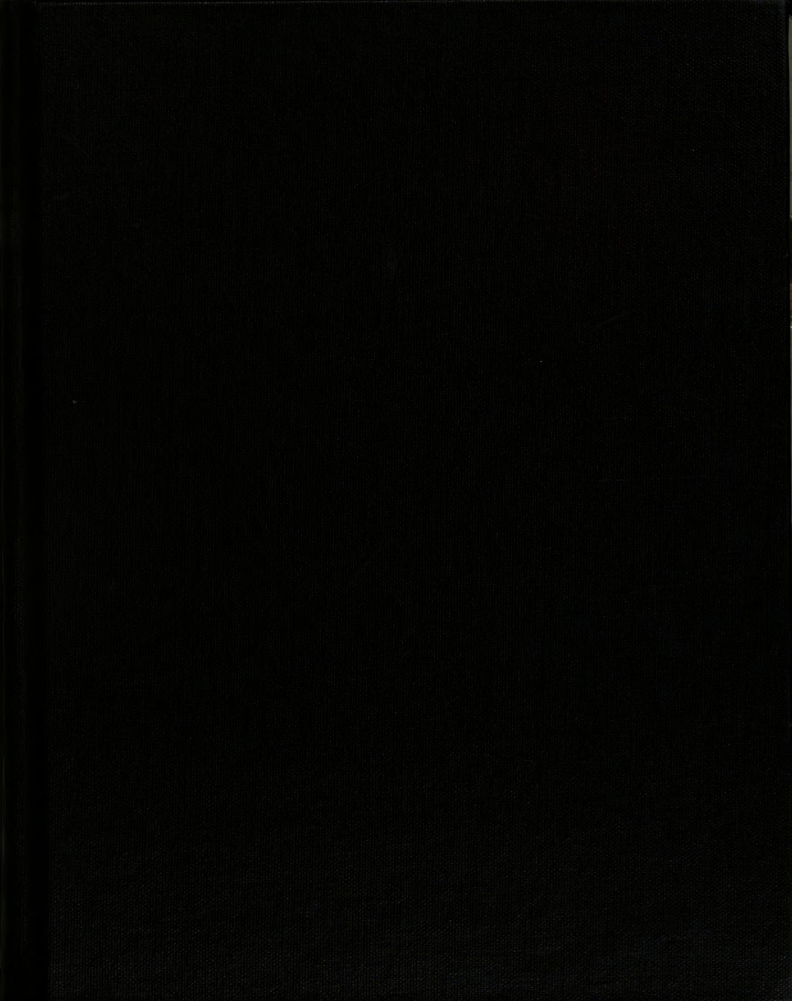

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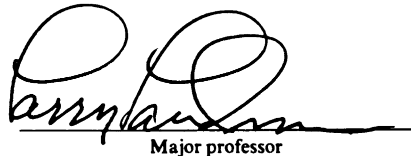

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IMAGES OF COMMUNITY: CONSTRUCTIONS OF ETHNICITY AND IDENTITY IN LATE 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN FILM

By

Joel R. Brouwer

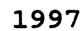
A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of English

1997



ABSTRACT

IMAGES OF COMMUNITY: CONSTRUCTIONS OF ETHNICITY AND IDENTITY IN LATE 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN FILM

By

Joel R. Brouwer

Recent studies of the signs of ethnicity and race in film stress political and cultural dimensions, emphasizing liminality as a trope of ethnic sensibility. Such studies tend to conflate *auteur* with film text, and foreground sociology rather than style. The present study takes a different path, reading images of ethnicity and community by analyzing the way these images affect viewers pre-perceptually in films directed by Spike Lee, Martin Scorsese and Wayne Wang.

Postmodern interdependence, multiculturalism, and technological change complicate the concept of community. Sociologist Zygmunt Bauman writes of "imagined communities" forming around spectacle, style, or temporary allegiance. The communities constructed in the films considered here demonstrate this temporary, constructed quality, even while invoking images of ethnic identification. The tools used to analyze the images of community in these films are those provided by Gilles Deleuze in his Cinema 1 and Cinema 2.

Ethnic communities are geographically represented by neighborhoods, or public space, in *School Daze*, *Do the Right Thing*, *Mean Streets*, and *Chan is Missing*. Conceptual and stylistic differences amongst these films are analyzed in

terms of their use of the action-image: Lee's images of confrontation, Scorsese's images of ostentatious display and Wang's images of inquiry and indeterminacy. The films' image structures are read as inquiries into structures of ethnic identity, depicting the way temporary communities form around these inquiries.

The affection-image is the primary point of comparison for images of family as community in *The Joy Luck Club*, *GoodFellas*, and *Crooklyn*. Crystal-images, and spaces of pure affect (Deleuze's "any-space-whatevers"), visually transmit a sense of Chinese American identity in *The Joy Luck Club*. *Crooklyn* conveys experiences of nuclear family and African American identity through affection-images, crystal-images, and variations of dream-image. In *GoodFellas* the moving camera creates what Deleuze calls a reume, a type of perception-image where subject flows through frame. These any-instants-whatever undercut the illusion of stability which the imagined community of mobsters claims. Finally, the presentation of eating as a communal gesture is compared in the three films, using Deleuze's concept of the noosign, the thinking camera.

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DEDICATION

My mid-career foray into scholarship has been an adventure that would not have been possible without the strong encouragement, support, and love of my children, Joel, David and Sharon, my mother, Wilma Brouwer, my parents-in-law, Bill and Wilma DuBois, and most of all my wife, Dr. Rosanne DuBois Brouwer. I dedicate this volume to them.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This study would not exist without the encouragement, advice, and wisdom of my dissertation committee chair, Dr. Larry Landrum. He introduced me to the works of Gilles Deleuze, and provided invaluable assistance as I worked out the design for this study and carried it through. I am very grateful. I also appreciate the support of my dissertation committee members: Dr. Gretchen Barbatsis, Dr. Linda Susan Beard, Dr. Barry Gross, and Dr. William Vincent. Their friendship, encouragement, and thoughtful responses to my work were of great value to me as I labored to complete this project.

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CHAPTER 1

THE SOCIOLOGY OF ZYGMUNT BAUMAN, THE PHILOSOPHY OF GILLES DELEUZE, AND THEIR APPLICABILITY TO THE STUDY OF LATE 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN FILM

In a world where simulations create a reality all their own, film stands out as a primary example of virtual experience which shapes perceptions of lived experience. Though a narrative film is a constructed artifact, it appears to represent a depiction of "the way things are," or were, in some imaginary or historical time and place. The psychological and emotional responses that this portrayal evokes may create the illusion that the portrayal is real, or an image of reality.

Just as the filmmaker constructs a milieu that is meant to be read as real, he or she constructs images that affect our understanding of concepts. When Spike Lee, in Crooklyn, depicts a noisy, squabbling crew of brothers and sisters living in a cramped Brooklyn flat with their mother, and sometimes their father, the images construct a sense of family different from that depicted by Wayne Wang in The Joy Luck Club, where a group of adults gather in a nicely appointed San Francisco apartment to tell stories which

spark a variety of memories. Because no essential concept of family exists, neither filmmaker can tell a story that absolutely defines it. But each tells a story and presents images that contribute to a concept of family.

As with the concept of family, there is no essential concept of community. The three filmmakers I will consider, Spike Lee, Martin Scorsese, and Wayne Wang, cannot define community, nor do they attempt to try. But their films are replete with images which represent community, and communities, either images which are physical structures and icons depicted visually, or images which are metaphors. Their films also recognize the interplay between ethnic/racial identification and the sense of "belonging" which may be construed as a constituent element of the sense of community. As overdetermined and problematized as issues of race and ethnicity are in late 20th Century American society, an inquiry into these three filmmakers affords the possibility of examining the way issues of ethnicity and race impinge on understandings of community as communicated in these films.

As mainstream contemporary American filmmakers, Lee, Scorsese and Wang work within a common filmic tradition, and use similar sets of tools for constructing the films they make. They also work under similar financial constraints. In some ways, their films may appear to be similar. Yet the distinctiveness of their films asserts itself as well. My project here is to discover and employ a set of critical and

theoretical tools which will be productive in reading the images each filmmaker creates of the concept of community, and in accounting for the differences among the films of these directors as they construct the concept of community.

The choice of three filmmakers foregrounds the fact that this study is not first of all focused on the auteurs themselves, nor even on a direct and closed comparison of two of them; rather, my purpose is to use these three as subjects of a study aimed at discovering communicative structures within the films, and probing the way those communicative structures operate. In this respect, my study is different from those which foreground the filmmaker's intentions in constructing the images under consideration, comparing the intentions with the execution. In a sense, the filmmaker's intentions are immaterial. What is important for this study is the filmic image itself, and the effect it creates. For this reason, unlike most studies of auteurs, this study will pay little attention to the testimony of the filmmaker.

I have chosen to focus this study on the works of specific auteurs, however, because I suspect that the structures I find in a specific film will also be characteristic of other films by the same filmmaker. If this consistency is indeed evident, it provides a point of departure for comparison with films by other filmmakers. The element of comparison is valuable as a control factor: since all three work within the Hollywood milieu, it might

be reasonable to expect that there would be similarities in their methods of structuring films which could be considered standard. The differences among them, though, will provide the clue to what is individual about each filmmaker, and his portrayal of the concept of community. Consequently it is important to this study that more than one filmmaker be considered.

These three particular filmmakers participate in the techniques and structures characteristic of American filmmaking at the end of the 20th Century. Yet each has a distinctive style and approach, making it possible for me to discern differences as well as similarities displayed by the three. Wang, Scorsese, and Lee are appropriate subjects for this study because their careful, consistent construction of film texts repays the effort it takes to analyze them. Further, each participates consciously in a particular culture within the multicultured American society: Lee an African American, Scorsese an Italian American, and Wang a Chinese American. Their films resist being classified as ethnically representative, yet their portrayals of community are conflated with constructions of ethnic experience.

Finally, Lee, Scorsese and Wang have returned to the idea of community over the course of a number of films, exploring its dimensions thematically and conceptually. Since my purpose is to connect these thematic manifestations of the concept with the iconographic communicative structures from which the films are constructed, the choice

of filmmakers who deal thematically with the concept of community is a logical one. My focus, then, will be on the construction of images of community in the films, and the relationship that these structures bear to the thematic treatment of the concept of community.

ZYGMUNT BAUMAN ON COMMUNITY

A necessary first step toward a consideration of the way Lee, Scorsese and Wang present community in their films is to consider various possibilities for what the term means, how it is used, and how it might be conceptualized. Meanings change, and the meaning of community is complicated by new developments of interdependence, multiculturalism, and technological change characterized as "postmodern." My lens for considering the meaning of community will be the theoretical perspective of Zygmunt Bauman, a sociologist who recognizes the complexity of conducting sociological study in a postmodern world. Bauman seeks not to categorize and explain human behavior, as he explains in the introduction to Thinking Sociologically, but to view "human actions as elements of wider figurations,...webs of mutual dependence" (7-8). In exploring these relationships, Bauman seeks to defamiliarize "common sense" conceptions of society: "Suddenly, the daily way of life...appears to be just one of the possible ways, not the one and only, not the 'natural', way of life" (Thinking 15).

The subjects which interest Bauman are many, but the concern which unifies virtually all of them is his interrogation of culture as ongoing creative process. This dynamic view of culture informs his understanding of the way the concept of culture must be understood in the postmodern age. As Bauman explains in Intimations of Postmodernity, "...the postmodern setting...invalidate[s] many an essential constituent of the cultural discourse. Central precepts of that discourse, like dominant culture, or cultural hegemony, seem to have lost much of their meaning, or (as far as their missionary, crusading stance is concerned) run out of energy. The contemporary world is, rather, a site where cultures (this plural form is itself a postmodern symptom!) coexist alongside each other, resisting ordering along axiological or temporal axes...Like postmodern art--postmodern culture seems doomed to remain disorderly, to wit plural, rhizomically growing, devoid of direction" (35). This disorderly, decentralized, authority-less (postmodern) world provides impetus towards the search for community, as both a refuge against disorderliness and directionlessness, yet also an alternative to discredited authoritarianism and totalizing systems or philosophies.

Bauman characterizes postmodernity as a state in contrast to modernity, with its belief in universality and foundation: "the moral thought and practice of modernity was animated by the belief in the possibility of a non-ambivalent, non-aporetic ethical code...It is the disbelief

in such a possibility that is postmodern--'post' not in the 'chronological' sense..., but in the sense of implying...that the long and earnest efforts of modernity have been misguided, undertaken under false pretences and bound to--sooner or later--run their course..." (Postmodern Ethics 9-10). Modernist thought looks to rational and potentially universal structures, such as laws and codes, or scientific inquiries and advances, to create movement toward overarching clarity, and certainty. From the post-modern perspective, such expectations are misguided. That is not to say that the postmodern does not recognize claims to certainty or meaning; rather, the postmodern recognizes the existence of many such competing claims, acknowledging the primacy of none of them. "Postmodernity is marked by a view of the human world as irreducibly and irrevocably pluralistic, split into a multitude of sovereign units and sites of authority, with no horizontal or vertical order, either in actuality or in potency" (Intimations 34).

The condition of plurality, of multiple sites of authority, leaves individuals in a state of ambivalence, ethically speaking. As Bauman says in Postmodern Ethics, "with the pluralism of rules...the moral choices (and the moral conscience left in their wake) appear to us intrinsically and irreparably ambivalent. Ours are the times of strongly felt moral ambiguity" (20-21). This state of ambiguity, and perhaps fear engendered by loss of certainty, are factors creating impetus toward community.

"If the modern world-view theorized (both reflected and legitimized) the unificatory tendencies and uniformizing ambitions of state societies, the postmodern view shifts the focus on to the (admittedly underdefined) agency of community. More precisely, the focus shifts to communities; the most seminal distinction of the new framework of perception and analysis is precisely its plurality" (Intimations 36).

THE DESIRE FOR COMMUNITY

The desire for community is a desire for an ideal situation in which individuals are safe, protected by the collective strength and wisdom of the community, yet free, recognized as individuals whose rights and opinions are respected. This constructed vision of community has little relationship with the actual workings of particular communities, but this wished-for alliance appears to provide a site of allegiance, cohesion, and safety for individuals threatened by loss of certainty and recognition of contingency. "Thus postmodernity, the age of contingency fur sich, of self-conscious contingency, is for the thinking person also the age of community; of the lust for community, search for community, invention of community, imagining community...Community--ethnic or otherwise--is thought of as the uncanny (and in the end incongruous and unviable) mixture of difference and company: as uniqueness that is not paid for with loneliness, as contingency with roots, as

freedom with certainty; its image, its allurement are as incongruous as that world of universal ambivalence from which--one hopes--it would provide a shelter" (Intimations 134-135). For individuals who experience the uncertainty which accompanies postmodern ambivalence, some sites of comfort and identification seem close at hand: ethnicity, nationality, traditional religious affiliation. Others may be more ephemeral, shifting, and provisionally constructed, such as affiliations built around suburban neighborhoods or professional sports teams. In a society marked by postmodern isolation and estrangement, "community" is more a manifestation of the desire of the community-seeker to find solace despite the postmodern absence of absolutes than it is of any objectively existent entity. Thus, Bauman asserts, ours is "an age of imagined communities. For the philosophers and the ordinary folk alike, community is now expected to bring the succour previously sought in the pronouncements of universal reason..." (Intimations xviii-xix).

Of course, not every community is entirely imagined. But "real" communities, while based on commonalities of geography, race, social class, ethnicity, or religion, still participate in the constructed nature of the "imagined" community. Qualities and characteristics imputed to the community, while perhaps based on actual events and empirically demonstrable assertions, are often extrapolated and abstracted from these specific events into statements of

certainty about the nature of the community which have little empirical warrant. In this sense, the neighborhood, or extended family, or social club are constructed entities, communities both actual and imagined. They share characteristics with communities far more ephemeral and temporary--communities such as those created by moments of shared stress, as when dealing with widespread disaster, or moments of shared joy, as when celebrating a sports team's victory.

Regardless of its place on this continuum of permanence, an imagined community gains strength, appropriately enough, in the imaginations of its constituent members. The strongest sense of a community's robustness and immutability occurs when community members see the community as a natural, self-engendered and self-perpetuating phenomenon. In this view, community "need not be laboriously constructed, maintained and serviced. The community type of belonging is at its strongest and most secure when we believe just this: that we have not chosen it on purpose, have done nothing to make it exist and can do nothing to undo it..." (Thinking Sociologically 72). This perception may be extremely distorted with regard to any particular community, but to the extent that community members hold and share this perception, the community will be robust.

The sense of the inevitability of community is reinforced by the perception that factors "beyond human

power" are catalysts of its existence. When individuals perceive "immutable links" between themselves and others, a sense of community more readily forms. Bauman cites links such as common ancestry, common connection to the land, common historical heritage, common belief--in short, factors of race, nation and religion, as points of coalescence for community feeling. These factors, Bauman asserts, are particularly conducive to community-building because "the invoked facts remain steadfastly beyond the control of the people to whom the appeal is being made. The reference to such facts effectively hides the element of choice and arbitrariness involved in the choice...Under such circumstances unwillingness to join forces cannot but be treated as an act of treason" (Thinking 74). Another manifestation of behavior which appears treasonous in the context of community is disagreement. Or, to put it positively, a sense that community members are in agreement, or at least ready to agree, "is assumed to be the primary, natural reality of all community members. A community is a group in which factors which unite people are stronger and more important than anything which may divide it; the differences between members are minor or secondary by comparison with their essential--one is tempted to say overwhelming--similarity" (Thinking 72).

Yet, when this sense of similarity is deconstructed, it proves to be a chimera. The postmodern multiplicity of sites of authority and claims on allegiance undermines such

simple solidarity. So an activity correlative to the assertion of community agreement occurs: the shoring up of the sense of similarity, the sparking of the imagination to reengender the ever-failing sense of the (imaginary) community. "When we use a phrase like 'As we all agree...' we attempt, therefore, to bring to life, or keep alive, or resuscitate a community of meanings and beliefs which has never existed 'naturally', or is already about to fall apart, or is to rise again from the ashes. We do it under conditions admittedly unfavourable for the existence and survival of 'natural' communities--in a world in which contradictory beliefs coexist, different descriptions of reality compete with each other, and each view has to defend itself against the arguments of the other side" (Thinking 73).

Perceptions of commonality, and stimuli toward agreement, are primary signs upon which communities base their sense of communal identity. Imagined communities which form in the absence of these signs may be more tenuous, but can still be perceived to provide a refuge against postmodern contingency. The signs around which these more tenuous communities form are signs of action. Spectacle, and style, translate to symbols which assert communal identity.[1] Outrageous acts, or destructive ones,

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[1] As Bauman explains, "To exist is to be enacted; I am seen, therefore I exist--this might have been the imagined community's own version of the cogito. Having no other (and above all no objectified, supra-individual) anchors except

or spectacular displays are all equally effective assertions of identity for imagined communities.

IDENTITY FORMATION: US AND THEM

Imagined communities from as small as nuclear families to as large as nations or ethnicities all develop corporate identities in the minds of the individuals who comprise them. As the identity of the imagined community is created and reinforced, its members create and reinforce their individual identities in concert with their conception of their communities. Paradoxically, this process of individual identity formation occurs in a context which often encourages submersion of individual identity into the wider community identity. Imagined agreement and expected conformity are norms of behavior which reinforce the sense of community existence and cohesion, seemingly at the

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the affections of their 'members', imagined communities exist solely through their manifestations: through occasional spectacular outbursts of togetherness (demonstrations, marches, festivals, riots)--sudden materializations of the idea, all the more effective and convincing for blatantly violating the routine of quotidianity. In the postmodern habitat of diffuse offers and free choices, public attention is the scarcest of all commodities (one can say that the political economy of postmodernity is concerned mostly with the production and distribution of public attention). The right of an imagined community to arbitrate is established (though for a time only; and always merely until further notice) in proportion to the amount and intensity of public attention forced to focus on its presence; 'reality', and hence also the power and authority of an imagined community, is the function of that attention" (Intimations xix-xx).

expense of the autonomy and agency of the individuals who affiliate with the community.

This seeming paradox can be accounted for by the existence of competing communities, large and small. The individual may concurrently identify or sympathize with a nuclear family, a neighborhood, an ethnicity, a nationality, a profession, an interest group, a political party, and numerous other organized or ephemeral communities. According to Bauman, one of the most powerful means of creating community identity is to define the community in terms of what it is not: "...an out-group is precisely that imaginary opposition to itself which the in-group needs for its self-identity, for its cohesiveness, for its inner solidarity and emotional security" (Thinking 41-42). Thus, the sense of belonging which the individual feels about being a part of a community, which is brought into sharper focus by contrast with the dissimilar appearance and behavior of members of other communities, also serves, through the same contrast, to impart a sense of individuality. When the alliance with the community requires action, again as an assertion of community uniqueness, the sense of individuality becomes a sense of agency as well. While this impetus toward action in defense of the community against perceived enemies may operate most clearly on the large scale of nations, it also operates on smaller scales such as ethnic enclaves, neighborhoods, even families.

This sense of community solidarity in contrast with competing communities offers a basis for making easy ethical or political decisions. Though community members may frame constructions of community in positive terms, those constructions are often politically charged, and can become tools of violence and oppression. According to Bauman, "the idea of community as 'spiritual unity' serves as a tool for drawing as yet non-existent boundaries between 'us' and 'them'; it is an instrument of mobilization, of convincing the group to which the appeal is made of its common fate and shared interests, in order to solicit a unified action" (Thinking 73). Such "unified actions" can certainly be positive, but they can also be destructive as well, particularly when they are born of an imagined community's sense of its own tenuousness, and need to assert its importance in competition with alternate manifestations of community: "Seeking an authority powerful enough to relieve them of their fears, individuals have no other means of reaching their aim except by trying to make the communities they imagine more authoritative than the communities imagined by others--and this by heaving them into the centre of public attention. This can be achieved by spectacular display--so spectacular and so obtrusive as to prevent the public from turning their eyes the other way. Since no imagined community is alone in its struggle for public attention, a fierce competition results that forces upwards the stakes of the game. What was sufficiently spectacular

yesterday loses its force of attraction today, unless it lifts to new heights its shocking power. Constantly bombarded, the absorptive powers of the public are unable to cling to any of the competing allurements for longer than a fleeting moment. To catch the attention, displays must be ever more bizarre, condensed and (yes!) disturbing; perhaps ever more brutal, gory and threatening" (Intimations xx).

An alternate reading of the phenomenon of competing communities is to read this as evidence of the postmodern multiplicity of sites of authority. Every community is a locus of power and authority, recognized as such by individuals who identify with the community. Individuals may or may not accede to the authority of the community, but the choice and the imperative are always there, explicitly or implicitly. The degree of the individual's complicity with the political, social or ethical agenda of the community will be more or less consonant with the individual's willingness to recognize community authority, but that complicity may be challenged by the individual's sense of alliance with other communities which are directly or indirectly in competition with the first community. Individuals who look to community norms, or rules, for guidance find that there are "too many rules for comfort: they speak in different voices, one praising what the other condemns. They lash and contradict each other, each claiming the authority the others deny" (Postmodern 20). This ambivalence, this confusion, symptomatic of the

postmodern, raises the necessity of choice, a form of agent behavior discouraged by affiliation with a single community, but necessary where multiplicity exists. In order to exercise choice, the individual needs at least some degree of freedom, another attribute which is restricted and constricted by community standards and norms. This tension seems irresolvable: "The need for freedom and the need for social interaction--inseparable, though often at odds with each other--seem to be a permanent feature of the human condition" (Bauman Freedom 53).

This tension may, however, be less irresolvable than it seems. If Bauman's assertion is accurate that postmodern "community" is less likely to describe actual, extended social interaction between a particular group of individuals, and more likely consists of a "virtual" or "imagined" community which is as much a manifestation of the community member's conception of the community as it is a description of any existing reality, the conflict between group and individual dissolves into the "free agent" status of the individual. The multiplicity of communities, which calls for a choice on the part of individuals as to the communities they will identify with, leaves the ultimate power of definition, both of the community and the self, to the individual. These definitions may in all likelihood not be self-generated, and indeed may be no more than choices from an almost infinite menu of possibilities which bombard the individual, yet under conditions of the multiplicity of

communities, the power to define is nonetheless ultimately within the province of the individual. This possibility of shifting allegiances amongst multiple communities, or sites of authority, creates a fragmented sense of self at the same moment that it seems to validate the autonomous self through the act of choosing. Individuals who choose this route (a condition endemic to the postmodern) become border dwellers, participants in various overlapping or neighboring communities who are entirely at home in none of them. Bauman calls them "strangers;" though they may actually be familiar to other community members, the impermanence of their allegiance to the community makes them unreliable, and sources of anxiety. At one moment, they may be one of "us," at the next, one of "them." Because they are neither friend nor foe, they cause anxiety (Thinking 54-58).

Bauman's perspective on the concept of community recognizes its complexities and ambiguities. These complexities and ambiguities resist easy analysis or categorization; they also open rich, though inconclusive, lines of thought and exploration. In this respect, Bauman's theoretical approach to the concept of community mirrors the postmodern communities which he considers. They may be fragmented, shifting, virtual--but they do function as loci for allegiance and action, with varying degrees of impermanence and commitment. This consonance with late 20th Century experience makes Bauman's approach a productive frame through which to view late 20th Century films, and an

appropriate complement to Gilles Deleuze's poststructural approach to cinema.

THE CINEMATIC PERSPECTIVE OF GILLES DELEUZE

Gilles Deleuze was primarily a philosopher whose philosophical interests involved him heavily in questions of psychology. A long-term project, shared with Felix Guattari, was to develop a philosophical framework for psychological inquiry in a manner alternative to that of Sigmund Freud. It may seem strange, then, that the Deleuze canon includes one book, in two volumes, on the topic of film: Cinema 1: The Movement Image and Cinema 2: The Time Image. Deleuze's purpose was not to serve as a cinema critic, though his knowledge of European film, and some American film, was broad. Rather, Deleuze constructs a theory of cinema which "is not 'about' cinema, but about the concepts that cinema gives rise to... " (Cinema 2 280). In Cinema, Deleuze grounds his analysis of the structures of cinema in the philosophical and psychological insights of Henri Bergson, and the semiotic taxonomy of C.S. Peirce. Deleuze reworks, refines, sometimes recreates and redefines concepts from Bergson and Peirce, then demonstrates how the images of cinema are visual and aural analogues of these concepts. But while it may have been written as a philosophical exploration, Cinema provides a fresh way to read the images produced in film, an alternative to the psychoanalytic perspective in cinematic interpretation.

Instead of beginning with the psychological concepts which originate with the viewer, or the theorist, then finding their analogues in the themes depicted or the structures employed in cinema, Deleuze begins with the structures themselves. These structures are initially apprehended as sensation, pre-perceptually. That is, the phenomenon of film is a physical stimulus which we first experience as sensation, then process perceptually to arrive at cognitive understanding. In Deleuze's analysis, recognition of this initial, pre-perceptual instant opens a site for analysis which has not been previously explored, allowing the critic to begin with the phenomena of cinema itself, rather than with a theory extraneous to it. Light, color, sound, moving and changing images--these are the basic constituents of film as a physical, sensation-producing artifact. A way in to the analysis of film, then, is to consider the structures through which these elements operate. In doing so, Deleuze provides not only a new starting point, but a new language for analysis of film. His is a philosophical project, with practical applications. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam assert that "Deleuze is engaged in the work of concept creation 'alongside' the cinema. New concepts are invented, on the basis of some well-known philosophical themes, and then put to work in the cinema" (xi).

The starting point for the consideration of cinema is the image. And the starting point for the cinema-image is movement--not movement added to image, but movement-image

(Cinema 1 2). In contrast to a painting, or sculpture, the cinema image moves. Furthermore, the pose in a painting or a sculpture is consciously chosen and produced; Deleuze refers to such poses as "privileged instants" (Cinema 1 4). Consciously chosen and reproduced images in cinema--closeups, or figures haloed by lighting, for example--display the qualities of privileged instants. But most moments in cinema are "any-instant-whatevers." Deleuze draws on Henri Bergson's Creative Evolution to contrast the "privileged instant" with the "any-instant-whatever", the random moment frozen into an image by the mechanical operation of the camera (Cinema 1 3-4). These images, "any-instant-whatevers," linked with other images and mechanically projected, create the movement-image. Or, more properly, the movement occurs in the intervals between these static images; movement cannot be a property of any one of the images, but is the effect of their linking--not movement added to image, but movement-image. The cartoon provides a readily recognizable example, as each cell in itself "no longer constitutes a pose or a completed figure, but the description of a figure which is always in the process of being formed or dissolving through the movement of lines and points taken at any-instant-whatevers of their course...It does not give us a figure described in a unique moment, but the continuity of the movement which describes the figure" (Cinema 1 5).

This relationship of any-instant-whatevers to each other, constantly breaking down and reconstituting the cinematic image, is the first half of the understanding of the movement-image. The second half introduces the relationship of the movement-image to its wider context, and to time. These are concepts which Bergson explored in his attempt to understand the relationship between matter, image, movement and time. Deleuze first explains Bergson, then demonstrates how Bergson's concepts, or adaptations of Bergson's concepts, are consistent with the specific case of the cinematic image. The seen cinematic image exists in relationship with a wider, unseen whole, and exists through time. "If we tried to reduce it to a bare formula, it would be this: not only is the instant an immobile section of movement, but movement is a mobile section of duration, that is, of the Whole, or of a whole. Which implies that movement expresses something more profound, which is the change in duration or in the whole" (Cinema 1 8).[2] The whole and "wholes" are not synonymous with the concept of a set. Sets are closed entities, existing in space (they may, for example, comprise the physical elements within the frame). Wholes are in duration, and are synonymous with duration (Cinema 1 10-11).

"Thus in a sense movement has two aspects. On one hand, that which happens between objects or parts; on the

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[2] This lays the groundwork for the concept which Deleuze foregrounds in Cinema 2: the time-image.

other hand that which expresses the duration or the whole" (Cinema 1 11). On this primary concept, the nature of the movement-image, Deleuze builds the subsequent concepts which comprise Cinema 1: The Movement Image.

The second half of Deleuze's project is taken up in Cinema 2: The Time Image. Though Cinema is not a history of film, Deleuze does connect his project with the historical development of cinema. While duration through time was an integral part of cinematic experience from the beginning of film art, an element which filmmakers learned early to manipulate by compressing, extending or resequencing to fit their dramatic purposes, its underlying progression in concert with dramatic action came to be a staple element of film art and audience expectation. The important factor here, though, is that in cinematic art this reproduction of duration and temporal continuity is not an inherent feature of the medium, but is constructed and manipulable.

In the constructedness of the cinematic image lies also the possibility of dissociating cinematic movement and duration. The cinematic image may be a representation of movement, with time as an element of its representation, but it may also be a representation of time itself. This phenomenon of the time-image, in Deleuze's analysis, did not arise until a particular historical moment: the aftermath of World War II. As Deleuze explains in the preface to the English Edition of Cinema II, "...in Europe, the post-war period has greatly increased the situations which we no

longer know how to react to, in spaces which we no longer know how to describe. These were 'any spaces whatever,' deserted but inhabited, disused warehouses, waste ground, cities in the course of demolition or reconstruction" (Cinema II, xi). These blasted and war-ruined spaces, both in real life and in cinematic depictions, were sites of confusion, shell-shock, wandering, aimlessness, enervation, and other states and behaviors divorced from purposeful action, if not sites devoid entirely of human action. Particularly as represented in film (Deleuze cites especially the Italian Neo-Realists), these any spaces whatever were and are sites where "what tends to collapse, or at least to lose its position, is the sensory-motor schema which constituted the action-image of the old cinema. And thanks to this loosening of the sensory-motor linkage, it is time, 'a little time in the pure state,' which rises up to the surface of the screen" (Cinema II, xi). Images which pre-war audiences might have expected to become part of a meaningful narrative and chronological progression were experienced by post-war audiences in new cinematic surroundings: "the images are no longer linked by rational cuts and continuity, but are relinked by means of false continuity and irrational cuts. Even the body is no longer exactly what moves; subject of movement or the instrument of action, it becomes rather the developer...of time, it shows time through its tirednesses and waitings [as in Antonioni]" (Cinema II, xi).

The significance of Deleuze's framework for considering the operation of cinema goes beyond his insight into historical progression and structural issues. As noted earlier, Deleuze is first a philosopher, and his project in considering the operation of cinema links with his wider philosophical inquiries. As Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta observe, "The time-image which Deleuze releases from modern cinema gives him a new line of approach to a number of important problems of modern thought: the undecidability of truth and falsity, the relation of inside and outside, the nature of 'the people,' the relation between brain and body" (xvi). These inquiries by Deleuze find a wider context as he explores them in such works as "Rhizome" and A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia (both co-Authored with Felix Guattari), and consequently these other works will be useful reference points in this study. It is in Cinema, though, that Deleuze gives his fullest picture of the relationship between the time-image in cinema and the conditions of late 20th Century life, the conditions which both Deleuze and Zygmunt Bauman characterize and describe as "postmodern."

As artifacts of postmodern cultural production, film texts both are comprised of and generate images of social concepts such as community. When the concept of community is explored within a specific body of films, such as those of Lee, Scorsese and Wang, Bauman's sociological insight into the pressures which postmodern conditions bring against

the concept of community is useful for examining the contours of community within this set of films. To the extent that different filmmakers have different visions of the concept of community, however, the images that they create are not simply conceptual, but physical. The films do not simply say things differently, or say different things, about the concept of community. They consist of *images*, and those images resonate differently. Deleuze's inquiry into the relationship between the physical structures of the images in films provides a taxonomy for analyzing those images, allowing for the possibility of distinguishing the images of community created by one filmmaker from those created by another. Beyond taxonomy, however, Deleuze's inquiry provides a basis for relating the actual structure of the images to the concepts which the images convey. All of these uses for Bauman's theories and Deleuze's theories, classifications, and connections I wish to demonstrate and explore in the following chapters on the images of community in the films of Spike Lee, Martin Scorsese, and Wayne Wang.

CHAPTER 2

COMMUNITIES IN PUBLIC SPACE

Harlem, Chinatown, and Little Italy have been the settings for numerous films. Many of those films, not surprisingly, have been mysteries or other variations of the crime film. The locations offer both the mystery of the Other and the familiarity of the American city. The physical, readable nature of these communities makes them public spaces which are simultaneously accessible and inaccessible to film audiences, just as the actual locations may be accessible to outsiders in search of an ethnic meal, but closed to any meaningful interaction between the interlopers and the occupants of these communities.

Whether a community is viewed as exotic or banal, however, depends on who is doing the viewing. What is exotic to the outsider is quotidian to the resident. That such neighborhood locations are presented as exotic in traditional Hollywood films says more about the filmmakers and their conception of their audience than it says about the location itself. Traditionally, the perspective of Hollywood films on places like Harlem, Chinatown, and Little Italy has been a stereotypical one. As Norman K. Denzin observes about the depiction of Asian Americans in film, the

Hollywood infrastructure has functioned "as an institutional apparatus which described, taught, and authorized a particular view of Asian culture, Asian men, women, and Asian family life. It created a system of discourse which constituted the 'Orient' and the Asian as 'imaginary others' who were simultaneously categorized, exteriorized, excluded and included within the Western framework" (Denzin, Cinematic 90).

