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Cover Photo: Vivienne Dick. Beauty Becomes the Beast. *1979.*

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The Beaubourg-Effect: Implosion and Deterrence

JEAN BAUDRILLARD

translated by ROSALIND KRAUSS and ANNETTE MICHELSON

Beaubourg-Effect . . . Beaubourg-Machine . . . Beaubourg-*Thing*—how can we name it? The puzzle of this carcass of signs and flux, of networks and circuits . . . the ultimate gesture toward translation of an unnamable structure: that of social relations consigned to a system of surface ventilation (animation, self-regulation, information, media) and an in-depth, irreversible implosion. A monument to mass simulation effects, the Centre functions like an incinerator, absorbing and devouring all cultural energy, rather like the black monolith of *2001*—a mad convection current for the materialization, absorption, and destruction of all the contents within it.

The neighborhood all around is merely a buffer zone, recoated, disinfected by snobbish and hygienic design, psychologically. It's a vacuum-making machine, somewhat like nuclear power centers. Their real danger lies not in lack of safety, pollution, explosion, but in the maximum-security system that radiates from them, the zone of surveillance and deterrence that spreads by degrees over the entire terrain—a technical, ecological, economic, geopolitical buffer zone. What does the nucleus matter? The center is a matrix for developing a model of *absolute* security, subject to generalization on all social levels, one that is most profoundly a model of deterrence. (It is the very same one that serves to regulate us globally under the sign of peaceful coexistence and the simulation of atomic peril.)

With allowances made for scale, the same model is developed through the Centre: cultural fission, political deterrence.

This being said, the circulation of fluids is uneven. All the traditional fluids—exhaust, coolant, electricity—flow smoothly. But already the circulation of human masses is less assured (the archaic solution of escalators moving through plastic tubes . . . they should have used suction, propulsion, or what have you, some kind of motion in the image of that baroque theatricality of flux which makes for the originality of the carcass). And as for the stock—works of art, objects, books—as well as the so-called polyvalent interior workspace: there the flow has stopped entirely. The deeper you penetrate into the interior,

the less circulation you find. It's the exact opposite of Roissy, where after moving through a space-age, futuristic design radiating outward from a center, you end up prosaically at . . . ordinary airplanes. But the incoherence is the same. (And what of money, that other fluid, what of its mode of circulation, emulsion, and fallout in Beaubourg?)

The contradiction prevails even in the behavior of the personnel assigned to the "polyvalent" space and thus with no private place to work. Standing and on the move, the staff effects a laid-back, flexible style: very high-tech, very adapted to the "structure" of a "modern" space. But seated in their cubicles, which aren't really even cubicles, they strain to secrete an artificial solitude, to spin themselves a bubble. Here is another fine strategy of deterrence: they are condemned to expend all their energy on this individual defensive. Here again we find the real contradiction at the center of the Beaubourg Thing: a fluid commutative exterior—cool and modern—and an interior uptight with old values.

This space of deterrence, linked to the ideology of visibility, transparency, polyvalence, consensus, contact, and sanctioned by the threat to security, is virtually that of all social relations today. The whole of social discourse is there, and on both this level and that of cultural manipulation, Beaubourg is—in total contradiction to its stated objectives—a brilliant monument of modernity. There is pleasure in the realization that the idea for this was generated not by a revolutionary mind, but by logicians of the establishment wholly lacking in critical spirit, and thus closer to the truth, capable, in their very obstinacy, of setting up a basically uncontrollable mechanism, which even by its success escapes them and offers, through its very contradictions, the most exact reflection possible of the present state of affairs.

*

Granted, the entire cultural contents of Beaubourg are anachronistic, since only an interior void could have corresponded to this architectural envelope. Given the general impression that everything here has long been comatose, that the attempt at animation is nothing but reanimation, and that this is so because the culture itself is dead, Beaubourg figures this forth admirably well, though shamefacedly, when this death called for a triumphant acceptance and the erection of a monument—or antimonument—equal to the phallic inanity, in its time, of the Eiffel Tower. A monument to total disconnection, to hyper-reality, and to the cultural implosion actually created by transistor networks continually threatened by a huge short-circuit.

Beaubourg is really a compression sculpture by César: the image of a culture flattened by its own weight, the mobile automobile suddenly frozen into a geometric block. Like César's cars, survivors of an ideal accident, Beaubourg is no longer external, but internal to the metallic and mechanical

structure, which has made of it a pile of cubes of metal scrap, whose chaos of tubes, levers, chassis, of metal and human flesh within, is cut to the geometric measure of the smallest possible space. So culture at Beaubourg is crushed, twisted, cut out, and stamped into its tiniest basic elements—a bunch of transmissions and defunct metabolism, frozen like a science-fiction mechanoid.

Yet, within this carcass, which looks, in any event, like a compression sculpture, instead of crushing and breaking all culture, they *exhibit* César. Dubuffet is shown, as is the counterculture—whose imagery of opposition merely functions to refer to the defunct culture. Within this carcass that might have served as a mausoleum for the hapless operation of signs, Tinguely's ephemeral, self-destructing machines are reexhibited under the rubric of the eternal life of culture. Thus everything is neutralized at the same time: Tinguely is embalmed in the museological institution and Beaubourg is trapped within its so-called artistic contents.

Happily, this whole simulacrum of cultural values is undermined from the very outset by the architectural shell.[1] For, with its armatures of tubing and its look of a world's fair pavilion, with its (calculated?) fragility that argues against traditional mentality or monumentality, this *thing* openly declares that our age will no longer be one of duration, that our only temporal mode is that of the accelerated cycle and of recycling: the time of transistors and fluid flow. Our only culture is basically that of hydrocarbons—that of the refining, the cracking, the breaking up of cultural molecules, and of their recombination into synthetic products. This, Beaubourg-Museum wants to hide; but Beaubourg-Carcass proclaims it. And here, truly, is the source of the shell's beauty and the disaster of the interior spaces. The very ideology of "cultural production" is, in any case, antithetical to culture, just as visibility and multipurpose spaces are; for culture is a precinct of secrecy, seduction, initiation, and symbolic exchange, highly ritualized and restrained. It can't be helped. Too bad for populism. Tough on Beaubourg.

*

What, then, should have been put inside Beaubourg?

Nothing. Emptiness would signify the complete disappearance of a culture of meaning and of aesthetic sensibility. But even this is too romantic and agonizing; this empty space might have suited a masterpiece of anti-culture.

Perhaps a spinning of strobe lights and gyroscopes, streaking the space whose moving pedestal is created by the crowd?

1. One more thing undermines Beaubourg's cultural project: the very mass of people that swarms in to enjoy it (to which we shall return further on).

Beaubourg, however, actually illustrates the fact that an order of simulacra is maintained only by the alibi of a preceding order. A body entirely composed of flux and surface connections chooses for its content the traditional culture of depth. Thus, an anterior order of simulacra (the one of meaning) now supplies the empty substance of a later order: one which no longer even recognizes the distinction between signifier and signified, between container and contents. Therefore the question "What should be in Beaubourg?" is absurd. It can't be answered because the local distinction between inside and outside can no longer be posited. There is our truth, the truth of Moebius—a utopia that surely is unrealizable, but one which Beaubourg confirms in the sense that any one of its contents is an (internal) contradiction, destroyed from the outset by the container.

And yet . . . and yet . . . if Beaubourg really had to contain something, it should be a labyrinth, a library of infinite permutations, a game or a lottery for the chance reparceling of destinies—in short, a Borgesian world, or better still, a Circular Ruin: a linkage of individuals each dreamed by the other (not a Disneyland of Dream, but a laboratory of practical fiction). An experiment in all the different processes of representation: diffraction, implosion, multiplication, chance connections and disconnections—a little like the Exploratorium in San Francisco or the novels of Philip Dick: simply, then, a culture of simulation and fascination, and no longer a culture of production and meaning. Here is a proposal of something other than a miserable anticulture.

Is it possible? Clearly not here. But this culture is happening elsewhere, everywhere, nowhere. Henceforth, the only true cultural practice, that of the masses as of ourselves (there is no longer any difference), involves the chance, labyrinthine, manipulatory play of signs without meaning.

*

It is, in another sense, not true that Beaubourg displays an incoherence between container and contents. If we give credence to the official cultural project this is true. But what really takes place is the exact reverse. Beaubourg is nothing but a huge mutational operation at work on this splendid traditional culture of meaning, transmuting it into a random order of signs and of simulacra that are now (on this third level) completely homogeneous with the flux and tubing of the facade. And it is really to prepare the masses for this new semiurgic system that they are summoned—under the pretext of indoctrination into meaning and depth.

We must, therefore, start with the axiom: Beaubourg is a *monument of cultural deterrence.* By means of a museological script which is there only to rescue the fiction of humanist culture, the actual labor of the death of culture is enacted. It is to this—*a real cultural work of mourning*—that the masses are joyfully summoned.

And they stampede to it. That's the supreme irony of Beaubourg: the masses rush there not because they slaver for this culture which has been denied them for centuries, but because, for the first time, they have a chance to participate, en masse, in this immense work of mourning for a culture they have always detested.

If, therefore, we denounce Beaubourg as a cultural mystification of the masses, the misunderstanding is total. The masses fall on Beaubourg to enjoy this execution, this dismembering, this operational prostitution of a culture that is at last truly liquidated, including all counterculture, which is nothing but its apotheosis. The masses charge at Beaubourg as they do to the scenes of catastrophes, and with the same irresistible impulse. Even better: they *are* the catastrophe of Beaubourg. Their number, their trampling, their fascination, their itch to see and touch everything comprise a behavior that is in point of fact deadly, catastrophic, for the whole business. Not only does their weight threaten the building, but their adhesion and their curiosity destroy the very contents of this cultural spectacle.

This stampede is totally out of scale with the cultural objectives proposed; this rush is, in its very excess and "success," their radical negation. The masses, then, serve as the agent of catastrophe for this structure of catastrophe: *the masses themselves will finish off mass culture.*

Flowing through the transparent space they are, to be sure, converted into pure movement; but at the same time, by their very opaqueness and inertia, they put an end to the "polyvalence" of this space. They are summoned to participate, to interact, to simulate, to play with the models . . . and they do it well. They interact and manipulate so well that they eradicate all the meaning imputed to this operation and threaten even the infrastructure of the building. Thus, a type of parody, of oversimulation in response to the simulation of culture: the masses, meant only to be cultural livestock, are always transformed into the slaughterers of a culture of which Beaubourg is just the shameful incarnation.

We should applaud this success in cultural deterrence. All those anti-artists, leftists, and culture haters have never so much as approached the deterrent efficacy of this huge black hole, this Beaubourg. This operation is truly revolutionary, exactly because it is involuntary, *mad and meaningless*, uncontrolled, when every reasonable operation to liquidate culture has—as we know—only revived it.

*

Frankly, the only contents of Beaubourg are the masses themselves, which the building treats like a converter, a black box, or in terms of input/output, just like a refinery handling petroleum products or a flow of raw material.

Never has it been so clear that the contents—here culture, elsewhere in-

formation or merchandise—are merely the ghostly support for the opposition of the medium whose function is still that of beguiling the masses, of producing a homogeneous flow of men and minds. The huge surges of coming and going are like the crowds of suburban commuters: absorbed and disgorged by their places of work at fixed hours. And of course it is work that is at issue here: the work of testing, probing, directed questioning. People come here to choose the objectified response to all the questions they can ask, or rather *they themselves come as an answer* to the functional, directed questions posed by the objects. No more forced labor. The restraints of programmatic discipline are hidden beneath a varnish of tolerance. Well beyond the traditional institutions of capital, the hypermarket, or Beaubourg the "hypermarket of culture," is already the model of all future forms of controlled "socialization": the retotalization of all the dispersed functions of the body and of social life (work, leisure, media, culture) within a single, homogeneous space-time; it is the retranscription of all contradictory movements in terms of integrated circuits. It is the space-time of the whole operational simulation of social life.

This requires that the mass of consumers become equivalent or homologous to the mass of products. And it is this very confrontation and fusion of the two masses that occurs in the hypermarket as at Beaubourg, producing something quite different from traditional cultural settings: museums, monuments, galleries, libraries, cultural centers. It is here that a condition of *critical mass* develops, surpassing that of merchandise become hyper-merchandise, or culture become hyper-culture—a *critical mass* that is no longer tied to specific exchanges or to determinate needs but to a kind of total universe of signals; through this integrated circuit impulses travel everywhere in a ceaseless transit of selections, readings, references, marks, decodings. Like consumer objects elsewhere, the cultural objects here have no other purpose than that of maintaining one in a state of integrated mass, of transistorized flux, of magnetized molecularity. That's what we've learned from the hypermarket; the hyper-reality of the merchandise; and that's what one comes to learn at Beaubourg: the hyper-reality of culture.

The traditional museum had already begun this process of excising, regrouping, and interferring with all cultures—this unconditional aestheticization that produces the hyper-reality of culture—but the museum still had a memory. Never as here has culture so lost its memory to the profit of inventory and functional redistribution. And this records a more general fact: everywhere in the "civilized" world the buildup of stockpiles of objects entails the complementary process of human stockpiling: lines, waiting, bottlenecks, concentrations, camps. That's what "mass production" is—not massive production or a utilization of the masses for production, but rather a production *of the mass(es)*. The mass(es) is now a final product of all societal relations, delivering the final blow to those relations, because this crowd that they want us to believe *is* the social fabric, is instead only the place of social implosion. *The mass(es) is*

that space of ever greater density into which everything societal is imploded and ground up in an uninterrupted process of simulation.

Thus this concave mirror: it's because they see the mass(es) inside it that the masses will be tempted to crowd in. It's a typical marketing device from which the whole ideology of transparency draws meaning. Or put another way, in presenting an idealized miniature model they hope to produce an accelerated gravitational pull, an automatic agglutination of culture as an automatic agglomeration of the masses. The process is the same: the nuclear chain reaction, or, the specular operation of white magic.

Thus for the first time, at Beaubourg, there is a supermarketing of culture which operates at the same level as the supermarketing of merchandise: *the perfectly circular* function by which anything, no matter what (merchandise, culture, crowds, compressed air), is demonstrated by means of *its own accelerated circulation*.

*

But if the stockpiling of objects entails the pile up of people, the violence latent within the object-inventory entails an inverse human violence.

There is violence in stockpiling due to the fact of implosion; and in the massing of people there is also a violence proper to its own specific gravity, to the increase in its specific density around its own center of inertia. The mass(es) is a center of inertia and thus a center of a wholly new violence—inexplicable and different from explosive violence.

Critical mass. Implosive mass. Above 30,000 it threatens to "buckle" Beaubourg's structure. That this mass, magnetized by the structure, should become a factor of potential destruction for that very structure . . . what if this were intended by those who conceived the project (but it is beyond one's hopes) . . . if it were part of something they had programmed, the chance to finish off both architecture and culture in one blow . . . well, Beaubourg would then be the most audacious object and successful happening of the century.

MAKE BEAUBOURG BUCKLE! A new revolutionary slogan. No need to torch it or to fight it; just go there! That's the best way to destroy it. Beaubourg's success is no mystery; people go there *just for that*. The fragility of this edifice already exudes catastrophe, and they stampede it just to make it buckle.

Sure, they obey the commands of deterrence, for they have been given an object to consume, a culture to devour, a physical structure to manipulate. But at the same time they aim expressly and unknowingly for this annihilation. The only act, as such, that the mass(es) can produce is the stampede—a projectile mass, defying the edifice of mass culture, defiantly responds to the culturalism promoted by Beaubourg by means of its own weight, its most meaningless,

stupid, least cultural aspect. In defiance of a mass indoctrination into a sterile culture, the crowd replies with a burst of destruction extended as brute physical manipulation. Thus to mental deterrence the crowd responds with direct physical deterrence. This is the mass's own form of defiance. Its tactic is to reply in the same terms in which it is solicited, but beyond that, to respond to the simulation within which it is confined by a social enthusiasm which outstrips its objects and functions as a destructive hypersimulation.[2]

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The people want to accept everything, swipe everything, eat everything, touch everything. Looking, deciphering, studying doesn't move them. The one mass affect is that of touching, or manipulating. The organizers (and the artists, and the intellectuals) are alarmed by this uncontrollable impulse, for they reckoned only with the apprenticeship of the masses to the *spectacle* of culture. They never anticipated this active, destructive fascination—this original and brutal response to the gift of an incomprehensible culture, this attraction which has all the semblance of housebreaking or the sacking of a shrine.

The day after the opening Beaubourg could or should have disappeared, dismantled and kidnapped by the crowd as the only possible response to the absurd challenge of the transparency and the democracy of culture: each person would have carried away a bolt as a fetish of this fetishized culture.

People come to touch, and they view as if they were touching, their glance being only an aspect of tactile manipulation. It's really a world of touch, no longer one of visuality or discourse. People are now directly implicated in process: manipulate/be manipulated, ventilate/be ventilated, circulate/be circulated. And this process is no longer part of the order of representation or of distance or reflection. It is something connected with panic, and with a world in panic.

*

Panic in slow motion, without external movement. It is the internal violence of a saturated whole: *implosion.*

Beaubourg can hardly burn; all precautions have been taken. Fire, explosion, destruction are no longer the imaginary alternatives for this type of edifice. The abolition of this "quaternary" world—cybernetic and permutational—takes the form of implosion.

Subversion and violent destruction are the forms of response to a world of

2. In relation to this critical mass and the radicality of its comprehension of Beaubourg, how silly was the demonstration of the Vincennes students on the evening of the opening!

production. To a universe of networks, permutations, and flux, the response is reversion and implosion.

This holds true as well for institutions, the state, power, and so forth. The dream of seeing all that explode through the force of its own contradictions is, precisely, only a dream. In fact what will happen is that the institutions will implode themselves by the power of ramification, feedback, overdeveloped control circuitry. *Power implodes*; that is its real form of disappearance.

And so it is with cities. Fire, wars, plague, revolutions, criminal marginality, catastrophes: the whole problematic of the anticity, of hostility to the city from without or within, all this has something archaic about it in relation to the real modality of the city's annihilation.

The scenario of the underground city—the Chinese version of burying structure—is also naive. Cities no longer repeat themselves according to a schema of reproduction still dependent on a general schema of production, or according to a schema of resemblance still dependent on the schematic of representation. (That was the type of restoration that followed World War II.) Cities no longer renew themselves, even in their depths. They get remade according to a sort of genetic code that allows for an indefinite number of repetitions according to a cumulative cybernetic memory. Even the utopia of Borges—the map that is coextensive with its terrain, reduplicating it completely—is finished. Today the simulacrum no longer works through doubling and reduplication but rather through genetic miniaturization. No more representation, as implosion—there also—of all space occurs within an infinitesimal memory that forgets nothing and belongs to no one. Simulation of an irreversible, immanent order, increasingly dense and saturated to capacity, that will never again know the liberation of explosion.

We *used to be* a culture of liberating violence (reason). Whether this is seen as a function of capital, of the free play of productive forces, of the irreversible extension of the field of reason and the field of value, of the conquest and colonization of space all the way to the cosmos—or whether we view it as a function of revolution which anticipates the future forces of society and of social energy—the same schema applies: that of a sphere expanding in either slow or violent phases, that of released energy, the image-repertory of radiation.

The violence that goes with this is the kind that engenders a larger world, the violence of production. This kind of violence is dialectical, energetic, cathartic. It is the kind we've learned to analyze and which is familiar to us, the kind that lays out the paths of socialization and leads to a saturation of the whole social field. This violence is analytic, liberating, *determinate*.

The violence appearing today is of an altogether different kind, one we no longer know how to analyze because it eludes the traditional model of explosive violence. It is an *implosive* violence no longer resulting from the extension of a system but from its saturation and contraction—as in the physical systems of stars. Violence as a consequence of unlimited increase in social density, result-

ing from an overregulated system, from overloaded networks (of knowledge, information, power), and from hypertrophied controls that invade all the interstitial paths of facilitation.

This violence is unintelligible to us because our entire image-repertory is oriented to the logic of expanding systems. Indeterminate, this violence is nonetheless indecipherable because it is no longer consistent with models of indeterminacy. Because these models of the operations of randomness have replaced the models of determinacy and classical causality from which they are not fundamentally different. They all express the passage from definite systems of expansion to multidirectional systems of production and expansion—no matter whether star- or rhizomelike in structure. All philosophies of the release of energy, of the radiation of intensity, and of the molecularization of desire tend in the same direction: that networks are capable of infinite and interstitial saturation. The difference between the molar and the molecular is only one of modulation—perhaps the last—within the fundamental processes of energy within systems of expansion.

*

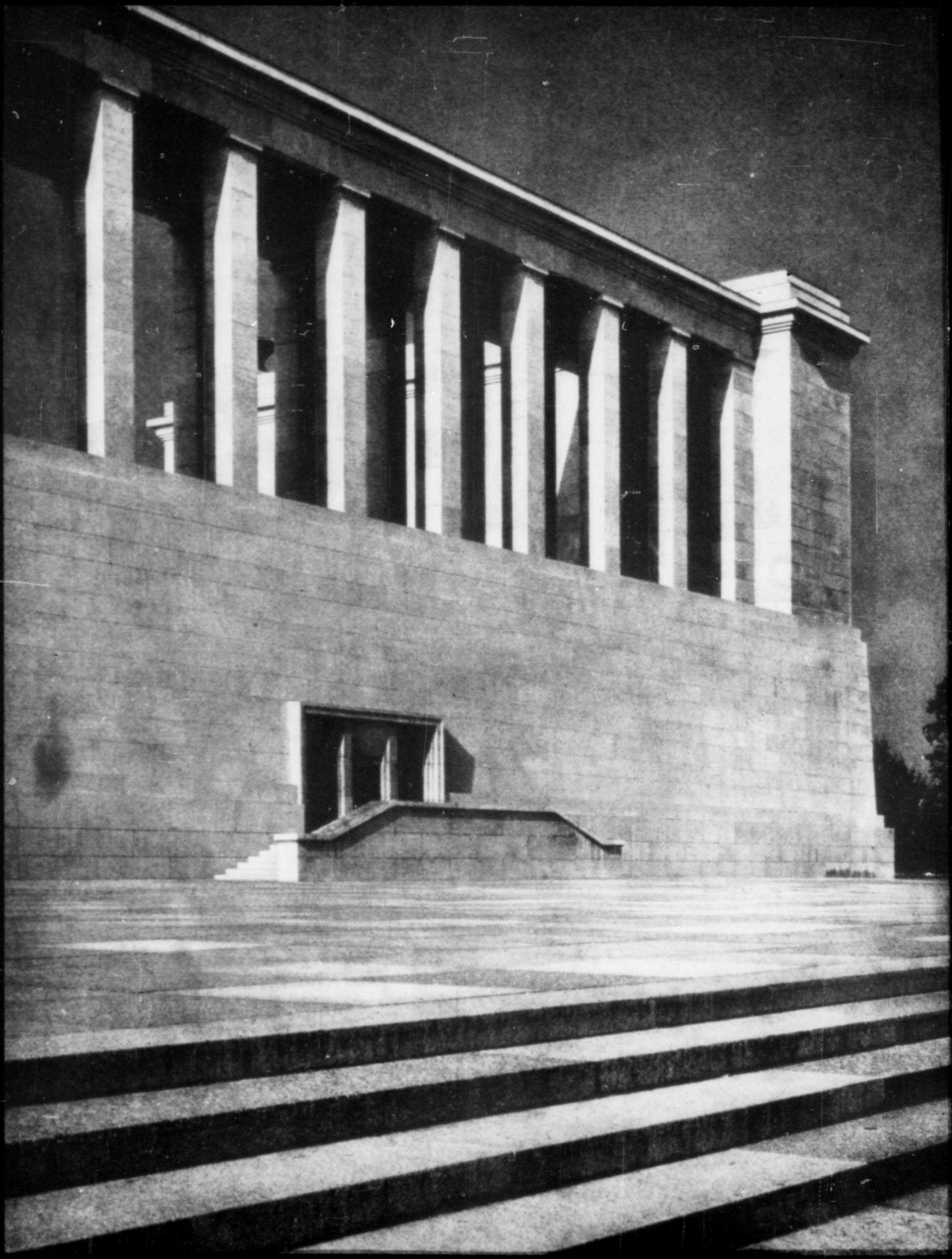
But it's quite another thing if we pass from the millennium of liberation and energy release, after a sort of maximal radiation, into a phase of implosion, a phase of *social inversion*—the enormous inversion of a field once the point of saturation has been reached. (Reconsider in this sense Bataille's concepts of loss and expenditure, and the solar myth of an unlimited radiation as the basis for his sumptuary anthropology: this is the last myth of explosion and radiation within our philosophical tradition, the terminal fireworks of a general economy, although the myth is no longer meaningful for us.) After all, stars don't cease to exist once their radiational energy has been expended. They implode according to a process that is slow at first but then accelerates exponentially; they contract at a fabulous pace to become involuted systems that absorb all the surrounding energy until they become black holes where the world as we understand it—that is, as radiation and unlimited potential of energy—is destroyed.

Perhaps the great metropolises—these surely, if this hypothesis makes sense—have become implosive centers in the sense of centers of absorption and reabsorption of a society whose golden age (contemporary with the double concept of capital and revolution) is undoubtedly past. Society closes in on itself, slowly—or brutally—within a field of inertia that already envelops all politics. (Is this inverse energy?) We must be careful not to understand implosion as a negative, inert, regressive process, as language tends to force us to do by glorifying the inverse terms of evolution or revolution. Implosion is a specific process with incalculable consequences. Undoubtedly May '68 was the first implosive episode—which is to say (contrary to its rewriting as the very personifi-

cation of revolution), a first violent reaction of social saturation, a retraction, a defiance of social hegemony, even though this was in contradiction to the ideology of the participants themselves who thought they were pushing social structures forward—such is the imaginary that continues to dominate us. Even though a large part of the events of '68 could still be a function of revolutionary dynamism and explosive violence, other things began to happen at the same time: the violent involution of society around this focal point; the consequent, sudden implosion of power, beginning after a brief lag in time but never stopping once it began. That is what continues underground: the implosion of social structure, institutions, power; and not some matchless revolutionary dynamic. On the contrary, revolution, or rather the very idea of revolution, has imploded with far heavier consequences than revolution itself.

In Italy something of the same type is in play. In the actions of students, Metropolitan Indians, radio-pirates, something goes on which no longer partakes of the category of universality, having nothing to do either with classical solidarity (politics) or with the information diffusion of the media (curiously neither the media nor the international "revolutionary" movement reverberated with the slightest echo of what went on in February–March of 1977). In order that mechanisms of such universality cease functioning, something must have changed; something must have taken place for the effect of subversion to move in some sense *in the inverse direction, toward the interior, in defiance of the universal.* Universality is subverted by an action within a limited, circumscribed sphere, one that is very concentrated, very dense, *one that is exhausted by its own revolution.* Here we have an absolutely new process.

Such indeed are the radio-pirates, no longer broadcasting centers, but multiple points of implosion, points in an ungraspable swarm. They are a shifting landmass, but a landmass nonetheless, resistant to the homogeneity of political space. That is why the system must reduce them. Not for their political or militant content, but because, nonextensible, nonexplosive, nongeneralizable, they are dangerous localizations, drawing their uniqueness and their peculiar violence from their refusal to be a system of expansion.



Albert Speer, the Architect

From a Conversation of July 21, 1978

BERNHARD LEITNER

translated by SOPHIE WILKINS

Architecture is politics in stone: that was Hitler's concept for his buildings. For Speer architecture was ultimately a matter of decent proportions—Fascist architecture as well.

*Speer was the only one of the defendants at the Nuremberg trials to indulge in self-criticism. It did not occur to him, however, to be critical of his architectural contributions: "The architecture I designed for the regime is the least of my troubles; it even seems to me sometimes that it is after all better than the Trocadero in Paris or the Lomonossow University in Moscow" (*Spandau: The Secret Diaries, *March 9, 1952).*

*Speer knew that architects are never held personally responsible. Not even in the case of an architect who builds the architectural framework for a Hitler; not even in the case of an architect whose buildings and pageantry, because of their mass psychological impact, were one of the most powerful tools of Nazi propaganda. Speer is candid in admitting how much he wanted his designs to reflect National Socialist ideology, how ideologically calculated the effects were. But "as architect of Hitler I would have been perfectly safe after a lost war—nobody would have taken an architect to court" (*Spandau Diaries*).*

Speer was not a one-sided architect: he had both technical and artistic skills. He was a clearheaded, excellent organizer, which served him later in his activities as minister of armaments. But the strongest driving force was his ambition to become a major figure in the history of architecture—why not with Hitler's help? A highly intelligent, cultivated, even sensitive, and ultimately unscrupulous architect, his reasoning was rational-professional: the successful architect is the one who organizes better, implements faster, thinks ahead, comes up with a more convincing design solution—Speer outdid his professional colleagues in materializing Hitler's ideology.

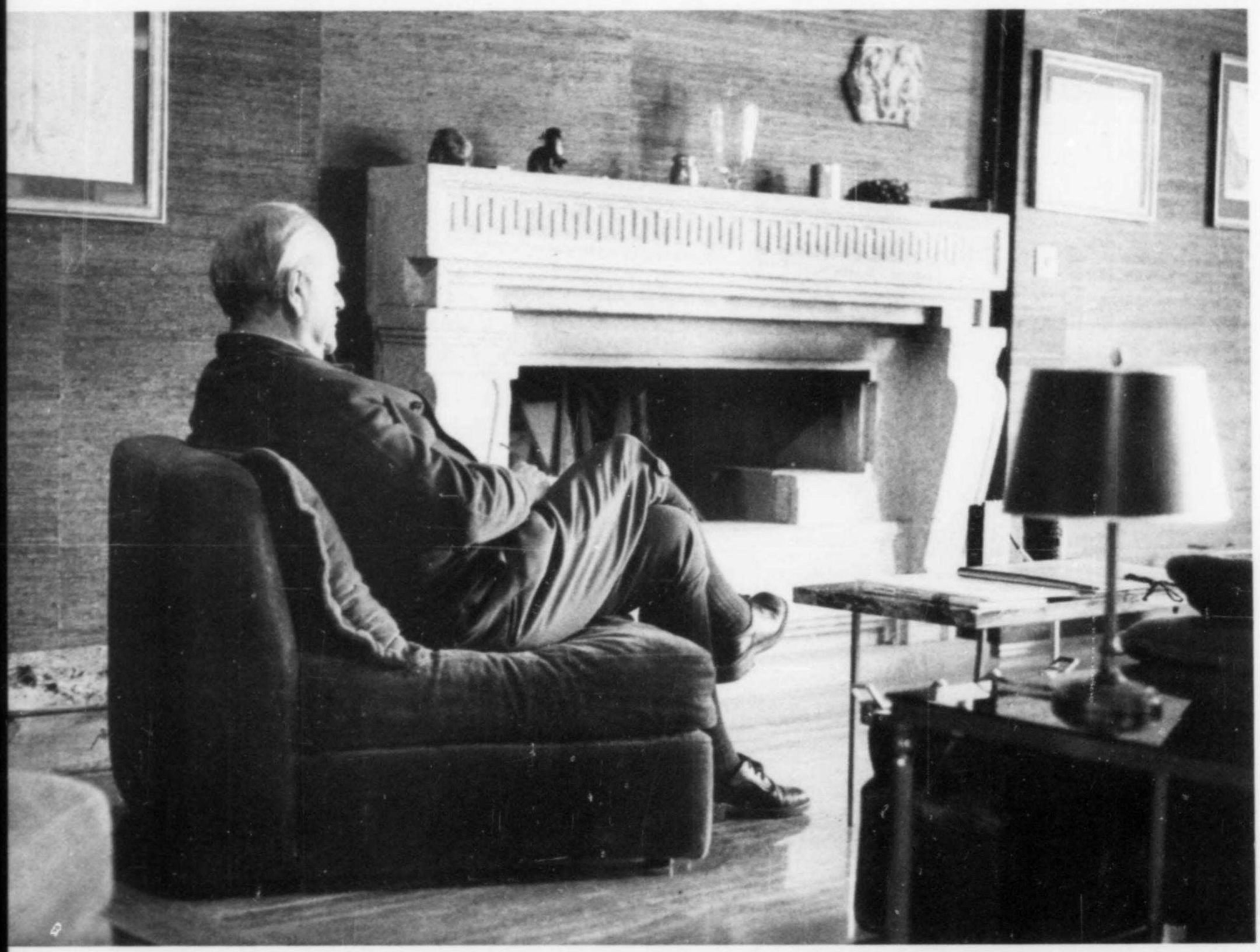
Speer wanted to be a late classicist, consciously in the tradition of Prussian classicism. But by using solidly craftsmanlike methods for his building techniques, he also wanted to take a clear stand against modern architecture (against the international style) and against the leading architects representing this school. Under the dictatorship of an amateur archi-

Albert Speer. Reviewing Stand of the Zeppelin Field, Nuremberg.

tect, Hitler, this was a political, not an aesthetic confrontation. "[In the prison library there is] also an annual series of The American Builder. *With astonishment I note the many German names: Gropius, Mendelsohn, Neutra, Breuer, Mies van der Rohe. Of course I know them all. . ."* (Spandau Diaries, *May 7, 1955*).

Speer, the architect, knew that his commissions were for political edifices. Nevertheless he perceives his work as an architect retrospectively as nonpolitical: calculated self-justification of an artist? or a wise, foresighted assessment of his work? Fifty years from now (or even sooner) Speer's buildings will lose their ideological message, just as all historic buildings have lost their original built-in political content. History will indeed judge Speer only by proportions and other aesthetic criteria.

