

FROM LITERATURE TO CINEMA: THE  
AMERICAN SHORT STORY SERIES

By

HARRIS JAMES ELDER

Bachelor of Arts  
Oklahoma State University  
Stillwater, Oklahoma  
1968

Master of Arts  
Oklahoma State University  
Stillwater, Oklahoma  
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Thesis Approved:

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Pat Calhoun", written above a horizontal line.

Thesis Adviser

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Gordon Weaver", written above a horizontal line.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "William R. Hays", written above a horizontal line.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "D. Dean Gilburn", written above a horizontal line.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Norman N. Ruckman", written above a horizontal line.

Dean of the Graduate College

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## PREFACE

The use of literary sources for movies began early in film history and continues to this day. The more recent development of novelization, or books based on movies, appears to ensure book sales just as films based on novels, plays, and short stories attain a measure of legitimacy through that kinship. While it is my personal opinion that filmmakers are better off working with original instead of adapted material, the fact remains that the widespread use of literary "properties" does, and no doubt will, continue. Studies about the literature-film relationship, then, must continue if we are to understand the aesthetic principles and potential of film adaptation.

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## CHAPTER I

### THE AMERICAN SHORT STORY SERIES: THE COMPATIBILITY OF CINEMA AND FAITHFUL ADAPTATIONS

During April and May of 1977, the Public Broadcasting Service aired a series of nine short stories on film, adaptations of American short fiction ranging from the work of Ambrose Bierce to John Updike.<sup>1</sup> Called The American Short Story, the television series quickly received critical accolades. "Lo, a miracle," wrote Jay Sharbutt for the Associated Press in Los Angeles.<sup>2</sup> John Vorhees called The American Short Story "the best dramatic series that TV has offered this season."<sup>3</sup> Tom Shales found the series "the most promising and provocative thing to happen on TV this spring. It's the kind of thing that reawakens one's dormant excitement for the possibilities of television."<sup>4</sup> Patricia Simmons reported that WETA, the Washington-based educational television station, received 200 telephone calls about the adaptations and that the New York producers of the series, Learning in Focus, received as many letters, "all singing the praises of the PBS mini-series."<sup>5</sup> Sally Ferguson at The National Endowment for the Humanities, which supplied more than \$2,043,000 in funding to the independent producer of the series, expressed confidence in the new television venture: "There were no opening night jitters April 5 when the Public Broadcasting Service aired the premiere telecast. . . . They knew they had a winner."<sup>6</sup> And not only was the series a "winner" in its first telecast, it has been rebroadcast twice since May, 1977.

Other reviewers expressed appreciation for the combined intellectual and entertainment potential of projects like The American Short Story. The National Observer wrote that "no viewer hungry for exceptional television fare can fail to appreciate this whole noble experiment."<sup>7</sup> The New York Times called the project "an extraordinary experiment in the blending of scholarship, cinematic art . . . first-rank creative talents."<sup>8</sup> Praise for the series also came from academia. Gregory Sojka called The American Short Story "both intellectual and entertaining: a rare treat for television viewers who subsist upon a steady diet of 'Laverne and Shirley' and 'Charlie's Angels.'"<sup>9</sup> These representative critical responses suggest that The American Short Story consists of more than a series of made-for-television movies and that the adaptations required thoughtful conception and skillful production. The reviewers also seem to identify the series as an example of the state of the art of film adaptation.

Critical responses to film adaptations have historically been less than enthusiastic, however. Indeed, attacks on Hollywood for its "crass" handling of literature date from the time Hollywood began using literary "properties."<sup>10</sup> Nearly all of these complaints focus on the issue of fidelity to the original author. In 1936, Gilbert Seldes wrote, "the movies are doing better and better by their originals and at the same time the originals themselves are worthier and weightier." Seldes doubted that "in their famous 'story conferences,' the men of Hollywood very often ask themselves what is the essence or the meaning or the significance of the work they were adapting."<sup>11</sup> Novelist James T. Farrell noted that "the likelihood of good adaptations is minimal." It is because of business needs rather than artistic needs that "the film again and again

reduce, disfigure, and alter novels."<sup>12</sup> As film critic for The New Republic in 1947, Robert Hatch wrote an article on adaptations and Hollywood producers in which he attacked them for "ripping to pieces the work of better men in their search for a little box office money."<sup>13</sup> For these writers, the integrity of literary work is not to be tampered with: filmmakers should be faithful to their literary sources.

Likewise, Hollywood was not silent on the matter. Jerry Wald, a Hollywood screenwriter who specialized in adaptations, stated that only the best screenwriters can retain the intent, theme, and spirit of the original. He outlined some of the challenges of adaptation, such as economy, selection, and translation.<sup>14</sup> Daniel Taradash, adaptor of From Here to Eternity (Columbia, 1953) suggested that departure from the original is at times essential, and that "the matter of responsibility in adapting a fine novel is . . . mostly a matter of respect for the material. That is, for the heart of the material, for what you feel the author has tried to say."<sup>15</sup> Philip Dunne, adaptor of How Green Was My Valley (Fox, 1941) and The Robe (Fox, 1953) stated that "if he [the screenwriter] can, in a radically different medium, express the intent of the novelist, if he can capture the spirit and the inner essence, the style of the original, then he has done his work well."<sup>16</sup> Don Siegel, who adapted Hemingway's "The Killers,"\* viewed literary sources as only a pretext which vaguely provides material for scenes. In making The Killers (Universal, 1964) Siegel said, "the only thing taken from it was the catalyst that a man has been killed by somebody and did not try to run away."<sup>17</sup> Fidelity is not an absolute rule in film adaptation.

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\*Following the MLA Handbook, 1977, prose short story titles are enclosed by quotation marks while film titles are underlined.



The American Short Story, however, was not a Hollywood venture. The personnel, methods, and goals of the series suggest its suitability as a test case for the state of the art of film adaptation. Robert Geller, executive producer of the series, has produced documentaries and studies for the National Education Association and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. He has served as the first director of education for the American Film Institute and has taught at Antioch College, the New School for Social Research, and the University of California at Santa Barbara.<sup>18</sup> Geller, who conceived the series and began work on it in 1974,<sup>19</sup> noted that "the faithful, creative presentation of short stories on film required some of the nation's most gifted producers, directors, performers, writers and literary scholars." He and his staff and consultants began by reading some 500 American short stories. Author and literary critic Alfred Kazin was among his advisors during the formulation of the project.<sup>20</sup> Under the direction of Calvin Skaggs, Professor of English at Drew University, a committee of literary scholars was then given a list of one hundred stories to read and reduce to a list of twenty. According to the executive producer, the final choices were made on the basis of "literary merit, entertainment potential, and psychological and social insight."<sup>21</sup> Stories which had been filmed previously were not considered for inclusion in the series.

The ambitious goals of the series mirrored the selection process. One major goal of The American Short Story centered around aesthetic and thematic concerns. Drawing upon the expertise of his panel of literary advisors and a wide variety of writers, directors, actors, and technicians, Geller hoped to produce films which examined American values over the past century; as he noted, "Our challenge has been to capture, on

film, the perceptions, style, and narrative power of the author. Fidelity to the author has been one of our main concerns."<sup>22</sup> According to Gergory Sojka, the central theme of "growth through experience and crumbling of illusions" links the films in the series.<sup>23</sup> Robert J. Kingston, acting Chairman of the Humanities Endowment, said that those in his organization "felt that some of America's greatest writers of the past century had something important to tell us about ourselves and our culture" and the The American Short Story was an excellent means to communicate this heritage.<sup>24</sup> Writing about the series in the Endowment's newsletter, Sally Ferguson recommended "more serious television programming which is not afraid to make its major responsibility making the audiences feel pain, whether the pain of discovery or the pain of empathizing with someone."<sup>25</sup> Reviewers of the series thought the films had met this responsibility. The Associated Press in Washington, D.C. wrote that the films show "a century of insights into U.S. culture."<sup>26</sup>

The producers of the series thought that fidelity to the original authors would assist in these cultural insights. Typically, each script was reviewed and rewritten several times before approval.<sup>27</sup> The nine films in the series "are not merely adaptations, treatments or interpretations," said Geller. "They are the short stories, themselves, on film."<sup>28</sup> Again, reviewers agreed that the films had achieved the stated goal. "Bull's eye," wrote Karl Meyer.<sup>29</sup> Another reviewer said the films had "scripts with substance . . . something for every literary taste."<sup>30</sup> Playboy magazine thought the authors in the series were "handled with tender loving care."<sup>31</sup> Fidelity, then, was a series goal both announced by the producers and recognized by the viewing audience.

The American Short Story also aimed at a broad audience.<sup>32</sup> Chloe Aaron, PBS Senior Vice President for Programming, expressed confidence that the "series represents public television in its fullest potential." The series "will not only entertain, but will also introduce millions of Americans to significant aspects of our literary heritage."<sup>33</sup> Executive Producer Geller noted that the short story is sometimes regarded as "the fast food of literature" but, he asserted, it "offers more sustenance than we sometimes associate with that fare."<sup>34</sup> Geller thought the films "built a sturdy bridge between high artistry and cultural integrity at one end and compelling popular entertainment at the other."<sup>35</sup> Those not connected with the series' production agreed. Joan Hanaver thought that the "variety of mood and style and . . . quality of production . . . could appeal to a wide audience."<sup>36</sup> Ellen Coughlin believed that "the shows promise to be stylish and entertaining."<sup>37</sup> Such high hopes for the series were encouraged by admiration and embarrassment for television programming imported from Britain. TV Guide, for example, stated that "good TV dramas don't have to be British, as proved by The American Short Story."<sup>38</sup> A reviewer in Variety wrote that the series "is public television as it should be, a series with the production values of the best commercial television and dramatic values of the best of the British imports."<sup>39</sup> Other reviewers took the series as an opportunity to criticize the quality of commercial television. The Christian Science Monitor hoped the series would signal "a switch from the second-rate best-seller selections of the major networks to the works of real quality."<sup>40</sup> John O'Connor asserted that the series "represents a long-overdue recognition of the obvious." Programming like The American Short Story "has been largely and inexplicably ignored while the medium has turned to assembly-

line factories and the hacking out of sit-coms and action-adventures."<sup>41</sup> Finally, Karl Meyer was moved to recommend "a year-round repertory company on commercial television that can give us a weekly short story to season the usual tripe."<sup>42</sup> But whatever the motivations behind these reviews, the entertainment qualities of the series met with almost overwhelming critical praise and appreciation.

Pedagogy, the third major goal of The American Short Story, combined the aesthetic and thematic qualities of the films with their artistic and entertainment value. The National Endowment for the Humanities wrote "that in a media-oriented society in which radio and television are the major sources of information for most citizens, the support and dissemination of high quality humanities programming through these media are among the most effective means of increasing public access to and use of the humanities." Programming like The American Short Story will bring "an appreciation of the cultures of the American people."<sup>43</sup> Toward this end, the producers facilitated the exchange of information for colleges whose curriculum incorporated the films and provided educators with preliminary bibliographies on the authors represented. Additional study materials and interpretive guides were also prepared, many of which are included in an inexpensive Dell paperback volume.<sup>44</sup> Edited by literary advisor Calvin Skaggs, the anthology includes all nine story texts as well as shooting scripts for many of the films, interviews with two of the filmmakers, and essays on the writers and their adapted work.

These three main goals of the series--entertainment, mass dissemination of literature and culture, and pedagogy--invite an assessment of the films as an index of the state of the art of film adaptation. The Dell paperback provides a bridge between the films and the classroom. As the

reviewers have almost unanimously indicated, the films should appeal to a mass audience. What the reviewers have suggested, but lacked the space to explore in sufficient detail, is the success of the films as adaptations, of their fidelity to the authors. This study gauges both the cinematic value and the fidelity of four representative films in the series: The Jolly Corner (Henry James), The Music School (John Updike), Soldier's Home (Ernest Hemingway), and The Displaced Person (Flannery O'Connor).

The basis for selecting these four films is the degree to which the prose story is amenable to adaptation to the film medium. "The Jolly Corner" and "The Music School" tend to resist conversion to the film medium. For the most part, these stories probe subconsciousness; obviously, this inner world is difficult to picture. "Soldier's Home" and, especially, "The Displaced Person" tend to invite conversion to the film medium. Both stories use strong dialogue, are largely based in the physical world, and share common elements with the film scenario. The Hemingway story, for example, is quite short and thereby frees the filmmaker to invent characters and scenes. O'Connor's story reads almost like a screenplay with its episodic structure, strong characterization, local color, and setting. Chapter and spatial divisions in the text clearly suggest different scenes for a film of the story. With the exception of Updike's work, filmmakers have shown continuing interest in these authors' works as material for their medium.<sup>45</sup>

The method of studying the films was as follows: Each story was read prior to its broadcast on PBS. The film was then screened on television. A detailed realized script of each film was prepared. Realized scripts differ significantly from the shooting script, or teleplay. The

shooting script usually does not include many details of lighting, camera angle and distance, sound, and character expression and elocution. Only until the filmmaker views the rushes does he have a clear idea of how the scenes will actually work. With this information he can then reshoot, edit, restructure, add scenes, and make other changes. The shooting script of the film is a plan; the realized script is a written record of how that plan was eventually realized. This study limits its discussion to the final product. Two extended quotations from the realized script of The Displaced Person appear in the chapter which examines that film. The values of each story and its film were then compared with an interest in fidelity, the repeatedly stated goal of The American Short Story. Each film was rescreened twice during the series' two rebroadcasts and once in a sixteen-millimeter format. The remainder of this chapter discusses basic theoretical principles in film adaptation. These principles are then applied to each of the four films in the study. The final chapter, which discusses The Music School, also serves as a conclusion.

The theoretical similarities and differences in film and fiction bear on the issue of fidelity. George Bluestone writes that only certain qualities of prose can satisfactorily be expressed on film. Those qualities which deal with exteriors are more accessible to a filmmaker than those which deal with an inner world, what goes on in the mind of a character. Film adaptors, therefore, might have to omit or modify those elements of a prose narrative. As Bluestone states, "changes are inevitable the moment one abandons the linguistic for the visual medium . . . the end products of novel and film represent different aesthetic genera. . . . In the last analysis, each is autonomous, and each is characterized by unique and specific properties."<sup>46</sup> Bluestone thinks that the properties

unique to each medium arise from a basic difference in their modes of communication. Fiction is better equipped to communicate the interior world because verbal language more easily handles figures of speech, dreams, and memory--elements of conceptual consciousness. Film, on the other hand, is a perceptual and presentational medium and is better equipped to deal with the exterior world through images which exist in the physical world. Bluestone points out that "the rendition of mental states . . . cannot be as adequately represented by film as by language. If the film has difficulty presenting streams of consciousness, it has even more difficulty presenting states of mind precisely by the absence of them in the visible world."<sup>47</sup> Manifestations of states of mind, however, are not absent from the visible world. Nearly everyone has watched a film and had the feeling that he knew a character's thoughts, his inner world. Soldier's Home, for example, leaves one with a clear sense of Krebs' state of mind as he flees his stifling hometown, as he is pursued by his mother's off-camera prayer.

Nicola Chiaromonte holds an even more extreme view than does Bluestone: film as a medium is restricted to exteriors. Cinema consists of a "language of signs that describes the external, in all its certainty and completeness. In this language every sign is clear, the meaning of every gesture is immediately comprehensible, and vagueness is excluded by definition. . . . It has at its disposal a realm where all is explicit and accessible, where act immediately follows on intention, and where real life is magically transformed into a series of clear and definite events. But it is certainly not through the cinema that we can explore what Heraclitus called the 'confines of the soul.'"<sup>48</sup> Film language, however, communicates through more than just the visual mode. Charles

Eidsvik notes that "literature is an art comprised of more than one medium and . . . film is a medium of more than one art. Literature and film are two sorts of things, each capable of encompassing part of the other."<sup>49</sup> Film as a rhetorical strategy of several presentational modes employs verbal language (dialogue, visualized print, voice-over narration), sound, and music to add a connotative dimension to objects and action which exist in physical space.

Chiarmonte's restriction of the film image to the reproduction of exteriors anticipates Siegfried Kracauer's theory of film as "the redemption of physical reality," the belief that film is unable to communicate the significance of externalized objects, events, and characters. Chiarmonte, for example, writes that "the photographic image is an absolutely explicit indicator; and this is both its strength and its weakness. It can show everything that is showable--and nothing else." Unlike verbal language which requires "ordering and evaluating" of the reader, film "images can only be registered."<sup>50</sup> Yet the idea that "ordering and evaluating" are not required of film viewers is untrue. One could refuse to evaluate the interrelationships that arise when images are juxtaposed with other images, sounds, music, and dialogue, but it would be difficult and undesirable to view a film in this way. As Harold Schneider points out, "literature and film are not totally different disciplines. They interrelate, they associate, they hobnob. Film is not merely visual, it is verbal."<sup>51</sup> The composite of cinematic images in a film is capable of much more meaning than simply on a denotative level. If Chiarmonte were correct, film images could mean anything and therefore would mean nothing.



Siegfried Kracauer bases his position on adaptations on one general criterion, "the extent to which they [the adaptations] meet the requirements of the film medium." Those novels that adapt more easily are more concerned with exterior details and are therefore closer to Kracauer's theory of film as "the redemption of physical reality," the subtitle of his book. But Kracauer does not want to be misinterpreted as suggesting that only outer reality is adaptable: "that a novel involves inner life processes does not by itself alone mark it as an unadaptable narrative." The greatest problem for the adaptor is to translate skillfully a novel that has a "cinematically unmanageable universe." Some things will simply not work in cinematic terms. Whereas the novelist can detail "inner reality," the filmmaker usually focuses on the outer world. The range of novels that can be adapted "faithfully," then, is limited, for "each medium has a specific nature which invites certain kinds of communication while obstructing others."<sup>52</sup> The four films discussed in this study represent a range of adaptability into the film medium and therefore serve as tests for the degrees of fidelity possible.

Some critics agree that film can reveal and comment upon the interior world. Henry Bergson compares "the mechanism of conceptual thought" to the way motion pictures work by drawing an analogy between perception and movies. In real life, the process of thought activates and finds significance in unconnected images much as a film projector mechanically activates separate frames on celluloid: "We hardly do anything else than set going a kind of cinematograph inside us."<sup>53</sup> Gertrude Stein notes that her early writing did what the cinema was doing, "making a continuous succession of the statement of what that person was until I had not many things but one thing."<sup>54</sup> The result was not a collection

of separate images but a new thing not contained in the separate images, a tertium quid. Wylie Sypher defines the cinema in similar terms as "an artistic technique of presenting things as they exist in time by means of a composite perspective."<sup>55</sup> R. E. Jones is more explicitly optimistic about the potential of film to convey the inner life of a character through external images. In contrast to Chiaromonte, Jones believes that film presents anything but "the external, in all its certainty and completeness": "Motion pictures are our thoughts made visible and audible. They flow in a swift succession of images, precisely as our thoughts do, and their speed, with their flashbacks--like sudden uprushes of memory--and their abrupt transition from one subject to another, approximates very closely the speed of our thinking. They have the rhythm of the thought-stream and the same uncanny ability to move forward or backward in space or time. . . . They project pure thought, pure dream, pure inner life."<sup>56</sup> In lieu of these polemic theories, a cautious middle ground might be the most flexible position from which to assess the capacity of the film medium to reveal the inner world. Charles Eidsvik, for example, takes a very skeptical view of Bluestone's ideas on this inner-outer dichotomy: "Critics accustomed to identifying film by its perceptual mode of apprehension mistakenly believe that literature can be identified by the conceptual way we apprehend printed verbal language. . . . Bluestone is wrong about both the world we see and about perception." A writer and a filmmaker deal with a world which "is pre-structured and pre-signified by his culture. . . . What we see is already a universe of significations . . . verbal language and perception are interlocked parts of a larger linguistic gestalt of which we know very little."<sup>57</sup> As all but The Music School in The American Short Story

films in this study demonstrate, film does have the capability, although it is sometimes limited, to reveal the thoughts, attitudes, and feelings of characters.

The problems suggested by Eidsvik's "larger linguistic gestalt" also applies to verbal and cinematic tropes as modes of symbolic representation. Verbal figures of speech depend on the symbolic medium of verbal language; the reader apprehends metaphorical qualities through phonetic representation. Cinematic figures of speech also require a symbolic medium--one, however, which is ideographic: pictures symbolize a thing or idea but not a particular word or phrase for it. The film reviewer apprehends metaphorical qualities through representation which is not necessarily more concrete, but closer to the object itself because the medium of language is no longer needed to perform the task of representation. What film gains in closeness, however, costs the medium in effectiveness. Although, as Charles Barr says, film "cannot show the essence, but it can suggest the essence by showing the substance,"<sup>58</sup> film images tend to be taken more literally. In this literalism--the externalization of thought--the film trope loses some of the quality of thought. Just as the verbal figure of speech loses some of its metaphorical quality if taken literally, the film image, because it is seen more directly, not reliant on words to construct the image, gravitates toward literalism and thereby loses some of its metaphorical quality. Robert Richardson states the problem succinctly: "Literature often has the problem of making the significant somehow visible while film often finds itself trying to make the visible significant."<sup>59</sup> Significance has been achieved in The American Short Story films Soldier's Home and The Displaced Person. When the camera attentively watches the dancing feet of Roselle Simmons and Harold

Krebs, for example, that metaphor for the patterns of Krebs' hometown both arises naturally from the action and is charged with significance. In the adaptation of O'Connor's story, the combination of the Judge's grave circled by the Displaced Person on the instrument of his death establishes these physical objects as metaphors for the theme of universal displacement which permeates the story. ✓

Bluestone writes that "The novel renders the illusion of space by going from point to point in time; the film renders time by going from point to point in space,"<sup>60</sup> a conclusion which Edward Ruhe thinks "takes him to the borders of metaphysics."<sup>61</sup> Fiction has three basic tenses--past, present, and future--and can suggest changes in location through changes in time. Film, however, has only one basic tense--the continuous present, the immediacy of the image, the inexorable progress of the celluloid--but through changes in location, film can suggest that time has changed. According to John Harrington, "Alterations in time necessarily involve alterations in space. . . . The visual component of film produces changes in light intensity and pattern, and these changes are taken by a viewer to mean that both space and time have changed."<sup>62</sup> In the denouement of The Displaced Person, for example, verbal language in O'Connor's story using different tenses to suggest the passage of time is transformed into visual changes in space. Supplemented by slow dissolves and music to enhance the sense of time passing, these changes in location create the illusion of the time flux.

The difference between adaptations of novels and short stories may appear to be less complicated: the short story's limited material should adapt in less time. Alfred Hitchcock thinks that film has more in common with the short story than the novel. In a conversation with Francois

Truffaut, Hitchcock says, "A film . . . is close to a short story, which, as a rule, sustains one idea that culminates when the action has reached the highest point of the dramatic curve. . . . A short story is rarely put down in the middle, and in this sense it resembles a film. And it is because of this peculiarity that there must be a steady development of the plot."<sup>63</sup> With fidelity as criterion for explication, short stories are only ostensibly less complicated. Marguerite Ortman's assertion that a "short story of the novelette size is ideal for a motion picture"<sup>64</sup> aptly applies to feature films made from authors held in less esteem than those included in The American Short Story project. When the short story compresses its length it tends to compress its language, encouraging, maybe requiring the use of metaphor--a task which film performs with greater difficulty.

Although the short story by definition treats fewer sequences of action than a novel, film adaptors of short stories--if they include as much of the original plot as possible--tend to lengthen their films. Such a tendency is not surprising: as the filmmaker attempts to find cinematic analogues for connotations embodied in the original's verbal language he will have to create a larger number of visual images if their connotative meaning is to arise naturally from the setting. Distention of plot occurs less often in films made in an expressive style. Although Sally Ferguson reports that the films in The American Short Story were "free of the time strictures of commercial television," and that the "films last only as long as is necessary to tell their stories,"<sup>65</sup> scenes had to be invented and amplified. Minor lengthening of a scene occurs in the addition of mirror imagery in The Jolly Corner. In adapting Hemingway's rather brief "Soldier's Home," the filmmakers had to invent

characters and entire scenes in which Krebs could confront both people and inanimate objects.

