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STANLEY CAVELL

Knowledge as Transgression: Mostly a Reading of *It Happened One Night*

FOR THE DISCUSSION AMONG THE SYMPOSIASTS of the original version of the following essay, I introduced what I had to say by expressing an awareness of a certain outrageousness in considering, and in asking others to consider, a Hollywood film in the light of the teaching of what has claim to be regarded as the most serious philosophical achievement of the modern age. In part I meant to be contributing to a discussion of limits and their transgressions, an essay that itself embodied a little transgression in its indecorous juxtaposition of subjects. (But you might think that velvet.) I was compelled in any case to include a statement of Kant's teaching both to call to attention the fact that this epochal achievement can be described as exactly a discovery of and about limits and transgressions, and because I felt that Kant's investigation of the idea of human limitations anticipated an ambiguity in the idea (say, as between picturing these limitations as confinements of knowledge and as conditions of knowledge, as made to defeat or to define the human in knowledge and conduct) that was bound to arise repeatedly in our discussions, and that would be unresolvable apart from work as strenuous as Kant's. This feeling seems to me to have been borne out in the event.

I gave three principal reasons for *my* transgression, that is, for courting and expressing a certain outrage. Various participants found them useful in thinking over what I had written and urged me to include a statement of them with my essay.

First, I wished to take the opportunity to acknowledge that philosophy, as I understand it, is indeed outrageous, inherently so. It seeks to disquiet the foundations of our lives and to offer us instead nothing better than itself—and this on the basis of no expert knowledge, of nothing closed to the ordinary human being, once, that is to say, that being lets himself or herself be informed by the process and the ambition of philosophy. Wittgenstein voices the accusation against his work that it “seems to destroy everything interesting, that is, all that is great and important.” He replies, as translated, that what he is “destroying is nothing but houses of cards”—as if this destruction were less important, less devastating than some other, as if we had any other modes of dwelling.¹

Second, I wished to take the opportunity of the form of symposium to raise a question of the limits of the convivial, anyway of the extent to which the experiences and the pleasures of the symposiasts were shareable—a way of test-

ing the limits or the density of what we may call our common cultural inheritance. This issue was focussed for me by the request of several of the symposiasts for a thumbnail sketch of Kant's views against which one unfamiliar with Kant might assess my claims about him in my opening pages. (And to assess echoes in the closing?) Since my pages on Kant are already a thumbnail sketch, I assume what was meant was a preceding sketch, maybe like a short encyclopedia entry. Whatever the value in such a genre, for my purposes it would have none. It would not, for example, put its recipient in a position to assess certain originalities in the way I sketched Kant's vision. (But you might think this some more velvet, or maybe burlap.) A purpose of mine, in any case, was precisely to bring into question the issue of our common cultural inheritance. The request for a (another) thumbnail sketch is an expression of something my sketch, in its juxtaposition with a Hollywood film, itself registers, that Kant is not a part of the common cultural inheritance of American intellectuals. (Perhaps this just means that we are not Germans or Central Europeans.) But if one of the indisputably most important philosophical achievements of the modern era of Western Civilization is not a piece of our inheritance, what is? The ensuing discussion of a Hollywood film might stand in the place of an answer, or as a certain emblem of an answer. It must be an ambiguous place. One ought not to say, for example, that we have films instead of books as our legacy. In the first place, we do have some books (though perhaps not many we share with outsiders); in the second, it is not clear that we do have films in common, or not clear what it is to "have" them; in the third, the idea of "instead of" is undefined. The fact is that you cannot acquire the Kant I know from me, certainly not here and now. Anyway, would this work be worthwhile just for the sake of having something intellectual in common? Whereas a companion fact is that you can acquire from me, or reacquire, a Hollywood film, here and now (if you've seen it recently), along with certain related matters. But would this be something worthwhile having in common?

