THE ADAPTATION OF CINEMATIC DREAMS

By Marsha Kinder

Many researchers believe that dreaming may be an evolutionary mechanism that mediates between genetic programming and cultural imprinting, generating new possibilities for the future (Jones, 1970). This assumption may drastically alter our understanding of the connection between dreams and the mass media. We now know that the basic rhythm and form of dreams are genetically programmed and controlled by the primitive part of the brain. But the more highly developed forebrain determines the content, recombining self-generated images with images from the reservoir of memories that have been shaped by the culture in which the dreamer lives (Hobson & McCarley, 1977).

The advanced technology of our culture has undoubtedly transformed our dreams as much as our waking lives. We are bombarded daily by thousands of prefabricated moving visual images that can be incorporated into our dreams. Television and movies, in particular, have influenced not only their content but also their style. Many dreamers report seeing newsreels, animation, fades, dissolves, superimpositions, freezes, and instant replays in their dreams. Some of these techniques may have appeared in dreams before being developed in the media; perhaps they even contributed to their invention. Whatever their genesis, the media have made these techniques commonplace within our cultural dream pool.

The fact that visual images are directly recorded by our brain, and reprocessed in our dreams, means that they readily become part of us. We have an extraordinary capacity to become what we see. Literature cannot influence our dreams as strongly as films and television because it is not a visual medium. Although words are arbitrary signs coded by the culture and although their specific meanings depend primarily on the context in which they appear, words evoke different sensory images in different readers; in fact, some readers respond with no visual images whatever. Reading is essentially a private act in which the reader must take an active role in choosing images and setting the pace. We have much less control over visual media, where the rhythms are set by the editing and where the images represent the external world more directly and concretely than words, thus giving them another meaning besides those established by the particular context in which they appear. This combination of factors makes it very easy for a viewer to lift any visual image out of its filmic context and adapt it readily to a dream, even if the conscious mind does not find the image compelling. In one of his dream reports
included in this volume, Paul Sharits traces the cinematic source for a specific dream image of a hand pistol that he uses to shoot himself in the head.

I went to see a Buñuel film, which was billed as being his "return to surrealism." The film seemed corny to me; I didn’t feel affected by its violence. However, my dream that night contained within it just about every imagistic icon that the Buñuel film contained (not the same "story" line or the same circumstances but the "iconography-isolated-from-its-former-contingencies").

Dream adaptation moves in two directions. Not only are dreams adapted to a wide range of media, forming the basis of certain styles (e.g., surrealism, dada) and genres (e.g., dream visions), but other art forms (especially movies and television) are absorbed and adapted into dreams, generating new dream genres and archetypes. The interplay between dreams and films is particularly intriguing because these two media share many primary features: e.g., the primacy of moving visual images, spatial and temporal discontinuity, and the double identity of the dreamer as passive voyeur alone in the dark and as actor projected on the luminous screen.

No one has dramatized these similarities more brilliantly than Buster Keaton in Sherlock Junior (1924), where he plays a movie projectionist who dreams that his transparent double leaves his sleeping body to enter the fictional world of a film (a melodrama entitled Hearts and Pearls) where he reenacts the Oedipal triangle and fulfills his wish of winning the girl away from the powerful villain. The dramatic situation allows Keaton to combine contradictory roles of a dreamer—a sleeping frozen-faced projectionist and a daring, acrobatic stuntman, a rational decoder of mysteries and an ardent, needy lover. His witty derring-do enables him to master feats of dreamwork, particularly in the archetypal chase sequences where he transforms a sinking car into a sailboat, rides on the handlebars of a driverless motorcycle, and escapes his captors by jumping out of a window into a convincing disguise as a woman (Freud claimed that everyone has bisexual dreams). Despite these Freudian overtones, the most brilliant and funniest sequence relies on the formal parallels between movies and dreams—the discontinuity of space and time—as the primary source of humor. Every time the film cuts to a new scene it leaves Buster behind floundering on stage in the previous reality, trying to adapt to the peculiarities of this dreamlike medium. Just as he is about to sit down on a bench in an elegant garden, the film suddenly cuts to a shot of a busy street, where he falls down; later, when he is stranded on a rock in the middle of the ocean, he dives into the water, but another fast cut makes him land headfirst in a snowbank. Once Keaton is awakened from his dream by his fiancée who comes to his projection booth to apologize, the film, which has formerly been the vehicle for his private fantasies, now takes on its more public function of reflecting and perpetuating cultural models of behavior. Buster watches the screen for instruction on how to kiss his girl and slip the ring on her finger and then is disturbed when the film reminds him that these courtship rituals will soon lead to bringing up babies! He is able to move so easily from his personal dream to the cinematic melodrama because both focus on the same archetypal romantic triangle and provide narrative solutions for human survival—for the individual and the species. Just as Jung argues that fairytales and myths represented the projected dreams of a culture, in Keaton’s technological society this function has clearly been taken over by movies.

