



SUPER EIGHT

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE MELBOURNE SUPER-8 FILM GROUP NO. 48 JUNE 1990

* REALISM

* DIRK DE BRUYN

* ST-KILDA FILM FESTIVAL

* MARK ZENNER
INTERVIEW

* EXPRESSION

ALL THIS AND MORE.

COMING TO YOU DIRECT.

STAND BY.

Are you wanted
by this man?



IL CONFORMISTA

Loren Daniel	Lyndsay Christopherson
George Goularas	Russell Morris
Adam Thompson	Noel Lloyd
Nick Ostrovskis	Ian Poppins
Terence Monro	Damian Lynch
Harry Starverkos	Darron Davies
Ross Doonan	Brian Pritchard
Sandy Munro	Jacqui Ward
Maria Jacovelli	Tim Danko
Rohan Forster	Philip Heffernan
Cleo Constantinou	David Coulton
Ivana Measic	David Haberfeld
Detlev	Julian Dahl
Damien Grant	Peter McLennan
Jenny Pignataro	Angie Porter
Michael Koller	Bree McKilligan
Melanie Speldewinde	Damien Grant
Brendan Murray	(second time on this list!)
Mark Zenner	Laki Sideris
Ellen MacLennan	Sandy Munro
Richard Tuohy	(another quick one!)
Renata Fairhall	Nigel Buesst
Nicola Eveleigh	MIMA
Gary O'Keefe	Phillip Dean
Alex McCallum	Michael Siu
Adam Boyd	Bruce Armstrong
Elius Levin	Greg Olsen
Michael Filippidis	Mark La Rosa
Robert Jankov	Flora Georgiou
Brett Magee	Mark Freeman
Sarah Johnson	Chris Windmill
Matthew Rees	Bill Mousoulis

If your name is not on this list it means you're not a currently paid up member, which means this could be the last newsletter you'll be getting for awhile. Bill remains a nice guy, sending more newsletters out than he should, but don't exploit that niceness! We get funding, but incorporated within that is a certain amount of memberships.

The 5th MELBOURNE SUPER-8 FILM FESTIVAL

The person introduced to people at the last Open Screening as the festival director is an imposter! No, seriously, Brendan Murray is now unable to take the position up, so the new director is Steven Ball.

The festival is on Aug 31 - Sep 2 at the Glasshouse Cinema, and entry deadline is July 27. Entry forms will be available soon now.

For more info: Steven Ball on 531 8145
Bill Mousoulis on 429 9847

MIMA

Open screening

Linden, 26 Acland St.

SUN, 24 June, 2p.m.

2:00 "AMERIKA"

3:45 Open Screening

Rim 650 7692

ST. KILDA ACCESS TELEVISION

FIRST FLOOR
29 FITZROY STREET
ST. KILDA 3182
PH. 525 3551

P.O. BOX 1252
ST. KILDA SOUTH 3182



ST KILDA ACCESS TELEVISION (SKA TV) was incorporated in October 1988 and has since held two test telecasts, in December 1988 and December 1989.

SKA TV aims to establish a permanent Community Access television station serving the inner eastern and inner southern suburbs of Melbourne. Together with RMITV (student/youth telecaster), TVU (Western suburbs telecaster) and Open Channel (community access video centre), we are forming a consortium to apply for a permanent Metropolitan wide Public television licence on a channel-share basis.

MELBOURNE FRINGE ARTS FESTIVAL FILM AND VIDEO FESTIVAL SEPTEMBER 1990

Film-makers and producers of independent productions are invited to submit works for screening. The Fringe festival takes place in conjunction with the Melbourne International Arts Festival.

AIMS OF THE FESTIVAL

- o To premiere new productions in film and video
- o To encourage the distribution and exchange of information about film and video
- o To expand the audience of the independent film and video sector

Assisted by Film Victoria and the Australian Film Commission

ARTFORM MEETING JUNE 26 AT 6.30PM - FRINGE OFFICE

DEADLINE FOR ENTRY - Entry forms, together with preview films or videos must reach the Fringe Network Office by the 6th July 1990. TO:

FILM AND VIDEO DIRECTOR OR DROP IN TO
P.O BOX 1479
COLLINGWOOD VIC 3066

Fax 417 7872 Phone 419 9548

FRINGE, FIRST FLOOR
184 BRUNSWICK ST
FITZROY VIC 3065

TELEVISION UNLIMITED TRANSMITS

when



WED JUNE 27th - JULY 6th

TVU is interested in screening films by Super-8 film makers. Films need to be on a video format such as VHS, Video 8 or U-Matic.

If you're interested please call Lisa Horler ASAP on 580 8079 or call the office 687 1847.

NEXT MEETING

At 7:30 p.m.:

BEST SUPER-8 FILMS OF THE 80'S

A selection of some of the better Super-8 films of the last decade, as suggested by the list in the 1990 SUPER-8 MAGAZINE.

Next Open Screening is on Tuesday, JUNE 12 at the usual venue at the Glasshouse Function Room, RMIT, 360 Swanston St. City.

"8 in the 80's" VIDEO COMPILATION on sale at the next Open Screening. Only \$30 for members. Bring your money!

At 8:30 p.m.:

OPEN SCREENING

BYO film. Everybody and everything welcome. You don't even have to be a member - just roll up. Sometimes we get a lot of films. To be guaranteed that your film will be screened (especially if it's over 10 minutes) it is wise to book it in with Bill beforehand on 429 9847.

NEXT MEETING

"HOMECOMINGS"

I went to see Dirk de Bruyn's film Homecomings at the Glasshouse Cinema on Friday 25 May 1990. I sat in my usual expensive super-box seat. With me was Bill Koussoulis, Richard Tucky and Sandy Munro. Behind me in the darkness was Michael Lee with his beard and his friends. There were other people too. They were complete strangers. If you want a description of them (the strangers) don't hesitate to ask me at the next open screening.

I thought that Homecomings was a great film, even though it was too long. The film went for about 90 minutes. I thought that it could have been bathed in hot water and shrunk by about 20 minutes. In Homecomings, Dirk combines his hypnotic single frame images with real time images, nostalgia, timelapse, narration and Michael Luck's sound. All these elements are integrated very smoothly. The film does flow.

Homecomings is a film of Dirk and his family's journey to Holland (the country of Dirks birth) in 1982. It is a personal trip back to his distant childhood past - his origins/ancestry. It was 25 years since Dirk left Holland as an 8 year old. This is Dirks first time back. He meets old relatives and friends again. Dirk has a special relationship with his Uncle Arie who is a painter. Arie paints stunning landscapes of the Dutch countryside, ships, barges, farms, weather effects and family portraits. A selection of about 20 of Aries pictures are shown which span several decades. This was my favorite part of the film.

In the film, Dirk discusses the sense of separation that exists after leaving his homeland. He observes that in Australia his name is often spelt wrong. On the other hand his name is always spelt correctly in his homeland. Dirk visits old familiar places like schools and the house where he lived as a kid. He contrasts these places with E/W photos of the same place in the 50's. This gives the film a feeling of longing for the past. There is a tingling sadness as he walks through familiar streets and memories flood back. In his young son Kees, Dirk sees himself as the young Dutch kid. In photos as an 8 year old, Dirk does look almost like Kees.

At one stage of the film, Dirk and his wife Allison do a single frame strip for their supper. Throughout the film, there are amazingly beautiful timelapse scenes of the Dutch countryside. The light is so different from the harsh Australian light. The light there can be seen as dull/murky or else soft/misty. There are timelapse shots of farm animals walking around in a pastel landscape, barges, a funeral procession and more. The most memorable was a timelapse/exposure shot of cars speeding past on a country road. I recall these timelapse sections being shown in 1983 at the magical Fringe Network open screenings at the 'Flying Trapeze' in Brunswick Street, Fitzroy. They were shown as 5 or 10 minute sections as 'works in progress'. They looked great then and they look great now.

I am a fan of Homecomings.

