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## **The Body as Is: The Copula of the (Cinematic) Body**

### **Abstract**

**This paper examines the body in cinema as a type of copula between the narrative of the film and the act of spectating. The cinematic body is seen as a type of hinge between what is represented (with its narrative force) and the processes of becoming a spectator of a film. Part of the analysis involves a comparison between the semiotic and philosophical ideas of CS Peirce with the works of Freud and Lacan. The paper examines how we might use a combination of these theories to compose a new theory of the cinematic body. Examples are drawn from the films of Malick, and Lynch, and the paper concludes with some of the implications of Bergson and Deleuze for these issues.**

**KEYWORDS: Peirce, Lacan, Body, Cinema, Copula, Spectator**

### **Introduction**

What would it be to shift the idea of a cinematic body (where the corporeal is a part of the various elements of film, located with the *mise-en-scène* and perhaps nowhere else) to one of the body as cinema and cinema as body? To do so is, at the very heart of things, to acknowledge the adoration of the body in, and by, cinema. And yet it is also to reveal two orders of impossibility: the adoration of the body by the cinematic apparatus; and the idea that the cinematic body itself is impossible, at least in any homogenised sense. The first of these – the impossibility yielded up through adoration – comes about in part because cinema’s intent can only be realised via the body. Even in its absent or implied form, the body in a film is so powerful that the spectator conjures it up.<sup>1</sup> The compulsive nature of this appresentation means that cinema is determined continually by a sense of the body, even in those moments of *lacunae*. (And let us remind ourselves that the etymology of adoration is from *orare* –to speak; the body is cinema speaking the impossible).<sup>2</sup> The second impossibility – that of the cinematised body – is so because the body is in a constant state of flux. It refuses representation so that cinema becomes, as it were, one of culture’s

considerations of representability. It is the tension of these two impossibilities based on necessity and refusal that this paper works towards investigating in terms of C.S. Peirce's ideas on Firstness, Thirdness, and iconicity, Freud's concept of the drive, and Lacan's various interjections on the Freudian model.

### **The Body as Red – Peirce and the cinematic moment**

Perhaps we can take some small comfort in a statement once made by Peirce that the greatest compliment he thought ever paid him was that he seemed uncertain of his conclusions. As he put it: "I am a man of whom critics have never found anything good to say... Only once, as far as I remember, in all my lifetime have I experienced the pleasure of praise – not for what it might bring but in itself. That pleasure was beatific; and the praise that conferred it was meant for blame. It was that a critic said of me that I did not seem to be absolutely sure of my own conclusions" (CP 1.8). The comfort is in the fact that conclusions in Peirce are slippery and elusive – they are something not to be confident with. This may well be part of Peirce's attitude towards language and its inadequacies (he once called English 'that pirate lingo', implying at the very least that it is a language of theft, adventure, and to be mistrusted). Perhaps if he saw this as one of the greatest strengths of his work, we should also avoid trying to tie his ideas down to specifics and steadfastness. That said, I would like to propose the following four notes towards some conclusions on iconicity via Peirce:

1. Iconicity is far less about a typology of signs and far more about meaning.
2. That it is only within a sense of the community of users that the icon is made possible (and that theories of spectatorship in film scholarship have prejudiced themselves by not considering this).
3. Iconicity must be read within a sense of representation; and that representation is an unending process. This in turn must be located within Peirce's idea of infinite regress.

4. Cinema's ground, determined through the corporeal, is based on the hypo-icon.

These four points will proceed somewhat to formulating the idea of the body as is; that is, the body as it appears to be, what it actually is (both cinematically speaking and the corporeality of the body in the world), and how it operates as 'is', that is, the copula. The central idea here being that the cinematic body (by which I mean the cinematised body – rendered in and through cinema as a sign) acts as a copula between that which is (the actual body, which includes the spectator, the mass/community of spectators, as well as the implied spectator/position) and that which is rendered as a sign. However, this last part of the equations presents a unique set of problems and issues and will be returned to later. The cinematised body is part of a complex translation process, turning the materiality of the body into a sign, and in doing so asserting a discursive moment. The cinematised body, then, is the hinge between corporeality and the impossible body. Before this can be explored further it is necessary to take stock of what might be termed the cinematic moment and the issuing of the body through Peirce's constructions and articulations. *Issuing* is used here in the double sense of to be made a point of investigation (for example, the issue at hand) and within the military sense, that is to be issued with something.

Given that Peirce appeared to have a continuing fascination, or at the very least a strong preference, for the colour red it seems appropriate to illustrate some of the ways in which we might discuss the issuing of the body in cinema through that colour.<sup>3</sup> Peirce employs the example of red in the opening discussion of Firstness. Given the close attachment of Firstness and icon developed by Peirce, this is particularly apposite here:

Firstness is the mode of being which consists in its subject's being positively such as it is regardless of aught else. That can only be a

possibility. For as long as things do not act upon one another there is no sense or meaning in saying that they have any being, unless it be that they are such in themselves that they may perhaps come into relation with others. The mode of being a *redness*, before anything in the universe was yet red, was nevertheless a positive qualitative possibility. And redness in itself, even it be embodied, is something positive and *sui generis*. That I call Firstness". (The Principles of Phenomenology: CP: 1.25).

