

This book is a publication of  
*Indiana University Press*  
601 North Morton Street  
Bloomington, IN 47404-3797 USA

<http://www.indiana.edu/~iupress>

Telephone orders 800-842-6796  
Fax orders 812-855-7931  
Orders by e-mail [iuporder@indiana.edu](mailto:iuporder@indiana.edu)

© 2001 by Robert B. Ray

All rights reserved

*No part of this book may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. The Association of American University Presses' Resolution on Permissions constitutes the only exception to this prohibition.*

*The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1984.*

MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Ray, Robert B. (Robert Beverley), date  
How a film theory got lost and other mysteries in cultural studies / Robert B. Ray.  
p. cm.  
Includes bibliographical references and index.  
ISBN 0-253-33851-4 (cl : alk. paper) — ISBN 0-253-21438-6 (pa : alk. paper)  
1. Motion pictures—Philosophy. 2. Film criticism. I. Title.

PN1995 .R39 2001  
791.43'01—dc21

00-061399

1 2 3 4 5 06 05 04 03 02 01

How a Film Theory Got Lost and Other Mysteries in  
Cultural Studies.

*To my brothers, Charles Barham Ray and Russell Beverley Ray, Jr.*

When you talk about the media today, one question constantly recurs: Do the new media wipe out the old?

—Walter J. Ong<sup>1</sup>

When you get right down to it, the most fantastic thing you could film is people reading.

—Jean-Luc Godard<sup>2</sup>

10

Although few people writing about “Film and Literature” have acknowledged it, a single question haunts this area of media studies: why has this topic, obviously central to humanities-based film education, prompted so little distinguished work? In 1975, Louis D. Giannetti did manage to propose that “the overwhelming bulk of what’s been written about the relationship of film and literature is open to serious question”;<sup>3</sup> twenty-five years later, however, even that judgment seems generous, with its implication that such books as George Bluestone’s *Novels into Film* and Robert Richardson’s *Literature and Film* would demand (and ultimately receive) a series of vigorous responses.<sup>4</sup> Instead, contemporary film studies has simply ignored these books, dismissing them as completely as modern scientists have pre-Newtonian physics. And, indeed, if a practicing physicist perforce regards as irrelevant to his own work Aristotle’s theory of motion, what must a film semiotician or poststructuralist

make of Richardson’s chapter-length analysis of Eliot’s *Waste Land* and Fellini’s *La Dolce Vita* as modern reworkings of *Ecclesiastes*’ theme, “the emptiness of life”?<sup>5</sup> Thus, throughout much of the 1980s and 1990s, “Film and Literature” fell into thorough disrepute, as if the sensed inadequacies of the topic’s principal books, journals, and textbooks had somehow discredited the subject itself.<sup>6</sup> How did this situation arise? Answering that question should tell us something not only about film and literature, but also about the apparatuses<sup>7</sup> under which both have been taught.

Like any historical formation, Film and Literature as a topic is overdetermined. In other words, if we want to know why it took the direction it did, we need to look at the factors that influenced its development, in particular, from the most general to the most immediate: (1) the nature of narrative, (2) the norm of cinema, (3) the methods of academic literary and film study, and (4) the exigencies of the academic profession. Each of these factors has shaped the writing and teaching that have gone under the rubric “Film and Literature.”

### The Nature of Narrative

If from the early days of film criticism, the cinema invited comparisons with literature (rather than with music, sculpture, architecture, or painting), the reason was obvious: both were narratives. (In fact, “Film and Literature” has always meant Film and the Novel, or Film and Drama, but never Film and Poetry, unless the poetry under consideration tells a story.) Theoretical work in narratology, the study of narrative wherever it may be found, legitimized that comparison, demonstrating that as a means of organizing information, narrative is not specific to any one medium.<sup>8</sup> Since literature departments were traditionally charged with the responsibility for narrative, they inevitably appropriated for study this powerful new means of actualizing it—the movies. In doing so, however, these departments neglected to ask two questions that now seem crucial: first, do popular narratives differ in some fundamental way from “artistic,” “high-art” ones; and second, why had the cinema committed itself almost exclusively to storytelling? These questions went unaddressed as critics contented themselves with interminable analyses of individual cases, comparisons between novels and their filmed versions. In retrospect, the two overlooked questions seem to hold the key to the Film/Literature comparison, and the failure to take them up almost certainly accounts for the dead end in which the field quickly found itself.

Of all academics, Film and Literature scholars should have been the best situated to spot the first question’s significance. With the whole enterprise of Film and Literature founded on the hypothesis of narrative transmutability, they might have seen that stories (and popular stories in particular) depend

for their legibility on codes, conventions, connotations, *topoi*, and tropes that similarly migrate from medium to medium—in short, on an intertextuality that includes not only Film and Literature, but all the other media as well. As Roland Barthes described this process, “The cultural codes [deployed by any single story] . . . will emigrate to other texts; there is no lack of hosts.”

Take, for example, the scene in *Casablanca* that introduces Rick Blaine (Humphrey Bogart). After a closeup of Rick’s hand boldly authorizing a check, the camera pulls back to reveal Bogart, seated in a white dinner jacket, smoking a cigarette, playing with a chess set placed next to a half-empty champagne glass. As Hollywood knew perfectly well, the immediate, efficient, shorthand characterization telegraphed by this image (a sophisticated, jaded, clever man, simultaneously proud and melancholy) derived from the objects (tuxedo, champagne glass, chess set) whose meaning had become coded through repeated, similar uses in other movies, popular fiction, advertising, comic strips, and “common sense.” At its most extreme, the Hollywood system sought to codify even its leading actors, turning them into predictably signifying objects, not only through consistent cinematic use (typecasting), but also through extracinematic, semiliterary forms of publicity (press releases, fan-magazine articles, bios, interviews, and news plants).<sup>10</sup> Long before its critics, in other words, Hollywood recognized the perpetual interchange between film and writing and its role in creating (or controlling) meaning.