In this essay, I plan to explore the two-way process of adaptation between dreams and films, drawing on concrete examples wherever possible. This discussion will be shaped by a set of general assumptions that apply to any adaptation—from any period or medium, moving in either direction.

Every adaptation is not only a work of art but also a form of criticism that simultaneously functions on three levels—practical, theoretical, and phenomeno-
logical. First, any adaptation offers practical criticism of its source in that it attempts to capture the essence, or certain nondiscursive qualities of the original. Buster Keaton chooses to adapt *Hearts and Pearls* to his dream because it provides appealing roles for the principles in his own romantic triangle, it enables him to act out his detective fantasy, and it encourages him to perform the daring stunts of a hero. His selection process helps to define the essential features of the detection romance. Secondly, in the process of deciding what can be carried over from the original and how the potentialities of the new medium can be exploited, the adapter implicitly makes a theoretical comparison between the two media. Keaton discovers that film and dream share a spatial and temporal discontinuity that differs from theater and real life. Yet, the unique dream characteristic of feeling simultaneously both inside and outside of a particular space or experience, is expressed in Keaton’s filmic adaptation through the narrative situation, which, in contrast to the spatial and temporal discontinuity, functions symbolically rather than phenomenologically. Thirdly, since every adaptation appeals to a different audience existing in a different time/space continuum than that of the audience and artist of the original work, it must implicitly compare the two different phenomenological contexts in which the works are experienced. Though Keaton experiences his movie and dream in the same darkened theater, he is in a peculiar observation place for both. Never sitting among the audience, he chooses either to replace the projector in the booth or the hero on the screen and implies that this triple point of view is possible in both media. Only when he awakens is he able to distinguish between his dream and the movie, yet his problem is how to adapt these two fantasy modes to his waking life. When his eyes are closed, he is totally submerged in his private dream; he doesn’t imitate his idols but actually becomes them and thus is enlarged by the experience. But once his eyes are open, he becomes a conscious imitator and realizes that the visions projected by movies lead thousands of dreamers along the same comic path.

These three levels generate three different criteria for evaluating an adaptation, which together comprise a dialectic. The practical level strives for a similarity between the original and the adaptation; the theoretical comparison assumes that difference is inevitable and valuable; and the phenomenological comparison accepts the combination of the similarity and difference as an enrichment. All three sets of criteria are highlighted in *Sherlock Junior*, both for the character within the film who adapts the inner movie to his dream, and for Keaton the director who adapts the dream medium to film.

Whenever dreams are adapted to film, a great degree of distortion is inevitable, yet the dreamer selects some aspects to retain and to communicate to others. The same applies to all dream reports—whether written or recorded, verbal or visual. Such reports are usually deemed unreliable, yet they are analogous to documentation of other forms of perishable art, and to recordings of artistic performances. Such documentation (even a filmed play or concert) is generally considered to be art (though of a secondary kind) because no other access remains and it usually captures images that have resonance both for the dreamer in the process of creative revision and for the audience in responding to the resulting adaptation. One main difference between the film adaptation of a dream and other forms of documentation is that the former is granted a much higher status of artistic expression than the original dream on which it is based or any intermediary forms of notation, partly because it can be consciously controlled.