But rarely has so powerful an architect invoked the future (or the past respectively), the great leveler and neutralizer, while during his professional life as an architect he resorted to any means in order to please Hitler, to stay at the center of power, to be and remain the



Albert Speer at his country house in the Allgaeu. (Photo: Bernhard Leitner, 1978).

leading architect of the Third Reich, the model of professional ethics, the architectural leader of the National Socialist empire.

"There is nothing wrong with having been Hitler's architect" (Spandau Diaries, *August 24, 1960*).

My first conversation with Albert Speer took place on July 12, 1974, in his Heidelberg home, which had been in the family's possession since before the world war. It lasted for several hours. In the spring of 1978 I asked Speer for another interview, which he readily granted me. This time he received me at his newly acquired country estate, which he had remodeled himself, in the South German Allgaeu. "Do you mind if I tape our conversation?" "On the contrary," said Speer, "I prefer it: greater precision."

Twenty-six excerpts from this conversation are printed on the following pages. Speer's own words serve as headings:

REALLY ENJOYABLE
A DELIGHT
FORTUNATELY
FABULOUS, FABULOUS
MY INVENTION
QUITE ENJOYABLE (NYLON FABRICS)
MORE USEFUL
MINOR CORRECTION
TO MAKE IT EASIER FOR THEM
BORING AS HELL (MONOTONY I)
MORE HONEST (MONOTONY II)
COLOR (MONOTONY III)
THIRD-RATE
HIDEOUS
SOMEHOW IN POOR TASTE
MORE THAN APPROVED
NO PROFESSIONAL SUPPRESSION
FATAL FLAW (WANTED TO PLEASE I)
TOO BAD (WANTED TO PLEASE II)
UNFORTUNATELY (I)
UNFORTUNATELY (II)
NOT THAT STUPID
FOXY
SIMPLY HAPPY AND CONTENT (BAYREUTH)
JUST LIKE MY TROUBLES (PHILIP JOHNSON)
BUT OF COURSE

REALLY ENJOYABLE

Leitner: One more question with regard to architecture and mise-en-scène. Mise-en-scène, I believe, is an important element in your architectural work.

Speer: Yes, this was really enjoyable—

A DELIGHT

Leitner: Hitler's taste ran basically to the baroque, in the nineteenth-century sense.

Speer: Semper-style baroque, the two museums in Vienna, and the Opera, too.

Leitner: How did he react to the spareness, the simplicity of your buildings [in Nuremberg], to the toned-down style you used there?

Speer: There was something going on in his mind, something I don't understand to this day. Somehow he gave me a free hand almost from my first sketch onward, in contrast to his ways with other architects, where he personally made alterations in their sketches and asked for changes. He never did that with me, so he must have somehow—perhaps it was a question of character—(with a laugh) maybe my charisma got to him.

Leitner: Might he have identified with you as an architect?

Speer: That's saying a bit much. No doubt he felt, as Mitscherlich[1] wrote—have you seen that article about my book in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Presse*?—he writes something about homoerotic relations between Hitler and [me]. Well, no, homoerotic is not—

Leitner: More like father and son.

Speer: Yes, something of that sort. That article would be of interest to you; it was published in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine*—

Leitner: That's the psychological interpretation. From the architect's point of view it is again of interest that he, who had wanted to be an architect but did

1. Alexander Mitscherlich, director of the Sigmund Freud Institute in Frankfurt.

not have the creative ideas that you had, identified himself (perhaps) with the creative process going on inside you.

Speer: Could be. Anyway, the fact is, he gave me a free hand. When I showed him my first sketches for the Zeppelin Field, he said, "Right, build it like that," and afterwards I showed him something from time to time—he had, let us say, a certain respect, a great respect for me; in fact he wrote in the book on the New Chancellery that I was a genius, something he normally (laughing) credited only himself with, and he respected that genius.

Leitner: He did like the finished buildings.

Speer: Yes, he liked them very much. He was really quite impressed with them.

Leitner: But he never changed his basic taste for the Semper baroque style.

Speer: That was always latent with him.

Leitner: The forceful, militant air of architecture which was highly acclaimed as a specific aspect of National Socialist politics—what's odd is that it doesn't quite go with his turgidly baroque architectural ideas. Yet he must have liked that hard-edged look.

Speer: Oh yes, I know what you mean. But you have to consider that Nuremberg was meant to serve a very specific purpose, a quasi-religious purpose, while Berlin served a very different one; Berlin was to be a cosmopolis. As an architect, one looks keenly for some prerequisites which inspire you—whether for a housing project or anything else—to give the design a special touch. You understand what I mean. So that for me it was a delight—one might almost say—to work out that for these mass gatherings a certain style would be most suitable, and that simplicity was very suitable as a background for a great display of color and for the liveliness of that great crowd of people.

FORTUNATELY

Leitner: The design elements which you used in Nuremberg—there was a deliberate contrast between the monumentality of the stone structures and the ephemeral nature of the flags—

Speer: That's something I learned from the Catholic church.

Leitner: The flags?

Speer: No, not the flags, but the—I was in St. Peters in Rome, and it was decorated for some church festival or other. It had an entirely different color scheme and an entirely different look—you are familiar with this, aren't you?—and I liked it very much. And since I was anyhow always trying to introduce color wherever I could, I said to myself that especially for these pageants color would be a most beautiful enrichment. And then, fortunately—I was always grateful to Hitler for this—it so happened that this flag was so well suited—a tricolore would not have been suited, you see—but our flag was virtually made to be used [as an architectural element].[2]

Leitner: Hitler actually designed the flag himself. He understood that red was most effective with the masses.

Speer: Probably. I don't know—but this is something I don't feel qualified to talk about.[3]

FABULOUS, FABULOUS

The layout of the Zeppelin Field was above all a matter of organization. Speer handled the mass scenes in such a way that it would be hard to say whether the stage manager here determined the architecture or whether the architect had assumed the job of the stage manager as well. The field was bordered on one side by the main reviewing stand with the speaker's lectern in the center and on the other three sides by ramparts that permitted quick access to the field they surrounded.

Speer: —just when it was the turn of the political officials, there was the effect of the banners waving as the column carried them forward. The back rampart of the Zeppelin Field had stairs of differing widths, and a central entrance, which is still there today. And in the background there were tens of thousands of flags—after all every little local branch had a flag with a beautiful gilt eagle on top, with golden ribbons and all that. They were posted behind the [back] wall, and then, at command, they marched in four columns on the left side, then widening out in the center again four columns on the other side, marching

2. In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler deals extensively with the subject of the Nazi flag, showing a keen sense of mass psychology.
3. "At the time I dearly loved flags and used them wherever I could. . . . I saw all that with the eyes of an architect" (Albert Speer, *Inside the Third Reich*, trans. Richard and Clara Winston, New York, Macmillan, 1970, p. 72).

very slowly into the passages cleared for them—pouring over the rampart and filling the entire field—these are some of the effects which I (laughs)—

Leitner: Which you produced and directed—

Speer: Yes, I could do all that. There was a so-called Parade Office in Nuremberg, and we'd have a session and I'd simply say, "Wouldn't that be the thing?" And it was a first-rate idea, and then I did it.

Leitner: The field was empty?

Speer: The field was not empty; the officials in their brown uniforms were already in place—

Leitner: Leaving passages for the marchers open—

Speer: And those were filled as I told you. At first we filled it up like that by daylight; then I said, "They look so unattractive and they get all mixed up in an unmilitary manner," and they all had remarkable paunches to show by then, so I had the idea of doing it after dark. Then we had the cathedral of light—I had met the lighting specialist of the Berlin Opera, a good craftsman, who made the most marvelous spotlights—and these focused beams of light on the tips of the flags, those golden [eagles], and all that glittered and glittered—those fabulous, fabulous visual effects—

MY INVENTION

Leitner: You worked with banners, with light, with movement—but you also used soldiers as a kind of sculptural medium.

Speer: At the Tannenberg Memorial, for instance [the memorial service for Hindenburg]. That was my invention—it was very hard—the military were horrified because there was nothing in their rule books to cover it—so unmilitary (laughing) the way they stood there [their folded arms resting on their guns].

Leitner: How did you place the soldiers? in a certain pattern of proportions?

Speer: Yes, they were standing there—they were like sculptures—in a certain rhythmic relationship—I no longer remember that accurately. If you're interested in more details, there are pictures in the magazine *Berliner Illustrierte.* It was actually more like accentuating the architecture, the towers—

Leitner: Mirroring, reflecting—

Speer: Intensifying the architecture.

QUITE ENJOYABLE (NYLON FABRICS)

For Speer this ideologically calculated flag was merely another, although major, tool of design. There was a variety of ways to use it: making a flat, repetitive pattern, that is, spreading the flags flat, side by side, to make a wall (examples: the hall of columns at the Zeppelin Field, the wall of flags defining a plaza for a celebration in front of the Schinkel Museum in Berlin, the planned temporary partitions of flags, to be raised and lowered in the spaces between the giant columns of the Marching Field); further, hanging many flags at right angles in front of a facade, so as to create a body of color (as, for example, at the Luitpold Hall in Nuremberg).

Leitner: To be quite specific about the staging of spectacles, the use of the flag: in our last conversation, you indicated that there were several principles according to which the flag could be used. Did you develop those?

Speer: Yes, it was my [idea]. It was imitated subsequently, but I was the pioneer, or rather the inventor of this approach. Then later, as was done in the Riefenstahl film [*Triumph of the Will*], I covered up whole facades in Nuremberg, where you no longer saw the flag as such at all—the flags were so close together—but long banners hanging all the way down the building facades. And there was another way that I liked, the way we did it in Goslar, for example, for the Harvest Festival. They had those narrow old streets, so I closed the upper end of the streets with flags—

Leitner: Flags hanging vertically?

Speer: Yes, but small flags; otherwise it would be, well—doing such things was quite enjoyable for me—

Leitner: And finally the flag in the wind, as [with the bundled flags] at the Zeppelin Field—

Speer: Yes, yes (warming to his subject), in those days nylon fabrics were not known as yet, otherwise I'd have come up with even more fantastic things (laughter).

MORE USEFUL

In his memoirs Speer never once mentions Friedrich Gilly[4] in his detailed description of who and what influenced and inspired him in his work.

Speer: —at the time there was a Gilly exhibition in Berlin that impressed me very much—actually more in contrast with Schinkel, Gilly was closer because Gilly was more akin to Tessenow,[5] and simply because he was closer to modernity than Schinkel; Schinkel was, after all, an eclectic in a sense—

Leitner: When was that exhibition? When you were still a student?

Speer: It must have been when I was still a student. But it could have been later when I was working as an assistant, say about 1923 to 1928. But it wasn't a regular public exhibition. It was only something arranged by the seminar, in the Schinkel Archives—whether it was open to the public, too, I don't remember anymore. It made a strong impression. Tessenow himself actually had little to do with Schinkel and Gilly. He was so independent and so dedicated to doing everything his own way that he hardly acknowledged anyone else's work—you know how it is with professors.

Leitner: He did acknowledge Le Corbusier, I think.

Speer: He acknowledged Mies van der Rohe, Corbusier too, as a revolutionary, but Mies van der Rohe was somewhat closer to him. Looking back, I must say that, while I am an admirer of Gilly's work, I never actually let the spirit of Gilly take over. There are actually few elements in my work that have in any way the remotest connection with Gilly—perhaps the Zeppelin Field in Nuremberg or that entrance to the Luitpold Hall, the austere touches, those could possibly—

Leitner: I was just about to touch on that. There's a sketchbook of Gilly's—in that sketchbook there are drawings on the subject of the French Revolution and the pageantry—

Speer: I'm not familiar with that. That's something I'd rather like to—

Leitner: There's an interesting drawing that shows a revolutionary festival on the Champ de Mars (showing the Gilly sketch)—

4. Friedrich Gilly (1772–1800), an immediate predecessor of Karl Friedrich Schinkel (1781–1841), did not build much himself, but with his architectural sketches and designs introduced into Prussia a classicism monumental and heroic in its simplicity.
5. Heinrich Tessenow (1876–1950), teacher of Albert Speer, who claimed him as mentor.

Speer: Is this a sketch of how it was done, or is it a design by Gilly?

Leitner: A sketch of what actually happened at the time. My question is: when you were facing these new tasks, did you consciously concern yourself with the problems of [revolutionary] peoples' festivals, as they occurred in history?

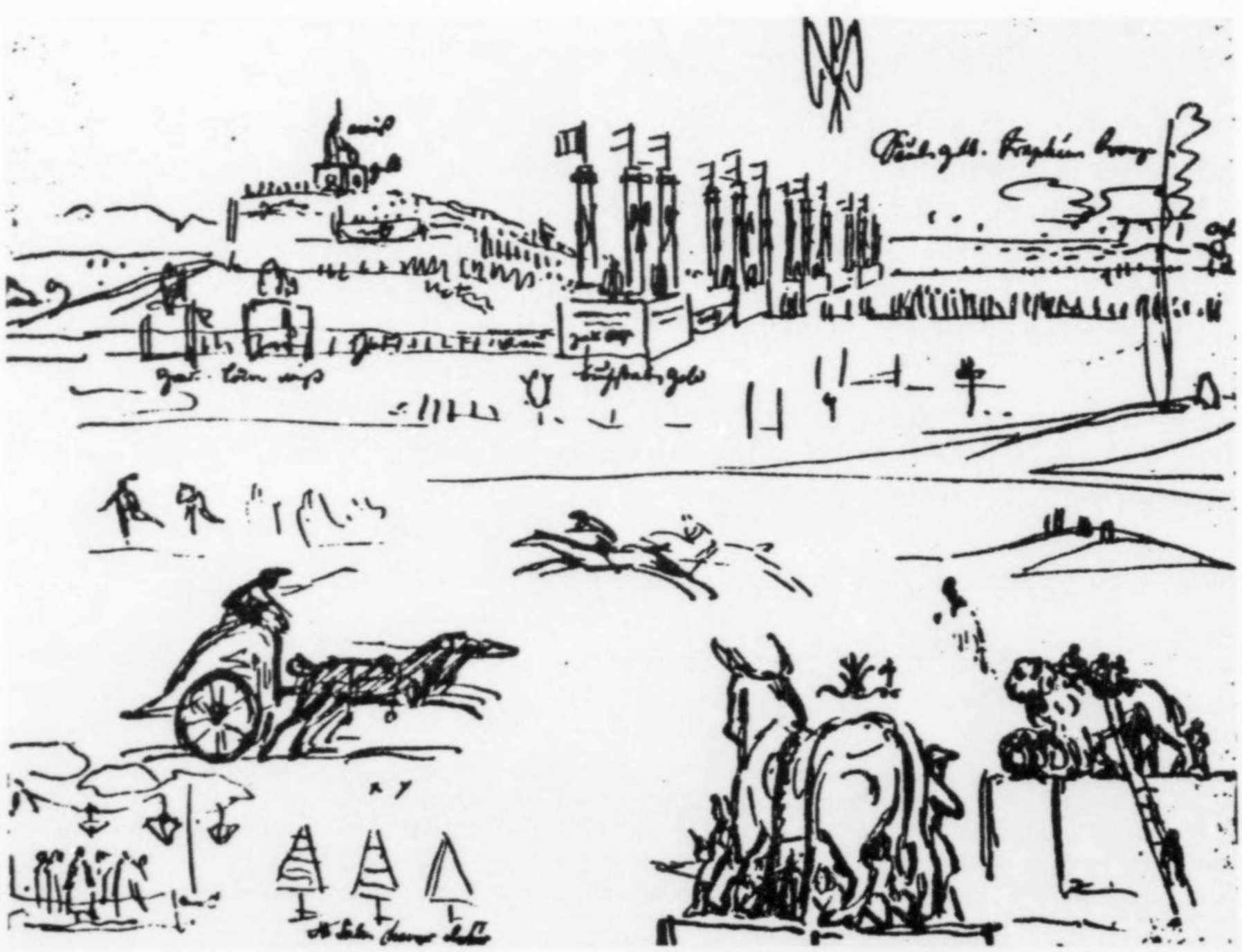
Speer: Not really, but I know this [drawing].

Leitner: Here there seem to be direct parallels to the Zeppelin Field.

Speer: Yes, yes, that is something—

Leitner: Were these conscious choices?

Speer: I'll get back to that right away, but this is something I've seen somewhere. I can tell at a glance that I did see that sometime—



Friedrich Gilly. Sketch after David of a revolutionary pageant on the Champ de Mars.

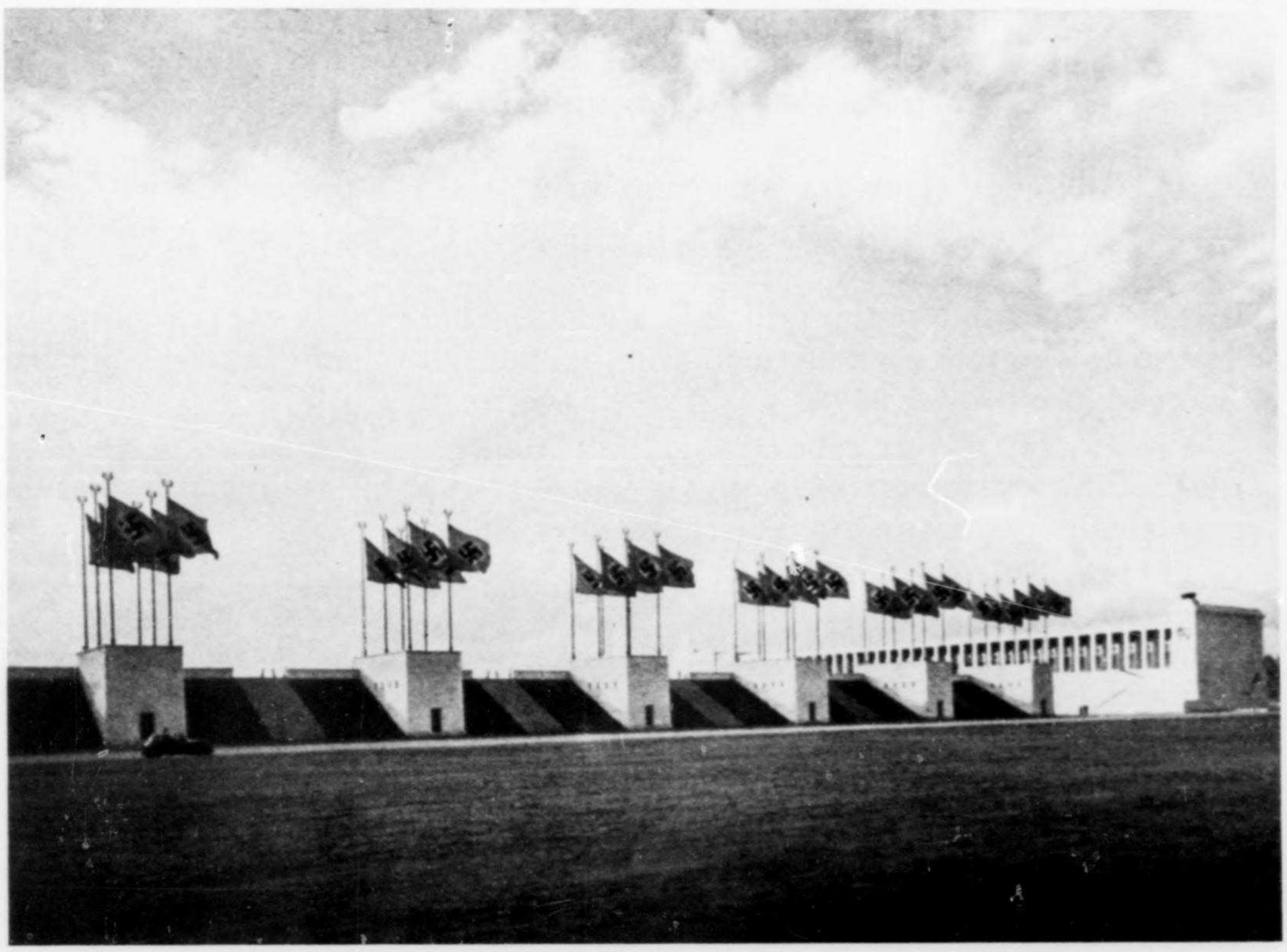
Leitner: It could have been part of that exhibition [in the Schinkel Archives] perhaps?

Speer: Quite likely, but then the creative process—one shouldn't—that is to say, people tend to be simplistic about that, but it is the same with musicians and with everybody. They pick up something unconsciously, something that slipped into an ear or into the mind unawares. That's no—it's impossible to keep those things apart. It isn't a direct copy, as such.

Leitner: Then you never studied David?[6]

Speer: Only when I was in Spandau did I find out that the painter David was involved then with those things. If I had seen it earlier, as a student, the chances

6. Jacques Louis David was in charge of the artistic direction of pageantry during the French Revolution.



Albert Speer. Zeppelin Field, Nuremberg.

are it was still somewhere [in my head], and then, when the same kind of problem came along—it's there in one's head, right?—and so it came out again.

Leitner: These cubelike buildings with bundles of flags on top—

Speer: Yes, I see (studying the sketch).

Leitner: Surely this is unambiguously related to your design for the Zeppelin Field.

Speer: With the ramparts—

Leitner: Although it's only on one side here.

Speer: Yes, well, there was a purpose to be served by these little towers. It was necessary, you see—all those services [you have to provide] for such a mass gathering: sanitary installations, transformer stations, for the photographers, toilets—

Leitner: These toilets are very high-ceilinged, eight or ten meters high—

Speer: As high as the towers, I know, but it was necessary to provide room [for all those services]. That's what gave me the idea.

Leitner: Gilly's other works—his simplicity, clarity, precision, the formal austerity of it—all that interested you only after 1933? or was it before then?

Speer: No, I was interested in it as a student. There was a certain affinity to Tessenow, who was my idol then. Gilly is, far more than Schinkel, someone who lived in a similar world.

Leitner: The most important quality of Gilly's work is a certain heroic one; the heroic element is missing in Tessenow, after all—

Speer: Yes, but that doesn't matter. Why shouldn't I make up for Tessenow's puritanism, since I liked a touch of the heroic very much. To like that sort of thing was certainly part of my nature—it was indeed like that.

Leitner: You were less influenced by Schinkel?

Speer: Certainly by Schinkel, too. Schinkel was more the kind one could resort to later on when the Reichs Chancellery was to be built, as a direct influence,

as a source of inspiration—for example, his colorfulness, the splendor and abundance—all that was transformed in the Chancellery, so that there is, of course, far more of Schinkel than of Gilly in that building.

Leitner: You said [in our previous conversation] that Gilly was more useful, that it was easier to make use of Gilly—

Speer: Yes (laughs), for all those things [in Nuremberg], but for the Berlin projects, for those showplaces, it was Schinkel who was actually more useful.

MINOR CORRECTION

Looking over the parade route in Nuremberg some years ago, I was struck by seeing on the horizon exactly along the line of the parade route's axis, the Castle of Nuremberg: what a shrewd combination of military preparedness with a visible reminder of Germanic tradition.

Leitner: You developed the master plan [for the Party Rally Grounds in Nuremberg]—was it your idea to have the axis [of the main parade route] point straight at the castle?

Speer: Yes—well, [the plan] worked out in such a way that the axis pointed almost directly at the castle; it only took a small correction to make it point directly at the castle.

Leitner: How did that happen?

Speer: Hitler had various objectives [with respect to the Party Rally Grounds], and so I said, "We have to pull all that together into a single site plan," and he liked that site plan very much. The marching field had to be at the back—there was enough space there—and there would have to be a parade somehow, so it was only natural that the parade would directly [enter the marching field]. I ordered them to bring me a fire ladder out there. Then I climbed up that fire ladder—it wobbled something terrible; it really is terrible climbing up such a tall fire ladder, having to keep going higher and higher; and then it bends over—to get above the trees, to see over the trees, to see whether that business with the castle made any sense. And it did make sense, and so I turned [the parade route] straight in the direction of the castle.

Leitner: You went [up the ladder] to see for yourself if one could see the castle?

Speer: Right, yes—you try climbing up one of those fire ladders. It starts to—like a mountain climber—

Leitner: I can imagine that Hitler must have been impressed, such a linkage with tradition.

Speer: Well, of course, he immediately understood. It increased my ratings. But it was really something that just—as it often does—turned out that way.

Leitner: It was not the site plan's basic idea, but a correction—

Speer: A minor correction had to be made; then it was perfect.

TO MAKE IT EASIER FOR THEM

Leitner: The parade route is covered with large slabs of granite. How big are they? about one square meter apiece?

Speer: Bigger than that—they're still in place—almost two square meters apiece, or one and one-half by one and one-half at least. I saw them not too long ago. They're quite impressively big.

Leitner: How did they come to be that size?

Speer: Well, we were going to have a parade [there]. It would have been really rough on the soldiers; they'd have had to drill for such a long time, marching by in lines that went the whole width of the parade route, you know—the Russians do it that way, I think, not in rows of six, but twenty men side by side—and so, to make it easier for them, I put those inserts of dark granite into the granite pavement, to give them straight lines to follow, and also across, to give them some control—

Leitner: So you laid out a pattern for the soldiers, as it were.

Speer: Yes, to make it easier for them. Incidentally, I did the same thing for poor Hitler with his two—Himmler and Roehm—on that well-known occasion when they had to walk back from the memorial,[7] because there's nothing harder than walking a straight line (amused); looking at it from above, it's as if they were tipsy.

7. In Leni Riefenstahl's film, *Triumph of the Will*, this scene is shown in great detail; the three men march alone along a processional route flanked by huge, architectonically grouped formations of soldiers.

Leitner: What did you do about it?

Speer: Again I drew straight lines using dark granite that they could easily follow.

Leitner: Specifically for that purpose?

Speer: Right, right, that's what it was for.

Leitner: Did the size of those granite slabs have anything to do with the width of the marching columns?

Speer: No, the size of those slabs—I can't tell exactly anymore—it certainly worked out that way in our drawings; it was a matter of decent proportions.

Albert Speer. Party Rally Grounds, Nuremberg. (Photo: Bernhard Leitner, 1974.)

BORING AS HELL (MONOTONY I)

Leitner: Apparently you concerned yourself later on, in 1941, with the Frederick Monument [by Gilly].

Speer: No, not really. I had seen the sketchy project somewhere, and then we said, "What a marvelous project, and we'll make a fine model of it."

Leitner: Was there any intention of building it?

Speer: No, but we toyed—I don't know whether you can understand this, but if you look through that book by Larsson,[8] you will soon see that I was gradually becoming very bored with the stuff the architects kept proposing for the individual building projects. There wasn't much margin for variety there, and so it gradually became boring as hell (laughter).

Leitner: Why wasn't there enough margin for variation?

Speer: Because a number of things had been eliminated that would have allowed for variations. I can say so now, but at the time one was somewhat infatuated—so I had the idea—

Leitner: Did everybody realize it, or were you the only one to notice this monotony that was developing?

Speer: Oh, well, we talked about it some, among my associates—and so we made this one experiment—we commissioned different architects—this you'll find also in the [Larsson] book—to design for once simply a rich facade.

Leitner: A rich facade?

Speer: A rich facade. The commission was simply: design rich facades.

MORE HONEST (MONOTONY II)

Leitner: Was it a competition?

Speer: These were never public competitions. Just certain architects were handpicked for something like that. The other thing was that I said, "It is really stu-

8. Olaf Larsson, *Die Neugestaltung der Reichshauptstadt.*

pid that these designs by Schinkel were never executed. They're so elaborated that one could actually build them." In those Schinkel portfolios there are truly incredible designs. Why shouldn't one simply build somewhere, for one occasion or another, as a jewel, a little temple or something like that from Schinkel?

Leitner: You wouldn't underwrite this today?

Speer: No, I wouldn't underwrite it any longer, but at the time it was a serious idea, but it was never done.

Leitner: Even with the most complete blueprints, you can't build a house a hundred years later. Didn't that seem a problem to you at the time?

Speer: No. They were so beautiful. I could have said to the architects, "Why don't you go through those piles of Schinkel folders and see if you can't make use of something or other in them." Instead of trying to copy from these drawings it seemed to me simply more honest to say, "Let's build one of Schinkel's designs."

COLOR (MONOTONY III)

Leitner: But the problem of monotony that you mentioned became a real problem after a few years.

Speer: It did get to be a problem, but then we did try, especially in Berlin, to do things with color. The buildings—it's difficult to reconstruct all that—were all colorful, sort of like Dutch buildings, a mixture of bricks and natural stone. It would have looked somewhat different from the way it looks nowadays in all those black-and-white photographs.

THIRD-RATE

What differentiates first-rate Fascist architecture from second-rate Fascist architecture? Speer wants to be regarded not only as the leading architect but as the best architect of the Third Reich. He downgrades other architects, such as Giesler, for having even less of a "margin of variation," spontaneously classes Sagebiel's Air Force Ministry building in Berlin as third-rate, and disclaims having had anything whatsoever to do with von Arent.

Leitner: In our previous conversation we mentioned in passing [Ernst] Sagebiel, and you said that what he did was third-rate architecture. Why is the Air Force Ministry in Berlin third-rate.

Ernst Sagebiel. Air Force Ministry, Berlin.

Speer: I didn't like the proportions. I did not find the design interesting. Incidentally, he came out of Mendelsohn—

Leitner: He used thin slabs of stone instead of solid blocks.

Speer: Yes, they had to work fast. Those buildings had to be finished in a great hurry—you can't hold that against him. As for the finished buildings, the proportions were not to my taste, nor did I like the way his windows fit in the wall. He always framed the windows so that the frames projected from the wall, a bit in the manner of Fahrenkamp, I think it was. Even today, I don't find it very impressive.

Leitner: There's also the element of a building's message, what a building symbolizes. Do you feel that his architecture did not translate the ideology as clearly as yours did?

Speer: Yes, one might say that.

HIDEOUS

Leitner: How was it with those temporary structures, those ceremonial avenues, for example, for Mussolini's visit to Berlin? You did that, I think, in collaboration with [Benno von] Arent.

Speer: No, no collaboration, but I thought it was hideous—no collaboration; I must deny that categorically.

Leitner: And why was it hideous?

Speer: There are things—nowadays you can toss it all in the same pile, but at the time it made a tremendous difference, as far as I was concerned.

Leitner: What is that difference? I find it hard to understand.

Speer: It's not easy to explain. For one thing, he used cardboard. I thought that was awful. You can't do that kind of thing in cardboard, architectural elements in cardboard. And then he had these awkward eagles, gilded, and the proportions were so bad. Simply to set up that kind of architecture for a festive occasion, set it up like a carnival and then take it down again—this by itself I thought was in bad taste.

Leitner: You never put up temporary architecture of that kind yourself?

Speer: No, or when I did, I did it so that they were not actual architectural elements, but things like banners.

Leitner: Did that ceremonial avenue by von Arent have the desired effect?

Speer: I thought it was hideous.

Leitner: Wasn't it effective?

Speer: No.

Leitner: Did Hitler make any comment?

Speer: Yes, he loved it, and it was to be copied in stone, but that never came to pass.

Leitner: Hitler couldn't see the difference?

Speer: No, he liked it fine. There was nothing I could do about it. He liked Arent. Arent also had access to him. He was the head of an artists' society, some sort of artists' club that Hitler enjoyed frequenting. This gave Arent a very good connection with Hitler.

SOMEHOW IN POOR TASTE

Leitner: To what degree did you participate in the *Gleichschaltung,*[9] making the architects tow the new line, which after all hadn't yet been clearly defined in 1933? What was defined, however, was everything that was no longer to be tolerated. No pamphlets by you and no public talks by you [on the subject] seem to exist.

Speer: Nothing at all.

Leitner: But you must have taken part.

Speer: (long pause) Yes, but—

Leitner: I'm sure that you read the publications of your associates.

Speer: Of course, I did read those—Wolters—

Leitner: Julius Schulte-Frohlinde? He was an associate of yours, wasn't he?

Speer: Oh no, he was very far from it. He didn't actually work under my direction. He was a Baurat or Oberbaurat [with the city of] Nuremberg. And something had to be done about Ley,[10] because he was so wedded to the architect [Clemens] Klotz that everything had to go in that direction in his bailiwick, so then I recommended Schulte-Frohlinde to direct the building department of the German Labor Front. However, he very quickly, against my expectations, made himself independent and went his own way, just like [Hermann] Giesler. Giesler was also my man at first. Then he took his own—have you read Giesler's book?

Leitner: I know some of his works.

9. Removing radical architects from influential positions; reorganizing the professional organizations.
10. Robert Ley, head of the German Labor Front.

Speer: He's written a book—I'll show it to you later—quite a malicious book against me. I had admittedly a narrow margin for variation [in my architecture]; he had none at all.

Leitner: The publications of Shulte-Frohlinde did not have your approval?

Speer: No, that was totally separate. He was not one of my associates. I [recently] had a look at it [a publication by Schulte-Frohlinde] because they were planning a publication of some of these old things. It's amazing how Schulte-Frohlinde operated with antisemitism and such things, in contrast with what Stephan and Wolters did in my office—that was not customary with us. With me it was not customary at all. I found it somehow in poor taste to drag this in just to curry favor. It was partly his insecurity, his bringing that in, because he had no connection with the party. I always felt such things were beneath me.

MORE THAN APPROVED

Leitner: How much of a hand did you have in these reshufflings of positions among the leading professionals? Were you involved in the BDA [Bund Deutscher Architekten] or the KDAI [Kampßund Deutscher Architekten und Inginieure]?[11]

Speer: Not with them, in any case. There was a certain rejection, from all the students of Tessenow, too, who were in the party, because the Kampßund was not in accord with what Tessenow stood for. But even after 1933 the Kampfbund für Deutsche Kultur was regarded by us as a somewhat ridiculous business.

