Institut for Informations- og Medievidenskab
Aarhus Universitet

p.o.v.

A Danish Journal of Film Studies

Editor
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Number 14
December 2002

Department of Information and Media Studies

University of Aarhus

Udgiver: Institut for Informations- og Medievidenskab
Aarhus Universitet
Niels Juelsgade 84
DK-8200 Aarhus N

Oplag: 500 eksemplarer
Trykkested: Repro-Afdeling, Det Humanistiske Fakultet
Aarhus Universitet
ISSN-nr.: 1396-1160
Omslag: Jakob Nielsen

The publication of this issue of p.o.v. was made possible by a grant from the **Aarhus University Research Foundation.**

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All issues of p.o.v. can be found on the Internet at:
http://imv.au.dk/publikationer/pov/POV.html

The contents of this journal are indexed in the MLA International Bibliography, the Film Literature Index and the International Index of Film Periodicals.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The principal purpose of p.o.v. is to provide a framework for collaborative publication for those of us who study and teach film at the Department of Information and Media Studies at the University of Aarhus. We will also invite contributions from colleagues in other

departments and at other universities. Our emphasis is on collaborative projects, enabling us to combine our efforts, each bringing his or her own point of view to bear on a given film or genre or theoretical problem. Consequently, the reader will find in each issue a variety of approaches to the film or question at hand – approaches which complete rather than compete with one another.

Every March issue of p.o.v. is devoted to the short fiction film.

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Introductory Note

This issue of *p.o.v.* offers fourteen new takes on one of Hollywood's most enduring classics: *Casablanca*.

Normally, a number of stills would accompany the articles contained here, in order to illustrate the points made by the authors. However, the Clip and Still Licensing department at Warner Brothers strictly prohibits frame-grabbing stills from their films, and the conditions under which authorized stills may be used (such as a minimum payment of $200 per still) are beyond the reach of a publication of this kind.

Our apologies therefore go out to the reader, who will find in this issue no stills from *Casablanca*, much to our regret.

I am grateful to all of the contributors to this *Casablanca* issue and to Stacey Cozart and Marilyn Raskin for their invaluable help with proofreading many of the articles.

Richard Raskin
Editor

Sublime Superficiality
An Interview with Ole Michelsen on *Casablanca*

Susanne Stranddorf and Line Aamand Hansen

Ole Michelsen, born in 1940, is Denmark's best known film reviewer. Since 1985, his TV program "Bogart" has played an important role in shaping Danish film culture, and keeping it open to outside influences. He has written three books: *Film skal ses i biografen* (1997), *Den dansende demon* (1999) and *Natten har tusind øjne* (2002). [RR]

What led you to choose Bogart as the icon and moniker for your TV program?

Well, the program originally started as a radio show. Back then I thought about what I was going to call it, and decided that *Filmkrønike* or *Filmmagasinet* were too boring. Two other possibilities came to mind and I was either going to call it *Dr. Caligaris Kabinet* or *Bogart.* And fortunately I chose *Bogart* – it was a shorter title and young people today don't know what *Dr. Caligaris Kabinet* is. That title would have been much too subtle. I chose Bogart because to me he is a genuine film symbol. You automatically associate him with American action movies and one of the greatest Hollywood periods, and everybody knows Bogart. To me he is the most authentic representative of all of that. After I came up with the title we found out that it is actually a very beautiful title, because it looks good in writing and if you split the

words with a hyphen you get 'Bog-art' (Book-art) which is also quite interesting. There was a gift in the title, and it did catch people's attention, which of course you never know in advance.

So it is not so much Bogart as a person or as an actor, but the symbol or myth he has come to represent for American film?

Yes, in that connection I don't really care about him. It was just intended to signal film on an international level. I could have called it *Ib Schønberg* but that would have been too local... And since the market is very much dominated by American film, it seemed natural to pick an American actor, and also I like Bogart but I don't feel a particular connection with him. Actually I don't know if I really like him that much.

Well, this should be interesting then, but how about Casablanca*. You also use that in your program – the title song and so on, do you have a special relationship with that movie?*

Yes, well, obviously I regard it as a very important American mainstream movie, and it goes well with the idea of having a very broad audience. This is not an exclusive, closed academic film program – but a program that is supposed to address a broad audience and reflect the whole cinematic repertoire in Denmark. And *Casablanca* is probably one of the most outstanding movies from that period, and almost everybody knows it. Although today they don't... Times have changed. I have done this program for almost twenty years now, two on the

radio and seventeen on television, and I am sure that the new generation hardly knows who Bogart is. But at that time everybody knew *Casablanca* and then it was obvious to pick *As Time Goes By* as a title song. It is a brilliant song, right? It invokes magic and nostalgia. But in the new form of the show, we only have a tiny bit of the song left in our jingle. We are actually moving away from Bogart more and more, as you will see. I don't use the hat anymore or have it with me in the studio. We are trying to renew the concept.

Does that also have something to do with the possibility that younger generations can't relate to Bogart?

No, not at all. I haven't even thought about that. It is simply because we want to try new things, and because I felt it was time to do something new.

There are four things that have often have been credited as the reasons for Casablanca*'s enduring success: Humphrey Bogart as an icon, the emotional melodrama, the many possibilities for reading meaning into the film, and not least its camp style or aesthetics. Which of these, if any, do you think are responsible for the film's success?*

What I like about both *Casablanca* and the way it was released, is that it was presented without any pretensions. Back when they made it, it was a standard product from the "Warner" company and none of the people who made it, not even Michael Curtiz, imagined that it was going to become a cult phenomenon or even an incredibly popular

film. It was simply an example of "This is what we know how to do: we know how to write dialogues like this, we know how to construct narratives like these, and we know how to implement contemporary themes." This is something that American film has always been able to do. In *Casablanca* it all comes together beautifully, and what makes it sublime is probably the unresolved love story. If you ask people, it is the story between Ingrid Bergman and Humphrey Bogart that carries the film, that is its center. Though the film's introduction is a study in one of American film's strengths, that is telling a story clearly but briefly, the film manages to leave this story of politics and refugees in time, which is another American specialty, and instead focuses on telling us a tragic love story. And this is exactly what Hollywood has always been able to do. Here they do it as a matter of routine, but with the sublime love story that elevates the film into the realm of the unique.

In what way do you see Casablanca *as a routine product? After all, they do use several of their best talents.*

They made it exactly the same way as they always did. It was like a factory running with extremely talented personnel, who made many, many films, and who had no other ambitions than to produce the usual craftsmanship. There were no initial intentions or expectations of making something special or unique. If you compare it to contemporary productions, all productions are now launched as if the film were

a miracle of wonders. For *Casablanca* they did what they always did, and they pulled in the great actors because they had them on contract. That was the background for the film. How it would be received, no one could predict, and in this case the reception was amazing. Of course the positive reception is connected to the fact that it was released in 1942, and coincided with the increased American involvement with the war, but I really believe the primary appeal of the film is its love story.

How do you feel that the love story of Casablanca *differs from other love stories? Why is* Casablanca *different, more successful, than any other love story?*

It must be because it is a tragic love story. It is untraditional in the sense that it has Rick walking away at the end and because no one dies as they often do in tragic love stories. The film probably would not have been as unique if Rick had been shot, as a more traditional denouement would have had it. I think that is what makes it special. That and the exceedingly cool and simultaneously very sensual interaction between the two main characters.

You mentioned previously the routine characteristic of the film. Casablanca *did win an Academy Award for Best Film, Best Director and Best Screenplay in 1943, and has been ranked as the second best film of the century by The American Film Institute. Yet many critics still question its artistic value, partly because they see it as inherently stereotypical. As a critic, where do you*

stand on this issue? Is it possible for a film to be so full of clichés and still constitute a work of art at the same time?

I think there is a clash between the European and the American mindset here because I think it is the Europeans who have called it a collection of clichés. This is typical for the European intellectual mindset. Great films often consist of clichés, and film is a popular art form that uses all forms of banalities and sentimentalities. The Americans do this without shame or restrictions. I think this is one of the great merits of American film; it has always dared to do what the Europeans have avoided, because they did not think it was artistic enough. I don't care about the clichés, I think it is fine if there are a lot of clichés. And I also dare people to bring forth arguments about the clichés, because you would be hard put to find a screenplay with more zest, and a more precise presentation of attitudes and points of view, than in this film. Is that banal or clichéd? I don't think so. Of course, it is not innovative stylistically because it resembles all other productions of its time. But it is just a little bit tighter than all the other films. It does not wallow in more sentimentality than is necessary. All the usual elements are there, as they almost always are in that type of film from that period. But I don't think it has ever bothered the Americans. You can say that it is not innovative, that it still uses the same film language, but in a way that is just a little bit tighter.

But do you think it is clichéd?

No, and I think that is irrelevant. If the film works, and the story is touching and is full of zest and gusto, then it is an intellectual exercise to begin debating whether it is clichéd or not. I don't agree with that, I do not support the allegations that it is clichéd. Of course it is not a film like those of Orson Welles, intended for an intellectual audience. It makes its points so clearly that anyone can understand them, and I think that is of great value in a film. That is enough for me to say that this is an amazing film, and I am not going to object to it for being clichéd.

Over the past 60 years many different interpretations have been read into the film. It has for example been interpreted as a political allegory concerning America's isolationistic foreign policy, and during the 1960s as concerned with homoeroticism. As a cultural mediator, what do you think Casablanca *has to offer a contemporary audience, thematically or otherwise? Does the film even have anything to offer a contemporary audience?*

It's hard to say, you would have to ask the younger audience what they think of it, and in this regard I am not sure the film hold up so well. I have for example sensed that Bogart as an emblematic icon is for people over 50. Younger people don't identify with him, they can't relate to him anymore. The posters that you used to find of him everywhere 20 years ago are gone. He is not on the walls of young people's rooms anymore. In that sense he is history. He had his time, and he has been used a lot, especially by the generation who had any connection to the Second World War. He was very important to them,

and to the American films of his time, and so was *Casablanca.* But I think we are going to see the end of *Casablanca* now. It is going to be for people with a special interest in film history. I don't think a re-release would be a success. It is a thing of the past, though still very beautiful.

Don't you think its mythical importance will last, that it will continue to exist as a part or our collective awareness?

It does signal nostalgia, and it is a part of our collective awareness, obviously, but I don't think it will have any future importance. I think if you ask younger fans of for example *Star Wars,* they consider *Casablanca* a slightly ridiculous matter, strictly for old-timers. You have to be considerably sophisticated to accept and love what this film represents. That means that the opposite development has occurred: From having captured all hearts, and all nationalities, it has today become a bit old-fashioned, in that its themes and perhaps also its love story is somewhat antiquated. I don't think it plays a big part in young people's lives today, neither in Europe nor in America. But you're right, it is definitely a part of our collective awareness. Yet, you have to be fairly tuned into the topic of film history to cultivate the film. There is a big difference between recognizing a line from the film and buying the DVD.

How much significance do you attribute to the icon Humphrey Bogart as a reason for the film's cult status?

A lot. No doubt about it. You could hardly imagine any other actor in that part. He put into it all that he had, of mystery, of masculinity as it was defined back then, and also of ambiguity. Before this he had played many villains, and was often shot in films. He often played the choleric loner, the private eye, or the gold digger, of very questionable morality. And so he is in this film. His character is, with regard to morality, an asshole. He is an opportunist, a fugitive, he has been a gunrunner in Ethiopia for the wrong side, he is a petty criminal with a shady background. He is arrogant, rude and cynical. That setup in the screenplay is brilliant, gradually letting us in behind his shell, but it is never resolved – we know there is a heart beating behind his tough exterior, but he never really shows it, not even in the dubious finale. I have thought a lot about the ending, and I think particularly a lot of women have cried over the ending "Why don't those two lovely people end up together?" I'm not at all sure it would have suited Rick to get Ilsa. That's what you notice in the finale: He looks very pleased and satisfied when he walks away with Renault and says "I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship." You could also read something homoerotic into that, but I think that is reading too much into it. That's what I like about him; he remains the same shady character. That is interesting. It wouldn't have been interesting if he had become a dedicated freedom fighter, or a character of high morals. Then he probably would have been more of a cliché. He is the same guy, going out to do new business, and I could imagine that later on he

would do business in narcotics. He is happy and not at all bothered by the tragic parting with Ilsa. He doesn't break down crying. I would have done that or gotten drunk or something. He doesn't do that, it is not part of his world.

So you experience Rick as a static character, you don't think he undergoes a transformation? Doesn't he take a political stand, and join the resistance?

I'm not sure he does that. Why would he? What indications are there that he does that? I think you idealize his character if you think that. He says "Where I go you can't follow." That is probably because he intends to continue his somewhat criminal life. That is what I like about it. I don't think he turns out to be a great freedom fighter. It's the two who leave who are freedom fighters, they continue, but Rick… He is to me the same character. So I wouldn't say that his character evolves very much. What happens to him is that he is attacked by vulnerability, which doesn't otherwise characterize him. He loses control. That was a typical theme for American films, and still is. If there is anything the Americans are afraid of, it's losing control. They are terrified of it, and so is Rick. The only thing that can make him lose control is Ilsa. I sense that he fears that. But he opens himself up because she has meant a lot to him, and still does. It is like ripping open an old wound. Yet, Rick is also the type who helps people if it isn't too dangerous, and if it isn't bad for business. I think that is the quality that moves the film onto another level. If he had gone out to

join the resistance, then the film would have lost something in my eyes, because I don't believe in that development.✍

The appeal of the Bogart icon also seems to be inextricably connected to the myth of his masculinity. As for example Woody Allen's Play it Again, Sam *shows, Bogart is often considered the ultimate Male. What significance do you think this has for* Casablanca*'s audience today? Is he still the ultimate Male, or is he rather ludicrous?*

Yes, I would say that he has become ludicrous, though he wasn't so in his own time. They had that macho, trouble-shooter type as an ideal. Not only in America, but also in Europe. His viewpoints regarding women, his treatment of women, and his character in a broader sense is mostly comical today. If you look at a film like *The African Queen*, he reveals himself as a decrepit alcoholic, looking twenty years older than he is. Physically he is a weakling, he wouldn't pass muster today in American film. Perhaps he could have been in a Woody Allen film in his older days, with a lot of self-irony. In that way he doesn't compare to the characters Bruce Willis portrays today. The concept of masculinity has probably evolved greatly. For me that has much more to do with a recognition of your own feminine side. That was not exactly something that characterized Bogart or his image, and it was something that he denied systematically, both privately and in his films. He portrays some rather primitive characters, where love is

✍ The editor of this journal feels compelled to point out that he knows of no line of dialogue nor of any hint in *Casablanca* that might be cited in support of Ole Michelsen's characterization of Rick in these last two replies [RR].

present, but only on his terms. And if it is too difficult he flees it, just as he does in this film. He is slightly ridiculous as a symbol of masculinity, in that he has no lasting power. We have to reinterpret that masculine image as a part of the American frame of mind at that time. I don't think it can be of use to anyone today, except as a laughing matter.

Don't you think there is some sort of love or respect for him and his image, even if he is slightly ridiculous?

Yes, but I think that is within the discourse of film in general. Woody Allen works within that discourse. In *Play it Again, Sam* he examines the masculine image within the genre and tradition of film, and in that context it is clearly a symbol of undefeated masculinity and uncompromising strength. I see his masculine image in a broader context, not only as a film concept, and in that context it doesn't hold up. As a film person you can look fondly upon it, and within the frame of the film this is the perfect definition of a masculine actor. But if you go beyond that frame, and consider what men today might see in his masculine image, then we move into the slightly grotesque or ridiculous. Because we have left behind those ideals, he has lost his impact. I can hardly remember any films where you see him interacting with children. We never see that side of him. He is a childless creature, a creature of no procreation. And thus also in a weird sense not erotic, despite what you'd think. But exactly by being this closed-off character, limited and

self-contained, he isn't generous. You cannot imagine him procreating. What would his heirs be like? I've met Bogart's son, and he didn't feel too good about his father. He lacks that side of his character; the family man.

Another aspect of the film which it is safe to say is outdated is its representation of women. Think of Ilsa leaning back and saying "You'll have to do the thinking for both of us." Where does that leave the feminine audience? Why do you think Casablanca *has any appeal to a female audience?*

Because most women don't get the man they want, and neither does Ingrid Bergman. And because of the great pain in the film. We have two people who were made for each other but who cannot have each other, and the fact that he makes a sacrifice when he gives up his chance for happiness with Ilsa. That is all part of the tragic aspect. I think that has an appeal, it does for me, and I think it has a lot of appeal for women. It can be a very beautiful, ethical idea, saying that the cause is more important and that she will do more good where she is. Or you can believe it really does suit Rick just fine to let her go. There is that possibility. I sense that it also has to do with the wonderful woman Ingrid Bergman portrays. She might at first seem a little quiet, yet she plays an important role. She stands behind a man who needs her very much, and she is a very moral person. Yet, at the same time she is divided between that morality and her affection for Laszlo, and her dangerous love for the psychopath. Most women

would probably follow the reasonable freedom fighter into safety and not live a life-threatening life in North Africa with a petty criminal. But they might dream about it. And that is exactly what films can provide. She is also very beautiful, and carries herself with dignity. She is the nexus of power in the film. It is only with respect to her that Rick shows any vulnerability and humanity. There is a strength in her not to be underestimated. She doesn't just follow along. She comes to meet Rick at night, she does things, she transgresses some borders, and she shows her feelings. She might be the most honest of the film's characters. She is the fuel that drives the narrative forward, and she is worth it. She acts wonderfully, although she did have problems with Bogart, who was a rather cold person to be with. I think the female aspect of the film is very strong, although she is almost the only woman in the film. Otherwise, the film portrays a very masculine universe.

Are there any other aspects of the film you find outdated?

No, strangely enough, and I think that is due to the quality of the screenplay, and the actors' abilities. The dialogue is delivered perfectly. The scenes are of the right duration, you couldn't tighten it up anywhere. There are no embarrassing sequences, with bad acting or anything else that could be improved. It has been resolved simply, and it is wonderful evidence that black and white films age better than color film. If it had been produced in color it probably wouldn't have

aged as well, but as black and white, it has retained a graphic beauty. As a film, I cannot find any mistakes in it. It is brilliant musically as well. The themes in it are wonderful. And the acting is the wonderful, stylized, *Verfremdung*-like method of acting. Peter Lorre has a few breakdowns, but otherwise, the film is carried by this sort of superficial acting. None of them overact, they just deliver their lines with nonchalance and a sense that "This is just something we do everyday." There is no sense that this is the culmination of either of their careers. But they act as an ensemble. And there is a visual density that makes us ignore the fact that it is actually a fairly unrealistic film. It is a far cry from social realism. It is an example of the typical Hollywood superficiality, that when delivered like this, is a great quality. That might be one of the reasons the film lasts as well as it does.

Copenhagen
August 14, 2002

Everything's in *Casablanca*

Diana Paladino

Of all the gin-joints in all the towns
in all the world, she walks into mine

Improbability is a striking feature of *Casablanca*, and one of the most appealing qualities of the film. Unusual encounters (such as Rick's and Ilsa's in that remote city of French Morocco); surprising coincidences (such as the fact that Ilsa and her husband are seeking the very "letters of transit" that a spy had left with Rick before dying), and frankly extravagant conventions (such as the one that Jesús G. Requena indicates regarding "*the kid-glove treatment that the Nazis lavish on the man presented as their greatest enemy: Laszlo, the leader of the resistance.*" [1]). In spite of all this, or perhaps because of it, *Casablanca* succeeds in organizing a coherent and solid plot. It is therefore appropriate for us to ask ourselves through what means the film manages to do so; and in the process, to consider how the film holds our attention with no more explanations than those that are offered to us; obtains our emotional involvement in each scene; and secures our obliging approval of each grandiloquent line of dialogue. In short: what are the mechanisms that

[1] Requena G.J. "Casablanca. El film clásico," *Archivos de la Filmoteca*, No. 14 (June 1993), Valencia, p.89.

make us feel at home in the Babel-like setting of *Casablanca*? What are the rules that govern the interplay of verisimilitude and improbability in this film?

To begin with, we can consider the immediacy and conclusiveness with which the story builds a credible imaginary universe. A universe initially made of referents that are very close to the contemporary spectator (the Second World War), and that are gradually diluted so that the story becomes contained almost exclusively in the microcosm of Rick's Café. In the opening scenes, the film employs the blunt and direct style of newsreel footage,[2] in evoking the famous 'March of Time' through a documentary-like assembly of images with voice-over commentary by a narrator. Then, once the general context of the war and the private situation of *Casablanca* are respectively presented, the voice of the narrator disappears and we are introduced completely into the story. Let's review these scenes briefly:

1) A voice-over establishes a concrete time and space: "*With the coming of the Second World War many eyes of imprisoned Europe turned hopefully, or desperately toward the freedom of the Americas. Lisbon became the great embarkation point. But not everybody could get to Lisbon directly. And so a tortuous roundabout refugee trail sprang up. Paris to Marseilles. Across the Mediterranean to Oran. Then by train or auto or foot across the rim of Africa to Casablanca in French Morocco.*" On the screen, these coordinates are marked over a rotating Globe. Over this, images of a massive exodus of people reinforce the idea of a documentary as

[2] These scenes were shot directly by Don Siegel, assistant film editor.

suggested by the sound track, giving the impression of authenticity.

2) The first shot of Casablanca located in a point of the map melts with a panoramic image of this city. In the meantime, the voice-over establishes a bridge between the general context of the World War and the particular problems of those who arrive at this port of unoccupied France to obtain their visas.

3) From a general shot of the city, a tracking shot brings us to the level of a street packed with street-venders, stores and exotic pets. The confusion, the disorderly movement, and the vertigo of the unknown all converge to create the setting of *Casablanca.* The voice-over ends by saying: *"But the others wait in Casablanca... and wait... and wait... and wait."* With these words the voice-over is concluded and an omniscient narrator takes control of the story. Discourse is transformed into story.

4) An officer receives and broadcasts over the radio the following telegram: *"...two German couriers carrying important official documents murdered on train from Oran. Murderers and possible accomplices headed for Casablanca. Round up all suspicious characters and search them for stolen documents. Important."* In fact, this information *is* important. It is the pivot of the plot, the thing that drives the action. The letters of transit are the objects desired by all the characters: by Lazlo and Ilsa who are trying to leave Casablanca, by Renault and Strasser seeking to trap the murderer, and by Ferrari who wants to sell them. Only Rick, who actually possesses the letters, desires something entirely different.

5) A brief sequence of images shows arrests, persecutions and murders that are carried out in broad daylight in the streets of the city. While stealing their wallet, a pickpocket explains to an English couple that the disorder is due to the death of a

> German courier. An airplane is followed by the eyes of a long row of people who are waiting for their exit visas: "*Perhaps tomorrow we will be on that airplane*," a young woman says longingly. In the last shot of the plane, the sign of "Rick's Café Américain" fills the screen. From here onwards, the film moves on to the central action of the plot.

