I told them. What tribe? they'd ask. And I would pick out the obvious brand names: Navajo, Cherokee, Cree—names I'd heard from the movies . . . I liked California. It was full of people like me, ghosts with histories receding daily. (374)

William's sense of racial identity has become so blurred, so amalgamated that not only has he given up trying to define it, opting simply to be recognized as a "John Wayne Indian" (which in itself is a racial conflation: Navajo, Cherokee, Cree), he begins by stating that he no longer looks Chinese, or even Filipino—the implication being that he no longer looks like the race he pretended to be or actually is.

Furthermore, William spends his days wandering, "sunglassed," in and around the homogenized shops and malls and multiplexes. Almost Binx Bolling-like, he wanders and he views movies daily, mostly of the contemporary, clichéd

Hollywood variety such as the “bank heist gone wrong” film. The film, which plays out as a series of death scenes includes as the final death, Jokey, who “had risen enough in the last year to have his screen deaths postponed until the finale, therefore assuring him more screen time, but who still had not risen to the level of being thought of as life material” (377). William muses on the idea of a movie version of his own life wherein he could be cast as Chao thereby allowing him to finally “be able to play the kind of part that had always alluded him: someone who lives, who, in that way, I suppose triumphs” (377). “Or,” he offers alternatively, “would they, in the movies, kill me?” (377). Here again we see underscored William’s racial ambivalence. He is at once thoughtful and self-aware (he assesses Jokey’s film as a sure fire hit based on its effectiveness in satisfying generic expectations) and complacent (succumbing to the notion that he is equally the star of his own film and a racial other who dies in it).

Moving away, it seems from both the Japanese references and those of the Old Hollywood—*Jezebel* and *Hud* in particular which offered a potentially more lasting model for mobility and the American Dream in that they present rebellion rather than appropriation—William’s journey ends on the third referential option: the contemporary Hollywood film. This choice is in line with the ambivalent tone of the end of the novel. William writes:

But apart from seeing Jokey again, my life remained an uninflected one of stalking around unbothered, until finally one day a thought succeeded in forming itself: that what had been a lifelong irritant—that I walked around the world unseen, as if invisible—had now become a strange and

beautiful blessing, freeing me to live my life all over again, as if the previous one had only been a rough draft, a vague outline to be crossed over, exceeded, to be transcended, as if that life was the earthly life and this one, the California one, with myself benumbed and calm and floating inside the bubble of mall after white mall—places that were like hospitals with their piped-in music and blanching light—as if this life, finally, was the heavenly one. (377)

It is as if William has given himself over a colorless idealization. Disillusioned by the use of film as both a means of cultural capital and self-making, William instead is relegated, sans any concrete racial identity, to a sort of ambivalent bliss, an invisible moviegoer and mall zombie.

It seems clear that for Ong this rebirth of William into the hospital-like malls of California is meant to be taken with a sense of irony. What isn't clear is whether or not we are to understand that William senses the irony as well. What we are left with is essentially the American Dream realized in a colorless, homogenized, and antiseptic shopping mall/multiplex wherein, as if out of some dystopian science fiction film, calming music and clichéd cinema are piped-in as a sort of consumerist calming agent. Race, class, and even gender evaporate and with them the need for the performance of each as such. And yet film nonetheless is carried through as a source of identification for William despite the fact that his cinematic self-awareness seems only to amount to a profound racial and sociological ambivalence.

EPILOGUE

DeLillo's Twentieth Century Scope



Bobby Thomson's "shot heard round the world" October 3, 1951



Zapruder film of the JFK assassination November 22, 1963

“ . . . a day now gone to black and white in the film fade of memory.”

“Didn't *Ivan the Terrible* contain scenes so comically overwrought, amid the undeniable power of the montage, that you laughed and caught your breath more or less simultaneously?”

Don DeLillo's *Underworld* provides me not a definitive conclusion but temporary closure by its bringing this dissertation historically full-circle and because it serves as the beginning of a larger, or at least future project. The historical scope of the novel—which overtakes even that of *Gravity's Rainbow*—and its use of film as a means of applying that historical scope reinforce, I would

suggest, the intertextual link to modernists. Playing a role for DeLillo similar to that which Fritz Lang does for Pynchon, Sergei Eisenstein's inclusion in *Underworld* effectively bookends this dissertation on the point that the film intertext can, despite modernist or postmodernist designations, pre- and postwar



Sergei Eisenstein with His Ammunition

contexts, etc., function as a unifying analytical rubric for particular twentieth century fiction.

No doubt in some part influenced by Pynchon, DeLillo's use of film in *Underworld* is centered on the metaphorical

connotation of the cinematic "shot" which becomes the basic structuring principle for the novel's investigation of American identity, history, historical trauma, and memory against the backdrop of the Cold War. The etymology of the cinematic use of the term "shot" stems from the earliest years of cinema and manually cranked cameras which operated like hand cranked machine guns. Film would be loaded like rounds of ammunition and fed through the camera thusly to shoot, or capture—to extend the militaristic metaphor—the image as such. As Julianne Burton writes in, "The Camera as 'Gun': Two Decades of Culture and Resistance in Latin America":

The metaphor of the movie camera as gun is as old as the apparatus itself. Etienne Jules Marey, credited with inventing the first motion picture camera in France in 1882,

described the instrument he sought to invent before the fact as “une sorte de fusil *photographique*” [“a sort of photographic musket”]. What he designed was in fact the size and shape of a rifle. The metaphor acquired renewed currency in the Latin American context. There is a marvelous photograph of Sergei Eisenstein on location for the ill-fated *Que Viva Mexico!* Eisenstein is posed behind a camera on a tripod; draped over him and the camera are the cartridge belts made famous by the soldiers of the Mexican revolution. (49)

The camera as weapon of revolution was a prospect not lost on Eisenstein, of course, whose work in intellectual montage was as ideologically motivated, at

least early on, as it was artistically so.



Marcy's "Photographic Musket"

For DeLillo, the “shot” metaphor, the camera as gun⁹⁷, is established through its

conflation of other gun and/or “shot” imagery. The first of which is Bobby Thomson’s “shot heard round the world” homerun on October 3, 1951 which provides the historical context for *Underworld*’s prologue entitled “The Triumph of Death.” This historical moment for DeLillo functions as a way to establish the intermingling cinematic and violent connotations of a “shot”: 1) the homerun is often called a “shot” in baseball lingo, or a color commentator might remark that

“he killed the ball,” even “launched a bomb” equally lethal though more suitable maybe to Pynchon, 2) the game was shot, captured on film in perpetuity, 3) the nickname for the event was taken from two historical moments of war (originally from the first stanza of Ralph Waldo Emerson’s “Concord Hymn” (1837)⁹⁸ which commemorates the first shot of the American Revolution and then later as used to designate the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in 1914 which instigated the First World War, and 4) possibly the most lethal of all it was a shot that killed Dodger fans hopes for the playoffs.⁹⁹

In addition DeLillo, explicitly and implicitly, incorporates home movies and video, documentary, and military footage—“an endless series of images sucked up by the belly cameras of surveillance planes” (462)¹⁰⁰—as other forms of cinematic intertextuality which relate to issues of historical memory. For



Keith Relaxing After or Before a Show in *Cocksucker Blues*

instance, during Thomson’s homerun comes the news that the Soviet’s have tested an atomic bomb which invariably evokes in the reader’s mind the filmed images of our own nuclear testing as well as military footage of the bombs

dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki which effectively started the Cold War.

DeLillo also incorporates other examples of documentary film from *Cocksucker Blues* (Robert Frank, 1972), home video in the fictional footage of the Texas

Highway Killer's murder, and the Zapruder film, which captured another shot heard round the world the footage of which is burned into our collective historical memory. It is as if DeLillo suggests two ways to perceive history, through the "shots" of violence and war and the "shots" of film which captured them as such.

Per this point, it is clear that DeLillo's interest in the cinematic image as shaper of historical memory manifests as a motif throughout much of his work. As filmmaker Frank Volterra, a DeLillo character from another novel, *The Names* (1982), states:

Film is more than the twentieth-century art. It's another part of the twentieth-century mind. It's the world seen from inside. We've come to a certain point in the history of film. If a thing can be filmed, film is implied in the thing itself. This is where we are. The twentieth century is *on film*. It's the filmed century. You have to ask yourself if there's anything about us more important than the fact that we're constantly on film, constantly watching ourselves. The whole world is on film, all the time. Spy satellites, microscopic scanners, pictures of the uterus, embryos, sex, war, assassinations, everything. (200)

The implication is that film provides the evidence, supplies both artifact and origin for our historical memories. The consciousness of American historical identity, DeLillo suggests, is more based on film images than experience. We exist once removed from actuality and our allegiance of thought and emotion is first to the cinematic image, the record of an event, provided us. Of course, this

critical perspective works both ways: 1) it suggests a vapidness, vicariousness in the collective understanding of the American experience, and yet 2) it recognizes mediascape as it impacts, for better and for worse, our collective understanding of history. And so it will be interesting to consider what DeLillo's exact take is on visual media's saturation of the collective consciousness of America and how such representation corresponds to individual understanding. On the one side we are removed from reality based on the distancing function of partisanship. On the other, we have the abhorrent nuclear mushroom, JFK, and the rest so permanently embedded in our historical memory as reminders of universal misbehaviors and governmental misdirection, that one is paused to take note.