My juxtaposition of Kant and Capra is meant to suggest that you cannot know the answer to the question of worthwhileness in advance of your own experience, not the worthwhileness of Capra *and* not that of Kant. (Some might feel this means that nothing we stand to inherit is sacred, and further that this just means we are Americans.) I am not, in the case of the Capra, simply counting on our capacity for bringing our wild intelligence to bear on just about anything, say our capacities for exploring or improvisation. What we are to see is the intelligence that a film has *already* brought to bear in its making; and hence perhaps we will think about what improvisation is and about what importance is.

Perhaps we will not, too; which means that my transgressing conjunction of interests will be refused as a courting, and expression, of the outrageous. This would tend to outrage me (because it would strike me as intellectually complacent and neglectful)—to acknowledge which is the third reason for my conjunction here of film and philosophy.

To subject these enterprises and their conjunction to our experience of them—that is, to assess our relation to these enterprises—is a conceptual as much as it is an experiential undertaking; it is a commitment to being guided by our experience but not dictated to by it. I think of this as trusting one's experience. I indicated a moment ago in my quotation from Wittgenstein that philoso-

phy requires the sense or the title of all that is great and important to be given up to experience. If one may think of this as an overcoming of philosophical theory, I should like to stress that the way to overcome theory correctly, philosophically, is to let the object or the work of your interest teach you how to consider it. I would not object to calling this a piece of theoretical advice, as long as it is also called a piece of practical advice. Philosophers will naturally assume that it is one thing, and quite clear how, to let a philosophical work teach you how to consider it, and another thing, and quite obscure how or why, to let a film teach you this. I believe these are not such different things, but my essay attempts to make it out mostly in the case of a film.

One feature of the essay sets up an appeal to one's experience, or to an active memory of one's experience, more continuous than any of my other pieces of writing about film—I mean its frequent transcription of dialogue.² Apart from a clear memory, or a vivid imagination, of these words as spoken by these actors in those settings, my attention to these words may well seem misplaced or overdone. But this is an epitome of the nature of conversation about film generally, that those who are experiencing again, and expressing, moments of a film are at any time likely to become incomprehensible (in some specific mode, perhaps as enthusiastic to the point of folly) to those who are not experiencing them (again). I am regarding the necessity of this risk in conversing about film as revelatory of the conversation within film—at any rate, within the kind of film under attention here—that words that on one viewing pass without notice, as unnoticeably trivial, on another resonate and declare their implication in a network of significance. These film words thus declare their mimesis of ordinary words, words in daily conversation. A mastery of film writing and film making accordingly requires, for such films, a mastery of this mode of mimesis.³

Trusting one's experience is a rubric an American, or a spiritual American, might give to the empiricism practiced by Emerson and by Thoreau. The moral we might draw from their practice is to educate your experience sufficiently so that it is worthy of trust. The philosophical catch would then be that the education cannot be achieved in advance of the trusting. Hence, Emerson is logically forced to give his best to Whim. Yet, the American inheritance of Kant (and wasn't this in advance of experience?) is essential to making up Transcendentalism, and hence it goes into what makes Emerson Emerson and what makes Thoreau Thoreau.

* * *

If it is inevitable that the human conceive itself in opposition to God; and as debarred from a knowledge of the world as it is in itself; and as chained away, incomprehensibly, maddeningly, from the possibility of a happy world, a peaceable kingdom; then it is inevitable that the human conceive itself as limited. But what is it to conceive this? Let us say it is to take ourselves as finite. Would this be something positive or something negative, something lacking? In either case, it portrays being human as being inherently subject to the fate of transgression, to commandments and prohibitions that are to be obeyed and that therefore *can* be disobeyed.

I have recently published a book in which philosophical skepticism is cast as a wish to transgress the naturalness of human speech. But skepticism is also

described as a peculiarly human prerogative. My subject here shifts the wish to transgression from what might be called the natural to the social plane. Two of the fundamental human properties that human societies have been most anxious to limit are the capacity to relate oneself to the world by knowledge and the capacity to relate oneself to others by marriage. We seem to understand these capacities for relation as constitutive of what we understand by human society, since we attribute to them, if unchecked, the power to destroy the social realm.