The idea of embodiment mentioned here is something we will return to, for the moment it can be held in abeyance. The idea of Firstness is certainly not an easy one to pin down (a true non-conclusive idea of Peirce); elsewhere Peirce gives this succinct definition: "First is the conception of being or existing independent of anything else" (The Architecture of Theories: CP: 6.31).<sup>4</sup>

In a way Peirce seems torn here, for there is an almost Socratic dialogue underpinning what is being said in this short passage from "The Principles of Phenomenology". On the one hand Peirce is arguing for a sort of absoluteness in terms of Firstness (the quality of being positively something), and yet he offers the counter position that this is only ever a possibility, acknowledging this impossibility of something being independent of everything else.<sup>5</sup> Yet Firstness gains its status through the idea of independence – that something is Firstness only when it is seen as having its *eidos* (to keep within this phenomenological frame) derived from itself. It is self-defining because it has *sui generis*. Redness, as Peirce points out elsewhere, is not green for a very simple reason – a reason emerging, curiously, from a context of madness: "But to ask why a quality is as it is, why red is red and not green, would be lunacy. If red were green it would not be red; that is all. And any semblance of sanity the question may have is due to its being not exactly a question about quality, but about the relation between two qualities, though even this is absurd" (CP: 1.20). The key idea here is qualities, but it is very important to note that Peirce also introduces the issue of the double in this moment. Firstness, it would seem, requires both Secondness

and Thirdness to function. (This point about qualities is also significant in terms of reading Peirce's categories of the sign as one embedded in epistemology<sup>6</sup> rather than typology). In this way we are led to the all-important aspect of ground, and it is within the notion of ground that the icon finds its definition. This is something that must be addressed in a moment.

In this way Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness are mapped onto icon, index, and symbol. Given the previously cited definition (see above and note 2), where Firstness is the relation to self, Secondness is the relation of reaction, and Thirdness is a relation through mediation, note how Peirce defines icon (termed here as likeness), index, and symbol in terms of connections:

A regular progression of one, two, three may be remarked in the three orders of signs, Likeness, Index, Symbol. The likeness has no dynamical connection with the object it represents; it simply happens that its qualities resemble those of that object, and excite analogous sensations in the mind for which it is a likeness. But it really stands unconnected with them. The index is physically connected with its object; they make an organic pair. But the interpreting mind has nothing to do with this connection, except remarking it, after it is established. The symbol is connected with its object by virtue of the idea of the symbol-using mind, without which no such connection would exist. (What is a Sign? CP: 2.302)

Of particular interest here is that the icon is figured as having no connection to its object except as those constructed in the mind. This recalls Peirce's famous distinction of the icon when he states that photographs are not iconic, but rather indexical, and the zebra and donkey are iconic because they share the characteristic of obstinacy and not just some physical traits. This is the excitation of "analogous sensations".

The issuing of the body in cinema can be read in these terms of Firstness and the icon. *Issuing* is employed here to denote the delivering up of corporeality in cinema (the emerging out of the condition of cinema) as well as how cinema makes the body a point of discussion – that is, the issue of the body as a cinematic topic. And, to push the polyseme further, the spectator is issued with (as in military parlance) the cinematic body as a type of uniform which unites the disparate groupings of spectatorship. Spectators are issued with gendered bodies, desired and desirous bodies, racially and ethnically inscribed bodies, bodies that are manipulated and tortured, admired and loved, and so on. Thus meaning is derived through this issuing because the body is made to appear meaningful – it has intentionality. Iconicity in these terms is not about how closely matched the cinematic body is to the body as is. That is, as it is experienced in the lifeworld, and as it is positioned and negotiated in the endless discourses we find ourselves subjected to – from the medical to the sexual, to follow a Foucauldian line, or from the psychosomatic to the hysteric, to follow a Freudian one. The iconicity of the cinematic body is derived from the analogous sensations that the spectator creates (along with all the systems of textuality and narrativisation) between his/her body and the cinematic body. (Between the exotic zebra-body of cinema and the everyday donkey-body of the spectator, so to speak). Thus the iconicity of the cinematic body has nothing to do with resemblance. The temptation becomes to see this body as indexical, in terms of actual connections between the filmed/represented body and the body that was filmed, but this would be a difficult position to sustain, not the least because reading the cinematic body as icon provides a far richer model. In a moment we shall consider in more detail the issue of the community of spectators and what role this plays on the development of the cinematic body (as well as how that body is part of the discourse of corporeality in a much wider sense), but for the moment some specific examples will help illustrate this point about iconicity.