KICK OSTROVSKIS 3 June 1990

On Tuesday 14 April 1990, there was a screening of films organised by the MUSE at the George Foster Gallery in Melbourne University. The films shown were:

- Le Bateau-Lavoir Chris Windhill
- Original Copy Mark Jenner
- No More Bread Bill ???
- Benita, Jane and Co Barron Davies
- Box Foot in the Bill Koussoulis
- King Lear Richard Tucky
- Learning for a Day Mark La Rosa
- Bowl Houndronat Chris Windhill
- Patterns Kick Ostrovskis

Mr Breveulent looked really good. I laughed alot even though I've seen it about six times. The audience loved it.

Mark Jenners Criminal Copy came across OK for a second viewing, though at times I was aware of the muffled recording. However, its still a fine piece.

Next were a couple of films which didn't flow well for me, however the audience didn't really mind. The first one had no title, credits or introduction of any sort. It was like a no name product on a super-market shelf. The film was of no name quality too. Benita, Jane and Co by Barron Davies was interesting in parts. There were some nice shots of farm animals. Many of the animals resembled people that I know (this was funny). The frazzled looking cockatoo is a spitting image of Mark Jenner. I also thought that the hunched teenage girls trying to decide which band to go to was amusing, however this film needs more substance. It needs something else. It needs a story woven into it or else more visuals.

Bill Koussoulis' How Soon is Now had me thinking "how soon is this going to finish". This is a short nothing film by Bill. George Hanlon gets his head on the screen yet again in this shallow effort.

Richard Tucky's Lark Desert is a long fifteen minute film. Long. This film wins the 'Jolly-Filler' award for filling time.

Mark La Rosa's Learning for a Day did not come across as well as it could. It needs a message by the head trainer and some body-building. It has potential.

Chris Windhill's Bowl Houndronat is a "I don't know what to make of it" film. I like all of the Chris Windhill titles at the Altona East video library, however I don't like Bowl Houndronat. I did not understand it.

Due to the Geneva Convention I won't review my new single frame animation film Patterns.

Pare thee well !!!

KICK OSTROVSKIS

3 JUNE 1990



St. Kilda

Film

Festival



The St. Kilda Film Festival, held over four days from May 2 - 5 at the National Theatre in St. Kilda, was quite a jolly affair. It remains as the one great festival if you want to see what 16mm. short films have been made in the past twelve months.

Originally I wanted to do an in-depth critique of some of the films in the festival, but I've run out of time. So here I offer an overall impression. I managed to catch 40 of the 43 films on show (Sandy Munro, who took the photos accompanying this piece, saw all 43!)

Only two films truly moved me - *Teenage Babylon* and *Words and Silk*. I've mentioned the former once before in these pages. As for the latter, it was the first time I'd seen it, despite its release at the State Film Centre last year. It does what it talks about - it is adventurous, metaphoric, magical, and like *Kiwi* coming home from last to win that Cup, it will take you by surprise.

There were other films I liked slightly. *Sex Rules* is charming and has a great closing line; *The Killing of Angelo Tsakos* also has a great ending, and is okay before that; *Storm in a Teacup* is unusually convincing for a Swinburne film; *Once as if a Balloon* is perfectly successful in what it attempts; *Confessions of a Simple Surgeon* has a totally passionate lead actor/person; and *Mortgage* has 'pretty good acting in it.

At the other end, there were some films that I detested. The glossy, inane *I See Said the Blind Man* and *Brutini*; the typically badly-acted student films *Sparks* and *King of the Bean*; and the countless number of silly, confused, pretentious films from cinema-hopefuls who better not give their day jobs up (*Days Without Sugar*, *Hector and the Harpy*, etc.)

But I'll sit through anything, because I know I'll be rewarded occasionally. A wonderful festival.

The award-winners were: *Night Out*, *Words and Silk*, *A Little Life*, *The Space Between the Door and the Floor*, *Between Us*, *Teenage Babylon*, *Brutini*, *King of the Bean*, and *Raymond's Mission*.

Bill Mousoulis



Festival Director NIGEL BUESST



Legends BILL MOUSOULIS and RICHARD TUOHY

first in a series...

123 INTERVIEWS

MARK C ZENNER TALKS TO MARK LA ROSA ABOUT 'ORIGINAL COPY' AND OTHER STUFF.

HOW DID THE IDEA FOR 'ORIGINAL COPY' DEVELOP?

It developed just before the film was made, in a very rudimentary fashion. I had a vague idea about the narrative and then on about the third day of shooting the final form it would take crystalized, around the presence of the actors and actual sets.

As for where I got the idea from, I really don't know. It arose from an old notion I had that I might try to show somebody whose image of himself at any given moment is hopelessly out of tune with what his actual image to others is. Somebody whose reflection in the mirror doesn't always square with the way he thinks he looks.

WHOSE IMAGE OF GEORGE DO WE SEE IN ON THE SCREEN?

It's left ambiguous. It's up to the audience what they see. He might be dead. He might be drempt by someone. Or he might be dreaming.

HOW DID YOU WORK WITH IN THE LIMITATIONS OF SUPER 8 TO ACHIEVE SUCH A STRONG EXPRESSIDNISTIC STYLE, SOMETHING NOT NORMALLY ATTEMPTED ON THAT GAUGE.

The idea for such effects as I had, once they had crystalized on the third day of shooting, actually came from the limitations of the medium. In other words, I had what I knew I could have. As for the lighting, you can use that expressionistically in any medium. Perhaps the basic formal idea was that you discover the limitations of the medium by pushing it, by trying for something that usually isn't tried and that seems a bit more difficult than normal. You soon discover what you come up against. It's a way of testing the medium, its flex.

WHAT SORT OF THINGS DID YOU DISCOVER?

I discovered that there's no truth to the myth that you cannot get smooth pans on Super 8. There's no truth to the myth that you cannot edit as much as you please and have shots as short as you please. If spliced carefully they won't jump. You can get very good quality, detailed images if you use fine grain stock by virtue of the fact that you just can't print them. It's precisely the fine-grain, high resolution stocks on Super 8 colour that are impossible to print because no suitable low-contrast reversal print material exists for those.

In Super 8 you get, relative to the distance from camera and relative to other mediums, a higher depth of field. The smaller the film gauge, the bigger the depth of field you can get without having to follow focus.

GIVEN THAT SOME OF THE SCENES IN 'ORIGINAL COPY' WERE SHOT USING DIRECT SOUND, HOW DID YOU OVERCOME THE PROBLEM OF THE ONE SECOND SOUND DELAY WHEN EDITING THIS FOOTAGE?

I used a rather rough and ready method. I transferred everything on the mag stripe from the projector, through an amplifier and onto quarter inch reel tape. Then, still using the pre-amp, I equalized that and re-transferred it in cases where an overlap would have been disturbing. I simply had to juggle around the tape and the projector until I found dead synch, which at 18f.p.s. is slightly easier than 24f.p.s.

WHAT COMPROMISES WERE YOU FORCED TO MAKE DURING THE SHOOTING OF THE FILM?

Initially I wanted the ending to be far more violent. I wanted the cane broken over George's face, and copious blood. But I'm not unhappy with the

ending as it is. Because the first idea would have been too physical, too present somehow, and it would have detracted from the ghostly sense of George's character that I wanted to convey.

The limitations of Super 8 mainly confine themselves to the sound quality you get. You have to be super careful when filming indoors not to let even a quiet camera reverberate and reflect off bare walls or any highly reflective surfaces. And using a high quality microphone doesn't help you in these instances because the higher the quality the better it will pick up that reflection. One must always blimp cameras, and blimp them thoroughly when filming indoors. There simply is no way around that.

WITH THE FILMING OF 'ORIGINAL COPY' YOU DIDN'T HAVE A FIXED VISION OF WHAT EACH AND EVERY SHOT WOULD LOOK LIKE BEFORE DAY 1. INSTEAD, YOU MAINTAINED A FLEXIBILITY AND DISCOVERED POSSIBILITIES IN THE MIDST OF ACTUAL SHOOTING, MUCH LIKE GODARD IS SAID TO HAVE DONE WITH 'A BOUT DE SOUFFLE'. DO YOU THINK THIS IS THE WAY TO GO WITH SUPER 8?

