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Hillary Campbell
Denison University

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THE REALITY BLOWING IN

BY HILLARY CAMPBELL '00

NOTE: This essay was written as a response to James Faulkner's *Sanctuary*, Virginia Woolf's *The Waves*, and Ford Madox Ford's *The Good Soldier*—it is a conversation between myself and three characters from the novels: *Sanctuary*'s Temple, *Waves*' Bernard, and *Soldier*'s Dowell. Though I realize this essay is not written in any typical analytical or "academic" form, I nevertheless chose to write it this way in order to illustrate both the main point of the essay (the reality of fiction), as well as to mirror the brilliantly convincing style/technique/realism found in *Waves*. After reading these three novels, I wanted to express the inherent modern nature of them all, in addition to each author's haunting ability to draw strings between the characters in the novels and the readers reading about them. This essay was meant—atypical though it may be—to voice my interpretations of the three novels in a way just as imaginative as that found in the novels, and in a way highly worthy of the texts I have come to adore.

"There's an excitement, a blooming, an electricity—almost like a living, breathing current running through the brown grass and bricks and flesh. Every seat is filled and the day is sunny, as though a spotlight burning coldly down on leafless trees and breathless workers, abounding with words. You can feel the words, the effort, the ambition to make black-and-white what is colorful and imaginary and false-true. You can feel the narrative rising," Bernard says.

"What narrative?" Temple asks.

"This," I say.

"And you just plan to sit there while we talk?"

Dowell says.

"That's the plan."

"What's 'this?'" Temple asks.

A throbbing in my right cheek. A tiny heart-beat pocketed in my mouth. Hope. That this will all fall into place, and points will be made. Before the sun sets. "I want you to tell me if life can be written down."

"Say *what*? Whose life?"

"Your life. All of you. I want to know about reality, and about existence, and about *life*. And I want to write something about being a person, and about putting things how they 'are' *directly* onto paper. So, if you would, just talk to me about—"

"All of *this*," Dowell says. He sweeps his arm about the room as if the light of understanding were

about to dawn. But it helps.

"Well my life isn't worth talking about. 'My father's a judge' (Faulkner 54) and I had a cat," Temple says.

Everyone laughs, but she hadn't meant to be funny. The feeling that what you'd planned isn't going to go quite right is not the best feeling in the world. Sometimes I feel that if everyone were exactly like me, things would run a hell of a lot more smoothly. Trying to impress and be different just doesn't cut it sometimes.

"Look at the way your lights wind up around the windows," Bernard says. "Do you keep them on all the time? Your face is throbbing. Constancy runs through the meadows out there, where no one waits to find it, he once said to me. If you want to find it, though, you will. Wanting is acknowledging self, acknowledging need and desire and you, I, me, because none of us knows a 'right' definition of ourselves. It is all make-believe and taking photos like those up on the wall there. Why? A glossy You is not the real You, and yet you paste and stick because you want to be associated with that happy, smiling You. A faux reality. A proposal of the delighted girl by the beach in California, with hair that is longer now. And yet you claim that *that* is who you were and are and want to be. But you don't know."

"That's in Florida," I say.

Hillary Campbell is a sophomore from Upper Arlington, Ohio, majoring in English (writing), and minoring in philosophy. She is co-editor-in-chief of *Exile*, and her spare time is spent sleeping, watching *The X-Files*, watching *Northern Exposure*, looking for gray and yellow skies, reading *Durrell* and chewing blue pens.

"What the hell is he talking about?" Temple's voice screeches. She runs her fingers through her hair, and the way her tense body lays makes the bean-bag seem like it's made of stone.

Dowell is nodding at Bernard. "That was 'the saddest story I have ever heard' (Ford 11). That was quite remarkable. That was just the sort of thing Edward would have liked to quarrel with you about. Or Leonora. Or even poor Florence. Yes, yes—quite remarkable."

"You sound like that book they made us read last semester. I read the whole thing but I still have no clue what the thing was about," Temple says, glaring at Bernard.

"It was interpretive," I say, opening my eyes toward her in an effort to seem friendly and accepting. But they tell you to never look an animal in the eye. I should have remembered that.