In the spirit of Peirce, let us take up the example of ‘red’ bodies, or, more accurately put, the sign of redness as part of the issuing of the cinematic body. I

wish to sidestep some of the more obvious examples of red as a constructed, meaning-directed utterance (such as is found in the red roses of Mendes' *American Beauty*, the psychosomatic coding of sexuality and trauma of redness in Hitchcock's *Marnie*, and the prescient, uncanny red fluids and clothing in Roeg's *Don't Look Now*) and attempt to extract a redness out of analogous sensations. In doing so it is possible to map this idea of the body as is, via Peirce, to Kant's thing-in-itself (perhaps echoed in Peirce's line quoted above, in relation to Firstness 'unless it be that they are such in themselves that they may perhaps come into relation with others' (CP 1.25))<sup>7</sup>. 'Redness' is often presented quite literally in Peirce, even if his motivations are far from such overt gesturing. Interestingly, it is often used to discuss issues of reality and perception, memory and actuality. Recalling that Peirce demands that we hold together both the reality of an object and its psychical reality (a true Freudian line), redness is something that crosses the line between actuality and hallucination. One of the best examples of such a glissading status is to be found in much of the latter cinema of Krzysztof Keieslowski. Note, for example, how the body is problematised in *The Double Life of Veronique* not simply as one of doubled existences and lives (as the film is usually read) but of social reality (very specifically designated within the political climate of Poland) and psychically reality colliding and disturbing one another. Veronique's collapse, like the socio-political collapse, has fundamental realities, but there are also other contestations within the psychical realities. All of this is played out through the body. This body – that of Irene Jacobs – is reinscribed with these same issues in *Three Colours: Red*. This time the doubling effect takes place through the rendering of the character as the one who returns the dog (the personal and specific) as well as the one whose image of her face is blown up to an extraordinary size as a modelling product. In this sense Michelangelo Antonioni provides an antithetical position, for his doubles are almost inevitably derived from absences. Both *L'Avventura* and *Blow Up* are devised around an absent body that becomes the focal point for the central characters. Hitchcock's *Psycho*

has it both ways – Mother is as absent as the body in the bushes in *Blow Up*, and yet as strong a doubled presence as the model's mask in *The Colours: Red*. Just as Peirce will ask us what is the true status of red in the world and in our minds, so Veronique, Anna in *L'Avventura*, and Mother in *Psycho* split the iconicity of the cinematic body to render its fragmentation more overt (corporeally, visually, and narratively speaking).

### **The (narcissistic) intervention of cognizance**

This rendering, and rending, can be seen in Peirce's idea on real and psychically real: "That conclusion to which I find myself driven, struggle against it as I may, I briefly express by saying that the inkstand is a *real* thing. Of course, in being real and external, it does not in the least cease to be a purely psychical product, a generalized percept, like everything of which I can take any sort of cognizance" (CP 3.09). The force of the idea is at least threefold: the convolutions of distinctions between the real and the psychical (the same struggles that underpin a great deal of Freud's theory it should be recalled); the intervention of cognizance in such convolutions does not, nor cannot, act as a type of resolution, rather a reflection of the plenitude; the idea that the real and the psychical vie for ontological status reliant on a seeming binarism, but ultimately are revealed to be part of the same productivity. In some ways Peirce allows us to have it both ways – the inkstand can be *both* real and psychically based and derived. Consider now how Freud constructs the dream-work (or indeed a great many of the manifestations of the unconscious he indicates to us) as something that is both psychical and real. One of the unspoken projects of psychoanalysis is not to differentiate between a reality in itself and with 'out-there-ness' and another embedded within and of questionable status; but precisely to acknowledge the flows, abutments, and tensions between the two 'realities'. Freud's dream and Peirce's inkstand operate in the same manner, but approached from a different angle. The inkstand is real 'first' and then allowed the status of being a pure psychical product (through cognizance); the dream is psychical first and then



given the status of the real (the cognizance here is psychoanalytic). Lacan allows us the opportunity to devise this matter from another perspective, and presents a moment to return to the cinematic.

The 'Schema with two mirrors'<sup>8</sup> is part of Lacan's working through the relations of subjectivity with various apparatus (in particular psychical), in this case the gaze. Part of the agenda relates to the issue of the real image and the virtual image, which in turn become the real and virtual subject. Although it would be hazardous to conflate Lacan's virtual with Peirce's psychical and see them as identical, there is much to be gained by comparing them in terms of subjectivity and meaning.<sup>9</sup> In building up to the Schema Lacan notes the significance of the eye to the subject in the domain of the Imaginary. But the Peircean moment can be conceived in how Lacan articulates a certain part of the relationships under scrutiny: "... the relation between the constitution of reality and the relation with the form of the body" (Lacan 1988: 124). That Lacan wants us to address the body here is important, for it places the moment of subjectivity within the field of the corporeal, and makes narcissism of primary significance. This is part of the way in which Lacan figures narcissism in this context: "First of all, there is, in fact, a narcissism connected with the corporeal image. This image is identical for the entirety of the subject's mechanisms and gives his *Umwelt* its form, in as much he is man and not horse. It makes up the unity of the subject, and we see it projecting itself in a thousand different ways...This initial narcissism is to be found, if you wish, on the level of the real image in my schema, in so far as it makes possible the organisation of the totality of reality into a limited number of performed frameworks" (Lacan 1988: 125). One such performed framework of reality can be seen in Peirce's conception of cognizance as that which refuses to distinguish the ontological status of the sign as a typological act. In other words, this Lacanian management of reality through performed frameworks is also found in Peirce's admission that the sign is both real and imagined.