Film and Literature scholars might have spotted this interchange, too, had they noticed how popular narratives differ from the avant-garde in relying heavily on codes that are never medium-specific.<sup>11</sup> Their specialized literary training, however, predisposed these critics to attend only to how a work functioned within its own medium’s tradition: if *Madame Bovary* could best be explained by studying Flaubert’s use of the novel form, then so could a movie. But while even (especially?) avant-garde texts deploy general codes (in the process Bakhtin called “heteroglossia”),<sup>12</sup> they typically display a preoccupation with their own medium that popular works, aimed at nonspecialist audiences, cannot afford. Further, as *S/Z* demonstrates, avant-garde texts (“the writerly”) criticize, ironize, and parody the conventions on which popular works (“the readerly”) depend. Indeed, far from contesting its signifiers’ received connotations, popular narratives such as *Casablanca* ratify them. To the extent that the sum of such connotations equals a culture’s ideology, such ratification amounts to a political act affirming the *status quo*, and one no less important for taking place at the level of signs.

Their failure to spot popular narratives’ distinctive, radical intertextuality caused Film and Literature scholars to miss an insight that was right before their eyes: if narrative was not specific to any medium, neither was ideology. Indeed, the instant accessibility of popular stories, especially the movies, de-

pends on a signifier’s connotation remaining consistent as it migrates from form to form: if a champagne glass means one thing in an ad and another in a film, *Casablanca*’s audience might not be so readily able to decipher Rick Blaine’s character.

The histories of semiotic, reader-response, and structuralist accounts of the reading process (our negotiation with signs) converged in ideological criticism, a theoretical practice that the movies, a thoroughly commercial practice utterly exposed to the whims of the marketplace, have always demanded. Barthes made the semiotic/ideology connection at least as early as *Mythologies* (1957; English version, 1972), his now-classic analysis of the behavior, events, and culture of everyday life. His 1964 dissection of a French pasta ad (“The Rhetoric of the Image”)<sup>13</sup> made this point more explicit: immediate intelligibility requires signifiers whose connotations are predictable within a culture (e.g., a champagne glass, as opposed to a beer bottle, must always suggest “sophistication”); the sum of these stock connotations equals a culture’s ideology, its elaborate lexicon of representations. Understanding even a single ad, in short, requires that a reader participate (however ironically) in that lexicon whose signifiers he has necessarily encountered elsewhere.

Serious investigations of *narrative* intertextuality (and its entailing ideological disposition) began only with Barthes’s *S/Z* (1970; English version, 1974). By subjecting a single Balzac novella to what he called “a slow motion reading” and by contrasting its “readerly” acceptance of convention with *Bouvard and Pecuchet*’s ambivalence, Barthes demonstrated that popular narratives not only follow the route of received ideology, they also propagate it. Such ideology is intertextual (“there is no lack of hosts”), but film and literature are especially visible sites of its traces.

Presumably familiar with both written and filmed narratives, Literature and Film scholars might have been among the first to recognize both the conventional ideological grounding of popular storytelling and its thoroughgoing intertextuality. Most, however, treated all narratives alike, simply transposing methods developed for the study of “high art” literature. Nevertheless, the few who immediately followed Barthes’s lead often came from literature departments.<sup>14</sup> As a group, they distinguished themselves by appearing more interested in ideology and theory than in either literature or film per se. But their training in the latter two enabled them to detect the elaborate intertextual, ideological scaffolding that sustained popular fictions. Thus, while the non-literature-based film program at Wisconsin became famous for distinguished aesthetic, formalist analyses, several of Indiana’s comparative literature film students went on to found *Jump Cut*, a Marxist journal that monitors the indiscriminate wanderings of ideology among the various narrative media, which now include music video.

### The Norm of Cinema

Film and Literature's basic interest in how stories travel from medium to medium might have allowed the field to anticipate contemporary theory's linked concerns with narrative, intertextuality, and ideology. Sensing the importance of the second question—Why had the cinema committed itself almost exclusively to storytelling?—would have been more difficult. In fact, the overwhelmingly dominant filmmaking enterprise, Hollywood, has always worked as hard as possible to keep that question from occurring to *anyone*. Taking that effort into account, we can rephrase the question: Why was commercial filmmaking so eager to make the feature-length fictional narrative seem the inherent definition of “the cinema”? Significantly, the answer to that question involves narrative literature, in particular, its favored status among a certain filmgoing population.

As early as 1964, Marshall McLuhan suggested an answer to why movies told stories: the content of a new medium, he wrote in *Understanding Media*, is always an old medium.<sup>15</sup> Thus, written narratives appropriate oral tales just as the movies borrow from books and television from film. When we remember that more than half of all commercial movies derive from literature,<sup>16</sup> that television's basic genres (news, situation comedy, the detective story, melodrama, the Western, etc.) descend from Hollywood, and that television devotes an enormous percentage of its programming literally to replaying old movies, we may think that McLuhan has cleared up the problem.<sup>17</sup> But McLuhan articulated as a metaphysical principle what in fact was a historical development. There is no inherent definition of “the cinema.” For specific, albeit multiple reasons, our films have been almost exclusively fictional narratives. Under different circumstances, however, they might have become primarily lyric expressions, theoretical essays, scientific investigations, vaudeville reviews, or all of these things and others besides. That they did not, of course, has everything to do with money.

