

Englit 3464
Spring 2005
Lowenstein, A.

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SURREALISM AND CINEMA

ENGLIT 3464 (CRN 40512), Spring 2005, Tuesdays 6-10pm, CL 444
Dr. Adam Lowenstein

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Course Description. Some might say that cinematic Surrealism was “born” when the razor met the eyeball in the infamous opening of Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí’s *Un Chien andalou* (1929). But if the disorienting spirit of Surrealism appears in formulations such as Lautréamont’s “fortuitous encounter on a dissecting table of a sewing machine and an umbrella,” then isn’t there something inherently cinematic about Surrealism? And something powerfully Surrealist about cinema as a medium? In this sense, has cinematic Surrealism ever really “died”? This graduate seminar engages the aesthetic and political debates produced by the conjuncture of Surrealism and cinema – debates first given shape by such major philosophers as André Breton, Georges Bataille, and Walter Benjamin in the years between the two world wars, but still vital to present-day questions concerning culture and representation, when the legacy of Surrealism touches institutions as varied as the modern art museum and MTV. The seminar will investigate cinematic Surrealism from a variety of vantage points, including an historical excavation of canonical Surrealist films and writings; an exploration of the Surrealist fascination with cinematic figures and genres ranging from Charlie Chaplin to the horror film; and an experimental survey of “living” Surrealism(s) in films by directors from East and West, from Hollywood and the avant-garde and a variety of points in between. Seminar participants will be expected to pursue advanced independent research in relation to the questions posed by the seminar, and to share their findings in presentations and essays.

Prerequisites. None. Previous work in film studies is advisable, and a working knowledge of the textbook *Film Art: An Introduction* by David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson is strongly encouraged, as seminar members will be required to speak and write about film technique (mise-en-scene, cinematography, editing, sound) using the technical vocabulary presented in *Film Art*. Other recommended textbooks for review of basic film studies terms include *The Film Experience: An Introduction* by Timothy Corrigan and Patricia White and *A Short Guide to Writing About Film* by Timothy Corrigan. All of these titles are available at the University of Pittsburgh Book Center and on Hillman reserve.

Course Requirements. 1. Active, vocal, engaged class participation. 2. A journal with short, typed, weekly entries focusing on analysis of each unit’s readings, including observations to raise in class and points of connection with previous films/readings/discussions. These journals should be brought to each class, as they may be collected periodically or shared with classmates. 3. An oral presentation based on independent research. 4. A short midterm paper. 5. A final research paper that applies the seminar issues to original areas of scholarly inquiry. Please note that all due dates are FIRM; extensions will not be granted.

If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you

are encouraged to contact both your instructor and Disability Resources and Services, 216 William Pitt Union, 412-648-7890/412-383-7355 (TTY), as early as possible in the term. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

Course Texts (available at the University of Pittsburgh Book Center and on Hillman reserve): The two-letter abbreviations following each title provide a key to their appearances in the course schedule:

- Georges Bataille, *Story of the Eye* (1928; San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1987) [SE]
- Georges Bataille, *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927-1939* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985) [VE]
- André Bazin, *What is Cinema? Volume 1* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967) [WC]
- André Breton, *Manifestoes of Surrealism* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1972) [MS]
- Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920; New York: W.W. Norton, 1961) [BP]
- Paul Hammond, ed., *The Shadow and Its Shadow: Surrealist Writings on the Cinema*, third edition (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2000) [SS]
- Rudolf Kuenzli, ed., *Dada and Surrealist Film* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996) [DS]
- Ivone Margulies, ed., *Rites of Realism: Essays on Corporeal Cinema* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003) [RR]
- Maurice Nadeau, *The History of Surrealism* (1965; Cambridge: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 1989) [HS]
- Xeroxed articles on reserve in Crow Room, CL 526 [X]
- David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction*, seventh edition (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2004) [recommended]
- Timothy Corrigan, *A Short Guide to Writing About Film*, fourth edition (New York: Longman, 2001) [recommended]
- Timothy Corrigan and Patricia White, *The Film Experience: An Introduction* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2004) [recommended]