To reframe things and setting politics aside for a moment, DeLillo's "shot" motif underscores filmmaking as a structuring component for literature, as an intertext in kind with a century-long tradition. For example, the scene at the Polo Grounds is essentially an extended montage, an arrangement of single images which make up a larger composition. DeLillo cuts back and forth between the action in the stands, on the field, the play-by-play announcements, and conversations between Jackie Gleason, Frank Sinatra, and J. Edgar Hoover, among others. At moments, sentences shorten, become more like shot descriptions and are rapidly juxtaposed line by line. For example:

Gleason is suspended in wreckage, drained and humped, and he has barely the wit to consider what the shouting's about.

The field streaked with people, the hat snatchers, the swift kids who imitate banking aircraft, their arms steeply raked.

Look at Cotter under a seat.

All over the city people are coming out of their houses.

. . .And Cotter is under a seat handfighting someone for the baseball. He is trying to get a firmer grip. He's trying to isolate his rival's hand so he can prise the ball away finger by finger.

It is a tight little theater of hands and arms, some martial test with formal rules of grappling.

The iron seat leg cuts into his back. He hears the breathing of the rival. They are working for advantage, trying to gain position.

The rival is blocked off by the seat back, he is facedown in the row above with just an arm stuck under the seat.

People make it a point to read the time on the clock atop the notched façade of the clubhouse. (47)

In staccato, DeLillo edits a montage of images: from Gleason to fans storming the field, to Cotter fighting some unknown adversary, to the crowd again reading the clock. He even cuts an insert shot: a shot of people all over the city moving out into the streets to celebrate.

DeLillo's use of film montage recalls a similar passage from *The 42nd Parallel* in which Dos Passos constructs a newsreel-like biographical montage. In the chapter title "Big Bill," Dos Passos' short descriptive lines constitute shots, sometimes several shots, arranged in montage, compressing time as he gives Big Bill Haywood's entire biography in only two pages:

Big Bill Haywood was born in sixty nine in a
boardinghouse in Salt Lake City.

He was raised in Utah, got his schooling in Ophir a
mining camp with shooting scrapes, faro Saturday nights,
whisky spilled on pokertables piled with new silver dollars.

When he was eleven his mother bound him out to a
farmer, he ran away because the farmer lashed him with a
whip. That was his first strike.

He lost an eye whittling a slingshot out of scruboak.

He worked for storekeepers, ran a fruitstand, ushered
in the Salt Lake Theatre, was a messengerboy, bellhop at the
Continental hotel.

When he was fifteen

he went out to the mines in Humboldt County,
Nevada,

his outfit was overalls, a jumper, a blue shirt, mining
boots, two pair of blankets, a set of chessmen, boxinggloves
and a big lunch of plum pudding his mother fixed for him.

(74)

Dos Passos' use of montage here as a means of compressing Big Bill's life into a shorter more manageable literary form, relies on short sentences, shots which are unified through their cinematic juxtaposition rather than traditional, clearly delineated exposition. Dos Passos' use of cinematic form as a means of representing history and temporality suggests that he might be DeLillo's earliest American predecessor along the literary spectrum of film intertextuality.

However, my immediate concern here is not to engage in an in-depth extrapolation of DeLillo, but rather to suggest *Underworld* as a point of departure for the development of this dissertation toward being a book project. DeLillo's *Underworld*, for its use of montage, references to specific films and filmmakers, and its appeal to the visual image as the crux of its historical examination, begs further investigation along the line I have pursued above. It seems clear that DeLillo is continuing in the cinematic mode of Dos Passos and Pynchon in particular and, as such, will function as a bookend to the century long trend of film intertextuality.¹⁰¹

NOTES

Introduction

¹ Not to mention the fact that Cain based the novel's plot in part on a real life crime covered in the newspapers—a plot he would rework again for his novel *Double Indemnity*, which was adapted for the screen twice.

² Despite working his way into the 1960s, Murray does not discuss Walker Percy.

³ For more on Joyce and cinema see Maria DiBattista's "This is Not a Movie: *Ulysses* and Cinema" as well as Burkdall's "The Unknown Art: Joyce and Cinema" and "In the Linguistic Kitchen: Joyce, Eisenstein, and Cinematic Language."

⁴ See Eisenstein's "Dickens, Griffith, and the Film Today."

⁵ See also Magny's "Time in Dos Passos."

⁶ As an extension of this attempt at breadth, I also have included an exhaustive bibliography and filmography that include every text referenced in any manner throughout the entire dissertation. An intertextual travelogue of sorts.

Chapter One

⁷ See Aldridge's *In Search of Heresy* (1956).

⁸ Referring to Lowell's poem "Memories of West Street and Lepke" (1959), specifically the following stanza:

These are the tranquilized Fifties,
and I am forty. Ought I to regret my seedtime?
I was a fire-breathing Catholic C.O.,
and made my manic statement,
telling off the state and president, and then
sat waiting sentence in the bull pen
beside a negro boy with curlicues
of marijuana in his hair.

⁹ Lewis' *Babbitt* (1922) perhaps.

¹⁰ A characterization made by Mark Johnson in his "The Search for Place in Walker Percy's Novels," p.78.

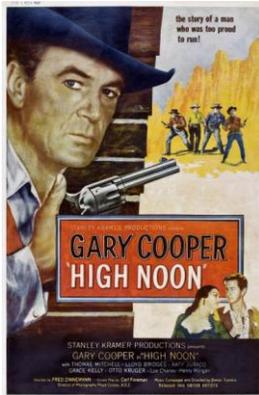
¹¹ As cited by Allen, Luschei's *The Sovereign Wayfarer*, p.110.

¹² *The Moviegoer* ranked #60 on the Modern Library's top 100 English language novels of the twentieth century.

¹³ Luschei ends his article thusly: "In *The Moviegoer* Walker Percy, a novelist with acute powers of observation, has produced a book rich in film-like visual effects. But as a novelist of

consciousness and of ideas, realms in which film works under inherent disadvantages, he has also delivered us a *novel*” (35-6). He also writes that “A novel whose resources can be exhausted in the filming is not a novel in the fullest sense” (35). He, of course, regards Percy’s novel very highly, but his literary bias is nonetheless evident.

¹⁴ The westerns alone from the transitional era include *High Noon* (Fred Zinnemann, 1952), *The Naked Spur* (Anthony Mann, 1953), and *The Searchers* (John Ford, 1956), not to mention the works of Alfred Hitchcock, Billy Wilder, Vincente Minnelli, Douglas Sirk, Elia Kazan, and Nicolas Ray during the same period.



¹⁵ Sherwood’s play received the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 1941.

¹⁶ Allen defines the terms as follows: “rotation is any change in one’s normal routine that has the effect of increasing awareness. A planned change, however, may not work: surprise is essential for a ‘good’ rotation. Repetition is a repeating of an experience in order to see how one has changed in the interval, and to savor the time that has passed” (22). Both are sought as temporary distractions from despair.

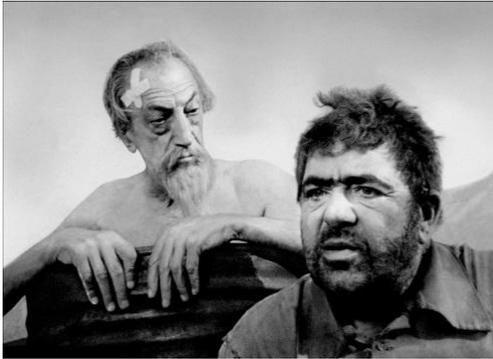
¹⁷ The western transitioned to the small-screen almost immediately and was an ubiquity on television for nearly two decades. *Gunsmoke*, *Sugarfoot*, *The Lone Ranger*, *Wagon Train*, *Rawhide*, *Tales of Wells Fargo*, *Bonanza*, *The Life and Legend of Wyatt Earp*, *Cheyenne*, *Bat Masterson*, *The Big Valley*, *Restless Gun*, *Have Gun Will Travel*, *The Rifleman*, *Maverick*, *Wanted: Dead or Alive*, among a hundred others.

¹⁸ In “The Man on the Train,” Percy writes that, “There is a great deal of difference between an alienated commuter riding a train and this same commuter reading a book about an alienated commuter riding a train....The nonreading commuter exists in true alienation, which is unspeakable; the reading commuter rejoices in the speakability of his alienation and in the new triple alliance of himself, the alienated character, and the author. His mood is affirmatory and glad: Yes! that is how it is!—which is an aesthetic reversal of alienation” (83).

¹⁹ “Toward the Postmodern Historical Imagination: Mass Culture in Walker Percy’s *The Moviegoer* and Nicholson Baker’s *The Mezzanine*” p.617.

²⁰ Clint Walker is an appropriate choice given the fact that he came from television, a subject I investigate in the next section, as the eponymous star of *Cheyenne* (1955-62).

²¹ For example, his Sancho Panza in Orson Welles’ unfinished *Don Quixote* (1992), Boris Adreivich Chernov in *Anastasia* (Anatole Litvak, 1956), and General Yang in *The General Died at Dawn* (Lewis Milestone, 1936).