Adaptation is a form of secondary revision, which Freud assumed was a means of distortion or censorship that made the irrational dream material more acceptable to the conscious mind. Even if we accept Hobson and McCarley’s activation-synthesis model of dreaming (1977) and reject Freud’s theory of censorship, we may still acknowledge that considerable distortion does take place.
in the dream report, perhaps because dreaming is essentially a right-brain experience while the process of verbal recording is primarily a left-brain function. Yet even in the critical process of selecting the medium of adaptation and deciding what to emphasize or omit, neither Freud nor the new neurobiologists would deny that the unconscious or the right brain hemisphere might play an active role. When the critical process is dramatized in the dream content of artists, it frequently appears destructive or inhibiting. For example, Paul Sharits concludes his suicide borrowed from Buñuel “is undramatic,” so he decides to repeat it. Stan Brakhage fears that when Jonas Mekas takes him to “an ordinary escape movie...he might spoil the pleasure of the movie by criticizing it or by fidgeting in his seat.” Both Brakhage and Dusan Makavejev report dreams where they decode the meaning of photographs that reveal latent violence. Scientists have not yet discovered the process by which the forebrain selects and combines dream images, but Hobson and McCarley claim it must involve some randomness. Even if this is the case, the consistent patterns of images found by Calvin Hall (1966) in the content of dreams experienced by one dreamer in one night and the consistent thematic and stylistic patterns discovered by psychotherapeutic analysts of dreams suggest there is considerable method, perhaps unconscious, in the selection process. Of course, the patterning may emerge in the process of “reading” and interpreting the dream. Freudian dreamwork theory actually presents a methodology for reading such adaptations. In either case, the tendency to create or discover patterns seems to be an inherent characteristic of the human brain. By examining some specific examples of dream adaptations, we may discover that, like Freud’s methods of free association and analytical interpretation, the adaptation process (moving in either direction) is an effective means of illuminating rather than distorting the latent content of the source on which it is based.

**FELLINI’S AIRPORT ‘61**

Fellini’s dream report and sketches included in this volume date from 1961. While they immediately evoke the brilliant airport sequence in *Toby Dammit*, 1968 (Fellini’s adaptation of an Edgar Allen Poe story, which is an episode in *Spirits of the Dead*), they also illustrate his masterpiece *8½* (1962). Admittedly his most autobiographical work, *8½* traces the artistic process by which a filmmaker converts his memories and immediate sensory experience into dreams and fantasies, which he uses to create his new movie. Although he is a film director rather than the director of an airport, Guido, the middle-aged hero of *8½*, fears he is losing his creative and sexual powers and suffers the same indecisiveness and confusion that Fellini describes in his dream. Guido also tries to stall those who await his decision—his producer, his actors and crew, his wife and mistress, and the press—with “childish lies which are less and less convincing.”

This state of anxiety is powerfully expressed in the opening nightmare sequence, where Guido is trapped in his car in a low-ceilinged tunnel in the middle of a traffic jam. The camera pans out of the darkness over the tops of the cars into overexposed brightness, as if seeking an escape route, then moves in front of Guido’s vehicle and shows him looking at the occupants trapped in the other cars. They stare back like zombies, silent and immobile, as if waiting for him to act (like the passengers in the airport). The strange silence is broken by the sound of Guido’s panicked breathing, as the car fills with steam and he fights suffocation and paralysis (which is reinforced by freeze shots). The car becomes “a terminal room with glass walls” (Figure 1) (an image that recurs in a later dream, where it is converted into his father’s tomb, and in the steamroom fantasy, where the Cardinal condemns Guido by shutting him out of the Heavenly City with a glass window). Guido pounds

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desperately against the windows, then climbs out of the car and flies through the air to the sea on his own power (Figure 2); his joyful flight is transformed into an anxious fall when a rope tied to his ankle is yanked by his film crew waiting below (Figure 3). The men who pull him down resemble the priests from his childhood memory, who forcibly yank little Guido (who is dressed in the same black cape that the adult dreamer is wearing) away from the Satanic Saraghina and the exhilarating motion of her rhumba; this first conflict between sexuality and discipline also takes place by the sea. In the opening dream, we glimpse on the beach two sexual images—a powerful horse and a giant rocket tower that Guido has constructed for his film. While this latter image implies that he is trying to create a phallic superstructure to solve his confusion, it also evokes the grounded flight imagery from Fellini’s airport dream. The implicit conflict is between faith in his own animal instincts and reliance on reason and technology. When the fall awakens Guido from his nightmare, he finds himself in an examination room, where he is probed by doctors and nurses and criticized by a writer who finds his script adolescent and confusing. Playing the critical Super-Ego throughout the film, this intellectual (like the priests and film crew) seriously inhibits Guido’s creativity and ultimately proves to be as superfluous as the rocket tower.