Changes in the original prose narrative may present difficulties. Yet it is hardly necessary to bring all of the language from the short story to the film; some material can be externalized in dramatic scenes. The filmmaker may find it useful to expand on action suggested in the original. Here, the filmmaker finds perceptual analogues for conceptual language. Spencer Brydon's meeting with construction boss Wilkes in The Jolly Corner lasts much longer than its description in James' story. Plot restructuring may also be desirable, especially if the short story does not quickly establish tone: filmmakers usually attempt to establish a dominant mood early in the viewing experience. In Soldier's Home, for example, the quick succession of scenes depicting Krebs before, during, and after the war creates an ironic tone of conflict whose implications are extended throughout the remainder of the film. Other kinds of action may require rearrangement. The murder scene in Richard Brooks' In Cold Blood (Columbia, 1967), for example, occurs near the end of the form, when it chronologically took place in 1959. The restructuring heightens the climax. Finally, omission of material may be necessary if it does not or cannot serve a filmic purpose--as long as such deletions do not alter the essential spirit, tone, or theme of the adapted story. As a general rule, the film adaptor should approach the prose original in the same spirit as that author approached his sources and experience.

This same basic principle--a spirit of approaching materials--applies to characterization. Short stories usually focus on one character. But characters described in verbal terms may tend to be uninteresting when they simply appear in a film. The problem can be managed partly

through a careful selection (or invention) of plot incident and character details. In the plot of Soldier's Home, for example, Krebs attends a YMCA dance where the pressure to conform increases dramatically. The filmmakers of The Displaced Person wisely used O'Connor's details of dialogue and local color as almost exact cinematic material. Here the actors play a decisive role. John Houseman, who portrays Father Flynn in The Displaced Person, delivers lengthy, unsolicited lectures to Mrs. McIntyre on Catholicism in an Irish brogue. He perfected the brogue through study with a dialect coach at New York's Julliard Drama School.<sup>66</sup> Characters can also help define other characters by contrast, functioning as representatives of a value system and clarifying the main conflict. The invented character Bill Kenner in Soldier's Home represents the values Krebs rejects and through contrast helps clarify both the main conflict in the story and define Krebs' state of mind. The interior world of a character, particularly if he is a meditative narrator, can present formidable difficulties. Visual analogues which suggest thought are neither easy to find nor to employ convincingly. In desperation, a filmmaker may resort to extensive voice-over narration--as found in The Music School.

Adapting stylistic elements as a main interest in film adaptation presents formidable difficulties. Film is seldom able, and probably should not attempt, to concentrate on finding analogous stylistic techniques. The success of a work of fiction depends largely on its style--in the work of John Updike, for example--but stylistic adaptations are seldom successful due to the root difference between verbal and visual language. As Gerald Barrett states, "The irrational dimension of a literary work, the germ of its existence, is often untranslatable into

visual terms--and it, in turn, destroys the special, irrational discussion of the film."<sup>67</sup> The persistent voice-over narrator in The Music School wreaks this kind of destruction. A literary work's characteristic uses of diction, grammar, and syntax will usually not satisfactorily transfer to analogous cinematic uses of shots, sound, and montage. Thus a different style, only roughly analogous at best, will have to be used. The filmmaker should bring his own style to bear on the materials.

The film adaptor is more fortunate with setting. Film can hardly avoid having a setting, and faithful adaptations usually capitalize on the setting described in the prose story. Andre Bazin clarifies this essential feature of cinema by contrasting it with live theater: "in the theater the drama proceeds from the actor, in the cinema it goes from the decor to man. This reversal of the dramatic flow is of decisive importance. It is bound up with the very essence of the mise-en-scène. One must see here one of the consequences of photographic realism. Obviously, if the cinema makes use of nature it is because it is able to."<sup>68</sup> The American Short Story project used meticulously authentic sets. The entire film The Displaced Person was shot at Andalusia, the Milledgeville, Georgia farm owned by Flannery O'Connor's mother. A number of scenes were shot in the house where O'Connor lived and worked. Executive Producer Geller notes that O'Connor's mother "very kindly let us use the house and surrounding property as our locale, including the barns, fields, and hired hands' shacks. . . . Even the peacocks seen in the film were among those the author actually wrote about."<sup>69</sup> Actors in The Jolly Corner agree that "the production company's selection of the locale for the film was crucial in achieving a feeling of historical authenticity and capturing the suggestion of a supernatural presence."<sup>70</sup> The landmark



house that was used for most of the filming is the "Commandant's House," which overlooks the former site of the Brooklyn Navy Yard. For more than 150 years, the building was the headquarters for the Admiralty of the North Atlantic Fleet. "Sometimes we shot at night," Fritz Weaver, who portrays Spencer Brydon in the film, recalls. "One almost began to feel that the great people who actually lived in these homes during the last century were still there, somewhere, hovering about."<sup>71</sup> Robert Young, director of Soldier's Home, wanted to recreate the sense of small town America waking up just after World War I. He paid great attention to period detail in recreating the main street of Krebs' hometown.<sup>72</sup> The scene in The Music School showing nuns manufacturing the communion wafers was filmed in the convent near San Francisco where the wafers are actually made.<sup>73</sup> All of these settings help control viewer responses to the action by affecting and revealing characters, producing atmosphere and tone, and suggesting theme. They also serve as a means of fidelity to the original.

Tone is an aspect of style which the film medium is better equipped to approximate. Fiction is better able to convey the attitude of a narrator toward setting--in Conrad's "The Secret Sharer," for example. Physical details may be unimportant because it is the narrator's perception of those details which makes the setting significant. Film, however, more closely reproduces physical reality; the task of showing a character's response to or perception of setting may operate against the "realistic tug" of cinema. George Linden states that while the prose writer "deploys," the filmmaker must "display." Capturing the tone of the original is essential to the success of an adaptation. "For a film to be an adequate rendition . . . it must not only present the actions and events

. . . but also capture the subjective tones and attitudes toward those events."<sup>74</sup> Prose diction conveys the writer's attitude toward his material and audience. Film also reveals an attitude by using the sensory imagery of film. In Soldier's Home, for example, the first scene employs sepia tint not only to identify the past of Krebs' fraternity days, but to convey the storyteller's attitude toward the fading values which they embody. When sound is put to effective use, more than one image can be presented simultaneously; sound multiplies the potential of montage. When the characters in The Displaced Person express their various attitudes toward the peacocks, the birds are heard on the sound track while each character speaks, a reminder of the birds' symbolic presence. Rhythm is an important tonal device which produces mood. In prose, rhythm comes through repetitions of words, recurrence of syntax patterns, and structuring of larger units such as the paragraph. The editing rhythm of film shots and the kind of transition used produces tone. In The Displaced Person, the two final sequences create tone both internally and through contrast. The death scene is cut rapidly, communicating the violence of Mr. Guizac's death. Following his death, the gradual disintegration of the McIntyre farm comes to the screen in the form of slow dissolves and contemplative music. Death is more cruel and disintegration more inexorable precisely because the two sequences are different in tone.

A successful adaptation will express the theme of the original work within the limitations imposed by the film medium. Because film is primarily visual, images, not words, must bear the major responsibility of communicating ideas and themes. The thematic scope of an adaptation may therefore be limited. The filmmaker can, however, select and emphasize

thematically representative action, delete and invent characters, and also externalize figurative language in dialogue, acting, and details of setting. Fidelity as a main interest in the adaptation of fiction set in past decades may present difficulties for a contemporary viewing audience. The reverse, however, is true in the case of Soldier's Home. Robert Geller states that the film "stirs haunting echoes of a more recent event--the gradual, week by week return of the American soldiers from Vietnam. Then, too . . . the arrival of the foot soldiers was without widespread public recognition."<sup>75</sup> In any event, the original's theme as well as its tone should be conveyed in the adaptation. George Linden believes that

a director can change the plot of a novel, he can eliminate certain characters and scenes, and he can include scenes not included in the novel without violating it. But he cannot seriously violate the theme of the novel, and the one thing he must be able to translate into his new medium is its tone. If the tone of a work is lost, the work is lost; but the tone of the novel must be rendered in an aural/visual patterning instead of by the use of descriptive dialogue or other narrative device. The author's intellectual viewpoint must become the director's emotional standpoint. If this happens, the camera will capture the relevant visual analogues. If not, the meanings of the novel are lost. Of course, if the director succeeds in his effort, he will have produced not a copy of the novel, but a new object: an art film that aims at close targets in a different way.<sup>76</sup>

The "other narrative device" to which Linden refers is reminiscent of the voice-over narrator heard throughout The Music School. In that adaptation, however, "the author's intellectual viewpoint" has not "become the director's emotional standpoint." The prose narrator has been dropped wholesale into the much different texture of the film.

Linden's definition of a successful adaptation is representative of most recent literature on the subject. Yet the basic criteria--an adaptation's retention, in cinematic language, of the essential tone, theme,

and by implication, the spirit of the original--entail elements of both fiction and film which are communicated through a controlling point of view. Control of the fictional world necessarily requires a rhetorical strategy through which the author continually passes judgment about the material presented. As Wayne Booth states, such authorial judgment is "always present, always evident to anyone who knows how to look for it . . . though the author can to some extent choose his disguises, he can never choose to disappear."<sup>77</sup> To disappear would be to eliminate the meaning of a work; if any meaning were possible, the work would mean nothing.

When novelist Robert Nathan says that film follows "by means of the camera, the single, unique vision of the writer,"<sup>78</sup> he is linking the two media as narrative arts because they both tell a story from a controlled point of view. Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg state that "the problem of point of view is narrative art's own problem. . . . In the relationship between the teller and the tale, and that other relationship between the teller and the audience, lies the essence of narrative art."<sup>79</sup> As a narrative art, then, film must also have a point of view. The filmmaker's ability to find cinematic analogues for the original's point of view can determine how well the adaptation captures the essential tone, theme, and spirit of its literary source.

The omniscience inherent in the camera may limit film's ability to succeed in adapting the various points of view found in fiction. Bluestone writes that "Bound by its respect for physical reality, but unbound by the vision of any one spectator, the lens becomes an ideal, unrealistic eye; unbound by natural observation, the eye of the spectator becomes omniscient."<sup>80</sup> Thus, some of the qualities of some stories may

not be available for successful adaptation. One notable example of success in shifting point of view occurs in The Jolly Corner when Spencer Brydon becomes sufficiently detached from himself so that he assumes both the role of hunter and haunted. Care and restraint are used in this film to achieve an acceptable third-person-limited narration. The camera and the location of shots shift back and forth from the more objective role of detached observer to the more subjective point of view of Brydon. And these intensities change to the film's advantage. As Wayne Booth points out, "no quality, however desirable, is likely to be suitable in the same degree in all parts of a work."<sup>81</sup>

The dual role of first-person narrators more strongly resists conversion to the camera's omniscient eye. Some films have been adapted from fiction narrated in the first person, but such films tend to rely on a convention in cinema which is often analogous on a superficial level. The film may begin with a voice-over to suggest first-person narration. Soon the voice-over narration stops, causing a shift toward omniscience. The voice-over occasionally returns to suggest first person. But the voice-over narrator in film cannot capture the tone created by the singular presence of a voice telling the story. A notable example of success in this convention is Pip's voice-over narration in David Lean's Great Expectations (Universal, 1946). The voice-over very gently punctuates major scenes which show Pip's growth to maturity. But this first-person narrative strategy functions significantly, not merely as a substitute for film rhetoric that could not be found. Films made with a first-person point of view throughout are even less satisfactory. In first-person adaptations the filmmaker comes into conflict with the fact that film is far more adept at visual expression. Writers on film have often

complained of the deleterious effect of such a technique. Margaret Thorp, for example, reviews the "conscious attempt at working out a point of view" in Robert Montgomery's Lady in the Lake (MGM, 1946) (all scenes are revealed through the hero's eyes). Revelation of all scenes through the hero's eyes is a mistake in film because the first-person narrator "must tell you not what is happening but what has happened, while the essence of film is immediate expression and experience."<sup>82</sup> First-person point of view works best in film when used with restraint.

Wayne Booth believes that the distinction between first and third person in prose fiction needs to be "more precise and describe how the particular qualities of the narrators relate to specific effects."<sup>83</sup> The issue of point of view in fiction, then, encompasses more than merely labeling narrators. Rhetorical stances provide the reader and viewer with necessary aesthetic distance, the power of artifice to position an audience relative to the materials of fiction. Such distancing is crucial for the enjoyment of art. An overdistanced work places its audience in too remote a position to identify with the fictional world. The separation by time and location of the two climaxes in The Jolly Corner overdistances, and therefore dilutes, both the intensity and significance of Brydon's double confrontation. On the other hand, an underdistanced work places its audience in too close a position to enjoy, understand, and find meaning in the story. Moreover, aesthetic distance is not an end in itself; it enables an author or filmmaker to supply his audience with a system of controls over and judgments about the fictional materials. As Booth points out, "distance along one axis is sought for the sake of increasing the reader's involvement on some other axis." Authors (and filmmakers) of powerful works take great care to provide "an elaborate

system of controls over the reader's involvement and detachment along various lines of interest."<sup>84</sup>

Some filmmakers and film theorists believe that the aesthetic distance in cinema either should or will be relatively close. Filmmaker Michael Roemer values an intense kind of involvement in film: "A good director tries to eliminate this distance between audience and action, to destroy the screen as a picture frame, and to drag the audience through it into the reality of the scene."<sup>85</sup> Christian Metz believes that the nature of the film medium, "by hermetically isolating fiction from reality . . . levels all obstacles to spectator participation."<sup>86</sup> Andre Bazin writes that the filmmaker has little at his disposal to affect aesthetic distance: "alone, hidden in a dark room, we watch through half-open blinds a spectacle that is unaware of our existence and which is part of the universe. There is nothing to prevent us from identifying ourselves in imagination with the moving world before us, which becomes the world."<sup>87</sup> But to deny that film can control point of view and distance is to deny film its place as a narrative art. Through lens manipulation, film stocks and exposure, manipulation within the camera, camera placement, lighting, music, sound, dialogue, montage, and a wealth of other rhetorical resources in cinema, the filmmaker can evaluate the surfaces his medium requires be shown. Thus, the film audience is not limited to any single angle of vision and will occupy the various distances which the filmmaker effects. Camera movement and editing make a constantly shifting point of view possible by changing location, angle, distance, and objective or subjective views of the story. And point of view is crucial to meaning in both fiction and film. As Percy Lubbock says, "The whole intricate question of method, in the craft of fiction,

I take to be governed by the question of point of view--the question of the relation in which the narrator stands to the story."<sup>88</sup> Point of view in cinema fiction provides an equally important control over viewer distance.

Postwar Hollywood had problems with a basic aspect of filmmaking. There was an increasing tendency in the late 1940s to use voice-over narration to provide story continuity if images and dialogue themselves failed to do the job. Robert Sklar thinks the voice-over often serves as an unintended distancing device: it "destroys the illusion of the screen image's presentness and forces the narrator's interpretation of visual experience on the viewer instead of allowing him or her to feel directly."<sup>89</sup> The pressure on Hollywood filmmakers is much like the self-imposed pressure on The American Short Story to maintain fidelity to John Updike's "The Music School." Fidelity is a difficult goal in a different medium, and the voice-over reproduction of language from the original often creates not more, but less of the original's essence. Film theorists have noted that when a voice and an image compete in a film, the image dominates, but its visual effect is lessened by the intrusion of a verbal element. John Harrington, in explaining the persuasiveness of real details, writes that "It is the sense of recorded reality, not the genuineness of it, that makes film believable and causes a viewer to accept the relationships among photographed details. . . . The most effective images do not work on the verbal level."<sup>90</sup> Thus, the technique of voice-over narration in film adaptations functions as a limited surrogate for the narrator in a literary work. This "solution" to finding a clear and faithful point of view in film merely avoids the issue of



finding analogous rhetorical techniques in film for the literary techniques of the original.

The use of voice-over narration also demonstrates how adaptations can be too faithful to their sources. First, voice-over narration can be redundant: narration taken verbatim from the source may tell what has already been suggested cinematically. The power of pictures is undermined by a duplication of modes, a rhetorical overkill. The voice-over in Soldier's Home, for example, verbalizes what pictures already say. Second, the voice-over can be inappropriate: it reveals thoughts and feelings that are nowhere in pictures or dialogue. The words will then exist in a vacuum. The big danger of voice-over narration is that it will probably not work as a complement to visual and dramatic elements. It runs the risk of contradicting, confusing, repeating, and undermining the drama. Such verbal "aids" cannot provide a substitute for what is on the screen; what is on the screen may seem more like an illustrated story. In The Music School, voice-over narration, although coming from the protagonist, does not subtly punctuate the film at key points in the story. It permeates the film in an unfortunate mix of prose and cinema.

Edward Ruhe thinks "judgments about the general superiority of literature are based narrowly on the predictable inferiority of film adaptations to their classic originals."<sup>91</sup> Perhaps this feeling is a source of The American Short Story project's interest in fidelity. Film adaptors tend to be suspected no matter what their success. "Not only are our expectations higher for adaptations," writes Charles Eidsvik, "but we are willing to put up with radically less." The film adaptor faces a frustrating dilemma: "to be unfaithful is to be a heel and to

be faithful, dull. Condemnation comes not because a film does something but rather because of what a film does not do."<sup>92</sup> The concerns implicit in these views raise the problem of defining fidelity. Andre Bazin defines the term in much the same way as The American Short Story project defines the aesthetic and pedagogical goals of the series: "Fidelity is . . . the temperamental affinity between film-maker and novelist, a deeply sympathetic understanding. Instead of presenting itself as a substitute, the film is intended to take its place alongside the book."<sup>93</sup> But art forms are unique in the way they communicate. George Linden believes that the main similarity between prose fiction and film is in their power to create illusion. But these illusory capacities are different in kind: "Because of the intimate organic relations of form and content, no matter how faithful the film, it can never express the content of the novel as the novel expresses it. Different materials demand different modes of expression."<sup>94</sup> Linden thinks the verbal power of fiction and the visual power of film both create illusions but in different ways. This does not, however, rule out the possibility of successful adaptations. Robert Richardson states that "stories can be translated from one form to the other, but what makes a good novel rarely makes a good film."<sup>95</sup> Richardson's key word here is "what." While it may seem that the content in one art form is not available for use in another because the art form actually shapes the content, success is possible if one does not take too limited a view of form and content. Bela Balazs states:

To accept the thesis that the content or material determines the form and with it the art form, and nevertheless to admit the possibility of putting the same material into a different form, is thinkable only if the terms are used loosely, that is if the terms 'content' and 'form' do not exactly cover what we are accustomed to call material, action, plot, story, subject, etc. on the one hand and 'art form' on the other.

There can be no doubt that it is possible to take the subject, the story, the plot of a novel, turn it into a . . . film and yet produce perfect works of art in each case--the form being in each case adequate to the content. . . . It is possible because, while the subject, or story, of both works is identical, their content is nevertheless different. It is this different content that is adequately expressed in the changing form resulting from the adaptation.<sup>96</sup>

Thus, a film adaptation cannot justly be evaluated on the basis of its fidelity to all elements of its source. Nor should it be seen as a product having nothing whatever to do with the original. A successful film and faithful adaptation will capture the essential tone, spirit, and theme of the original. Alterations in plot, characters, setting, dialogue, and style are permissible when dictated by the transformational requirements of the film medium. If possible, the adaptation will use cinematic equivalents for key prose elements which resist conversion.

Film adaptations which are too literal risk failure both as entertainment and as art. As John Howard Lawson says, "An accurate film adaptation of a novel cannot avoid being prosaic in the literal sense: having the quality of prose without its magic . . . filmmakers who are conscientious in their efforts to transcribe a novel are likely to go to the . . . extreme. In following the text of the novel they lose its spirit. Fiction cannot be transformed into film by duplicating the 'dramatic' scenes and omitting the prose passages."<sup>97</sup> Some of the language of the original, that which tends toward perceptual communication, could readily be "paraphrased" in cinematic terms. A strategy such as dramatizing inner thoughts and suggesting the inner world through mise-en-scène could be employed to communicate conceptual features of the original. In this way, the essential spirit, tone, and themes of the original could be communicated.

A successful adaptation, therefore, is not a copy of the original, but a new object which captures the essence of its source in a new form. In his praise of Tony Richardson's adaptation of Tom Jones (United Artists, 1963), Fielding scholar Martin C. Battestin observes that "analogy is the key. To judge whether or not a film is a successful adaptation of a novel is to evaluate the skill of its makers in striking analogous attitudes and in finding analogous rhetorical techniques."<sup>98</sup> Such an ambitious goal is achieved through a combination of rhetorical strategies which are both analogous to those in the prose source and effective in the film medium. Those elements of fiction which adapt readily provide material for more literal cinematic rendition. The wise filmmaker is alert to their potential for inclusion in his work. Those elements which resist literal transfer must either be modified or, in some cases, abandoned. As George Bluestone writes of the film version of Pride and Prejudice (MGM, 1940), an adaptation succeeds "almost as if destroying the book were a precondition for its faithful resurrection."<sup>99</sup> The discussion of four films in The American Short Story series in this study attempts to clarify if such destruction is necessary in the pursuit of fidelity as pledged by the producers of the series and if cinematic integrity and fidelity in adaptations are compatible.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>The nine films and their original authors are: Parker Adderson, Philosopher (Ambrose Bierce); The Blue Hotel (Stephen Crane); The Jolly Corner (Henry James); I'm a Fool (Sherwood Anderson); Bernice Bobs Her Hair (F. Scott Fitzgerald); Soldier's Home (Ernest Hemingway); Amos' a Man (Richard Wright); The Displaced Person (Flannery O'Connor); The Music School (John Updike).

<sup>2</sup>"Public TV Series First-Rate Drama," as reprinted in "The American Short Story," Pressbook (New York: Learning in Focus, Inc., n.d.) n. pag.

<sup>3</sup>"Cheers for 'Short Story' Series," Seattle Daily Times, 5 April 1977, as reprinted in "The American Short Story," Pressbook, n. pag.

<sup>4</sup>Washington Post, as quoted in "The American Short Story," Pressbook, n. pag.

<sup>5</sup>"'Short Stories': A Double Bill," Washington Star, 26 April 1977, as reprinted in "The American Short Story," Pressbook, n. pag.

<sup>6</sup>"Short Stories: Wonderfully Loving Transpositions," Humanities Newsletter for the National Endowment for the Humanities, 7 (April, 1977), 1.

<sup>7</sup>As quoted in "The American Short Story," Pressbook, n. pag.

<sup>8</sup>As quoted in "The American Short Story," Pressbook, n. pag.

<sup>9</sup>"The American Short Story Into Film," Studies in Short Fiction, 15 (1978), 203.

<sup>10</sup>Such articles are abundant. See, for example: Charles E. Whittaker, "Movies Destroy Art," Harper's Weekly, 29 April 1916, p. 458; Virginia Woolf, "The Movies and Reality," New Republic, 67 (1926), 308-10; Thomas Craven, "This Great American Art," Dial, 81 (1926), 481-92; Leda V. Bauer, "The Movies Tackle Literature," American Mercury, 14 (1928), 288-94; Theodore Dreiser, "The Real Sins of Hollywood," Liberty, 11 June 1932, pp. 6-11.

<sup>11</sup>"Vandals of Hollywood," Saturday Review of Literature, 17 October 1936, pp. 3-4, 13-14.

<sup>12</sup>Literature and Morality (New York: Vanguard, 1945), p. 50.

<sup>13</sup>"Movies: The Wreckers," New Republic, 29 December 1947, p. 34.

<sup>14</sup>"Screen Adaptation," Films in Review, 5 (1954), 62-67.

<sup>15</sup>As quoted in Wald, p. 64.

<sup>16</sup>As quoted in Wald, p. 67.

<sup>17</sup>As quoted in Peter Wollen, Signs and Meaning in the Cinema, 3rd ed. (London: Indiana Univ. Press, 1972), p. 113.

<sup>18</sup>"News From The American Short Story," Pressbook (New York: David S. Wachsman Associates, Inc., n.d.), p. 4.

<sup>19</sup>The short story series began with the pilot film Parker Adderson, Philosopher. With continuing support from the National Endowment for the Humanities, Geller, writer-director Arthur Barron, and scholar Alfred Kazin helped formulate the initial design for the film series, originally titled Anthology: The American Short Story. They had three main objectives. They would "film great fiction reflecting central themes in the American experience." Second, they would "explore the shape of American social and intellectual mores through the history of her short stories." And they would "whet their audiences' appetite for fine literature and television programming" (Ferguson, p. 2).

<sup>20</sup>"News From The American Short Story," Pressbook, p. 2.

<sup>21</sup>As quoted in Monard G. Sanford, Letter to Perspective Films, as quoted in Pressbook (New York: Perspective Films, n.d.), p. 1.

<sup>22</sup>As quoted in Ferguson, p. 1.

<sup>23</sup>"The American Short Story Into Film," p. 203.

<sup>24</sup>As quoted in "News From The American Short Story," Pressbook, p. 2.