Although the cinema has most often been compared to literature, it really has far more in common with architecture. Both forms are public, collaborative, and above all, expensive. In both arts, economic constraints have always dictated the shape of the work produced. In comparison, literature (especially “serious” literature) seems almost a priestly calling: novelists and poets, at least since Romanticism, have (for better or worse) been largely able to write whatever pleased them, without regard for audience or expense. At its origins, the cinema attested to divergent concerns, some similarly disinterested. While Méliès intended his films as entertainments, the Lumière brothers, as Noël Burch has argued, regarded theirs as part of the scientific research tradition

of photographers Eadweard Muybridge and Albert Londe.<sup>18</sup> While that tradition has survived in the documentary, both it and Méliès's stunts quickly gave way, under commercial pressure, to what became the movies' principal form: narrative fiction.

In a series of important essays, Burch has maintained that while primitive cinema's *presentational* mode appealed to a proletarian audience accustomed to vaudeville, melodrama, circus, puppet shows, conjuring, and street entertainment, it did not satisfy the bourgeoisie's taste for the *representational*. The movies could do so only by adopting the bourgeoisie's preferred arts, the nineteenth-century realistic novel and drama, reactualized in cinema by means of what Burch calls “the Institutional Mode of Representation,” his term for what is more commonly called “continuity” or “the invisible style.”<sup>19</sup> In brief, the film industry spent the twentieth century's first two decades developing the cinematic equivalent of that seamless “writing degree zero” that Barthes saw as the essence of realist prose fiction.<sup>20</sup> The resulting system, largely in place by the early 1920s and requiring for its perfection only the final cement of synchronous sound, turned on detailed protocols regarding shot-to-shot matching and *mise-en-scène* centering. The result was a rhetoric so naturalized that its traces disappeared: what appeared on the screen seemed the work of no maker's hand. More important, the single form that the movies had become now appeared the inevitable definition of “the cinema” whose other possibilities were quickly forgotten.<sup>21</sup> This naturalized norm served another immediate purpose. As George Mitchell describes, the major film producers' tacit decision to define “the movie” as a feature-length fiction, employing stars and elaborate sets, created a drastically effective barrier-to-entry that rapidly destroyed most independent production and established the oligopolistic industry we still know today.<sup>22</sup>

The whole enterprise of continuity rested on film's *rapprochement* with literature, especially with narrative prose fiction, whose enigmas, forward momentum, and psychological coherence motivate, and thereby conceal, all rhetorical machinery.<sup>23</sup> More urgently, literature provided a young, voracious, financially vulnerable industry with an apparently limitless supply of proved raw material. With “embourgeoisement” and consolidation achieved, Hollywood needed to concentrate on maintaining a hold over its recently acquired audience. Significantly, it often sought to do so, especially during box office downturns, by upping its reliance on pre-sold product: the already successful novel, story, Broadway play, or classic—in short, on literature.

Hollywood made its appropriation of literature's narrative mode seem inevitable. Nevertheless, in Ian Watt's 1957 *The Rise of the Novel*, Film and Literature scholars had a powerful precedent for regarding any aesthetic form as the product of historical (particularly economic) circumstances.<sup>24</sup> Their fail-

ure to make this connection had to do with the prevailing paradigm of "English" and with the concrete demands of the academic profession.

### The Methods of Academic Literature and Film Study

Contemporary critical theory, perhaps emulating the Frankfurt School's productive merger of Freud and Marx, has typically worked synthetically. Film critics especially seized on the discovery that the apparently natural norm of realist narrative in fact rested on an ideologically sustained network of stock, intertextual connotations. This position in turn led to the by now well-developed critique of realism as an inherently repressive mode.<sup>25</sup> Although their field might have given them a privileged viewpoint on these developments, Literature and Film scholars, as we have seen, did not anticipate Barthes's suggestive analyses of ideology's intertextual migrations and did not follow up on Watt's treatment of the novel as a historical formation. What *did* Literature and Film scholars do? Adaptation studies.

A look at Jeffrey Egan Welch's *Literature and Film: An Annotated Bibliography, 1909-1977*<sup>26</sup> will suggest the dominance of this one approach. Of 1,235 entries, the vast majority come equipped with such titles as the following:

- "Hemingway on the Screen: His Universal Themes Fared Better Than His Topical Ones"
- "*Macbeth*: The Making of the Film"
- "Reconciliation: *Slaughterhouse-Five*—The Film and the Novel"
- "Sirk's *The Tarnished Angels*: Pylon Recreated"
- "Henry James into Film"
- "Films and Edith Wharton"
- "*Blow-Up* from Cortazar to Antonioni"
- "*The Bridge on the River Kwai*: From the Novel to the Movie"
- "*The Fox*: The Film and the Novel"
- "Three Filmed *Hamlets*"

The sheer number of these articles, their dogged resort to the individual case study, the lack of any evidence of cumulative knowledge development or heuristic potential—all these factors suggest that as a discipline, Literature and Film largely remained in what Thomas Kuhn called a "pre-paradigmatic state."<sup>27</sup> Without benefit of a presiding poetics, Literature and Film scholars could only persist in asking about individual movies the same unproductive layman's question (How does the film compare to the book?), getting the same unproductive answer (The book is better). Each article seemed isolated from all the others, its insights apparently stopped at the borders of the specific film or novel selected for analysis.