If we do not equate human knowledge with the results of science but understand it as the capacity to put one's experience and the world into words, to use language, then the will to knowledge and the will to marriage may be seen to require analogous limitations in order to perform their work of social constitution, limitations that combat their tendencies to privacy or their fantasies of privacy. Concerning marriage, I am invoking Lévi-Strauss's understanding of the barrier to incest as the force necessary to compel that reciprocity and exchange apart from which separate human families cannot create the realm of the social, the public. I shall not claim that this understanding is as clear as one would like, and especially not that it is, as it seems to take itself to be, an alternative to Freud's psychological account. In particular, if there is a *horror* of incest, I do not see that Lévi-Strauss's compulsion to society reaches it. My intuition is merely that any better view of these matters, and of their connection, will have to take up this one. Concerning knowledge or language or naming, I am invoking Wittgenstein's construction and destruction of the possibility of a private language as revealing the barrier to narcissism, facing us with that reciprocity and exchange apart from which separate human individuals cannot acquire the force so much as to name themselves, to create the realm of the private.

This region of issues may seem as abstract and distant from our everyday experience as any theories of anthropology and of philosophy, but they are as close to us as what I have recently claimed to be a genre comprising the best of the Hollywood comedies since the advent of the talkie⁴—or so I will try to show by spending most of my time here reading the earliest of those comedies, Frank Capra's *It Happened One Night*. Before turning to that film, I wish to map out a little the abstractness and the apparent distance of the idea of our lives as shaped by certain reigning intellectual and social barriers. I wish to call to mind certain pictures of the human projects of knowledge and of community blocked out most memorably in Kant's philosophizing, for Kant is the first figure likely to occur to a philosopher who has been asked to think about the subject of limits in human knowing.

The empiricists Locke and Hume also insist upon something each *felt* as limitations of reason. Locke's introduction to his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* explains the motive for his investigation as one of determining, before any particular investigations of nature, or of God, what we can hope to know, what we are humanly equipped to know, to save ourselves fruitless ventures into matters exceeding the limits of our understanding. And in the *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, Hume, through Philo, speaks of our understanding or experience as limited in extent and duration. Both recommend a modesty, or humility, in the exercise of our powers of understanding, suggesting a prudent limitation of our aspirations that will accord better with these powers. But both Locke and Hume rather suggest that if our powers of understanding were en-

larged, we would be in a position to know what we cannot at present know. What Kant undertakes to show is that our present position is in a way worse than that suggests and in a way better than that suggests. It is worse because, although, of course, with “increased” range of experience and greater powers of understanding (and it is important that it is quite unclear what this would mean—new sensations? new concepts? new laws?) we would know *something* more than we know now, we would still never know enough, or not the right sort of thing, to satisfy the philosopher’s dream of perfect knowledge. Philo had said that “our experience, so limited in extent and duration, can never provide us with a significant conjecture concerning the whole of things.” It is as if Kant were saying, “This formulation puts our problem wrongly from the beginning, it is a false picture of the faculty of knowledge altogether.” For “the whole of things” *cannot* be known by human creatures, not because we are limited in the extent of our experience, but, as we might say, because we are limited *to* experience, however extensive. Put it this way: to know the world as a whole, or the world as it is in itself, would require us to have God’s knowledge, to know the world the way we more or less picture God to know the world, with every event and all its possibilities directly present. And this simultaneous, immediate intuition of the world is not merely beyond us in fact or in extent; it is not a matter of having more of something we now have a little of. It is beyond us in principle; human knowledge is not like that. First, because all our knowledge, being a function of experience, is *sequential*; it takes place in time (in history, Hegel will say). Second, because the sequences of experience are categorized in definite ways—in terms of a definite notion of what an object is, of what a cause is—and there is no way to know whether these categories of the understanding are ultimately true of things. All we can say is, “They are ours, it is our world.” But our position is also *better*. Because the discovery of our necessary limitations, our subjection to our experience and our categories, is one of human reason’s greatest discoveries, it is the great discovery of reason about itself. The very facts that from one point of view are to us limitations of human knowledge are from another the necessary conditions of all knowledge; and, therefore, in knowing these conditions once for all, we know once for all the general conditions or specifications or features anything must have in order to become an object of knowledge for us at all. And to know this is a traumatic increase of human knowledge.