![Image](image_url)  

*Figure 1: The Tomb as “Terminal Room with Glass Walls.” From the motion picture Fellini’s 8½ through the courtesy of Avco Embassy Pictures Corp.*

The key figure in Fellini’s dream is the Mongolian passenger, who has the “face of an emperor, of a prophet, of a saint, but also one of a gypsy, of a wayfarer, of a strolling player.” Fellini claims that his films always begin with “fantasy characters”—faces that have appeared to him in dreams or memories; he doesn’t care whether the face belongs to an actor or plumber, so long as it matches the image in his mind. Guido dramatizes this process when he examines hundreds of photographs, searching for faces to play his fantasy characters. In 8½, the Mongolian passenger is transformed into Maurice the Magician, the partner of Maya the Seer, both of whom Guido has worked with in the circus. These strolling players represent for Guido positive archetypes of creativity. As Maurice, Fellini
Figure 2: Guido's Flight Out of the Tunnel. From the motion picture Fellini's 8½, through the courtesy of Avco Embassy Pictures Corp.

Figure 3: The Short Flight Turns into an Anxiety Dream of Falling. From the motion picture Fellini's 8½ through the courtesy of Avco Embassy Pictures Corp.
Figure 4: Maurice the Magician Resembles the Mongolian in Fellini's Airport Dream. From the motion picture Fellini's 8½ through the courtesy of Avco Embassy Pictures Corp.

Figure 5: Maurice Triggers Guido's Ephemany. From the motion picture Fellini's 8½ through the courtesy of Avco Embassy Pictures Corp.
casts Ian Dallas, who has slightly slanted eyes and the “strange, disturbing aristocratic glow” of the Mongolian (Figure 4).

The last two fantasies in which Guido resolves his confusion and fear are the sequences that bear the strongest connections with the airport dream. The embarrassed Guido is dragged to a press conference, where he is seated behind a huge table (like the Director in the Airport dream) and badgered by strangers, who drive him to flee under the table where he is trapped as in the opening nightmare. This time, instead of flying away, he shoots himself in the head. This suicidal fantasy makes him decide not to make the film. Then, as Guido sits in his car listening to the intellectual praising his decision and watching the dismantling of the rocket tower, the Magician quietly approaches, taps on the window, and says, “We’re ready to begin.” (Figures 5 and 6.) These events are related to Fellini’s first dream sketch in which, in the lower left-hand corner, the Director sits at his desk facing the Mongolian while the other passengers wait in front of a window through which we see a bird-like plane ready to take off; all of the figures are faceless and blue, except for the Mongolian, whose face is glowing yellow. The right side of the drawing is dominated by a larger window through which we see a gigantic plane with a ladder leading to its entrance, which is reminiscent of Guido’s rocket tower. The second drawing makes the polarity between the strong individual and the machine even sharper, for each is framed by a separate window; the fact that Fellini must choose between them is emphasized by the fact that we see only his controlling hand and the plaque labelling him “Direttore.” (Fellini uses this dream motif of the escape flight again in Juliet of the Spirits [1965], when the heroine fantasizes about her grandfather’s elopement with a circus bareback rider in a bird-like plane; in this version, the individualized gypsy saint, the animal instincts, and the machine are all harmoniously combined.) Fellini’s verbal description of the Mongolian passenger in the airport dream also helps to explain this crucial moment in 8½ and the power

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of the white magician-clown, just as the development of the cinematic sequence illuminates the potential power of this dream spirit.

He opposes my discomfort and very emotional insecurity with the definite, incontrovertible reality of his arrival and presence...he just waits calmly with the confidence of someone identifying himself with an unavoidable event of destiny...I'm the one who must decide if he can enter or not. He did what he had to. Now it's up to me.

Instead of leading to more confusion as in the dream, in 8½ this moment triggers an epiphany that enables the director to accept all the conflicting parts of himself. As they descend from the tower, all of the characters from his memories, fantasies, and present experience enter his circus ring of love, which is led by the Magician. It is the presence of the Magician, with his "miserable dignity," that makes Guido's decision possible. Fellini's dream explains why this character (who otherwise seems very minor in the film) plays such a crucial role in the joyful finale. The recording and adaptation of this airport dream undoubtedly helped Fellini to reach this creative resolution.