Course Schedule

WEEK 1, JAN. 11 – INTRODUCTION: “INTENTIONAL” AND “ACCIDENTAL”
SURREALISM

Screening: *Un Chien andalou* (Luis Buñuel, 1929, France) 17m; *A Trip to the Moon* (Georges Méliès, 1902, France) 21m; *Xtro* (Harry Bromley Davenport, 1983, Great Britain) 82m

WEEK 2, JAN. 18 – REALISM AND SURREALISM, AESTHETICS AND POLITICS

Screening: *L'Age d'or* (Luis Buñuel, 1930, France) 62m; *Las Hurdes: Land Without Bread* (Luis Buñuel, 1933, Spain) 27m

Reading: André Breton, “As in a Wood” [SS]; Georges Bataille, “Eye” [VE]; The Surrealist Group, “Manifesto of the Surrealists Concerning *L'Age d'or*” [SS]; Maurice Nadeau, “Ch. 14: The Aragon Affair” [HS]; Stuart Liebman, “*Un Chien andalou*: The Talking Cure” [DS]; Allen Weiss, “Between the Sign of the Scorpion and the Sign of the Cross: *L'Age d'or*” [DS]; Tom Conley, “Documentary Surrealism: On *Land Without Bread*” [DS]

WEEK 3, JAN. 25 – THE HUMAN ANIMAL, PART I

Screening: *Blood of the Beasts* (Georges Franju, 1949, France) 22m; *Eyes Without a Face* (Georges Franju, 1960) 88m

Reading: Maurice Nadeau, “Ch. 1: The War” and “Ch.6: The Foundation of the Movement” [HS]; André Breton, “Manifesto of Surrealism” [MS]; James F. Lastra, “Why Is This Absurd Picture Here?: Ethnology/Heterology/Buñuel” [RR]; Georges Bataille, “The Big Toe” and “Mouth” and “Formless” and “The Use Value of D.A.F. de Sade” [VE]; Jean Cocteau, *The Art of Cinema* (on Franju) [X, pp. 119-121]

WEEK 4, FEB. 1 – THE HUMAN ANIMAL, PART II

Screening: *Los Olvidados* (Luis Buñuel, 1950, Mexico) 88m

Reading: André Bazin, “The Ontology of the Photographic Image” [WC]; André Bazin, “Death Every Afternoon” [RR]; Serge Daney, “The Screen of Fantasy (Bazin and Animals)” [RR]; André Bazin, “*Los Olvidados*” [X]; Luis Buñuel, “The Cinema, Instrument of Poetry” [SS]; Linda Williams, “The Critical Grasp: Buñuelian Cinema and Its Critics” [DS]

WEEK 5, FEB. 8 – SUBJECTS AND OBJECTS OF SURREALISM

Screening: *Blood of a Poet* (Jean Cocteau, 1930, France) 55m; *Meshes of the Afternoon* (Maya Deren, 1943, USA) 18m; *Ritual in Transfigured Time* (Maya Deren, 1946, USA) 15m

Reading: P. Adams Sitney, *Visionary Film: The American Avant-Garde, 1943-1978*, second edition [X, 3-46]; André Bazin, “Cinema and Exploration” [WC]; Philip Rosen, “History of Image, Image of History: Subject and Ontology in Bazin” [RR]; Jean Cocteau, *The Art of Cinema* (on *Blood of a Poet*) [X, pp. 133-134]

WEEK 6, FEB. 15 – INCLUSION, EXCLUSION, AND ETHNOGRAPHIC SURREALISM

Screening: *The Last Wave* (Peter Weir, 1977, Australia) 106m

Reading: James Clifford, “On Ethnographic Surrealism” [X]; Maurice Nadeau, “Ch. 12: The Crisis of 1929” and “Ch.13: ‘In the Service of the Revolution’” [HS]; André Breton, “Second Manifesto of Surrealism” [MS]; Georges Bataille, “The ‘Old Mole’ and the Prefix *Sur* in the Words *Surhomme* and *Surrealist*” [VE]