Hence, to Hume’s skeptical discovery that we cannot know, for example, that causation holds sway in nature, or that if it does, it will continue, that we know simply that certain experiences in fact follow other experiences, but that there is no necessity here, Kant’s counter is this: the rule of causation and the other rules associated with the categories of the understanding are necessary in the sense that if they did not hold of the things of the world, there would be nothing to understand as a world of things. The categories of the understanding are interpreted by Kant as rules or laws that are imposed upon the material provided to thought by the system of the senses.

I note at once that we already have here a source of dissatisfaction with the more or less unrefined idea—to be found, it seems to me, in Lévi-Strauss’s *Elementary Structures of Kinship*—that culture as distinct from nature is a realm of rules. What we understand as nature is also a realm of rules, that is, a realm, a world. For culture to be achieved, human beings, or rather rational creatures,

must act, as Kant puts it, not merely in accordance with law but in accordance with the concept of law. We must understand ourselves as subject to law, and as the bringers of law. In both our participation in the world of nature and in the world of culture, reason acts as lawgiver, imposing order on our otherwise arbitrary and inconstant sensuous endowment. In each case reason provides our motions and our motives with that necessity and universality apart from which we would have no access to the objective, no idea of a world. (This hardly settles the Kantian question whether Reason is a unity.) In each case two worlds are discovered, and in each case there is between us and one of these worlds a barrier, establishing the condition of the world we normally live in as limited—call this the world of experience or of knowledge, or the public world, the shared world.

Kant's vision seems to tap various sources of our idea of our finitude, from the prohibitions in the Garden of Eden to the overreachers of tragedy to our various vague senses of unbridgeable distance from nature and from others; but his idea of a limitation on human knowledge fixed by the fixed nature of the human being has caused as much perplexity as it has conviction. Is his idea of limitation (whatever the particular limitations he draws) the necessary consequence of his philosophizing, or is it to be accepted rather as a Wittgensteinian "picture," some sort of rigid fantasy of how things must be, itself in need of deciphering?

Some twenty years ago I remarked that Wittgenstein's criticisms of metaphysical speculation in *Philosophical Investigations* are a continuation of Kant's critique of metaphysical speculation,⁵ specifically on three counts: in the emphasis on the "possibilities of phenomena"; in the provision of philosophical diagnosis of philosophical failure; and in the appeal to the idea of limits in this diagnosis. By now the idea of a general relation between Kant and the later Wittgenstein seems to be easily accepted, so perhaps it is worth now specifying some differences. First, there is for Wittgenstein no final systematic form of philosophy in the face of which metaphysical speculation can be brought to a halt. Nor can you always tell by looking, so to speak (looking, perhaps, at the topic of a remark), whether a stretch of thought is metaphysically speculative. You have to try it out. The temptation to metaphysics becomes in Wittgenstein a will to emptiness, to thoughtless thought; and this is something that has to be resisted again and again, because the temptation to speculation, however empty, is as natural to the human creature as its criticism is. Second, the idea that what happens to the philosophic mind when it attempts speculation beyond its means is that it transgresses something we want to call limits, is an idea that cannot as it stands constitute a serious term of criticism for Wittgenstein but must remain merely a "picture," however significant. Kant, however, really does take the mind as *confined* in what it can know, takes it that there are things beyond the things we know, or something systematic about the things we know, that we cannot know, a realm of things-in-themselves, noumenal, open to reason, not phenomenal, not presentable. When Wittgenstein speaks of "bumps that the understanding has got by running its head up against the limits of language," the very obviousness of figurative language here works to suggest that thought is not confined *by* language (and its categories) but confined *to* language. And then we have to go on to ask, testing the picture: Is this really

confinement? Is our freedom checked? From what are we withheld? I do not of course deny the presence of a *sense* of confinement here. On the contrary, I imagine that good answers to the questions I am asking will provide useful expressions of this sense, expressions concerning how we are to apprehend the picture of a metaphysical limit or barrier in our relation to the world and to others.