<sup>25</sup>"Wonderfully Loving Transpositions," p. 3.

<sup>26</sup>As quoted in "The American Short Story: A Film Series," Pressbook (Chicago: Perspective Films, n.d.), p. 3.

- <sup>27</sup>Ferguson, p. 3.
- <sup>28</sup>Pressbook (New York: David S. Wachsman Associates, Inc., 11 February 1977), p. 1.
- <sup>29</sup>"Tapping Riches the Networks Ignore," Saturday Review, 2 April 1977, p. 44.
- <sup>30</sup>Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, as quoted in "The American Short Story," Pressbook, n. pag.
- <sup>31</sup>"Television," May 1977, p. 40.
- <sup>32</sup>As quoted in Ferguson, p. 3.
- <sup>33</sup>As quoted in Pressbook (Wachsman Associates, Inc., 11 February 1977), p. 2.
- <sup>34</sup>"News From The American Short Story," Pressbook, p. 1.
- <sup>35</sup>"The American Short Story," Pressbook, p. 1.
- <sup>36</sup>"Short Stories Make Comeback on PBS," as reprinted in "The American Short Story," Pressbook, n. pag.
- <sup>37</sup>"Ambrose Bierce to Updike," Chronicle of Higher Education, 11 April 1977, p. 17.
- <sup>38</sup>"The Screening Room," 2 April 1977, p. A-4.
- <sup>39</sup>"PBS Drama Comes of Age With 'Short Story,'" 6 April 1977, as reprinted in "The American Short Story," Pressbook, n. pag.
- <sup>40</sup>As quoted in "The American Short Story," Pressbook, n. pag.
- <sup>41</sup>"TV: 'The American Short Story' Impressive," New York Times, 5 April 1977, Sec. 4, p. 66.
- <sup>42</sup>"Tapping Riches the Networks Ignore," p. 44.
- <sup>43</sup>"News From The American Short Story: The Humanities Endowment in Public Television," Pressbook (New York: David S. Wachsman Associates, Inc., n.d.), p. 1.
- <sup>44</sup>The American Short Story, ed. Calvin Skaggs (New York: Dell, 1977).

<sup>45</sup>See Arthur Knight, "Hemingway Into Film," Saturday Review, 29 July 1961, pp. 33-34; Frank M. Laurence, "Death in the Matinee: The Film Endings of Hemingway's Fiction," Literature/Film Quarterly, 2 (1974), 44-51; Gideon Bachman, "How I Make Films: An Interview With John Huston," Film Quarterly, 19 (Fall 1965), 3-13; Michael Adams, "Hemingway Filmography," Fitzgerald-Hemingway Annual (Detroit: Gale Research, 1977), pp. 219-32; DeWitt Bodeen, "Henry James Into Film," Films in Review, 28 (1977), 163-70; Harry Horner, "Designing The Heiress," Hollywood Quarterly, 5 (1950), 1-7; Patrick Neligan, Jr. and Victor Nunez, "Flannery and the Film Makers," Flannery O'Connor Bulletin, 5 (Autumn 1975), pp. 98-104.

<sup>46</sup>Novels Into Film: The Metamorphosis of Fiction Into Cinema (1957; rpt. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1971), pp. 5-6.

<sup>47</sup>Novels Into Film, p. 47.

<sup>48</sup>"On Image and Word," in The Movies as Medium, ed. Lewis Jacobs (New York: Noonday, 1970), p. 49.

<sup>49</sup>"Soft Edges: The Art of Literature, the Medium of Film," Literature/Film Quarterly, 2 (1974), 16.

<sup>50</sup>Jacobs, pp. 38-39.

<sup>51</sup>"Literature and Film: Marking Out Some Boundaries," Literature/Film Quarterly, 3 (1975), 32.

<sup>52</sup>Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1960), pp. 240-44.

<sup>53</sup>Creative Evolution, trans. Arthur Mitchell (1911; rpt. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1937), p. 306.

<sup>54</sup>Lectures in America (New York: Random House, 1935), pp. 176-77.

<sup>55</sup>Rococo to Cubism in Art and Literature (New York: Random House, 1960), p. 266.

<sup>56</sup>The Dramatic Imagination (1941; rpt. New York: Theater Arts Books, 1956), pp. 17-18.

<sup>57</sup>"Soft Edges," pp. 16, 19, 20.

<sup>58</sup>As quoted by Wollen, p. 56.

<sup>59</sup>Literature and Film (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1969), p. 68.



- <sup>60</sup>Novels Into Film, p. 61.
- <sup>61</sup>"Film: The 'Literary Approach,'" Literature/Film Quarterly, 1 (1973), 80.
- <sup>62</sup>The Rhetoric of Film (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973), p. 93.
- <sup>63</sup>Francois Truffaut, Hitchcock (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1966), p. 50.
- <sup>64</sup>Fiction and the Screen (Boston: Little, Brown, 1935), p. 93.
- <sup>65</sup>"Wonderfully Loving Transpositions," p. 2.
- <sup>66</sup>"John Houseman is 'Quietly Devious' in Flannery O'Connor Short Story," Pressbook (New York: David S. Wachsman Associates, Inc., n.d.), p. 2.
- <sup>67</sup>"From Fiction to Film," in From Fiction to Film: Ambrose Bierce's "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge," ed. Gerald R. Barrett and Thomas L. Erskine (Encino, Calif.: Dickenson, 1973), p. 3.
- <sup>68</sup>What Is Cinema?, trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1967), pp. 102-03.
- <sup>69</sup>As quoted in "John Houseman is 'Quietly Devious,'" Pressbook, p. 3.
- <sup>70</sup>"Conflict in American, European Values Seen in James' 'The Jolly Corner,'" Pressbook (New York: David S. Wachsman Associates, Inc., n.d.), p. 3.
- <sup>71</sup>"Conflict in American, European Values," Pressbook, p. 4.
- <sup>72</sup>"Parallel With Vietnam Veterans Seen in Ernest Hemingway's 'Soldier's Home,'" Pressbook (New York: David S. Wachsman Associates, Inc., n.d.), p. 3.
- <sup>73</sup>"Korty Risks Minutes of Silence at Start of Updike Short Story," Pressbook (New York: David S. Wachsman Associates, Inc., n.d.), p. 3.
- <sup>74</sup>Reflections on the Screen (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 1970), p. 45.
- <sup>75</sup>"The American Short Story: A Film Series," Pressbook, p. 2.

- <sup>76</sup>Reflections on the Screen, p. 49.
- <sup>77</sup>The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1971), p. 20.
- <sup>78</sup>"A Novelist Looks at Hollywood," in Film: A Montage of Theories, ed. Richard Dyer MacCann (New York: Dutton, 1966), p. 130.
- <sup>79</sup>The Nature of Narrative (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1966), pp. 240-41.
- <sup>80</sup>Novels Into Film, p. 17.
- <sup>81</sup>The Rhetoric of Fiction, p. 60.
- <sup>82</sup>"The Motion Picture and the Novel," American Quarterly, 3 (1951), 197.
- <sup>83</sup>The Rhetoric of Fiction, p. 150.
- <sup>84</sup>The Rhetoric of Fiction, p. 123.
- <sup>85</sup>"The Surfaces of Reality," in Film and Literature: Contrasts in Media, ed. Fred H. Marcus (Scranton: Chandler, 1971), p. 49.
- <sup>86</sup>Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema, trans. Michael Taylor (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1974), p. 11.
- <sup>87</sup>What Is Cinema?, p. 102.
- <sup>88</sup>The Craft of Fiction (New York: Viking, 1957), p. 251.
- <sup>89</sup>Movie-Made America: A Cultural History of American Movies (New York: Random House, 1975), p. 282.
- <sup>90</sup>The Rhetoric of Film, p. 33.
- <sup>91</sup>"Film: The 'Literary Approach,'" p. 76.
- <sup>92</sup>"Toward a 'Politique des Adaptations,'" pp. 255, 57.
- <sup>93</sup>What Is Cinema?, p. 141.
- <sup>94</sup>Reflections on the Screen, p. 35.

<sup>95</sup>Literature and Film, p. 16.

<sup>96</sup>Theory of the Film, trans. Edith Bone (London: Dennis Dobson, 1952), pp. 259-60.

<sup>97</sup>Film: The Creative Process (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964), p. 206.

<sup>98</sup>"Osborne's Tom Jones: Adapting a Classic," in Man and the Movies, ed. W. R. Robinson (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1967), p. 45.

<sup>99</sup>Novels Into Film, p. 140.

## CHAPTER II

### THE JOLLY CORNER: TACKLING A DIFFICULT STORY

Filmmakers have demonstrated a steady if not always prodigious interest in adapting the fiction of Henry James to their medium. DeWitt Bodeen writes that "almost everything" James "wrote in his involuted style cried out for visual interpretation." A number of films have been made using James' fiction as source material, some of the most successful appearing on television. "The greater bulk of his fiction presents a fascinating source for films," says Bodeen. "His style suits filmmaking, where the story line has grown more and more devious every year. If story movies ever come back, maybe so, too, will Henry James."<sup>1</sup> The Heiress (Paramount, 1949), adapted from James' Washington Square, was nominated for best picture of 1949. Critics praised Jack Clayton's superior direction in The Innocents (Fox, 1961), a film adapted from The Turn of the Screw. Even the popular filmmaker Peter Bogdanovich was lured to James' Daisy Miller for film material (Paramount, 1949). Karl Meyer thinks The American Short Story production The Jolly Corner\* "comes off very well indeed on television."<sup>2</sup> What, then, attracted The American Short Story producers to a problematic story like "The Jolly Corner"?

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\*Following the MLA Handbook, 1977, prose short story titles are enclosed by quotation marks while film titles are underlined. All references to James' story are taken from The American Short Story, ed. Calvin Skaggs (New York: Dell, 1977) and page numbers are cited in the text.

James' "The Jolly Corner" (1908) poses an appealing problem for the film adaptor. James himself described the tale to his literary agent as a "miraculous masterpiece."<sup>3</sup> Maxwell Geismar views "The Jolly Corner" as typical James, "perhaps the best and most accurate description of James's whole body of literary work."<sup>4</sup> But the same critical remarks which would appear to attract The American Short Story producers to the work would also appear to warn them against attempting such a film project. Richard Hocks, for example, thinks that "The Jolly Corner" illustrates "the coalescence of the entire direction of James's work in its post-Ambassadors extension" but implicitly warns against tackling the story's "multileveled incorporation of just about every facet of James's work in a remarkably concentrated amount of space."<sup>5</sup> A basic problem in adapting "The Jolly Corner" to the film medium may arise from what Martha Banta calls "James's usual minute attention to the artistic rendering of his strange materials, as well as a concern for 'aboutness' discreetly wrapped in the disguising subtleties of his craft."<sup>6</sup> And finally, anticipating complaints commonly applied to film adaptations, James himself questions the legitimacy of "illustrations" in fiction: "Anything that relieves responsible prose of the duty of being, while placed before us, good enough, interesting enough and, if the question be of picture, pictorial enough, above all in itself, does it the worst of services, and may well inspire in the lover of literature certain lively questions as to the future of that institution."<sup>7</sup> What basis, then, would The American Short Story producers have for selecting "The Jolly Corner" in light of their commitment to fidelity and these somewhat discouraging comments?

James' return to the novel in 1895 followed several years of experimental writing in which he assimilated techniques derived from the

theater. During this period, his themes had changed: from a preoccupation with problems of conduct James shows an interest in states of feeling and dilemmas of existence. He begins to examine the "unlived" life of his characters and to portray "poor sensitive gentlemen" like Spencer Brydon who discover the price of being isolated from experience. But the technical innovations in his later fiction are perhaps even more interesting than their themes. Increasingly, James drew upon lessons he had learned in the theater: use of dialogue (or attributed dialogue) as narration, revelation of action through setting, and removal of the omniscient author from his role as informer and commentator. This means that the reader must assume a greater responsibility in discovering what is happening in the story, in a sense converting the reader into an author. The Jolly Corner filmmakers have assumed this role as authors, following James' discovery of the possibilities of merging stagecraft with fictional method. The filmmakers have deleted, invented and restructured material in and from the prose story to suit filmic purposes, capitalized on the mise-en-scène of the jolly corner, and transformed the crucial James point of view into the film medium.

The film generally follows the structure of James' story. Much of the exposition and tone which runs throughout Chapter One, however, is established in the first scene of the film. Following a still photograph of the middle-aged Brydon and an exterior shot of the jolly corner, Brydon is seen wandering through the darkened interior of the house. Using lines from Chapter One of the story, Brydon explains voice-over his past, his reasons for returning to New York City, and his recent fascination with the jolly corner. The opening shot of this scene includes tapping percussion sounds which evoke an eerie sensation and set the tone

for Brydon's admission that he is strangely attracted to his ancestral home "as though compelled by some ineffable presence there." Eerie string music accompanies this statement, and then Brydon looks out a window and turns around, as if expecting to find something inside. As he walks through a doorway toward the camera in a dutch angle shot which suggests his new disorientation, he admits that he has been "making solitary, secret visitations to it, which became ever more frequent and--how shall I say it--ever more strange."

Where the story gradually establishes the existence of ghosts, then, the film, using voice-over narration and mise-en-scène, makes clear at the outset that Brydon will probably confront some kind of "other" being. (James' brother William had dabbled in theosophy for years, although Henry largely abstained from active participation.) What this other being will mean to Brydon is also suggested in the first scene. In James' "The Jolly Corner," Spencer Brydon eventually sees his life from four different perspectives: who he was, who he might have been, who he thinks he is but is not, and who he really is. James treats these four perspectives, some at great length. The filmmakers have found their cinematic analogue. As Brydon speaks the above lines, the picture cuts to his image as seen in three floor-length mirrors with Brydon facing them. At this point in the film, Brydon's voice-over indicates who he thinks he is. In the process toward self-knowledge he undergoes, Brydon will confront his other three selves in the film: his nostalgic past, himself as he might have been had he remained in New York, and finally the real Spencer Brydon.

"The Jolly Corner" illustrates James' matured theory of the ghostly tale. Like the "ordinary" setting in The Jolly Corner, James writes of

settings in which grow "an 'unnatural' anxiety, a malaise so incongruous and discordant, in the given prosaic prosperous conditions, as almost to be compromising."<sup>8</sup> Mystery and terror do not hinge on corpses, dark castles, and secret passages. James creates his eerie atmosphere in "The Jolly Corner" by having the unusual occur in the realm of the usual. In this way the horror is greatly intensified. Walter Wright believes that the final scene, and the whole setting of the jolly corner as well, "ultimately takes its beginning in Brydon's initial malaise, his feeling that the self he has known is not the complete reality."<sup>9</sup> Although setting is strong and important in "The Jolly Corner," James does not rely upon an abundance of detail. Rather, he selects the detail which captures the essence of the particular tone of a scene. James writes that he would arrange just enough details to give "the look that conveys their meaning."<sup>10</sup> Following James' example, The American Short Story filmmakers have approached the materials in "The Jolly Corner" much as James approached the raw materials for his story. As film can only with difficulty avoid details in setting, however, the film The Jolly Corner will naturally include a more detailed setting, thus capitalizing on one of the major strengths of the medium.

Other filmmakers recognize the importance of setting in adaptations of James' fiction. Harry Horner, who won an Academy Award for his set designs in The Heiress, carefully researched and planned his work, realizing the importance of "the design and the arrangements of the rooms . . . upon the style in which the story is told."<sup>11</sup> The American Short Story production The Jolly Corner was shot on location at the "Commandant's House," which overlooks the former site of the Brooklyn Navy Yard. The actors in the film agree that the locale selected was crucial in



achieving a feeling of historical authenticity and capturing the suggestion of a supernatural presence. "Sometimes we shot late at night," recalls Fritz Weaver, who plays Spencer Brydon. "One almost began to feel that the great people who actually lived in these homes during the last century were still there, hovering about."<sup>12</sup> The presence felt by Weaver carries over into the film.

James and The Jolly Corner filmmakers make subtle use of setting as a symbol of Spencer Brydon's search for his other self. In the film and the story, as Brydon begins to wonder what he would have been if he had stayed in New York all his life, the quest for his other self gradually becomes an obsession. Night after night he goes to the huge old house in which he was born and roams through the empty rooms. The jolly corner has four symbolic implications in both story and film. First, the house represents the past, and this meaning is inherent both in the house and in the way Brydon perceives the house: "He spoke of all the value he read into it, into the mere sight of the walls, mere shapes of the rooms, mere sound of the floors, mere feel, in his hand, of the old silver-plated knobs of the several mahogany doors which suggested the pressure of the palms of the dead; the seventy years of the past in fine that these things represented, the annals of nearly three generations, counting his grandfather's, the one that had ended there, and the impalpable ashes of his long-extinct youth" (p. 89). After several scenes in which Brydon and Alice discuss the past and in which Brydon hints at his growing obsession with what he might have been, Brydon suddenly tells Alice that they are going to visit the jolly corner together. In their tour, parts of which come from the story, this symbolic meaning of the house and of Brydon's view of the house are dramatized. Outside, in front of the

jolly corner, Brydon points to a window and tells Alice, "I was born-- just there--in that room. Here were gathered the few chilled flowers of my youth." As Brydon starts to open the door, he abruptly pulls his hand away from the knob, having "just had the strangest thought! For an instant, this knob felt to me like the palm of someone I was greeting, or . . . rather who was greeting me!" Eerie music from the first scene plays, clarifying Alice's role as confidante, as they slowly, cautiously walk forward. Brydon tells Alice, "I cannot tell you how powerfully it affects me to walk through this house. The mere sight of these walls, the shape of the rooms . . . the sound of the floors. [Taps his cane on the floor.] Three generations of my family lived and died here." In order to convey Brydon's sense of the house as his past, the filmmakers have taken dialogue attributed to Brydon and had him actually speak the words. Brydon's reaction to the setting reinforces this sense of the past.

The house also represents the present as it might have been, a second meaning inherent in both the house and in Brydon's view of it. Brydon's European tastes conflict with the monstrosities he discovers in New York. It is natural, therefore, that Brydon should ask, "What would it have made of me, what would it have made of me?" (p. 91) and natural that he should turn to his ancestral house for an answer. Empty and full of echoes, the house becomes even more convincing to Brydon as a symbol of life as it might have been. When Brydon laughs there, his laughter starts an "odd echo, the conscious human resonance (he scarce knew how to qualify it) that sounds made while he was there alone sent back to his ear or his fancy" (p. 88). In the film, Brydon's implicit motive for visiting the house with Alice is to discover the present as it might have

been. Brydon's interest in this imagined present has been sparked by his realization that he possesses "a most unexpected talent" for construction. "There are sides of me you have never seen," he tells Alice. Later, after Alice tells Brydon that he "might have become a tycoon of industry," he speculates as they roam the house, that he "might have lived here." During his solitary visits, his footsteps echo throughout the empty house, speaking to him as if the footsteps of the present as it might have been.

The house also represents who Brydon thinks he is. Just as the house sends back echoes of his voice and his footsteps, Brydon's mind rings with "disguised" and "muffled . . . vibrations." His sense of wonder as he enters the house comes into his mind "very much as he might have been met by some strange figure, some unexpected occupant, at a turn of one of the dim passages of an empty house" (p. 86). The film conveys this symbolic meaning of the setting through Alice, Brydon's second consciousness, who, states M. Corona Sharp, represents "the acme of the minor confidante's dramatic value." Alice "functions technically as a means of exposition and dramatization; as a character she is sympathetic to, and understanding of, the conflicts of her confider."<sup>13</sup> As an important catalyst in Brydon's quest for his alter ego, Alice also senses the presence of the "other." In their tour of the jolly corner in the film, she dramatically witnesses mirror images reminiscent of those which Brydon sees in the first scene.

Alice enters the ballroom of the house where she remembers some affair from the distant past. She slowly walks around the room, then begins to sing a dance song, herself dancing as if at a party. As she is turning around several times, the picture changes to an unfamiliar

face suddenly reflected in the three floor-length mirrors. The frightened Alice screams, and Brydon rushes toward her as the woman whose face Alice saw in the mirrors appears in the frame. The woman is only Mrs. Muldoon, whom Brydon has hired to air and dust the house. This incident, suggested in the prose story only by Mrs. Muldoon's remarks about the house, has two main functions. First, it dramatically furthers the spooky atmosphere of the house. Second, and more importantly, it visually links the four symbolic meanings the jolly corner embodies and clarifies Alice's role as Brydon's second consciousness. In this scene, Alice is remembering the past, who Brydon was. But she dances in the present, with Brydon as he is over thirty years later. The eerie quality of the house, the possibility of a presence there which is Brydon's alter ego, has already been established in preceding scenes. The fourth symbolic meaning of the house, representing Brydon's life as it actually has been --empty and hollow up until his moment of recognition in the final scene of the film and story--is developed through Alice's encouragement of Brydon to seek it out. Thus, this brief incident subtly juxtaposes three symbolic meanings, visually links Alice as catalyst and participant, and foreshadows, through repetition of mirror imagery, a fourth symbolic meaning.

The precise sequence of Brydon's thoughts which lead to his obsession are left obscure in the story, but his first interest in wandering through the rooms of the jolly corner apparently precedes his awareness of his latent talent for construction and is then augmented by it. The American Short Story film, however, makes this sequence much clearer. "The Jolly Corner" is told alternately in a dramatic or narrative manner and in a description of the images or articulated thoughts in Brydon's

mind. Such a flow of conscious and ordered intelligence, however, might confuse a film audience expecting dramatized scene, so the filmmakers have wisely dramatized one hint in the story and invented another scene to clarify and concretize the sequence of Brydon's thoughts which lead to his obsession.

In the James story, Brydon's "not quite so 'good'" property (p. 83) is "in course of reconstruction as a tall mass of flats" where "it had been not the least of his astonishments to find himself able, on the spot, and though without a previous ounce of such experience, to participate with a certain intelligence, almost with a certain authority" (p. 84). One paragraph later, part of the scene dramatized in the film is described:

She had come with him one day to see how his "apartment-house" was rising; he had helped her over gaps and explained to her plans, and while they were there had happened to have, before her, a brief but lively discussion with the man in charge, the representative of the building-firm that had undertaken his work. He had found himself quite "standing-up" to this personage over a failure on the latter's part to observe some detail of one of their noted conditions, and had so lucidly argued his case that, besides ever so prettily flushing, at the time, for sympathy in his triumph, she had afterwards said to him . . . that he had clearly for too many years neglected a real gift. (pp. 85-86)

This rather brief episode in the story becomes a major scene in The Jolly Corner because the film follows a more explicit plot line than the story.

Several critics stress the importance of the construction project to Brydon's evolving psychological state. Referring to Brydon's response to the construction project, Richard Hocks believes James

constructs a narrative framework on behalf of the obsession. . . . The components of the ghostly relationship--the cause and effect . . . are now for him in their proper order. Furthermore, he now appropriately extends the given fact of an obsession . . . by including in his narrative framework its own original act of creation, as though in his clarity of the

whole issue of the quasi-supernatural he can take us from its very inception to its last terminal results; or he can reenact and recapitulate its total pattern and process as he had come to grasp it. . . . Thus we watch the creation of Brydon's obsession.<sup>14</sup>

Walter Wright thinks that "it is with the scarcely admitted excitement of finding a latent aspect of his nature that Brydon becomes absorbed in the introspective adventure."<sup>15</sup> Ernest Tuveson makes a connection between Brydon's repressed personality and the renovation of the other house: "The construction project stirs up his dormant self, as it finally receives its opportunity to manifest its real nature."<sup>16</sup> Brydon understands both material realities and his own ability to compete as an American businessman using this knowledge. This understanding stimulates his curiosity to know what he might have been.

The construction scene in the film capitalizes on, strengthens, and clarifies the implications of the construction project described in James' story. Brydon, for example, does not simply "happen" to discuss details of the project: he goes there, he tells Alice, to see "a certain Mr. Wilkes" with a definite purpose in mind: "You're using too much copper," Brydon tells Wilkes. When Wilkes challenges his experience in such matters, Brydon replies, "That's why I'm so meticulous. I've checked and double checked." As Brydon unfolds Wilkes' own blueprints on which he has "made my calculations" and explains how money is being wasted on unnecessary copper pipes, Wilkes and Alice are obviously surprised and impressed. When the draftsman responsible objects, Wilkes says, "Quiet, listen to the man." As they leave the building, Wilkes presses Brydon, through Alice, to renovate the jolly corner into "a handsome triplex. With an imposing lobby. Doorman in uniform." Brydon curtly refuses.