Gradually, like a funnel, the story narrows the focus of the narration from the general and universal to the particular and contingent. Then the arrival of the head Nazi, Major Strasser, at the airport renews the interest in the visas, reinforces the image of subordination of Vichy (incarnated in Captain Renault) to the Nazi power, and justifies the convergence of all the characters in one unusual setting: Rick's café. Citing once more Requena: *"A café is populated, like Hollywood itself, by people from all nations, and [a place] where the occupation forces insist on behaving with exquisite courtesy."*[3] Rick's place is neither more nor less than a stylized reproduction of what was shown before in the streets of Casablanca, with the same heterogeneity and the same exoticism. A place where people sell their jewelry for a visa, and that is also populated by the hopeless who fear dying without ever reaching the Promised Land, the desperate who day-dream about a fabulous escape plan and the unworried who gamble in the illegal casino. With all of these initial images inside "Rick's Café Américain," the imaginary universe of *Casablanca* is established.

[3] Requena, Op.cit, p.89

Secondly, in order to understand the logic of the interaction and the limits that govern the horizon of the possible in this film, we should start by considering that it is a melodrama. That is to say, a genre with predetermined conflicts (the impossibility of forming a couple), norms (paying for sins committed at an earlier time), situations (secrets / revelations, separations / reunions) and conventions (dramatic effects). In this perspective, not only does the love triangle Rick – Ilsa – Laszlo develop, but also such arbitrary factors as destiny (driven by the war that once again separates the couple) and the stereotyped quality of the characters, especially Laszlo, Strasser and Renault. Laszlo is the material and intellectual leader of the resistance, a perfect hero even for the Germans (the Third Reich's representative admits he is a brave man). His repeated escapes from the concentration camps have virtually elevated him to a legend. Major Strasser appears as the great Nazi villain, a complete film icon. While the witty Captain Renault defines himself as a corrupt and accommodating official who can easily adapt to new situations.

Furthermore, the schematic treatment of opposing forces (the Nazis vs. the rest of the world), the ambiguity provoked by false appearances (Rick supposes that Ilsa is an adventurer) and the passive attitude of the protagonists (first Rick, grieving beside a bottle of bourbon, and then Ilsa, asking him to decide for the two of them), all correspond to the conventions of the melodrama.

Now there are other events that the prodigious "probable improbability" of melodrama cannot account for. Let's remember the ridiculous and ingenuous offer that Major Strasser makes to Víctor Laszlo: two visas in exchange for the names of the resistance leaders of Paris, Brussels, Amsterdam and Athens. How can a Major of the Third Reich seriously propose such a thing to the man who has been persecuted in all of Europe by the Nazis? *"If I did not give them to you in the concentration camps, where you have more persuasive methods than you dispose of here, I certainly won't give them to you now,"* replies Laszlo dazed. In this same style, the psychological complexity of the protagonist escapes the conventions of the classical melodrama. Differing from that of Ilsa, Rick's personality has ambiguities that go beyond the genre and, even more so, of the back and forth of a script during the screenwriting process.[4] Ilsa's feelings oscillate between desire and duty, love and admiration, personal happiness and the cause of the Allies. Options that, in the final analysis, are reduced to the choice between Rick and Laszlo. Nothing could be more perfect for a melodramatic heroine. Rick, on the other hand, is an unknown quantity. Strasser and Laszlo have heard about him. Clients want to meet him, to share their table with him. Renault tries to decipher him. Ilsa admits not knowing what type of guy he is, even stating *"I saw him quite often in Paris.*" Ferrari says

[4] A well known anecdote about Ingrid Bergman asking director Michael Curtiz with which of the two men Ilsa will end up, and his response about not knowing either. But to act as if she is in love with both until this issue was resolved.

that he is a difficult and unpredictable man. In contrast to these imprecise descriptions of Rick, concrete details about a past of political commitment are cited: in 1935 he ran weapons into Ethiopia; in 1936 he fought in Spain against the fascists. Strasser adds that since 1937, he cannot return to United States and that he knows what Rick did in Paris and why he had to leave. In fact, in the flashback, on the day the occupation begins, his faithful companion Sam reminds him that there is a price on his head and that the Germans will come for him. Seen in this light, Rick is almost a hero. An image that has nothing to do with the proud businessman who looks down on his own clients, or with the individualist who boasts that he is not interested in the war, that his only cause is himself and that he sticks his neck out for nobody. There's no doubt that these oppositions bring nuance and density to the character, that they were necessary to reduce the moral and ideological differences separating Rick from Laszlo (a factor that concerned Bogart, and the reason why he asked the studio to emphasize this idealistic side[5]). Furthermore, without these ambiguities of character, it would have been hard to justify the altruism of the final renunciation at the end (*I'm not good at being noble, but it doesn't take much to see that the problem of three little people don't amount to a hill of beans in this crazy world"*). The truth is that Rick's contradictions go from one extreme to the other and reach unsuspected limits, so that in the end two abso-

[5] Howard Koch added the references regarding Rick's political past.

lutely opposite hypothesis are evoked: Will he betray Laszlo and leave with Ilsa, or will he sacrifice himself so that the couple can escape? How is it possible that we naturally accept so polarized a character? A key ally in this sense is without doubt Captain Renault. He admires and respects Rick. His point of view is sharp, complicit and yet there is enough distance left as to introduce a touch of irony (*Rick is the type of guy I'd fall in love with if I were a woman*). His is a mediating point of view that guides our vision and induces us to value in Rick a compassionate background: *"under a cynical cover there's a sentimentalist,"* he tells Rick in the beginning. Later, the conjecture is confirmed after the episode with the young Bulgarian woman, with Renault's comment: " *You are not only a sentimentalist, but you have become a patriot."* The other mediating presence between Rick and us is Bogart himself. A dense and complex figure, combining traits of the gangster, the criminal and the private detective. Bogart's person comes across as the *noir* aspect of the Rick character (his dark and cynical side), contributing predictability to the character by means of a recognizable code, temperament and idiosyncrasy.

As Umberto Eco has pointed out, *"Casablanca* is not one movie, but many."[6] Therefore, besides the melodrama and the film noir evoked by Humphrey Bogart, *Casablanca* is the intrigue of an espionage film set in motion by the disappearance of the letters of transit; the newsreel

[6] U. Eco, *La Estrategia de la ilusión* (Buenos Aires: Lumen, 1992), p. 291.

documentary intending to legitimize the story; the exotic setting of an adventure film; and the claustrophobic male universe of a war movie. *Casablanca* is a superposition of fictions and a mixture of genres. It is a pastiche. A dynamic, heterogeneous, and exuberant text, that builds its own imaginary universe using the base of other texts (films, characters, genres) with different laws and different codes. This is one of it's major attractions and principal reasons for enduring… as time goes by.

Casablanca: The Wrong Man Gave Her the Right Feelings

Nancy Graham Holm

Some things should never be looked at up close, especially cherished illusions. These and other fantasies are best retained under the protection of long distance views.

So it is with the 1942 Hollywood film classic, *Casablanca*. Until we stop to examine the nature of Richard Blaine's and Ilsa Lund's "relationship," we are in love with their love and only too happy to bask in the intensity of their passion. Rick and Ilsa had the perfect affair in Paris and the ultimate resolution to their dilemma is emotionally satisfying because it is loaded with honor, grace and dignity. In the last five minutes of the film, we weep and sniffle no matter now many times we've seen the film. We weep for their love; for the pain of their separation; for sacrifice and honor.

Shifting focus to up close and personal, however, there is another story; a story we don't really want to see because the long distance one is far more enjoyable. Reality is often too complicated for pleasure and pleasure is what we want when we watch *Casablanca* for the tenth or twentieth time. We don't want truth but the truth is Rick's and Ilsa's "love" is shallow with little authenticity. This man and woman fell in love, undoubtedly made love (although we never see it) and celebrated

their love without gaining any significant knowledge of one another. Their intimacy is phony. Anyone who's ever been in a serious relationship knows that true intimacy is established only with trust and knowledge. Yet from the beginning, Rick and Ilsa agree not tell one another too much.

> Rick: Who are you, really?
> Ilsa: We said, no questions.

At this point in their relationship, Ilsa believes that her famous husband, Victor Lazlo is dead. Two years later, Rick can't understand why she didn't tell him this and we can easily understand his confusion. *Why didn't she tell him about Victor?* Why, indeed? Why all the secrets? Didn't she or couldn't she take Rick seriously?

> Ilsa: I know so little about you.
> Rick: I know so little about you except that your teeth were straightened.

What is it about Rick that makes Ilsa fall in love with him? When we meet him in Casablanca, he is hardly a man we can admire. He is self-centered, disillusioned, embittered and an exiled loner. He is cruel to his French girlfriend who begs him for his attention.

> Yvonne: Where were you last night?
> Rick: That's so long ago, I can't remember.
> Yvonne: Will I see you tonight?
> Rick: I never make plans that far ahead.
> Yvonne: I was a fool to fall for a man like you.

What kind of man *is* Rick? Compare him to Ilsa's secret husband, Victor Lazlo who is educated, cultured and a political activist with an international reputation. In comparison, Rick is under-educated, unrefined and inarticulate. The best sweet-talk he can come up with is: "Here's looking at you, kid."

What else? Victor Lazlo is obviously older than Ilsa and although he is an elegant attractive man, it is doubtful they have a strong physical attraction. Ilsa alludes to hero-worship and their on-screen kisses are the small cheek pecks of a brother and sister. Rick Blaine, however, is a guy with attitude who invokes in Ilsa all "the right feelings." These *feelings* are powerful and she loves the feelings even though she hardly knows the man who gives them to her.

Had *Casablanca* been made today, undoubtedly there would be skillfully photographed bedroom scenes showing sweaty skin and faces in an altered state of consciousness. Passionate physical love is a bio-chemical bliss so powerful that many people get stuck there, preferring to be ecstasy junkies at Stage I of relationships instead of struggling to achieve true intimacy by facing the tedious emotional challenges of developed partnerships. Any mature adult knows this. We all know this and this is exactly why we love romantic stories: it allows us to pretend that true authenticity and intimacy can happen without hard work and sacrifice.

Rick and Ilsa's love is the love of the erotic with a large dose of magical thinking. The flashbacks don't really show us much but if we fill in the blanks we can well imagine how they fell in love. Ilsa sexually responded to a cluster of attitudes: the way Rick tilts his head, hunches his shoulders, lights his cigarettes and speaks with an American accent. Rick found the beautiful Scandinavian woman uninhibited, open and responsive. We can only guess how they are together in the bedroom but it is evident that when Rick wakes up Ilsa's Aphrodite, Athena disappears. Two years later when Ilsa walks into his cafe and rediscovers him, the *feelings* return.

> Ilsa: I know I'll never have the strength to leave you again. I can't fight it anymore. I ran away from you once. I can't do it again.

Casablana is a film classic for many reasons, one of which is its black and white photography. Theoreticians of media aesthetics tell us that black and white images are low definition, containing less information than colored ones. Less information requires the perceivers to work harder in order to decode the message. By increasing our participation in decoding the message, we invest more of ourselves and the experience becomes more *subjective.* This subjective experience is one of the reasons we love *Casablanca* (and other B/W films) and choose to see it again and again. Through the B/W images, we are invited to experience the intensity of the emotions and we love feeling those feelings.

We first meet Rick in a foreground close-up. Only his hand is seen authorizing an advance of 1,000 francs. Other close-ups reveal the objects in front of him - an ashtray with a cigarette, an empty glass, a chess board, and a pen. Then a slow tilt up the white tuxedoed arm to his face as he drags on his cigarette. Rick drinks and sits by himself, playing a solitary game of chess. He is a lonely man. We *feel* his loneliness and that's just the beginning. Eventually, we will experience every emotion in the script. Even committed feminists can identify with Ilsa when she gives up her independence.

> Ilsa: Oh, I don't know what's right any longer. You have to think for both of us.

How many women have loved men like Rick, the wrong men who gave them the right *feelings*? No matter how much pleasure we get from watching Rick and Ilsa, we know this is a relationship that would never really work. Whatever it was that brought Ilsa Lund into Victor Lazlo's life and work is still a large part of her. She is refined, educated and noble. Rick knows this too which is why he decides to send Ilsa away with Lazlo.

> Rick: Inside we both know that you belong with Victor. If you stay, you'll regret it. Maybe not today, maybe not tomorrow but soon and for the rest of your life.
> Ilsa: But Rick, what about us?
> Rick: We'll always have Paris. We lost it until you came to Casablanca. We got it back last night.

Intuitively, we know that what happened in Paris was an illusion. In order to preserve it, they must lock it away forever, avoiding the contamination that would inevitably result from day to day reality.

What follows is the most famous good-bye in cinema history:

> Rick: Where I'm going you can't follow. What I've got to do you can't be any part of. Ilsa, I'm no good at being noble, but it doesn't take much to see that the problems of three little people don't amount to a hill of beans in this crazy world. Someday you'll understand that. Now, now … here's looking at you, kid.

No matter how many times we see *Casablanca*, it's not possible to watch this scene without getting teary eyed. What touches us is the sheer beauty of the resolution. Victor Lazlo escapes the Nazi Gestapo. His muse goes with him. Cynical Rick now joins the cause. And the *illusion* of Rick's and Ilsa's Paris love is preserved forever.

Casablanca in *Morocco* – *Morocco* in *Casablanca*

Bodil Marie Thomsen

The intro to *Casablanca* shows a revolving globe and focuses on Northern Africa as we hear Arabic music mixed with horns playing the French national anthem. The narrator explains (war-newsreel style) the escape route from occupied France and Europe via Paris, Marseilles, the Mediterranean, Oran and then Casablanca, where the lucky and the wealthy could fly to America. Immediately after a shot of the sign ”Rick's Café,” we see a plane framed by an Arabic gate in the same shape as the cupola of a mosque. The mixture of European, Arabic and American culture is fully underlined.

But there is another reference in the intro, an intertextual reference to *Morocco* (1930), by Josef von Sternberg. In this film, the Arabic context is more obvious and more clearly related to passion and death. *Morocco* has the exact same ingredients in its opening scene: the globe turning as the camera zooms in to the map of Africa and then Morocco. However, the Arabic music has no French undertones and the Western idea of an Arab world as ”Other” remains central, with the film showing a mule that refuses to move, the harsh heat of the sun and Muslims praying to Allah, as well as erotic encounters between Western soldiers and Arab women. The silhouette of the gate in the shape of a mosque cupola is there as well.

In both films, Islamic culture is presented to us by way of a musical and visual arabesque, where the pattern of the cupola is central.

Why *Morocco*?

Casablanca is outstanding in every sense of the word. So why bother to think of *Casablanca* in connection with other movies? Its status as a classic has been well proven over the years. The characters, the acting, the story, the music and above all the rhythm of it all are worth it for every new moviegoer to experience. I do not challenge these more or less self-evident truths. Although I agree that *Casablanca* has the status of a classic, I shall nevertheless relate its ”scenic architecture” to *Morocco,* as this might explain some of its remarkable abilities to ”move” an audience.

Morocco was originally launched in America in order to present the cool image of an indifferent but visually superior *femme fatale* – the subject of Sternberg's seven films with Dietrich. He made her icon empty and luminous in order to produce a feeling for the material surface of the screen: the composition rather than the story was his main interest. He treated the film medium as a painter would use light and shadow on a canvas to highlight his intentions, and as a poet would use grammar to create a visible rhetorical pattern (Sternberg 1965: 54).

In my view, Sternberg was right in choosing not to let *Der Blaue Engel* (filmed in 1929 in Berlin, where it had its world première on April 1, 1930) be the first presentation of Dietrich in America. He thus rushed to Hollywood, where Jules Furthman (who worked with Sternberg at Paramount) had already written a film script based on the

novel *Amy Jolly*, by the Berlin journalist Benno Vigny. According to Dietrich, the novel was her gift to Sternberg when he left before she did on the boat to America.

The atmosphere of *Morocco* was far more modern (in an American sense) than the expressionistically styled *Der Blaue Engel*, whose leading character, Professor Rath (played by Emil Jannings) had more in common with theatrical film forms and the turn-of-the-century novel by Heinrich Mann, *Professor Unrat* (1905), than it had with the glamorous Hollywood style. The English version, *The Blue Angel*, was not shown in America until 1931. With *Morocco*, Sternberg created an image of a modern European *femme fatale* in an exotic environment – something that had often been done during the silent era whenever a new European star was to be introduced in America. Dietrich was on a diet that suited the standards of Hollywood, and Travis Banton created the costumes, which were far more glamorous than the ones seen in *The Blue Angel*. By these means, Sternberg succeeded in transforming the rhetoric of the silent movies to suit the talkies. The metaphoric style of the silent movie is more obvious in their next movie together, *Dishonored* (1931), where Dietrich plays a spy in Austria during World War I, but it is also clearly evident in *Morocco*. As I will try to show, some of the figures of *Casablanca* that condense the meaning of European, Arabian or American types and their interrelations are based on some of the rhetorical devices for transforming silent aesthetics to talkies that Sternberg created in *Morocco*.

The story and the characters

The storyline of *Morocco* is more daring, more European, more philosophical than that of *Casablanca.* Amy Jolly (Marlene Dietrich) is a prostitute fleeing from Europe to Morocco, where she is going to earn her living as a singer in a cafe owned by Lo Tinto, who is half European and half Arab. His rather fat and calculating figure is mimed in *Casablanca* by the character of Ferrari, who owns a café next to Rick's.

When the spectator is first presented to Amy Jolly, she looks shabby – a pitiful figure, who has turned her back on the future. The captain of the ship refers to her as another "suicide passenger" with no return ticket. The rich art lover La Bessiere (Adolphe Menjou) immediately takes an interest in her on the boat to French Morocco. She turns him down several times during the film yet ends up becoming engaged to him, as he can offer her protection and constant admiration. But she doesn't marry him; instead, she falls in love with Tom Brown (Gary Cooper), the American macho type who is a soldier in the Foreign Legion. Like Amy Jolly, he has a hidden past and no future. He is disillusioned and treats no one – including himself – with respect, rather almost with contempt. He wants to be independent and prefers to pay for a woman's erotic services rather than getting involved emotionally. In the Foreign Legion no one asks personal questions. In their first conversation, Amy Jolly responds to this "life

philosophy" of his by relating it to her (former) profession as a prostitute: "There is a Foreign Legion for women, too, but we have no uniform, no flag and no medals, when we are brave. No wound stripes, when we are hurt..." Tom offers his help, but she replies that there is no hope, unless he can restore her faith in men. He responds by saying that she has found the wrong man for this – and that anyone who trusts him is naive.

The setting of the main characters is quite parallel to the setting in *Casablanca,* where Richard Blaine (Humphrey Bogart) is described in no less cynical terms than Tom Brown. Neither of them "sticks his neck out" for anyone. Rick at last places his faith in a political cause – nothing less than the European resistance movement, personified by Victor Laszlo (Paul Henreid) – and hands over the precious tickets to America to Laszlo and his wife Ilsa (Ingrid Bergman). Meanwhile, we have learned that Rick had been a volunteer in Ethiopia (1935) as well as in Spain (1936). The credibility of his decision – as he shoots the German officer, forces Ilsa to leave him behind, and escapes punishment in the end – is clear-cut. It is not muddy and unexplained as was Tom Brown's decision to leave his love, Amy Jolly, behind.

Rick lets his head win over his heart just as Amy Jolly does when she rediscovers Tom Brown (who had been presumed dead) in a bar, where he – as another sailor – has just carved her name on the table (which she doesn't see until later). When he asks her whether she is married, she wants to know why he didn’t return to town with his

regiment, and he proceeds to ask if she is going to marry La Bessiere. She answers yes. When he asks if she is sure of this decision, she answers, ”I do not change my mind,” referring to his writing in lipstick on her make-up mirror earlier, when they had agreed on fleeing together like true lovers. He had second thoughts when he saw the expensive bracelet Amy Jolly had just received from La Bessiere, knowing that he would never be able to offer her that kind of luxury.

In *Morocco* it is money and the arrogance that comes from hurt feelings that serve as an obstacle to love being declared and the reunion of Amy and Tom. In *Casablanca* it is the political situation and the very striking ”song contest” between German and French national tunes that serve as an obstacle to the reunion of Rick and Ilsa, not to forget the fact that she (unlike Amy Jolly) *is* married. As we all know, the Hollywood film codex – dictated by the Hays Office – allowed nobody to get away with breaking up a marriage and then living happily ever after. Rick and Ilsa are able to declare their love, but Rick allows himself to publicly misinterpret her intentions so that Laszlo and Ilsa can go on as if Rick and his café had never existed.

Rick chooses against his heart just as Tom Brown does in *Morocco,* but unlike Tom, he is provided with a higher political purpose. Amy Jolly, who lets Tom get away with it at first finally (unlike Ilsa, whose destiny is determined when she catches the plane) finds a ”way out” of choosing between a happy and an unhappy ending. The famous last part of *Morocco* shows Amy Jolly pursuing the

barely visible paths of the Foreign Legion out into the desert. She undoes her high-heeled shoes, as they are an obstacle to her in her new social position as a member of the outcasts, the true ”Foreign Legion of women” she had referred to earlier: a group of women whose only ambition is to follow their men into the desert.

The desert, where the sun burns without mercy, is clearly seen as the end of culture, the story's end. It is from the point of view of La Bessiere, the aesthetically sovereign, masochistic male, that the image of the disappearing Amy Jolly is seen. It is brilliant of Sternberg to let her step out of her shoes and leave them behind as a relic of fetishism offered to the spectator, who would feel better if she were able to perform the role of the demanding goddess that La Bessiere had given her in the story. Her disappearance into the desert (framed by an Arabic gate in the shape of a mosque cupola) makes it clear that the only possible role for (fallen) women in culture is fetishistic – and that the only way out is by leaving behind culture and visuality and entering the desolation of nature, identified here as Arabic passion and death.

However, the opposite interpretation is also possible, since it was also La Bessiere who explained to Amy Jolly that those women were living according to their love and that this was true love. It is in other words La Bessiere who formulates both parts of the masochistic interpellation – between Apollonian control and Dionysian passion – creating at the same time pain and joy. It is a question of not reaching the very end: the never-ending foreplay and admiration of the woman, who has to be superior as the ultimate oral or phallic figure. La Bessiere is acting as a stand-in for Sternberg's position as the author of the story in the same way as the little boy Johnny does in *Blonde Venus* (1932) (Thomsen 1997: 275). Sternberg's aesthetic is masochistic in the way Gaylyn Studlar has described it (Studlar 1988) on the basis of Gilles Deleuze's theory of masochism (Deleuze 1967). La Bessiere is clearly marked as part of the visual triangle between the spectator, the woman and the fetish. Through La Bessiere, Sternberg offers the spectator a special understanding of woman (Amy Jolly) as someone who could

only possess the qualities of care and love outside paternalistic law. This quality is ”Das Ewig Weibliche.” It is offered to us as an image, a view of the desert already emptied of soldiers, horns and rifles, and women seen from behind, following and not knowing if they will ever see their loved ones or return to civilization. This is the empty space into which Dietrich is put– to perform as an icon of desire that can never be fulfilled.