There is a notable difference in the ways we might grasp Kant's idea, as I put it, of reason as lawgiver, as world-creating, in the realm of the natural and in the realm of the social. In our knowledge of nature we seem to have no choice over whether the laws of our reason apply to it or not. What alternative could there be to the knowledge of nature? Ignorance of nature? But since Kant's problem is not a matter of knowing certain facts or specific physical laws of nature, but rather a matter of establishing the possibility of knowing nature at all, establishing the world of things as such, then ignorance of nature would mean our ignorance of such a thing as a world at all. To choose such ignorance would be like trying to choose to be an animal or an insect. Even that is not radical enough, since animals know something, even a totality of somethings. It would perhaps be expressible as our trying to choose to become a stone. In the case of our social life we *do* have a choice over whether the laws of the moral universe, "objective" moral laws, apply to us; which is to say, a choice over whether to apply them, as is implied in their presenting themselves to us as imperatives, matters, as it were, not fully natural to us. This is as we should expect. There is an alternative to moral goodness—moral evil. Moral evil is not merely a matter of falling short of the dictates of the moral law: our sensuous nature indicates to us that for all we know we always fall short. The matter is rather one of choosing evil, of choosing to thwart the very possibility of the moral life. Kant does not say much about this alternative, but I understand it in the following way. One inflection of the moral law is that its necessity and universality are to be viewed as holding in "the realm of ends," which may be thought of as the perfected human community. This realm is also a world "beyond" the world we inhabit, a noumenal realm, open to reason, standing to reason; but I am not fated to be debarred from it as I am from the realm of things-in-themselves, by my sensuous nature; for the perfected human community *can* be achieved, it may at last be experienced, it is in principle presentable. Yet, there is between me and this realm of reason also something that may present itself as a barrier—the fact that I cannot reach this realm *alone*.

Any teacher of philosophy will have some way of picturing our inaccessibility to the realm of things-in-themselves, say by a circle or a line, readily drawn on the blackboard, outside of which or below which our mental and sensuous faculties cannot penetrate. (Some teachers might draw the same ready diagram year after year for a lifetime, each time with more or less the same sense that our human fate is being inscribed or emblemized. I assume that some of these teachers will be on a good path, some on a bad, depending on their capacities for diagramming, that is, for allegorizing.) But if now I ask myself how I picture the barrier to the realm of ends, I find I draw a blank. Would a good picture be an outline of my body, as of the perimeter of my power? Or ought I rather to try imagining the collection of all persons apart from me, with whom I know I ought to be, but am not, in community? Or is the absence of a picturable

barrier here due rather to my not attributing the limits of community to a set of circumstances (as, for example, the sensuous dimension of human nature) but to a condition of will, and I do not know how to picture the will? But what in particular about the will? If the eventual community of humanity is not merely something close to us that we are falling short of, but something closed to us, something debarred, then its nonexistence is due to our willing against it, to the presence of moral evil. This takes moral evil as the will to exempt oneself, to isolate oneself, from the human community. It is a choice of inhumanity, of monstrosity. Then our inability to picture ourselves as debarred from the social, or as debarring it, our drawing a blank here, may express a horror of this possibility, call it a horror of metaphysical privacy, as though picturelessness were a kind of namelessness. (This choice, or refusal to apply the moral law to ourselves, is not, I think, to be understood as the disobedience in which Paradise is lost. As creatures who have lost an immediate connection with commandedness, we are all disobedient; our obedience is forced, it is imperative, we would exempt ourselves if we could. Thoreau's way of saying this is to describe us as hard-of-hearing. Raskolnikov is not merely disobeying the law in a given case, refusing to universalize his maxim and act for the sake of the law. He might be conceived as attempting to refuse the law as such, to act for the sake of immorality, to become, let us say, unjudgeable. He purifies our wish for inhumanity. Whereas our everyday human, impure disobedience creates not hell but a restive and populous earth.)