The question of representation of ethnic groups in Hollywood film has a long and problematic history,[3] rendered problematic to a great extent by the "otherness" of the actors, producers, and directors in relation to the people they were depicting. This situation has changed somewhat in recent years. Spike Lee, Martin Scorsese and Wayne Wang are all examples of filmmakers whose identification is to some degree ethnic, and who also make "Hollywood" films. While all three have acknowledged that their work is sometimes situated within and often affected by their own ethnicity, none claims to speak for anyone other than himself in making his films. All three, however, have claimed that when making films about others who share their ethnicity, they

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[3] For a historical overview of the representation of Asian Americans, see Richard A. Oehling's "The Yellow Menace: Asian Images in American Film," in Randall M. Miller, ed., The Kaleidoscopic Lens: How Hollywood Views Ethnic Groups, Jerome S. Ozer (1980) 182-206. For a broader context on the depiction of ethnicity in film, see Lester D. Friedman, ed., Unspeakable Images: Ethnicity and the American Cinema, Urbana: U of Illinois P (1991).

speak from an insider's position of knowledge, and privilege.[4]

A more interesting question than how the directors claim to construct images of ethnicity, though, is the question of how the films themselves construct images of the communities they depict, communities which are often but not always ethnically identified. These are images of communities which exist and interact within public spaces. In the films of Wang, Scorsese and Lee, the public spaces are almost always urban, and technically open to use by anyone, yet communities of varying degrees of permanence and stability employ various overt and implicit strategies to mark out territories and define themselves through territory as well as other means.

One of the means of territorial definition and demarcation which occurs in a number of the films in question is the means of ritualistic display through gatherings such as demonstrations and parades. Communities which define themselves in these ways may be temporary and shifting entities, but for a time these ritualistic displays, carried out publicly, serve the function of defining the community both for itself and for onlookers. In Zygmunt Bauman's analysis, "imagined communities exist solely through their manifestations: through occasional spectacular outbursts of togetherness (demonstrations,

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[4] See Wang, "A Delicate Balance;" Scorsese, "The Martin Scorsese Interview;" Lee, Uplift the Race.

marches, festivals, riots)--sudden materializations of the idea, all the more effective and convincing for blatantly violating the routine of quotidianity. In the postmodern habitat of diffuse offers and free choices, public attention is the scarcest of all commodities...the right of an imagined community to arbitrate is established (though for a time only; and always merely until further notice) in proportion to the amount and intensity of public attention forced to focus on its presence" (Intimations xix-xx).

This assertive use of public space seems to be most characteristic of the films of Spike Lee. His earliest film She's Gotta Have It, shows the early signs of a general pattern: the characters are not often seen in public spaces such as streets, parks, and subways, but when they are, interesting patterns emerge. Public spaces are places of display, or of confrontation. The public location which is referred to more than any other is a park. Two noteworthy scenes take place here. In one, on the occasion of Nola Darling's birthday, two dancers perform for Nola in front of a large monument in the park. The fact that this scene is presented in color in an otherwise black-and-white film signals that the scene, while not literally a fantasy (Nola and Jamie, the boyfriend who arranges the performance for Nola, are actually in attendance) has overtones of the fantastic, beginning with the fact that they are alone in the park during the performance. Here is an example of a public place used for display, though it appears to be

display for private purposes, in the absence of any other audience than Jamie and Nola.

The other important scene in the park takes place between Nola and Jamie, at a park bench which has appeared numerous times in the film as a place of contemplation or conversation for Jamie. Visually, though the space is public, it is a confined, bounded space. The bench has a fence directly behind it, and in the earlier scenes, Jamie has been seated on the bench while the camera holds him in place with tight shots that allow minimal views of the physical context. The any-space-whatever which surrounds the close-up of Jamie's face shows the cross-hatched pattern of the chain-link fence, a visual suggestion of the limitations Jamie faces in his relationship with Nola Darling. In these scenes, Jamie talks directly to the camera about his problems with Nola, and in one case discusses these problems with Mars Blackmon, one of his rivals for Nola's affections. In the final scene at the park bench, however, Nola herself confronts Jamie and tries to persuade him to maintain their relationship without commitment. When Jamie refuses, Nola turns her back on him and walks slowly, almost in slow motion, toward the camera. In one of the few deep-focus shots in the film, Jamie stays in focus behind her while Nola walks away. When Nola is about 20 feet away from Jamie she turns toward him, but he doesn't follow. She continues to walk away. Though the deep focus shot reduces the sense of confinement present in

the previous scenes at the park bench, it also emphasizes the distance between Nola and Jamie which results from their inability to agree about the nature of their relationship. Again, Lee's use of public space in She's Gotta Have It draws attention to the park as a locus of conflict, in this case conflict of an interpersonal nature.

Because the issues in She's Gotta Have It are largely interpersonal, rather than social or political, it is not surprising that the use of public space is not particularly social or political. Yet the confrontation between Jamie and Nola, even though it is over the personal matter of commitment in relationship, is predictive of the use of public space in subsequent Spike Lee films. Public space is a space of tension, a place of confrontation, a place where conflicts surface but are not resolved.

This construction of public space as a place of uncertainty and confrontation is a stronger motif in the musical School Daze. Here the issues are more public and social, though still largely proscribed by the imagined community of African Americans. The public space in School Daze consists of the public areas on the campus of fictional Mission College, patterned after Spike Lee's alma mater, the historically black Morehouse College. The conflicts in School Daze are almost entirely conflicts between groups of students over issues ranging from jealousy over skin tone to whether the school should divest itself of investments in South Africa. As Lee himself remarks, "the entire film is

jammed with conflict and confrontations" (Uplift 177). Some of the confrontations seem to be the product of youthful swagger,song which the women sing take note of and interrogate the desire of some African Americans to have "good hair," defined as hair which is not kinky and is capable of being styled in a "white"" manner. The public space of the beauty shop becomes a site of confrontation between African Americans who self-define into two different groups, forming community around physical characteristics, and confronting each other through dance, song, and other forms of ritual expression. That their confrontation is ultimately a conflict over the power of self-definition in regard to concepts of beauty is a concept brought into focus by Clyde Taylor, whose comment in a different context applies equally as well to School Daze: "The effectiveness of repressed people in the communications struggle, either as senders or receivers through systems influenced by this hierarchy, depends on their realisation of the obsolescence of the contest over the nature of truth beside the contest over the control of truth, and the irrelevance of 'beauty' beside the power to choose and name beauty" ("Black Cinema" 90).

A parallel scene between males occurs at a fraternity-sponsored "step-show." Each female group has a male group counterpart: the "Wannabes" are sorority members, aligned with the Gamma Phi Gamma fraternity, which exercises its campus dominance through intimidation and ritualized

aggression. The "Jigaboos" are a more loosely organized group, and are aligned with a group of campus men, led by Dap and known as "the Fellas," whose allegiance to each other is based simply on friendship, rather than on the formalized bonds of obligation which characterize the fraternity. The step-show, a public competition of dance and rhythm between fraternities, is nominally presented as part of Mission College's homecoming weekend entertainment. It goes beyond entertainment, though, in that the competition is read by its participants and its spectators as an assertion of social dominance, the "power to choose and name beauty," which reflects not only on the groups themselves, but also on the definitional values which they actively or implicitly advocate. Thus the fraternity dancers are aligned with values of a hierarchical social structure and economic stratification within the African American community, with power belonging to light-skinned, "good haired," well-educated blacks. The non-fraternity men, whose uninvited contribution to the step-show is a direct attack on the fraternity men in general and the Gammas in particular, are identified with a more democratic ideal for social structure, both within the college and within the African American community at large. The sites of confrontation between these two dogmas are various throughout the film, but are always public places, and often involve ritualized display through dance, song, and chant, as in the "straight and nappy" and the "Step-Show" segments.

Lee's visual realization of these two scenes in School Daze conforms broadly to patterns typical of those described by Deleuze as action-images. The action-image is the image of twoness, of confrontation. It occurs in "determinate, geographical, historical and social space-times" (Cinema 1 141). It is the site of realism in cinema, explained as "milieux and modes of behaviour, milieux which actualise and modes of behaviour which embody. The action-image is the relation between the two and all the varieties of this relation" (Cinema 1 141). The action-image, unlike affection-images and perception-images, is not a matter so much of individual shots as it is of sequences of shots, extending to the point of the shape of the trajectory of the film in its entirety. This is in keeping, broadly, with Lee's visual style; individual shots are typically on-screen for short durations, and the meaning of the scene results less from the composition of any particular shot or camera movement than it does from the accumulation of shots and framings from different perspectives and angles, and their relation to each other. That which is dynamic becomes so because of editing and montage, rather than because of composition or camera movement.

Deleuze distinguishes two broad types of action image: the large form, where a situation produces an action which alters the situation (SAS'), and the small form, where an action reveals a situation which then results in a new or altered action (ASA'). Both the "Straight and Nappy" and

the "step show" sequences exhibit the characteristics of the large form, as does the narrative trajectory of School Daze in its entirety. The situation is one of disunity amongst the students at Mission College, a disunity which arises from their having different "missions." Dap's, and consequently that of the Fellas as well as Rachel and the women who surround her, is to instill a greater sense of Black solidarity and Black pride within the college community. The mission of the Gammas, mirrored by Jane and the Gamma Ray sorority members, is much more self-serving: to garner and maintain status within the college social system, and to use it for personal gratification and gain. This broadly painted conflict becomes evident shortly after the film begins, and drives the behavior of students who are aligned with one group or another. Secondary conflicts arise over related issues, such as definitions of Black beauty, as in the "straight and nappy" sequence.

There is one significant contextual difference between "straight and nappy" and "step show," which is that "straight and nappy" is presented as a fantasy sequence. The sequence shot which precedes "straight and nappy" depicts Jane, the Gamma Ray leader and girlfriend of Gamma Phi Gamma President Julian, striding down a dormitory hallway at the head of a group of Gamma women. They encounter Rachel, Dap's girlfriend, at the head of a group of non-sorority women. Rachel's group members are dark-skinned, the Gammas light-skinned. They trade insults,

reminiscent of the "Dog Parade" section of She's Gotta Have It, and prefiguring the racial insults scene in Do the Right Thing. The sorority women, mocked for their straightened hair and blue contact lenses, reply with "Pickaninny," "Tar Baby," and "Jigaboo." In response they hear "Barbie Doll" and "High yellow heifer." With Rachel and Jane facing each other down in the middle of the group, the scene cuts to the beginning of "straight and nappy," where the camera tilts down from the Madame Re-Re sign to the entrance of the beauty shop, as the Jigaboos and Wannabes run through the doors to the site of their dancing and singing confrontation. The shot which directly follows the "straight and nappy" sequence returns us to Jane and Rachel, still facing each other down, telling each other "watch it." This sequential suggestion of the fantasy nature of the "straight and nappy" production number is reinforced by the location, which is nominally decorated to resemble a beauty salon, but in a very stylized fashion; it is obviously a set on a sound stage, in the manner of sets for production numbers in other musicals.

Despite these markers of the non-literal, the "straight and nappy" sequence still fits comfortably within Deleuze's definition of the action-image. Even though Madame Re-Re's may seem outside the province of the "determined milieu," ("determinate, geographical, historical and social space-times" [Cinema 1 141]), it is not the physical milieu which is of paramount importance. Rather, the wider milieu of the

film, the campus with its tensions between students with different definitions of "progress" for African Americans, is decidedly determinate, geographical, historical and social, as Lee is at pains to establish at the beginning of the film through a series of still photographs that situate "Mission College" and its students within the history of African American struggle. The photographs depict slave ships, slavery, Marcus Garvey, and other images of oppression or "the other" which contextualize the importance of self-definition and of community solidarity, issues around which the film revolves. According to Deleuze, realism "does not exclude fiction nor even the dream. It can include the fantastic, the extraordinary, the heroic..."(Cinema 1 141).

The situation of disunity which gives rise to conflicts between individuals, such as Julian and Dap, or Rachel and Jane, also produces the conflicts between groups that are acted out in the "straight and nappy" and "step show" sequences. The action which is produced as a result of the situation is a physical acting-out of the "duel of forces"(Cinema 1 142) which according to Deleuze typifies the action image. These duels may be inconclusive throughout the story or film, but at some point the protagonist and antagonist must appear together in the same frame as the duel comes to a climax. In School Daze, these sorts of climaxes appear throughout the film, including in the two sequences under discussion here. Ultimately,

though, they do not result in a clear sense of a changed situation (the final moment in the SAS' equation). The film ends with Dap assembling the Mission College community in a public space, in front of the chapel, at sunrise on the day after the homecoming weekend. His cries of "Wake Up!" seem to signal his realization that, despite his efforts to unify, the community is about as fragmented as when it began. The situation produced action, but no discernable change in situation.

A more complete realization of the action-image occurs in Do the Right Thing, another Spike Lee film in which the action-image is the medium for the use of public space as a site of confrontation, spectacle, and display. After the title and opening credits, Do the Right Thing begins where School Daze left off: with the disc jockey Senor Love Daddy telling the neighborhood to "Wake Up!," a signal that this film will also explore issues of identity and consciousness raised in School Daze.

She's Gotta Have It explores primarily interpersonal issues, and is located primarily in private spaces, such as Nola Darling's apartment. The issues of African American community and solidarity in School Daze are explored in settings both private and public. The settings and spaces in Do the Right Thing are almost entirely public: a pizza parlor, the street in front of it, and the front steps of buildings on the block. The only interiors we see for any length of time are the interiors of apartments: the one

Mookie shares with his sister Jade, and the one Mookie's girlfriend Tina and son share with Tina's mother. Appropriately, the issues and conflicts presented in Do the Right Thing are more far-reaching than those in the previous two films: issues of racism, both personal and structural, and economic struggle, as well as the community and identity issues broached in School Daze. These more public issues and the conflicts that highlight them are played out in the public spaces of Do the Right Thing.

The first visual images in Do the Right Thing appear to suggest that this film will not, in fact, follow the classic pattern of the action-image. The opening credits sequence operates in the area that Deleuze identifies as beyond the action-image, the state where the link between environment and action is tenuous as "the synsigns disperse and the indices become confused" (Cinema 1 206-7). The opening credits sequence presents Rosie Perez dancing to Public Enemy's "Fight the Power."[5] The sequence consists of 29 shots. Apart from a few shots with slight tilts or zooms, the only camera movement in the sequence is one crane shot where the camera begins in a position above Perez, then booms down to a front view. About a quarter of the shots are close-ups of Perez's face; the rest are medium long shots. The sequence is obviously shot on a sound stage,

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[5] Though Perez plays the part of Tina, Mookie's girlfriend and mother of his child, this sequence bears no relationship to her role within the film.

with three backdrops suggesting exterior locations in the film to follow--a storefront, a brownstone, and a covered entryway set into a blank wall. The sequence also features three costumes on the dancer: a red dress, a blue jumpsuit, and white boxer's trunks with black top and red boxing gloves. Though the costumes and backdrops change, the manner of dancing remains constant: frenetic, and jerky. Even in the close-up shots, the dancer's face reflects intensity, even anger, and obliviousness to the camera.

Whatever situation there might be which would motivate such dancing is entirely disconnected from its presentation. Consequently, these shots move toward the condition of being opsigns, pure optical situations which evince no sensory-motor link, and which exist in any-space-whatever.[6] This sense of disconnectedness is enhanced by the seemingly random order of presentation of backdrops, costumes, and shot distances, and by the use of lighting with red and yellow filters. The sequence is a montage which creates effect through its cumulative nature, rather than through the meanings of constituent parts. The sequence does have more continuity than does the typical music video, however, in that location, character, character movement, and for the most part camera placement remain constant, or oscillate within parameters defined by the sequence itself. Visually, the sequence gives only the slightest hint about conflicts

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[6] The representational quality of the backdrops mitigates this classification.

in the film, and that metaphorically, in the shots where Perez wears boxing gear and modifies her dancing to include feints and jabs.

The driving beat of the Public Enemy rap song to which Perez dances might allow the sequence to operate as a sonsign as well, the beat making it possible to tune out the lyrics, at least initially. But the explosive utterance of the phrase "fight the power," and the repeated use of "fuck" and "motherfuck" draw attention to the confrontational nature of the song, and compel attention to the lyrics. As other than a "pure sound situation," the soundtrack is in tension with the visual images, or perhaps overrides the visual images, compelling a sense of sensory-motor connection which the visual images themselves do not suggest. The visual images, tending toward opsigns, suggest a non-linearity which is at odds with the linearity and message-driven nature of "Fight the Power." This ambivalence about its own identity seems to characterize Do the Right Thing in a variety of ways, right down to the didactic ambivalence of the two quotations with which it ends, the advocacy of violence when necessary in the Malcolm X quotation seeming to cancel out the nonviolent thrust of the Martin Luther King Jr. quotation.

Despite the credit sequence's visual suggestion that Do the Right Thing will break with the action-image, the narrative trajectory of the film does not do so. "Fight the Power" suggests that the situation which obtains at the

beginning of the film is the situation of institutionalized racism. Visually, the situation which obtains on this block in Brooklyn is that it's summer, and it's hot. Dominant colors, as in the credit sequence, are red and yellow; fans turn, and people sweat, despite attempts to cool off with showers. The visual and atmospheric situation suggests the volatility of the structural presence of racism. The development of conflict and confrontation in the film's public spaces occurs in a dispersed manner which is gathered in the riot at the end, but the thread that ties it together is the general air of volatility.

Though the film's audience may see and understand both the structural racism and the atmospheric volatility, Mookie only realizes that it's hot. His primary objective is stated throughout the film in economic terms: "I gotta get paid." To the extent that Mookie gives evidence of any awareness of the existence of racism in his environment, he conceptualizes it on a personal level only. When Pino, Sal's son, asks Mookie "How come you niggers are so stupid?" Mookie confronts Pino with his personal racism by asking "Who's your favorite basketball player? Movie star? Rock artist?" Pino names Black performers in every instance, prompting Mookie to reply "Pino, I think secretly that you wish you were Black."

While Mookie recognizes racism on a personal level, his dim understanding of structural racism is evident in his response to Buggin' Out's efforts to organize a boycott of

Sal's because Sal refuses to put pictures of African Americans on the "Wall of Fame." Mookie reads Sal's refusal purely in personal terms:

> Buggin' Out: Mookie, How come you ain't got no brothers up?
>
> Mookie: Ask Sal.

Though Mookie never reacts directly to Buggin' Out's political response to the "Wall of Fame" issue, his reaction is presumably similar to that of his sister Jade: "Buggin' Out, I don't mean to be disrespectful, but you can really direct your energies in a more useful way."

The clearest signifiers of structural racism on the block are conveyed visually through the organization of the public space of Sal's Famous Pizzeria, and through modes of transportation. Sal's choice of pictures for the Wall of Fame may be a relatively inconsequential indicator of structural racism, but it visually signifies Sal's dissonance with the Bed-Stuy block where his pizzeria is located, a dissonance reinforced by numerous indicators of his colonializing presence, and that of other whites in the film. Sal asserts his authority in his pizzeria in numerous ways, invoking the hierarchy which puts him at the top ("This is my pizzeria. I'm the boss.") Within its walls his wishes rule, as he demonstrates in conflicts with Buggin' Out and Radio Raheem, but also in his dictatorial orders to his son and to Mookie. While Pino and Vito may work in the back room, and Vito may accompany Mookie on one

of Mookie's many delivery forays into the neighborhood, Sal remains firmly planted behind the counter,[7] visually asserting his dominance over his domain.

Modes of transportation are the clearest signal of the transient, colonial presence of whites in this neighborhood of color. In Do the Right Thing, only whites drive cars. Sal and his sons arrive for work in a Cadillac. At the end of the day, they propose to leave the pizzeria for home, which is elsewhere (probably Bensonhurst). The police drive through the neighborhood repeatedly, sometimes menacingly. In the incident involving the driver of the Cadillac convertible and the youths at the fire hydrant, the white driver is clearly just passing through the neighborhood. His confrontation with the youths who spray his car, and his subsequent complaint to the police, make it clear that he has no sympathy for or affinity with the residents of the block. Even the one white person who lives on the block, and asserts his right to do so by virtue of his having been born in Brooklyn, arrives by bicycle. In contrast with all these images of white choice by reason of mobility, and white colonializing presence, every person of color in the film walks, and stays on the block.

Mookie's blindness to this situation of structural racism is itself a situation which will change at the climax

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[7] In two instances, Sal takes a seat in the customer area of the pizzeria, once to talk with his son Pino, once to talk with Mookie's sister Jade.

of the film. It is not, however, a blindness shared by all the residents of the block. Like a Greek chorus, the three corner men (Coconut Sid, ML, and Sweet Dick Willie) comment extensively on matters such as the disparity between Korean and African American opportunities to start small businesses. When two white policemen drive by the corner men, stare menacingly, and comment "What a waste" as they drive away, they highlight the tension which exists on a structural level. The cornermen reinforce the perception of a structural gulf between Black resident and white colonizers with their identical, reciprocating comment: "What a waste."

The exchange between the cops and the corner men is typical of shot/reverse shot strategies used throughout Do the Right Thing. As in The Joy Luck Club[8], most of these affection-image close-ups frame only the individual, as opposed to shot/reverse shot strategies which contain the interlocutor's shoulder in the foreground of the frame. In The Joy Luck Club, however, these affection-images are typically close-ups held on-screen for a fairly long duration; they are not typically part of a shot/reverse-shot strategy. Thus, in that film, the affection-image serves to make present the emotional state or the memory function of the character in close-up, focusing attention on the character as character by abstracting the character from

[8] See chapter 3, where affection-images in The Joy Luck Club are considered in some detail.

environment, presenting the character stripped from context. As Deleuze puts it, the affection-image, the close-up, " abstracts [its subject] from all spatio-temporal coordinates, that is to say it raises it to the state of Entity" (Cinema 1 96). Though the close-ups in the shot/reverse shot sequence between the corner men and the cops are, in themselves, affection-images, and do make present the character's emotional state, they are not stripped of context; the juxtaposition of affection-images in the shot/reverse-shot sequence contextualizes each image in two ways. First, since the images do not contain the shoulder of the other they are at least potentially POV shots from the other's point of view. The stare of the camera replicates the stare of the other from whose POV the shot is created; the reciprocating stare of the shot's subject creates a direct bond between other and subject. In The Joy Luck Club the wider context of the film suggests that this relationship translates into community, since the context of such sequences are occurrences such as a mah-jongg game between friends. Here, however, the stare-down between cops and corner men, carried visually through alternating affection-images, makes visual the relationship of tension and distrust. This leads to the second, more abstract way in which context is created around the juxtaposition of affection-images: this shot/reverse shot sequence, juxtaposing potential combatants, forms the basic building block of the action image, the duel. This is an

example of what Deleuze calls the *binomial*, which "designate[s] every duel, that is to say, what is properly active in the action-image. There is a binomial as soon as the state of a force relates back to an antagonistic force, and particularly when--one or both of the forces being 'spontaneous'--it involves in its very exercise an effort to foresee the exercise of the other force: the agent acts as a function of what he thinks the other is going to do" (Cinema 1 142). Do the Right Thing is full of such face-offs, all ripe with the possibility of conflict: between Sal and Mookie, Sal and Pino, Sal and Buggin' Out, Sal and Radio Raheem, Buggin' Out and Clifton (the gentrifying yuppie), Radio Raheem and the Puerto Ricans. All of these incipient action-images begin the process of bringing the constituents of the binomial into frictional contact, but they all are aborted or averted before moving from the stage of situation to the stage of action. This frictional contact is evidence of the wider presence of what Deleuze calls the *synsign*, a term modified from Peirce's sinsign, referring to "a set of power-qualities as actualised in a milieu, in a state of things or a determinate space-time" (Cinema 1 142). In constructing the broader situation on one city block on this day around these multiple binomials, the film creates the macro-situation, or synsign, which will indeed lead to explosive action at the climax of the film.

This structure in Do the Right Thing departs from Deleuze's analysis of the classic progression of the action

image in one respect: in the classic action-image film, the protagonist has a clear antagonist, the relationship between them forming the binomial within which the tension of the synsign increases as they are repeatedly brought into contact with each other. In Do the Right Thing, by contrast, the antagonisms are dispersed throughout the space and the time of the film, and across a variety of characters, so that the tension is a characteristic not of the relationship between classic hero and villain, but rather *of the community as a whole*. Further, the tension does not build in a direct chronological or spatial progression, but rather according to a complex pattern by which individual characters are revisited in a loosely circular fashion, their stories and conflicts elaborated upon each revisiting.[9] In this respect, the construction of Do the Right Thing does not proceed directly toward the climax, but in a roundabout fashion similar to the circularity of which Julie Dash speaks when she describes the narrative strategy of her 1992 film, Daughters of the Dust, as being that of a West African griot, or storyteller. Dash tells her story "the way an old relative would retell it, not linear but always coming back around. It's all connected, but how you get to the information is different" (qtd. in Rule C17). This narrative dispersal, while

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[9] Deleuze says that the powers of the *synsign* are brought to bear upon each other in "a spiral of development which includes spatial and temporal caesuras" (Cinema 1 151).

supporting the binomial development of the action-image, does so in a way that presages the beyond of the action-image, where pure affect (in this case, tension, and anger) operates.

The diffuse anger latent in all these community members coalesces and erupts in the penultimate scene, the murder of Raheem by the police and the subsequent riotous destruction of Sal's Famous Pizzeria. The operative synsign here is the atmosphere of racial tension which has been building throughout the day. Because the synsign is atmospheric rather than located in any particular character, or for that matter in any binomial created between a pair of characters, the riot could theoretically erupt as a consequence of any of the many frictions the day has produced. The friction from which it develops is an appropriate one on many levels, though, as it is Raheem's boombox which has carried through the theme of "Fight the Power," and apart from the police, Sal is the most obvious locus of power, both the hierarchical power he asserts in his relationship with Mookie and his sons, and the economic and culturally imperialistic power he asserts in denying Buggin' Out's request to "put some brothers on the wall." As the scene develops, the duel is joined in the binomials circulating around Sal and Raheem.[10] The shot/reverse shot method noted earlier is again used as Sal and Raheem

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[10] "the synsign must contract into a binomial or duel..." (Cinema 1 152).

confront each other in the pizzeria, though it is not immediately clear that the duel will coalesce in these two figures.

The scene in the pizzeria begins at the end of the business day, when Sal and his employees have already locked the front door. In a gesture of magnanimity, Sal opens the door when a group of four neighborhood youths (Ahmad, Cee, Punchy, and Ella) knock, and ask to be served. Shortly after they enter, Buggin' Out enters with Raheem at his side and Smiley in tow. Raheem sets his boombox on the counter, "Fight the Power" blaring. Sal and Buggin' Out trade demands and insults, Buggin' Out referencing his attempted boycott and demanding that Sal include African Americans on the Wall of Fame, Sal referencing his earlier assertion to Raheem that he turn off the boombox before entering the pizzeria.

The development of the scene proceeds in exactly the manner that Deleuze explains the joining of the action in the action-image. A series of shots follow the shot/reverse shot pattern. Shots of Sal are from the POV of Buggin' Out and Raheem; shots of Raheem and Buggin' Out are from Sal's POV. As with earlier shot/reverse shot sequences, they are not over-the-shoulder shots, but are medium close-ups of the subject or subjects alone. The sense of strain is heightened by the fact that they are consistently low-angle,

dutch-angle shots.[11] Occasional cut-ins of close-ups of Mookie, Vito, Pino, and the four neighborhood youths increase the tension, as they shout at one or the other of the arguers. After 25 shots of this montage of heightening tension, a shot finally occurs which frames both Sal and one of his adversaries: not Buggin' Out, but Raheem. As Deleuze observes, while montage may be an effective or necessary instrument for bringing the forces of the synsign to the point of convergence, there must also be "a moment where two terms confront each other face to face and must be seized in an irreducible simultaneity, without the possibility of resorting to a montage, or even to a shot-reverse shot" (Cinema 1 153). This moment is the essence of action, and requires that both forces be contained within the same frame. Sal, bat in hand, stares in the direction of Raheem, whose arm we see in the foreground, resting on his boombox. In the next shot Sal lifts the bat and bashes the boombox, as Raheem, Smiley, and Buggin' Out back quickly away. Another quick montage of twelve shots intersperses images of Sal bashing the boombox with reaction shots of Raheem, Buggin' Out, Mookie, Pino, Vito, and Ella. The last shot in this sequence is a low-angle shot of Raheem, glaring down, from Sal's POV, as Sal has finished the demolition. This shot is followed by a second two-shot, initially very

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[11] The sense of strain is also heightened by the fact that Buggin' Out and Sal scream their demands at each other, in order to be heard over the incessant beat of the boombox.

similar to the one that preceded Sal's rampage. Raheem again is in the foreground, Sal across the counter. Raheem picks up the boombox and throws it to the floor behind him, then lunges across the counter to grab Sal by the shirt, drag him across the counter, and throw him to the floor, where they wrestle. In a succession of shots, the others either pile on, or attempt to separate Raheem and Sal. Shortly, Raheem picks Sal up and pushes him out the door into the street, where the wrestling match continues.

In this sequence, the sensory-motor link which is basic to the action-image is expressed as Sal, through the gripping of his baseball bat, actualizes his anger in smashing Raheem's boombox. Raheem, in turn, actualizes his anger in first handling the smashed boombox, then grabbing Sal and pulling him across the counter.[12] But this scene, while it constitutes an action which leads to a new situation, is not the culmination of the action-image in Do the Right Thing. Instead, it creates a new situation--the arrival of the police--which leads to a new action, the murder of Raheem by the police. This in turn creates a new situation, the realization by Mookie that he has been

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[12] Deleuze, in discussing the sensory-motor link, observes that the Actors Studio actors practiced a "cinema of behaviour" where "a sensory contact must be established with the objects adjacent to the situation: even an imaginary contact with a material [a glass, a fabric, an instrument, etc.]...the object must, in this way, awaken an affective memory, reactualise an emotion which is not necessarily identical, but is analogous to that which the role calls up" (Cinema 1 158).

aligned with Sal for economic reasons only (Mookie's constant refrain is "gotta get paid"), but this has made him complicit with the colonialism and structural racism which Sal represents, and which has just been manifested in the murder of Raheem as an act protecting Sal's property. This realization of Mookie's constitutes a new situation, which leads to the new action which is also the climax--the moment when Mookie throws the garbage can through Sal's window.

The realization is conveyed through a powerful noosign[13], where in successive frames the camera reveals that Mookie is initially aligned with Sal, realizes the import of this alignment, and consciously chooses to disassociate with Sal and align instead with the crowd. The context for this scene is set earlier, just before Sal opens the pizzeria for the group of four youths, when he talks about the satisfactions of owning a family business and tells Mookie that there will always be a place for him at Sal's Famous Pizzeria--that Mookie is like a son to Sal. This family alignment, and Mookie's complicity with Sal, is

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[13] The noosign offers us entry into a process whereby the camera emulates thought. The camera "subordinates description of a space to the functions of thought. This is not the simple distinction between the subjective and the objective, the real and the imaginary, it is on the contrary their indiscernibility which will endow the camera with a rich array of functions, and entail a new conception of the frame and reframings...it becomes questioning, responding, objecting, provoking, theorematizing, hypothesizing, experimenting, in accordance with the open list of logical conjunctions ('or,' 'therefore,' 'if,' 'because,' 'actually,' 'although...'), or in accordance with the functions of thought in a *cinema-verite*..."(Cinema 2 23).

demonstrated visually in a sequence of shots that occur just after Raheem and Buggin' Out are hauled off in police cars, and the crowd gathers in front of the pizzeria, shouting their anger. Following the tracking shot of the crowd, where individuals are each momentarily framed in close-ups as they say such things as "he was killed because he had a radio," and "they didn't have to kill the boy," we see a close-up of Mookie, who with Sal, Pino and Vito, is the recipient of the comments. Mookie turns his head to the right of the frame; the succeeding shot is a close-up of Sal, turning his head to the frame left to meet Mookie's gaze. The next shot is the key, a low angle four-shot of Mookie at the left, then Sal, Vito, and Pino, standing in front of the pizzeria, an image visually conveying the relationship of familial alignment which Sal asserted as Mookie's prerogative in perpetuity. As the shot progresses Mookie turns his gaze away from Sal and toward the crowd. Next is a shot from Mookie's POV of six of the young men in the crowd, at intervals of depth.

The camera shows, in this series of shots, a situation which follows the action of the cops' murder of Raheem: Mookie's awakening to his position of alignment with Sal and consequent complicity in the actions that followed from Sal's destruction of Raheem's boombox, the actions culminating in Raheem's death. The shot which follows the Mookie POV shot is an objective long, high angle shot from behind the crowd, reinforcing Mookie's alignment with Sal

and sons, confronting the crowd. Mookie leaves the line and walks toward the crowd, completing the sequence of noosigns which visually depict his realization and consequent decision. The action which follows the decision, of course, occurs fourteen shots later when Mookie picks up the trash barrel, walks past the crowd with it, and hurls it through the front window of the pizzeria, precipitating the looting and subsequent arson of the building. The gathering of the crowd, facing off against Sal and his sons (no longer including Mookie) is the final binomial situation of the film, the context in which the final explosive action occurs.

This final explosive action, occurring in the public space of the street before the pizzeria, and in the public space of the pizzeria itself, is an image of self-validation for the temporary, or "imagined" community which Mookie joins when he leaves the hierarchically defined, familial community of Sal's work force.[14] This anarchically

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[14] Norman Denzin also notes how the action of the riot serves as a self-validation for the temporary community, identifying the riot as a political act: "In this moment of violence and its aftermath, Lee projects a political economy of signs which make a difference; for now the signs of the self are connected to real political action. The personal becomes political, and the political is personal. In a single motion Lee politicizes semiotics, and suddenly gives a real force to the blurred, evocative, floating signifiers [the messages on characters' t-shirts] that, in another world--the postmodern--drift by, are gazed at for a moment, and then read as fleeting markers of the self. For Lee what you wear is who you are. who you are is marked by your politics and whether or not you will take a stand against the 'power' that rules, the 'power' that is, that 'power' who is the

organized temporary community defines itself through its anger and its actions. Thus public space in Do the Right Thing becomes a space of community self-definition, even if the community is short-lived. The next morning, when Mookie confronts Sal on the front steps of the burned-out pizzeria to ask for his weekly pay, no one else is in evidence. The two conflicting communities--the temporary, "imagined" one forming around the anger and action which followed in the wake of Raheem's murder, and the familial one which formed around the father-figure of Sal--are absent. Only protagonist and antagonist remain to confront each other. The final confrontation takes place once again in public space, as Sal throws twice Mookie's salary at him. Mookie, initially standing on principle, refuses to take more than his due. In perhaps a signal that the economics of survival are still a stronger motivator than the fellow-feeling of the imagined community that coalesced around his action of the night before, Mookie eventually scoops the extra money off the sidewalk.

As they are in Spike Lee's films, public spaces in the films of Martin Scorsese are also often places of tension, confrontation, and danger. Paul Hackett (Griffin Dunne) is pursued through the streets of lower Manhattan in the dead of night by an angry mob in After Hours. Jake La Motta (Robert DeNiro), in Raging Bull, enters a public arena

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white man" (Images 134-5).

dedicated to confrontation and violence every time he steps into a boxing ring. Though the most powerful sites of danger in Cape Fear are the Bowden family home and houseboat, Sam Bowden's confrontational encounters with Max Cady (Robert DeNiro) take place in a bar, a parking lot, and a crowd gathered along a street for a parade, among other public sites. This acknowledgment within Scorsese's *ouvre* of the potential for danger inherent in public places reaches its visual apex in the opening scene of Casino, where Ace Rothstein (DeNiro again), clad in a pastel suit that screams for attention, crosses the parking lot in front of his casino toward his Cadillac. As he settles in behind the wheel and turns the key, the image explodes into a fireball which presumably ends Rothstein's life. The sequence introduces a story told in flashback about a violent and dangerous life, lived largely in the public spaces of Las Vegas casinos.