²² Marlon Brando is another such actor who made the transition, admittedly by his own idiosyncratic style and means.

²³ In 1973, *Bang the Drum Slowly* was later adapted by the novel's author Mark Harris into a feature film starring Robert DeNiro.

²⁴ Like Altman and Peckinpah, Schaffer was a New Hollywood director who came from television, directing literally hundreds of episodes and films for the small screen. He went on to direct *Planet of the Apes* (1968), *Papillon* (1973), and won the Oscar for directing *Patton* (1970).

²⁵ Interestingly, *The Young Philadelphians* was Newman's last film under his Warner Brother's contract. As another example of transitional era context, Newman was able to—according to Marian Edelman Bordan's biography (38)—buy himself out the contract in August of 1959 for a half-million dollars.

²⁶ Having conceived a child out of wedlock with her then love Mike Flanagan, Kate Judson Lawrence enters into a marriage of convenience with William Lawrence III (played emphatically by Adam West). Kate's family wants the prestige of marrying into the Lawrence family, while the Lawrence's are keen on getting William married to produce an heir. Unfortunately William is a closeted homosexual and as a result of a besotted tantrum of realization, he dies in a car accident on their wedding night. Kate keeps the Lawrence name for Tony and the identity of his biological father from him. Although Kate and Tony do not benefit in the interim from any Lawrence money, the name still offers them, particularly Tony, the potential for class mobility.

²⁷ Interestingly, Newman's final onscreen performance was in *Empire Falls* (Fred Schepisi, 2005) which was a mini-series made for television. With the exception of playing Woodrow Wilson and Justice Earl Warren in a PBS documentary series in 2003, it was his first onscreen television performance since *The 80 Yard Run*.

Chapter Two

²⁸ Scott Simmon agrees as early as 1978, in his "Beyond the Theater of War: *Gravity's Rainbow* as Film"—a work I found after my composition of this chapter—that Pynchon's novel is not filmable: "*Gravity's Rainbow* could never be filmed without hideous deletions; it exists with a scope that films can have only in the imagination. Pynchon manages, perhaps as much as it is possible for a novelist, to have it both ways—to keep literature's precision and range while incorporating film's cultural reflections and comic excitement" (361). I would offer that film is potentially equally as precise and expansive as literature, that literature can offer cultural reflection and comic excitement, and that Robert Altman could have totally done an interesting adaptation of *Gravity's*

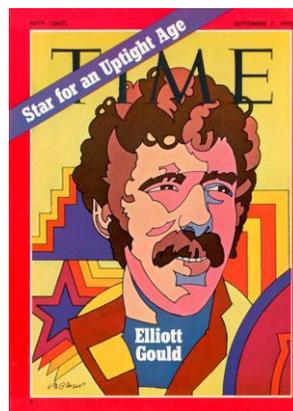
Rainbow. Donald Sutherland or Eliot Gould as Slothrop? Mickey Rooney as Mickey Rooney? Bud Cort as Mickey Rooney?

²⁹ In addition to Scott Simmons above, Charles Clerc’s “Film in *Gravity’s Rainbow*,” Hanjo Berressem’s “*Gravity’s Rainbow*: Text as Film—Film as Text,” Antonio Marquez’s “The Cinematic Imagination in Thomas Pynchon’s *Gravity’s Rainbow*,” and Sherrill E. Grace’s “Fritz Lang and the ‘paracinematic lives’ of *Gravity’s Rainbow*” were works I encountered only after the composition of this chapter. All of their work is excellent and had I discovered it prior to writing this chapter I would have endeavored to acknowledge it within the text proper. As it stands, I respectfully offer my likeminded treatment of Pynchon and film with the best of intentions. If this dissertation is developed into something in the future, I will certainly make every effort to remedy my omission of this scholarship.

³⁰ I prefer Hollywood New Wave over American New Wave primarily because several of the filmmakers associated with this era of cinema were not American, but were nonetheless working in varying degrees through the Hollywood system, whether by means of production, distribution, etc. It also is terminologically more consistent within the Old Hollywood/New Hollywood nomenclature. Therefore, New Hollywood Auteur seems like the best meditative terminology.

³¹ Simmon argues that the novel “is more accessible to moviegoers than literary critics because of its reliance on the conventions of the American genre film” (352). Simmons provocatively goes on to argue that “*Gravity’s Rainbow* is a musical, and we can call it a musical-comedy if we remember that it is occasionally anything but comic: within that musical framework, the novel intermittently becomes a horror film, a gangster film, an adventure film, a romantic melodrama, and a western. The most prevalent genre however is the musical” (352-3).

³² The crime film, gangster and *noir*—*Bonnie and Clyde* (Arthur Penn, 1967), *The Godfather* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1972), *Dillinger* (John Milius, 1973), *The Long Goodbye* (Altman, 1973), *Chinatown* (Roman Polanski, 1974)—science fiction—*2001: A Space Odyssey* (Stanley Kubrick, 1968), *THX 1138* (George Lucas, 1971), *Close Encounters of The Third Kind* (Stephen Spielberg, 1977), *Quintet* (Altman, 1979)—horror—*Rosemary’s Baby* (Polanski, 1968), *The Exorcist* (Friedkin, 1973), *Jaws* (Spielberg, 1975), *Carrie* (Brian De Palma, 1976)—western—*Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (George Roy Hill, 1969), *The Wild Bunch* (Sam Peckinpah, 1969), *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* (Altman, 1972)—the musical—*Cabaret* (Bob Fosse, 1972), *Tommy* (Ken Russell, 1975), *Rocky Horror Picture Show* (Jim Sharman, 1975)—and other gestures toward a generic and industrial Hollywood past—*Young Frankenstein* (Mel Brooks, 1974), *Blazing Saddles* (Brooks, 1974), *The Day off the Locust* (Schlesinger, 1975), *The Last Tycoon* (Elia Kazan, 1976).



³³ *The Bride of Frankenstein* (James Whale, 1935), *A Day at the Races* (Sam Wood, 1937), *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (Robert Weine, 1920), *Dumbo* (Ben Sharpsteen, 1941), *God Is My Co-*

Pilot (Robert Florey, 1945), *My Little Chickadee* (Edward F. Cline, 1940), the anachronistic *The Return of Jack Slade* (Harold D. Schuster, 1955).

³⁴ Marriage and family—*The Graduate* (Mike Nichols, 1967), *Five Easy Pieces* (Bob Rafelson, 1970)—sex and gender politics—*Midnight Cowboy* (John Schlesinger, 1969), *Carnal Knowledge* (Nichols, 1971), *The Last Picture Show* (Peter Bogdanovich, 1971), *Klute* (Alan J. Pakula, 1971), *Cabaret*, *Last Tango in Paris* [*Ultimo tango a Parigi*] (Bernardo Bertolucci, 1972), *Dog Day Afternoon* (Sidney Lumet, 1975)—religion and violence—*M*A*S*H* (Altman, 1970), *Mean Streets* (Martin Scorsese, 1973), *Taxi Driver* (Scorsese, 1976)—politics and media—*Medium Cool* (Haskell Wexler, 1969), *The Parallax View* (Pakula, 1974), *Shampoo* (Hal Ashby, 1975), *All The President's Men* (Pakula, 1976), *Network* (Sidney Lumet, 1976)—drugs and conservative values—*Easy Rider*, *Zabriskie Point* (Michelangelo Antonioni, 1970), *The French Connection* (William Friedkin, 1971), *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (Milos Forman, 1975).



³⁵ Later in *The Zone*, as Pökler negotiates his lineage, Pynchon addresses the substance and fallacy of celluloid: “love something like the persistence of vision, for They have used it to create for him the moving image of a daughter, flashing him only these summertime frames of her, leaving it to him to build the illusion of a single child . . . what would the time scale matter, a 24th of a second or a year” (422). Although the phrase is still commonly used, the “persistence of vision” myth has long been dispelled, but the cerebral illusion of motion remains. Pynchon also conflates 24 frames per second with “24th of a second” which recalls the conceptual principle of the persistence of vision which says that an afterimage persists for 25th of a second on the retina supposedly explaining the illusion of motion images.

³⁶ From his *Film: An International History of the Medium*.

³⁷ Some debate on authorial intention here. There is evidence to suggest that these blocks or frames, film-strip divisions as I and others argue them, which divide or edit scenes/episodes, were not initiated by Pynchon, but by the editors in an attempt to help break up the novel for the sake of the reader (*Gravity's Rainbow Wiki*). I suggest the editors were prescient and that Pynchon accepted this addition knowingly, but I have no way of substantiating that.

³⁸ Pynchon later in the novel directly references, and misspells, Moviola, when he writes, “trapped inside Their frame with your wastes piling up, ass hanging out all over Their Movieola viewer, waiting for their editorial blade” (694).

³⁹ See Christina Jarvis’s “The Vietnamization of World War II in *Slaughterhouse-Five* and *Gravity's Rainbow* which investigates specifically this literary conflation of wars. Her reading of Pynchon’s reference to the “Capra-esque framing of the war” jibes with my analysis of Altman’s

loudspeaker referencing of *When Willie Comes Marching Home*, *The Halls of Montezuma*, and *The Glory Brigade*.