Strictly speaking, however, Film and Literature was not without paradigm; for a field growing in the 1960s out of literature departments, it simply inherited the assumptions of the dominant New Criticism. But despite its paraphernalia of manifestos and scientific vocabulary, New Criticism proved ultimately antitheoretical. Its grounding in the individual critical sensibility (T. S. Eliot: "There is no method except to be very intelligent"<sup>28</sup>) and a reified notion of the text (to be appreciated for its "integrity," "relevance," "unity," "function," "maturity," "subtlety," "adequacy")<sup>29</sup> authorized only close readings of particular cases and not a more sweeping, explanatory poetics. Further, New Criticism's veneration of "art" and its famous hostility to translation ("the Heresy of Paraphrase")<sup>30</sup> sponsored Film and Literature's obsessive refrain that cinematic versions of literary classics failed to live up to their sources. Indeed, most of these articles could have used the same subtitle: "But Compared to the Original . . ."<sup>31</sup>

The inadequacy of this objection has become apparent. Philosophically, it rests on a hierarchy/opposition of *original* and *copy*, which Jacques Derrida has repeatedly deconstructed. Practically, it rests on a notion of original "aura" dissipated by what Walter Benjamin first described as modernity's rapidly accumulating tools for mechanical reproduction.<sup>32</sup> In Derrida's terms, any criticism that denounces the copy in the name of the original works in vain to arrest the inevitable volatility of signs:

And this is the possibility on which I want to insist: the possibility of disengagement and citational graft which belongs to the structure of every mark, spoken or written. . . . every sign, linguistic or non-linguistic, spoken or written . . . in small or large unit, can be *cited*, put between quotation marks; and in doing so it can break with every given context, engendering an infinity of new contexts in a manner which is absolutely illimitable.<sup>33</sup>

The film adaptation, in Derridean language, is not simply a faded imitation of a superior, authentic original: it is a "citation" grafted into a new context and thereby inevitably refunctioned. Thus, far from destroying the literary source's meaning, adaptation "disseminated" it in a process that Benjamin found democratizing:

[T]echnical reproduction can put the copy of the original into situations which would be out of reach for the original itself. Above all, it enables the original to meet the beholder halfway, be it in the form of a photograph or a phonograph record. The cathedral leaves its locale to be received in the studio of a lover of art; the choral production, performed in an auditorium or in the open air, re-sounds in the drawing room. . . .

One might generalize by saying: the technique of reproduction detaches the

reproduced object from the domain of tradition. By making many reproductions it substitutes a plurality of copies for a unique existence. And in permitting the reproduction to meet the beholder or listener in his own particular situation, it reactivates the object reproduced. These two processes lead to a tremendous shattering of tradition. . . .

Instead of being based on ritual, it [art] begins to be based on another practice—politics.<sup>34</sup>

Many Literature and Film scholars, however, resisted the process that Benjamin celebrated as inescapable. Fearful of seeing literature's narrative role usurped by the movies, and under the sway of New Criticism's religious reverence for "serious art," these critics typically used the adaptation study to shore up literature's crumbling walls.

New Criticism's attempts to define the essence of "Poetry," "The Novel," and "Literature" also encouraged Film and Literature scholars to use adaptation articles as vehicles for speculating about, in Seymour Chatman's words, "What Novels Can Do That Films Can't (and Vice Versa)."<sup>35</sup> Such articles normally advised readers of the cinema's limitations: it had, for example, no tenses, no means of maintaining strict points-of-view, no descriptions, and no way of revealing "interior consciousness." Most of this speculation was useless, based as it was on the severely curtailed definition of "the movies" that Hollywood had successfully naturalized. Even in its reverse formulation—Eisenstein-sponsored discoveries of literary "anticipations" of some cinematic device such as montage—this whole project rested on notions of unchanging, idealist objects ("Literature," "Cinema") now thoroughly discredited.

In sum, Literature and Film scholars wrote adaptation studies because New Criticism had trained them to do so. For some reason, they did not see that the cinema's very different determinations (commercial exposure, collaborative production, public consumption) made irrelevant methods of analysis developed for "serious literature."<sup>36</sup> That reason has much to do with the immediate demands of the academic profession.

### The Exigencies of the Academic Profession

In the spring of 1971, the Midwest Modern Language Association devoted its entire *Bulletin* to two topics: "Film and Literature" and the growing crisis in the academic job market.<sup>37</sup> While the MMLA obviously regarded these two subjects as discrete, hindsight has exposed their connection. The sociology of knowledge has repeatedly demonstrated that basic academic structures, normally taken for granted (having been naturalized as thoroughly as Hollywood's continuity style), materially affect such things as canon formation,

choice of methodologies, and definitions of literacy.<sup>38</sup> In specific, Jonathan Culler has observed how professional obligations have reinforced scholars' preference for isolated close readings:

[O]ur tenure system creates a need for theories and methods that generate numerous small projects which can be completed in less than six years and listed on curriculum vitae. Since interpretation can generate an endless series of twenty-page articles, it suits our system much better than theories whose projects would take years to complete. . . . It would be interesting to investigate whether in countries with different academic reward systems many fewer interpretations are published and writing about literature takes more varied forms.<sup>39</sup>

"An endless series of twenty-page articles" amounts to a reasonable description of what has been produced under the rubric of Literature and Film. In asking how that situation came about, we should first remember that academic film studies began its rise precisely during the moment when the job market for Ph.D.'s in literature first fell apart—in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Obviously, film's admission into literature departments was itself motivated by an attempt to maintain declining enrollments in the humanities. For the individual job candidate, untenured assistant professor, or ambitious tenured faculty member, the rapidly escalating requirements for employment, tenure, and promotion conspired to encourage rapid and frequent publication. Restricted in scope, demanding neither sustained research into nor historical research about the two media, the typical adaptation study had things in common with that undergraduate staple, the comparison-contrast paper—it was easy to turn out, it satisfied the requirements, and it could be done over and over again. Surely it is no accident that the principal journal for such articles, *Literature/Film Quarterly*, began in 1973 as the job market worsened. Significantly (and admirably), that journal has always reserved most of its space for articles by graduate students, junior faculty, and teachers at small, relatively unprestigious colleges and universities—all obviously groups needing to publish.<sup>40</sup>

### Coda: Possibilities for Future Work

Inevitably, all writing will return to the pictogram. It's been foretold down the century as words turned into objects, stories fell apart, and the medium became the message.

