Figures of Desire

A Theory and Analysis of Surrealist Film

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CHAPTER TWO

Un Chien andalou

> New images will come to follow the free bent of desire
> at the same time as they are vigorously repressed.
>
> SALVADOR DALI[1]

Un Chien andalou (*The Andalusian Dog*) 1929

Production: Luis Buñuel.
Director: Luis Buñuel.
Script: Luis Buñuel, Salvador Dalí.
Photography: Albert Duverger.
Design: Pierre Schilzneck.
Editor: Luis Buñuel.
Music: At its first performance the film was accompanied by gramophone records, including Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde* and some Argentine tangos. In 1960 Buñuel advised on the compilation of a score for a synchronized version based on the 1929 musical selections.
Leading Players: Pierre Batcheff (The Man); Simone Mareuil (The Woman); Jaimé Miratvilles; Salvador Dalí (Marist Priest). 17 minutes. Black and White.

IN 1929 Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí's short film *Un Chien andalou*[2] burst upon the Paris scene, an instant success in Surrealist and

[1] Dalí, "The Stinking Ass," trans. J. Bronowsky, *This Quarter* 5 (September 1932):49–54; reprinted in Lucy Lippard, ed., *Surrealists on Art* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1970). Originally published as "L'Ane pourri," in *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution* 1:12.

[2] Buñuel directed from a scenario written by himself and Dalí. Much has been written about the respective contributions of each man. Although Dalí was present only on the last day of shooting, Buñuel gives him equal credit for creation of the scenario: "'The film was 50% of each of us. . . . I did the cutting of the eye and the ants in the hand; Dalí did the garden scene and the cocktail shaker bell.'" Francisco Aranda, *Luis Buñuel: A Critical Biography*, trans. and ed. David Robinson (New York: Da Capo Press, 1976), p. 60. Many com-

other avant-garde circles and the apparent fulfillment of the many Surrealist hopes for the cinema. Ever since, this short seventeen-minute film has enjoyed a privileged position in film history, considered variously as: the primary source for the spread of a Surrealist style in the commercial cinema, the first film to assault its spectator systematically, the classic example of cinematic poetry, and an important precursor of the current American avant-garde.[3]

In an extended article Philip Drummond shows how the above accolades have, for half a century, replaced and obscured any serious understanding of the text by so many "presumed moments of historico-aesthetic impact and effect."[4] Drummond's detailed analysis of the film is an important corrective to the kind of impressionistic rewriting to which the film has so often been subjected, and I highly recommend it on that account.

The aim of my own analysis is somewhat different. If, as Artaud suggests, Surrealist film can offer the cinematic equivalent of the "mechanics of the dream" and if, as is widely recognized, *Un Chien andalou* is the most successfully oneiric of Surrealist films, it is important to discover what these mechanics are all about. The aim of the following section is to establish the methodological groundwork for analysis of the dreamlike rhetoric that dominates the film. With this groundwork I hope to offer: (1) a close analysis of the peculiar form of the Surrealist figure in film, (2) a subsequent analysis of the latent meaning of these figures in relation to the text as a whole, and (3) a rhetorico-psychoanalytic reading of the entire film.

The Rhetoric of the Unconscious. Unconscious desire cannot be named. As Freud defines it, it is forbidden a normal mode of dis-

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mentators, Aranda included, tend to attribute positive credit to Buñuel, negative credit—for snobism and avant-garde preciosity—to Dalí (ibid., p. 60). This is a tempting view, since Dalí had much less to do with their following "collaboration" on *L'Age d'or* and since he appears to have a long history of behaving irresponsibly toward Buñuel. Nevertheless, as far as the scenario goes, it seems more reasonable to accept Buñuel's word on their equal collaboration than to allow current anti-Dalí sentiment to lead us astray.

[3] Philip Drummond cites the sources for these prevalent views in "Textual Space in *Un Chien Andalou*," *Screen* 18 (Autumn 1977): 55.

[4] Ibid., p. 56.

course; it can only be registered by its transgressions. For the psychoanalyst these transgressions are the slips and repetitions that do violence to originally intended speech. In dreams they are memory traces divested of their original meaning by the hidden discourse of the unconscious.[5]

The way in which the unconscious accomplishes these transgressions is not in itself codified in the same way a linguistic system is codified. Emile Benveniste points out that it is only in the broad sense of a general linguistic capacity, as *langage* rather than *langue* (a specific system or code), that one can speak of "language" in dreams or other unconscious expressions.[6] Benveniste continues that it is really in the secondary procedures of what is commonly referred to as *style* that one encounters the qualities that constitute unconscious *langage*. He explains that the unconscious makes use of a rhetoric which, like style, has its figures. The old catalog of tropes can thus provide an inventory suitable to it.[7]

Jacques Lacan, in his essay "The agency of the letter in the unconscious or reason since Freud" carries Benveniste's original observation a step further by drawing an analogy between the primary figures of new rhetoric—metaphor and metonymy—and the procedures of condensation and displacement in dreams.[8] Lacan suggests that condensation and displacement in dreams are primary processes that temporarily bind the psychic energy of desire in ways similar to the temporary poetic binding of meaning in metaphor and metonymy. This is not to say that metaphor and metonymy are the same as condensation and displacement. Dreams are unconscious productions, and poems are for the most part conscious productions. For this reason I prefer to retain the poetic/rhetorical terms *metaphor* and *metonymy*, but with the ultimate purpose of discovering how a specifically Surrealist use of these rhetorical procedures resembles the unconscious procedure of "dream work."

[5] Lacan, *Le Seminaire*, vol. 1, *Les Ecrits techniques de Freud*, p. 270.

[6] Emile Benveniste, "Remarques sur la fonction du langage dans la découverte freudienne," *Problèmes de linguistique générale* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), p. 86.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Lacan, *Ecrits*, pp. 146–75.

JAKOBSON'S METAPHOR AND METONYMY: RHETORICAL FIGURES IN FILM

When Lacan first noted the resemblance between Freud's condensation and displacement and Roman Jakobson's rhetorical concept of metaphor and metonymy, he acknowledged the importance of Jakobson's reformulation of the old catalog of tropes into a more modern, restricted rhetoric consisting of two main figures: metaphor and metonymy.[9] This restricted rhetoric[10] was composed of two basic kinds of figures modeled on the binary oppositions of structural linguistics: paradigm and syntagm. Since the rhetorical notions of metaphor and metonymy derive from the parallel with the linguistic function of paradigm and syntagm, it is important to describe what these linguistic functions are.

The structural linguistics of Ferdinand Saussure show that language has two fundamental axes. The first, a *paradigmatic axis*, functions to select the elements of any given utterance according to certain rules or paradigms. A paradigm is the theoretical reconstruction of the linguistic choices made by every speaker of a language. These choices are made among similar things. "'Did you say *pig* or *fig*,' said the cat. 'I said *pig*,' replied Alice." Thus Jakobson explains that phonologically the cat was attempting to recapture a linguistic choice made by Alice. "In the common code of the cat and Alice . . . the difference between a stop and a continuant, other things being equal, may change the meaning of the message."[11] Alice has made a paradigmatic selection from similar—phonological—elements. The second, a *syntagmatic axis*, refers to the way in which the elements actually present in the verbal chain are arranged. Here the key function is the combination of *contiguous* elements along

[9] Roman Jakobson has written several articles on aphasia, all of which are reprinted in volume 2 of his *Selected Writings*, 2 vols. (The Hague: Mouton, 1971). The most famous of these, the one to which I refer, is the 1956 article "Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances," pp. 239–59. For a brief history and description of the "old catalogue of tropes" that Jakobson is reformulating, see Roland Barthes, "L'Ancienne rhétorique: Aide-mémoire," *Communications* 16 (1970): 172–230.

[10] The term *restricted rhetoric* is Gérard Genette's. See his "La rhétorique restreinte," *Communications* 16 (1970): 158–71.

[11] Jakobson, *Selected Writings*, 2:241.

the chain of discourse: how Alice put together the contiguous phonological, morphological, and syntactical elements she has already chosen. Every speech act, Saussure shows, encompasses both these functions.

Jakobson's article on language and aphasic disturbances shows how this binary division of structural linguistics applies to two very similar divisions in aphasic speech disorders. Jakobson suggests that two rhetorical figures selected from the catalogs of classical rhetoricians can be used to simplify and revitalize rhetorical analyses in literature and the visual arts. Thus, he proposes that metaphor and metonymy are the two quintessential rhetorical figures, because they have polar axes similar to those of paradigm and syntagm.[12]

Jakobson explains that the one thing (linguistic) paradigms, (rhetorical) metaphors, and the so-called aphasic "contiguity disorder" have in common is *similarity*: all derive from the selection of features from among similar things. On the other hand, syntagms, metonymies, and the aphasic "similarity disorder" are all marked by the function of *contiguity*, the combination of contiguous and present elements. Aphasic similarity disorder affects a speaker's ability to *select* words or phrases from the paradigmatic language code that is organized according to similar categories. Contiguity disorder affects a speaker's ability to *arrange* these elements contiguously. The speaker with a contiguity disorder will therefore rely heavily on the other pole of language, choosing similar or "metaphoric" formulations from the paradigm. In response to the word *microscope*, such an aphasic might substitute the similar word *spyglass*, but he or she would have difficulty providing the linguistic context for the word in a full sentence. On the contrary, a speaker with a similarity disorder would find it difficult to select similar terms from a paradigm. Such speakers would find it hard to name, provide synonyms for, or metalinguistically define a given term. For example, when shown a pencil, an aphasic with similarity disorder would not be able to name it but would, instead, veer off to a contiguous quality or function and say something like "to write."[13]

Jakobson applies the underlying linguistic categories of similarity

[12] Ibid., pp. 244–56.
[13] Ibid., p. 247.

and contiguity (or selection and combination) to larger stylistic (or aphasic) idiosyncrasies of metaphor and metonymy.[14] In so doing he draws the important lesson that similarities that underlie metaphor have been given much attention in stylistic analyses, while contiguities that underlie metonymy have been rather ignored. We hardly notice, for example, that Anna Karenina's handbag becomes a metonymic figure for the heroine herself in her famous suicide scene in Tolstoy's novel. Jakobson's point is that we tend not to notice that metonymies are figures, because the fact that they are based on real or virtual spatial contiguities makes them seem so much more realistic than metaphoric associations based upon similarity alone.

At the end of his article Jakobson suggests that metaphoric and metonymic poles of stylistic expression occur in film. But he does not say how this is so other than that the work of Griffith is predominantly metonymic, while the work of Chaplin and Eisenstein is predominantly metaphoric.[15] Although this statement is extremely suggestive, Jakobson does not tackle the very difficult problem of tracing the differences between verbal and visual figurations. Yet, often when we talk about metaphors in film, we really think of the model of verbal metaphors. Verbal metaphors are built out of the transgression of coded linguistic meanings. On the purely denotative, linguistic level, the phrase *my love is a flame* makes no sense, because love is not a flame. On the connotative, rhetorical level, however, the word *flame* has undergone a change of meaning. A figural meaning arises out of the discrepancy between the coded, literal meanings of the two parts of the statement. This discrepancy between what I. A. Richards[16] calls *tenor* (the underlying idea of love) and *vehicle* (the flame with which love is compared) forges the discovery of a new meaning that is based upon the *ground* of their

[14] Jakobson himself does not always keep these linguistic and rhetorical levels separate. Christian Metz, in "Métaphore/Métonymie, ou le référent imaginaire" (*Le Signifiant imaginaire*, pp. 224–29), clarifies Jakobson by stressing the difference between the coded linguistic level of the discourse and the uncoded rhetorical level of the referent. I mention this now to avoid confusion later.

[15] Jakobson, *Selected Writings*, 2:256.

[16] I. A. Richards, *Philosophy of Rhetoric* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1936, 1971), p. 96.

shared characteristic of heat. The metaphor is composed of both halves of the statement.

