
BETWEEN OPERA
AND CINEMA
JEONGWON JOE
and ROSE THERESA
Editors
with an afterword by
STANLEY CAVELL

Between Opera and Cinema

Critical and Cultural Musicology

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Series Editor's Foreword

Martha Feldman

MUSICOLOGY HAS UNDERGONE A SEA CHANGE IN RECENT YEARS. WHERE once the discipline knew its limits, today its boundaries seem all but limitless. Its subjects have expanded from the great composers, patronage, manuscripts, and genre formations to include race, sexuality, jazz, and rock; its methods from textual criticism, formal analysis, paleography, narrative history, and archival studies to deconstruction, narrativity, postcolonial analysis, phenomenology, and performance studies. These categories point to deeper shifts in the discipline that have led musicologists to explore phenomena which previously had little or no place in musicology. Such shifts have changed our principles of evidence while urging new understandings of existing ones. They have transformed prevailing notions of musical texts, created new analytic strategies, recast our sense of subjectivity, and produced new archives of data. In the process, they have also destabilized canons of scholarly value.

The implications of these changes remain challenging in a field whose intellectual ground has shifted so quickly. In response to them, this series offers essay collections that give thematic focus to new critical and cultural perspectives in musicology. Most of the essays contained herein pursue their projects through sustained research on specific musical practices and contexts. They aim to put strategies of scholarship that have developed recently in the discipline into meaningful exchanges with one another while also helping to construct fresh approaches. At the same time, they try to reconcile these new approaches with older methods, building on the traditional achievements of musicology in helping to forge new disciplinary idioms. In both ventures, volumes in this series also attempt to press new associations among fields outside of musicology, making aspects of what has often seemed an inaccessible field intelligible to scholars in other disciplines.

In keeping with this agenda, topics treated in this series include music and the cultures of print; music, art, and synesthesia in nineteenth-century Europe; music in the African diaspora; relations between opera and cinema; music in the cultural sensorium; music and Marxism; and music, sensation, and sensuality. Through enterprises like these, the series hopes to facilitate new disciplinary directions and dialogues, challenging the boundaries of musicology and helping to refine its critical and cultural methods.

Introduction

Rose Theresa and *Jeongwon Joe*

> I believe that in the coming years by my work and that of others . . . grand opera can be given at the Metropolitan Opera House at New York without any material change from the original and with artists and musicians long since dead.
>
> —Thomas Edison (1895)

> The world of opera is built upon premises which radically defy those of the cinematic approach. . . Opera on the screen is a collision of two worlds detrimental to either.
>
> —Siegfried Kracauer (1951)

> Opera shares with film . . . many of its functions.
>
> —Theodor Adorno (1955)

> In significant ways, opera via the media today is more important, more vital than opera done live. . . . But this shift toward mediated opera has a price.
>
> —Sam Abel (1996)

THE TITLE OF THIS VOLUME, *BETWEEN OPERA AND CINEMA*, REFLECTS ITS purposefully ambivalent and multivalent aim. To focus attention on those spaces between the two—whether aesthetic, cultural, historical, ideological, institutional, phenomenological, or technical—implies questioning both what is shared between opera and cinema and what comes between them.

Within the university, opera and film as academic disciplines share a sense of relative youth. Both fields established their institutional affiliations from the periphery, and both are marked by their involvement in critical and methodological issues that have continually questioned and redefined relations between the centers and margins of the academy. As Marc Weiner points out in chapter 5, the growing field of opera cinema studies, where these two disciplines come together most obviously, is further marked by its diversity and heterogeneity. Perhaps this is as it should be, owing to the myriad ways in which opera and cin-

ema have interacted over the past century. Though this volume reflects the diversity of its interdisciplinary subject, we have nonetheless loosely organized its chapters under three rubrics.

SILENT AFFINITIES

Thomas Edison's statement points out the special interest of early cinematographers in the possibilities of opera on screen. As Noël Burch has argued, a desire for the reproduction of theatrical, literary, pictorial, and, in some cases, operatic modes of representation was part of a complex cultural fantasy during cinema's early years. Cinema was at once "a series of researches whose ultimate aim remained the reproduction of life. . . an analogue of reality" and, at the same time, a "lyrico-theatrical dream" for a perfectly reproduced "reality" no less than operatic in its effects.[1] Edison's dream of performances given by "artists and musicians long since dead" also suggests some of the strangeness of early relations between opera and cinema. When Edison launched his series of "Grand Operas" in 1909 with a film version of Gounod's *Faust*, the characters onscreen were mute. In his *Music and the Silent Film*, Martin Marks discusses the seeming contradictions of film based on opera during the era before standardized synchronization of sound:

> The mute medium robs such a work of its dramatic essence; and even if the accompanying score were to include vocal as well as instrumental parts (which does not often seem to have been the case), the original theatrical balance has been lost.[2]

And yet, as Marks has discovered, film producers and audiences willingly accepted these mute adaptations of popular operas.