"It was b.s., is what it was. Ambiguity out the wazoo and all these words making no sense and pointless stories in a bigger pointless story and—"

"I could make a dozen stories of what he said, of what she said—I can see a dozen pictures. But what are stories? Toys I twist—"

"Oh God..." Temple mutters.

"—bubbles I blow, one ring passing through another. And sometimes I doubt if there are stories. What is my story? What is Rhoda's? What is Neville's? (Woolf 144)?" Bernard leans back on the bed with his arms behind his head, and stares.

"I believe I read the novel you're speaking of, or at least the sort of novel you're speaking of," Dowell says eagerly. "I kept telling myself as I read it that I had *life* there in my hands—on paper! For once, I knew exactly how things were because I was hearing everyone's side of it, and nothing could surprise me later on that would make me change it all later. I repeated to myself, I said: 'I console myself with thinking that this is a real story and that, after all, real stories are probably told best in the way a person telling a story would tell them. They will then seem most real' (Ford 167)."

If I'm not able to take all this down, I'll have to remember it. But even then, how will I know what order to put it all in, or if it will even make sense?

"So what—it's human to tell stories? Is that what you all are saying? That that novel I read was good—"

"Brilliant," Dowell interrupts.

Temple rolls her eyes. "That that novel I read was *good* because of the way it talked? No one I know speaks that way."

"But what you said before—that 'it's human to tell stories' ... that's exactly it," Bernard says. "That novel bothered you like it did because it connected to some part of your heart—some corner, and shattered it like glass. It was pink, and it was hard, and it was familiar, and you realized that you had inhaled life. Putting together pieces of our own realities for the submission of others—*that's* how we deal with the shaky ground and the unearthing of sponges and 'arrows of sensation' (Woolf 239)."

"To break the uncertainty, we create universes of our own," I say.

"We create the interpretive in order to turn jello into concrete. To give meaning to the meaningless." Bernard is whispering. I've told them that these walls are thin.

"But what if you already *had* meaning? I mean, what if the meaningless *was* your meaning and, by 'lifting the curtain' as it were—by hearing the stories of others, you're turning your own world into nothing?" Dowell asks.

"Poor Florence?" I say.

"Indeed poor Florence. Or poor Edward. Or poor any of them. If we'd only keep to our own worlds, there would be no hurt or pain or revelation! One can learn of life, but what if that is too much?" He's becoming terribly excited. Temple shushes him carelessly. "I found it was false, 'and yet I swear by the sacred name of my creator that it was true. If for nine years I have possessed a goodly apple that is rotten at the core and discover its rottenness only in nine years and six months less four days, isn't it true to say that for nine years I possessed a goodly apple? So it may well be with Edward Ashburnham, with Leonora his wife and with poor dear Florence' (Ford 14). What if, by accepting the arbitrariness of life, we are dooming ourselves to hell?"

Outside, the light is actually beginning to fade, and inside, my watch feels constricting. The tension in the room is palpable—I like that word, "palpable"—and I become aware of the dried saliva caked on my lips. Secretly, I try to wipe it away.

And then Lisa instantly comes home. And with one look at me, words pass effortlessly and she grabs her Spanish dictionary and wafts just as instantly back out the door. She has a problem with concentration,

and I know she has only taken the book to tell herself she at least *tried* to work. In this current sea of stress and academia, though, I know she won't last long. No one will want to talk back to her. No one will want to tell her stories to keep her from her book.

In the silence, the candle flickers. We can all hear its silent fury, and we can all hear the car roar by outside. The darker it becomes outside, the fuzzier it becomes inside, and the light from above heats us all like an oven. I stare at my books lined up next to each other on the desk—leaning and depending and ready to fall. Bernard's weight creaks a spring. Dowell's breath sounds like another candle. Temple remains uncomfortably wedged in the beanbag, her eyes pouring into me like ice. You can taste winter coming—bite into it like a steel bar. And when a plane flies overhead, I notice that I've been talking.

"...so Derrida says that the word is arbitrary—that anything relating to language is arbitrary. If this is ... if what you say ... if what Dowell believes is true, then stories only help to let us know what shifting sands we stand on."

"How poetic," Temple says.

"Well, what do *you* think?" I ask.

She shakes her head.

"What sort of a name is 'Temple?'" Bernard mumbles/asks/says half-heartedly from the bed. He's twirling the tassels of my blanket in his fingers.