In *Casablanca* Rick is the one who gets the last words and images. He clearly stands for action, for the right American attitude – away from neutrality. Ilsa disappears out of the story as Rick is able to control his passion for her. He doesn’t follow her as Amy Jolly follows Tom – to the end of the world. And this is the whole, rather simple point of the story: in war the hero has to give up love in order to win. Tears may fall. The ending has all the melodramatic qualities of Hollywood – and there is a higher political purpose to it all! No wonder this film had a great impact on the American attitude towards involvement in the war. Ilsa certainly has the qualities of ”Das Ewig Weibliche,” but she is only able to perform them as a luminous beauty that every man would die for. She is not allowed to "give herself up" for her love as Amy Jolly did in *Casablanca.* Instead, Rick ›gives up love‹ for his political faith. He believes her and yet betrays her (and his own) heart. But – as is clearly demonstrated – she had once done the same to him. She has to stay faithful to her marriage just as he has to remain faithful to his political beliefs. The outcome is Bergman's

remarkable beauty being offered to the spectator – "Here's looking at you, kid!" – and a man whose words you can trust. The rest is longing and memory – ”We’ll always have Paris” – as played again and again by Sam: "You must remember this. A kiss is just a kiss..."

Morocco had the purpose of presenting a coming star in a highly visual style and thus renewing some of the metaphoric qualities of silent divas. *Casablanca* had no such purpose, but as it turned out it became a film about longing and unfulfilled desires, suggested by the beautiful face of Ingrid Bergman. The interval in time (from the ‘30s to the ‘40s) and our collective ”remembrance” of an unlived past during wartime are held together by the tune ”As time goes by,” played by Sam. The tune and her face structure the entire film and the way we remember it, bringing meaning to the film by evoking the authentic desires that remain unfulfilled, like statues left untouched “as time goes by.”

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What is Rick Doing in the Balkans?
Quotes from *Casablanca* in Kusturica's *Black Cat, White Cat* (1998)

Francesco Caviglia

Louis, I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship

The "beautiful friendship" that begins between Rick and Renault in the last scene of *Casablanca*, accompanied by the notes of *La Marseillaise*, is both personal and political: during the production of the film it was an exhortation to military intervention against Germany at a time when the U.S. government seemed to hesitate,[1] while by the time the film reached Europe the friendship may have been perceived by viewers in connection with D-Day or even with the Marshall plan.

What does this scene mean today to a Balkan filmmaker and to his audience? The sentence uttered by Bogart after Renault drops a bottle of Vichy water into the trash can returns three times – twice with images from *Casablanca* visible on the screen – in Emir Kusturica's *Crna macka, beli macor / Black Cat, White Cat* (1998). I suggest in the following that these quotes have a crucial function in shaping the viewer's feelings, expectations and understanding of this film, which may not

[1] Richard Raskin, *The Functional Analysis of Art* (Aarhus: Arkona, 1982), pp. 279-304.

deserve to be dismissed – as it has been by at least one major critic – as an apolitical minor work cluttered with "irrelevant diversions."[2]

Black Cat, White Cat – Apolitical?

John Wrathall is one of the authoritative voices – including Kusturica himself – that claims that *Black Cat, White Cat* is fundamentally apolitical:

> At one point the gangster Dadan is jokingly referred to as a war criminal. But beyond the implication that Serbia is now run by men like him, there's nothing else in *Black Cat White Cat* to suggest the turmoil of Yugoslavia's recent history. This was clearly Kusturica's intention.

Moreover, after praising several formal aspects of the film, Wrathall concludes his review by writing:

> However, the film's most memorable images all seem to be either irrelevant diversions (like the pig eating a car) or reruns of previous greatest hits [...] The final scene, meanwhile, in which the lovers Zare and Ida float off down the Danube, recalls *Underground*, with its suggestion that escape is the only happy ending possible in Yugoslavia.[3]

The final scene and the figure of Dadan are indeed the most overt references to the present condition of what remains of Yugoslavia. In my view, however, Wrathall overlooks the ways in which quotes, self-quotes and digressions function in Kusturica's work as a privileged means of involving the viewer in the creation of meaning and thereby serves in many cases as between-the-lines comments.

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[2] John Wrathall, "Black Cat, White Cat – Review," *Sight and Sound*, May 1999.
Also online: <http://www.bfi.org.uk/sightandsound/reviews/details.php?id=97>, seen 30.8.2002.

It was Kusturica himself who contributed – through interviews and amusing pictures such as the one shown in figure 1 – to what I consider as a partial misunderstanding. In fact, after being virulently accused of having made pro-Serbian propaganda with *Underground* (1995),[4] Kusturica seemed glad to support apolitical readings of his new film.

Fig. 1. Emir Kusturica. In a recent book this picture was captioned as "Shortly after quitting film-making, Kusturica

[3] Wrathall, op. cit.

[4] Dina Iordanova, in *Cinema of flames. Balkan film, culture and the media* (London: British Film Institute Publishing, 2001), devotes one chapter to the violent controversy (pp. 111-135) and does not entirely acquit Kusturica from the accusation. On the other hand, Goran Gocic, in *Notes from the Underground: the cinema of Emir Kusturica* (London & New York: Wallflower Press, 2001), ends the debate by saying that "the arguments used against *Underground* were simply unsustainable, often ridiculous and occasionally plain stupid" (p. 41). At any rate, Kusturica deeply resented the criticism.

> released his apolitical *Black Cat, White Cat.*"[5]

History (with a capital *H*) actually does not play the same central role in this film as in *Underground*; however, *Black Cat, White Cat* is rooted in the same deep commitment to his people – those who grew up in former Yugoslavia – and in contempt of those responsible for their misery. Both attitudes are expressed with the same strength and just as unmistakably as in *Underground.* Only this time the framework for sharing these feelings with his audience remains a comedy most of the time, instead of turning into tragedy as do Kusturica's previous features.[6]

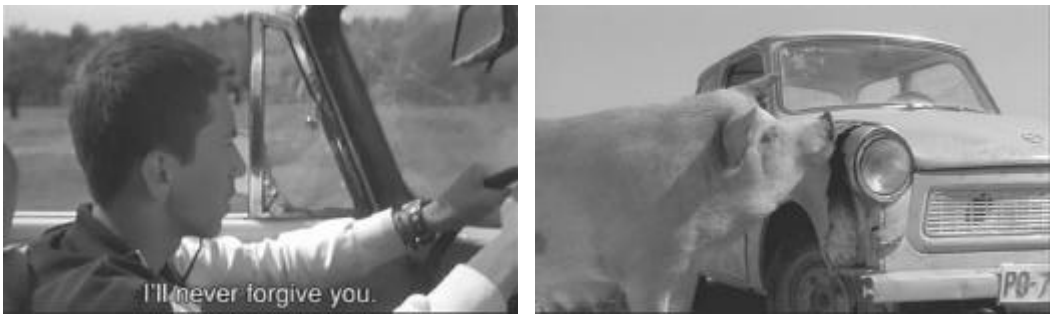


Fig. 2-3. Zare reproaching his father and a pig eating a Trabant.

For example, the apparently "irrelevant" pig is eating a Trabant,[7] a car that became a symbol for Eastern Europe's backwardness with respect to the West at the end of the '80s. Viewers may differ as to the

[5] Iordanova, op. cit., p. 128. A few pages below, Iordanova again defines the film as "intentionally apolitical" and dismisses it as a minor work, in accordance with the opinion of "serious critics" (p. 131).

[6] From an interview with Kusturica, reported as an indirect quote in Gocic, op. cit., p. 12.

specific villains and victims they read into the pig and the car, but the reference to the fall and spoliation of post-Communist countries is quite clear. Moreover, the first of the pig's three appearances is placed right after a confrontation in which the young protagonist Zare shouts at his father, "I will never forgive you" (figs. 2-3), and is followed by another "digression": a luxurious tourist boat gliding on the Danube to the melody of *An dd schönen blauen Donau*, underlining the East-West dichotomy, with the latter seeming far and unreachable at this stage of the film. In the last scene, however, the same boat will take the young heroes away from the misery of their land forever. As Goran Gocic puts it, in his insightful monograph on Kusturica:

> Resting in a quite discreet sub-context and underplayed by the guiltless vulgarity of *Black Cat, White Cat*'s humour, this level [the 'political' one] is nevertheless present.[8]

Before proceeding further, a brief overview of the plot in *Black Cat, White Cat* may help those who have not seen the film.

Young Zare (Florijan Ajdini) lives on the banks of the Danube within a (mainly) Gypsy community with his father, Matko (Bajram Severdzam), a small-time, inept crook. Matko would like to enter big business and asks an old powerful and sick Gypsy godfather, Uncle Grga (Sabri Sulejman), for a loan in the name of the old friendship between Grga and Matko's deceased father. This is a lie (the one that his son Zare "will never forgive"), because Matko's father, Zarije (Zabit Memedov), Zare's beloved grandfather, is still alive, although old and ailing in hospital. Matko uses the money to organize the hijacking of a train together with the gangster Dadan (Srdjan Todorovich), who cheats Matko by making the coup alone and by pretending that it failed; in addition, Dadan blames Matko for the failure and asks, as retribution, that Matko's son Zare marry Dadan's midget sister, Afrodita (Salija

[7] That the old car is a Trabant has been noted by Gocic, op. cit., p. 75, and surely by many viewers.
[8] Goci, op. cit., p. 59.

Ibraimova). Neither Zare, in love with beautiful Ida (Branka Katic), nor Afrodita, who is waiting for the very tall man of her dreams, want to marry, but they are literally forced by the much feared Dadan. Zare's grandfather tries to save his grandson by dying on the day of the wedding, which should postpone the ceremony for the 40 days of mourning; but Dadan obliges Matko to hide his father away until the end of the feast. It is Afrodita, in theory the weakest link (as Ida remarks with bitter irony), who first has the guts to defy Dadan and escapes from the wedding banquet. Zare gains courage too: he decides to escape with Ida and take revenge on Dadan. The happy ending is in sight, but the story still reserves surprises, with the two old gypsies as *dei ex machina* coming back from death to give their blessing to the young couple. In the last scenes, the old men look at the young couple sailing toward a better future, and then toward Dadan, who just fell into a cesspit (Zare's revenge) and is helped out by Matko, the only one who does not desert him; their comment in the scene is: "I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship."

The attributes of the main characters

As in all of his other features films with the exception of *Underground*, the heroes are young and, especially Zare, basically innocent, to the extent that 'innocence' is possible in Kusturica's world. Their faces reveal just about everything we need to know (figs. 4-5).

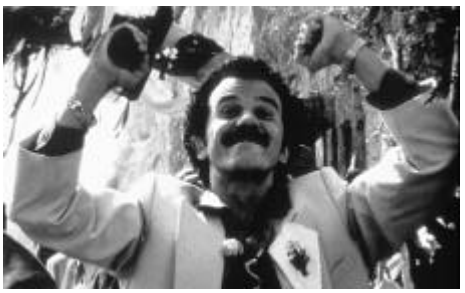
Figs. 4-5. Zare and Ida in the scene in which they first talk to each other.

Their opponents are the adults who have power: especially Matko, because he is Zare's father, and Dadan, because he has power over Matko and, until the final scenes, over everyone else in the small community.

Matko enters the scene playing cards with himself and then snatching his son's breakfast. Dadan, the true villain, has as his attributes weapons, cocaine (which he sniffs out of a crucifix), bodyguards, disco music and two groupies following him around (figs. 6-7). He is a killer, as we both see and are told: Matko speaks of him to his son as "a war criminal," while praising him in public as "a patriot and businessman." But Dadan has neither the brains of *Underground*'s Marko, nor the strength of 'Blaky' Peter Popanov, although he does share with

them a certain vitality, and with Marko the habit of manipulating others.

The young heroes receive decisive help fulfilling their dreams from twosick and dying old characters who manage to use what remains of their power to help those they feel close to.



Figs. 6-7. Matko and Dadan.

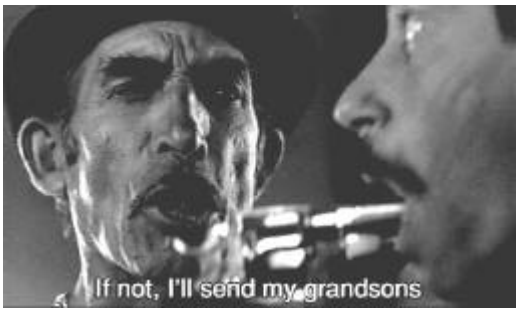
Zarije's hallmark is the music resurrecting him from a bed in hospital (figs. 8-9), which is enough to make him sympathetic from the start; music will later accompany his voluntary death, while an accordion (full of money, by the way) will be his final gift to his grandson Zare.

Figs. 8-9. Zarije revived and 'rescued' from hospital by the music of a gypsy band brought there by his grandson Zare.

In order to better appreciate the impact of Zarije's first appearance, it should be added that the actor performing his part had played a very similar role and had been linked to the same tune in *Time of Gypsies* (1989); also Matko, his inept son, is quite similar to the character of Merdzan in the same film (an example of the way Kusturica constructs and maintains complicity with his aficionados, inviting them to perceive each film as an ongoing dialogue).

Zarije's long-time friend Uncle Grga (played by a non-professional actor, a retired shoeshiner in everyday life)[9], is indeed a new face, and not one that is easy to forget (figs. 10-13).

Figs. 10-11. Uncle Grga (the Great) in his first appearance, enjoying life.



Figs. 12-13. Uncle Grga talking business.

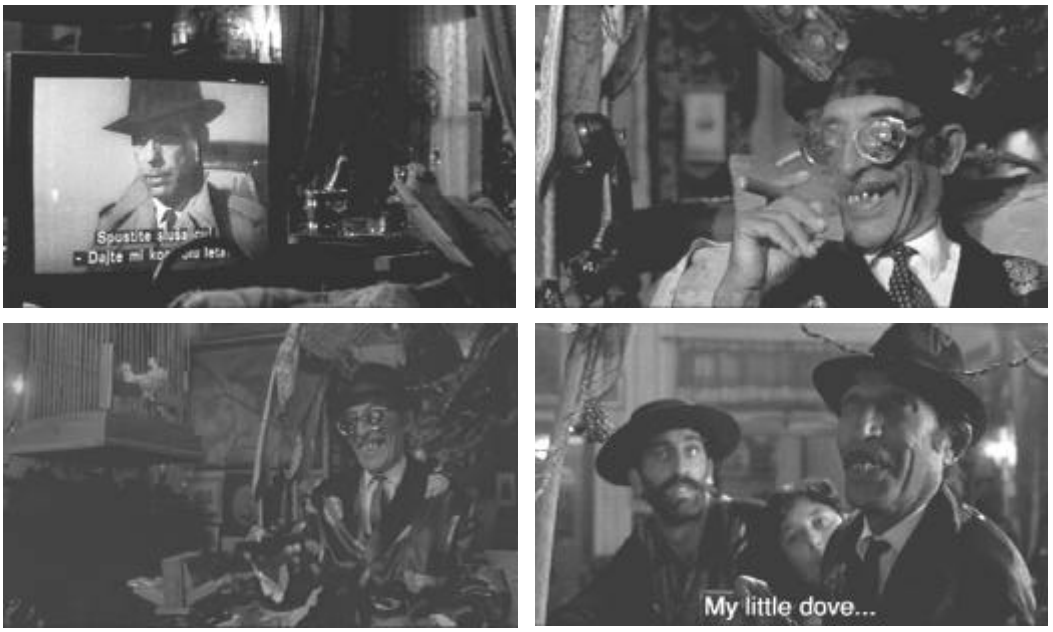
[9] James Berardinelli (1999) *ReelViews*.
Online <http://movie-reviews.colossus.net/movies/b/black_cat.html>, seen 30.8.2002.

Uncle Grga is the only one among the main characters whose moral status is not already decided from his first appearance. He lives in a fortress protected by television cameras and armed thugs (as we will understand later, Grga was once Dadan's boss, and possibly a model). Uncle Grga is a gypsy Godfather who possesses heaps of money, and everybody pays their respects to him as he moves around in a baroque, motorized wheelchair, brandishing a golden revolver.

He gives the impression of a ruthless old gangster with a code; he decides to entrust Matko with a considerable sum to honour his friendship with Matko's allegedly deceased father. At any rate, the viewer probably associates Uncle Grga above all with power, Mafia-type criminality and maybe with eccentricity, until the second encounter presents the character in a different light.

The old crook and *Casablanca*

The second time we meet Uncle Grga he is lying in bed and talking business with his son and associates (the enterprise actually seems more harmless than the fortress-like house would suggest: making 'artificial' whiskey). His face is as cold and emotionless as in the first encounter, until it is transfigured while he is watching, visibly moved, the final scenes of *Casablanca* (figs. 14-16).



Figs. 14-15-16. Uncle Grga watching the last scenes of *Casablanca* and then rewinding the tape. Fig. 17. Uncle Grga looking at the portrait of his only true love. *As times goes by* is playing in the background.

The farewell between Rick and Ilsa at the airport evokes for him – as he tells his son with a dreamy tone – the one great love of his life, a 'vertically-challenged' beauty that he recalls as 'my little dove' (fig. 17). From that very moment we (viewers) realize that Uncle Grga will stand by the heroes and fight the villains. And, with Bogart on his side, he is likely to succeed.

But Uncle Grga is now old and almost blind, and does not have much time left. The third time he appears, he is lying in a hospital bed, again watching *Casablanca*, and repeating along with Rick the famous line: "Louis, I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship."

The beginning of a beautiful friendship revisited

Goran Gocic has observed how Kusturica consistently uses quotes and paraphrases according to a 'core-periphery' or 'original-cheap copy' scheme, with his characters translating popular Western myths into a marginal (Eastern / gypsy / psychotic) dimension.[10] Evoking the 'beautiful friendship' as a comment on the new alliance between Matko and Dadan (figs. 16-17) corresponds precisely to this 'original-cheap copy' scheme.

The same scheme seems to apply more generally, with *Casablanca* being appropriated by the marginals of the marginals – sick old Gypsies in Eastern Europe.

Figs. 16-17. Uncle Grga points at Matko and Dadan (the latter just coming out of a cesspit) and quotes, "Louis, I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship." Zarije nods.

[10] Goci, op. cit., p. 145.

I would argue, however, that here the scheme takes on a different function and a wider resonance than, say, in *Do You Remember Dolly Bell* (1981), where young people from Sarajevo long for Western kitsch, like Hollywood's 'baby doll' somehow transformed in the Balkans, via Rome, into the stage name of a stripper.

But in *Black Cat, White Cat* the friendship between Uncle Grga and Zarije that we see on the screen (fig. 17) is indeed as beautiful and heroic as the one between Rick and Renault. And the original, *Casablanca*, is cherished in about the same way by Uncle Grga and Kusturica's audience. In this respect, Uncle Grga and Zarije are not a 'cheap copy' (although they may look like it), but rather the truest heirs of the disenchanted but heroic attitude to life portrayed by Bogey. Their friendship – two old crooks with a sense of art and love – incorporates the best virtues of the Balkan soul, never presented before by Kusturica in such a positive light. But the two men are old, maybe already dead; their last deed is to help their young heirs to run away from the stupid and ferocious criminals who are now in charge. And young Zare actually does succeed in carrying out the legacy of the two old men: Uncle Grga's courage in love and war – Zare finally takes revenge on Dadan and kidnaps the officer of the civil wedding in order to get married in time to catch the boat to the West – and Grandfather Zarije's feel for art. "Remember the accordion. Inside, you'll find what you need to live happily," are Zarije's words in response to his grandson's decision to go away. The fact that the accordion also

contains Zarije's money just adds a touch of irony to a moving statement about art and its place in life.

Casablanca and Popular Music as Film Music

Birger Langkjær

In its combining of several genres and archetypical situations, *Casablanca* has acquired an outstanding reputation as the quintessential Hollywood movie (Eco 1987). Dramatic conflicts of love and politics are given flavor by combining the style and mood of exotic settings with popular American tunes. It has often been stated that almost any line spoken in *Casablanca* is quotable (Jørholt 1989). The central use of popular music, including *As Time Goes By*, somehow matches this as the quotability of dialogue is complemented by a "hummability" or "singability" of the music. In the case of film music, *Casablanca* can be considered a case study in how popular music as film music can be highly foregrounded at a time when the pop score pure and simple was an option not even to be considered.

POPULAR MUSIC AND THE FILM SCORE

The name Max Steiner ought to be familiar to anyone who has ever glanced at the names written with big letters in the opening credits of films from the 1930s and 1940s. He is one of the most productive Hollywood composers, and has written scores for about 150 films. Apart from *Casablanca*, he has done music for movies such as *King Kong* (1933), *Gone with the Wind* (1939), and *The Big Sleep* (1946). But even

though every film in Hollywood has its musical composer, many a tune heard as the story unfolds has a previous life. They can be popular tunes to be heard in scenes in restaurants, clubs, from a radio or the like. As those popular tunes often appear as part of the fiction, they will be played in the manner of contemporary popular music and combine instrumental and vocal means of expression, including lyrics. Otherwise, an already popular tune might provide melodic material to be combined with other motifs in the instrumental musical score and thus be part of the symphonic orchestral sound. Furthermore, some well-known songs and melodies, like national anthems and "classical highlights," can be used together with recognizable pastiches of specific musical styles, to signal time, place or cultural identity (see Langkjær 1996). Thus, a Hollywood composer will both compose new music and use and arrange already written tunes for specific narrative purposes. And all of this applies to *Casablanca*.

As is the case for many other popular tunes used in Hollywood movies, *As Time Goes By* had an earlier life. It was written by Herman Hupfeld and first appeared on Broadway in 1931 in *Everybody's Welcome*. By way of the play *Everybody Comes to Rick's* (never to be produced on stage but nevertheless the basis for the movie that became *Casablanca*), the song ended up in *Casablanca*. It was sung by Dooley Wilson as the character Sam (and probably played by the pianist Elliot Carpenter). According to imdb.com the song remained on the radio "Hit Parade" for 21 weeks - but not in the same version as in the film:

> However, because of the coincidental musicians' union recording ban, the 1931 Rudy Vallee version became the smash hit. (It contains the rarely-sung introductory verse, not heard in the film.) Max Steiner, in a 1943 interview, admitted that the song "must have had something to attract so much attention."
> (imdb.com\Casablanca\Trivia, august, 2002).

Even though the sound track album is a more recent invention of the combined music and film industry, the circulation of popular tunes between movies and theaters, and later records and radio, has its origin back in the early years of the 20th century: "Between 1936 and 1942, film songs were regularly found atop *Variety*'s weekly roster of the twenty-five most-played songs. Additionally, a Peatman survey showed that Hollywood and Broadway together accounted for more than 80 percent of the most-performed songs in 1942" (Smith 1998: 31). In that sense, much movie music is certainly heard by its audience; both as part of and apart from the film in which it appears.