⁴⁰ As the Argentine in *The Casino* confesses, “Fences went up, and our gaucho became less free. It is our national tragedy. We are obsessed with building labyrinths, where before there was open plain and sky. To draw ever more complex patterns on the blank sheet. We cannot abide that *openness*: it is terror to us. Look at Borges” (264).

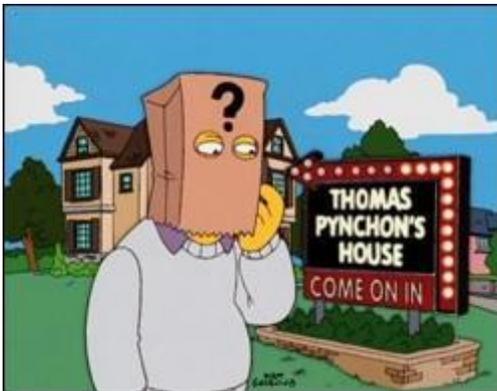
⁴¹ For Pynchon’s part, he seems ambivalent about Walt Disney’s *Dumbo*. On the one hand, it represents Hollywood’s disingenuousness or at least disengagement during the war, “telling us how grand it all is over here, how much fun, Walt Disney causing Dumbo the elephant to clutch to that feather like how many carcasses under the snow tonight . . . hands each frozen around a Miraculous Medal” (135). Or when Pynchon writes: “ten thousand stiffs humped under the snow in the Ardennes take on the sunny Disneyfied look of numbered babies under white wool blankets, waiting to be sent to blessed parents” (70). On the other hand, the *Dumbo* metaphor seems to resonate in terms of questions of psychology and identity as Bodine declares: “But I’m out of the *Dumbo* stage now, I can fly without it” (741). In addition, Pynchon’s inclusion of *Dumbo* brings to mind the air-sea rescue operations during the war, the codename for which was “*Dumbo*” and by association the planes involved in these operations were nicknamed “*Dumbo*.” The insignia for these planes as well as those for other military craft were designed and donated to the war effort by the Disney Company.

⁴² From the episode “Rosebud.”

⁴³ Simmons attributes Pynchon’s high angle camera not to Lang, but Busby Berkeley which suits his musical rubric but misses its German origins.

⁴⁴ Via “An Aesthetic of Reality: Neorealism.”

⁴⁵ In *The Simpsons* episode “Little Girl in the Big Ten,” Lisa Simpson notices that one girl in a group of college girls who have befriended her has a copy of *Gravity’s Rainbow*. With wonderment she asks, “Are you reading *Gravity’s Rainbow*?” to which the girl pretentiously replies, “Well, rereading.”



⁴⁶ This is similar as well to how Vonnegut uses his first and tenth chapters in *Slaughterhouse-Five*. Vonnegut’s jumping-off point for his novel is representational anxiety. He attempts to diffuse this simply by admitting to it. Pynchon folds his into the labyrinthine referential abyss.

⁴⁷ *The Blue Angel* [*Der blaue Engel*] (Josef von Sternberg, 1930), *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* [*Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari*] (Robert Wiene, 1920), *Destiny* [*Der müde Tod*] (Lang, 1921), *Dr. Mabuse: The Gambler* [*Dr. Mabuse, der Spieler—Ein Bild der Zeit*] (Lang, 1922), *Joyless Street*

[*Die freudlose Gasse*] (Georg Wilhelm Pabst, 1925), *Kriemhild's Revenge* [*Die Nibelungen: Kriemhilds Rache*] (Lang, 1924), *M* (Lang, 1931), *Metropolis* (Lang, 1927), *Nosferatu* [*Nosferatu, eine Symphonie des Grauens*] (F.W. Murnau, 1922), and *Woman in the Moon* [*Frau im Mond*] (Lang, 1929). *Woman in the Moon* and *Destiny* provide an appropriate visual analogue for Pynchon's phallic rocket.



As Pynchon writes: “The countdown as we know it, 10-9-8-u.s.w., was invented by Fritz Lang in 1929 for the Ufa film *Die Frau im Mond*. He put it into the launch scene to heighten the suspense. ‘It is another of my damned ‘touches,’ Fritz Lang said.” (753).

⁴⁸ In 1999, a “restored” version of *Greed* was released with a running time of 239 minutes.

⁴⁹ For his part, Simmons is able to spend more time on Lang and does well to address something of “man’s struggle toward power and his resulting death” (357) which Pynchon certainly seems to latch onto in his referencing of Lang’s films.

⁵⁰ Later in *The Zone* at a party/conference of Allied delegates, with President Truman and Churchill in attendance—“the whole joint lit up like a Hollywood premiere” (380)—Mickey, a USO presence at Potsdam, encounters Slothrop as Rocketman who, helmeted, caped, masked, and mustached, is recovering Jolly Jack Tar’s hashish. But more drugs below.

⁵¹ McHugh does well to follow this idea of Pynchon’s political postmodernism especially as it relates the white counterculture.

⁵² Apropos, Hot Lips exasperatedly screams at Col. Blake, “This isn’t a hospital, this is an insane asylum.”

⁵³ This harkens back to Vonnegut’s *Slaughterhouse-Five* actually. In chapter one, mulling over the possible ramifications from attempting to depict his experience at Dresden, Vonnegut, in his own voice, quotes Mary O’Hare, the wife of his old war buddy, who is angered by the prospects of his writing a book about his and her husband’s experience during the war and presupposes, based on how she has seen war depicted by mainstream cinema, that his depiction will follow suit: “You’ll pretend you were men instead of babies, and you’ll be played in the movies by Frank Sinatra and John Wayne or some of those other glamorous, war-loving, dirty old men. And war will look just wonderful, so we’ll have a lot more of them.” For Vonnegut the danger of glorification is a source of great authorial anxiety and informs the entirety of the form of his novel (18).

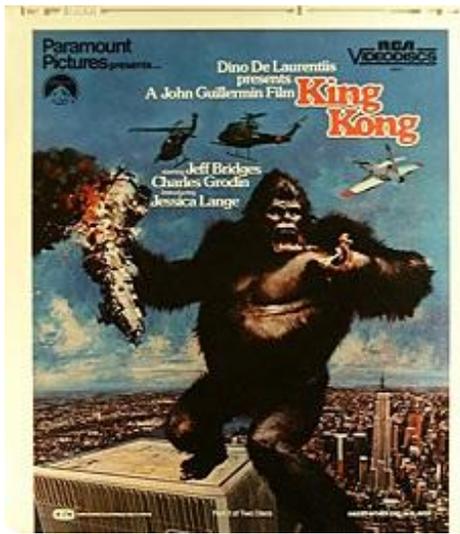
⁵⁴ From Altman’s DVD commentary.

⁵⁵ Altman’s subversive approach to the subject matter of war as it contrasted to that of Twentieth Century Fox’s concurrent productions is evident when we see the three films’ promotional posters side-by-side.

⁵⁶ Meanwhile, Slothrop is “wearing a blonde wig and the same long flowing white cross-banded number Faye Wray wears in her screen test scene [in *King Kong*]” (688). Pynchon suggests here that Slothrop is both the scapeape *and* the damsel in distress, both the V-2 and the unsuspecting audience in the movie theater in the early 1970s, both the erection and the victim of masculine aggression as such.

⁵⁷ The S-Gerat, the Schwarzgerät compartment inside the 00000 V-2 rocket.

⁵⁸ It should be noted that in 1976, nearing the end of the New Hollywood Auteur era and at the turn toward the era of blockbuster syndrome, *Kong* was remade as a big budget release. In this version Kong actually falls from the North Tower of the World Trade Center rather than the Empire State Building.



⁵⁹ Scapegoat as defined by *American Heritage*: “2. Bible A live goat over whose head Aaron confessed all the sins of the children of Israel on the Day of Atonement and that was then sent into the wilderness” (1239).

⁶⁰ “Berlin proves to be full of these tricks.” (368). “Like a young skipping Dorothy’s antagonist, a mean witch.” (329). “‘Follow the yellow-brick road,’ hums Albert Krypton, on pitch, ‘follow the yellow-brick road,’ what’s this, is he actually, yes he’s skipping. . . .” (596-7).

⁶¹ To be completely accurately these scenes were originally shot in sepia tone. Subsequent theatrical and television exhibition had the Kansas scenes in black and white. The sepia was not restored until 1989.

⁶² Dorothy’s balloon escape is of course not meant to be. Instead she clicks her heels together and returns to reality. Slothrop, on the other hand, rides the balloon away from reality and into an entirely new fantasy.

⁶³ See Reel 3: Scene 8 for a group of gangsters sitting around a vacant harmonica factory wearing white “Caligari gloves” watching a Bob Steele western projected against a brick wall painted white for a screen, effectively meshing German Expressionism, the Hollywood gangster, and western film during the WWII era.