Wilkes, the practical-minded, ambitious man of construction embodies qualities which Brydon attributes to his alter ego, who, Alice tells Brydon in the next scene, "might have started some awful architectural style, and turned it into a gold mine" in lines similar to those attributed to her in the story. Although Brydon is visibly upset at Wilkes being "impossibly familiar" with Alice, she thinks Wilkes "had found a kindred spirit" in Brydon: "You speak the same language." The film takes Brydon's thoughts and a brief scene from the story and transforms them into a full-scale dramatic scene which clarifies the sequence of events leading to Brydon's obsession, with finding what "I might have been, by staying here, something nearer to one of these types who have been hammered so hard and made so keen by their conditions" (p. 91).

Another scene in the film, wholly invented, also makes more explicit the plot line of the story. The scene in which Brydon and Alice tour the jolly corner, which includes dialogue suggesting the possible existence of ghosts, is followed by a seance scene. The seance, attended by Alice and Brydon, concretizes their mutual belief in ghosts. James writes that the "'ghost story'" was for him "the most possible form of the fairy-tale. It enjoys, to my eyes, this honour by being so much the neatest--neatness without which representation, and therewith beauty, drops."<sup>17</sup> For raw material, James used reported appearances of ghosts and other instances of psychic phenomena published in the Proceedings of the Society of Psychical Research.<sup>18</sup>

James thought the narrative voice should be virtually inaudible. The actors should carry the burden of presentation in their dialogue. His aim was "to make the presented occasion tell all its story itself, remain shut up in its own presence."<sup>19</sup> The seance makes this possible

in the film. Before the seance scene, Brydon attempts to laugh off Alice's suggestion that a ghost inhabits the empty old house: "Ah, ha! Ghosts! The house must swarm with them. I should be ashamed of it if it didn't." But he avoids eye contact with Alice as he says this, and when she walks out of the frame, Brydon looks nervous. As Alice walks down the stairs (stairs which Brydon later descends in his climactic plunge toward self-knowledge) the camera moves closer to Brydon's uneasy expression. Off-camera, the seance leader is heard: "We are interested in the whole deep mystery of man's soul and conscience." This overlapping of the aural element of the seance links the house with the supernatural as a literal proposition. The seance, suggested for the film by literary advisor Henry Nash Smith,<sup>20</sup> is reminiscent of William James' interest in mystical speculations on the constitution and course of nature. Henry's brother believed that through meticulous research, proof might be obtained of "the presence, in the midst of all the humbug, of really supernatural knowledge."<sup>21</sup> Evidence might be in the form of a spirit that craved to take possession of a receptive organism, making communication possible between the living and the non-living. Spencer Brydon is a fictional character who experiences this kind of communication.

The seance scene begins with a group of people seated at a large round table in a semi-darkened room. As the shots alternate among the faces of Brydon, Alice, the seance leader, and other members of the group, the seance leader slowly intones: "There exists a huge psychic organism, as yet imperfectly expressed in terms of--action--or thought. One reason for much of our malaise as human beings is the fact that we are cut off from our past--This--perfect part of ourselves. And yet--if we commune, if we make the leap, if we yield, why then we can readily



commune--with this inner world." Candles are lit and a fire flickers in the background as the seance leader closes her eyes and breathes heavily. Brydon looks on anxiously as the seance leader speaks, her hands gesturing expressively in the left foreground of the frame as if they are affecting Brydon: "I'm trying to make contact. I'm trying, trying--to--contact. The veil--the veil. . . ." This shot cuts to the interior of the jolly corner. It is night, and the darkness is broken only by a solitary candle. Wind and eerie string music are heard. Brydon is shown carrying the candle as the seance leader continues off-camera. "The veil must part. To touch. To reach. To touch--closer--closer. To reach--to--to touch." Then Brydon enters the frame, looking anxious as he wanders about. A high-pitched whistling sound plays on the sound track as he walks up the "ample back staircase over which he leaned, many a time, to look far down" (p. 98) toward the room in which he and Alice had their previous conversation on ghosts. His face now in close-up, Brydon peers up toward the room and asks, "Who are you?"

The seance scene clarifies James' "plot" and externalizes Brydon's perception of the sequence of events which bring on his growing obsession to seek out his alter ego. By inventing the seance, the filmmakers have hit upon an analogous rhetorical technique to dramatize, to represent, following James' advice, Brydon's growing belief in the supernatural. It achieves this internally: the film story tells itself, without voice-over intrusions. The seance concretizes Brydon's consciousness following James' own approach to his raw materials. It also foreshadows where the first step will take place in his climactic confrontation with his alter ego. When Brydon, looking up to the top of the stairs, asks, "Who are you?" he is but halfway in his journey. According to Walter

Wright, "The alter ego is not specifically defined, of course, but he has a reality which awaits only identification; and Brydon's consciousness, which cannot see itself, can see both the supposed Brydon and the alter ego with about equal interest."<sup>22</sup> The identity of the alter ego is not made until the climactic scene in which Brydon actually sees him. The seance "equalizes" Brydon's interest in the ghost with his own self-centered being. It pulls him away from his speculative attitude regarding what he might have been to what his alter ego actually is.

This shift in Brydon's perspective suggests a complex, shifting narrative point of view. In most of James' fiction, point of view refers to whose view of things, from among the dramatis personae, is used to "tell" the story. This is not first-person narration, however. Rather, it is the quasi-dramatic use of the vision and knowledge which the narrator attributes to different characters. The reader is shown what these characters might see, told what they might hear, and offered their possible interpretations. Such a removal of narrative authority from an omniscient author helps a story seem to exist independent of its author, helps make a story more dramatically expressive. To heighten the illusion that it is a character's, not James', view being expressed, James often phrases narrative passages in the same idiom as the character in question. Furthermore, he invests such passages with the dramatic quality of dialogue: the reader thinks he is hearing a direct conversation. The Jolly Corner draws upon many such passages in James' story, converting them into fully dramatized scenes. Other passages are utilized in Brydon's thoughts spoken off-camera.

Removal of narrative authority also helps focus attention on the most important aspects of action. Importance resides in the characters'

concern with the meaning of events; this helps create a sympathy toward these interpreting actors. Actors in The Jolly Corner enjoyed the non-commercial, experimental feature which characterized the project. "Often, in a feature film or teleplay, there's little time for rehearsal," remarks Salome Jens, who portrays Alice Staverton. "In this production, we had a chance to discuss and understand the characters, to share our feelings before the filming began. We all felt that we had a stake in the film's being wonderful."<sup>23</sup> As James puts it, "the figures in any picture, the agents in any drama, are interesting only in proportion as they feel their respective situations; since the consciousness, on their part, of the complication exhibited forms for us their link of connexion with it."<sup>24</sup> The important features of a story receive an implicit emphasis through subtle manipulation of point of view. Following the seance with a scene in which Brydon roams the jolly corner, for example, helps define his evolving view of the supernatural. By placing the seance between a scene in which there is casual speculation on ghosts and another scene in which Brydon actually speaks to an imagined presence, The American Short Story filmmakers focus not only on the event, but on what Brydon thinks about it, what difference the event makes to him and in him.

Finally, removal of narrative authority helps define the clarity of Brydon's vision: what and how much he "tells" he is conscious of defines the quality of that perception. Richard Hocks notes that James' story "explicitly posits an alter ego. What it means under these conditions is that Brydon is his own 'other self' throughout the tale in a proceeding and ongoing way. . . . And what this in turn means is that throughout the night-stalking and hunting of the tale we can continually measure

Brydon's own evolving psychic condition and progress by what he is claiming the ghost has decided; and we can simultaneously measure the actual movements of the ghost by what Brydon himself then decides to do on the basis of the view he attributes to the ghost."<sup>25</sup> The film The Jolly Corner captures the essence of this double point of view by crosscutting shots of stalking, some by Brydon and others by the ghost, into other scenes.

In an early scene in the film, for example, Brydon wonders aloud to Alice, "What would have happened, had I not fled, I wonder. What would I have been? Perhaps the house knows." In the house, immediately after this remark, Brydon says voice-over that he likes to "linger and listen, feel that other presence." The eerie sound track in this scene is more than an element of mise-en-scène: it implies that the "other" is actually there. Brydon's admission of his now-habitual activity suggests that he is responsible for its presence and that the ghost, too, likes to "linger and listen" and feel the presence of Brydon.

Before Brydon takes Alice through the jolly corner in a later scene, they are talking in a cab which delivers them to the house. Brydon admits to her, "This is how I like best to come upon it . . . gliding through. And come smoothly to it. Letting it take me in." The high-angle shot which follows, of Alice and Brydon getting out of the cab as seen from one of the windows of the house, implies that Brydon's view of how the house takes him in is shared by the jolly corner itself. A few seconds later, as the camera tilts slowly up the front of the exterior of the house, Brydon tells Alice, "I was born--just there--in that room." Abruptly, the location cuts to the interior of the house, which is dark except for light coming through large windows. Eerie music and

percussion sounds play on the sound track again, as a subjective camera shot using hand-held equipment moves down a hallway. Footsteps are heard, suggesting that just as Brydon seeks his alter ego, this "other" is likewise stalking Brydon. This brief shot also makes the existence of ghosts a literal proposition and defines, through the implied physical existence of a ghost, "Brydon's own evolving psychic condition." In the scene which follows the seance, the disembodied voice of the seance leader, which has brought Brydon to the house, represents the view which he attributes to the supernatural.

The film capitalizes on the role of Alice as Brydon's confidante and second consciousness by interpreting Brydon's alter ego as one haunted by sexual repression. M. Corona Sharp writes that Alice "shows . . . sympathy with the protagonist, enters into his ideas with . . . eagerness, and sees more deeply than he does."<sup>26</sup> Near the end of Chapter One in James' story, Brydon paces in front of the fire at Alice's house, wondering aloud, following the construction scene, "'what I might have been . . . by staying here'" (p. 91). When he naively compares his alter ego to "'the full-blown flower . . . blighted . . . for once and for ever'" by his thirty-three-year residence in Europe, Alice replies, "'it would have been quite splendid, quite huge and monstrous.'" Echoing Alice's remark, Brydon speculates that his "'blighted'" self would have been "'monstrous above all . . . and I imagine, by the same stroke, quite hideous and offensive'" (p. 92). When Alice reassures him that she would have accepted him if he had turned out differently, Brydon resolves to track down this Jamesian alter ego: "'I do want to see him. . . . And I can. And I shall.'" After "Their eyes met for a minute while he guessed from something in hers that she divined his strange sense," Alice

admits that she has seen his alter ego in a dream: "'Twice over. . . . The very same'" (p. 93). The opening statement of Chapter Two clarifies the effect of their conversation on Brydon: "It was after this that there was most of a virtue for him, most of a preposterous secret thrill, in the particular form of surrender to his obsession and of address to what he more and more believed to be his privilege" (p. 94). As Quentin Anderson sees it, "What has become other for Brydon does so at the moment he is prepared to accept Alice Staverton's version of life and reject the one he has so long cherished."<sup>27</sup> Alice, as Brydon's second consciousness, facilitates his search for the alter ego which he confronts later in Chapter Two. In that climactic scene, he discovers and is repelled by what he is not and by what he is. In Chapter Three, he begins to realize what, through Alice, he can be.

The filmmakers have dramatically visualized and restructured this material from the short story. Following Brydon's wanderings through the jolly corner brought on by the seance, the film includes a conversation between confider and confidante similar to that in the story. Salome Jens states that she approached her role by "searching for the essence of Alice Staverton."<sup>28</sup> Much of the direct dialogue from the story is used verbatim in this scene and other dialogue is culled from the tone of both direct and attributed dialogue in the story. Writer-director Arthur Barron thinks that at times a paragraph of "pure James" would be too difficult for the ear to follow, so he condensed much of the dialogue.<sup>29</sup> As Alice makes her statement about the flower, she lightly touches a nearby flower, and a few moments later assures Brydon that she would have liked him no matter how he turned out. Before Alice confesses her dreams to Brydon, the conversation cuts to a sepia-tinted memory scene of the

couple in a croquet game. Alice is radiant and happy. Brydon, however, seems to be trying to be relaxed and happy, but has difficulty giving himself over to the pleasure and intimacy of the game. Alice's dream, which represents their life as it might have been, follows and interprets this scene depicting their past.

Brydon's penultimate visit to the jolly corner in the film is initially intercut with shots of Alice preparing for bed and then dreaming. As she walks from her vanity table to her bed, the eerie sounds heard in several places throughout the film dramatically emphasize the haunted atmosphere of the dream. This scene cuts to Brydon entering the jolly corner and placing his walking stick in a corner. He walks to a mantle and finds a candle and match, ready again to roam the old house. The same sounds from the above scene continue, thematically linking their mutual quest for Brydon's alter ego. Alice tosses in her sleep in the next shot. In a dream, she sees the alter ego, photographed visually distorted and out of focus. This "reciprocal hallucination," a term introduced by F. W. H. Meyers, a member of the Society for Psychical Research, was an idea available to Henry James through correspondence with Meyers.<sup>30</sup> The tonal and thematic sound track continues as she imagines herself younger and voluptuous, the Brydon alter ego passionately embracing her. She wakes up screaming, and in the next scene Brydon continues his prowling while the eerie sounds continue.

Henry Nash Smith, writing in an essay which supplements James' story and the film, explains the motivation for this visualized dream: "The hypothesis that Arthur Barron has built into his film version of the story . . . views the buried part of Brydon's psyche as his male sexuality. . . . The emphasis on Brydon's sexuality allows recognition

of Alice Staverton's also. Her passionate love for him accounts for her being aware of the repressed alter ego before he is, and for the fact that she dreams of the phantom at the moment of Brydon's confrontation with it."<sup>31</sup> Cinematically, the visualized dream and its juxtapositioning has additional values. While Alice's confession of the dream is adequate for the short story, visualizing the dream enhances Alice's role as Brydon's second consciousness in the film. Length narration in the short story achieves the same goal, but the narrative mode in film usually requires more direct presentation. The visualized dream also intensifies the terror Brydon experiences in his simultaneous visit to the jolly corner: both Alice and Brydon feel terror, thematically and quantitatively heightening the sensation.

Subsequent scenes cinematically restructure Brydon's confrontation with what he is not. In the short story, Brydon confronts both what he is not and what he is during a single nocturnal visit to the old house. In the film, these two confrontations occur during separate visits. The identity of the first encounter, clarified in the short story through lengthy narration, is made in the film by a scene invented from several spoken and narrative remarks in the story which follow that visit. As Brydon walks through the upper stories of the house, his voice-over brings James' stalking imagery to the film: "I roamed slowly here. I knew what I meant, and what I wanted. A creature more subtle--yet at bay perhaps more formidable--than any beast of the forest." He opens a door, and the eerie string music is again heard. When the door squeaks open, Brydon peers in and hears a moaning sound. As he turns around and walks away from the door, it shuts by itself. Startled, Brydon turns around and cowers against a wall as if trapped. He holds the candle in



front of him, its light from below giving his face a sinister look. As he slowly approaches the door, the eerie sounds intensify. Dialogue in the remainder of this scene is taken almost verbatim from the short story: "I know you're there. I have known it these many years." He begins to retreat. "I have pursued you, but now I spare you and I give you up." In the darkness, something stirs and moves toward him. As the door opens again, Brydon cries out in terror: "No! I renounce--never on my honor to try again!" He retreats further, terrified. "So rest for ever--and let me!" The door suddenly slams shut.

The partially invented scene which follows uses Alice to provide a transition between Brydon's two final visits to the jolly corner. Just as he has been doing throughout both the short story and film, Brydon continues to confide in Alice:

Brydon: And don't you see how, without my exile, I might never have been waiting all this time.

Alice: I see that it has spoiled nothing--it hasn't spoiled your being here at last. It hasn't spoiled this.

Brydon: You really believe, then, that I am as good as the person I might have been?

Alice: No, far from it. But I don't care.

Brydon: You mean I'm good enough.

Alice: Would you believe me if I say so? Anyway, the other person is still you.

Brydon: He's not myself.

Then Alice tells him about her dreams. Milton Mays believes that life as defined by James consists of "genuine emotional involvement with another human being."<sup>32</sup> In a note for his "A Round of Visits," James states the essentials of the kind of relationship shared by Alice and Brydon: "Don't I see that there is one person whom he has been counting

upon most, inevitably a woman, a woman whom he has been occupied with, confusedly, anxiously, tenderly, whom he hasn't been sure about and as to his feelings for whom he has been by no means sure? He thinks it clears up that feeling that now, instinctively, it is to her his imagination turns most."<sup>33</sup> Alice's interest in the present coupled with her statement that she does not care what Brydon might have been, therefore, pulls his attention away from his most recent experience in the jolly corner--his encounter with what he is not--toward what he is. In the next scene, Alice further encourages him to seek what he is, a quest symbolized by the James' violent imagery which is brought into the film.

Writing about "The Jolly Corner," James states that "the spirit engaged with the forces of violence interests me most when I can think of it as engaged most deeply, most finely and most 'subtly' (precious term!). For then it is that, as with the longest and firmest prongs of consciousness, I grasp and hold the throbbing subject; there it is above all that I find the steady light of the picture."<sup>34</sup> Brydon and Alice are now walking through a park. Hearing wind and distant thunder, Alice says, "What an angry sound." Later in the scene, the thunder and wind intensify to violence, and Brydon states resolutely, "I shall see him now." The terror created in the short story through its violent suggestions of assault, aggression, and confrontation are brought to film in this scene and prompt Brydon to make his final visit.

Alice encourages him to visit the jolly corner by willingly discussing courage, a subject continually on Brydon's mind in the short story. The filmmakers incorporate this subject into the dialogue between Alice and Brydon rather than using a voice-over mode in the confrontation scene itself. In the story, for example, when Brydon concludes that the ghost

is afraid of him, he enjoys "a consciousness, unique in the experience of man" (p. 97). When he believes he has the ghost cornered in a room behind a closed door, he experiences a sensation "more complex than had ever before found itself consistent with sanity" (p. 100). During the violent weather in the film, Brydon asks Alice if she, like others, thinks he is a coward. She replies, "I think you've not yet been tested." Immediately after her answer, Brydon decides to make one last visit to the jolly corner, his courage having been gently challenged by Alice.

But Brydon must become distanced from himself in order to know his true self. In James' story, this detachment occurs when he begins to see himself from the point of view of the alter ego he is stalking. He asks, in thoughts attributed to him in the story, "who had ever before so turned the tables and become himself, in the apparitional world, an incalculable terror" (p. 97)? He sees himself pursuing both his alter ego and himself: "He was kept in sight while remaining himself--as regards the essence of his position--sightless" (p. 98). In a moment of "the proudest . . . duplication of consciousness" he builds up his alter ego as a man who "has been dodging, retreating, hiding, but now, worked up to anger, he'll fight" (p. 99). At the bottom of the rear staircase in the jolly corner, Brydon feels "the lapse of certain instants of concentrated conscious combat, the sense of a need to hold on to something, even after the manner of a man slipping and slipping on some awful incline" (p.100). When he "closed his eyes, held them tight, for a long minute, as with that instinct of dismay and that terror of vision (p. 100), he suddenly finds himself "still at the top" (p. 101) of the stairs. John Clair believes that there is no ghost and Alice Staverton has staged the event for Brydon.<sup>35</sup> Richard Hocks, however, notes that at this point "Brydon

and the ghost exchange places. . . . This tells us not only how Brydon miraculously gets from the vestibule hall to the top of the house, but how the ghost gets to the front hall where he 'belongs' for the confrontation that eventually occurs."<sup>36</sup> Now at the top of the stairs, Brydon views his situation as a romantic adventure: "This was before him in truth as a physical image, an image almost worthy of an age of greater romance. That remark indeed glimmered for him only to glow the next instant with a finer light; since what age of romance, after all, could have matched either the state of his mind or, 'objectively,' as they said, the wonder of his situation" (p. 101)? Again, Brydon's detachment places him in a better position from which to view himself.

Such a complicated narrative would not readily transform into a fully dramatized film. But The American Short Story filmmakers have captured the essence of Brydon's detachment. On film, the climactic scene is much briefer than in the short story. Brydon's perception of his quest as a romantic adventure occurs in the scene with Alice. The turbulent weather and Alice's suggestion that he demonstrate his courage, a suggestion made elsewhere in the short story, function as the cinematic equivalent of Brydon's perception of his search as a romantic adventure.

Of James and the plastic arts, F. O. Matthiessen writes that "by seeing life in pictures, he found his organic form."<sup>37</sup> In restructuring Alice's role as confidante and second consciousness, however, the filmmakers inadequately reimage the climactic scene in plastic form. Usually, says Peter Penzoldt, the ghost story moves through an ascending exposition which establishes an atmosphere conducive to emotional vulnerability. When the ghost suddenly appears, it can be viewed as a "double climax," since the same figure may have materialized earlier but is only

now identified as a true ghost which acts with violence.<sup>38</sup> In James' story, a long exposition is followed by the appearance of one ghost at the top of the stairs, and another narrative sequence concluded by the appearance of another ghost. When Brydon encounters the ghost upstairs, he thinks his search is over, but is then led downstairs to a violent encounter with the second presence.

In the film, this double climax is presented, but weakened by separating each climax by the scenes with Alice. Brydon's spatial and temporal disorientation, the "vertiginous" (p. 105) quality described in the story and crucial to the feeling of terror it creates, are interrupted. Having already encountered one ghost, Brydon now pursues and confronts a second, representing what Brydon is. Oddly, Henry Nash Smith in The American Short Story companion text states that "James intends for us to understand that Spencer Brydon passes through a psychological crisis so intense that it might be considered a metaphorical death and rebirth."<sup>39</sup> But in the film, the intensity of Brydon's crisis is weakened because he has had time and distance to collect his thoughts following the first crisis. Although the spatial qualities in the climactic encounter are well-done--Brydon's view of and descent from the upper floors are spatially communicated, for example--too much time and too lengthy a change in location has occurred for Brydon--or the viewer--to feel the intensity of his crisis. Such a crisis could have been intensified, for example, by intercutting brief glimpses of Alice's dream into both climactic sequences, thus following the Arthur Barron interpretation and clarifying the identity of each ghost encountered. Possibly over-faithfulness to Alice's role and too much preoccupation with interpretation at the cost of film's spatial powers decrease the effect the story

has in a different medium. Yet overall, The Jolly Corner is a commendable achievement which combines both entertainment and adaptation fidelity. Actor Fritz Weaver thinks Arthur Barron "is an artist with the camera."<sup>40</sup> He ranks as an artist with the pen as well. The many difficulties in adapting a James story written in his "involute style" place extra demands on the film adaptor who aims at both film and fidelity.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup>"Henry James Into Film," Films in Review, 28 (1977), 163, 165, 169.
- <sup>2</sup>"Tapping Riches the Networks Ignore," Saturday Review, 2 April 1977, p. 44.
- <sup>3</sup>Quoted in Leon Edel, Henry James: The Master: 1901-1916 (New York: Lippincott, 1972), p. 316.
- <sup>4</sup>Henry James and the Jacobites (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1963), p. 363.
- <sup>5</sup>Henry James and Pragmatistic Thought: A Study of the Relationship Between the Philosophy of William James and the Literary Art of Henry James (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1974), pp. 202, 203.
- <sup>6</sup>Henry James and the Occult: The Great Extension (Bloomington: Univ. of Indiana Press, 1972), p. 136.
- <sup>7</sup>The Art of the Novel (New York: Scribner's, 1934), p. 332.
- <sup>8</sup>The Art of the Novel, p. 262.
- <sup>9</sup>The Madness of Art: A Study of Henry James (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1949), p. 204.
- <sup>10</sup>The Future of the Novel: Essays on the Art of Fiction, ed. Leon Edel (New York: Vintage, 1956), p. 14.
- <sup>11</sup>"Designing The Heiress," Hollywood Quarterly, 5 (1950), 1.
- <sup>12</sup>"Conflict in American, European Values Seen in James' 'The Jolly Corner,'" Pressbook (New York: David S. Wachsman Associates, Inc., n.d.), pp. 3-4.
- <sup>13</sup>The Confidante in Henry James (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1963), pp. 40, 59.
- <sup>14</sup>Henry James and Pragmatistic Thought, pp. 202-03.