Though Lee and Scorsese share this sense of public space as a place with the potential for confrontation and danger, their presentation differs in some respects. For one, while Lee's characters may form temporary and shifting alliances with other characters which would constitute loose, imagined communities, for the most part they operate largely on their own.[15] Even in Malcolm X, the title character (Denzel Washington) operates quite autonomously,

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[15] Crooklyn, with its location within a nuclear family, is the exception.

with this individualistic propensity leading to his ultimate assassination by operatives of the Nation of Islam, with which he had previously been affiliated. While such forms of betrayal are not foreign to characters in Scorsese films, the affiliations in Scorsese films are often buttressed by a layer of community solidarity lacking in the experiences of the characters in Lee's films. This layer of community solidarity is expressed in ritual and ceremony, the visual and choreographed signifiers of an individual's connection with a wider community in both space and time. Ritual and ceremony, in Scorsese's films, serve the same solidifying purpose for his characters that the riot does in Do the Right Thing--they provide a point of coalescence for an imagined community. The difference in the way the imagined community coalesces in a Scorsese film as compared with a Lee film, which translates to a different sense of the permanence or impermanence of community, is that ritual behavior in Scorsese's films is not spontaneous, is not the action which eventuates from a situation according to the pattern of the action-image. Rather, ritual is a part of the environment, is one of the "givens" of a character's situation. Though the character may still be brought into danger in the determined milieu of a public place, where a synsign-engendered conflict may be brought binomially to the point of action, the element of ritual not only affects the visual presentation of these actions, but indeed is an

elemental constituent of the milieu which affects the very way these actions unfold.

Elements of ceremony and ritual enter a Scorsese film in many ways, but always visually, with signifiers as large as church interiors or as small as a pair of boxing gloves. Lesley Stern, in comparing Raging Bull to Michael Powell's The Red Shoes, remarks on the ceremonial quality of the totemic objects of shoes and boxing gloves as they are employed in public spaces in both films: "The totemic object, in so far as it implies an ordinary object invested with extraordinary qualities, summons a context of ritual, of ceremony, of theatre--a context realised in sharp opposition to the everyday. The gloves and the shoes both indicate an arena of performance, an arena in which the ordinary body is transformed. On the stage, in the ring--boxing, dancing--for an audience, the body is ceremonialised" (Connection 14).[16] In addition to boxing gloves, religious icons permeate the milieu of Raging Bull, reinforcing the sense that Jake LaMotta's suffering is somehow a religious tribulation. As Morris Dickstein puts it, "Scorsese the Italian Catholic turns a boxer's story into a Stations of the Cross movie" (661).

This Italian Catholicism also permeates Mean Streets, both visually and metaphorically. It is a strange companion,

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[16] The religious iconography of Max Cady's tattoos in Cape Fear are another striking example of the ceremonialized body.

much remarked upon, to the sometimes calculated, sometimes irrational violence which also pervades the film.[17] Both the Catholicism and the violence are played out in Mean Streets ceremonially and ritualistically, largely in public spaces. They are not the spaces, though, of Bauman's "spectacular outbursts of togetherness" which spontaneously and temporarily define the imagined community. Rather, they are spaces within which the Italian American community of Mean Streets identifies itself through rituals of inclusion and exclusion, spaces which are nominally public, but in reality only open to those who belong, by virtue of family or nationality.[18]

The motif of festival and celebration is introduced moments into Mean Streets, when the home movies that begin the film depict rituals of the church.[19] These rituals are

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[17] See especially Scorsese's interview with Anthony DeCurtis, as well as discussions in Kolker, Loneliness, and Librach, "Temptation."

[18] Scorsese claims ethnic authenticity for Mean Streets, as he told Anthony DeCurtis: "That's the whole story of Mean Streets. I mean, I put it on the screen. It took me years to get it going--I never thought the film would be released. I just wanted to make, like, an anthropological study; it was about myself and my friends. And I figured even if it was on a shelf, some years later people would take it and say that's what Italian Americans on the everyday scale--not the Godfather, not big bosses, but the everyday scale, the everyday level--this is what they really talked like and looked like and what they did in the early seventies and late sixties. Early sixties even. This was the life-style" (434).

[19] As Hosney et. al. observe, the home movies at the beginning of Mean Streets may actually be the end of the story. Hosney et. al. assert that the home movies depict the wedding of Charlie and Theresa, and the baptism of their

the church's means of including and excluding, offering a vehicle of self-definition to those who participate. They are recorded, though, on a movie within a movie--Scorsese's self-reflexive and ritualistic acknowledgment that self-definition consists in part of the images of ourselves which we create, in this case literally.[20] The home movie displays the self-conscious creation of the characters'

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child. While alternate readings of the home movie introduction are certainly possible, Hosney et. al. see them as evidence that, despite the bloody gunplay and car crash at the end of the film, "Charlie and Theresa survive to become the happy parents in the home movie" (413).

[20] Zygmunt Bauman discusses this phenomenon of self-definition through identification in discussing the formation of "neo-tribes" (a term he borrows from Michel Maffesoli). "The neo-tribes--the tribes of [the] contemporary world, are...formed--as concepts rather than integrated social bodies--by the multitude of individual acts of *self-identification*. Such agencies as might from time to time emerge to hold the faithful together have limited executive power and little control over co-option or banishment. More often than not, 'tribes' are oblivious of their following, and the following itself is cryptic and fickle. It dissipates as fast as it appears. 'Membership' is relatively easily revokable, and it is divorced from long-term obligations; this is a kind of 'membership' that does not require an admission procedure or authoritative rulings, and that can be dissolved without permission or warning. Neo-tribes 'exist' solely by individual decisions to sport the symbolic tags of tribal allegiance" (Intimations 136-7).

Of course, the Catholic Church does not fit Bauman's criteria for a neo-tribe; it does have control over co-option or banishment, does keep track of its adherents, and does impose obligations. But decisions by individuals to participate in the rituals of the church serve the same sort of self-defining purposes as the more nebulous "individual decisions to sport the symbolic tags of tribal allegiance" which Bauman identifies as neo-tribal affiliation.

identity, framed in terms of religious ritual.[21] Mean Streets self-consciously displays the identity formation of its characters, and by extension of the community which they both inhabit and create through their presence and interaction, a community which bears strong resemblances to the community in which Scorsese himself grew up.[22]

The motif of festival and celebration is carried out in public places through the parades of celebration of the feast of San Gennaro, a yearly festival which attracts crowds of tourists to New York's Little Italy section. The parades and crowds which mark this festival become an ironic backdrop for the action of Mean Streets. For the thousands who attend the celebration, it signifies an ethnically and religiously authentic event in which they can participate, yet even while it happens in the neighborhood inhabited by the main characters of Mean Streets, it is entirely

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[21] Lee Lourdeaux notes that "Sacramentality appears in his [Scorsese's] films not just in intimate close-ups of hold statues, but also in lively color shots of church festivals; public rituals of community are as sacramental for Scorsese as traditional church icons. Scorsese views his work as part of a popular religious tradition in which sacramental symbolism is an integral part of everyday life (228).

[22] Scorsese takes pride in this seeming verisimilitude. In his 1990 interview with Scorsese, Gavin Smith asked "Did you ever get feedback from the underworld after Mean Streets? In answer, Scorsese told a story he'd heard about a mob boss who usually didn't see movies, but whose associates "just grabbed him and threw him in the car and took him to see the film. It was Mean Streets. They loved it. So that was like the highest compliment, because I really try to be accurate about attitude and about way of life" (69).

peripheral to their lives. They don't participate; they don't even stop to watch the festivities.[23] At most, the crowds on the sidewalk watching the parades are simply an impediment to Charlie as he walks to a meeting in a restaurant. Like the rituals recorded in the home movies, the festival is so much a part of the environment of the characters in Mean Streets that its nature or function as ceremony and ritual is not thought about nor remarked upon. Visually, its presentation in Mean Streets is appropriately fragmented; one shot of the parade is a bird's eye view, held for only a moment. Other shots follow Charlie's progress as he fights his way through the crowd on the sidewalk. In each case, the festivities are simply a feature of the environment.

In addition to self-definition through ritual, Mean Streets also features the characters' self-definition through physical environment, or neighborhood, and through contrast with all forms of otherness. The title of the film suggests that location is important, and while it suggests that the streets may be mean for the protagonists, they are even meaner for those who appear not to belong in this neighborhood. Ian Penman remarks on both identifying factors, neighborhood and the sense of us/them: "Mean Streets is the anti-road movie. Pinned into their plush red

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[23] At one point, while riding to the pool hall with Charlie and Tony in Tony's car, Johnny Boy remarks "I hate this fucking festival. You can't even move through the streets in your own neighborhood."

maze, these guys are all flying centrifugal gestural movement...The boys live in the midst of a rich patchwork culture, but are in every sense abusive of it. In the middle of a capital city, they can't get their compound tight enough: Chinese, Jews, blacks, gays all stray in from their own encampments and are swiftly ejected" (10-11). The characters' attachment to their neighborhood is so great that the simple act of leaving it is fraught with peril. A sign of the menace which Michael holds for Johnny Boy at the end of the film is the fact that Charlie persuades Johnny Boy to go to Brooklyn. They might just as well have gone to Indiana.

Little Italy, with the Festival of San Gennaro as one of its identifying features, forms what Gilles Deleuze calls the "determined milieu" of the film. The neighborhood is a concrete locale in space and time, a public space, and the festival flavors that locale both ethnically and religiously. Though the characters in the film use this public space of the neighborhood, and encounter the festival, they pay no more attention to these environmental phenomena than a fish pays to water. Yet the physical and ritual environments are critical to their (and our) sense of who they are. In this respect, the neighborhood and the ethnic identity of the characters function similarly to race and place in Do the Right Thing, as cultural identifiers and geographic delimiters. Scorsese, like Lee, visually creates a determined milieu within which the action-image functions.

Beyond this point, though, the presentation of milieu in Mean Streets diverges from its presentation in Do the Right Thing. As explained earlier, the narrative structure of Do the Right Thing is not only enacted in public space, but builds through incidents of friction to the moment of climax in the pattern of the classic action-image. The characters of Mean Streets do pass through public space, and identify with and are identified by the ceremonies and rituals performed there, but the determined milieu of the film is only a surface upon which many of the significant actions of the film occur. Other significant events occur in a place of refuge and release, intimacy and danger: Tony's bar, where the indirect lighting combines with the red-filtered cinematography to produce a gaudy, hellish atmosphere.[24]

Tony's bar functions in Mean Streets as the location of an "originary world," Gilles Deleuze's term for a milieu in which impulses, rather than affections or actions, are at the fore. It is here that the impulse-image is formed, just as the affection-image exists in the any-space-whatever and the action-image exists in a determined milieu. Between the action-image and the affection-image lies the impulse image.[25] Like the action-image, the impulse-image is not so

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[24] Jim Hosney et. al. (411) and Penman (10), among others, remark on the hellish visual quality of the red-tinted scenes in the bar.

[25] "...between the two, between firstness and secondness, there is something which is like the

much a matter of a particular shot, with its characteristics of composition creating its effect, or even of a montage, or series of shots, the effect created by the accumulation or juxtaposition of shots. Rather, the effect of the impulse-image follows from the nature of the milieu in interaction with the impulses enacted there. Analogously, just as "Modes of Behaviour" are enacted in "Determined Milieux" (specific, realistic locales) to create the action-image, so "Elementary Impulses" are enacted in "Originary Worlds" to create the impulse-image (Cinema 1 123). These originary worlds are not autonomous, or disconnected; they exist in relationship with determined milieux. The impulses generated in the orginary world may or may not lead to actions in determined milieux.

What Deleuze posits here is that impulses can be visually depicted, just as can affections or actions. Since impulses are pre-rational, the visual depiction of an impulse will be located in a milieu which suggests pre-rationality: "...pure background, or rather a without-background, composed of unformed matter, sketches or fragments, crossed by non-formal functions, acts, or energy dynamisms which do not even refer to the constituted

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'degenerate' affect, or the 'embryonic' action. It is no longer the affection-image, but is not yet the action-image. As we have seen, the former is developed in the Any-Space-Whatevers/Affects pair. The second will be developed in the Determined Milieux/Modes of Behaviour pair. But, between the two, we come across a strange pair: Originary Worlds/Elementary Impulses." (Cinema 1 123).

subjects. Here the characters are like...human animals. And this indeed is the impulse: the energy which seizes fragments in the originary world" (Cinema 1 123-4).

Perhaps the most powerful originary world scene which Scorsese has created is the scene between Danielle Bowden (Juliette Lewis) and Max Cady (Robert De Niro) in Cape Fear, when Cady lures Danielle to the deserted high school auditorium by posing as her new drama coach. The setting meets Deleuze's criteria for the physical presentation of an originary world. It is at a distance from Danielle's normal sphere; she walks through pipe-lined corridors to reach the auditorium. Once there, to approach the stage, she must descend. The stage itself contains sets that emphasize the apartness of the milieu: a fairy-tale hut, surrounded by cut-out trees and large candy canes.

The scene is one of innocence violated. Danielle's innocence is suggested as she leaves her friend in the school's hallway, saying "I have to go downstairs for drama." In her eagerness, she skips as she leaves the friend and enters the door to the pipe-filled hallway. Her trip through the hall is depicted in three shots: a long shot from the opposite end as she enters the hallway, showing its length and cave-like quality; a close-up of Danielle's face as sinister music comes up, showing her apprehension, and a shot from Danielle's POV as she walks slowly through the hall, the sinister music rising. Once Danielle reaches the stage, her hesitant answers to Cady's

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questions, and her fluttering hands as she nervously plays with her hair or strokes her own cheek intensify this sense of her innocence.

Cady, by contrast, represents malevolence and temptation. Danielle approaches him as he sits in the doorway of the hut, either backlit or lit from the side, so that his face isn't clearly visible. He's smoking marijuana, and offers Danielle a hit. She smiles as she says "You can't smoke grass in school," but she takes the reefer from him and takes a puff. While Cady functions here as a tempter, it is also evident that Danielle's innocence is interlaced with a certain amount of experience, both with marijuana and, vicariously, with sexuality. When Cady asks if she's read any Henry Miller, she says that she sneaked <u>Tropic of Cancer</u> off her parents' bookshelf and read parts of it. When Cady mentions a passage where Miller "describes an erection as a piece of lead with wings on it," Danielle replies "I didn't read that part."

The most viscerally powerful part of the scene, the one most consistent with its identification as an interaction within an originary world, comes at the scene's climax. Having gained Danielle's confidence, even though she knows that Cady is the man who has been hanging around their home because he dislikes Danielle's father, Cady asks "Do you mind if I put my arm around you?" After hesitating, Danielle agrees. Instead, Cady begins to stroke Danielle's cheek, as she smiles uncertainly through her braces. Cady's

caresses Danielle's lip with his thumb, then pushes the thumb gently between her lips. Startled, Danielle reaches for Cady's hand, at the same time beginning to suck the thumb. Cady withdraws his thumb, then reinserts it; Danielle sucks it once more. Cady withdraws the thumb, then abruptly turns and walks away in a medium-long shot taken with a wide-angle lens, accentuating the abruptness of his departure. The set decoration towards which he walks is a gnarled tree, with a medusa-like entanglement of roots. This is the first long shot in minutes, the entire conversation between Danielle and Cady having been presented in shot/reverse shot medium close-ups and close-ups. It is followed by a close-up of Danielle, her hand still at her face, her bewilderment evident. In the next shot, a long shot, she turns and runs up the stairs toward the auditorium's exit, and begins to cry. The following shot is of an angry Sam Bowden, Danielle's father, on the telephone with the private detective who was supposed to have been following Cady.

The scene on the stage can and has been read in a variety of ways,[26] but the concern here is with its presentation in an originary world. These are not actions being depicted, or emotions being explored, so much as they

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[26] Pam Cook asserts that "...Danielle is far from innocent. She is the one who forms an alliance with Cady and, in a sense, 'employs' him to violate her mother and destroy her father" (15). J. Hoberman emphasizes the exotic setting by calling this a "fairy-tale sequence in the make-believe gingerbread house..." (11).

are a revelation or a bringing to consciousness of the impulses of both Cady and Danielle, Cady's impulse toward seduction and defilement tempered only by his realization that he ultimately wants revenge on Sam Bowden, not on his daughter, and Danielle's impulses toward rebellious drug usage and sexual excitement ultimately tempered by her realization that she's been a victim, not a participant. The impulses brought to consciousness in the originary world of the auditorium do lead to actions of consequence in the determined milieu, however. When Danielle finds a copy of Henry Miller's Sexus under a potato-chip can on the front porch of the Bowden family home a few days later, it is a clear sign that Cady has penetrated their defenses. She hides the book under her shirt and tells no one, an act of collusion in Cady's eventual penetration of the home itself and his murder of the maid and the private detective. On Cady's side, his physical violation of Danielle presages the murders of the maid and the private detective, and more directly, his rape of Danielle's mother on their houseboat. While Danielle's impulses are juvenile and unformed, Cady's impulses toward revenge and violation fit Deleuze's observation that "The impulse is an act which tears away, ruptures, dislocates...The law or destiny of the impulse is to take possession through guile, but violently, of everything that it *can* in a given milieu...The impulse must be exhaustive" (Cinema 1 128-9).

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The necessity of exhaustion, of playing out the impulse until the extremities of the consequent behavior have been reached, is also characteristic of the impulses showcased in the originary world in Mean Streets. They ultimately lead to the death of the most impulsive of the characters, Johnny Boy, whose unbridled disposition toward impulsive behavior is typified in his entirely unmotivated decision to climb to a rooftop and shoot at the Empire State Building. Johnny Boy's thoughtlessness in borrowing money from Michael, then insulting Michael instead of repaying him, are events which occur in the locale of Tony's bar but which lead to Johnny Boy's death at the hands of a hired shooter in the determined milieu of the street. Concurrently, Michael's impulse toward revenge for Johnny Boy's lack of respect in the bar is dampened by the fact that Johnny Boy is armed, but is carried toward the point of exhaustion as Michael contracts with the gunman and drives the shooter's car.

Other behaviors enacted in Tony's bar are just as impulsive and pre-rational. While Johnny Boy's and Michael's impulses serve as precursors of deeds enacted in the determined milieu of the neighborhood, Charlie's impulses surface in the originary world, then wither there. One such impulse is Charlie's sexual energy with Diane, the black dancer. Charlie's attraction is presented early in Mean Streets through his approach and faux strip-tease as he removes his coat and takes the stage to dance with Diane. Though they never touch, Charlie's moves mimic hers in a

performance that is sexually charged, at least for him. Later, he acts on this impulse by going to Diane's dressing room to tell her of his plans to take over a restaurant, and his desire to have her serve as hostess. He makes a date with her to discuss the possibilities, but as he sits in a cab and sees Diane waiting for him, he tells the driver to drive on, saying, "I can't be seen with her. She's black."

Deleuze's observation that the characters in an originary world "are like animals...because their acts are prior to all differentiation between the human and the animal" (Cinema 1 123-4) is particularly illuminative in the case of Mean Streets, where Scorsese obliquely suggests the same continuum between animal impulse and rationality by including a scene in the back room at Tony's bar, where Tony shows off two cats, a lion cub and a leopard cub. He tells Charlie and Johnny Boy, "I really wanted to get a tiger, y'know...like in William Blake and all that." Commenting on this scene's allusion to Blake's tyger, Jim Hosney et. al. conclude that "the viewer realizes that Johnny Boy is Scorsese's symbol of fierce strength, both terrifying in his possibilities, yet impressive and admirable" ("Passion" 415). They also notice the impulsive unpredictability of Johnny Boy's behavior: "Like the unanswered questions of Blake's "The Tyger,"...Johnny Boy's behavior remains unexplained. Why does he blow up a mailbox in his introductory sequence? Why does he borrow money from everyone? Why does he fire a gun from the rooftop? Why

does he purposely spend the money Charlie has given him for Michael's payment? These unanswered questions yield an explosive enigma--Johnny Boy" ("Passion" 416). Hosney et. al. don't have any satisfactory answers for these questions, and Scorsese doesn't either. Nor does Johnny Boy. By beginning so much of Johnny Boy's behavior in the milieu of the originary world, where impulsive, pre-rational behavior is expected, Scorsese visually suggests that Johnny Boy could no more explain his behavior than Tony's lion cubs could explain theirs. As Robert Kolker says, "De Niro's Johnny Boy is all nervous energy and self-delight...The character makes himself from moment to moment, almost speaks himself into being" (Kolker Loneliness 220).

Though Spike Lee and Martin Scorsese both explore the tensions, confrontations, and dangers that are present in public space, and though both explore the way that communities, both temporary and stable, coalesce in public spaces around acts of display (either the violence of Do the Right Thing or the ritual and celebration of Mean Streets), another point of difference between the two is Lee's exploration of these concepts at the level of the action-image, while Scorsese employs both the action-image and the impulse-image, using the latter and its generation within an originary world to interrogate the impulses which lie beneath the actions depicted. Scorsese himself asserts that his films are cumulative, examining characters' interior lives (motivations, codes of honor, ways of constructing

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reality) within specific locations and through specific actions: "I usually am attracted to characters that have similar attributes to characters in my other films....I'm fascinated by history and anthropology. I'm fascinated by the idea of people in history, and history having been shown to us in such a way that people always come off as fake--not fake but one-dimensional. And I'm interested in exploring what they felt and making them three-dimensional. To show that they're very similar to us. I mean, they're human beings. So just because the society around them and the world around them is very different, it doesn't mean that they didn't have the same feelings and the same desires, the same goals and the same things that haunt us..." (DeCurtis 443).[27]

Though Lee and Scorsese may differ in their choice of rubric through which to present their characters' coming or failing to come to self-awareness, Mean Streets and Do the Right Thing both employ the action-image in the determined milieu of public space as one visual means for this inquiry. Wayne Wang's Chan is Missing, by contrast, appears at the beginning of the film to employ the action-image trajectory, but it is incomplete. The film opens with a situation which

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[27] Scorsese claims an autobiographical component for Mean Streets, as well as a broader inquiry into human nature and motivation: "Mean Streets was an attempt to put myself and my old friends on the screen, to show how we lived, what life was like in Little Italy. It was really an anthropological or a sociological tract" (Scorsese on Scorsese 48).

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produces action, but the action produces no change in the situation. Public space, the determined milieu of San Francisco's Chinatown, is prominent as the milieu within which the events of the film take place, but this determined milieu is the site of events which can only be labelled actions in the broadest sense, since in the specific sense of actions which produce results, or a changed situation, they do not qualify. Chan is a mystery story, as might be expected both from the title directly, and from the title's oblique reference to the "Charlie Chan" mystery films of the 1930s and 1940s. Unlike the Charlie Chan films, though, which created a veneer of inscrutability around their oriental-other title character but always ended with a clear resolution of the mystery, Chan is Missing provides a thorough explication of the mystery (situation), and a thorough examination of it (action), but no resolution. When the film ends, the mystery is intact.

As with Wang's later work in The Joy Luck Club, Chinese American identity is at the heart of Chan is Missing. The film's narrative premise has the main character, a San Francisco Chinese American cabby named Jo, searching for Chan Hung, a friend of Jo's who has disappeared. Jo's assistant, mimicking the "number-one son" figure in the Charlie Chan films, is his Americanized nephew Steve. These allusions to the Charlie Chan films serve as a constant reminder that Wang is reclaiming the imagery of the Chinese American from a film series which helped create the image of

the exotic Asian. Wang's reclamation is in tacit harmony with Edward Said's assertion that representations such as the Chan films, or for that matter Chan is Missing, while culturally formative of the image of a particular community, are nevertheless only representations, not "truth."[28]

Wang's reclamation of Chinese American representation foregrounds its complexity. Jo's search for Chan is the pretext for extensive conversations with a variety of Chinatown inhabitants, as well as recurring conversations with his nephew Steve. As each interlocutor offers his or her own perspective on the possible reasons for Chan's disappearance, each also reveals differing perspectives on Chan's Chinese Americanness, as well as their own. This polyphonic aggregation of perceptions serves a variety of structural purposes in Chan is Missing: through contrast, it calls into question the straightforward narrative construction of the original "Charlie Chan" films, it de-

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[28] Though Said's assertions make reference to written language, they apply equally well to filmic representations. According to Said, "it needs to be made clear about cultural discourse and exchange within a culture that what is commonly circulated by it is not 'truth' but representations. It hardly needs to be demonstrated again that language itself is a highly organized and encoded system, which employs many devices to express, indicate, exchange messages and information, represent, and so forth. In any instance of at least written language, there is no such thing as a delivered presence, but a re-presence, or a representation. The value, efficacy, strength, apparent veracity of a statement about the Orient therefore relies very little, and cannot instrumentally depend, on the Orient as such. On the contrary, the written statement is a presence to the reader by virtue of its having excluded, displaced, made supererogatory any such real thing as 'the Orient'" (21).

centers the narrative voice of the film, making it episodic and multi-vocalic, and it constructs a complex and ultimately irreconcilable portrait of Chan Hung, by implication calling into question the very idea that "Chinese American" is a meaningful category, or that representations of "Chinese Americans" can ever be accurate or complete.

The initial sequence in Chan is Missing, through the use of a handheld camera and POV shooting, places us as viewers in the position of a passenger who enters Jo's cab. As Jo drives, we hear his thoughts in voiceover: "1000, 2000, 3000--." The passenger says, "Hey, uh, where's a good place to eat in Chinatown?" Again, we hear Jo's thoughts in voiceover: "Under three seconds. That question comes up under three seconds 90% of the time. I usually give them my routine on the difference between Mandarin and Cantonese food, and get a good tip." The exchange suggests that Jo feels both resentful of and resigned to the passenger's flattening of Jo's identity into a stereotyped image that only identifies Chinese Americans with Chinese restaurants. Yet recognizing the futility of confronting the passenger with the absurdity of his perception, Jo simply turns it to his own advantage by employing a routine that results in a good tip. In doing so, Jo mirrors the double-consciousness which W.E.B. DuBois articulated as being part of the constant experience of the African American: "The Negro is...gifted with second-sight in this American world,-- a

world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness..." (8). DuBois's succinct explanation connects with Jo's sense of what it means to be cast as Other, or marginalized by a dominant group in society.

Ironically, though Jo both resents his Othering by the passenger and simultaneously turns it to his advantage, he is himself subject to the temptation to essentialism in his own notion of what it means to be Chinese American. Jo's very act of trying to find Chan Hung, and in the process trying to determine Chan Hung's "real" identity, becomes a metaphor for the attempt to absolutize the definition of "Chinese American". In a later conversation with Steve, Jo says: "It's hard enough for guys like me who've been here so long to find an identity. I can imagine Chan Hung's problem, somebody from China coming over here and trying to find himself." Despite Jo's resentment of being stereotyped by the cab passenger, Jo himself implicitly believes that "Chinese American identity" exists in some essential form, to be found by people like himself and Chan Hung. Steve provides a historical perspective on Jo's essentializing by

replying: "That's a bunch of bullshit, man. That identity shit. That's old news. Man, that happened ten years ago!"

The process of tracking down Chan Hung, and concurrently exploring his identity, serves both to undermine Jo's sense of himself as a Chinese American and to problematize Jo's insistence that "Chinese American" is a meaningful category. Untidy, unruly information of this sort, information which resists being tamed by or incorporated into a particular system, fits the description of what Gilles Deleuze calls "lines of flight."[29] Jo constructs Chinese Americanness as an orderly web of information, and sets himself the task of learning its pattern. Many of the perspectives he hears, however, are

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[29] As Todd G. May explains, the concept of "lines of flight" is an element of Deleuze's analysis of the way systems function: "The idea of lines of flight is inseparable from that of molecularity, a notion Deleuze opposes to the molar...Most political analysis is concerned with molar organizations: the great unities of state, economy, and military. For Deleuze, these molar unities are the intersection of smaller, molecular lines, upon which they often react back, suppressing or destroying those lines that could prove threatening to them. In Dialogues Deleuze divides these lines into three types: segmentary, which occur on the register of already constituted identities and thus involve molar terms like state, family, profession, and the like; supple, which constitute segments in a segmentary line but which alone are without a constituted identity; and lines of flight, which are nomadic, irreducible, creative, and always the object of molar unities which try to harness their productivity for their own anti-productive ends...Lines of flight, then, are not escapes from the social field in which they arise, but rather escapes within it." (5).

lines of flight, contradictory and irreconcilable, resisting his essentializing impulse rather than confirming it.

At the end of the film, Jo reflects on all the different "identities" which Chan Hung has in the minds of the people he has interviewed:

> I've already given up on finding out what happened to Chan Hung. What bothers me is that I no longer know who Chan Hung really is. Mr. Lee says Chan Hung and immigrants like him need to be taught everything as if they were children. Mr. Fong thinks anyone who can invent a word-processing system in Chinese must be a genius. Steve thinks that Chan Hung is slow-witted, or sly when it comes to money; Jenny thinks that her father is honest and trustworthy. Mrs. Chan thinks her husband is a failure because he isn't rich. Amy thinks he's a hot-headed political activist. The old man thinks Chan Hung is just a paranoid person. Henry thinks Chan Hung is patriotic, and has gone back to the mainland to serve the people. Frankie thinks Chan Hung worries a lot about money and his inheritance. He thinks Chan Hung's back in Taiwan fighting with his brother over the partition of some property. George thinks Chan Hung's too Chinese, and unwilling to change. Presco thinks he's an eccentric who likes mariachi music. The problem with me is that I believe what I see and hear. If I did that with Chan Hung I'll know nothing because everything is so contradictory.

Here's a picture of Chan Hung, and I still can't see him.

These different identities are analogues for the different identities of "Chinese Americans," which is to say that there is no essential "Chinese American" identity at all. To the extent that any meaningful information attaches to the term, it is a function of what Werner Sollors calls "the invention of ethnicity," in his book of that name. According to Sollors, "the interpretation of previously 'essentialist' categories (childhood, generations, romantic love, mental health, gender, region, history, biography, and so on) as 'inventions' has resulted in the recognition of the general cultural constructedness of the modern world" (x). There may be a construction called "Chinese American," but it is a complex, shifting entity, sounding very different coming from the mouth of one speaker than another, paralleling the mystery of the identity of Chan Hung.

In Chan is Missing Wang represents this mystery verbally and structurally; the visual construction of the film reinforces the dispersed quality of the narrative and the multiplicity of meanings for the term "Chinese American."

The initial image in Chan is Missing deserves notice, particularly since it recurs at various points in the film. The image is confusing, and not immediately identifiable. It is a tight shot from the outside of the windshield of Jo's cab. The left half of the screen is effectively blank,

blocking a view of the interior, creating a sense of inscrutability. The left half of the screen shows the windshield's reflection of the blankness of the sky; the right half shows the windshield's reflection of the buildings Jo passes as he drives down the street. These darker reflections allow us to see Jo through the windshield, partially and intermittently. The effect is one of multiple signifiers, all of them obscure, or cloudy. The film's main character is driving, but he cannot be clearly seen. Because of the movement of the cab, he is completely obliterated at some points, partially obscured at others. The method of obscuring him is a reflection, and at the same time an overlay of one image upon another, dispersing our attention by providing simultaneous images. Finally, as this effect is created through the movement of the cab, the nomadic, shifting quality of the shot is a visual analogue to the nomadic, shifting quality of Chan's identity, and by extension the very concept of the construction "Chinese American".

As a shot which does not provide much rational information, if any, or advance the narrative, the cab windshield shot is an example of an affection-image, an image where affect is primary. More precisely, it is an any-space-whatever, where "space is no longer a particular, determined space", but "a space of virtual conjunction, grasped as pure locus of the possible" (Cinema I 109). Any-space-whatevers appear either as frames within which the

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visual information does not link up, or frames which are in some sense empty. Thus shadows, or light, or pure color, when they fill or partially fill the frame, create any-space-whatevers. Within these spaces, pure affect functions. Intellectual constructs such as "Chinese American identity" do not function there, but instead are broken down and dispersed affectively. Sensibility takes precedence over rationality. This foregrounding of sensibility in Chan is Missing is underlined, as in Wang's The Joy Luck Club, by a preponderance of close-ups of faces, creating a milieu of affection-images within the determined milieu of San Francisco's Chinatown.

The opening cab-windshield shot also introduces a primary motif in Chan is Missing, the motif of nomadic movement. In his quest to find Chan, and to solve the mystery of Chan's identity, Jo drives his cab to the Manilatown Senior Center, to Chan's ex-wife's home, to the flophouse hotel where Chan has been staying, to the English language school of his friend George, to Henry's Golden Dragon Restaurant, and to other locations. He walks the streets alone, and with Steve, searching for clues. This motif of constant movement functions on at least two levels: narratively as Jo's (unsuccessful) method for solving the mystery[30], and metaphorically as a comment on the nature of

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[30] John Cawelti suggests that nomadic movement such as Jo's is characteristic of the hard-boiled detective: "The ratiocinative English detectives of authors like Dorothy Sayers, Agatha Christie, or Ngaio Marsh investigate crimes

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Jo's quest to find Chan, and ultimately some sense of Chinese American identity. As much as Jo might desire clear-cut results, it is not a straightforward search. In fact, there are numerous false starts, dead ends, and clues which come up empty. There is nothing particularly systematic about Jo's search; he simply goes next to any place which presents itself as a possible site of fruitful inquiry. This wandering, while not exactly aimless, does give the film the quality of a road movie which never leaves town.

If plotted on a map of Chinatown, Jo's criss-crossing of the territory would form a web with no particular pattern, yet one where each point is related to the other by the nature of his search. As such, it takes on a rhizomatic quality[31], in the sense that Deleuze and Guattari use the term to describe an organic whole which does not organize itself hierarchically, or genealogically, or arboreally, but in a manner without beginning or end, without primacy, yet with a systemic connectedness that has integrity without consistency, and logic without linearity: "A rhizome has no

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by examining clues, questioning witnesses, and then using their intellectual powers of insight and deduction to arrive at the solution. The hard-boiled detective investigates through movement and encounter; he collides with the web of conspiracy until he has exposed its outlines" (229). Another mark of the hard-boiled detective story in Chan is Wang's use of voice-over narration, in which Jo explains and comments upon the progress of his investigation.

[31] See also Chapter 3, where I discuss the rhizomatic quality of Scorsese's camerawork in GoodFellas.

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beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, *intermezzo*. The tree is filiation, but the rhizome is alliance, uniquely alliance. The tree imposes the verb 'to be,' but the fabric of the rhizome is the conjunction 'and...and...and.' This conjunction carries enough force to shake and uproot the verb 'to be.' Where are you going? Where are you coming from? What are you heading for? These are totally useless questions" (Thousand 25). In Jo's rhizomatic search for Chan, he adds information without ruling out; he encounters people whose perceptions contradict each other's without cancelling each other; he discovers lines of flight which make resolution of the mystery impossible, yet which are incorporated into his understanding in ways that satisfy him. Jo's attitude is one that his nephew Steve cannot understand, since it seems contradictory. Steve would like to turn the mystery over to the police, yet Jo won't allow that because "it's none of their business," signifying that whatever the nature of the mystery is, it is one which occurs within the rhizome which is Jo's understanding of his community and his circle of friends, and which is not amenable to the investigatory techniques or attitude of those who are outside this community, this rhizome. Jo realizes that their investigation may seem to be at a dead-end, yet unlike Steve, he understands the operation of the rhizome, which, in the words of Deleuze and Guattari, "may be broken, shattered at a given spot, but it will start up again on one

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of its old lines, or on new lines. You can never get rid of ants because they form an animal rhizome that can rebound time and again after most of it has been destroyed. Every rhizome contains lines of segmentarity according to which it is stratified, territorialized, organized, signified, attributed, etc., as well as lines of deterritorialization down which it constantly flees. There is a rupture in the rhizome whenever segmentary lines explode into a line of flight, but the line of flight is part of the rhizome. These lines always tie back to one another" (Thousand 9).