The beanbag makes a crunching, forgiving sound when she stands up. "My father gave me that name!" she shouts. I know it's useless to tell her (again) that the walls are thin, so I'm quiet. "And I don't want to read about life, because mine is perfectly fine as it is!" She whirls about the room like a cornered animal. She looks like she wants to run. "Do you know what I did? Do you know what I made them think, and what I let them do so that I could have him around? I tasted the drink so I could feel it on my tongue and know that the light was on! Do I need a book to tell me that? Hell no! I don't need to learn *anything* from a book that doesn't make any sense and pretends to know what I'm living just so it can make me examine again how that drink felt on my throat."

In her rage, in the room, it seems like she's speaking to a television screen. Or maybe I'm the only one listening. And maybe she doesn't want that, either.

"I can tell stories from everyone's point of view!"

she gasps, sinking down on the beanbag and standing right back up again, so that it sounds like corn, like the rustling of shucks. And then she starts talking about just that, which I think is really weird. "Let me tell you what I'll do, I'd say. And I'd lie there with the shucks laughing at me and me jerking away in front of his hand and I'd think what I'd say to him. I'd talk to him like the teacher does in school, and then I was a teacher in school and it was a little black thing like a nigger boy, kind of, and I was the teacher.' Don't you see I don't need interpretation to tell me what to do? 'Because I'd say How old am I? and I'd say I'm forty-five years old. I had iron-gray hair and spectacles and I was all big up here like women get. I had on a—' (Faulkner 219-220)"

"Temple, it's OK," I interrupt.

"Reading about it has made her see it. Know it," Bernard says.

"I believe I wouldn't ever want to know *that*," Dowell says.

In the brilliant haze inside, the darkness against the window pushes in and closes her mouth and forces her hands to her powder compact, to her cheeks. The door closes us in, and the words fly around like pieces of dust caught in the wave of the next conversation. I know I'll never be able to get this to make sense. My foot's asleep.

"So this is reality," Bernard says. He sits up and dangles his legs over the bed. "So what? If this is how it is, then what have we to complain about? We can't change it. We can't make it make sense anymore than we already have. There are the facts, and there are the facts. But isn't the darkness out there the very thing that keeps us from believing in this light we create? We keep things in perspective by taking in the words, taking in other people's moths and holding them close to our own light. I don't know what the night is, but the best I can do is to hold my light up and recognize that light, all the while remembering that there is blackness that can hurt me. 'For I am more selves than Neville thinks. We are not simple as our friends would have us to meet their needs. Yet love is simple' (Woolf 89). Loving and ingesting and remaining open to suggestion is what keeps us sane..."

Temple stands. Her lip trembles slightly.

"...which is the ultimate irony, is it not?"

Dowell says. The candle across the room is reflected in his eyes. "We tell stories to stop ourselves from

seeing the falseness of it all"—again, the displaying sweep of his arm—"and yet in order to remain sane, we must make sure we don't believe that those stories are completely true."

("Popeye believed they were true.")

"And why? For what purpose? To point what lesson? It is all a darkness' (Ford 151)," Dowell says.

"Darkness," Temple says.

"Darkness," Bernard says.

The candle goes out in Dowell's eyes, and the smoke fills the room as though it were fog choking the humanity out of us. I smirk. I begin to feel like we are losing sight of what is important, of what I had originally sat them all down to tell me. "So does life narrate?" I ask, and I think why would anyone want to narrate this moment, with the black pulse of the window trying so hard to get in here...

"What makes us human is to tell stories. Constancy. Reiteration. You—" Bernard looks at me, "I don't know your story, and I have no reason to believe what you say is true, and yet I choose to listen to it, because that's what makes me pull the blinds to the sunlight. Pull them up. You—" he looks to Dowell, "I don't know if what you've said is true. I don't think you know, either, and you began to doubt it when they all told you your life. You—" he looks to Temple, "are insane. I don't know that you even have a bed, a kitchen, a liking of fish. Your world was turned upside-down, and all you can say is that you had a cat."

"He was gone when I got home," Temple says to the floor, quietly.

I look to my hands, and back up again. Bernard continues.