In chapter 1, Rose Theresa situates the appeal of opera in the context of cinema's early modes of spectatorship based on spectacle and narrative procedures. During cinema's first decades, the early "cinema of attractions," which emphasized the spectacle of cinematic technology, gave way to narrative films. With the newer modes of narration, Theresa stresses, spectators were offered new positions of understanding and subjectivity, not so much as part of a particular exhibition or technological event, but rather from a space within the fictional worlds of specific films. Spectatorship became part of the film itself as a point of address and a textual entity that worked to standardize cinematic consumption. In her investigation of early cinematic versions of Gounod's *Faust*, the most frequently filmed opera of the period, Theresa argues that opera provided cinema with a flexible model for negotiating—at times through sexual difference—the contradictory claims of spectacle and narrative during this "transitional" period in cinema's history.

Michal Grover-Friedlander's essay is part of a larger project exploring the significance of silence to opera and operatic representation. At the heart of silent film's attraction to opera, she posits, is the fact that opera derives its force not simply from the extravagance of the singing voice, but rather in its suggesting or approaching the limit of the vocally expressible. What lies at that limit, constituting a hidden focus to which voice is drawn, is that which transcends the operatic voice: the silence beyond song. For Grover-Friedlander, early cinema in its muteness—its fascination with and anxiety about silence—was uniquely suited to revealing opera's tendency to go beyond song, disintegrating into deadly silence. But the silent affinity between opera and cinema that lies beyond the limit of the sensical can be traced in films throughout the history of cinema. In this essay, she turns to the Marx Brothers's *A Night at the Opera* (1935) to question whether or not cinema, now possessing a voice, is still attracted to opera. She explores how cinema, after its transformation into the talkie, looks back at its silent past. She argues that cinema wishes to remember, that it is nostalgic for the absent voice or for a loss in relation to its new voice. What the talkie indeed inherits from its silent past is related in fundamental ways to the medium of opera.

Lesley Stern also locates the encounter between opera and cinema in the practices of silent film. In chapter 3, Stern discusses Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger's *The Tales of Hoffmann* (1951)—not a silent film at all, but rather what Powell called a "composed film." She argues that *The Tales* dissolves the "real" of its operatic source into a magical display of cinematic trickery and stylized artificiality. Though far removed from the operatic stage in its exuberant display of special effects, it nonetheless conveys a remarkable sense of the operatic through certain operations she defines as "operality." Stern traces a genealogy of these operations through the "grandiose époque of hysterical cinema"—through the silent cinema of the divas—to illustrate the intersections of dancerly, operatic, and theatrically avant-garde practices that find their apotheosis in Powell and Pressburger's film. Conceived within the parameters of a dramaturgy not centered on character but nonetheless charged by an intense investment in acting, this film's multiplication and doubling of operatic and cinematic performative signs produces for Stern a cinema of visceral engagement.

It may have been this multiplication and doubling—the "operality"—of Powell and Pressburger's *The Tales of Hoffmann* that left Siegfried Kracauer quite profoundly ambivalent. Of the film he wrote that "having thrown out the cinema as a means of capturing real life, Powell and Pressburger reintroduce it to evolve an imagery which is essentially stage imagery, even though it could not be staged in a theatre. . . No doubt it is cinema. But it is cinema estranged from itself."[3] For Kracauer, opera was a "monstrous amalgam" laden with values and meanings irreconcilable with the critical and even redemptive potential of a popularly conceived cinema. As Miriam Hansen has argued, Kracauer felt that film should take as its object the material realm of the everyday as it existed at or just

below the surface: "the world of things in its habitual, unconscious interdependence with human life, with the traces of social, psychic, and erotic relations."[4] It was not the job of Kracauer's "cinematic approach" to reflect faithfully everyday phenomena but rather to render them strange, to expose the contingency of that which was habitual and familiar. Within the context of his critical economy, opera worked at cross-purposes with cinema, magically transforming the strange and improbable into the spectacularly familiar. Paraphrasing Kracauer, opera does not "penetrate" the material world, it "transcends" it.

As Jeongwon Joe demonstrates in her dissertation "Opera on Film, Film in Opera: Postmodern Implications of the Cinematic Influence on Opera," the exploitation of aesthetic and technical conflicts between opera and film can yield the sort of disruptive effects that Kracauer sought exclusively in cinema. Philip Glass's *La Belle et la Bête* is one of several recent works attempting such a provocative fusion of cinema and opera. In *Belle*, Glass uses Jean Cocteau's film of 1946 as the visual content of his opera, while replacing the original soundtrack with live music. In chapter 4, Joe examines this multimedia opera's dialectical tension between stage and screen, between live bodies and reproduced images, to elucidate how, by re-embodying operatic voices in cinematic images, the cinematic visuality of Glass's *Belle* challenges performing and viewing conventions of the traditional operatic theater. Joe also traces affinities between *Belle* and silent film, focusing on the fact that both explore the mixture of live voices with filmic images. Yet, she argues, the live voice in Glass's opera functions to undo silent cinema's convention of reducing the distance between voice and body.

STRATEGIC MEDIATIONS

Theodor Adorno, like Kracauer, also wrote about relations between opera and cinema. For Adorno, however, the two shared significant aesthetic and historical similarities. In chapter 5, Marc Weiner draws on insights from *In Search of Wagner*—in which Adorno advanced the notorious thesis that Wagnerian music drama is the ideological precursor to modern film—to answer the question "Why does Hollywood like opera?" He observes that in the last twenty-five years, opera has played a central role in a large number of "blockbuster" films intended for a wide popular audience that would otherwise evince little interest in the art form. Applying Adorno's discussion of "phantasmagoria" to the use of opera in Jonathan Demme's *Philadelphia* (1993), Weiner seeks to uncover the ideological assumptions regarding the role of opera in American culture and the often unacknowledged set of associations that attend it. He argues that in terms of its social and psychodynamic function, opera constitutes a labile object rife with contradictions. When opera is strategically deployed in blockbuster films such as *Philadelphia*, the social differences that often accompany the artform—between high and low, rich and poor, homosexual and heterosexual, diseased and

healthy, exotic and mainstream—are both evoked and transcended by opera's phantasmagorical efficacy as a sign of the universal.