The sense of doubling is significant here, inescapable we might say. Peirce doubles the inkstand by allowing it two distinct realities at the same moment. (We could argue that for cultural expediency distinctions are made; that sometimes the inkstand *is* more real and sometimes *is* more imagined. This is the convention of defining and escaping madness). This we can trace directly to Lacan's points regarding the link between the Imaginary and the Real; a link that depends on the subject in much the same way as Peirce does with his use of the term cognizance. Lacan argues that his schema "... shows you that the Imaginary and the Real act on the same level" (Lacan 1988: 141 translation modified), which is the level of the body. Furthermore, the image produced in this matrix of body, sign, and Imaginary/Real becomes one of desire because of the insertion of the libidinal drive - what Lacan terms the libidinal investment (Lacan 1988: 141).

What are we to make of the cinematic body in this context? The two versions that have been articulated here are: 1) the iconicity of the body through the analogous sensations (this depends on the spectator's engagement at a certain level of connection with the screen body); 2) the heterogeneous status of the body in terms of reality and psychical reality. The more complex aspect of this second order emerges from the fact that the cinematic body imitates and mimics the spectator's body, whereas the inkstand enjoys its doubled status simply through the intervention of the mind. The cinematic body usually has this libidinal investment, and this is precisely where the strength of the doubling takes place. The two narcissisms Lacan speaks of in terms of the Schema exposes the two narcissisms required for the cinematic body to exist and function. These two narcissisms, I would contend, enable us to disentangle the sign from Peirce's notion of cognizance and the capacity to be real and psychically based at the same time. Lacan states that the first narcissism is connected to the corporeal image, whilst the second narcissism "is identification with the other which, under normal circumstances, enables man to locate precisely his Imaginary and libidinal relation to the world in general (Lacan 1988: 125 translation modified). This, he

goes on to argue, enables the subject to locate him/herself as being in the world. So one is tied to the self as corporeal entity, the second as identification through the Imaginary. Through the two narcissisms the cinematic body, like the inkstand, is both formed and operates in reality and psychically. Desire – and Peirce’s cognizance certainly has libidinal investment – forms a key moment in the formation of identification because it transfers across from the subject to the cultural (and back again). To understand this better we can turn to the idea of community.

Horst Ruthrof gives the following in terms of defining community: “If size is not a crucial factor in determining the role of the community in the production of meaning, what is? The short answer is the guardianship over the dialectic between old and new signs” (Ruthrof 1998: 45). He then maps out the relationship set up by Peirce between community and knowledge, tied together by a “significatory reality”. Implicated in Peirce’s (and Ruthrof’s) notion of community is the sense of reality as it is formed by and through the communal body, sustained by its laws and systems of belief. Of course the ‘significatory’ aspect – the semiosis in effect – does not just enable such reality to be exchanged and represented. At one level communities can only exist through their realities because of the semiotic processes. This goes hand in hand with the guardianship (benevolent or otherwise) of the old and new, which must negotiate the rather tricky terrain of unending production of signs and meanings – that is, Peirce’s notion of the community “without definite limits, and capable of a definite increase in knowledge” (CP 5. 311). Deciding on the status of the inkstand and the cinematic body is part of this guardianship, as both guidance and interdictory rulings against seeing it otherwise. Can we say that the analogous sensations of the icon also fall within this guardianship of the community? In other words, does the community form iconicity? Such questions are positioned within the cinematic here, and in so doing we introduce the idea that spectatorship is a form of community in the sense articulated by Peirce and Ruthrof.

One of the four propositions stated at the beginning of this paper was that it is only within a sense of the community of users that the icon is made possible (and that theories of spectatorship in film scholarship have prejudiced themselves by not considering this). This is more than simply saying that just because a community thinks of something as an icon, so it is (although at some level this must be the case); rather the key aspect here lies in how iconic signs are *allowed* and permitted to be produced and understood as such. What is at the heart of such an issue is not the categorising of signs, or even the production of new signs; rather what is implied in such a question is that a certain order of community may well exist precisely because it forms iconicity. Furthermore, such processes are essentially hermeneutic even if they may appear typological in design. If this is the case then icons are formed in the analogous sensations, dependent on users within the community. To take the idea at an almost literal level, the community in M. Night Shyamalan's *The Village*, and most particularly the guardians in the form of the elders, enable an iconicity of the monstrous. What lies waiting in the woods certainly guards the secret (in this sense it is no different from the folktale tradition), but it also demonstrates how the cinematic body is formed through this reading of the icon. The signifiatory reality of the monstrous nightmare operates within the community, but is no more real than any morality tale; its costume signifiers are hung in a hidden place, to be revealed as flesh and blood through the belief of the group.<sup>10</sup> This is the next order of the body as is, for it is 'as is' within the community of cinematic spectatorship. To illustrate this point I wish to employ two contrasting cinematic modes, the first of these being some examples from the films of Terrance Malick, the second examples from the films of David Lynch.