—C. Carr<sup>41</sup>

Twenty years ago, one of American film studies' most prominent figures, Dudley Andrew, called for a moratorium on the kind of Film and Literature article I have been describing—what Andrew referred to as "the discourse of

fidelity," "unquestionably the most frequent and most tiresome discussion of adaptation." Nevertheless, Andrew summoned E. H. Gombrich and André Bazin as supporters for the argument that "one cannot dismiss adaptation since it is a fact of human practice":

We can and do correctly match items from different systems all the time: a tuba sound is more like a rock than a piece of string; it is more like a bear than a bird; more like a romanesque church than a baroque one. Adaptation would then become a matter of searching two systems of communication for elements of equivalent position in the system capable of eliciting a signified at a given level of pertinence, for example the description of a narrative action.<sup>42</sup>

Speculating about possibilities for future research in Film and Literature asks that we think about a question: What do we need to know? Elsewhere in his article, Andrew proposed that adaptation studies might continue fruitfully were Film and Literature brought "out of the realm of eternal principle and airy generalization, and onto the uneven but solid ground of artistic history, practice, and discourse" (14)—an indisputable suggestion but one that might simply foster more rigorous investigations of the transactions between classic literature and serious filmmaking. I think we more urgently need to know something else.

If in Gombrich's terms, knowledge about adaptation simply entails the ability to isolate systematic equivalences capable of generating the same signified, then the commercial media, never fussy about mixing forms, have long since beaten academics to the punch. Confronted by our century's distinctive feature—a media industry whose shared (and oppressive) representations converge from every side to structure even our unconscious lives—we have no idea how to fight back. Academic life and its resulting pedagogy are still bound to the word; the more supple tools that impinge upon us, images and sounds combined with language, we have not yet learned to use.

As a movement in the arts, sciences, and critical theory, postmodernism teaches that things repressed (objects, groups, signs, questions) return in displaced form. Ignored soup labels return as Warhol's avant-garde paintings, women's studies becomes feminist theory, and photographs of Vietnam appear on punk rock album covers. Similarly, Film and Literature, repressed as a topic by film studies' leading institutions and scholars, has for some time been reappearing as explorations into transactions between word and image. Prominent precedents for this position have long existed: Freud's positing of the unconscious (and the dream) as a rebus, Eisenstein's and Pound's fascination with the Chinese ideogram, Barthes's semiotic inquiries into the relationships between photograph and caption, Godard's experiments with language re-motivating imagery, Eikhenbaum's thesis that filmwatching depends upon the

viewer's accompanying images with his own "inner speech," Francis Yates's description of Renaissance memory systems founded on mentally stored images, Derrida's research into the vestigial hieroglyphic elements of our writing, and Alexandre Astruc's famous demand that we use the camera to *write*.<sup>43</sup> Why as students and teachers should we care about the relationship of word and image? Let me propose an answer, which I hope will provoke future work in a transformed field of Film and Literature.

In a provocative series of essays analyzing the decisive shift from orality to writing in ancient Greece, Eric A. Havelock demonstrated that every facet of a culture's life is influenced by its presiding means of communication.<sup>44</sup> Nearly fifty years ago, Arnold Hauser labeled the twentieth century "The Film Age."<sup>45</sup> Although film and television, and now computers, have steadily supplanted the book, we continue to live in a period of transition with the two forms, word and image, existing side by side. Commercial interests have long since learned *one* way of using the communications resources whose richness no other historical period can equal. The task facing all of us, especially Film and Literature scholars, involves rethinking the media's *fait accompli*, imagining new ways in which words and images can combine and new purposes for those combinations.

crime" ("A Small History of Photography," in *One-Way Street*, p. 256). Several of Hopper's most well-known paintings share this sinister quality. *Drug Store* (1927) and *Seven A.M.* (1948), for example, make their small shops seem vulnerable, as if a robbery, timed for these deserted times of day, were imminent. *Drug Store*, in fact, resembles the site of the surprise attack on *The Godfather's* Don Corleone. Similarly, *Cape Cod Evening* (1939) seems to portray a rural hideout, reached by the highway visible in *Gas* (1940). Meanwhile, the other gang members wait in a *Hotel by a Railroad* (1952), or in the *Hotel Lobby* (1943); or they meet surreptitiously with their accountant in a *Conference at Night* (1949). Indeed, in Hopper's world, even the smallest detail—ordinary curtains, blown by the wind (*Night Windows*, 1928)—becomes ominous.

13. Benjamin, "Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia," in *One-Way Street*, p. 229.

14. Aragon, "On Décor," in *The Shadow and Its Shadow*, p. 29.

15. For a discussion of conventional cinema's narrative linearization, see Noël Burch, "Film's Institutional Mode of Representation and the Soviet Response," *October* 11 (Winter 1979): pp. 77–96.

16. André Breton, "As in a Wood," in *The Shadow and Its Shadow*, pp. 42–44.

17. Benjamin, "Surrealism," in *One-Way Street*, p. 229.

18. Quoted in Robert Hobbs, *Edward Hopper* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1987), pp. 10–11.

19. See Roland Barthes (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), pp. 54–55: "Le plein du cinéma—Saturation of the cinema. Resistance to the cinema. The signifier itself is always, by nature, continuous here, whatever the rhetoric of frames and shots; without remission, a continuum of images; the film . . . follows, like a garrulous ribbon: statutory impossibility of the fragment, of the haiku."

20. Roland Barthes, "The Third Meaning," in *Image Music Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), pp. 52–68.

21. Barthes, "The Third Meaning," in *Image Music Text*, pp. 61–62.

22. Barthes, "The Third Meaning," in *Image Music Text*, pp. 64–65.

23. For a longer discussion of fetishism as a research strategy, see my book *The Avant-Garde Finds Andy Hardy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), chap. 5.