Mary Hunter addresses somewhat similar issues in chapter 6. She argues that the representation of opera in Frank Darabont's *The Shawshank Redemption* (1994) evokes a world of universality and timelessness where engaged listening and emotional response to aesthetic phenomena transcend arbitrary social divisions. But this is not the only way that mainstream cinema uses opera. John Huston's *Prizzi's Honor* (1985), in stark contrast to *The Shawshank Redemption*, cleverly deploys operatic quotations to articulate an insider culture where hierarchy outweighs universality. In her essay, Hunter offers a comparative analysis of these two films, illuminating how the use of both diegetic and non-diegetic operatic music, as well as the female voice, marshals opera to engage cinematic listeners—through sonic versions of feeling and knowing—even while entering universes that in sociopolitical terms are nearly diametrically opposed.

David J. Levin offers a critique of the recent trend in opera criticism toward the intensely emotive and autobiographical. In their libidinal effusions, such authors as Wayne Koestenbaum, Sam Abel, and Paul Robinson seem to emulate the operatic objects of their affections. In chapter 7, Levin charts the terms of this particularly extravagant style of criticism, which he terms "Neo-Lyricism," through a reading of Jean-Jacques Beineix's 1981 film *Diva*. Like the New Lyricism, this film both suggests and repeatedly performs the notion of "going your own way with your pleasure." Levin suggests that the New Lyricism is in part a product of the media technology that brings operatic experiences into the privacy of the home. What informs this criticism is a love of opera as an undomesticated pleasure of the domestic sphere. But, he argues, there are no innocent pleasures. For Levin, little is gained by purchasing the legitimation of enthusiasm at the cost of nuanced textual analysis.

For Marcia Citron, Jean-Pierre Ponnelle's *Le nozze di Figaro* (1976) is an instance of the mediation between technology and tradition that characterizes the genre of the opera-film itself. Her essay focuses on the alternation in this film between "exterior" and "interior" singing. She argues that interior singing, in which vocal music is presented without the moving lips of the characters, calls into question the status and location of the voice. As a flexible, mobile, and quasi-independent object, it wields considerable power in the narrative and representational economy of Ponnelle's film. Citron's analysis demonstrates that through interior singing and other cinematic techniques, Ponnelle produces an opera-film that is striking in its literary sensibility.

MEDIATED MEMORIES

The last three chapters treat films in which representations of operatic traditions effect significant mediations between past and present. When art music is used in postwar Italian cinema, it is most often the music of Verdi. Deborah Crisp and Roger Hillman read this phenomenon as part of the process of Italy's coming to

terms with the prewar fascist era and its ongoing presence in postwar politics. In this context, where both the left and center-right of Italian politics have mythologized the Resistance as a "Second Risorgimento," the use of Verdi, veritable icon of *the* Risorgimento, becomes a powerful device of cultural and historical commentary, both eliciting and refiguring cultural memory. Chapter 9 focuses on two postwar films. Crisp and Hillman argue that in his *Senso* (1954), Visconti draws on parallels between the Risorgimento reception of operas with potentially incendiary plots and Italian "occupation" by the forces of fascism to ignite the political and personal narratives of the film. Leto, in his *La villeggiatura* (*Black Holiday*, 1973), on the other hand, traces the continuation of bourgeois humanism into the prewar years of fascist ascendancy, with Verdi representing an ideal once shared and now contested. Both exploit the dramatic potential of Verdi's operas to reinforce a historical myth. Bearing a skewed relationship to neorealism, the combination in these films of the operatic and cinematic creates a threatricalized version of Italian history. What Verdi's music evokes in these films—whether tenable or not—is the mythology of the Resistance as a convenient postwar view of Italian history.

Teri Silvio also sees opera—in this case Chinese Opera—as a vehicle for engaging cultural memory. Her essay on Chen Kaige's *Farewell My Concubine* (1993) focuses on how nostalgia is evoked through the tension between the theatrical subject of the film and its "Hollywood" style, particularly the contrast between the charisma of the film's opera actor Cheng Dieye and the international pop star Leslie Cheung who plays him. Silvio argues that the overabundance of Freudian symbolism in the film and the construction of Leslie Cheung's queer star persona are both attempts to find a cinematic correlative of the lost erotic quality of the Peking Opera actor's physical presence. She reads the linking of themes of cultural identity and homosexual desire in this film in light of the ongoing transformation of China's entertainment culture from local and stage-based to international and screen-based.