### **Lost pleasures and the body as is**

The cinematic body as copula operates within this order of guardianship because it establishes and maintains the processes of spectatorship. This hinge is what unites the cinematic body with the spectating body, providing all the points of

connection – from the sensual (that is body driven) to the abstract (anything from the teleological to the spiritual). I wish to bypass the more direct sense of this copula that is inscribed in the body driven genres (such as horror, slasher, pornography), and instead propose that once the body is cinematised it is always read corporeally through the copula. This is part of the guardianship of the film body – it is mapped onto the spectator's own sense of self through the body. It is also part of the attractiveness of the body in cinema, as well as its compulsion for the spectator. This can be demonstrated in any number of ways, depending on the filmic route taken. One film may well show this in a manner completely different from another – there is certainly heterogeneity to this copula. And this is not as contradictory as it may seem. We can speak of this heterogeneity as part of the guardianship, or more correctly as part of the fecund fabric of cinematic textuality that leads to the same result. Malick's cinema puts forward the body in a very particular way, always invested in a relationship to nature. For nature is inescapable to his bodies, and yet these same bodies are so often condemned to abandon it. In *The New World* this is exemplified in the figure of Pocahontas as the body invested within nature, and John Smith as the European who desires such an investment. In this sense Smith is in both spirit and representation remarkably similar to Witt in *The Thin Red Line*. However it would be far too reductionist to see this depiction of nature as some sort of utopian order, posited as an antidote to the travails and violence of humanity. Even when there is conflict of the most brutal kind (the European settlers' murderous mistreatment of the indigenous tribes in *The New World* and the conflict of the Second World War in *The Thin Red Line*) nature is neither mere backdrop nor sanctuary. As the voice-over at the commencement of *The Thin Red Line* points out, there is a source of great conflict in the heart of nature itself.

However the cinematic body in these films is used to show how alienated the non-indigenous body really is from these natural landscapes. (It is, after all, an 'outsider's' voice that describes this nature as having conflict in its heart; a conflict that seems invisible or non-existent to the indigenous people). At the

level of *mise-en-scene* this is shown in shots such as the poetic rendering of the tall grass (also shown in *Days of Heaven* with the wheat fields, but the alienation is of a different order here) as figures move through it. This visual contestation, so cinematic in its scope and range, locates the filmed body as one with the spectator's body as (it) is, for the underpinning signifiatory purpose is alienation. This is a true Peircean icon for the cinematic body becomes iconic for the spectator's own sense of disbelief and disjunction in this unfamiliar natural world order. It is an order born out of Malick's Heideggerian vision of the world where being is contested by its own sense of self. The narrative of *The New World* has profound sympathy, love even, for Pocahontas, and her body remains impervious to the corruption of civilisation. At the very end she remains in touch with the nature in which she is initially located.

Without falling into the trap of auteurism, this process can be seen as part of a community of iconicity that is formulated within Malick's cinema. The copula of this corporeal sign is devised within a certain type of relationship that relies on the signifiatory force of Malick's iconicity of the body in nature. In other words in scenes such as Pocahontas disappearing into the tall grass, Witt, in *The Thin Red Line* swimming through the jungle, and Kit, in *Badlands*, attempting escape in the desert landscape, the body is made iconic through the community of spectators who are invested in the connections through the network of the films. However this iconicity is far from straightforward and operates in the least at two levels. The first of these is based on the spectator's function within the community to make the iconic connections (akin to Peirce's analogous sensations); the second is the cinematic function to connect the spectator's body to that of the screen body. Both are part of the body as copula for the relationships hinge very much on the sorts of investments (psychical and otherwise) that allows cinema to be pleasurable. Within the first order (the community making iconicity) what seems to take place in Malick's films is a connection between the body and nature. A number of different orders of

bodies are devised in these films: those who are a part of nature (Pocahontas); those who desire/crave this status (Witt in *The Thin Red Line*, John Smith in *The New World*, and Kit in *Badlands*); those excluded from it (the mass of others in the film that walk blindly past the natural order); and those who sit on the edges, not quite cultivating it, not quite a part of it (Pocahontas' husband, the soldiers of Witt's platoon, Holly as Kit's slightly bewildered partner). In this typology of signifiers the iconic body is that which forms the relationship with nature. Pocahontas' body becomes iconic of the wind, grass, trees, and so on.

The second order is more difficult to locate within the iconic, and I would suggest that in fact it is a consequence of this iconicity. This means that what is taking place is outside of, or a part from, any sense of identificatory process and can only be seen to be happening when this version of the cinematic body as icon is in operation.<sup>11</sup> Lacan's dictum that the true aim of desire is the Other is apposite here, for the desire of/for the Other is negotiated through the icon. This is part of the attractions of the arts, for they present us with the capacity to engage with the unconscious. The iconic function of the cinematic body operates through the copula so that the spectator can deliberate on their own desires in a context that still allows disguise and repression.