24. Roland Barthes, "Longtemps, je me suis couché de bonne heure . . ." in *The Rustle of Language* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1986), pp. 278–279.

25. *Godard on Godard*, ed. Tom Milne (New York: Viking Press, 1972), p. 181: "Cinema, Truffaut said, is spectacle—Méliès—and research—Lumière. If I analyze myself today, I see that I have always wanted, basically, to do research in the form of a spectacle. The documentary side is: a man in a particular situation. The spectacle comes when one makes this man a gangster or a secret agent."

## 8. The Riddle of Elvis-the-Actor

1. David Thomson, *A Biographical Dictionary of Film*, 3rd ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), p. 602.

2. John Lahr, "Sinatra's Song," *New Yorker*, 3 November 1997, p. 83. Lahr's *New Yorker* essay appears, in expanded form, as *Sinatra: The Artist and the Man* (New York: Random House, 1997). LaRosa's comment appeared in Gene Lees's tribute, "Turning a 32-Bar Song into a 3-Act Play," *New York Times*, 24 May 1998, Arts and Leisure section, p. 28.

3. Ronald L. Davis, *The Glamour Factory: Inside Hollywood's Big Studio System* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1993), p. 113.

4. See James Naremore, *Acting in the Cinema* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988). This book has greatly influenced this essay.

5. Sinatra: "I always believed that the written word was first. Always first. The word actually dictates to you in a song. It really tells you what it needs" (Lahr, *Sinatra: The Artist and the Man*, p. 37).

6. See Naremore, *Acting in the Cinema*, pp. 17–19, for the notion of the-self-as-performance in *Breathless*.

## 9. The Two Cities and the Archive

1. Sigmund Freud, *The Origins of Psychoanalysis: Letters to Wilhelm Fliess*, trans. Eric Mosbacher and James Strachey (New York: Basic Books, 1954), p. 216.

2. Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg, *The Nature of Narrative* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. 13–15.

3. Roland Barthes, "The Reality Effect," in *The Rustle of Language*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1986), pp. 141–148.

4. Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* (New York: Norton, 1975), p. 5.

5. Roland Barthes, "The Third Meaning," in *Image Music Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), pp. 52–68.

6. Jorge Luis Borges, *Labyrinths* (New York: New Direction, 1964), p. 83.

7. Jean Baudrillard, *Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), pp. 125, 128.

8. Donald Spence, *Narrative Truth and Historical Truth: Meaning and Interpretation in Psychoanalysis* (New York: Norton, 1982), p. 32.

9. Jean-Luc Godard, *Godard on Godard*, ed. Tom Milne (New York: Viking, 1972), pp. 169, 181, 192, 235.

10. Quoted in Dudley Andrew, ed., *Breathless* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1987), p. 166.

11. Roland Barthes, "Longtemps, je me suis couché de bonne heure . . ." in *The Rustle of Language*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1986), pp. 278–279.

12. Bill Nichols, *Ideology and the Image* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981), p. 70.

13. The "Signorelli episode," Freud's account of his forgetting of that name and his attempts to replace it with the names of two other Italian Renaissance painters (Botticelli and Boltraffio) appears in the first chapter of *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, trans. Alan Tyson (New York: Norton, 1965), pp. 1–7.

14. Baudrillard, *Selected Writings*, p. 125.

15. Noël Burch, *Theory of Film Practice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), pp. 111–112.

16. The best account of the *Cinémathèque Française* and its founder Henri Langlois is Richard Roud's book *A Passion for Films: Henri Langlois and the Cinémathèque Française* (New York: Viking, 1983).

## 10. Film and Literature

1. Walter J. Ong, *Interfaces of the Word: Studies in the Evolution of Consciousness and Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), p. 82.

2. Jacques Bontemps, Jean-Louis Comolli, Michael Delalay, and Jean Narboni, "Struggle on Two Fronts: A Conversation with Jean-Luc Godard," *Film Quarterly* XXI, no. 2 (Winter 1968–1969): p. 31. A more complete version of Godard's famously cryptic remark: "When you get right down to it, the most fantastic thing you could film

is people reading. I don't see why no one's done it. Film someone who's simply reading. . . . The movie you'd make would be a lot more interesting than most of them are. Why couldn't film mean people reading really fine books? Why shouldn't you see something like that on TV, especially now that people don't read much?" Earlier in this same interview, Godard confesses, "You know I can't read" (25).

3. Louis D. Giannetti, *Godard and Others: Essays on Film Form* (Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1975), p. 89.

4. George Bluestone, *Novels into Film: The Metamorphosis of Fiction into Cinema* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968); Robert Richardson, *Literature and Film* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969).

5. Richardson, *Literature and Film*, pp. 194–218. This chapter is discussed (critically) in James Goodwin, "Literature and Film: A Review of Criticism," *Quarterly Review of Film Studies* IV, no. 2 (Spring 1974): pp. 227–246 (see especially pp. 229–230). Goodwin's survey article provides the best early introduction to Film and Literature as a topic. By far the best recent survey is Timothy Corrigan's *Film and Literature: An Introduction and Reader* (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1999).

6. The topic's main journal is *Literature/Film Quarterly*, begun in 1973 at Salisbury State College. Of the earlier books, Seymour Chatman's *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978) and Dudley Andrew's chapter "Adaptation," in *Concepts in Film Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), seem the most abidingly useful.

7. I am using the word *apparatus* in Brecht's sense to mean the conditions under which information is produced, distributed, and consumed. As Brecht pointed out, in a justifiably famous remark, "Great apparatus like the opera, the stage, the press, etc., impose their views as it were incognito" (*Brecht on Theatre*, ed. John Willett [New York: Hill and Wang, 1964], p. 34).