But in film, the image of a flame is not an arbitrarily coded link between a sound and a concept. If a filmmaker uses the image of a flame as a metaphor for love, this visual flame rather stubbornly remains a flame, at least more stubbornly than the word. (If one thinks of all the love scenes in films that take place adjacent to fireplaces, it is clear that such "figures" are only loose approximations of the love-flame equation in the verbal metaphor. In fact, they are very often partial metonymies owing to the fact that the fireplace and its flame are contiguously related to the lovers.)

One result of Jakobson's reformulation of old rhetoric into two binary figures has been to encourage a great many studies in film (and literary) metonymy.[17] Rather than the loose application of the poetic term *metaphor*, film analysis now tends to focus on *metonymy* to the extent that film has often been defined as an essentially metonymic art. Film metaphors have been pushed aside, as if to make up for all the years metaphor reigned supreme.

An extreme but typical instance of this antimetaphoric tendency is film historian and aesthetician Jean Mitry's insistence that film metaphors do not actually exist. Mitry argues that most of what are called film metaphors are not true metaphors at all but rather at least partial metonymies. He cites as an example a famous close-up of the pince-nez of the ship's doctor caught in the ropes of the ship in Eisenstein's *Potemkin*, after the doctor himself had been thrown overboard. Mitry argues that the pince-nez is not so much a metaphor founded on *similarity* between the upperclass doctor and his glasses as a metonymy based upon the fact that the glasses and the doctor have been *contiguously* associated with each other previously in the film.[18]

Here Mitry simply gives a more elaborate theoretical basis to the general notion mentioned above—that in film metaphor the flame and pince-nez, unlike the words for these things, seem to be really

[17] One of the best analyses of metonymy in literature is Gérard Genette's "Métonymie chez Proust." *Figures III* (Paris: Seuil, 1972), pp. 41–66.

[18] Jean Mitry, *Esthétique et psychologie du cinéma*, 2 vols. (Paris: Editions universitaires, 1963), 1:120–22.

there. If they don't have a reason to be there, Mitry argues, they disrupt what is often felt to be the film's primary function of narration. Mitry generalizes this notion to proclaim that film, unlike verbal language, cannot accommodate metaphors that do not arise from the given space or imaginary world of the narrative—from what he and other French critics refer to as its diegesis.[19] In other words, since film must use images to create its diegetic illusion of a world, any figural connotation that comes from outside this world goes against the grain of filmic creation; it is a conceptual intrusion appropriate to verbal language but not to film.

Mitry's pronouncements are important because they articulate narrative norms that are often implied in analyses of films. But although Mitry is correct to show that many so-called film metaphors are in fact partial metonymies, he is wrong to deny the existence of "pure" filmic metaphor. Such a denial leads him to dismiss such metaphors as the two shots that open Chaplin's *Modern Times*. This famous metaphor—a shot of a crowd of sheep herded to the slaughter followed by a similar crowd of workers pressing into a subway entrance—points out the function of workers in a machine-dominated, depersonalized society. Metaphoric similarity between the herd of sheep and the "herd" of workers suggests that workers are as faceless and submissive as sheep herded to the slaughter. Mitry would claim that, since the sheep don't belong to the modern urban world of the diegesis (they are extradiegetic), the metaphor defeats the realistic thrust of all filmic discourse and thus weakens Chaplin's film. He adds that even this metaphor is not entirely pure, since the sheep are present in the image chain along with the workers; they have not taken their place. Thus Mitry also defines *metaphor* substitutionally: as only that instance where, in a verbal metaphor, the word *flame* replaces the word *love* (my flame burns) and, in a film

[19] *Diegesis* is an important term in the analyses of *Un Chien andalou* and *L'Age d'or* that follow. The term was first coined by Etienne Souriau to indicate the denotative material of a film. Christian Metz explains that the term is derived from the Greek διγλσις meaning *narration* but also relating to the represented instance—the ficitonal space and time dimension implied in and by the narrative. It is thus contrasted with the aesthetic instance of the film, its connotative or figural level, which, according to Metz, comes later, building upon the diegesis. Christian Metz, *Film Language*, trans. Michael Taylor, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 97.

metaphor, where the shot of the sheep replaces the shot of the workers.

But if Jakobson's binary rhetorical division is to be useful as a way of talking about filmic or any other kind of figures, these divisions must be able to accommodate all existing practices. It is no solution to disallow metaphor in film, when the films of Chaplin, Eisenstein, and Buñuel all contain such metaphors. The real question is how these figures operate.

In this connection I would like to mention a very helpful elaboration of Jakobson's rhetoric proposed by Christian Metz.[20] Metz shows that, in spite of Jakobson's expansion of verbal rhetoric to include visual figures, there is a persistent tendency, even in Jakobson's work, to define film rhetoric in terms of verbal tropes. When Mitry says the *Modern Times* metaphor is not a metaphor because it lacks substitution, he is thinking in terms of the verbal definition of a *trope*—one word or expression used for another. Metz suggests, however, that both in language and in film there are really two ways in which a figure can be deployed, and only one of them is an actual substitution. The first and more common way is for a metaphor (or metonymy) to be arranged syntagmatically in the verbal or image chain. The second, less common way, is for the figure to be arranged paradigmatically—condensed in such a way that the given element of the figure implies the part that is not given.[21]

With this distinction, Metz suggests that we must be careful not to confuse the referential axis of rhetoric with the discursive axis of linguistics. What has often happened in past rhetorical analyses is that, since the phenomenon of contiguity is common to both metonymy and syntagm, contiguity of the discourse (syntagm) is confused with contiguity of the referent (metonymy). In like manner, since similarity or contrast is common to both metaphor and paradigm, it is easy to confuse similarity or contrast of the discourse (paradigm) with that of the referent (metaphor). In critical practice this commonly means that the observations made about metonymy are actually pertinent to a discussion of syntagm, while the observations about metaphor are pertinent to paradigm. Proof of this con-

[20] Metz, "Métaphore/Métonymie," pp. 177–371.
[21] Ibid., pp. 224–29.

fusion is often provided in the tacit assumption that metonymies, like syntagms, are always spread out along the horizontal axis of the discourse, while metaphors, like paradigms, can only appear vertically, as implied but absent terms.

Metz preserves the primary rhetorical categories of metaphor and metonymy while providing a secondary stipulation as to how the figure is deployed on the linguistic level of the discourse. Out of Jakobson's original binary division, Metz develops a four-part classification consisting of: (1) *Metaphors placed in syntagm* (similarity—or comparability—on the level of the referent plus contiguity on the level of the discourse). Such metaphors can either be pure, as in the extradiegetic example of sheep plus workers from *Modern Times*, or diegetic, as in the shot of Clive Brook and Marlene Dietrich's kiss on a train followed by the train whistle blowing in the film *Shanghai Express*. (2) *Metaphors placed in paradigm* (similarity—or comparability—on the level of the referent plus comparability on the level of the discourse). Here, a single comparable element of an originally two-part metaphor placed in a syntagm comes to stand for the thing being compared. Thus (in a diegetic example) in a love scene that takes place before a fire, the fire can come to stand for (and replace) the passion of the embracing couple. (3) *Metonymies placed in paradigm* (contiguity on the level of the referent plus comparability on the level of the discourse). Here, as above, one element replaces another, but in this case the original association of elements is based on metonymic contiguity rather than similarity or contrast. A classic example cited by Metz is the moment in Fritz Lang's *M* when a balloon, which had earlier been contiguously associated with a little girl, is shown all alone, caught in a web of telephone wires. The balloon replaces the murdered body of the girl herself in much the same way Anna Karenina's handbag comes to stand for Anna's crushed body. (4) *Metonymies placed in syntagm* (contiguity of the referents plus contiguity of the discourse). This is similar to (3), except that both elements of the metonymy are present in the image chain as, for example, the earlier moments in *M* when both balloon and girl appear together.[22]

What happens most often in narrative films is that a metaphor or metonymy first placed in syntagm will at some later point be placed

[22] Ibid.

in paradigm. Metz's elaboration allows us to keep the rhetorical and linguistic levels separate so that we can more completely describe the operations of the figure and the way it is deployed in the actual discourse. The usefulness of this distinction will, I hope, become evident in the analysis of the prologue to *Un Chien andalou* that follows.

THE PROLOGUE TO *UN CHIEN ANDALOU*: A SURREALIST FILM METAPHOR

The famous metaphor of moon and eye that concludes the prologue to *Un Chien andalou* is perhaps the most often cited example of filmic Surrealism—to the extent that audiences usually remember it and forget the rest of the film. The image of a woman's eye cut open by a razor has been isolated as a still in countless posters, film histories, and anthologies, to become the very emblem of surreality in film in much the same way as Dalí's melting watches have functioned in painting. But this image has not been sufficiently studied as a metaphor. It is, after all, the bizarre similarity between the eye cut by a razor and the moon cut by a horizontal sliver of a cloud that is so striking in this episode. In this section I propose to concentrate exclusively on the peculiar form of this most famous Surrealist metaphor.

Description of the Prologue. The prologue is composed of what appears to be an entire scene played out in the space on and near a balcony bathed in moonlight. It begins with the title, "Once upon a time." Apart from this title the sequence has only twelve shots. The following is a numbered description of each shot, including a camera-distance scale.

Title: "Once upon a time . . ."

SHOT	DESCRIPTION	SCALE
1	Fade-in on two hands sharpening a long razor on a strop attached to the door-handle of a French-window. Hands are viewed from above and behind. A watch is on the left wrist. Four strokes of the razor.	Close-up

2	Head and shoulders of man, cigarette in mouth, eyes lowered, in three-quarter right profile. The man is wearing a striped, collarless shirt. A curtained window is visible to right of frame.	Close-up
3	As in 1. Razor blade is tested for sharpness on the thumbnail of the left hand.	Close-up
4	As in 2.	Close-up
5	Man in left profile standing before window-door with curtains. He looks at strop, razor, then opens French-window to go outside.	Medium
6	Reverse frontal of balcony and man walking out onto it. He looks out across balcony (in general direction of spectator) and walks to edge where he leans on railing, razor still in hand.	Medium
7	Head and shoulders of man in three-quarter right profile. He raises head to look up.	Close-up
8	Dark sky with moon on screen left. A horizontal sliver of cloud approaches from the right.	Long shot
9	As in 7.	Close-up
10	Direct frontal view of woman's face staring at spectator. To left and slightly behind is torso of man wearing striped shirt, a diagonally striped tie, and no watch. As his left hand holds open her left eye his right hand moves in front of the lower part of her face, as if preparing to draw razor across the round exposed eye.	Close-up
11	As in 8. The cloud now passes before the moon.	Long shot
12	The eye with thumb and forefinger holding it open. The razor slices it open. A jellylike substance spills out.	Extreme close-up

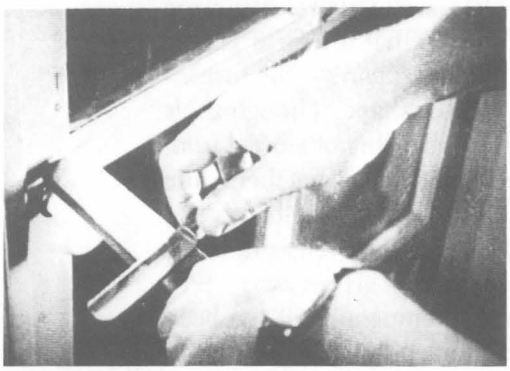
Shots 1–4. The prologue opens on a high-angle close-up of a man's hands sharpening a long razor on a strop. The four strokes of this sharpening correspond to the four-shot alternating syntagm (1–4) of the entire sharpening action. In shot 2 (close-up of the man's head and shoulders, cigarette in mouth), it is only by the downward direction of the man's glance that we infer the diegetic contiguity of shots 1 and 2, e.g., that these hands and arms are connected to the

head and shoulders which follow. Shots 3 and 4 repeat this same procedure with the slight difference in shot 4 that the razor is now tested for sharpness on the thumbnail of the left hand—the first instance of a horizontal line bisecting a circular shape. Though shots 1 and 3 (looking down on the razor and hands) are not viewed from precisely the same angle at which the man would see them, the downward angle of the shot, from above and behind the hands and a little to the left, does approximate the subjective viewpoint of his glance.