"But this reiteration is not true—it can't be proven or verified because of the meaningless of everything around us. Like a good friend of mine told me, 'I desired always to stretch the night and fill it fuller and fuller with dreams' (Woolf 205). This cotton-candy world is a dream. This carpet. This swirl on my tongue and between my toes. My outstretched

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hand to you is but an illusion." He looks to me. "Who writes the story—the writer or the reader?"

"Well, the writer," I say without pause. But as soon as I say it, I know I'm wrong. And I'm scared. And I'm petrified of putting myself out there on the line, and writing reality, and having it all blow up in my face when this person draws this from it, and that person draws that from it, until it's not mine anymore, and therefore by stripping away my narration of life, they have stripped *me* away, as well.

"I have done with phrases' (Woolf 295)," Bernard says. "Life is not susceptible perhaps to the treatment we give it when we try to tell it' (Woolf 267)."

I look desperately, clawing for solid ground, head swiveling, to Dowell, who only shakes his head and says softly, "I leave it to you' (Ford 220)."

Gathering limbs and sentences and movement, they leave my room of light slowly, one by one, slipping out as Lisa did such a seemingly long time ago. I feel completely at a loss—completely helpless and hopeless and without answers. And yet, somehow, with.

They are gone. I am alone. Perhaps I dreamt of their stay, and of what was said. Perhaps in the morning it will all be like evaporating mist, and my bed will not have his imprint on it anymore. The throbbing in my cheek has stopped. My foot is awake. And looking for life to narrate, there is nothing but she, who swims through my eyes, and reminds me of the electricity and the fakeness of the students and the need to finish this, this, this. There is nothing but she, the reality blowing in...

"That was when I got to thinking a funny thing. You know how you do when you're scared. I was looking at my legs and I'd try to make like I was a boy. I was thinking about if I just was a boy and then I tried to make myself into one by thinking. You know how you do things like that' (Faulkner 216)."

THE EVOLUTION OF THE AVANT-GARDE: TOWARDS IMPRESSIONISM IN CINEMA

BY AMY L. SPEARS '98

From Surrealism to Trance Film and Beyond

Trance films in general ... tend to resist specific interpretation. (Sitney 23)

In his book, *Visionary Film*, P. Adams Sitney describes the trance film as the link between earlier surrealist film and the later mythopoeic and structural films of the avant-garde cinema. Trance films in general seem indeterminate in meaning; it is difficult to say that they *literally* mean some specific thing, as they seem poetic in form, like metaphors for their subjects. Often, trance films or their precursors in the surrealist tradition employ psychological symbols and themes in order to suggest an overall idea or feeling to the viewer, as opposed to a straightforward narrative plot. In this way, these films can almost be thought of as impressionistic in some sense.

In Sitney's definition, he considers the trance film (and other avant garde films of the same period) to deal with several themes: the unconscious articulation of space, the quest for sexual identity, sometimes casting the filmmaker as the protagonist, and like their surrealist precursors, the evocation of the dream state (Sitney 18). However, unlike the trance film, "the surrealist cinema ... depends upon the power of film to evoke a mad voyeurism and to imitate the very discontinuity, the horror, and the irrationality of the unconscious (Sitney 11). I would agree with Sitney in this respect; trance films seem much more ordered and rational than surrealist ones.

The link between surrealist films and trance films is related to the dream-like quality which both genres portray on the screen. By transporting the viewer to a place which can exist with elements not from reality, the trance filmmaker is able to create a work which asserts its meaning in a nontraditional way. That is, the meaning of a film from either genre will not be easily deciphered; the images cannot always be taken at face value, or the film might seem to have no meaning at all.

Sitney also sees a connection historically be-

tween the trance film and what he calls the mythopoeic or mythographic film. He writes,

The fundamental change of the early 1960s within the avant-garde film, as I have shown in several places, was the emergence of the mythopoeic film, a direct descendent of the trance film, which had undergone a gradual but fragmented evolution in the 1950s. (Sitney 345)

The mythopoeic film is similar to the trance film in that it also concentrates on the "primacy of the imagination." But whereas the trance film concentrates on a dream-state, the mythopoeic film focuses on ritual and myth, whether already established or created in the diegesis (Sitney 123). As in its precursors, mythopoeic film has an ambiguity surrounding the meaning or plot of the film, giving it as well a sense of indeterminate meaning.