- <sup>15</sup>The Madness of Art, p. 202.
- <sup>16</sup>"'The Jolly Corner': A Fable of Redemption," Studies in Short Fiction, 12 (1975), 273.
- <sup>17</sup>The Art of the Novel, p. 254.
- <sup>18</sup>Henry Nash Smith, "On Henry James and 'The Jolly Corner,'" in The American Short Story (New York: Dell, 1977), p. 124.
- <sup>19</sup>The Art of the Novel, pp. 110-11.
- <sup>20</sup>Sally Ferguson, "Short Stories: Wonderfully Loving Transpositions," Humanities Newsletter for the National Endowment for the Humanities, Vol. 7 (April 1977), 3.
- <sup>21</sup>"The Confidences of a 'Psychic Researcher,'" William James on Psychic Research, ed. Gardner Murphy and Robert O. Ballou (Fairfield, N.J.: Kelley, 1960), p. 322.
- <sup>22</sup>The Madness of Art, p. 204.
- <sup>23</sup>"Conflict in Values," p. 3.
- <sup>24</sup>The Art of the Novel, p. 62.
- <sup>25</sup>Henry James and Pragmatistic Thought, p. 206.
- <sup>26</sup>The Confidante in Henry James, p. 57.
- <sup>27</sup>The American Henry James (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1957), p. 278.
- <sup>28</sup>"Conflict in Values," p. 3.
- <sup>29</sup>"Conflict in Values," p. 3.
- <sup>30</sup>Smith, p. 124.
- <sup>31</sup>Smith, p. 126.
- <sup>32</sup>"Henry James, or, The Beast in the Palace of Art," American Literature, 39 (1968), 469.



<sup>33</sup>The Notebooks of Henry James, ed. F. O. Matthiessen and Kenneth E. Murdock (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1947), p. 159.

<sup>34</sup>The Art of the Novel, p. 258.

<sup>35</sup>The Ironic Dimension in the Fiction of Henry James (Pittsburgh: Duquesne Univ. Press, 1965), pp. 17-36.

<sup>36</sup>Henry James and Pragmatistic Thought, p. 207.

<sup>37</sup>"James and the Plastic Arts," Kenyon Review, 5 (1943), 535.

<sup>38</sup>The Supernatural in Fiction (New York: Humanities Press, 1965), pp. 16-19.

<sup>39</sup>Smith, p. 124.

<sup>40</sup>"Conflict in Values," p. 2.

## CHAPTER III

### THE DISPLACED PERSON: CINEMATIC PROSE INTO CINEMATIC LANGUAGE

The decision to include "The Displaced Person" (1955)\* in The American Short Story series was a wise one considering the strong cinematic qualities of Flannery O'Connor's fiction. In an introduction to "Flannery and the Film Makers," The Flannery O'Connor Bulletin states that "to read Flannery O'Connor even superficially is to be impressed by her remarkable ability to create images. Her artist's eye was as sensitive to the concrete details of her stories as her ear was to the speech rhythms of her characters. Inevitably, film makers recognize the possibilities for translation into their medium."<sup>1</sup> Adapted O'Connor stories include "A Circle in the Fire," "The Comforts of Home," and "Good Country People." More are planned.

Considered one of her best stories, "The Displaced Person" offers promising material for film adaptation. In addition to strong visual imagery and colorful dialogue, "The Displaced Person" has other qualities which have potential for cinematic use. Its episodic structure resembles that of a screenplay, with clear chapter and spatial landmarks between key scenes. Clear and meaningful descriptions in the narrative provide

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\*Following the MLA Handbook, 1977, prose short story titles are enclosed by quotation marks while film titles are underlined. All references to O'Connor's story are taken from The American Short Story, ed. Calvin Skaggs (New York: Dell, 1977) and page numbers are cited in the text.

directions for the actors; the characters in the story leap easily off the page and into the film. Cecil Smith, for example, writes that John Houseman's Father Flynn "offers a subtly disturbing portrait."<sup>2</sup> The tale's blend of humor and seriousness recommend it to entertainment-oriented filmmakers and audiences. The lush, warm setting, a Southern dairy farm and the surrounding countryside, is rich in detail and suggests a convincing mise-en-scène within which the strong local color embodied in O'Connor's characters can be shown to its fullest extent. The American Short Story filmmakers capitalized on setting by filming the entire adaptation at Andalusia, the farm near Milledgeville, Georgia, where O'Connor did much of her writing. Along with the tone and mood created by the local color and setting, the pace moves deliberately, events proceeding with the inevitability inherent in the film medium.

Not only does "The Displaced Person" readily lend itself to film adaptation, its screenwriter, Horton Foote, clearly understands the unique role of the film adaptor, how he faithfully and effectively approaches his raw materials. Foote is a well-known dramatist for the New York stage, for the screen, and for television. His film dramatizations of Harper Lee's To Kill a Mockingbird and William Faulkner's "Tomorrow" are highly regarded. In an interview conducted by Calvin Skaggs, literary advisor for The American Short Story, Foote describes the difference in preparing for adaptations and original works: "I think that the first preparation is almost a mystical one; you have to feel somehow that you can enter into another writer's terrain, and take on the beat of another writer's heart. Whenever I have not obeyed that and tried just to do something, it has never worked for me."<sup>3</sup> In this statement Foote reveals the most effective way to capture the essence of O'Connor's

story: approach the materials of the original in a spirit analogous to the way that author approached the raw materials of reality. "It's a poem, it's a poem, it's a poem," says actress Iren Worth, who portrays Mrs. McIntyre, of Foote's script.<sup>4</sup> Although Ms. Worth's repetition may be an overstatement, the film is both original in its own right and faithful to the essential mood, tone, and theme of "The Displaced Person."

Gerald Becham, curator of the Flannery O'Connor collection at Georgia College, writes in a letter that The Displaced Person "is a superb work of art. It is a true rendition of the story. Not a line or scene is out of place. I think even Flannery would have been more than satisfied and maybe elated over the results. It is the first film of one of her stories that 'rings' completely true."<sup>5</sup> Cecil Smith echoes these remarks: The Displaced Person is "a marvellous rendition of a marvellous story."<sup>6</sup> In adapting the structure of "The Displaced Person," the filmmakers did not confront a difficult problem. Martha Stephens believes that O'Connor's fiction progresses with a "wonderfully controlled momentum."<sup>7</sup> Victor Nunez, film adaptor of O'Connor's "A Circle in the Fire," writes that he "made the decision early not to use any voice-over narration as the story seemed to move forward without editorializing."<sup>8</sup> Screenwriter Foote thinks O'Connor is "as structured a writer as I know of. . . . The form of her work is so inevitable."<sup>9</sup> As a highly structured piece whose fictional events are "so inevitable," then, "The Displaced Person" structurally adapts to the screen with relative ease. And film, as a medium, deals with the inevitability of events. As George Bluestone states the matter, "the film viewer is bound by the relentless rate of a projector which he cannot control. . . . In that relentless

unfolding, each frame is blurred in a total progression." Film "holds the spectator within a system of metrically regulated time."<sup>10</sup> The temporal inevitability in O'Connor's story is carried over into the film.

Recognizing this affinity between O'Connor's story and the film medium, the filmmakers have restructured "The Displaced Person" only when necessary to dramatize material not already in dramatic form. Early in the story, for example, "The Priest had told Mrs. McIntyre his name was Rudolph and he was twelve and the girl's name was Sledgewig and she was nine. Sledgewig sounded to Mrs. Shortley like something you would name a bug, or vice versa, as if you named a boy Bollweevil. All of them's last name was something that only they themselves and the Priest could pronounce. All she could make out of it was Gobblehook" (p. 283). This narration, which attributes dialogue to Mrs. Shortley, is dramatized three scenes later in the film when the Shortleys discuss the new arrivals in a thick Southern accent suggested in the story:

Mrs. Shortley: She don't call them the Gobblehooks no longer.

Mr. Shortley: What does she call them?

Mrs. Shortley: Whatever their last name is. She can say it just as plain as that Priest can. The boy's Rudolph, and the girl's Sledgewig. I'd just as soon name a child of mine Bollweevil as Sledgewig.

By recasting the narrative material in dialogue, the filmmakers not only avoid the use of intrusive voice-over narration, they capture the emotive essence of Mrs. Shortley's ignorance by having her speak the words in a convincing dramatic scene.

Another narrative scene in the story occurs much earlier in the film. In the story, Mrs. McIntyre has just learned of Mr. Guizac's miscegenation plot between his cousin and Sulk. She is on her bed crying

and sits up and says aloud, "'They're all the same. It's always been like this,' and she fell back flat again. 'Twenty years of being beaten and done in and they even robbed his grave!' and remembering that, she began to cry quietly, wiping her eyes every now and then with the hem of her smock" (p. 308). In a non-dramatic narrative, the next paragraph describes her thoughts:

What she had thought of was the angel over the Judge's grave. This had been a naked granite cherub that the old man had seen in the city one day in a tombstone store window. . . . She had always thought it hideous but when the Herrins stole it off the old man's grave, she was shocked and outraged. Mrs. Herrin had thought it very pretty and had walked to the graveyard frequently to see it, and when the Herrins left the angel left with them, all but its toes, for the ax old man Herrin had used to break it off with had struck slightly too high. Mrs. McIntyre had never been able to afford to have it replaced. (pp. 308-09)

Because film has difficulty rendering thought and memory, Mrs. McIntyre's memory in the story is placed in an appropriate dramatic scene which occurs much earlier in the film than in the story. As in the story, this scene takes place in the back field of the farm where the Judge's grave is located. While the Judge is discussed in this scene in both story and film, his grave is "seen" only in the film, thus giving visual meaning to the dialogue between Mrs. McIntyre and Mrs. Shortley. The two women walk down a hill toward the small graveyard, seen in the foreground, and as they talk the camera circles the Judge's grave as they do:

Mrs. McIntyre: When Mrs. Herrin was here, used to come out here all the time and look at the angel on the Judge's grave. She thought it was pretty, she said. When they left, the angel left with them. They stole it right off the Judge's grave.

Mrs. Shortley: How come they left the toes?

Mrs. McIntyre: I guess the ax old man Herrin used to break it off with struck too high. I've never been able to afford to have it replaced.

In addition to including an image from the physical world to externalize Mrs. McIntyre's articulated memory, the scene in her bedroom is linked to this scene in the back field by the film's theme music, which plays throughout the later scene and near the end of this earlier one. Although the material appears at different places in story and film, the subject matter is thematically associated visually and aurally. While the structure changes ostensibly, the way in which those changes are managed keeps the film faithful to the intended structure of O'Connor's story.

Other narrative material is recast in dramatic form by employing monologues. Mrs. Shortley begins to think of herself as a prophet, and following a scene in the story in which she warns Astor and Sulk that the Displaced Person might displace them, she experiences one of her inner visions: "She was seeing the ten million billion of them pushing their way into new places over here and herself, a giant angel with wings as wide as a house, telling the Negroes that they would have to find another place. She turned herself in the direction of the barn, musing on this, her expression lofty and satisfied" (p. 288). In the film, this vision also occurs following her conversation with Astor and Sulk, and is effectively dramatized both visually and aurally. Mysterious music accompanies this brief scene, Mrs. Shortley's sense of self-importance suggested by a low-angle shot. She closes her eyes, breathes deeply, and says, "They have come to take your place. You'll have to find another. Go on now, I warned you." She then opens her eyes as she comes out of her inner vision.

Mrs. Shortley's next vision in the film uses material from two places in the story. She sees Polish words "all piled up in a room, all

the dead dirty words, theirs and hers too, piled up like the naked bodies in the newsreel." Having seen this, "she started from that day to read her Bible with a new attention. She poured over the Apocalypse and began to quote from the Prophets and before long she had come to a deeper understanding of her existence. . . . She saw that the Lord God Almighty had created the strong people to do what had to be done and she felt that she would be ready when she was called" (p. 297). She sees the Priest "leading foreigners over in Hoards to places that were not theirs, to cause disputes, to uproot niggers, to plant the Whore of Babylon in the midst of the righteous" (pp. 298-98)! When she has her actual vision in the story, "the sky folded back in two pieces like the curtain to a stage and a gigantic figure stood facing her." Her prophecy is direct dialogue: "'The children of wicked nations will be butchered,' she said in a loud voice. 'Legs where arms should be, foot to face, ear in the palm of hand. Who will remain whole? Who will remain whole? Who'" (p. 298)?

Mrs. Shortley's state of mind and her second vision are effectively brought to the screen. She tells her husband, "When you get two of them families on the place, there won't be nothing spoken but Polish. Then they'll all gang up on us Shortleys. That's why I'm really studying my Bible these days." The same music heard in the earlier vision cuts in as Mrs. Shortley begins her prophecy: "I believe in the Lord God Almighty . . ." and the scene dissolves to her walking up a hill. She continues her prophecy: ". . . created a strong people [her voice begins to echo] to do what has to be done, and I know I'll be ready when He calls me. And the word of the Lord came into me, saying, 'sinner man, set thy face toward the mountains of Israel and prophesy against them.'" The sky dominates the frame in this shot. Her vision in the story is



actually a minor heart attack, communicated filmically with a dutch angle shot. She stops walking and begins her vision with a jerking motion: "Prophecy! The children all will get knives and shall be butchered! Legs where arms should be, foot to face, ear in the palm of the hand. Who will remain whole? Who will remain whole? Who?"

It is exactly this kind of material in "The Displaced Person" which lends itself to cinematic treatment. The dialogue, whether direct or attributed, functions as effectively in the filmic as in the prose mode. While much of the credit must go to the inspired and completely convincing acting by John Houseman, Irene Worth, Shirley Stoler (Mrs. Shortley), and Lane Smith (Mr. Shortley), O'Connor's visual descriptions of setting and renditions of states of minds come to the screen with few, if any, necessary alterations. Capitalizing on the strong directions for acting implicit in the narrative, The American Short Story film alters only those elements which must be recast in order to make sense in the film narrative. Given the persistent temptation to follow the easy route--voice-over narration--screenwriter Foote is bold enough and at the same time faithful to O'Connor's story to capture its essence in a different medium while maintaining clear narrative continuity.

The film retains the basic structure of O'Connor's story through musical and visual transitions. The story is divided into three main chapters, and the film signals these divisions using slow dissolves, musical transitions, and thematically linked imagery. Chapter One of the story ends with Mrs. Shortley's violent death in which she "seemed to contemplate for the first time the tremendous frontiers of her true country." The scene which follows in the story has Mrs. McIntyre telling Astor that "we can get along without them" (p. 302). In the film,

portentous music heard as the camera slowly zooms in on Mrs. Shortley's blank face dissolves slowly, as does the image, to the sight and sound of Mr. Guizac operating the tractor, in a sense the instrument of Mrs. Shortley's displacement into death and clearly the instrument of Guizac's death in Chapter Three.

The end of Chapter Two includes a strong cinematic direction which the film uses. Standing next to the back field in which the Judge's grave is located, Mrs. McIntyre "opened her eyes to include the whole field so that the figure on the tractor was no larger than a grasshopper in her widened view" (p. 312). In the film, the camera, at high angle, slowly zooms out to reveal more and more of the back field, eventually including Mr. Guizac as his tractor slowly circles the field inward toward the Judge's grave. In the story, "By nightfall, the Displaced Person would have worked his way around and around until there would be nothing on either side of the two hills but the stubble, and down in the center, risen like a little island, the graveyard where the Judge lay grinning under his desecrated monument" (p. 312). The next scene in the story takes place at the McIntyre house. The transition to this scene in the film is managed by a slow dissolve, theme music, and matching camera angle and distance as the establishing shot of Chapter Three shows the McIntyre house in a high-angle shot.

In addition to functioning as transition to and announcement of the beginning of Chapter Three, the way in which these images are handled is charged with meaning significant in the film. Miles Orvell views the image of the Judge's grave circled by Mr. Guizac on the tractor "like the grim reaper . . . an image of the Pole riding what will be the instrument of his own death. As he circles in toward the center, the

Judge's grinning death's-head seems to disdain all in this transitory world."<sup>11</sup> Leon Driskell and Joan Brittain write that Mr. Guizac's "fate is made more meaningful by cutting away the barrier between Mrs. McIntyre and her husband's grave, adorned with a headless angel and associated with the peacocks."<sup>12</sup> The film visually incorporates these meanings.

The filmmakers also employ slow dissolves as transitions between key scenes. Many of these divisions are indicated in the story by a space between paragraphs; other dissolves in the film occur between key scenes created through the film's minor restructuring of the story. Slow and contemplative theme music often accompanies these transitions, adding to their function. Although Horton Foote "would have preferred to have the script longer,"<sup>13</sup> probably because of a concern for capturing the mood of the story, the transitions in the film create much the same effect. Cumulatively, they distend the sense of time in a film which lasts a relatively short time. Whereas other films in the series employ cuts almost exclusively, the pace of *The Displaced Person* is skillfully controlled through cinematic transitions faithful to the pace of O'Connor's story.

Cuts are used effectively in the film as well. In the death scene, O'Connor meticulously describes the actions of all involved so that their mutual complicity in Mr. Guizac's death is made clear. *The Displaced Person* is under the wheel of a tractor, repairing it. Mrs. McIntyre is watching at a close distance, and in a brief paragraph O'Connor both describes the "accident" and implicates those who are guilty:

Mr. Shortley had got on the large tractor and was backing it out from under the shed. He seemed to be warmed by it as if its heat and strength sent impulses up through him that he obeyed instantly. He had it headed toward the small tractor but he braked it on a slight incline and jumped off and turned

back toward the shed. Mrs. McIntyre was looking fixedly at Mr. Guizac's legs lying flat on the ground now. She heard the brake on the large tractor slip and, looking up, she saw it move forward, calculating its own path. Later she remembered that she had seen Mr. Shortley turn his head with incredible slowness and stare silently over his shoulder and that she had started to shout to the Displaced Person but that she had not. She had felt her eyes and Mr. Shortley's eyes and the Negro's eyes come together in one look that froze them in collusion forever, and she heard the little noise the Pole made as the tractor wheel broke his backbone. (pp. 321-22)

This highly spatialized scene in the story is carried over into the film through quick cuts among the faces of those involved and the machines which cause Mr. Guizac's death. A concluding extreme high angle shot summarizes their complicity in the crime. Throughout the scene, as Miles Orvell says of the scene in the story, "The landscape itself seems to cooperate in forming an arena of silence for the action."<sup>14</sup> Mrs. McIntyre has just appeared on the scene with the intention of firing the Displaced Person:

CUT to MS of Mr. Guizac repairing the tractor, while Sulk watches. Mr. Guizac [to Sulk as he makes a gesture which visualizes how a screwdriver works]: Screw. [Sulk walks off to get one. The camera tracks him to the tool box, and as he locates the screwdriver and returns to the tractor, another tractor, driven by Mr. Shortley, appears in the background.]

CUT to MS of Mr. Guizac and Sulk next to the tractor under repair. The camera is now located closer to the front of the tractor, not to its side as before. Mr. Guizac crawls on his back under the wheel of the tractor, and Sulk goes to the rear of the tractor. The tractor driven by Mr. Shortley is seen pulling up several yards to the rear of the other tractor. Mrs. McIntyre stands to one side.

CUT to MCU of Mr. Shortley stopping his tractor. He puts on the hand brake and gets off.

CUT to MS of Mr. Guizac under the tractor and Sulk at rear. Mrs. McIntyre and Mr. Shortley stand in the background, several feet apart, watching.

CUT to CU of Mrs. McIntyre watching Mr. Guizac work on the tractor. A sound, which comes from the brake of Mr. Shortley's tractor, is heard. She looks in that direction.

CUT to XCU of brake slipping out of locked position. The tractor begins to move forward.

CUT to MCU of Mr. Shortley looking complacently, yet knowingly, at the moving tractor. [As it is directly behind Mr. Guizac's tractor, he must know they will collide.]

CUT to MCU of Mrs. McIntyre, who sees the danger, opens her mouth to warn Mr. Guizac, but says nothing.

CUT to CU of Mr. Guizac as he works under the wheel of the tractor. He appears not to know about the runaway tractor about to collide with the rear of the tractor he is under.

CUT to CU of front wheels of the runaway tractor.

CUT to MCU of Mr. Shortley watching the tractor and other people in the scene.

CUT to MCU of Sulk watching the tractor and other people in the scene.

CUT to MCU of Mrs. McIntyre, who looks at the tractors and other people in the scene. The sound of the runaway tractor's wheels crunching on the ground gets louder.

CUT to MS of Mr. Shortley, looking at Mrs. McIntyre, as the runaway tractor rolls by directly in front of him. Music is heard which "announces" the impending disaster.

CUT to MS of Sulk, who jumps back to get out of the way.

CUT to CU of the front of the runaway tractor.

CUT to MCU of Mr. Guizac under the tractor. He is still working, obviously unaware of the danger. The camera rapidly zooms in on him.

CUT to MCU of Mrs. McIntyre watching the tractors, which are about to collide.

CUT to MCU of Mr. Guizac's legs extending from underneath the tractor. Camera faces toward the runaway tractor, which is about to hit Mr. Guizac's tractor.

CUT to EXTREME HIGH ANGLE SHOT of the runaway tractor hitting the rear of Mr. Guizac's tractor, whose wheel runs over him. A crunching sound is heard. Mrs. McIntyre, Mr. Shortley, and Sulk stand at the edge of the frame.

CUT to MS of Mrs. McIntyre falling backward in a faint.  
Music stops.

The rendition of this scene in the film serves as an example of fidelity as advantage. The cinematic quality of the prose scene is faithfully, and therefore effectively, cast in film form.

The final paragraph of the story describes the result of the Displaced Person's death, the universal displacement of all involved and the theme of the story. Chronological time covered in this paragraph is left vague, but probably encompasses several months. Nine slow dissolves accompanied by a violin and flute rendition of the film's theme music create a time-transition montage which carries this passing of time over into the film, again capturing the contemplative mood of O'Connor's story through carefully paced and constructed transitions:

DISSOLVE to MS of Mr. Shortley carrying his belongings to his car, which is loaded for his departure. It is night. The camera tracks his walk to the car, then dollies back to MLS of him loading the car. Theme music continues.

DISSOLVE to MS of Sulk, then in to MCU, walking in daylight down a road, carrying his belongings. The camera tracks his movement as he walks past the camera, then away from it. Theme music continues.

DISSOLVE to LS of Judge's grave, with other graves surrounding it. Mrs. McIntyre's car is in the background. Theme music continues.

CUT to another angle of Judge's grave, now in MLS. The camera pans right and Mrs. McIntyre is seen sitting in her parked car. Theme music continues.

DISSOLVE to CU of a sign which reads "Auction: Dispersal Sale." The camera pans left and down slightly to reveal the cluttered neglected floor of the dairy barn. Theme music continues.

DISSOLVE to MS of Astor walking down a road carrying his belongings. He stops with his back to the camera, leans on a fence, and looks out over a field. Theme music continues.

CUT to CU of Astor as he looks out over the field and pond toward the McIntyre house, which is not in sight. Theme music continues.

CUT to MS of Astor, as above. He turns around, picks up his belongings, and walks out of the frame. Theme music continues.

DISSOLVE to MS of neglected farm implements in disarray. The camera pans right to reveal more details of the deserted farm, now MLS. Theme music stops.

DISSOLVE to MLS of Priest feeding the peacock, which is not heard.

CUT to MS of Mrs. McIntyre in bed, her back to the camera, with a Negro nurse at the side of her bed, face towards camera. The nurse fans Mrs. McIntyre slowly. A sound is heard; the nurse turns and gets up.

CUT to MS of Priest entering the room. He walks forward and speaks to the nurse in a two-shot MCU.

Priest: She had any visitors?

Nurse: No, sir. You're about the only one who comes to see the poor thing. [The nurse walks out of the frame, and the Priest walks around to the foot of the bed. The camera tracks him as he walks and sits down next to the bed.]

Priest [softly to Mrs. McIntyre]: Now. Where did we leave off last week? Purgatory--yes, I think by now we have a clearer idea of that. [Mrs. McIntyre, now apparently an invalid unable to talk, makes no response. The camera very slowly dollies in on the Priest until in CU.] Do you know, I'm eighty years old, I've been a Priest for fifty-five years. How many prayers I've said for the souls in purgatory. Yes, I think we have a clearer idea now about souls in purgatory. You know, I wish I could question you sometimes. . . . [He continues to speak very softly to her.]

CUT to CU of Mrs. McIntyre's face which stares blankly into space.

Priest [off-camera]: . . . and see what you know, and don't know. [The camera begins to pull back very slowly. Theme music begins, softly.] Still, we were speaking of purgatory, a temporary state, that can go on for centuries, [back of Priest now in frame] of souls who have been cleansed for heaven, or doomed

to hell. These souls have not yet attained an incorporeal state. Therefore purgatory must be a place, but where. . . . [The camera is now back far enough to include the two in a MS.]

DISSOLVE to MLS of McIntyre house, second floor, seen from outside. The camera slowly zooms back, revealing more of the house. Theme music continues, now louder.