So far the diegetic action of a man sharpening a razor has been placed in an alternating syntagm characterized by the organization of isolated fragments of space leading to the inference of their connection in a larger whole. But already there are problems in this inference. If we look closely at the relation of the arms and hands to the French door and curtain in shots 1 and 3, we see that the man's position in relation to the curtained window close behind this head in shots 2 and 4 is spatially different in relation to what is presumably the same (now curtainless) window-door in shots 1 and 3.

Shots 5 and 6. The repetition of close-ups in shots 1–4 gives way in the middle of the prologue to two medium shots. These shots reinforce the spectator's previous inference as to the contiguity of hands and arms (1 and 3) to head and shoulders (2 and 4) by showing the whole person and the general scene through which he moves. In shot 6 the French doors behind the man form a horizontal line that runs into his head at precisely eye level. This is the second instance of a horizontal line that bisects a round shape.

Shots 7–12. Shots 7, 8, and 9 seem about to repeat the alternating syntagm of shots 1–4 in which the man's glance is alternated with the object he sees in a four-shot series. But there are two important differences. In the first series the order is object-seen + glance, while here it is the more usual glance (man looks upward at night sky) + object (insert of moon). In the second series, just at the point where the pattern glance + moon, glance + . . . creates anticipation of a return to the moon to continue the already begun movement of the cloud across the moon, an entirely new element is introduced, a close-up of a woman's face (shot 10). The seated woman



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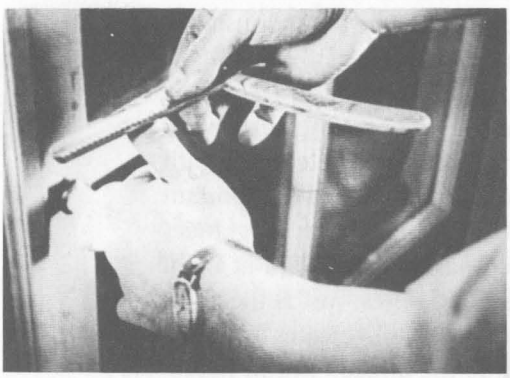

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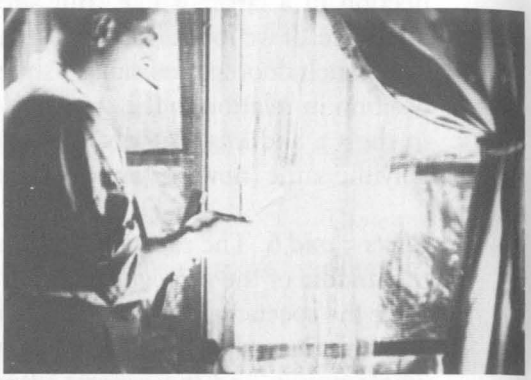

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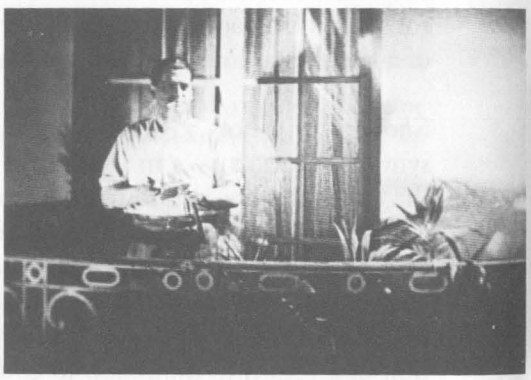

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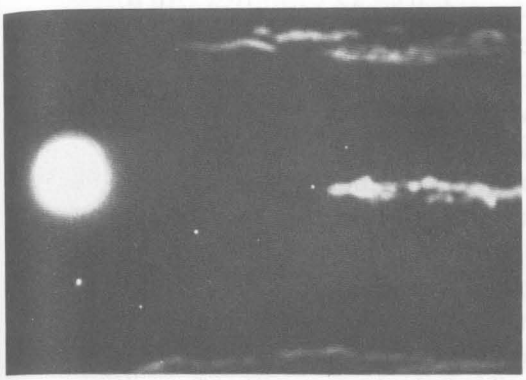

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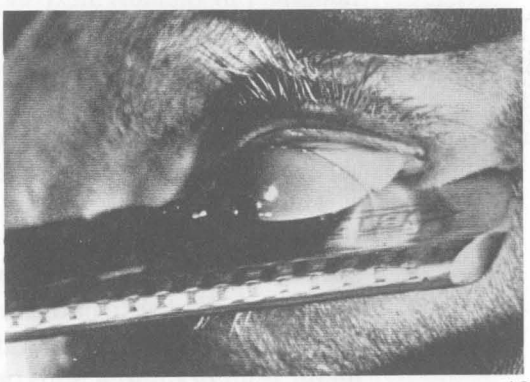


12

is staring directly at the camera; the torso of a (or is it the?) man stands beside her preparing to cut open her eye. Thus, instead of the anticipated completion of one diegetic action—the movement of the cloud across the moon—another, formally similar, action is introduced. This new action, like the movement of the clouds before the moon finally completed in shot 11, is also divided into two alternating shots, culminating in the final shot of the extreme close-up of the eye cutting. (The movements of cloud across moon and razor across eyeball are the third and fourth instances of round shapes bisected by horizontal lines.)

Because it is an action divided into the same kind of alternating two-shot syntagm as the movement of the clouds across the moon, this new element of the eye cutting at first seems consistent with the diegesis in the rest of the prologue. In other words, we tend to read this action as taking place in the continuous diegetic space of the balcony and night sky. But at the same time there is no real indication that this woman whose eye is about to be cut is placed in this space. We only infer it on the basis of the general contiguity of the previous syntagms. We tend to assume, for example, that the torso of the man standing beside her in shot 10 holding a razor and wearing a striped shirt is the same man we have viewed throughout the prologue. But, if it is the same man, he has suddenly lost his watch and acquired a striped tie. And, after solitarily gazing at the sky in shot 9, he is suddenly in an entirely new position as well as in modified dress in the very next shot. Our tendency to want to absorb a nondiegetic element that ultimately cannot be absorbed into the diegesis is an important feature of both this prologue and the film in general. The result is a subtle tension that seems to emanate from within the diegesis without allowing us to point to clear-cut instances of a total rupture with its apparent realism.

This initially subtle spatial discrepancy of the man's position in shots 1–4 becomes more apparent in shots 8–12, but only as a tension within a dominant pattern of alternating syntagms that describe two connected sets of actions: the sharpening and test cutting in shots 1–5, and the final bisecting (of both moon and eye) in shots 8–12. Both of these actions proceed via the division of what at first appear to be contiguous fragments of space and time in a conventional diegetic manner. But on closer examination (almost im-

perceptibly in the first, and more noticeably in the second) both subvert the very same assumptions about diegetic space and time they seem to want us to accept.

The Figure: Metaphor or Metonymy. The rupture in the diegesis that occurs in the second half of the prologue is a rhetorical figure. The only apparent motivation for the interruption of the movement of the cloud across the moon is the formal *similarity* between the round shape of the moon and eye, and the thin shape of the cloud and razor, which "cut" them. Since the motive is *similarity* of the (shapes of the) referents rather than an association of *contiguity*, this figure is metaphoric rather than metonymic.

Using Christian Metz's four-part division of filmic figuration, we can see that this is a metapor placed in syntagm. It is a metaphor in which similarities between the referents—moon and eye, cloud and razor, and the similar horizontal movements of the latter—are arranged contiguously (syntagmatically) in the image chain.

To reach an understanding of what is special about this particular metaphor, it may be helpful to compare it with the much more typical function of a similar figure in another more typically diegetic film. In the example from Josef von Sternberg's *Shanghai Express* cited above, Clive Brook and Marlene Dietrich's first kiss is followed by an exterior shot of the train's whistle blowing. These two elements, kiss (the tenor) and whistle (the vehicle) constitute a diegetic metaphor placed in syntagm, in which the vehicle "comments" upon the tenor. The usual procedure in reading such a metaphor is to construct a connotative system of the referents that can encompass both elements. Differences between kiss and whistle are minimized, while their similarities (heat, excitement, pressure) emerge in a comment upon the sexual excitement of the Dietrich-Brook's relationship.

This particular metaphor observes a structure typical of many diegetic metaphors in film: a contiguous background element, the whistle that is on the same train, is brought momentarily to the foreground as a comment upon the dominant narrative action of the kiss. The figure preserves a hierarchy of the tenor belonging to the diegesis over the vehicle brought into the diegesis momentarily. Thus the vehicle (the more properly figural element of the meta-

phor, brought in for purposes of comparison) rarely takes on more than momentary importance before restoring us to the main action of the tenor. In the classical metaphor this hierarchy is usually maintained by the order of appearance of the two parts of the metaphor placed in syntagm: most often, diegetic action of the tenor is followed by the comparison of the vehicle commenting upon it. The whistle emerges as connotatively significant only after the kiss; the reverse would be less effective. But if this order is reversed, as for example in the extradiegetic pure metaphor of the herd of sheep from the opening of *Modern Times*, in which the shot of the sheep preceeds the shot of the workers, there is a second way in which the dominance of the diegesis is assured.[23] The vehicle, whether present in the diegesis or not, usually belongs to natural, architectural, or otherwise nonhuman material (in this case the sheep) that seems a secondary or background element, again maintaining a hierarchy of diegesis over figure.

In the prologue metaphor, precisely this hierarchy is disturbed. The distinctive feature of this metaphor is that what would commonly constitute the tenor or comparing element of the figure—in this case the moon—is given first. But, not only is it given first, its entire function builds upon the viewer's expectation of the more common metaphoric process—of a metaphor that serves the diegesis—while actually giving a diegesis that serves the metaphor. Everything happens in this metaphor as if the formal resemblance between the moon that is "sliced" by cloud and the woman's round eye elicits the human action of slicing the eye. In other words, there is a reversal of the usual metaphoric process in which the tenor half of the metaphor belongs to the action of the diegesis and the vehicle half belongs to a part of the decor or, in the case of the pure metaphor, to an entirely extraneous element brought in from outside the narrative. Instead, the moon and cloud are precisely the kind of extraneous or background material that would usually come second and belong to the vehicle, while the eye and the razor, which here belong to the compared element of the figure, are the kind of

[23] The *Modern Times* metaphor is somewhat of an exception in that the vehicle part of this metaphor—the sheep—precedes the tenor part—the workers. But this unusual order is because the metaphor opens the film; it does not disturb the usual hierarchy of diegesis over figure.

human activity that would usually appear first and belong to the tenor.

So it is impossible to say that the vehicle element of this metaphor (moon and cloud) comments on another hierarchically more significant tenor element belonging to the diegesis (eye and razor). For here it is precisely the vehicle—the element that usually appears to be the artificial or consciously constructed part of the figure (the moon and clouds)—that constitutes the "action" of this sequence. In other words, the action has shifted to the vehicle part of the figure, which usually comes second and in which we notice the hand of the artist at work forging connotative meanings. Within the original denotative signifiers—the round shape of the eye and moon, the thinness of the cloud and razor, and the similar speeds with which both move across their respective objects, there is a remarkable formal similarity of the signifiers alone motivating the comparison; yet there is no immediate connotative "explanation" on the level of the signifieds.

But not only does the first part of this figure seem to create the diegesis, it also becomes a self-reflecting comment on the very process of making metaphors. In describing the first part, we tend to say that the clouds slice or cut the moon, which they do not really do—it is already a figure of speech to say so. But we say so precisely because the film has been building up to this final cutting through a proliferation of motifs emphasizing the bisection of circular shapes by horizontal lines. The first cutting of the thumbnail with the razor prepares us for the later—figural—cutting of the moon by the cloud. This figural cutting is in turn a prefiguration of the literal cutting of the eye which follows. What is so radically disturbing in this figure then is, not only the audacity of comparing one violent and sadistic image with another that is innocuous and natural, but also the fact that such a rigorous formal control exercised by the operation of the figure dictates the development of the sadistic and violent content.