As noted by Jeff Smith (1998), popular music was for a long time thought to be unsuitable for underscoring the reason being its lack of dynamic change and its repetitive form that made it unable to adjust to the changing actions and events on screen. This view was probably enhanced by a certain elitism (and vanity) on part of the composers. Many of them had their formal training and cultural background in European art music and were somehow mental strangers to the American film industry. Max Steiner did not choose *As Time Goes By* himself: it was given to him. As he later, in 1966, was to complain: "Compo-

sition is a highly developed art that's now dominated by young men who can only hum a tune" (Steiner quoted in Prendergast 1992:148).

The pop score proper was not to be made before the late 1950s. As is the case in Hollywood films in the 1930s and 1940s, the musical style or idiom is closely tied to the reality-status of the music, whether that is diegetic or non-diegetic. The actual underscoring is often in the style of late romanticism and turn-of-the-century opera, that is, rich orchestral texture, recognizable but often tonally and otherwise transformed melodic material (a game of melodic hide and seek), and expressive dynamics. Diegetic music, on the other hand, is most often heard as tunes and vocal songs in the idiom of today or nearby yesterday. They are hummable and singable, easy to remember and accessible, often have lyrics and consist in repetitions with minor deviations. Whereas the first can be recognized (and sometimes hummed), the second can be recognized and sung. In *Casablanca*, it is not only Sam that is singing. The *Knock on Wood* song (music by M. K. Jerome, lyrics by Jack Scholl) basically has a song and response structure. As Sam sings "who is knocking", the people at Rick's reply "we are knocking."

This is a moment in the film where the kind of common human space established by the entertainment culture is most visible - but never without a prevalent feeling of nostalgia, the felt presence of something distant or unreachable in the past. In *Casablanca*, the collective nostalgia is one for America, a nostalgic object that is framed by the exotic scenery that surrounds Rick's Café Américain. Thus, in *Casa-*

blanca music is very much part of establishing spatial and cultural identity. Rick's Café Américain gives the film makers an excuse for playing plenty of music, most of it popular and somehow nostalgic tunes from the thirties like *It Had To Be You* by Isham Jones and Gus Kahn, *Shine* by Ford Dabney, some rhythmic improvisations on piano, and, as already mentioned, *Knock On Wood* and *As Time Goes By*. Songs like these create a microcosm, a small scale imaginary America. But it is an America in African exile, full of Europeans, and, except for Rick and Sam, without any Americans. And, ironically, Rick is for some reason not allowed to go back to America. Thus, the nostalgia related to the impossible love-affair between Rick and Ilsa, certainly has its emotional equivalent in terms of national and cultural belonging very much prevalent in its music.

Other kinds of familiar songs can be heard as is the case with *La Marsellaise*. Basically, it is a march with its characteristic triumphant upwards leaps in the melody line so typical for many western European anthems. It is first heard during the credit sequence (it triumphantly accompanies the name of Max Steiner!) as a musical foreshadowing of the drama to come. In the opening sequence, it has a somehow ironic effect. A mocking snap of the melody line (in the minor mode) is heard as a man is shot in front of a huge poster for the Vichy-regime. In his hands they find a poster for The Free French. Later, as Sam enters the bar late at night to find Rick drinking on his own, there follows a flash-back sequence in which it is used as a

signature for France (to evade any possible misunderstandings both the Eiffel Tower, the Arch of Triumph and the Seine is seen as back-projections behind Rick and Ilsa). And later, in a variation in the minor mode, it is heard before the Germans march into Paris and, finally, as Rick stands alone on the platform in the rain with the farewell-letter from Ilsa.

Apart from its use as part of the score, it gains its most triumphant expression during the virtual battle on anthems at Rick's. Beforehand, Victor Laszlo tries to buy from Rick the much needed "letters of transit" and offers him a big sum of money. But Rick refuses. As Laszlo asks him why, Rick replies: "Ask your wife." They are now interrupted by the off-screen sound of a group of German officers singing *Die Wacht Am Rhein*. Maybe because he is somehow upset about Rick's reply, Laszlo throws away any caution and asks the band to play *La Marsellaise*. Their hesitation is brief as Rick nods silently. And with Laszlo in the lead, more and more people sing along, even the French girl Yvonne, that earlier came together with a German officer. The Germans react by singing louder but their small group is soon to give up, thereby loosing the battle on anthems. This extended and symbolic use of *La Marsellaise* results in the closing of Rick's place and the political thriller plot is intensified. From being snatches of melody in the score, the song has been foregrounded as part of the action. And as I will argue in general, foregrounding music is the

essential strategy in *Casablanca.* This will be even more obvious in the case with *As Time Goes by*.

FOREGROUNDING MUSIC: *AS TIME GOES BY*

Baldly stated, some of the fundamental functions of film music are to secure that the plot gets through and to enhance our pro-attitude towards certain characters and whatever they might wish for (see Langkjær 2000).

As the film begins, two German couriers carrying exit-visas have been killed. Major Strasser arrives from the third Reich to secure that the famous resistance leader, Victor Laszlo, will not succeed in leaving Casablanca. This war/thriller plot is intensified with the confrontation between Strasser (with some dubious help from Renault) and Laszlo. Narrative closure is achieved as he - and his wife - leave Casablanca on an airplane and Major Strasser is shot. Thus, the thriller plot provides some limitations that puts pressures on characters. It gives the plot a forward drive, and leads to some final action that closes down the chain of events. Even though the romantic plot somehow complicates the thriller plot, it is the thriller plot that forces Rick to decide on love. In this (narrative) sense, the thriller plot is the central plot that frames and structures the chain of events, and the love-plot a secondary one. But as is often the case, the secondary plot-line is the most interesting, the one the audience really cares about. And even though some musical attention is given to the central plot in

the last third of the film by use of suspenseful musical motives and harmonics, the music in the first half of the film concentrates on two other functions: to characterize the place and to characterize the inner state of the two central persons of the romantic plot, Rick and Ilsa.

In the first quarter of *Casablanca*, underscoring has "characterization of locale" as its major functions. Arabic sound-alike melodic figures are heard (pentatonic scales and movement along chromatic intervals, enhanced in its cultural color by instrumentation). Whereas the film as such supplies its audience with a rich, varied, and numerous cast of characters and a more narrowly focused suspense-plot, the music focuses on place. The only deviation is the chase scene, mentioned above, taking place in the streets of Casablanca. No music related to the psychology of the characters will be heard before Rick and Ilsa meet.

As Time Goes By is heard as the first quarter of the film has passed. In terms of plot structure this fits in with the first so-called plot-point (Field 1979), that is, some action or event in a scene or sequence that gives the plot a new direction and supplies it with a forward drive. Everybody has been presented at Rick's Café Américain, except for two people that up until now have only been spoken about: Victor Lazslo and Ilsa Lund. An important set-up is the fact that Ugarte has been arrested for having stolen the much needed exit visas some few moments before they enter the cafe. And from that moment, it will be more and more clear that both Strasser and Renault will do anything in their power to prevent Laszlo from having those exit visas (which, by

the way, happen to be hidden in Sam's piano) and leaving Casablanca. And, in return, Laszlo will do his best to succeed in leaving (the thriller plot). Secondly, the verbal exchanges, acting, and editing make it all to clear that there is a past between Rick and Ilsa yet to be revealed to the audience (the romantic plot).

As the two enter the café, Ilsa gives Sam a strange look and vice versa. Later, Ilsa asks a waiter to call Sam over and he places himself at the piano (for those who find bad continuity funny, the very useful piano that suddenly appears next to the table of Ilsa is absent in previous shots). Ilsa asks questions about Rick, and Sam obviously feels this to be unpleasant. At a certain point she asks him to play some of the old songs: "Play, it Sam. Play *As Time Goes By*." As Sam replies "I'm a little rusty on that," Ilsa insists: "I'll hum it for you." And so she does. When he plays it on the piano, she will insist once again: "Sing it, Sam." The lyrics go like this:

> You must remember this
> A kiss is just a kiss
> A sigh is just a sigh
> The fundamental things apply
> As time goes by
>
> And when two lovers woo
> They still say "I love you"
> On that you can rely
> No matter what the future brings
> As time goes by.

The piano-accompanied song is a slow ballad in regular beats. In the scene mentioned above only part of the song is heard, basically two verses of eight bars each. The first bar (and the first line of the lyrics)

consists of a six-note melodic figure starting with a small upward movement (a small second) and ending on a sustained note. The second bar starts with a larger tonal leap (a small third) but otherwise the melodic rhythm and the intervals between tones are repeated. And again, the third bar repeats the pattern even though it begins with a bigger tonal leap (a fourth). The fourth bar is without a melodic line, thereby preparing us for the next two bars that vary and give a certain closure to the melodic figure and are to be followed by a two bar interlude. Thus, the six-note melodic line undergoes small variations in the first half of the verse, but the melodic contour is somehow repeated. The last half provides variation and closure. These eight bars are repeated in the second verse as only the lyrics (and the last note in the seventh bar) change. Thus, the song has its musical identity from the principle of likeness (melodic rhythm and contour) and some variation (as the sudden leap by a fourth at the beginning of the third bar), thereby making it somehow easier to remember and to recognize by ear.

As soon as Sam begins to sing, there follows a visual cut to Ilsa. She is seen in soft-focus with a downward glance, inward and dreamy as if listening to the lyrics and tone of the song. At the end of the third bar in the second verse (before "no matter what the future brings"), the camera cuts to Rick forcefully moving through the café. Sam stops playing and Rick immediately scolds him: "Sam, I thought I told you never to play...." Sam nods out of frame and Rick looks up. Then follows a visual cut to a close-up of Ilsa in soft-focus. A light-pitched and

vibrating musical drone is heard (non-diegetically). As the two exchange glances, the melody line of *As time Goes By* is played with a lot of vibrato by a solo-violin. Thus, Ilsa's musical request (including some nice humming), Sam's reluctance to play it, and Rick's highly emotional response to his playing it (otherwise he is not the emotional kind) makes it quite clear to the audience that this is not just another tune.

From this moment the melody is part of the underscoring and it will return again and again. As Renault interferes and presents Rick to Victor Laszlo, the melody disappears for a short while. As they talk about Germans and Laszlo's work, a low rumbling of timpanies are heard. But as soon Rick turns towards Ilsa, the *As Time Goes By* motif returns as a variation in the light strings. And when Ilsa talks about "the day the Germans marched in," dark timbered and dissonant brasses are heard together with a high-pitched version of the *As Time Goes By*-melody, as if the music both resonates the dangers of war and the love-affair. And as Lazslo and Ilsa finally leaves the café, Ilsa comments to Rick that "there is still nobody in the world who can play *As Time Goes By* like Sam." Thus, dialogue, character-reactions, and visual editing appears as if almost excessively trying to frame and foreground the small melody and its lyrics. Thereby, it is given every possible chance of making itself heard. It will be the major musical motif to appear again and again, accompanying Rick lost in sad memories; in the long flash-back sequence in Paris; in some scenes between Victor and

Ilsa in which her possible doubt as to whether or not to stay with Victor is in play; and, of cause, every time Rick and Ilsa are together.

This is one of the clearest examples I know of in a film that educates its audience into knowing what a certain musical melody is all about. The song and its melody are framed in such a way that probably no person with a normal hearing ability will leave the theater without remembering this little sentimental tune and the romance it makes salient.

Hollywood films are man-made artifacts designed for mass consumption. Accessibility is a prime intention among producers and something expected by its audience. Music is part of what makes a film accessible. Popular music will often work to enhance accessibility by using easily recognized and singable or at least hummable tunes and melodic lines that hook into the memory of the audience.

In some sense, *Casablanca* can be seen and heard as a predecessor to the pop-score of the late 1950s and later on. But whereas the pop-score does sound like pop-music pure and simple (e.g. in its style, orchestration, arrangements, etc.), the score of *Casablanca* presents itself as an idiom and as an orchestral sound typical of late romanticism. Even though the melodic material can be recognized as a popular tune, its actual sound and manner belong to a previous century.

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Visa for Transition
Casablanca and the spiritual melodrama

Daniel Kothenschulte

If you wanted to leave Casablanca, that inhospitable meeting place for exiles in Michael Curtiz's film, you could do so if you had a "letter of transit," an official paper that in reality never existed during the war but in the melodrama became a conveyance for such important wares as love, faithfulness and sacrifice. It might be pleasant news to all admirers of the surreal that these useful documents have survived the passing decades in the collection of Dr. Gary Milan in Beverly Hills – along with the "original" passport of Ilsa Lund.

When I saw these paper documents of that imaginary journey in a Berlin exhibition celebrating the centenary of the movies in 1995, these small props appeared much realer to me than the over-restored original of Dooley Wilson's piano, which could also be seen there. These papers which once had allowed their owner to enter a plane escaping the walls of an imaginary asylum, now serve quite well as a link between the realities of both the cinema and its reception.

The idea of transition is an issue most evident in the cinema between the world wars. Although the down to earth approach of director Michael Curtriz does not leave much space to the spiritual, the parallel between the limbo-like situation in this permanent exile,

inhabited by numerous Jewish European actors in the minor parts who all had escaped Germany in their real lives and the offensively supernatural environments of a certain sub-genre of Hollywood cinema, are evident. I like to refer to these films as supernatural melodrama. In these pictures, death is not a given fact.

One of the earlier examples is Frank Borzage's immensely successful, Oscar-winning drama *Seventh Heaven* from 1927. Although the spectator is given every possible evidence that the hero of the film, played by George Farrell, has died in the war, Borzage simply ignores the factual world and lets him keep the appointment with his lover Janet Gaynor. Stunned by this unheard of ignorance, we see the dead man climbing the seven stairs to the couple's Parisian flat. Can love overcome reality? For Borzage it could. It is the sympathy towards the dead that helps to overcome the tragic reality of the war. Michael Powell and Emeric Presburger go a similar way in their World War II melodrama *A Canterbury Tale*. The borders between the world of the dead and the living are invisible in this romantic and quiet war film, unique in its tone but quite common concerning the plot. There are dozens of films which assure the spectator that life is not all that matters – even if a film called *A Matter of Life and Death* – speaking of Powell / Pressburger's supernatural romantic comedy. Borzage again was the first, along with Chaplin's *Great Dictator*, to focus on the sad reality of Germany in *The Mortal Storm*. But again: the *rite de passage*,

the transition from one world to a better one, only worked when one was willing to pass the borderline between life and death.

The world of the dead was close to the living during the war years even in comedies like the *Topper*-films starring Cary Grant, or René Clair's American films like *I Married a Witch* and *The Ghost Goes West*. The living tried their best to keep the company of those long gone – as in Dieterle's *Portrait of Jenny*, Hathaway's *Peter Ibbetson* or Mankiewicz's post war romance *The Ghost and Mrs. Muir*. Sadly, it did not take long for the ghosts to disappear from the screen for a while; noir existentialism left little room for their free-floating spirits. However, postmodernism saw a revival of those living dead. It is no coincidence that Wim Wenders placed *Casablanca*'s Curt Bois among his angels in *Wings of Desire*. The whole idea of Rick's Café as a waiting room for transit travellers was revived by *Man in Black*, and around the millennium one could "see dead people" everywhere.

Is it too much of an interpretation to place Peter Lorre's treasured letters of transit within this context of transition in Hollywood's once favoured spiritual melodramas? *Casablanca* might be famous for its understatement. I think there is much evidence to show that Rick's Café is located at the borderline between the real and a dream world, the latter a place of hope for the living and an asylum for the dead. Or just the silent majority of drunks who just cannot make up their minds. And it is quite a place to make a living.

How unhappy E. T. was at his temporary stopover. Barry Sonnenfeld's *Men in Black* even gave us the world as a transfer station, where you wait, as you once had to in *Casablanca*, for your letters of transit.

It's *Almost* the Same Old Story
Or
When the Legend Becomes Fact, Print the Truth

Niels Weisberg

Aljean Harmetz, *Round Up The Usual Suspects. The Making of Casablanca – Bogart, Bergman, and World War II*. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1993, xiv + 402 pages. ISBN 0 297 81294 7.

Frank Miller, *Casablanca. As Times Go By…50th Anniversary Commemorative*. Virgin Books, London, 1993, 224 pages. ISBN 0 86369 701 1.

While we are waiting for the book about *Casablanca* in the BFI Film Classics Series, I would like to call attention to two not-so-recent books of the type "*the making of...*" Though the books in some ways are very alike – e.g. the organization of the material, with a chronological account of the making of the film from the original play (bought by Warner Bros) until the opening of the finished film, the later fate of the film, TV spin-offs, and a number of critics' analyses of the film – the two books complement each other rather nicely. Neither of the authors seems to know the other (or the other's project), and having drawn on the same sources, mainly the Warner Bros Archives at the University of Southern California, they inevitably overlap: the same story, the same anecdotes, and the same debunkable myths!

But there are differences: while Miller's book could more accurately be described as a coffee-table book, with beautiful, well-chosen pictures taking up more than half the space, Harmetz's book, which is almost twice as long as Miller's, is more wide-ranging and much more thoroughly researched, with twenty-six pages of endnotes. The author has talked to practically everybody involved in the production and looked into whatever old letters and papers she could dig up, and she places the film in a wider context, both as a war production with its political/propaganda aspects, and as yet another assembly-line product in the entertainment industry.

Among the many legends about *Casablanca* is the question of who wrote the script. In an article from 1973, screenwriter Howard Koch took credit for most of the script and was generally believed, but Harmetz and Miller correct this, agreeing that much of the raw material can be found in Murray Burnett & Joan Alison's play, *Everybody Comes to Rick's*, and that dozens of lines made the transition unchanged. Because of the standard studio practice of using multiple writers, four writers are responsible for the script: roughly speaking, Howard Koch's largest contribution (he was on the film for seven weeks) was in making the film more political and giving it weight and significance; the Epstein brothers (who worked for twelve weeks) gave the film its sparkling dialogue and wit, and, to further complicate things, besides the fact that several late drafts bear no writer credit,

they rewrote each other's material, so "(w)ith delicate balance, Koch managed to hold down the gags while the Epsteins managed to cut the preaching";[1] and in between was Casey Robinson, Warner Bros' highest paid screenwriter, who took three weeks to straighten out the love story, changing the Ilsa character of the play from an American tramp into a romantic European heroine.

Even – of all people – Joseph I. Breen, head of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors Association, contributed *positively* to *Casablanca.* Regarding the scene in Rick's apartment in Casablanca, when Ilsa tries to get the exit visas, Breen suggested: "The present material seems to contain a suggestion of a sex affair which would be unacceptable if it came through in the finished picture. We believe this could possibly be corrected by replacing the fade out on page 135 with a dissolve, and shooting the succeeding scene without any sign of a bed or couch, or anything whatever suggestive of a sex affair."[2]

Another persistent myth is that nobody knew how the film would end. Bergman said that when she asked the writers which man she would end up with, they answered that they had not decided yet. But Breen would never have allowed Ilsa to forsake her husband and stay with

[1] Harmetz, p. 57.

[2] Miller, p. 120. Breen's suggestion was actually followed and is the starting point in an excellent article by Richard Maltby on ambiguity – according to Harwitz, the very thing that Hollywood movies lack today and one of the reasons for the success of *Casablanca.* See Maltby, ""A Brief

her lover, and due to the war (in mid-1942 the German armies were still victorious) Rick could never have been arrested or killed. The problem was simply how to make the ending work.

And when the shooting at the airport (on one of WB's stages) finished, there were still eleven days left, so Bergman knew exactly what Ilsa felt about the two men before she played several earlier scenes with Bogart and Henreid.

When editing the film, producer Hal Wallis fine-tuned the ending. Miller states (with no exact reference) that he had four possibilities for the final line:[3] 1) "Louis, I begin to see a reason for your sudden attack of patriotism. While you defend your country, you also protect your investment." 2) "If you ever die a hero's death, Heaven protect the angels!" 3) "Louis, I might have known you'd mix your patriotism with a little larceny." And 4) "Louis, I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship." Harmetz reproduces a memo to editor Owen Marks in which Wallis has narrowed the decision down to the last two choices, which he wants Owen to have Bogart speak – and the author of those lines was Wallis.[4]

So far I haven't mentioned director Michael Curtiz, but if Andrew Sarris is right – and I think he is – then *Casablanca* truly is "the most

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Romantic Interlude": Dick and Jane Go to 3½ Seconds of the Classical Hollywood Cinema" in David Bord well & Noël Carroll (eds), *Post-Theory* (Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1996), pp. 434-459,

[3] Miller, p 153f.

[4] Harmetz, p. 263.

decisive exception to the auteur theory."[5] Both Harmetz and Miller agree that Wallis is the film's true creator (if authorship is to be narrowed down to one person). Miller writes: "Of all the artists who helped create *Casablanca*, the one whose overall influence was the strongest was producer Hall Wallis."[6] Harwitz writes: "Hal Wallis was the creative force behind *Casablanca*... It is impossible to read through the hundreds of memos Wallis sent and received without understanding how thoroughly he shaped the movie, from the quality of the lighting to the exact details of the costumes to his insistance on a live parrot outside the Blue Parrot Café."[7] Harmetz recounts that cinematographer Haskell Wexler, twice Academy Award winner, recently examined Arthur Edeson's photography and Wallis's memos to him. "Wexler is amazed to find a producer who understands visuals, just as musicians who have examined Wallis's music notes are impressed by his understanding of music. "Wallis's memo of June 2 is intelligent, cogent, helpful, respectful, and also true," Wexler says."[8]

Curtiz is portrayed in a poor light in the two books, especially in Harmetz's. He was respected much more for his professionalism than his artistic achievements (from 1927 to 1961 he directed 101 movies,

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[5] Andrew Sarris, *The American Cinema* (New York: Dutton, 1968), p. 176.
[6] Miller, p. 60.

[7] Harwitz, p. 29. *Casablanca* was the third of the nine movies Wallis made for his new company, "Hal Wallis Production", under his contract with Warner Bros. Though an A-picture, its final cost was only $1,039,000. Of the seven films shot on WB stages that summer it was the cheapest of all but one. (cf., p. 5)

[8] Harmetz, p. 136.

sometimes five a year) but was apparently disliked or downright hated by most, except producers, who admired his workaholism, which he tried to force on everyone, sometimes causing actors and crew to stay on the set for seventeen hours a day. He had emigrated from Hungary in the late '20s, and even after thirty years in America, English was a foreign language to him. "He spoke five languages," says his stepson, "and I am told he spoke all of them equally bad."[9]

Miller tells what I consider to be the two funniest anecdotes about him.

> One more brief delay was caused by Curtiz's mangled English. On the day he arrived to shoot the first Black Market scene, he informed the properties man, who already had assembled an impressive group of animals for the shot, that he needed a "poodle, a black poodle." The request seemed unusual, but the prop man was not about to argue with the temperamental director, so he set about finding the dog while everyone waited. As luck would have it, there was just such an animal available, and the man got it to the set within half an hour. "It's very nice," said Curtiz, "but I want a poodle." When the poor technician tried to explain that that's what the dog was, Curtiz exploded: "I wanted a poodle in the street! A poodle of water! Not a goddamn dog!"[10]

The other one goes: "Once, when viewing a marathon dance contest, John Barrymore reportedly turned to his date, who had just marvelled at the endurance of the contestants, and quipped, "That's nothing! Have you ever worked for Mike Curtiz?"[11]

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[9] Ibid., p. 123.