The public space of Chinatown which Jo traverses in his rhizomatic search for Chan is itself a rhizome, a community which is "stratified, territorialized, organized, signified, attributed, etc." geographically and ethnically, but, like (the identity and idea of) Chan himself, is ruptured by "segmentary lines [which] explode into a line of flight," understood and interpreted differently by different observers, and thus is ultimately uninterpretable. This public space is claimed by at least two different groups for political purposes, as we learn through Jo's explanation of the "flag-waving incident" in connection with his suspicion that Chan had something to do with this occurrence. The flag-waving incident consisted of a public clash between a group of demonstrators sympathetic with Communist China (PRC) and a group sympathetic with Taiwan (ROC). Though we briefly see a blurry newspaper photograph of this incident, our only other knowledge of it is through the filter of Jo's

conversation with various people. Political themes sprinkle Jo's conversation with various interlocutors (Steve, Amy, Henry, George), but these uses of public space are only discussed, not depicted. In this respect, Wang's focus is different from Spike Lee's, where confrontations in the public spaces of School Daze, Do the Right Thing, and Malcolm X directly involve the film's major characters, and is also different from Martin Scorsese's, where even though the major characters of Mean Streets are not directly involved in the ritual use of public space in the Feast of San Gennaro, they encounter it directly as part of their milieu. Public space in Chan is Missing, and to an extent in Wang's Slamdance, is not filled with confrontation or ritual or political display. Nor is it a place of ownership, danger, or contestation. Rather, in the spirit of the rhizome[32], it is a matrix of inquiry and encounter which Chan traverses unimpeded by political or religious alliances, or by threat of harm. Its openness signifies a site of possibility, rather than the closed-off quality suggested by the binomial of confrontation or the truth-claims of politics or ritual. This rhizomatic understanding

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[32] "Multiplicities are rhizomatic, and expose arborescent pseudomultiplicities for what they are. There is not unity to serve as a pivot in the object, or to divide in the subject. There is not even the unity to abort in the object or 'return' in the subject. A multiplicity has neither subject nor object, only determinations, magnitudes, and dimensions that cannot increase in number without the multiplicity changing in nature..." (Thousand 8).

of community, in both its geographic and psychic manifestations, contests the more traditional notion of ethnic identity and community which Jo foregrounds as he searches for Chan. Jo's search for Chan becomes Jo's encounter with a paradigm which competes with his notion of community, ethnicity and identity; ultimately, he enters into the spirit of the rhizome himself when he acknowledges that "The problem with me is that I believe what I see and hear. If I did that with Chan Hung I'll know nothing because everything is so contradictory. Here's a picture of Chan Hung, and I still can't see him."

Wang's camera reinforces the rhizomatic quality of the Chinatown location and the narrative of Jo's quest for Chan's whereabouts and identity. Whereas Spike Lee's use of affection-image close-ups privileges the use of shot/reverse shot juxtapositions in Do the Right Thing, emphasizing the confrontational nature of the characters depicted in these sequences, Wang's use of affection-images in Chan privileges the single character more than the relationship. Affection-image close-ups in Chan are held for greater duration, creating more of a sense of identification with the character and his affections or thought processes rather than placing the character in relationship with a single other, thus opening a multitude of relational possibilities rather than specifying a single one. Further, like Martin Scorsese in GoodFellas, Wang makes extensive use of the reume, the form of perception-image which Deleuze calls

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"liquid perception." There is a key difference, though, between Scorsese's framing of the reume and Wang's, even though both foreground rhizomatic qualities. In Scorsese's GoodFellas, the reume consists of shots of specific and significant characters, the members of Henry Hill's "crime family." The reume is created with a moving camera, so that the images within the frame flow through it because of the movement of the camera. As will be explained more fully in chapter 3, Scorsese's moving camera serves to place the characters contextually within a matrix of characters which is continually in flux, and while functioning as a "family," also poses potential harm for the characters involved. The moving camera's composing, decomposing and recomposing of images accentuates the constructedness and the mutability of the "family," undercutting Henry Hill's sense of belonging to something solid and secure. The images also suggest the rhizomatic "lines of flight" which Deleuze and Guattari characterize as a component in the growth of organisms (Deleuze and Guattari "Rhizome" 16-18), in that the tendency toward hierarchy and ossification is constantly disrupted by seemingly spontaneous lines of flight which rupture and reformulate the system, while still being a part of the system. In Scorsese's presentation, the tracking shot which is the reume is an image of insubstantiality, but this insubstantiality is dangerous, because it is an image of known characters which suggests their unknowability, or their potential for treachery. Like the confrontational

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binaries of Lee's shot/reverse shot affection-images, Scorsese's reume is a vehicle of danger because of its contextual placement within a known and circumscribed community which is nevertheless in transition or flux in ways impossible to chart.

In contrast with Scorsese's use of reume-images, Wang's reume-images are signifiers of complexity, ambiguity, and anonymity. Physically, the composition of the reume in each instance reinforces the signification. Whereas Scorsese's reume is created dynamically, through the use of the moving camera, and signifies danger, Wang's reumes are composed with a stationary camera creating a frame-field through which movement occurs.

Chan is Missing is replete with examples. Early in the film, within the first four minutes, Jo (in voiceover) talks about beginning his search for Chan at a restaurant named Chester's. As he talks we see a long shot of the restaurant. The camera placement is across the street from the restaurant, an eye-level shot. A single man stands in the street, in front of the restaurant. A streetcar enters the frame on the right, moving diagonally from lower right to upper left of the frame, filling the frame for just a moment. As the streetcar passes out of the frame, we see that the man has disappeared. Our POV, dictated by the placement of the camera, keeps us at a safe distance from this mystery, and Jo is at an affectively safe distance from it as well, in that he fails to notice or comment on the

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disappearance. This movement through the reume from one composition (with man) to another (without) in a single shot serves notice not of danger, but of mystery and insubstantiality. Events occur without notice, without comment, without motivation, without explanation.

Wang links this visual exposition of the rhizomatic quality of the community under consideration with a verbal one as well. The following shot is a close-up at eye-level of the head and shoulders of a young woman, dressed in a suit and tie. The any-space-whatever which surrounds her shows fragments of a picture hanging on a wall and a serving station, elements of the interior of Chester's Restaurant. Jo's voiceover continues, in introduction: "This morning when Steve and I were having breakfast at Chester's, a woman showed up looking for Chan Hung. It was about a car accident he was in." The soundtrack then switches to synch-sound as the woman expounds to Jo and Steve:

> You see I'm doing a paper on the legal implications of cross-cultural misunderstanding. Mr. Chan's case is a perfect example of what I'm trying to expose here. The policeman and Mr. Chan had completely different culturally related assumptions about what kind of communication about communication each one was using. For instance, the policeman, in an English-speaking mode, asks a direct factual question; there are just to be facts, and that's all: 'did you stop at the stop sign?' He expected a 'yes or no' answer. Mr. Chan,

however, rather than giving him a yes or a no answer began to go into his past driving record--how good it was, the number of years he had been in the States, all the people that he knew--trying to relate different events, or objects or situations to what was happening then, to the action at hand. Now this is very typical, as I'm sure you know, of most Chinese speakers--trying to relate possibly unrelated objects or seemingly unrelated objects to the matter at hand. The Chinese try to relate points, or events or objects that they feel are pertinent to the situation, which may not to anyone else seem directly relevant at the time. At any rate, at this the policeman became rather impatient, restated the question, 'Did you or did you not stop at the stop sign?' in a rather hostile tone, which in turn flustered Mr. Chan, which caused him to hesitate answering the question, which further enraged the policeman, so that he asked the question again: 'You didn't stop at the stop sign, did you?' in a negative tone, to which Mr. Chan automatically answered 'No.' Now, to any native speaker of English 'No' would mean 'No I didn't stop at the stop sign.' However to Mr. Chan 'No I didn't stop at the stop sign' was not 'No I didn't stop at the stop sign.' It was No, I didn't not stop at the stop sign.' In other words, 'Yes I did stop at the stop sign.' Do you see what I'm saying? He was correct in the Chinese because the answer has to

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> match the truth of the action. However, native American speakers tend to work more from a grammatical mode. To put it in layman's language, English language emphasizes the relationship between grammatical structures, and the Chinese language tends to emphasize the relationship between the listener, the speaker, and the action involved. Well, at any rate, Mr. Chan has to appear in court so we can get this all straightened out, so he can explain everything. He missed his court date...

In the young woman's explanation, the system of communication through language is complicated by the differing cultural assumptions and communication styles of Mr. Chan and the policeman. This complication, as explained, could be considered rhizomatic, in that it deals with a system (language) which contains within it lines of flight which alter the system and its functioning without rupturing it. Yet Wang doubles the rhizomatic quality of the scene. Cut-in affection-image close-ups of Jo and Steve provide an ironic counterpoint because they appear to indicate that Jo and Steve either do not understand the woman, or do not respect her analysis.

As the woman talks, we experience the quality of faceicity, where "micromovements of expression" within the affection-image demonstrate intensity and desire (on a continuum of love-hate), rather than wonder (Cinema 1 90). The animation of this affection-image is matched, even

exceeded, by the animation of the affection-images of Steve and Jo which are cut in to this sequence as the woman talks. They also exhibit faceicity rather than faceification--changing expressions rather than immutable ones. In one instance, Steve's facial expression is augmented by a sigh, and the movement of his running his hand over the back of his head. In each of these cut-in reaction shots, the expression on Steve's or Jo's face undercuts the sense that the woman is making rational sense in her exposition toward them. Ironically, even as she discourses on the nature of communication, she fails to communicate to Steve and Jo. The verbal signifiers clash with the visual signifiers, leaving as indeterminate and unresolved the question of whether the woman's explanation of Chan's behavior is sufficient. In a sense, the two levels of communication form a matrix over one another, with the rhizomatic escape of lines of flight occurring at each level.

The reume created by the passage of the streetcar through the frame in front of Chester's Restaurant is brief, but it prefigures Wang's use of this type of fluid motion, flowing into and out of the frame, throughout Chan is Missing. A typical instance occurs when Steve and Jo visit the Manilatown Senior Center, a place Chan Hung frequented. As they interview the attendant, Frankie, the elderly habitués of Manilatown are surveyed with a moving camera. Later they dance, or walk, through the frame. They are never known to us by name, but are briefly part of our

experience through the reumes which constitute these shots. This reume-pattern comes to a head at the end of the film, where Wang uses a series of reumes to visually reinforce what Jo says about the lack of resolution to the mystery of Chan's identity, and more broadly, about the indeterminacy and insubstantiality of all such issues as agency and identity. The shot which introduces this sequence is a "pure" reume--a shot with no visual information other than flowing water.[33] Jo's voice-over of this shot stresses the indeterminacy which the reume suggests: "This mystery is appropriately Chinese. What's not there seems to have just as much meaning as what is there. The murder article is not there. The photograph is not there. The other woman is not there. Chan Hung is not there. Nothing is what it seems to be. I guess I'm not Chinese enough. I can't accept a mystery without a solution." Even at the end of the film,

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[33] "Finally, what the French school found in water was the promise or implication of another state of perception: a more than human perception, a perception not tailored to solids, which no longer had the solid as object, as condition, as milieu. A more delicate and vaster perception, a molecular perception, peculiar to a 'cine-eye'. This was the result of starting from a real definition of the two poles of perception: the perception-image was not to be reflected in a formal consciousness, but was to be split into two states, one molecular and the other molar, one liquid and the other solid, one drawing along and effacing the other. The sign of perception would not therefore be a 'dicisign', but a reume. While the dicisign set up a frame which isolated and solidified the image, the reume referred to an image in the process of becoming liquid, which passed through or under the frame. The camera-consciousness became a reume since it was actualised in a flowing perception and thus arrived at a material determination, at a flowing-matter" (Cinema 1 80).

Jo seems to be missing (or not accepting) the point, still essentializing "Chinese" identity.

Jo's further reflections lead him back to the comment of Frankie, the attendant at the Manilatown Senior Center: "If you want to solve the mystery, you got to look in the puddle. I been down here too long. I see regular things, everyday things, and for years people do normal things. Then all of a sudden something happens. This guy [Chan Hung] disappears without a trace, without a reason. Nothing." As Jo remembers Frankie's words, the shot is one of Jo sitting in a cafe, a bottle of beer on the table before him. Behind him, through the window, pedestrians pass on the street--a reume-flow which presages the next sequence of shots, where Wang visually comments on Frankie's statement about the tenuousness of the difference between normalcy and abnormality, and about the insubstantiality of agency and presence: "this guy disappears without a trace...."

The next sequence is a variation on the earlier streetcar shot, but this time it is unmistakably a series of reume images which problematize Jo's insistence on clarity in determining agency and identity. For this instance the camera is positioned across the street from a bus stop on a busy, commercial Chinatown street. Six long shots from a fixed position at eye level show some people standing at the bus stop while others walk through the frame in both

directions.[34] Traffic flows through the frame in both directions. Cuts between shots are difficult to detect, being cut on the momentary obliterations caused by passing traffic. The anonymous subjects included in the shots appear and disappear because of their passing through the frame, but also because new sets of characters appear with new shots (though others remain from one shot to another). The montage is not accompanied by Jo's voiceover any longer, but for the only time in the film, the soundtrack is comprised only of non-diegetic instrumental music. Most, though not all, of the anonymous people depicted in the sequence are apparently Chinese; what is as interesting as their evident ethnicity, however, is their appearing and disappearing, both through the flow of the reume and through the manipulative cutting of the filmmaker. The one seems a comment on the other: that questions of agency, ethnicity, and identity are fluid, and sometimes mysterious. Each of these people is a character in a narrative which is totally closed to us except for a momentary physical glimpse as they go about what apparently are their normal routines. Then,

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[34] Wang uses an intriguing variation on this technique in Smoke, where Augie the cigar shop owner (Harvey Keitel) crosses the street once a day to take a still photograph of his
cigar shop promptly at 8:00 AM. His collection of hundreds of these photographs depict identical infrastructure, just as the planters and storefronts behind the anonymous characters in the sequence in Chan is Missing remain the same from shot to shot. Yet Augie's still photographs capture a diversity of vehicles, pedestrians, and weather conditions, making each photo unique at the same time that it is a close copy of every other.

as Frankie says, they "disappear without a trace, without a reason."

The bus stop sequence is followed by a short sequence which sums up, both verbally and visibly, the tenuous and rhizomatic conclusions of Jo's inquiry into questions of Chan's identity, Chinese American ethnicity, and the insubstantiality of agency. It consists of three shots: a reprise of the reume shot of water, a reprise of the film's signature shot, the cab windshield shot, and a photograph of three people, only one of them distinct enough to be identified. The sound track for these three shots consists of the lengthy quotation cited earlier ("What bothers me is that I no longer know who Chan Hung really is. Mr. Lee says Chan Hung and immigrants like him need to be taught everything as if they were children..."), in which Jo reflects on the way that the many "identities" of Chan Hung ultimately suggest that an "essential" Chan Hung is unknowable and may not even exist. The image of the reume of water unmistakably reinforces the import of Jo's words, suggesting the inscrutability of Chan's identity and by implication the shifting, constructed quality of the notion of Chinese, or Chinese American identity. The cab windshield shot ties the reume of inscrutability to the ambiguity of nomadic movement, the lines of flight of the rhizome. The third shot, the still shot of the indistinct photograph, directly illustrates and confirms the suggestions of the two previous images. In voiceover, Jo

says "Here's a picture of Chan Hung, and I still can't see him." The sequence which follows, and which ends the film, is a montage of Chinatown scenes, accompanied by an extra-diegetic rendition of "Grant Avenue" sung by Pat Suzuki. The sequence begins with static shots of locations; subsequent shots show people, all anonymous, passing through the frame, or passing into and out of the frame by virtue of camera movement. Other shots show reflections in windows. These images of indeterminacy depict the community at the same time that they suggest it can never be fully depicted.

Chinatown, Little Italy, and Bed-Stuy are existing communities defined by geography and ethnicity. As constructed cinematically in the images created by Wayne Wang, Martin Scorsese and Spike Lee, these communities exhibit some common characteristics--concerns with questions of ethnicity, awareness of their status on the border between ethnic identity and assimilation, use of ritual, display, and public space as means and arenas of self and group definition. The three directors, however, show conceptual and stylistic differences in their depictions of communities and the use of public space, most particularly in their differing uses of the action-image: Scorsese in images of ostentatious display, Lee in images of confrontation, and Wang in images of indeterminacy.

CHAPTER 3

CONSTRUCTIONS OF FAMILY AS COMMUNITY

Images and constructions of "family", as an abstraction, tend to be idealized. Ideal families are places where individuals are accepted and loved for who they are, unconditionally. Ideal families are groups which provide physical protection and emotional encouragement. As Zygmunt Bauman notes, "It is the family (not necessarily the one we know from our own, not always happy, experience, but one like we imagine 'an ideal family' to be...) which serves most often as a model for that mutual sympathy and assistance which we tend to ascribe to, or demand from, or hope to obtain from, an in-group" (Thinking 42). As Bauman implies, though, such "ideal families" are a prototype which seems to have few analogues in late 20th Century western lived experience.

The societal forces which make the existence of "ideal" families tenuous are many, including those Bauman identifies which were discussed in chapter 1: pluralism, individual isolation, interdependence, technological change, multiple sites of authority, and contingency, to re-name some. But these very forces, as Bauman notes, intensify the desire for community, even as they undermine the possibility of

community. If real "ideal" families do not exist, we create simulated ones to take their place. The signs which we read as "family" are ascribed to groups of people who may be unrelated, but nevertheless fulfill the functions we expect families to fulfill. Or, more accurately, we read our relationship with them as fulfilling those functions, whether they actually do or not. In this sense, these groups which are read by their members as families are what Bauman calls imagined communities. Though themselves tenuous and impermanent, they appear to provide their members with solace against the tension and confusion and competing allegiances of postmodern existence. Thus their members will them into existence, and show allegiance to them for at least as long as the "family" fulfills the functions expected of it. Even families which are biological entities, rather than temporary alliances, share in the constructed quality of the imagined community, to the extent that the relationships within the family are imagined to be something different than they really are.

Filmic images of families, whether nuclear or constructed, are always representations which can and should be read as signs, paying attention to the manner of the representation as well as to the representations selected for display. In this chapter I will read the images of families presented in three films: The Joy Luck Club, Crooklyn, and GoodFellas. The lens through which I will read them is the analytic framework provided by Gilles

Deleuze in Cinema I and Cinema II, paying special attention to the lines of analysis which open from the use of Deleuze's construct of the opsign, and its particular manifestation as affection-image, located in or connected with the any-space-whatever, and sometimes in circulation with the recollection-image. These filmic constructs will be the means of differentiating the uses of the opsign by Wang, Lee, and Scorsese, uses which are not only marks of style but also methods of encoding meaning.

As a Hollywood convention, the close-up forces our attention to its subject. The decision to use a close-up, though, belongs to director and editor, with a variety of factors affecting the way the close-up is read: the placement of the close-up within the continuity, the manner in which the close-up is framed, and the visual information presented within the close-up, to name the most obvious. While some effects of the use of the close-up may be universal, and attributable to conventional use and reception, other effects may provide a means of comparatively reading directors' influences, styles, and messages. It also is an appropriate window through which to examine constructions of the family community, since the "tight shot," or close-up, is itself visually suggestive of the bonds, real or imagined, which hold these constructions together.

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According to Zygmunt Bauman, "the community type of belonging is at its strongest and most secure when we believe just this: that we have not chosen it on purpose, have done nothing to make it exist and can do nothing to undo it" (Thinking 74). Ironically, this sense of the inevitability of community connections seems to permeate The Joy Luck Club, Wayne Wang's 1993 film adaptation of Amy Tan's novel. The irony is that the "family" represented is actually an aggregation of friends and relatives who function like an extended family, even though only some of them are biologically related. Nevertheless, the film's sense of family is very strong and, along with its focus on relationships of mothers and daughters, led many reviewers to dismiss the film with comments such as Leslie Felperin Sharman's: "at heart The Joy Luck Club remains an old-fashioned Hollywood woman's picture, the kind I'd go see with my mother and a big box of hankies" (45). As a representation, however, of life along the emotional border of Chinese ethnicity, American identity, and personal autonomy, the film is considerably more subtle and complex than Sharman's comment suggests.

In a literal sense, the "family" depicted in The Joy Luck Club is a constructed entity, formed against the backdrop of the traumatic experiences of four Chinese women separated from their biological families by events occurring during and after World War II. The narrative constitutes an

example of Zygmunt Bauman's assertion that, in the face of the chaotic, disorderly condition of postmodern existence, individuals seek some semblance of refuge and order in community, and form communities to achieve that goal (Intimations 134-35). Both the chaos of the women's past and the refuge they seek in community are represented in the shape of the narration, and in its visual realization.

The narration is shaped around a party which, in filmic "current time," takes place almost entirely during the course of a single afternoon and evening in a spacious San Francisco apartment shared by June and her father. June's recently deceased mother, Suyuan, was one of the four members of the Joy Luck Club, a group formed initially to play mah-jongg, but which became their "family" in place of the families lost in China. The Joy Luck Club was the place for them to tell and retell the stories of their similarly difficult experiences, and share both their pride in and their bewilderment with their daughters. In her mother's absence June's "aunties," Lindo, Ying Ying, and An Mei, and their daughters Waverly, Lena, and Rose, host the party in June's honor, as June is about to journey to China to meet her recently rediscovered step-sisters. Structurally, the party serves as the departure point for episodes in flashback chronicling portions of the histories of the four members of the Joy Luck Club, and their sometimes strained relationships with their Chinese American daughters. As a narrative device, the current-time party provides a

touchstone, a point of commonality to which to return, tying together stories that are thematically related but only haphazardly connected in character or chronology. The device of the party reinforces the sense of refuge represented by the "imagined community" of the Joy Luck Club; the stories in flashback reveal why the sense of refuge is needed. The stories are of two types: stories of chaos and family sorrow in China, and stories of tension and misunderstanding with Americanized daughters. Each member is the primary character in at least one story of each type.

The visual realization of the film reinforces the sense that the "current time" Joy Luck Club is a locus of comfort and security, while the flashback scenes depict incidents and events which are disquieting, disruptive, or chaotic. The relationship between the two sets of visual information, the party and the flashbacks, is a relationship of memory (current experience vs. recollection) and of circumstance (comfort vs. peril), as well as a relationship of time (present vs. past). In Cinema 2, Gilles Deleuze offers a method for understanding how these relationships are represented visually, as well as conceptually.

The first thing to notice is the visual quality of the party. Many shots foreground the connectedness of the people in attendance by such devices as slow-panning across the table where they eat, or including groupings of people within wide angle shots. In each of these examples the use

or position of the camera creates the sense that the people at the party do not simply share space; they exist in relationship with each other. These relationships, though, are not relationships of action. In the few instances where the people at the party actually do anything, the actions are relatively inconsequential, and serve the purpose of community-building. The most typical action is conversation; others are the playing of a game and the serving of food. In a sense, nothing happens at the party. And intuitively, we understand that a circumstance where "nothing happens," where there is little or no action, may constitute an appropriate circumstance for building and maintaining relationships.

The images at the party where "nothing happens" most obviously are the close-ups which occur just before a flashback. They are close-ups which exhibit the traits Deleuze calls those of "faceification"--close-ups emphasizing the outline of the face, or the face taken as a whole. Close-ups of this type Deleuze associates with the sense of wonder, or thought or inscrutability, as opposed to close-ups where the parts of the face are mobile, and convey more active affect, such as fear or desire. In one such shot, An Mei separates herself from the crowd, leans against a doorjamb, puts her hand to her face, and stares absently at nothing in particular. The camera pans to follow her movement, then zooms slowly toward her face. This is an image of thought, of recollection, forming a smooth

conceptual transition by straight cut to the next image, which is from An Mei's childhood in China.

Gilles Deleuze offers more precise language for describing this situation. In Deleuze's terms, film images where nothing happens are "pure optical and sound situations," or "opsigns" and "sonsigns" (Cinema 2 6). These images do not share the sensory-motor link which characterizes the action-image; rather, by existing apart from a logic of cause and effect, they open possibilities for filmic expression in a realm beyond the action-image. Opsigns and sonsigns "become established in what we might call 'any-space-whatever,' whether disconnected, or emptied..." (Cinema 2 5); they "sometimes [consist of] everyday banality, sometimes exceptional or limit-circumstances--but, above all, subjective images, memories of childhood, sound and visual dreams or fantasies, where the character does not act without seeing himself acting, complicit viewer of the role he himself is playing..." (Cinema 2 6).

Deleuze's assertion here is that some images or sequences in film do have a sensory-motor connection, where a perception is followed by a resulting action in cause and effect manner, while other images are not elements of this connection. As Deleuze schematizes the relationship between image and time, "the relation, *sensory-motor situation -> indirect image of time* is replaced by a non-localizable relation, *pure optical and sound situation -> direct time*

image. Opsigns and sonsigns are direct presentations of time" (Cinema 1 41). Certain images in film are in fact opsigns which, lacking the sensory-motor connection, are direct points of entry into the representation of time by an image.

The specific type of opsign which characterizes the close-ups under consideration in The Joy Luck Club is one which Deleuze calls the "recollection image," a name he borrows from Henri Bergson: "With recollection images, a whole new sense of subjectivity appears...which is no longer motor or material, but temporal and spiritual: that which 'is added' to matter, not what distends it; recollection image, not movement-image" (Cinema 2 47). These opsigns, the close-ups which connect the current-time thinkers with the recollections subsequently represented in the sequences which follow the close-ups, are images of time rather than action, since they form a circuit not with a subsequent action, as an action-image would, but with themselves, the image of the recaller and the image of the recalled.[35] The filmic representations of the recollections of the thinker portrayed in the opsign are "recollection-images."

Deleuze's consideration of the recollection-image is a step toward completion of his project in Cinema 2 of identifying the image "which is sufficient to define the new

[35] Within these circuits, however, fragments of action-image will sometimes occur, as when the recalled incidents follow a trajectory of conflict and resolution.

dimension of subjectivity" (54); that is, the image which completes the circuit of the time-image which the opsign begins. In other words, with what image does the opsign link up in order to form an image of time? Opsigns such as the close-ups in The Joy Luck Club do indeed link up with recollection-images, but this kind of circuit, Deleuze concludes, is not a direct time-image; in order to be so, it would have to link up with a virtual image[36], not with a "former present," as Deleuze calls it: "We asked: when a present, actual image has lost its motor extension, with what virtual image does it enter into relation, the two images forming a circuit where they run after each other and each is reflected in the other? Now the recollection-image is not virtual, it actualized a virtuality (which Bergson calls 'pure recollection') on its own account. This is why

[36] The virtual image is not a specifically defined member of Deleuze's taxonomy of cinematic images (note the lack of hyphen). Rather, Deleuze uses this more general term in discussing the implications of Bergson's theory of dreams as Deleuze extends that theory in his consideration of cinematic images. The virtual image is not a reflection or recollection of an image experienced in real time or space; rather, it is the dreamer's re-constitution of those images as images which may reflect the shape or form of actual images, but are drawn from imagination, not experience. An example is found in "Bunuel's *Un chien andalou* [where] the image of the thinning cloud which bisects the moon is actualized, but by passing into that of the razor which bisects the eye, thus maintain[s] the role of virtual image in relation to the next one" (Cinema II 57). After working through the concept, Deleuze arrives at a definition of sorts: "we can say that the actual image itself has a virtual image which corresponds to it like a double or a reflection" (Cinema II 68).

the recollection-image does not deliver the past to us, but only represents the former present that the past 'was'" (54).[37]

The extensive occurrence of recollection-images in The Joy Luck Club can to some degree be ascribed to the structure of the novel by Amy Tan, which also journeys between present and past through flashback. The flashback itself is a Hollywood convention. But the manner of introducing and structuring the recollection-image is a matter of choice, and affects our reception of the film. Wang's choices for representing the relationship between the present and "the former present that the past 'was'" are consistent with the sense of the Joy Luck Club as a family-like community which functions as a refuge from the isolation and anxiety brought about by the chaotic conditions which each woman has experienced. The chaos, of course, is represented in the recollection-images; the manner of their introduction, in close-up, removes the thinker from her surroundings at the party, most significantly from her friends and the other guests, isolating her in a pose which suggests temporary aloneness, while the proximity of the out-of-frame friends balances that with the possibility of community.

The close-ups discussed above are opsigns, pure optical situations which do not link up with subsequent actions, but

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[37] Deleuze next considers "dream-images" and "world-images," neither of which occurs in The Joy Luck Club.

with recollections. Opsigns exist in "any-space-whatever," a form of affection-image where cinematic space has "lost its homogeneity, that is the principle of its metric relations or the connection of its own parts, so that the linkages can be made in an infinite number of ways" (Cinema 1 109). Any-space-whatevers may consist of the space within the frame which surrounds a close-up, or they may consist of shots where what is framed is deconnection, or emptiness (Cinema 1 120). The occurrence of both types is of interest in The Joy Luck Club.

The opening shots of the film, over which the opening credits and title are superimposed, are abstract frames, first a trail of white crossing the screen, then an all-black frame, into which a white feather drops. June's voice, as a voice-over, accompanies the feather as she tells the tale of a swan, a story passed down from her mother. Even though the narration imposes meaning on the image, the image itself takes place in a disconnected "any-space-whatever," a harbinger of Wang's use of the technique throughout the film.

The China-stories of the four members of the Joy Luck Club, told in recollection-image, are stories of abandonment and loss. In each case, the sense of desolation is visually intensified by the occurrence of any-space-whatever images. Suyuan's story is the first, introduced as June's recollection of her deceased mother's story. Suyuan's war-time experience included separation from her husband, and an

arduous refugee trek with her infant twin daughters. On this trek, she realizes that she cannot continue to carry the children and still save her own life. Knowing that if she dies her daughters will die too, she leaves them at the foot of a tree. She leaves with them all of her valuables, and a note imploring the finder to care for them.

The physical milieu in which these actions occur is a scene of desolation. Other refugees plod along the same road, but the terrain is isolated, mountainous, and generic. No distinguishing features, such as homes or signs, mark this road as any road in particular; it is simply a refugee escape route, littered with broken carts and abandoned possessions. There are mountains in the distance, but they stand simply as a sign of the difficulty of the refugees' escape. The only distinct features are the people, wandering through the blasted terrain. Two particular shots of the babies reinforce this sense of disconnectedness; in one, the camera is above them, looking into their faces from the POV of their mother, as they are wheeled along the road on a flat wheelbarrow. The babies fill the screen, with only the fragments of road, any-space-whatever, passing by around the edges of the frame. They are disconnected from any stable environment, in motion, connected only implicitly, by the placement of the camera, to their mother. A subsequent shot is quite similar, with the babies again filling the screen. But this time they are stationary, at the foot of the tree where their mother abandons them.

Again, the edges of the frame show the fragments of surroundings, any-space-whatever, a generic tree base. The babies' only connection, to their mother, is broken in the next shot as she leaves.

This fusion between a story of loss and an any-space-whatever as the location for it is also played out in Lindo's story. Her childhood trauma revolves around the promise made by her poor parents when she was five to give her in marriage at age 15 to the son of a somewhat wealthier family. As Lindo reports in a voice-over comment, "For next 10 years, my mother treated me as if I already belonged to Huang Tai Tai." A few years later, the family becomes even more severely impoverished, and they decide to move to a distant part of China. Because of her promised marriage, however, Lindo must be left behind. The scene of her abandonment is largely shot from a distance, in medium-long shots. The frame is rarefied; the locale is a forest, but with only a few trees obscured by drifting fog. Lindo's family loads their possessions into a cart, and the cart begins driving away, right to left across the screen, with Lindo standing at the right of the screen, watching. The sense of desolation and abandonment is conveyed by the space on the screen, and reinforced by the placement of the scene within an any-space-whatever.

The next cut is to billowing red fabric, a saturation of the frame with color, which proves to be the backdrop to Lindo's wedding ceremony to Huang Tai Tai. The initial

effect of the cut is one of disorientation. The billowing red fabric fills the screen, creating an any-space-whatever of the type to which Deleuze refers when he says "It is therefore shadows, whites and colours which are capable of producing and constituting any-space-whatevers, *deconnected or empty spaces*" (Cinema 1 120). This effect also occurs when a subsequent frame is filled with the yellow and red curtains which drape Lindo's marriage bed. In voiceover, she says, "That night, I met my husband for the first time."

These shots are spaces of pure affect, though Deleuze specifies no particular affect which is necessarily connected with an any-space-whatever; it is simply a screen-space which operates affectively, rather than rationally. In this second case, affective reaction is channelled by Lindo's voiceover, which gives rise to feelings of apprehension, and sympathy. Whatever feelings are generated, though, are visually allowed free rein by their association with the any-space-whatever, the locus of the affection-image.

A more directed, or specific means of generating affect is through a technique strongly associated with the any-space-whatever: the close-up. The sequence chronicling Lindo's wedding is short, and constructed almost entirely of close-ups: of Lindo's veiled face, and of Lindo's husband's face, obscured by wedding costume. Like the close-ups which introduce the recollections, these close-ups exhibit the traits of "faceification," signifying wonder or amazement.

The close-ups in the Lindo-wedding sequence follow from and exist within the affective context established in the any-space-whatever shots discussed earlier. We read the close-ups of the two children's faces as signs of bewilderment and lack of understanding. Though the POV is indeterminate, and they may or may not be looking at each other, each close-up is of Lindo or Huang Tai Tai alone, rather than being an over-the-shoulder, shot/reverse shot sequence. This editing pattern suggests that the children may both be naive and puzzled, but they do not form a bond, or linkage. Each remains a separate entity throughout the scene. The visual images in close-up reinforce the confusion and dismay suggested by Lindo's voiceover revelation that she met her husband, Huang Tai Tai, for the first time on their wedding night. Interior states achieve presence through screen imagery.

The interiority of recollection and emotion function on a personal level. At the intersection of personal and corporate concerns is the issue of identity, framed in this film as the tension between personal identity and identity as a Chinese American. Wang himself typifies this duality, claiming this position as qualification to explore its dimensions in The Joy Luck Club when he says "I understand the Chinese culture. It's part of my consciousness, part of my history. If anybody else had wanted to do this [film], he would have had to spend a lot of time researching the

subject, and even then the subtleties of the culture would have been too confusing" (Wang 3).

The self-consciously Chinese character of The Joy Luck Club is evident in many ways. The action shuttles back and forth between a family party in San Francisco and flashbacks to remembered events in China. The dialogue in the sections set in China is spoken in Chinese, with subtitles in English. This use of language as a marker of ethnicity is underlined by the English speech patterns of Suyuan, Lindo, An Mei and Ying Ying, which are characterized by the truncated and grammatically imperfect constructions that signal the characters' position between two cultures.

Another mark of the self-conscious connection between the characters' Chinese heritage and their current status as Americans is the dispersed, generational nature of the narrative structure. Through recollections in flashback, each mother connects her perception of her daughter's problems with a problem of confidence or identity or self-worth suffered by the daughter's Chinese grandmother. This generational connection suggests that the daughters, though quite thoroughly Americanized and in each instance but one married to Caucasians, still carry the sign of their Chinese heritage.