⁶⁴ Pynchon references the Biograph Theater directly later in the novel as “Pig” Bovine—the only character that can “see Slothrop as any sort of integral creature any more” (740)—rants about and relinquishes the fetishized bloody Dillinger T-shirt he had collected at the scene. I reference this passage in endnote 10 as well in connection to *Dumbo*

⁶⁵ There’s a probably unnecessary but interesting section to be written on mustaches in the novel: Dillinger, Gable, Don Ameche, Fairbanks, Henry Fonda as Frank James, and Errol Flynn on the pencil thin side, Groucho Marx and Fu Manchu for their respective grease paint and ethnic stereotyping, and of course, Hitler, Chaplin, and Oliver Hardy for the little push-broom forever relinquished to the annals of comedy and mass-murder history.

⁶⁶ Scott Simmon does point to both Dillinger and *Manhattan Melodrama*.

⁶⁷ It should be noted that in the film childhood Blackie is played by none other than Mickey Rooney.

⁶⁸ See John Toland’s *The Dillinger Days*, Alston Purvis’s *The Vendetta: Special Agent Melvin Purvis, John Dillinger, and Hoover’s FBI in the Age of Gangsters* and for more tabloid-style fare Helmen’s and Mattix’s *The Complete Public Enemy Almanac*. See Clerc for more on Dillinger.

⁶⁹ See Patrick O’Donnell’s *Latent Destinies*.

⁷⁰ I would be remiss if I did not mention the so-called “Darkside of the Rainbow.” Pink Floyd released their momentous album *Darkside of the Moon* in 1973, conveniently the same year as the publication of Pynchon’s novel. In subsequent marijuana- and acid-induced decades a mythology has grown up around the synchronization of the album and the film based on the idea that *Oz* was founding, former member, and schizophrenic hallucinogenic drug casualty, Syd Barrett’s favorite film and that *Darkside* was intentionally composed as an alternative score to the film. In addition, Elton John’s and Bernie Taupin’s “Goodbye Yellow Brick Road,” also from 1973, takes as its primary referent the film and its themes of lostness and self-discovery, but also lends itself anecdotally to drug culture via the apocryphal connoting of yellow and brick with marijuana and hashish and vice-versa.

⁷¹ Slothrop’s drug-induced venture into the toilet brings to mind Danny Boyle’s *Trainspotting* (1996) made many years later, wherein Renton, suffering from withdrawal induced diarrhea, forgets that he had hidden his heroin in his ass. After evacuating his bowels he is faced with the prospect of chasing the heroin down the toilet, which he does so in hallucinogenic fashion.



⁷² See also: *The Trip* (Roger Corman, 1967), *Something Weird* (Herschell Gordon Lewis, 1967), *Rosemary's Baby* (Roman Polanski, 1968), *Psych-Out* (Richard Rush, 1968), *Midnight Cowboy* (John Schlesinger, 1969), *Zabriskie Point* (Michelangelo Antonioni, 1970), and *Performance* (Donald Cammell and Nicolas Roeg, 1970) a film which, interestingly, is self-consciously indebted to Borges. You should also watch LSD's cinematic inception in *The Tinger* (William Castle, 1959).

⁷³ An analytical side note on football in *M*A*S*H*: Although baseball carries the nickname "America's Pastime" and resonates culturally in terms of union struggles and racial integration, football is absolutely the right choice of sport for the climactic sequence in the film. For one, the sport had reached its first height of mass-popularity (and television coverage) during the mid-to-late 60s with the inception of The Super Bowl, and the Johnny Unitas vs. Joe Namath generational monolith. Second, the sport lends itself appropriately to a militaristic sensibility. No one has illustrated this better than George Carlin, an icon of 60s and 70s counterculture, who on his 1975 album *An Evening with Wally Londo, Featuring Bill Slazso* offered the following "Baseball-Football" here taken from his Oct 11, 1975 SNL performance of the bit:

Football's kinda nice, they changed it a little bit - they moved the hash marks in. Guys found it and smoked them, anyway! But you know, football wants to be the number-one sport, the national pastime. And I think it already is, really, because football represents something we *are* - we *are* Europe, Jr. When you get right down to it, we're Europe, Jr. We play a Europe game. What was the Europe game? [high voice] "Let's take their land away from them! You'll be the pink, on up; we'll be blue, the red and the green!"

Ground acquisition. And *that's* what football is, football's a ground acquisition game. You knock the crap out of eleven guys and take their *land* away from them. Of course, we only do it *ten* yards at a time. That's the way we did it with the Indians - we won it little by little. First down in Ohio - Midwest to go!

Let's put it this way - there are things about the *words* surrounding football and baseball, which give it all away:

Football is technological; baseball is pastoral.
Football is played in a stadium; baseball is played in the park.

In football, you wear a helmet; in baseball, you wear a cap.

Football is played on an enclosed, rectangular grid, and every one of them is the same size; baseball is played on an ever-widening angle that reaches to infinity, and every park is different!

Football is rigidly timed; baseball has no time limit, we don't know when it's gonna end! We might even have *extra* innings!

In football, you get a penalty; in baseball, you make an error - whoops!

The object in football is to march downfield and penetrate enemy territory, and get into the end zone; in baseball, the object is to go home! "I'm going home!"

And, in football, they have the clip, the hit, the block, the tackle, the blitz, the bomb, the offense and the defense; in baseball, they have the sacrifice.

⁷⁴ At one point in the film, during a particularly bloody operation, the following is announced over the loudspeaker: "Attention. Attention. From Colonel Blake's office. The American Medical Association has just declared marijuana a dangerous drug, despite earlier claims by some physicians that it is no more harmful than alcohol, this is not found to be the case. That is all."

⁷⁵ Speaking of irreverence toward Presidential politics, "Hail to the Chief" is sung by the camp denizens as they hoist Trapper aloft during a drunken night away from the already somewhat accommodating oversight of Colonel Blake. This is the same night O'Houlihan and Burns compose more than just a letter together in response to the prevailing countercultural attitude of the camp.

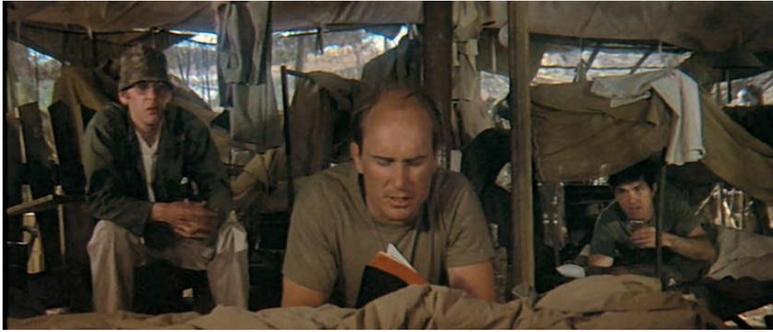
⁷⁶ As both an antiauthoritarian case in point and a sort of implied reinforcement of Altman's attitude toward Twentieth Century Fox as mentioned above, Trapper and Hawkeye, while driving golf balls off the elevated helicopter landing platform midway through the film, are inconvenienced by, well, a helicopter landing there and bringing summons to Japan on a special surgical assignment (a congressman's son needs heart surgery). The surgery appears routine, but the opportunity to play golf in Japan is not. Upon arriving, informally clad—eschewing regulation dress as they so often do—golf clubs in hand, they assert themselves into the surroundings with no regard for military protocol. Once in the operating room, Colonel Merrill, the immediately authority figure, bursts into the operating room demanding an explanation for such insubordinate actions. Hawkeye's responds, "Somebody get this dirty old man out of our operating theater." After the successful surgery and in the minutes that follow, Trapper and Hawkeye are escorted into Merrill's office by MPs wherein they practice their putting until the colonel arrives. Later, while still dressed in geisha house attire after a celebratory dinner they rush into the operating theater and begin illegal operation proceedings on a native infant. During the procedure Merrill again intervenes only to be gassed to unconsciousness and then photographed naked with geishas as blackmail. . . . This all happens very quickly, but the point is this: those in power are not the ones talented enough to do the things they are positioned to oversee. And in part this lack of ability manifests itself in a condescension and antagonistic relationship with the subordinate "talent," the ones who do, perform, accomplish. As an extension of Trapper's and Hawkeye's disregard for and rebellion against the ineffectual holders of authority, Altman implies a New Hollywood Auteur to studio executive analogy as well.⁷⁶ In other words, filmmakers in this era, who in some ways have more freedom after the dissolution of the Old Hollywood system are nonetheless ultimately at odds with and constrained by the larger administrative body, and therefore have to assert their vision by any means necessary—fending off bureaucratic emissaries (nurses in this case) with umbrellas as it were. For Altman this means innuendo, allegory, and most importantly flying under the budgetary radar. For Pynchon, despite the fact that his publication was not subject to the same industrial restrictions as was Altman's production, this countercultural, antiauthoritarian attitude resonates nonetheless in a similar irreverence for military protocol and bureaucratic governance.



Furthermore it is in Japan that we get the Bobby Troupe-delivered line: “Goddamn Army,” which he will repeat as the last line of the film.