As I discuss the individual films I have chosen (from surrealism: Salvador Dali and Luis Buñuel's *Un Chien Andalou*, from trance film Maya Deren's *Meshes of the Afternoon* and *At Land* and from mythopoeic film, Kenneth Anger's *Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome*, *Puce Moment* and *Kustom Kar Kommandos*) I hope to make clear the evolution of the avant garde film as Sitney has described it, from the surrealist films of the 1920s to the trance films of the 1940s and then to the mythopoeic films of the 1950-60s. But most of all, I also hope to show that it is possible that the further evolution of the avant-garde may branch off from the current structuralist trend into something which most closely resembles "cinematic impressionism."

Un Chien Andalou and Trance Film Elements

Un Chien Andalou (1928) by Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dali, has long been heralded as the definitive surrealist work of the cinema. As Buñuel himself wrote after the film had been made:

It should be noted that when an image or idea appeared the collaborators discarded it imme-

Amy L. Spears is a senior cinema and English (writing) double major. She is editor emerita of The Denisonian and a DJ for WDUB. She is currently a member of Denison's presidential search committee and plans to attend Oregon State University for graduate school next year.

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diately if it was derived from remembrance, or from their cultural pattern or if, simply, it had a conscious association with another earlier idea. They accepted only those representations as valid which, though they moved them profoundly, had no possible explanation ... The motivation of the images was, or meant to be, purely irrational! They are as mysterious and inexplicable to the two collaborators as to the spectator. NOTHING, in the film, SYMBOLIZES ANYTHING. (Mullen 153)

It would seem from this emphatic note from the filmmaker that in fact, trying to find any coherent meaning in the film would be futile. However, because the same characters are seen throughout the film, it seems impossible for the viewer to *not* perceive some sort of linearity or continuity (of which Buñuel also writes). "Far from being puzzling, the film achieves the clarity of a dream" (Sitney 4).

However, because of the intertitles which make clear that the film actually spans a period of eight years, confusion sets in. Without these indicators of time, one could attempt to view the film as a somewhat chronological narrative, albeit in the form of a dream. With these intertitles, there is some ambiguity as to the order of the events. The most ambiguous perhaps is the phrase "eight years later" which follows the eye-slashing scene and precedes the scene in which the main female character rushes to assist the cyclist, her eye now intact. There is no cause and effect type of action occurring here; events may seem to proceed in an order, but they are never as a result of anything else in the film.

Even with all these ambiguities (or perhaps because of them), *Un Chien Andalou* does convey the mood or aura of a dream state, readily recognizable because of the inconsistencies in plot and causality which are the mainstays of traditional narrative film.

Even though Sitney would classify *Un Chien Andalou* as a surrealist film (and I would not dispute this) it also has many elements of trance film, alluding to the evolution into it. As already mentioned, the film evokes a dream state, one of the staple elements of surrealism which "leaked into" trance film. Both filmmakers also appear in the film, though not as protagonists: Buñuel as the eyeball slasher and Dali as one of the priests being pulled along with the pinos.

Elements of the search for sexual identity are

also present within the film. The androgyne is especially representative of this trance characteristic. Also, the man as a sexual predator towards the woman and the woman as she relates to the various men both seem to be searching.

Un Chien Andalou does not seem to contain many elements pertaining to the unconscious articulation of space, but it is not a trance film anyway. In fact the surrealist elements far exceed the trance elements, so while it may fit into the trance genre, it is on the fringes of such a definition.

Bridging the Gap to the "Pure Trance Film": Maya Deren

Like Buñuel and Dali, it seems that Deren did not intend for her films to give any specific meaning. The introduction which she reads on a videotape edition of her collected works reads:

I am content if
on those rare occasions
whose truth can be stated
only by poetry,
you will, perhaps,
recall an image —
even if only the aura
of my films.

However, even though there is no determinate meaning in her works, Deren succeeded in helping to define an entirely new genre in the American avant-garde cinema.