To summarize the differences between the *Chien andalou* prologue metaphor and the structurally similar, and more typical, metaphor in *Shanghai Express*, we find that: (1) in the prologue metaphor a disturbed hierarchy of background and foreground creates a situation in which the figural or vehicle half of the metaphor comes

first and appears to generate the diegesis; and (2) in the *Chien* figure is a deviation from the more typical semantic basis for association of the elements of the metaphor—form rather than content dictates the ground of the association. Such a figure, though formally modeled on the typical metaphor, actually functions as a deconstruction of the anticipated metaphoric process in which the denotative content of the eye-cutting refuses to be absorbed immediately into a connotative expression.

Unlike the classical figure, this seemingly autonomous figure refuses to be read as mere embellishment upon a discourse. It demands to be seen as the very cause of this discourse. The figure, which in its more usual manifestation can be dismissed as superfluous, here becomes essential. In *Un Chien andalou* this means that none of the events related by the prologue can be read as the illusion of past events, but only as configurations arising out of the act of writing, out of the desire expressed by the figure itself. Yet, what is so striking about this particular metaphor is the way the meticulous building of an apparently realistic diegesis culminates in an outrageous and metaphoric act of violence, which unlike most film violence subverts the very realism of its discourse.

The Hand and the Eye.[24] If, as we have seen, this figure does not permit the kind of connotative interpretation that comments on the diegesis, there is another sense in which it can be seen as a general symbol of the entire act of filmic creation. It is certainly no accident that the first shot of this prologue is a close-up of a hand sharpening a razor, while the last shot combines the elements of hand, razor, and eye. Even to a viewer unaware of the identity of the man who wields this razor—he is played by Luis Buñuel himself—and whose gaze we constantly follow, it is clear that his function in this prologue resembles that of the filmmaker. This function is double: it consists of vision and cutting, two processes that are repeated several times in the short twelve shots of this sequence.

Each new element introduced after the first shot is first viewed by the man on the balcony. We watch him looking—twice this look is

[24] In this section I am only making more explicit what Pascal Bonitzer ("Le Gros orteil: 'Realité' de la denotation," *Cahiers du cinéma* 232 [October 1971]: 15) and Joel Farges ("L'Image d'un corps," *Communications* 23 [May 1975]: 88) have already implied.

followed by the razor, once by the moon. The final look of outward regard that precedes the sudden appearance of the woman develops out of the pattern created by this vision. It is a progression to *en*vision, which the diegetically contradictory elements of the tie and the absence of the watch seem to affirm. The cutting that follows this envision is nothing less than its implementation, an ironic symbol of the hand of the artist at work cutting up the continuous fabric of "reality" into newly significant combinations.

This prologue has yet another kind of vision, that of the woman. Hers is an eye that sees nothing, an eye that stares straight ahead, passive and unblinking at the approach of the razor. It is an eye that is put there to *be* seen, whose vacant stare, as Joel Farges has noted,[25] connects with our own passive voyeuristic stare, which through this connection feels the violence of the razor as a blinding assault on its own vision. But blindness, as every poet knows, can also be a *figure* for a different kind of sight. For, as the Surrealist poet Paul Eluard writes, "*Le doux fer rouge de l'aurore/Rend la vue aux aveugles*" (The gentle red iron of dawn/Restores sight to the blind).[26] And, just as Eluard employs the iron that blinds as a metaphoric figure for sight, so Buñuel and Dalí draw their razor across our eye in such a way that, by blinding us to the possibility of seeing *through* the figure, they force us to look *at* the work of the figure itself.

LATENT MEANING

The above analysis of the formal attributes of the prologue metaphor is in no sense exhaustive. But at this point it will be more fruitful to proceed with the analysis of the rest of the film before venturing an interpretation of its latent significance.

Since metaphor and condensation, unlike metonymy and displacement, make associations between elements that may never be brought together outside the particular textual space of the metaphor, it is reasonable to ask, especially in the case of Surrealist meta-

[25] Farges, "L'Image d'un corps," p. 93.

[26] Paul Eluard, "Le Baillon sur la table," *La Vie immédiate* (Paris: Editions des cahiers libres, 1932). The translation is mine.

phors like that of the prologue, just what is the motive for these combinations: why are the moon and eye, like the umbrella and sewing machine in Lautréament's famous image, brought together? (In fact, the parallel between Lautréamont's famous comparison from *Maldoror*, "as handsome . . . as the fortuitous encounter upon a dissection table of a sewing machine and an umbrella"[27] and the filmic figure under question is itself fortuitous. In both examples male and female symbols combine with cutting motifs. Just as André Breton has noted the sexual import of Lautréamont's poetic image,[28] we will eventually see a similarly latent sexual import in the prologue metaphor.)

On the microlevel of a single metaphor, it is not possible to point to a consensus of meaning with the same facility with which we would translate the classical metaphoric formula My love is a flame. In the preceding analysis of the prologue metaphor, we have only seen that a self-referential figure seems to generate the diegesis. Although there *is* a latent meaning to this metaphor, it cannot be discovered through the kind of translation that the classical equation *love* = *flame* has accomplished in the past. Once again this is partly due to the absence in film, as well as in the unconscious productions of the Imaginary, of a fixed code analogous to that of language. As we have seen, the figural meaning of verbal rhetoric arises out of the discrepancy between the accepted literal meanings of the two parts of a statement. This discrepancy between the conventional coded meanings of *tenor* (love) and *vehicle* (flame) forces the discovery of a new meaning based on the *ground* of a shared characteristic (heat). But film does not possess such a fixed denotative code except insofar as rhetorical figures themselves have hardened into codelike forms.

Christian Metz's work in film semiology has shown that the narrative procedures of film have tended to develop out of connotative effects that have later become absorbed into short-lived and only partial kinds of systems: what Metz prefers to call a *grande syntagmatique*, rather than a full-fledged paradigmatique. This grande syntagmatique is a level of codification that exists only in the larger

[27] Lautréamont, *Maldoror*, p. 263.

[28] Breton, *Les Vases communicants* (Paris: Gallimard, 1955), p. 67. Breton suggests that the umbrella represents man, the sewing machine woman, the dissection table the bed.

organizational units of sequences and not in the minimum unit of the shot. Unlike language, the film does not begin with a code that connotation then transgresses. Instead the filmmaker begins with the raw material of the photographic registration, which connotative effect eventually shapes into a denotative code. (For example, Metz explains how an alternating montage originates as a way of making the denotation more lively and later becomes codified as one of the signifiers of simultaneity.[29]) In other words, the separation between grammar and rhetoric is not as sharp as it is in the verbal arts, although certainly even the verbal arts present problems enough on this score.

Similarly, in the dream the basic units of discourse are images that, unlike words, in themselves have no codified meanings. As seen in chapter 1, it is a common mistake in dream analysis to assume that the unconscious is a preexisting storehouse of meaning which the dream symbols simply represent. Laplanche and Leclaire, in their psychoanalytic study of the unconscious, explain that it is a misuse of the Freudian understanding of the unconscious to see dream images as the fixed symbolization of certain unconscious thoughts rather than as the production and creation of meaning.[30] This is not to say that there is not a latent meaning in every dream, but simply that this latent meaning is not an already existing entity that can be reached through mechanistic decoding.

Insofar as *Un Chien andalou* imitates the procedures of the unconscious, its figures too have a latent meaning, not just the usual connotation of most filmic figuration, like the kiss and whistle in *Shanghai Express* that can be interpreted in an instant, but a truly latent meaning that can be discovered only through a close analysis of the entire text. In the prologue metaphor we saw the peculiar way in which a figure becomes a part of the denotative diegesis through a reversal of the more typical hierarchy of diegesis and figure. The disturbance of this hierarchy is an indication that a desire simultaneously seeks to find expression and through censorship to cover this expression. On the basis of the prologue alone, we cannot yet determine what this latent meaning is. We have only been cued to

[29] Metz, "Problems of Denotation in the Fiction Film," in *Film Language*, pp. 118–19.

[30] Jean Laplanche and Serge Leclaire, "L'Inconscient: Une Etude psychanalytic," *Les Temps Modernes* 183 (July 1961):83.

the presence of an enigma by the unconventionality and self-referentiality of the metaphoric process.

As a result, we are forced to hold the process of interpretation in suspense, to look *at* the figure and the discourse it generates more closely, until on the macrolevel of the whole text we begin to see a pattern of overdetermination. Throughout the film these include a fascination with body parts that are never quite as they should be and the often related activity of cutting or mutilation—mutilation that always occurs in the context of male and female relations. The following close description and analysis of the rest of the film attempts to understand the metaphorical "statement" of the prologue in light of the figural complex of the entire film.

The prologue is followed by a second time-reference, the specificity of which, "eight years later," contradicts the earlier fairy-tale time-reference ("once upon a time") that began the film. A cyclist appears on a deserted Paris street. (I will refer to this man as *the cyclist* through the rest of the analysis to distinguish him from other nameless male figures.) In addition to a dark suit, he is wearing incongruous lacy-white frills on his head, shoulders, and waist. Around his neck, attached by a strap, is a wooden box covered with diagonal stripes. When the cyclist rides directly toward the camera the box becomes the center of the shot. The following shot is a lap-dissolve to a close-up of the same box. The diagonal stripes on the box are a visual echo (or rhyme) of the vertical stripes on the tie the razor-wielding man suddenly acquired during the eye-cutting.

The scene changes to a full view of a bed and sitting room, in which the woman of the prologue sits at a table reading a book. She is wearing the same dress but her eye is uncut. Suddenly she looks up as if startled. A shot of the cyclist outside leads us to infer that his presence must somehow be what startled her. The woman throws her book shut onto the table. In a close-up it unnaturally reopens to a reproduction of Vermeer's *The Lacemaker*, showing a seated woman intently working a piece of lace. The woman goes to the window and looks down on the cyclist. From this high perspective we watch the cyclist slowly come to a stop and, without putting out a hand or leg to break his fall, keel over onto his side in the street. There he remains motionless, one wheel of the bicycle still spin-

ning, his box still around his neck. In reaction shots, the woman has been alternately repelled and intensely interested. She now runs downstairs, where in a great show of protective emotion she kneels beside him, holds his head, and kisses his face repeatedly. Dissolve to a close-up of a box showing a hand opening it with a key. An object wrapped in diagonally striped paper is removed. A medium shot reveals that the woman, who is now back in the room, is the person opening the box with the key, removing from it a diagonally striped necktie wrapped in vertically striped paper.

From the bed beside her, the woman picks up a white collar with a black tie attached. She removes the black tie and replaces it with the diagonally striped one from the box. A shot of the bed shows that the cyclist's frills have been carefully laid out in the position they would occupy if the cyclist were himself on the bed. The woman puts the collar with the new tie in its proper place but without tying the tie. She carefully arranges the whole effigy as the camera pulls back to reveal that the box too is in its proper place around the "neck" of the "cyclist." The woman then sits beside the bed as if watching over a sick person. Two separate shots show the bed and frills over which she watches. In each of them the untied striped tie magically ties itself—first quickly, then slowly.

This ritualized arrangement of the cyclist's bizarre garments on the bed in the woman's apartment has an unmistakable fetishistic function, which we shall examine later. For the moment it is sufficient to note that these garments evoke the absent cyclist in the form of a metonymy-placed-in-paradigm, a figural association based upon the previous contiguity of the cyclist and these garments (as the pince-nez of the ship's doctor in *Potemkin* evoked its recently drowned former owner). But, in this case, the extremely unlikely combination of these particular garments with a male cyclist on a Parisian street lends to this metonymy (unlike the more typical metonymic association of doctor and pince-nez) a good deal of the sense of artificial construction common to metaphor. This sense of artifice tends to encourage us to discover an underlying metaphoric similarity between the cyclist himself and the confused signs of gender—tie, collar, box, and frills—which evoke him.