BERGMAN'S RED ROOM

A film for me begins with something very vague...split second impressions that disappear as quickly as they come...Most of all, it is a brightly colored thread sticking out of the dark sack of the unconscious. If I begin to wind up this thread, and do it carefully, a complete film will emerge.4

Ingmar Bergman claims that Cries and Whispers (1972) was based on a germinal dream image that haunted him for over a year—four women in flowing white dresses moving through a red room in a grey morning light. His first step in adapting this dream image was to convert it into a narrative situation typical of his canon—a few characters in an isolated environment doing psychological violence to each other—and to focus on an archetypal rite of passage—"three women who are waiting for the fourth to die and who take turns to watch by her." This quoted description and those that follow are from Bergman's short story, which appeared in The New Yorker on October 21, 1972, and which marked the next stage of his secondary revision. While filling in the gaps and making the image more intelligible, this story also combined and further condensed the basic situations and characters from his earlier films, The Silence (1963) and Persona (1966).

While the four women can be seen as parts of a single personality, they also suggest figures from a family fairy tale—three sisters and a humble maid like Cinderella, who nobly mothers the dying one. As mothers, the other two sisters are cold and bitter, or selfish and unreliable like their own mother; the fathers are all cruel, weak or absent. As dreamer, Bergman apparently identifies most strongly with the artist and child, who are dying or already dead. The servant's daughter died at the age of three; and, although the dying artist is an adult, she is treated like a child and is absorbed in childhood memories. The cancer in her womb makes her belly swell up "as though she were in an advanced state of pregnancy." At the end of the film, when the servant is alone in the house, "faintly, very far away and scarcely discernible, she hears the child's crying." The infantile wish at the center of the story is that the child escape the cries of pain and death and return to an idyllic environment where play, love, and harmony are nurtured by the intimate whispers
of an ideal family. This narrative elaboration of the germinal dream image obviously draws on unconscious material that Bergman repeatedly uses in his works.

Bergman could not stop with the story, because the colors—red, white, and grey—that are essential to the dream image demand visual expression. Cries and Whispers is the first film in which Bergman used color with the richness and symbolic resonance that he had previously achieved with black and white. The film takes place in a house, a common dream environment for expressing one's life space. In describing its red rooms as the inside of the soul; Bergman draws a metaphor from the internal tissues of the body, reinforcing even further the interior nature of the action.

All our interiors are red, of various shades. Don't ask me why it must be so, because I don't know. I have puzzled over this myself, and each explanation has seemed more comical than the last. The bluntest but also the most valid is probably that the whole thing is something internal and that ever since my childhood I have pictured the inside of the soul as a moist membrane in shades of red.

The structure of the film is controlled by an inward movement representing psychic penetration. The film opens with a montage of exterior landscapes, then moves inside the house to external observation of the four women, before probing their subjective visions. After the opening sequence, there are only two external scenes—one a memory, and the other the final vision that is evoked in the servant's mind as she reads the journal of the dead artist. Each of the subjective sequences that reveal the minds of the four women is framed by red fades. Within the memory sequence, the dying artist returns to a childhood memory of watching a magic lantern show; this scene evokes one of Bergman's own famous recollections, which reveals an early association to the color red:

The devil was an early acquaintance, and in the child's mind there was a need to personify him. This is where my magic lantern came in... Red Riding Hood and the Wolf, and all the others. And the wolf was the Devil... with a tail and a gaping red mouth... a picture of wickedness and temptation on the flowered wall of the nursery (1960, p. xiv).

In Bergman's version of the fairy tale, the color red unites killer and victim as two faces of evil.

The symbolic use of red and white—as colors of interior exposure and external disguise—is primary in the film. The symbolic identity of the entire film as an inner experience is expressed concretely through the color red, which saturates the film from the opening frame to the closing fade. Besides the structural fades, red is used for coverings that invite penetration—the low-cut gown of the youngest sister, the bed covers, wallpaper, carpets, and draperies of the rooms. Before revealing the torment she suffers, the eldest sister moves into a room and stands in front of a red wall as the camera draws in for a tight close-up of her face. In contrast to red, which always draws one into pain and evil, white provides an innocent surface that displaces the torment. Only after a slow, elaborate process of removing her several layers of white garments does the eldest sister reveal her nakedness and self-hatred; her self-mutilation with a piece of glass draws from her sex the dark red blood, which stains the white sheets and flesh. In the funeral scene, the corpse is swathed in a white gown and nightcap that draw attention away from the yellowed skin, limp hair, and blistered mouth; she is laid to rest on a field of white sheets in a red room. The dark interiors are contrasted not only with the white fabrics that conceal interior weakness of the flesh and soul but also with the brightness of the few exterior scenes that project idyllic serenity. The beauty of the film's visual
surface (like the “flowered wall” of little Ingmar’s nursery) displaces the horror latent in its emotional center. Bergman insists:

Furniture, props, and other paraphernalia must be very exact, but we must be able to use them capriciously and just as they suit our purpose. But everything must be beautiful and harmonious. It must be the way it is in a dream: a thing is there because we desire it or need it, just for the moment.

In this interior film, all characters, environments, and props express parts of Bergman’s psyche as the tortured dreamer.

**BUÑUEL’S RITUAL ESCAPE ACT**

We do not have any dream reports from Luis Buñuel, whose reputation as a masterful ironist probably makes him less likely to reveal his psyche than Fellini or Bergman. Yet, he has insisted from the twenties that films are “the superior way of expressing the world of dreams, emotions and instincts” (1967, p. 175). In Penelope Gilliatt’s recent profile of Buñuel in *The New Yorker* (1977), he is quoted as saying: “The cinema is an involuntary imitation of dreams. It might have been invented to express the life of the unconscious, whose roots go so deep into poetry” (pp. 69–70). He thinks that of all means of expression, films function most like the imagination and thus reveal the human mind, which he assumes is filled with “dreams, and also the most everyday questions. ‘What time is it?’ ‘Do you want to eat?’ ” (Gilliatt, 1977, p. 70) That is why he is fascinated with the capacity of film to “create such moments of compressed ritual” (p. 54). Instead of developing conventional plots, his most recent films are filled with repetitive rituals of eating, sex and religion: *The Exterminating Angel, Belle Du Jour, The Milky Way, The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie, The Phantom of Liberty, and That Obscure Object of Desire.*

Buñuel claims that “A film is the story of a dream. A dream recalled because of the realistic nature of the cinema” (Gilliatt, 1977, p. 53). In contrast to Fellini and Bergman, he stresses the narrative aspect of dreams and dream recall rather than the prevailing emotion or visual image as the prime resource for cinematic adaptation. Instead of starting with a specific face or environment, his films grow out of a word or abstract concept that demands experimentation with narrative structure. “When Jean Claude and I work together, we work always from a key word. ‘The Milky Way’ was ‘heresy’. ‘Discreet Charm’ was ‘repetition’. ‘Le Fantome de la Liberte’ was ‘hazard.’ ” (Gilliatt, 1977, p. 60). His rebellion against the well-made plot frequently takes the form of a series of inset stories or dreams-within-dreams that provide an escape, not only for the individual dreamer but also for the audience. This is the same strategy used in *Sherlock Junior* by Keaton, who has long been one of Buñuel’s idols, but he takes the technique much further. According to Freud, dreams-within-dreams usually express a true memory or highly charged fear, while the continued outer dream represents the wishes of the dreamer. By labelling it “only a dream” the censor manages to transform his most threatening material into a harmless fiction. Buñuel uses this strategy, particularly in *Discreet Charm*, which passes as a playful farce about dreams, but actually sneaks past his censors (in the audience and film industry) the harshest perceptions on man and society. He assumes that cinematic dreams can have a more powerful influence on the consciousness of the audience than any other medium.
Motion pictures act directly upon the spectator; they offer him concrete persons and things; they isolate him, through silence and darkness, from the usual psychological atmosphere. Because of all this, the cinema is capable of stirring the spectator as perhaps no other art. (1967, pp. 175-176)

In Buñuel's films there is no real escape. In his early documentary, Los Hurdanos (Land Without Bread, 1930), a smug narrator describes the horrors of poor villagers trapped in poverty and ignorance; at the end of the film he is eager to escape this misery, but he returns to a society that suffers the same economic injustice on a larger scale. This structural pattern is elaborated in Exterminating Angel (1962), where a group of aristocrats are mysteriously trapped at a dinner party and vow to give thanks to the Virgin if they ever escape. When the single virgin among them manages to release them through an absurd ritual of reversed repetition, they flock to a cathedral to fulfill their promise, and are merely trapped in a larger structure. When the audience leaves the theater after seeing this grim satire on civilized order, we enter a world trapped in precisely the same conventions. Buñuel implies it is impossible for anyone totally to escape these conventions or the structures of the subconscious. Ironically, this idea is developed most fully in his most radically experimental films, The Discreet Charm (1973) and The Phantom of Liberty (1974), but the former is more clearly centered on dreams.