Not knowing whether human knowledge and human community require the recognizing or the dismantling of limits; not knowing what it means that these limits are sometimes picturable as a barrier and sometimes not; not knowing whether we are more afraid of being isolated or of being absorbed by our knowledge and by society—these lines of ignorance are the background against which I wish to consider *It Happened One Night*. And most urgently, as may be guessed, I wish to ponder its central figure of the barrier-screen, I daresay the most famous blanket in the history of drama. I am not unaware that some of my readers—even those who would be willing to take up Kant and Capra seriously, or earnestly, in isolation from one another—will not fully credit the possibility that a comic barrier, hardly more than a prop in a traveling salesman joke, can invoke issues of metaphysical isolation and of the possibility of community—*must* invoke them if this film's comedy is to be understood. I still sometimes participate in this doubt, so it is still in part myself whose conviction I seek.

The blanket dividing the space, and falling between the beds, is the man's idea, as the principal pair, for the first of three times we will know about, prepare to share a cabin in an auto camp. The woman is understandably skeptical: "That, I suppose, makes everything all right." He replies that he likes privacy when he retires, that prying eyes annoy him, and goes on at once to situate the blanket allegorically: "Behold the Walls of Jericho. Maybe not as thick as the ones Joshua blew down with his trumpet, but a lot safer. You see, I have no trumpet." Wise in the ways of Hollywood symbolism, as generally obvious as the raising and lowering of a flag, we could already predict that the action of the film will close with the walls tumbling down. But then let us be wise enough, if

we care about this film, to care about the rigors of this symbolism. The question the narrative must ask itself is how to get them to tumble. That this is a question, and what kind of question it is, is declared late in the film when the second blanket is shown unceremoniously pulled down by the suspicious owners of this second auto camp. Of course it is easy to pull it down if you do not know what it is, or care. So an early requirement for its correct tumbling is that the pair come to share a fantasy of what is holding it up.

An immediate complication is insinuated concerning who must use the trumpet. As the man, the wall in place, their spaces ready for the night, prepares to undress, he says: "Do you mind joining the Israelites?"—that is, get over to your side of the blanket. Now anyone who knows enough to refer to the Walls of Jericho—say a Hollywood script writer—knows that the Israelites are the attacking force and that it is they who have the relevant trumpets. Thus the man is repeating his claim that he has no trumpet and is adding that whether the walls come down will be up to whether the right sounds issue from her side of the wall. You may think this is pushing popular biblical study too far, but while it may be most common for audiences to interpret the allegory so that Clark Gable is Joshua and at the end blows the trumpet, it should be considered that we do not *see* this and that, for all we are apprised of, we are free to imagine that it is the woman who is still invited to make the move and who gallantly accepts the invitation. (So why don't we exercise that freedom?) If the trumpet is the man's, then presumably the blanket-wall represents the woman's virginity, or perhaps her resistance, even conceivably her reserve. I shall not deny that these symbolisms are in train here, but I wish to leave it open to the film to provide us with some instruction about what, a third of the way through our century and for a couple of persons not exceedingly young, virginity and resistance and reserve consist in, what the problem is about them.

I would not place such emphasis on the possible ambiguity concerning who blows the trumpet apart from my taking this film as one of a set of Hollywood talkies of the thirties and forties defining a genre I have called "the comedy of remarriage";⁶ for it is an essential feature of that genre, as I conceive it, to leave ambiguous the question whether the man or the woman is the active or the passive partner, whether indeed active and passive are apt characterizations of the difference between male and female, or whether indeed we know satisfactorily how to think about the difference between male and female. This is why I have said that this genre of film rather refuses the distinction, made most usefully for me in the work of Northrop Frye, between Old Comedy and New Comedy, in the former of which the woman is dominant, in the latter, the man. This is also a reason I have also called the genre "the comedy of equality." Before going further into the genre, however, let us notice something else we know about the blanket-barrier from almost the first moment it is put up.