In Mary Wiles "Sounding Out the Operatic," opera is seen to mark personal rather than cultural nostalgia in the work of filmmaker Jacques Rivette. Wiles demonstrates that, in the film *Noroît,* Rivette pays tribute to the memory of his friend and mentor Jean Cocteau, who was planning a filmed version of *Pelléas et Mélisande* shortly before his death. While Rivette's *Noroît* is usually read as an adaptation of Tourneur's *The Revenger's Tragedy*, a seventeenth-century play quoted at strategic moments in the film, Wiles persuasively traces *Noroît*'s "phantom source" in the characters, narrative, and mise-en-scène of Debussy's opera. She further situates Rivette's project in the context of theoretical debates of the 1960s and 1970s to argue that Debussy's subtle though radical modernism provided Rivette with an alternative to the prevailing anti-aesthetic tendencies of Brechtian filmmakers. The essence of mystery and ambiguity found in *Pelléas* is captured in *Noroît*, a film inspired by Debussy's opera of uncertainty.

Despite the century-long, mutual attraction between opea and cinema, as evidenced in this collection of essays, there are but a handful of book-length studies devoted to the topic.[5] A fairly recent spate of papers, presentations, and seminars suggests, however, the potential of a growing community of scholars interested at this time in what is at stake in the study of these two forms of representation and their complex interrelations. With the aim in mind to stimulate more dialogue within and beyond this community, this volume offers a mapping out of some of those richly ambivalent spaces yet to be explored between opera and cinema.

NOTES

1. Noël Burch, *Life to Those Shadows*, trans. Ben Brewster (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), 49.

2. Martin Marks, *Music and the Silent Film* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 42.

3. Siegfried Kracauer, "Opera on Screen," *Film Culture* 1 (1955), 21.

4. Miriam Hansen, "'With Skin and Hair': Kracauer's Theory of Film, Marseille 1940," *Critical Inquiry* 19 (spring 1993), 442.

5. Marcia J. Citron, *Opera on Screen* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000); Jeongwon Joe, "Opera on FIlm, Film in Opera: Postmodern Implicationsa of the Cinematic Influence on Opera" (Ph. D. diss., Northwestern Univesity, 1998); Alexander Thomas Simpson, Jr., "Opera on Film: A Study of the History and Aesthetic Principles of a Hybrid Genre" (Ph. D. diss., University of Kentucky, 1990); Roxanne Elizabeth Solomon, "A Critical Study of Franco Zeffirelli's *La Traviata* (EDD diss., Columbia University Teachers College, 1987); Jeremy Tambling, *Opera, Ideology and Film* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987); Jeremy Tambling, ed., *A Night in at the Opera: Media Representations of Opera* (London: John Libbey and Co., 1994); the joint issue of *L'Avant-Scène Opéra/Cinéma*, no. 98: *Cinema et Opéra (May* 1987); David Levin, *Richard Wagner, Fritz Lang, and the Nibelungen: the Dramaturgy of Disavowal* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

1
From Méphistophélès to Méliès
Spectacle and Narrative in Opera and Early Film

Rose Theresa

DURING THE LAST DECADES OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY, GOUNOD'S *Faust* was performed more often than any other operatic work, not only at the Paris Opéra, but internationally as well.[1] It was also the opera earliest cinematographers turned to most frequently. During cinema's first decade and a half, *Faust* made its way to the screen time and time again. Why was this so? The appeal of this opera around the turn of the century can be attributed in some part to they way it "combined spectacle and narrative," to borrow a phrase from Laura Mulvey.[2] As Mulvey and others indicate, spectacle and narrative are distinct forms of visual pleasure that realize the circulation of meaning and power with particular force in the cinema. As different ways of seeing, they shape spectators' rapport with the screen. Through spectacle and narrative, we will see how *Faust* offered early filmmakers a readymade, proven, and flexible model for establishing and regulating visual pleasure.

For Mulvey, the pleasures of spectacle and narrative and the experiences of filmgoers are structured through sexual difference. Cinema's ultimate power—particularly in mainstream cinema of the 1930s to the 1960s—is that of the "patriarchal order." Historians of early film, on the other hand, attend to distinctions between spectacle and narrative to elucidate a transformation in the nature of both cinematic language and spectatorship during the earliest decades of the medium. For scholars such as Tom Gunning, Thomas Elsaesser, and Miriam Hansen, cinema during these years effects a gradual shift from modes of engagement predicated on spectacle to those based on narrative continuity. They read this shift as one aspect of the increasing control of an emerging film industry over the cinematic experiences of its audiences. This essay will briefly consider *Faust* the opera in light of Mulvey's feminist analysis of spectacle and nar-

rative before exploring several *Faust* films in the context of changing modes of early cinematic spectatorship.

MULVEY AND THE GENDERING OF SPECTACLE AND NARRATIVE

In her "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," Laura Mulvey focuses on spectacle and narrative to discern ways in which sexual difference both structures and is structured by these "two contradictory aspects of looking in the conventional cinematic situation."[3] In her groundbreaking essay, Mulvey analyzes the ubiquitous gaze of the cinema in terms of three secondary "looks," those of the camera, the characters on the screen, and the spectators in the theater. She argues that it is through this powerful apparatus of interchanging looks that masculine-identified positions are more coherently aligned with narrative procedures, while femininity comes to be equated with spectacle.[4]

Though much attention has been given to defining the nature of narrative in the cinema and to analyzing narrative procedures in individual films, similar work on cinematic spectacle—the predominantly feminine side of Mulvey's dichotomy—has been generally limited to studies of early film, pornographic genres, and the American musical. In this context, spectacle is often defined in a negative relation to narrative. In the most general terms, where narrative is understood as the figuring of spatial and temporal movement, spectacle is characterized as static, disrupting the narrative flow through direct confrontation with "the here and now."[5] For example, Paul Willemen characterizes similarities between musicals and pornographic films in just this way:

> In both cases the importance of the generically obligatory sequences makes for a weak narrative as the story is simply there to link the graphic sex/musical numbers with fairly predictably coded transitions from the narrative to its interruptions, with the interruptions functioning as self-contained pieces. Moreover, the need to include such relatively autonomous segments arranged as spectacles "arresting" the look and thus, at least to a significant extent, suspending the narrative flow, makes for films that proceed with a halting rhythm.[6]

Without challenging these notions, Mulvey's essay shows that spectacle and narrative can also be distinguished more instructively as two different modes of address in cinema, two distinct ways in which cinema implicates its spectator.

Although any film may be read as an interweaving of spectacle and narrative, these two ways of seeing structure the ongoing rapport between spectator and screen in different ways. Spectacle is perhaps the more ambivalent of the two, the more unstable in its effects. With spectacle, there is a sense of direct rapport, an immediacy that invites a merging of spectator and screen image. But, at the same time, the experience of spectacle is necessarily predicated on separation: the spectacle is experienced primarily as other than the spectator. It is, after

all, only through separation that "the fantasy of merging, the confused boundaries between self and other" may be posited.[7]

Narrative operations, on the other hand, are effected through an initial sense of sameness and belonging. The narrative mode of address establishes and assumes identification of the spectator with a space constructed and shared from within the fictional world of the film itself. In other words, where spectacle addresses the spectator in a way that says "look *at* me and see me from where you are," narrative says "look *with* me and see what I see from where I am." Spectacle invites an immediate, direct rapport with the other. Narrative provides a more vicarious experience, in that rapport with the other is mediated through the same. In Mulvey's words, spectacle "implies a separation of the erotic identity of the subject from the object on the screen." Narrative, on the other hand "demands identification of the ego with the object on the screen through the spectator's fascination with and recognition of his like."[8]

In cinema's gendering of spectacle and narrative, then, the other is female and the same is male. Mulvey exemplifies this gendering of vision through a comparative analysis of specific films directed by Josef von Sternberg and Alfred Hitchcock. She demonstrates that in Sternberg's films starring Marlene Dietrich—particularly *Morocco*—spectacle reigns supreme. Mulvey describes Sternberg's general approach to narrative as one concerned with "situation, not suspense, and cyclical rather than linear time, while plot complications revolve around misunderstanding rather than conflict." In film after film, Sternberg casts Dietrich in the role of a performer such as a cabaret singer, a character whose profession is to provide erotic spectacle. In this context, a liberal use of close-ups overwhelms the narrative with images of Dietrich—of her face, of her legs—presented "in direct erotic rapport with the spectator." At the same time, a consistently shallow depth of field focuses visual interest on the pictorial space of the frame, such that "the beauty of the woman as object and the screen space coalesce."[9]

By contrast, the narrative mode of address dominates the films of Hitchcock, where suspense is expertly generated and resolved through patterns of mystery, intrigue, investigation, recognition, and disclosure. Though female characters provide instances of erotic spectacle, in some films they also embody the narrative's primary enigma or mystery-to-be-solved. The title characters of *Marnie*, for example, or *Vertigo*'s Judy/Madeleine become motivating objects of curiosity not only for the film's male protagonists, but also for the cinematic spectator.

Throughout Hitchcock's films, and irrespective of a female character's status as central enigma, it is predominantly—though never exclusively—from the perspective of male characters that the gaze implicates the spectator. As Mulvey explains, "Hitchcock's skillful use of identification processes and liberal use of subjective camera from the point of view of the male protagonist draw the spectators deeply into his position."[10] *Rear Window* provides a most obvious example

of this tendency in that, throughout the film, the spectator generally sees what Jeffries, the male protagonist (played by Jimmy Stewart), sees as he peers through his rear window. In Mulvey's words, the spectator is "absorbed into a voyeuristic situation within the screen scene and diegesis which parodies his own in the cinema." The spectator is thus positioned to share this situation with the protagonist who drives the narrative from within the film's fictional world.[11]

It is remarkable the degree to which Gounod's operatic characters Faust and Marguerite embody, if through quite different means, the visual dynamic outlined by Mulvey: "Woman as Image, Man as Bearer of the Look." Time and again throughout the opera, Faust gazes upon Marguerite who is presented as a spectacular vision to behold. The first appearance of the two characters together onstage provides an obvious example of the opera's gendering of spectacle and narrative. This takes place in the extended middle section of the first-act duo between Faust and Méphistophélès. It is the moment when Faust is about to sign away his soul. Méphistophélès presents him with a black parchment, but Faust balks, his hand trembles, and Méphistophélès responds to Faust's indecision:

> What will it take to persuade you?
> If it is youth that you desire,
> dare to gaze upon this![12]

With a wave of Méphistophélès's hand, the far wall of Faust's study, a painted curtain, rises to reveal Marguerite at her spinning wheel.[13] Faust looks, exclaims "O merveille!" and, after a general pause in the orchestra, the horns introduce "O nuit d'amour," one of the opera's most lyrical melodies to accompany Marguerite's spectacular first appearance.[14]