Suddenly, the woman starts, as if sensing something. She turns her head away from the bed to see the cyclist on the other side of the

room now without the frills and box. He stares with fascination at his right hand. The woman approaches, looks at the hand with him, and then recoils fearfully. The man continues to stare at his hand, glancing at her only briefly to check if she sees it too.

A Metaphoric Series. At this point an intricate series of similar shapes forms a transition between the space of the apartment and the street below. The metaphoric series begins by revealing the mystery of the cyclist's hand:

> Shot 1. Close-up of the man's hand with a *circular* hole in the palm, out of which ants swarm. Dissolve.
>
> Shot 2. Close-up of the torso of a female sunbather lying on her back with arms crossed behind her head. The shot is centered on a *round* patch of dark underarm hair. Dissolve.
>
> Shot 3. Close-up of a *round* sea urchin, whose stiff black spines are slowly moving. Dissolve.
>
> Shot 4. A *round*, iris-framed, long shot from a high angle centered on the *round* close-cropped head of an androgynous-looking woman holding a long stick. With the stick she pokes at a *round* severed hand lying in the street. The iris opens out to reveal a crowd that has formed a circle around the androgyne.

This is the end of the figure proper, although the action begun in the final shot of the androgyne continues with a close-up of the severed hand as it is prodded by the stick, a low-angle shot of the crowd as it sways slightly, and a policeman who pushes the crowd away from the androgyne. As an interior shot reveals the cyclist and woman standing before a window looking down on the scene in the street, we realize that the high-angle shot that first presented the androgyne (shot 2) was in fact the perspective from the woman's apartment and that she and the cyclist have overseen the drama of the severed hand taking place in the street below. While the cyclist and woman continue to watch from above, the androgyne places the severed hand in a ubiquitous, diagonally-striped box identical to the cyclist's box and clasps it sadly to her breast. Soon afterward she is struck by a car. The cyclist's reaction to all these events is one of mounting sexual excitement.

Like the metaphor of the prologue, the metaphoric series proper is motivated by the formal similarity of round shapes emphasized by

the dissolves between shots. The round shape of the hole in the cyclist's hand and the swarming movement of the ants resemble the similar round shape of the sunbather's armpit and its tuft of hair. Thus far similarity of the referents (hollow in hand and armpit) combine with contiguity of the discourse to form a metaphor placed in syntagm.

In shot 3 the round shape of the sea urchin and its protruding spines echoes the round hole and swarm of ants in shot 1 and the round underarm and tuft of hair in shot 2. But, whereas in shots 1 and 2 the round shapes were *concave* holes or vacuums from which ants and hair emerged, the round shape of the sea urchin in shot 3 is a *convex* volume from which black spines protrude.

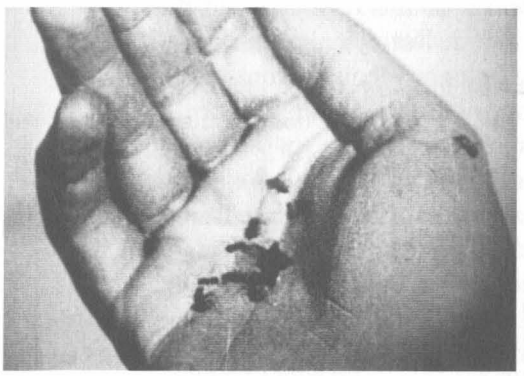
With shot 4 (beginning with the iris on the androgyne), the round shapes of the preceding three shots are repeated in a different way. Here the iris frame of the shot itself is round. This roundness is echoed by the round shape of the androgyne's head within the shot. Then, as the iris opens out, its shape is replaced by the round shape of the crowd encircling the androgyne and is echoed by the severed round hand with which she plays.

Comparing these images, we discover a marked development from the round concave hole of the hand (shot 1) and the equally concave round cup of the sunbather's armpit (shot 2) with the convex roundness of the sea urchin (shot 3) and the equally convex roundness of the androgyne's head and severed hand (shot 4). In this progression, the metaphor begins within the diegesis; it continues its development extradiegetically in the shots of the armpit and sea urchin. Then, in the final shot of the series, the androgyne and severed hand lead back into the diegesis through the subsequent revelation that the androgyne has been observed by the cyclist, whose own mutilated hand began the series. Thus a progression of similar shapes deviously links the contiguous space of apartment and street, leading first away from and then back to the diegesis.

THE MEANING OF THE FIGURES

Each of these enigmatic figures—the prologue metaphor of moon and eye, the metonymy of the garments placed on the bed, and the

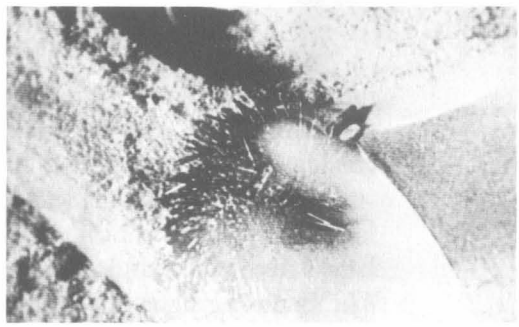
The cyclist and woman stare at his hand. The metaphoric series begins with



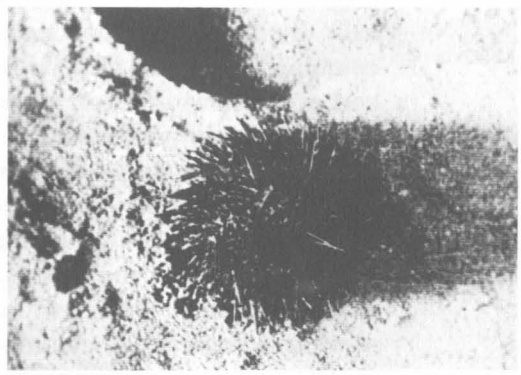
Shot 1. The cyclist's hand with ants swarming out of a hole.

Dissolve between the hole in the hand and

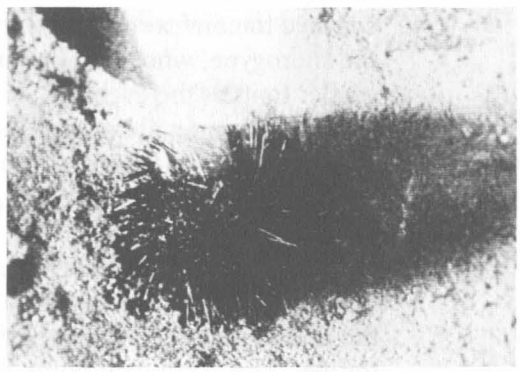
Shot 2. The underarm of a female sunbather.



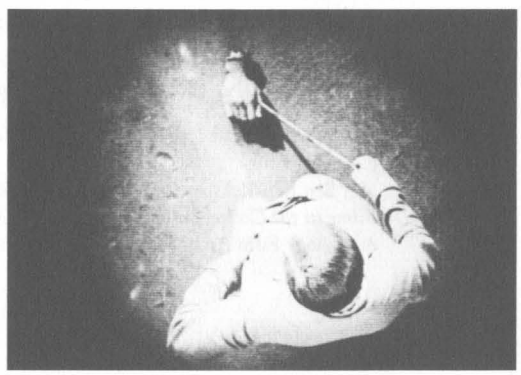
Dissolve between the underarm of the sunbather and



Shot 3. A spiny sea urchin.



Dissolve between the sea urchin and



Shot 4. The androgyne who pokes at a severed hand with a long stick.

metaphoric series beginning with the hole in the hand—repeat motifs of cut or mutilated flesh and/or signs of male and female gender.

The cutting motif begins with the trial cut of the thumbnail before the eye-cutting of the prologue and continues with the mutilated hand and completely severed hand of the metaphoric series. The opposing signs of male and female gender appear first in the diegesis in the combination of male cyclist dressed in feminine frills, then in the metonymic manipulation of male collar and tie combined with these same frills; they continue in the more abstract concave hollows and convex protrusions of the metaphoric series, and finally culminate in the person of the androgyne "herself."

Mutilation by cutting frequently leads to the combination of the signs of male and female gender. For example, the initial mutilation of the eye-cutting in the prologue is followed by the male-female cyclist and then by the fetishized signs of his contradictory gender alone in the metonymies of the garments placed on the bed. In the metaphoric series this pattern is repeated within a single figure: the initial mutilation of the hole in the hand is followed by a shift from concave to convex roundness that culminates in the appearance of the androgyne, who combines in one person the same contradictory gender traits as the cyclist.

Most commentators have viewed the prologue metaphor variously as a symbol of sexual penetration of the female body,[31] as an assault on the viewer's own vision and a movement toward inner vision,[32] and finally, as in my own preceding analysis, as some form of metaphor for the act of cinematic construction itself. My further view does not deny any of these meanings but, rather, adds the notion that the latent meaning of the metaphor can only be castration. The significant point about this meaning is that it emerges only in the light of the other figures, as they respond to the initial metaphor of the prologue. But what these subsequent figures do, paradoxically, is attempt to deny the meaning of castration, even

[31] See Raymond Durgnat, *Luis Buñuel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), p. 24.

[32] See Ken Kelman, "The Other Side of Realism," *The Essential Cinema: Essays on the Films in the Collection of Anthology Film Archives*, 2 vols., ed. P. Adams Sitney (New York: Anthology Film Archives and New York University Press, 1975), 1:113.

though this very denial becomes itself the confirmation of the fear it is intended to allay.

The woman whose eye is cut by the razor in the prologue becomes a sexual object of the cyclist's desire in the subsequent diegesis. It is thus reasonable to interpret the woman's split eye as a metaphor for the vagina and the razor as a substitute penis. But if this is so, the metaphor of male desire is peculiarly condensed. The fact that penetration occurs through cutting opens up the possibility that it is the result of cutting—the result, that is, of castration. This only becomes apparent in the movement of the following figures to deny the consequences of this castration: to deny sexual difference.

In a 1927 article[33] Freud shows how the function of the fetish arises from the fear of castration. In the male fantasy, a woman's difference (and desirability) is the result of castration. If the fear of castration becomes a fixation, the tendency on the part of the male unconscious is to replace female love objects with fetish objects that will forever *disavow* the feared castration. Thus Freud shows that the function of the fetish is to be a substitute for the mother's "penis that the little boy once believed in."[34] He calls this substitute a *Verleugnung* or "disavowal" of the terrifying fact that women have no penis:

> In the conflict between the weight of the unwelcome perception and the force of his counter-wish, a compromise has been reached, as is only possible under the dominance of the unconscious laws of thought. . . . the woman *has* got a penis; but this penis is no longer the same as it was before. Something else has taken its place, has been appointed its substitute. . . . the horror of castration has set up a memorial to itself in the creation of this substitute. . . . It remains a token of triumph over the threat of castration and a protection against it.[35]

Frequently these substitutes—feet, shoes, underpants—are contiguous substitutes metonymically associated with the hidden and feared lack. They either cover or stop short of the part of the body that may have undergone castration. Thus the fetish allows the

[33] "Fetishism," in Freud, *Complete Psychological Works*, 21:153.
[34] Ibid., p. 154.
[35] Ibid.

fetishist to preserve the illusion of the female phallus. Yet, as Freud points out and as others after him have stressed even more,[36] the fetish is an object that, in its denial of what is most feared, cannot help but assert that very fear.

The feminine frills the woman lays out on the bed, to which the diagonally striped tie is significantly added, are fetishistic figures of the cyclist himself that wishfully present him as a sexually undifferentiated being, as both male *and* female. But this fetishistic assertion of the absence of sexual difference simultaneously asserts the fear that the fetish is created to deny.[37] This process of denial is repeated in the following figure of the metaphoric series. But here the metaphor also reasserts the initial fear of castration in the beginning shot of the wounded hand. Just as the wound of the eye-cutting is followed in a subsequent scene by the disavowal of the fetish garments, so here the metaphoric assertion of castration is directly followed by a progression of increasingly convex shapes that attempts to disavow the initial concave wound.

