

give, let me be quick not just to avoid the impression of denying this, as though I were eager to be known as a tolerant liberal on this issue; let me prove that there *must* be more than one interpretation possible. Call the reading I give of a film the provision of a text about a text. Think of this provision as a secondary text and let us say that it is an interpretation of the primary one. Then, among other things, we owe an account of what an interpretation is. I pick up the suggestion from Wittgenstein's celebrated study, in Part II of *Philosophical Investigations*, that what he calls "seeing an aspect" is the form of interpretation: it is seeing something *as* something. Two conditions hold of a case in which the concept of "seeing as" is correctly employed. There must be a competing way of seeing the phenomenon in question, something else to see it as (in Wittgenstein's most famous case, that of the Gestalt figure of the "duck-rabbit," it may be seen as a duck or as a rabbit); and a given person may not be able to see it both ways, in which case it will not be true for him that he sees it (that is, sees a duck or sees a rabbit) *as* anything (though it will be true to say of him, if said by us who see both possibilities, that he sees it as one or the other). And one aspect dawns not just as a way of seeing but as a way of seeing something now, a way that eclipses some other, definite way in which one can oneself see the "same" thing.

Accordingly, taking what I call readings to be interpretations, I will say: for something to be correctly regarded as an interpretation two conditions must hold. First there must be conceived to be competing interpretations possible, where "must" is a term not of etiquette but of (what Wittgenstein calls) grammar, something like logic. Hence to respond to an interpretation by saying that there must be others is correct enough but quite empty until a competing interpretation is suggested. Second, a given person may not be able to see that an alternative is so much as possible, in which case he or she will not know what it means to affirm or deny that an interpretation involves reading in, hence will have no concrete idea whether one has gone too far or indeed whether one has begun at all. So many remarks one has endured about the kind and number of feet in a line of verse, or about a superb modulation, or about a beautiful diagonal in a painting, or about a wonderful camera angle, have not been readings of a passage at all, but something like items in a tabulation, with no suggestion about what is being counted or what the total might mean. Such remarks, I feel, *say* nothing, though

they may be, as Wittgenstein says about naming, preparations for saying something (and hence had better be accurate). The proof that there must be competing interpretations speaks to two recurrent issues. It helps one see why someone wishes to insist, more or less emptily, that there *must* be another interpretation: since one interpretation eclipses another it may present itself as *denying* the possibility of that other. It also helps me see what a complete interpretation could be, how it is one may end a reading. Completeness is not a matter of providing *all* interpretations but a matter of seeing one of them *through*. Reading in, therefore, going too far, is a risk inherent in the business of reading, and venial in comparison with not going far enough, not reaching the end; indeed it may be essential to knowing what the end is.

Having now spoken of my readings as secondary texts and described them as interpretations, I would like to propose an alternative to the concept of interpretation as a mode of describing these texts—which is to say: I would like to start providing a tertiary text. There are many such tertiary passages in the discussions to follow and, having said that such a notion of a hierarchy of texts creates obligations of explanation, let me at least note that it is not clear that these levels mean the same thing. A tertiary text, as I just introduced the term, is just a text referring to itself, and not all ways of referring to itself are departures from itself. So maybe there is no higher text (of reading) than a secondary one. But secondary, then, as opposed to what? Is the primary thing a text in the same sense? Suppose that an interpretation just is of a text and that to be a text just is to be subject to interpretation; and suppose this means that a text constitutes interpretation. A secondary text is a text in admitting of an interpretation but also in being an interpretation of a text. Is a primary text an interpretation of a text? Unless we see how what it interprets is a text (for example, how the world, or a person, is a text) we may not know how it is a text.

This aside, what I was going to call my tertiary text, my alternative to speaking of interpretation, is this: A performance of a piece of music is an interpretation of it, the manifestation of one way of hearing it, and it arises (if it is serious) from a process of analysis. (This will no longer be the case where a piece just is its performance; where, say, it is itself a process of improvisation.) Say that my readings, my secondary texts, arise from processes of analysis. Then I would like to say that what I am doing in reading a film is performing it (if you wish, performing it in-

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side myself). (I welcome here the sense in the idea of performance that it is the meeting of a responsibility.) This leaves open to investigation what the relations are between performance and interpretation, and between both of these and analysis, and between differing analyses, and hence between differing performances.

THE WAY I HAVE SPOKEN OF interpretation (marked by the occurrence of a certain use of "as," that is, of comparison, of a point of view dawning) is meant to mark a significant relation between the thought of *Philosophical Investigations* and the thought of Heidegger's *Being and Time*. Further relations between these writings are pointed to in the remarks entitled "Film in the University" that I have placed in the Appendix. These remarks were written as the introductory half of an essay the second half of which consisted of the reading of *Bringing Up Baby* that appears as Chapter 3. I retain those introductory remarks here if for no other reason than that they say things not said elsewhere in this book about who I am, I mean who I is, who the I in this book is, how that figure thinks things over and why such a one takes film as something to think over.