Leitner: You got rather quickly into the Reichskultursenat.[12] Was that a personal gesture of Hitler's?

Speer: No, that was Goebbels's doing. It was from Goebbels's turf that I came to Hitler, after all, and Goebbels was, of course, eager to have me in the Kultursenat. Actually it was almost a matter of course for me to be in it, as Hitler's architect. However, that was the Kultursenat. I don't recall that we had any discussions there [with respect to changes in professional representation], but I did have a good connection through the managing director— Hofmann was his

11. A subsidiary organization of Alfred Rosenberg's Kampßund für Deutsche Kultur.
12. The governing body of the centralized cultural organizations.

name. He was either in the Reichskulturkammer[13] or the Reichskunstkammer. I knew him well, and so a lot of things were dealt with that way—certain problems—officially I did not intervene in that matter at all, but unofficially it was possible for me to say quite a few things by way of Hofmann.

Leitner: Weren't you the one who had the last word, so to speak?

Speer: No, I always resisted being put in that position.

Leitner: But those reorganizations, the conforming of the architects' associations—you surely must have approved?

Speer: Oh, yes, obviously. Of course I did; I more than approved.

NO PROFESSIONAL SUPPRESSION

Speer: Even so, the architects still had their freedom, if you compare their situation with what happened in the arts. No one was forbidden to go on working and—I knew Eiermann[14] from the time we were students together—

Leitner: But surely there were withdrawals of commissions. A man was either not allowed to work or did not receive any commissions.

Speer: I don't know. As far as I'm concerned, when I was in Spandau [prison] I came across something done by Scharoun[15] or others, who had built something, and just now I am reading a study by an American woman about Mies van der Rohe during the years 1933–38. It's most interesting—he wasn't blacklisted.

Leitner: He wasn't blacklisted? Would he have been inclined to go along, perhaps?

Speer: Oh yes, of course, the book indicates as much.

Leitner: Did you ever have any contact with him personally?

13. Established in 1933 as part of Goebbels's propaganda ministry.
14. Egon Eiermann (1904–70), influential teacher and architect in post-WWII Germany.
15. Hans Scharoun (1893–1972), prominent architect of the twenties (Siemensstadt, Berlin) and after the war (Philharmonic Hall, Berlin), dismissed from his teaching position in 1933.

Speer: No, I am sorry to say. I should have liked to have made his acquaintance in those days.

Leitner: After 1933?

Speer: He went to see Rosenberg.[16] He went to the Gestapo on account of the Bauhaus, and curiously enough the Bauhaus was reopened after that—

Leitner: It was not reopened.

Speer: Very briefly.

Leitner: Do you think he could have been co-opted? Ultimately no, after all—

Speer: No, that would have been horrible for Mies van der Rohe. It would have done him in completely. He couldn't have stood it.

Leitner: You personally were not interested in taking some of your fellow architects in tow?

Speer: Oh yes, I got Eiermann for personal reasons, and he was grateful to me for it. I helped young Poelzig—

Leitner: Old Poelzig[17] had problems. Apparently, he tried to emigrate in 1936—

Speer: Yes, yes, I had to help Tessenow a lot—

Leitner: You couldn't help Poelzig?

Speer: No, that was impossible. What I did were organizational things. What I [was able to do] for Eiermann and Poelzig came rather late in the day—it was 1942-43—when they were building those auxiliary hospitals, hospitals outside of town—that's when Eiermann and young Poelzig were commissioned, directly by me, to build that sort of thing.

Leitner: Apart from your plan for the new Berlin, you also concerned yourself quite basically with city planning—

16. Alfred Rosenberg was regarded as the ideologue of the Nazi movement on the strength of his book *The Myth of the Twentieth Century.*
17. Hans Poelzig (1869–1936), architect of the Grosse Schauspielhaus, Berlin, 1918–19, was one of the leaders of expressionism in architecture.

Speer: But this question is not quite finished yet. I always had the impression that, compared with the painters, the architects didn't make such rigorous distinctions between what used to be avant-garde or hypermodern—there was no—

Leitner: Most of them had to emigrate.

Speer: Yes.

Leitner: Some of them had to adapt or they would have gotten no commissions, which is almost the same as dying off professionally.

Speer: That's true, but some of them also had—many of them were employed building for industry.

Leitner: Herbert Rimpl, for example.

Speer: He came from Mies.

Leitner: You're saying that the architects fared better, in principle—

Speer: Fared somewhat better, was my impression. I am not saying that I should get credit for it.

FATAL FLAW (WANTED TO PLEASE I)

Speer: We had this one fatal flaw to contend with in this business of designing buildings at that time. The men were, the architects were all very unsure, and, of course, they wanted to please. So when you built something, it was widely copied, which made the original lose its value, as it were. Perhaps it still had some value by virtue of its larger dimensions, its better proportions, but it had lost its originality. Consequently, you were impelled somehow, in those days, to come up with new things—you understand—something new again—

Leitner: Which were copied again—

Speer: Which were probably copied again, or would be copied, even though I was not opposed to—but, for instance, I would not have permitted the erection of a facade that would have looked like or was somehow similar to [my design for] the facade of the Fuehrer's Palace. I would not have let them put it up anywhere else.

Leitner: You would have prohibited that?

Speer: It had to be unique. But the individual features—those turn up everywhere, again and again, and that gave me a compulsion, as an architect, to come up with something new every time, partly also because of a certain claim I had to leadership—

Leitner: Was that one of the reasons for your change of style, the enrichment of your [later] architecture?

Speer: The enrichment—yes, one of the reasons.

Leitner: Wasn't it clear to you at the time that this monotony was a function of the system?

Speer: No.

Leitner: What you describe as uncertainty can also be described as fear—the architects were afraid to design anything else. Not that I wish to defend the architects, but the fact that they wanted to copy you, in order to please Hitler through you, is surely self-evident.

Speer: Yes, no doubt. Absolute provincialism.

TOO BAD (WANTED TO PLEASE II)

Leitner: After 1933 you surely must have taken your stand consciously with regard to certain stylistic periods?

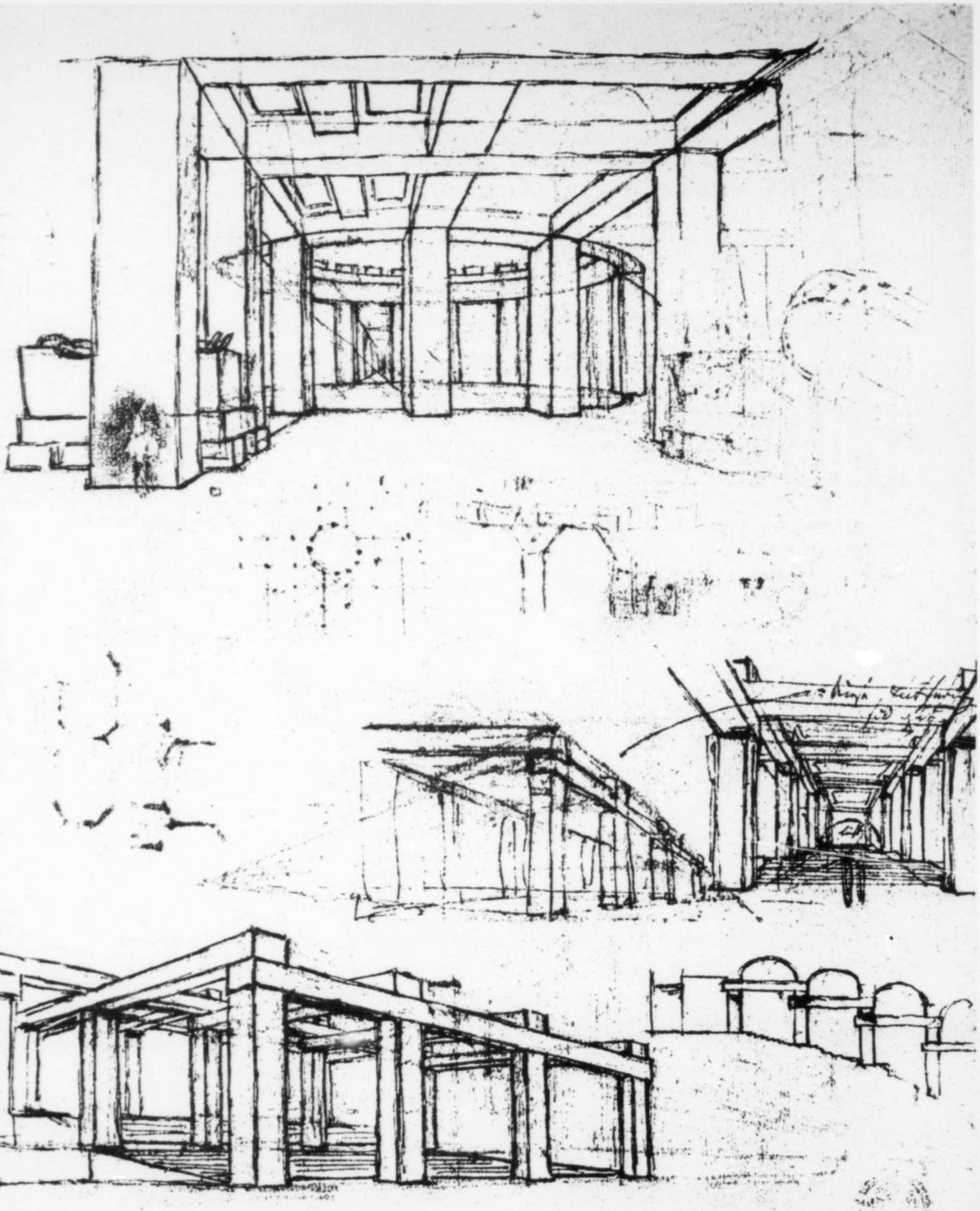
Speer: That goes without saying.

Leitner: Which periods, then?

Speer: It is significant for what we were doing that the Inspector General of Buildings [for the renovation of Berlin] had commissioned two monographs, one on Theophil Hansen,[18] the other on Semper[19]—it indicates a certain direction we were taking.

Leitner: Both were undertaken on your initiative?

18. Theophil von Hansen (1813–91) designed many major public buildings in Vienna, among them the Austrian Parliament, the Stock Exchange, and the Academy of Fine Arts.
19. Gottfried Semper (1803–79) codesigned with Karl Hasenauer the two museums, the Hofburg, and the Burgtheater in Vienna.



Speer: Yes—too bad I didn't think of producing a big monograph on Gilly. There was a Gilly book available at the time.

Leitner: Alste Onken, 1935—you undoubtedly were familiar with it?

Speer: Of course I was familiar with it. It was a relatively little book, a thin one.

Leitner: Did you commission the Hansen [monograph] because he was one of the architects who had designed buildings along the Ringstrasse in Vienna that Hitler liked so much?

Speer: There was a certain—yes—in a certain way I naturally wanted to please Hitler with it—

Leitner: The same is true of Semper?

Speer: Yes. On the other hand, I thought very highly of the buildings by Hansen which I had seen in Athens and in Copenhagen when I was a student back then—beautiful work.

Leitner: With a Schinkel publication you would have pleased Hitler less?

Speer: The Prussian Ministry of Finance was issuing a Schinkel edition in many volumes, ten or twelve volumes, quite complete. It contains every scrap of paper Schinkel ever wrote on. There would have been no point in my doing him, but Gilly deserved to have a really big publication done on him.

UNFORTUNATELY (I)

Speer used several watercolors by Nolde to decorate the Goebbels residence, which he had rebuilt.

Leitner: It seems you accepted Hitler's rejection of those pictures [the Nolde watercolors] since you took them off without any discussion.[20] Did you ever try to influence him [in matters of this sort]?

20. "I too, though altogether at home in modern art, tacitly accepted Hitler's pronouncement" (*Inside the Third Reich*, p. 27).

Friedrich Gilly. Design for a mausoleum.

Speer: No, no. That was quite out of the question. That would have been the death blow, to try something like that—

Leitner: It would have been suicidal to have tried to influence him in that direction?

Speer: That would have been—only Frau Troost[21] could afford to do such a thing. Troost had his portrait done by one of the more modern painters, approximately like Koenig in style, and the picture was always hanging in his room. When he was dead, it was still hanging there, and Hitler always made fun of it, saying, "But that's a corpse you've got hanging up there—all blue in the face." But Frau Troost just left it hanging there. She could get away with it.

Leitner: She was the exception?

Speer: Frau Bruckmann,[22] too. As the publisher of that magazine, she could get away with a lot of things. But I couldn't really afford doing that sort of thing, I would say—

Leitner: Did you bother at all?

Speer: No.

Leitner: Did you privately also reject Nolde then, or did you continue to like his work, but without using it?

Speer: Unfortunately I didn't buy it. I turned to the romantics, Rottmann and the like.

UNFORTUNATELY (II)

Leitner: Let's get back to Hitler's taste and how you dealt with that, or had to deal with it. You were well versed in the music and the painting of that period, German expressionism, for instance.

21. Gerdy Troost, widow of the architect Paul Ludwig Troost, who built Hitler's temple to German art (Haus der Deutschen Kunst) in Munich.
22. Elsa Bruckmann, wife of the publisher Hugo Bruckmann, born a Hungarian noblewoman, was an early supporter and admirer of Hitler, who attended her soirées before the putsch of 1923.

Speer: Well, I wouldn't put it quite like that. For example, abstract art was a sealed book to me; it still is today. It simply passes me by. However, what Nolde, Kandinsky, and others did in their early days, I liked even then, and I still like today. Incidentally, in Munich, in the Lenback House—marvelous—I was again quite enthusiastic about it when I saw it there.

Leitner: But they're abstract, those Kandinskys.

Speer: I know, but even so, the colors are so wonderful; it simply becomes a delightful thing to look at.

Leitner: You liked those even then?

Speer: Yes, I did. In my library I had a whole series of those yellow volumes from the Bauhaus—you know them don't you? I had it all at hand. I found it interesting, too, but I could never quite relate to it. But the expressionists—that was a different story. There I am one of those who liked Nolde and Munch—this went on for a long time, side by side, as it were, as I described it in my book—

Leitner: Yes, that's well known.

Speer: And then, in Paris—actually more through the connections Breker[23] had there—I spent a lot of time sitting around with Vlaminck and all the others, drinking my bottle of red wine. Unfortunately, however, I never bought a Vlaminck (laughing). When I think of how little I would have had to pay for it then—

NOT THAT STUPID

Leitner: Now on the subject of city planning, you concerned yourself not only with the new center for Berlin. In the small towns there is the idea of a forum, that is, a space cleared for parades and public occasions—

Speer: Something of the sort was to be done in every Gaustadt [leading regional township].

Leitner: With a tower housing the party headquarters—

23. Arno Breker, leading sculptor of the Nazi era, was a friend of Speer's.

Speer: Yes.

Leitner: These town centers were basically conceived by you?

Speer: No, no.

Leitner: Under your general supervision?

Speer: Not that, either, no. Let me give you an idea of how that came about, more or less. The Gauleiters [local party chiefs] were, of course, princes of their realms, you understand, directly subject to Hitler. And Hitler showed an interest when he visited them, and he suggested that each of the Gauleiters set up a Gauforum in his Gaustadt. And now I was for some time the man of the party who oversaw these building activities. I was really just a consultant; I never actually decided things—it was Hitler who decided—but I was kind of an adviser. I soon changed that, because that was a kind of situation that would have led to my ruin with Hitler. And I was not that stupid. Because the Gauleiters whom I advised and the architects had hardly a clue to what was required by Hitler, what was called for. They prepared their designs, which were shown to Hitler, and when they were there with Hitler, and the design was a good one, then the Gauleiters naturally took all the credit. They never told him what part I had played in the matter. If it was bad, then they naturally gave him to understand that Speer had also had a hand in it, or something like that. Anyway in the long run it was a losing proposition. They took credit for everything positive, while the negative results were booked to my account.

Leitner: You couldn't extricate yourself from that position?

Speer: Oh, yes, I could, and I did. In 1940 or '41 I saw a possibility. I even had a scene with Bormann [about this business], when I said to Hitler that it was all wrong for me to have all those things on my back. I told him I could accomplish far more and get more done as an architect if I didn't have to do all that, and Hitler immediately agreed—that's documented.

Leitner: You wanted to get out because it was—

Speer: Too much trouble.

Leitner: Thankless work?

Speer: Thankless and dangerous.

FOXY

Leitner: So you had little to do with architecture after 1941.

Speer: Actually, after 1940.

Leitner: Did you try to retain an influence, keep contact with your successors, or did you withdraw from it altogether?

Speer: You must mean after 1942. Until 1942 I was still correcting plans, blueprints, and still working as an architect, even though my main occupation was the war effort. I was patriotic by inclination and didn't want to hang back. I built the military installations for the air force—Peenemünde, for example. My staff did that. After 1942 that was over, but then in 1943 we received the commission for the reconstruction, for planning the rebuilding of the destroyed cities. There's a speech or something, a letter to the Gauleiters—it's also in the Federal Archives somewhere—and that's actually quite reasonable, quite free of that business of quasi-religious building—an [architectural] matter purely defined by the developments of the war.

Leitner: Did Hitler take an interest in this?

Speer: No, he was not interested at all, nor was I in a position to take enough of an interest in it. I left it more or less to my people, chiefly Wolters, and they invited all sorts of city planners, and they drew up all sorts of plans for the cities. There were such very good people among them, such as Hillebrecht and Hebegrand, who were the leading city planners later on, after the war. They were already working with us, long before, on city planning. The point was actually this—quite logical—this was my idea—what I said was that when the war is over, then plans for reconstruction of the cities have to be ready. If there are no plans, necessity will lead to building without plans, and that means losing an opportunity which one has when cities are destroyed by bombs.

Leitner: The plans for rebuilding the cities surely depend on who governs the country after the war.

Speer: Not necessarily. We were turning out straightforward, useful city plans, newly drawn streets, and so on. In general, we left the streets more or less in the old locations because of the sewer systems, because those pipelines were still fairly intact. And where there was new terrain to be developed—it was usable for anyone, but of course we were not expecting—I can't quite say that considering my position as minister of armaments—of course, I realized that the chances that we could not win the war were greater than the other—

And then, partly, it was something else altogether: through Bormann, through Bormann's machinations—he had succeeded in elbowing me out a little—I had lost credit with the Gauleiters. Through this commission—I was quite foxy sometimes (laughs); I hope you don't deny me that—through these projects I regained credit with the Gauleiters, [and] they were attached to me again in some fashion that held their interest. And this was worth something for me, too, of course.

Leitner: Because of those rebuilding schemes?

Speer: Yes, right.

Leitner: That was also a reason for doing it.

Speer: To get myself back into—to regain some importance in the scheme of things, not that I was chiefly motivated by this, but it entered in. The other factor that mattered was keeping all my cadres, the people I wanted to keep with me, the whole staff I had, to tide them over, keep them occupied and functioning.

Leitner: Whose idea was it, these rebuilding schemes?

Speer: That was a spontaneous idea I had.

SIMPLY HAPPY AND CONTENT (BAYREUTH)

Leitner: Wasn't Hitler a really fanatic lover of music, especially as regards opera?

Speer: It was a clear case of opera and nothing else, for him.

Leitner: But when it came to symphonies—perhaps Bruckner, because he also came from Linz [Hitler's native region in Austria].

Speer: No, that has been exaggerated. He never really related to Bruckner, but because Bruckner was also from Linz, and because Bruckner has a certain tonal affinity to Wagner—

Leitner: Is it a fact that movements from Bruckner symphonies were played in Nuremberg [at party meetings]?

Speer: Yes, on the *Kulturtagungen*.

Leitner: At the Zeppelin Field there was no such music?

Speer: No.

Leitner: Wagner was his cherished favorite?

Speer: Of course.

Leitner: Were you ever with him in Bayreuth?

Speer: Oh yes, I was actually there with him almost every year. We were a very small circle, those of us who went to Bayreuth with him. I stayed at the [Wagner] house—I still keep in touch with Wolfgang Wagner. I can get tickets to Bayreuth any time, though Winifred Wagner is down on me because of my two books.

Leitner: Why?

Speer: She regards them as too critical.

Leitner: Did you like opera, or did you go because Hitler invited you?

Speer: I liked it. Actually I liked opera quite well. I still enjoy going to the occasional Wagner performance. Still, I like Bruckner even better, for instance; for Bruckner I actually have a rather strong preference.

Leitner: Bayreuth meant prestige; for Hitler it was a mixture of national, ideological, cultural—

Speer: For Hitler, Bayreuth was simply a dream. When you consider what his life was like when he was young, and that he was now staying in Wagner's house, being together with the Wagner family, sitting in the family box—he was simply a different man there. Politics and all that were forgotten. He was simply happy and content. That's how you have to see it, more or less.

JUST LIKE MY TROUBLES (PHILIP JOHNSON)

Leitner: In recent years the international style has been subjected to increasingly intensive criticism, including criticism of the steel-and-glass highrises. A new eclecticism seems to be defining itself. Are you familiar with this (showing a sketch of Philip Johnson's AT&T building)—a skyscraper in New York in the new eclectic style?

Speer: [Edward Durrell] Stone was an eclectic long before this, but Stone is a kitschist, while Johnson—Johnson is one of my favorite architects. I must say that I am surprised that he did [such a thing]. Johnson is a marvelous architect.

Leitner: Now, Johnson regards the adapting of history, of historical motifs, as entirely logical and correct—

Speer: You know, it's just like the troubles I had. As an architect you keep striving to—somehow you get bored with what you've done already. You've gone through all your variations of form and now you want to do something really new for a change (laughs)—I'm sure there's something of that sort behind all this.

BUT OF COURSE

Leitner: Clearly the effect of your buildings was calculated?

Speer: But of course.

Leitner: In line with the prevailing ideology then—

Speer: It says so in the essay I wrote once about Hitler's architecture. Let me fetch it—it has just appeared in English. (Reads) "My buildings were intended, as I specified in 1936, not only to express the nature of our movement. I went beyond that. They were to be a part of the movement themselves." This is what you're really asking, isn't it? "With this comment I had defined my work as extremely political, and so I could not see in Hitler, as I wrote at the time, the benevolent master builder of former centuries and a Maecenas in the old style. As a National Socialist, Hitler would have to determine the meaning and thereby the inner content of his architecture. For the popes of the Renaissance and for the monarchs of the baroque, building had been a kind of noble pastime. For Hitler, it was one part of the political will of the National Socialist movement." This will appear right at the start of my [new] book [about my architecture]. That's just it.

Leitner: The implications of what you are writing, of what you thought at the time, were quite clear to you?

Speer: Yes, quite clear, of course.

Leitner: Including all the aspects of National Socialism? You have said that you never read *Mein Kampf*.

Speer: That's true.

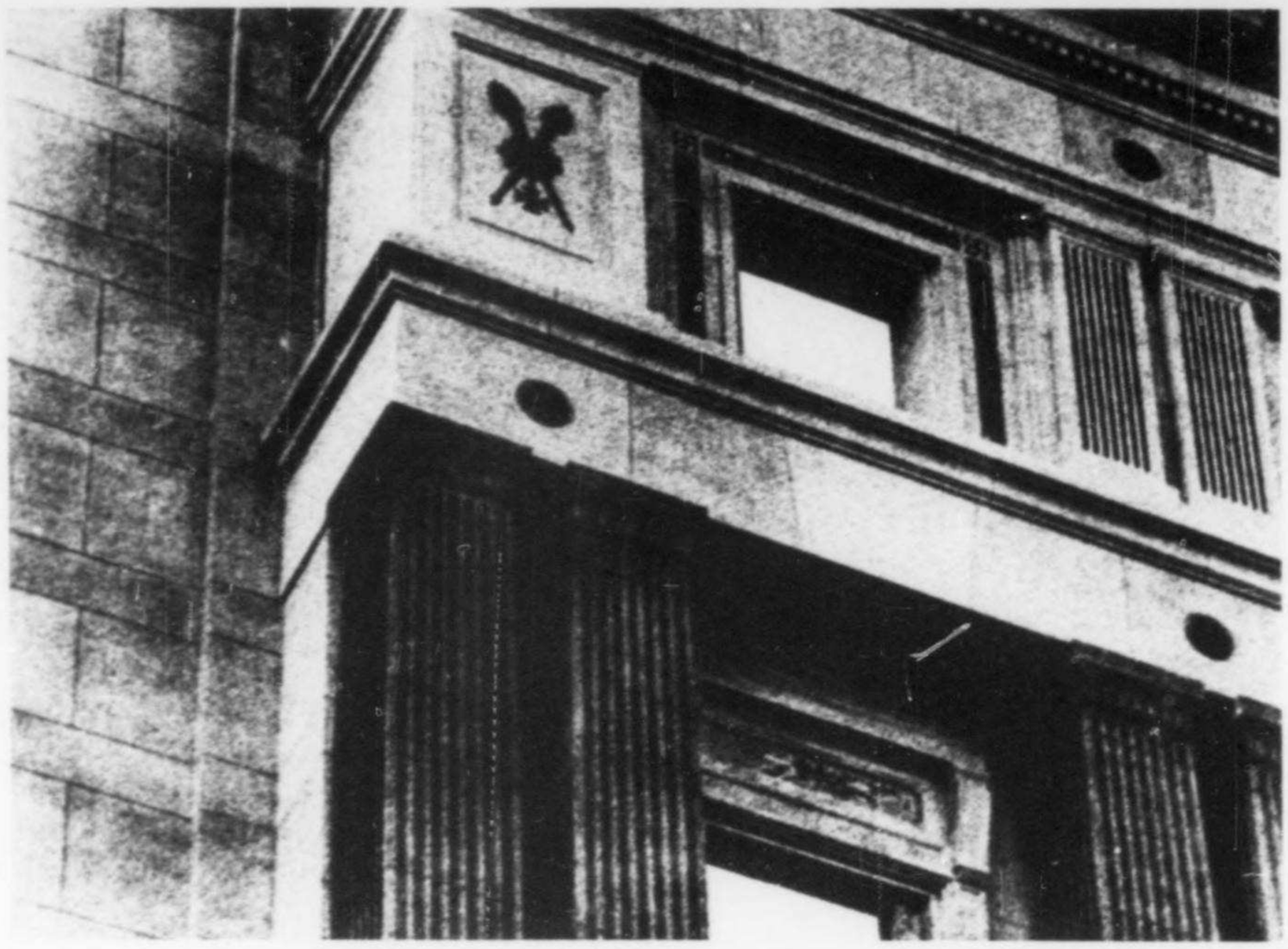
Leitner: But you knew exactly what Hitler formulated back in 1924 about town planning and architecture?

Speer: Perhaps I wouldn't put it quite like that. I never read it in *Mein Kampf.* He kept telling me that all the time.

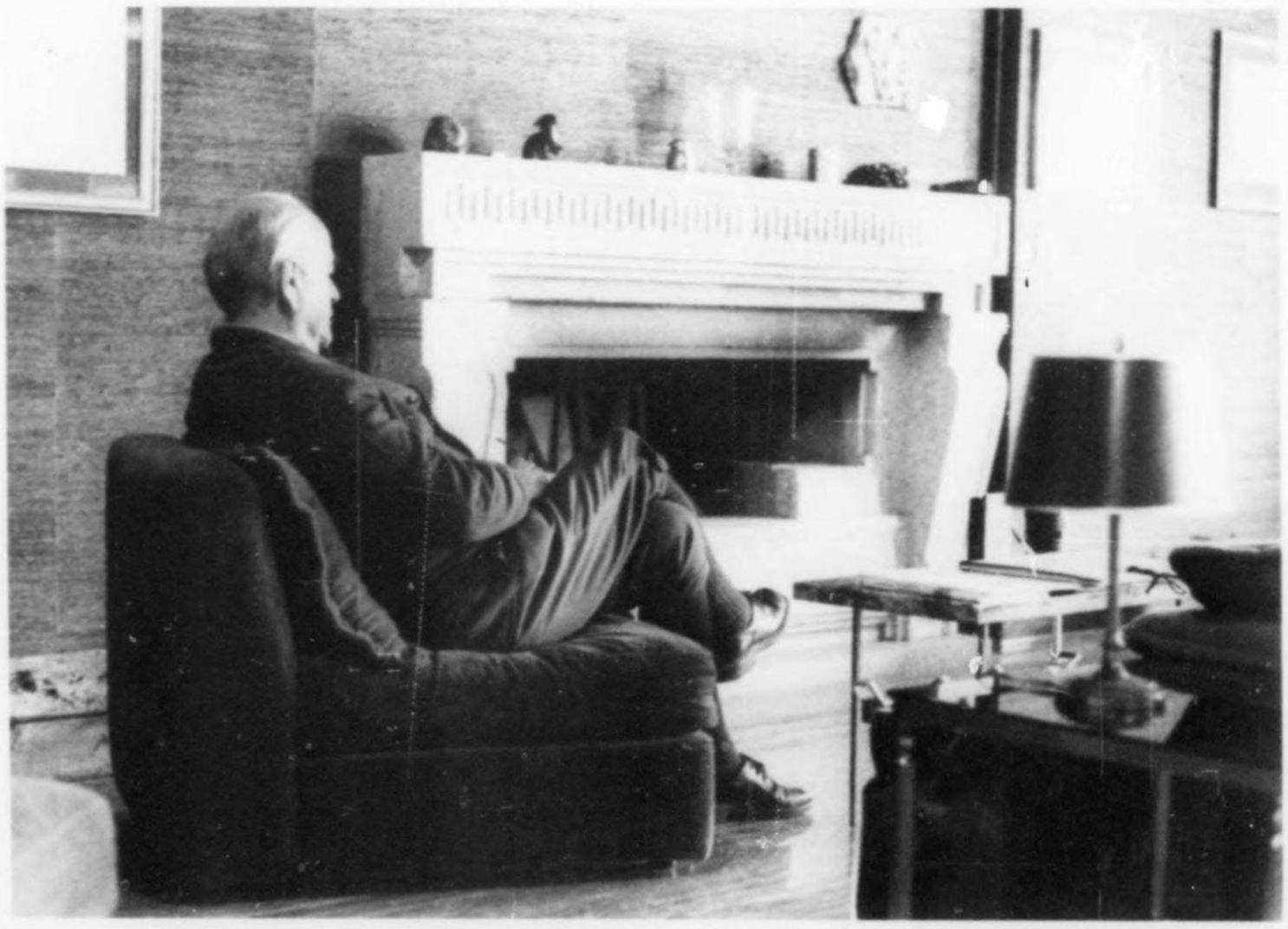
In December 1970, I had published in Artforum *an extensive critical article about Speer's first book, his* Memoirs, *with illustrations of his buildings for the Nuremberg Party Rally grounds. After our conversation, as we were lunching at the village restaurant, Speer commented on my article: "What I liked best about your article was your choice of photographs. It was just as I would have done it myself. Those happen to be my favorite works. The article is critical [I had never sent Speer a copy of the article], but I was pleased that it appeared in* Artforum *— a rather good publication, isn't it?"*

A little later, I touched on the run-down condition of the Zeppelin Field in Nuremberg. Quite recently the two pylons at either side had to be partly taken down, as the stone has weathered quickly and keeps crumbling away. Speer thinks that they may have used a bad grade of an otherwise good quality stone, adding in a matter-of-fact tone: "Seen that way, it's a good thing that Hitler lost the war; otherwise he'd hold me responsible for that."

Albert Speer. Zeppelin Field, Nuremberg. (Photo: Bernhard Leitner, 1974).



In Berlin, Speer had ordered a model of part of the facade of the Fuehrer's Palace, planned and designed by himself, to be built in stone at full scale. When he heard a few years ago that one of the ornaments intended for this structure was still in an Italian quarry, he went there, checked the ornament, and brought it home. Out of this ornament intended to frame the top of a window between two gigantic pilasters of Hitler's palace, Albert Speer, the architect, built himself an open fireplace for the living room of his country house in the Allgaeu.



The Future of Allusion: Hollywood in the Seventies (and Beyond)*

NOËL CARROLL

One rootless man, driven by an illicit passion for another man's wife; a murderous bargain with the siren; fateful destruction. It's an old story. Or, to be more exact, it's an old movie—shades of *The Postman Always Rings Twice* ('46) and *Double Indemnity* ('44). And yet, of course, it is also a new movie—*Body Heat* ('81), directed by Lawrence Kasdan, coauthor of such other historical pastiches as *The Empire Strikes Back* ('80) and *Raiders of the Lost Ark* ('81).[1] Nor does *Body Heat* merely rework an old plot. It tries to evoke the old films, films of the forties, that the plot was a part of. *Body Heat*'s costumes are contemporary, but of a nostalgic variety that lets us—no, asks us—to see the film as a shifting figure, shifting between past and present. The lighting extensively apes the *film noir* style of the forties, thereby enhancing its mood of pessimism-cum-destiny by citing the approved cinematic iconography for fear, lust, and loathing. We understand *Body Heat*'s plot complications because we know its sources—in fact, because, through its heavy-handed allusions, we've been told its sources. Without this knowledge, without these references, would *Body Heat* make much sense? Even its eroticism requires our explicit association of the female lead with certain movie myths—for example, the woman-as-devil/temptress archetype—in order to be really forceful.

Though recent commercial film is too diverse to capture in a single formula, there is a tendency, of which *Body Heat* is an exampe, that distinguishes the seventies and eighties from every other decade in Hollywood's past—viz., allusion. Indeed, this tendency is so pervasive that it has already trickled down to TV advertising. There is an ad for women's blue jeans in which a long-legged, long-haired model strikes a pose of James Dean's (in a convertible, against a prairie mansion) that is a straight imitation of a shot from *Giant* ('56).