The visual apparatus of the theater is put into play to accentuate Marguerite's status as spectacle. She appears deeply upstage, removed from the main area of the stage by a sheer blue curtain.[15] From this enclosed space she poses mutely at her spinning wheel, in the manner more of a figure in a painting than a character in an opera. Marguerite's stage space, beyond the study and behind the transparent blue curtain, is also brightly illuminated. Faust and Méphistophélès remain downstage, left along with the audience in relative darkness. The spectator is thus positioned, through staging and focused lighting, to gaze along with the male characters upon the spectacle of Marguerite.[16]

Faust's role here is to look, and look he does until Marguerite disappears from view as magically as she appeared. While she is still onstage, Faust asks for the parchment and signs it. Méphistophélès offers his new conscript a celebratory drink. With goblet in hand, Faust toasts the vision of Marguerite, "to you, charming and adorable phantom," and proceeds to drink.[17] During all the acting out of this stage business, Faust gazes continuously upon the vision of Marguerite, his eyes never wavering from the spectacle. Even with the goblet at his lips, he does not turn away from the apparition.[18] Faust's visual engagement

with the female character, here and across the opera, comes to channel the spectator's visual engagement with the opera. As I have argued elsewhere, there are few operas of the nineteenth-century repertory that so "neatly" combine spectacle and narrative through sexual difference.[19] In this opera, the gaze is male.

Was it this gendering of visual pleasure in Gounod's *Faust* that appealed to early filmmakers? I would say yes, but it was more than that, too. For the visual and narrative dynamic provided by the two main characters is generated by a third one, namely, Méphistophélès. From within the diegetic world of the opera, he conjures the female spectacle out of thin air. With a wave of his hand, she appears. If Faust can look, it is because Méphistophélès makes it so. Here and elsewhere throughout the opera, it is through his trickery that spectacle and narrative are combined. Méphistophélès, in other words, embodies a fantasy of mastery over the very technology—the stage, settings, lighting, and even the orchestra—that realizes the opera in performance. Méphistophélès's fictive control over the operatic apparatus was perhaps the *ultimate* pleasure that Gounod's *Faust* had to offer its spectators, and especially the cinematographers who made this opera their own.

FAUST ON SCREEN: THE MOVE FROM SPECTACLE TO NARRATIVE

> [Narrative] continuity becomes not the attainment of an ideal of narrative efficiency as much as it is a "weapon" in a struggle over control, in which textual authority is the expression of authorship as product control and the ability to impose standards and standardization. . . . Continuity and the question of control can thus be seen to be linked, becoming crucial aspects of the story-telling process.[20]

For many historians of early film, the gradual emergence of a cinematic language based on narrative procedures must be understood in the context of cinema as an emerging industry based on various and shifting interests. The founders of French cinema were concerned above all with the new technology and its manufacture. Films themselves were seen merely as a promotional adjunct for selling cameras, projectors, and unexposed film stock. Although the Lumière company, for example, sent cameramen around the world, their short films capturing slices of local reality were used to publicize the company and its developing technologies. It was not until the nickelodeon era that film production—the making of movies—became a commercial enterprise in and of itself. Charles Pathé began construction on his first studio in 1902. The more cautious Gaumont waited until 1905 to invest in a studio. By the end of the decade, increasing numbers of production crews were churning out the single-reel genres demanded by an expanding international market. From manufacture of the apparatus and production of short films, the industry next moved in the direction of distribution of films, with Pathé abandoning films sales in 1907 to rent out entire weekly

programs. At the same time, film companies also began extending their concerns to the actual sites of exhibition. The Omnia-Pathé, Paris's first movie palace, opened its doors on December 15th, 1906. By midsummer of the next year, there existed over fifty newly constructed or converted movie houses in Paris. The French press declared 1907 "the year of the cinema."[21]

Indeed, 1907 was something of a watershed year. In the United States, the nickelodeon market had reached a saturation point, with independently operated storefront theaters attracting audiences in small towns and urban neighborhoods across the country.[22] French production companies provided much of the footage shown during this time; France led the United States in production and international distribution of films until about 1911.[23] The film genres increasingly in demand, from about 1907 onwards, were single-reel story films rather than actualities (films of "real life"). By 1907, market forces were in place and cinema was becoming a much different object than it had been ten years earlier.[24] As a commodity, cinema was no longer the technological apparatus. From apparatus to the individual reel of film and eventually the weekly program, it had now become a cinematic experience the industry offered for sale directly to the spectator.

For Tom Gunning, the true narrativization of cinema occurred with the commodification of a relatively standardized film experience, during the period from 1907 to about 1913. Before this time, films were not dominated by the narrative impulse that later asserted its sway over the medium. They were presented to their audiences as spectacle rather than narrative, and experienced in terms of "exhibitionist confrontation rather than diegetic absorption."[25] Miriam Hansen argues that:

> . . . early films adopted a particular aesthetics of display, of showmanship, defined by the goal of assaulting viewers with sensational, supernatural, scientific, sentimental, or otherwise stimulating sights as opposed to enveloping them into the illusion of a fictional narrative.[26]

Early cinema differed not only in terms of genre and style but, above all, in terms of the way it engaged its viewers.