[10] Miller, p. 154.

[11] Ibid., p. 97.

”Of the seventy-five actors and actresses who had bit parts and larger roles in *Casablanca*, almost all were immigrants of one kind or another. Of the fourteen who were given screen credit, only Humphrey Bogart, Dooley Wilson, and Joy Page were born in America.”[12] Most of all those immigrants had come to America voluntarily, so to speak, but about two dozen had fled the Nazis for various reasons, mostly racial – and they gave the film an authenticity, or, in Pauline Kael’s word ”the color and tone”[13] that other American actors, faking the accents, could not have given it (Henreid, Veidt, Lorre, Sakall, LeBeau, Kinsky, Dantine, Bois, Dalio, Stössel, Grunig, Twardowski, Zilzer, etc).

History helped *Casablanca* become a box-office success – twice. On November 8, 1942, the Allies invaded North Africa and a few days later Casablanca was ”liberated,” so the film’s premiere was rushed. On November 26 it opened in New York with supporters of the Free French parading down Fifth Avenue. The national release was set for January 23 – at the same time that Roosevelt and Churchill met secretly in the city of Casablanca, again bringing the word Casablanca into the newspaper headlines. Harmetz convincingly demonstrates how very pro-Roosevelt and anti-Nazi Harry and Jack Warner were, more than the other studio heads, and she mentions but skates over the problem that the Roosevelt administration deliberately maintained diplomatic

[12] Harmetz, p. 212
[13] Ibid.

relations with Vichy for various reasons (until November 1942) while at the same time denying the Free French diplomatic recognition (until October 1944).[14]

Though a print of the film was rushed to the American troops in North Africa, it was never shown. Robert Riskin, head of the motion-picture division of the overseas branch of the Office of War Information, withheld it "on the advice of several Frenchmen within our organization who feel that it was bound to create resentment on the part of the natives."[15]

[14] Harmetz, p. 286. She does not seem to be aware of an article by Richard Raskin, "*Casablanca* and United States Foreign Policy" in *Film History*, vol.4 no.2, 1990, pp.153-164, in which he discusses the discrepancy between the film's pro-Free French attitude and that of the Roosevelt administration, and the public's failure to recognize the Allies' reconstruction of a *pro*-Vichy administration in North Africa right after the invasion.

[15] Ibid. Quote from letter from Riskin to Ulric Bell, Jan. 8 ,1943.

On Visual Design and Staging in *Casablanca*

Jakob Isak Nielsen

In one of the opening scenes of *Casablanca* (Michael Curtiz, 1942), there is a shot that reveals something essential about why movies look the way they do: after hearing that two German couriers have been killed while carrying letters of transit – the MacGuffin of *Casablanca* – we see brief shots of the police authorities arresting suspicious characters in the streets of Casablanca. Among these characters is a middle-aged man whose papers are not in order; he tries to flee from the police but is gunned down. An officer bends down to the dead man, pulls some papers from his clenched hand (Fig. 1a) and *passes them on* to another officer closer to the camera who then unfolds the papers, which turn out to be *Free France* propaganda material (Fig. 1b). We see the close-up of the officer's hand holding the papers for a few seconds. But wait a minute… this shot seems slightly concocted. Is there something wrong about it? From a certain perspective, you might well say there is. For upon closer scrutiny, we find that the papers are awkwardly angled towards the camera – in fact, the officer holding these papers has a very poor view of them from where he is placed! From the perspective

of passing on story information, however, the shot is logically staged. What counts above all is not what the character sees, but what WE see. This leads us to a statement that may be only too obvious: *film images are not organized according to an inherent logic of character placement – they are organized in relation to the film viewer.*

This may not be true for all filmmaking, and indeed filmmakers committed to principles of truth or reality (or who follow other guidelines or restrictions in their work) often claim to be opposed to such intentionality. Nonetheless it offers a very useful approach to a study of why films look the way they do – particularly classical Hollywood films, the makers of which rarely if ever protest the claim that they *stage and design visuals for the audience.*

Fig. 1a

Fig. 1b

In this essay I will focus on a particular aspect of visual design and staging in *Casablanca*, namely the use of "aperture framings," i.e. the

use of frames within the composition of shots.[1] Like other classical Hollywood films of the thirties and forties, *Casablanca* clearly prefers closed formal compositions as opposed to open one, and aperture framings play a prominent role in the visual design and staging of shots.[2] Incidentally, visual *design* refers here to the static organization within shots while visual *staging* refers to organizational shifts within shots.

The Space Above

At this juncture it would be appropriate to interject that we should be speaking in the past tense about how the makers of *Casablanca* **staged** and **designed** visuals for the audience. After all, we are dealing with a sixty year old film notoriously tagged: "They don't make 'em like that anymore!" This, of course, is true of many aspects of *Casablanca* but it also applies to the visual style of the film.

For instance a contemporary American mainstream film relies too heavily on the visually dynamic to have characters seated around tables talking in almost half of its scenes! Nonetheless, I don't consider these types of compositions to be simple. In fact, the abundance of

[1] In the present context, "aperture framing" refers to the use of framing devices in the playing space in front of the lens and not e.g. to the use of iris shots, vignettes or lens filters. The term is borrowed from David Bordwell's *On the History of Film Style* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1997), pp. 180-182.

[2] James Monaco, *How to Read a Film*, 3rd edition (New York: Oxford UP, 2000), p. 185.

conversation scenes makes it even more interesting to note nuances in their design and staging.[3]

Fig. 2

Fig. 3

If we consider the two shots above, which feature characters seated at a table, we see how the arch-shaped vaulted ceiling neatly frames Major Strasser (Conrad Veidt) and Herr Heinz (Richard Ryen, to the right in Fig. 3), whilst simultaneously blocking off the otherwise empty space above them. On the basis of compositions like these, you might argue that the use of aperture framings is in fact an attempt to improve compositional balance, i.e. in this particular case someone – most likely Director of Photography Arthur Edeson - saw empty space above the characters' heads as a compositional problem that had to be

[3] The fact that *Casablanca* contains many shots of characters seated at tables is also closely intertwined with the overall structure of the narrative. After all, the primary occupation of people stranded in Casablanca is to "wait, and wait, and wait" as the voice-over declares in the opening sequence. But as the film progresses and the action is intensified, the mobility of the characters also increases, culminating in the final scene when the plane takes off with Ilsa (Ingrid Bergman) and Laszlo (Paul Henreid), after which Rick (Humphrey Bogart) and Renault (Claude Rains) walk away from the airport and into the future struggle against the Third Reich.

tackled. Faced with an aspect ratio of 1:1.37 and set-ups that demanded the inclusion of, say, four characters within the shot, you are left with the choice of two visual playing fields – the space above the characters or the space below the waist. When such set-ups occur in *Casablanca*, the compositions are almost invariably cut off just below the characters' waists, thereby leaving space above their heads. The result is that there is a new playing field to work with and in this case the circular framing can be understood as a way of dealing with the space above.

However, the use of aperture framings has implications that go beyond purely aesthetic issues of composition. For instance circular and arch-shaped framing devices are used even if there is no substantial space above the characters' heads to work with or to deal with. Indeed aperture framings can serve a variety of functions in a film. Besides formal compositional issues, there are at least three ways to account for the use of aperture framings in *Casablanca*. They are not mutually exclusive.

1. APERTURE FRAMING AS METAPHOR

One way of discussing aperture framings is to consider them as metaphors of entrapment or confinement. The coffin framings in F.W.

Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922) are probably the most obvious examples that lend themselves to interpretations of this kind. In *Casablanca*, many characters inside Rick's are placed within frames. Since there are no clear patterns as to which characters are framed, it is obvious that the framings inside Rick's serve as metaphors of entrapment for ALL the characters. In this regard, Rick's Café Américain shares the desperation of all of Casablanca. However, I would argue that the significance of aperture framings inside Rick's is of a paradoxical nature. After all, the soft circular lines of the entrances, walls and vaulted ceilings not only trap the characters but also envelope them, giving Rick's almost womb-like connotations. In that regard the aperture framings imply that Rick's is a safe haven, which implicitly sets it in stark contrast to the rest of Casablanca - perhaps to the rest of the world for that matter.

Regarding the metaphorical function of aperture framings, there also exists the slightly speculative possibility of assigning different meanings to different shapes of framing. In this context one could point out the confined narrow framing of Ugarte (Peter Lorre) and that of Major Strasser (Fig. 4 & 5) and claim that these particular "coffined" framings plant a seed of presentiment in the mind of the viewer that these characters will ultimately die. There is in fact some evidence that indicates a systematic use of these half-circle framings for Ugarte and Strasser (Fig. 2-5) whereas for instance Rick (Humphrey Bogart),

Ferrari (Sydney Greenstreet), Herr Heinz and others are instead framed by quarter-circles or other shapes, though there are of course exceptions.

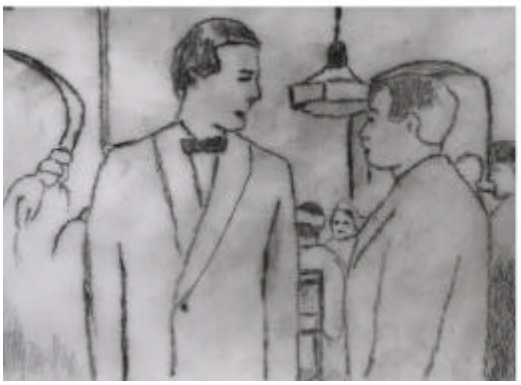

Fig. 4

Fig. 5

My main concern, however, is not with the actual meanings ascribed to the various frames, but rather to what extent aperture framings actually *elicit* notions such as confinement, claustrophobia, refuge, etc. That is, do these shots actually pass these notions on to the viewer or are they purely analytical constructs? Though I assume that the viewer's understanding of a character is at least influenced by the kind of frame that the character is placed in, it is difficult to prove exactly *how* the different framings are interpreted. Furthermore, metaphorical implications of aperture framings only seem to apply in specific dramatic contexts. As I will show later, a doorway frame around a certain character is not always a metaphor of entrapment. This makes it hard to see metaphorical framings as a broad-ranging

staging strategy. My point is that assertions about metaphorical framings can be difficult to substantiate when trying to determine *how framings are staged and designed in relation to the viewer.* While it is definitely relevant to study metaphorical implications arising from the way characters are framed in a film, there are other approaches that may at first seem more mundane but on the other hand offer more fundamental explanations of why a movie like *Casablanca* looks the way it does.

2. DIRECTING ATTENTION

Reformulating a claim made by Robert L. Solso, David Bordwell notes that viewers tend to scan pictures and pause on areas of high information content such as faces, eyes, hands and movement but also on "vivid, prominent compositional features, such as areas where light values contrast or vectors cross."[4] Aperture framings need not necessarily carry metaphorical significance concerning the character that is framed. They can simply be used as a means of directing the viewer's attention towards a particular area of the shot. This deictic function is really much closer to the original use of aperture framings as an intraframe storytelling device which was developed during the golden era of depth composition from around 1908 to 1920. Intraframe staging

[4] David Bordwell, *On the History of Film Style*, op.cit., p. 164.

constituted, at least for a short time, an alternative path to that of editing in directing the attention of the viewer within the shot instead of between shots. From the vantage point of working with a stationary camera, directors developed ways of activating the action *in front* of the camera and the use of the space behind and other framing devices was an important tool in this regard. In particular directors such as Yevgeni Bauer and Louis Feuillade found subtle ways of blocking, revealing and activating aperture frames.[5]

Just a year or two prior to the release of *Casablanca*, Orson Welles and Gregg Toland had shown in *Citizen Kane* (1941) how to make good use of two other important intraframe narrative devices that the silent film makers didn't have at their disposal: sound and the extremely close foreground. While *Casablanca* generally doesn't make use of stationary long takes[6] or extremely close foregrounds in shots with substantial depth of field as does *Citizen Kane*, it is possible to detect how some of the same intraframe narrative strategies have been assimilated into the more orthodox découpage of *Casablanca*.

Consider for instance the scene where Ilsa (Ingrid Bergman) comes to talk to Rick on the night of her arrival in Casablanca. This is just

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[5] See Ben Brewster, "Deep Staging in French Films 1900-14" in *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative*, ed. Thomas Elsaesser (London: BFI, 1990) and Bordwell, *On the History of Film Style*, p. 158-198.

[6] *Casablanca* has an average shot length of 7,2 seconds– PAL running time.

after the Paris flashback. The first shot after the flashback features a right to left camera movement from Rick's face to his hand that tips over a glass (just as Ilsa did in the flashback). The second shot features a left to right camera movement following Sam's (Dooley Wilson's) short walk to the right edge of the frame thus leaving open space *between* him and Rick in the very center of the shot. Here there is a door in the background which is itself framed by the vaulted ceiling. So in a sense it is a double aperture framing. The visual staging clearly prepares the viewer for the oncoming activation of this area of the shot where Ilsa will enter shortly after (Fig. 6a & b). The only object featured in the center of the shot is the bourbon bottle in front of Rick, but half a second before Ilsa enters, Rick *removes* the bottle to pour himself a drink thereby giving the viewer an unobstructed view of the entrance. In fact, this scene almost provides a catalogue of means to direct the viewer's attention towards a character's entrance. Beyond the measures already discussed, both Rick and Sam turn their heads toward the door; there is a musical cue; the foreground of the shot is darkened right before Ilsa enters and when she *does*, strong back lighting emphasizes that she is framed by the doorway.[7]

[7] The main difference between an Orson Wells/Gregg Toland shot and the shot where Ilsa enters is that Curtiz does not keep the take going but almost immediately after Ilsa's appearance cuts to closer views of Rick and Ilsa in an orthodox shot /reverse shot pattern.

Fig. 6a

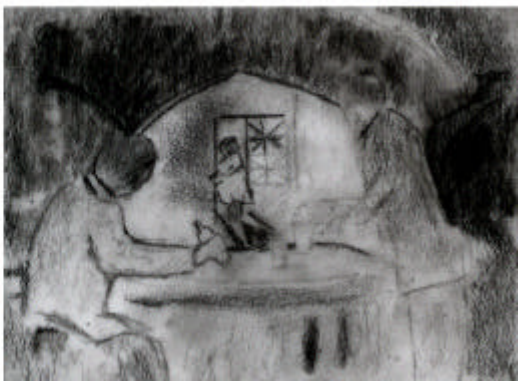

Fig. 6b

Other examples of aperture framings that focus attention on a specific character include for instance the staging of Rick's entrance to the gambling room and the staging of a French policeman coming to announce Major Strasser's arrival (Fig. 7 and 8). As a matter of fact, it could be argued that all of the examples I have mentioned in connection with compositional balance and metaphorical implications also *direct attention* toward the characters framed. Take for instance the shot of Strasser (Fig. 2). The framing does not necessarily carry metaphorical significance but simply singles Strasser out, thereby helping to draw attention to Strasser as a central character in the scene. This, of course, does not *exclude* the possibility of the framing also carrying metaphorical significance or its also serving the purpose of blocking off space above his head. Nevertheless, the purpose of directing attention presents a more fundamental and verifiable

explanation for the way movies visually present themselves to the viewer.

Fig. 7

Fig. 8

3. APERTURE FRAMINGS AND MOOD: FROM CASA BLANCA TO CASA NEGRA

When producer Hal Wallis saw the first rushes of scenes filmed inside Rick's, he complained that they were too brightly lit. He first complained to Arthur Edeson and when later footage did not make amends he remonstrated to Michael Curtiz: "Dear Mikey: Again I want to say that I don't think the Café is dark enough. I think there is much too general lighting and somehow or other the place doesn't seem to have the character to me that it should have."[8] How much Wallis' complaints influenced the footage from Rick's Café used in the final film is difficult to determine but bearing Wallis' complaints in mind, it is interesting to observe that Rick's and the film as a whole become

darker as the film progresses, culminating when Rick and Renault walk out into the darkness on the landing stretch at the end of the film.[9] Interestingly, the shift in the overall lightingis *paralleled* by a shift in the use of aperture framings, which in turn help convey a shift in mood.

As to how aperture framings in *Casablanca* influence the mood of the film, I would argue that the white arch-shaped and circular framings inspired by Moorish architecture help establish a mood that can be described as exotic and mysterious. Films set in Western countries usually feature predominantly horizontal and vertical lines in the architecture surrounding characters, and hence these Moorish shapes evoke a milieu that is profoundly different. In a sense, it isn't the actual framing properties that are relevant here. The circular and arch-shaped white backgrounds are more important as a backdrop.

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[8] Frank Miller, *Casablanca: As Time Goes By…50th Anniversary Commemorative* (London: Virgin Books, 1992), p. 132.

[9] The shift in lighting is particularly evident after Rick's is closed about 25-30 minutes from the end of the film.

Fig. 9

Fig. 10

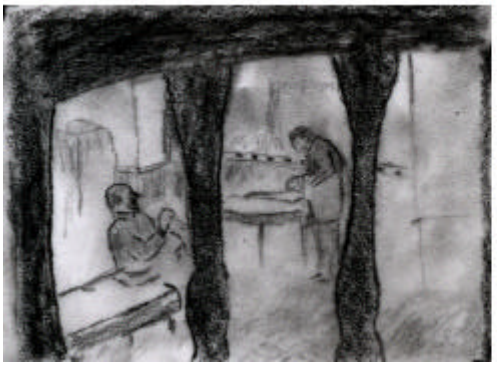

Fig. 11

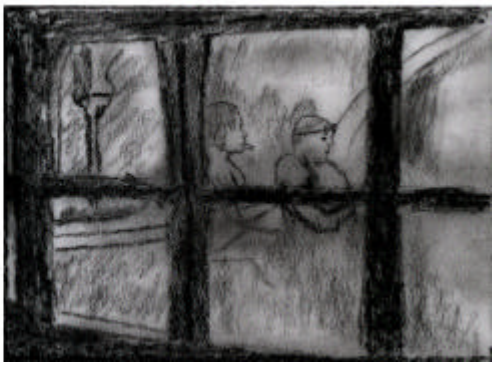

Fig. 12

However, as we get into the drama of the story, the circular and arch-shaped whiteness of the *background* framings (Fig. 9-10) give way to dark quadrangular *foreground* framings (Fig. 11-12). The net is literally tightening around the characters and instead of creating an exotic and mysterious mood, the aperture framings now evoke a sense of danger and secrecy. Contributing greatly to this mood is the placement of the camera immediately behind these foreground framing devices, which serves to subjectify the shots. In other words, the connection between the viewer and the film is strenghtened by the inscription of a secret observer into the design of the shots. Again we

are faced with the initial question of which subject position these shots are organized according to. Is it the omnipresence of the Nazis that is implied? Hardly, because in Fig. 12 Major Strasser is one of the observed. Furthermore, neither Fig. 11 nor 12 are part of a point-of-view sandwich. In fact, we cannot attribute the position of observer to anyone but *ourselves*.

In two other shots that use dark foreground framing devices (Fig. 13 & 14), the observer position *is* ascribed to specific characters - Laszlo (Paul Henreid) and Ilsa respectively – by way of an over-the-shoulder shot and a point-of-view construction. Yet, even in these shots the sense of mood is primarily determined by the inscription of the *viewer's* presence as a secret observer. Laszlo's and Ilsa's observer positions simply focalize *our* view of the action.

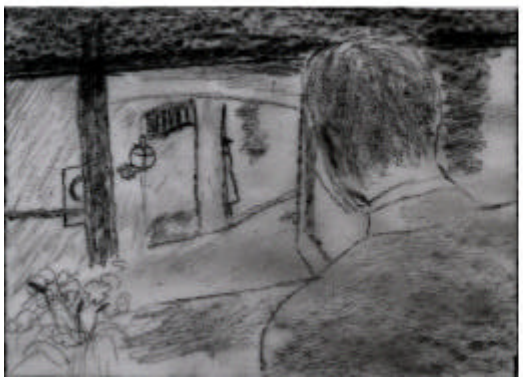

Fig. 13

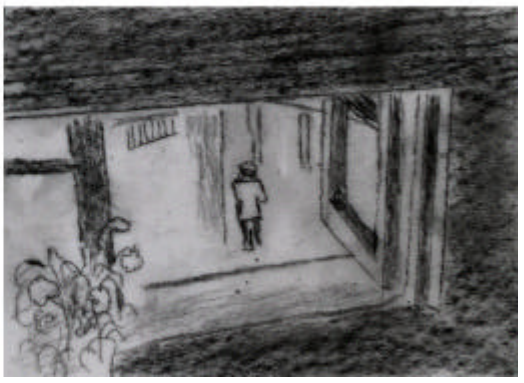

Fig. 14

Again the visual design of these shots (Fig. 13 & 14) gives cause to restate a claim made in the introduction of this essay. No matter how

we choose to approach aperture framings – whether in terms of compositional æsthetics, metaphorical significance, directing attention or evoking a mood – in the final analysis their use is best understood from the same vantage point: determining how the visual design and staging is carried out in relation to the viewer. After all, the most important thing is what WE see.

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"We Said No Questions."

Reflections on Playful Uncertainty in *Casablanca*

Edvin Vestergaard Kau

According to Captain Renault, the French prefect of police in Casablanca, Ilsa Lund has been asking questions about Rick Blaine before the three of them meet at the same table together with Victor Lazslo (her husband and an important leader in the resistance movement). However, when Renault announces this, she manages to stay calm and very innocently plays down the fact that they know each other, saying: "I wasn't sure you were the same. Let's see, the last time we met…," "Was The Belle Aurore," Rick finishes for her. "How nice you remembered," Ilsa replies with a big smile. One might wonder what is going on behind what is said and the obvious reactions in this first part of the conversation. What is happening in their minds, what are their secrets?

How we see how they look

The first time Ilsa Lund enters Rick's Café Americain, she is reminded of the days she spent with Richard Blaine in Paris around the time the Germans marched into the city. As soon as she and Victor enter, her attention is draw to the piano player, Sam. And of course she couldn't have missed Rick's name above the entrance. Asking Captain Renault

about Sam (as a way of indirectly obtaining information about Rick, of course), he informs her that Sam arrived from Paris together with Rick, tells her about his ownership of the café, and even how attractive he is (which makes Ilsa look down).

So, under the circumstances and in more than one way she was basically right in saying to her husband: "Victor, I feel somehow we shouldn't stay here." On the one hand, both he and she are in danger because of his activities in the resistance movement and the Germans' joining forces with the French administration, loyal to Vichy; and on the other, she is very worried about the risk of being confronted with Rick.

At this point, the audience knows nothing about Ilsa. Only a few glances and hesitations (mostly on the part of Ilsa and Sam) hint at something in the past, and the mystery is only further deepened and obscured by Sam's line: "Leave him alone, Miss Ilsa. You're bad luck to him." Also, we know very little about Rick. Besides running the café, he "ran guns to Ethiopia" in 1935, mentions Renault, and "fought in Spain on the loyalist side" in 1936. He has a past that makes it difficult for him to return to the United States, and the Germans' record on him makes it impossible for him to go to Nazi controlled countries.