If Malick's cinema presents a type of iconic body in and out of nature and defined through its relationship to the natural order, Lynch's cinema presents a dysfunctional body that nature cannot hold. The example here is *Lost Highway*, but similar work could perhaps be done in terms of some of his other films.<sup>12</sup> A scene worthy of comparison to Malick's estranged bodies in nature is the desert scene where Peter Dayton asks the blond femme fatale, Alice, in the most plaintive of voices: "Why me Alice?" It is the perfect question for a character to ask in a Lynch film, and perhaps an impossible one for a character in a Malick film. Dayton's question is left unanswered, at least in the sense of the verbal, but Alice's sexual response is a type of answer in the Lynchian universe. All questions are tracked back to the fundamental Freudian themes of libidinal and

mortido drives, and Alice's response (recalling that this sequence takes place after a particularly brutal murder) is purely lascivious. This scene is played out in the desert, all ghostly whites from the car headlights that consume the bodies, a seemingly unending landscape of sand and dust, and impossible music in the background.

To describe it as either dream-like or surreal would be disingenuous to the Lynch worldview, for in a way it presents the most real moment of the entire narrative. And nowhere else is this more so the case than within the issuing of the body. The perversion of the cinematic body in Lynch's films is not what they are made to perform, or even the ways in which they are represented, but the idea that this is the body as is in all of its iconic power. This notion of iconic power relates directly to Peirce's notion of analogous sensations, for its textual and spectatorial force is derived from the work of the spectator. And the interplay and slippage between psychic reality and the reality of the Symbolic order found in films such as *Lost Highway* demonstrates the Peircean notion of the inkstand having both external reality and psychical reality. It also illustrates the two narcissisms by disallowing the distinctions between dream and reality. Dayton's investment in Alice (libidinal but certainly inflected with an amatory moment as well) in the desert locates him within her world, hence the ontological shift that takes place. To take up Lacan once more, he argues that the second narcissism formulates the libidinal being: "The subject sees his being in a reflection in relation to the other that is to say in relation to the *Ichideal* (Lacan 1988: 126). But note, this is not simply the spectator observing a number of characters act out this schema; what is revealed in the spectator observing their own two narcissisms within the film. This is what is required to become a cinematic spectator; without it cinema becomes impossible. The corporeal copula in *Lost Highway* relies on the community of users both within the film (the diegetic composition, the textual and narrative consistencies, the inter-relations between characters, and so on) as well as that community of users formed by spectatorship. Perhaps this may be the case in all films and could be



seen as a description of the act of spectating, however certain films, and *Lost Highway* is the exemplar here, appear to hold it as both technique and subject matter. To understand this better we need to turn directly to the idea of the corporeal copula.

### **Thirdness and the drive**

To a certain extent we are dealing with what Henri Bergson aims at with his notion of the 'image', its relationship to the body, and the body as part of the order of the image. As he puts it: "And by 'image' we mean a certain existence which is more than that which the idealist call a *representation*, but less than that which the realist calls a *thing* – an existence placed halfway between the 'thing' and the 'representation'" (Bergson 1991: 9). Of course Bergson continues to develop this in terms of corporeality and memory, but our concern can be located within this notion of the in between-ness of the image and its relationship to the body. To cite Bergson once more: "My body is, then, in the aggregate of the material world, an image which acts like other images, receiving and giving back movement" (Bergson 1991: 18). Recalling that a key aspect of Peirce's definition of Thirdness is the process mediation, there would appear to be some argument for seeing the cinematic body, particularly in terms of the copula, as being that of Thirdness, and hence part of the Symbolic, rather than iconic. The fundamental aspect however is the relationship between independence (Firstness and iconicity) and analogous sensations as mediating processes. This is the activity of the copula – that is, the cinematic body placed halfway between the thing and the representation. Subsequently, it is argued here, the spectator, through the community of users, becomes located in the same space (and thus a Bergsonian image).

A further note is required here. One that suggests that resolution is something to be mistrusted as firmly as Peirce's himself resists conclusions. Gilles Deleuze argues that one of the key difficulties with Peirce's mapping of Thirdness is that he locates it as the end point. This is emerging out of a strong Bergsonian

lineage, so it is easy to see why Deleuze might want to argue the imperative nature of a beyond to Thirdness, especially given the primacy of movement to the Deleuzian argument. It is precisely this notion of movement that leads Deleuze to argue a beyond to the finality of Thirdness: “We could no longer consider Peirce’s Thirdness as a limit of the system of images and signs, because the opsign (or sonsign) set everything off again, from the inside” (Deleuze 1989: 34). Here is the fundamental issue for Deleuze on this point – from the inside – thus suggesting the type of unlimited semiosis that Umberto Eco posits as one of the drivers for the relationship of sign to meaning. From the inside suggests an agitated core in the sign (particularly for the image which, as Deleuze rightly points out, is one of Peirce’s major contributions to the development of semiotics). We may want to take issue with Deleuze’s reading of Thirdness as a conclusive and resolving point, that nothing can go beyond it because everything moves towards it; the implication being that movement, for Peirce, concludes in Thirdness. Peirce’s defence may well have been that the system of signs and sub-signs (from Qualisign to the Dicsign so to speak) that constitute Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness will always negate such a reading. It is understandable that Deleuze will need to emphasise the ongoing flow and slide of the sign in terms of movement (and, one suspects, also of time) but the body as sign as is (the cupola of signness in effect) allows us to reconfigure even Deleuze’s need to imagine Thirdness as the end point.