Perhaps Deren's *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1942) is the film which best exemplifies the emergence of the trance film from surrealism. It fits somewhere in between the two genres because of its heavy reliance on Freudian psychological symbols mixed into a dreamlike diegesis. Another filmmaker praises this use of such symbols:

Perhaps the most startling thing about this film is the naturalness and ease with which it presents certain psychological symbology ... Maya had the capacity to speak more directly about what everyone else was being very pompous about — that is, symbolism, particularly psychological symbolism — than anyone else I ever met. If one underestimates such a talent, then I suggest trying to make a film that uses the obvious psychological symbols like keys and knives as *Meshes* does and not bring the house down with laughter. (Brakhage 93)

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Meshes is more ordered than a surrealist film because it does portray a continuous story, but the objects which are central to the film (telephone receiver, flower, knife, key) are reminiscent of the striped box in *Un Chien Andalou* in that they reappear throughout the film, linking the scenes together, but not in any way which would suggest traditional continuity. In fact, her collaborator on the film and then husband, Alexander Hammid had made several surrealist films in Prague (Fabe 138).

Meshes does have several of the elements which become important to Sitney's definition of trance film. Deren the filmmaker is cast as the protagonist, and the film does seem to deal with the articulation of space. One example of this comes in the sequence of close up shots of her feet as she walks. The motion is entirely continuous; the action is matched perfectly and the shots are all framed identically. However, each step takes us through a different terrain — grass, sand, rocks, etc. — therefore disrupting the continuity of setting.

Sitney, however, develops his definition of the trance film around Maya Deren's later work, calling her 1944 film *At Land* "the earliest of the pure American trance films" (Sitney 21). Most important to Sitney when discussing this film is the protagonist. Played by Deren herself, she is seen as fairly isolated from the other characters in the film; the most interaction she has is when walking down a path conversing with a man. However, the man keeps turning into several different men, so it is difficult to call even this "interaction". In other scenes, as she crawls along the banquet table or watches the women playing chess on the beach, she is barely noticed or acknowledged by the other characters. The only time that another character ever seems to react to her is in fact when there are multiple shots of her at different places on the beach and she is in effect looking at and reacting to herself.

Deren's film is also very much about the articulation of space. Different scenes seem to merge and connect as she moves throughout the film. For instance, as she climbs up the dead tree on the beach, her head exits the top of the frame, only to reappear entering from the bottom of the frame in the banquet hall in the next shot. The motion is uninterrupted, but the scene around her has changed entirely, thereby giving the illusion of a continuous space.

As Deren's career moved on, she seemed to fall away from the pure trance film element and move on into the realm of myth and ritual with her film *The Very Eye of Night* (1952-1959), probably as a result of her real-life initiation as a Voodoo priestess. Had she lived longer she might have progressed even further into this type of theme, but since she died in 1961 at the age of 44, she left only the possibility for other filmmakers to go into this realm.

Kenneth Anger: Creator of Mythopoeia

The next major genre of avant-garde film which Sitney discusses is the mythopoeic film. Just as Maya Deren bridged the gap between Surrealism and trance film, Kenneth Anger can be seen as bridging the gap between trance and mythopoeic films. Two of his shorter films, *Kustom Kar Kommandos* (1965) and *Puce Moment*, both fragments of proposed but never completed longer films, have a certain dream-like quality that evokes thoughts of trance film. Had they been completed however, it seems likely that both of the films were intended to be more mythopoeic endeavors. The proposed *Puce Women* was to be, "according to Anger ... 'a film on the women in Hollywood in the 1920s.' It was to be a study of their lifestyles, their clothes, their cars, their houses, their social patterns" (Landis 52). *Puce Women* therefore, had it ever been made, would have focused on one aspect of the mythical Hollywood which Anger was so obsessed with lampooning.

Kustom Kar Kommandos is therefore very similar to what *Puce Moment* exists as: a trance-like fragment of a film which would have been more mythopoeic in scope. *KKK* might actually come closer in its fragmented form to achieving this goal, as the film shows a man polishing and maintaining his hotrod with great care. His mood and demeanor suggests the trance film, but the action is evocative of ritualistic elements and in fact Anger's proposal for the film actually sought to capture on film the teenage phenomenon of customizing cars with an adult mentor. Anger describes these relationships as almost religious in his prospectus:

The aforementioned adult "mentors," ... will be shown at work in their body shops on various cars-in-the-process-of-becoming, in the role of "arch-priests" to the teenagers whose commission they are fulfilling. ... the idolized customizers (the only adults seen in the film)

will be represented as shadowy, mysterious personages (priests or witch-doctors) while the objects of their creation, the cars, will bathe in a pool of multi-sourced (strictly non-realistic) light, an eye-magnet of nacreous color and gleaming curvilinear surfaces. (Sitney 125)

The very words which Anger uses to describe his vision of his film are imbued with religious and mythic imagery. The car is seemingly "birthed" from the magical/religious parents.