If you have a too precise vision of what you want before a film is made you are much better advised to go into a larger format, especially if opticals are involved.

On the other hand, if you know the limitations and specific advantages of each gauge, and the well-thought-out idea or theme fits within those limitations, then there's no reason why within them you can't use what's available to its maximum possible extension.

COULD YOU HAVE MADE A BETTER VERSION OF 'ORIGINAL COPY' ON 16mm?

The question is neither here nor there because at this stage

all I can see are the film's flaws, and if I was to do it again on 16mm it actually wouldn't be the same film. Whatever I did not quite right on Super 8 would be done right on 16mm, so it actually wouldn't be the same film. Technically it would probably have a lot more polish, but you can never re-make a film exactly on a larger format because that 're' means you're repeating something, and by repeating it you'll improve it. The question can never arise.

TELL ME ABOUT YOUR OTHER IDEAS FOR FILMS YOU'D LIKE TO MAKE, SUCH AS 'THE VULTURES'?

'The Vultures' is basically the idea of a love story, although of a peculiar kind. It would be about a person who falls in love with another and who, in being totally preoccupied with that other person, becomes psychically, spiritually, emotionally and finally physically depleted. A diabolical element might or might not come into it, with the ambiguity of whether the loved person is or is not aware of the effect he or she is having upon the lover, and if he or she is not in fact exacerbating precisely that effect to derive some mysterious advantage or feeling of power from the thing. I envisage it as primarily an emotional advantage. It would add to the intimate chamber quality of the idea, without in any way lessening the element of diabolism, parasitism, and perhaps vampirism involved.

Vampirism is an old theme. It goes back to Byron and was adumbrated in a short novel by Henry James written in 1899 entitled "The Sacred Fount", and, in short, it would be a good subject for a film, if one could get the actors one needed.

Another idea I had was for a documentary I wanted to entitle "Death at Work". It was to involve finding a real person with a terminal disease, probably cancer, and obtaining that person's permission to come in every day during the duration and up to the termination of his illness, and briefly taking a film shot of him. Placed next to this sequence of shots, which

would of course illustrate graphically a kind of time-lapse process of deterioration in the person's face, ^{there} would be snapshots of this same person, juxtaposed at the beginning and end of the thing as a form of brackets. And after a final view of that photo, go back to that person as he is now, at the end, or very near the end.

It's a documentary and also an experiment in as much as I wanted to see if on that face anything besides purely physical deterioration appears. That foreknowledge of what has to happen and cannot not happen. A spiritual endeavour if you will, or research.

Another idea I had was to illustrate how a sudden and violent act has in a sense already been recuperated by the possibilities of communicating that through various media.

For example, someone reads a newspaper on a bench, awaiting an old friend in the grounds of a commission flat. They have an argument, then a fight, and the other is killed by main force. The idea I had was that with each subsequent scene in the piece the picture would recede into an image. The shot of the man leaving the ground would recede into the view of the grounds' security camera. This would be a television image and this would turn into a video tape that some reporters or police would examine and a press conference would be in progress, and this would turn into a voice coming out of a radio in a woman's flat. The woman would listen a while, keep on vacuuming, go over to the window and look down. Suddenly, as if we were seeing ghosts, two men would meet. We'd go down to them, then find out they weren't the same two, they were just reporters who'd come to take pictures of the place for the Sunday tabloids. So we'd go from that into the photos they take and then these photos would be littering some desk of exhibits in a

court room, that would then again turn into a photo, and so on. Finally a newspaper half-tone photo of the entire process would turn into a news paper being read by a man on a bench, the same man we saw at the beginning, or possibly another, waiting for his friend. The man folds his newspaper, throws it into a bin and begins to take his walk.

The basic idea is that no act, no matter how sudden or capricious, un^{pre}meditated, unforeseeable or unique, can exist that hasn't already found its proper form or image. That everything, in a sense, has already happened and will continue to happen. It's that cycle I wanted to show.

WHY DO YOU MAKE FILMS?

I make them to please myself. The challenge of making something that somehow stands as a structure and is unified is its own reward. If I, months later, can come back and project the thing, and look at it and believe in that world, then I'm happy. If audiences manage to get some kind of...well I don't know...entertainment? Food for thought? Thrills? Who knows what they get out of films? Even the audiences don't know...If they manage to get something out of it too, particularly a strong, intense feeling that it was intended they should have at a given point, that's also a source of satisfaction. If you intend fear and they feel it, you've done your job.

YOU SKETCH, YOU WRITE, BUT YOU LOVE MAKING FILMS THE MOST. WHAT DO YOU LOVE ABOUT FILM?

It's got everything. It's got a visceral excitement, a power to create spaces and atmosphere and moods that never existed. Characters out of nothing. With that corporeality, it paradoxically allows you to create everything out of absolutely nothing.

YOU MADE SOME 16mm FILMS IN THE EARLY EIGHTIES. WOULD YOU LIKE TO WORK IN THAT GAUGE AGAIN?

Very much.

SO YOU DO HAVE PLANS OF MAKING A 16mm FILM IN THE FUTURE?

I have nothing to lose by at least submitting an application for a grant, and submitting it more than once. But in the event of that not going through, I have the option of being able to make it independently by private means.

AND HOW WOULD YOU GO ABOUT GETTING THE FILM EXHIBITED?

A lot of telephoning and running around I presume.

IN MELBOURNE?

Not necessarily. I'm hoping to film the thing overseas. Screening a good film in Melbourne is really like casting pearls before swine.

WHY IS AUSTRALIAN FILMMAKING SO DULL?

Because the mentalities of the people making them are dull and the mentalities of the people issuing grants to them are even duller. Plus the quality of the scripts is very poor. Most people who attend film schools, on close examination, would be found to be semi-literate, very badly read. And on the whole, people are afraid to take imaginative chances because of the situation of money for filmmaking. In other words, filmmaking as such issuing from the fiat of government funding bodies.

WOULDN'T THE CASE BE THE SAME IN OTHER COUNTRIES?

Well, there are governments and there are governments. Those in Australia are not noted for being up with the times, or being particularly devoted to experiment.

GIVE ME A HINT OF WHAT YOUR NEXT SUPER 8 PROJECT IS GOING TO BE ABOUT.

It's about how fear isolates. Unusually for me it will be a sombre film, but also very romantic and dark. With a kind of magic invisibility shrouding everything. Much of the film will be shot at night using a fast stock.

CAN YOU GIVE ME THE TITLE?

'3 AM.' That stands for 'ante meridian'.

(This interview was recorded on the evening of May 21, 1990)

KODAK IN THE HOT SEAT (WE HOPE)

Those of you who have been getting film back from Kodak and it's a bit shitty (blue sparkle/lines, etc.) here's some news for you (not that it's good):

Richard Tuohy has gone in there and spoken to the guy, who says they're working on rectifying the problem. It's not the processing machine in Coburg, but another one. If they can't fix it, we're going to suggest they go back to Coburg. In the meantime, you can send your film to U.S.A. (it would take weeks to be done) if you want perfect processing.

RICHARD TUOHY'S 'LOVE LIFE' EXPOSED!

The Super-8 Programme in the Melbourne Film Festival is on Saturday June 16 at 5:30 p.m. at the State Film Centre. Richard Tuohy's newly completed 38-minute masterpiece (we hope) Love Life will be the featured film, alongside work by Damien Grant, Laki Sideris, Heinz Boeck, Raffi Ghazarian, and others.

SHOCK REALISM DEBATE

(NUMBER THREE)

RESPONDING TO THE RESPONSES
by Bill Mousoulis

(NUMBER ONE)

THE INTERVENING FRAME - ANOTHER OPINION
BY IAN POPPINS

Damien Grant's essay "The Intervening Frame" in the 1990 Super 8 magazine raises some thoughts which, I must confess, have not considered before.

I would agree with Damien that I do take the role as a "recorder or objective biographer" of the event, holiday or happening that I am filming. I agree that my style is different from most other people in the Melbourne Super 8 Group. However, I believe my films are just as "personal-subjective" as the other film makers. My objective in making the films the way I do, is to record some enjoyable moments in my life, and to try and share them with others in, I hope, an entertaining and easily understood way. Whether I succeed in this is for others to decide.