* The author wishes to express his gratitude to Paul Arthur, David Bordwell, Annette Michelson, and Michael Nagelback for their careful readings of and comments on this article.

1. If Kasdan's work on *Continental Divide* ('81) seems less derivative than the films named here, one must still remember the degree to which it is simply an updating of the classic Hollywood battle-of-the-sexes motif.

Of course, allusionism as it is practiced in the new Hollywood is generally more motivated than it is in this ad. Allusion, specifically allusion to film history, has become a major expressive device, that is, a means that directors use to make comments on the fictional worlds of their films. *Allusion*, as I am using it, is an umbrella term covering a mixed lot of practices including quotations, the memorialization of past genres, the reworking of past genres, *homages*, and the recreation of "classic" scenes, shots, plot motifs, lines of dialogue, themes, gestures, and so forth from film history, especially as that history was crystallized and codified in the sixties and early seventies.

During that period, a canon of films and filmmakers was forged. An aggressive polemic of film criticism, often called auteurism, correlated attitudes, moods, viewpoints, and expressive qualities with items in the putative canon. These associations became available to contemporary filmmakers, who were able to lay claim to them by alluding to the original films, filmmakers, styles, and genres to which certain associations or assignments were affixed in the emerging discourse about film history. Thus *Body Heat*, a film based on references to film history, a film that tells us that for this very reason it is to be regarded as intelligent and knowing, a film that demands that the associations which accrued to its referents be attributed to it and that it be treated with the same degree of seriousness as they were.

The strategies for making allusions are various. They include the outright imitation of film-historical referents; the insertion of classic clips into new films; the mention of illustrious and coyly nonillustrious films and filmmakers in dialogue; the arch play of titles on marquees, television screens, posters, and bookshelves in the background of shots; the retreading of archaic styles; and the mobilization of conventional, transparently remodeled characters, stereotypes, moods, and plots. I am grouping all these practices and strategies under the rubric of "allusion to film history" because the new films in question are structured by pertinent strategies and practices in such a way that (1) informed viewers are meant to recall past films (filmmakers, genres, shots, and so on) while watching the new films, and that (2) informed viewers are not supposed to take this as evidence of plagiarism or uninspired derivativeness in the new film—as they might have in the works of another decade—but as part of the expressive design of the new films. The force of *supposed to* in this formulation is conventional; it is a rule of seventies film viewing, for example, that a similarity between a new film and an old film generally can count as a reference to the old film.[2]

2. By this I mean that in interpreting recent films, the appearance of a correspondence between a new film and an old film is used as a criterion or ground for asserting that the new film is making a comment of some sort. That is, it asks us to apply what we know of the old film to the new film's point of view on its materials. To see how this operates, consider a literary, non-

Furthermore, such allusions by seventies filmmakers are expressive devices; they are a means for projecting and reinforcing the themes and the emotive and aesthetic qualities of the new films. By referring to a film by Howard Hawks, contemporary filmmakers assert their possession of a Hawksian world view, a cluster of themes and expressive qualities that has been (ever so thoroughly and repetitiously) expounded in the critical literature; by such an allusion, the new filmmakers unequivocably identify their point of view on the material at hand and thereby comment, with the force of an iconographic symbol, on the ongoing action of the new film. Observing the same phenomenon from the opposite side of the screen, we can say that the invocation of the Hawksian world view serves as a privileged hermeneutic filter for informed film viewers, who can use it to bring into sharp focus the filmmaker's attitude or ethos.

Not all or even most films of the seventies and eighties employ allusion; and certain major filmmakers, like John Cassavetes and Michael Ritchie, seem altogether immune to it.[3] Nevertheless, the large number of prominent con-

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cinematic allusion from *Ragtime* ('81), one that the film repeats from Doctorow's novel. The Coalhouse Walker episode bears several similarities, including the onomastic resemblance, to Kleist's *Michael Kohlhaas*, the story of a man who leads a peasant revolt because his horses are destroyed at an aristocrat's illegal tollgate. In recognizing the allusion to Kleist's novella, we feel the reinforcement of the theme of the rage of justice as well as its universalization across time and culture. In *Reds* ('81), some viewers have taken the dog as a reference to Asta, which, in turn, is taken to cast the Reed/Bryant relationship under the metaphor of the relationship of Nick and Nora Charles. The tenuousness of this fit suggests that something has to be added to similarity or that the relevant modes of similarity have to be refined in order for a given similarity to amount to an allusion. My claim is that, with contemporary film viewing, similarity can generally be used as a starting point for isolating an allusion even if it is not a sufficient condition for allusion. The steady-cam point-of-view shots of the creature in *Halloween II* ('81), for example, are not allusions to *Halloween* ('79) but are rather a continuation of a stylistic donnée of the original. On the other hand, the clips from Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* ('67) in *Halloween II* are allusions to Romero's film because of their obvious aptness as an annotation of what is happening in the new film. This suggests that aptness needs to be joined to similarity in order to constitute an allusion.

The preceding paragraph jumps easily from the discussion of high art to low art. This may surprise readers who are more accustomed to essays in art and literary criticism than film criticism. Those older disciplines focus attention on a limited range of works of roughly the same degree of (high) ambition. Such works belong to a commonly agreed upon canon. Film criticism, though often in search of a canon, has no agreements about how to close off entry to its proposed canons in such a way that lowly genre films like *Night of the Living Dead* can be differentiated a priori from the lofty ambitions of films like *Reds*. Anything can be taken seriously in film criticism; this is the price auteurism paid in its effort to redeem American film from the denigration it suffered at the hands of the high-art, especially the literary, establishment. This entire essay reflects the film-world tendency to take any kind of film as potentially serious, that is, as aspiring to seriousness. I do not do this because I am attempting to construct my own canon, but because one cannot understand the current practices of the film world unless one takes an insider's viewpoint. One tenet of that viewpoint—shared by certain filmmakers, critics, and viewers—is that any kind of film, from a chintzy horror film to a multimillion-dollar "personal" film, can be a candidate for consideration as a major work.

3. Paul Mazursky might also seem to be a nominee for this company, but his fetishism of Fellini is too pronounced.

temporary auteurs who do indulge in allusion, allusion's appearance in so many works both major and minor, indicates that it is the symbolic structure that most distinguishes the present period from the past.

The boom of allusionism is a legacy of American auteurism, a term that I intend to adopt, for better or worse, to denote the frenzy for film that seized this country in the sixties and early seventies. Armed with lists from Andrew Sarris and compatible aesthetic theories from Eisenstein, Bazin, Godard, and McLuhan, a significant part of the generation raised in the fifties went movie mad and attacked film history. They passionately sought out films they had missed, returned obsessively to old favorites, and tried to classify them all. At times, this orgy of connoisseurship degenerated into downright film buffery. An unprecedented awareness of film history developed in a segment of the American film audience. A common vocabulary developed, including catch phrases such as "Langian paranoia" that were used both to describe past films and to categorize new ones—"x (some new film) has a Fordian view of history, a Hawksian attitude toward women, an Eisensteinian use of montage, and a Chuck Jones approach to the body."

Among those engaged in this discovery of film history—particularly American film history—were some people who would become filmmakers. Like their confreres, they were caught up in the whirl of discourse and discovery. They, too, used the nascent critical categories as a crude taxonomy for understanding film, for labeling it, and, most importantly, for fixing standards of seriousness and accomplishment. In their study of film history, they learned the exemplary themes, styles, and expressive qualities as these had been selected and distilled by American auteurism. These filmmakers predictably attempted to incorporate the budding film-historical sensibility—the central intellectual event of their youthful apprenticeships—into their works. Filmmakers began to appear who equaled, and in some cases surpassed, the erudition of the film-historically conscious audience—Paul Bartel, Peter Bogdanovich, John Carpenter, Michael Cimino, Bob Clark, Francis Coppola, Jonathan Demme, Brian DePalma, Monte Hellman, Tobe Hooper, Dennis Hopper, Philip Kaufman, George Lucas, Terence Malick, John Milius, Dick Richards, George Romero, Paul Schrader, Martin Scorsese, and Steven Spielberg.[4] A number of these directors were trained in film schools. Many

4. Though this essay for the most part emphasizes recent dramatic film, it should be clear that mainstream film comedy in the seventies also evinced an obsession with film history and allusion—were not Woody Allen and Mel Brooks the regnant comic directors of the period? Even Richard Lester's stunning swashbucklers—*The Three Musketeers* ('74), *The Four Musketeers* ('75), and *Robin and Marion* ('76)—depend on some awareness of film history, since their humor is often the product of the subversion of the bodily gracefulness associated with the classical costumer. Their expressive qualities—their roughness and joie de vivre—rely on the interruption of the flawless acrobatics, boundless energy, and good manners of a well-entrenched Hollywood form.

who were not were autodidacts of an almost monastic bent, worshipping film classics at local revivals. Some wrote about film; some taught it. Their command of the quasi-academic film lore of the sixties is estimable. Moreover, as indications of that knowledge surfaced in their works, each was recognized by the film-historically conscious audience as a secret sharer in the movie mania. Their works were greeted by an expanding cinema-learned coterie, constantly reinforced by the influx of film-school critics and college-bred film-appreciation and film-society audiences. The proliferation of the film-history credo allowed emerging directors to presuppose that at least part of their audience was prepared to look for their allusions to film history and to see in them signals of the expressive commitments of their films. The game of allusion could begin; the senders and receivers were in place; the necessary conditions for allusionistic interplay were satisfied.

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In a nutshell, the language of sixties film connoisseurship and criticism has become associated with certain genres, compositions, lighting styles, plots, and so forth, so that a new film that evokes an old film (genre, lighting style, and so on) refers not only to its own fictional world but also to a web of interrelated ideas previously introduced by film criticism and then recycled as reflections or commentaries on the fictional world of the new film. The film-historically conscious directors and viewers grew up together. They encourage each other by a reward system based on reciprocal recognition. Each side of the exchange abets the other's view of itself (that is, reinforces the criteria for serious film viewing, on the one hand, and for serious filmmaking, on the other). The result of this situation is a cinematic style that is subtly changing the nature of Hollywood symbol systems.

A Hitchcock, a Hawks, a Ford, or a Fuller employed certain shots, cuts, genres, or plots in a way that critics and aficionados came, over time, to isolate as crucial to the work of these directors. In formal analyses, these devices were seen to function as parts of organic aesthetic wholes that communicated specific themes and expressive qualities. These organic correspondences of forms and contents were dubbed Hitchcockian, Hawksian, Fordian, Fulleresque. . . , and once these connections were established and disseminated it became possible to use knowledge of them as a shorthand. Allusions to Hitchcock, Hawks, Ford, and Fuller became a means by which directors following these masters could pretend to the same preoccupations and to the same intensity as the originals. What had been organic expression for a Hawks was translated into an iconographic code by a Walter Hill or a John Carpenter. A similar story can be told about stylistic epithets like *film noir*. For example, dark lighting in an urban setting is, in virtually dictionarylike fashion, now a telegraphic transmission for anxiety and a "descent" into "ex-

istential angst," even if that mood is not exactly borne out in the film's own specific dramatic development.

Though the college-educated provide an important portion of the regular movie audience, neither they, nor the cognoscenti in their ranks, constitute the bulk of Hollywood's loyal constituency. The queue at the box office is dominated by teenagers seeking a hearth away from home. These consumers know what they want and Hollywood has listened to them; after the experimentation of the early seventies, genres have once again become Hollywood's bread and butter. And the viability of genres is what makes allusionism a practical option. The film-historically conscious director can deftly manipulate the old forms, satisfying the adolescent clientele while also conveniently pitching allusions to the inveterate film gnostics in the front rows. At many late-seventies premieres, one frequently had the feeling of watching two films simultaneously. There was the genre film pure and simple, and there was also the art film in the genre film, which through its systems of allusions sent an esoteric meaning to film-literate exegetes. For example, in *Halloween* there is the Grand Guignol at ground level, and then, at another remove, the meditation on the atavistic, irremediable nature of irrationality that is broached almost exclusively through references to *Forbidden Planet* ('56) and *Psycho* ('60). It seems that popular cinema wants to remain popular by developing a two-tiered system of communication which sends an action/drama/fantasy-packed message to one segment of the audience and an additional hermetic, camouflaged, and recondite one to another. Taken as a proposed solution to the problem of Hollywood's aesthetic survival, however, this is far from ideal, because there is a remainder of the audience that the two-tiered system ignores and that is nonplussed by what it perceives as films that are, paradoxically, at once intelligent, sophisticated, and just plain dumb. Annual excursions in deathly sincerity like *Kramer Versus Kramer* ('79), *Ordinary People* ('80), and *The Four Seasons* ('81) are appeals to the backlash instincts of these disenfranchised, college-educated movie lovers.

It may appear specious to make generalizations on the basis of films like *Halloween*, admittedly a flagrant example of the seventies film-school film. But it is important to keep in mind that such films are the direct beneficiaries of a widespread, eager, contemporary willingness to endorse an explicit film-historical consciousness as a hallmark of ambitious filmmaking and film going. Indeed, serious American commercial filmmakers have come to require serious film goers—that is, those well enough versed in film history to note references and delicate variations, and sufficiently committed to the pretensions of Cinema to bother to decipher such self-conscious gestures—as a prerequisite for anything approaching a full appreciation of their work.

One common practice reveals the measure to which the contemporary director presupposes a shared film-historical consciousness with the audience; it is the genre reworking in which a traditional schema—that of the western, the

thriller, the horror film, or the mystery—is changed in its rhythms, characters, plot structures, and so forth. For informed viewers such deviations mark the personal stamp of the new auteur.[5] This practice is more complicated and generally less objectionable than the one-to-one allusions of *Halloween*, but it obviously presumes an extremely knowledgeable spectator who will interpret the new film—the reworking—against a backdrop of the accepted associations of the appropriate genre. That is, the reworking evokes a historical genre and its associated myths, commonplaces, and meanings in order to generate expression through the friction between the old and the new. The reworking of genres has become one of the major career focuses of contemporary directors. The filmmaker proceeds from one genre to the next, revising each one so that a personal vision shines through. The progress in recent years of Robert Altman, Stanley Kubrick, Romero, Bogdanovich, and Scorcese approximates this program to varying degrees.[6]

To state the point in greater detail, consider the case of Altman. *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* ('71) and *Buffalo Bill and the Indians* ('76) rework the western; *M*A*S*H* ('70) unpatriotically plays off the army comedy somewhat in the manner of what one might imagine would be an SDS adaptation of Phil Silvers's TV series *You'll Never Get Rich*; *Thieves Like Us* ('74) is a gangster film of the "road" variety that comments on predecessors like *Bonnie and Clyde* ('67) and its prototype, *They Live by Night* ('47, released '49); *A Wedding* ('78) is a farce,

5. The idea that the modern filmmaker *should* be a director with personal touches, concerns, themes, etc., is also a consequence of American auteurism, which has served to define the proper expectations that contemporary auteurs should set for themselves. Furthermore, the idea of the Director, initially inspired by auteurism, has within the last decade come to be increasingly reinforced by film criticism, which, also influenced by auteurism, uses the category of the Director as central for cataloging films and plot developments (i.e., changes in so-and-so's style, etc.). As a category, the Director is a convenient means for keeping track of the mass of information a reviewer must process as well as a rhetorical device through which a critic claims authority.

Throughout this essay I continually advert to the relation between serious film viewing and serious filmmaking. Obviously within the class of serious film viewers there is a very special group, the ever-expanding numbers of historically savvy film critics. Often they act rather like conductors in the game of allusion. That is, by constantly noting allusions in their writings, they implicitly tell the audience that this is how to watch a film while simultaneously rewarding filmmakers for their allusions in a way that invites more of the same. Needless to say, allusionism is also valuable to the critic because it affords the opportunity to adopt the role of guardian of specialized knowledge.

As the foregoing suggests, the kinds of influences and, to a certain extent, the role of the critic have been changing during the seventies. The relation of Hollywood to the critics has altered as Hollywood's symbol systems altered. And these, of course, are terms connected within a complex network of causal interaction.

6. Along with genres, remakes of classic films have been embraced by Hollywood as a hedge against an insecure future. The logic behind both moves is related: if something worked once it will work again. Also, remakes, like genres, can provide ready-made pretexts for studied reworkings. Witness *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* ('78), *The Postman Always Rings Twice* ('81), and even *The Incredible Shrinking Woman* ('81).

Top: Nicholas Ray. They Live by Night. *1947. Bottom: Robert Altman.* Thieves Like Us. *1974.*

although one that owes more to *Rules of the Game* ('39) than to any American genre.[7] *Countdown* ('68) and *Quintet* ('78) are science fiction; *That Cold Day in the Park* ('69) is a melodrama; *The Long Good-Bye* ('73), a detective film; *Popeye* ('80), a cartoon; *California Split* ('74), a gambling film; *Images* ('72), a thriller psychologized between fantasy and reality à la Resnais; *Nashville* ('75) is a cross between show-biz biographies and a backstage musical. *That Cold Day in the Park* and *Countdown* are probably best assessed as pedestrian genre rehearsals rather than as ironized reworkings. And, of course, some Altman films are not easily pigeonholed as genres: *Brewster McCloud* ('70) and *Three Women* ('77). My point is not that Altman only works in genres. I want to direct attention to the surprising extent to which his creativity hinges on genres (and their subversion) for its energy and the concomitant degree to which such a project assumes an audience ready, willing, and able to follow and savor every self-conscious modification of received formats.

McCabe and Mrs. Miller launches its broadside against American individualism by tampering with the character stereotypes, among other things, of classical westerns, particularly those of the forties. McCabe is a founding father, the builder of a town. At first, he appears a likely heir to the resourceful and strong Clark Gable or to the more beautiful but still resilient Errol Flynn.

7. Though this section deals with genres, it is important to note that Altman's relation to historical film styles is also complex. Altman's debts to the Renoiresque tradition of realism are many, including the openness of his frame, his blocking, the busyness of his soundtracks, his direction of actors, and his commitment to accommodating the conflicting viewpoints of different characters in his "grand scheme of things." Concerning this, I am at least tempted to say that Altman is not just someone who was influenced by the Renoir tradition but someone who essentially imitates it rather than expands it. If this is true, then it would seem that much of Altman's expressive power, for informed viewers, is reducible to stylistic allusion; that is, Altman's meanings are primarily a function of allusions to a style that already has strongly associated values, such as freedom, spontaneity, vitality, and so forth. To clarify this point, contrast Altman to Kubrick. Kubrick works in the tradition of Welles (rather than that of Renoir); Kubrick emphasizes monumental compositions of great solidity, and he is also a montagist. But Kubrick is not parasitic on Welles for his expressive qualities. Though formal properties are shared, Kubrick uses them to create a greater distance, sense of circumspection, and feeling of implacability than does Welles. Whereas Altman often depends on his tradition to fix the meaning of his formal choices, Kubrick, while belonging to a tradition, uses it to generate his own original cluster of expressive qualities.

Throughout the seventies, perhaps as a result of *Battle of Algiers* ('65), directors self-consciously adopted styles with established connotations as a means of making comments about the fictional worlds of their films. For example, Scorsese tells us as clearly as he can that the culture of Little Italy is "raw," "authentic," and "real" in *Mean Streets* ('73) by using a cinema-verité style—that is, a style linked to these very adjectives. I suspect that Altman is involved in the same type of allusionism.

Like *Battle of Algiers, Psycho* ('60) is an influential forerunner in this particular use of allusion, which we might call style-as-symbol. In *Psycho* Hitchcock stresses the banality of his fictional world by intentionally adopting, after the florid stylization of *Vertigo* ('58), the modest look and style of a TV program. The use of this style is not mysterious or obscure; think of vulgar examples like *What a Way to Go* ('64).

Gradually, after evoking such associations, he is revealed to be a bumbling loser—weak, ultimately ineffectual, and not very smart (a fact developed in large measure through another stereotype reworking, the person of Mrs. Miller). We might say, metaphorically speaking, that Altman is talking to us through genres; we have to grasp the fact that his film makes reference to certain prototypes and their connotated values in order to understand that *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* is about the discounting of the myth of the rugged individualist and not just about some poor, dead slob in the snow. *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* is an example of the revisionist western which dates back at least to *The Wild Bunch* ('69), a film that introduces its darkening view of America by presenting townspeople, the community, as the lunatic fringe, simultaneously chanting and besmirching John Ford's beloved "Now We Gather at the River" (was ever an allusion so cruel?). The revisionist western[8] lives off the classical western, which it criticizes by decisive subversions of set genre plots, locales, and/or characters (whose intelligence, competence, and, at times, sanity are often intentionally and severely limited). The revisionist western assays these alterations for the sake of projecting a broad sentiment of social disenchantment by demystifying national myths and registering a sense of loss. One could watch *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* and other revisionist westerns heeding only the drama and the ever flashier gunplay. Yet surely this sort of spectatorship would miss the discursive implications of these films.

But how can these films have discursive implications? By referring to genres that have a large body of established meanings, by using genre itself as a symbol. *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* requires a viewer informed of the fact that the western takes American values as its general subject, and that changes in elements between westerns of an earlier period and a new western are indexes of changes in attitude toward certain American values. An expressive system so structured on self-conscious, stylistic change, of course, presumes a great deal of historical knowledge, since the allusions can be quite arcane. Nor is the western the only terrain on which this genre-banked mode of expression has

8. Other revisionist westerns are *The Culpepper Cattle Company* ('72), *Dirty Little Billy* ('72), *Little Big Man* ('70), (probably) *Bad Company* ('72), *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid* ('73), *The Great Northfield Minnesota Raid* ('72) in terms of the portrayal of Jesse James especially, *The Ballad of Cable Hogue* ('70), and *Missouri Breaks* ('76) as a late entry. During the height of the genre's popularity in the late sixties and early seventies, many cowboy films, such as *War Wagon*, were anything but reworkings, and there were genre reworkings made that were not revisionist, such as *The Shootist* ('76). By the mid-seventies, the western had spent itself, its residual energies absorbed by cop films.

Attempts to revive the genre, mostly through reworkings, have appeared in the last few years. *Comes a Horseman* ('78) and *The Long Riders* ('79) have attempted to do this by elongating the pace of the past, giganticizing the everyday. *Days of Heaven* ('78) also adopts a drawn-out cadence to rework the genre, as well as a battery of other defamiliarizing techniques that makes the old West seem like Mars. The disaster of *Heaven's Gate* ('80), however, should put a damper on any wholehearted attempt to reinstate the genre in the near future.

flowered. Altman's *The Long Good-Bye* derives its ironic tone through its systematic contrast with the moral universe of 1940s private-eye films. Examples like this—remember *Chinatown* ('76) and *Farewell, My Lovely* ('75)—are easy to multiply. *The Late Show* ('77), as its title suggests, also derives its expressive flavor through explicit contrast with vintage detective films.[9]

It is not my contention that contemporary genre reworkings are automatic successes. In fact, they are dangerous risks at the box office at times when audiences are looking for old-fashioned entertainment. Precisely because reworkings are constituted through strategic subversions of fixed genre elements, reworkings are likely to frustrate the audience's expectations in a way that makes the audience nasty and bitter. Kubrick's *The Shining* is a recent example. His property was a popular novel, and his advertisements promised the scariest horror film ever. But what he offered was a reworking, one that jettisoned Stephen King's carefully built rhythm of tension and replaced a number of King's smoothly timed shocks (in the center of the plot) with an abyss of languor. Audiences were confused, bored, and angered. Defenders of the film quickly pointed out that what Kubrick had done was to substitute one horror—the loneliness of the nuclear family—for another. I have no quarrel with this analysis. But, in addition, I would hold that *The Shining*, like many other reworkings, was designed on the two-tiered structure of communication described earlier and that only one of its meanings, the esoteric one, reached its target.[10] Scorsese's genre reworking, *New York, New York* ('77)—perhaps the

9. Clark's *Murder by Decree* ('79) is also an interesting example of expression by genre variation. It works through combining two subgenres—the classical detective and hard-boiled modes—in order to underscore the enormity of its outrage over governmental conspiracy; it does this by having Sherlock Holmes behave like a private eye, showing feelings and dealing in fisticuffs. The genre transgression is meant to mirror the seriousness of the crime. Clark is an old hand at using genres as a tool of political statement. His *The Night Walk* ('72) exploits the vampire film to comment on the Vietnam War in relation to the social values that produced it.

The British have also been very active in detective reworkings throughout the seventies. Hodge's *Get Carter* ('71) and Frear's *Gumshoe* ('72) are examples of allusionist English films that take the historical mystery film as a starting point. Though many would disagree, I would argue that Winner's *The Big Sleep* ('78), an Anglo-American coproduction, is also a respectable mystery reworking.

Throughout this essay the majority of examples are in the nature of allusions to the narrative, dramatic, and thematic content of earlier films rather than to their cinematic style. This, I think, reflects the direction of allusionism as it is currently practiced. One reason for this might be that auteurist criticism, despite its proclaimed antiliterary bent, tended primarily toward narrative/dramatic/thematic analysis rather than to the discrimination of visual, audio, and cinematic modes of stylization. Thus, contemporary allusionists, depending on the codified commonplaces of received criticism, recapitulate the tendencies of American auteurism. Of course, there are many exceptions to this observation; perhaps Martin Scorsese is the most notable.

10. On the other hand, Romero's *Dawn of the Dead* ('79) was quite a financially successful reworking and one far more loaded with inside allusions (for example, to motorcyle films) than Kubrick's *The Shining*. The moral seems to be that you can have hermeticism as long as the action keeps moving fast enough that the general audience isn't annoyed.

For the past several years the horror film has been a major vehicle for reworkings. One

most intricately cross-referenced film of the new Hollywood—shared a similar fate.

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Another practice within the perimeter of the genre-as-symbol is memorialization, the loving evocation through imitation and exaggeration of the way genres were. *Star Wars* ('77), both parts of *Superman* ('78, '81), and *Raiders of the Lost Ark* are some of the most extravagant examples. For one part of the audience, ostensibly the youngsters, these are rousing adventure sagas. But the more seasoned among us are asked to view them also as remembrances of things past, of comic books and serials, and of times of which it is said that good and evil were sharply cleaved. A film like *Raiders of the Lost Ark* is not a perfect replica of a B cliff-hanger; for one thing it is too lavish. Rather it is the filmmaker's reverie on the glorious old days; if it has more action and adventure than Tim Tyler ever saw, then memory has worked its magic, heightening the excitement of *Raiders*' potboiler prototypes so that they are finally as breathtaking as we want to remember them. The plot implausibilities—Indiana Jones hops on a submarine without worrying whether it will submerge—and its oxymoronic, homemade surrealist juxtapositions—the Nazi Army led by the Hebrew Ark of the Covenant—are not forsaken but defended as homage duly paid to the very source of charm in the originals. Despite all the thunder and fury, *Raiders* uses its allusions to produce a sense of wistfulness and yearning. Like Borges's Pierre Menard, the producers of *Raiders* can't stifle the acquisition of new expressive properties in the process of putting old wine in new bottles. Nor, probably, do they want to, since these qualities can be cashed in on as nostalgia. A genre reworking like *Popeye* defamiliarizes its source (by humanizing it) in order to reveal the strangeness of this thing, Popeye, that we once accepted unblinkingly. There is no irony, however, in *Raiders*' reminiscences. Its message to the informed viewer is that of paradise regained, also the

looming tendency in this field is the use of the horror format to illustrate metaphors of pop psychology, for example, all of Cronenberg's films and *The Howling* ('81). It is interesting to note that the current horror-film cycle correlates with several other social preoccupations that, in turn, are related to the latent content of horror-film imagery. What I have in mind are the seventies' obsessions with sexual experimentation, ecology (especially pollution), and the resurgence of religion—cults, established and otherwise, are flourishing a decade after the death of God. That horror is the major genre of the seventies may be explained by the fact that no other genre combines sex, themes of pollution, and religion so well.

The horror genre is also allusionistically invoked in nonhorror films such as *Apocalypse Now* ('79), the last section of which effectively becomes a monster film through its use of lighting, scale, and mystifying spatiality. This, of course, is meant as a visualization of the theme of "the horror" that issues in the dialogue. (Perhaps Coppola got the idea of an allusion to the horror-film genre from *Citizen Kane*, a film whose opening uses thirties-Gothic stylizations as a means to metaphorically introduce the monster in the mansion and the "ghost" in Kane.)

Steven Spielberg. Raiders of the Lost Ark. *1981.*

This page: Michelangelo Antonioni. Blow-Up. *1966. Right: Francis Coppola.* The Conversation. *1974. Far Right: Brian DePalma.* Blow-Out. *1981.*

selling point of Lucas's first big box-office triumph, *American Graffiti* ('73). The aesthetic risk of *Raiders* is that the line between a genre memorialization and a tawdry genre rerun, like the difference between the new Hollywood and the old, may become all but invisible.

Not only genres but specific films are singled out for reworking. *Blow-Up* ('66) has already been twice reincarnated, once as *The Conversation* ('74) and more recently as *Blow-Out* ('81). The mime at the beginning of Coppola's film and the title of DePalma's unmistakably allude to Antonioni as do the repetitions of Antonioni's core plot structure, that is, the accidental recording and discovery of a crime. Via allusion we are instructed to interpret both of the newer films as concerned with the theme of the artist's relation to reality. That is, it is through the allusion to *Blow-Up*, a film that dealt far more directly with the topic than do either of the reworkings, that Antonioni's groundwork enables us to gloss *The Conversation* and *Blow-Out* as their respective auteur's attitudes to their vocations. We note that both Coppola and DePalma have changed their protagonists into soundmen, a transformation that befits the high-tech self-image of the seventies director and the shift from film-as-chemistry to film-as-electronics. We also note that the plot machinations and dramatics of the newer films suggest that neither Coppola nor DePalma is as reconciled as Antonioni and his surrogate were at the end of *Blow-Up* to the relation between art and life. Both *The Conversation* and *Blow-Out* also sharpen their reflexive edges through their central theme of voyeurism. The significance of this cannot simply be explained as something they found in *Blow-Up*, though, of course, it was there to be found. Rather the importance of voyeurism in the newer films also rests on the fact that voyeurism was one of the premier themes (watch-words?) of the movie-crazy sixties, the time when Coppola and DePalma came of age artistically. For obvious, undoubtedly narcissistic reasons, film connoisseurs of the sixties (and beyond) loved voyeurism—I mean as a theme. They looked for

it everywhere and showered great attention on it wherever they found it; Hitchcock particularly benefited from this. Moreover, voyeurism as a dramatic element in the fictional world of a film, like *Rear Window* ('54), could always work overtime as a symbol for the conditions of filmmaking and/or film viewing as far as film connoisseurs, critics, and buffs were concerned. Both Coppola and DePalma chose to allude to a popular theme and to an influential film of their youth as a means to articulate their perhaps only fashionably pessimistic view of their art in films that without the cross-references might slip past as nothing more than thrillers with, at most, some touches of political topicality.

Allusions to *Psycho* in recent film are ubiquitous—let mention of *Sisters* ('73), *Texas Chain Saw Massacre* ('74), *Dressed to Kill* ('80), *Funhouse* ('81), *The Exorcist* ('73), and *Halloween* suffice. *Rebel Without a Cause* ('55) stands behind the race in *American Graffiti*, while *Badlands* ('73) engenders much of its aesthetic static—that persistent feeling that something is missing—through its complex use of the James Dean image in a figure who retains his mentor's glamorous romantic isolationism but also repulses identification by being an unlovable, dumbly opaque, irredeemable sociopath.

The Searchers ('56) is another bible of the new Hollywood. Allusions to it appear in *Who's That Knocking at My Door* ('69), *Mean Streets, Taxi Driver* ('76), *Dillinger* ('73), *The Wind and the Lion* ('75), *Big Wednesday* ('78), *Star Wars, Ulzana's Raid* ('72), and possibly *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* ('77) and *The Deer Hunter* ('79). The film that most ruthlessly repossesses *The Searchers* is incontestably Paul Schrader's *Hardcore* ('78). The Indians become West Coast skin merchants; the wilderness, the underworld of pornography; the searcher is no longer an obsolete frontiersman but one of the elect of the Protestant ethic, a real pilgrim; if he was on the inside of the door that shut John Wayne out, he is now on the outside, traveling across a landscape that is stylistically constructed like Ford's—all California seamlessly blends into a homogeneous continuum

Robert Bresson. Pickpocket. *1959*.

until it seems like one undifferentiated symbolic arena. Ilah Davis has a sidekick and a scout; his daughter is a (possibly kidnapped) concubine and she likes it. Through these allusions (and others) Schrader borrows *The Searchers* and the discourse that has grown around it, which in turn enables him to shoplift one of the greatest, most enduring themes of the American experience—sexual repression and its relation to the creation of minatory doppelgängers, dark doubles of the forest and the city, to be confronted and exorcised through regenerating violence. Schrader's penchant for allusionist annotations of his texts is notorious. In *Taxi Driver*, which Schrader scripted, Travis Bickel's deep alienation is signaled by running *Diary of a Country Priest* ('50) up the flagpole, while the *redemption* of the protagonist (through his being able, finally, to receive love) in *American Gigolo* ('79) is italicized by a reprise of the ending of *Pickpocket* ('59).[11]

If Schrader seems a particularly extreme case of one whose "serious" ambition and big themes drive him to heavy allegory and pedantry, it is important to remember that his delight in allusion is not different from that of the more commercial, lowbrow whiz kids. In *Assault on Precinct 13* ('76), a film that owes a lot to *Rio Bravo* ('59), Carpenter has the embattled black policeman heave a shotgun to a dangerous prisoner in imitation of a famous moment in *Red River* ('48) when Walter Brennan comes to John Wayne's aid. For the viewer not aware of the reference, the scene is a rather typical one in which the cop, in a tight predicament, has no alternative but to trust the outlaw. For those in the

11. In *Taxi Driver* Schrader joined a director who more than matched his own passion for cross-reference. For instance, toward the end of the film, Scorsese footnotes his violence as Fulleresque by copying a widely admired camera movement from *Park Row* ('52).