Stressing the revolutionary nature of the subconscious, The Discreet Charm has an expansive structure opening outward, which defies narrow conventions, linear designs, and rational interpretations. The film is organized around recurring dinner parties, the social ritual that demonstrates how civilized people cope with their animal needs; yet, these eating rituals are repeatedly interrupted by sex, violence, and dreams—the main preoccupations of the subconscious.

In this film, the lines between dream, inset story, theater, and bizar coincident soon break down. After telling an elaborate dream about his own death, a young soldier is asked to tell another that is apparently well known among his colleagues; as if his dream were narratively prophetic, we never see him again nor hear his tale. In a restaurant, a young stranger approaches three beautiful women and tells them a story from his childhood, in which he is led by his mother's ghost to poison his father; the women avoid responding to the horror of his story or the oddity of his approach by becoming involved in the banal absurdity of a restaurant out of coffee, tea, and milk. A woman fetching a priest for a dying man promises to tell the story of why she hates Jesus, but this blasphemy is interrupted by the confession of the dying sinner, who reveals he has murdered his employers. The victims turn out to be the parents of his confessor, who, after absolving the storyteller of his sins, shoots the dying killer. Perhaps this bizarre coincidence suggests one good reason to hate Jesus. At one of the many disastrous dinner parties, the guests discover that the chicken is a theatrical prop and that they are on stage in front of a hostile audience without knowing their lines; they are saved by Senechal, who awakens from this nightmare just in time to dress for the actual party, which turns out to be more elegant but also more violent, for one of the guests is murdered. Again, Buñuel allows the diners to escape by cutting to another guest awakening in bed and telling his wife, "I was dreaming, no I was dreaming that Senechal was dreaming." This patterning of incidents seems totally random, except in the light of such internal explanatory remarks, which ironically seem just as arbitrary and thereby compromise all similar efforts at interpretation by nervous critical viewers. The outer dreams, like critical revision, provide short-lived escapes into realities that may prove even more threatening than the inset nightmare.

Despite the disruptive narrative structure, Discreet Charm repeatedly returns to six bourgeois characters, dressed in modish clothes, strolling down a
country road that apparently goes nowhere. These characters are puppets manipulated by Buñuel, the master dreamer, who handles them as easily as his theatrical props and sets. He uses them to suggest that dreaming is an endless tripping; yet despite the expansive variety of the random realities we may encounter along the way, there is always something terrifyingly familiar about the terrain. Despite their indomitable resilience and discreet charm, these characters never escape their anarchistic nature.

A COMPARISON OF DREAM STYLES

The term surrealism, which has come to represent the codified dream style in the arts, is inadequate to characterize the stylistic variations of Fellini, Bergman and Buñuel. In fact, it is only Buñuel who has been explicitly connected with the surrealist movement, which he helped introduce to cinema in 1928 with Un Chien Andalou, made in collaboration with the noted surrealist painter Salvador Dalí. Buñuel claims to have learned from surrealism, not so much how to portray the unreal but "to suppose thought and sympathy are moral paths that men cannot refuse to take. It taught me that man isn't nature. A marvellous poetic stride forward." Although he claimed in the program notes to Un Chien Andalou that "Nothing, in the film, symbolizes anything," he granted that "the only method of investigation of the symbols would be, perhaps, psychoanalysis." Surrealism led him to accept Freud as his Master, but without relinquishing his own rebellious spirit.

Freud himself was immensely important to the Surrealists. A great prophet. Though I still don't want to be told who my mother is, who my father is. I know this. I prefer to dream about who might be my sister (Gilliatt, 1977, p. 63).

In fact, Buñuel preferred to see Freud as a Great Dada figure. "Our wish was to honor the claims of the unconscious, and I suppose Freud was our patron saint" (Gilliatt, 1977, p. 57). Although he has always retained the anarchic spirit of dada and surrealism, these aesthetic terms do not really delineate the unique qualities of his style.