Damien's point that the frame is the limiting factor in every film is a good one. Years ago it was realised that the frame needed expanding to the range of human vision, so various widescreen processes were tried out to encompass this, but these methods did not work out very well.

Damien says the frame only shows parts of the action and excludes others. This, is of course correct. It is how the person behind the camera places the subject matter in the frame, what they include and exclude, which lets the audience know what the film maker is trying to say.

If the filmmaker is able to communicate this to their audience then they have succeeded in the making of their film. It does not matter how it is done, so long as you can "grab" your audience, and "grabbing" your audience is what filmmaking is all about.

Incidentally, I have not made a film called "Indonesian Wonderland" yet. Perhaps Damien is thinking of a film called "Another World" which featured Bali, and was shown one night at the Friends of the Earth screenings.

I think Damien Grant's essay was well thought out and he deserves some feedback from other members of the club.

(NUMBER TWO)

FILM IS FILM

This newsletter has, of recent months, been something of a forum for Realist v. Formalist debate. A personal and passionate view from Bill Mousoulis, and a response from Damien Grant on the nature of realism have provided good reading. Yet the entire debate sets film theory back 40 years!

It's time someone told the Emperor about his clothes!

I find the notion that the only 'good' film is a realistic one totally repugnant. Film is art, and therefore should not be bound by such (unattainable) constraints. Part of the beauty of film, particularly Super-8, is the potential diversity of expression it provides. Let's not limit that by bowing to the false god of Realism.

All films are constructed. Realistic films are only a representation of reality, an illusion. I don't intend to denigrate films which try to present a realistic image. I wish instead to defend films which have no such intention of deceit. Films which point up the filmmaking process, or shatter the illusion of reality can be just as valuable as those which try to perpetuate Gdard's myth that "Film is reality at 24 frames per second" (Which he himself disproved on several occasions). Filmmakers from Vertov to Cocteau, through to Greenaway have exploited the illusion of film to marvellous effect, both visual and cerebral, without trying to create 'reality'.

I take the point of both Bill and Damien's articles that film should reflect something of the filmmaker. Surely this is going to be inherent in any medium. This does not however preclude room for imagination in film. As Freud seems to be something of a hero to both Bill and Damien, I will use him as an authority here, because didn't he say that real and imagined events came as experience to the participant? Surely any creator of film can't help expressing something of himself, whether this is overt or not. I agree with Damien in that 'everyday reality is made up of invention', therefore is it not proper to make imaginative films?

Some of the recent statements in relation to Super-8 films are puzzling. For example Bill's statement: 'I hate films which are 'films''. Or further: 'I hate genres, but the genre I hate most is the 'film' genre, exemplified by those films that are clearly ... merely films.' Firstly, genre are not created by the filmmaker, but are tools of the critic, in an effort to categorize, or provide a standard against which any given film may be compared. While hating 'genres', Bill has created a new one, albeit poorly defined. But what are 'films that are ... films'? 'We don't even need to compare the films, let's just stick with the titles.' Is this a sound, logical approach to film analysis?

Damien Grant also made some enigmatic points along similar lines: 'I have become tired of films that seem nothing more than an attempt to masquerade as a film.' He then used my last film 'Man with Lemon' as an example, pointing out that it was 'devoid of any substance'. Don't get me wrong, I'm not offended by criticism, in fact I appreciate it, where it is well-founded, well-reasoned and enlightening. While 'Man with Lemon' is far from great I refuse to apologize for it. The film has little substance beyond the simple visual metaphor for a man's escape from his work. (Which as I said at the screening is in fact based on a true story). But obviously without recognizing this, Damien still found the film 'funny'. Is not that vindication enough for its existence? Is 'fun' a dirty word? Must we always be fondling our intellectual genitals?

That is all. 'Keep on thinking free.'
'Question Everything'.

At last!

Gratitude within me at a maximum, I now feel that my mad ravings (especially "The Gamble of Realism") have not just been for the printer and myself. At this rate, maybe someone will even respond to the thoughts of Mark C. Zenner! But perhaps that's something only devoutly to be wished...

It's probably a little unfair of me to be responding to something that appears in the same issue as this (i.e. Numbers 1 and 2 of this section), but hopefully no-one minds.

I've always wanted the Super-8 newsletter to be substantial and alive each issue, because that would reflect the film activity going on. I believe in film deeply, and I believe the whole Super-8 scene is a perfect model for the mainstream industry. (Boy, is that a dream!) Where else in Australia do film-makers get together as a group and analyze their films and help each other out? If there is, a Cahiers du Cinema and Nouvelle Vague in Australia, then we are it.

Vague? Yes, such a wave has always been vague locally. But I sense some stirrings in the last 12 months. The newsletter has been fuller, and some more ambitious films have been attempted. Still, the majority of Super-8 film-makers, including the revered names of Sandy Munro, Mark Freeman, Chris Windmill, Ian Poppins, and Heinz Boeck, will not be a part of a 'New Wave' if it happens. Let's be brutally honest. If you're not prepared to quit your job and give your life (other than your personal/social life) to film, you will never 'make it' (i.e. earn a living from film-making.) There are people like Anne-Marie Crawford, Nick Ostrovskis, Mark Zenner, and George R., who are only possibilities for 'making it', for whatever reasons. But then there are those who are destined to 'make it', namely Mark La Rosa and Richard Tuohy. You can now add Damien Grant to that last list. Unless I've misread...

Have another look at my article Damien (you too, David) and you will see that at no point do I value kitchen sink social realism above any other realism. I don't even mention social realism. Although I must admit I used the term "realism" intentionally, to suggest that social realism is not a bad place to start. Obviously I'm interested in what is real, true, and in the film-maker's responsibility in expressing his/her ideas, and how those ideas relate to all other ideas that have been expressed before.

(A quick parenthesis here to acknowledge that the sentence I just wrote could mean anything. Words like 'true' or 'ideas'. But this is another gamble I'm undertaking. I have to seize this moment and say to others 'SEIZE THE DAY', and hope they understand, rather than dryly define terms, a la Mark C. Zenner.)

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ESPRESSO ~ UNO!

MARK C. ZENNER

A widespread phenomenon repeatedly observed in the arts today is the wavering of the boundaries that enable us to determine the limits, not only of a "work", but even of the genre within which it supposedly arises. The delineation of "genres", the beginning and end of a "work", are in question amid the most variegated practises, popular ones included.

To take some examples from the popular end of the spectrum, namely film, traditionally one of the most rigidly genre-barricaded of the arts: at what specific points can the schlock-horror/sci-fi/comedy/cops'n'robbers/superhero cycle be generically delimited with a typographic slash? At which parametrical degrees would each portion of this cycle cease to be sovereign unto itself? What luggage-labels do we stick onto "Robocop" and the Texas Chainsaws, Arnold Schwarzenegger and "Batman", George Romero and David Lynch? Expressionism, Social Satire, Pop-Art, Collective Myth? Or, taking a typical case of the "individual" work: at what point can a popular blockbuster from the factory of Mr. Lucas Bratpack Spielberg be said to begin? From the first ad, or from the first frame? From the moment its collective image and public word-of-myth attains clear and recognizable outlines — or from the moment the film's toys are mass-produced? From the completion of post-production, or of the marketing-schedule? Is the film only what's on the release-print, or all the rest as well? And how much of "all the rest" are we responding to when we claim to be responding to the film? (I say "we" for politeness' sake.)

Nor is this questioning of limits applicable only to cinema. The "closure" of the work has been problematized, often consciously, in fields as apparently diverse as music and architecture, painting and drama — indeed, everywhere that an architectonics of structure seems irreducible. (John Cage, or industrial-grunge Rock — do their forces flow outward or do they depend on their contexts to activate them? Ditto, Tschumi's recreational park in suburban Paris: or certain experiments in early-80s Berlin using the torn-paper effect of bombed and ruined walls via irregular ridgework, for interior designs: whence proceeds the effect? What is setting the style and what has set it? Where does "retro" end and "futurity" begin?