Priest [off-camera]: One thing is clear--that purgatory may be that the souls may benefit from the living. . . . [He continues to talk, but the distinctness of his words fades out as the camera continues to zoom out slowly, finally revealing the whole house.]

DISSOLVE to LS of McIntyre house. The camera continues to zoom back slowly. The theme music continues to play softly, and the Priest is still heard, indistinctly, continuing his talk. The grounds surrounding the house are now in the frame.

This sequence clearly illustrates the different ways in which each medium handles time and space. Whereas fiction has three basic tenses, film has only the present. The verbally communicated passage of time in prose, which suggests spatial movement, must be spatially communicated in the filmic mode to suggest the passage of time. As Bluestone says, fiction "renders the illusion of space by going from point to point in time; the film renders time by going from point to point in space."<sup>15</sup> Changes in space, supplemented by music and slow dissolves to extend the sense of time passing, faithfully transform the spirit of O'Connor's denouement onto the scene.

One element of O'Connor's fiction which receives less critical attention than it deserves is her consistent use of strong visual images in the form of physical objects which function to advance plot and characterization and as thematic metaphors. Of the importance which physical objects have in her work, O'Connor states that "Fiction is an art which calls for a strictest attention to the real--whether the writer is writing a naturalistic story or a phantasy," for "every serious novelist is



trying to portray reality as it manifests itself in our concrete, sensual life."<sup>16</sup> O'Connor's dependence upon the surrounding world for her raw materials is clarified by her statements. She stresses that a sensible, concrete reality must inform fiction if it is to be successful. Furthermore, these "near things," or physical objects, must also be seen with their "extensions of meaning": "The writer's gaze has to extend beyond the surface, beyond mere problems, until it touches the realm of mystery which is the concern of prophets. True prophecy in the novelist's case is a matter of seeing near things with their extensions of meaning and thus of seeing far things close up."<sup>17</sup> Two elements are crucial to O'Connor's fiction: mystery and manners. Manners, the "near things," her Southern locale, local color, and physical objects along with mystery, or the expression of archetypal truth inherent in the "near things," work in concert in "The Displaced Person." Together, they advance the plot and reveal character while at the same time revealing the theme of the story, that displacement is a universal phenomenon. The American Short Story film adaptation of "The Displaced Person" capitalizes on O'Connor's "strictest attention to the real" either by directly transferring physical objects to the screen or by finding their cinematic analogues.

How this fortunate blend of mystery and manners functions in "The Displaced Person" is indicated by Sister M. Joselyn. She finds two thematic centers in the story. One is "the peacock, as a Christ figure . . . with the major characters ranged around it." Another is Mr. Guizac, around whom "the major characters also range themselves . . . on a descending scale from love to hate." The result is that because "a character's feelings toward the peacock may coincide with his feelings

toward Mr. Guizac," each major character in the story "defines himself in relationship to Mr. Guizac, [and] so that character defines himself in relation to Christ."<sup>18</sup> The Priest, for example, displays the most charitable attitude toward the Guizacs and is also strongly attracted to the peacocks. When he brings the Guizacs to Mrs. McIntyre's farm and sees one of the birds, he says, "'And when does he raise his splendid tail. . . . So beauti-ful. . . . A tail full of suns,'" (p. 286) as he admires the bird up close. In addition to using the same dialogue, the film employs music played on a harp, suggesting the divine nature of the peacock.

In a later scene, the Priest explicitly identifies the peacock as a symbol for Christ. Mrs. McIntyre has just explained why the Guizacs must leave the farm, but the Priest answers obliquely, expressing the hope that she will not dismiss them. Mrs. McIntyre continues:

"I don't find myself responsible for all the extra people in the world."

The old man didn't seem to hear her. His attention was fixed on the cock who was taking minute steps backward, his head against the spread tail. "The transfiguration," he murmured.

She had no idea what he was talking about. "Mr. Guizac didn't have to come here in the first place," she said, giving him a hard look.

The cock lowered his tail and began to pick grass.

"He didn't have to come here in the first place," she repeated, emphasizing each word.

The old man smiled absently. "He came to redeem us," he said and blandly reached for her hand and shook it and said he must go. (p. 314)

Miles Orvell calls this scene "a beautifully designed counterpoint, concluding with a juxtaposition that states, as clearly as one could wish, the dramatic and symbolic function of Mr. Guizac in the story."<sup>19</sup> Robert Fitzgerald writes that it "is a bold little scene, concluding in a kind of fugue."<sup>20</sup> The film captures the essence of this important scene.

Dialogue is brought directly to the scene from the story. Repetition of the harp music in this scene emphasizes the symbolic value of the peacock. The juxtaposition, the fugue-like quality, is further enhanced by cutting among the peacock, the Priest, and Mrs. McIntyre. The development of contrapuntal voices is visualized by cutting the shots so that the two voices and the sound made by the bird are alternately heard off-camera.

Mrs. McIntyre, on the other hand, only tolerates the peacocks, and her attitude toward Mr. Guizac changes from enthusiasm to suspicion to hatred. As the years have gone by, she has grown more and more indifferent to the peacocks, and this parallels her growing alienation from the Guizacs. In the story, for example, she reacts indifferently to the Priest's attraction to the bird: "Another mouth to feed. . . . There used to be twenty or thirty of those things on the place but I've let them die off. I don't like to hear them scream in the middle of the night" (p. 286). In the film, these words contrast with the harp in that scene and with the colorful grandeur of the bird which the camera captures. In the film's rendition of the conversation regarding the dismissal of the Guizacs between her and the Priest, she is irritated and angry at the Priest for his answers.

Mrs. Shortley sees the peacocks physically, but hardly acknowledges their presence and grants them no significance. Her disregard for them parallels her lack of feeling for the Guizacs. When the Guizacs are first brought to the farm, for example, she mutters, "Nothing but a peachicken" (p. 286). In the film her words are underscored when the harp abruptly stops, suggesting the degree of her indifference. In the story a conversation she has with Astor and Sulk immediately after the arrival

of the Guizacs further emphasizes the parallel between Mrs. Shortley's relation to the Guizacs and the peacock:

Then she stood a while longer, reflecting, her unseeing eyes directly in front of the peacock's tail. He had jumped into the tree and his tail hung in front of her, full of fierce planets with eyes that were each ringed in green and set against a sun that was gold in one second's light and salmon-colored in the next. She might have been looking at a map of the universe but she didn't notice it any more than she did the spots of sky that cracked the dull green of the tree. She was having an inner vision instead. She was seeing ten million billion of them pushing their way into new places over here and herself, a giant angel with wings as wide as a house, telling the Negroes that they would have to find another place. (pp. 287-88)

In the film, the peacock is heard throughout and seen in close up at the completion of the scene, Mrs. Shortley taking no notice of either its sight or sounds. Gilbert Muller, writing about O'Connor's story, could just as well have been referring to the film adaptation: "the imagination of the author transforms an ordinary symbol into a complex tale which assaults the opposition between Christ and Culture."<sup>21</sup> Once again, the interest in fidelity works to the benefit of the filmmakers.

O'Connor emphasizes that displacement involves everyone by linking together three images: the March of Time newsreel of Nazi concentration camps, Mrs. Shortley's prophetic vision, and the death of Mrs. Shortley. In the story, "Mrs. Shortley recalled a newsreel she had seen once of a room piled high with bodies of naked people all in a heap, their arms and legs tangled together, a head thrust in here, a head there, a foot, a knee, a part that should have been covered up sticking out, a hand raised clutching nothing" (p. 284). In the film, she relates this memory ✓ to her husband; it is not seen. When she has her vision, she prophecies aloud in both story and film in language reminiscent of the newsreel. In the death scene in the story, Mrs. Shortley, "her huge body rolled

back still against the seat and her eyes like blue-painted glass, seemed to contemplate for the first time the tremendous frontiers of her true country" (p. 302). While the film very convincingly visualizes her death itself, it fails to drive home the significance of her final vision by not including March of Time footage. Horton Foote eventually agreed with Glenn Jordan, director of The Displaced Person, that mixing the different styles--intercutting newsreel footage with Mrs. Shortley's death--would not have captured the "whole kind of style to treat those things in."<sup>22</sup> ✓ But it is precisely through the juxtaposition of styles that the meaning of her death could have been most effectively visualized. The significance of Mrs. McIntyre's decline to an invalid is made clear through the final scenes in which the Priest lectures to her on the purgatory to which she has been displaced. The meaning of Mrs. Shortley's death in the film, however, is less clear. According to Dorothy Tuck McFarland, the earlier newsreel imagery Mrs. Shortley sees suggests that "her experience of being displaced from Mrs. McIntyre's farm brings her to a condition imaginistically parallel to that of the most displaced Europeans; in suffering and death she is united with suffering humanity."<sup>23</sup> The film, as a medium of images, of perceptual communication, could easily and effectively incorporate such archival footage to clarify the meaning of this significant event in the story.

But it would be presumptuous to insist upon such a rhetorical strategy in a film already successful both as cinema and as faithful adaptation. Recognizing the strong cinematic qualities in O'Connor's fiction, The American Short Story filmmakers can have it both ways: execute the goals of the NEH-funded project and make an entertaining movie. The

Displaced Person should please those reviewers who expressed hope for a new era of literate and entertaining television programming.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Patrick Neligan, Jr. and Victor Nunez, "Flannery and the Film Makers," The Flannery O'Connor Bulletin, 5 (1976), 98.

<sup>2</sup>"PBS Series a Success Story," Los Angeles Times, 12 April 1977, Sec. 1, p. 16.

<sup>3</sup>"Interview with Horton Foote," The American Short Story (New York: Dell, 1977), p. 329.

<sup>4</sup>Quoted in Sally Ferguson, "Short Stories: Wonderfully Loving Transpositions," Humanities Newsletter for the National Endowment for the Humanities, Vol. 7 (April 1977), 3.

<sup>5</sup>"News from The American Short Story," Pressbook (New York: David S. Wachsman Associates, Inc., 12 April 1977), p. 4.

<sup>6</sup>"PBS Series a Success Story," p. 16.

<sup>7</sup>The Question of Flannery O'Connor (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1973), p. 11.

<sup>8</sup>"Flannery and the Film Makers," p. 102.

<sup>9</sup>"Interview with Horton Foote," p. 330.

<sup>10</sup>Novels Into Film: The Metamorphosis of Fiction Into Cinema (1957; rpt. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1971), pp. 50, 59, 210.

<sup>11</sup>Invisible Parade: The Fiction of Flannery O'Connor (Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 1972), p. 148.

<sup>12</sup>The Eternal Crossroads: The Art of Flannery O'Connor (Lexington: Univ. of Kentucky Press, 1971), p. 67.

<sup>13</sup>"Interview with Horton Foote," p. 331.

<sup>14</sup>Invisible Parade, p. 149.

- <sup>15</sup>Novels Into Film, p. 61.
- <sup>16</sup>Flannery O'Connor, Mystery and Manners, ed. Sally and Robert Fitzgerald (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1977), pp. 96, 170.
- <sup>17</sup>Quoted in Margaret Meaders, "Flannery O'Connor: 'Literary Witch,'" Colorado Quarterly, 10 (1962), 384.
- <sup>18</sup>"Thematic Centers in 'The Displaced Person,'" Studies in Short Fiction, 1 (1964), 86-87.
- <sup>19</sup>Invisible Parade, p. 148.
- <sup>20</sup>"The Countryside and the True Country," Sewanee Review, 70 (1962), 391.
- <sup>21</sup>Nightmares and Visions: Flannery O'Connor and the Catholic Grotesque (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1972), p. 35.
- <sup>22</sup>"Interview with Horton Foote," p. 332.
- <sup>23</sup>Flannery O'Connor (New York: Ungar, 1976), p. 31.



## CHAPTER IV

### SOLDIER'S HOME: AN INVENTIVE ADAPTATION

The issue of fidelity permeates Hemingway film criticism. Michael Adams lists fifteen screen adaptations from 1932 to 1977, noting that "many of the adaptations are rather loose ones."<sup>1</sup> Arthur Knight takes issue with those who describe Hemingway's fiction as cinematic: "Hemingway . . . created a literary form very much his own, with only the most superficial resemblance to film." Knight lists examples of the many adaptations of Hemingway fiction which "have tended to stay on the surface, preserving the sound while missing the substance."<sup>2</sup> Frank Laurence traces a long history of compromised endings in Hemingway adaptations, concluding that "it was not only Hemingway's endings that were subjected to the Hollywood 'treatment'. . . . Hollywood had ever to be careful it was selling emotions that were appropriate as escapist entertainment and not the sometimes more deeply disturbing emotions of art."<sup>3</sup> Has National Endowment for the Humanities writer Sally Ferguson's statement that "we need more serious television programming which is not afraid to make its major responsibility making the audiences feel pain, whether the pain of discovery or the pain of empathizing with someone"<sup>4</sup> come to fruition in The American Short Story production of Hemingway's "Soldier's Home"? Have screenwriter Robert Geller and director Robert Young met the standards of "strong cinematic talent to rephrase his intentions for the screen" which Arthur Knight says are necessary?<sup>5</sup>

Soldier's Home\* does indeed combine entertainment and fidelity in one inventive package.

"Soldier's Home" (1925) tells the story of Harold Krebs, a young World War I veteran whose faith in traditional Midwestern American values has been destroyed by his combat experiences as a Marine. When Krebs returns from the Rhineland to his Oklahoma hometown in 1919, long after the local war heroes have been welcomed home enthusiastically, nothing has changed. The town, his family, his friends, even his father's car are still the same. But Krebs' new moral orientation repeatedly conflicts with that of his hometown. Should he decide to acclimate himself into the society he left behind, Krebs will be forced to tell lies--about the war, about his role as a returned veteran in the old society, about his religious faith, about his love for his mother. Although "his lies were quite unimportant lies," they conflict with the new person he has become in the war, and they ultimately destroy the "cool, valuable quality" (p. 224) that initiation into combat has given him.

Krebs no longer has a genuine desire to take up his life again as a small-town citizen. He observes his parents moving about in their conventional lives as though they were animals in a zoo. He has lost religious faith and is uncomfortable with the formulaic pieties of his hometown social world. Even the attractive young girls who once appealed to him now live "in such a complicated world of already defined alliances and shifting feuds that Krebs did not feel the energy or the courage to

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\*Following the MLA Handbook, 1977, prose short story titles are enclosed by quotation marks while film titles are underlined. All references to Hemingway's story are taken from The American Short Story, ed. Calvin Skaggs (New York: Dell, 1977) and page numbers are cited in the text.

break into it" (p. 225). Krebs' parents want him to get a job, but work does not interest him. His mother attempts to get him to pray with her, but he is unable. She wants him to express his love for her, but to do this he must lie. All emotions and emotional effort seem futile to Krebs: "He did not want any consequences. He did not want any consequences ever again. He wanted to live along without consequences" (p. 226). Krebs responds to this oppressive environment by withdrawing from it. He will leave for another town, avoid relationships and entanglements, and set up a life that will "go smoothly" (p. 231).

As Krebs confronts these conflicting values, he realizes intuitively what no one else seems to understand: that conventional prewar values are no longer valid for a country experiencing--or soon to experience--a great moral upheaval. Richard Hovey explains Krebs' dilemma and the reason he must eventually escape: "What torments Krebs, because it is the loss of what is precious to him, is that he finds it impossible now to be honest with other people and true to himself."<sup>6</sup> This is the theme of "Soldier's Home," and the Hemingway narrator in this story, otherwise usually reluctant to editorialize, announces that theme: "Krebs acquired the nausea in regard to experience that is the result of untruth or exaggeration" (p. 225). What, then, brings on Krebs' emotion of nausea in the prose story, and how does the successful American Short Story film adaptation Soldier's Home capture the theme of the original?

Hemingway records that his difficulty in writing was to discover and communicate "what really happened in action; what the actual things were which produced the emotion" felt by the observer, to find "the real thing, the sequence of motion and fact which made the emotion."<sup>7</sup> Scholars have noted a correlation between Hemingway's remark and the methods of

achievement in his fiction, methods for which the Soldier's Home filmmakers have found analogous rhetorical techniques. Richard Hovey views the Hemingway technique as "that unerring choice and patterning of outward realities which point to and make us feel but almost never explain the inward reality."<sup>8</sup> Carlos Baker writes that Hemingway's fiction shows "a state of mind causally related to the extrinsic events and accurately presented in direct relation to those events."<sup>9</sup> J. Kashkeen believes that Hemingway conveys "the most intimate, the most subtle moods by an accumulation of external details . . . by an opposition of words."<sup>10</sup> This is the method of Hemingway's "Soldier's Home," a method by which Krebs' inner world, his nausea, is revealed through a careful selection, compilation, and juxtaposition of external events and details. The task to which the adaptors of "Soldier's Home" have addressed themselves is the visualization of the exteriors verbalized by Hemingway both in narrative revelations and in dramatic scene. Toward this end, the Soldier's Home filmmakers have adapted the narrative structure of the original for the screen by dramatizing Krebs' confrontation with an alien geography and an outmoded system of values. Although the filmmakers have omitted material unnecessary to capturing the essence of the story, rearranged certain elements in the Hemingway structure, and invented characters, dialogue, and scenes for dramatic purposes, Soldier's Home succeeds both as an entertaining film and faithful adaptation precisely because of these changes.

"Soldier's Home" is structured in three main divisions which trace the sequential pattern of events leading to Krebs' nausea. The first section, an expository portrait, summarizes Krebs' experiences during his first month home. Within this first section, the implications of

those experiences are suggested through brief, subtle juxtapositions of contrasting and conflicting exterior details. A dramatized scene follows in which the conflicts suggested in the portrait are given action and dialogue. Dramatic time in this scene occupies only the few minutes during which Krebs gets out of bed, dresses, and eats breakfast. During this moment of decision for Krebs, his mother confronts her son as a symbolic composite of the conflicts outlined in the narrator's earlier portrait. The final paragraph tells how Krebs decides to resolve the conflict.

The American Short Story series' Soldier's Home also follows a climactic sequence of fact and event which brings on Krebs' feeling of nausea. The film captures the conceptually communicated essence of the original's first section through a perceptual mode. Such a strategy necessitates the invention of scenes, characters, and dialogue, an example of the filmed short story's tendency to contain more original than adapted material. In the film, therefore, Krebs becomes alienated from society more gradually because the compressed language of the Hemingway narrative has been recast in dramatized form. Thus, the dramatic line of the plot action in the film occupies considerably more time than in the Hemingway story. The film uses the only dramatized scene in the original nearly intact. A section of this scene has been removed and dramatized elsewhere, and a few minor changes have been made in the sequence which remains. The narrative explanation of Krebs' decision to leave is dramatized largely in cinematic terms.

The opening portrait in the Hemingway story juxtaposes two actual photographs of Krebs, one before and one during the war. These pictures foreshadow the conflict in the plot structure. The first photograph

suggests a young man committed to the conventions of his society: "Krebs went to the war from a Methodist college in Kansas. There is a picture which shows him among his fraternity brothers, all of them wearing exactly the same height and style collar" (p. 224). In the second photograph, however, several details make it clear that Krebs has undergone a considerable change during the war: "There is a picture which shows him on the Rhine with two German girls and another corporal. Krebs and the corporal look too big for their uniforms. The German girls are not beautiful" (p. 224). This second picture concretizes the effect the war has had on Krebs. The yearbook appearance of the first photograph is now quite unlike that associated with the socially conforming college undergraduate. The fact that their female companions are "not beautiful" hints that these girls are not the type with which Krebs' circle of college friends would have associated. The conformity of "the same height and style collar" contrasted with the ill-fitting uniforms worn by the two soldiers suggest that Krebs' commitment to the strict and stolid environment of his fraternity days has been eroded.

Sheldon Grebstein writes that "Hemingway renders different social milieux and their appropriate values or moral qualities by means of a subtle contrast of locales."<sup>11</sup> The film Soldier's Home transforms this technique by opening its story with two juxtaposed cinematic portraits of Krebs before and during the war. Scene one, photographed in sepia, shows the fraternity picture being taken. The shots are cut between the photographer and the group, panning the homogeneous faces in the group and ending on Krebs. Music alternates between ragtime piano music and ominous drumbeats, establishing the film's tone and foreshadowing the conflicts Krebs will face later. Visualization of the second photograph

is reserved for more advantageous use in a later scene. In place of the photograph of Krebs on the Rhine, scene two consists of a compilation of World War I actuality footage of soldiers departing for their overseas destinations, a montage of battle action, and returning soldiers. The juxtaposition of these first two documents foreshadows the contrasting locales which will figure prominently in Krebs' emotions. The compilation then cuts back to Krebs, a satisfied look on his face, riding home on a train as he recalls these experiences. In contrast to the disorienting, cacophonous sound track which accompanies the compilation, no such expressive aural component is heard while Krebs is on the train, suggesting, as the Hemingway narrator states, that Krebs has "done the one thing, the only thing for a man to do, easily and naturally," and that these actions have a "cool, valuable quality" (p. 224) for him. Invention of the compilation scene also serves as an example of how Soldier's Home is faithful to Hemingway in a broad sense. Robert Penn Warren views Hemingway's first American publication of fiction as being "concerned chiefly with scenes of inland American life and a boy's growing awareness of that life in contrast to vivid flashes of the disorder and brutality of the war years."<sup>12</sup> The invention of the compilation scene and its position in the film narrative spatially visualizes this theme dominant in Hemingway's In Our Time.

The redundant voice-over narration in scenes one and three, however, illustrates how a film adaptation can be too faithful to the original. Here The American Short Story commitment to fidelity operates against the film's cinematic quality. In scene one, the voice-over narrator announces that "Krebs went to the war from a Methodist college in Kansas." Although taken directly from the Hemingway story, this is information

which is either obvious from what is seen here or later on, or is unnecessary to conveying the essence of the original. In a few seconds it will become clear that Krebs has fought in the war; it is not important to know his college affiliation; nor is the significance of the photograph more clearly learned through the information that "there is a picture which shows him among his fraternity brothers." The conformity shared by the men in the photograph is visually obvious.

Redundant voice-over narration also punctuates scene three, set at the train station of Krebs' hometown. At this point the viewer is given verbal information about when and from where Krebs has returned, the absence of welcoming committees at this late date, the return of the town "to its usual patterns," the courageous performance of Krebs in battle, and the need of the weary veteran for time "to sort things out." Although this information is given at different places in the story, it is unnecessary for the film to verbalize dates and places. It is visually obvious that no one is on hand to welcome Krebs; it will later be dramatized in great detail that the town has returned to its routine after the war. Scenes one and two have already suggested Krebs' demonstration of courage in combat. Finally, it is a fact made clear throughout the film that Krebs is taking time to determine his place in this now-alien world. The voice-over narrator duplicates modes and therefore interferes with the cinematic element; in so doing, he undermines what the film communicates in the cinematic mode. Sound conservatism is a feature common to film adaptations which aim at faithfulness to their original at any cost. There is an additional cost of these word balloons in Soldier's Home. Hemingway states that he has "tried to eliminate everything unnecessary to conveying experience to the reader so that after he or she has



read something it will become a part of his or her experience and seem actually to have happened."<sup>13</sup> Ironically, this attempt to be faithful to Hemingway's "Soldier's Home," an intrusion of prose on the cinematic narrative, results in infidelity to Hemingway's attitude toward his materials.

Krebs' lonely arrival at the train station in the film foreshadows his increasing isolation from the patterned, hometown world to which he has returned. As Krebs slowly walks toward the depot, he passes a WELCOME HOME YANKS banner, which droops limply from a weathered cornice, and remnants of World War I patriotic posters, once a prominent feature of life on the home front. But the propaganda has a different meaning for Krebs as he dispassionately makes his way home, isolated from the "great deal of hysteria" (p. 224) afforded veterans who returned earlier.

The first section of Hemingway's story subtly implies Krebs' isolation and alienation from his family, but the filmmakers have invented a scene which dramatizes Krebs' first dose of the oppressive environment in which he will live for the next month. Jackson Benson describes this as a place which has changed for Krebs, "an atmosphere that he feels is emotionally and intellectually suffocating. The point of the story is not that war has ruined him for normal life; it is, paradoxically, that he has found so-called 'normal life' abnormal and unendurable."<sup>14</sup> The family homecoming dinner scene gives the first clear indication that something in Krebs' psychic makeup has changed. Employing a technique analogous to that of Hemingway's juxtaposition of the simple and the complicated, this scene brings the "cool, valuable quality" of the new Krebs into conflict with the predetermined sentiments required by his family.