8. For an excellent discussion of this point, see Seymour Chatman, "What Novels Can Do that Films Can't (and Vice Versa)," *Critical Inquiry* 7, no. 1 (Autumn 1980): pp. 121–122. Robert Scholes makes the same point in *Semiotics and Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), p. 57.

9. Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974), p. 205.

10. For two excellent discussions of how the apparently extratextual (e.g., publicity, distribution, even rumor) inflects the readings of a particular text, see Tony Bennett, "Text and Social Process: The Case of James Bond," *Screen Education* 41 (Winter/Spring 1982): pp. 3–14; and Annette Kuhn, *Women's Pictures: Feminism and the Cinema* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982), pp. 3–18, 125–126, 178–196.

11. I recognize that this point is debatable. A counterargument might invoke Barthes's *S/Z* as evidence of the radical intertextuality of all texts. But we often forget that *S/Z*'s point is based on an analysis of a popular text, Balzac's *Sarrasine*.

12. M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas, 1981), pp. 263, 428.

13. Roland Barthes, *Image Music Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), pp. 32–51.

14. Judith Mayne, for example, superbly outlined *S/Z*'s importance to Film and Literature in "Introduction: Film/Narrative/The Novel," *Ciné-Tracts* 13 (1981): not paginated. I am also thinking here of Julia Lesage, who quickly saw *S/Z*'s relevance to film study. See her "S/Z and Film Criticism" and "S/Z and Rules of the Game," *Jump Cut* 12/13 (1976): pp. 41–51; and "Teaching the Comparative Analysis of Novels and Films," *Style* 9 (1975): pp. 453–468. Lesage studied in Indiana University's comparative literature program and cofounded *Jump Cut*.

15. Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), p. vii.

16. Dudley Andrew, "The Well-Worn Muse: Adaptation in Film History and Theory," in *Narrative Strategies: Original Essays in Film and Prose Fiction*, ed. Syndy M. Conger and Janice R. Welsch (Macomb: Western Illinois University Press, 1980), p. 10. This estimate may be high. John Ellis says that "about 30 percent of all narrative films made in Hollywood's classic period were adapted from novels and short stories" ("The Literary Adaptation," *Screen* 23, no. 1 [May–June 1982]: p. 3). Even working from the other direction, the percentages still startle: the *New York Times* once estimated that one in fifty novels gets optioned for the movies (Edwin McDowell, "Hollywood and the Novelist: It's a Fickle Romance, at Best," *New York Times*, 14 July 1985, sec. 2, p. 1).

17. Between 1952 and 1955, all the major Hollywood studios (except MGM) sold most of their pre-1948 films to distributors who promptly sold them to local TV stations. See Erik Barnouw, *Tube of Plenty: The Evolution of American Television* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), pp. 197–198. By 1968, apart from its non-prime-time showings, television had an *NBC Monday Night Movie*, an *NBC Tuesday Night Movie*, an *ABC Wednesday Night Movie*, a *CBS Thursday Night Movie*, a *CBS Friday Night Movie*, an *NBC Saturday Night Movie*, and to complete the week, an *ABC Sunday Night Movie*. For listings of the annual prime-time schedules, see Tim Brooks and Earle Marsh, *The Complete Directory to Prime Time Network and Cable TV Shows 1946–Present* (New York: Ballantine, 1995).

18. Noël Burch, "Charles Baudelaire versus Doctor Frankenstein," *Afterimage* (London) 8/9 (Spring 1981): pp. 4–21.

19. For portions of Burch's argumentative archaeology of the cinema, see the following: "Porter, or Ambivalence," *Screen* 19, no. 4 (Winter 1978–1979): pp. 91–105; "Film's Institutional Mode of Representation and the Soviet Response," *October* 11 (Winter 1979): pp. 77–96; "A Parenthesis on Film History," in Burch's *To the Distant Observer: Form and Meaning in the Japanese Cinema* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), pp. 61–66; and "How We Got into Pictures: Notes Accompanying *Correction Please*," *Afterimage* (London) 8/9 (Spring 1981): pp. 22–38. Burch summarized this argument in his book *Life to Those Shadows*, trans. Ben Brewster (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990). The book, however, proved less interestingly provocative than the articles from which it derived.

Burch bases part of his argument about the "embourgeoisement" of the cinema on Russell Merritt's landmark article, "Nickelodeon Theaters, 1905–1914: Building an Audience for the Movies," in *The American Film Industry*, ed. Tino Balio (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), pp. 83–102. Another excellent article in this tradition is Margaret Morse's "Paradoxes of Realism: The Rise of Film in the Train of the Novel," *Ciné-Tracts* 13 (Spring 1981): pp. 27–37.

20. Roland Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero*, trans. Annette Lavers and Colin Smith (New York: Hill and Wang, 1968).

21. Readers interested in a brief description of Classic Hollywood's stylistic protocols may wish to consult my book *A Certain Tendency of the Hollywood Cinema, 1930–1980* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), pp. 32–55.

22. "George Mitchell, 'The Consolidation of the American Film Industry 1915–1920,'" *Ciné-Tracts* 6 (Spring 1979): pp. 28–36, and *Ciné-Tracts* 7/8 (Fall 1979): pp. 63–70.

23. In *S/Z*, Barthes wittily observes that often a narrative's sheer speed keeps a reader from asking questions (p. 127).

24. Another precedent was Arnold Hauser's monumental, four-volume *The Social History of Art* (New York: Vintage), which first appeared in the United States in 1951.