Paul Schrader. American Gigolo. *1979.*

know, however, the gesture also has the aura of the sort of mystic male bonding that cements the Hawksian brotherhood; we know that a special understanding—of the type, you know, only men can have—now exists between the lawman and the thug.[12] Steven Spielberg, no one's idea of an artist possessed, also enjoys allusions, especially to cartoons. His flying saucers zip along the highway like Road Runner, a reference that he is careful to parade; while the endings of both *Close Encounters* and *Raiders* feed off the "Night on Bald Mountain" sequence of *Fantasia* ('40) in order to swathe their supernaturals in Disneyesque wonderment.[13]

Though it is harder to put one's finger on, it seems to be the case that recent filmmakers not only depend on references to explicit genres, films, scenes, and so forth, but also on references to themes that have dominated film discourse and which have been enshrined therein—for example, Hawksian professionalism. Walter Hill's alterations of *Alien* ('79), culled in large part from

12. In *Escape from New York* ('81), Carpenter has the hero, Snake, speak in that choked whisper Clint Eastwood perfected as the man-with-no-name in the Leone series and *Hang 'em High* ('68); thus we know how really mean this guy is.

13. Spielberg also used the Road Runner allusion in *Sugarland Express* ('74), where it worked quite effectively, first as a comparison and then ultimately as an ironic contrast to the pursuit in the film. While not alluding to specific cartoons, Russ Meyer relies on references to Hollywood, especially Warner Brothers, cartoons to evoke his particular comic-plastic view of the body. What is important in this context is that both Spielberg and Meyer differ from someone like Tashlin. Tashlin treated live-action film as if it were capable of cartoon physics. Meyer alludes to cartoons to suggest that the pornographic urge is antirealistic, essentially a form of caricature based on deformation through exaggeration. The content of Spielberg's references is even more specific, grounded in the use of very definite sources which make exact comments about given scenes and stories.

The Thing ('51), unambiguously show his indebtedness to Hawks. And some of his own films, like *The Driver* ('78), only appear to make sense in the light of the Hawksian cult of the professional. As one might argue of *The Warriors* ('79), the title of *The Driver* is the name of the profession or skill of the central character. The film is a compendium of elegant car stunts, outpacing *Bullitt* ('68) and *The French Connection* ('71), and opening the eyes of even the most jaded veteran of the last decade's infatuation with the guns-and-gas subgenre. The protagonist has no psychological motivation other than the need to prove that he is the best at what he does; his room and his personal interactions are as empty and uneventful as is his inner life. He has nothing to say and he doesn't, and he has nothing to do but drive. The hiatuses between action scenes are as willfully flat as the escape episodes are hair-raising. The obsession with the driver's skill, his profession, is monomaniacal. To an outside observer, the film might appear to be naught but mindless action. But to an insider, the action itself is an icon of an existential commitment; through years of discussions of Hawks's professionalism, we know to take the action of *The Driver* as Hill's philosophical position—the ultimate personal reality is skill; meaning in life comes through excellence. Hill's professionalism is different from Hawks's. Hill lacks the master's humor and sense of camaraderie. And yet without the critical hypostasization of Hawksian professionalism, Hill's professionalism would not be particularly comprehensible. The exact increments of Hill's allusion to Hawks are more difficult to pinpoint than are allusions made to a scene or a camera movement or even to a story; there is no structural element, no object or image that we can hone in on that is being imitated. So without a handle on the global reference to the professional-cult theme, the spectator is likely to find *The Driver* unintelligible. If, however, we keep Hawks in mind, we can at least begin to answer the question, "Why does the driver do what he does?" by saying with the accumulated profundity of feeling allowed us by Hawks's criticism, "Because it's his *job*."

Langian paranoia also has become an important referent of films of the seventies and eighties. This level of allusion is even more slippery to deal with than Hill's dependence on Hawksian professionalism. The notion of Langian paranoia, as galvanized by recent film discourse, has a certain specificity. It does not apply to just any thriller/crime film with a conspiracy in it, but only to conspiracies that are virtually all-encompassing while also appearing innocent and ordinary. The Langian myth, as conceived in film discourse, is that of a vast, almost undetectable evil scheme disguised by an illusory patina of things-as-usual. The hero is alone in seeing through the veil of everydayness and is pitted against something or someone of the demonic proportions of a Mabuse. The seventies saw the development of the paranoia subgenre—for example, *Parallax View* ('74), *Three Days of the Condor* ('75), *Capricorn One* ('78), *Hangar 18* ('81)—which often had as its presiding point, "In government, we distrust." These films do not look like Lang's. And yet their provenance is in themes that

were refined, discussed, and interrelated in reference to Lang's work. The Lang of criticism, a far more rarified and coherent being than the Lang of celluloid, has provided the undermeaning and standards for the subgenre. The films need not directly allude to Lang, and yet to be appreciated they must be weighed on a paranoid fantasy scale whose interrelated criteria were originally tagged and popularized in terms of Lang. That is, we decide whether such films are good examples of the Langian-paranoic kind by asking how claustrophobic, how all-enveloping, how omnipotent, omniscient, and all-malevolent is the conspiracy in the film while everything on the surface appears to be normal.

Styles as well as historic themes are often alluded to in a way that gives them a special expressive, iconic function. Style in the generative (explanatory) sense as opposed to style in the classificatory (descriptive) sense, of course, is intrinsically connected to expression—we isolate stylistic units in terms of looking for the formal variations that give rise to the expressive and discursive effects we already intuit. But, in the recent films I have in mind, the style, because it is mediated through allusion, works by iconic reference rather than by expressive implication. That is, the historical reference of the lighting in a specific scene or its color may allow it to be taken as the use of style-as-symbol. For example, in the early seventies, the discussion of one historical style, *film noir*, reached the proportions of a popular sport. As a result, what the composition of *film noir* was said to express can now be appropriated simply by dimming your lights and tightening your framing. In Schrader's *Blue Collar* ('78), the images grow ominously dark while the story still seems comic and high-spirited. *Blue Collar* starts to look like a *film noir*, or at least to satisfy enough of the criteria to be *said* to look like a *film noir*—a style, by the way, which Schrader as a critic wrote about in a major article—before the tension in the plot begins to build. But you feel the allusion strongly, and, sure enough, as time goes on, the stylistic reference turns out to have been a premonition of things to come. The number of recent films in the style-as-symbol category that revive *film noir* as a means of commenting on their dramatic material is legion: *Night Moves* ('75), *Elephant Man* ('80), *All the President's Men* (76), *Taxi Driver, Hardcore,* and *Body Heat*. Nor is *film noir* the only archaic style available for quotation. Scorsese opens *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore* ('74) with a precise *homage* to the Hollywood musical, explicitly recalling *Hello, Frisco, Hello* ('43) and *The Wizard of Oz* ('39). The glorious studio-framed set contrasts strongly with the open style of the rest of the film. Scorsese uses this overdetermined allusion to characterize Alice's ambitions as full-color, Hollywood fantasies on the boundary of childlikeness and childishness. Scorsese is an addicted allusionist, as his asides through clips of *The Searchers* and *The Big Heat* ('53) in *Mean Streets* attest. *New York, New York* is probably the wildest experiment in style-as-symbol of the new Hollywood, combining compositions from period dramatic films, plot lines from musical biographies, and dashes of Visconti in a whirligig of allusions that requires a

viewer with the knowledge of a film historian like William K. Everson or Miles Kruger.[14]

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American filmmakers are not alone in their taste for allusion. It is also a popular practice in the new German cinema. Fassbinder's periodic exhumation of Douglas Sirk is the most publicized example. Wenders is also a crafty allusionist; his *American Friend* ('77) is the most sophisticated use of *film noir*-as-symbol that we have so far. Even Herzog dabbles in historiography; his *Nosferatu* ('79) is more about Murnau's film and its symbolic implications than it is a vampire movie. Nor is the shared allusionism of the new Hollywood and the new German cinema a mere caprice of the zeitgeist wending its mysterious ways. The correlations can be explained genetically; the two movements have a common ancestry, the French new wave. In the sixties, aspiring American and German filmmakers looked to Paris for role models, as did aspiring film connoisseurs and buffs. The filmmakers learned, or thought they learned, what it meant to be serious and ambitious about film from the French. They also got tips about how to behave which included not only pointers on editing, composition, and improvisation, but also the idea of allusion. I am not trying to equate

14. Midnight cult films such as *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* ('75) and *The Love Thing* ('80) also rely on allusion; however, they are not constructed on the two-tiered model of communication. Their meaning remains hermetic, hidden in the system of allusion. Undoubtedly this is one reason they succeed as cult films—one must have knowledge of the allusions as well as grasp their sub rosa connotation; to do this is to be of the select. Such Morrisey/Warhol collaborations as *Heat* ('72) are relevant forerunners of this type of allusion.

Douglas Crimp pointed out to me that the extreme emphasis on historical references and historical pastiches involved in the Hollywood practice of allusionism raises questions about its relation to the phenomenon of postmodernism in the other arts. Though social factors—such as the rise of the arts-education system—may be common causes of Hollywood allusionism and the various postmodernisms, Hollywood allusion as currently practiced diverges from, for example, postmodernist activity in the visual arts as represented by such artists as Laurie Anderson, Robert Longo, Sherrie Levine, Cindy Sherman, Richard Prince, Jack Goldstein, and Troy Brauntuch. Two immediate distinctions to be drawn between Hollywood allusion and these postmodernists are: first, Hollywood allusionism involves a two-tiered system of communication whereas these postmodernists operate on a one-tiered system of recondite meanings (even though they justly point out that they are more accessible than the minimalists); and second, Hollywood allusionism is undertaken for expressive purposes whereas postmodernism, like modernism, refers to artifacts of cultural history for reflexive purposes, urging us to view the products of media as media. Undoubtedly some of these postmodernists were influenced by the auteurist project; their knowledge of the history of film is often evident. But their use of that knowledge subserves their deeper commitment to the esoteric dialectics and unflinching reflexivity of modernism. Perhaps Hollywood allusionism is more akin to postmodernist architecture, for example, a work such as Charles Moore's Piazza d'Italia in New Orleans. Postmodern architecture is a two-tiered system; while building structures for public use, it packs its edifices with esoteric quotations. At the same time, however, Hollywood allusionists are essentially respectful of their forebears whereas postmodernist architects are repudiating their predecessors.

Martin Scorsese. New York, New York. *1977.*

the new wave, new German cinema, and the new Hollywood. Each differs considerably from the others. Where there are tangencies, however, such as allusionism, that is a function, for good or ill, of the influence of the new wave. The Americans were very selective in what they took from the French, and they left a great many fecund ideas to wither on the vine. As well, they transplanted their graftings to a very unique climate, Hollywood, where strange mutations occurred. The Germans, on the other hand, took on the spirit as well as the techniques of the new wave, and seem consequently to have evolved in a more satisfying aesthetic direction than the Americans.

Much of the American film craze of the sixties and early seventies was underwritten by the French; many a film buff recited a litany of film directors garnered from French auteurism; and, of course, the preoccupation with the Director was itself originally French. In many cases, perhaps the majority, American auteurists did not know their progenitors from the original sources, but secondhand from synthesizers, summarizers, and imitators. A great deal of information circulated by word of mouth; if French auteurism was not widely read in this country, it nevertheless supplied an increasingly suffusive coloration to the American film-consciousness movement. New wave films were initially seen to go hand in hand with auteurism, of either the French or the American variants. A number of the American auteurs of the new Hollywood were early admirers of Godard. Some features of Godard that caught their eye included his loose form, mood shifting, improvisation, jump-cutting; his attempt at combining formalism and realism, documentary techniques and Eisensteinian montage; and, of course, his use of allusion to film history and pop culture (as opposed to his allusions to the rest of culture). But the Americans never bought into the whole of Godard's program, not even to all of its implications in terms of the use of allusion to film history. Specifically, they were not interested in what has been called Godard's critique of illusionism. They did not seek to drive the kind of wedge between their fictions and the process of filmmaking that was at the heart of Godard's enterprise. The Americans were never taken by the notion of Brechtian distance as Godard interpreted (or, to be more truthful, misinterpreted) it. The Americans did not mind distance but they preferred the smart-alecky, wise-guy distance of a precocious film buff to the cerebral intensity of Godard's progressively more modernist phases. Godard's allusions to film history, either when they functioned to communicate the show-off exuberance of every young cinéaste's self-discovery of film, or when they functioned as comments on the fictional world of a film, were fine. But allusionism as a means of interrogating the nature of cinema was foreign to Godard's American acolytes.

The new wave practice of reworking genres—for example, *Shoot the Piano Player* ('60), *The Bride Wore Black* ('67), *Fahrenheit 451* ('66), *Mississippi Mermaid* ('69), *Alphaville* ('65), *Made in U.S.A.* ('66)—offered the Americans a fertile concept not only because it accorded with their own rediscovery of film history and

because it gave them a well-charted, easily manipulated expressive vocabulary, but because it provided a road to their dreams, working in Hollywood *and* still being artistically and intellectually respectable. But as a consequence of the American lack of any full-blooded commitment to modernism, their work evolved less in the direction of Godard's and more in the direction of the later Truffaut's and that of Chabrol, of whom it can be said "the genre is the man."[15]

The rise and fall of allusionism, the distance between great expectations and Alexandrianism, can be profitably reviewed in the career of Brian DePalma. He became interested in film through his work in theater in the sixties. He absorbed the rich Manhattan film culture, participated in varied art-world activities, and wanted to become the American Godard. His early works have strong affinities with other avant-garde work of the period. *Wotan's Wake* ('62) is an absurdist self-parody of male fantasies of sexual repression in which Wotan, a satirically grotesque, horny rag of an underground man pursues comely coeds in the style of silent comedy chases—imagine Mack Sennett's adaptation of the Return of the Repressed. *Wotan's Wake* culminates in what in 1962 was a hilariously awkward and intentionally tacky allusion to the last scene in *King Kong* ('33), transforming into bathos the male self-pity inherent in the original. *Dionysus in '69* ('70) covered some of the same territory as *The Brig* ('64) while, like *Hallelujah the Hills* ('63), *The Wedding Party* ('64) tried to join European experimentalism—jump-cuts, episodic transitions, and improvisation—with American humor. Allusionism is the fundamental strategy in *Murder à la Mode* ('68), an exercise in style in which each part of the film is done in a distinctive pop idiom that metaphorically comments on its content (for example, soap opera style equals soap-opera people). In the young DePalma, one sees the best of the cinéphile turned filmmaker. He is irreverent, topical, satirical, experimental, and stylistically iconoclastic while assuredly in command of his forms in a way that seethes with brashness, confidence, and talent.

Undeniably, many of these qualities continue to be visible in DePalma's later work, especially *Phantom of the Paradise* ('74). His flair for experimentation is still evident in his always creative fascination with the split screen. And he is an awesomely formidable formalist; in *Carrie* ('76) he takes little more than a handful of scenes and through camera movement and editing erects a full-length feature film on a plot more meager in complications than many TV dramas. It is a tour de force of what was once called the cinematic. But with each new film, DePalma's ambition seems to recede a little further. He clamors for the mantle of Hitchcock and spins variations on *Vertigo* and *Psycho*. He

15. I do not mean to suggest that the Americans should have slavishly imitated Godard in every respect. The last thing cinema needs is still more earnest, gaseous, self-proclaiming philosopher-manqués drifting on the ether of undigested ideas. Nevertheless, some sustained American commitment to modernism might have been beneficial. Perhaps Brecht himself could have served as a model for a cinema that would have been both reflexive and popular.

wants Hitchcock's themes, like voyeurism; but by working through allusion, does he ever inherit them except in name only?

I have already introduced *Blow-Out*. The reference there to Antonioni enables us to see that the film is *about* more than the action without the reference would suggest. It is about art and representation, and about what is given (directly in Antonioni; derivatively in DePalma) as the enigmatic inadequacy of the attempt of art to do something like "capture" (represent) life/reality. DePalma's artist figure is "deeper into" technique than Antonioni's and DePalma himself seems far more interested in showing the audience exactly how his recording toys work than Antonioni was. And DePalma's artist-cypher is finally more disgruntled than the hippyesque affirmation of Antonioni's disappearing stand-in. But without *Blow-Up* as a hermeneutic key, *Blow-Out* has very little to say about the purported problem of the relation of representation and reality. Most of its energy is invested in the convolutions of its thriller plot and its everyday-exotic realism—that is, the detailed discovery of folkways and places never before seen in film, for example, what goes on in Philadelphia phone booths. Of course, the problem is not just that DePalma has nothing theoretically staggering to offer; the problem is that whatever he does feel about the issue is so elliptically signaled and so tangential to the pulse of the action that it lacks any urgency. Yes, DePalma has made a big statement about a matter of putatively great importance to him. But it is so deferred that no one, including DePalma, could say that reflexivity was the central or even *a* central preoccupation for anyone watching the film. There is nothing wrong with allusion per se, but *Blow-Out* indicates the greatest risk involved in allusionism as it is currently practiced in the new Hollywood—self-deception. Filmmakers and audiences are both deceiving themselves if they think that by merely "mentioning" great themes about which great artists have expended great energies, a two-tiered, allusionistic genre film will be saying anything substantive of its own.

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The industrial conditions that led to the rise of the new Hollywood and its allusionist auteurs are complex, overlapping, and causally interconnected. In rough sequential order they include: the steady decline of the movie audience since 1946, the industry's final divestiture of its theater holdings, its overinvestment in production in the mid-sixties, the disappearance of the studio system's experienced leaders (the quondam moguls), and the takeover of the industry by huge corporate conglomerates. These interrelated factors conspired in multiple ways to make the late sixties and early seventies a time of ferment, uncertainty, and experimentation—a period in which no one was sure which way to turn. As a result chances were taken in every direction. The failure of high-budget, general entertainments like *Star*! ('68) terrified Hollywood in the late sixties.

Around the same time, however, the condign success of low-budget "youth" films, notably *Easy Rider* ('69), suggested a possible avenue of retrenchment. Hollywood focused its energy on special-interest audiences, especially youth. Remember *Getting Straight* ('70), *RPM* ('70), *Vanishing Point* ('71), *Alice's Restaurant* ('69), *Dealing* ('72), *Drive, He Said* ('70), *The Last Movie* ('71), *Electra Glide in Blue* ('73), *Scarecrow*, ('73), *Move* ('70), *Zabriskie Point* ('70), *The Strawberry Statement* ('70), *The Revolutionary* ('70), *Brewster McCloud*, *Jesus Christ Superstar* ('73), *Two-Lane Blacktop* ('71), *Out of It* ('69), *Little Fauss and Big Halsey* ('70), *Five Easy Pieces* ('70), *The Landlord* ('70), *Steelyard Blues* ('72), *Panic in Needle Park* ('71), *The Christian Licorice Store* ('70). The idea of special-interest films not only made revisionist westerns popular, but also made hyper-morbid comedies like *Where's Poppa?* ('70) and *Harold and Maude* ('71) possible (even if the industry was not always enthralled with the results), as well as "personal" films like *King of Marvin Gardens* ('72). Though at the time the cascade of different kinds of films seemed ructious and confusing, in retrospect it was a rich period. Hollywood's insecurity made it open to new ideas and new blood. This provided an entry into the industry for many of the sixties cinéphiles who are today's major directors. Once inside the industry proper, the young auteurs had a distinct advantage over the corporate managers who bankrolled Hollywood—they knew about movies. They consolidated their power by helping fellow cinéphiles begin their careers, and gradually the aesthetic predispositions of American auteurism became a significant force in Hollywood. The settling down of the industry in the mid-seventies through the increasing reliance on genres strengthened rather than weakened the position of the cinéphiles, who adjusted via the two-tiered system of allusion. But the question remains whether the DePalmas, Schraders, Carpenters, and Spielbergs are putting the old genres through their paces or vice-versa.

Just outside the gates of the old Hollywood in the sixties were a number of those who would become lords and ladies of the new Hollywood. They were encamped and waiting at a small studio called American International Pictures. Among those who passed through AIP were Bogdanovich, Coppola, Scorsese, Milius, Hellman, Hopper, Johathan Demme, Robert Towne, Jack Nicholson, Robert DeNiro, Bruce Dern, John Alonzo, Laszlo Kovacs, and Verna Fields. For financial reasons, AIP gave many young cinéphiles an opportunity to work—they were dirt cheap and they labored unstintingly for love of cinema. When the industry proper became interested in special-audience and youth films it was natural that AIP would be a source of talent, since for years it had, almost alone, farmed the fields of special-interest genres (such as motorcycle movies) and youth (and even younger) films. But AIP was important for the creation of the new Hollywood not only because it was a stepping-stone for future luminaries but because it provided an atmosphere which was not just congenial but also conducive to the aesthetic proclivities of the cinéphile.

The major artistic force at AIP was Roger Corman, a figure of great sym-

bolic and inspirational, as well as instrumental, value for cinéphiles of the sixties. His was a life of film, the closest approximation around to the life of the American studio contract directors the American auteurists idolized. The very existence of Corman answered the cinéphiles' wish to believe that it was still possible to live and work like a Ford or a Walsh. Corman plied the *old genres*, moving from one to another, doing his job at a constant rate of productivity. Corman's individual films were less important than the fact that he was always immersed in the process of *film*. Though never of comparable quality, Corman could toss off films as quickly and as confidently as Mozart could symphonies. The number of camera setups Corman could run through from dawn to dusk was legendary; he could churn out a feature in three days, though he usually gave himself two to three weeks for a project. He worked quickly, improvising with surety, evoking the same kind of admiration for craftsmanship that Balanchine and Cunningham do in outsiders witnessing them in the thick of choreographing. Corman's creative speed and enormous output made him seem like a visitor from a bygone era.

His working procedures also recalled the hurly-burly days of early films—jumping into a car to drive over to a friend's house for some location shooting or cooking up a second film on the days remaining on the contract for the first. The working schedule was grueling, but it seemed tinged with adventuresomeness, freedom, and the fun of filmmaking. Corman's low budgets were often the mother of formal inventiveness; in the middle of an unadorned, almost TV-documentary-looking run of shots, his film might burst into an assertively edited sequence, a strikingly self-demonstrative camera movement, or a cheap, glaringly garish special effect that felt bold and experimental in contrast to the staid prevailing dicta of sixties Hollywood realism. Though overstated, his Poe films were refreshingly stylized in their use of color in a period of gray flannel films. Corman's indulgence in layers of albeit often strained religious and ritual allegory and literary conceits, as well as his willingness to shift from flat, homely, mundane images to self-declaiming stylization gave his work a personal signature, a sense of irony; Corman was a literate director who stood apart, somewhat amused but also genuinely involved and entertained by his generally silly but at the same time oddly compelling little films. The films looked thrown together, a bit amateurish; they were often wooden, but would suddenly evince a feat of cinema that would appear to hail from nowhere. They could leap from cheap economical realism to montage to broad shtick. This gave his work a quality of freedom or free play that could be mistaken for Godard's, especially as the latter was misperceived in America.

Corman made parodies like *Bucket of Blood* ('59), *Little Shop of Horrors* ('60), *Creature from the Haunted Sea* ('61) and the funny, belligerently avant-garde *Gas* ('70) that were directed at a special hip audience that accepted the *Mad Magazine, Comix* premise that being sophomoric can be sophisticated—an article of faith not unrelated to the mind set required to become a committed film

Top: Alfred Hitchcock. Psycho. *1960. Bottom: Tobe Hooper.* The Texas Chain Saw Massacre. *1974.*

fiend. In works like *St. Valentine's Day Massacre* ('67) Corman includes self-conscious bows to the historical gangster film, while in *Bloody Mama* ('70) he madly careens from dramatic to comic tones, from brutal to lyrical ones, while also taking potshots at media-made America. Increasingly Corman's cinema came to be built with the notion of two audiences in mind—special grace notes for insiders, appoggiatura for the cognoscenti, and a soaring, action-charged melody for the rest. In this, he pioneered the two-tiered system.

It was the not-so-secret daydream of many a cinéphile to run away from school and join Corman—to make the old genres dance to new themes, topical and metaphysical, and to lard them with personal touches like the ones people were always finding in Ford, Hawks, Lang, and company. Everyone wanted to make a film rather than to write the Great American Novel; those with auteurist leanings wanted to be directors, directors of American genre films, ones with highly personal preoccupations showing. Some actually carried

through on their dream. And Corman was a demanding, hard-driving, yet permissive taskmaster. The cinéphiles could have all the personal touches and artistic flourishes they wanted so long as they stayed on schedule, stayed within their budgets, and kept the sex and violence moving along briskly enough so that the drive-in audiences didn't start honking their horns. Corman asked no more of his epigones than he asked of himself.

The result were films like *Boxcar Bertha* ('72), in which one is suddenly jolted by the imitation of an editing pattern from *Shoot the Piano Player*, Scorsese thereby striking a blow for cinema literacy on the drive-in circuit. Of course, the seminal film of this two-tiered variety was Bogdanovich's *Targets* ('68), the most enterprising early exercise in allusionism. In *Targets*, Bogdanovich, as a character, explicitly tutors the audience in the creed of American-style auteurism. He also uses film history—in the person of Boris Karloff—to defend film violence from its puritanical detractors; the melodramatic and stylized horrors of cinema, according to *Targets*, are piddling compared to the banality of evil spawned by American life. I do not wish to defame *Targets*; it was an artistic success, partly because its allusionism was woven into its overall expressive point and partly because the mad sniper was, for a number of reasons, including the war, a timely, chilling image. The issue is not whether *Targets* is a good film but whether it and Bogdanovich's other ventures in allusionist film provide a satisfactory prototype for film now.

*

The rise of allusionism is part of a more general recent tendency toward strident stylization that began in the mid-sixties. If the late fifties and early sixties settled into a comfortable, non-self-demonstrative black-and-white form of realism à la Stanley Kramer, Sidney Lumet, John Huston, William Wyler, and others, then the later sixties, through the zoom lens, rapid montage, slow motion, freeze frame, emphatic use of angulation and close-ups, of lenses of varying focal lengths, of narrative ellipses, and so on, explored the expressive potentials of shamelessly aggressive and conspicuous displays of technique. The shift away from an understated, "classical" realist style toward expressive stylization is uneven and sporadic, popping up here and there—for example, Lester's Beatles films, Frankenheimer's *Seconds* ('66), Penn's *Mickey One* ('65), all of which painlessly integrated, while muting, European innovations into the popular cinema. There are, of course, numerous other forerunners of this tendency, but it can be said that by the time we reach *Bonnie and Clyde* and *The Graduate* ('67), the idea that style is something that an audience should see and consciously unpack as part of the overt meaning of the film had become the wave of the future.

In *The Graduate* not only is the editing studded with fancy match and shock cuts, but almost every setup reeks with symbolism which the audience is nudged

to interpret. For example, toward the end we see the protagonist divided from his true love by a pane of glass, which we refer back to some strong arm shots of a toy diver in an aquarium (through which we see the "alienated" protagonist disconsolate in the background), which we refer back even further to an earlier shot of the hero at the bottom of a swimming pool "drowning (well, submerged) in materialism." Though dated now, *The Graduate* seemed daring when it was released; every shot looked like it was planned according to the rules of a textbook such as *Film as Art*. But the student-exercise quality was less immediately apparent than the possibilities heralded by *The Graduate*: that popular film could be self-consciously, "cinematically" intelligent, and that assertive stylization was authorized so that the audience could be expected to perceive and decipher stylistic choices.

These are unquestioned operating presuppositions for making and seeing film in the seventies (and beyond), that is, for those who regard themselves as serious filmmakers and film goers. As presuppositions, these are salutary, even if the results are often mixed, and they produce extremely agreeable working conditions for film-school directors. Allusionism is part and parcel of this tendency toward demonstrative expressiveness through markedly deliberate style. Indeed, allusionism probably follows from the larger tendency through a natural series of events: a concern with style leads to the study of examples and thereby opens the possibility of both learning from the examples and quoting them outright. There is no reason in principle to scorn either the increasingly presupposed sensitivity to style or the use of allusion. Allusionism as it is currently being employed, however, is problematic.

The generation that came to film consciousness in the sixties was embarked on a very special project—the attempt to create a common cultural heritage, a repertoire of shared references to be used the way the bible or Aristotle or Shakespeare had been used in the past. The film craze had the dimensions of a crusade; the film fanatic felt moral indignation over the denial or belittling of film, especially American film. It was our popular art, our great art—how could anyone fail to see its splendor? Hollywood was touted as a twentieth-century creative counterpart to the golden ages of the past. Allusionism, at least initially, was an expression of this utopian urgency, this desire on the part of many members of the generation that grew up in the fifties to establish a new community, with film history supplying its legends, myths, and vocabulary.

It is important to remember that the generation which rediscovered film also rediscovered radical politics. Many cinéphiles participated in the political upheavals of the mid-sixties, becoming politically conscious at the same time that they came to film consciousness. This fact is still evident indirectly in the thriving leftist tenor of a significant portion of our contemporary film journals, many of whose editors and contributors became involved with film during the Vietnam War, when they also were active politically. For many, film and politics seemed to blend into each other easily—perhaps all too easily—in the

sixties and early seventies. It seems plausible, then, to speculate that the politics and the film craze of the sixties may have had the same or very similar causes—the identity crisis (or identity construction, if you prefer) of the generation that grew up in the fifties. The film boom was a call for the democratization of art—for the admission of the lowly genre film into the canon of aesthetic and academic worthiness. The film generation chose movies as an emblem of self—movies, something deeply part of their youthful experience, but something whose existence was ignored, disparaged, and sometimes even "forbidden" by the established "adult" culture. What better sounding board for selfhood? The battle against the injustices of art history toward film was energized by the same self-righteous rebelliousness that activated the social movements of the sixties. The completion of their task by the visionary company of cinéphiles was to have supplied and codified the sacred texts of this most promising new generation's new community. American auteurism is best understood as part of a quest for identity through the construction of a new and, needless to say, improved culture, one to be implemented by political and alternative life-style activism, one whose common vocabulary would be found at the movies. The early inclusion of film-conscious allusions in genre films and their recognition by stalwart cinéphiles was a symbolic interaction of great emotional resonance in the sixties and early seventies, when the rediscovery of film was bound up with both a general utopian project, the creation of a brand-new common culture, and a concurrent process of self-definition and discovery, the adoption of a new sensibility, one customized to order for the postwar generation. But with the foreclosure of the prospects for utopia, allusionism loses much of its glitter. It can deteriorate into mere affectation, nostalgia, and, at worst, self-deception when filmmakers[16] or now

16. Some people, hearing my argument, have asked why I believe allusionistic filmmakers are deceiving themselves. These critics seem to think that filmmakers like DePalma put allusions in their work but don't think that the allusions come to much or are very important. The filmmakers are just goofing around. I find this psychological explanation hard to swallow. Why waste your time on these allusions? Why array them so carefully (and coherently) unless you really want them to mean something special? Admittedly this is not an absolutely conclusive rejoinder to my critics—people, yes, even filmmakers, have been known to act in peculiar ways. But I think that on any model of artistic psychology and artistic communication that presupposes purposiveness on the part of contemporary filmmakers, we must assume that they have a reason for what they are doing and that that reason is probably connected with the obvious communication they are achieving. This is another way of saying that they must be serious. But if they think that the way they are attempting to be serious is unproblematic, then they are self-deceived.

In conversation David Bordwell has noted that one reason that the allusion/pastiche style is attractive to filmmakers is that it provides a perfect forum in which a director can display consummate virtuosity—mastery of all and every style. Though Bordwell has not yet developed this idea, we can conjecture that allusionism in this light might be seen as a celebration of skill and professionalism for their own sake. This is certainly a preoccupation of this decade. Allusionism becomes the means of presenting the artist in terms of ultra-competence rather than genius, as technically brilliant rather than profound, as a manipulator rather than an innovator.

middle-aged viewers think that in and of itself allusion to film history is still charged with the psychocultural importance it had when the sixties turned into the seventies.

There is an arresting analogy to be drawn between the film-school allusionism of the new Hollywood and certain tendencies of recent avant-garde film, viz., the Althusserian-Lacanian "new talkie." Both are examples of film styles that testify to the victory of certain critical-theoretical positions—American auteurism, on the one hand, and Anglo-French psychoanalytic semiotics on the other. Both artistic practices try to incorporate the prejudices of their critical lights in their works and deeds. In the new Hollywood, the filmmakers model themselves on the great-director notion of American auteurism, as well as making allusions to film history that require knowledge, on the part of audiences, of the commonplaces and criticism of American auteurism in order to make sense. Likewise, the new talkie often takes its guidelines (for example, don't make eyeline matches, don't connect, don't suture) from the writings of reigning semiological tastemakers, while the works themselves, such as *Dora* ('80), are illustrations of ideas, controversies, and arguments that preexist the films in the world of academic film writing, and they presuppose spectators familiar with that literature in order to be understood. In many instances, artists of the new Hollywood and the new-talkie wing of the avant-garde appear to be taking their marching orders from established criticism. This, at the very least, is a reversal of the conventional order of things in which the artist is envisioned as creating works that impel the critics and theoreticians to alter their conceptual frameworks. Now we have works designed for a particular kind of criticism. Perhaps this reversal is what accounts for the feeling that much of the production of the new Hollywood and the semiological wing of the avant-garde is dull, predictable, and authority-bound. It is as if the unprecedented, extended process of film education that many contemporary filmmakers have undergone has resulted in an unexpected catastrophe—through overexposure to the medium, the cinéaste has succumbed to the essentially authoritarian features of the film-viewing situation. Or perhaps it was the authoritarianism of the medium that attracted these particular cinéastes to film in the first place.