⁷⁷ Burns’ religiousness is mocked not only as the stuff of hypocrisy, however, but as both childish, given the context of war, and implicitly colonialist. Subsequent to Duke’s displacing of Burns’ biblical teachings to Ho-Jon with porn, as addressed above, he and Hawkeye encounter for the first time Burns’ prayer ritual and proceed to ridicule him, in kind with their sort of countercultural condescension, each sipping home-stilled martinis, through snide suggestions and even song. As Burns kneels, praying for “our Commander and Chief in Washington,” etc., Duke likens his devotedness to the syndrome of an eight year old, in other words as a childishness out of place in the context of war. They then, softly at first, break into “Onward Christian Soldier”⁷⁷ to which several other camp denizens join in mockery, marching to the showers, bath scrubbers held aloft as surrogate missionary crosses as Altman characteristically zooms in on Frank’s increasingly consternated eyes as he suffers this vituperation. The choice of this song is important in that plays on not only the “soldier for Christ” New Testament tenet, but suggests something the sort of Nineteenth Century missionary effort which, in a Twentieth Century context, might be looked at through a different lens by those questioning dominant cultural paradigms. In other words, Frank’s Christianity is likened to the sort of colonialist “white man’s burden” model of civilizing missionary zeal—his teaching Ho-Jon to read English for instance—which, to Hawkeye and Duke, who represent a more circumspect, humanist ideology, smells of elitism, self-righteousness, and latent bigotry.



Interestingly, one of the most prominent uses of the song in a film is in *Stanley and Livingstone* (Henry King, 1939) starring Spencer Tracy, a film which is referenced in *Gravity's Rainbow* as a sort of colonialist companion film to *King Kong*. In the film Tracy's Stanley is sent on a Conradian sort of journey into the Dark Continent to find Dr. Livingstone who has been administering medicine and Christianity to the natives—as Pynchon notes at one point, “Well Africa's the Dark Continent, nothing *there* but natives, elephants, 'n' that Spencer Tracy. . . .” (266). In this sense, for Pynchon, *Stanley and Livingstone* functions as a representational short cut to a western, Christian understanding of Africa within the context of World War Two.



⁷⁸ For example Pynchon's Calvinist-tinged proverbial markers designate his antiauthoritarian, not to mention conspiratorial, even paranoid impulses. Back in the Casino, Reel 2: scene 5, Pynchon offers “Proverbs for Paranoids, 1: You may never get to touch the Master, but you can tickle his creatures” and “Proverbs for Paranoids, 2: The innocence of the creatures is in inverse proportion to the immortality of the Master.” As McHugh offers it:

Gravity's Rainbow is in large part organized around the question of countercultural politics. . . .

On the one side, an oppressive and hegemonic “System” serving an elite or “Elect” “They” is coercing the entire planet toward military apocalypse. On the other side, a victimized, mostly powerless, and likeable human “preterite” “us” attempts in varying ways and with varying degrees of manic euphoria and desperate futility to counter the apocalyptic momentum of the System. (3)

One could replace in McHugh's statement *M*A*S*H* for *Gravity's Rainbow* and lose nothing in translation. This power dynamic between the preterite and elite in Pynchon mirrors Altman's favoring of the doctor over the administrator, draftee over the enlisted man, filmmaker over studio executive. For both Pynchon and Altman, counterculture is very literally that—a

countering or undermining or at least calling into question through satire the dominant cultural paradigms, be they political, sexual, religious. . .

Following suit, Frank Burns—who functions as a sort of representative of Pynchon’s elite—is the catalyst for not only Altman’s critique of blind patriotism and military allegiance, but his irreverent attitude toward sex and religion as well. Given O’Houlihan’s similar thinking about military protocol as well as her immediate admiration for Burns which so repels Hawkeye, it stands to reason that the two, O’Houlihan and Burns, would be drawn to one another at least ideologically. One night, the same night Trapper is being drunkenly heralded about the camp with a chorus of “Hail to the Chief” from revelers spurred on by PBR’s chilled in a blood cooler, O’Houlihan and Burns conspire to write a letter to superiors describing rampant insubordination in the camp, this in reaction primarily to Hawkeye’s antagonistic remarks and his ilk’s “unprofessional” behavior. While supposed debauchery by the countercultural element, or as Burns would have it “Godless buffoons all of them,” rages outside, this collaboration leads hypocritically to extramarital sex:

O’HOULIHAN: “We’ve grown very close in a short time.”

BURNS: “It isn’t just chance, I am sure of that. God meant us to find each other.”

O’HOULIHAN: “His will be done!” (as she rips open her gown to expose her breasts).

Therefore, they are drawn to one another not only ideologically, but hypocritically given their stance on military protocol, insubordination and Christian values. The dialogue here clearly mocks Christian values—in that both Burns and O’Houlihan invoke God as a defense for their own debauched, extramarital sex—and shows even suggests the arbitrariness of the elite, as Pynchon would have it. While deriding those who undermine their espoused moral doctrine, they nonetheless regard their position of authority such that it justifies their actions regardless of obvious hypocrisy. This sexual encounter also marks the first of two public sexual humiliations that will end in the conversion of O’Houlihan to the thinking of Hawkeye and Trapper and Duke and basically the rest of the camp, not to mention earn her the nickname “Hot Lips.” During their passionate, if awkward, uh, humping, and unbeknownst to both, Radar positions a microphone into their tent as the revelers congregate around the broadcast station. And with this Hot Lips’ most vocal dirty talk is aired to the entire camp. Later, with the complete complicity of her subordinate nurses, Hawkeye and Trapper arrange for the women’s shower tent to be pulled up, drum roll, revealing Hot Lips in her full soapiness. Subsequently, Hot Lips begins an affair with Duke and dons pompoms at the football game.

⁷⁹ Following this thread, in the scene following the aforementioned *When Willie Comes Marching Home* loudspeaker—the fumbling voice of supposedly sanctioned authority—announcement, Hawkeye voices his displeasure for Hot Lips’ respect for Major Burns (again the embodiment of patriotic, militaristic, and Christian zealotry in the film) and her enthusiastic adherence to military protocol. Their exchange in the mess hall captures Hawkeye’s antiestablishment attitude and gestures at the issue of sexual infidelity ends thusly:

O’HOULIHAN: “Captain Pierce, may I join you?”

HAWKEYE: “You’ve already joined me gorgeous. You’re a sight for sore eyes. Where do you come from?”

O’HOULIHAN: (sitting upright, without absolute conviction, and a beautiful almost imbecilic smile on her face) “Well I like to think of the Army as my home.”

HAWKEYE: (incredulous) “Oh yeah. Yeah? (directed off-screen) Ho-Jon you bring me some ketchup, will you?”

O’HOULIHAN: Captain I’ve been observing the nurses on your shift.

HAWKEYE: “Yeah I know I saw you.”

O’HOULIHAN: “Naturally your own opinion is more informed than mine.

HAWKEYE: “You would like to know what I think of the nurses on my shift . . . um, I think they’re fine I think they’re just great . . .”

[At this point the scene is intercut with a brief operating sequence during which the power goes out and under flashlight the entire medical and nursing staff harmonizes in song as they continue working undeterred. Cut back to the mess hall.]

O’HOULIHAN: “Well major Burns is far from satisfied.”

HAWKEYE: “Well that doesn’t surprise me. Frank Burns does not know his way around an operating theater, he does not know his way around a body and if you have observed anything you will have observed that Frank Burns is an idiot, he has flipped his wig, that he’s out of his head, that he’s a lousy surgeon.”

O’HOULIHAN: (with consternation) “On the contrary, I have observed that Major Burns (notice that Hawkeye refers to him as Frank and she Major) is not only a good technical surgeon but he is a good military surgeon.”

HAWKEYE: “Finished?”

O’HOULIHAN: “I have also noticed that nurses as well as enlisted men address you as Hawkeye.”

HAWKEYE: “Yeah, because that’s my name, Hawkeye Pierce.”

O’HOULIHAN: “Well that kind of informality is inconsistent with maximum efficiency in a military organization.”

HAWKEYE: “Oh, come off it major! You put me right off my fresh fried lobster, you realize that? I’m gonna go, go back to my bed and put away the best part of a bottle of scotch and under normal circumstances you being normally what I would call a very attractive woman I would have invited you to come back and share my little bed with me and you possibly have come. But you really put me off. I mean, you’re what we call a regular army clown.”

O’HOULIHAN: (to the entire mess hall) “I wonder how a degenerated person like that could have reached a position of responsibility in the army medical corps.”

FATHER JOHN MULCAHY “DAGO RED”: (who has been sitting, reading scripture six feet from this conversation the entire time) “He was drafted.”



In the Pynchonian sense, those that abide by and believe in the bureaucratic and hierarchical structure of the American military, Burns in particular, given his Protestant-Christianity and the fact that he enlisted for service, are the elect, those that reject this structure, its rules and codes, those that were drafted, are the preterite. For both Altman and Pynchon, the preterite is the ineluctably preferred status. The rejection of, or at least resistance to this authority and the conventions of the traditional social paradigm, to the “establishment,” to bureaucracy, is a fundamental to both *Gravity’s Rainbow* and the American New Wave and *M*A*S*H* in particular.

⁸⁰ Blake is only one for superficial military protocol himself. In the subsequent scene he enters Trapper’s barracks and berates him not for his insubordination necessarily, but for the fact that now he has to deal with the situation so that O’Houlihan won’t stir up any trouble for him and the 4077. Blake is also sleeping with his personal assistant, for what it’s worth.