All of these observations about The Joy Luck Club suggest that questions of agency, subjectivity, and identity, particularly identity as Chinese Americans, are central themes in the film. Wang's choices of physical

structures and screen images reinforce those thematic concerns. Affection-image close-ups, as noted earlier, serve to make present the emotional state or the memory function of the character in close-up; but they also focus attention on the character as character by abstracting the character from environment, presenting the character stripped from context. As Deleuze puts it, the affection-image, the close-up, " abstracts [its subject] from all spatio-temporal coordinates, that is to say it raises it to the state of Entity" (Cinema 1 96).

Admittedly, the close-up is a staple convention of film. What is unconventional here is its excessive use to visually underscore the thematic concern with issues of agency and identity which are carried through the conversations between mothers and daughters, by connecting the theme with the physical images of individuals. The type of close-up Wang employs is of interest here: instead of over-the-shoulder shots where the camera faces the woman yet holds her interlocutor in the frame as well, Wang typically uses close-ups of the woman alone, even when she is engaged in conversation or social situations. For example, in the early scene at the party where June sits down to play mah-jongg with her aunties, taking her mother's place in the Joy Luck Club, a series of close-ups shows us each of the women at the table. Each shot is from the perspective of the woman across the table, but the shot only includes the woman being seen. The POV makes the community of the Joy Luck

Club implicit, but the entity in these close-ups is the woman herself, without the supporting context which would confine or describe her. Agency is implied in this isolation, and the development of the film reinforces that visual cue, as each woman subsequently tells her story. But identity is not simply a matter of self-definition. The arrangement around the table, and the device of each woman being seen by the camera from the POV of another of the women, suggests a web of interconnection, a family-like community, within which each woman functions. In this way, the issues of individual identity and group identification which are intertwined as primary themes in the film are connected visually, through Wang's use of close-ups, as well.

Another conscious choice which foregrounds issues of identity is a particular type of close-up, the frame within frame. In each of the recollection-narratives, a primary character is featured in a close-up which draws attention to her face by framing it through a window, or in a mirror, or some other frame-within-frame device. The most striking of these are shots where the face is reflected within a mirror, a type of shot which occurs a number of times in the film. In each instance, the accompanying dialogue or voice-over raises issues of identity. As a literal reflection, both to the character and to the viewer, these mirror shots visually foreground the film's preoccupation with the construction of identity.

These mirror shots are examples of what Deleuze calls crystal images: examples of the opsign in which "the actual optical image crystallizes with its own virtual image, on the small internal circuit" (Cinema 2 69). According to Deleuze, the crystal image "gives us the key, or rather the 'heart,' of opsigns and their compositions" (Cinema 2 69), because here the separation from the sensory-motor logic is complete: the image no longer portrays movement, but time itself. It does so by visually representing the split which occurs in time, where the instant is present, but immediately also past. Time splits itself in two at each moment; the time crystal propels both back into the past and forward into the future. "Time consists of this split, and it is this, it is time, that we *see in the crystal*. The crystal-image was not time, but we see time in the crystal" (Cinema 2 81).

A shot with a mirror is the most obvious visual example of this representation of the splitting of time, and connects with one of the categories of crystal-image which Deleuze posits: the crystal image which represents the "actual/virtual" dichotomy. Often, in a film image, it is impossible to tell which is the actual and which is the virtual. The crystal-image is a representation of a circuit of indiscernibility which "constitutes an objective illusion; it does not suppress the distinction between the two sides, but makes it unattributable, each side taking the other's role in a relation which we must describe as

reciprocal presupposition, or reversibility. In fact, there is no virtual which does not become actual in relation to the actual, the latter becoming virtual through the same relation: it is a place and its obverse which are totally reversible...The indiscernibility of the real and the imaginary, or of the present and the past, of the actual and the virtual, is definitely not produced in the head or the mind, it is the objective characteristic of certain existing images which are by nature double" (Cinema 2 69). In mimicking this function of time, the crystal-image shots are representations of time, not of movement.

Crystal-images occur throughout The Joy Luck Club, but most of all in the final story, where frame-within-frame closeups foreground identity consciousness. The story's central character is An Mei's daughter Rose, who has been married for six years to Ted, a wealthy man who seems to have been attracted to her initially simply because she is Chinese. Through the mediation of her mother, Rose realizes that she has subsumed her identity in her role as dutiful wife, just as we saw in An Mei's earlier recollection-story about Rose's Chinese grandmother. The progression of Rose's coming to awareness can be traced in three frame-within-frame shots, where the visual image corresponds with the dialogue, or voice-over. In the first, Rose is only a reflection in a mirror; the only image we see of her is the "virtual" half of the crystal. The action she performs is the application of make-up, accentuating her Asian features.

This behavior is consistent with the "China Doll" image which Rose has cultivated, believing that Ted loves her for her exoticism. In the second frame-shot, Rose's identity is still constructed by someone else; we see her through a frame from the POV of her husband, Ted, suggesting that he and we see a two-dimensional picture of Rose. Ironically, the conversation which occurs at this point is about Ted's frustration at Rose's unwillingness to make her own opinions or desires known. In the third crystal-image, as Rose confronts Ted about her discovery that he's having an affair, she looks away from the camera through a window, where her reflection can be seen. The image suggests that as she musters the courage to confront Ted about his infidelity, she also confronts a split in her own identity between the "China Doll" quality which she has cultivated and the possibility of some more autonomous and self-respecting sense of herself.

The segment ends by returning to Rose in close-up at the narrative-touchstone party, where the camera pulls back to demonstrate that she is re-integrated into the company of family and friends, including Ted, whom she evidently hasn't divorced. This suggests that the process of individuation begun at the point of the third crystal-image has continued. Her identification as Chinese American and as a member of family-community is obviously important, visually represented by the surrounding family and friends, but her ability to sustain a relationship with a man who has

emphasized the importance of knowing her as an individual suggests that she is no longer subsumed in that role.

One way to read The Joy Luck Club, then, is as an exploration of the development of personal agency and identity against the backdrop of Chinese American ethnicity. The context for that exploration is the strength of a particular community, the community of family, comprised both of blood relatives and close friends. The visual structures of The Joy Luck Club, particularly the presentation of opsigns and their consequent connections, are not simply a vehicle for these thematic concerns, but are themselves an integral part of the structure of the theme, through the operation of the qualities of the opsign itself.

CROOKLYN

Unlike the imagined community of the constructed family at the heart of The Joy Luck Club, the family depicted in Crooklyn is an actual biological unit. Crooklyn is Spike Lee's tale of an African American family in Brooklyn in the 1970s, a family whose circumstances loosely parallel those of Spike Lee's own growing up: father Woody Carmichael is a struggling musician, mother Carolyn Carmichael is a teacher. The four boys in the family outnumber Troy, the one girl, who is the primary character in the film.

Crooklyn opens in the street, with a crane-mounted camera omnisciently depicting the energy of children on a

summer day as they play hopscotch, jumprope, battling tops, and stickball. No adults are included in the opening shots, and the only order is created by the rules of the games. When shots of adults are eventually intercut with the shots of children, the adults don't interact with the children; the adults play dominoes, converse, stroll down the street. The only hint of any authority structure, or attempt at social engineering, comes in the forms of two close-up shots of signs with encouraging messages, such as "a healthy block is a clean block, and "a cleaner block is up to you."

All this positive energy, bathed in sunlight and accompanied by a pleasant lyric on the soundtrack, give the block a quality of nostalgic pleasantness. A few spats between neighbors--notably a short argument between a landlady and a tenant behind on his rent--mute this edenic quality, but do not undercut it. The multi-racial and multi-cultural quality of the block is also foregrounded: the children are African American and Puerto Rican, and the adults span an even wider ethnic range, reminiscent of the ethnic diversity of Lee's earlier Do the Right Thing.

The energy, diversity, and relative anarchy of the opening scene echo the conditions discussed by Zygmunt Bauman as characteristic of the postmodern era[38], and

[38] "...the postmodern setting...invalidate[s] many an essential constituent of the cultural discourse. Central precepts of that discourse, like dominant culture, or cultural hegemony, seem to have lost much of their meaning, or (as far as their missionary, crusading stance is concerned) run out of energy. The contemporary world is,

influential in forming the consciousness out of which its inhabitants make ethical decisions. As he notes in Postmodern Ethics, "These times offer us freedom of choice never before enjoyed, but also cast us into a state of uncertainty never before so agonizing. We yearn for guidance we can trust and rely upon, so that some of the haunting responsibility for our choices could be lifted from our shoulders. But the authorities we may entrust are all contested, and none seems to be powerful enough to give us the degree of reassurance we seek" (21).

This "state of uncertainty" is a fair description of the situation of the Carmichael family. Though intact at the beginning of Crooklyn, the Carmichaels experience a number of stresses, and experience little or no trustworthy and reliable guidance; for the most part, they must make it on their own. The stressors are typical: the five high-energy children keep their mother in a foul mood most of the time, a mood worsened by a shortfall of money, and exacerbated by her husband's erratic patterns of work and penchant for bouncing checks. Woody's fuse becomes shorter when, as a musical artist, he feels both unsupported by his

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rather, a site where cultures (this plural form is itself a postmodern symptom!) coexist alongside each other, resisting ordering along axiological or temporal axes. Rather than appearing as a transitory stage in the as-yet-unfinished process of civilizing, their coexistence seems to be a permanent feature of the world, with no authority in sight aspiring to an ecumenical, universal role. Like postmodern art--postmodern culture seems doomed to remain disorderly, to wit plural, rhizomically growing, devoid of direction" (Intimations 35).

wife and unable to work effectively in a chaotic household. Not surprisingly, the stressors and lack of emotional support lead Woody and Carolyn to separate temporarily.

Conditions of uncertainty and fragmentation, according to Zygmunt Bauman, are conditions which strengthen the desire for refuge in community. Bauman's general precept is true of the particular example of the Carmichaels as well. Carolyn's stress is evident as she berates her children, while they in turn pick on each other, particularly on Troy. Yet despite the stresses and fragmentations, the Carmichaels maintain a veneer of middle-class respectability, and Woody in particular works at maintaining affection within the family. To the extent that these efforts are self-deceptive, the Carmichaels' desire for stability leads them to construct an "imagined community" out of their own family. The signs of that imagined community reflect on their understanding of themselves in relationship to each other, but also reflect their self-identification as African Americans.

Crooklyn's self-consciously African American display is consistent with Spike Lee's statements about his purpose as a filmmaker. In his book Mo' Better Blues Lee states his mission as he saw it at that time: "...making films about, and for, Black people, first and foremost. Our mission is not meant to exclude anyone else, it's just what we've been called to do" (31). Concentrating on an African American family as the locus of interest, Crooklyn is consistent with

this vision. Other signs of Afro-centric pride are exhibited by Woody Carmichael in the clothing he sometimes wears, such as a red, green and black hat, or a dashiki, and by the fact the ram's horn with which he calls his children to dinner is reminiscent of an African custom. The structure of this latter shot reinforces the positive quality of the African identification; Woody is shown in profile, in medium close-up, wearing his red, green and black hat, his chin lifted, the ram's horn to his lips. The slight low angle of the shot accentuates the sense of nobility which this striking shot displays. Woody's African American pride is complemented by Carolyn's wearing of beaded braids, a hairstyle which she has fixed for Troy as well.

The Carmichael family's signs of Afro-centric identity are not uniformly positively acknowledged or received. Later, when Troy visits her relatives in Virginia, Aunt Song disparages Troy's braids and takes them out, replacing them with pigtails. Song's ambivalence about African styles is not an isolated incident of a conflicted response to being African American. Earlier in the film, Carolyn leaves orders for the children to clean the house while she is out for the evening. She accompanies the orders with disparaging remarks about how they never do enough work around the house, invoking a racist stereotype about African Americans by calling them "a bunch of shiftless Negroes." When she returns to find her orders ignored, she again draws

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on stereotypes in expressing her anger. She rouses the children out of bed to complete the chores, threatening to "slap the black off of you," refusing to participate in the work by saying "This ain't no plantation. I ain't no slave."

Awareness of racial distinctions is established early as a motif in Crooklyn. As in Lee's earlier Do the Right Thing, the residents of the multi-ethnic neighborhood in Crooklyn refer regularly to the race and ethnicity of others in deprecating ways. One sequence begins with a group of boys, including Troy's brothers Clinton and Wendell, sitting on a stoop. After an establishing long shot at eye level, the succeeding shots in the sequence are of two types: either medium close-ups, with the any-space-whatevers surrounding the speaker's head and shoulders including arms and legs of others, or two-shots. Early in the sequence Tommy, a young man in his late teens or early twenties, sings to the accompaniment of a portable record player. Suddenly, Tommy flings a pop bottle at the door of Tony Eyes, shouting "You stinking faggot! Whatcha going to do about your stinking dogs, man?" Tommy's homophobic insult elicits an ethnic insult from Wendell, the second-oldest Carmichael son, who laughingly comments about Tommy, "Chinese Puerto Rican Chink Spit." That such talk is common is conveyed visually by Wendell's posture of sitting back against the step in a relaxed position, and is confirmed by the lack of noticeable reaction from the other boy in the

low-angle two-shot, from Tommy's POV. Tommy's response, in a close-up from Clinton's POV, is "You friggin' chocolate black nigger," which raises an immediate audible response from the other boys on the stoop. Tommy then says to Clinton "Why you let him talk to me like that, man? I never say nothing bad about your mama," implying that Clinton has some responsibility for the behavior of his younger brother.

This motif of awareness of racial distinctions is carried a step further in the sequence which follows, a parallel sequence in which Troy and a group girls, none older than 12, sit on another stoop. Again, after an establishing shot of the six girls, all the succeeding shots are close-ups or two-shots, often from the POV of another group member. All the girls appear to be African American, except one girl who is identified in the dialogue as Puerto Rican. The first line of dialogue, spoken by a girl whose hairdo features a bulb-shaped spike of hair drawn straight up from the top of her head, is a comment about Troy's beaded hairdo: "It look funny. It look stupid." The speaker is seated next to a girl in an orange blouse, who appears to agree with everything she says. Troy responds, in a close-up from the first speaker's POV, "So, look at yours. At least mine isn't standing on my head sticking straight out like Topsy!" When the first speaker rises to respond, a girl in purple says "Why don't you sit down with your old Black self." The response: "I'm Black and I'm proud." A girl in yellow, stroking another friend's hair,

changes the subject: "She got good hair." The girl in orange says, "She got Puerto Rican hair," to which the girl with Puerto Rican hair responds with a curt remark and a dismissive hand signal.

The effect of these two scenes is to foreground issues of race as means by which people in Crooklyn interact with one another. These interactions may cross ethnic or racial lines, but they also demonstrate an awareness of finer degrees of distinction within the category of "African American," with implications concerning stereotypes about behavior, or conceptions of beauty.[39] Though Troy never comments directly about her self-awareness as an African American, these examples from family, extended family, and community demonstrate that her environment is saturated with such consciousness, suggesting that Troy's exploration of her own identity is inextricable from her self-awareness as an African American.

Though the Carmichael family is at the center of Crooklyn, the film is actually Troy's tale, told from her perspective. The construction of the tale relies heavily on images which in themselves convey Troy's sense of who she is and who she is becoming within the context of her community and her family. One of these recurring images in Crooklyn

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[39] The comment about "good hair" recalls Lee's foregrounding of this African American issue of constructions of beauty in School Daze. In the dance/production number entitled "Straight and Nappy," two groups of African American college women trade insults based on skin tone and hair quality.

is the image of Troy as watcher, an image which also establishes that Troy's is the primary POV in this film, gives some sense of Troy's inability to make sense of the events of her life, and suggests that a primary thematic concern of the film is Troy's coming-to-awareness, or increasing in knowledge, through the course of the film.

The Troy-as-watcher motif is introduced in an unremarkable way, through numerous instances where, either alone or with her brothers, she watches television. The early scenes where she watches by herself foreshadow other shots to come later in the film, where she is again a watcher. Troy gains information and experience through the activity of watching TV programs such as a World War I movie, or a Snagglepuss cartoon, both suggestive of the hegemonic control of society by Caucasians. Later in the film she sees a Pepsi commercial depicting an African American girl who's unhappy because she's been left off the baseball team--an image which Troy can connect with more directly because of her own sense of being left out by her brothers. Because of the type of affection image these shots are, close-ups which exhibit the traits of faceification, little can be learned about her affective response to these television images.

Troy carries her watcher-persona into numerous situations. One scene begins with a slightly low angle of a short Puerto Rican man and a tall "Bodega Woman," played by Ru-Paul, doing a bump-and-grind dance in a grocery store

aisle. As the dance progresses, the camera dollies closer to the couple. The second shot reveals that the first shot was from Troy's POV, since the second shot shows her in the frame with the dancing couple as she walks slowly toward them, stands a few feet away, watching, then retreats in the direction of the counter. In the third shot, Troy stands at the counter looking in the direction of the dancing couple. The shot is now slightly high angle and from the couple's POV, though the fourth and fifth shots, from Troy's POV, show that they are oblivious of her. In the earlier shot of Troy walking toward, then away from the couple, her face was not clearly visible. By contrast, the slightly high-angle shot of Troy at the counter shows her face clearly, though it is closer in length to a medium shot than a close-up, since 3/4 of her body is visible and the any-space-whatever around her clearly contextualizes her within the space of the grocery. Yet this Troy-as-watcher shot, like the close-ups of Troy watching TV, is a close-up of faceification which conveys a sense of wonder while giving little indication as to her reaction. Troy is so transfixed by the dancers that she doesn't immediately notice the clerk behind the counter when he asks for her order; when she does realize she's being addressed, she tells him "just a minute," never taking her eyes off the stylized mating dance. The scene appears to represent Troy's naivete about sexuality, and her introduction to it as something

irrational and provocative, that makes people do crazy things.

Troy learns by watching throughout the film. This motif is central to a number of scenes where medium-close-up shots of Troy standing still, with a blank expression on her face, are intercut with other activity which she watches and learns from. The close-ups of Troy are opsigns; the sensory-motor connections displayed by the actions she observes do not extend to encompass her as she watches, disconnected, in a pure optical situation. These are similar to many of the opsign close-ups in The Joy Luck Club in this respect, that they serve to suggest Troy's sense of disconnection from the events in her environment while they focus our attention on the processes of her mind, rather than her actions. In several respects, though, they are dissimilar from the opsigns in The Joy Luck Club noted earlier. First, the close-ups of the characters in The Joy Luck Club which were identified as opsigns were also recollection images, entry points to the stories told in flashback of the characters' histories. As such, the opsigns were single takes of relative temporal length, followed by the story in flashback. The characters appeared to be staring off into space; if they were indeed looking at particular objects it was impossible to know what they were, since the objects were not included in the frame nor revealed in a subsequent shot. The opsigns of Troy-as-watcher, on the other hand, connect her to the actions she

watches, even though she has no direct involvement in them. The surrounding action places her in proximity to the events, and the technique of intercutting suggests that she is watching them. Further, the any-space-whatever surrounding the recollection-image opsigns in The Joy Luck Club momentarily separate the individuals from their environment through the abstracting quality of the close-up. These any-space-whatevers are typically a fragment of bare wall, or an indistinct doorframe, or some other rarefied scrap of screen image, any-space-whatevers that Deleuze would call "emptied" (Cinema 2 5). The close-ups of Troy-as-watcher, however, are surrounded by any-space-whatevers which, while they abstract Troy from her environment, still remind us that she is very much a part of it. These any-space-whatevers Deleuze would call "disconnected" (Cinema 2 6) because they are only scraps of visual information surrounding the close-up. But they are saturated spaces, identifiable through the amount of visual detail which reminds us that she is in a store, or in the street in front of her house, or in the doorway of her own apartment, or in her Aunt Song's home. Though the opsigns in The Joy Luck Club and in Crooklyn function in broadly the same way, to signal the disconnection of the character from the action and to suggest thought, propelling us away from the action-image and toward the time-image, they are also dissimilar, disconnecting the character from the environment in The Joy

Luck Club, connecting character and environment in Crooklyn.

A number of sequences in Crooklyn are built around these opsigns of Troy-as-watcher. I will examine three. In the first, as Troy returns home from the store at night, she sees police car lights blinking as she nears her home. When she gets close enough for the police car to be in the frame with her in long shot, she stops, and watches. As the sequence unfolds, Troy's neighbor Vic is put into the police car, presumably for hitting their Italian neighbor Tony Eyes, an event shown earlier. Intercut with medium shots of Vic being placed in the police car are close-ups of Troy alone, lit by the headlights of the police car, which also illumine the street-scene any-space-whatever which frames her. Her face is expressionless, a "plate" of faceification, as she simply takes in this scene of Vic's arrest.

A second scene of watching brings Troy's arena of learning out of the street and into the home. Troy has been a watcher of family dynamics between Woody and Caroline from the beginning of the film, including the fight between her parents which precipitated their temporary separation. But in those instances, Troy was part of the crowd scene which was the family. Shortly after Woody's return to the family, though, a worker from Commonwealth Edison shows up to turn off the Carmichaels' electricity because of Woody's non-payment of the bill. Troy is uninvolved in the action, but

watches the incident unfold. A close-up of her face again depicts a blank look, the any-space-whatever this time being a fragment of the family's brownstone behind her. Earlier Troy-as-watcher scenes suggested her absorption of information about sexuality and about the consequences of a punch thrown in anger. Here she learns that life within the family is uncertain, and that her father and mother are not capable of averting all calamities.

A third instance of Troy-as-watcher foreshadows her inability to comprehend her mother Carolyn's death. For a few weeks of the summer, Troy lives with her Aunt Song, Uncle Clem and Cousin Viola in a Virginia suburb. According to Carolyn, Troy's extended visit has the purpose of getting her off the Brooklyn streets; Carolyn may, though, have been aware of her own failing health by this time, and may have wanted to spare Troy the anxiety of watching her mother weaken.

At the end of Troy's Virginia stay, two events coincide. Troy's birthday is the occasion for a sleep-over party with Cousin Viola and two other girls, and Aunt Song can't find her small Pekinese dog. When Song pulls out a sofa bed to accommodate the sleep-over guests, the dead dog pops out. Song wails inconsolably. As in the earlier scenes, Troy watches. These shots of Troy-as-watcher once again depict her in close-up, distanced from the actions which she observes, yet indirectly connected by intercutting, and by the sharing of the milieu suggested by

the saturation of the any-space-whatever which surrounds the close-up.

bell hooks, describing this scene as "the mysterious, not really comical, death of the pet dog Troy's aunt dotes on" ("Sorrowful" 12), misses the point when she guesses that the scene is meant to be comic. Seen as part of the motif of Troy-as-watcher, the scene becomes one more where Troy learns lessons but doesn't know what to make of them. Here, Troy is confronted with death on a small scale and grief on an overblown scale, and is perplexed by both. Later, when her own mother dies, Troy is incapable, at least initially, of any emotion approaching the hysteria that Song displays over the death of her dog.

All of these scenes of Troy-as-watcher are affection-images in which the sensory-motor relationship has been disconnected. Thus they are opsigns: pure optical situations. Attention to these structures of film allows for a reading of Crooklyn's message which connects the pre-rational effect of the opsign with the rational conclusions that can be drawn about the portrayal of Troy's attempts to make sense of the events in her life.

Another set of images also foregrounds Troy's attempts to make sense of the events in her life. At various points in the film, Troy studies herself in a mirror. Once, early in the film, she monopolizes the family bathroom, studying her profile in the mirror, then stuffing toilet paper into her blouse. The POV is at first over Troy's shoulder, then

as she turns, past her profile to view her profile in the mirror. Later, while in Virginia, she again studies her profile in the mirror, this time wearing a nightie of Cousin Viola's that Aunt Song has given Troy because Song judged Troy's own pajamas to be unacceptable. The POV follows a trajectory similar to the previous mirror shot. In both of these crystal-images, Troy's reflection on her reflection suggests her attempt to sort out her own identity, and come to terms with her own burgeoning sexuality. Though she is younger than Rose, the woman in The Joy Luck Club who is also represented through a series of crystal-images, Troy is similarly shown to be involved in a process of self-definition and coming-to-understanding.

The identification of these shots of Troy studying herself in the mirror as crystal images, a category of opsigns which are time-images, is useful to realize that time is more of a concern here than action. Troy is waiting to grow up. She is trying to make her present her past; by projecting herself into the future, she attempts the impossible--she attempts to have the understanding and awareness of her self, her sexuality, which will attend her self-awareness at some point in the future. What is impossible for Troy, though, is at least implicitly possible in the visual construction of her image in crystal: it represents the splitting away of future from present splitting into past which is necessary for Troy to achieve the presence of sexual maturity which she desires.

Another manipulation of time occurs with a different sort of mirror image, the image created by the use of the anamorphic lens. The entire Virginia sequence (about 20 minutes of screen time) is shot with this lens; bell hooks contends that the technique is confusing, and done "to create a comedic atmosphere to contrast with the seriousness of the Carmichael household ("Sorrowful" 12). In the context of advertisements for Crooklyn which represented the film as a comedy, this reaction to the Virginia sequence is understandable, though misdirected. Viewed as a mirror-sequence, the Virginia sequence becomes a time-warp, a through-the-looking-glass experience for Troy.

At the very least, the elongated and distorted images produced by the anamorphic lens must be read as unrealistic. At the most obvious level, this connects with Troy's likely perception that life in this Virginia suburb is quite unreal. The contrasts with her Brooklyn neighborhood are many: there are no other children around, there are no people on the street, the houses are separated by vast expanses of lawn, which are almost constantly watered by pop-up watering systems.

But it also seems, during this "unreal" experience, that the passage of time is distorted for Troy, as well as for us. This becomes evident toward the end of Troy's stay in Virginia, when she receives a letter from her mother. We learn the contents of the letter through a structural device where, instead of hearing Troy read the letter aloud, we

watch a sequence of Carolyn herself speaking the lines in the letter. She's in the Brooklyn apartment, combing out her young son's hair; as she speaks the lines of the letter which inform Troy of the events that occurred during the weeks of Troy's absence, we see intercut sequences illustrating the events in the letter, including everyday occurrences such as the boys playing Strat-O-Matic Baseball on the stoop, and special events such as Woody's concert, including the tension attending Clifford's decision to skip the concert to attend a Knicks' championship game. In sum, we watch the events in flashback with a voiceover of Carolyn's narration. The manipulations of time are multiple: Troy in current time "reads" the letter which we see as narrated by Carolyn because Troy imagines it this way; Carolyn as narrator imagines earlier events, which we simultaneously see depicted. These images seem to fit the Bergsonian category of the recollection-image. But the manipulation is more complex than a simple recollection-image, because the images of Carolyn are being formed in Troy's mind, as are the images of the incidents Carolyn reports being formed in Troy's mind through the vehicle of imagined formation in Carolyn's mind. The recollection-image is not a sufficient explanation for these manipulations. These images are idealized, edited or "wished for" images of events which Troy can only know through the filter of her mother's letter. Still, they seem more real to Troy than her lived experience in Virginia, and

are imagistically represented as "real," since a standard lens is used in contrast to the anamorphic lens which creates the distorted images of the Virginia sequence. The contrast in physical images visually demonstrates the through-the-looking-glass quality of the Virginia sequence for Troy. Deleuze does not supply a category such as "imagination-image" by which to name these physical representations of the images Troy creates in her mind; though the images have characteristics in common with the dream image, they cannot be categorized as such because dream-images "are as cut off from memory-based recognition as they are from motor recognition: no specific group of recollections comes to correspond to them..." (Cinema 2 55). These "imagination-images" have more similarity to the recollection-image, being based on Troy's general recollections of her mother's appearance and the milieu of her home and neighborhood.

To complicate matters, and to highlight the unreliability of recollection-images or crystal-images as accurate representations of reality, the letter-from-Carolyn sequence embedded in the Virginia sequence is eventually revealed to be manipulative and only partially true. Though the physical images of the letter/narrative seem "realistic" compared to the distorted anamorphic images of the Virginia sequence, the reality portrayed by those images is distorted by being half-truthful and idealized. What Carolyn fails to tell Troy is that she is seriously ill, and slated to enter

the hospital for tests. Troy only learns this reality upon her return to New York. Troy's mental picture of her mother as she read her letter was of a smiling, healthy woman--an inaccurate picture, as it turned out. All the more reason for Troy to be confused about what's real and what's not, as if viewing the reverse of reality in a mirror.

A final sequence embedded within the fun-house mirror Virginia sequence deserves note. Throughout her time in Virginia, we've seen Troy with only one other child, Cousin Viola. On Troy's birthday Aunt Song, searching for her absent dog, enters the family room to find Troy and Cousin Viola pillow-fighting. With the distortion of the anamorphic lens, it appears that the pillow fight is reflected in a full-length mirror; eventually, we become aware that two unnamed guests have been invited to sleep over for Troy's birthday, and in fact there are four girls pillow-fighting. This crystal-image connects broadly with the scenes from the Carmichael home where the high spirits of Troy and her brothers were evident, while at the same time it connects with the other mirror-image scenes which foreground Troy's subjectivity. It also immediately precedes the discovery of Aunt Song's dead dog, a scene discussed earlier. It is an interesting example of a crystal-image which is not static, yet there is not a sensory-motor connection between this action and any succeeding action. Consequently, it still functions as an opsign, and a time-image.

The opsign is the condition on which Deleuze's contention that the movement-image is supplemented in film by the time-image depends: "In everyday banality, the action-image and even the movement-image tend to disappear in favour of pure optical situations, but these reveal connections of a new type, which are no longer sensory-motor and which bring the emancipated senses into direct relation with time and thought. This is the very special extension of the opsign: to make time and thought perceptible, to make them visible and of sound" (Cinema 2 17). The opsigns in Crooklyn fit this description, making time and thought perceptible through affection-images which are visually arresting in and of themselves, but which also contrast with the realistic (or quasi-realistic) depiction of the family in the film, providing a visual commentary on the circumstances of the characters depicted, and on their relationships with one another.

According to Deleuze, there are three types of opsigns through which time and thought become perceptible. Though I only intend to explore the chronosign with relation to Crooklyn, an overview of the types of opsigns will contextualize my use of the chronosign.

Deleuze stipulates that opsigns and sonsigns are manifested in three ways, or open up the possibilities for three types of images: chronosigns, lectosigns, and noosigns. The chronosign is "a time-image which has subordinated movement. It is this reversal which means that

time is no longer the measure of movement but movement is the perspective of time: it constitutes a whole cinema of time, with a new conception and new forms of montage..." (Cinema 2 22). With the lectosign the image on the screen is descriptive, but the description is "subordinated to the internal elements and relations which tend to replace the object and to delete it where it does appear, continually displacing it" (22). This sign is a readable sign, one which encourages us to "read" it for what it is, rather than what it appears to represent. The noosign offers us entry into a process whereby the camera emulates thought. The camera "subordinates description of a space to the functions of thought. This is not the simple distinction between the subjective and the objective, the real and the imaginary, it is on the contrary their indiscernibility which will endow the camera with a rich array of functions, and entail a new conception of the frame and reframings...it becomes questioning, responding, objecting, provoking, theorematizing, hypothesizing, experimenting, in accordance with the open list of logical conjunctions ('or,' 'therefore,' 'if,' 'because,' 'actually,' 'although...'), or in accordance with the functions of thought in a *cinema-verite*..."(Cinema 2 23).

Investigation of the blend of realism and beyond-realism which characterizes Spike Lee's visual style, and serves to convey Lee's vision of community, can be aided by the use of Deleuze's concept of the chronosign. There is of

course the representation of a passage of time in the film, in the conventional sense by which days and weeks pass. But this is time in subordination to image. Image is made to represent time, though, in instances where the construction of the visual image, the opsign, allows us to see time itself as a construct represented on the screen. These constructs are not unique to Lee's work, but his use of them is a structural marker of his work in Crooklyn and elsewhere, and serves as a means of framing the concepts foregrounded in this and other Spike Lee films, one of which is the construction of family as community.

Deleuze's explication of the chronosign proceeds through two steps: his adaptation of concepts of time and memory from Henri Bergson, which he applies to cinema in instances which he labels "the cinema of enchantment" (Cinema 2 60), and his own extension of Bergson's concepts into a cluster of types of time-image in cinema which he calls the crystal-image, a filmic image which takes a variety of forms in visually representing the functions of time. Deleuze's adaptation of the Bergsonian concepts and the his extension of them, the crystal-image, are both useful in examining Crooklyn.

The Bergsonian concepts which Deleuze applies to the cinema of enchantment are these: the recollection image, which is akin to the flashback in that it links up a current actual image with a recalled virtual image; the dream-image, in which a dream is cinematically represented as being a

mental (visual) response to a weak sensory stimulus; and the world-image, where "the optical and sound image is quite cut off from its motor extension, but it no longer compensates for this loss by entering into relation with explicit recollection-images or dream-images...characters do not move, but...the world takes responsibility for the movement that the subject can no longer or cannot make" (Cinema 2 59).

The first of these types of images, the recollection-image, is historically a conventional practice in Hollywood films. Dreams are also conventionally represented, though perhaps not typically in the way Deleuze describes in the dream-image. But the third type of image, the world-image, is comparatively rare. Interestingly, there are two instances of world-image in Crooklyn. The first is embedded in a conventionally-framed nightmare sequence, while the second is embedded in an otherwise-realistic sequence.

The first sequence using a world-image occurs when Troy is sleeping, and dreaming. The sequence begins with a shot seen once before in the film and twice after: an overhead shot of a Chinese paper umbrella, which appears to hang on the ceiling of Troy's bedroom. The camera tracks left, until it stops over Troy's bed, where a long shot shows her thrashing and appearing to run in her sleep. This lead-in to the dream-image of the nightmare sequence is a departure from the technique both Wang and Lee used as an introduction to the recollection-image, since the dream-image is

introduced with a long shot and the recollection-images were introduced with close-ups.

The nightmare sequence itself begins with an out-of-focus shot of the top of Troy's head, virtually filling the screen. As she lifts her head we see in the any-space-whatever surrounding the close-up that she's on the street, at night. We only see the top half of her body, in medium-close up. She begins to move--but with no effort of her own. It could also be construed that the world is moving, while Troy is immobile. Now, in the any-space-whatever behind her, are Snuffy, a neighborhood glue-sniffer (played by Spike Lee), and his sidekick Right Hand Man. A medium shot of Snuffy and Right Hand Man shows them demanding food stamps from Troy, then sniffing in their bags. Then they compel Troy to sniff, after which she flies upward as if on an escalator--or the world falls away from her.[40] She's in close-up, so the movement of world happens in the any-space-whatever surrounding her. Her face is virtually expressionless all the while, as if she is half-asleep, or dazed. The sequence ends as it began, with a shot of the Chinese paper umbrella (daylight now), which then tracks left to Troy's bed, where a long shot shows Woody, her father, wiping her brow to calm her down. She's aware of

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[40] This technique, holding the character stationary while the any-space-whatever is in motion, is also used in Jungle Fever, Malcolm X, and Clockers.

the dream, because she says "Snuffy and Right Hand Man are chasing me."

In order to relate this dream sequence to the rest of the film, two other things must be noticed. The first is a matter of narrative: Woody's appearance at Troy's bedside is in fact a re-appearance. He has been absent from the family for a period of time because his wife Carolyn earlier asked him to leave after the two of them quarrelled. Troy was unhappy that he left, but did not express this directly to Carolyn. Woody's appearance at her bedside signals his reintegration into the family.

The other point to notice is that Lee seems to signal something about the meaning of this sequence through the use of the musical accompaniment. This relatively conventional device is used throughout the film, usually in situations where the mood of the music is meant to replicate and reinforce the mood of the scene. That tactic seems not to be Lee's purpose in the nightmare sequence, though, where the musical accompaniment is the 1970's rock song "Time Has Come Today," performed by The Chambers Brothers. Instead, the song lyrics foreground the manipulation of time which the sequence represents, including the pronounced ticking/beat of the music, which winds down towards the end of the scene, as Troy appears to be separated from the earth. The winding down of the music, in fact, forms a sound bridge to the "reality" scene of Woody leaning over the sleeping Troy, as she awakes.