And so we come to perhaps the most difficult of questions in regards to this issue: if the cinematic body is a copula, what does it act as a hinge between? On the one side must exist the spectator’s body, located within the community of users (and hence the side is also composed of this very community) and occupying the processes and acts articulated by Bergson as between thing and representation. This must also consist, at least in part, of Lacan’s notion of the Symbolic, and thus the circulation of signifiers within a cultural domain. Here they will attain not only meaning and usage, but also the sorts of categorical imperatives that invest them with power and morality. But what is on the other

side if it is not the cinematic body itself? That vast and unending production (and consumption) of sign bodies as movement, and even bodies measuring time? For this, it is argued here, falls within the domain of the copula. The answer lies somewhere in the mix of psychoanalysis and Peirce for it is most closely articulated as the drive in Freudian theory.

The drive, for Freud, is one of the fundamental aspects of the unconscious. Without it there is no libidinal urges, no death drive, no formation of the Superego, and no narcissistic compulsion of the ego. In this sense the drive is power itself; but more than this, the drive is a key component in the linking of the unconscious to its manifestations. It is the drive from and to something as much as it is a psychical function in its own right. It is this linking process that allows us to record a connection between the drive and Peirce's notion of Thirdness. A great deal of the early part of the discussion here focussed on icon and Firstness, but now it is necessary to include Thirdness, for this is where we witness the processes of mediation, particularly in terms of mental (read psychical) acts. These are the two recurring aspects that Peirce foregrounds in terms of Thirdness. A few quotations from a number of Peirce's writings illustrate this: "thirdly comes "thirdness", or the mental or quasi-mental influence of one subject on another relatively to a third." ('Pragmatism', CP 5.469, 1907); "Firstness is the mode of being of that which is such as it is, positively and without reference to anything else. Secondness is the mode of being of that which is such as it is, with respect to a second but regardless of any third. Thirdness is the mode of being of that which is such as it is, in bringing a second and third into relation to each other" (A Letter to Lady Welby, CP 8.328, 1904); "In its genuine form, Thirdness is the triadic relation existing between a sign, its object, and the interpreting thought, itself a sign, considered as constituting the mode of being of a sign." (A Letter to Lady Welby, CP 8.331-332, 1904); "The third is that which is what it is owing to things between which it mediates and which it brings into relation to each other" ('A Guess at the Riddle', CP 1.356, c. 1890).

Thirdness can thus be seen to be established through connectivity and mediation. Its primary function is to allow relations to form, exist, and continue. This suggests a direct lineage to Peirce's concept of the copula which, as Ruthrof argues, is far more than a specific and restricted class of signs: "... it [the copula] is one of the most important elements of all human sense-making operations, from culturally saturated acts to those performed with formal signs. ... Yet the copula is never merely a relation between the subject and predicate or a proposition. As Charles Sanders Peirce put it, 'the essential office of the copula is to express a relation of a general term or terms to the universe'" (Ruthrof 1998: 66-7). If Thirdness and the copula foreground relations at this universal level of meaning production, then where are we to locate the notion of the drive? The answer, it is suggested here, reveals the other side of the body as is in the cinematic field.<sup>13</sup> For this is the location from which the body is invested with a certain type of drive and only becomes possible as a sign through the Peircean action of the copula.

### **Conclusion**

To recall, Freud posits the drive, *Trieb*, through four actions or qualities, *Drang* (thrust), *Quelle* (source), *Objekt* (object) and *Ziel* (aim), and so implying that the trajectory of the drive is from compulsion to satisfaction. Lacan, however, presents us with a remarkable interpretation of this, arguing that such a trajectory is far from clear-cut in Freud's theory. His reading focuses on a number of subtle moments, of which two are particularly apposite here. The first is that the aim of the drive is not always satisfaction (or, put another way, the satisfaction of the drive is not always recorded in the aim – although we must of course be wary of speaking of such satisfactions, for the drive by its very definition is beyond rest). The thrust of the drive may well appear to be towards a specific aim, but it can be satisfied through sublimation. As Lacan states: "... Freud tells us repeatedly that sublimation is also satisfaction of the drive, whereas it is *zielgehemmt*, inhibited as to its aim – it does not attain it.

Sublimation is nonetheless satisfaction of the drive without repression” (Lacan 1986: 165). This mode of satisfaction can be mapped on to the cinematic body as Firstness and desire. At this level the body functions at the very least as one of libidinal exchange and sublimation. The lack of relations in Firstness is what establishes it as the potential aim of the drive; and the way this becomes enacted is through Thirdness, that is the copula of the drive from thrust to aim. What becomes crucial in such a relation-forming set of processes (which includes the rendering of the cinematic body as meaningful) is the object. So the pattern proceeds something along the following lines: the spectator’s drive (via the libidinal, for this is more often the primary process) towards the satisfaction shapes the aim through the object; this is the process of the copula to render the body as sign, forming relations between the body as is (Firstness) to the body as meaningful (Thirdness). In both trajectories the missing element is the object. The object of the drive exists outside of all relations (this must be so because the object is more status than thing, that is a constant state of abstraction) but becomes one of relational force through the cupola. This is the true sense of the body as is – not a cinematic version, not a repository of textualities that construct cultural versions of the body. Rather it is the version of the body as determined by the spectator as his/her body meets all of these other (impossible) bodies. This is ultimately why the body is part of the copula as it forms relations (through Thirdness) in the attempt to satisfy the various drives. These drives, it is argued here, are part of the adoration of the body in and through cinema, in as much as they are part of the articulation of cinema itself.