The woman has joined the Israelites, the man finishes changing into his pajamas and gets into his bed, the woman asks him to turn off the light, after which she begins hesitantly to undress. In one camera set-up we watch the blanket-screen with the man as it is rippled and intermittently dented by the soft movements of what we imagine as the woman changing into pajamas in cramped quarters. The thing that was to "make everything all right" by veiling something from sight turns out to inspire as significant an erotic reaction as the

unveiled event would have done. Call this thing the elaboration or substitution of significance, call it the inspiration of significance, the beginning of a credit system. The barrier works, in short, as sexual censorship typically works, whether imposed from outside or from inside. It works—blocking a literal view of the figure, but receiving physical impressions from it, and activating our imagination of that real figure as we watch in the dark—as a movie screen works.

I cannot doubt that the most celebrated Hollywood film of 1934 knows that it is, among other things, parodying the most notorious event of the Hollywood film's political environment in 1934, the acceptance of the motion picture Production Code—the film industry's effort, it said, to avoid external censorship by imposing an internal censorship.⁷ (Some avoidance; some originality.) The question posed by the parody may be formulated this way: If the film screen works like a kind of censoring, elaborating the effect of what it covers, how will you censor *that*?

Now we must start asking specifically what there is between just these two people that just this mode of censoring or elaboration is constructed between them. And for this a further elaboration of certain features of the genre of remarriage comedies will help. In "Pursuits of Happiness" I traced out an emphasis on the father-daughter relation that the comedy of remarriage inherits from Shakespearean romance, and I put together with this the absence of the woman's mother. The father's dominating presence is handled most wittily in *The Lady Eve* and most oratorically in *The Philadelphia Story*; but it is given its most pervasive handling in *It Happened One Night*. The entire narrative can be seen as summarized in the first of the newspaper headlines that punctuate it: Ellie Andrews Escapes Father. And throughout her escapades with Clark Gable, Claudette Colbert is treated by him as a child, as his child, whose money he confiscates and then doles back on allowance, whom he mostly calls "Brat," and to whom he is forever delivering lectures on the proper way to do things, like piggyback or hitchhike. After his first lecture, on the proper method of dunking doughnuts, she even says, "Thanks, Professor," a title more memorably harped on in *The Philadelphia Story*. In the genre of remarriage the man's lecturing indicates that an essential goal of the narrative is the education of the woman, where her education turns out to mean her acknowledgment of her desire, and this in turn may be conceived of as her creation, her emergence, at any rate, as an autonomous human being ("Somebody that's real," the man will say, half out of a dream-state, at the climax of the film, "somebody that's alive. They don't come that way any more.").

But perhaps I should justify including this film under the genre of remarriage at all, since while it is true that a later newspaper headline satisfyingly declares Ellen Andrews Remarries Today, what the film—or the newspaper—thinks it means is not that she is to marry the real object of her desire again. I might say that what a film, or any work, thinks it means—or what one might at first think it thinks it means—is not to be taken as final. I might, again, say that the matter of remarriage is only one of an open set of features shared by this genre of comedy and that the absence of that one feature may in a given instance be compensated for by the presence of other features. Most pointedly, here, a

film that opens (virtually) with the following exchange between a daughter and her father—

ELLIE. Can't you get it through your head that King Westley and I are married? Definitely, legally, actually married. It's over. It's finished. There's not a thing you can do about it. I'm over twenty-one, and so is he.

ANDREWS. Would it interest you to know that while you've been on board, I've been making arrangements to have your marriage annulled?