The nightmare sequence is a time-image, specifically a world-image, not a narrative comment. Within the narrative the nightmare doesn't make any particular sense; but understood as a time-image, it becomes a representation of the dislocation which characterizes Troy's world at this moment, even though she doesn't express it. That dislocation revolves most immediately about the split between Carolyn and Woody, but there are other stressors too, such as the family's lack of money, and more importantly for Troy, the incessant harassment she endures from her two older brothers, Clifford and Wendell. She also has no one with whom to share her growing awareness of her changing body, represented by at least two scenes where Troy studies herself in the mirror to see whether her breasts are growing. In one of those scenes where she stuffs toilet paper into her blouse, no one notices, since that happens to be the moment that Woody and Carolyn's quarrel erupts into an all-out fight, precipitating Woody's departure. The world-image of the nightmare, which presents a physical representation of Troy's world in transition, is an analogue for the upheaval in her world.

There is one other world-image in the film. Near the end of the film, after Carolyn's funeral, Troy joins the mourners back at their brownstone for the traditional reception. Her own emotional response to her mother's death is hard to read, and seems to be held in abeyance. She resists attempts to reach out to her, except for her brother

Clifford's taking her hand at one point. But she rises in indignation when her little brother Joseph comes in crying, and reports to her that Snuffy had mocked him because his mother was dead, and then stole Joseph's money. Angrily, Troy takes Joseph's hand and goes out to the street to confront Snuffy. When she spots him, the connection is first made visually by alternating close-ups of Troy, then Snuffy, then Troy. These close-ups of Troy do not exhibit the faceification of the earlier close-ups in the Troy-as-watcher sequences. Instead, this is a close-up of faceicity, where "micromovements of expression" demonstrate intensity and desire (on a continuum of love-hate), rather than wonder (Cinema 1 90). The close-up introduces the second "world-image": Troy and Joseph, in close-up, appear to cross the street--except they are not in motion. Again, either they are moving effortlessly across the street, toward Snuffy, or they are stationary while their world is in motion. When they reach Snuffy, or Snuffy reaches them, Troy whacks him on the head with a stick, draws blood, and says "I'm tired of you being here. Go sniff on your own block."

The change in Troy's world signalled by this world-image is quite evident. She is no longer the child, fleeing and in need of protection, as she was in the world-image embedded in the nightmare scene. Instead she's the protector of her little brother, now filling the protector's role formerly held by her now-departed mother. This

thematic strand is in evidence at various points in the film; Carolyn was portrayed as protector when her children ran afoul of the neighbor, Tony Eyes, and from her hospital bed she specifically charged Troy with responsibility for her little brothers. The world-image scene is Troy's first venture into that territory. Her role continues as the film ends, when Joseph asks Troy for permission to go out to play. Troy grants permission, with stipulations about when Joseph is to be back.

bell hooks takes exception to Lee's non-critical representation of this passing of adult responsibility to a child only ten years old. As hooks notes, Troy is told by her mother, from her hospital bed, "how she must assume the caretaker role...No one in the film is concerned about the loss of Troy's girlhood...Becoming a mini-matriarch because her mother is sick and dying requires of Troy that she relinquish all concern with pleasure and play, that she repress desire. Sexist/racist thinking about black female identity leads to cultural acceptance of the exploitation and denigration of black girlhood" ("Sorrowful" 13). hooks' article is largely a corrective to critical and audience reception of Crooklyn which was "fascinated by the funky, funny 'otherness' of typical Spike Lee black images," even to the point of ignoring the death of the mother in the film ("Sorrowful" 11). hooks' attention to the centrality of Troy's character, and the profound impact of her mother's death on Troy's future, is a more accurate reading of the

film than the film's own advertising, which billed it as "hilarious."

As I have attempted to demonstrate through a Deleuzean reading of the images in the film, Troy is indeed the central character in Crooklyn, and hooks' quarrel with Lee's seeming lack of criticism of the assimilation of her subjectivity into the motherly role at the end of the film is a telling point. The world-images discussed earlier do portray Troy as the inheritor of her mother's responsibilities, just as hooks notes. Crystal-images depict Troy wondering about her sexuality and her future, and ripening to the adult responsibilities which lie before her. As these changes occur, her identity within the Carmichael family is recast from peripheral to central figure. Recognizing the way the structures of the film convey this message is the first step toward assessing its thematic impact, as well as its self-conscious exploration of African American identity as an element of Troy's coming-to-awareness.

GOODFELLAS

The high-spirited energy of the first hour of GoodFellas is so at odds with the brutal knife-slaying that opens the film that we have to ask "what's going on here?" Ethically, what's going on is that the main character, Henry Hill, bases all his decisions on one bedrock fact, articulated in the first voice-over words he speaks in the

film: "As far back as I can remember, I always wanted to be a gangster." Ironically, the exuberant joking that attends the slaying of Billy Batts also contains the seeds of destruction for Henry, Tommy De Vito and Jimmy Conway. Because the only way to survive as a gangster is to follow orders, and killing Billy Batts was most assuredly not following orders. As Henry explains later, again in voice-over, after Jimmy and Tommy kick Billy Batts senseless on the floor of Henry's bar, "We had a serious problem with Billy Batts. He was a made guy with the Gambino crowd. Before you could touch a made guy, you had to have a sit-down and an ok." When Jimmy, Tommy and Henry kill Billy Batts anyway, they signal their inability to play within the rules, and respect the mob status of a made man. As Kathleen Murphy remarks of the film's opening sequence, "the murder is the right place to begin; for it's here that Henry's dream really starts to break down, though it won't hit the wall for another decade" ("Made" 26).

Henry's dream, to be a gangster, has two dimensions. He wants to live the easy life, but much more importantly, he wants to be somebody, a big shot, someone who belongs. This takes on the quality of family more important to Henry than the biological family headed by Henry's Irish father and Italian mother. The young teenager, remarking about his involvement with Paulie's mob at the taxi stand across the street from his family home, says "People like my father could never understand, but I was a part of something. I

belonged. I was treated like a grown up." As David Denby notes, "This avid and clever boy is weaned away from his pinched, working-class family and joins the far more wealthy, pleasure-loving family of mobsters. They educate, approve, and reward" ("Meaner" 81). That's exactly the picture we see when young Henry passes his first real test of loyalty: called into court for selling stolen cigarettes, Henry doesn't rat on his friends. When he exits the courtroom, freed because of the mob lawyer's signal to the corrupt judge that Henry should be freed, Henry is met and embraced by Paulie and the rest of his men, who congratulate him that he "broke his cherry" by being arrested for the first time. The transition of loyalty, from nuclear family to Henry's "adopted" mob family, is complete.

Henry's affiliation with the mob family of Paul Cicero follows the pattern examined by Zygmunt Bauman as he considers the workings of traditional communities, based on ethnicity or geography, and those of more loosely constructed communities, based on perceptions of common interest which may be more tenuous than they appear. Bauman asserts that all communities, traditional or temporary, are dependent upon the perceptions and beliefs of those who identify with the community: "Communities are _imagined_: belief in their presence is their only brick and mortar, and imputation of importance their only source of authority" (_Intimations_ xix). Though the Cicero mob has the appearance of stability and permanence, based on blood, ethnicity and

loyalty, these qualities exist largely in the minds of the community's adherents rather than in any immutable family loyalty, as demonstrated in the bloodbath towards the end of GoodFellas, where the participants in the Lufthansa heist, "family" members all, are systematically "whacked," or murdered. But imagined or not, this community appears to be a family to Henry when he says "I was a part of something. I belonged." Of course, there are other rewards for choosing to affiliate with this community. At first, the money is alluring, as Henry notes: "At 13 I was making more money than most of the grown ups in the neighborhood." As he grows older, the mix of glamor and power becomes as important as the money, as when Henry compares his life to that of "a movie star with muscle." Les Keyser pulls all these strands together when he notes, "the Mob is a family that embraces and contains all its members; like a feudal fiefdom, it endures by absolute allegiance. Its rewards are wealth and a sense of belonging; its penalties are exile and death" (Martin 211-12).

The price of acceptance into this family is loyalty. Henry is quite content to affirm his loyalty to Paul Cicero, at one point bringing Paulie a portion of the proceeds when Henry, Tommy and Jimmy steal $420,000 in an airport inside job. But Henry's first loyalty is to his two friends, Jimmy and Tommy, and collectively the three of them become like bad sons--involved in the drug trade which Paulie expressly forbid Henry to enter, and of course being suspected of

responsibility in the disappearance of Billy Batts, though that charge is never proven. But even the appearance of lack of loyalty is enough to get you killed; the execution of Tommy, the most obvious loose cannon, shows Henry quite clearly what he can expect for lack of loyalty.

Thematic and plot concerns such as the foregoing can be explored endlessly in terms of the logic or illogic of narrative flow, but they can also be explored in terms of the visual structures through which they are conveyed. While the narrative may suggest certain motivations for such phenomena as Henry Hill's sense of loyalty to Paulie's mob, or his later behavior as a renegade and consequent abandonment by and betrayal of Paulie and Jimmy, an examination of the visual structures of the film leads away from considerations of narrative logic and toward an examination of the event-nature of the image, rather than understanding it as simply a building block of the narrative. As we learn from Deleuze, the image itself carries a pre-perceptual impact. As Steven Shaviro asserts, "the insubstantial flicker of 'moving pictures' cannot easily be contained within systems of stratification. Images on the screen are violently torn away from any external horizon or context, as from any actual presence...Sheer appearance precedes any possible act of recognition; film shows before it says" (Cinematic 28). The structure of the images in GoodFellas creates a sense of family based on loyalty which parallels that presented in

the narrative, while at the same time visually demonstrating its instability. Ultimately, the "family" is an entity which collapses under the pressure brought to bear by individual subjectivity, both in the film's narrative and in its visual structure.

In a fashion similar to the party scenes in The Joy Luck Club, scenes in GoodFellas which depict group or family gatherings are invested with a good deal of energy through the device of the moving camera. In both cases the technique serves to connect the information within the frame with the wider environment, so that the "set" of the within-frame is contextualized by the moving camera which constantly breaks down and reconstitutes the information within the frame, creating a series of new "sets." These sets, which occur as what Deleuze calls "any-instants-whatever," progressively exchange the place of the within-frame and the out-of-frame, showing the relationship between them. The panning or tracking creates on the screen "a figure which is always in the process of being formed or dissolving through the movement of lines and points taken at any-instant-whatevers of their course" (Cinema 1 5).

But there are dissimilarities between group scenes in GoodFellas and the party scenes in The Joy Luck Club as well. The GoodFellas scenes do not recur in the same location; also, in GoodFellas, the method of camera movement, a hand-held camera proceeding through relatively unbounded space, creates an affective response different

from that created by the relatively circumscribed movements in The Joy Luck Club, where the tracking camera moves slowly through the room, or the stationary camera pans slowly. As noted earlier, the moving camera in the party scenes in The Joy Luck Club serves to connect the characters with one another, suggesting their cohesiveness as a constructed "family." The moving camera in GoodFellas, on the other hand, serves less to connect characters with one another than to place them contextually within a matrix of characters which is continually in flux, and while functioning as a "family," also poses potential harm for the characters involved. The moving camera's composing, decomposing and recomposing of images accentuates the constructedness and the mutability of the "family," undercutting Henry's sense of belonging to something solid and secure. In this sense, the visual structures specifically parallel the narrative flow. They are also metaphorically suggestive of the rhizomatic "lines of flight" which Deleuze and Guattari characterize as a component in the growth of organisms (Deleuze and Guattari "Rhizome" 16-18),[41] in that the tendency toward hierarchy

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[41] "Every rhizome includes lines of segmentation according to which it is stratified, territorialized, organized, signified, attributed, etc.; but also lines of deterritorialization along which it endlessly flees. There is a rupture in the rhizome each time the segmentary lines explode into a line of flight, but the line of flight is part of the rhizome. These lines never cease to refer to one another, which is why a dualism or dichotomy can never be assumed, even in rudimentary form of good and bad. A rupture is made, a line

and ossification is constantly disrupted by seemingly spontaneous lines of flight which rupture and reformulate the system, while still being a part of the system. Jimmy Conway tells Henry early in the film that the first rule of mob membership is "Never rat on your friends, and always keep your mouth shut;" but that first rule is preceded by an unspoken first principle: "save your own skin." Conway's "first rule" gathers power in the hierarchy; the first principle disrupts it.

Scorsese himself was conscious of the possibilities of camera movement for creating disruptive effects, and claims to have employed it for that purpose in GoodFellas. As he told Gavin Smith, "...I wanted lots of movement and I wanted it to be throughout the whole picture, and I wanted the style to kind of break down by the end, so that by his last day as a wiseguy, it's as if the whole picture would be out of control, give the impression he's just going to spin off the edge and fly out. And then stop for the last reel and a half. The idea was to get as much movement as possible--even more than usual. And a very speeded, frenetic quality to most of it in terms of getting as much information to the audience--overwhelming them, I had hoped--with images and information" (Scorsese "Smith" 30).

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of flight is traced, yet there is always the risk of finding along it organizations that restratify everything, formations that restore power to a signifier, attributions that reconstitute a subject..." ("Rhizome" 18).

What Scorsese expresses in general terms is evident in the use of the moving camera in GoodFellas. When the moving camera is used, Deleuze notes, "a figure...is always in the process of being formed or dissolving through the movement of lines and points" (Cinema 1 5). In a number of long sequence shots in GoodFellas, the camera is employed to represent the POV of the audience, constructing the imagined audience as part of the action of the film as it moves through a room, observing. Many of these shots last 20-30 seconds, the longest over three minutes before cutting to another angle. All are created with a hand-held camera; some involve the audience directly as characters speak towards the camera, as if acknowledging its presence as a character in the scene. Many of these hand-held sequence shots show a recurring emphasis on placement of Henry Hill within a "family" community which is both glamorous and dangerous, rigid yet always in flux.

One such example of these hand-held sequence shots appears early in the film and establishes a pattern for the others. It occurs as the young Henry begins his association with Paulie Cicero's gang, functioning as an errand boy. As such, he is in the back room of Paulie's bar, where a presumably illegal gambling operation is taking place. The shot begins in high angle close-up of a table of cold cuts and cheese, tracks along the table to its end, where hands put meat on a sandwich, then tilts up to show that we're watching young Henry. The POV shot tracks and pans with

Henry briefly as he takes the sandwich through the crowded room, but almost immediately the camera takes a different route, flowing across tables of poker players, then tilting up to rejoin Henry as he delivers the plate with the sandwich to a man surrounded by other men at a table in the medium distance. The tilt up also reveals that the room is crowded with people, all men. Never stopping, the camera leaves Henry, tracking and panning past Paulie, then coming to rest on a doorway, just as Jimmy Conway enters. Though the shot is packed with people, few are seen clearly, as the moving camera cuts off heads or shows only parts of bodies around poker tables; Henry, however, is seen clearly though briefly as he constructs the sandwich, Paulie is prominently featured as he stands apart from others and observes, and Jimmy Conway is featured as he steps into a pool of light, surrounded by a darkened any-space-whatever, when entering the room. The sequence continues, with Henry meeting Jimmy for the first time and receiving from Jimmy a $20 tip just for being a good kid. The voiceover, in Henry's voice, asserts young Henry's awe of Jimmy.

On a narrative level, this sequence shot might be considered to be an establishing shot, demonstrating the nature of the "family" to which Henry has attached himself (all male, engaged in illegal activities, etc.) and featuring two of the three men who will figure most prominently in his attachment to the crew: the "father figure," Paulie, and the "mentor" figure, Jimmy Conway. In

the Deleuzean analysis, an establishing shot will be conveyed as a perception-image, the type of image which functions as a vehicle for orienting a viewer to the circumstance of the image. In shots where the frame is fixed (i.e. the camera is stationary) the perception image is a "dicisign," or "perception in the _frame_ of another perception" (_Cinema 1_ 217), a "solid state" perception where the parameters of the frame are unchallenged. But the shot described above is a perception-image of a different sort, which Deleuze names the "reume," or liquid perception. The most evident example of such a perception would be a shot of flowing water, but the concept applies whenever the subject of the shot seems to flow through the parameters of the frame, rather than being contained by it. The frame is still felt, but as the limit through which the elements of the shot flow. With its sometime privileging of Henry, Paulie, and Jimmy as subjects, the shot loses some of its character as pure example of the type, but because it is characterized by dispersal and flow, still fits this category. What the reume shows, in this as other instances, is an image of insubstantiality. The world which Henry is entering may have primary figures, such as Paulie and Jimmy, but it is a fluid world of changing relationships; nothing is fixed.

This sense of insubstantiality is reinforced by the second sequence shot I wish to consider, a reume where the flowing matter again consists of images of people. In this

shot, however, not only the frame is felt as the object limit of each any-instant-whatever, but the camera is also felt as the surrogate for the viewer, as characters address the camera, validating John Simon's assertion that "Whenever possible, he [Scorsese] shoots from a character's point of view" (Simon "Mob" 64).

The shot follows an establishing shot outside the Bamboo Lounge, a bar where the gangsters hang out. At the beginning of the sequence shot, the camera travels up an aisle between tables bathed in the red light of the lounge. From a high angle perspective, the tracking camera reveals men and women at a sequence of tables; some of the men are introduced on the voiceover narration by name. As they are introduced, they look at the camera and respond with "hey, how ya doin'," "what's up, guy," "stayin' out of trouble?" and other comments which make it seem that the camera is a character. The flow continues as the camera comes to the end of the row of tables, circles around behind the bar, and tracks along the bar, revealing more characters who also either respond directly to the camera, or utter dialogue which confirms what the voiceover narration asserts. The perspective remains slightly high angle, the distance medium close. When the camera reaches the end of the bar, the nature of the sequence shot changes in a manner which reduces the effect of flow. Up to this point, the camera has been oriented to the side as the tracking occurs, so that the images flow into the left side of the frame and out

the right side. When the camera reaches the end of the bar, however, it follows a character who leaves the end of the bar and walks toward the door, tracking behind him. At the door to the kitchen, the camera abandons this character and follows another into the kitchen, where it discovers Henry Hill pushing a rack of fur coats. The camera follows Henry. The effect of tracking behind Henry, in medium shot, is less unsettling than the left-to-right discovery of characters which occurred in the club. Additionally, the lighting in the kitchen is normal, as opposed to the red tint in the club.

As with the shot of the young Henry in the gambling den, this shot too is partially comprised of following Henry as he is placed conceptually in the world he inhabits. Also as with the previous shot, the voiceover narration identifies this shot as an establishing shot in the sense that it appears to be meant to introduce specific people within Henry's world, the world of Paulie's mob. In reality, though, none of the characters so introduced is particularly important; even those who are seen again later in the film are seen in thoroughly minor roles, and many are literally not seen again. The physical structure of the shot provides a surer clue to its significance; the people being introduced are at once both important and unimportant--individually unimportant, mere cogs in the mechanism of Paulie's mob, but important as figures of the apparent cohesiveness of that "family." Sliding over these images as

it does, all in one take, the sequence shot connects them all to the figure who comes last, Henry Hill, as does the fact that the voiceover narrative is rendered in his voice. Unlike The Joy Luck Club, however, which also exhibits extensive use of the reume as a tool for connecting characters within the confines of the apartment which is the locus for the "real-time" party from which the rest of the narrative emanates in flashback, the use of the reume in GoodFellas creates a sense of instability by moving through space which has not been previously defined and is therefore always being discovered for the first time, along with its inhabitants, by the camera.

The third sequence shot to consider is by far the longest take in the film.[42] After insulting his future

[42] Kathleen Murphy describes the shot this way: "Henry's first real date with the woman he eventually marries (Lorraine Bracco) is a paean to the juice that gets you anywhere; the director plays this long shot-sequence in fast-forward mode, with not a single cut to retard the rush. Henry hands Karen out of his car, guides her across a neon-lit street, straight through the block-length line of hopefuls waiting to get into the Copacabana, and down a flight of stairs to swinging doors that open--magically--just for them. Camera hot on their heels, the couple hurries down dim halls, Henry scattering tips and banter on all sides. They burst into a brightly lit kitchen alive with activity, passing between counters and smiling faces. Then, through a curtain and into the nightclub proper, where the maître d' immediately signals a waiter; the camera turns to catch the man already on his way to stageside, table held high. Henry and Karen are barely seated when drinks arrive, courtesy of a group nearby; camera swings swiftly leftward to register the men raising glasses in salute. Basking in privilege, the couple settles in for the show. Henny Youngman, 'king of the one-liners,' is still cracking wise, voiceover, even as Scorsese, sly king of the one-shots, has cut into another pell-mell
performance--an airport heist that's played like a game of

wife, Karen, on their first date, Henry decides to make it up to her by taking her to the Copacabana nightclub. The shot begins in closeup on Henry's hands as Henry tips a doorman on the street outside the club in exchange for watching Henry's car. Henry and Karen cross the street; the camera follows, contextualizing them by including the long line of people waiting to enter the club as an element in the any-space-whatever which surrounds the figures of Henry and Karen. The camera follows as Henry and Karen pass through the line and down stairs to a basement-level door, which a restaurant employee opens for them. The camera continues to follow through the confined spaces of a series of corridors which lead, eventually, to a restaurant kitchen. For a brief moment the camera loses sight of Henry and Karen in the kitchen, panning left towards a chef; otherwise, it follows them as they pass tables, turn corners, and dodge the numerous kitchen staff who bustle about. Henry and Karen emerge from the kitchen into the nightclub and the camera loses them once again, directing its gaze toward the maître d', who greets Henry and orders a special table to be placed down front for him. After Henry and Karen are seated, the camera leaves them once more, panning left to show "Mr. Tony," who has sent a bottle of wine to Henry's table, seated in a group at an adjacent table. After panning back to Henry and Karen, the camera

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hide 'n' seek" ("Made" 26)

leaves them for the final time in the shot, tilting up to Henny Youngman on stage as he begins his routine. The routine forms a sound bridge to the next shot, of Henry and Tommy striding across an airport parking lot on the way to a robbery. The sequence of Henry and Karen at the Copa lasts over 3 minutes, and consists of one shot.

This third sequence shot is the most extreme departure from the manner in which the moving camera was used to create the sense of community and connection in The Joy Luck Club, and is indeed a departure from the use of the moving camera in the other two sequence shots from GoodFellas discussed above. Though the movement of the camera still results in an image characterized by dispersal and flow, the fact of its following Henry and Karen gives the shot at the same time a central, privileged image or pair of images. Their environment, the any-space-whatever which surrounds them, is constantly breaking down and reforming, but the central images, while in motion and therefore not static, are nevertheless still central. Consequently, this shot which by its very sweep and length calls attention to itself and to the frame as its object limit, is a perception-image suspended somewhere along the continuum between dicisign and reume, containing elements of both subjective and objective perception, as defined by Deleuze in the spirit of Bergson: "*a subjective perception is one in which the images vary in relation to a central and privileged image; an objective perception is one where, as in things, all the images vary*

in relation to one another, on all their facets and in all their parts" (Cinema 1 76). Water is the most pure example of the latter; the breaking down and recomposing entailed in the shots, described earlier, of the camera moving through the gambling den and through the bar, so that the subjects flow through the frame, share the characteristic of objective perception with Deleuze's example of a shot where water flows through the frame. The shot of Henry and Karen at the Copacabana is a subjective perception-image, but not a fixed one, because of the effect of flow occurring in the any-space-whatever which surrounds them. It does, however, highlight their subjectivity and even though it places them in relation with other characters, the other characters are for the most part anonymous (restaurant employees, kitchen staff, maître d'). The one who is not entirely anonymous, "Mr. Tony," is understood to be a mobster and in some sense a member of Henry's "family," (we met him in the second sequence shot discussed above, when he was introduced as "Tony Two Eyes") yet the connection is brief and inconsequential, the result of a single swish pan. Though the shot happens at midpoint in the film, it presages the condition which characterizes Henry and Karen at film's end: estranged, and alone. In this manner visual structure and narrative logic meet, undermining Pauline Kael's assertion that "the filmmaking process becomes the subject of the movie. All you want to talk about is the glorious whizzing

camera, the freeze-frames and jump cuts" (Kael "Tumescence" 101).

Another component of narrative logic which is reinforced by visual structures is a thematic strand which echoes elements of _The Joy Luck Club_ and _Crooklyn_, the issue of identity formation as a factor affected both by group identification and by markers and constructions of ethnicity. The first words in _GoodFellas_ foreground this issue, when Henry says "As far back as I can remember, I always wanted to be a gangster." His desire is complicated, however, by ethnicity: Henry's mother is Italian, but his father is Irish. Like Jimmy Conway, another Irishman, Henry can never be a "made man" in the mob.

Les Keyser asserts that Scorsese intended to foreground issues of ethnic identification in _GoodFellas_, and that "to ensure verisimilitude, Scorsese cast virtually all Italian American performers in _GoodFellas_..." (Keyser _Martin_ 201). The concern that the look of the film should identify it with Italian American identity is a topic discussed at some length by Leo Braudy, who asserts that "in many of [Scorsese's] films the ideology is not ethnicity or religion per se so much as it is the way in which those social and psychological forces are mediated by and even subordinated to visual style. The crucial issue is not ethnicity but the _representation of ethnicity_..." (Braudy "Sacraments" 250). Braudy sees ethnicity and religiosity represented in Scorsese's films in "(1) the importance of ritual

narratives, (2) the significance of ritual objects, and (3) the conferral of ritual status. Unlike the Protestant (and often Jewish) denigration of visual materiality in favor of verbal mystery, these directors [Scorsese, Coppola, DePalma] mine the transcendental potential within the visual world. Objects, people, places, and stories are irradiated by the meaning from within, which as directors they seek to unlock" (Braudy "Sacraments" 242).

The iconic quality of visual representation of ethnicity which Braudy alludes to suffuses GoodFellas, beginning with Scorsese's casting of his own mother as Tommy's mother. She appears three times--first, making a meal of spaghetti for Tommy, Jimmy and Henry as they are en route to bury Billy Batts; second, as a guest at Henry's wedding, sitting next to Tommy and encouraging him to find a girl and settle down like Henry, and finally, fussing over Tommy's appearance in the living room of her home on the day he thinks he is to become a "made man," though actually it is the day of his death. Scorsese's father is cast also, as an associate of Paulie Cicero's. His most prominent moment occurs as he cooks for Paulie, Henry and others of the mob who have been imprisoned. When seeking the iconographic representation of ethnicity, these scenes with Scorsese's parents provide some clues about objects and rituals to consider.

The most prominent of these ritualistic behaviors is the preparation and eating of meals. The three moving

camera shots discussed earlier are all shots where food and food preparation are prominent; in two of the three, the shot begins with a high angle shot of a table laden with food or drink, with the camera then tracking along the table. In two of the three, a significant portion of the shot occurs in a restaurant kitchen. These types of shots recur throughout the film, which features approximately 20 scenes which include the preparation or consumption of food or drink. These scenes take place in a variety of locations, both public and private, and serve various purposes, from familial to social to business. But all are interactive. In GoodFellas, no one eats alone.

Eating is a central motif in GoodFellas, its visual and thematic recurrence underscoring the familial quality of Henry Hill's relationship with his fellow mobsters. Since both Crooklyn and The Joy Luck Club also contain numerous shots that represent eating, the shots from GoodFellas can be compared with the other two films, with some potential for isolating gestures and signs which may potentially be identified as ethnic markers within the film.

One point of comparison has to do with the characters depicted in the scenes of eating. Except for two scenes, every scene in Crooklyn depicts family members eating together, usually the Carmichael nuclear family.[43] One

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[43] Though a few scenes do show some incidental eating on the street, involving children, such as the scene where Troy and her friend make purchases from the ice cream truck.

exception is a scene intercut with Woody's recital, depicting a small celebration of family and friends occurring after the recital where about seven or eight people gather around the dining room table in the Carmichaels' apartment. The other exception is the reception held in the apartment after Carolyn's funeral, where food is present. The medium shots which depict Troy's alliance with her brother Clifford include a table with food on it in the foreground, but very little eating is actually done in the entire sequence. A third sequence, which does involve relatives eating together, is the only instance of eating a meal that occurs outside the Carmichaels' apartment, and depicts the Carmichaels being fed in the kitchen and informal dinette of Clem and Song's suburban home, before they leave to take Nate to another relative's, further south. In this scene, interestingly, the boys and men sit at the table while Troy and Viola, and their mothers Carolyn and Song, stand behind the counter which separates table from food preparation area.

Unlike Crooklyn, depictions of eating in both GoodFellas and The Joy Luck Club are extensive. The Joy Luck Club has numerous scenes both of nuclear families dining together, and of larger gatherings where various people are present. And of course the entire narrative is structured as a series of flashbacks emanating from a "real-time" party where food and eating are dominant visual motifs. Dining in GoodFellas is even more of a communal

experience; the only scene of a nuclear family eating alone occurs early in the film, when young Henry's family eats dinner together; even there, Henry does not join them, instead standing at the window to look across the street to Tuddy's cab stand. In every other instance, either a group of mobsters eats together or a mixed group of families and friends eats together. Consequently, it would be difficult and perhaps inconsequential to compare scenes from the three films which literally depict the gathering of nuclear families to eat, since the overall use of eating in the films only revolves around the nuclear family in the instance of Crooklyn. But remembering Bauman's assertion that communities, and by extension families, can be provisionally constructed entities as well as biologically constituted ones, it is possible to compare the three films on the basis of scenes of eating which involve "families" as the films themselves construct this entity: in The Joy Luck Club being constituted by the extended "family" which gathers in June's father's apartment for June's "bon voyage" party, and in GoodFellas being constituted by the extended "family" comprised of the mobsters and their families. As Karen says at her wedding to Henry, "It was like he had two families...," meaning his biological family and the "family" constructed around Paulie Cicero.

One scene of eating which is typical in GoodFellas also provides a basis for analysis and comparison. It is the second scene of eating in the film, effectively juxtaposed

with the first, which involves Henry's nuclear family. Here as in every subsequent scene of eating, Henry is present. In this scene he interacts not with his nuclear family but with his new family, the men who work for the mobster Paulie Cicero. The scene, a picnic in the yard behind the cabstand, consists of only three shots. It nominally serves to illustrate Henry's recollection in voiceover where he explains that Paulie does all his communicating through intermediaries or in one-one-one situations, and that he is paid tribute by hundreds of people in return for "protection." The visual construction of the scene tells its own story about Paulie.[44]

The first shot, like many others in GoodFellas,[45] begins with a high angle closeup of a table of food. The camera pans left to right across the table and tilts up slightly to watch a pair of hands put mustard on a hotdog; a man walks left to right between camera and hotdog, only his midsection and hands visible as he carries a drink; the camera pans left to right following the drink, then stops to

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[44] Kathleen Murphy asserts that a referent for reading this scene can be found in the movie business itself, which mirrors the hierarchical structure of Paulie's domain: "Anyone who's witnessed the protocols of movie direction will recognize Paulie's style--on the streetcorner and during the patio picnic where his orders are nodded from director's chair to his A.D. to 'union man'" ("Made" 27).

[45] The shot of young Henry preparing a sandwich in the private gambling club, the shot in the Bamboo Lounge which introduces the mobsters, the shot of the meal preparation in prison, which begins with an extreme close-up of Paulie slicing garlic with a razor blade.

let the drink carrier walk out of the frame to the right, revealing a row of four occupied chairs against the backdrop of a green hedge. Three of the chairs are metal garden chairs; the fourth, upholstered, holds Paulie Cicero, the subject of the voiceover. The men eat. Someone in a blue shirt walks between camera and seated men; we only see the blue-shirted individual from neck to thigh. Tuddy, Paulie's brother, enters the frame from left, crosses to Paulie, and whispers. As Tuddy whispers, another (or the same) blue-shirted person crosses the frame. Tuddy then leaves the frame at the right.

The second shot is a matching cut, showing Tuddy entering the frame from the left to confer with the left-most of three men already in the shot in medium distance, standing with the house or building behind them. Tuddy whispers with the other man; someone in a blue shirt walks between the camera and Tuddy. Tuddy leaves, walks right to left, and the camera pans with him. He returns to Paulie to confer, bending to whisper in Paulie's ear; another blue-shirted person walks by. Tuddy stands erect next to Paulie, nods in the direction of the other man, and the camera pans right to show the other man nodding in return. A pan back right to left picks up Tuddy walking left to right; the camera reverses direction and pans left to right with Tuddy as he finds Henry seated inconspicuously behind the man with whom Tuddy was earlier talking. Tuddy stoops to whisper to Henry. Henry rises, comes toward the camera, walks around

Tuddy's former interlocutor, and goes up a set of stairs that lead into the building, leaving the frame at the back of the frame. The shot ends before Henry is completely out of the scene. The third shot is a medium shot of Paulie, still seated between two men visible in the frame. He has a napkin tucked into his shirt, and he's chewing. The sides of the frame tighten, excluding the other two men as the camera zooms in on Paulie. It stops as he is in medium closeup, the any-space-whatever consisting entirely of the green hedge behind him. No one, blue-shirted or otherwise, walks between camera and Paulie now.

The gestures to notice in this scene are of two sorts: those made by the characters, and those made by the camera. The things I notice about the characters are these. First, even though food is consumed, the primary characters are concerned with business. Paulie eats, but also listens intently to Tuddy and issues orders accordingly. Tuddy has no food, only a cigar. Henry too is without food, as is the nameless man with whom Tuddy confers. Thus food, and consumption of food, are only a pretext for conducting business in this scene, and the picnic only a convenient venue. This is reinforced by the fact that the only people present are men. Thus the impression created by the camera's initial attention to the food table is false, or misdirecting. This same misdirection also occurs in two of the sequence shots discussed earlier, which begin with tracking or panning shots across tables of food, but where

food really is secondary to business. In fact, in many of the scenes of GoodFellas which are structured around food, eating is merely a pretext for being together so that business can be done.

Another thing to notice about the characters is that their command of space is a clue to the hierarchical quality of their relationship. Paulie and three others sit; the others stand. Of those who sit, Paulie's chair is most substantial. Henry, as the youngest, sits at the periphery of the action. Tuddy, as Paulie's brother and emissary, has free access both amongst those sitting and standing, but is the only one privileged to have Paulie's ear. While there is some incidental movement in the service of getting food, most of the men in the yard are stationary.

The gestures of the camera work in concert with those of the characters, most noticeably in these ways. In the first shot, while Tuddy exercises his privilege of free movement, the camera is skeptical of his prerogative; Tuddy enters the frame at left, while Paulie is centered. The camera allows this intrusion, but doesn't change its focus; Paulie remains centered as Tuddy leaves at right. However, Tuddy's contact with Paulie has empowered him, in the camera's eye as well. The second shot of the sequence begins with Tuddy entering the frame from the left, but Tuddy becomes the primary object within the frame; when he leaves his conference with the other man, the camera now follows him as he returns to Paulie, then follows him again

as he leaves Paulie to find Henry. When Tuddy gives Paulie's orders to Henry, the camera recognizes the importance conferred upon Henry by this action, and follows Henry until he leaves the frame by going through the door at its rear. Then the shot ends.

In each of these situations, the camera as observer decides whom to follow and whom to leave. In this respect, as in the beginning of the first shot when it initially misleads the viewer, the camera takes on some of the functions of thought, as described by Deleuze: "Even when it is mobile, the camera is no longer content sometimes to follow the characters' movement, sometimes itself to undertake movements of which they are merely the object, but in every case it subordinates description of a space to the functions of thought" (Cinema 2 23). Deleuze names this type of cinematic sign the "noosign," the third in a taxonomy of chronosign (time-image), lectosign (readable image) and noosign (thinking image). When the camera mimics the functions of thought, it has left the realm of the action-image and entered into the province of time.