Gunning stresses that "every change in film history implies a change in its address to the spectator, and each period constructs its spectator in a new way."[27] By his account, the move from spectacle to narrative signals a paradigmatic shift, and this "transformation of filmic discourse . . . bound cinematic signifiers to the narration of stories and the creation of a self-enclosed diegetic universe."[28] Only with the narrativation of cinema were spectators invited to enter the fictional fantasy worlds of the films themselves. Although spectators generally experience films as an interweaving of spectacle and narrative—and there is no doubt that even the earliest actualities and trick films display a narrative component—the relative move from spectacle toward narrative is perhaps the most important

aspect of a trend toward more imaginary relations between the spectator and the screen. These relations relied less and less on local contexts as the cinematic experience became more standardized, and at the same time, more fully interiorized.[29]

It is striking that there occurred a substantial increase in the number of films based on operas during this crucial period in the history of cinema. Operatic adaptations were especially popular from 1908 through 1910. Of the more than 150 opera-related titles produced before 1926, nearly half were released during these years.[30] The other striking fact that emerges from an initial investigation of cinematic titles is the number of films based on Gounod's *Faust:* roughly thirty. *Faust* indeed seems to have been the first opera adapted for the screen. In 1897, Lumières produced two short scenes from the first act of the opera. These two shorts are quite anomalous within the context of the hundreds of actualities that comprise Lumière's output.[31] Short travel films made up the bulk of Lumière's production, with more shots of West African dancers than any other single subject. Why French opera amidst all of this African dancing?

The two operatic scenes produced by Lumières were two opportunities Gounod's opera offered for cinematic tricks. The first was the vision of Marguerite conjured for Faust by Mephistophélès, the second Faust's transformation from shriveled up old scholar to vibrant youth. Both are transformation scenes, a relatively popular genre in early cinema.[32]

Although the Lumière company produced very few trick scenes, other filmmakers devoted more energy to this genre. Several of them produced films based on specific stage tricks from Gounod's opera.[33] These are all very short films, generally a couple of minutes in duration, and display little if any sense of narrative. These short, isolated scenes functioned to display technological tricks, and are excellent examples of cinema's early spectacle-orientated mode of address.

Georges Méliès's 1904 *Faust et Marguerite* is a much more elaborate adaptation of Gounod's *Faust*. With the exception of his *Le Royaume des fées* of the previous year, *Faust et Marguerite* was in fact Méliès's most ambitious film to date.[34] Roughly twenty minutes in duration—a long film for the time—*Faust et Marguerite* relates the entire story of the opera, with few departures from the series of events as they occur in the Gounod.

Méliès's approach to cinema is best understood in terms of his involvement with stage magic. Many of his films were first exhibited at the Robert Houdin, a small magic theater he had owned since the 1880s. Like his magic shows of which they were a part, Méliès's films were intended to dazzle his audience with spectacular visual effects. By his own account, the story of a film functioned only to provide a context for the all-important tricks:

> As for the scenario, the "fable," or "tale," I only consider it at the end. I can state that the scenario constructed in this manner has no importance, since I

use it merely as a pretext for the "stage effects," the "tricks," or for a nicely arranged tableau.[35]

Most of Méliès's films bear this out. For example, in *L'Enchanteur Alcofrisbas* of 1903, Méliès stages, in under four minutes, many more tricks than in the twenty minutes of *Faust et Marguerite*.[36] Even the few films longer in duration than *Faust*, such as *Le Royaume des fées* (1903) or *Les quatre cent farces du diable* (1906), are saturated with special effects that are presented in a narrative style amazingly phantasmagoric. In the context of Méliès's general output, *Faust et Marguerite* displays a high level of narrative control, with special effects serving the story, rather than the other way around.[37] This seems to be a direct result of the extent to which Méliès relied on the opera as a model for his film.

Several aspects of Méliès's production are indebted to its operatic model. Most obvious is the "nicely arranged tableaux" of the film. Sets and costumes, as well as the choreography and blocking of the actors were all based on those of the Paris Opéra.[38] *Faust et Marguerite* is presented as a series of twenty tableaux that each function, in effect, as operatic numbers. One might suggest that the film also creates a spectator that is perhaps as much operatic as cinematic. Méliès's exceptionally deep staging in this film, intended to emphasize the elaborate sets, tends to dwarf the characters, who generally occupy little more than a third of the screen's height. Although unusual from a cinematic standpoint, the effect is not unlike that of an operatic performance. The use of an immobile camera moreover positions the spectator to experience the action on the screen as though from a seat in an opera house, as a *l'homme d'orchestre*. The camera, and therefore the spectator, remain positioned in the same fashion from tableau to tableau.[39] Méliès's reliance on a specifically operatic system of tableaux contributes to the exceptionally static quality of this film, a characteristic frequently pointed out by critics.[40]

At the same time, *Faust et Marguerite* represents a step for Méliès in a direction toward clarity of narrative organization and continuity. The opera's series of tableaux offered Méliès a relatively clear-cut sequence of events to follow.[41] But just as important as the underlying temporal linearity of the story is the way in which the *mise-en-scène* of Gounod's *Faust* provides a specific model for negotiating spectacle and narrative—as modes of address—within the space of the tableau. We encounter in *Faust et Marguerite* a demarcation between foreground and background space that takes on more and more significance from tableau to tableau. As in Gounod's opera, the background (upstage) comes to be identified with feminized spectacle, the foreground (downstage) with the more masculine narrative mode of engagement from which the male characters gaze along with the spectators.[42]

Throughout the film, Marguerite tends to appear in the background, where she is presented as a spectacle offered by Méphistophélès to Faust and the audience. It is only after she has been conquered by Faust and cursed by her

brother that Marguerite occupies foregrounded space, and then only for the church and prison scenes. After her death, she is restored to the background, in a tableau of angels and saints. (Méliès's face appears as the second member of the Holy Trinity!) Her lifeless body, however, remains in the foreground space of the screen. Only when mad or dead does she occupy the space of the film's narrative mode of engagement.[43] The effect of this positioning is most obvious in the opening sequence: the vision of Marguerite appears within the frame of a window that becomes, with her appearance, a little tableau within the tableau. In hand-tinted prints of the film, Marguerite appears in color, though framed in black and white within her small, screen-like setting.