During the conversation between Renault, Victor, Ilsa, and Rick some remarks and reactions suggest that Rick and Ilsa had some kind of relationship in the past. Something about which nothing definite has been told so far. But then the audience is shown something special

during the last part of the scene and the dialogue. It gradually starts appearing as the above-mentioned dialogue unfolds. Ilsa continues her line, talking about the last time she and Rick were together: "But of course, that was the day the Germans marched into Paris." Rick: "Not an easy day to forget. I remember every detail. The Germans wore grey, you wore blue." Ilsa, smiling: "Yes, I put that dress away. When the Germans march out, I'll wear it again."

The camera work and editing discretely yet at the same time very precisely build Rick and Ilsa a space of their own within the scene as a whole. The conversation between Victor and Renault together with the variation of "As Time Goes By" in Max Steiner's score become the back-drop for what is going on between Ilsa and Rick. While Renault and Victor talk the concentration on Rick and Ilsa that began during their remarks on Paris proceeds to show or foreground their silence and their glances. Stylistically they are singled out from their surroundings, and during the last moments of the scene the camera even "sneaks" in between Ilsa and Rick, and Victor Lazslo is standing behind her, so her expression is hidden from him and is only visible to Rick and the audience. Everything works together to *show* that they have something hidden in their past and hearts. Something that neither the audience nor the other characters can know anything about. (Except for Sam, who followed Rick from Paris, of course.)

In love and war

The main characters are situated in the middle of a drama of historic world events. In this context of politics, war, ideological clashes, moral pressure and resistance, we are presented with a kind of "blurred" romance. If the love story is told during the course of the film, and the war as the circumstances surrounding the lovers is a well-known and closed chapter of history, what is still fascinating about these inter-twined plot lines?

Wartime and the events in the battlefields certainly played a role in Warner Bros.' decision to develop and produce "Casablanca" for the screen. The script was an adaptation of the play "Everybody Comes to Rick's," by Murray Burnett and Joan Alison. Producer Hal Wallis at Warner Bros. immediately saw the possibilities when he was presented with the project in December 1941. During the winter and spring of 1942 a number of writers would develop the script. Shooting began on May 25th and was finished by late August. Some of the first comments Wallis read from the Warner staff responsible for evaluating the cinematic potential of incoming manuscripts used words like "excellent melodrama," "timely background," "psychological and physical con-flict," and "a box-office natural" (Miller, p. 30). Soon it would become even timelier. On November 8th 1942 allied forces landed in North Africa, in fact they fought in a battle near Casablanca, and of course Wallis and Warner were busy getting the film out. The premiere came on November 26th at the Hollywood Theatre in New York, complete with a Free French parade, and on January 23rd 1943 it opened in Los

Angeles and was generally released – notably around the same time as the Casablanca Conference, where Roosevelt and Churchill met with de Gaulle.

Apart from this, and without there being an equally visible fingerprint in all films, many things were in line with the wishes of the American government, which wanted to mobilise Hollywood for ideological warfare. Directors and hundreds of other people in the industry worked on (training and propaganda) films for the government. In return for the cooperation the industry was given different kinds of support and advantages. For example, the Justice Department dropped antitrust cases against studios that had their own theatre chains.

Even specific themes considered helpful to the American cause were outlined for use in feature films by government officials, such as war issues in general, the American way of life, criticism of the enemy, favourable depictions of allies, the home-front efforts, and the allied forces.

In this political and psychological climate Casablanca was a plum in Warner's lap. Without being too crudely cut along the lines of what the politicians might want, it "automatically" had a very timely plot, the right blend of characters, and the right mix of patriotic and ideological hints. Take, for example, the character of Rick and his development. At different points his personal considerations and decisions are commented upon by Renault and put into a much broader political

perspective, such as when he makes his remarks on what Rick does or doesn't do and when he talks about his "isolationism" and good or bad "foreign policy."

Julius J. and Philip G. Epstein did important work on the script, and Howard Koch took over, actually rewriting it in large part and developing a new script. Koch was a liberal who apparently tried to have his projects make as much political sense as possible. He was the scriptwriter behind the adaptation of H. G. Wells's "The War of the Worlds" for Orson Welles's famous Mercury Theatre radio broadcast that caused people to believe that Martians were invading. In *Casablanca* he tried to make Rick Blaine a stronger character (also politically) and to underline references to current events. (Miller, pp. 111-17). In his own words, compared to the efforts of the Epsteins he saw what he was doing like this: "They apparently see the situations more in terms of their comic possibilities, while my effort has been to *legitimize the characters* and develop *a serious melodrama of present-day significance*, using humor merely as a relief from dramatic tension" (Miller, p. 116; italics added).

No questions. Any answers?

With the tilting camera and its diving crane, both the audience and the story's many refugees are lowered down into Casablanca's market place and the trading of human lives. Some are lucky to be able to go on to America, while many, in the words of the voice-over of the

opening scene, "Wait, and wait – and wait". This is the important premise and setting of the events. The war defines everything that happens. This also means that Casablanca is not about themes like fate or culture in general. It is about some people who find themselves in a kind of no man's land created by the war; it is about survival, loneliness, death threats, fighting for a common cause, and love. And everything is told in the light of very precise circumstances. Also, Casablanca is a place where the producers can develop the exoticism of the location as well as the destiny of a whole series of refugees in transit.

In this framework of world history, location and an obscure past, what is hinted at but never spelled out clearly becomes a puzzle that is never completely solved. How does the war affect the lives and innermost feelings of the characters? How much of what they say and do are we to believe? What are their real motives? As it turns out, the audience will never know. This goes not only for Ilsa and Rick, but also to a great extent for Renault and Victor. For instance, is Ilsa telling the truth about her information that Victor is dead (and later, isn't), when she meets Rick in Paris? Or does her expression tell a different story at the very moment she says the words to Rick?

The possibility of such double talk (and the awakening of the audience's sensibility towards it) is in fact demonstrated in the above-analysed moments, when Ilsa's and Rick's silent reactions are fore-grounded near the end of the conversation with Victor and Renault. It

is an example showing how psychological "action" is *shown* within the visual style. This is a practice of style that "goes beyond itself" and becomes much more than what is traditionally described as a kind of invisible carrier of the logic of narrative continuity. What we find is an uncertainty and some hints that the film offers to the audience. Through these elements of style the viewer is "invited" to participate in playful and pleasurable guesswork regarding what the characters' real past, motives, and perhaps hidden passions might be. The dialogue never reveals any definite solutions, and in establishing this guessing game it is important that even the described precise stylistic devices (camera work, eyelines, expressions, editing…) do not give away any solutions either. The fascination has to with the lack of definite answers.

From Paris to Casablanca on a sofa

During the first minutes of the Paris flashback Ilsa acts very carefree and happy, showing her love for Rick with a relaxed smile on her face. Apparently nothing can disturb them. Rick asks his first question over a glass of champagne: "Who are you really, 'n what were you before? What did you do, and what did you think, ah?" But, at the time, she answers: "We said no questions." They can laugh about it, and Rick just ends by saying: "Here's looking at you, kid!" They go out dancing, but back at the hotel things get serious when Ilsa wants to hear what Rick is thinking, and he asks how he could be so lucky, how he could find

her waiting for him to come along. Ilsa: “Why there is no other man in my life? That's easy. – There was … He's dead!" He says that he is sorry he asked and that he "forgot we said no questions." Ilsa remarks that only one answer can take care of all their questions, which means that they stop talking, lean back in their sofa and kiss each other. But before that, when she mentions the dead man, Ilsa begins to look down and to the side, worried about something. (Already at this stage she *may* have invented a lie on the spot.) This kind of behavior continues throughout the last scenes of the Paris flashback sequence. Instead of concentrating on Rick, her glance wanders off in other directions, and is often highlighted as directed out of the picture frame.

A remarkable duality is thus initiated in Ilsa's behaviour and Ingrid Bergman's performance, as well as in the viewer's attention to what is happening. It is also an example of the special kind of interaction between what is clearly defined for the audience (events, people, relations, conflicts, etc.) and ambiguities that also demand attention.

The next time a sofa plays a major role is in Rick's apartment above his café in Casablanca, when Ilsa is trying to persuade Rick to give her the visas for her and Victor’s escape. After the discussion and her admitting to still being in love with Rick, they kiss again. Before that, she gives another version of the events in Paris and tells him that Victor wasn't dead after all, claiming that she only learned this shortly before they were to leave the city; therefore, she did not tell Rick in order to let him leave alone, in a way forcing him away from her. But

again, the film hints at something other than what her words are saying. The way she explains to him about Victor and the way this is shown to the audience still leave room for doubt. Her hesitations and eye movements even suggest that it is already at this point that Rick develops the plan to send Victor and Ilsa out of Casablanca on that legendary airplane.

As is evident, the repetition of sofa situations is both a simplification and one of several ways of tightening the structure of the story. Along with the way Curtiz handles the dialogue, uses the camera and edits the dynamics of time and space, this repetition opens up for a sense of variation and an awareness on the part of the viewer of possible combinations, explanations and other patterns of meaning. These elements are just examples from a production that was not at all as confused as myth would have it. The continued development of the script well into the shooting period did *not* mean that *Casablanca* was shot in sequence, and Ingrid Bergman was not left in ignorance of the ending during the shooting of many of the important scenes with Rick and Victor. In fact, the final scenes at the airport and hangar were shot before several other important scenes (such as the scene with Ilsa and Rick in his apartment). The key consideration was the best and most economic way to use sets and players. "According to the production reports, *Casablanca* was shot in pieces as sets and people became available, *just like any other film* (Miller, p. 123; italics added).

Most of the choices made by the scriptwriters, producer Hal Wallis and director Michael Curtiz involved establishing motivations and simplifying the structure of the story. Even the apparent solution to the problem at the end is an example of this: How can they get rid of Strasser without getting Renault or Rick into trouble? Strasser himself has to challenge Rick (trying to phone and drawing his gun). Renault must resort to his old routine: order that the usual suspects be rounded up. Victor has to get away safely, and Ilsa must go with him to be safe, even if he continues his fight against Nazism.

So, at the end of the day it is not what we intellectually and logically understand in the story that continues to be the attraction and charm of *Casablanca* (war, propagating the right values, the right side winning, etc.), rather, what is intriguing and what makes the audience stay and love this movie is its mystique: what I have discussed as the uncertainties, as the riddles behind the actions of the characters, as well as in their lives and decisions. Why, when it comes to decisive matters, is Renault finally behaving in a decent way? How can Victor both go on with his fight and keep his loved one – without having her? How can Ilsa go on living like that? (Or: How can the film let her?). One could ask even more questions without finding any answers. On the surface of the plot this realm of uncertainties doesn't even arise as themes within the narrative, nor even as questions. The exiting thing in the depiction and in the viewer's experience (and, a little mysteriously, what is never explained) is the doubt and the resulting curiosity, that

is, the fact that the characters never remain unambiguous and that they are not the templates that the myths about *Casablanca* would like to make of them. "We said no questions," but they are the intriguing center of the film – as long as we can play along with them as unanswered.

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A Walk Down Fascination Street
- Bits and Pieces about *Casablanca*

Søren Høy

Time has been good to film analysts and reviewers around the world with respect to *Casablanca*. We have had sixty years to dig deep down into details, and can of course, and understandably, add the historical knowledge into the text. What was the situation when Warner Brothers made the film, and how did history turn the same way as the film did? It has also been stated one (or even two) million times, that *Casablanca* is a classic. A masterpiece. An all time favourite – the best love story without physical love and a unique ensemble piece way ahead of its time. Hard to deal with. Almost everything has been written about *Casablanca* – so I guess the only obvious thing is to write an article about what really amused me when I researched on what my article should be about. You could call it an article about what first met the eye – what deep down (or even more correctly - on the slick surface) fascinates me about the film.

Using that understated technique I hope that reading the piece will be as entertaining as it has been reading about *Casablanca* and seeing the film once more.

I have seen it 8-10 times, and every time something new occurs. This time it was one of the – to say the least – corny discoveries. The window view in the Paris-flashback is the same (*Sacré Coeur* seen from somewhere just down the *Montmartre Hill* in the 9th arrondissement) as the view Harrison Ford has in *Frantic* (1988) and Ebbe Langberg in *Peters Baby* (1961). Strange observation – but yet again – *Casablanca* was made long before these two films, so it just adds value to the myth about *Casablanca,* that directors from Polanski to Annelise Reenberg pays their respect to Michael Curtiz and his classic film every chance they get.

Box Office and Oscar

I have this great book called "The most popular film of the last fifty years" - bought back in 1988. I know it is possible to find all details on the Internet, but sometimes the old heavy books are the best. I feel good in their company – a bit like the old films.

I wondered how much money *Casablanca* made when it was running back in 42 and 43. The answer is of cause in the big book.

It turns out, that it was the seventh best selling film in USA that year. It grossed 3,7 million dollars, which was a third of what was made by number one, *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (11 million). Ingrid Bergman starred with Gary Cooper in the classic Hemmingway adaptation and she effectively entered the big league of money-making Hollywood actresses that year.

Several war epics were made for release in the early forties. In 1943 five of the ten best selling films were war films. Funny enough director Michael Curtiz also made third best grossing film in 1943: *This is the Army* – a wartime major set piece flag-waver with music by Irving Berlin.

Casablanca was the only one without the battlefield as the dramatic highlight. Quite daring to make a war/love story with so few gun shots (when Peter Lorre's *Ugarte* tries to escape, and when Rick kills Strasser) with the war going on in Europe, and people wanting to see dead Germans - and only three years after another epic love story, *Gone with the Wind*, which was already a classic by that time.

No one making *Casablanca* thought they were making a great movie. It was simply another Warner Bros. release. It was an A list picture, no doubt about that.

Bogart, *Bergman* and *Paul Henreid* were stars, and no better cast of supporting actors could have been assembled on the Warner's lot than Peter Lorre, Sidney Greenstreet, Claude Rains and Dooley Wilson. But it was made on a tight budget ($950, 000), and released with modest expectations. Everyone involved in the film had been, and would be, working in dozens of other films made under similar circumstances, so the greatness of *Casablanca* was largely the result of happy chance.

The film premiered in November 1942, but was not released until 1943, leaving the dark-horse film clear to win three Oscars (presented in early March of 1944) for Best Picture (producer Hal B. Wallis), Best

Director (Michael Curtiz) and Best Screenplay (Julius P. Epstein) and to earn five other nominations.

The nominations included Best Actor (Humphrey Bogart), Best Supporting Actor (Claude Rains), Best B/W Cinematography (Arthur Edeson), Best Score (Max Steiner), and Best Film Editing (Owen Marks).

Bogart lost to Paul Lukas for his role in *Watch on the Rhine*. And Bergman was not even nominated for this film, but was instead nominated for Best Actress for *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. Unfortunately she lost to Jennifer Jones in *The Song of Bernadette*.

Anyway, *Casablanca* made it big. Both at the box office, with the critics, the audience and the Academy.

Behind the film

There have been two attempts to make a sequel to *Casablanca*, both times on television, both times a failure. After its success in 1943 Warner Bros. tried unsuccessfully to pair up some of the talents again and rekindle the magic. The story, from an unproduced play by Murray Burnett and Joan Alison, has itself been recycled many times.

The fact is that even if they had wanted to, Warner's could not have set out to make *Casablanca* turn out the way it did. It was a combination of elements and circumstances that produced a work of indefinable appeal that has endured for generations even though tastes and

attitudes have changed. One does not set out to make a classic; one sets out to make a movie.

Casablanca was produced by Hal B. Wallis (a major player in 1940s Hollywood) and directed by Michael Curtiz, a reliable craftsman who had already helmed hits such as *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938) and *Yankee Doodle Dandy* (1942), the latter of which had won James Cagney an Oscar for Best Actor.

The initial casting had Ronald Reagan playing the tough American exile Richard Blaine.

Ilsa Lund was to be played by Ann Sheridan. Who can imagine that? Not that I am amazed by the fact that several actors go through producer meetings – English director Ridley Scott (*Alien*, *Blade Runner* and many others) told me once that every Hollywood hunk from Harrison Ford to Nicolas Cage was in line for Russell Crowe's Maximus in *Gladiator*. Crowe won the Oscar and made a career. That is the way the *Tinseltown* system works.

But anyway – *Ronald Reagan*... Think about that. I cannot se anybody besides *Bogey* as *Rick*. But it was not that obvious back then. Producer Wallis went through several names including Frank Morgan, Michéle Morgan and Heddy Lamar, before fixing on Bogart and Bergman.

Bogart had just proved his worth (!) in the hits *High Sierra* and *The Maltese Falcon* (both 1941 and both produced by *Wallis*), and Bergman was still well rated since *Intermezzo* (1936).

The supporting roles were filled out by other bankable talents including Paul *Henreid*, fresh from playing opposite Bette Davis in *Now Voyager* (1942), *Claude Rains*, an Oscar nominee for *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939), *Sydney Greenstreet* and *Peter Lorre* both from *The Maltese Falcon* and *Conrad Veidt* who was so memorable as the villain in *The Thief of Baghdad* (1940).

I saw a documentary about the film, where my suspicion turned out to be right. They did not know what they were doing. They could not figure out the genre, and the daily script was never finished until everybody was set and ready to shoot.

Some wanted it to be a romance; others wanted it to be a war propaganda picture. It ended up being neither, though it is better at being a war picture than a romance.

For all Curtiz's skill and Arthur Edeson's elegant abilities with the camera they do not give the war picture the suspense that is needs and they do not give the romance the tension or exoticness it deserves.

When production began on *Casablanca* the screenplay was unfinished leaving the conclusion to the movie up in the air.

According to the main source herself *Ingrid Bergman*, she asked director *Michael Curtiz* whom of the two men she was in love with, *Rick* or her freedom fighter husband *Victor Laszlo*? *Curtiz* responded: "*Play it between*".

Bergman, always being the consummate actress, did as she was told and played it in between. That is the one serious flaw in her

performance, that nasty indecision in a character that clearly has already made up her mind about who she loves, even though it does not turn out the way she expects it to.

In her close-ups during the final scene, Bergman's face reflects confusing emotions. And well she might have been confused, since neither she nor anyone else on the film knew for sure until the final day who would get on the plane. Bergman played the whole movie without knowing how it would end, and this had the subtle effect of making all of her scenes more emotionally convincing; she could not tilt in the direction she knew the wind was blowing.

The film as a film

What works in the film, and what does not work? What is myth, and what really comes out of the screen? It is quite surprising what you see when you look a little bit further.

The Paris-flashback for instance. It is horribly made. Bad technique, even for 1942 – and quite boring storytelling. They needed the flashback for the story to hold, but obviously they did not know how to make it. Shot on blue screen and without any solid information. But it lifts the film from the dark *Casablanca* setting – and it enables us to see Bogey smile in the film. And that is something! Both for Bogart and for Rick.

And I do not know if anyone remembers the German *Laudsprecher* from the same Paris-sequence, but there is one – and it delivers its

message with a super funny US-German accent, to which Bogey replies *"I dunno what he is saying – my German is a bit rusty"*. That just makes it even more comical, because he comments on the indeed rusty German in the message. Intentional or not – it is brilliantly funny!

And Ingrid Bergman? This is probably the film most people remember her for. She does not act much in *Casablanca*, and she has surprisingly few scenes with *Bogart* – but the few she has are absolutely brilliant. She is Norwegian in the film, which is a bit strange. They could, with better subtext, have made her Swedish and neutral in the war. Both because she is Swedish, and because love cannot choose between war and freedom.

Bogart's performance as *Rick* in *Casablanca* is to be ranked among his best. Of course along with his *Sam Spade* in *The Maltese Falcon* and his *Fred Dobbs* in *The Treasure of The Sierra Madre*. At first I thought that it was his play alone, sitting drinking in the bar, that was the true *Casablanca*-scenes – but it turned out later to be the scenes with Renault that really hit home. He is the only one who can see through Rick, and from the very beginning he knows that Rick is a softy deep down, he comments on everything Rick does. If he drinks – if he does not. How Rick's mood changes when he sees Ilsa, and how Rick's motivation changes as the plot develops. The relationship between the two men is actually what keeps the plot line going the film, and gives the brilliant and understandable ending, where the two men walk out into the mist.

Curtiz's low key direction helps the film. He does not charge the material with energy or enthusiasm but he keeps everything at a level pace. He does what nobody would dare today. The entire intrigue is situated in the same location. 25 minutes in the beginning in the cafe – we see everybody in the game, we feel everything happening and we certainly do not feel that there is a world worth knowing outside the cafe. The whole world is inside the cafe (rumour has it that 25 nations are represented in the café scene!), and despite the movie's low budget, Curtiz and Edeson make the movie look like an aesthetic masterpiece. The camera works for the story and the characters – with the same efficiency that was "invented" with *Dogme 95*, fifty-three years later.

Strangely the visual style is both the films strength and weakness. The light in *Rick's Cafe* is almost too designed. There is nothing dirty in the setdesign. The bars and streets are clean and polished. You notice the same thing in the characters. There is absolutely nothing mean in freedomfighter *Laszlo*, *Bergman* is smooth as an angel and even big time hustler *Ferreri* looks like he just walked out from a *Versace* show.

Rick is more understandable. He is a playboy from everywhere in the world where there is money. He "sticks his neck out for nobody" (at least until the end of the film), and along with his war-independent attitude, it gives him the right to wear white tux and dancing shoes, and never get his hands dirty. He is a really well written character. We know only fragments of his past; he is mysterious, cynical, tough and at the same time a heartbroken heartbreaker.

Now that's cinema for you.

"We'll Always Have *Casablanca*"

Morten Kyndrup

I

The question of precisely what made Michael Curtiz's *Casablanca* a genuine film classic has been discussed by film critics for decades. It is not self-evident that the audience should adore this movie – let alone continue to adore it generation after generation. As often pointed out, *Casablanca* is at several levels obviously mediocre, if not downright clumsy. The plot itself is at any level completely unconvincing; especially the decisive focal point about the very special letter of transit for two persons (no matter who) – obtained from two German couriers who were assassinated, which is well-known by everybody – is indeed almost comical. But also technically and compositionally this movie is uneven. It was shot very fast and for many years it was more or less a public secret that the main structure of the plot was not decided until the very shooting of the film. On the other hand, the degree and stability of its success is incontestable. Now, is this due to the consistent and unchangeable bad taste of the audience – or did this movie *par hasard,* so to speak, actually strike some qualities which, intended or not, make it a lasting artwork?