The third shot in the sequence cements Paulie's primacy in this scene, cementing as well the realization that eating is simply a pretext for doing business. The shot begins with Paulie centered between two other seated figures, but the thinking camera excludes them through the device of a slow zoom on Paulie. In this shot, no one (blue-shirted or otherwise) breaks the camera's gaze; the earlier two shots

in the sequence presented choices to the camera, whom to follow and whom to abandon. This third shot situates Paulie as the unquestioned controller of the action. After the zoom it is a medium close-up, an affection-image where the any-space-whatever surrounding Paulie is the evenly distributed green of the hedge, unbroken by fence, chair, people, or any interrupting lines. Paulie's face is not expressionless, but it is unchanging, giving it the quality of faceicity, the quality in this case not exactly of wonder, but of unchanging intensity, of force of will. The cut to the shot following (which begins a sequence subsequent to the one under discussion here), one of young Henry presumably following Paulie's orders given through Tuddy, shows Henry smashing car windows with a crowbar, thus bonding the affection-image of Paulie's intensity to the action that emanates from his force of will.

The signs to be read from this scene, those of food preparation and serving as a pretext for business, functional eating, the constructedness of the mob family, and its hierarchical order, are reinforced by numerous other scenes in GoodFellas. When young Henry fixes a sandwich in the gambling establishment, the camera sweeps over the food table but then away from it, as we do the "business" of meeting Jimmy Conway. When Paulie meets with Sonny, the owner of the Bamboo Lounge, to discuss Sonny's problems with Tommy, the setting is a restaurant. They meet over a table, yet we barely see the table, and no one eats. On two

occasions Henry takes his wife and daughters to Paulie's home for dinner. The table is heaped high with food, but we only see it in long shot. Again, we don't see anyone actually eat, but on each occasion we see Paulie take Henry aside before the meal to discuss matters of business: on the first occasion the whereabouts of Billy Batts, and on the second the necessity of Henry's staying away from drug-dealing. All these examples also demonstrate the hierarchical deference with which Paulie expects to be, and is, treated.

The one seeming exception proves the rule. With Billy Batts' not-yet-dead body in the trunk of Henry's car, Henry, Tommy and Jimmy stop at Tommy's mother's house for a shovel in the middle of the night. Tommy's mother (Catherine Scorsese) surprises them as they enter the house. She insists they stay while she fixes them a meal. This is the only scene in GoodFellas which depicts extended conversation taking place across a table, or actually shows consumption of food over a period of time. Further, there is minimal camera movement; half of the 24 shots in the sequence are close-ups of Henry, Jimmy, or Tommy, most of the rest are 2- or 3-shots across the table, where bread, wine and pasta are prominently featured. The only business conducted is that Tommy borrows a large knife from his mother, inventing a story about hitting a deer and having to extract its foot from the car's grille. Otherwise, the conversation is

spirited and social, concluding with Tommy's mother showing a painting she has painted.

Here, the camera does not think; instead, it links the static affection-images of Jimmy, Tommy and Henry, who are all complicit in Batts' murder. No close-ups of Tommy's mother intrude in this process. The consumption of food together, combined with the bondinging of the close-ups, marks the men as equals rather than in a hierarchical relationship. More precisely, they are equally complicit in the flouting of the hierarchy by murdering Billy Batts, an act which Henry later denies to Paulie that he has any knowledge of. Aside from the macabre spectacle of these three eating the food naively prepared for them by Tommy's mother while Batts awaits his death in the car trunk outside, this scene is also remarkable as virtually the only scene in GoodFellas where food consumption occurs in a context more social than practical or business-oriented; they eat the food here because Tommy's mother insists on preparing it for them. As such, it is in defiance of the pattern for food consumption established in the rest of the film. This isn't too surprising, since Henry, Jimmy and Tommy's other behavior here in killing Billy Batts is also defiant of the hierarchical order of fealty to Paulie Cicero which they know themselves to be responsible for upholding.

The approach to eating in Crooklyn and The Joy Luck Club is in marked contrast to the business-oriented approach to food consumption which characterizes GoodFellas. Like

GoodFellas, the time for eating in Crooklyn is often associated with control, but not in the hierarchical manner of GoodFellas. The controller in Crooklyn is Carolyn, the mother, and the controlled, at least nominally, are the children. Woody, the father, makes gestures toward sweetness and peace. Though these generalizations describe all four of the scenes where the nuclear Carmichael family eats together, a close examination of one of these scenes will suffice.

The third of four scenes where the nuclear Carmichael family gathers around the dining room table is a scene which lasts for 2 1/2 minutes of screen time, and comprises 64 shots. Except for two of the first three shots in the scene, none employs any camera movement. The first shot is a high angle close-up of a plate of blackeyed peas; the camera then booms down and tilts up to show that Nate, one of Troy's younger brothers, is seated at the table, staring at his plate of peas. The next shot shows his mother, Carolyn, from a low angle, standing next to Nate, demanding that he eat his peas. The rest of the family has left the table; in subsequent shots of Nate, the any-space-whatever sometimes includes a fragment of Joseph, the youngest brother, or Troy, as they play in the background, out of focus. Woody enters from the hall, having just returned from the store with ice cream and cake. The other children come running to their places at the table; Woody distributes the treats, despite Carolyn's statement to him that "You

know I don't want them eating that junk!" Nate too wants cake, but is forbidden from having any until the peas are finished. Woody sets aside a piece for him; when the dog Muttly snitches Joseph's piece of cake from the table Joseph complains and Woody gives him another piece. When Nate protests that it was his piece that Woody gave to Joseph, Woody reclaims the piece of cake, breaks it in half, and gives half to Joseph, saving the other half for Nate. Clifford and Wendell taunt Nate, Clifford drawing a slap on the head from Carolyn. Carolyn tells Nate again, exasperatedly, to eat the peas; Woody says "Do like your mother tells you." Nate then puts a forkful in his mouth and promptly vomits in his plate. Everybody but Woody scatters. Nate says "Do I still have to eat my peas?" Woody replies, "That's ok now. Just go in the bathroom and get cleaned up." The last shot of the scene is a tight closeup of Nate looking in Woody's direction, from Woody's POV.

As with the scene from GoodFellas, the gestures made by the characters and the gestures made by the camera work in concert to show the power relations within the family, and the alliances and sympathies which form within those relationships. The first thing I notice is that, while everyone else in the scene is mobile, Nate and Carolyn are not. Nate is confined to his chair until he eats his peas; Carolyn is the enforcer, standing next to him with her hand on the back of his chair. Though the camera only moves in

the first and third shots of the scene, the camera nevertheless establishes relations of power and loci of sympathy. In the third shot, a closeup of Nate, the camera pans right and tilts up, slightly, following Nate's glance up towards his mother and situating us on the same plane, with the same low angle perspective of Carolyn, as Nate. Every time we see Nate we see him in closeups of varying distances, a series of affection images. Every time we see Carolyn, on the other hand, we see her from a low angle which accentuates her power, but also her unapproachability. This presentation of Carolyn through low angle shots continues throughout the scene, in contrast with shots of Woody which are mostly closeups, always from the same medium angle as all the shots of Nate and the other children ranged around the table. Through this visual text, Woody is aligned with the children as he struggles with Carolyn for primacy within the family. Also, viewers are aligned with Woody and the children; numerous shots are explicitly from Woody's or a child's POV, others implicitly so because of camera angle. Only two shots are either explicitly or implicitly from Carolyn's POV, and they occur early in the sequence: high angle shots of the table with the children seated around it and Woody parceling out treats. The camera in this scene is not a "thinking" camera, as with the noosigns presented in the picnic scene from GoodFellas, but it does present us with "readable" images, or lectosigns,

readable by virtue of the way shot angle and POV suggest alliance.

The major characters in the scene are Carolyn, Nate, and Woody, with Woody and Carolyn in a struggle for primacy, each employing their own method of child-rearing. The fact that Troy and Joseph, Clifford and Wendell are here positioned as spectators rather than participants is conveyed by the camera through the fact that those four are always shown either in whole-group shots or in two-shots as they sit at the table. Carolyn, Nate, and Woody are shown to be primary characters by the fact that they are frequently shown in one-shots, often closeups: Nate in 20 one-shots, Carolyn in 9, and Woody in 10. In the cases of Woody and Nate, these closeups take on the traits of faceicity, affection-images which display emotions through "micro-movements of expression" (Cinema 1 90). Carolyn, on the other hand, is shot from slightly farther away and shows less variability in her facial expressions, leading to the conclusion that these are affection-images of faceification where the "immobile receptive plate" (Cinema 1 90) of her face testifies to her resolve. Again, these contrasts serve to demonstrate that the camera builds sympathy for Nate and Woody, not for Carolyn. This perception is reinforced by the structural balance of the scene; the closeups of Carolyn occur early in the scene, and are in balance with the closeups of Woody as the scene progresses. Closeups of Woody are more numerous towards the end of the scene, and at

the very end, after Carolyn literally flees the scene, it ends with shot/reverse shot closeups of Woody and Nate. Though Carolyn exercises power throughout by force of will and prominence of position (she stands at the table while Woody and the children sit), the alliance which Woody builds with the children through kindness (provision of treats, sympathetic treatment of Nate after he vomits) prevails against Carolyn's toughness and drives her from the field.

The juxtaposition of affection-image closeups in GoodFellas, as Henry, Jimmy, and Tommy ate at Tommy's mother's house, served to link them as equals in the plot to kill Billy Batts and thereby defy the hierarchy of the mob. The juxtaposition of affection-images in the vomit scene in Crooklyn functions differently, bonding Woody and Carolyn as combatants over Nate's fate, and ultimately bonding Woody and Nate as allies. The combative relationship between Woody and Carolyn is accentuated by their positioning at the table, on opposite sides from each other, Carolyn next to Nate so that she can exert physical as well as emotional control. Her hand rests on the back of his chair, and she physically restrains him when he reaches for cake. Even though Woody verbally reinforces Carolyn's insistence that Nate eat his blackeyed peas, he nonverbally positions himself as an ally of Nate's, and by extension the other children, as reflected in the camera angles which align him this way.

The other scenes where the Carmichaels gather for meals share some of this quality of struggle for primacy and control in the family. Interestingly, in another type of eating scene which recurs features one or more of the children eating while watching TV, food is again imbricated with conflict. In one, Troy eats Trix. When little brother Joseph asks for some, she replies "No, you idiot." Older brother Wendell then steals the box from Troy. In another, Troy returns from the store with candy and finds her brothers watching TV. She taunts them with the candy, prompting Clifford to call her an "evil, flat-chested wench." She replies, "nigger." Clifford then grabs her bag of candy. Even scenes which include food incidentally are imbricated with conflict. Troy steals Clifford's buffalo head nickel collection, and uses the money to buy ice cream cones for herself and a friend. Twice, Troy steals from neighborhood stores. She's caught stealing potato chips; later, she is not detected stealing a package of meat. Food is literally used as a weapon when Clifford first shoots aerosol Dream Whip directly into his mouth as a snack, then shoots some onto his hand to rub it on Troy's face. In all of these ways, the association of food and conflict, food and control of others, is reinforced in Crooklyn.

Eating in GoodFellas is a pretext for business; in Crooklyn it is a pretext for exercising control. In The Joy Luck Club, by contrast, eating functions in such a variety of ways that it is difficult to generalize. Its depiction

is consistent, though, with the narrative structure of the film discussed earlier in this chapter: eating in The Joy Luck Club is the pretext for the narrative itself, in the sense that the narrative is structured as a series of flashback stories circulating around the hub of June's bon voyage party, at which eating plays a primary, celebratory role. While many of the flashbacks also include scenes of eating, most times in situations where families eat together, or entertain guests, the "master meal" of the film, the current-time party scene, is both pervasive and typical, making it the scene that it makes the most sense to examine.

Actually, the party scene is presented in six scenes, alternated with flashbacks: 1) greeting of guests and preparation of food; 2) the mah-jongg game; 3) serving of main courses; 4) end of main courses, presentation of dessert (cake); 5) serving of cake; 6) champagne, toast to June, guests leave. These six scenes take just over 15 minutes of screen time, and are recorded in 79 shots, including 22 which are either static closeups over the mah-jongg table, or shot/reverse shot between June and Lindo at the end of the final party scene. Many of the 57 remaining shots are lengthy sequence shots, where the camera slowly tracks and pans through the apartment. These numbers become more striking when compared with the numbers for the dinner (vomit) scene from Crooklyn analyzed above, which took 2 1/2 minutes of screen time to present 64 shots, almost all from

a static camera, a large proportion of them closeups. Though The Joy Luck Club uses a great number of static closeups during the flashback sequences, as noted earlier, to highlight issues of personal identity contextualized by identity as Chinese American, the only extended sequences of static closeups that occur in the party scenes are the aforementioned mah-jongg and shot/reverse shot sequences. The sequence shots include a number of closeups, but always temporary, as the camera keeps moving, contextualizing them. Initially, then, the presentation of the party scenes has more in common with the look of the picnic scene discussed in GoodFellas than with the dinner (vomit) scene from Crooklyn. It differs from the picnic scene, though, in that the camera engages in minimal "thinking," and is never duplicitous. Camera movement is typically motivated by following the movements of a primary character, who is then kept central in the frame. An alternative motivation for camera movement is to situate a character as a member of a group of characters: a pan across a line of women, or a slow zoom out from a closeup of an individual to show the larger group are typical examples of camera movement as contextualizing device.

An examination of one of the party scenes will serve as an illustration of the way all of them work, with the gestures of the characters mirrored by the gestures of the camera in constructing both the sense of the extended family and their ethnicity, and in contrast to the gestures of

characters and camera in GoodFellas and Crooklyn. The third party scene follows the set of flashbacks which feature Lindo's girlhood in China, her relationship with her daughter Waverly as a child, and her more recent tensions with Waverly as a grown daughter. As with other party scenes that follow flashbacks, this one begins with a closeup of the person whose flashback we've just seen, Lindo, shoulders and head only. In the any-space-whatever are fragments of people in a small group behind her; a portion of the chandelier hanging above the dining room table is included at the top of the frame. This affection-image is one of faceification, as Lindo is lost in thought; it is only on-screen for a few seconds, supplanted by the second shot, a sequence shot which begins by reinforcing the contextualization implied by the any-space-whatever of the first shot. Lindo stands facing the camera at the left of the frame, her son-in-law Rich is seated to her left, her daughter Waverly is seated to his left. The group of four people standing behind Lindo are less prominent within the frame, but clearly visible and in focus. The food on the table is within-frame in the foreground. Rich maneuvers with chopsticks, an allusion to a scene of his chopstick-ineptness in the flashback. Here he lifts a piece of meat, gets everyone's attention for his accomplishment, then drops it, occasioning laughter. Lindo walks screen right, the camera panning with her, revealing other guests in pairs and trios, June's father standing, and June seated at the end of

the table. Lindo walks behind June's father, then behind June. June passes food to another seated person, then says "Here's a fork." Simultaneously Lindo, back to the camera, receives a platter heaped with vegetables and rice from An Mei. With a "ta da!" she places the platter in front of June, to the accompaniment of ooh's and aah's from others in the room. Composition is now a medium angle two shot, with Lindo and June in the center of the frame, others less prominent. Lindo uses chopsticks to place food on June's dish; when June protests, Lindo says "Whatsa matta? Guest of honor! Should eat more. Too skinny." The third shot of the sequence is a cut-in shot, the reaction of Ying Ying and Ah Mei, medium angle, with the chandelier at the top of the frame and fragments of other guests in focus in the any-space-whatever. An Mei says to Ying Ying, "June so happy. Going to China." The fourth shot completes the take of June and Lindo, same angle, distance, and guests in the any-space-whatever as previously, with Lindo still piling food on June's plate, saying "Only steamed. Can't make you fat," and June smiling, putting her hand to her face, shaking her head resignedly. The fifth shot returns to An Mei and Ying Ying in the same medium angle two shot, with An Mei remarking how terrible it is that Suyuan died before being able to see her daughters in China. At that, Ying Ying turns away from An Mei and toward the doorway behind her. The final shot in the sequence maintains the continuity, as Ying Ying, in frame from the waist up, completes the turn

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and takes a couple steps toward the camera. Momentarily, she is framed by a shaft of light; the other guests in the any-space-whatever are out of focus. She then leans against the door frame, which creates a vertical of red at the left of the screen. In leaning, she leaves the shaft of light. She looks past the camera, vacantly. Her voice, in voiceover, speaks the words "Only one thing is worse..." and the voiceover continues as her flashback begins.

The gestures of the characters in this scene, as in the other party scenes in the film, testify to their sense of connection with one another and their acceptance of one another, ethnically as well as individually. At least for the length of this party, they form a family/community characterized by acceptance and mutual fondness. Two of these gestures hinge on consumption of food, which in contrast to GoodFellas is a focus of activity here, and in contrast to Crooklyn is an activity which signifies togetherness rather than strife. One such gesture is Rich's fumbling with the chopsticks, a marker of his non-Chinese status which he acknowledges by being proud of his temporary prowess, and which everyone else forgives by laughing with him when he fumbles their use once more. The other such gesture is June's acceptance of Lindo's insistence that she take more of the featured dish, even after June protests. Again, polite laughter signifies acceptance. These two incidents are also replete with markers of ethnicity: the chopsticks, the food, the appearance of Lindo, Waverly,

June, An Mei, June's father, and some of the guests, which contrast with the Caucasian appearance of Rich and other guests. The potential for division or mistrust which this realization creates is muted, or erased, by at least three gestural factors: the laughter, the fact that conversations seem to proceed freely without recognition of racial differences, and the fact that all of the guests are connected through their expensive, conservatively styled clothing and jewelry. The apartment too is tastefully and conservatively furnished and appointed, and as eclectically as the guest list is composed: Chinese art on the walls, elegant English dining room furniture, and in one shot, a television set showing a football game.

Another way in which this scene resonates with others in which food is central is that times of eating are sites for sharing of communal knowledge, or passing on of family wisdom. Rich's fumbling with the chopsticks suggests that he has something to learn about the mechanics of using these tools, but the fact that he's still trying, and calls attention to his momentary mastery, shows that he accepts the importance of learning this skill as a marker of togetherness and acceptance. This superficial incident recalls a more significant lesson Rich learned earlier, in the Lindo flashback sequence, where Waverly introduced Rich to her family at a dinner party given by Lindo. At that meal, too, Rich bungled the use of chopsticks, but he committed a much more serious gaffe by failing to understand

that when Lindo criticized her own cooking, that was a signal for the others present to praise it. When he said "All it needs is a little soy sauce," pouring the sauce on the dish simultaneously, he inadvertently insulted Lindo, making a poor impression on his prospective mother-in-law. His obtuseness marks his status as an ethnic outsider; the occasion of eating is both a site of ethnic demarcation, and a locus for learning what it takes to be an insider.

This resonates with one of the culminating scenes of the film. The three previous flashbacks have revolved around the surviving members of The Joy Luck Club--Lindo, Ying Ying, and An Mei. Logically, the last would be Suyuan's, but it must be presented through the filter of June. She remembers events surrounding Suyuan's last Chinese New Year's celebration, an event she celebrated by serving an elaborate dinner to her family, Lindo's family, and other guests. The featured dish was snow crab. During dinner, Waverly embarrassed and humiliated June by revealing that Waverly's high-powered business associates were not satisfied with some freelance writing that June had done for the company. Waverly asserts that June's writing is "unsophisticated," and implies that June is unsophisticated herself. To ease the tension, Suyuan makes a remark that appears to accept Waverly's assessment of her daughter. Later, while they are cleaning up in the kitchen, June confronts her mother with the embarrassment and pain that Suyuan's remark caused her. Suyuan uses the occasion to

teach June a lesson about self-respect. She points out at dinner, June took an inferior piece from the platter of snow crab, but that Waverly had no qualms in helping herself to the "best quality" crab. The lesson is that June's lack of respect for herself is a greater problem than any lack of respect she might receive from others. Again, as so often in this film, a dinner is both the site and the means for passing on family and communal knowledge, as well as a sense of ethnic identity. Like the narrative itself, these lessons build in force because of their dispersal and circularity, as they are woven into the various flashbacks and party scenes.

A final factor to consider in the third party scene is the way the visual construction of the scene is integrally connected with the presentation of family and ethnicity. This can be seen by contrasting the visual presentation of this scene with that of the scenes discussed from GoodFellas and Crooklyn.

As noted earlier, the party scene seems to have more in common with the picnic scene from GoodFellas than with the dinner (vomit) scene from Crooklyn. With all the shots in the scene from Crooklyn being static, and many of them closeups or tight two shots, the sensations created are those of tension, claustrophobia, and a struggle for control. The greatest control in the scene is created by the camera, which not only rigidly controls what we see by keeping the frame filled with closeups and tight two-shots,

but also controls what we think about the subjects through the implicit identification and sympathy created through camera angle and POV. The number of shots in the scene also control viewer response, since both the scene's rhythm and its effects are under the control of the editor; the juxtaposition of images enhances the sense of conflict.

By contrast, the scene from *The Joy Luck Club* is much less manipulative. The closeups in the scene, whether static, stand-alone closeups or momentary elements of sequence shots, are always contextualized by fragments of figures of people in the any-space-whatever surrounding the subject of the closeup. The effect of closeups in *Crooklyn* was to isolate the individual from the other characters, and intensify the sense of conflict through shot/reverse shot editing. Even the closeups in *The Joy Luck Club* do not isolate, but situate the characters within family, and community--a community which is identified by ethnic markers yet open to otherness as well. Further, unlike the closeup in *GoodFellas* which accentuated Paulie's power, the closeups of individuals in *The Joy Luck Club* disperse attention even while focusing it. The first and last shots in the sequence are closeups, yet people in conversation are seen clearly in the any-space-whatever behind Lindo and out of focus in the any-space-whatever behind Ying Ying. The closeup gives momentary primacy to the foregrounded character, but it is impermanent and non-hierarchical.

This same oscillation between individual primacy and communal identification characterizes the long sequence shot which follows Lindo from one end of the table to the other. Conceptually, it is similar to numerous sequence shots throughout The Joy Luck Club, where the motivation for the tracking or panning is to follow the movement of a single character, granting her primacy as the movement of the camera breaks down and reforms the information within the frame. Unlike the sequence shots in the picnic scene in GoodFellas, the camera does not make decisions about which character to follow: it stays with the one granted primacy initially. Yet the saturation of the frame with large amounts of other visual information, in this case the table, the food, the other party-goers, and the slow pace of the pan or tracking motion, combine to give us alternative points of focus. The character being followed is granted primacy through that act, but is sometimes almost incidental within the entirety of the frame. Individual identity is situated communally; the camera both grants primacy and disperses it through the flow of the sequence shot. The shot is not a noosign, the camera making decisions and forcing them on us, but a lectosign, a readable image which because of its saturation leaves us much latitude in deciding where to focus and how to read the shot. One example of this latitude is the way that the inclusion of a number of Caucasian guests can be read as a gesture of ethnic openness and inclusivity, but needs to be read

against and contextualized by the markers of complication of ethnic identification such as the artwork on the walls, the nature of the food, Lindo's truncated English, the mingling of chopsticks with forks, and the physical appearance which marks some party guests as Chinese, just as others are Caucasian, and one is African American.

The gestures of the characters and the gestures of the camera in GoodFellas, Crooklyn, and The Joy Luck Club, and the contrasts and comparisons between those gestures as examined in each film in scenes of eating, reveal much about the way each film text situates itself with respect to issues such as individual identity, family and communal identity, ethnicity, interpersonal conflict, and hierarchical or dispersed social formations. Because these issues of theme and idea are presented visually as well as verbally, they open themselves to analysis of the way the visual presentation creates a pre-perceptual, affective context for reception of these themes and ideas. The use of Gilles Deleuze's analytical tools, as developed in Cinema 1 and Cinema 2, is an entry point for examining with precision the visual presentation of these films, and the affective and pre-perceptual effects of that presentation.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

What are the signs of ethnicity, or racial identity, in film? Most prominent are the faces and features of the characters portrayed. But this is only a beginning, and an insufficient one. Even though the blaxploitation films of the 1970s were peopled by African Americans, it could hardly be claimed that they were ethnically or racially representative. They simply represented a calculated effort on the part of their financiers to make money by exploiting Black fantasies, irrespective of the question of the integrity of the films' portrayals of African Americans.[46]

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[46] Jesse Algeron Rhines succinctly explains the genesis and eventual demise of the blaxploitation film: "From 1969 through the mid-1970s, white-owned distribution companies released an average of fifteen films per year featuring blacks as strong, sexually charged characters frequently at war with traditional American society. Although aimed at black audiences, many of these films were written, produced, and directed by whites. Their low production costs and high profit ratios helped distributors prosper, but blockbusters like The Godfather and The Exorcist, released in the same period, demonstrated that African-Americans on screen were not needed to bring African-Americans into movie theaters. Neither of these films featured black characters, yet one-third of the domestic box office was from black communities. Since black dollars flowed as easily or, in fact, more easily to such blockbusters than to black exploitation films, black-oriented films were soon virtually abandoned. Between 1975 and 1985 the theatrical release of films by African-Americans, or films featuring African-Americans in significant roles, averaged fewer than two a year.

The Charlie Chan films, while peopled with Asian faces (or Caucasians made up to look like Asians), were not representative of an Asian American perspective. More recent films have featured ethnically diverse casts, but they often serve only to create the impression of diversity without offering any genuine complexity or greater understanding of ethnic diversity or identity.

A more credible marker of ethnicity in a film is the sensibility of the writers or directors responsible for the themes dealt with and the manner in which they are depicted. Thus, directors like Spike Lee, John Singleton, or Melvin Van Peebles are assumed to provide an authentically African American filmic perspective. Ang Lee, John Woo, or Wayne Wang, by virtue of their names as well as their ethnic heritage, become the critics' touchstones for Asian and Asian American perspectives in film. John Ford is identified with an Irish American perspective, Woody Allen with a Jewish American perspective, Martin Scorsese with an Italian American perspective.[47] But this approach too elides a number of significant questions. What is meant by ethnicity, and how is that concept different from race? How does one's ethnicity intersect with one's sense of personal

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Distributors were content to focus on big-budget films with special effects and bankable stars" (38).

[47] See, for example, Lester D. Friedman, Hollywood's Image of the Jew, New York: Fredrick Ungar, 1982; Patricia Erens, The Jew in American Cinema, Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1984; Lee Lourdeaux, Italian and Irish Filmmakers in America, Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1990.

identity? Can claims of ethnicity or ethnic representation be made in a vacuum, or must the work of one director or writer be compared with the work of others, in order to create a context where such claims can be examined? How do these questions bear on the way we read films which appear to address issues of ethnicity?

According to Lester D. Friedman, there is an "enduring conflict between those who conceive of ethnicity and cultural identity as a predetermined, immutable condition beyond circumstances and rational control, and those who view ethnicity and cultural identity as a self-determined, changeable condition subject to situations and personal taste" ("Celluloid" 18). In making this observation, Friedman acknowledges that this binary opposition echoes the implication of Werner Sollors' title, Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture, that ethnicity is both a cultural heritage and a choice, and that "most conceptions of ethnicity negotiate a compromise of varying degrees between these extreme positions" ("Celluloid" 19). Peter Feng suggests that the appellation "Asian American," referring as it does to a variety of ethnicities, extends the concept of ethnicity in yet a different direction--the political: "'Asian American' is not a cultural term at all, nor even an ethnic label, but rather the name of a coalition of Americans who have come to realize that their political situation--determined in part by how Asians are seen by outsiders--requires them to act together" ("In Search" 33).

This political dimension to the question of ethnic identity has, at some time or other, characterized the self-definition of most other American ethnicities as well. As Ella Shohat explains, "ethnicity does not constitute a fixed entity or category expressing a natural, essential difference, but rather a changing set of historically diverse experiences situated within power relations" (216).

Recent studies in the representation of ethnicity in American film have stressed this cultural, political dimension. Focussing on the filmic presentation of ethnicity as otherness, and the tacit pressure of those so defined as "other" to assimilate, Gina Marchetti asserts that "Hollywood has the power to define difference, to reinforce boundaries, to reproduce an ideology which maintains a certain status quo. Although organized protests always exist as a last resort, the means to challenge Hollywood's hegemony over the representation of race and ethnicity remain elusive...Access to the industry also exists, but entrance demands a tacit agreement to assimilate, at least to a certain degree, with the dominant culture" (278). Thus directors like Spike Lee, Wayne Wang, and Martin Scorsese exist in a state of liminality, dealing on the one hand with the economic and social pressures to present racial and ethnic images which mesh with the Hollywood "tacit agreement to assimilate," and on the other with the political and personal reasons they have for producing images of race and ethnicity which meet their own

standards of verisimilitude. The accuracy of such representations is always open to question, as is the socio-political motivation for the production of these images.

The positional liminality of ethnically identified directors such as Lee, Wang, and Scorsese manifests itself in another way as well. Both through the operation of Hollywood stereotyping and through the operation of self-definition, directors like Lee, Wang, and Scorsese are identified as "hyphenated" Americans: African[-]American, Chinese[-] or Asian[-]American, and Italian[-]American.[48] As Peter Feng notes, "To claim a hyphenate identity is to assert a subject position while simultaneously asserting the impossibility of stable positioning" ("Being" 93). The subject position asserted by the hyphenate director is of necessity one situated on a border, oscillating between the stance of Hollywood insider necessary to finance film projects and secure distribution, and the stance of spokesperson for a particular ethnic perspective, unlikely

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[48] I bracket the hyphens to acknowledge that the hyphen itself is the subject of current debate. I have not used it in this study because of its visual suggestion of disjuncture between the ethnicity and the Americanness of the person being represented. In Peter Feng's words, "the hyphenate term itself...critiques the discourse of identity and labeling. The hyphen, while yoking two terms together on the page, emphasizes the inadequacy of either term; furthermore, as the hyphen strains to hold the terms together and apart, it denies the creation of a stable third term in the space between the two. The strength of the hyphenate term then is the way in which it foregrounds the inadequacy of its discursive construction" ("Being" 93). For further discussion, see Peter Feng's "The Politics of the Hyphen," Cineaste 21:1-2 (Winter-Spring 1995): 33.

to be understood or valued within the Hollywood infrastructure. Lee, Wang and Scorsese have all acknowledged, to some extent, their positionality on the cusp of the hyphen.

The tension of liminality, a felt quality of ethnically identified directors themselves, is also a state of being for ethnicities in general, and as such becomes a thematic paradigm for at least some of the films of these directors. In Jungle Fever, for example, Spike Lee creates a storyline where the love affair between an African American man and an Italian American woman, though passionate on an interpersonal level, cannot be sustained because of the lack of social support each experiences when they deviate from norms imposed on them by ethnicity, race and class. Both Flipper Purify (Wesley Snipes) and Angie Tucci (Annabella Sciorra) seek and find a small measure of support and understanding from their close friends, but not enough to sustain them. The wider context of the film amply demonstrates the social atmosphere of racial/ethnic intolerance and misunderstanding which exist in their respective neighborhoods of Harlem and Bensonhurst, dooming their cross-racial and cross-cultural relationship. As Henry Louis Gates observes, "Jungle Fever shows how overdetermined interracial contact is in American society--overdetermined by hundreds of years of exploitation, mythology, and pseudoscience" (169).

Yet Jungle Fever is not simply a story of racism. Its more subtle message is that interracial connections occur, and that the highly nuanced dynamics of such relationships are not adequately explained by simple revelations of racism in society. As Gates says, "[the film] also shows that social categories like 'black' and 'white' are not mutually exclusive, either, that the supposed cultural and psychological barrier between black and white ethnic Americans...is just one more myth of American racism. Jungle Fever shows that the relationship between black and white in America is one of endless fascination and cultural and social interpenetration...Jungle Fever--perhaps destined to be misinterpreted as one more film about white racism--is actually a brilliant exploration of the liminal space that connects, rather than divides, black America with white" (169). Though Spike Lee has often consciously chosen to frame his films with little or no reference to white America (She's Gotta Have It, School Daze, Crooklyn, Clockers), films such as Jungle Fever reveal his own liminality, his own desire and ability to explore the subtleties of the spaces between the absolutes of black and white, where traces of each mingle with the Other.

As explored earlier, the films of Wayne Wang also display this positional quality of liminality, particularly as it relates to the spaces between the categories of Chinese and American, both as descriptors of cultures and as descriptors of individuals such as Jo and Steve in Chan is

Missing. As in Jungle Fever, the initial notion of the fixity of ethnic identity in Chan is Missing is interrogated and broken down, showing it rather to be a dynamic, rhizomically changing, process of becoming. As Peter Feng puts it, "Wayne Wang's films explore the contradictions of Chinese American identity and in so doing propose a space for Asian American subjectivity. Chan is Missing takes the interrogation of identity as its central project, presenting a variety of perspectives on Chan Hung from a variety of puddles...Whereas each character [in the film] fixes Chan Hung in an attempt to fix her/his own identity, the spectator is not allowed to occupy any one of these fixed perspectives but must instead negotiate all of them" ("Being" 110). With no fixed vantage point, but instead with a rhizomatically connected inquiry which builds its own logic as it unfolds, Chan is Missing demonstrates the quality of liminality which Wang's films share with Lee's.

Wang's other Chinese American films also display this liminality. Eat a Bowl of Tea, a story of the difficulties faced by a post-Second World War Chinese bride as she attempts to adapt to her Chinese American husband's frantic business life and consequent neglect of their relationship, explores the frictions that occur and the fissures that develop as traditional Chinese expectations get lost in the translation to a new context in New York. As examined earlier, the de-centered narrative of The Joy Luck Club is a study in shifting perspective, the liminal quality of

uncertainty held in suspension, again, between the cultures of the Chinese past and the American present.

This narrative liminality, the de-centeredness of storyline that characterizes The Joy Luck Club, is also evident in the three Wang films to date that are not specifically Chinese American: Slamdance, Smoke, and Blue in the Face. In Slamdance, the narrative makings of a conventional murder mystery are rendered unconventional by the ambiguity and uncertain positionality of Drood (Tom Hulce), the main character. It may be fairly conventional for the narrative structure to keep the audience in suspense as to whether the character is a murderer or not, but Drood's liminality is not only an uncertainty in our eyes, but in his own as well. He genuinely occupies the space between criminal and victim, not only in the audience's (lack of) understanding, but in his own. In Smoke, the liminal positionality is also a matter of narrative de-centering, but more in the manner of The Joy Luck Club. Like The Joy Luck Club, the narrative structure of Smoke is fractured into multiple stories, each announced at its beginning with the name of a particular character. The narratives are connected by the characters' associations with one another. They find their physical point of commonality in a Brooklyn cigar store, but the stories do not add up to a conventional narrative. Even though overt issues of ethnicity are not on the surface of Smoke, its narrative structure suggests the liminal positionality which

I here associate with Wang's ethnic perspective. Blue in the Face, an even more fractured and episodic film, exhibits many of the same characteristics.

As with Lee and Wang, Martin Scorsese's liminal positionality as an ethnically-identified filmmaker has been often remarked upon. In fact, it is rare to see an article about Scorsese in the popular press which does not reach to connect his filmmaking to his personal history and ethnicity, even though many of his films do not thematically invite this connection. Lee Lourdeaux's comment is fairly typical: "Scorsese's canon, when compared to Francis Coppola's, is far less ambivalent about the tensions between the Italian and American halves of his identity. The films set in Little Italy primarily treat conflicts within Italian American culture, conflicts that Coppola never had to face. The films set outside Little Italy, all narratives of seeming Anglo conformity, do not so much erase Italian culture as place it in strong ethnic parentheses. (Even the nonethnic housewife in Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore has kitchen curtains decorated with tiny eggplants, intimate signs of Italian culture)" (219).