But, again, the more the text tries to disavow and cover an initial lack, the more it asserts that lack. For in the final image of the series—the shot of the androgyne on the street—the forms are convex; but the content of the convex form is, most disturbingly, a severed hand—a cut-off organ. Not only does this process of disavowal call attention to the fear of castration, it also ironically points out the double nature of the sexual symbols involved: concave and convex are two sides of the same bowl. One side is absence (the concave wound, the vagina), the other side is presence (the convex protrusion, the penis). When the convex protrusion turns out to be a severed organ, it becomes a presence that insidiously evokes an absence. Thus even a phallic protrusion becomes an ironic metaphor for the fear it is intended to allay.

The paradoxical structure of all these figures reflects the ambiguous logic of dreams, in which the assertion of any thought can be

[36] Octave Manonni, "Je sais bien mais quand même," *Clefs pour l'imaginaire* (Paris: Seuil, 1969), p. 2.

[37] A variant and even complementary interpretation of the placing of these garments on the bed could see it as an expression of the woman's desire that the sexually undifferentiated child not develop into a sexual being. thus her own disavowal would seem to be less oriented toward a specific fear of castration and more toward keeping the child a neuter (and unthreatening) object of her motherly affections.

both positive and negative in a perpetual movement between the opposing poles of signification. Contraries act in this film as they do in dreams, where, as Freud has observed, the concept *no* seems not to exist.[38] Causality in general seems to operate throughout the film in a particularly dreamlike way. Freud has observed that dreams can represent causal connection by the introduction of the dream equivalent of a "dependent clause." In certain kinds of dreams a clearly separate beginning section—the dependent clause—posits an initial condition or state of affairs, which the rest of the dream—the "principal clause"—then develops. Freud's point is that the seemingly disjointed segments of a dream can nevertheless exhibit the logic of causality. In *Un Chien andalou* the prologue metaphor acts as such a dependent clause positing the initial condition of castration-division-absence that the principal clause of the subsequent figures—and the diegesis that flows out of these figures—attempts to deny.

Still more may be said about the principal clause of the final metaphoric series ending with the androgyne. The androgyne herself is a dominantly feminine version of the contradictory gender traits of the dominantly masculine cyclist. Her feminine skirt is countered by short hair, angular body, and tailored jacket, just as the cyclist's suit and tie are countered by feminine frills. The cyclist and androgyne are also linked by their mutual possession of the diagonally striped box, which in one instance contains a necktie and in another becomes the receptacle for the severed hand. In the first instance the box appears to let out its secret: the necktie as substitute phallus and fetish working to deny a feared castration. In the second instance it functions as the container for the countersecret: the receptacle for the severed hand, which because it is once again a reminder of castration must be hidden away.

Taken together these figures establish a symmetrical pattern of assertion and denial, the basic terms of which are *presence* and *absence*. The prologue metaphor of cutting posits a gap-split-absence, which the metonymy of the fetish garments attempts to disavow.

[38] "'No' seems not to exist so far as dreams are concerned. . . . Dreams represent any element by its wishful contrary so there is no way of deciding at a first glance whether any element that admits of a contrary is present in the dream-thoughts as a positive or a negative." *Interpretation of Dreams*, p. 353.

The hole in the hand posits a similar gap-split-absence, which the following series of metaphorically similar shapes even less successfully disavows. The desire of the text thus mirrors the desire of the (male) subject. It seeks perpetually and impossibly to fill in, cover over, and to otherwise deny an original loss. If castration is one meaning of the prologue metaphor, it is itself, as Lacan has said, also a metaphor for difference, for the fundamental lack-in-being that marks the entrance into the Symbolic and structures desire.

Thus the intense figural activity of this first part of the film offers a conscious imitation of the rhetorical form of the discourse of the unconscious. The dream work carried out by condensation and displacement in actual dreams is closely imitated in *Un Chien andalou* by the Surrealist use of metaphor and metonymy in which the meaning of the text is generated entirely through its figures. Only by putting off the initial impulse to interpret these figures on the micro-level of their relation to the immediate diegetic situation have we been able to discover the latent text consisting of the repeated assertion-denial of castration in the context of awakening sexual desire. These Surrealist figures intentionally frustrate our attempts at interpretation based on the relation of the figure to the diegesis that surrounds it, because the discourse of this film is carried out by and large on the level of its figures. This is the final reason for the disturbed hierarchy between diegesis and figure noted earlier. The desire expressed by this film cannot be directly named or diegetically presented: it can only be generated by a hidden discourse, which like the discourse of the unconscious in dreams, Freudian slips, or bungled actions disturbs and rearranges the memory traces, logical speech, and action of our daily lives.

Sexual Pursuit. When the cyclist observes the death of the androgyne on the street below, his response is mounting excitement (captured beautifully by his breath fogging the window through which he gazes). This excitement immediately becomes overt sexual desire for the woman who has been observing the scene below with him. Until this point his relations with her have been mostly filial and passive. Suddenly, in direct response to the death of the androgyne, he is on the verge of raping her. One interpretation of

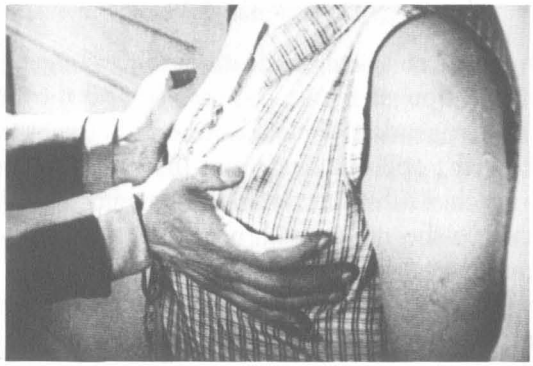
his reaction would be to see the death of the androgyne as at least a temporary resolution of the castration fear and the fetishistic impulses this fear engenders. This resolution allows a progression toward desire for the opposite sex. From this point on, the woman is no longer a mother substitute, whose absence of a penis is a source of disturbance to the male child; now she has become a woman, whose difference becomes the object of his desire—his first act is to grab for her breasts.

In the second half of this film, the intensely Surrealistic figurations examined above give way to more conventional symbols. Desire here becomes a conscious pursuit of a concrete love-object. But it should be clear from the preceding analysis that this love-object is herself nothing but another substitute for the fundamental lack-in-being posited by the castration metaphor of the prologue.

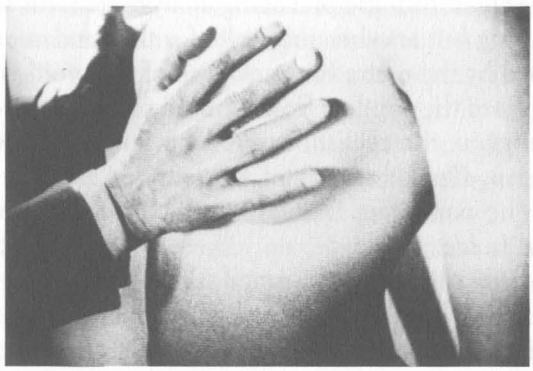
Turning from the window from which he has witnessed the death of the androgyne, the cyclist begins a comic cat-and-mouse pursuit of the woman. On the sound track a jaunty Argentine tango alternates with the ponderous and passionate *Liebestod* from Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*.

Momentarily catching the woman, the cyclist caresses her breasts over her clothes. A dissolve reveals the same hands caressing entirely nude breasts. A close-up of the cyclist's face shows that he, too, has undergone a transformation. His face is contorted, his eyes roll up so that the pupils are no longer visible, and from the side of his mouth drips a bloody drool. This transformation begins a pattern of association linking passion with the paroxysms of violence and death. This is a frequent association in a great many of Buñuel's films, in which sexual desire is never beautiful but always that which dirties, mutilates, or profanes its object and subject. In most cases this excessive passion represents the pursuit of an impossible and absolute union that death alone can finally offer.

In the love-death scene in question, when the cyclist begins to caress the woman's breasts, his passion immediately evokes a reaction that approximates death: his eyes roll up into his head and drool drips from his mouth. Love and death are inextricably connected, because only the transgression and separation of death can accomplish the ultimate union of love. Bataille points out that in French *orgasm* is often referred to as a *petite mort* (little death), a brief



1. The cyclist caresses the woman's breasts over her dress.



2. The breasts are suddenly nude.

3. The breasts become buttocks.

moment in which an individual transgresses the separate discontinuities of daily life to dissolve into continuity with the rest of the universe. He also notes that such eroticism can place the very existence of human consciousness in question.[39] *Un Chien andalou* is precisely such a questioning of the self and of the illusion of the unity of the self through eroticism. Unlike the Wagnerian *Liebestod*, this love-death is not a romantic affirmation of the transcendent power of love that finds its ultimate fulfillment in death. The Wagnerian references, like the similar references in *L'Age d'or*, are ironic, as the musical alternation between the ponderous and passionate *Liebestod* and the jaunty Argentine tango suggests.[40] Where Wagner's *Liebestod* is a transcendent unity, Buñuel and Dalí emphasize the impossibility of ultimate consummation. Just as masculine signifiers evoke feminine signifiers, so also desire evokes death. For Buñuel and Dalí it is the process of the movement between these poles that holds our attention, not their transcendent merging.

The cyclist's passion begins when he caresses the woman's breasts through her clothes. On a dissolve the breasts are suddenly nude; then they are clothed again. In a repeat of this sequence, when the hands caress the alternately clothed and nude breasts, the mounds of flesh turn out to be not breasts but buttocks. The switch from breasts to buttocks comprises a movement from sexual orthodoxy to relative perversion—a transgression that obviously heightens the cyclist's passion. It is also a transgression that presents a similar flux of male and female signifiers observed in the first part of the film.

The breasts belong to the woman's body and the buttocks seem to also. But in the context of being caressed and substituted for breasts, these buttocks tend to suggest the perversion of a normal male desire for *different* body parts (breasts or vagina) into an abnormal male desire for *similar* body parts (buttocks or penis). Whether the buttocks are male or female, we tend to read them as yet another variation on the frequent assertion-denial of sexual difference begun by the figural castration of the prologue.

At this point the woman runs away. The cyclist chases her around

[39] George S. Bataille, *Erotisme* (Paris: Editions de minuit, 1957), p. 34.

[40] At the film's first public screening, Buñuel stood behind the screen with a record player. In 1960 this same music was placed on the soundtrack of the film.

the room and across the bed. Grabbing a tennis racket that is hanging on the wall, she fends the cyclist off. Against such resistance the cyclist has recourse to more subtle stratagems, sublimating his energetic desire into a more socially acceptable form. Retreating a bit he casts about for some alternative. Finding two ropes on the floor he grabs them and resumes his movement toward the woman pulling a rope over each shoulder, evidently pleased to have found "the solution." The frame does not immediately reveal just what is attached to the ropes, although it is clear that the weight must be enormous.

Even before we know what the cyclist is pulling, the action of pulling alone is a fairly clear imitation of the process of sublimation. The energy for one (sexual) purpose is channeled into another; direct movement toward the woman is balanced by the weight on the other end of the ropes. Subsequent shots of what he pulls reveal the various forms taken by his sublimation: ropes and corks at the beginning suggest the accoutrements of fishing and the notion of entrapment. Next the two Marist brothers dragged along by the ropes seem to represent the smug piety of religious sanctions, the religious weight and authority that impedes and transforms the cyclist's initial desire. The same can be said of the two grand pianos which follow, except that this sublimation is cultural. On top of it all, mocking these religious and cultural pretensions is the dead, rotting flesh of two asses, one on top of each piano. Their exposed teeth are an echo of the pianos' keyboards, and their blinded, oozing eye-sockets are a reminder of the prologue eye-cutting as well as a prefiguration of the gouged eye-sockets of both man and woman in the final tableau. The rotting asses are a reminder that the ultimate end of all desire can only be death and decay. Thus the castration of the prologue blinding gives way in these later blindings to the general symbolic meaning of death. Here sex and death begin to approach each other in a different way. The asses' blinded eyes signify an absence of desire. Associated with death, they are an ironic mockery of the cyclist's sexual energy, and their dead weight slows him down to the extent that the woman manages to slip away into the next room.