25. The leading book in this "constructivist" tradition is, of course, *S/Z*. A useful

summary of this position appears in Tony Stevens, "Reading the Realist Film," *Screen Education* 26 (Spring 1978): pp. 13-35. Other important discussions in this vein include Colin MacCabe, "Realism and the Cinema: Notes on Some Brechtian Theses," *Screen* 15, no. 2 (Summer 1974): pp. 7-27; Terry Lovell, *Pictures of Reality: Aesthetics, Politics and Pleasure* (London: British Film Institute, 1980); Sylvia Harvey, *May '68 and Film Culture* (London: British Film Institute, 1978); and Catherine Belsey, *Critical Practice* (London: Methuen, 1980).

26. Jeffrey Egan Welch, *Literature and Film: An Annotated Bibliography, 1909-1977* (New York: Garland, 1981).

27. Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), pp. 10-22, 43-51.

28. Quoted by Terence Hawkes in *Structuralism and Semiotics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), p. 152. Hawkes's book contains a useful summary of New Criticism's assumptions: pp. 151-156.

29. These words come from one of New Criticism's manifestos, W. K. Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley's "The Intentional Fallacy," in Wimsatt, *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1954).

30. The title of Cleanth Brooks's famous essay, found in his book *The Well Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1947), pp. 192-214.

31. An actual title of an article by William Fadiman who, in fact, criticized the tendency I am describing: *Films and Filming* 11, no. 5 (1965): pp. 21-23.

32. For film students, a convenient place to find Walter Benjamin's famous essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" is in *Film Theory and Criticism*, ed. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 731-751. It also appears, differently translated, in Benjamin's *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken, 1969).

33. Jacques Derrida, "Signature Event Context," *Glyph* 1 (1977): p. 185.

34. Derrida, in *Film Theory and Criticism*, pp. 733-734, 736.

35. *Critical Inquiry* 7, no. 1 (Autumn 1980): pp. 121-140.

36. Not surprisingly, initial work on television made the same mistake by simply carrying over a series of questions from film study that may or may not obtain in this different medium. When scholars trained in New Criticism's close-reading methods first approached the cinema, they inevitably gravitated to such apparently complex, ambiguous "art" films as Bergman's; and rightly so, since Hollywood films, while even more complex with their concealed reliance on intertextual networks, seemed slight in comparison. Making sense of how these popular movies worked required a whole new set of questions (having to do with ideology, semiotics, the experiences of reading and identification). Those issues may or may not apply to basic television genres. So far, the best work on television takes into account TV viewers' far more casual attention to images and sounds, which have become, for many people, part of the household furniture.

37. *The Bulletin of the Midwest Modern Language Association* 4, no. 1 (Spring 1971).

38. See, for example, Brian McCrea's argument that English professors' need for apparently complex texts has resulted in the banishment from the curriculum of the relatively straightforward Addison and Steele: *Addison and Steele Are Dead: The English Department, Its Canon, and the Professionalization of Literary Criticism* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1990). The most comprehensive discussion of how academic structures affect assumed notions about "Literature" and teaching appears in Gerald Graff, *Professing Literature: An Institutional History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987). Also useful is Robert Scholes, *The Rise and Fall of English* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

39. Jonathan Culler, "The Critical Assumption," *SCE Reports* 6 (Fall 1979) (The Society for Critical Exchange), p. 83.

40. I have written elsewhere about the job market's pernicious effect on the kinds of film studies work that gets published: see my book *The Avant-Garde Finds Andy Hardy* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp. 5-10.

41. C. Carr, "M. Kasper's Glyph Hangers," *The Village Voice Literary Supplement*, March 1985, p. 19.

42. Andrew, "The Well-Worn Muse: Adaptation in Film History and Theory," pp. 12-13. For an excellent discussion of "the discourse of fidelity," see Christopher Orr, "The Discourse on Adaptation," *Wide Angle* 6, no. 2 (1984): pp. 72-76.

43. On Freud's analogy of the unconscious and the dream to the rebus, see *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. A. A. Brill (New York: Modern Library, 1950).

On the ideogram, see Sergei Eisenstein, "The Cinematographic Principle and the Ideogram," in his *Film Form*, trans. Jay Leyda (New York: Harcourt, 1949), pp. 28-44; and Ernest Fenollosa, *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry*, ed. Ezra Pound (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1936).

For Barthes's semiotic investigations, see "The Photographic Message" and "Rhetoric of the Image," in his *Image Music Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), pp. 7-31.

Almost all of Godard's films explore the relationship between word and image (he calls his own production company *Sonimage*). I am thinking in particular of two scenes: the first, in *Masculin-Féminin* (1966), where the image of the pretty "Mademoiselle 19 Ans" competes with the tendentious caption ("Dialogue with a Consumer Product") that introduces her; the second, in *2 ou 3 choses que je sais d'elle* (1966), where consecutive voiceovers introduce the same woman as first actress and then fictional character.

The best article on Eikhenbaum's "inner speech" is Paul Willemsen's "Cinematic Discourse: The Problem of Inner Speech," in his *Looks and Frictions: Essays in Cultural Studies and Film Theory* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press/British Film Institute, 1994), pp. 27-55. See also my book *The Avant-Garde Finds Andy Hardy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), chap. 2.

On renaissance memory systems, see Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966). For a fascinating historical extrapolation from Yates's work, see Jonathan D. Spence, *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci* (New York: Viking, 1984).

The best study of Derrida's interest in hieroglyphics is Gregory L. Ulmer's *Applied Grammatology: Post(e)-Pedagogy from Jacques Derrida to Joseph Beuys* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985).

On the *caméra-stylo*, see Alexandre Astruc, "Le caméra-stylo," in *The New Wave*, ed. Peter Graham (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1968), pp. 17-24.

44. See Havelock's *Preface to Plato* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963) and *The Literate Revolution in Greece and Its Cultural Consequences* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982).

45. Hauser, *The Social History of Art*, vol. 4 (New York: Vintage, 1951), pp. 226-259.