It seems that the less apparent mythic elements of these shorter films alludes to the enormous pantheon which Anger portrayed in *The Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome* (1956, revised 1966). Sitney calls this film "the first major work to herald the emerging mythic form in American avant-garde film. (Sitney 124).

In *Inauguration*, Anger displays a somewhat bizarre "magickal" ritual, not unlike what he himself undertook in his occult practices, only the participants in this ritual are gods from Greek, Roman and Egyptian and Christian mythology. The film is imbued with rich colors and at times up to five layers of superimpositions, giving the ritual a sense of richness and lavishness.

Inauguration does seem to embody what Sitney means when he writes, "The triumph of the mythopoeic film ... spring from the filmmakers' liberation from the repetition of traditional mythology and the enthusiasm with which they forged a cinematic form for the creation or revelation of new myths" (124). However, the film also contains remnants of the trance era as well. The heavy layering of superimpositions and the strangely trance-like movements of many of the characters evoke the dream-like mood that the avant-garde has long been known for. The strange orgy which ensues after Pan's poisoning seems to allude to a sort of sexual searching (although not exactly for sexual identity).

Looking Forward to "Impressionist Cinema"

The term [impressionism] was first used to characterize the group in response to the first exhibition of independent artists in 1874. Louis Leroy and other hostile critics seized on the title of a painting by Monet *Impression, Sunrise*, as exemplifying the radically unfinished character of the works. The word 'impression' to describe the immediate effect of a

perception was in use at the time by writers on both psychology and art. Jules-Antoine Castagnary's review (1874) demonstrates that it was not always used in a negative way: 'They are *Impressionists* in the sense that they render not the landscape but the sensation produced by the landscape' ... The term is sometimes used to describe freely executed effects in works of other periods in which the artist has presented an impression of the visual appearance of a subject rather than a precise notation. (Turner, Vol. 8 151-152)

The above dictionary definition of impressionism could be effectively applied to many of the films I have discussed from the surrealist, trance or mythopoeic genres. Especially because of the indeterminacy of meaning which is prevalent in all of these films, "impressionistic" would seem to be a term which could be readily applied to such works. Much like impressionist paintings, in which the subject is seen through a sort of haze of brush strokes, the subjects of these films are somewhat hidden behind the effects of their means of representation onscreen. Whether due to lighting effects, rephotography, or even the thematic or nonlinear construction of plot, these films might seem to give just an impression of meaning, a sort of fluid idea upon viewing them.

This is not to say however that any or all of these films could fit into a category of cinematic impressionism. I do believe however, that following the historical model which Sitney has provided in his book, perhaps impressionistic film is a genre which could be looked forward to, branching out of the avant-garde alongside structuralism.

Following a strict definition of impressionism as it applies to painting, an impressionistic film would have to be nonnarrative in some sense, that is, simply evoking the impression of a perceived subject, something which all of the films here do quite well, especially those of Deren and Buñuel. Then special attention would have to be paid to "momentary effects of light, atmosphere or movement" (Turner 151). Perhaps this could indicate a further exploration of the type of choreographed movements that both Anger and especially Deren explored. One can imagine films tightly focused on particular movements and the interplay of light on the subject as sorts of studies in impressionism.

Impressionists are described as being concerned

with "finding a technical means to express individual sensation" (Turner 151). It seems then that impressionist cinema would be autobiographical in the sense that it would pay attention to more private experiences and trying to convey the actual feelings of these to the viewer. Here the analogy of experimental film as "film poem" (Sitney vii) becomes useful as we imagine a sort of synesthesia as the poet/filmmaker endeavors to give visual representations of the tactile elements of an experience.

It is difficult to predict where the avant-garde

cinema will next lead us, but I do believe that perhaps this sort of impressionism is possible as long as one intensely studies the subtle differences between the already established genres and builds upon the development which has occurred over the past seventy years. If a project is consciously undertaken to build upon the past historical development of the avant-garde cinematic art form, perhaps impressionism is a possibility.

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