Krebs is extremely nervous and withdrawn in this scene, foreshadowing what John McCormick calls "the difference between Krebs' aspiration that his life run smoothly, with no more 'consequences,' and Hemingway's demonstration through inference that Krebs' life is and will continue to be steeped in complexity and necessary consequences."<sup>15</sup> To Krebs, the relatively simple ways of combat conflict with the complicated patterns of family life. As the scene opens in the film, dinner is over and the uniformed Krebs sits looking glumly at his plate. Mr. and Mrs. Krebs and Marge, Krebs' sister, grope for words. The atmosphere is not one of celebration or ease. Krebs lights a cigarette, attempting through what Malcolm Cowley calls "the faithful observance of customs"<sup>16</sup> to insulate himself from the probing, curious eyes of his family. Following several moments of small talk about his son's smoking, Mr. Krebs nervously tells Harold: "We'll get to talk . . . about what you want to be doing. Plenty of time." Harold is made nervous by this statement and replies that he will "need a week or so."

The religious Mrs. Krebs worsens the tense atmosphere by describing her wartime supplicatory activities. Anticipating the final "nausea" scene, Mrs. Krebs folds her hands and raises her eyes, verbalizing religious values about which she will later force Harold to lie: "Let's just be thankful that you're home safe. Let's all give thanks to our dear Lord that you're back home." She lowers her hands and turns to Harold, continuing her after-dinner sermon: "Oh, Harold, we did pray for you. And every Sunday Reverend Nelson made a special. . . ." At this point, Mr. Krebs interrupts, rolling his eyes as if he has heard too many of his wife's religious reports: "Folks, I gotta go on up."

Not eager to be left alone with his mother, Krebs attempts to escape with his father. He walks from the frame, but is pursued by his mother in a tracking shot which suggests her ideological distance from Harold and her effort to recapture the relationship they once had. Capturing the tone of the original is an important criterion for the adaptor, and in Hemingway's "Soldier's Home" the tone is ironic. Daniel Fuchs describes this as "irony as a matter of tone" which "arises out of a sense of loss, a meaninglessness."<sup>17</sup> Ironically, Mrs. Krebs closes the physical gap but prevents an opportunity to bridge the emotional distance by reminding her son of the times "when you used to have those awful winter coughs and I used to bring you up a bowl of hot oatmeal," memories now meaningless to Harold. His only response is a look of extreme discomfort as he turns away from her and says, "Not tomorrow, Mom. I'll want to get up early." As E. M. Halliday states, "The ironic gap between expectation and fulfillment, pretense and fact, intention and action, the message sent and the message received, the way things are thought or ought to be and the way things are--this has been Hemingway's great theme from the beginning."<sup>18</sup> The ironic portrayal of their conflict in this scene is faithful not only to the story but to the mainstream of Hemingway's fiction.

The next scene, in Krebs' room, reinforces the implications of the locales contrasted earlier in the film. Robert Lewis writes that the stories in In Our Time are "better read as a series of place-oriented rather than time-oriented stories. And most of the stories are of dislocations, displacements, landscapes of potential peace invaded by the forces of chaos and destruction. . . . the stories are almost uniformly of good places being disturbed or destroyed."<sup>19</sup> That the former good

place, Krebs' room, has been disturbed is made apparent through a spatial juxtaposition of details in the room and in Krebs' mind, images culled directly from or through suggestions in the story. His sister's worship of him, suggested by a section of the dramatized scene in the story (p. 228) along with a reminder of his homecoming are visualized by a poster that she has placed over his dresser: WELCOME HOME, HAROLD. WE LOVE YOU, MARGIE. Krebs takes the poster down and examines it fondly, then looks on his dresser at the fraternity picture taken in the first scene. As Harold looks at the picture, photographed in a close-up with the poster juxtaposed in the background, the image is cut to a close-up of his face. He looks up as if his memory has been sparked and walks over to a box from which he takes the Rhine photograph described near the beginning of the prose story. Krebs ceremoniously unbuttons and folds his tunic (another ritual) and starts a phonograph. As he smokes a cigarette and listens to the music, the shot match cuts to the tunic being thrown to one of the German girls in the photograph. In this flashback, Harold enters the frame and climbs in bed with the girl. The phonograph music continues as they embrace passionately. This flashback prepares for Krebs' later rejection of the complicated behavior required by American girls who are "not worth the trouble. That was the thing about French and German girls. There was not all this talking. . . . It was simple and you were friends. He thought about France and then began to think about Germany. . . . He did not want to leave Germany" (pp. 226-27). Now back at home, Krebs is lost in space, and this scene from Soldier's Home communicates its content in spatial terms as does the Hemingway story. By alternating between visual images of past and present, the film depicts a character who longs for respite from the

bewildering routine of American hometown life. Ironically, home now represents only stifling proprieties and predetermined sentiment, while Europe represents freedom, courage, and potency. All of the "cool, valuable quality" Krebs gained overseas now remains only in memory and a fading photograph.

The next four scenes, which occupy roughly one-fourth of the film, dramatize Krebs' observation of his hometown's return to its pre-war routine, where "Nothing was changed . . . except that the young girls had grown up" (p. 225). Nearly all the details in these scenes are based on only a few brief hints in the Hemingway story, which uses narrative strategies that oppose two worlds. The scene allows Krebs to make what John Killinger calls "the distinction between authentic existence and complicated being."<sup>20</sup> Scene six, set in Krebs' room the next morning, opens with a close-up of the military tunic, neatly folded as if prepared for inspection. The camera pans slowly to a medium close-up of Harold listening to the sounds issuing through an open window. The location cuts to the front porch of the Krebs house from where Harold hears a factory whistle and sees people walking down the sidewalk to work. Harold slowly walks across the porch, looking out at the town. The bars supporting the railing around the porch separate the camera from Krebs, suggesting the threat of entrapment and his isolation from this world, a world made to seem even more alien by the dissonant piano on the sound track. Krebs' placement of the front porch is called for by three narrative statements in the story. In one place, Krebs is "reading on the front porch until he became bored" (p. 225); later, "He sat on the front porch" and "He sat there on the porch reading a book on the war" (p. 227). The point of these repetitive statements is to show Krebs' reluctance to mix in town

life. The film visualizes that reluctance and the strangeness of the town for Krebs.

The next scene in the film begins with Harold walking briskly down the street toward the camera. A telephoto lens is used here, so as Krebs walks fast he appears to make little progress, suggesting that he is both trying to escape from his family and find something but getting nowhere. What Krebs does find is one of the local citizens, who questions him about his war experiences and his plans for the future. This monologue makes Krebs nervous, so he abruptly excuses himself, offending the citizen, who remarks to himself: "I'll be! You'd think he'd killed the Kaiser. Even as a young boy he was always more uppity than anybody else in town." His remarks summarize the attitude of the town towards Krebs as described in the story: "Now the reaction had set in. People seemed to think it was rather ridiculous for Krebs to be getting back so late, years after the war was over" (p. 224).

The patterns to which Krebs' hometown has returned and his reticence to join in them, especially the female sector, are dramatized in scene eight. In this scene, the filmmakers have used visual details to dramatize narrative material in the story; some are literal and other details are invented. In the Hemingway story, Krebs is seen walking downtown in four brief phrases (pp. 225, 26). Scene eight is set downtown, where Krebs sees and reacts to girls described in the Hemingway story:

There were so many good-looking girls. Most of them had their hair cut short. When he went away only little girls wore their hair like that or girls that were fast. They all wore sweaters and shirt waists with round Dutch collars. It was a pattern. He liked to look at them from the front porch as they walked on the other side of the street. He liked to watch them walking under the shade of the trees. He liked their round Dutch collars above their sweaters. He liked their silk stockings and flat shoes. He liked their bobbed hair and the way they walked.

When he was in town their appeal to him was not very strong (pp. 225-26).

Scene eight captures the essence of this passage through Krebs' reaction to the mise-en-scène of his hometown's business district. The scene opens with a close-up of two young girls, in appearance similar to the Hemingway description, looking through a store window toward the camera. The collars they wear follow the description in Hemingway's story--imagery which suggests how all of these characters are yoked to their hometown routine. Ragtime piano music plays off-camera, further establishing mise-en-scène. The picture cuts to behind them as Harold walks up. Teasingly, the girls turn halfway around. But Krebs only smiles and walks away. He continues down the street for a few minutes, then stops in front of a barbershop window. Old friends inside recognize him and encourage him to join them, but again Krebs only smiles and walks away. The next shot is of merchandise on display in a store window, seen from Harold's point of view. The camera tracks, again from Harold's point of view, to an adjacent store window and stops on a medium close-up of a girl's feet. She is outfitting a mannequin. Krebs surveys the girl from feet to head, and the girl turns and smiles at him. Again, Krebs' only response is to smile vacantly and walk away. As he continues down the bustling street, he walks beside a woman pushing a baby carriage and notices his father's car parked in front of his office. Harold sees his father inside discussing business and then admires the details of his father's car. But the conventional work world which has purchased this car is one that Harold will later reject.

Krebs' confrontation with the attitudes of his hometown is more explicitly dramatized in the next scene. The Soldier's Home filmmakers have invented a character for this purpose. His name is Mr. Phillips, a

librarian whose existence in the film is justified by implication in the original. At one point in the story, Harold walks "down town to the library to get a book" (p. 225), and several paragraphs later "he was reading about all the engagements he had been in. It was the most interesting reading he had ever done" (p. 227). Krebs' predilection for reading about the war has afforded the Soldier's Home filmmakers an opportunity to create a character for dramatic purposes while remaining faithful to their source. Phillips embodies all that Krebs can no longer abide. In his early thirties, devoutly scrubbed, and a bit prissy, Phillips was Krebs' "youth group advisor in the lower grades." While Harold wants to read histories on the war, Phillips, who tries "to encourage good reading," recommends "the new Booth Tarkington." But the childhood days of Penrod Schofield are forever gone for Krebs. Phillips then notices the books Harold is checking out and effeminately remarks, "My heavens. All these books about the war. I would have thought you wanted to forget about that. . . . My Lord, the reports we had were absolutely horrible." The librarian then encourages Krebs "to check the social calendar on your way out of the building. We have socials and dances for the young vets so they can catch up with the community activities. This Friday, we're having. . . ." Krebs abruptly excuses himself and escapes from this anathema: Phillips' speech and appearance do not fit Krebs' new idea of what a man should be; he promotes a social world of which Krebs is increasingly distrustful; Krebs' new image of himself is not just one of the "young vets" who live "to catch up with the community activities."

The scene with Phillips also continues the idea of contrasting locales. In the story Krebs "wished there were more maps. He looked forward with a really good feeling to reading all the really good histories



when they would come out with good detail maps. Now he was really learning about the war" (p. 227). In the film, Krebs also attempts to understand his new moral orientation through contrasting geographies, the different terrains of his experience. As Robert Lewis writes, "The traumatic and dispiriting experiences for the heroes tend to occur in man-made environments . . . and therapeutic or enspiriting experiences tend to be set where the marks of humanity are minimal."<sup>21</sup> Troubled by his alienation from the hometown life he once embraced, Krebs tells Phillips that the histories help "make sense out of things that happened. Maps give me a better idea of the campaign." Robert Penn Warren believes that the members of Hemingway's lost generation "are seekers for landscapes and bearings in a terrain for which the maps have been mislaid."<sup>22</sup> In story and film, Krebs' increasing confusion draws him to documents which he thinks will resolve his dilemma.

The scene which follows, set in the Krebs' parlor, has a dual purpose: to continue the idea of contrasting locales as revealed in Harold's interest in maps and to dramatize how Mrs. Krebs "asked him to tell her about the war, but her attention always wandered" (p. 225). Harold, describing the maps, tells her, "I'm beginning to get an idea of where I was in the campaign. Here's where our trenches were. And here's where we had our heaviest losses." But his mother fails to acknowledge her son's role in the war and therefore fails to recognize the new person he has become. She quickly changes the subject: "You know, that Donald boy was killed over there. I had a talk with your father last night, Harold, and he's willing for you to take the car out in the evenings." Mrs. Krebs also expresses her eagerness for Harold to blend in with the hometown routine.

Krebs' last attempt to recapture the "cool, valuable quality" of his combat experience takes place in the next scene, "in the cool dark of the pool room. He loved to play pool" (p. 225). This scene subtly dramatizes a turning point in Krebs' experience back home, for it is in the film's pool room scene that he lies about his activities as a Marine. His lies "were quite unimportant lies and consisted in attributing to himself things other men had seen, done or heard of, and stating as facts certain apocryphal incidents familiar to all soldiers. Even his lies were not sensational at the pool room" (pp. 224-25). As Krebs circles the pool table, making shot after shot, he allows the other players to tell most of the lies for him:

Player One: Hey Harold--I'll bet you didn't have no time for pool in France, did you?

Krebs: [looking disinterested]: Nope. Not much time for pool.

Player One: Hey Harold--was it true you came home last because they kept the best soldiers around? You know, to keep the Krauts in line.

Krebs: [smiles and shoots]

Player Two: Harold? Did you really kill Germans?

Krebs: [continues to play, circling the table, attempting to appear intent on the game with a knowing smile on his face]

Player Two: Face to face? Honest?

Krebs: [continues to play]

Player Two: God! With bayonets?

Krebs: Uh, huh [looking coolly as he shoots]. That's what we went there for. Not to see the Eiffel Tower.

This scene dramatizes what will become for Harold "A distaste for everything that had happened to him in the war [which] set in because of the

lies he had told" (p. 224). These lies told in the pool room form part of the chain of events which bring about Krebs' "nausea in regard to experience that is the result of untruth or exaggeration" which will reach a climax in the final scene with Harold and his mother.

Phillips is one of four characters in the story who are wholly or partly invented to function dramatically as symbolic characters. The other three include Charley Simmons, one of Krebs' high school friends, now a successful businessman; Bill Kenner, another World War I veteran; and Roselle Simmons, Charley's sister, who attempts to re-initiate Harold into the patterns of courtship. Mrs. Krebs' symbolic function in Hemingway's only fully dramatized scene in the story is directly transferred into the film. By retaining the scene with Mrs. Krebs and her son and by inventing symbolic characters, the Soldier's Home filmmakers are faithful to both the method of the original and to Hemingway's method generally. As E. M. Halliday views the use of symbolic characters, "Hemingway may be said to be symbolic in his narrative method: the sense which indicates his typical creation of key characters who are representative on several levels."<sup>23</sup> Like Phillips, Charley Simmons represents many of the values Krebs now finds repugnant. In the fully dramatized scene in the story, Mr. Krebs tells Harold that "Charley Simmons, who is just your age, has a good job and is going to be married. The boys are all settling down; they're all determined to get some where. You can see that boys like Charley Simmons are on their way to being really a credit to the community" (p. 229). As the scene with Krebs and Simmons opens, Harold is seen walking rapidly down a sidewalk toward the camera. The two pool players to whom he related war stories are in pursuit. A telephoto lens is used, making Harold's hurried escape from his "reaction

against the war and against talking about it" seem futile. The two pool players realize that Krebs is not interested in their company, stop, and walk out of the frame. Krebs then abruptly collides with Simmons, tall and bulky, dressed in the attire of a prosperous, older businessman. Simmons asks his old friend if he is "working for your dad at the bank" and offers Harold "a permanent line of work. . . . Selling insurance." Simmons finds this kind of work valuable because "the vets are interested and need the security. They know the future." Less certain about the future, Krebs escapes from this confrontation as Charley calls behind him: "Hey--did you know I'm married now? Remember Edith Hanes? She was our class secretary. . . ." Krebs only turns around and mumbles, "Good luck, Charley," as Simmons continues, now speaking to no one: ". . . and the prettiest girl in town." But Krebs no longer has an interest in news on the home front.

The next scene clarifies the effects of Harold's recent experiences in his hometown. In contrast to the daylight of the previous scene, it is now quite dark as Harold arrives home. He peers uncomfortably at his family finishing their prayers before dinner, then enters, having avoided his mother's insistence on religious duty. She will later force this issue and cause her son to lie, bringing on his final nausea.

Krebs' reunion with Bill Kenner combines and modifies three separate hints in the Hemingway story. At one point, Krebs "occasionally met another man who had really been a soldier" (p. 225), and later, Krebs does not like girls "when he saw them in the Greek's Ice Cream Parlor" (p. 226). The story's dramatized scene includes a dialogue between Krebs and his sister in which their mutual respect is made apparent (p. 228). It is as if Marge sees her own future personified in her brother and Harold

sees in her the only person he knows not yet irrevocably tainted and confined by the value system he now mistrusts. Earlier in the film, the homecoming dinner scene showed Marge's admiration for her brother through her expression as she watched him at the dinner table. The present scene, set outside the ice cream parlor, dramatizes their mutual attraction. Krebs has made a special trip in the family car to take Marge home. When she sees him, her eyes light up. Later, when Bill Kenner, the invented character, interferes in their plans, Marge is visibly upset and Harold protective. Ironically, Mrs. Krebs, encouraging her son to take an interest in girls, thinks that Harold uses the family car "to take some young girls out for a drive," but the only girl Harold takes out in the car is his sister.

Expansion of the Greek's Ice Cream Parlor scene and the invention of Bill Kenner serve two other major purposes in the film. First, Kenner is the character who causes Krebs to attend a YMCA social function "for the young vets" at which Harold comes into direct conflict with the patterned rules of courtship which he does "not feel the energy or the courage to break into" (p. 225). Second, Kenner functions as another symbolic character: by contrast, he defines and clarifies Krebs' new personality. Nathan Scott notes, that opposed to the stoical heroes (such as Krebs) in Hemingway's fiction, "there are the messy people, the people who have never learned how to behave with decency and dignity, or with a modicum of competence; and there is a large gallery of these anti-heroes in the novels and stories."<sup>24</sup> Kenner functions in the film as a "messy" character who makes possible the dramatization of Krebs' difference from people who merely follow their random impulses. Through the

invention of Kenner, Soldier's Home faithfully draws on more in Hemingway than is in the story alone.

Krebs' "fellow sufferer in geometry and Latin," Kenner appears in flamboyant dress with bohemian dash, sporting a cane with a golden handle. Two teenage girls are in tow, evidence of Kenner's return to his hometown world: "C'mere, my lovelies," commands Kenner, the teenagers obeying him fawningly. Kenner walks with a perceptible limp, caused by "losing a part of your knee on a mine"; his physical wound, therefore, contrasts with Krebs' psychic wound and helps to set Krebs apart from other men and identify him as an individual. To Krebs, Kenner's appearance and manner identify him as all that a true individual is not: he brings only the facade of Europe while he conforms to the patterns of dating required by his hometown. "Pourquoi s'en faire," says Kenner as he manipulates his admirers, his affected manner contrasting with Krebs' naturalness. Kenner takes an interest in Krebs' car and acts as the agent who gets Harold to the YMCA dance: "Look. Let's you and I live it up, my friend. There's a dance at the Y. I might even get us some gen-u-ine cognac."

The first part of the YMCA dance scene visualizes Krebs' new attitude toward girls. In the Hemingway story, Krebs "did not really need a girl. The army had taught him that. It was all right to pose as though you had to have a girl. Nearly everybody did that. But it wasn't true" (p. 226). Scene fifteen opens with a close-up of Charley Simmons and his wife dancing. The camera pulls back to reveal a dance floor filled with other couples. Krebs is seen in the crowd, but he stands spatially isolated and remote from the activities. A medium long shot shows him drinking punch, looking around at the couples dancing. A medium shot

from Harold's point of view shows a group of girls approached unsuccessfully by a young suitor. The next shot, a wide angle of the dance floor, shows Krebs wandering across the floor past Kenner and a girl. As Harold lights a cigarette, Kenner and the girl seem to be talking about him. Krebs walks out of the frame and the girl follows.

She is Roselle Simmons, a character who represents one of the girls who "were too complicated. . . . Vaguely he wanted a girl but he did not want to get into the intrigue and the politics. He did not want to have to do any courting" (p.226). The coy, flirting Roselle walks up to Harold in an adjacent trophy room, fusses with her hair, and tells him he doesn't "seem to be having much fun at all. You haven't danced once. I've been spying on you." When Krebs sullenly replies that he is "not up to the steps . . . all the chatter," Roselle offers to give him a dance lesson as her "war effort." The camera has moved closer as this symbolic "lesson" begins, Roselle remarking, "I'll bet you like to command a girl. . . . Command me, Mr. Harold Krebs." The shots alternate between the camera tracking the couple from the waist up and their moving feet, a cinematic trope for the patterned world of courtship with which Krebs is now in intimate contact. As Krebs' hand moves further down on her hip, Roselle asks, "Did you ever dance like this with those foreign women?" "Front, back, front, back, together," she instructs, just before Harold attempts to kiss her. "Don't--I've got to freshen up," she teasingly resists. Impatiently, Krebs makes a more aggressive attempt. Roselle resists again, and again Krebs tries to embrace her. Finally, Roselle shouts, "Don't!" and walks off. She turns around with a vampish look, and Krebs yells, "Come on back here, Roselle!" Now looking rather frightened, Roselle, who earlier told Krebs to "command" her, flees from her

impatient suitor. Invention of this scene and Roselle serve to dramatize Krebs' increasing alienation from the complications of hometown life. Krebs' failure with Roselle also suggests two kinds of rejections found in Hemingway. John Atkins calls these the "animal rejection of all but the merely biological plane of living" and "the sophisticated rejection of all responsibility except that of self-indulgence and having a good time."<sup>25</sup> Roselle helps clarify Krebs' social disfunction in the film.

Kenner's symbolic function as a "messy" character who defines Krebs' individuality is amplified in the next scene. Set in front of Kenner's house after the two veterans have left the dance early, Harold and Kenner sit in the Krebs car, drunk and still drinking. They have a loud argument about the meaning of the war for the individual. This argument dramatizes one of the ways in which Krebs "lost everything" (p. 225). Here the film changes the passage in the original which suggests this scene. In the Hemingway story, Krebs tells other soldiers "that he had been badly, sickeningly frightened all the time" (p. 225). But the film shows how Krebs "lost everything" differently. In the film, it is Kenner alone who admits being frightened and Krebs who accuses Kenner of lying. To Krebs, "Being a good soldier. Doing what you had to do" is worth remembering, not, as Kenner believes, remembering "those damn women . . . no names . . . no faces . . . just those white bodies, smelling like . . . like sweet apricots in those warm hotel rooms." Ironically, Krebs has done the opposite earlier in the film: he lied in the pool room about how he was a good soldier, and he vividly remembered the European women in a flashback. These changes in the original made by the filmmakers show their faithfulness to the Hemingway story precisely



because the film adapts its material to its cinematic purposes. The essence of Krebs' lies is that through them "he lost everything." In the film, Krebs suffers this loss in a more gradual climactic "sequence of fact and event," the penultimate climax occurring in the scene above.

The climactic scene which brings on Krebs' final nausea employs dialogue directly from the story and invents new dialogue analogous to Hemingway's. Sheldon Grebstein writes that the conversations of Hemingway's characters "appear to occupy the same amount of time and space as they would in life, as if they were actually overheard."<sup>26</sup> Hemingway dialogue readily transfers to the screen. Compare, for example, the following dialogue of Mrs. Krebs in prose story and film:

Hemingway

Your father does not want to hamper your freedom. He thinks you should be allowed to drive the car. If you want to take some [of the nice] girls out riding [with you, we are only too pleased]. We want you to enjoy yourself. But [you are] going to have to settle down to work, Harold. Your father doesn't [care] what you start [in] at. All [work is] honorable as he says. [But] [you've got] to make a start at something.

American Short Story

Your father doesn't want to hamper your freedom. He thinks that you should be allowed to drive the car, and if you want to take some young girls out for a drive, that's fine with us --we want you to enjoy yourself. But you're going to have to begin to settle down to work, Harold. Oh, your father doesn't mind what you start out at. All work's honorable as he says. . . . [You're going] to have to start at something.

Only minor dialogue changes in the above passages have been made in the film. Changes in content, such as "nice" girls becoming "young" girls, make little difference. Changes in form, such as the use of contractions, arise largely when actors speak their lines. In retaining Hemingway's dialogue style, the filmmakers use this section of the prose story as a scenario with which to reconstruct the scene in cinematic terms.