There is another reason for retaining them. That introduction was written as part of the opening address of a conference entitled Film and the University.* The initiating and recurrent topics of the conference had to do with what was (and is) called the legitimacy of film study. However one conceives of this issue, I am for myself convinced that a healthy future of film culture, hence of useful, orderly, original film criticism and theory, is as bound to film's inhabitation of universities (whatever universities in turn have come to be, and will further come to be because of that inhabitation) as was the epochal outburst of American literary criticism and theory that produced the New Criticism of an earlier generation. But my hope for the future of film culture is not based on that healthy development alone, and the ambition of this book is not limited to wishing a role for itself in that development.

The hope and the wish are based as well on the fact that films persist as natural topics of conversation; they remain events, as few books or

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plays now do. I would like that conversation to be as good as its topics deserve, as precise and resourceful as the participants are capable of. I would like, to begin with, conversations about movies, and therefore daily or weekly reviews of them, to be as uniformly good as we expect conversations or columns about sports to be. Not as widespread, perhaps, if that matters. My fantasy here is of conversations about *If Happened One Night*—or, for that matter, about *Kramer vs. Kramer*—that demand the sort of attention and the sort of command of relevant facts that we expect of one another in evaluating a team's season of play; conversations into which, my fantasy continues, a remark of mine will enter and be pressed and disputed until some agreement over its truth or falsity, some assessment of its depth or superficiality, has been reached.

This is a fantasy any writer may at any time harbor about being read attentively; but it is also a fantasy that could only recently have become practical about movies. It depends on a certain access to at least some parts of the history of film, a fateful development I described earlier as increasingly at hand. But if the conversation, the culture I fantasize, is technically at hand, something further, something inner, untechnical, keeps it from our grasp.

We seem fated to distort the good films closest to us, exemplified by the seven concentrated on in this book. Their loud-mouthed inflation by the circus advertising of Hollywood is nicely matched by their thin-lipped deflation by those who cannot imagine that products of the Hollywood studio system could in principle rival the exports of revolutionary Russia, of Germany, and of France. This view sometimes seems the work of certain critics or scholars of film with a particular anti-American axe of contempt to grind. But it expresses, it feeds on, a pervasive conflict suffered by Americans about their own artistic accomplishments, a conflict I have described elsewhere as America's over-praising and undervaluing of those of its accomplishments that it does not ignore.* It is part of this situation that American film directors play to it. The case of Howard Hawks comes to mind. The films of his discussed in this book seem to me clearly the work of a brilliant, educated, if brutal, mind, and one that knows its craft, the work, you might well say, of an artist. Yet in the interviews Hawks submitted to upon his dis-

* Organized by Marshall Cohen and Gerald Mast and held in July 1975 at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York.

* *The Senses of Walden* (New York: The Viking Press, 1972), p. 33.

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covery by educated circles a decade or so ago, he presents himself as a cowboy. I assume this is a natural extension of his brilliance and education and brutality. It is as if he knew that for an American artist to get and to keep hold of a public he must not be perceived as an artist, except on condition; above all he must not seem to recognize himself as such. The condition that would take the curse off his claiming to be an artist is that he seem so weird that no person of reasonably normal tastes could be expected to want to pay the price of being like him.

It is complicated. Part of Orson Welles's reputed troubles with Hollywood was that he carried the air of an artist, or a genius, or something like that. But as if in compensation his clientele apparently accepts his work—*Citizen Kane* at least—as a work of genius and of art. I find it a dangerous model for naming such aspirations. It seems to me that what is being called art in that work is showmanship and that what is good in the film may not depend on its overt showmanship. It would follow that the craft lies in its effects, not in its basis; that the workmanship is arbitrary, not authoritative. This is not to deny that great artists may sometimes be great showmen, nor even to deny that something you might call showmanship is essential to major art, as active in Emily Dickinson as in Walt Whitman. While we're at it, take two showmen like Eisenstein and Frank Capra. The former is an intellectual, the latter is not, but as craftsmen they seem to me to resemble one another, especially in putting things together for their melodramatic value. Either might have hit, for example, on Edward Arnold and his cigars and diamond rings as the image of a capitalist munitions maker. (Both knew some Dickens.) This conjunction of minds will seem preposterous to some who care about film, to some partisans of each of them. A good reason for this feeling is the idea that Capra is not remotely as interesting visually as Eisenstein, along with an idea that film is a visual medium. Certainly it is true that nothing in Capra could satisfy an interest in the visual, in what one might call the melodramatically visual, the way Eisenstein can by, for example, watching the carcass of a horse drop from an opening drawbridge into the water far below. But suppose film's interest in the visual can be understood as a fascination with the fact of the visible. Then nothing in Eisenstein could be more revealing than Capra's camera, in *It's a Wonderful Life*, in the sequence in which James Stewart, greeting his returning brother at the railroad station, learns that this re-

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turn does not mean his release from his hated obligations but his final sealing within them, as it accompanies Stewart's circling away from the scene of happy exchanges, reeling from the collapse of his ecstasy, working to recover himself sufficiently to find a public face. We are vouchsafed a vision of the aging American boy, as melodramatically private as a Czar.