This clearly sounds like the profile of ambition for many walks of life since the mid-seventies. A defense mechanism is obviously at work when one's social world is defined by cynicism, disillusionment, and a sense of impossibility. If one can only survive as a movie apparatchik, then one might as well at least let everyone know that you are as skilled as any apparatchik can be, or was in the past.

Vivienne Dick. (Photo: Nan Goldin.)

Interview with Vivienne Dick

SCOTT MacDONALD

*Using an improvisatory, freestyle approach, Vivienne Dick has made five films—*Guérillère Talks *(1978),* She Had Her Gun All Ready *(1978),* Beauty Becomes the Beast *(1979),* Liberty's Booty *(1980), and* Visibility: Moderate *(1981)—which have attracted wide attention because of their distinctive look, their skillful casting of Lower East Side personalities, and their defiance of standard filmic categories and expectations. Though* She Had Her Gun All Ready *and* Beauty Becomes the Beast *are probably the best known of the films, I am more drawn to Dick's most recent work. This interview was recorded on May 30, 1981, in Dick's apartment on East 9th Street in New York City.*

MacDonald: You didn't start making films until fairly recently. What did you do before then, and how did you get into making films?

Dick: Well, I used to take black-and-white photographs and make the prints myself. After I was in New York about a year, I heard of Millennium and realized that all this equipment was only a few blocks away. I went and joined up, and I liked it because it was just people fooling around with cameras. Everyone would look at everyone else's film; it was really good for a start. That got boring after a month or so, but it was very good—I'd have never gone out and bought a camera, at least not at that time.

MacDonald: This is when?

Dick: 1976. I went to Ireland and made this fifteen-minute film. It was the first film I ever edited. I wanted to film my mother, because she was dying. She was having this illness, so I just shot some film at home. It was easier to shoot film with family, although I found that they would clam up whenever the camera was on. I started shooting when they were a little bit drunk, and it was easier. Then I stopped for almost a year, because I wasn't very inspired.

MacDonald: Did you go to college?

Dick: Yeah. I studied archeology and French. I had visions of being an archeologist.

MacDonald: Before you started making films, did you go to movies a lot?

Dick: No, not really. In Ireland there were big commercial movies only. I didn't even watch TV that much. When I moved to France from Ireland (I was there for a year; then I was in Germany for a year, then in India), I saw movies. There wasn't much else to do. There were loads of movies in Paris; you'd see films from Algeria and other Third World countries, a wide selection.

MacDonald: How long were you in India?

Dick: Three and a half months. The whole trip was about six months. In the spring of 1977, on my birthday, I met all these people who were talking about making films, people like Eric Mitchell and James Nares—the group that started Colab. They were getting together to talk about a film grant. Someone had a projector and someone else had this or that, and they helped each other out. They wanted to have actors and make up little stories. That seemed like a great idea to me. The people at Millennium were all into shooting the beach at Coney Island or the Staten Island Ferry or Central Park or pigeons. These were the first people I met who were talking in a *live* way about making films. I'd been to Anthology to see films and I liked some and hated others, but the atmosphere that pervades that place—and Millennium was the same way—is so heavy. These people took making film lightly; it was fun.

MacDonald: Guérillère Talks is the earliest of your films I've seen.

Dick: I just started shooting. I didn't really know what I was doing. I would do one roll with each person; they could do whatever they wanted in front of the camera. We'd choose a location, and the camera would either remain steady or I'd play around with it, experimenting. It was an easy way to start. I picked people I was interested in, sometimes people I didn't know, like Lydia. This film was an excuse to go talk to her; I was very curious about her—I'd seen her in Teenage Jesus. We became friends, and I went to a rehearsal of a new band —Beruit Slump—and she asked me to play. I met all those people that spring: Pat Place and Adele, Anya, Lydia. Beate was one of the earlier ones I knew.

MacDonald: Is *Guérillère Talks* edited?

Dick: No.

MacDonald: I don't understand the title.

Dick: That spring a group of us were going to make a movie based on *Les Guérillères*, that novel by Monique Wittig. We wanted to make a film that would be really different, a collaboration that would break away in all ways—especially in its shape. We talked about all kinds of things, but when we started doing the film, I found the collaboration part didn't work out so well. We did shoot some of it. We shot Pat out at Staten Island. She's this alien who's been living in an old barge. The beach is full of refuse. She really looked amazing; it's a really good piece of film. But it never got much further than that.

MacDonald: It's a very powerful sequence. It's a little like *The Creature from the Black Lagoon*, and *Nosferatu*, too.

Dick: Pat has such a good face. People's faces really affect me.

MacDonald: How did you go about getting *Guérillère Talks* shown?

Dick: We had a benefit for the other movie we were going to make. We got these bands to play, the Contortions and DNA (they weren't very big then). James Chance was the only band that demanded to get paid—we had to pay him $30. We showed whatever films we had, and other people brought stuff, too. It was a really good atmosphere. Then people were starting to show films at Club 57.

MacDonald: It's less complex than the later films.

Dick: I'm still finding my way around. There's a million and one things that haven't been done in movies, really simple things that can bring across all kinds of stuff. I think the possibilities are incredible.

MacDonald: I assume that *She Had Her Gun All Ready* is about either a failing relationship or the difficulty of relationships. I get a bit lost, though, in the middle section, where the Pat Place character is either being followed by the Lydia Lunch character or is hallucinating that she's seeing her.

Dick: She's haunted by her. She feels taken over by her and is anxious to get away. It's like when you meet someone you're very impressed by and start to feel overpowered, menaced. After she's so paranoid at the lunch counter, she goes out and makes a phone call. She's so nervous that she puts in a penny instead of a dime twice before she realizes what she's doing. When she does get through, it's like the wrong time—the person she wants to talk to is just about to go out the door. I'm very interested in that. You know, where you're just out of sync, your timing's off in every sense. Or, when things are right, and all kinds of funny coincidences happen. It can be really extraordinary sometimes.

Vivienne Dick. She Had Her Gun All Ready.
1978. (Left: Pat Place, right: Lydia Lunch.)

Toward the end the Pat Place character starts to realize that she can be strong after all, and the situation reverses.

MacDonald: So then she's following the Lydia Lunch character?

Dick: Yeah, stalking her.

MacDonald: When the Pat Place character is at the World Trade Center, are you making a statement about this kind of relationship existing because of, or in a context of, the sorts of things the World Trade Center represents?

Dick: I don't know. These kind of things can come in, but it wasn't on a conscious level. When you improvise, things happen that are coincidental but can fit in perfectly well with some idea you have.

MacDonald: Any reason for ending the film on the Cyclone other than the kick of trying to film on a roller coaster?

Dick: It just seemed like a good idea, that's all.

MacDonald: How about the shot of that magic snake at the very end?

Dick: Why that snake? I don't really know. It has something to do with the Lydia Lunch character dying, burning out.

MacDonald: You and the B's are talked about as punk filmmakers. Are you

comfortable with that term? What relationship do you see between the music scene and your films?

Dick: I think people will just get tired of using that term after awhile. I really don't care one way or another. The last film I made [*Visibility: Moderate*] could never be called a punk film, or even the film before that.

MacDonald: People have different definitions for the term.

Dick: It doesn't mean anything to me, so I don't care.

MacDonald: Is there a relationship between the films and punk music?

Dick: The actors are musicians, and a lot of their music is used, and a lot of sixties rock 'n' roll.

MacDonald: Do you think of a visual style as related to it?

Dick: That's something people have made up, "punk style." They can call it that if they want. It's a very temporary thing for me—I don't feel hemmed in by it or anything. I want to make films that are different; you can call them whatever you want.

MacDonald: Often it seems to mean an aggressively informal style.

Dick: After I met those people, I saw films like *Cars* by Tim Burns. That was the first super-8 feature film I ever saw. It was a pretty funny film—real messy but real funny. I also saw the short films Eric Mitchell made. Scott and Beth were making *G-Man* then, too; I was pretty impressed by that.

MacDonald: Did you originally want to work in super-8 rather than 16mm, or was the choice practical economics?

Dick: It was economics maybe first of all. I did do a little bit of 16mm over at Rafique's [OP Screen] after the time when I worked at Millennium. But it seemed like super-8 was much more modern. You had to wind the 16mm camera up, and there was no sound on it. And all that cutting up and everything. I did this little ten-minute film. I got as far as editing the work print, but I just couldn't be bothered with finishing it. It seemed like so much trouble—A and B rolls and everything. Super-8 was just much handier.

MacDonald: A lot of people talk about super-8 as being limited in ways 16mm isn't.

Dick: Well, super-8 has its own qualities, too. It does have a look about it. The more interesting films I saw in Carbondale (I was one of the judges at a film festival at Southern Illinois University; it was organized by the students) looked like they were shot in super-8, which I thought was real funny. They were 16mm films, done in a hand-held, scuzzy kind of style, with stop-start soundtracks.

MacDonald: When you were making your early films, what sort of thinking did you do about style?

Dick: I just didn't know. I just wanted to try out things. Just turning the camera on and leaving it on for a few minutes was the first thing. I was quite embarrassed about showing those early films. I was afraid people would think they were arty or something. I was self-conscious, too.

MacDonald: Where did you show *She Had Her Gun All Ready*?

Dick: I showed that at Max's [Kansas City, New York City] first.

MacDonald: What kind of response did you get?

Dick: Pretty good. They seemed to like it. It's been shown a lot since then.

MacDonald: Is the story Lydia Lunch reads about the guy who killed people and used their skins the story dramatized in *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*?

Dick: Yeah. The guy's name was Ed Gaines. He's real. It's a pretty crazy story. So many outrageous things happen to women. Well, they happen to men, too, but they seem to happen to women more. Women get chopped up, and there are these horrible sexual murders. The sickest thing in the world! It's just proof that the whole male-female thing is so fucked up. Because of the way the whole society is organized, men just have much more control and think that physical force is the answer. Women can be terrorized on the street. Men act like it's their territory. It's like racism. But another thing about that story is that with all this horror, the man really loved his mother. It's sad. He was just unbalanced. He wanted to be his mother, so he put on her skin.

MacDonald: All your films up to *Visibility: Moderate* center on women. Now that I think of it, I can't think of men in them, except indirectly—as tricks in *Liberty's Booty*, for instance. Women seem to be functioning within a world that's dominated by men, even though we don't see them.

Dick: I was focusing in on women for a change, that's all. I was more interested

Vivienne Dick. Beauty Becomes the Beast. *1979.*

in filming women, and found it easier as well. When we were talking about that film based on *Les Guérillères*, we wanted only women in the movie. We were all thinking along those lines. Part of the movie was going to be about women getting harassed in the street, like in *Ms. 45*, that movie on 42nd Street. Someone would be walking down the street and some guys would harass her, and she'd pull out a gun and shoot them. I know people who are making a movie about that right now. These harassment things that you have to put up with never get any attention. That's the first thing the Bush Tetras wanted to make a song about ("Too Many Creeps").

MacDonald: In *Beauty Becomes the Beast* I'm clear that Lydia Lunch is playing a character who we see as a child and who we see later as an adolescent. But there are other characters I'm not clear on. When she's at home, she apparently has a sister.

Dick: A friend or a sister.

MacDonald: Does that character relate to the woman we see later dancing with Adele Bertei?

Dick: No.

MacDonald: At one point one of the two girls who we see in front of the TV has a fantasy about these devilish figures. Is the Lydia Lunch character having that fantasy?

Dick: Yeah, what did you think?

MacDonald: The person curled up on the bed didn't look like her to me.

Dick: It's the same person.

MacDonald: Hoberman talks about the film being about the way in which women grow up in this culture, the way they're created to be incompetent, in part because of influences like television and. . . .*

Dick: Education, school, parents, *all* authority figures. The Son of Sam stuff on the TV in that film is like a terror tactic.

MacDonald: You mean that it works as a terror tactic against women?

Dick: It really does, like the Atlanta killings. It's the same racist thing. I never thought of that before, but that's what it is.

MacDonald: There are two major locations in the film: the beach and the house when she's a young girl, and an apartment in the city where the lights are flashing and you see the mother ironing.

Dick: Well, at that stage I don't even think of that woman as the mother anymore, just as another person.

MacDonald: It is the same woman who played the mother, isn't it?

Dick: Yes, but in my head I wasn't thinking of her as the same person.

MacDonald: The film gives a general sense of the influences that are acting on this person, but it's not as though everything is intricately put together in a normal kind of narrative way—is that right?

Dick: I don't really know. When we were shooting it, we weren't following a book on how to make a film, and I was going on instinct when I edited—it worked or didn't work. I think it pretty much does work. But it's not all that self-conscious. See, I want to make movies that are a little looser. That's why it's difficult for me to write scripts. You have to have a plan if you're going to get money, but I don't want to be hemmed in by it, trapped by it. I'm still learning. I'm still fooling around. I have to try out things that maybe are silly, like that scene in *Beauty Becomes the Beast* with all the ghosts. That's almost embarrassing for me to watch, but on another level it isn't silly.

MacDonald: The color in the early films, or the mixture of colors from scene to scene, is very different from the color in most films.

* J. Hoberman, "Notes on Three Films by Vivienne Dick," *Millennium Film Journal*, no. 6 (Spring 1980), 90–94.

Vivienne Dick. Beauty Becomes the Beast.
1979.

Dick: I like using filters. You've only got a choice of kodachrome or ectachrome film, and you can really change it. It's like *Excalibur* (which was shot in Ireland). The color in that film is really nice, almost all silver, gold, and green. He uses green filters just a little bit to add this little extra green—in the reflection on the armor and other places. Also, I've always liked colored lights, and there's a lot of colored lights outdoors in places where I shoot.

MacDonald: Did you include the TV mentions of Patty Hearst, the adolescent girl who shot people because she hated Mondays, and the woman who hijacked the plane as examples of women becoming more aggressive?

Dick: Yeah, as present day evidence that women are letting another part of themselves come out. There are more women in the PLO and the IRA than there used to be. Women are obviously standing up for themselves a bit better. Laws are changing a little bit. It's not like the way it was in the fifties, I know that.

MacDonald: I think of that smile on the hijacker woman's face. . . .

Dick: It's so unusual for a hijacker. She's loving the attention.

MacDonald: In the dance scenes in *Beauty Becomes the Beast* you painted directly on the film.

Dick: I just put it through this bowl of red dye. It got streaky because some dye would run down the film.

MacDonald: Why just in the dance scenes?

Dick: Because I didn't have enough light in the place, and it came out this awful dull yellow. I just wanted to change that, but I like the way it turned out. It looks like old film or something—and it's supposed to be this funny throwback to 1962: Motown and beehives. It has to do with the TV, too—the way you can switch the channel and you're in another decade.

MacDonald: Right near the end she says just the phrase, "Beyond legend and beyond moralistic value."

Dick: It just seemed like a good thing to say. I think that films, or whatever you're doing, should push beyond those things. You shouldn't be scared by conventions. You have to have room so you can get really wild or crazy. I'm not anywhere near there yet. I want to make films that will be outrageous, and I haven't. I hope I'll be able to do it. I hear music like Public Image; that's

pretty outrageous. I think the last album [*The Flowers of Romance*] is really great music. They're using all these Third World sounds. We're mostly trapped in a white supremacy civilization, in the dominant culture idea, and we're ill from it.

MacDonald: In both *She Had Her Gun All Ready* and *Beauty Becomes the Beast* you list the B's as helping you.

Dick: They used to let me use their projector, sometimes a microphone or a camera guard.

MacDonald: Were they working with you during the filming?

Dick: No, except when I shot that scene with Lydia and the ghosts. They helped me out with that.

MacDonald: You were in *Letters to Dad.* Did you work on other of their films?

Dick: No. I used to edit over there and do sound work. Scott showed me how to do some things.

McDonald: The day after you showed *Liberty's Booty* in Utica, one of the students in my class said it was a documentary, but done from the inside rather than the outside. I think that was a good point. You can feel that the filmmaker sees herself as being a part of the same community that the people in the film are in, that you're not coming in to examine a group of women who you feel are completely different from you. What was your feeling about making a film about prostitutes?

Dick: They knew friends of mine, and we were talking about prostitution quite a bit. I was very interested to meet them, curious about them, of course, but also interested in what they had to say. I found them really vocal; they were very interested in doing the film and in bringing out stuff that they thought should be said about their work. Another thing, it's not limited to houses of prostitution—it moves to other people's apartments. People get confused and think, oh, they're all prostitutes; *she's* a prostitute, *she's* a prostitute. . . . The whole point is that they may or may not be. How do you know who's a prostitute and who isn't? Most people who work as prostitutes are not your stereotype at all. The whole work situation in New York makes everyone a prostitute—in the other sense, anyway. We're all prostitutes to somebody. The film is playing with all that.

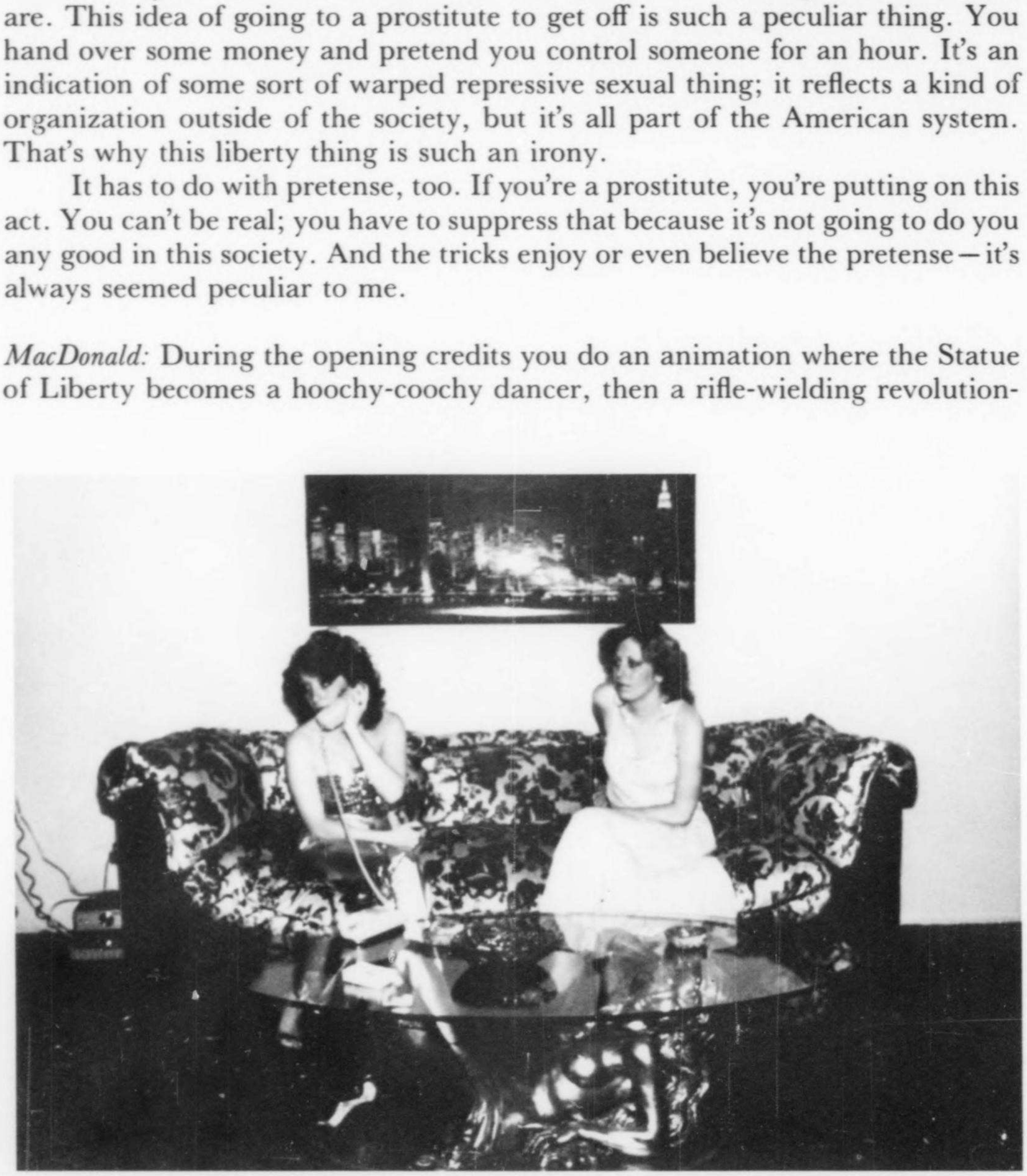
When I was a kid, prostitutes were really outside of society. Today, too, they have no rights, even though they're just like anybody else. Like she says in the film, it could be your sister—it could be anybody.

MacDonald: In a number of places you show males, tricks. Were they actually men who had come for prostitutes?

Dick: They were actors. Whenever you see a movie with prostitutes in it, the camera and the male director always examine the prostitute, the way she looks and this and that. She's this object or something. This film is different: the prostitutes are people telling me what they think, and talking about the men and how *they* look, what it's like to be with them and how stupid a lot of them are. This idea of going to a prostitute to get off is such a peculiar thing. You hand over some money and pretend you control someone for an hour. It's an indication of some sort of warped repressive sexual thing; it reflects a kind of organization outside of the society, but it's all part of the American system. That's why this liberty thing is such an irony.

It has to do with pretense, too. If you're a prostitute, you're putting on this act. You can't be real; you have to suppress that because it's not going to do you any good in this society. And the tricks enjoy or even believe the pretense—it's always seemed peculiar to me.

MacDonald: During the opening credits you do an animation where the Statue of Liberty becomes a hoochy-coochy dancer, then a rifle-wielding revolution-



Vivienne Dick. Liberty's Booty. *1980. (Production photo: Nan Goldin.)*

ary. Were you thinking of that in connection with the women speaking out in the film? Did you think of your giving them an opportunity to talk to an audience as a kind of revolutionary feminism?

Dick: Yeah, of course. When I make a film, I'm always thinking that it's going to be a revolutionary something or other. Otherwise, I'm not going to bother doing it. And it has to get more revolutionary; it's not revolutionary enough.

MacDonald: The film moves back and forth between the women in their apartments or at the house of prostitution and the woman with the red hair who addresses the screen. Why is she there?

Dick: If you can hear what she's saying (I've had trouble with that sound), she's a narrator introducing scenes. Her name's Angel.

MacDonald: She's not a prostitute, though.

Dick: No, she's not. But maybe she is, too, you don't know. Not necessarily.

MacDonald: McDonald's is a motif in this film. There's a place where you talk about a McDonald's in Dublin, right?

Dick: In Dublin the people who worked at McDonald's wanted to get a raise, from a pound an hour (which is like two dollars) to something more. They wanted to have their own union and to go on strike. McDonald's said, hey, you can't go on strike—we'll throw you out. They threw them all out and hired other people and paid them at the higher rate, just what the first people had been asking for! The whole battle went on for a year—pickets and going in and wrecking the kitchens; it was really vicious. In Ireland people saw McDonald's for being what it is: this horrible huge company, with these "McDonald Universities" where you learn how to become a little robot. And, of course, McDonald's and Coca Cola and all these companies always trying to be so "patriotic," saying they represent free America! In the McDonald's on Canal Street they have all these emigrants coming to the Land of the Free; it's such a fucking joke. I mean all that freedom is for *them*, freedom for McDonald's or freedom for Coca Cola, and for no one else. It's like a big con game. And Con Edison robbing everyone and making us pay for their Three Mile Island—that's total robbery. And they'll just keep doing it. Like the landlords they'll throw you right out on your nose, until you just say, "You can't do that!"

MacDonald: At one point one of the characters says that prostitution should be decriminalized, but not legalized. How do you feel about that?

Dick: Well, when I was there, all of them that I spoke to had that opinion. They feel that if it is legalized there will be far more control over them. In Nevada prostitution is legal, and you have these really sordid hotel complexes full of women, like barns or something. Men go on tours. It's really weird. There are rules: if you get a job you have to stay there, and your hours are long, and there's a boss—a pimp boss. I suppose when it's just decriminalized, they can't quite set up those kind of places. The women are still sort of half-independent. These women don't have pimps and don't want pimps. They *had* pimps; they got rid of them. If it's legalized, the mafia will take over.

MacDonald: In other words, if they do it, they want to control it themselves.

Dick: Sure.

MacDonald: There's a recurrent detail in *Liberty's Booty* of a spider and baby doll. At one point it's in the refrigerator.

Dick: One of the women had a broken doll with fake blood and this tarantula skin. She thought it was pretty funny. Of course, there's also all that little Miss Muffett stuff. Women are supposed to be afraid of spiders and snakes.

MacDonald: When you set out to make a film, do you begin with a general idea of what you want to do and then start shooting? How much is conceived before you start? *Visibility: Moderate* seems more planned than the earlier films.

Dick: There are certain things, places, people that I think would look great in a film. I see someone doing something or we start talking about making a film, and then it gets done. Sometimes it's improvised—I just go over to someone's house and shoot some film.

MacDonald: When I talked to the B's about *G-Man*, Beth said they wanted to make a film that would combine different areas of filmmaking: documentary, formalism, narrative. . . . *Visibility: Moderate* strikes me as working that way, too.

Dick: All my films do. They're part documentary, part improvisation, part whatever.

MacDonald: Visibility: Moderate seems an attempt to do a travelogue—or, you mention on your poster, "a tourist film"—which unlike all other tourist films I've seen deals not only with the romance or beauty of a country, but also with the political and economic realities.

Dick: Tourist Land is always make-believe land in a certain way. You work most of the year and in America you get two weeks off, only two weeks. Sometimes you get a month. You escape into this fantasy land, where everything has to be beautiful and fabulous. If it's Ireland you see lush green countryside and horses and carts and the Blarney Stone. The tourist in the film is completely vulnerable to leprechaun land. She sees this Broadway-stage Irish scene, and she's taken in by it as if it's the real thing. The actors get really mad at her for believing it. Irish people have a strange impression of American tourists. A lot of them come over with such a weird conception of Ireland. You can tell when they come to a bar. The Irish people in bars pretend they know relatives and get the Americans to buy drinks. It's totally unreal; it's all memory and myth.

MacDonald: You've been here for six or seven years. When you go back, do you feel part of things or are you like the tourist in the film?

Dick: In one sense, but not like she is at the beginning when she's running around the countryside, jumping around the stones. Actually, it's a very visual role: she doesn't say very much. Sometimes you don't know whether it's a dream or what. I was playing around a bit. I'd love to make a film that would have to do with the past as well as the present. Irish mythology's real interesting; there are really crazy stories and outrageous stuff.

MacDonald: I know you're involved, at least emotionally, with the struggle in Northern Ireland. You arranged a screening of *The Patriot Game*, didn't you?

Dick: A couple of friends and I just rented it and put it on. Some other people did it after us. I don't know who they are. There are the H-Block committees. I know a few of those people, and I might go to a meeting just to see who's there, but I don't like political groups and I don't like hanging out at meetings. I learn from individuals and decide for myself.

MacDonald: Have you always followed the Northern Irish situation?

Dick: I was conscious of it, but I kind of separated myself from it when I left Ireland. The first time I started to think about anything political was at the university. There were all these mass meetings and shut outs and everyone getting up and saying what they thought, which was the first time I ever saw anyone do that. That was really a very interesting time, but I didn't get any more involved, and then I moved away from Ireland. I didn't realize what was going on until quite recently, two or three years ago, when I met some people from the North and spent some time there.

MacDonald: Is that H Block at the end?

Dick: No, it's Mount Joy Prison, this ancient Dickensian prison outside of Dublin. People aren't there for political crimes. Political status in H Block was forced into a big issue by the Brits. The Provies had political status till 1976, when the Brits decided to call them criminals as part of the propaganda war. The recent election of Bobby Sands in the North (and, this summer, of two other hunger strikers as MPs in the South) proves there's a lot of support.

But I don't think *anyone* should be locked up. Most of those locked up in this country are black or Puerto Rican. Most are underprivileged; they've got the choice of working for three dollars an hour and just eating shit all their lives, or just saying, "Fuck this!" It's all right for middle-class people to say, "Oh those hooligans," but on Riker's Island thousands of people are locked up who haven't even been tried. They're just suspects, and they can't come out on bail because they're poor people. They're locked up in preventative detention or whatever it's called. That's totally illegal and it's happening here. Of course, there are going to be riots: wouldn't you riot if you were locked up and hadn't done anything? People get locked up and put away behind these walls, and it's made as difficult as possible to go in and visit them. In Ireland you have to go through all this rigamarole, and you end up having to sit there with a glass thing between you and the person. I don't know about locking anyone up. There's no real rehabilitation. It's totally a deterrent and punishment, that's all it is. It's really sick—society's sick and, of course, the prisons are part of it.

MacDonald: How about the title *Visibility: Moderate.* Does it relate to the view from the Trade Center?

Dick: No, just to the weather reports you hear all the time on the radio: "visibility moderate to fair." It's a little comment of my own on the film, which I felt was really a surface thing; it was the best I could do under the circumstances, moneywise and with the pressures on me. While I was doing it, and as I was finishing it, I met all these other people; it could have been quite different. I was just getting into living in Ireland again. I want to make more films there, better films.

MacDonald: You started showing your films in clubs, but recently you've shown a lot on the independent film circuit—Millennium, Anthology, the Collective. What kind of audience do you like best?

Dick: Well, generally the people who respond best are people who are not film critics or conscious film buffs. The people up at City College were a really great audience. When I showed in Ireland, it was good, too. I showed to this audience that had come to see Shell Shock Rock; they didn't even know a film was going to come on. I was really happy that they could understand. One thing about showing your own films, you're always there in the audience, and even though

I've seen them a million times, I still enjoy sitting in the audience and hearing people react. The last time I showed *Beauty Becomes the Beast* everybody thought it was hilariously funny.

MacDonald: Do you plan to keep traveling with the films? One of the problems with super-8 right now is that it's still fairly hard to distribute.

Dick: I'm hoping it will go into this low-power TV thing. That's where to go, not just here but all over Europe. I think people will start giving money to make films for cable TV, and we'll make better ones, and we'll be able to travel to the desert and the Burren in County Clare with the people I want to do films with. It's all waiting.

MacDonald: Did you say the desert?

Dick: Yeah. And music—we'll be able to go to the studio and make our own music, our own soundtracks, our own programs, have our own TV station. There's a million things you could do! There's so much money wasted on bad films I can't believe it. You can open a TV station with $50,000. Beam it to the satellite.

Anyway, I haven't shown enough in places like City College. I was amazed at how they responded to the films. They were asking questions all through the film and laughing. That was really great.

MacDonald: What's been your worst audience?

Dick: Cal Arts [California Institute of the Arts, Valencia, California]. Some people aren't able to respond to anything—they're so frozen up inside. They have to tick their brains around to try to work out this and that and this and that. Is this a correct response? Is it OK? Is it the right thing to do?

MacDonald: For a relatively young filmmaker—you've made and shown just five films—you've been getting a fair amount of recognition. Do you have any feelings about why that is?

Dick: I think the films are quite good. They touch on things that people are interested in. Not enough. I think I could be a lot better. I'm scared about professionalism, scared of writing scripts, and all the business of it. The ideal thing is to work with people who relate to what you're doing—not just hired people, stationmen. You really have to get along with the people you work with, so they're in touch with what you're all doing together. No ego trips and carry on. No bullshit. Collaboration's such a great thing, but you've got to find the right people. I'm going to be able to work with Jackie, this friend in Ireland. There

are a lot of people. I have a friend Janet who makes really incredible clothes. If we were doing a science-fiction film, I *know* she would come up with things. I wouldn't have to worry about that end. She'd do it the best it can possibly be, better than I could ever think of.

MacDonald: What plans do you have for a next film, and others? Ideally, what would you like to see happening, say, in the next two or three years?

Dick: I really want to make something that's going to come out and get seen, but that doesn't get all caught up in big business or big Hollywood. Probably the TV thing's better, really. It's going to get seen, but low key. I'm open to a lot of things: music—not just producing movies.

MacDonald: Would you want to work with 35mm?

Dick: I don't know. Maybe. It's not like that's the top of the ladder or anything like that. I love the way a big film looks and everything, of course; but you've got to put up with a lot of bullshit when you're doing that. Another thing—someone mentioned the other day that you can get away from the unions if you're working with super-8, which is a really big thing you know. I mean I understand everyone has to get a certain wage, but they can be fucking tyrants.

MacDonald: Are there filmmakers around that you particularly like or admire or learn from?

Dick: I'd say some of Maya Deren. *Little Stabs at Happiness* is a good film, though I really can't understand someone making films like that, and then doing structural films, which I find pretty constipated.

MacDonald: I don't think it was for Jacobs. I think it *can* be constipated, but sometimes it's not.

Dick: Yeah, well I haven't seen the films.

MacDonald: So Maya Deren, and who else?

Dick: I like Jack Smith's films, the ones I've seen.

MacDonald: Flaming Creatures?