In this climactic scene, Mrs. Krebs confronts her son as a composite of all the sources of malaise which have plagued him since his return home. She brings up the subjects of work, marriage, settling down, "being a real credit to the community," and, ultimately, the religious abstractions which Harold can no longer tolerate. She forces her son to lie to her, to admit that he loves her, and then forces him to kneel and pray with her. In the Hemingway story, Krebs' nausea is concretized by an imagistic detail when "Krebs looked at the bacon fat hardening on his plate." Sheldon Grebstein views this imagistic summary as "the mother's no longer digestible moralizing, his own queasy response to it, and his feeling of entrapment in a sticky domesticity. To translate the image literally is to accurately describe the protagonist's situation and state of mind: what was once nourishing remains only in the form of a slightly repulsive residue."<sup>27</sup> In the film, Mrs. Krebs' prayer functions as an aural analogue for this imagistic summary. Krebs, in emotional shambles after his mother reminds him how "I held you next to my heart when you were a tiny baby," promises to "try and be a good boy for you." Her appeal to Harold has worked; for he kneels while she prays: "Dear Heavenly Father! We thank thee for thy watch, care, and guidance over our son and your son, Harold. We thank thee especially for thy care of him on the foreign fields of battle, and we are grateful to you for having brought him home to us safe and sound." When asked to pray himself, however, Krebs cannot, so his mother continues her own prayer.

The imagistic function of Mrs. Krebs' praying is made clear in the next scenes. Harold is packing his suitcase, including in it a battle medal, while off-camera Mrs. Krebs continues: "We pray now, that you will continue to guide and direct him as decides what use to make of his

life." Back at the train station in the next scene, Harold walks alone across the platform carrying his suitcase as the off-camera prayer gradually fades out: ". . . Dear Father, to find the right path as he learns to settle down. Please, dear Father, be with him every day. . . ." Superimposition of the prayer simultaneously reveals the cause of Krebs' final nausea and what he decides to do about it. Unfortunately, the voice-over narrator again chimes in, offering a redundant verbal explanation.

In spite of the occasional over-literalism in the use of voice-over, The American Short Story film Soldier's Home is inventive, faithful to Hemingway, and effective as cinema. When characters and scenes needed in the film did not exist in Hemingway's story, the filmmakers invented them. These inventions are at the same time faithful to the story itself and to other stories and techniques in Hemingway's fiction. This new material, combined with material which is brought to the screen directly from the prose story, creates entertaining and effective cinema. Film and fidelity operate to mutual benefit in Soldier's Home.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>"Hemingway Filmography," in Fitzgerald-Hemingway Annual (Detroit: Gale Research, 1977), p. 219.

<sup>2</sup>"Hemingway Into Film," Saturday Review, 29 July 1961, p. 33.

<sup>3</sup>"Death in the Matinée: The Film Endings of Hemingway's Fiction," Literature/Film Quarterly, 2 (1974), 21.

<sup>4</sup>"Short Stories: Wonderfully Loving Transpositions," Humanities Newsletter for the National Endowment for the Humanities, 7 (April 1977), 3.

<sup>5</sup>"Hemingway Into Film," p. 34.

<sup>6</sup>Hemingway: The Inward Terrain (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 1968), p. 41.

<sup>7</sup>Death in the Afternoon (New York: Scribner's, 1932), p. 2.

<sup>8</sup>The Inward Terrain, p. 3.

<sup>9</sup>Hemingway: The Writer as Artist, 4th ed. (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1972), p. 54.

<sup>10</sup>"A Tragedy of Craftsmanship," in Ernest Hemingway: The Man and His Work, ed. John K. M. McCaffrey (New York: Cooper Square, 1969), p. 85.

<sup>11</sup>Hemingway's Craft (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1973), p. 14.

<sup>12</sup>Selected Essays (New York: Random House, 1951), p. 84.

<sup>13</sup>George Plimpton, "An Interview with Ernest Hemingway," The Paris Review, 18 (Spring 1958), 75.

<sup>14</sup>Hemingway: The Writer's Art of Self-Defense (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1969), p. 5.

<sup>15</sup>Fiction as Knowledge: The Modern Post-Romantic Novel (New Brunswick: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1975), p. 113.

<sup>16</sup>"Nightmare and Ritual in Hemingway," in Introduction to The Portable Hemingway, ed. Malcolm Cowley (New York: Viking, 1945), p. iii.

<sup>17</sup>"Ernest Hemingway, Literary Critic," American Literature, 36 (1965), 447.

<sup>18</sup>"Hemingway's Ambiguity: Symbolism and Irony," American Literature, 28 (1956), 15.

<sup>19</sup>"Hemingway's Sense of Place," in Hemingway: In Our Time, ed. Richard Astro and Jackson J. Benson (Corvallis: Oregon State Univ. Press, 1974), p. 136.

<sup>20</sup>Hemingway and the Dead Gods (Lexington: Univ. of Kentucky Press, 1960), p. 33.

<sup>21</sup>"Hemingway's Sense of Place," p. 121.

<sup>22</sup>Selected Essays, p. 81.

<sup>23</sup>"Hemingway's Ambiguity," p. 7.

<sup>24</sup>Ernest Hemingway: A Critical Essay (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Erdmans, 1966), p. 26.

<sup>25</sup>The Art of Ernest Hemingway: His Work and Personality (London: Spring Books, 1964), pp. 160-61.

<sup>26</sup>Hemingway's Craft, p. 99.

<sup>27</sup>Hemingway's Craft, p. 156.

## CHAPTER V

### THE MUSIC SCHOOL: THE PRICE OF FIDELITY

With the limitations inherent in adapting fiction to the cinema, the decision to include John Updike's "The Music School" (1964)\* as an American Short Story film is a curious one. Even Joyce Markle, who writes in the Dell text which accompanies the film series, admits that while many of Updike's novels and stories have a "highly cinematic quality" and read like the "scenario for a film," his story "The Music School" is "less obviously cinematic." This story "is a picture of a man's mind. Its scenery is internal, not external." And the protagonist of the story, in describing the music school which his daughter attends, does not give us "one of Updike's familiar detailed descriptions, but an impressionistic sense of Schweigen's experience while he waits there and meditates on the nature of music."<sup>1</sup> Yet as nearly everyone who writes on the subject of film adaptations of literary works points out, film adaptations often face difficult problems when rendering thought into their medium.

The goal of fidelity promised by The American Short Story exacerbates the difficulties faced by the adaptors of "The Music School." How is "The Music School" to be adapted with fidelity if "externalized and

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\*Following the MLA Handbook, 1977, prose short stories are enclosed in quotation marks while film titles are underlined. All references to Updike's story are taken from The American Short Story, ed. Calvin Skaggs (New York: Dell, 1977) and page numbers are cited in the text.

clothed in . . . factual reality . . . dreams and thoughts lose their qualitative properties. They cease being dreams and thoughts"?<sup>2</sup> Are analogous rhetorical techniques which will work together to reveal convincingly the thoughts of Alfred Schweigen available in the physical world of the cinema? If there is such a combination, The Music School filmmakers have not found it. The filmmaker who does not use voice-over narration to reveal the protagonist's inner world must inevitably discard the most characteristic feature of this story, its language. The American Short Story production of The Music School has not discarded the verbal element, but the result is a film whose admirable visual and musical qualities are diluted and dragged down by an intrusive voice-over narrator reading the story on the film's sound track.

The positive qualities of The Music School should not be overlooked, however. Visually, the film is impressive. Schweigen's thoughts concerning changes in the "Church's attitude toward the Eucharistic wafer" (p. 346) are partly rendered in visual terms. The film uses the wafer as a motif, for example. A shot of an elderly man receiving communion is followed by one of a middle-aged nun demonstrating the rituals of communion to a class of young children. A small boy incorrectly begins to chew the wafer and is gently reprimanded by the nun. Another scene visualizes the manufacture of Eucharistic wafers within the Church, complete with machines grinding away on the sound track. Schweigen's "pilgrims" eat secular wafers, and the Lutheran congregation of Schweigen's youth takes communion.

The murder of Schweigen's casual acquaintance, the computer expert, is effectively dramatized using quick cuts which alternate between medium to extreme close-ups of the terrified faces of his family and the head

wound of the murdered man. When the music school itself is seen, one can almost smell the church in which it is located. As Schweigen drives his daughter home after her music lesson, shadows play through the windshield across their faces as they contentedly return home. Schweigen's unwritten novel appears visually in sharply contrasting colors which lend the scene a futuristic appearance. As the hero of the novel walks out of the computer room, the images are kept at the midway point in a dissolve, making the man appear to have emerged from the body of the electronic gear. The church of Schweigen's boyhood is cavernous; sounds of hymn and sermon echo hollowly through the thinly populated sanctuary. The final party scene, attended by a priest, adulterers, and aspiring adulterers, captures the feeling of what Robert Detweiler describes as "how Updike's painfully married people carry on in their dislocated society."<sup>3</sup> In a later scene, quick cuts among the faces of the Priest, the embarrassed woman, and Schweigen communicate the sense of uncertainty followed by resolution as the protagonist perceives it. Most of these visual renditions are linked through repetition in other scenes.

The dominant metaphor of music in the story is carried over effectively into the film.<sup>4</sup> Schweigen metaphorically describes the process of his thoughts in the third part of this five-part story: "Vision, timidly, becomes percussion, percussion becomes music, music becomes emotion, emotion becomes--vision" (p. 348). Music used in the film thematically links his thoughts and helps restructure the story into dramatic action. Schweigen's vision comes when he learns of the change in the communion ritual as described by a young priest. Fragments from the First Bach Suite, played "timidly" by practicing music students, precede and clarify the communion ritual theme. "Percussion" refers to the



news regarding the mysterious murder of Schweigen's friend, the computer expert. A chord cluster accompanies the bullet which crashes through a window, killing the man. When Schweigen describes his thoughts about the music school, "percussion becomes music" as the students falter, then gradually play with more skill. In his description of the unwritten novel about the computer expert, "music becomes emotion." Beethoven's Emperor concerto has already been heard at the dinner party at the house of the murdered computer expert, and electronic fragments of the same piece accompany blinking lights on the computers, gradually building to an electronic rendition of the concerto. This aural-visual montage connects the music of the future with the present. In the fifth part, Schweigen's memory of his unfortunate piece of fiction prompts his return to "vision": "The world is the host; it must be chewed" (p. 351). Isaac Watts' "A Sad Little Tale," also heard at the music school, accompanies this scene, gradually building in tempo and fluency. Of these events, Schweigen admits, "I do not understand the connection, but there seems to be one" (p. 349). Edward Vargo aptly describes the protagonist's problem: "The music of his life is off-key."<sup>5</sup> The blend of disparate scores and dissonant sounds captures this theme.

But it is difficult when viewing The Music School to appreciate this admirable blend of sight and sound. Frank McLaughlin, professor at Farleigh Dickinson University, hints at the crux of the problem in The Music School in a letter to the producers of the series: "After screening The Music School in one large class, the kids were almost stunned into silence . . . the class requested a second screening the following week."<sup>6</sup> Perhaps Updike himself says more than he intends when, after screening the film, he writes the producers, "Thank you,"<sup>7</sup> and for good

reason: Schweigen reads in voice-over all except six lines of Updike's story. In a sense, the film is so faithful it has supplanted the Updike story. But the price of fidelity in The Music School is too high.

In the same letter to the producers of the film, Updike writes, "It seemed to me wonderfully loving transposition into film imagery of the-- I would have thought--almost untranslatable verbal interweave of my rather essayistic story."<sup>8</sup> But what has been translated? There can be no doubt that the verbal content of The Music School is superficially identical to Updike's story: nearly all the words are there and in almost the same order. But when the filmmakers put these same words into another form, the film medium, their content changed. Updike's story is didactic in neither form nor content, but when words are plucked out of one medium and dropped into the other, they become didactic in form, and therefore in content, changing the essential mood and tone of the story.

The filmmakers have attempted to separate form and content. Because only the verbal element can be transferred into the voice-over of the film, it is separated from its original form, thus altering its original content. The tone and mood of a voice-over in film are not the same as the narrative voice in a prose story. To hear Schweigen relate his thoughts in the prose story is to empathize with him; to hear him relate these same thoughts in the film and see him is to dislike this self-centered "pilgrim." The voice-over recitation of his thoughts is too artificial; it comes from outside; it takes place at a different time than the presentness of the physical events on the screen. Margaret Thorp describes the effect of such voice-over narration in film: "The story unrolls, like any other movie, with an effaced narrator until, at some difficult moment, the director feels the need for verbal exposition

and you are startled by the sound of the original autobiographical voice, shattering the illusion of present time, pushing the story back into the past."<sup>9</sup> The Music School views somewhat like an illustrated lecture. Although the sights and sounds of the film reimage the story cinematically, the voice-over intrudes upon and therefore dilutes this search for equivalents. As George Bluestone states, "the film, being a presentational medium . . . cannot have direct access to the power of discursive forms."<sup>10</sup> The occasional word balloons in Soldier's Home have become a zeppelin in The Music School.

The other three stories discussed in this study adapt more readily to the screen than "The Music School," but the films made of them more successfully meet the challenges of transforming fiction to the cinema when both film and fidelity are goals. All appropriately retain or modify the plot structure of their sources. The cinematic structure of "The Displaced Person" transfers to The American Short Story film with only minor alterations. And the film emphasizes the structure of O'Connor's story in the form of slow dissolves, musical transitions, and thematically matching visual imagery. The result is a well-placed film which captures the essence of its source. The filmmakers take Hemingway's skeletal "Soldier's Home" and make it into an entertaining film by restructuring the plot, inventing scenes and characters, and including archival footage that authenticates the historical setting. Each act of adaptation is both inventive and faithful to the original. The Jolly Corner filmmakers expand the construction scene and invent a scene to dramatize and externalize Brydon's thoughts. The symbolic meanings of the house are linked both to one another and to the two main characters through invented mirror imagery. As film adaptations of prose fiction

need characters, the filmmakers maximize Alice's role as confidante. The film falters, however, when attention to her role interrupts Brydon's double confrontation in the climactic scene.

Dialogue adapted in the teleplays and as communicated in gesture and word by The American Short Story actors whisk the viewer into the fictional worlds much as the prose stories do. Fritz Weaver looks, acts, and speaks like the dilettantish character portrayed by James. Salome Jens as his confidante captures the role as James might have staged it. Paul Sparer as Wilkes, the ambitious man of the rising middle class, comes across just as Brydon would have perceived him in the James story. Richard Backus as Krebs speaks much like the "tight-lipped" Hemingway narrator in "Soldier's Home." The actors who portray Mr. Phillips, Bill Kenner, Charley Simmons, and Roselle Simmons all play their roles so as to define Krebs' state of mind. The local color in O'Connor's "The Displaced Person" is carried over into the film by the array of characters who speak and act so convincingly as to transport the viewer into their midst. Again, fidelity to the stories has also worked for the cinematic values of the films.

These three films also capitalize on the setting of their sources. The American Short Story filmmakers' meticulous attention to mise-en-scène as conveyed in the prose stories pays off in terms of both film and fidelity. Soldier's Home captures the period detail of a small town recovering from the trauma of World War I. The use of original locale and authentic detail in the "Commandant's House" lends cinematic credibility to Spencer Brydon's personal trauma as described by James; at the same time, this convincing mise-en-scène ensures an element of entertainment. Set in and around the house where Flannery O'Connor lived and worked,

The Displaced Person captures the texture of life in the rural South following World War II. In all of these films, fidelity to setting operates to filmic advantage.

All three films succeed in externalizing the thoughts of characters in the prose stories. The labyrinthine, subjective world of Spencer Brydon as he confronts his alter ego is not readily available to the eye of the camera. States of mind cease to be states of mind when they exist in the physical world, so the best film can hope to achieve is a representation of that state of mind as it is embodied in action or in some physical object. When the filmmakers invent the character of Wilkes they show the viewer what kind of person Brydon thinks (and fears) he might have been. Brydon's reflections on his past, present, and future also come from James' story to the film through techniques of crosscutting, mirror imagery, and dialogue. The seance externalized Brydon's evolving interest in the supernatural which takes many pages to describe in the story. The cinematic treatment of point of view which clarifies Brydon's detachment from himself so that he can see both haunter and haunted with equal interest is an inventive strategy worthy of both adaptations and films with original scripts. The over-distancing problem in the film's dramatization of the double climax, however, demonstrates how fidelity can obstruct effective filmmaking.

In O'Connor's "The Displaced Person," states of mind are already represented in the physical world in the form of peacocks, graves, newsreels, and survivors of concentration camps. That is why O'Connor's story readily, and at the same time faithfully, transfers to the cinema. The Judge's grave in The Displaced Person externalizes Mrs. McIntyre's memory with her present thoughts. The peacocks and the characters'

reactions to them concretize Christian symbolism as developed in O'Connor's story. While March of Time footage could have further clarified Mrs. Shortley's final vision and its significance, her state of mind is adequately conveyed in the film through dramatic scene.

Hemingway's "Soldier's Home" readily adapts to the screen because the filmmaker is free to invent--he must invent, in fact, to make a film out of a story which contains only sparse hints for a film scenario. Soldier's Home communicates a clear view of Krebs' state of mind as he flees his hometown. The invented characters and scenes in the film are cinematically summarized by transforming the imagistic detail of congealing bacon fat into Mrs. Krebs' off-camera prayer. All of these examples of thought rendition demonstrate that adaptors need not be faithful to the intentions of the writer at the expense of their own artistic achievement.

The cumulative effect of these rhetorical strategies is to bring the tone, mood, and theme of each story into their film adaptations. In The Music School, however, the reverse takes place. This almost purely literal film treatment of Updike's story is not an adaptation at all. Fidelity and film are not compatible in this particular American Short Story effort. Possibly the story requires that a different balance be struck between fidelity to the story being adapted and the language of film. Possibly, too, such a balance is not to be found. Although voice-over narrators can be effective in film, certainly the use of the voice-over narrator is unsatisfactory in The Music School when it performs the duties of cinematic rhetorical strategies which could not be found. The rhetorical strategies in The Jolly Corner, The Displaced Person, and Soldier's Home are analogous to their literary sources; the voice-over

narrator in The Music School represents an attempt to be analogous, but its literalism defeats the search for equivalents. This defeat prevents the tone, mood, and theme of Updike's story from being realized on the screen.

Despite the problems of The Music School, however, the "noble experiment" of The American Short Story in the main achieves its goals commendably. Seldom does one find in film adaptation projects such an ambitious melding of literature and cinema. The producers of the series set high standards which would be difficult to meet for even the array of authorities involved in the project. A second American Short Story series is underway. If the films in this study can serve as a predictor of future success, the new films should admirably combine pedagogy, entertainment, and adaptation in another very usable package.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>"On John Updike and 'The Music School,'" in The American Short Story (New York: Dell, 1977), pp. 391, 392.

<sup>2</sup>George Bluestone, Novels Into Film: The Metamorphosis of Fiction Into Cinema (1957; rpt. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1971), p. 210.

<sup>3</sup>John Updike (New York: Twayne, 1972), p. 119.

<sup>4</sup>I am indebted to Mary Lena Harper for screening The Music School with me and for discussing the uses of music in the film.

<sup>5</sup>Rainstorms and Fire: Ritual in the Novels of John Updike (Port Washington: Kennikat Press, 1973), p. 126.

<sup>6</sup>As quoted in "The Story is Out," Pressbook (Chicago: Perspective Films, n.d.), n. pag.

<sup>7</sup>As quoted in Sally Ferguson, "Short Stories: Wonderfully Loving Transpositions," Humanities Newsletter for the National Endowment for the Humanities, 7 (April 1977), 3.

<sup>8</sup>As quoted in Ferguson, p. 3.

<sup>9</sup>"The Motion Picture and the Novel," American Quarterly, 3 (1951), 197.

<sup>10</sup>Novels Into Film, p. 47.



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## APPENDIX

### A SELECTED GLOSSARY OF FILM TERMS

Camera Angle: The viewpoint from which the camera films subjects; the angle the filmmaker sets up for particular shots.

Dutch Angle: The camera is positioned at any unusual angle. It is often used to express the subjective state of a character or to produce a bizarre or disturbing effect.

High Angle: A shot accomplished by placing the camera noticeably above eye level. Its purpose is often to make the actor appear demure or to place him in a weak or insignificant position.

Low Angle: A shot in which the camera looks up at the subject. Shot noticeably from below eye level, it tends to emphasize the massiveness and importance of the subject.

Subjective: The use of the camera to give the impression that the images seen on the screen represent the field of vision of one of the characters in the film.

Camera Mobility: The ability of the motion picture camera to move, giving the viewer the best, and often a changing, camera perspective.

Dolly: The camera is in motion on a dolly or truck, enabling it to move closer to or farther away from the subject, or to follow the subject as it moves.

Pan: Horizontal movement of the camera.

Crosscutting: A method of interweaving the shots of at least two separate locations, affording parallel action.

Film Syntax: The arrangement, organization, and relationship of frames, shots, scenes, and sequences.

Frame: A single photographic image imprinted on a piece of film.

Scene: A series of shots taken at one basic time and place; one of the basic structural units of film with each scene contributing to the next largest unit of film syntax, the sequence.

Sequence: A structural unit of film using time, location, or other patterns to link together a number of scenes.

Shot: A single, uninterrupted action as recorded by a camera and seen by a viewer.

Flashback: A segment of a film that breaks normal chronological order by shifting directly to time past. Flashbacks may be subjective (show the thoughts and memory of a character) or objective (returning to earlier events to show their relationship to the present).

Mise-En-Scène: The aura emanating from details of setting, scenery, and staging. Because films can generalize only from particulars, filmmakers work hard to include appropriate and significant details and to exclude distracting ones.

Montage: A method of putting shots together in such a way that dissimilar materials are juxtaposed to make a statement. Music, dialogue, and sound may be employed to further comment on the visual element.

Pace: The subjective perception of the relative speed with which film moves or its action progresses. The pace of a film is culturally conditioned, and the psychology of audiences varies not only from country to country but also from generation to generation. Editing, sound, color, camera angle, camera movement, lines, masses,

lighting, shot length, and dramatic content all contribute to the pace of a film.

Time-Transition Montage: A series of shots which, through their transitions, changes in location, or both indicate the passage of time.

Voice-Over: Spoken language not seeming to come from images on the screen. The voice-over occurs in film adaptations in three forms. First, the voice of a character not in the film explains and/or comments on the action. Second, the voice of a character in the film explains and/or comments on the action but that character is not seen during the voice-over. Third, a character in the film explains and/or comments on the action and is seen during the voice-over.

While each of these kinds of voice-over can be an effective device in film adaptations, the voice-over used as a surrogate for adaptational rhetorical strategies which could not be found in other forms is often disappointing and intrusive. See Sound Conservatism.

Rushes: Film prints which are processed through the photographic laboratory within 24 hours of the exposure of the negative. Filmmakers can then study the rushes to evaluate the progress of the film.

Shot: A section of a film that has been exposed without interruption by a single running of the camera.

Close-Up: The camera is very close to the subject, so that when the image is projected most of the screen will be taken up with revealing a face and its expression, a hand, a foot, or some relatively small part of a larger shot.

Establishing: A long shot, usually an exterior shot, which establishes the location of the scene.

Long: A shot in which the object of interest is, or appears to be, far from the camera.

Medium: Showing a person or object at its full size.

Zoom: A shot accomplished with a lens capable of smoothly and continuously changing focal lengths from wide angle to telephoto (zoom in) or from telephoto to wide angle (zoom out).

Sound Conservatism: The use of sound (music, dialogue, narration) which negatively affects the impact of the visual element. This use of sound often begins as an attempt to clarify what the visual element leaves ambiguous, but the overall result is to dilute and to intrude upon what is seen. See Voice-Over.

Transitions: Cinematic devices used to denote a change of time or locale and to connect shots.

Cut: The most abrupt transition from one shot to another. The second immediately obliterates the first.

Dissolve: The end of one shot merges slowly into the next. As the second shot becomes distinct, the first slowly disappears.

Fade: A transitional device in which either an image gradually dims until the viewer sees only a black screen (fade out) or an image slowly emerges from a black screen to a clear and bright picture (fade in). A fade provides a strong break in continuity, usually setting off sequences.

Match Cut: A cut from one shot to another that matches it in theme, subject matter, or graphic content.

VITA

Harris James Elder

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Thesis: FROM LITERATURE TO CINEMA: THE AMERICAN SHORT STORY SERIES

Major Field: English

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, March 31, 1945, the son of Mr. and Mrs. H. J. Elder.

Education: Graduated from Bartlesville College High School, Bartlesville, Oklahoma, in May, 1963; received the Bachelor of Arts degree in English from Oklahoma State University in May, 1968; received the Master of Arts degree in English from Oklahoma State University in July, 1976; enrolled in the doctoral program at Oklahoma State University in 1974; completed requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree at Oklahoma State University in July, 1979.

Professional Experience: Graduate teaching assistant and associate, Department of English, Oklahoma State University, 1973-1978; Instructor of English at North Adams State College, North Adams, Massachusetts, 1978-1979.