In the same questionable light fall the critical practises applied to "works" especially indicative of their own or their genre's dissolution. The failure of certain critical methods — with long, respectable pedigrees — to adequately engage with dissolving structures, with works in excess of works, whether by commentary, analysis, or mere review (summary description capped by a value-judgement) implies a corresponding dissolution: that of the assumptions such methods are grounded on.

Now, it is in the nature of an assumption to be somewhat arbitrary — a mechanism or ground-lever from which one takes off: a ground that cannot be given grounds without giving ground. Its character is operational, not reasonable; not "why" but "how" is the question it proceeds from. To begin mining assumptions for grounds opens the yawning abyss of an infinite recession of grounds requiring ever new grounds, none of which can be grounded without dissolving precisely as grounds. For in the end, the concept of "assumptions" as opposed to "certainties" is one more assumption, which blindly assumes and presupposes the very thing it is supposed to ground. We will never get beyond this "one more": we can no more ascertain assumptions than assume certainties. "Why" is the Chinese-box of questions.

Nor is it an answer to say that "signs" are the only certainty. When certainty is done away with, so is something that represents "it" — its "mere" sign. But if this unascertainability can be said, i.e. signified, doesn't that already undermine the foregoing conclusions? Yes, precisely: those and all others. For they conclude nothing.

This Chinese-box structure, this spiralling of reason within reason, truth beyond truth, each contained by what it contains, both and neither inside or outside, from the infinite subdivisions of involution to the infinite extensions of evolution, amorphous and eternally mutant around the emptiness of a graphematically-circumscribed and non-existent center — what is its name? It has none, just as the law has no special name for those who do not break it — but it has been given various labels by contemporary deconstructivists. "Law of Supplementarity", "structure of the remainder", "double invagination" are Derrida's, and fit as well or badly as any. "Vicious spiral", "double-bind" are others, echoing from the arched vaults of Yale, and like its architecture far less original. People as alike and as different as Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, Heidegger and Barthes have written about and around, around and about it. Heidegger bemoaned it soulfully. Nietzsche celebrated it with Dionysian joy. Wittgenstein analysed it in systems of logic, maintaining an impassive scowl. Mournful soul, joyful howl, impassive scowl — got the picture?

Assuming "yes", I will proceed to the proposition that one ground more than others underlies and permeates critical attempts to come to grips with structures that stubbornly refuse to be gripped, occasioning a slippage of heavy-handed critical terms. And the corollary: that this ground, and the methodology resting on it, is more deficient than others in apprehending such structures — structures whose undecidability remains and whose remains are as undecidable as the overhang of a spiral or the ends of a coil. On this ground an author or "auteur" has engraved a testamentary word; the word is "Expression"; and it is expressly to examine this concept that the spittle of the following words has sprayed — I mean, that the following has been written.

Expression is the assumption. And what is assumed? An author with interior contents to be exteriorized, in forms for which said author is solely responsible. "Expression" literally signifies the pressing-out of something interior. That something goes out presupposes that it was first inside. In question, then, is the assumed existence of an interior — psychological, emotional, intellectual — event separate from and preexistent to its exterior mode, which perfectly or imperfectly represents it. According to this assumption the interior event exists regardless of whether it is expressed or not; and many such events subsist, unexpressed, alongside the expressed ones.

This immediately gives rise to a further question — that of how an interior event arises at all, and the necessary perspectivism presupposed in it: that is, the uniceness of such an event. To be interior means that its contents are someone's undivided and absolute possession and cannot be shared, as an interiority or in the mode of interiority. Behind this is already the assumption that something which was exterior, e.g. a chaos of sensory intuitions, has been processed and differentiated cerebrally: that is, in the most personal way, hence through the perspectivism by which each living thing measures and evaluates the world from and according to itself, judging sensory degrees (near and far, big and small, bright and dark, etc.) in terms of its own modes and means. The best-known

example of an absolutely interior event which appears to have no adequate exterior mode is that of dreams: the attempt to convey the ecstasies or fears of a dream in words or any other representational code bleaches the dream, reducing it to "I saw", "I felt", etc. — and usually ends by boring the auditor. The concept "expression", however unacknowledged, has always been bound up with those of "interiority" and "unicity" — and these are not even silent partners, strictly speaking, since all three values are inseparably welded in the very word "expression" and inseverable from its utterance, as is "utterance" itself. (To "utter" something is to "outer" it.)

From this assumption, another follows: that for interior events there correspond exterior forms (with respect to the different codes from which they are taken) equatable uniquely to the events they express; that each unique interior requires a unique outer form for its proper expression. "Proper" means "true" in this context, and "true" means "unique", which is already contained in the idea of propriety. To aim at the "proper", at "truth", is to aim at appropriating something in a sensible, material form.

Such is the aesthetic significance of "expression". It underlies auteur theories, American and European, in their entirety; and also the allegedly more neutral structuralist ventures of late vintage. What about its critical significance?

The immediate consequence of an assumed personal and unique experience is to make the subject in whom it occurred completely responsible for the supposed felicities or imperfections of its expression, since only this subject could have all the data at his disposal and, therefore, the freedom of choice in what to emphasize, what to withhold, and in any given instance of imperfection, what might have been done differently. The subject of free choice and free will, as an expressor must be, is the subject who might have acted otherwise, falling in each case under the old legal definition of: answerable. The free common-law citizen and subject answerable for his actions is, ipso facto, the subject of accusation, or acquittal, as the case may be (revealing the common root of the "personal" and the "legal" subject). The answerable auteur; the critic who plays judge: atavisms.

To the immediate consequence, an objection immediately occurs: those in whom the "unique experience" never took place — critics — are unqualified to pass judgement on the "expression": they do not and can not have at their disposal the data of the event which would legitimize such an adjudication and the pronouncement of its results. Only against the internal cohesion of the form's structure could any allegation of imperfection be compared, and in its turn judged, on conditions that

the anthropomorphism of calling it an "expressed" structure, "someone's" structure, is avoided. But, into exile with this anthropomorphism, goes the validity of such judging. For what is pronounced-upon here is not the author but the structure, which cannot be praised or blamed for being the structure it is — and to which we assign the more-or-less artificial boundaries labelled "the work of art": precisely what the works-in-excess mentioned above have made problematic.

The chief difficulty in the "structuralist" idea, from the latter point of view, would be its failure to take account of the work's context and the external forces which interact with, and act upon, the so-called internal forces, relations, dimensions, and dynamisms of the structure. In other words, an infra-structural dynamics without reference to anything beyond the work is still obliged to assume the animating presence of an "author", and the work as his "expression" — whether it means to or not. What the entire opposition of internal/external rests on is left untouched by "the structure", at least theoretically: the question of just where the boundaries of a work are, or indeed if there can be any boundaries in a world of interacting and mutually-dependant forces. To speak of dynamic structures and to continue to apply "the" definite article to them — this is grammar as a dynamic structure! The problem is now for criticism to describe and accompany the dissolution of art-works' limits, their beginning/end, interior/exterior, without recourse to a unique subject or initiator of the works these parameters were supposed to contain — and to whose dissolution criticism will in any case contribute, as one more vectoring-factor in art's structural forces. (Those who still believe that art of any epoch remains unaffected by the operant cultural matrix, criticism included, are beyond help and should desist from reading further.)

Do you live in a society? Then you may as easily avoid a cultural matrix as air. It permeates everything of which it can be said: it means something. A place in an order of regularity, recurrence, custom and way-of-doing-things is the first thing we can be sure of wherever a culture exists. And so a cultural matrix at once confronts us with the dilemma of whether an interior, be it of a person or a work, can exist that hasn't already

been influenced by the possibility of its future expression; of whether this possibility hasn't itself been shaped by its social and cultural forms; of whether the very parametry of interior/exterior isn't also a cultural formation; and whether, therefore, a pure, absolute and uncontaminated interior is even possible...? Points in suspension, one of them hanging from a meathook, congealed, dead ink, xerox.