Dick: Yeah, and other bits of things that he shows. *Baby Doll* is a great film, and *Peeping Tom* and *Juliet of the Spirits.* I like those Kuchar films we saw the other day [several of the Kuchar brothers' 8mm films made between 1957 and 1963];

they're a little bit slow moving, but they're pretty funny. I'm kind of sick of the John Waters thing. It just reached the point where it's pretty boring for me. At the same time, there are things about it I really like. Mortville [Waters's trash village in *Desperate Living*]. His sense of humor. That movie *They Eat Scum*, that's the same John Waters thing. That's OK but do something else now.

MacDonald: Waters says he feels that way.

Dick: Yeah, he feels that way, too. He probably doesn't know what to do next. *Eraserhead* is a really interesting film, but what bugs me about it is that it's one side of the coin and not the other. It's superparanoia, paranoia in the real physical stiff sense. I want to make a film that will swing back and forth between being like that and being real loose, but in control. The way it is sometimes in life. Sometimes things are great, but you get a little petrified, too. You try to balance that. I feel pretty optimistic about it all. I'm really interested, and I'm really excited. Sometimes I feel scared, but on the whole the way things are moving is really good.

A Context for Vivienne Dick

J. HOBERMAN

The films of Vivienne Dick are part of recent developments within a mode of artisanal production—that of 8mm and super-8—which has exemplary status for the avant-garde. The relative inexpensiveness, accessibility, and convenience of narrow-gauge filmmaking make it the most genuinely democratic form of production. Its history and development are, however, still very much a subject for further research. The first 8mm cameras were placed on the market in 1932 but, for the most part, the first twenty-five years of narrow-gauge film practice remain unrecorded in cinema history. Despite its advantages, narrow-gauge filmmaking accentuates all that is ephemeral about film in general, while its distribution (and preservation) present far more difficulties than do larger formats.

In this country narrow-gauge filmmaking is represented by two periods of intense activity. The first occurred between 1960 and 1965, the second—still in progress—began a dozen years later, after the introduction of super-8 sound technology. Starting in the late 1950s, a widely scattered group of individuals—Wallace Berman, Bob Branaman, Bob Chatterton, Bob Cowan, Piero Heliczer, George and Mike Kuchar, George Landow—began producing extremely variegated 8mm work. In 1963 the discovery of the Kuchar brothers by Jonas Mekas and Stan Brakhage's encounter with Branaman created a small 8mm wedge within the new American cinema. Shortly afterwards 8mm entered its heroic age when Brakhage, as well as such established filmmakers as Bruce Conner and Ken Jacobs, switched (albeit temporarily) from 16mm to narrow-gauge production. Around the same time, Piero Heliczer entered his most productive phase, painter Alfred Leslie began work on an 8mm feature, and a number of younger filmmakers—most importantly, Saul Levine—began to release 8mm work. Ironically, this surge in 8mm activity coincided with the introduction of super-8. The new format's smaller sprocket holes allowed for a fifty percent larger frame as well as space for a strip of magnetic tape—and hence the possibility of sync-sound. Nevertheless, until the latter innovation was realized in the mid-1970s, 8mm remained the preferred format of avant-garde filmmakers.

Although the work of narrow-gauge filmmakers is as resistant to easy categorization as that of other avant-garde filmmakers, one can identify four traditions, each intrinsic to this type of production. The first and broadest of these is the most conventional: the production of diaristic home movies and/or vacation films. This includes, among others, many of Brakhage's *Songs* (1964–69), Jacobs's *We Stole Away* (1964) and *Window* (1965), Conner's *Looking for Mushrooms* (1965) and *Easter Morning* (1966). They are distinguished, however, from most amateur movies by their immeasurable degree of sophistication. In recent years, this tradition has been extended by Saul Levine, Howard Guttenplan, and Diana Barrie, to name three.

A related mode is that of documentation by the walker in the city. The inventer of this tradition is Bob Branaman, whose early use of multiple superimposition, fast in-camera editing, and free-wheeling camera motion served to confirm Brakhage's development along the same lines. Branaman appears to have been the first filmmaker to avail himself of 8mm's portable and inconspicuous nature by carrying his camera around with him and shooting extemporaneously on the street. But, his example notwithstanding, this kind of film did not come into its own until the second wave of narrow-gauge production. Recent examples of the form include Paula Gladstone's *The Dancing Soul of the Walking People* (1974–78), an observation of events above and beneath the boardwalk at Coney Island; David Lee's 1980 *To a World Not Listening*, which documents a series of New York derelicts and street crazies; Manuel De Landa's *Harmful or Fatal if Swallowed* (1975–80), a more aggressive treatment of similar material; and Joe Gibbons's *Spying* (1978–79), a perverse exercise in applied voyeurism wherein the filmmaker covertly observes his neighbors' daily activities, using porno inserts to fill in the blanks. Even the extremely formal films of the late Greg Sharits can be located within this context; his percussive edited-in-camera street compositions, like those of Gladstone, Lee, or De Landa, could only have been shot off the cuff in narrow-gauge.

A third narrow-gauge tradition is that of the ironic spectacle in which the filmmaker's visionary ambition is continually played off against the paucity of his or her means. Early examples of this mode include the violent, Hollywood-inspired melodramas of the Kuchar brothers, Jacobs's unfinished *The Sky Socialist* (1965–67), Heliczer's manic costume films, Leslie's destroyed *Philosophy in the Bedroom* (1965), and Brakhage's war film, *23rd Psalm Branch* (1966–67), arguably the apotheosis of narrow-gauge filmmaking as a whole. Among the second wave of narrow-gauge film production, Eric Mitchell's "underground movie" parody *Kidnapped* (1978), Beth B and Scott B's serial *The Offenders* (1978–79), Becky Johnston's mock *film noir, Sleepless Nights* (1979), and James Nares's threadbare sword and sandal epic, *Rome '78* (1978) are all ironical spectacles.

The final tendency characteristic of narrow-gauge filmmaking is that of self-dramatization. Its key figure is Vito Acconci, who released sixteen short films and two features (ironic spectacles, both) between 1969 and 1974.

Acconci's movies were, for the most part, close-up recordings of his own performances (stuffing his mouth with grass, plastering up his ass-hole, crushing cockroaches against his chest). In his way, Acconci reinvented the psychodrama—the original genre of American avant-garde cinema—wherein the filmmaker/protagonist performed before the camera as though before a mirror. Acconci's psychodrama was, however, founded on an extreme poverty of means and an insistent rawness of action and behavior. More recent narrow-gauge self-dramatizations—Ericka Beckman's *We Imitate; We Break-Up* (1978), Gail Vachon's *Mary Smith* (1980), Joe Gibbons's *Confidential*, Parts I and II (1979–80)—have availed themselves of sync-sound. The Vachon film, in which the filmmaker acts out a number of feminine roles, and the Gibbons film, a series of unedited camera rolls in which the filmmaker speaks to the camera about his relationship to it, are so direct as to be termed "confessionals."

Bearing these parallel and overlapping developments in mind allows us to understand the work of Vivienne Dick as that of the quintessential narrow-gauge filmmaker of the second wave. In her movies elements of urban documentary, confessional-psychodrama, ironic spectacle, and home-movie "dailiness" are fused. Each of Dick's five films is a jagged, sometimes fragmentary assemblage in which the camera appears to be as much participant as observer. Set mainly on New York's Lower East Side and populated largely by flamboyant bohemian types, Dick's movies are further distinguished by their open-ended rawness and ironic ashcan lyricism. Media quotations (particularly from network TV and rock 'n' roll) are frequently used to underscore her concern with social conditioning and sexual politics.

Dick's emergance coincided with that of a related group of super-8 filmmakers (the Bs, Mitchell, Nares, Johnston) popularly known as punks, a label primarily inspired by the filmmakers' close association with the avant-garde fringe of the New York rock scene and secondarily, by their unequivocal rejection of structural filmmaking and academic film discourse. Most punk films were first screened either at local rock clubs or at the New Cinema, a short-lived storefront theater on St. Mark's Place. Both the nonspecialized, populist nature of their audiences and the content of the films themselves harked back to the New York underground of the mid-1960s, particularly the early work of Jack Smith, Ron Rice, Ken Jacobs, and the Kuchars. Kenneth Anger's *Scorpio Rising* is another key precursor.

Punk filmmaking began in 1977 and peaked two or three years later, before being partially reabsorbed into the avant-garde mainstream. Nevertheless, its influence both on the work of established filmmakers and neophytes in New York and elsewhere has been marked. Some members of the original group have gone on to make 16mm films, others have switched to video. Dick, however, has continued to work with super-8 in a largely successful attempt to overcome both the inherent technical and distributional limitations of the format.

Guérillère Talks (1978), Dicks first film, consists of eight unedited rolls of super-8 sound footage. A chorus of red and white Kodak leader separates the individual rolls, each of which is a sort of screen test for Dick's female subjects (most of whom are or were associated with the punk music scene). As with Mitchell's *Kidnapped*—another first film exercise in real time, improvisation, and self-dramatizing personalities—or Gibbons's *Confidential, Guérillère Talks* can be seen as the extension of Warholian pragmatism to super-8 talkies. However, by juxtaposing various examples of female self-definition against the backdrop of a decaying social order, the film is also the rehearsal and paradigm for Dick's subsequent work.

She Had Her Gun All Ready (1978)—Dick's most compact and accessible narrative—explores the enigmatic relationship between two antithetical types, passive Pat Place and active Lydia Lunch, both of whom appeared in *Guérillère Talks*. On the one hand, their battle of wills (off-handedly played out in moldering tenements, Greek luncheonettes, the IND, and at Coney Island) has a playful, conspiratorial quality of the sort one finds in Vera Chytilova's *Daisies* or Jacques Rivette's *Celine and Julie Go Boating*; it is characterized, on the other hand, by an increasingly violent animosity. Dick's own description of the film implies that it deals with the anxiety of influence, and depicts a kind of exorcism. Like Jacobs's *Little Stabs at Happiness* (1963), a film which Dick admires, *She Had Her Gun All Ready* makes brilliant use of an improvisational home-movie mode. The continually inventive editing and mise-en-scène of this film display a formal control that Dick has only intermittently regained.

Lydia Lunch is again the protagonist of *Beauty Becomes the Beast* (1979), where she appears alternately as a five-year-old child and a tough teenager. Dick's densest and most associative film, *Beauty Becomes the Beast* is a virtual catalogue of female media images, ranging from Patty Hearst to *I Love Lucy*. Switching scenes and modes like a bored TV watcher idly spinning the dial, the film depicts a world of women where mother and daughter are reciprocal roles in an ongoing chain of victimization. (At one point, Dick considered calling the film *Voyage to the Planet of the Prehistoric Women*, a Marxist joke on the title of a 1965 schlock science-fiction film.) Extremely affecting, *Beauty Becomes the Beast* derives its considerable power mainly from the graphic regression of Lunch's persona and from an undercurrent of sexual rage that courses throughout.

A more militant and focused restatement of Dick's earlier themes, *Liberty's Booty* (1980) uses a matter-of-fact view of middle-class, white prostitution as both a work of sexual demystification and an ironic exposition of American "permissiveness." (Old rock anthems and memorabilia keep surfacing like reproachful shards of the sixties.) Dick's most disturbing film, *Liberty's Booty* purposefully blurs the distinction between spectacle and document, license and exploitation, prostitution and daily life. Although filled with digressions and apparent non sequiturs, the crux of the film is its frank subversion of male-stereotyped sex roles.

Visibility: Moderate (1981), Dick's latest film, is a departure of sorts from her earlier work. A parody of a vacation film, it offers a travelogue through her native Ireland in the company of Margaret Ann Irinsky (a new wave fashion plate who resembles one of the tawdrier ingenues from *The Blackboard Jungle*). As this stand-in tourist visits the Blarney Stone or Belfast, *Visibility: Moderate* touches on a number of specific Irish issues—the sentimental mythologizing of the national past, the Americanization of the contemporary culture, the continued occupation of the British—which perhaps set the agenda for subsequent films that Dick plans to make in Ireland.

On the Question of Originality: A Letter

To the Editor:

In her article in the fall issue, "The Originality of the Avant-Garde. . . ," Rosalind Krauss condemns the recent casting of Rodin's *Gates of Hell* as a "fake." She argues against its authenticity on the following grounds: it is not a lifetime cast; the plaster model from which it was cast was "in flux" until Rodin's death in 1918; *The Gates* were "very much unfinished"; and absent any lifetime bronze cast we cannot judge the new one by either the artist's standards or the style of the period. Krauss also writes that "for Rodin the concept of the authentic bronze cast seems to have made as little sense as it has for many photographers." She reports that Rodin "never supervised or regulated either the finishing or the patination, and in the end, never checked the pieces before they were shipped to the client. . . ." Writing about Rodin's juxtaposition of identical casts, as in his *Three Shades*, Krauss also argues that the sculptor's contemporaries such as Rilke were unaware of or blinded to this aspect of his production by the "myth" of Rodin as "prodigious form giver" and the "cult of originality" that grew up around him. For Krauss, who withholds her own definition, it appears that originality means unique, one of a kind. She seems to assume that Rodin and his contemporaries, in building the "myth" of his "originality," had this definition in mind.

The catalogue of the *Rodin Rediscovered* exhibition was available to Krauss at the time she was photographing *The Gates* in the National Gallery of Art for her article. She seems to have ignored the catalogue, which includes essays by the former director of the Louvre on "An Original in Sculpture," Dan Rosenfeld's on "Rodin's Carved Sculpture," and my own on "*The Gates of Hell.*" Jean Chatelain shows that in France editions of bronzes have been traditionally considered original. One could add that just as with prints, then and now, bronze editions were and are originals. To speak of an original Rembrandt print is no different from speaking of an original Rodin bronze. I was able to show by old photographs taken in 1900 and their comparison with the plaster model of *The Gates* left disassembled at his death that Rodin stopped work on his portal by 1900. With the possible exception of refining the architectural moldings, Rodin viewed *The Gates* as complete and ready for casting in 1900. Under the first

director of the Musée Rodin, a new, fully assembled plaster version of *The Gates* was made before Rodin's death in 1917. (Contrary to Krauss, he did not die in 1918, and the first two bronze casts of the portal were not made until ten years after his death, not three.) The fifth and most recent cast is also of Rodin's realization of *The Gates of Hell* in 1900. Unlike its four predecessors that were sand cast, the new casting transcends period styles. This fifth cast, just as were its predecessors, is destined for the out-of-doors, where its patina will be determined by nature rather than a period style.

Rodin did supervise certain castings in bronze, those commissioned by the government and by other important clients. He was particularly concerned with the first casting of a major work. Thereafter, he expected his assistants to follow his standards. His favorite patineur, Jean Limet, once wrote to Rodin confirming that no two bronzes of the same subject would be given identical patinas. There were some specific cases in which Rodin ordered repatination, notably his *Bellona* and his *Walking Man* that was destined for Rome. Contrary to Krauss, Rodin had very strong and consistent views on authenticity. He recognized as authentic only those bronze casts he had authorized. All others he condemned as counterfeit.

Contrary to Krauss, Rodin's contemporaries were aware of his reutilization of the same figure, not only in *The Gates*, but in his free-standing work. In 1900, reviewing Rodin's retrospective and *The Gates of Hell*, a critic named Jean E. Schmitt wrote about *The Gates*, "The same figure, the same group, inverted, modified, accentuated, simplified, combined with others, arranged in a shadow, placed in the light, revealed to their author the secrets of sculpture, the mysteries of composition, the beauties of which he had only confusedly dreamed." Krauss would have us believe that she and not Rilke, who as Rodin's secretary was in the studio daily for seven months, has recognized the same figure in *The Three Shades*.

Rodin's view of originality lay in his *conceptions*, such as his interpretation of the story of the Burghers of Calais or his ideas of what a public monument could be, such as his *Balzac*. Originality for Rodin meant breaking with convention, not tradition, and rethinking how to compose a figure or a group, how to win movement, or how to counter the concept of "finish." In his time, Rodin's acclaim as an original artist did not rest on making one-of-a-kind sculptures. He considered his authorized bronzes and carvings, reproduced by others, as "autograph" works, because they were his conceptions carried out to his standards. If a client wanted a totally distinctive marble, he would stipulate to Rodin that the commissioned work must differ in some visible, unalterable way from any subsequent carvings of the same theme. Rodin's public knew well the system of a division of labor that he inherited and relied upon to be productive and creative. (I discuss this in my catalogue essay, "Rodin's Perfect Collaborator: Henri Lebossé," as does Dan Rosenfeld in his aforementioned essay.)

Krauss worries about Rodin's having given his art to the French govern-

ment and to "an afterlife of mechanical reproduction." In what way was bronze casting less mechanical in his lifetime? Krauss writes that by his donation to France, "Rodin acknowledged the extent to which his was an art of reproduction, of multiples, without originals." Disdaining Rodin's view, Krauss imposes her definition of originality on Rodin and criticizes him for not living up to it.

Having condemned authorized posthumous bronzes intended by Rodin, Krauss does not in turn criticize or condemn the posthumous casting of Julio Gonzalez's unique welded iron works. Writing in the Pace Gallery catalogue of the Gonzalez show this past fall, Krauss evades the very issue she raises in connection with Rodin's *Gates of Hell.* She argues that since the use of found materials by Gonzalez was not metaphoric, as in Picasso's work, and what he did with welded iron was "a process," "many of the issues of direct metal working that would theoretically prohibit translation into bronze are also irrelevant." Many perhaps, but not all! And certainly not the big ones that count! Never in his life did Gonzalez bronze cast an iron piece. His drawing in space was possible only by transforming the conditions of making sculpture, and welded iron, not bronze, was crucial. Gonzalez modeled when he wanted a bronze cast. Krauss dismisses the legality and morality of the Musée Rodin casts in order to condemn them as "kitsch." Neither Rodin's nor Gonzalez's intentions count with Krauss. Why should not her acceptance of the posthumous bronze casts of Gonzalez's work in welded iron be viewed as inconsistent, a double standard, or hypocritical? What, for example, happens to the "period style" she feels was violated in Rodin's case?

Krauss also writes of a new film made on the casting of *The Gates of Hell* that since the opening of the *Rodin Rediscovered* exhibition last June 28 visitors are supposed to have seen in a "small theater" in the National Gallery of Art. As of this writing, January 12, 1982, no film on the casting has been shown to the public in any size theater of the National Gallery. Yet, Krauss writes, "Sitting in the little theater, watching the newest Gates being cast, watching this violation, we want to call out, 'Fraud.'" Just what do we call out when a critic invents issues, makes up contradictions, promotes a double standard, and reviews an event that has not yet happened?

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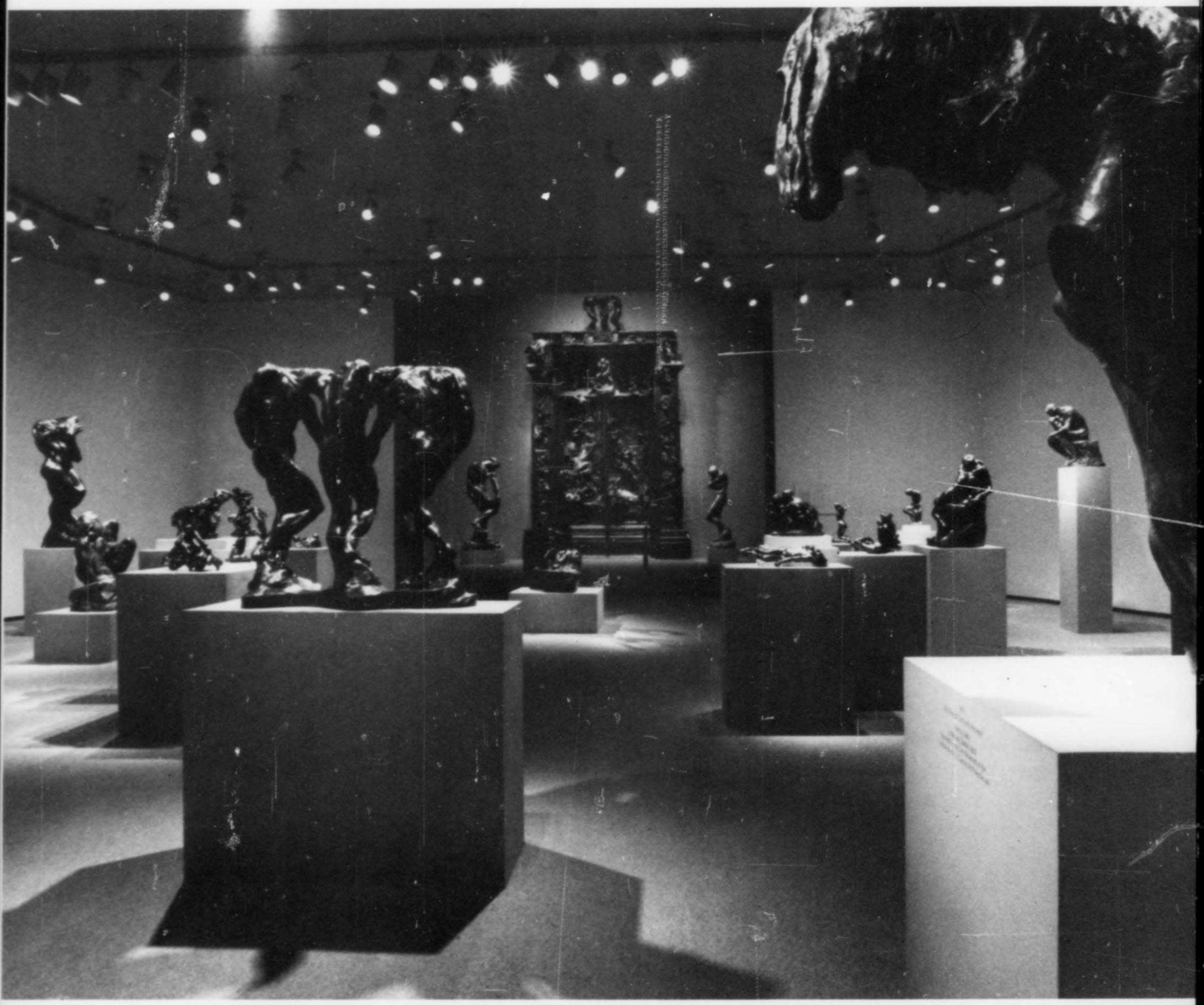
P.S. Readers interested in the view of experts on posthumous casts might write to the College Art Association, 16 East 52nd Street, New York, New York, for a copy of "Standards for Sculptural Reproduction and Preventive Measures Against Unethical Casting," adopted by the Art Museum Directors Association, Artists Equity, the Art Dealers Association, and the College Art Association.

National Gallery installation of Rodin Rediscovered, *Section VII: "The Gates of Hell and Their Offspring." (Photo: James Pipkin.)*



Sincerely Yours: A Reply

ROSALIND KRAUSS

Where to begin? Perhaps contrarywise: at the end. We could begin with the final paragraph of Professor Elsen's discussion of "Rodin's 'Perfect Collaborator,' Henri Lebossé," published in the catalogue for *Rodin Rediscovered*:

> Why did Lebossé accept Bénédite's commission to make the huge posthumous version of *The Defense*? *Did pride vanquish prudence*? . . . Lebossé's decision is more understandable, *if not condonable*, when one reads of his problems just after the war in putting his business back on its feet, even with the help of his son who had been demobilized. Finally, Bénédite had the *legal, if not ethical authority* as director of the Musée Rodin, and Lebossé *had money coming to him* after Rodin's death for other unfinished projects.[1]

These questions and their speculative replies cap the episode with which Elsen chooses to close his description of the career of Rodin's favorite *reproducteur*—a man whose letterhead bore the information "that he engaged in reducing and enlarging objects of 'art and industry' by a 'mathematically perfected process' and employed a 'special machine' for making these 'counterparts' in 'editions.' "[2] (Throughout this essay Professor Elsen's most frequently used terms for Lebossé's marbles is not *counterpart* but *reproduction*—a term to which we will return.)

The episode was a "scandal" in which Lebossé was "tragically" involved, although with the complicity of the first director of the Musée Rodin, who as beneficiary of Rodin's will had, of course, "the legal, if not ethical authority" in this matter. After Rodin's death Lebossé began an enlargement of *The Defense*, increasing the original scale of the work fourfold, which is to say, beyond that ever commissioned by Rodin himself. This was done at Bénédite's instructions

1. Albert E. Elsen, ed., *Rodin Rediscovered*, Washington, D.C., The National Gallery of Art, 1981, p. 256 (italics added).
2. *Ibid.*, p. 249.

for sale to the Dutch government as a monument to be erected at Verdun. Upon completion, we learn, "there was a storm of criticism directed at Bénédite for undertaking the posthumous enlargement," and further, "tragically for Rodin's 'perfect collaborator', the Verdun enlargement became part of a 1920 scandal involving fake works, marble carvers who continued to turn out sculpture signed with Rodin's name, and unauthorized bronze casts of the Barbedienne foundry."[3]

Now the major difference between Lebossé and the other "marble carvers who continued to turn out sculpture signed with Rodin's name" seems to be that their "fake" was illegal and his wasn't—by virtue of the authorization of "the artist or his beneficiaries" (General Code of Taxes, Appendix iii, Article 17), in this case the Musée Rodin, which is by law the sole, proper "holder of the artist's rights of authorship," and thus the source of "legal, if not ethical authority."[4] The director of the Musée Rodin, no less than Lebossé, approaches this question of authorship with money on his mind; for the museum's endowment *is* the right of reproduction and its income is derived from the continuing flow of originals.

The "legal if not ethical authority" is, indeed, central to the concept of the original edition and its careful buttressing not only by the Penal Code but also by the General Code of Taxes. For the law interests itself greatly in the question of the way originality opens directly onto the matter of contracts.

As Elsen assures us in his letter, Jean Chatelain is very illuminating on the whole problem of the sculptural original, particularly the issue to which he mainly limits himself, that of "original editions." "The special worth of an original edition," Chatelain writes, "does not come from an objective character of its originality, in the etymological meaning of the term, since every edition is in itself an operation of reproducing a model which is really the original, nor does this come about for want of a legal or customary definition. It arises from the agreements made by the edition's author with the buyers."[5] The *buyers*? What do they have to do with the matter of authorship or the status of the original?

Linking as it does "the revolutionary upheaval which shattered the traditional workshop system and the advent of an individualistic philosophy, followed by the rise of romanticism and the development of the art market and speculation,"[6] Chatelain's account of the development of the idea of the "original edition" has everything to do with consumption. The nineteenth-century buyer, he explains, was infected by the notion of originality—by which was understood innovation, creativity, inspiration. And, conflating originality with the condition of the physical original, he desired to possess the object that most

3. *Ibid.*, p. 256.
4. Jean Chatelain quotes from the relevant statues in *Rodin Rediscovered*, p. 281.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 279.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 275.

directly bore the traces of this spontaneous, unrepeatable process. Because of this new condition of desire, "any reproduction of an artist's work made by someone else, no matter what the process might be, is without real artistic value and therefore of an inconsequential price, for it no longer gives direct evidence of the creative impulse."[7]

For the compound arts (such as bronze sculpture), which are "arts of repetition," this new economy of desire threatened an absolute fall in value and required an immediate response. The "original edition" was the form of that response, a formula that Chatelain is quick to tell us "defies logic and linguistic accuracy [since] originality implies uniqueness; [while] an edition implies diffusion, multiplication, and series."[8] But as in most economic processes the logic has little to do with semantics, or "etymological meaning," and is instead a function of supply and demand, of what Chatelain calls "systematic rarefaction." Again and again Chatelain stresses that the "original edition" is a juridical fiction set up to create what could be called the *originality-effect*: "The effectiveness of this formula remains such in the eyes of the public at large that we can see it used to give greater value to editions which, for want of being originals, will at least have the appearance of being so, by being numbered."[9]

At first, reading this, we feel that Chatelain is being facetious, or perhaps is writing out of a scarcely veiled cynicism. But this is the effect of extracting pieces of his prose from the full context of his presentation, where his discussion is at pains to explain the reasonableness of the system and thus to account for the drift of his argument as it moves inexorably away from "etymological meaning" and into the determinations of the marketplace. Thus, dismissing the possibility of "competent authorities to . . . define what is an original edition at a given moment and for a given art," and viewing their indecision as something that "only reinforces this feeling of relativism," this former director of the Louvre throws the question into the arena of commerce:

> Once again, as is the usual formula in a liberal rights system, there remains the will of the parties involved: it is up to both sides to define what they mutually agree to. . . . In our field it is quite clear that the bidder, the seller that is to say, eventually the holder of the copyright of a certain work—be he the creating artist or his beneficiaries—he alone is in a position to set the characteristics of an edition about to be undertaken. He decides how many copies are to be made, what the technical characteristics are to be, and which specialists are to be called in. The buyer cannot help but take or leave the conditions thus layed out. The most he can do, aside from simply saying yes or no, is to try to bargain down the price or ask for some

7. *Ibid.*, p. 276.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 277.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 278.

> special secondary characteristic—in bronze, for example, for a certain type of socle.[10]

The beneficiary is thus truly the holder of the artist's "authorship," for he alone, once the artist is dead, "is in a position to set the characteristics of an edition. . . ." And the buyer? Desiring an original—the object of his desire—he must do what he can "to bargain down the price."

For Chatelain the wholly commercial/conventional nature of the "original edition"—which, in order to stress the oxymoronic quality of the formula, he sometimes changes to "original copy"—raises logical problems such that interpretation of the relevant legal instruments can often pose difficulties. As an example he examines a recent decree bearing on the Tax Code and treating the suppression of frauds in transactions involving works of art. This decree mandates that all reproductions of an original work carry the indelible notation "reproduction"; included in this category are "casts of casts." Now, the problem, as Chatelain sees it, arises from the fact that the term "casts of casts" seems to limit itself to casts not made from the original matrix—that is, in the case of bronze sculpture, not made from the original plaster. What that would mean is that any cast made from the original plaster *even after* the threshold of the "original edition" had been reached (in the case of Rodin, twelve casts) would *not* be a reproduction, but would be part of an "edition" and in some sense—"legal, if not ethical"?—an original. This possibility does not seem compatible with the principle of "systematic rarefaction," and so another reading of "casts of casts" is imagined by Chatelain. In *this* interpretation (which he calls "more stringent") *all* casts made once the limit of the "original edition" is reached, whether from the original plaster or not, would be considered "reproductions" and would have to be so labeled. Which of these interpretations should we adopt?

> Technically, only the first interpretation seems to us to be justified since it rests on a criterion which is itself technical. That which is made from the original plaster is a proof, an edition; that which is not made from the original plaster is a reproduction.
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> On the other hand, the overall spirit of the decree of 3 March 1981 is evidently *to impose strict limits on the art trade* as to the designation of objects. One can therefore think that the second interpretation, *because it is restrictive*, conforms more than the first to this spirit.[11]

The spirit of this decree is to impose limits on the art trade, which seems among other things to mean shoring up that fallible market for the compound arts by the operations of "systematic rarefaction." The decrees and codes to which Chatelain refers are of course articles of French law made with particular re-

10. *Ibid.*, p. 279.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 281–282 (italics added).

gard to a French art market that is taken seriously indeed. On this subject no one could suspect Chatelain of being facetious. Nor the French government. In October 1981 a tax on wealth passed by the Socialist controlled parliament was to have included privately held works of art. At the eleventh hour, however, Mitterrand, apparently convinced of the serious blow that would have thereby been dealt to the art market in France, exempted works of art from the bill. The following day the newspaper *Libération* carried the headline: "Vendez vos yachts! Achetez des Picassos!" No one here but the most heterodox left is going to joke about a market's production of rarefaction, systematic or otherwise.

But Elsen, who distinguishes between "legal" and "ethical authority," seems to want definitions that go beyond this commercial/conventional notion of the authenticity of "original editions." In his introduction to *Rodin Rediscovered* he refers to the American *Statement of Standards on the Reproduction of Sculptures* (which he also cites at the end of his letter) for a criterion that goes beyond authenticity: namely, desirability. And there he writes that although "posthumous casts by the Musée Rodin are unquestionably authentic in the terms of the sculptor's intent and his grant of the right of reproduction to the state," they are viewed by these *Standards* "as less desirable than those made in Rodin's lifetime."[12]

This viewing, with its lessening of desire, is Elsen's, not mine. Contrary to his notion that I regard the production of posthumous casts through the lens of condemnation, worry, and dismissal, I welcome the opportunity it affords us (who are we here?) to experience the conundrum posed by the "original"-by-convention in cases of the compound arts; because, contrary to Elsen's reading of my argument, I wish to explore the possibility that this convention is no less operative within the simple arts, thus raising the possibility that all claims to originality are equally conventional/juridical. Contrary to Elsen, this is not a worry, but a welcome: welcoming theory.

With those three contraries, we move into the series of statements made in Elsen's letter which often take the form "contrary to Krauss": for example, "contrary to Krauss, Rodin had very strong and consistent views on authenticity"; or "contrary to Krauss, Rodin's contemporaries were aware of his reutilization of the same figure." Indignant at my seeming contrariness, Elsen accuses me of inventing issues, making up contradictions, promoting a double standard, and reviewing an event that has not yet happened, all of this adding up to fraud. But what of the contraries to his contraries? What if his disclaimers make false claims about mine? Would that be fraud? Or would it be argument of the kind that theory often elicits from disciplinary orthodoxy? Let us begin *a contrario*.