Quite a few have tended to hold the former opinion – referring in particular to the star casting of the movie. Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman themselves have long ago become cult figures, and this along with the seductive, sentimental music of *As Time Goes By* and the romantic love story in themselves ensure interest. The Italian semiotician and cultural critic Umberto Eco makes a point along the same lines. Eco thinks that the fact that *Casablanca* deals with an abundance of clichés is what makes it so attractive to the audience. "Two clichés make us laugh. A hundred clichés move us," as he puts it. Eco emphasizes that this effect is engendered in spite of aesthetic theories and theories about film creation – what we are dealing with here is "... Narrative in its natural state, without Art intervening to discipline it."[1]

Although it could by no means be rejected that an accumulation of clichés may be fascinating, nor of course that Bogart, Bergman and impossible love are attractive, I shall argue in the following that the power of fascination of *Casablanca* has a far more complex basis than that. I shall attempt to demonstrate that as a matter of fact the movie – intentionally or not – mounts a rather advanced construction of ambiguity that gives it certain unique qualities at the level of aesthetic function. The point is thus that it is *not* through the redundant accumulation of clichés that this movie achieves its potential effect; on

[1] See Umberto Eco, "*Casablanca*, or the clichés are having a ball" in *Signs of Life in the USA: Readings on Popular Culture for Writers*, Maasik and Solomon, eds. (Boston: Bedford Books, 1994).

the contrary, it is by means of its own construction that the movie establishes a certain interrelationship among the clichés at several distinct narrative and epistemic levels. And by doing this the movie gets away with having it both ways, as it were. In other words, in an aesthetic analysis it is the movie's own construction as an artwork that forms the basis of its effect – that is to say, its success is realised not in spite of but because of its aesthetic qualities.

II

The core point is that *Casablanca* contains two fundamentally different versions of its own construction of meaning. The first one is rooted in a classical paradigm of representation, is directed towards the fabula level of the narrative, and aims at being decoded within the framework of the so-called depth model. The second one is more pragmatic, that is, directed against the movie as an act of signification. It unfolds primarily at the syuzhet level of the presentation and it aims at a more reflexive perception.

First, let us take a look at the version rooted in classical representation. Here we are dealing with a totally traditional construction of conflict drawing on the depth model's paradigm of understanding, both in terms of its epistemological basis and as concerns the abductive approach to the level of appearance of the events. Rick is left with a broken heart, leading a cynical but rather profitable life of professional cheating, fast ladies and systematic

corruption. He minds his own business and stays clear of the big questions of wartime concerning friend or enemy, true or false. Ilsa, his former beloved, turns up with her husband, Victor, who is a true hero in favour of the good. Ilsa and Victor desperately need the letter of transit that Rick happens to be in possession of. Rick, in turn, desperately needs Ilsa. Victor will be killed by the Germans if he does not get away. Ilsa is ready to kill Rick to get the travel documents from him.

The whole situation is deadlocked, driven into a genuine counterposition. There seems to be no possibility for exchange. If Rick gives Victor and Ilsa the letter of transit, he will lose every possibility of getting Ilsa back. The same thing will happen if he himself chooses to leave. And Ilsa does not want to leave without Victor, and Victor does not want to leave without Ilsa. Everybody seems to be losing.

But then, luckily, in the middle of the hopelessness it turns out that all this is only *apparent*. Because when it comes down to it Rick is actually by no means minding his own business. In fact, he is on the right side. He *is* a good guy. Helped by Ilsa, who finally chooses to put her fate in his hands, he suppresses his selfish wish to fulfil his own emotional needs. He thinks out a masterplot. He makes the authorities believe that he and Ilsa will leave Victor behind; Victor is made to believe that he and Ilsa may leave; Ilsa is made to believe that Victor will leave alone while she stays with Rick. It is only in the goodbye scene itself, when Rick has to shoot down the German major, that he

finally and insistently presents his sovereign nobleness. He sends Victor and Ilsa off and stays behind himself. He gives away everything. Fortunately, however, it now turns out that the hitherto corrupt French commandant, Renault, is also a good guy, so he does not make Rick pay for the murder. In this huge movement of mediation everything seems to end up well. At the level of the world, the good and the true, of which Victor is an indispensable agent, are strengthened; at the personal level, Ilsa preserves her self-respect, which she – as Rick clearly sees – would have lost if she had tricked Victor to leave alone. It is true that she loses her real lover, Rick, and that he loses her. But as he expresses it, "We'll always have Paris." They have the memory of the euphoric phase of their love and no one can take that away from them.

All in all we get a statement or a moral on value, insisting that the great stable values should be given priority over short personal passions. It asserts that there is such a thing as a supreme rationality that should be supported also when in conflict with personal, emotional needs. But it also asserts a model for approaching conflicts that in the style of mainstream popular media has as its central message that such a thing as real, painful, tragic or impossible conflicts do not exist at all. That is, upon closer inspection they always turn out to be based on a misunderstanding. In the end everybody (apart from the bad Germans, of course) is essentially good enough and consequently ends up wanting to do the same things. Therefore, this is

no real tragedy: Rick and Ilsa are united in their conviction of having done the right thing, and indeed they still have their memories. Realising their *liaison* would have caused thorough and lasting damage. As it turns out, all potential problems are actually avoided. And it becomes possible to resign oneself to longing nostalgically for lost love precisely because all the right choices have been made.

As concerns the narration technique, all this is mounted in a gradual uncovering process. The fact that, essentially, Rick is even better than good is pretty obvious long before he fully assumes his character. His immense pain explains and excuses his immediate rude reaction towards Ilsa; and in the final masterplot, where Rick's intention is not uncovered to the recipient until at the last decisive moment, he takes control not only of the presented universe but also of its presentation. All lines meet in this linear-perspective figure that makes him the moral master even of the hero, Victor, by giving him both the freedom and the princess without asking any other price than continuing to fight for the good. As the absolute giver Rick finally takes possession of the absolute symbolic power.

Indeed, at this level one can speak of an apotheosis of clichés. If this level had stood alone, this movie would probably have been unbearable to watch more than once, and it would never have stood out from other popular movies of that time.

III

This, however, is *not* the case. The depth version, the horizontal fabula of conflict mediation, does not stand alone. There is another version that throughout the movie leads its life at the syuzhet level, most of the time sheltered behind the major conflicts and their inevitable mediation until at last it fully assumes its character. This happens in the goodbye scene, where it becomes apparent as the question of whether it actually is evident who is in control of whom and motivated by what. Perhaps Rick is not actually driven by universal, noble motives? Perhaps Rick is just symbolically and in reality revenging himself on Ilsa for leaving him without a word in Paris? Symbolically this revenge consists in his installing himself in the position of giver and thus re-conquering the power. From being a walking decompression he becomes a man once again. And of course at the level of reality his revenge consists in actually condemning Ilsa to the life she leads with noble but utterly boring Victor. The point here is that it is Rick who makes the decision. Ilsa is thus no longer subject but is turned into object. Rick gets his tit for tat, and in such a way that Ilsa is even forced to thank him.

Conversely, Rick's supreme masterplot may be read as being staged by Ilsa. Firstly, she tries talking him into giving her the letter of transit, then she threatens him. As this does not work either, she realises that the only way to get what she wants from wounded Rick is by making him believe that he is giving it to her by his own choice – that is, by

offering him symbolic satisfaction for the wound she gave him but in such a way that he does not realise that *she* is making this offer. *He* must necessarily become the giver in order to regain power. That is why she apparently surrenders. That is why she explicitly leaves it all up to him – knowing, of course, that the only way in which Rick can rehabilitate himself in his own eyes is by letting her and Victor go. So, finally Ilsa gets what *she* wants; she is clever enough to know that only by turning herself into an apparent object is she able to become the real subject.

Whether Rick is "actually" cheating Ilsa or Ilsa is staging Rick is by no means decisive. Both interpretations may for that matter be "true" within the presentational level of the film in the sense that both sides get what they want. However, contrary to the first version, they do not want the same thing and what they want is not part of a greater universal pie of morals. No way: Rick needs his symbolic satisfaction so that he can live on without his castration. And Ilsa simply needs a passport in order to get out. The core point is not from whose side this is being seen; the core point is that at the level of the film this is hinted at as a subtle, indeterminable and – concerning the presentational level of the film, the syuzhet level – reflexive register.

This focus on the game *Casablanca* plays with its characters only becomes obvious towards the end of the movie. As a matter of fact, it is exactly at the point when the serious and tragic consequences of Rick's noble self-sacrifice in the first version are about to make themselves felt

that the movie changes its tone. Instead of having Rick arrested or shot, captain Renault sends his soldiers out to round up "the usual suspects." And the two men walk back to Casablanca together, arm in arm, ensuring one another that the basis for a beautiful friendship has now been formed. In the first-version reading this is of course due to the fact that captain Renault has reached his real character. But the situation is anything but unambiguous. It might as well be Rick who, having got rid of his problem, symbolically and physically, has resumed his good old pragmatic character. Anyway, in the final scene he does not exactly look like a man who has just lost the love of his life forever. On the contrary, the whole scene and the ending suddenly become characterised by relief and overall by lightness. The meta-message thus turns out to be that perhaps one should not take things too hard after all. One may of course give life to clichés and great feelings but that indeed is only fiction, only film. What matters is to go on living. And this is simply done at the syuzhet level of film. You can always break off, start a new story, and survive anyway. Within the framework of this interpretation the movie is anything but loaded with clichés, or, more precisely, the clichés are turned into means in a far more subtle game among the personas. It is indeed not clear whether Rick and Renault switch over to a heroic battle against Hitler's Third Reich or return to easy money and fast ladies. The point is that this is not very important since the fabula level is no longer primary; it has been taken over by the level of presentation of the movie itself.

The fact that this second counter-directed reading only becomes manifest late in the movie has certain consequences. The new level sends a shock backwards in the movie, thus reframing the harder basic conflict of the first version, putting it, in a manner of speaking, between quotation marks. If the second version's framing had been more manifest from the beginning, it would only have denied or obscured the immediate representational reading. Now the consequences work at both levels – but each in its own way. The decisive break, as mentioned above, takes place in connection with Renault's cue, "round up the usual suspects." It is of course anything but coincidental that Bryan Singer used exactly the title "The Usual Suspects" for his movie from 1995, which actually may be regarded as a radicalised version of the same type of construction. In Singer's movie the uncovering of the actual construction of enunciation at the diegetic level implies a totally reverse denial of the whole unfolding of the hardcore action film, performing a kind of epistemological breakdown. But *nachträglich* here, too.

IV

A distinct epistemological breakdown is of course far from what happens in *Casablanca*. Still, here as well the shift or dispersion in focal length at the end of the film engenders a kind of reverse effect. It implies that certain formal and substantial obscurities of the movie

suddenly become potential meaning at the reflexive level. This applies to the inconsistencies of narration, not least to the vacillating focalisation (that is, the question of "who sees"). And of course it applies to the completely incredible plot and the overwhelming weight of the repeated clichés. The light, musical spirit suggested at the end of the film is thus turned into a kind of counterpoint to the supreme message about mediating contradictions and doing the universally right thing.

The overall result is that in this movie both these versions or levels act at one and the same time. Not in the sense that they annihilate each other mutually, but in the sense that by framing and relativising each other they actually make each other work. By pointing out in an implicit way its own construction of fiction in terms of access to the tearful plot about noble sacrifice and everlasting love, it actually makes the two levels work differently. As "real" clichés they would have been unbearable, and Umberto Eco is of course *not* right in claiming that the more there are, the easier it is to bear them. No, what happens is that this construction makes the clichés appear as "clichés." The distance or space between the two modes or traces of narration in an odd way actually makes space for the recipient too. It creates an opening into an asymmetric and self-incongruent double universe that is maintainable exactly because the traces respectively relate to epistemologically distinct levels in the construction of fiction. Therefore, all in all *Casablanca* resembles far more self-reflexive films from our days more

than it does many of its contemporaries. On the other hand, it is obvious that the fact that this film does function at both levels at the same time also makes it possible to read it more unambiguously into certain traditional registers, cf. the analysis of Umberto Eco. It seems beyond doubt, however, that the reason for the movie's temporal resistance is to be found exactly here. Because *Casablanca* establishes a distance or difference immanent to the movie itself, its "both ways" become understandable and functional also outside its own time. This immanent exposition is a distinction not between the movie and something else but inside itself, furnishing this film with a kind of intrinsic, chronic present tense that immunizes it from the threat of becoming obsolete.

Now, the question of whether this double construction was artistically intentional or not seems utterly uninteresting. Great artists from time to time produce bad artworks, just as minor artists from time to time produce masterpieces where intuition and mere chance suddenly meet in a happy alliance. The latter is probably the case here. So, who cares? What counts is that if we take the statement "we'll always have *Casablanca,*" both the "we" and the "always" stand out as obvious internal properties of *Casablanca*, addressing real subjects and real time. That makes the difference, and this of course is not in any sense "beyond" the movie's quality as an artwork. It is a part of that quality.

Bogey's Imaginative Contribution

Johannes Riis

Although a dominant model for the creation of art is the single individual with a vision, the production history of *Casablanca* demonstrates that considerable artistic achievement can result also from a collective enterprise.[1] Comedy and witty dialogue blends with high-strung patriotism and tragic love, a love which is complicated by feelings of guilt as well as feelings of rejection and nostalgia. If the Epstein brothers, Howard Koch and an uncredited Casey Robinson, may be credited for developing and refining these aspects of an unproduced play by Arthur Burnett and Joan Alison, then Michael Curtiz, having made his mark with *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, supplied the pace and the elegant look to make sure, as he put it, that we overlook certain logical flaws in the story. The producer, Hal Wallis, may be credited for bringing together the talent and casting the players, and according to the production historiographer Rudy Behlmer, Wallis also came up with the last line: "Louis, I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship."[2]

[1] I am drawing here mainly on Rudy Behlmer, *Casablanca* (n.p.: MGM/UA & Turner, 1992). Using archived memos and interviews, Behler has described the production practices in more detail in Rudy Behlmer, *Inside Warner Bros. (1935-1951)* (New York, NY: Viking, 1985).
[2] Behlmer, *Casablanca*.

Humphrey Bogart's contribution may easily go unrecognized due to a tradition for recognizing the director rather than the actor as *auteur* and a tendency for seeing a star's contribution as mere acting of personality rather than a distinct aesthetic contribution. Nevertheless, his performance brings depth and resonance to the film, elevating it from the hundreds of films with patriotic, romantic, and comic elements. I wish to explain his contribution by looking at techniques of imaginative activity which aim to bring psychological realism to the performance. By distinguishing between two methods for achieving psychological realism, I wish to explore a comparison of Humphrey Bogart to Marlon Brando and James Dean which was initially made by the foremost critic of the 1940s and 1950s, André Bazin.

Secondly, I wish to see his character, Rick Blaine, as the result of an idealization in which certain aspects of his character are underlined. By itself, a repetition of certain character traits is easily experienced as detracting from the character's realism, suggesting a mere vehicle for setting up certain plot developments. When combined with Bogart's acting style, however, the result is somewhat different. The character becomes a perfect expression of a specific kind of embittered melancholy, the one caused by feelings of rejection, and leading, in turn, to solitude and self-reliance.

Bogart's Modern Interiority

It has almost become a truism that stars make use of their own personality in their acting and that this accounts in part for their ability to convince and to appeal to the masses. In Bogart's case, it is particularly tempting to infer that he merely projected his unhappiness about a marriage, which was deteriorating, onto the character of Ilsa Lund, played by Ingrid Bergman. In the early forties, Bogart's third wife, Mayo Methot, was turning mentally ill and putting him under severe pressure according to his biographer, Jeffrey Meyers.[3]

In describing his method of acting, Bogart points to observation, noting that in real life, e.g. in newsreels, people almost do not do anything in response to extreme emotional distress, and more to the point in this context, he suggests a process of personalizing the role:

> You just have to believe that you are the person you're playing and what is happening is happening to you. …If I had to do a scene in which my wife was run over, I'd just try to imagine how I'd feel if I saw my wife run over.[4]

Obviously, we cannot extract a specific method from these brief observations but we can assume to some extent his blending of elements from the script with elements from his personal life, particularly in terms of its actuality. Bogart's method reveals that he employs an element of psychological realism in which he attempts to let emotions give credibility to his performance, achieved by facilitat-

[3] Jeffrey Meyers, *Bogart: A Life in Hollywood* (New York: Fromm International, 1999).

ing emotional activity independently of the will. This, however, is characteristic of many a performance since naturalistic acting had its breakthrough in the 1880s. Clearly, the acting style of Humphrey Bogart differs from the kind of early naturalism, which we may find traces of in early sound film.[5] As far as we know, early naturalistic acting placed large emphasis on motivating psychologically each individual line, which in turn lead to a large number of pauses during the performance. A pause allows the actor the time to psychologically motivate the next line, thus leading to a great number of affective shifts as well. In contrast, the psychological realism which we associate with James Dean, Marlon Brando, the director Elia Kazan, and the teaching and writings of Lee Strasberg, tend to be affected by a dilemma or problem *transcending* individual lines.

In this perspective, André Bazin's characterization of Humphrey Bogart as an *interior* actor is illuminating.[6] In a 1957 Cahiers du Cinéma essay, he noted that James Dean and Marlon Brando, what he termed the *Kazan school*, were interior actors, externalizing "immediate impulses whose link with the inner life cannot be read directly."[7] Bogart also was an interior actor but his interiority is not anti-

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[4] Quoted in Ibid., 64.
[5] See Johannes Riis, "Vocal Style in Early Sound Film Acting: Naturalist and Classicist Principles in Georg Scneevoigt's Kirke Og Orgel," in *L'uomo Visibile/the Visible Man*, ed. Francesco Pitassio, et al., *Convegno Internazionale Di Studi Sul Cinema* (Universitá degli studi di Udine: Forum, Udine (2002), 2001).
[6] André Bazin, "The Death of Humphrey Bogart," in *Cahiers Du Cinéma: The 1950s*, ed. Jim Hillier (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985).
[7] Ibid., 100.

intellectual since it reveals "distrust and weariness, wisdom and scepticism."[8] That is, we sense a general weariness underneath the surface, and Bazin saw this as contrasting the emotional spontaneity of the Kazan school of actors.

Bazin also noted that the emergence of modern cinema, beginning with *Citizen Kane,* coincided with Bogart's emergence as a star. What he saw as a common ground between *Citizen Kane* and Bogart's acting was *ambiguity*, a sign that viewer freedom was proffered with respect to the represented world. In the case of Orson Welles' film, as he had demonstrated elsewhere,[9] the ambiguity arises from the use of long takes, whereas Bogart's ambiguity is derived from interiority. However, rather than pursuing the analogy to the long takes of *Citizen Kane*, it is far more fruitful, I believe, to explore in greater detail the similarities to method acting. This, I believe, might shed light on the techniques which are employed by Bogart and other modern actors in order to achieve psychological realism.

In moving towards a characterization of style and method, I believe that we are better off than by applying notions of personality acting. As we have seen, Bogart saw his method as one of imagining to be personally affected, by believing that he *is* the character and by substituting persons from private life for those of the story. One way to interpret these statements, what they mean for his performances, is to

[8] Ibid.

look for the functions served by imaginative activity. We may posit Bogart's use of imagination to be closer to the techniques preferred by Lee Strasberg than those preferred by Konstantin Stanislavsky and other early naturalists.

Is Bogart a Pre-Method Actor?

Naturally, imagination is an important tool for any style of acting since the very concept of acting requires an act of intentional make-believe on the actor's part. Nevertheless, the actor may try to downplay the number of elements, which he or she has to create in order to be moved by, as Bogart suggested, imagining that it is one's wife who is being run over. Rather than analyzing the character's relationship to an imagined character, the actor may add realism to the thought by imagining that it is his wife, an actual object with emotional significance, who is the victim.

When imagination is aided by elements from private life, we are very close to the techniques employed by method actors and advocated by Lee Strasberg. Method acting encourages a kind of spontaneous emotionality, which Konstantin Stanislavsky was strongly opposed to, criticizing it as being *personality acting.* It is evident in the way he scolds a students who gets carried away in the role as Iago by

[9] André Bazin, "The Evolution of the Language of Cinema," in *What Is Cinema* (Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 1967).

letting his emotions control the performance.[10] Stanislavsky's opposition to this kind of emotionality is based on the belief that this kind of feeling not only will ruin the composition of the play, but more importantly that it cannot be depended upon to occur over five acts and is therefore not a part of the actor's art. Lee Strasberg, on the other hand, did not share this concern. Instead he aimed at the realism which is likely to follow when involving one's own life.

The theatre historian, Sharon Marie Carnicke makes an illuminating distinction between the kinds of imagination favored by Stanislavsky and Strasberg. The difference, she argues, is between employing two distinct questions in order to initiate imagination:

> Strasberg believes this question ['What would I do, if I were to find myself in the circumstances of the play?] 'limits the actor to the play (precisely what [Stanislavsky's] System means to do). He prefers a slightly altered query: 'The circumstances of the scene indicate that the character must behave in a particular way; what would motivate you, the actor, to behave in that particular way?'[11]

Moreover, the technique advocated by Lee Strasberg encourages the actor to take elements from the text and project them into his or her

[10] Konstantin Stanislavskij, *En Skuespillers Arbejde Med Sig Selv*, trans. Ellen Rovsing and Egill Rostrup (København: Nyt Nordisk Forlag Arnold Busck, 1988) 32. [*An Actor Prepares*, ch.2]

[11] Sharon M. Carnicke, "Lee Strasberg's Paradox of the Actor," in *Screen Acting*, ed. Alan Lovell and Peter Krämer (New York: Routledge, 1999), 81.

personal life, whereas Stanislavsky encourages the actor to put himself in the role and the circumstances as *suggested by the text*.[12]

One of Strasberg's reasons for personalizing the actor's imaginative activity was to ensure greater realism. In his words:

> [I]t does not matter so much what the actor thinks, but the fact that he is really thinking something that is real to him at that particular moment. The make-believe thinking that may coincide with the play is not real enough.[13]

According to Strasberg, the actor needs to include concrete objects of his or her personal life, reacting to them rather than the make-believe objects of the play. In discussing the use of sense memory, he emphasized that it was not enough to attend to memories in an abstract way:

> Only by formulating the sensory concreteness of these objects can the emotions be stimulated. It is not sufficient to say, "It was hot." Rather, the actor must define precisely in what area he experienced the particular heat he remembers.[14]

By deliberately invoking a sensual memory, the actor may react to this internalized object, thus securing a realistic performance by "really thinking something that is real." If successful, the emotionality of the

[12] Ibid, 81, my emphasis.
[13] Lee Strasberg, "A Dream of Passion: The Development of the Method," in *Star Texts: Image and Performance in Film and Television*, ed. Jeremy Butler (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991), 46.
[14] Ibid., 49f.

actor impresses by its realism because actual objects have invoked them.

The less desirable side-effect of method acting has been aptly criticized by Joseph Chaikin, an avantgarde theatre director from New York. Chaikin points out that in order to inhabit the character, the method actor tries to involve himself with the character's inner dilemma. “But the character,” Chaikin continues, ”if he were a live person, would be doing the opposite? that is, trying to relieve himself of his unhappiness, and trying to respond to the circumstances around him.”[15] Chaikin even goes so far as to say that the “eyes of this actor are always secretly looking into his own head.”