Now, seen apart from the cultural matrix, as a concept in its pure state, and as a relation to preexisting modes and codes, the "unique" would have to denote something absolutely new — not merely a new configuration of cultural ciphers already familiar in themselves. This should be borne in mind: we see here a misapplication of what is probably already a misconception. Champions of the "unique", asking for a work of art absolutely unprecedented and different, and using no available formulas and forms, want at the same time to recognize this as an artwork, as new, as differentiated — and therefore as something absolutely cultural. But could any kind of recognition occur? Isn't the little prefix "re" somewhat out of place here? Would not such a demand be asking the impossible? The ans-

What we have had until now outlines at least the stencil of a more reasonable demand: a unique constellation of priorly available cultural elements. (Spraypainters, awake!)

The fact of a cultural matrix places criticism in direct confrontation with the question of codes and channels, systems and styles, with which any putative expression is obliged to concern itself: namely, in what language to frame the thing to be expressed? A culture is nothing but this socially unified constellation of systems and their languages, including all their subdivisions and specialisms.

To the same question — the matrix of the matrix, the cultural context — belong the critical formulations that have given Expression expression. "Adequation of the Expression to the System of Thought" — the ethic of Diderot, of Shaw, of Brecht. "Adequation of the Expression to the Feelings" — the ethic of Chekhov, of Strindberg, and in a direct line through the Swedish National Theatre, of Bergman.

It reduces to this: is the "event" obliged to accord with the forms and codes of culture, or are these going to form a unique, expressive configuration that accords with the interior event? To what extent has the "interior" already been exceeded by the codes available for its expression? In the latter event, how could expression genuinely exist? Even 2nd.-degree expression — an "author" expressing his personal view of another person's "interiority"? Isn't that mode of expression already only a duplication of an audience's impressional mode? I.e., something cultural, collective?

One at a time....Now, it must be clear that a "unicity" uniquely configuring the old would not be an absolute unicity but one whose possibility the older elements already contained, as a combination inevitably arrived at in a field of finite possibilities (continually becoming ever more finite with each new combination diminishing the chance of older ones recurring). In the "new" combination, "old" ones continue to inhere at least as a reference, and in any event as a provisional mode of entry for interpretation: an easing-into of the intelligence, which finds through these a telescoped history of interpretations and cultural meanings, functioning as a paradigmatic aid to outlining and identifying what is new in the constellated elements confronting it.

Each creative work contains this mixture of old and new — the former usually being identified first. This brings us to the question of "genres": the genre is a label retroactively applied: the "new" is a style retrospectively recognized — it is its own precession, setting its own precedent and that of other "new" works taking off in the same style of newness. It is less a pattern of deviance, a parting of ways and striking-out to uncharted paths, than of a chain of successive "news", coiling forward to greater or lesser diameters. The greater diameter is the wider departure from what could reasonably be predicted in the prevailing cultural codes — the more inventive and "newer" work: the smaller ones, more numerous, linked to the precedent this work has set and coming later, constellate around it as a circular chain-network, reflecting its radiance, borrowing its light, and in a few cases casting bright brilliant little beams of their own.

Gravity-linked as this constellated system may be, it is a system first and foremost, departing from possibilities subscribed-to and advantages-taken, forming with this orbit the illusive delineation of a centrality, a canonical place of preferment given to the work from which, it is imagined, the subscription-coupons have issued. A "style", born of constellar interlinks, begets in its coiling turn a "genre", casting back a spreading glow that envelops the supposed launch of the cycle, the "first" work, softening the hard contours of those newer elements once found to be so obtuse — and granting it, along with the status of "origin", a retrospective acceptability.

Does it follow that a new work, however audacious, is only a new style — a new genre of audacity to which any number of works may subscribe? The nature of the forms and codes along which art travels might tell us. We could be speaking of the verbal, the metrical, the visual, aural, dramatic, architectonic, graphic, numerical, et cetera.

Each code of expression, each form of representing, each language, already has its own precedent structured into it via its way of systematically dividing and resolving the world into relayable units — and these are only relayable as a language of representative significance to the extent of being commonly comprehensible and understood as such to everyone using it, receivers and senders alike. That is, to the extent that a pattern of precedence is recognized in it.

Only by repetition does a sign become a sign. The cipher, the unit-of-resolution, must have occurred several times and innumerable times; at some level of the sign, a uniform and common relation to its referent pertains and subsists, repeatedly. Repeatability is the very soul and possibility of a significant code — any one: it is the uniform underlayer of meaning, its backbone: the "old" that in every instance of language combines with the "new": the base referential elements to be moulded into a form: from "the" and "them" into an "a" and an "it". However finely or coarsely art-languages screen the world, whatever size the units of the net employed, something like a dictionary definition clings to them all, enabling them to remain and survive as significances — interpretable and inflectible with nuance through and above all subsequent reexposures of the denotative scheme: a systematic lever of decipherment.

And ultimately, the sign is first recognized as a sign — in the function, precisely, of a resolving unit — before the image it resolves, before the connection to experience it conveys, its place in a syntax of form, and any putative meaning can emerge. However infinitesimal the moment of recognition, however subliminal its character, the cluster of signs will first point to the code of which they are units. The "re" of the cipher precedes the "cognition" of decipherment.

In terms of film, we would have to speak here of a condition of viewability, related to the work's Graphematic aspect. The factors of repeatability and "commonness" will become clearer if we consider the works whose systems these factors structure from 2 points of view: the Textual and the Graphematic, which form together the basis of any public exhibition, i.e., that by which a work can be a work.

The Graphematic is simply that in a work which remains unchanged in all successive reexposures and exhibitions: a fixed and unalterable temporal succession of sounds, images, words, etc., and spatial disposition of like elements. It is what enables us to recognize a structure as such, and to identify a work as distinct from others, translating the wild chance of its public exile into a structured and somehow necessary chance — just as a fixed destination forecloses the destiny of a footloose traveller.

The Textual is the work's relationship to the spectator, crossing the path of its public launch with that of its reception in a big EX, when the time between a creative response to available materials and the response created in the result's receivers contracts to zero. Chance transformed into fate. The work exchanges with a spectator — always one — intersecting at an extensionless point in place and time that differs for each: each one, each time, according to the context of mind, memory, emotional states, etc. (Always etc.!) This EX and the cultural ceremonies presupposed in it is at the beginning of each expression, not vice-versa, and is the true end of every matrix: the source and start alike

of all change involving interaction, in art, in politics, in science, language itself — everywhere that a "public" is involved. Change is always exchange, for something already structured into the available cultural garments as a future possibility: their linings stretch, they "take out", they expand. Exorbitant to say they express, at least as hitherto understood: they exhibit only the exterior circumference of the culture they orbit, circumscribe, and create...

...which seems to make futile the great pose of "originality": for it means that no context for the work can saturate its meaning, even allowing for the differences which are endemic to anything that goes public and begins forming relationships. Futile, the pose of the "subject" with a "unique" content to express? Let's not cross destinies before coming to them...let's not cross anything, and instead choose a better figure — one that circumscribes in the looping coils of interpretation an illusive center: a rainbow-edged iridescence, continually shifted and displaced with each new coil, each oscillating argument and counter-argument, each new diameter of time extending and deepening the cultural space against which the work will be newly received and newly understood in the backward glance of widening memory. Each loop of time, each chance encounter with an audience, multiplies the levels, the repetitions — including past interpretations — by which a work was

understood: until finally we understand an "epoch", a moment of cultural time, by the way its products were interpreted.

The process is reversible: that's why the spiral — a 3-dimensional, vertical one — is a good illustrative figure: understood as movement or temporality, it is reversible, infinite, it uses one element to create the illusion of many, and its center or structural support is an illusory one, a figmentary creation of coils in continuous displacement. An origin, point-of-departure, and essence is lacking, as it is in the Graphematic transmissions and shifting perceptions of "a" work of art. Each spectator produces, at each encounter with it, a different work, however minimally; and only the encounter "produces" the work (as we say that the text is its readings). There exists no work that remains hidden and unexhibited; there exists no uniform reception-levels within one spectator or between several.