⁸¹ And this undercutting of Christian dogma is reflected as well in Trapper’s ceremonious introduction of Dago Red and almost immediate interruption of his performing of last rites on Painless. Trapper at once acknowledges the ritual, at least as a necessary function of the larger prank on Painless, and mocks its performance by interrupting it with his own ceremonial presentation of the “black capsule” which is presented in a box suitable for Medals of Honor. Altman demonstrates not only a blasphemous irreverence here but suggests something about the hypocritical complicity between religion and warfare—which of course recalls his attitude toward Burns—and the great colonialist tradition of using religion as justification for war. Furthermore, and in relation again to the elect/ preterite dynamic, it reminds the audience of an often sublimated historical truth that Jesus was in fact not of the elect, but was a subversive countercultural figure who rejected the established cultural paradigm. In effect, Altman reclaims Christ for the preterite by his association with Painless, rather than, for example, Burns. And if we follow Altman’s logic within his passion play parody, then it stands to reason that Painless should be resurrected not by divine means but, more appropriately for this M*A*S*H unit, through carnal pleasure.

⁸² This libidinal freedom as countercultural touchstone can be seen in *Gravity’s Rainbow* as well through Slothrop’s sexual exploits throughout his escapades in the Zone. As McHugh writes thusly of Slothrop’s countercultural behaviors:

At the outset in his fight against “The Man,” Slothrop seeks freedom through countercultural politics of rebellion and pleasure, pleasure in rebellion, transgression. . . .

A Massachusetts hipster in the post-Hitler German Zone, Slothrop hooks up with revolutionaries, drug dealers, smugglers, and others living in the seams of power. . . .

A major part of Slothrop's pleasure in the counterculture is of course libidinal frenzy. Slothrop encounters all manner of women ready and willing to take him into their bed (or wherever). (6-7)

Though arguably functioning on different levels of subversive behavior, Hawkeye and Slothrop are nonetheless cut from the same cloth. Both are East Coast, Ivy League types ostensibly born of the elect—Slothrop being from Massachusetts and Hawkeye from Maine though he did his residency in Boston. And Trapper as well, who went to Dartmouth and earned his nickname when he was caught on a train travelling from Boston to Maine having sex with a woman who later, in an attempt to protect her reputation claimed, “He trapped me! He trapped me!” All three embrace countercultural behavior, sexual and otherwise, as a point of departure for their interaction with the historical reality around them. Each views that reality as a systemic construct essentially at odds with individual freedom.

Chapter Three

⁸³ See McHugh for a different and continuing examination of Pynchon's novel as it relates to postmodern nomenclature and the reflection of such in cultural practices.

⁸⁴ See E. San Juan's discussion of film in *The Gangster of Love* in “Transforming Identity in Postcolonial Narrative: An Approach to the Novels of Jessica Hagedorn.”

⁸⁵ On tap for the Manila International Film Festival: soft-core pornography, Pia Zadora, and George Hamilton. Below is a picture of George Hamilton, because George Hamilton.



⁸⁷ Predominantly, Fassbinder revises the Sirkian painting tableau in *Fear Eats the Soul* by emphasizing interior framing and stillness. Shots become living tableaux. Characters frozen in interminable stares, gazing at one another—this exaggerated staging underscores themes of social repression. For example, the first meeting of Ali and Emmi, their honeymoon dinner, and Ali's affair with the blonde bartender. And for reference, Sirkian interior framing:



⁸⁷ Kincaide's *The Light of Peace* (1996)



⁸⁸ See Mulvey's "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema."

⁸⁹ Hagedorn is being consciously revisionist in her history here for the sake of implementing her intertextual use of Fassbinder. Not only is there no evidence Fassbinder was in Manila for the festival, or that one of his films was screened there, the 1982 festival actually took place in January of that year.



⁹⁰ Fassbinder finished shooting *Querelle* shortly before his death and the film saw its first theatrical releases in September of 1982. His film prior to *Querelle*, *Veronika Voss*, the third film in his BRD Trilogy, was released in February of 1982.

Chapter Four

⁹¹ As it is known in the West although its actual title more literally and appropriately translates, according to Brian Parker, to *The Castle of the Spider's Web* (508).



⁹²Per this point, Ong’s use of the term “wily” recalls Larry King’s infamous interview with Marlon Brando in 1996, wherein Brando, a lifelong civil rights advocate, said the following regarding the history of racial representation in Hollywood: “We have seen the nigger, we’ve seen the greaseball, we have seen the chink, the slit-eyed dangerous Jap. We have seen the wily Filipino.” (Kamalipour and Carilli 105).

⁹³ Fonda as the male lead in both *The Lady Eve* and *Jezebel* bears his own referential weight. His iconic everyman screen persona evokes the earnest American ideal of a classless society—*The Grapes of Wrath* (John Ford, 1940), *The Wrong Man* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1956), *12 Angry Men*

(Sidney Lumet, 1957). His appearance in numerous westerns also tie him to issues of the American Dream—*The Return of Frank James* (Lang, 1940), *The Oxbow Incident* (William A. Wellman, 1943), *My Darling Clementine* (John Ford, 1946), *Once Upon a Time in the West* (Sergio Leone, 1968).

⁹⁴ In re *Moviegoer* and Binx Bolling's limbo, *Hud* provides a good example of the western between Ford and Leone and Peckinpah when the genre was in limbo between the classical and the New Hollywood. Ford's *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, arguably his last masterpiece was released in 1962 concurrent to Peckinpah's *Ride the High Country* (1962). Sergio Leone's *Fistful of Dollars*, a multination, non-studio production was released in 1964 and is an example of the trend after the studio to globalize.



⁹⁵ It should be noted, however, that the argument has been made that *Tokyo Story* is not so entirely removed from western traditions. Taking a cue from David Bordwell, Arthur Nolleto, Jr. discusses this in his “Ozu’s *Tokyo Story* and the ‘Recasting’ of McCarey’s *Make Way for Tomorrow*.”

⁹⁶ “Kendo” is a type of ceremonious swordsmanship employing bamboo swords which was originally developed as a safe training method for Samurai. Ironically Kendo is very unceremoniously stabbed in the chest with a switchblade knife.

Epilogue

⁹⁷ For more on this concept see Kathleen Fitzpatrick's examination of DeLillo in the “A Camera is a Gun” section from her chapter “Spectacle” in *The Anxiety of Obsolescence: The American Novel in the Age of Television*. Her work will certainly be an essential source for any further investigation of DeLillo and his film intertext.

⁹⁸ Excerpt from Emerson's “Concord Hymn”:

By the rude bridge that arched the flood,
Their flag to April's breeze unfurled,
Here once the embattle farmers stood
And fired the shot heard round the world.

⁹⁹ Just as “shot” carries a variety of connotations for DeLillo, so to the title *Underworld* which conjures the criminal element, the deposition of human waste, the mythical, fictional Eisenstein film *Unterwelt*, and Josef von Sternberg's real *Underworld* (1927).



¹⁰⁰ This line from DeLillo recalls Vonnegut's *hysteron proteron* moment of bombs being sucked back up into bombers, except here the materials being sucked up are not the bombs but the cinematic images of their irreversible descent.

¹⁰¹ Another book I will need to address in the future incarnation of this project is Chuck Palahniuk's *Tell-All* (2010) which takes up the intertext in a sort of *Sunset Boulevard*-ian fashion. What differentiates this novel from the rest is Palahniuk's choice to bold-face all film references in the novel. I'm not sure yet whether this is a hyper-acknowledgement of film intertextuality as a literary trend or an ironic indictment of it as such.

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Rancho Notorious. Dir. Fritz Lang. Perf. Marlene Dietrich. RKO, 1952.

Red River. Dir. Howard Hawks. Perf. John Wayne, Montgomery Cliff, and Walter Brennan. United Artists, 1948.

Requiem for a Heavyweight. Dir. Ralph Nelson. Perf. Jack Palance, Keenan Wynn, Ed Wynn, and Max Baer. *Playhouse 90*. Television. CBS, October 11, 1956.

The Return of Frank James. Dir. Fritz Lang. Perf. Henry Fonda and Gene Tierney. Twentieth Century Fox, 1940.

The Return of Jack Slade. Dir. Harold D. Schuster. Allied Artists, 1955.

Rhapsody. Dir. Charles Vidor. Perf. Elizabeth Taylor. MGM, 1954.

Ride the High Country. Dir. Sam Peckinpah. Perf. Joel McCrea, Randolph Scott, and Warren Oates. MGM, 1962.

Road to Perdition. Dir. Sam Mendes. Perf. Tom Hanks and Paul Newman. DreamWorks, 2002.

The Rocky Horror Picture Show. Dir. Jim Sharman. Perf. Tim Curry, Susan Sarandon, and Meat Loaf. Twentieth Century Fox, 1975.

Rosalie. Dir. W.S. Van Dyke. Perf. Nelson Eddy. MGM, 1937.

Rose-Marie. Dir. W.S. Van Dyke. Perf. Nelson Eddy and Jeanette MacDonald. MGM, 1936.