MID-TERM PAPER DUE

WEEK 7, FEB. 22 – MAD LOVE AND CONVULSIVE BEAUTY

Screening: *Careful* (Guy Maddin, 1992, Canada) 100m

Reading: André Breton, “Beauty Will Be Convulsive or Will Not Be At All” and “L’Amour Fou, L’Amour Unique” [HS, 312-316]; André Breton, “Soluble Fish” [MS]; George Toles, “From Archangel to Mandragora in Your Own Backyard: Collaborating with Guy Maddin” [X]

WEEK 8, MAR. 1 – STORIES OF THE EYE

Screening: *Psycho* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960, USA) 109m

Reading: Georges Bataille, *Story of the Eye* [SE]; Roland Barthes, “The Metaphor of the Eye” [X]; George Toles, “‘If Thine Eye Offend Thee . . .’: *Psycho* and the Art of Infection” [X]; Alfred Hitchcock, “Why I Am Afraid of the Dark” [X]; Edgar Allan Poe, “The Black Cat” [X]

WEEK 9, MAR. 8 – ***SPRING BREAK***

WEEK 10, MAR. 15 – MAPPING THE DREAM

Screening: *The Seashell and the Clergyman* (Germaine Dulac, 1928, France) 9m; *Eraserhead* (David Lynch, 1977, USA) 89m

Reading: Walter Benjamin, “Dream Kitsch” [X] and “Surrealism” [X]; Sandy Flitterman-Lewis, “The Image and the Spark: Dulac and Artaud Reviewed” [DS]; Antonin Artaud, “*The Shell and the Clergyman* Film Scenario” [X]; Antonin Artaud, “Sorcery and Cinema” [SS]; Jean Goudal, “Surrealism and Cinema” [SS]

WEEK 11, MAR. 22 – LAUGHING MATTERS

Screening: *The Adventurer* (Charlie Chaplin, 1917, USA) 31m; *Animal Crackers* (Victor Heerman, 1930, USA) 97m

Reading: Salvador Dali, “Abstract of a Critical History of the Cinema” [SS]; André Bazin, “Charlie Chaplin” [WC]; Maurcie Nadeau, “Ch. 10: ‘Au Grand Jour’” [HS]; The Surrealist Group, “Hands Off Love” [SS]; Jean-Louis Bédouin, “Chaplin, the Copper’s Nark” [SS]

WEEK 12, MAR. 29 – PLEASURE/UNPLEASURE: SACRIFICE AND MUTILATION

Screening: *In My Skin* (Marina de Van, 2002, France) 93m

Reading: Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* [BP, 1-39]; Georges Bataille, “Sacrificial Mutilation and the Severed Ear of Vincent Van Gogh” and “Sacrifices” [VE]

WEEK 13, APR. 5 – PLEASURE/UNPLEASURE: DESTRUCTION AND EXPENDITURE

Screening: *Visitor Q* (Takashi Miike, 2001, Japan) 84m

Reading: Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* [BP, 40-78]; Georges Bataille, “The Notion of Expenditure” and “The Psychological Structure of Fascism” [VE]

WEEK 14, APR. 12 – UNCANNY DEVIATIONS

Screening: *Little Otik* (Jan Švankmajer, 2000, Czech Republic) 125m

Reading: Sigmund Freud, “The Uncanny” [X]; Michael O’Pray, “Surrealism, Fantasy, and the Grotesque: The Cinema of Jan Švankmajer” [X]; Georges Bataille, “The Deviations of Nature” [VE]

WEEK 15, APR. 19 – CONCLUSION: SURREALIST PASTS AND FUTURES

Screening: *Les Vampires* (Louis Feuillade, 1915, France) serial; *Irma Vep* (Olivier Assayas, 1996, France) 97m

Reading: Maurice Nadeau, “Epilogue: Conclusions” [HS]; André Breton, “On Surrealism in its Living Works” [MS]

FINAL PAPER DUE