On the other hand, every work can have the sour juice of a common referential meaning of surface-literalism squeezed out of it: a story, a tune, colors, a face. To search this for the source of a work's meaning or intensity is to mistake the stone for what is inscribed on it. Similarly, to examine the medium, the common substratum shared by any number of works employing it, will yield precisely the common, the superficial and oft-perceived en masse, multiplying zeros like pox-pustules on a skin bacillated with hybrid memories. Taking things at their word — a purely Graphematic encounter, examples of which include: uniform pupil-dilations to given intensities of light in a fixed and repeated sequence — in "Vertigo", in "The Silence", in a Godard film — and so much for that.

Every encounter of an artist with preexisting materials is a unique event; likewise every encounter of a spectator with the newly-constellated materials — there is no doubt of that. But as soon as we have the work before us, shaped by our hands or given a verbal explanation, it no longer seems to be. Exactly as with dreams. It may be that there is nothing in even our most intimate and thrilling possessions that is not reducible to a referential classification, in principle and in fact. To words, in other words. Do it only once, set a precedent — and the entire creative process appears to undergo a sudden transfusion. And this is in the nature of signs in any form. If a code or language can only express what is commonly apprehensible by everyone using it, then it follows that no signs exist for the absolutely singular, the unique: inasmuch as it is expressed, it remains inexpressible.

That is why a text, a work of art, or a piece of language that survives is never closed, never saturated, never definitive; the circulation that begins with it cannot close, but always leaves an overhang, a new loop, as on a film spool. The repetition, relay, and deferral structurally built into texts of any kind, indefinitely delaying a "final" meaning, indefinitely delays expression.

A form is exposed to a spectator. Paradox: the Text exists in each and neither; it is constituted by the relation; and the infinite cycle of interpretations and reexposures begins. The superabundance, the overhang, of meanings delays any final meaning. We will never be done with explaining and expounding, exploring and expanding, the forms of systematic division given out into the world and simultaneously comprising it. And this, if you will believe me, is the very lifeblood of art, culture, and languages. (A work we have finished explaining is a work we have finished with; a culture with no more secrets for us is — very nearly so.)

Differences will be endemic: and so the Eternal Return of the Same erects in its very utterance the structure of repetition, the "Re" that immediately divides and differentiates the "Same" as two or more objects to be compared and pronounced the "same", sundering from itself the seal of singularity. Exactly thus, a man's signatures must repeat and duplicate themselves before his signature can be identified. Same story with the "new" and "unique": it'll have to be multiplied, plagiarized, and copied before we recognize it as fashionable "retro" now recognizes the "stylishness" of Breathless — 30 years late. Philistyles!

"Adequation of the interior content to the available means"? But all that's said here is that a perfect structure would be achieved in recognizable terms.

"Adequation of the available means to the interior content"? But how can one prove that without knowing the interior content — which is impossible? In fact, all that such critical strictures do is oblige us to assume that a structure of conformity is taking place, with one of the terms invisible! And necessarily so!

As for "intellectual" contents, e.g. in Brecht, one might suppose that no critical ambiguity could take place, since these, as intellectual, were already exterior, already formulable in other ways — e.g. dialectics, in turn cipherable algebraically — and arrive in an already-adequated form; if not known, at least knowable to everyone: one exterior form expressing another, as it were. But that is precisely why it is not an interior event, and strictly speaking,

not an expression. It may be everyone's interior event, and it is no one's. And it has certainly not eliminated ambiguities, since one first has to be agreed on what the intellect has concluded, what it is calculating with, and what it has formulated its expression for: and this agreement has not taken place in even a single instance of a Brecht play! What is one to judge the "expression" with?

But now, what about these contents? Given the highly ritualized formal structure of a cultural exhibition, we are certainly entitled to assume that the artist is fully conscious of the things to be expressed. Let's leave aside the question of interpretations for a moment: the common, referential qualities that subsist in them are perhaps an occupational hazard of the art-codes ground-on these, and do not give expression its proper specificity. But it is even more hazardous to ignore these repetitive, familiar and schematic elements, since consciousness of what to express is necessarily concerned with whether and by what means the contents are expressible, governed by precedent means, against which or towards which they define and frame themselves. Can an inference be

drawn from the available languages to the contents that fill the consciousness of an artist's urge to express? We are displacing the question from after the "expression" to before it, asking if the great variety and exemplarity of cultural fields and usages does not already have an effect on what actually rises to consciousness — if, indeed, they do not form a good part of its contents?

Is not consciousness itself a mode of expression — of relations within and between our senses: the degrees of stimuli? Clearly the notion of expression is absurd without an author-subject, who is equally absurd without consciousness. The question should rephrase itself to ask whether anything at all of which one becomes conscious can exist that hasn't already become a unit of sense, a "thing", a recognizably distinct entity...? We think of consciousness as a matter of distinctnesses; we define it as knowing that one knows, as well as knowing what one knows; we relate it, habitually, to clarity, sharp outlines, light (the etymological source of 'clarity'). All this bespeaks sharp distinctions, units, divisions of sense, a net thrown over sensation and its chaotically continuous swirl. And it makes us ponder the identity of the gluey substance that kept the net in place while allowing the chaos to continue swirling. What is the enigma that deepened the animal mind and permitted its articulations to adhere?

Memory. Or rather, Mnemosyne — the more or less socially evolved technique by which memory, the faculty and process of re-cognition, was constructed. It is questionable whether any system of recognition-triggering, the instantaneous evocation and control of memories, could have evolved without a rudimentary society in some form — i.e., agreement in the ceremonies of living, a culture of however primitive lineaments in which it is likewise agreed that: "This recurs." In other words: this is something one needs to know about. Excisions out of the sensory continuum, units of sense, a system of triggering recognitions via spoken or inscribed labels within the chaotically-changing field they divide, and seem momentarily to freeze and suspend for conscious viewing — this is where the divisions of mnemotechnics and the distinctnesses of consciousness draw together, seeming to form one system as by moire-overlay and with a similar illusion of living movement.

The agreement by which a (primitive) society first coalesces already presupposes a mode of retention: a preservation, a protection or a defense. There will have been: agreement on what to retain: and agreed-upon forms of retention, whether by articulated sounds or glyphically simplified schemas of sense (easily copied, easily reproduced). The repeatability of sensations is created. To remember something is to recognize it: consequently, it is only to those elements of sensory experience that repeat themselves that a signal of recognition, a label, can be applied: for it must be valid and obligatory to all who use the label to recognize the same things by it, referring it to experiences had in common and in average. We have no language for that which does not recur: the unique. And consequently no means to express it: hardly, even, to remember, without falsifying it. For we do not remember until there are "things" to remember, labels and schemas of sense that evoke and repeat in us what seems to repeat itself.

A society is where the need to "know" one's experiences has arisen: to hold them up before us in compact units of sense that can be easily conveyed, triggering recognition in others. Consciousness is perceiving what we perceive as others would perceive it. It requires a uniform surface-layer of agreed-upon reality, against which its truth or falsehood can be checked. If

recognition is at the roots of consciousness, then consciousness is always a form of self-consciousness — a need to "know" its contents from the point of view of others, before whom they can be replayed. And the identity of consciousness and language at its origins stands revealed.

That is: Mnemosyne. Can we imagine awareness, a psyche, mind without a past (the ability to identify things) or a future (prediction based on past recurrences)? A consciousness solely concerned with the "present" and its chaotic continuum of change — ? That wouldn't be mind, or even specifically human: but mere instinct, mere response, continuum in another form. And some have dared to call this "full primal awareness"! A chaos of atoms, an anarchy of sensations, phenomena without nomina and without memory, continually strange, continually swallowing itself in a zero-duration present in pure reflex, pure reffect (to coin a barbarism for something barbarous): that is life without language, system or code of any kind; that is "living in the present"! "Full speech": "primal consciousness": the refuse and vomit of Parisian word-gourmets!

We can say, from a temporal aspect, that memory deepens sensation; and from a spatial aspect, that it makes it shallower, seeing in it only the broad, superficial generalities of form that recur. Or, switching metaphors: what the distance-ring of past time focuses for recognition, it blurs for present sensation, glossing-over and smoothening-out the porous texture of a moving constellation of continual difference. Only to a surface does a sensory unit-label adhere.