The next room is exactly the same as the one she has just left, down to the last detail of a tennis racket and sailor hat hanging on the wall. Indeed, everything that takes place in this scene is a kind of repetition or doubling of what has come before, from the repetition

The cyclist pulls pianos and rotting donkey carcasses toward the object of his desire.

of the room itself to the repetition of the hole-with-ants in the hand, to the appearance of an actual double who knocks on the door. As the woman escapes into the next room and closes the door against her pursuer, his wrist is caught in the door. In a prolonged and agonizing struggle, the pressure of the door grotesquely squeezes the ants out of the hole that has suddenly reappeared in his hand. The cyclist on the other side of the door reacts in agony. The escape to another identical room, along with the return of the previous image of ants-and-hole in hand suggests a regression to a former state, as the subsequent rediscovery of the cyclist dressed in his frills on the bed seems to affirm.

Certainly the trauma of a hand caught in a door is analogous to the vulnerability to castration of an erect penis. This is especially so in the context of the earlier metaphoric series begun by the same image of the hole in the hand. But while the first appearance of the hole and ants emphasized the fear that women have *undergone* castration, the excruciation of this same hand caught in a door emphasizes the more present and direct agony of *undergoing* dismemberment. From the apparent danger of this aggressive acting-out of sexual desire, the cyclist regresses back to a fear of castration, resulting in a return to the fetish-attachments of the beginning of the film. As the woman is still engaged in her struggle to close the door against her pursuer, she glances around and sees that "he" is now lying on the bed in his former frills, the striped box around his neck. Once again the cyclist resorts to the infantile attempt to cover over the possibility of sexual difference through disavowal by the fetish.

At this juncture a stranger wearing a hat rings the doorbell. The stranger quickly enters the room, imperiously orders the cyclist off the bed, roughly pulls off his frills and box. Then, going to the window, he throws them all out one by one. During this entire sequence the stranger's back is to the camera; we never see his face. He places the cyclist face-to-the-wall with hands out to form a cross. Thus far the stranger's actions have indicated an authoritarian role—either father or teacher. These functions correspond with Freud's concept of the super-ego, a censuring agent of self-observation that measures the self against a social ideal.

As the stranger turns around, we discover that he is the cyclist's double. This resemblance confirms the interpretation of the dou-

The cyclist reverts to his former frills in the adjacent room.

ble's function as super-ego—another, idealized, aspect of the self.[41] But the stranger is something else as well. When he rips off the fetish garments and throws the box and its cord out the window, he becomes a threat to the cyclist's tenuous sexual equilibrium. It is as if the cyclist has retreated to this infantile stage to protect himself against the stranger's feared punishment: castration.

But immediately the stranger's aspect changes. When he turns to face the camera for the first time in a slow-motion shot with a gauze-effect, his assertive manner gives way to a gentle sadness, as if overwhelmed and dismayed by the spectacle of what, by virtue of his resemblance to the cyclist, we now see to be his own youth. He walks over to a school child's desk that has suddenly appeared in the center of the room, picks up two books, and clasps them to his chest in a manner reminiscent of the way in which the androgyne clasped the box to her chest just before she was hit by a car. He puts a book in each of the cyclist's hands and moves away.

Suddenly the books become revolvers.[42] Now it is the super-ego's turn to raise his hands, a tremendously hurt and martyred expression on his face. When the cyclist shoots, the super-ego begins his slow-motion fall in the room and ends it outside in the meadow. As he completes his fall, his hand grazes the length of the naked back of a woman seated in the meadow. Again a moment of extreme agony coincides with a moment of sensual bliss. The lyrical beauty of the nude woman seated in the meadow, whose image slowly disappears after the super-ego has fallen, combines with the paroxysm of his death and the final gesture of grasping for, but never possessing, a fleeting image of desire: another instance of the interdependence of passion and death.

The death of the super-ego double marks an important phase in the successive stages of psycho-sexual development thus far portrayed. With this death and the funeral procession that follows it, the film for once lets a passion play itself out. In the only restful moment in the entire film, the claustrophobic and intense enigmas

[41] Kelman refers to the super-ego function of this personage in "The Other Side of Realism," p. 115. Durgnat refers to the stranger as an authority figure in *Luis Buñuel*, p. 33.

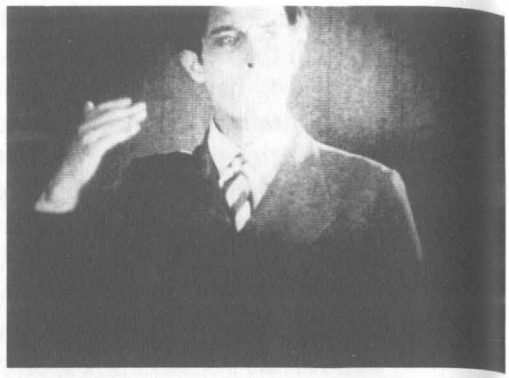
[42] The books-into-revolver theme is typical of Surrealist images. André Breton, in his second manifesto (*Manifestoes of Surrealism*, p. 125), had written that the simplest Surrealist act would be to go out on the street and shoot at random at a crowd.

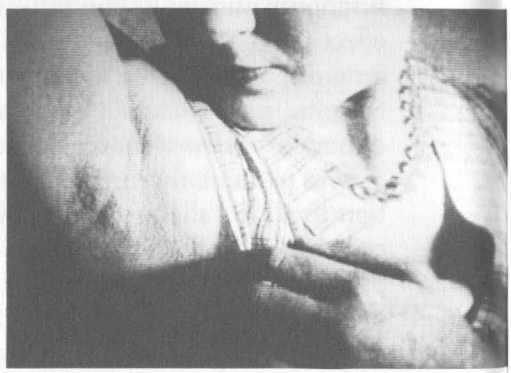
of the male-female sexual games give way here to a kind of irrelevant dénouement—a man dies in a field, and a group of strangers discover and carry off his body in a series of increasingly "epic" long shots, at the end of which they all disappear. The funereal commemoration this death receives marks it as a significant loss. Though the death of the super-ego frees the cyclist from the social forces that have attempted to sublimate his sexual energy, it also leaves him insufficiently socialized and, as far as the woman is concerned, irrelevant. At this point the focus of the film begins to move away from the desires and fantasies of the male and increasingly toward those of the female.

After the funeral procession we return once again to the room. The woman enters slowly, leans against the door, and looks intently at the opposite wall. The wall is blank. A second shot of the same wall reveals a small black spot. A closer shot reveals that the spot is actually a moth with a death's head on its back. A close-up of the death's head alone completes the series. As in many of the previous instances of metaphoric formulation, the death's head is an extremely formal variation of round shapes evolving out of a character's subjective glance. This, however, is not a metaphor but, rather, a conventional symbol of death.

Suddenly the cyclist appears in the room as well. In a rapid movement he puts his hand over his mouth and takes it away. His mouth has disappeared. The woman looks at him disdainfully. As if to assert her own possession of an oral orifice, she rouges her lips defiantly. In the next shot of the man, a tuft of hair "grows" where his mouth once was. This last outrage seems to have a desired shock effect upon the woman, who, looking with surprise at her underarm, discovers that the hair is gone; it has moved to the cyclist's face. Scornfully she sticks out her tongue at the man—a second assertion of her possession of an oral orifice—and leaves the room forever.

This particularly enigmatic scene can be understood only in relation to all the slicings, dismemberments, and holes that have preceded it and of which it is a direct reversal. Up until this point, physical mutilation has functioned as, among other things, a symbol of psychic interiority. Penetration of the flesh has corresponded to an analogous penetration of ordinarily repressed realms of the unconscious. Now, however, this final appearance of the cyclist closes





1. The cyclist.
2. The cyclist places his hand over his mouth.
3. His mouth disappears.
4. A tuft of hair appears where his mouth was.
5. The woman discovers her underarm hair missing.

and seals the flesh, not the grotesque wounds generated throughout the film, but a perfectly natural orifice: the mouth. It then covers this newly closed orifice with alien underarm hair.

Thus the last moments of the film seal and cover the interiority that the beginning of the film so grotesquely opened. Unnatural cutting is followed by equally unnatural closing. Though an epilogue follows, this final scene between the cyclist and the woman truly ends the revelation of psychic interiority begun by the prologue. Once the literal and figural openings have been sealed, nothing more can pass between them.

This reversal of cutting images also brings an end to the accompanying castration theme, but it does so in a peculiar way. When the underarm hair appears on the space that was once the cyclist's mouth, the effect of this triangular patch of hair is rather startlingly that of a misplaced patch of pubic hair.[43] Since the hair has sprouted over a *sealed* orifice, we know that it cannot conceal female genitalia. But neither does it cover male genitalia, for there is no protruding phallus. This particular displacement of body parts contradicts all previous instances of the assertion of masculine and/or feminine sexual traits. It represents the decidedly neutral absence of *any* sexual signifiers, even through it provides their natural context (pubic hair). In other words, displaced hair sets up an expectation for the signifiers of sexuality, which the sealed mouth denies. In this context the protrusion of the woman's tongue connotes a bit more than the usual disdain. Like her previous lip rouging it asserts her own possession of orifices (and thus of gender) and the man's pathetic lack (of gender, virility). Her tongue is a phallic protrusion that he can no longer emulate.

The woman now leaves the cyclist. The role of the woman, which began passively, now becomes active. Up until this point, events have tended to happen *to* her. Her role has been that of an object responding to the cyclist's initiatives: maternally to his bicycle fall and fearfully to his sexual advances. Now, in the face of his lack of initiative, she asserts her own desire to pursue the new man on

[43] In a 1934 canvas that later appeared on the cover of André Breton's *Qu'est-ce que le Surréalisme?* (Brussels: R. Henriquez, 1934), René Magritte created a similar figure. Entitled *Le Viol*, it is a portrait of a woman in which breasts take the place of eyes, a navel is the nose, and a triangle of pubic hair is the mouth.

the beach. But, although the woman's own desires now come into focus for the first time, these desires are not of the repressed, unconscious variety that have dominated the rest of the film. Even when she does find and win over the new man, this new relationship serves only as a comment on the deterioration of the former. This happens in the following way.

Before the woman leaves the room, she opens the door and waves to someone off-screen while a breeze blows her hair. In the next shot a new man in golf clothes turns around to face her. From the Parisian apartment she steps immediately onto the beach. The man in golf clothes at first shows her his watch as if to reproach her for tardiness, but he soon succumbs to her charms. In a close-up we see the side of the woman's face on the left of the frame, and the man's hand and watch horizontally on the right. This shot echoes the first part of the prologue in which a close-up of the woman's face and another male hand figured prominently. Smiling, the woman puts her hand over the watch and pulls the man's hand down out of the frame. When she does this, a horizontal white fence in the background bisects her face at exactly eye level, recalling the same visual motifs that culminated in the prologue's eye-cutting. But this man's hand holds no razor and the fence that bisects the eye leads to no cutting. Here the latent meanings that underlay the initial cutting metaphor—castration, fear, and denial; psychic interiority; filmic creation—have been exhausted.

The subsequent discovery on the beach of the broken and abandoned box, cord, and frills functions similarly; but here it is through a metonymy placed in paradigm, much like the pince-nez in *Potemkin*. The single image of the box and frills evokes the cyclist with whom it was associated earlier. But the added feature of deterioration of the box and frills comments metaphorically on the reduced status of the cyclist in the woman's affections, on the present absence of any desire. The useless box is kicked away by the new man, while the woman picks up the frills and cord. She laughingly gives them to the man, who throws them away one by one, in a manner that recalls the similar gesture of the super-ego double when he threw these objects out the window.

These paradigmatic evocations of previous metaphors and metonymies function much more traditionally than their initial for-

mulation in earlier parts of the film. Unlike these earlier figures, they do not generate the diegesis but only comment contrastingly upon previous developments, primarily upon the wearing down of desire that once generated so much of the discourse. As the new man walks along the beach with the woman, the banality of the final "happy ending" of united lovers rings false. It has no traditional integrating effect because the rest of the film has not functioned on this level.