Since there is a large range of variation within the dream adaptations of Fellini, Bergman, and Buñuel, then presumably there might also exist similar stylistic variations in the actual dreams on which they are based. Fellini's cinematic dreams are either anxiety attacks or wish fulfillments. In his comic vision, he uses them as narcissistic play in an aesthetic sense; his dreams alternately soar up and down, in and out, or move in circles like a circus parade of the self, with his own ego at the center. Bergman's cinematic dreams are revelations. In his tragic vision, he uses them as excorium in a psychological and religious sense; his dreams move inward structurally, plunging and surfacing to reveal inner landscapes of the secret self. Buñuel's cinematic dreams are nightmarish traps. In his satiric vision, he uses them as subversive anarchy in a political sense; his dreams move outward structurally, defying conventions and pursuing the phantom of liberty.

The range of stylistic variation is expanded if we consider those filmmakers who have been influenced by Fellini, Bergman, and Buñuel. Paul Mazursky's automobile dream (in this volume) is strikingly similar to the opening traffic jam nightmare in 8½ and to Fellini's airport dream. Mazursky acknowledged the influence in Alex in Wonderland by having Fellini fly through the dreams of the protagonist, who is also a middle-aged filmmaker worried about waning creative
powers. One wonders whether Mazursky's dream has been influenced by Fellini's films, or whether the fact that they have such similar dreams makes him more receptive to Fellini's cinematic adaptations. The interpretation of influences also occurs in Robert Altman's *Three Women*, which was based on one of his own dreams but which bears striking similarities with Bergman's *Persona* and *Cries and Whispers*. *Providence*, written by David Mercer and directed by Alain Resnais, works with a situation that is similar to the one in *8½* — a narcissistic artist who uses the creative process as a means of fighting old age and death and projects part of himself onto those around him; but the film's ironic tone and radical play with narrative structure are closer to Buñuel. The atmospheric dreams of Carlos Saura—especially in *Cria Cuervos*—combine Buñuel's terrain with Bergman's emotional intensity. Istvan Szabo elaborates on the collective dream sequence in Buñuel's *Exterminating Angel* and uses it as the structural framework for his masterful *25 Fireman's Street*.

The stylistic range is even greater if we consider those filmmakers who have broken entirely with Freudian tradition in order to portray the visionary dream. Werner Herzog's dream sequences are always mysterious and uniquely powerful—especially in *Kaspar Hauser* where they are a source of higher knowledge. The Australian director Peter Weir explores Aboriginal Dream Time in *The Last Wave*, where the brilliant dream sequences depend on subtle patterns of visual and audio detail and have the power of prophecy; the effect lingers in *Picnic at Hanging Rock*. Though not dealing strictly with dreams, Nicolas Roeg's *The Man Who Fell to Earth* is prophetic in demonstrating how the consciousness of an innocent outsider (alien David Bowie) becomes polluted by media images. All of Roeg's films, like those of Herzog and Weir, expand the imprinting power of the cinematic medium by confronting us with powerful images and unconventional structures that fuse present, past, and future and force us to see in new ways.

In contrast with dreamers from the past, we are now experiencing an acceleration in the rate of change by which we reprogram our consciousness—a change that is probably due to the imprinting power of the mass media. Ironically, the generation gaps multiply as our communications systems advance. Unlike most images being projected on movie screens and broadcast over the airwaves, the dream reports and adaptations of filmmakers like Fellini, Bergman, and Buñuel, and the other artists mentioned or represented in this volume seek to develop a powerful personal mythology that can creatively transform the images present in our cultural dreampool in order to expand our vision and offer new alternatives to future generations.

REFERENCE NOTES

1. For a theoretical discussion of the relationship between the dreaming and film viewing experiences (which is somewhat limited by its exclusive reliance on Freudian dream theory), see Metz (1976).
5. Buñuel has worked with Jean-Claude Carriere on his last eight scripts.
6. For a fuller discussion of *Three Women* and *Providence*, see Kinder (1977).
7. For a fuller discussion of the dream sequences in the films of Carlos Saura, see Kinder (1979).
8. For a fuller discussion of the use of dreams in the films of Istvan Szabo, see Jaehne (1978).

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Kinder, M. Carlos Saura: The political development of individual consciousness. Film Quarterly, Spring, 1979, 32 (3), 14–25.