We perceive constantly, without realizing it, thinking faster than we relay our thoughts; but only those percepts already tributary to a significant division reach consciousness. Here another secret about dreams, equally pertinent to cinema, discloses itself:-

Since recall can only work by significant patterns of repetition, it is obvious that the very effort made to call back the experience of a dream and to fix it in our minds will only widen the gap between what we want to experience and what in fact we succeed in retaining. To become conscious of what we dreamt is to bleed it dry: with the best will in the world, we will never have done anything but skim its communicable surface, draining it of its color in the process — and by 10am it sounds dull even to you who dreamed, that rich, gorgeous or terrifying experience; and you find yourself wondering what all the fuss was about. A clue to the overvaluing of conscious, and undervaluing of subconscious, phenomena? In any case, a question that only accelerates the fading tones, presence, and reality of that once-vivid image whose emotional charge you thought you could capacitate.

Exactly the same thing may be said of a film seen for the first time, in whose presence we find ourselves as helpless as in dreams: darkness descends, a slumbering reptile comes to life and uncoils, carrying us along in the whirlpool of its wake while our suspended self-awareness, in turn, slumbers — and on a trip traversing places and faces, times and spaces and twenty-four 24x15mm frames per second, or ninety English feet per minute, we roll in humble acquiescence. And on the Rich and Strange experience given us by a few rare masters of the cinema, our words act as leeches, our critical discourse becomes equally humble in its incapacity to convey the what or the why of certain films. Or so it should. How blithely it skates over the constructive discontinuities between frames and within them, within shots and between them, between and within sequences and scenes, seeing in the blur that this produces the very image of a "lifelike" continuum — of which the film is supposed to be a concentrated imitation, a "dramatized" distillate! We come to see the vague outlines of our signs' nonspecific referents — all that our words can convey to

those who haven't experienced the film — as a faithful copy of life's blurred edges, confusing what we mean with what anyone will understand, and hopelessly distorting the film we lived in the process.

We are inarticulate: semi-literates in the art of life's richest relays. Perhaps this is excusable the first time we see an exceptionally rich film: perhaps our inarticulateness is even a dial-governor of its value. No memories with their attendant labels intervene: and when we reach for a few, what we find would, on close inspection, be applicable to any number of lesser works. In the end, the only real test of a work's value is one we cannot or need not apply: time. If repeated viewings confirm the value and strength of the experience, and its construction doesn't seem to weaken under the minutest analyses, the work will survive — something whose confirmation or denial time brings about anyway, and in whose ineffable face any single critic becomes superfluous.

Accustomed as we are to viewing a film as a narrative expression or as a continuous flow of action, we are still very far from viewing it as a construction of spatial (within the image) and temporal (between the images) discontinuities, none of which retain in isolation the force they have in structuration. A fine illusion, that in the bounding of a discrete unit in art sees its totality! At any rate, we are a little further away by now from seeing it as an expression, at least in the classical definition of the term. At

the far limits of the concept, where it begins to topple over into absurdity, either the name or its definition will have to change. And yet these limits were attained only by following through premises within the concept itself: expression devours itself in its very utterance — in utterance as such. Which is in no way to be understood as a denial or negation of it. To say it once more: nothing can be meaningfully opposed to a concept which has been shown to be empty. The fact that artists and what they express owe their status solely to a public distinction from those who remain silent doesn't mean that anyone can be an artist or that such works are mere spoutings of impressionistic relay. To merely oppose sign to soul, or language to art, is to remain within the same conceptual scheme, at one end of whose paradigmatic scale we find its name as a positive definition (right-hand side), and at the other end, the extreme term of its negative definition: while all the rest are degrees of the perfection/imperfection of expression. Negation is a trap, granting to its term a substance it doesn't possess. But in terms of the foregoing analysis we must ask: cultural codes as opposed to what? — mnemonic precession as opposed to what? — and the genre-ridden, the automatic, the totally-formularized ...etc.?

In conclusion, five brief questions to summarize the conceptual drift of the foregoing arguments: you can see them as the dexteral digits of a glove turned inside-out, and silently dropped in sinistral challenge:—

1. Whether thousands of distinctions within each sense as well as those between the senses do not contain a certain degree of schematizing — into images, "things": and whether consciousness isn't the synthetic structure that has resulted from these bricks.
2. Whether consciousness could exist unless a tacitly agreed-upon division of the sensorium and the designations inherent in it had already taken place — designations being only another name for this division. (Consciousness is always "consciousness of X", something, a group of somethings.)
3. Whether anything that can reach consciousness, be it ideas or dreams, images or augurs, memories or possibilities, is not in principle and in fact reducible to schemas or words, implicitly communicable (via the relay-codes of more or less familiar transmission-channels: the more or the less according to the generality or speciality of the channels used).
4. Whether the need to "know" one's mind and one's experiences does not of itself imply the communicability of this knowledge, and hence its origin in commonly-understood signs.

5. Whether the belief that the contents of consciousness preexisted their designations (the fixed parameters of definition multiplied by communicable intentions) is not putting the cart before the horse, the tote before all bets have been placed.

That glove froze in claw-formation, as anyone will discover who attempts to grapple with these talons. Already I hear the muffled gurgle of a compressed throat.... should have chosen a happier metaphor. How about: fluid fate's fixed and immutable emblems doing five laps around a table covered in bright, vulgar, neon-green felt?

Or: the dead old woman's toothless smile sometimes glimpsed in the welcome of vaginal lips? Or the dry carp of a throat turning into the warble of loosened phlegm?

Happier for some, anyway.

— Mark C. Zenner.
20/5/90.

CONTINUED FROM CENTRE PAGES

David Coulton says that this realism debate sets film theory back 40 years. I'd say his contribution sets the newsletter back 40 years (or the time it takes to read his piece), because he has overlooked Damien's sole contention to my article, and gone backwards to give us a prep-school rundown on reality and illusion misquoting Godard in the process. I haven't got the time to go through his emotionalist piece and respond to it bit by bit; and I feel I don't have to justify this dismissal. It's more important at this point, in these fragile and tough times, to take sides. I want to encourage Damien Grant, for I sense he believes.

Going to the 1990 SUPER-8 MAGAZINE (and this may have nothing to do with realism, but don't fool yourself...), I really enjoyed the articles by Sandy Munro and Ellen MacLennan especially. Sandy tells us of her dream "for man to live by harmoniously if gregarious", whilst Ellen says that "all films begin with a dream." I don't care if this comes across as sexist, but I reckon Sandy and Ellen's articles are gentler and more loving than the articles written by the male writers.

Which brings me to David Cox's disappointing piece in the Magazine. Disappointing because I expect more intelligence from David. What's this stuff about "growth", Dave? The Super-8 Group is open; anything is possible. Where have you been? How could you have seen new faces at the screenings Dave, when you're not there yourself? Where is this "new push to revitalize."? And how can Sarah leaving the group to work on a 35mm. feature film be a part of that push? You say "we must put our money where our mouths are." What money? (Or maybe you're speaking for yourself.) How can funding possibly "sort itself out"? You ask if we're film-makers or office clerks. I ask: Can we risk not being office clerks?

All in all a pretty healthy last month, what with the Magazine accompanying the newsletter.

I look forward to more wonderful (and not-so-wonderful) articles. Oh, and films.

WRITE FOR THE NEWSLETTER

No brains needed, no good judgement, no insightful thoughts. Just write.



LAST OPEN SCREENING

At 7:30 p.m.

Highlights from 1989.

The Lordmower by Mark Freeman
Ride by Mark La Rosa
Precious by Bill Mousoulis
Original Copy by Mark Zenner

At 8:30 p.m.

Open Screening.

4th Timelapse 1988 by Nick Ostrovskis
Grrr! by Heinz Boeck
Madonna by Laki Sideris
Melbourne Pipers' Silent Horse Sense
by Sandy Munro
Optic Youth by Nick Ostrovskis
Wandering the Outback by Ian Poppins

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BILL MOUSOULIS,
in a great hurry.

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