As in the opera, Méphistophélès is the producer of this image. Judith Mayne has remarked on the presence in many early films of what she calls a "primitive narrator." Particularly in cinema of the first decade or so of the century, narrative functions were often fulfilled from within the fiction of the film by characters "who appear to direct, mediate, or otherwise act out the visual pleasures of the cinematic scene":

> . . . they are neither omniscient narrators nor the absolute agents of "primitive" narration—i.e., they are objects of the camera's view at the same time that they act out the emerging visual and narrative capacities of the film medium.[44]

These characters prefigured the invisible, interiorized narrator of later cinematic narrative. Mayne points to the conjuror or magician as the most obvious example of a "primitive narrator"—a type of character that was in fact a favorite of Méliès, who often played the magician in his own films.[45]

In *Faust et Marguerite*, Méliès himself plays Méphistophélès, the primitive narrator who controls the space of the screen to conjure Marguerite as a spectacular special effect. This film, following the example of the opera, effectively creates for the spectator a visual and narrative space from which to gaze, in classic fashion, upon the spectacle of femininity. The model provided by Gounod's *Faust* for negotiating the competing claims of spectacle ("look *at* me") and narrative ("look *with* me") operated along an axis of sexual difference. Méliès indeed seems to have been the earliest filmaker so profoundly and so specifically influenced by the lyric stage. And, according to Mayne and others, his are among the earliest films "to confirm the widely held claim that the cinematic apparatus, emergent or otherwise, is made to the measure of male desire."[46]

MÉPHISTOPHÉLÈS AFTER MÉLIÈS

Though one of the earliest operatic adaptations, Méliès's *Faust et Marguerite* was also one of the most famous, and the most thoroughly documented of the adaptations of Gounod's opera. Less well-known are the opera films directed between 1900 and 1907 by Alice Guy for the Gaumont company.[47] Like Edison, the Gaumonts were involved with sound reproduction before they turned to cinema,

and Guy's operatic adaptations were part of the chronophone series of films, produced and exhibited with synchronized sound.[48] Guy's 1907 production of *Faust* was the last and most complete of her operatic adaptations. It consisted of twenty-two operatic scenes, each short enough to have had the appropriate music recorded on a wax cylinder. Longer operatic numbers, such as the quartet in the garden, were produced in more than one scene. The chronophones, also called *phonoscènes*, were very popular in France until World War I.[49] Though none of the prints from this series have survived, the format of these films, autonomous scenes presenting musical "numbers," implies an approach, like that of Méliès, based on the operatic tableau for narrative and visual organization.[50]

From 1907, the year of Guy's adaptation of *Faust*, to 1910, there sprang up several French production companies specializing in the genres of the literary, dramatic, and operatic adaptation.[51] These new companies enlisted the expertise of established artists to design, direct, and act in their consciously "artistic" productions.[52] Films based on *Faust* were produced within this relatively specialized context. Film d'Art's *Faust* (1910), directed by Henri Andreani, is perhaps the most freely adapted of the French productions. Although Georges Sadoul claims Andreani was inspired more by Gounod than Goethe, this seems to be the only French adaptation to incorporate scenes from the Goethe play that do not appear in the opera. The filming of this production took place somewhere along the Côte d'Azur, and the specific scenes chosen from the play all take place out of doors, affording Andreani additional opportunities to take advantage of the beauty of the countryside, a major component of Andreani's *mise-en-scène* in this film.[53] Although many scenes were shot out of doors, rather than in a studio, the film still displays an organization indebted to the tableau, with relatively deep staging, an immobile camera, and little, if any, crosscutting within each scene.

Unlike the *Faust* of Film d'Art, the version produced by the Cines/Eclair company was marketed, at least in the United States, specifically as an operatic adaptation.[54] The opening title informs us that this is *Faust*, an "opera by Charles Gounod," and some of the intertitles within the film consist of the titles of specific arias from the opera.[55] Although it announces to its audience the use of Gounod's opera as its model, this version, directed by Enrico Guazoni, represents a significant departure from the tableau aesthetic that informs so many early operatic adaptations. There are examples of crosscutting, close-ups, point-of-view shots, some with peepholes, a narratively significant fade to black, and even an example of parallel editing, all cinematic operations associated with the "emerging" classic mode of narration.

The film begins within a point-of-view shot. The aging Faust peers out the window of his study and spots a couple on the street below, walking arm-in-arm. The film cuts to a peephole shot of the couple, presented as though peered at through a telescope.[56] The spectator is thus invited, fairly obviously, to share Faust's point of view. Similar peephole shots occur throughout the film, in scenes