Contrary to Elsen, I did not condemn the recent casting of Rodin's *Gates of*

12. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

Hell as "fake." I specifically called it a "legitimate work" and a "real original." But I also imagined confusion arising in viewers' minds which would lead them to brand the work as fake or counterfeit. After all, this confusion has, historically, arisen in relation to Rodin's own standard shop practices. Elsen himself cites instances of it: "There was a storm of criticism directed at Bénédite for undertaking the posthumous enlargement. Many people misunderstood the enlarging process and did not realize that for Rodin it was not to be strictly mechanical. There was published criticism that Lebossé had betrayed Rodin. . . ."[13] If this misunderstanding could have arisen in Rodin's day, despite the fact that, as Elsen tells us, "Rodin's public knew well the system of a division of labor that he inherited and relied upon to be productive and creative," how could it not occur even more insistently now? That it *does* occur is mentioned over and over by Elsen and his collaborators in the catalogue *Rodin Rediscovered.* They cannot seem to shake off the nag of this ("uninformed") public doubt. In discussing "Rodin's Carved Sculpture" Daniel Rosenfeld describes the corps of workmen that surrounded the master in his studio—"between 1900 and 1910 nearly fifty individuals were involved with the execution of Rodin's marble sculptures"—and begins his account of the atelier with the sentence: "The multiple marble examples of *Eve* [12 or more] raise the question of originality and authenticity in Rodin's carved sculpture."[14] Like Elsen, he feels certain that this question is an anachronism and would not have troubled Rodin's contemporaries. But that it *does* disturb us *now* is acknowledged, for example, by asides like "the issue of their authenticity as products of the artist's hand, so disquieting to some modern critics. . . ."[15]

By imagining the scene of this kind of disquietude and confusion, in which multiple appellations could be appended to an object—could be, and *are*—appellations that range across a wide spectrum: counterfeit . . . legitimate . . . authentic . . . desirable, a scene that is repeated not just by some uninformed member of the public but by art-historical experts, like Jean Chatelain in his arresting indecision about what to call those unfortunate proofs that have been pulled past the legal limit of the "original edition"—are they reproductions? they're not really *reproductions*! —by imagining this scene in all the intensity of its indecision, I wished to inaugurate a discussion that could not be solved in the confines of a courtroom or even the chambers of the College Art Association or the Art Dealers of America.[16]

13. *Ibid.*, p. 256.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 90.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 95.
16. This imaginary scene, with its onset of doubt, could be staged anywhere: in the galleries of a Rodin exhibition, in a darkened room where a movie of the casting of *The Gates* is shown, or in a meeting with the education department of a museum where a discussion about how to explain very late posthumous casts to a possibly dubious public takes place. It was at the last of these three possibilities (but there are many more, of course) that I first learned of the existence of the

This is a question of what could be called an "irreducible plurality"—a condition of multiplicity that will *not* reduce to the unit *one*, to the singular or unique—a condition that is inside the very existence of the unique or singular instance, multiplying it. Under this condition the compound arts are, simply, compound and no amount of systematic rarefaction will change this. The transfer of the idea from medium to medium in the production of the final "original" guarantees that inside that ultimate oneness is such a state of fission that the locus of singularity keeps receding from us.

Take, for example, the testimony of George Bernard Shaw. Like everyone else, he was conversant with the facts of Rodin's production and the paradox that the sculptor with the "inimitable touch" was famous for works that he himself had never laid hands on. (Elsen: "No sculptor in history is more famous for having an inimitable touch than Auguste Rodin. Yet big public works like the *Monument to Balzac* and *The Thinker*, on which much of Rodin's reputation is based, in fact issued from the hands of Henri Lebossé.")[17] Shaw was also aware that Rodin himself firmly located the "original" of a work in the clay model: "People say that all modern sculpture is done by Italian artisans who mechanically reproduce the sculptor's plaster model in the stone. Rodin himself says so." But Shaw begged to differ on this point. "The particular qualities that Rodin gets in his marbles are not in the clay models," Shaw writes, insisting

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movie of the casting of *The Gates of Hell*. Professor Elsen was at the National Gallery of Art in the early Spring of 1981 to describe the contents and layout of the forthcoming exhibition to the gallery's staff. It was he who spoke of the film and the little theater that would be constructed for its screening. (The exhibition was specifically conceived as a suite of separate rooms, or imaginative spaces, in which different aspects of the problem—the atelier, the salon, the photographic dissemination of the work, etc.—could be gathered and collectively projected.)

"The Originality of the Avant-Garde" was written for *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*, a conference held at the University of Iowa, April 9–11, 1981. It was therefore conceived and composed months before the opening of *Rodin Rediscovered*. The inclusion in the essay of the film and its screening as the imaginary mise-en-scène for the little drama of doubt depended on Professor Elsen's own earlier description of the show. *October* 18 was going to press at the time of the opening of the exhibition, at which point it was observable that there was no film. But since I knew from other sources about the existence of footage for this film, I assumed that the project was late but that it would be screened in conjunction with *Rodin Rediscovered* later in the course of the exhibition. However, the inclusion of the scene of the "film" in the published essay was, reportorially, journalistically, an error.

And yet . . . and yet . . . "the staging of the film" is part of the staging of *The Gates* as a theoretical entity at the beginning of a general inquiry on originality within the conceptual frame of modernism. As such, "the staging of the film" within the theoretical setting of "The Originality of the Avant-Garde" bounced off someone else's imaginary "staging of the film," namely, Professor Elsen's, as he informed a group of curators of the series of imaginary spaces by means of which Rodin would be rediscovered. These imaginary projections, these settings within which we locate the object of our inquiry, are important, and they are real. The variety of their actualizations is something else. Let us just say that in March 1981 Professor Elsen admitted to looking forward to that little theater and its "technicolor" projection of the forging of *The Gates of Hell* every bit as avidly as I did, although undoubtedly for different reasons.

17. *Rodin Rediscovered*, p. 249.

that the magical qualities of "Rodin" are somehow *in* the marbles and not *in* the other materials: "He gave me three busts of myself: one in bronze, one in plaster, one in marble. The bronze is me . . . The plaster is me. But the marble has quite another sort of life: it glows; and light flows over it. It does not look solid: it looks luminous; and this curious glowing and flowing keeps people's fingers off it."[18] The magic is what Shaw prizes. But it was not put there by Rodin, because it was not *in* Rodin's model. It is, we could say, the product of a collaborative effort between the artist, the artisan, and the physical properties of the material, but even that is too simple.

If the compound arts are irreducibly compound, that is because at every moment there is the intervention of choices and of skills. The laying on of hands? But even if there is only one hand—Rodin's from start to finish—there is still the slippage that is inevitable in transfer, the multiplicity inside the choice-repertory of the single creator. Working in a compound art Rodin had choices about how to produce the final versions of his works, both in terms of scale and material. For many years now critical opinion has been that Rodin's choices with regard to many of his marbles were a betrayal of his art. "Dulcified replicas made by hired hands," Leo Steinberg called them in the opening of his extraordinary study of Rodin, by way of meditating on the reasons for the nearly total eclipse of the artist's fame during the 1930s, '40s, and '50s.[19] Even Elsen in those days acknowledged that the marbles were a problem. Writing to Steinberg in 1969 he said, "Admittedly the marbles are not his best. Much of the stone carving is hack work. We know that there has been no editing of his marbles on view in Paris."[20] Would it be an exaggeration to say that inside Rodin there were at least two artists and that one, collaborating with the least exigent tastes of his own time (Shaw's perhaps?), betrayed the other? And in that case would we not speak not only of a divided or compound original, but also of a divided intention: at one end of the scale, the intention determinedly to withhold work from finalization and production, at war with the intention at the other end—the intention toward manufacture? Thus even within the notion of the artist's intention, which Elsen seems to think is so univocal—"Contrary to Krauss, Rodin had very strong and consistent views on authenticity. He recognized as authentic only those bronze casts he had authorized. All others he condemned as counterfeit." But "neither Rodin's nor Gonzalez's intentions[21] count with Krauss"—there may be a multiplicity.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 95.
19. Leo Steinberg, "Rodin," in *Other Criteria*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1972, p. 331. The core of this essay was initially published as a catalogue by the Slatkin Gallery, New York, 1963.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 329.
21. A word here about my high-handed treatment of Gonzalez's intentions in the catalogue essay for Pace Gallery, 1980: Speaking in his letter of my "evasions" and "double standards" with regard to Gonzalez casts, Elsen gives my position on this issue with a curious elision. He quotes

In the war that can develop between divided intentions is there not the possibility of an internal fraudulence, a sense that in doing a certain thing an artist has betrayed aspects of his own work? Informed taste feels this way about the mammoth concrete blowups of little matchbook maquettes that Picasso produced as sculpture during his waning years. This is a kind of fraudulence that is internal to an artist, seeming to be the inescapable result of the fact that an aesthetic idea cannot simply be externalized, as such, from the artist's brain. It (itself a fictitious unity) goes through stages and at any one of them it can be betrayed. By the artist himself. By his intentions. By his very notions of authenticity.

It was this kind of internal betrayal that I had in mind when I wrote that Rodin "participated in the transformation of his own work into kitsch." Contrary to Elsen, I did not use this label for the Musée Rodin casts. I had in mind not only the bulk of the marbles ("dulcified replicas"? "hack work"?), but the kind of output described in *Rodin Rediscovered* in the section devoted to "Rodin and His Founders." The following concerns the fate of a marble bust titled *Suzon*, which was worked by the Brussels firm Compagnie des Bronzes beginning in 1875:

> In 1927, she was still found among the pieces offered by the Compagnie des Bronzes in five sizes, either the original one (0.30 meters) or four mechanical reductions of 0.26, 0.21, 0.16, and 0.12 meters. These bronzes of diverse formats and also the numerous examples in marble, terra cotta, and biscuit instigated many decorative combinations, such as mounting above clocks or on fanciful bases, found most often in Belgian and Dutch private collections.[22]

Did Rodin, we wonder, design the clocks? or the fanciful bases? Did he authorize this unlimited edition? in 1875? in 1927? At some point did it *become* "counterfeit"?

This authorization, the warrant of Rodin's intentions with regard to

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me as saying that what Gonzalez did with welded iron was "a process" and thus "many of the issues of direct metal working that would theoretically prohibit translation into bronze are also irrelevant." What I wrote in the essay concerned the *process of copying* (not the truncated "a process") as it shapes Gonzalez's formal vocabulary—a procedure that involved making life drawings, translating them into more stylized versions of the life-model, and then, through a literal copy, rendering this second two-dimensional representation as a three-dimensional version in metal, a "drawing in space." Gonzalez's access to "abstraction," I argued, was thus a function of a *process of copying* that translates form from one material to another and from one dimensional space to another. On these *conceptual* grounds I think that Gonzalez's work opens itself to further translation and copying in a way that sculptures which enter the conceptual domain of the found object do not. What I think of the actual practice of casting Gonzalezes I did not say, but it would seem to exist in the same "legal, if not ethical" domain as certain of Bénédite's choices, given that French law vests "authorship" in the beneficiaries of an artist's estate.

22. *Rodin Rediscovered*, p. 286.

authenticity—his *undivided* intentions—led in certain cases to unlimited permissiveness: "He contracted with bronze editors," writes Elsen, "for unlimited replicas of popular works such as *The Kiss*, *Eternal Spring*, and *Victor Hugo*. Consistent with his peers, Rodin did not usually cast in limited editions, a practice that seems to have been introduced at the turn of the century by art dealers such as Ambroise Vollard."[23] In other cases, such as the *Suzon*, it led to the authorized manufacture of *objets d'art*, sculpture-plus-clocks, the industrialization of the artisanal experience, the corruption of the aesthetics of handicraft by the processes of mechanical reproduction. The commonly used appellation for this corruption is *kitsch*.

But even where we are not talking about the extremes of mechanical reproduction bearing the authorized patent "Rodin,"[24] we have ample evidence of Rodin's submission to the internal logic of the reproductive mediums, which is indeed, as Elsen tells us, "the division of labor." This division, which had led one nineteenth-century writer to ask, "Is the artist one man or a collection of people?" was equally applicable to carving as to casting. "Yet," we read in *Rodin Rediscovered*, "bronze casting made supervision more difficult since it was done outside of the artist's studio."[25] During the course of Rodin's career at least twenty-eight separate foundries were employed in the business of casting his work, making supervision difficult indeed.

As one of its contributions to our knowledge of nineteenth-century artistic practice, *Rodin Rediscovered* provides us with evidence about the degree to which the master acceded to the logic of divided labor necessary to the reproduction of his art. Elsen is able to report, "To the best of our knowledge Rodin did no actually participate in the casting and finishing of his bronzes. He left that to specialists who knew his high standards. . . . For more than fifteen years, he trusted Jean Limet to patinate most of his important casts and report on their quality."[26] This report was needed, we learn, because of Rodin's absence from the foundries particularly after 1900 and thus his ignorance of the state of the casts: "Since the castings were sent directly by the founders to Limet, Rodin, who had not seen them, asked about the quality of the casts as this letter of 3 September 1903 [from Limet] bears witness: 'I was waiting for the bronzes which Autin sent me to examine the head of Mme. Rodin. The cast is not bad, but the chiseling in my opinion leaves much to be desired. One can judge this piece, which is very simple, with difficulty. . . .' " Having so quoted, the author of this study of Rodin's casting procedures then adds, "It can be remarked,

23. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
24. "The study of the handwriting of Rodin's signatures hardly allows the assignment of a cast to one or another period since the signatures were traced by the founders and not by the artist himself" (*Rodin Rediscovered*, p. 292).
25. *Ibid.*, p. 90.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

therefore, that the notion of strict control of the casts and the patinas by Rodin himself needs to be shaded, at least from 1900."[27]

What, we wonder, then happened to this head of Mme. Rodin, the chiseling of which, in the view of Jean Limet, left "much to be desired"? For Rodin, Limet was one of the specialists "who knew his high standards," and Limet's opinion was that the chiseling left much to be desired. Was the work issued anyway? Is this what is meant by the *shading* that is needed for the "notion of strict control of the casts"? Does such shading also need to be applied to the notion of Rodin's "standards," Rodin's "consistent views," Rodin's "intentions"?

This shading is required because of the extent to which Rodin participated in what I called (in "The Originality of the Avant-Garde"), "the ethos of reproduction." Contrary to Elsen, I did not write, *tout court*, that Rodin "never supervised or regulated either the finishing or the patination, and in the end, never checked the pieces before they were shipped to the client. . . ." I said, "Much of it [the casting] was done in foundries to which Rodin never went while the production was in progress; he never . . . (etc.)," a view that is wholly supported by *Rodin Rediscovered* and is only rendered false by omitting the qualifying phrase "much of it." Why would Elsen wish to misquote?

But Elsen's contrariness increases as we penetrate more deeply the territory of this ethos of reproduction, which is, we could say, aesthetically trivial with regard to the master's supervision of casts but formally quite material when we approach Rodin's "conceptions," such as his "rethinking how to compose a figure or a group. . . ." At that point Rodin's frequent practice of composing by what Leo Steinberg has called *multiplication* becomes extremely interesting to consider.[28] The plasters, cast from the clay models, which had before Rodin been the formally neutral vehicle of reproduction, became for him a medium of composition. If there can be, *must* be, one plaster, why not three? And if three. . . . Thus the multiple, we could say, became the medium.

With the recognition of this absorption of multiples into the core of Rodin's "conceptions," this representation of the very means of reproduction, we begin to cross the bridge that both separates and links the material/legal/etymological original—Elsen's one of a kind—and the imaginative/conceptual original, which is to say, originality: a function of the powers of imagination. But we are only beginning to cross the bridge, and still within its structure, we have a view of both sides. We can see the transition as the material aspects shade into the conceptual. We can spot the sublime creative confusion engendered by Rodin's move to heighten the representation of movement—the breathlessness of each unique, fleeting moment of temporality—through the stutter of mechanical replicas, lined up side by side.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 292.
28. Steinberg, "Rodin," pp. 353–361.

Contrary to Elsen, I never claimed priority in the observation that *The Three Shades* presents us with the same figure in triplicate. My reference to Leo Steinberg's prior discussion of this phenomenon throughout Rodin's work makes this obvious.[29] But the recognition of this aspect that Professor Elsen vests in Rodin's contemporaries is not the same thing as interpretation. And thus the question of what this triplication might mean—with all the variety of its possible answers and possible denials—remains.

Its experience in 1900 by "a critic named Jean E. Schmitt" (did he earn his obscurity? we wonder) is entirely hostage to the nineteenth-century view that artistic greatness is the function of an ecstatic imagination: "The same figure, the same group, inverted, modified, accentuated, simplified, combined with others, arranged in a shadow, placed in the light, revealed to their author the secrets of sculpture, the mysteries of composition, the beauties of which he had only confusedly dreamed."

In its effort to rescue Rodin's art from the enthusiasm of sentiment and make it available to the rather sterner assessment of modernism, Leo Steinberg's reading of this manipulation of sameness regards the phenomenon of multiplication through the lens of process. The revelation of process works to expose the means of representation; in formalist terms, it bares the device. It is the intentional, shocking construction of a surface that will report not on "the secrets of sculpture," but on the banalities of making: in addition to sheer multiplication, there is the whole panoply of casting "error" courted and magnified by Rodin, as there is also the phenomenon of modeling strategies (like the little clay pellets added to a given plane to further the buildup of the form) left in their most primitive state to be recorded by the final cast.[30] This baring of the device is not discussed by Rilke, nor by Jean E. Schmitt. It was, it would seem, not visible to them. Are we then forced to abandon it as an illegitimate reading, surpassing as it does the critical powers of the viewer of Rodin's own time? Are we thereby compelled to say that because he didn't, or couldn't articulate this view of his art, Rodin didn't intend these "accidents" that support Steinberg's reading? But the accidents are too profuse and too stunning in their seeming perversity for us to dismiss them as unintentional. A view of intentionality entirely limited to contemporary documents is, it would seem, an unusable view: too rigid, too narrow to support the evidence of the work. It is also a curiously naive view, insisting that all intentions must be *conscious* causes.

If "The Originality of the Avant-Garde" adds my reading to Steinberg's, this is because the concept of multiples explored there is not the same as the notion of multiplication (though my conception is not intended to *refute* his).

29. See "The Originality of the Avant-Garde," *October*, no. 18 (Fall 1981), 50, fn. 1.
30. Steinberg: "The little clay pellets or trial lumps which a sculptor lays down where he considers raising a surface—even if the decision is no, they stay put and, in a dozen portraits of the mature period, get cast in bronze" ("Rodin," p. 393).

Multiplication, as I have said, is a feature of a more general revelation of the particularity of the artist's means. It is this particularity that is welcome to modernist sensibilities and restores an experience of uniqueness to the work. In this experience of uniqueness is married the surprise (the originality) of the strategy by which the material vehicle of the work is manifested and the sensuous immediacy of that revealed physicality. But the notion of multiples does not resolve itself into this revised, modernist experience of the absolute uniqueness of the object. As I said above, it is grounded on a perception of an irreducible plurality, the condition of the multiple without an original.

Multiplication, as Steinberg develops it, opens our perception onto process, or production. Multiples are a function, rather, of *re*production. Rodin's work was continually moving between production (the tiny clay pellets of the master's modeling) and reproduction (the authorized "Rodin"). If Rodin was able (consciously? unconsciously?)[31] to manifest the processes of production within his work, why not equally the terms of reproduction? But these are terms that are deeply disturbing to the art historian because he cannot imagine a situation of irreducible plurality: a multiple without an original.

It is to this failure of imagination that the story of *The Gates of Hell* addresses itself. It is the story that Elsen's letter is so anxious to deny, even though it is, in fact, told by Elsen in the pages of *Rodin Rediscovered*.

For the huge exhibition of Rodin's work in the summer of 1900, *The Gates of Hell* were shipped dismantled, their montage to take place at the time of installation. But this reassembly did not take place; and so, as Judith Cladel reported, "The day of the opening arrived before the master had been able to have placed on the *fronton* and on the panels of his monument the hundreds of great and small figures destined for their ornamentation."[32] And then? *The Gates* were never again reassembled under Rodin's supervision: not during the time of the exhibition nor afterward at Meudon. Cladel believed that the work was not reassembled in 1900 because "he had seen it too much during the twenty years in which it had been before his eyes. He was tired of it, weary of it."[33] But that this weariness should have extended for the next sixteen years does bear some explanation. One of these explanations has been that Rodin never considered the work to be finished, and it was for this reason that visitors to Rodin's studio had to deal with *The Gates* in their disassembled state. Elsen's explanation is different. "Rodin's refusal to reassemble his portal after June first, 1900," he suggests, "may have resulted from the view that as it was, the work

31. To say that an artist's intentions may not be conscious is not to claim that they are therefore unconscious. It is to question a notion of causality which an easy recourse to the "unconscious" continues to serve. See Stanley Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say?*, New York, Scribners, 1969, p. 233.
32. *Rodin Rediscovered*, p. 72.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 73.

had a greater breadth and unity of form."[34] If this is so, then Rodin's "undivided" intention bifurcates, pointing in at least two directions: one of them, *The Gates* as we now know it; the other, the idealized unity wrested from a heaving, nearly barren ground.

Before his death Rodin "presumably" agreed to a new cast of *The Gates* that would be placed in the Rodin Museum in Paris. "This second, full plaster model was not personally assembled or directed by Rodin before his death in November 1917; it was done under the direction of the museum's ambitious first director, Léonce Bénédite."[35] Elsen continues, "We know that from some time in 1916 until his death, Rodin was physically incapable of doing even the smallest amount of work with his hands, due probably to a stroke." But what Rodin could do with his hands is not really the issue, for the likelihood is that the work of reassembly was not even conducted in his presence. "Bénédite insisted that the montage was done under 'the master's direction,' but from what we know of Rodin's health, this is extremely doubtful. If the montage was done at the Dépôt des Marbres, it is even more doubtful, as Rodin was very much restricted to Meudon the last year of his life."[36]

Elsen's scholarship leads him to the conclusion that Bénédite undertook this assemblage on his own initiative and that he even violated certain of Rodin's own ideas in the course of the reconstruction. Since Elsen's letter insists that the posthumous casts—all of which were made from molds taken from this new Musée Rodin plaster—are "of Rodin's realization of *The Gates of Hell* in 1900," we can only assume that in his eagerness to argue for the authorized original object of Rodin's undivided intentions he had forgotten his own description of the "liberties" taken in this "presumably" authorized final cast. Elsen's presentation of these liberties is worth quoting in full:

> Surely, if Rodin had initiated the final assembly, his first director would have so indicated to the world in 1917 rather than in 1921. Bénédite took a large number of initiatives without Rodin's knowledge and consent, and, *ethics aside, he seems to have had the legal authority to do so*. Disturbing evidence of Bénédite's meddling with Rodin's arrangement of *The Gates of Hell* is given by Judith Cladel when writing with bitterness during the years 1933–1936 about the last weeks of Rodin's life and the insensitive removal of the artist's sculpture from Meudon to Paris: "Some of Rodin's scandalized assistants who cast his plasters made it known to me that charged with the reassembly of *The Gates of Hell* they received orders to place certain figures in a different arrangement than that which the artist

34. *Ibid.*, p. 76.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 74.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 79.

> wanted, because 'that would be better,' or because the figure of a woman representing a spring (*une source*) 'must not have the head below.' 'The sense of the cube (*la raison cubique*) is the mistress of things and not appearances,' Rodin used to say. But does a shockingly brusque functionary have the time to meditate on such an axiom?" (*Rodin: Sa Vie Glorieuse et Inconnue*, p. 397.) Cladel's clear accusation is that Rodin no longer had any say in what happened to his portal and that Bénédite was taking uncalled for and insensitive liberties with its reconstruction. "La raison cubique" refers to Rodin's view that one should imagine a well-made sculpture as existing within a cube.[37]

The "uncalled for and insensitive liberties" taken by this "shockingly brusque functionary" (is this what Elsen means by "ambitious"?) create the high probability that the 1917 plaster, the matrix from which all the bronze casts of *The Gates* have been taken, differs in aesthetically material ways from the 1900 plaster. Further, as Elsen himself records, after 1900 Rodin's own relationship to *The Gates* had become sufficiently complex that he refused to have them reassembled (preferring, perhaps, the "greater breadth and unity of form" of the naked doors?), and may or may not have authorized Bénédite's actions in 1917. It is this richly multiplex set of doubts raised by the history of *The Gates* that makes the work so perfect an example, on both a technical and conceptual level, of multiples without an original. As we try to move from the plurality of the casts to the unity of the model, we find this unity, this original, splintering, compounding.

And the *simple*, as distinct from the *compound*, arts? What of them? Jean Chatelain notes the "feeling of relativism" excited by the compound arts' relation to the notion of the original. This is not the case, he seems to argue, with the simple arts—those with the most immediate, direct relationship between conception and visual mark.

But we have reason to wonder whether this simplicity with its accompanying notions of immediacy and directness is not, itself, a product of that very same shift in desire that made the "original edition" necessary. For just as the compound arts—sculpture, tapestries, marquetry, porcelain, illustrated books, etc.—are the functions of workshops and the collaborative results of many skills and many hands, painting is also the product of workshops. The large decorative cycles demanded by patrons in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries could not be accomplished in any other way. The great studios, of which Rubens's is only the most well published example, necessitated an experience of the "compound" in the carrying out of the work.

37. *Ibid.* (italics added).

Art history, a discipline which is an intellectual partner of those newly conceived forces of desire that Jean Chatelain sees rising in the nineteenth century—art history is committed to the marks of *simplicity*, to the establishment of the autograph work, and to the sorting out of hands. The existence of the shop can be admitted in the study of painting only as long as the shop itself can be analyzed to produce its elementary components, among them the indisputably autographic *work* of the master. The finding and constituting of this work will in fact be the task of the art historian. For his empirical unity is this unity—which he takes to be irreducibly simple or singular—of the master's mark.

Thus, for example, the analysis of the Ghent Altarpiece has often turned on the problem of locating the autographic presence of each of its masters, since it was known that both Hubert and Jan van Eyck had been responsible for its making. Even Panofsky understood that his task as art historian would be—given this dual authorship—the sorting out of hands. Two linked assumptions operate within this notion of the scholarly task. The first is that the painting is a physical simple and thus is ideally made by one hand; if it is known in a given case to be the work of more than one author, then it can be somehow analyzed into a set of simples (for this reason, the sorting of hands). The second is that as a simple a painting is what would normally function within a claim to authorship; authorship is part of the grammar of executing a painting as it is not in, say, executing marquetry. It is in relationship to its seeming naturalness as an object of the claim to authorship (and thus its greater insistency with regard to the experience of authenticity) that painting is taken to be a unitary object, a simple. As such it has clear boundaries: it is everything that is *inside* the frame. (The frame on the other hand is a function of the decorative or compound arts. The frame is what both links and separates the painting from the complex decorative/architectural system that formed its original context. But for the art historian there is no confusion between painting and frame.)[38] Thus, when Lotte Brand Philip undertook to reorient the analytical task with regard to the Ghent Altarpiece, the resistance was intense. Her argument was that Hubert van Eyck was an author of the alterpiece, only not of its painted surfaces, but rather of its frame.[39]

The idea that authorship might displace itself outward to the frame does terrible things to the system of positivist relationships out of which the art historian works. Because authorship would then be made to flow from the bounded pictorial image into that great sea of anonymous artisanal practice

38. Jacques Derrida contests the possibility of these distinctions which ground the theory of Western art, for which it is assumed that a separation can be made between what is proper to a work and what is improper, extrinsic, outside. See "The Parergon," *October*, no. 9 (Summer 1979), 3–40.

39. Lotte Brand Philip, *The Ghent Altarpiece and the Art of Jan van Eyck*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1971.

that formed the shop systems of the arts. Authorship, with all its decorum and priorities, would collapse under this weight. Authorship assumes that paintings have an absolute firstness in the hierarchy of the arts and that their frames, which are adjuncts after all, must follow after, being made to fit. But it is perfectly possible to imagine a case where the frame comes first and the painted panel, like so much decorative filler, comes afterward, tailored to the measure of the more opulent, resplendent frame. This situation, with all its implication for a collapse of the notions of a hierarchy "natural" to the arts, is the news that is being delivered to art history with increasing frequency. It is the situation that Creighton Gilbert, for example, has discovered in the relation between panel painters and the carvers of frames in early Renaissance practice in Italy.[40]

The notion of the painting as a function of the frame (and not the reverse) tends to shift our focus from being exclusively, singularly, riveted on the interior field. Our focus must begin to dilate, to spread. As the boundary between inside (painting) and outside (frame . . .) begins to blur and to break down, room is made for the possibility of experiencing the degree to which painting-as-simple is a constructed category, constructed on the basis of desire, not unlike the "original edition." Just as we can also catch ourselves in the act of constructing frames in order illicitly to excise an image from the nonsimple context of the obviously compound arts, so as to assert it as pictorial, unitary, framed.

A common enough example of this is to be found in the museum displays of ancient seal rings, where photographic enlargements of the impressions made by the seals allow the imagery and forms of the carving to be seen. But by their very transformation of the signet into a framed, enlarged, two-dimensional image, the photographs pictorialize the object, endowing it with a different kind of presence, investing it with an experience of singularity. Photography used to transform the decorative object into a picture and thus to raise its status occurs with increasing frequency in museums. In the exhibition *The Search for Alexander*, mounted by the National Gallery in Washington, for example, one of the major objects was a bronze krater from Derveni, a vessel over thirty-five inches high with continuous reliefs of extraordinary quality. Set freestanding within a vitrine in the gallery the krater was perfectly visible from all sides. Yet the designers of the exhibition felt the need to supplement this object with photographic enlargements of some of its narrative components, fragmenting and composing aspects of the decorative object into . . . pictures. It would seem that the only experience that could correspond to our sense of the

40. Creighton Gilbert, "Peintres et menuisiers au début de la renaissance en Italie," *La Revue de l'art*, no. XXXVII (1977), 9–28. My attention to these examples of the problematic of the frame was drawn by Andrée Hayum.

National Gallery installation of The Search for Alexander, *"The Tombs of Derveni."*

object's value from the point of view of its antiquity and rarity would be an adaptation of it to fit the *aesthetic* measure of singularity, which means to reconstrue it in terms of the frame. Within the exhibition the Derveni krater existed twice, once as a decorative object and once as a series of pictures, larger than itself, framed and mounted on a wall.

This institution of the frame is a function of what could be called the Institution of the Frame. It is an act of excision that simultaneously establishes and reaffirms given conceptual unities—the unity of formal coherence, the unity of the enframed simple, the unity of the artist's personal style, his oeuvre, his intentions—and these turn out to be the very unities on which the institution of art (and its history) presently depends. As research uncovers more and more information about given practices this new data is poured through the slots of old categories to fill the unitary spaces. Thus Elsen can begin his introduction to *Rodin Rediscovered* by declaring, "Our aim in preparing this catalogue was to present the latest Rodin research."[41] He never imagines that this latest research might in fact provide the ammunition to place those unities through which research was formerly collated and valued under fire. All of the information needed to open Rodin's *Gates of Hell* to the experience of the multiple without an original is to be found in *Rodin Rediscovered*. Elsen and his fellow researchers provide it.

Contrary to Elsen, I no more consider myself to be "invent[ing] issues"—in the sense of originating them—than to be laying claim to a first view of Rodin's use of triplication. These issues, through which the physical original along with the originary act are rendered a *problem* for history and criticism and not the goal of their endeavors, have long been the shared concern of scholars and writers in many fields and countries. At the end of the 1960s Michel Foucault described this collective inquiry:

> What one is seeing, then, is the emergence of a whole field of questions, some of which are already familiar, by which this new form of history is trying to develop its own theory: how is one to specify the different concepts that enable us to conceive of discontinuity (threshold, rupture, break, mutation, transformation)? By what criteria is one to isolate the unities with which one is dealing; what is *a* science? What is an *oeuvre*? What is *a* theory? What is *a* concept? What is *a* text? How is one to diversify the levels at which one may place oneself, each of which possesses its own divisions and form of analysis? What is the legitimate level of formalization? What is that of interpretation? Of structural analysis? Of attributions of causality?[42]

41. *Rodin Rediscovered*, p. 11.
42. Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith, New York, Harper & Row, 1972, pp. 5–6.

But contemporary practice in the visual arts provides its critics with a special perspective on the problematic of one of these unities, which is that of *a* work, *an* aesthetic original. For we can watch the frantic attempts to reconstitute this unity even as all the activities of late modernism dramatize its dissolution as a mode of experience.

As the work of a depleted modernism becomes increasingly porous, admitting more and more citations from past art to enter the field of the image, this open terrain of eclecticism must be recontained or reunified in some way if it is to retain its "art" value (and thus its market value). Two ways are employed at present. First: frames. The work of Julian Schnabel, for example, resurrects the heavy, ornamented wooden frame of the old-master painting in order to reconstitute the interiority of the objects he makes, to shore up their identity as simples, an identity that would otherwise be contested by his recourse to imitation and pastiche. Second: the authorial mark of emotion—expressionism, psychological depth, sincerity. *Feeling* is the mark of the pictorial original. Much recent painting is both executed and received as though there were nothing problematic about the formulas of feeling and their continual reuse. The critical term *expressionism* is applied to these pictorial objects of manufacture with as little thought for its appropriateness as if it were to be appended to any of those conventions that operate the terms of polite address, like this one with which I will close my reply to Professor Elsen: "sincerely yours."

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OCTOBER 21

Rainer Werner Fassbinder: A Special Issue

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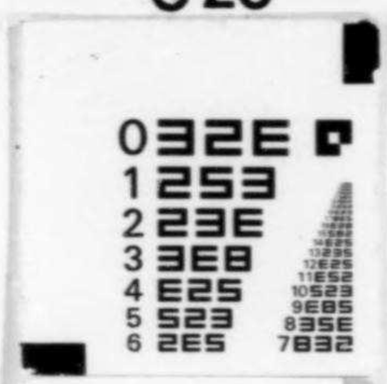
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