In contrast, the psychological realism of early naturalism relies on imagery derived from analysis of the text. The “inner image” which the actor, according to Konstantin Stanislavsky and his Danish contemporary, William Bloch,[16] needs to entertain in order breathe life into the performance, is of a make-believe kind rather than an actually existing object. This kind of imagination may be less intense and more detached; yet, the reason that make-believe objects, inner images, still are part of an actor’s training is that it may give character and nuance to the delivery of lines. In order to inflect the individual parts of a soliloquy or a speech with different emotional nuances, it is helpful to

[15] Quoted in Svend Christiansen, *Den Scenografiske Skuespiller* (København: Multivers, 1999) 102.

[16] In Riis, "Vocal Style in Early Sound Film Acting: Naturalist and Classicist Principles in Georg Scneevoigt's Kirke Og Orgel," I argue that an essay by the first naturalist, the Danish William Bloch

the actor to be able to shift among the inner images in a minutely planned order.

The method of blending role and personal experiences is a valuable technique as well, although less instrumental to the actor who uses lines and verbal meaning as his or her primary means of expression. This technique, as Strasberg well understood, adds greater realism to the performance. Method acting proper, in the technique favored by Lee Strasberg, may be overdoing this blending of personal life and role since the acting practice he advocated has been accused of being ego-centered and therapeutic. However, Strasberg also advocated other training techniques such as improvisation to "stimulate a continuous flow of response and thought within the actor,"[17] in principle balancing the tendency to be "looking into one's own head."

Importantly, method acting is only one particularly striking technique of blending role and personal life. The technique of adding realism by motivating psychologically the performance in personal terms – rather than a textually derived motivation – may find other approaches and methods in modern film acting. One is suggested by Lindsay Crouse in discussing her testimony in Sidney Lumet's *The Trial*. She imagined that the act of giving testimony was a confession

who was first to stage Henrik Ibsen's plays in a naturalist style, provides a much better source to the beliefs underlying early naturalism than the more broad-minded Stanislavsky.

[17] Strasberg, "A Dream of Passion: The Development of the Method," 45.

directed at personal life and allowing her to move on.[18] This may sound therapeutic but her performance does neither serve to suggest restless and unforeseeable activity, nor the introverted attending an inner dilemma, identified by Bazin and Chaikin respectively.

Bogart's performance in *Casablanca*, of course, is never introverted to the extent that he is attending only his inner dilemma. Yet the impression of realism in his acting, that he is in fact thinking and feeling as a person in the kind of situation which is depicted, might stem from the same kind of source as employed by method actors. Paul Henreid noted that Bogart was unhappy during the production and felt that it was embarrassing to look at the daily rushes (viewing of the previous day´s work), blaming Michael Curtiz that he was incapable of telling Bogart that "he should not play like a crybaby."[19] Nevertheless, this unhappiness may indeed indicate kind of imaginative work which we should expect from a method actor. Rather than the kind of make-believe advocated by Stanislavsky, which allows the actor put aside the emotional problems of the role at the very moment work is over, almost as if wearing a mask, Bogart just might have been insisting on the reality of the character's emotional situation.

[18] In an interview, Carole Zucker, *Figures of Light: Actors and Directors Illuminate the Art of Film Acting* (New York: Plenum Press, 1995).
[19] Meyers, *Bogart: A Life in Hollywood,* 140.

Idealization of Character

The psychological realism of Bogart's acting style allows an unequivocal, yet somewhat contradictory characterization of Rick Blaine. In terms of the respect and love shown to him by others, Rick Blaine is presented as god-like; in terms of his actions and emotions toward others, he is almost unequivocally presented as cynical and self-centered. Only when these two character traits are established, does the romance plot begin, some thirty minutes into the film.

This exposition would be otherwise unbearable if were not for the lightness with which minor characters are presented. This is partly the result of Michael Curtiz' dynamic and modern mise-en-scène, most strikingly so in his tracking-in on characters as they approach the camera. It is partly the result of the performances of supporting actors. The humorous and enjoyable performances by Peter Lorre, playing Ugarte, and Claude Rains, as Captain Renault, are particularly impressive. Peter Lorre, whom John Huston admired for his ability to convey "a sense of Faustian worldliness" underneath "an air of innocence," has noted that Warner Brothers in those years had on contract an ensemble of actors who were able to shift the audience from laughter to seriousness.[20] Even if seriousness is never entirely absent from the performance, the task of maintaining the impression of realism is almost entirely on the shoulders of Bogart, supported mostly by Ingrid Bergman.

We must keep in mind that it is an instrumental part of Hollywood storytelling to introduce important characters by means of dialogue before we actually see them. In Rick Blaine's case, however, this expository technique is taken to its extreme. First, we see a sign in the foreground, "Rick's Café Americain," as a plane passes in the sky, then Captain Renault informs the newly arrived major Strasser that an arrest will be made of a murderer that same night at Rick's café. Strasser responds that he has already heard of the café and its owner. It is useful here to note that in a star-based cinema such as Hollywood, in which stars serve as brand names for the quality and content of the product, it is important to introduce stars in a striking manner. When we actually see Rick Blaine, some seven minutes into the film, the camera follows a bill which is then signed by a hand, "OK Rick," and only then do we see the face of Rick Blaine, placed in a grey shadow.

The following scenes, lasting some fifteen minutes, furthers the plot about the transit papers, but due to an absence of realism in the performance style, they serve essentially to paint a picture of Rick as loved and respected by everyone. As evidence of the lack of emotional realism in the plot about the transit papers, bear in mind that we are not moved by the death of Ugarte, nor repulsed by Rick's lack of emotions when he is shot. Rick Blaine's character is conveyed in the scene when he refuses to allow a powerful German banker into his casino, and by Ugarte's gentle and submissive behavior, then his

[20] Quoted in Ibid., 125.

disturbance when Rick seems to dislike him. He is presented to us through his interactions with his respectful, subdued and loving employees, a woman, Yvonne, unrequited in love, and Captain Renault who comments on his fighting for ideals in Spain as well as his success with women. Here the lines which serve expository goals are present in a humorous manner: "Underneath that hard, cynical shell, you're a sentimentalist at heart!" and "If I were a woman, and I were not around, I should be in love with Rick!" His lack of respect for authorities is underlined when he is asked about his nationality by Major Strasser ("I'm a drunkard!"), as is his cynicism and cold-heartedness when declining to help Ugarte ("I stick my neck out for nobody!").

Particularly in the first part of the film, we may speak of *idealization*: Bogart maintains an expression of weariness and the actions of the other characters serve to arouse our curiosity about and sympathy for the man behind the harsh exterior. Were it not for the realism in Bogart's acting, we would have experienced this characterization of Rick Blaine as overdone. Idealized characterization is enabled by the fact that the spectator processes meaning at various levels, to a certain extent independently of each other.[21] Rather than by simple comparison to reality, checking for possible matches or discrepancies, we recognize and become affected by the meaning of individual parts of

[21] I use a point here made by Torben Grodal (personal communication, 2002) who also has suggested the witch example, referred to in text.

the whole. Take, as an example, the type of representation for a witch that can be seen in an illustrated book for children. The impression that we are looking at the essence of what is fear provoking and dangerous, may have been deduced immediately through certain visually emphasized traits, with very little reliance on narrative context. For example, a set of large eyes suggests a scary capacity for surveillance and when they are represented as black, we get the impression of an empty hole, a creature marked by a fundamental "otherness" rather than a human being with a natural capacity for empathy. Indeed, this processing of meaning at various levels may lie at the heart of visual metaphors, probably explained most adequately by the concept of *blending*.[22]

Although the analogy of the witches of children's books to Rick Blaine may seem forced, the principal difference pertains only to the time for the description. The witch may convey a powerful and distinct image of evil and otherness immediately whereas the exposition distributed over thirty minutes in *Casablanca* serves the same function. This allows Bogart to play him realistically at any given moment, without having to overplay or exaggerate "mysteriousness" or "cynicism." We become curious and interested instead, as a result of other characters' love and respect in response to his arrogant and self-centered manners.

[22] See Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), Mark Turner, *The Literary Mind* (New York:

Realism and Idealism as a Matter of Degrees

The reason why Rick Blaine becomes an emblem of embittered love-sickness is that he contains the essence of feelings of rejection by a loved one. This is the result of a striking level of idealization in which certain character traits are underlined in an unequivocal manner. The cynical and disappointed Rick Blaine is conveyed through his actions, the sympathetic Rick Blaine is presented to us through the reactions of others.

In order for this theory of idealized characterization to be conceptually sound, we need to abort the premise that a comparison to reality is the primary operation we perform in experiencing a film. The contrast between Rick's self-reliant and self-centered attitudes and the love and respect shown to him by others is anything but realistic. In real life, irritation is likely to be the result of his arrogant manners, but in film viewing we do not necessarily expect these reactions from other characters. Bogart's realistic performance of Rick's cynicism and unhappiness, and the caring and respectful attitudes towards Rick cue us to discover these aspects of his character. Note also that we never really suspect any betrayal on Ilsa Lund's part, and that this is the result of an open and sensitive performance by Ingrid Bergman (this is perhaps more evident if one imagines Lauren Bacall in the role). Moreover, we become cognitively and emotionally affected by the

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Oxford University Press, 1996).

various degrees of idealization and realism in the film. The film becomes an almost perfect representation of how circumstances may block a romantic relationship; yet there is no weakening of unconditional love.

This may sound naïve and pre-modern, but it is *not* experienced as such. I suspect that the reason is to be found in large part in the ambiguity of Rick's response when they depart in the final scene. Due to his previous hostility – recall that he refuses to listen to Ilsa's point of view on her first visit – as well as a lack of signs that he is saddened by her departure, we are left with the impression that Rick may finally be relieved. Yet in the light of his previous self-reliance and a narcissistic flight in work and discipline, it is not entirely convincing that he will let himself become strongly attached to Captain Renault. Yet the final line, suggesting the initiation of a beautiful relationship, conveys neither irony nor sarcasm.

The exit of Rick and Renault, due in large part to the visual style of the scene and Max Steiner's score, signals to the spectator that the story ends here by removing its realism. However, this signal is not so strong as to "destroy" the illusion, thereby forcing us to interpret the status of what is presented in a different manner than hitherto. Instead, it is a question of degrees: the realism of Rick's character is downscaled in order to allow for a different spectator experience. In comedy, a downscaling of realism allows us laugh at the pain and humiliation "experienced" or, more precisely, *pretended* to be experienced by the

performers. In *Casablanca*, this downscaling of psychological realism prepares us for the ending of the film. The weight of the character's problems is removed from the spectator's mind because Bogart does not convey any sadness at this point. The aesthetic result of a hurried and ambiguous ending is that we may leave the tragedy in an uplifted mood and with a sense of closure.

In Conclusion

Rather than opting for a model in which screen persona and private self are seen as well-defined and discrete, we are better off by recalling Strasberg's emphasis on being concrete when employing objects from memory. There are perhaps no good grounds for assuming that personality exists as a unit, at an holistic level; a resource which the actor may then bring into his or her performance at will. What the actor may bring into his performance are *specific* objects. In Casablanca, Bogart may have brought into his role his marital problems with Mayo Methot. In his *film noir* roles he may have been able to bring in his disillusionment with Hollywood; certainly cues were never far away.[23] Moreover, it is difficult to see how an abstract entity such as personality may be brought into the imaginative work in order to effect the performance. It is likely that concrete objects may perform a creative function. This also allows for what would otherwise look like contra-

[23] Meyers notes that Bogart's essay, Humphrey Bogart, "Why Hollywood Hates Me," *Screen Book*, no. 22 (1940), is concerned with why he hates Hollywood; a discontent which were growing during

dictions under the premise of one coherent personality: Bogart may have been a tough guy at work but the impression, which emerges from Meyer's biographical descriptions of his marriages, is of a husband largely dominated by women at home.

Humphrey Bogart contributes to *Casablanca* with the psychological realism, or interiority, which he was able to convey. We may hypothesize that he achieved this aesthetic result by a very modern technique of acting in which he involved his personal life. The kind of organic creation which an actor may use in his or her performance, is not dissimilar to the creative work of other kinds of artists. A distinction between artistic creation and skillful production of an object may be highly suspect, but at least it grasps an intuition that the former is more demanding in terms of imagination-skills. The kind of imagination-work required of a writer, director, or actor is distinct from that required by, say the producer and host of a TV game show, in part because the former, we may speculate, puts to imaginative work one's understanding of human psychology as well as personal experiences.

If we take the concept of *auteur* to refer to those aesthetic properties, which are particularly valuable and highly critical in the work's overall design, we may also be able to acknowledge an actor's contribution to a collective enterprise. Rather than taking the notion of a controlling will or intelligence from an individual art form such as literature, we

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the late 1930s due, in part, to bad casting decisions, which lead him to refuse the roles he was offered. Jack Warner responded by suspending him from the pay roll.

may look for what is most valuable in a work. In the case of *Casablanca*, Humphrey Bogart makes a highly valuable contribution by his imaginative work. Psychological realism is instrumental in modern film acting and idealized characterization is pivotal in classical Holly wood storytelling. At first glance, the two may seem incom patible but when they are successfully fused, as *Casablanca* demonstrates, the result is a very satisfying work of art.

Bogart's Nod in the *Marseillaise* Scene: A Physical Gesture in *Casablanca*

Richard Raskin

When the stage has been properly set, the simplest physical gesture can be charged with meaning in a film. Bogart's nod in the *Marseillaise* scene in *Casablanca* stands out as perhaps the most striking example of this important resource in cinematic storytelling, and one particularly deserving of a closer look.

The situation

Rick (Humphrey Bogart) and Victor Laszlo (Paul Henreid) are upstairs in Rick's office, with Laszlo offering to buy the letters of transit. Rick refuses, and in reply to Laszlo's question as to why, Rick tells him to ask his wife. They then hear German officers singing *Die Wacht am Rhein* in the main room below. Rick and Laszlo go out on the balcony and look down at the Germans singing. Renault is watching from the bar, his eyebrow raised. Laszlo, listening tight-lipped, finally walks down the steps and goes decisively over to the band, telling them: "Play the *Marseillaise*! Play it!" The band members look down, then up toward Rick, who nods to them. Having obtained Rick's approval, the band then begins to play the *Marseillaise*, and one of the most electrifying scenes in film history unfolds.

Earlier nods in the film

On meeting Rick for the first time, we see two things he does before we actually see his face: 1) approving a customer credit slip handed to him by an employee and on which he writes "OK Rick," thereby identifying him for us as the owner of the café and defining him as the man in charge, the one the people working at the café go to when approval is needed; and 2) playing chess with himself, suggesting an enjoyment of strategy, intellectual challenge and self-sufficiency (in a positive sense). Soon after we see Rick's face and the intensity of his involvement in the game, he looks up and sees another of his employees, Abdul, on guard at the entrance to the room and asking with a glance whether the couple standing in the doorway may be admitted. Rick nods yes. After they enter, another person appears in the doorway and again Abdul, now with a sneer on his face, looks to Rick for a signal. This time Rick nods no, and when the man protests, Rick walks over and – as Ugarte (played by Peter Lorre) slips in – Rick confirms that the guest is unwelcome in this part of the café and lucky that his money is good at the bar. In the ensuing dialogue between Rick and Ugarte, we learn to our delight that the man Rick had excluded was a representative of the Deutschebank.

Nodding yes or no to an employee looking to him for a signal, is one of the first things Rick does in this film, and Bogart's nod in the *Marseillaise* scene is therefore grounded in our experience of Rick from the very start. Though the relation of the earlier to the later nods is hardly

one of set-up to pay-off,[1] the earlier nods nevertheless help to prepare us for the later one, by defining Rick as the one who calls the shots.

The significance of the nod in the *Marseillaise* scene

1) Marking a new stage in Rick's development

Rick's overall evolution, including what we know of his past and can foresee of his future, can be divided into three periods:

> an early idealistic period, when – as both Renault and Victor Laszlo point out – Rick ran guns to the Ethiopians and fought on the loyalist side in the Spanish civil war, earning himself a place of honor on the Nazis' blacklist;
>
> a central period, filling most of the present of the film, characterized largely by a cynical and selfish neutrality, as expressed by the line spoken twice by Rick – "I stick my neck out for nobody"; yet even here, there are flashes of profound integrity, as when Rick tells Ferrari (Sidney Greenstreet) that he doesn't buy or sell human beings; presumably, Rick's fall into cynicism was triggered by what he experienced as a betrayal at the Paris railroad station when he received Ilsa's farewell note;
>
> a final period, in which Rick overcomes his selfish and self-pitying stance and returns to the fight against oppression.

In the dialogue between Rick and Victor Laszlo just before the *Marseillaise* scene, we are reminded that Rick is at present squarely grounded in his neutrality stance, telling Laszlo for example: "I'm not

[1] For definitions of these terms, see the author's article, "Set-up/pay-off and a related figure" in *p.o.v.* no. 2 (December 1996), pp. 53-74.

interested in politics. The problems of the world are not in my department. I'm a saloon keeper."

Yet moments later, when the boundaries are clearly drawn between resistance and oppression, and the possibility of delivering Victor Laszlo's liberating response to the German song is dependent on a choice that only Rick can make, the saloon keeper risks everything and nods yes. As one commentator wrote:

> The die is cast. At Rick's behest, a line has been drawn between good and evil in a place where moral ambiguity, also at Rick's behest, has been the order of the day.[2]

The Rick the band members knew was the one who had stood by passively as Ugarte was arrested, and who consistently put the interests of the café above politics. This is why, when confronted with Laszlo's command to play the *Marseillaise* in defiance of the Germans, the band could not take it for granted that Rick would allow them to comply.

If any moment in this film might be called a *point of no return*, this is it. Here, for the first time, in nodding his approval, Rick takes a stand against the representatives of the Third Reich, and places himself on the side of resistance.

All of this is in the nod, which marks Rick's transition from neutrality to commitment. It is here that the ground is broken for

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[2] Harvey R. Greenberg, *The Movies on Your Mind. Film Classics on the Couch, from Fellini to Frankenstein* (New York: Saturday Review Press/E. P. Dutton, 1975), p. 96.

future moves Rick will undertake, such as devising and carrying out a plan for getting Victor and Ilsa out of Casablanca, ultimately shooting Major Strasser in the process, and going off to join the Free French in Brazzaville along with Captain Renault, who – inspired by Rick – undergoes his own parallel conversion from neutrality to commitment. Renault's line "Round up the usual suspects" in the final airport scene plays the same point-of-no-return role in his development as the nod does for Rick in the *Marseillaise* scene.

2) *Status and power*

Paul Henreid did not want the part of Victor Laszlo when he was first assigned the role as a contract player at Warner Brothers. His initial response was that the script was terrible and he didn't "want to be the second lover in a film, second to Humphrey Bogart!" But he allowed himself to be talked into the role, provided among other things that he get Ilsa at the end, as befits a leading man.[3] In other words, from the very start, he experienced a fundamental rivalry with respect to Humphrey Bogart's Rick.

This feeling of rivalry was dramatically reactivated when Henreid learned whom the band members look at before beginning to play the

[3] Paul Henreid with Julius Fast, *Ladies' Man: An Autobiography* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984), pp. 120-121. Though Henreid apparently believed he had been promised he would get the girl at the end of *Casablanca*, his contracts bear no such indication. See Aljean Harmetz, *Round Up the Usual Suspects: The Making of* Casablanca (New York: Hyperion, 1992), p. 100.

Marseillaise, as the following passage in Henreid's autobiography makes abundantly clear:

> I am described by the Germans as a great leader of the masses, a man who can command obedience. That's the reason the Germans don't want me to leave Casablanca, and it's also the plot hinge. There's a scene in Rick's Café, one of the high points, when I order the band to play *"La Marseillaise"* to counter the Germans' singing *"Die Wacht am Rhein,"* a very patriotic military song. The musicians look away, then back to me before they start playing, and I conduct them, singing myself.
>
> After the rehearsal, I asked Curtiz, 'What the hell is going on? Why do they look away and then back at me?"
>
> "Oh, yes," Curtiz said, "That – I told them to look at Bogie. I'll have a cut of Bogie nodding, giving them the order to play."
>
> "But why?" I asked, confused.
>
> "Because in the picture Bogey pays their salary, and they don't want to do anything that could get them fired."
>
> "But for heaven's sake," I protested, "I'm supposed to be a leader of the masses, and here I have a stinking little band, and I can't get them to do what I want!"
>
> Curtiz laughed. "Oh, it'll be all right. It will establish that Bogie is on your side."[4]

So much for the relative status of Laszlo and Rick in this scene, as experienced from Paul Henreid's perspective, as well as the manner in which Curtiz pacified Henreid.

But there is another hierarchical relationship in play here as well: namely that involving Curtiz and Bogart, the latter being just as unaware as Henreid had been as to exactly what happens when Laszlo orders the band to play. And in this connection, it is ironic that the very nodding shot that invests Rick with so much power in the scene

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 122.

was directed in such a way as to make Bogart feel as powerless as possible:

> One day, when Bogart appeared for shooting, Curtiz told him, 'You've got an easy day today. Go on that balcony, look down and to the right, and nod. Then you can go home.' 'What am I nodding at?' Bogart asked. 'What's my attitude?' 'Don't ask so many questions!' Curtiz replied. 'Get up there and nod and then go home!' Bogart did as he was told, and didn't realize until long afterward that that nod had triggered the famous 'Marseillaise' scene, where Henreid leads the nightclub orchestra in drowning out some Germans who'd been singing 'Die Wacht am Rhein.' It's a scene that, ever after thirty years, prickles the scalp and closes the throat, and for all Bogart knew he was nodding at a passing dog.[6]

There was no artistic justification whatsoever for holding back from Humphrey Bogart the shred of information he requested. In not letting him in on the meaning of the nod and instead insisting on blind obedience, Curtiz indulged in an arbitrary exercise of power at the expense of an actor who merely wanted to understand what was happening.

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[6] Nathaniel Benchley, "Here's looking at you, kid," *Atlantic Monthly*, February 1975, p. 44.

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8th International Short Film Symposium

12-14 March 2003

Four prize-winning short fiction films, shown and admired at numerous international festivals, and representing four very different kinds of storytelling, will be the focus of this year's symposium:

Mitko Panov, **With Raised Hands**
(Poland, 5 min., 1985)

Unni Straume, **Derailment**
(Norway, 7 min., 1992)

Oren Stern, **Funeral at Parc de France**
(Israel, 24 min., 2000)

Stephanie Morgenstern and Mark Ellis
Remembrance (Canada, 19 min., 2001),

Wednesday, March 12th, 13:15-16:00, 340, Trøjborg

• Four Short Fiction Films and Their Directors

The directors will tell about the making of their films and their own goals as filmmakers. They will also answer questions from the audience, and some of the ensuing discussion will focus on the nature of storytelling in the short fiction film.

• Short Film Workshop (not open to the public)

Student filmmakers who are in the process of producing short video films at the Department of Information and Media Studies at Aarhus University, will be given advice by the visiting directors.

On the evening of Thursday, March 13h, the directors will appear at Aarhus Film Workshop and on Saturday, March 15th, they will present their films at the European Film College in Ebeltoft.

These events have been arranged by the Department of Information and Media Studies.

Richard Raskin