The final tableau, with the words "in the springtime" written at the top of the frame and the new man and woman buried up to their chests in sand, blinded and devoured by insects, further mocks the happy ending. This frozen image of the putrefying carcasses of the two characters is one of final exhaustion, a remarkable precursor of Beckett's similar stage image fifty years later in *Happy Days*.[44] But here it is the unnatural stillness of the image that is significant. The effect is of a painted tableau with real people stuck in the sand like dead flowers. The tableau effect gives none of the violence of the previous surreal images in spite of the fact that the two figures have hollowed eye-sockets and are eaten by insects.[45] Rather, it is a worn-down, exhausted image of death that includes the previous element of blindness/castration as well as a new suggestion of return to the womb in the half burial[46] that resembles the corpse planted in a garden in Eliot's *Waste Land*.[47]

The title "in the springtime" is also an ironic mockery of rebirth, fertility, and energy (another resemblance to Eliot's *Waste Land*). What purports to be a beginning is really an end. Just as the beginning images (preceded by the fairy-tale "once upon a time") opened the semantic paradigm "romance" through the insistence of moon, balcony, man, and woman and then subverted this paradigm

[44] Samuel Beckett, *Oh, les beaux jours* (Paris: Editions de minuit, 1963); id., *Happy Days* (London: Faber & Faber, 1962).

[45] I should add that, although these details are indicated in the scenario, I have yet to see a print in which they are very noticeable. The eyes simply look dark and hollow. Neither is it very clear that the man in the tableau is the man from the beach, although the scenario so indicates.

[46] In his essay "The Uncanny," Freud notes that dreams of burial often express a desire to return to the womb. *Complete Psychological Works*, 17:217–52.

[47] "Stetson! You sho were with me in the ships of Mylae / That corpse you planted last year in your garden, / Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?" T. S. Eliot, *Selected Poems* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1964), p. 53.

through the metaphor of the eye-cutting, so the final image of the man and woman united on the beach opens up a similar semantic paradigm of "happy ending to romance," which the content of the final tableau disrupts. Such are the tensions that structure the entire film. From a metaphoric blindness that is also a figure for a new kind of sight, the film moves to the final blindness of death, from which no further vision ensues.

Secondary Revision. Throughout much of *Un Chien andalou* there is rather scrupulous attention to the classic rules of film editing and *mise en scène.* Early in the film, when the woman leaves her apartment to run downstairs, the filmic transition is careful to show a sample of every step of her journey, across the room, down the steps, and out the door to the street. But these details are established only so that, at a later point in the film, when she leaves the apartment for good, the abruptness of the transition from Parisian apartment to seaside will be felt.

These transgressions of filmic conventions modeled on the distortions of the unconscious in dreams or fantasies register as such only if the laws transgressed are first established. In other words, a process at work in this film tries to satisfy our conscious expectations of intelligibility. But this intelligibility is only a semblance analogous to another agency of dream formation, which Freud has described as secondary revision.[48]

As Freud defines it, *secondary revision* is contemporaneous with the process of dream formation. It is a form of censorship that covers up the illogicality of dreams. Freud compares it with the false semblance of coherence encountered in the enigmatic inscriptions that entertained the readers of a popular journal of his day. These inscriptions were "intended to make the reader believe that a certain sentence—for the sake of contrast, a sentence in dialect and as scurilous as possible—is a Latin inscription. For this purpose the letters contained in the words are torn out of their combination into syllables and arranged in a new order. Here and there a genuine Latin word appears."[49] To read the real text the reader must actually

[48] Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams,* p. 539.
[49] Ibid.

disregard the semblance of Latin, looking only at the letters and not at their ostensible arrangement. In a similar way *Un Chien andalou* creates the illusion of obeying the codes of filmic narrativity. But, like the spurious Latin text of Freud's example, it does so only to transgress them.

This process is a further refinement of the way Surrealist film imitates what Artaud calls the "mechanics" of the dream—its textual procedures. As in the early screenplays of Apollinaire, Desnos, and Artaud, the quality of surreality is not achieved by the "liberation" of pure imagination. It is achieved rather through the tension between the categories of the Imaginary and Symbolic. Thus, if the transgressions of the Imaginary are to be felt, it is necessary for the film to first set up certain diegetic expectations, which the intrusion of the Imaginary then transgresses. Secondary revision is thus ultimately a set-up for an eventual rupture of the very codes it pretends to obey. This rupture occurs either through the eventual nonobservance of the diegetic code itself (as when the woman exits from Parisian apartment to the seashore with no transition) or through the disturbed hierarchy between diegesis and figure occurring at significant points throughout the film.

Physical Violence/Textual Violence. I have already shown the very subtle ways in which the relations between figure and diegesis are transgressed in this film, but I have not yet commented on the way in which this textual violence is also connected with a very physical violence. Violence is not as gratuitous an element in this film as at first appears. Physical violence is used as a catalyst for even more radical forms of textual violence, to cue a textual progression to a greater interiority of vision (or envision). This envision could be more usefully rechristened *Mindscreen* after Bruce Kawin's book of the same name.[50] Mindscreen is a filmic visual field that presents itself as the product of a mind. Often associated with self-reflexive works, it is a concept developed to explain a general textual subjectivity that is not confined to the more limited notion of subjective camera and point of view (which imitate the activity of a character's physical eye). Mindscreen can thus be used to describe the visual

[50] Bruce Kawin, *Mindscreen* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978).

workings of film texts in which there is no fictionalized character whose mind is visualized—works in which the text itself projects the workings of a mind. This occurs in films as diverse as *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, *Persona*, and *Un Chien andalou*.

We have seen how the physical violence of the eye-cutting of the prologue opens up a literal and figural gap out of which the rest of the film's exploration of unconscious sexual fantasy spills, just as the gelatinous fluid spills out of the eye. This is the first pattern-setting instance of an act of physical violence that triggers the textual violence of mindscreen. In this initial instance the mindscreen is the whole balance of the film considered as an unconscious reaction to the fear of castration.

But within this basic structure are many smaller repetitions of the progression from physical violence to mindscreen. If the overwhelming violence of the prologue triggers the mindscreen of the rest of the film, subsequent moments of violence trigger localized progressions to mindscreen that can be read as the subjective fantasies and unconscious projections of individuals within the initial mindscreen: mindscreens within mindscreens.[51] Thus the violence of the mutilated hand (another gap) leads to a metaphoric progression that is a mindscreen for the flux of male and female signifiers. Or a violence to eyes and face in the breast-caressing scene triggers another mindscreen of the nude breasts that become buttocks. And, finally, the more conventional murder of the super-ego leads to another mindscreen in the image of the nude woman seated in the field.

Physical violence on the Symbolic level of the diegesis consistently leads to a new level of textual violence—the rupture of the diegesis and a progression to Imaginary fantasy. Thus, even when physical violence does not lead to a specifically metaphoric elaboration as it does in the prologue metaphor or the mutilated-hand series of metaphors, the effect is quite similar: physical violence on the diegetic level triggers a textual violence that moves the film to a different level of discourse altogether. Each of these new levels or mindscreens entails a visual elaboration of the opposition between male and female signifiers. Both the violence *in* the diegesis and the

[51] Buñuel develops this procedure extensively in his later films—*Belle de jour*, *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*.

violent rupture *of* the diegesis are ways in which the film overcomes the censorship usually imposed on sexual obsessions. It is therefore another way in which the diegetic codes (and sexual taboos) of the Symbolic are transformed by the workings of the Imaginary.

But if, as we have seen, *Un Chien andalou* is about sexual desire (and the accompanying fear of castration), it is not about a love affair whose consummation is thwarted by the intervention of society. I state this because, even though some critics who have dealt with the film proclaim the enigmatic presence of unconscious meanings, they still tend to read it in terms of a love affair that is never consummated due to moral and social circumstances.[52] In fact, to speak of sexual consummation at all in this film is misleading. *Un Chien andalou* focuses on the unconscious oppositions that structure sexual desire rather than on a psychological love affair that either is, or is not, consummated.

The principal oppositions that structure sexual desire in the film are, in their most abstract and schematic form, male-female, love-death, and sight-blindness. These oppositions are in continual flux in many different and complex ways throughout the film, finally coming to rest in complete stasis at the end. For example, the assertion of passion in the scene in which the cyclist caresses the woman's breasts leads directly to an apparent contradiction of this passion in the death throes that follows. A similar, though reverse order, pattern occurs during the love-death of the super-ego. In this instance murder leads to a passionate caress as his dying hand grazes the naked woman's back. Finally, in the frozen tableau of the two dead lovers buried up to their chests in sand, love and death coincide.

Sexual desire manifests itself in this context as an energy that transgresses and dissolves the constituted forms of social life. But only insofar as these forms *are* constituted can transgression have value. Because transgression is forbidden, it is by definition a violence to the established order. This quality of violent transgression marks Buñuel's portrayal of sexual desire in all his most Surrealist films. These transgressions are the search for an impossible unity that only death can finally offer. Thus death, violations, and mutila-

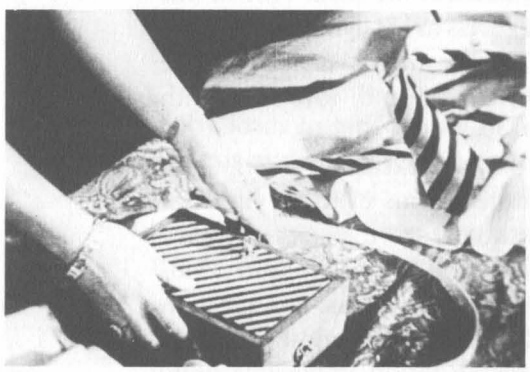
[52] "Man is not free to approach the woman he loves. He carries around with him a whole load of moral and social circumstances." Buache, *Cinema of Luis Buñuel*, p. 12.

tion express a complicity with the very law that forbids them. Love evokes death and death evokes love in a fascinating structure of opposition. Sight and blindness are opposed in similar ways.

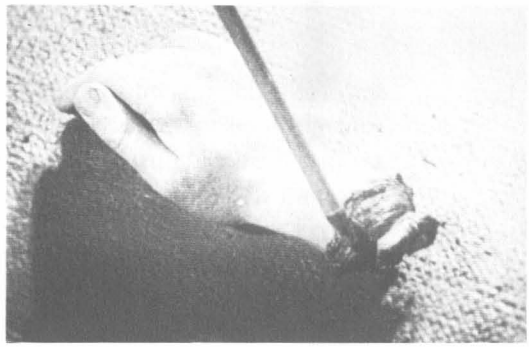
If *Un Chien andalou* pushes these transgressions to their limit, it does not do so to negate one or the other pole. Death does not negate love, neither does blindness negate sight. As in a dream, negation and contradiction do not exist. As Freud observed above, there is no "no" in dreams.[53] The film does not assert or deny any one truth about desire; it simply reveals the opposing elements that structure it and the rhetorical figures that enact it.

[53] Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams*, p. 353.

1. A cyclist appears on a deserted Paris street.

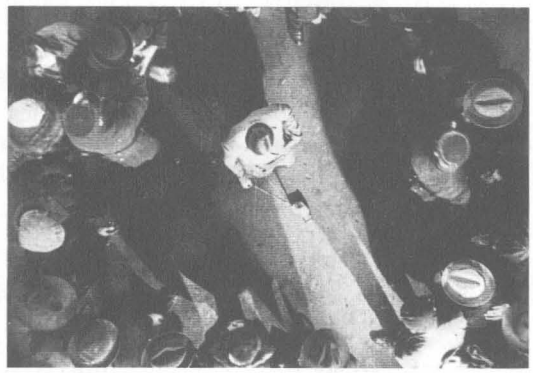


2. The woman places the cyclist's frills on the bed and adds the box.



3. The severed hand is prodded with the stick.

4. The cyclist and woman observe the scene in the street below.



5. The policeman puts the hand in the box.

6. The policeman admonishes the androgyne.