Philistines about film may take reassurance from such observations about Hawks and Welles and about the comparison of Eisenstein and Capra. That would be because they are philistines, who prefer reassurance to all things. A significant worry for me is that sophisticated about film may regard the same remarks as heresies. As heresies the observations are uninteresting, which means to me that the orthodoxies are equally uninteresting which cast them as heresies. My worry is that instead of such issues becoming examples of the ongoing conversation about film I was fantasizing (which is what they are designed to be), the orthodoxies will receive tenure in university programs of study, and therewith unnatural leases on life. What then? Should one try to convince oneself that universities are not as urgent for the future of film studies as I have taken them to be? Not to strike even though the iron is hot is sometimes the creative way to proceed. But it is of limited value as a general principle of conduct. (I distinguish this from the more popular principle of striking while the hammer is hot.)

But there is something beyond our distorting of the value of the good films closest to us that keeps them inaccessible to us as food for thought. It lies in the dilemmas I was invoking in calling upon Emerson's appeal to the common and the low, and his and Thoreau's passion for the near, claiming their affinity with my philosophical preoccupation with the ordinary, the everyday. The dilemmas concern what I called taking an interest in one's experience. The films that form the topics of the following chapters are ones some people treasure and others despise, ones which many on both sides or on no side bear in their experience as memorable public events, segments of the experiences, the memories, of a common life. So that the difficulty of assessing them is the same as the difficulty of assessing everyday experience, the difficulty of expressing oneself satisfactorily, of making oneself find the words for what one is specifically interested to say, which comes to the difficulty, as I put it, of finding the right to be thus

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interested. It is as if we and the world had a joint stake in keeping ourselves stupid, that is dumb, inarticulate. This poses, to my mind, the specific difficulty of philosophy and calls upon its peculiar strength, to receive inspiration for taking thought from the very conditions that oppose thought, as if the will to thought were as imperative as the will to health and to freedom.

... perhaps the finest, strongest, happiest, *most courageous* period of Wagner's life: the period during which he was deeply concerned with the idea of Luther's wedding. Who knows upon what chance events it depended that instead of this wedding music we possess today *Die Meistersinger*? And how much of the former perhaps still echoes in the latter? But there can be no doubt that "Luther's Wedding" would also have involved a praise of chastity. And also a praise of sensuality, to be sure—and this would have seemed to be quite in order, quite "Wagnerian."

For there is no necessary antithesis between chastity and sensuality; every good marriage, every genuine love affair, transcends this antithesis. Wagner would have done well, I think, to have brought this *pleasant* fact home once more to his Germans by means of a bold and beautiful Luther comedy, for there have always been and still are many slanderers of sensuality among the Germans; and perhaps Luther performed no greater service than to have had the courage of his *sensuality* (in those days it was called, delicately enough, "evangelical freedom").

NIETZSCHE, *Genealogy of Morals*

Had I had faith I should have remained with Regine.

KIERKEGAARD, *Journals*

The finding of an object is in fact the refinding of it.

FREUD, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*

Hegel remarks somewhere that all facts and personages of great importance in world history occur, as it were, twice. He forgot to add: the first time as tragedy, the second as farce.

MARX, *The Eighteenth Brumaire*

The life of man is the true romance, which, when it is valiantly conducted, will yield the imagination a higher joy than any fiction.

I have seen an individual, whose manners, though wholly within the conventions of elegant society, were never learned from there, but were original and commanding, and held out protection and prosperity; one who did not need the aid of a court-suit, but carried the holiday in his eye; who exhilarated the fancy by flinging wide the doors of new modes of existence; who shook off the captivity of etiquette, with happy, spirited bearing, good-natured and free as Robin Hood; yet with the port of an emperor,—if need be, calm, serious, and fit to stand the gaze of millions.

Since our office is with moments, let us husband them.

Our moods do not believe in each other.

EMERSON, "New England Reformers," "Manners," "Experience," "Circles"

I should like to say that what dawns here lasts only as long as I am occupied with the object in a particular way.

WITTGENSTEIN, *Philosophical Investigations*