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<sup>1</sup> A John Ford Western needs no body when the camera pans across a vast, seemingly unending vista of desert and canyons. Even when the establishing shot is done in terms of the first person gaze, as in the opening scenes of *The Searchers*, the seemingly empty landscape always implies a body, somewhere. The body is implicated at every moment by its absence. These sorts of spaces can only make sense if the spectator implicates the body within them, inserts it to make sense of scale and time. Similarly, every unrolling shot of empty space implies the vulnerability of the human body. Technological advancements in telescopes enable us to see much further into the universe – but it is a gaze that is always attached to a body, just as is the case with cinema's versions of space.

<sup>2</sup> Such an etymological shadow recalls much of the cinematic theory of the 1960s and 1970s with the struggles to articulate a language of cinema. The obvious example is Christian Metz, but we also find this idea of cinematic 'speech' in Umberto Eco, Julia Kristeva, and Pier Paolo Pasolini.

<sup>3</sup> Peirce's constant use of red as metaphor, exemplar, and illustration is quite extraordinary. For example, we find it in 'The Principles of Phenomenology' (at least seven times), 'Logic as Semiotic: The Theory of Signs', 'What is a Sign?', 'The Doctrine of Chances, With Later Reflections', 'The General Theory of Probable Inference', 'The Law of Mind', and 'Some Consequences of Four Incapacities'. What are we to make of this? Probably little except that Peirce utilised red as a conceptual example, moving what appears to be something in the world to something more abstract. In this sense it served him well, operating across a range of investigations and topics.

<sup>4</sup> The definition goes on to state: "Second is the conception of being relative to, the conception of reaction with, something else. Third is the conception of mediation, whereby a first and second are brought into relation" (CP 6.31)

<sup>5</sup> Such a definition of being finds strong resonance in Foucault's idea of power/knowledge. When he argues that power can only exist in relations, he effectively adds to Peirce's idea of firstness. And although Peirce never actually argues firstness in terms of power, there are plenty of moments where such a theme is implied.

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<sup>6</sup> Although no doubt Peirce would prefer the term *Erkenntnislehre*, as he indicates in 'Pragmatism in Retrospect: A Last Formulation'.

<sup>7</sup> There is an intriguing line of investigation to be had by comparing Kant's development of the thing-in-itself in *Critique of Practical Reason*, where he proposes that the thing-in-itself is the cause of appearance, with Peirce's ideas on Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness. A sense of this will be considered shortly in terms of Bergson's idea of the body as image.

<sup>8</sup> The Schema with two mirrors, and its companion models, 'The Experiment of the inverted bouquet' and 'Simplified schema of the two mirrors', are presented by Lacan in the 1953-1954 Seminars *Freud's Papers on Technique*. They operate within a context dedicated to the Imaginary, hence their importance for Lacan's interpretation of the imago, self, problematising of the self as agency, and the role of narcissism. The fact that Lacan invests so much of this discussion with issues of the real and the virtual makes it particularly relevant to the matter at hand.

<sup>9</sup> It is interesting that Lacan refers to Freud's own 'metaphors' of the psychic agencies as "representing what takes place in a camera, namely as images, which are either virtual or real, produced through its functioning.... Hence the agencies should be interpreted by means of an optical schema" Lacan 1988: 123).

<sup>10</sup> For an altogether different (read 'unHollywood') version of the disguised beast in the woods see Walerian Borowczyk's *La Bête*. Predatory beasts are revealed to be not what they seem, inverting the order so that the hapless bestial creature is seen as the victim of voracious feminine sexual desire. In Freudian terms the beast in *La Bête* is the masculine hysteria of feminine sexuality, whereas in *The Village* it is a warped version of the Oedipus complex as the father sends the blind daughter into the quest for answers.

<sup>11</sup> Identification is employed here very much within the psychoanalytic sense. It is not, therefore, a spectator's identification with the character; rather it is a psychical investment, quite often made outside of a conscious process. The identification here relies on cinema's capacity to present a moment that is 'relevant' to the unconscious and all of its desires.

<sup>12</sup> I am thinking in particular of *Blue Velvet* of the liminal areas of neither nature nor culture (the gangster's house where Jeffrey Beaumont is taken); of *Mulholland Drive*, which constructs dream-like areas such as the ranch; and *Twin Peaks* where borders are marked by nature.

<sup>13</sup> This idea of the cinematic field has quite specific textuality attached to it; however there seems no reason why these conclusions could not also be applied to other visual fields, such as painting and photography. The case could also be argued that the literary body, the dramatic body, and even the medicalised body could be read in similar ways. Of course such readings would require some fundamental shifts in the analysis of the signifiatory processes.