I have earlier considered these "conflicts of Italian American culture," as they are played out in Mean Streets. As with Wang and Lee, though, Scorsese's hyphenated positionality is not only a matter of themes, but also a matter of stance, occupying the liminal space of being in-between, in process, in motion. Perhaps no film of

Scorsese's shows this more clearly than Taxi Driver, where Travis Bickle's meandering, voiced-over musings are visually augmented by the constant motion of his taxi through the streets of New York. As in GoodFellas, the constant motion of Travis' cab is echoed and reinforced by the motion of Scorsese's camera, another sign of the fluid and unfixed nature of this film. Leslie Stern suggests this sense of motion and restlessness in her description of the opening shots of Taxi Driver: "Out of the night the bumper of a yellow cab emerges like the snout of a huge beast rising up out of some subterranean lair. It edges into shot [*sic*] filling the frame, accompanied by a dramatic soundtrack. This curiously oblique introduction inaugurates a sequence of restless images, a sequence that signifies compulsive aimlessness...We are cruising, gliding in a lateral track next to the pavement; people on the street move in slow motion, like the living dead" (47).

The stance of Taxi Driver is continuously liminal. It does not only exist in in-between space, but as Robert Kolker suggests, "exists only within its own space, a space which is itself formed by the state of mind of its central character, in that strange double perception in which we see the world the way the character sees it, but see as well the character himself and therefore perceive and judge his perceptions" (228). In Kolker's formulation, Taxi Driver implicates us as spectators in the liminality which characterizes Travis, and by extension the world of the

film. Though Kolker makes no reference here to ethnicity or race, his formulation sounds much like W.E.B. DuBois's explanation of the liminal situation of the African American, the "double consciousness" referred to in Chapter 2 in my discussion of Chan is Missing, the circumstance of seeing oneself through the filter of another's perceptions.

In its liminality, Taxi Driver demonstrates how Scorsese's sensibility works in concert with the liminal condition of ethnicity, even in one of the films which Lordeaux would identify as one of Scorsese's "narratives of seeming Anglo conformity." In the works of Lee and Wang as well as Scorsese, I have traced here the trope of liminality as a mark of ethnic sensibility in a conventional manner, turning to the work of other critics to demonstrate how they too identify this trait as a sign of ethnicity in the films of these directors, explicitly or implicitly. This will get us to a certain point, but no farther.

The shortcomings of the method employed above are at least two. First, this approach conflates the positionality of the film with the positionality of the director in a manner which makes it virtually impossible to untangle the two. Thus, in discussing the ethnicity of Scorsese's films (or Lee's, or Wang's) it becomes necessary to discuss the ethnicity of Scorsese (or Lee, or Wang) himself. This auteurist approach to film analysis is particularly rampant in the popular press, but consistently appears in academic analysis as well. Critics and scholars often seem to assume

that, before the analysis of any particular film is anything more than provisional, the director must be asked about his or her intention in making the film. In the analyses I have made in previous chapters, I have consciously kept to a minimum any reference to the director himself, or to the director's intentions for the film.

A related shortcoming is expressed by Paul Schrader, who notes the neglect of serious critical consideration of style. In his classic essay "Notes on Film Noir," Schrader says that "American critics have always been slow on the uptake when it comes to visual style...[they have] been sociologists first and scientists second" (225). Schrader explains that such critics have seen style only as a vehicle for the theme, or idea, of a film, rather than adopting Schrader's view that "style determines the theme in every film" (225). Though Schrader's "Notes" was first published over 20 years ago, and his comments do not account for numerous strands of film criticism to appear since his essay, the comments in some ways still ring true today. Style, when referred to in contemporary critique, too often is viewed as a support system for narrative and theme, rather than a central element in molding viewer response.[49]

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[49] Schrader's reference to "American" critics seems to implicate primarily the *auteurists* of the Andrew Sarris variety, whose adaptation of the theories of the *Cahiers du Cinema* critics of the 1950s to scrutiny of Hollywood production elevated studio directors such as John Ford and Howard Hawks to the status of *auteur*. My only assertion here is that the *auteurist* impulse still thrives. This is not to deny, but only to bracket, such contributions as

I have chosen to consider the way that the theme, or idea, of "community" is portrayed in the films discussed in this study by considering, broadly, the way this idea is communicated through visual style, or, more accurately, through the images and signs which constitute the cinema. Thus the title, *images* of community. The term *image* is itself ambiguous, denoting both a linguistic trope and a visual representation. It would be easy to allow this sliding signifier to oscillate between these two denotations (perhaps I have unwittingly done so on occasion), but primarily through the use of the concepts, the vocabulary, and the set of tools provided by Gilles Deleuze's taxonomy and explication of the images and signs of cinema, I have attempted to approach the theme of "community" through an analysis of its representation by these images and signs. The use of the particular theme, "community", allows for a comparative dimension to the study: in examining the ways that images of community are constructed in the films of Lee, Scorsese and Wang, I use Deleuze to consider similarities and differences. This allows me to avoid operating from any essentialized definition or preconception of ethnicity, but instead to use Deleuze to note the similarities and account for the differences among these three directors in order to provisionally offer a reading of

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Stephen Heath's (post)structuralist analyses in the British journal Screen, or Laura Mulvey's feminist application (also in Screen) of psychoanalytic theory to posit the camera's, and thus the spectator's, phallocentric gaze.

how the images produced in their films manifest an ethnicity which emanates from their image and sign structure, as well as from the intention of the director and the thematic impact of the dialogue or narrative trajectory.

Of course, many of the images created by Lee, Scorsese and Wang are quite typical of the filmmaking tradition in which they work, the tradition of Hollywood. Scorsese, particularly, acknowledges his debt to the tradition, and makes extensive reference to it both in interviews about his filmmaking, and in reflexive references within the films themselves.[50] The tools of cinema develop through technical and artistic advances, and certainly Lee, Scorsese, and Wang have made their contributions in this respect, but it is not their contributions to this advancement which primarily concern me here. Rather, their use of the tools available to them, and their permutations

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[50] Examples abound, such as Scorsese's insertion of clips from John Ford's The Searchers in Taxi Driver, or J.R.'s discussion of The Searchers in Who's that Knocking? Scorsese is copious in acknowledging the influence of earlier filmmakers such as Michael Powell, whose The Red Shoes is identified by Lesley Stern as an influence throughout Raging Bull. And, of course, Cape Fear is a re-make, clearly an indication that Scorsese sees himself as part of the Hollywood tradition while at the same time not bound by it. Spike Lee has not been nearly so vocal and specific about the influences on his work, and has been specifically critical of a tradition which he sees as an expression of a dominant society that marginalizes African American filmmakers. Yet he too employs clips from other films in Crooklyn. Wayne Wang's clearest acknowledgment of the Hollywood tradition comes in Chan is Missing, where the title and the narrative premise are both ironic reappropriations of the Asian American image from the old Hollywood series of Charlie Chan movies.

of those tools, provide a basis for analysis, for comparison, and potentially, for speculation about whether a particular use of these tools, in contrast to the use by another or other directors, might constitute an imagistic or signatory mark of ethnicity which is imbricated with or even precedes the narrative and thematic evidences of ethnicity. As detailed in previous chapters, it is in the service of this particular approach that Deleuze's analysis provides a mechanism for analysis and comparison.

To approach the images of ethnicity in the work of these filmmakers through Deleuze is particularly fruitful because of Deleuze's framework, that cinema is "a composition of images and of signs, that is, a pre-verbal intelligible content" (Cinema I ix). The effect on the viewer of "the images of the cinema [is], therefore, 'automatic...'" (Cinema I ix), meaning that our first experience of the image is its pre-perceptual apprehension through the operation of our central nervous system. We experience cinema first with our bodies, through the absorption of sensation, and only after that with our minds. Much of film criticism and theory elides this pre-perceptual point of origination and begins further up the line, analyzing cinema as it engages us intellectually, through narrative and theme. According to Steven Shaviro, such an approach suggests that "percept and affect must be subordinated to textuality and the Law of the signifier...[film theory] endeavors to subdue and regulate

the visual, to destroy the power of images, or at least to restrain them within the bounds of linguistic discursivity and patriarchal Law" (16). But the nature of cinema itself militates against being understood this way: "...perception can no longer be subsumed under reflective consciousness, or under cognition and judgment; instead, it marks a limit beyond which these can never extend. Sensation is disengaged from the transcendental conditions that are supposed to ground and organize it, as from the referential coordinates that allow us to locate and preserve it. Sheer appearance precedes any possible act of recognition; film shows before it says" (Shaviro 28). In this context, Shaviro notes, Godard's famous comment about Weekend, that "what is presented is not blood, but merely the color red," serves as a defining example: "The immediacy of the image short-circuits the processes of signification, while its simulacral incorporeality precludes any objective reference" (Shaviro 27).

Neither Shaviro nor Deleuze, of course, was the first to recognize that the imagistic nature of film, as well as its de-centered, spatially non-sequential manner of construction through editing, would affect the viewer pre-perceptually. In "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Walter Benjamin comments that "the distracting element of [film] is also primarily tactile, being based on changes of place and focus which periodically assail the spectator...The spectator's process of

association in view of these images is indeed interrupted by their constant, sudden change. This constitutes the shock effect of the film..." ("Work" 238). While both Benjamin and Shaviro notice this sensory "shock effect," though, Deleuze's contribution, and my reason for using his insights as the basis of this analysis, is that he goes beyond noticing to create a matrix of classifications for filmic images. Building on Bergson and Peirce, Deleuze facilitates a more precise analysis of the operations of cinematic images, beginning with the pre-war operations of the movement-image and showing how the loosening or the breaking of the sensory-motor link[51] led to the crisis of the action-image, which produced the post-war phenomenon that has extended into our own time, the supplanting of the movement-image in cinema by the time-image: "In everyday banality, the action-image and even the movement-image tend to

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[51] In Richard Dienst's discussion of Deleuze's Cinema, he construes the sensory-motor link as the causal relationship between image and viewer: "...what in fact defines the entire regime of the movement-image, is the way in which sequences of images are supposed to extend into the responses emitted by those living images called spectators. (I would call these 'subjects supposed to see.') Deleuze's keyword for this extension is 'sensory-motor link'" (Dienst 152). While I don't disagree with the plausibility of Dienst's formulation, I find it more likely that Deleuze locates the sensory-motor link within the sequence of movement-images itself, where a depicted action results from the character's having experienced a sensation, or series of sensations, conveyed through previous behaviors, usually by other characters, "since behaviour is an action which passes from one situation to another, which responds to a situation in order to try to modify it or to set up a new situation" (Cinema 1 155). These behaviors constitute the situation which has permeated the character's awareness. The character first absorbs, then acts: the sensory-motor link.

disappear in favour of pure optical situations, but these reveal connections of a new type, which are no longer sensory-motor and which bring the emancipated senses into direct relation with time and thought" (Cinema II 17).

In positing this fundamental rupture, the transition from action-images (in which the sensory-motor link remains intact) to the pure optical and sound situations which appear in cinema devoid of the sensory-motor link, Deleuze points the way toward understanding the sensibility of post-war cinema. Concurrently, he recognizes how the sensibility of post-war cinema mirrors the sensibility of the times it depicts. The logic of the cinematic sequence is no longer necessarily driven by the narrative force of behaviors or events, but instead inheres in the way the images immerse us first in pure sensation, because the participants themselves absorb sensation without engaging in a resultant action.

Deleuze's observations about the loosening or rupture of the sensory-motor link, and the resultant pure optical and sound situations portrayed in post-war films, arose as much from his observations about the landscape of post-war Europe as they did from his understanding of post-war European film (particularly the Italian neo-realists), or, more precisely, from his recognition of the way the images in film replicated images and social conditions in real space and time.[52] In this study, I have built upon and

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[52] Deleuze identifies this issue as the bridge between the two volumes of Cinema, addressing it in the "Preface to

extended Deleuze's observations to show how the images in the films of Lee, Scorsese, and Wang can be read as representative of images in late 20th Century American film in the way that they, too, reproduce images and social conditions central to our own place and time in their depiction of community, ethnicity, and race.

These concepts, foregrounded as they may be in the thematic and narrative elements of the films of Lee, Scorsese, and Wang, are also communicated through the construction of the movement-images and time-images in the films.[53] The anxieties and conflicts engendered by questions of community, ethnicity, and race are not only part of the narrative trajectory of a film, but are also communicated pre-perceptually through its images, as

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the English Edition" of Cinema 2: "Why is the Second World War taken as a break? The fact is that, in Europe, the post-war period has greatly increased the situations which we no longer know how to react to, in spaces which we no longer know how to describe. These were 'any-spaces-whatever', deserted but inhabited, disused warehouses, waste ground, cities in the course of demolition or reconstruction. And in these any-spaces-whatever a new race of characters was stirring, kind of mutant: they saw rather than acted, they were seers. Hence Rossellini's great trilogy, Europe 51, Stromboli, Germany Year 0: a child in the destroyed city, a foreign woman on the island, a bourgeoise woman who starts to 'see' what is around her. Situations could be extremes, or, on the contrary, those of everyday banality, or both at once: what tends to collapse, or at least to lose its position, is the sensory-motor schema which constituted the action-image of the old cinema. And thanks to this loosening of the sensory-motor linkage, it is time, 'a little time in the pure state', which rises up to the surface of the screen" (Cinema 2 xi).

[53] Though I restrict myself to a specific set of films by these three filmmakers, the broader applicability of the concepts is implied.

discussion in previous chapters of the specific imagery of various films demonstrates in some detail.

A question central to the concerns of Lee, Scorsese, and Wang, bearing as much on the social conditions surrounding the production of their films as on the societies depicted in their films, is the question of who controls the representation of ethnicity and ethnic identity. Stuart Hall's analysis of the importance of this question for blacks is equally applicable to any group which experiences disjuncture between its own lived experience of itself, and the representations of itself generated by others: "...we tend to privilege experience itself, as if black life is lived experience outside of representation. We have only, as it were, to express what we already know we are. Instead, it is only through the way in which we represent and imagine ourselves that we come to know how we are constituted and who we are. There is no escape from the politics of representation, and we cannot wield 'how life really is out there' as a kind of test against which the political rightness or wrongness of a particular cultural strategy or text can be measured" (30).

Historically, the "right" of controlling representation has been conferred economically and politically, so that the construction of the identity of peoples represented as Other has been out of their own control, and lodged firmly with dominant hegemonic forces. Considering this problem particularly from the perspective of blacks, Cornel West

calls it "the modern black diasporan problematic of invisibility and namelessness [, which] can be understood as the condition of *relative lack of black power to represent themselves to themselves and others as complex human beings, and thereby to contest the bombardment of negative, degrading stereotypes put forward by white-supremacist ideologies*" ("Cultural" 16, emphasis in original). By identifying this as a "diasporan problematic," West alludes to the positionality of blacks as Others not only in societies dominated by European and American economic and political power to control representation, but also in homelands such as his own Ethiopia, where a history of colonial control by these same hegemonic forces has controlled representation of the image of indigenous peoples. Diana Fuss shows how Frantz Fanon foregrounds the implications of the operation of colonialism for the question of self-definition, or identity: "Colonialism works in part by policing the boundaries of cultural intelligibility, legislating and regulating which identities attain full cultural signification and which do not. For the black man, the implications of his exclusion from the cultural field of symbolization are immediate and devastating...'Fixed' by the violence of the racist interpellation in an imaginary relation of fractured specularity, the black man, Fanon concludes, is 'forever in

combat with his own image'" (Fuss "Interior" 21-2).[54] This fracturedness, the position of being in combat with one's own image, seems almost inevitably to be a corollary of not being in control of the production of representations of oneself.

West and Fanon seem to cast this liminal position of Otherness as a particularly African or black colonial position, but the colonial impact on representation affects all whom Gayatri Spivak would call "subaltern." The phenomenon is not specifically racial, but is rather a means of defining the relationship between hegemonic and Other, categories which change situationally. Vietnamese anthropologist/filmmaker Trinh T. Minh-ha examines the means by which anthropological inquiry, for example, sets up a binary opposition between the hegemonic social scientist and the "Other" whom s/he studies. The conventions of anthropological documentary filmmaking are supposedly designed to avoid the dominant/Other binary, but in fact perpetuate it. As Trinh explains, "Factual authenticity [in anthropological filmmaking] relies heavily on the Other's words and testimony. To authenticate a work, it becomes therefore most important to prove or make evident how this Other has participated in the making of his/her own image; hence, for example, the prominence of the string-of-interviews style and the talking-heads, oral-witnessing

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[54] Fuss quotes from Fanon, Black p.120.

strategy in documentary film practices. This is often called 'giving voice', even though these 'given' voices never truly form the Voice of the film, being mostly used as devices of legitimation..." (134). In anthropology, as in politics and in economics, control over representation lies with those who control the tools and set the parameters for their use.

Since the ethnic and racial communities with which Lee, Scorsese, and Wang have identified themselves are sometime participants in this discourse of Otherness, it might at first appear appropriate to consider the operation of third-world dynamics of Otherness and marginality as possible analogues for the filmwork of ethnically-identified American filmmakers. This presents some problems, however, as can be seen in examining the genealogy of third-world cinema suggested by Teshome H. Gabriel, who suggests that third-world cinema develops in three phases: "Unqualified Assimilation," "Remembrance," and "Combativeness." The first phase is one in which the third-world filmmaker so closely identifies with the "Western Hollywood film industry" ("Towards" 31) that the filmmaker's aims are almost exclusively to entertain, and his/her style emphasizes "formal properties of cinema, technical brilliance and visual wizardry, [which] override subject matter" ("Towards" 32). In the "Remembrance" phase, which according to Gabriel describes much of current third-world film, the films deal with themes that are "the Third World's

source of strength, i.e. culture and history" ("Towards" 32). Filmmakers and crews are more likely to be indigenous. Though style is still likely to show the influence of Hollywood, a move in the direction of the indigenous is signalled by "growing insistence on spatial representation rather than temporal manipulation" ("Towards" 33). Gabriel identifies the "Combative" phase as the phase of maturity for third-world film, marked by its examination of "the lives and struggles of Third World peoples" and its "insistence on viewing film in its ideological ramifications" ("Towards" 33). Style in this phase is congruent with substance, evincing "an ideological point of view instead of that of a character as in dominant Western conventions" ("Towards" 34). Gabriel also notes the propensity of the mature, ideologically aware third-world filmmaker to contextualize his/her work historically, often through use of flashbacks. As with the other phases, Gabriel cites a number of examples of third-world films which meet his criteria for the "Combative" phase, while also noting that most third-world films have not yet reached this stage.

Gabriel's taxonomy of third-world film foregrounds the political necessity of struggle in the (post)colonial context, where indigenous people have been cast as "Other," both politically and culturally, by hegemonic interlopers. Third-world filmmakers participate in the counter-hegemonic struggle by reclaiming the right of cultural formation

through construction of filmic representations of their own ethnic and racial identity. This struggle may seem quite congruent with the goal of recuperation of ethnic identity and self-representation ascribed to Lee, Scorsese, and Wang throughout this project. In some respects it is; in others, it is not. This is empirically evident in the fact that Gabriel's description of third-world film's progression through phases of assimilation, remembrance, and combativeness does not describe the trajectories of the filmmaking careers of Lee, Scorsese, and Wang. In fact, their careers seem to follow exactly the opposite path: from combativeness through remembrance to (a type of) assimilation.

One possible explanation for this counter-trajectory may be the positionality, explored earlier, of one "who claim[s] a hyphenate identity" (Feng "Being" 93). Occupying this liminal space on the cusp of the hyphen makes particular demands on those who oscillate between struggle against and participation in Otherness, both hegemonic Otherness and subaltern Otherness. Gayatri Spivak has often alluded to the problematic nature of her own implication in and entanglement with the positionality of hegemonic privilege in her position as a Western university professor, while at the same time speaking from her positionality as a native of a third world country, with a counter-hegemonic political stance. Her provisional solution to this problem is to reject the dead-end of binary thinking, and accept

liminality as the only positionality possible: "In the field of ethno-cultural politics, the postcolonial teacher can help to develop this vigilance rather than continue pathetically either to dramatize victimage or to assert a spurious identity. She says 'no' to the 'moral luck' of the culture of imperialism, while recognizing that she must inhabit it, indeed invest it, to critique it" ("Foundations" 160-61).

Trinh T. Minh-ha's inquiry into her two vocations, anthropology and filmmaking, offers a specific example of accepting the conditions of liminality and operating from that stance. Trinh's film, Naked Spaces--Living is Round, inquires anthropologically into an African culture not her own. The gap between her subject and herself is the gap between outsider and insider. From her own third-world positionality Trinh asks, "where should the dividing line between outsider and insider stop? How should it be defined? By skin colour (no Blacks should make films on Yellows)? By language (only Fulani can talk about Fulani, a Bassari is a foreigner here)? By nation (only Vietnamese can produce works on Vietnam)? By geography (in the North-South setting, East is East and East can't meet West)? Or by political affinity (Third World on Third World counter First and Second Worlds)? What about those with hyphenated identities and hybrid realities" (145)? Trinh's response to her rhetorical questions is embedded in the construction of her article. She quotes extensively from Zora Neale

Hurston, an African American anthropologist and novelist, conflating Hurston's positionality with Trinh's own in this respect: that both, as ethnically identified ethnographers, occupy liminal space: "The moment the insider steps out from the inside, she is no longer a mere insider (and vice versa). She necessarily looks in from the outside while also looking out from the inside. Like the outsider, she steps back and records what never occurs to her--the insider[--] as being worth or in need of recording. But unlike the outsider, she also resorts to non-explicative, non-totalising strategies that suspend meaning and resist closure...She refuses to reduce herself to an Other, and her reflections to a mere outsider's objective reasoning or insider's subjective feeling. She knows, probably as Zora Neale Hurston the insider-anthropologist knew, that she is not an outsider like the foreign outsider. She knows she is different while being Him. *Not quite the same, not quite the Other, she stands in that undetermined threshold place where she constantly drifts in and out*" (145--emphasis added).

As Trinh stands between cultures, both professionally and personally, yet participates in both of them as "not quite the same, not quite the Other," so to do Lee, Scorsese, and Wang stand between cultures within which they participate as African American, Italian American, and Chinese American. If the trajectory of their careers runs in the opposite direction of Gabriel's appraisal of the

maturation of third-world film through stages of assimilation, remembrance, and combativeness, I suggest it is because Lee, Scorsese, and Wang are not third-world filmmakers, but share a positionality of greater complexity, in that they both participate in and resist their particular communities, even as they both participate in and resist American culture. Trinh T. Minh-ha labels this positionality as the "Inappropriate Other/Same who moves about with always at least two/four gestures: that of affirming 'I am like you' while persisting in her difference; and that of reminding herself 'I am different' while unsettling every definition of otherness arrived at...Whether she turns the inside out or the outside in, she is, like the two sides of a coin, the same impure, both-in-one insider/outsider" (145-6).

From their position as Inappropriate Other/Same, Lee, Scorsese, and Wang interrogate their own relationship with their ethnically identified position, even as they interrogate the hyphenated positionality of their own ethnicities as both partially constitutive of and necessarily resistant to the wider American culture. As cultural workers within the film industry, Lee, Scorsese, and Wang have been in position to follow Cornel West's call to "contest the bombardment of negative, degrading stereotypes" ("Cultural" 16) of their own ethnicities. I contend in this project that the work of their early careers was designed to do just that, meaning that they began at

Gabriel's most advanced stage, the stage of combativeness. Spike Lee subtitled his book on the making of his first film, She's Gotta Have It, "Inside Guerrilla Filmmaking," and commented in the introduction: "It's not for me to say whether SGHI is a landmark film (I make 'em, that's all) but I do want people to be inspired by it, in particular, black people. Now there is a present example of how we can produce. We can do the things we want to do, there are no mo' excuses. We're all tired of that alibi, 'White man this, white man that.' YO! Fuck dat! It's on us. So let's all do the work that needs to be done by us *all*. And to y'all who aren't down for the cause, move out of the way, step aside..." (Spike 17). Martin Scorsese began with two films of a projected trilogy (Who's That Knocking, Mean Streets) which were designed to portray accurately the lives of young men, petty hoods, in his lower Manhattan Italian American neighborhood, without reference to the romanticized images characteristic of The Godfather or to Hollywood stereotypes such as the Dead End Kids or the Bowery Boys. Scorsese even refers to Mean Streets and GoodFellas as "anthropology."[55] Wayne Wang's first film, Chan is Missing,

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[55] See, for example, this question and answer from Gavin Smith's 1990 interview with Scorsese:
Smith: *Do GoodFellas and Mean Streets serve as an antidote to The Godfather's mythic version of the Mafia?*
Scorsese: "Yes, yeah, absolutely. Mean Streets, of course, was something I was just burning to do for a number of years. (By the time I did it,) The Godfather had already come out. But I said, it doesn't matter, because this one is really, to use the word loosely, anthropology--that idea of how people live, what they ate, how they dressed. Mean

has been extensively discussed earlier as a conscious reappropriation of the image of the Chinese American, recuperating it from the stereotypes perpetrated by Hollywood in the Charlie Chan series.

In each instance, the necessity of beginning from a position of combativeness in relationship with the wider American culture, and with its Hollywood stereotypical representations of ethnicity, is a driving force. These initial films constituted notice served (since Who's That Knocking, Chan, and SGHI were produced as independent films, outside the Hollywood mainstream) that representational space was hereby being appropriated for correctives to the mainstream stereotypes previously created by Hollywood. The notice was received. All of Scorsese's and Lee's subsequent efforts have been financed and produced within the Hollywood mainstream.[56] While Wang subsequently made independent films (Dim Sum, Eat a Bowl of Tea) he also has secured financing and produced films within the Hollywood system

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Streets has that quality, a quote 'real' unquote side of it. GoodFellas more so. Especially in terms of attitude. Don't give a damn about anything, especially when they're having a good time and making money. They don't care about their wives, their kids, anything" (Scorsese "Smith" 28).

[56] Though sometimes still within a combative and charged atmosphere. Lee, for example, mounted a publicity campaign to have himself named as director on the Malcolm X project, and appealed to prominent African Americans to secure sufficient financing to produce the film on the scale he thought appropriate. Scorsese agreed to make The Last Temptation of Christ on a minimal budget after realizing that he was in danger of having all studio support withdrawn from the controversial project.

(Slamdance, The Joy Luck Club). These subsequent films, whether concerned with ethnic themes or not, have been a corrective to previous Hollywood ethnic stereotypes perpetuated both in film narratives and in assumptions about the quality of work done by ethnically identified directors and actors.

From the combative stage, all three directors proceeded to a stage analogous to Gabriel's stage of remembrance. All three have made explicitly historical films, recuperating the representation of their ethnic American history both from Hollywood representations and from stereotypes current in the wider culture. Spike Lee immediately contextualized his second film, School Daze, by opening with a montage of still photographs depicting specific events from African American history, accompanied by the singing of the spiritual, "I'm Buildin' Me a Home." The film itself is a representation to African Americans of African American issues, meant not to combat stereotypes, but to build consciousness and identity. Lee's most monumental project of reclaiming representation has been his Malcolm X, which he insisted from the beginning had to be made and controlled by an African American.[57] Wayne Wang's second film, Dim Sum, like Chan is Missing, is set in Chinatown. But the rhizomatic liminality foregrounded in Chan is only alluded

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[57] In Lee's case particularly, but to a degree with Scorsese and Wang as well, the stages of combativeness and remembrance blend with one another to a degree.

to in _Dim Sum_, an exploration of the intergenerational dynamics between Chinese American mother and daughter over whether the daughter will marry. The theme prefigures _The Joy Luck Club_, another Wang film (along with _Eat a Bowl of Tea_) which is consciously and primarily a representation of the ethnic positionality of Chinese Americans, almost without reference to any sense of combativeness with the wider American culture. Though Scorsese's body of work contains fewer films which can be characterized as works of remembrance, _Mean Streets_, _Raging Bull_, _GoodFellas_, and _Casino_ certainly contain elements of this characteristic. In an emotional if not a historical sense, _The Last Temptation of Christ_ is a work of remembrance as well.

Gabriel's first phase for third-world film, which I identify here as the most mature phase for the films of Lee, Scorsese, and Wang, is the phase of assimilation with the hegemonic environment of film production. At first glance, this seems to suggest that these directors whose early careers were marked by noble struggle have now sold out to Hollywood's commercial interests. While I do not deny that all three have become far more sophisticated in their ability to get a film project financed, and that all three have learned how to negotiate the Hollywood power structure, I do not mean to imply that by "assimilating" in this manner, they have compromised their artistic or ethnic integrity. Though "assimilation" may have a commercial

component, my primary contention is that "assimilation" should be construed narratively and aesthetically.

The assimilative impulse is perhaps most clearly seen in Scorsese's body of work, where a number of films (Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore, The Color of Money, Cape Fear, The Age of Innocence, and others) appear to have no ethnic point of reference. Whatever representations these films construct, they seem not to be representations of ethnicity in either a combative or a remembrance mode. In this sense, the subject matter of the films can be said to have assimilated with broader Hollywood traditions, traditions which Scorsese consciously alludes to directly through such tactics as re-making an earlier Hollywood production (Cape Fear). Wayne Wang, too, has made films within the Hollywood system which are virtually devoid of direct reference to Chinese American or Asian American experience.[58] His first such effort, Slamdance, starring Tom Hulce and Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, disappeared from sight almost immediately after its release. Smoke and Blue in the Face, by contrast, have found a measure of recognition and success as art house releases. In the latter two films as well, Wang works with established and well-known actors, unlike

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[58] Though it is no easier for an ethnically identified director to escape stereotyping than it is to erase the ethnically stereotyped images which Hollywood produces. Peter Feng notes that "at least one reviewer...went out of his way to mention that a minor character in Smoke was of mixed Asian ancestry, as if to assure readers that they were not mistaken, that Wayne Wang usually did Asian movies (Feng "Being" 115).

his practice with the Chinese American films of using an ensemble of seasoned actors whose names are generally unfamiliar. Slamdance, Smoke, and Blue in the Face seem to suggest that Wang, too, has developed to the point where he can "cross over" between ethnic and non-ethnic themes, that he has the option of "assimilating" with Hollywood tradition and production. It is more difficult, however, to make such a claim on the basis of Spike Lee's body of work. On the most obvious level, all of his films have foregrounded African American characters and themes. All retain a degree of combativeness, even when their primary thrust is remembrance. His most recent release to date, Get on the Bus, is a loosely constructed narrative about the differing motives and social positions of a busload of African American men united by their intention to participate in an intensely political event, the Million Man March organized by Louis Farrakhan and staged in Washington D.C. Working with such themes, Spike Lee cannot be said to be heading toward an assimilationist phase, except in the sense that he has thoroughly learned the skills and tactics necessary to secure financing and respect within the Hollywood system, even as the subjects of his films continue to confound Hollywood expectations. At first glance, this may seem to suggest that Lee has maintained a degree of "purity" which no longer applies to Scorsese and Wang. Or it may suggest,

conversely, that it is only a matter of time until Spike Lee tries his hand at a non-African American theme.[59]

Does this movement toward assimilation signal a lessening of ethnic consciousness in the films of Scorsese and Wang, and potentially Lee? If subject matter is the only criterion, perhaps so. But subject matter is not the only criterion. It has been my purpose throughout this project to demonstrate that the sensibility of ethnic positionality is not simply a matter of subject matter, or of theme, but that narrative structure and the structure of images in the films of Lee, Scorsese and Wang demonstrate the sensibility of ethnic positionality as well. To test this theory, I have shown how Deleuze's Cinema, though itself as much a work of philosophy as of filmic analysis, can be used with primary film texts as a tool of practical criticism to examine the conventions these directors employ, and, through comparison, to reach some provisional conclusions about the possibility of locating their ethnic sensibilities in the structures of their images of community as well as in the subject matter of their narratives. Thus, when (for example) Scorsese's use of the impulse-image was

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[59] Why, of these three ethnically identified yet successful filmmakers, has Spike Lee been the one to maintain a combative-recollective stance? Any answer is of course purely speculation. Though I intend no minimization of the way that Italian Americans and Asian Americans have historically been marginalized in American society, the long history of violence and racism directed against African Americans in this society suggests to me that Lee simply has more to be combative about.

examined in the creation of an originary world in Cape Fear, and was subsequently connected with his use of the same image-structure in Mean Streets, the ethnic positionality of Mean Streets was shown to resonate in Cape Fear, even though the latter film is not typically included in the list of Scorsese's ethnic explorations. Though no extensive analysis of Smoke has been attempted in this project, its de-centered narrative structure is certainly reminiscent of the structure of The Joy Luck Club, and Wang's privileging of the affection-image in both films shows how the ethnic sensibility of Joy Luck resonates in the images and signs of the non-ethnic Smoke. The use of Deleuzean tools facilitates analysis of the structures of images of community in the films of these three filmmakers, images imbricated with their ethnic positionalities.

The move toward "assimilation," then, on the part of Scorsese and Wang (and the tentative prediction of such movement at some time in the future for Lee), needs to be carefully bracketed and understood not to imply that these directors are to be construed as abandoning their positionality as Italian American, Chinese American, and African American artists. Instead, their "assimilative" thrust should be understood to reinforce and reinscribe their ethnic positionality within their body of work, even when the subject matter may not be specifically ethnic. This happens in two ways: aesthetically and culturally. On the aesthetic plane, this "assimilationist" move can be seen

as an artistic assertion that ethnicity is not only inscribed in a film's subject matter, but is also inscribed in its image and sign structure. Culturally, this move toward "assimilation" must be seen not as a capitulation to the identity politics of the hegemonic, but as an assertion of these filmmakers' own identity politics as "hyphenated" Americans. This is a position of liminality, but also a position from which assertions of cultural power can be made in resistance to the identity of "exotic Other" thrust upon them through traditional Hollywood images, replacing these with images from their own films of "empowered other," in the sense in which Homi K. Bhabha explains the operation of "otherness" in a multicultural society: as the condition necessary for cultural self-definition. Bhabha suggests that we should value otherness, a sign of liminality, as a necessary condition for hybridity, the Third Space which must supplant hegemony and diversity as a socially and culturally stabilizing force. Bhabha connects advances in linguistic theory with the possibilities of advances in cultural understanding: "the theoretical recognition of the split-space of enunciation may open the way to conceptualising an *inter*national culture, based not on the exoticism or multi-culturalism of the *diversity* of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's *hybridity*. To that end we should remember that it is the 'inter' [i.e. a liminal space]--the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the *in-between*, the space of

the *entre* that Derrida has opened up in writing itself--that carries the burden of the meaning of culture. It makes it possible to begin envisaging national, anti-nationalist histories of the 'people'. It is in this space that we will find those words with which we can speak of Ourselves and Others. And by exploring this hybridity, this 'Third Space', we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves" (131).

The Otherness which Bhabha describes is not an Otherness of lack, but an empowered Otherness. The liminal positionality from which it operates is not a liminality of anxiety or rootlessness, but a generative liminality of creative social and cultural production, the liminality of Bhabha's "Third Space," where hybridity signifies that the cultural contributions of ethnically identified Americans can manifest at one and the same time their ethnicity and their Americanness, without being exoticized or marginalized, because in their hybridity they are productive of Americanness itself. This is the generative, creative Otherness which, in its essential Americanness, describes the "hyphenated" ethnic positionality of films made by Spike Lee, Martin Scorsese, and Wayne Wang, and marks their place in late Twentieth Century American film and culture.

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