Rosemary's Baby. Dir. Roman Polanski. Perf. Mia Farrow, John Cassavetes, and Ruth Gordon. Paramount, 1968.

Saboteur. Dir. Alfred Hitchcock. Perf. Robert Cummings and Otto Kruger. Universal, 1942.

Sabrina. Dir. Billy Wilder. Perf. Audrey Hepburn, William Holden, and Humphrey Bogart. Paramount, 1954.

Scarface. Dir. Howard Hawks. Perf. Paul Muni, George Raft, and Boris Karloff.
United Artists, 1932.

The Searchers. Dir. John Ford. Perf. John Wayne, Vera Miles, and Natalie Wood.
Warner Bros., 1956.

Sergeants 3. Dir. John Sturges. Perf. Frank Sinatra, Sammy Davis, Jr., and Dean
Martin. United Artists, 1962.

The Seventh Seal [*Det Sjunde inseglet*]. Dir. Ingmar Bergman. Perf. Max von
Sydow and Bengt Ekerot. Svensk Filmindustri, 1957.

The Shack Out on 101. Dir. Edward Dein. Per. Frank Lovejoy, Lee Marvin, and
Keenan Wynn. Allied Artists, 1955.

Shadows. Dir. John Cassavetes. Perf. Ben Carruthers and Lelia Goldoni. Lion
International. 1959.

Shaft. Dir. Gordon Parks. Perf. Richard Roundtree. MGM, 1971.

Shampoo. Dir. Hal Ashby. Perf. Warren Beatty, Julie Christie, and Jack Warden.
Columbia, 1975.

She Done Him Wrong. Dir. Lowell Sherman. Perf. Mae West and Cary Grant.
Paramount, 1933.

Siegfried [*Die Nibelungen: Siegfried*]. Dir. Fritz Lang. Perf. Rudolf Klein-Rogge.
Decla- Bioscop AG, 1924.

Singin' in the Rain. Dir. Stanley Donen and Gene Kelly. Perf. Gene Kelly, Debbie
Reynolds, and Donald O'Connor. MGM, 1952.

Sisters of the Gion [*Gion no shimai*] Dir. Kenji Mizoguchi. Perf. Isuzu Yamada.
Daiichi Eiga, 1936.

Something Weird. Dir. Herschell Gordon Lewis. Hur-Lew Productions, 1967.

Son of Frankenstein. Dir. Rowland V. Lee. Perf. Basil Rathbone, Boris Karloff, and Bela Lugosi. Universal, 1939.

Spies. Dir. Fritz Lang. Perf. Rudolf Klein-Rogge. UFA, 1928.

Stagecoach. Dir. John Ford. Perf. John Wayne, Thomas Mitchell, Claire Trevor, and John Carradine. United Artists, 1939.

Stalag 17. Dir. Billy Wilder. Perf. William Holden. Paramount, 1953.

Stanley and Livingstone. Dir. Henry King and Otto Brower. Perf. Spencer Tracy and Walter Brennan. Twentieth Century Fox, 1939.

A Streetcar Named Desire. Dir. Elia Kazan. Perf. Marlon Brando, Vivien Leigh, Karl Malden, and Kim Hunter. Warner Bros., 1951.

Strike. Dir. Sergei Eisenstein. Goskino, 1925.

Sunset Boulevard. Dir. Billy Wilder. Perf. William Holden, Gloria Swanson and Erich von Stroheim. Paramount, 1950.

Sweet Smell of Success. Dir. Alexander Mackendrick. Perf. Burt Lancaster and Tony Curtis. United Artists, 1957.

Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song. Dir. Melvin Van Peebles. Perf. Melvin Van Peebles. Yeah, 1971.

Sweethearts. Dir. W.S. Van Dyke. Perf. Nelson Eddy and Jeanette MacDonald. MGM, 1938.

Tarzan the Ape Man. Dir. W.S. Van Dyke. Perf. Maureen O'Sullivan and Johnny Weissmuller. MGM, 1932.

Taxi Driver. Dir. Martin Scorsese. Perf. Robert De Niro, Peter Boyle, Harvey Keitel, Jodie Foster, Cybill Shepherd, and Albert Brooks. Columbia, 1976.

Ten Seconds to Hell. Dir. Robert Aldrich. Perf. Jack Palance. United Artists, 1959.

The Thief of Bagdad. Dir. Raoul Walsh. Perf. Douglas Fairbanks. United Artists, 1924.

The Third Man. Dir. Carol Reed. Perf. Joseph Cotton and Orson Welles. London Film, 1949.

There Shall Be No Night. Dir. George Schaefer. Perf. Charles Boyer. Hallmark Hall of Fame, 1957.

Thirty Seconds over Tokyo. Dir. Mervyn LeRoy. Perf. Van Johnson and Robert Mitchum. MGM, 1944.

Throne of Blood [Kumonosu-jo]. Dir. Akira Kurosawa. Perf. Toshirô Mifune and Isuzu Yamada. Toho Company, 1957.

THX 1138. Dir. George Lucas. Perf. Robert Duvall and Donald Pleasence. American Zoetrope, 1971.

The Tingler. Dir. William Castle. Perf. Vincent Price. Columbia Pictures, 1959.

Tokyo Story [Tôkyô monogatari]. Dir. Yasujiro Ozu. Shôchiku Eiga, 1953.

Tommy. Dir. Ken Russell. Perf. Ann-Margret, Oliver Reed, Jack Nicholson, Roger Daltrey, Elton John, and Tina Turner. Columbia, 1975.

Tora! Tora! Tora! Dir. Richard Fleischer, Kinji Fukusaku, and Toshio Masuda. Perf. Martin Balsam, Joseph Cotton, E.G. Marshall, James Whitmore, Jason Robards, and Sô Yamamura. Twentieth Century Fox, 1970.

Touch of Evil. Dir. Orson Welles. Perf. Orson Welles, Charlton Heston, Janet Leigh, Dennis Weaver, Marlene Dietrich. Universal, 1958.

The Towering Inferno. Dir. John Guillermin and Irwin Allen. Perf. William Holden, Steve McQueen, Paul Newman, Faye Dunaway, Fred Astaire, and Jennifer Jones. Twentieth Century Fox, 1974.

Toxicology Trailer. Dir. Jessica Hagedorn and Angel Velasco Shaw. *Jessica Hagedorn Official Website*. 2011.

<http://www.jessicahagedorn.net/?page_id=12>.

Trainspotting. Dir. Danny Boyle. Perf. Ewan McGregor, Johnny Lee Miller, and Robert Carlyle. Channel Four films, 1996.

A Tree Grows in Brooklyn. Dir. Elia Kazan. Twentieth Century Fox, 1945.

The Trip. Dir. Roger Corman. Perf. Peter Fonda, Jack Nicholson, Susan Strasberg, Bruce Dern, and Dennis Hopper. AIP, 1967.

12 Angry Men. Dir. Sidney Lumet. Perf. Henry Fonda,

Two Girls and a Sailor. Dir. Richard Thorpe. Perf. Van Johnson. MGM, 1944.

2001: A Space Odyssey. Dir. Stanley Kubrick. Perf. Keir Dullea. MGM, 1968.

West Side Story. Dir. Robert Wise and Jerome Robbins. Perf. Natalie Wood and Rita Moreno. United Artists, 1961.

What Ever Happened to Baby Jane? Dir. Robert Aldrich. Perf. Bette Davis and Joan Crawford. Warner Bros., 1962.

When Time Ran Out. Dir. James Goldstone. Perf. Paul Newman and William Holden. Warner Bros., 1980.

When Willie Comes Marching Home. Dir. John Ford. Perf. Dan Dailey and Corinne Calvet. Twentieth Century Fox, 1950.

White Zombie. Dir. Victor Halperin. Perf. Bela Lugosi. United Artists, 1932.

The Wild Bunch. Dir. Sam Peckinpah. Perf. William Holden, Ernest Borgnine, Edmond O'Brien, Warren Oates, Ben Johnson, Robert Ryan, and Strother Martin. Warner Bros., 1969.

The Wild One. Dir. Laslo Benedek. Perf. Marlon Brando and Lee Marvin. Columbia, 1953.

Winchester '73. Dir. Anthony Mann. Perf. James Stewart, Shelley Winters, Tony Curtis, and Rock Hudson. Universal, 1959.

The Wizard of Oz. Dir. Victor Fleming. Perf. Judy Garland and Frank Morgan. MGM, 1939.

Woman in the Moon [Frau im Mond]. Dir. Fritz Lang. Perf. Rudolf Klein-Rogge. Fritz Lang Film, 1929.

The Wrong Man. Dir. Alfred Hitchcock. Perf. Henry Fonda and Vera Miles. Warner Bros., 1956.

Young Frankenstein. Dir. Mel Brooks. Perf. Gene Wilder, Peter Boyle, Cloris Leachman, and Teri Garr. Twentieth Century Fox, 1974.

The Young Philadelphians. Dir. Vincent Sherman. Perf. Paul Newman and Barbara Rush. Warner Bros., 1959.

Zabriskie Point. Dir. Michelangelo Antonioni. MGM, 1970.

VITA

If you are reading this, Ramsay Wise earned his PhD in English from the University of Missouri-Columbia in 2012.