—by that fact alone has a claim in my book to be called a comedy of remarriage, because a central claim of mine about the genre is that it shifts emphasis away from the normal question of comedy, whether a young pair will get married, onto the question whether the pair will get and stay divorced, thus prompting philosophical discussions of the nature of marriage. We might accordingly say here that the issue of remarriage is present but displaced. (Is there a reason this film opens on a yacht, beyond the obvious economy in establishing a setting of luxury? A boat is a good place for a father to confine a daughter without brutality, as, say, by locking her in a tower; and a ship's captain is empowered to perform a marriage ceremony but not to grant a divorce—as if the latter had not the same urgency. Yet, at the end the father-captain will perform a kind of divorce ceremony [called buying someone off], and it is declared to be urgent.)

The idea of displacement seems to me right as far as it goes, but it does not explain how the issue gets displaced onto just this pair, what it is about them that invites it. It feels at the end as if they are marrying again, and not merely because of the plain fact, significant as it is, that the wedding night is shown to be set in yet another auto camp—which thus repeats two of the three nights they have already spent together—but specifically because what we have been shown in the previous auto camps is something like their marriage. We know of course that they have not been legally, actually married, but we also know that those things do not always constitute marriage, and we may freely wonder what does. Our genre is meant to have us wonder. The opening exchange between daughter and father, leading up to the response about annulment just quoted, had gone as follows.

ELLIE. I'm not going to eat a thing until you let me off this boat.

ANDREWS. Aw, come now, Ellie. You know I'll have my way.

ELLIE. Not this time you won't. I'm already married to him.

ANDREWS. But you're never going to live under the same roof with him. Now I'll see to that.

As if living under the same roof were the consummation apart from which a marriage may be annulled. The night of the second auto camp, which succeeds the night in the hay, followed by a whole day of walking and hitchhiking and giving a thief a black eye for his car, the pair achieves something like marital familiarity as they prepare for bed, a familiarity heightened by the fact that what they are discussing is the intimate topic of never seeing one another again,

and by the surrealist matter-of-factness with which the man goes about the business of hanging the blanket-wall-screen before each matter-of-factly undresses for bed. They are living under the same roof.

This familiarity is prepared by a former one, equally if oppositely powerful, at the first auto camp, when their breakfast is interrupted by Ellie's father's private detectives and the pair pretend to be a working-class married couple. Or rather, since in taking the cabin together they were already pretending to be man and wife (or pretending so again, since they have *already* already pretended as much, to put the quietus on the loudmouth forcing his attentions on her on the bus), we might say they are giving a charade of marriage. While this also does not achieve marriage, it does achieve the earlier of the familiarities I mentioned, since it makes their pretense of marriage by contrast seem an almost natural estate. The form the marriage charade takes is yet more significant. The pair mean the routine to convince hardened, suspicious observers on the spot that they are a seasoned couple, and their knockdown proof is to bicker and scream at each other. This laugh over the misery of a squalid, routine marriage poses at the same time a puzzle over the almost incessant bickering the pair have engaged in on their own from the instant they meet and dispute a seat on the bus. As if there may be a bickering that is itself a mark, not of bliss exactly, but say of caring. As if a willingness for marriage entails a certain willingness for bickering. This strikes me as a little parable of philosophy, or of philosophical criticism.

The exchanges of comedy span the quarrels of romance and the tirades of matrimony, arguments of desire and of despair. So essential are these arguments to the genre of remarriage that it may be taken above all to pose the problem: What does a happy marriage *sound* like? Since the sound of argument, of wrangling, of verbal battle, is the characteristic sound of these comedies—as if the screen had hardly been able to wait to burst into speech—an essential criterion for membership in that small set of actors who are featured in these films is the ability to bear up under this assault of words, to give as good as you get, where what is good must always, however strong, maintain its good spirits, a test of intellectual as well as of spiritual stamina, of what you might call “ear.”

In this, as in other respects, these comedies illustrate, or materialize, the view of marriage formulated in John Milton's eloquent *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, which I might describe as a defense of marriage in the form of a defense of divorce. It will further my argument to insist on this a little by quoting a summary statement from Chapter 2 of Milton's theological point of departure.

And what [God's] chief end was of creating woman to be joined with man, his own instituting words declare, and are infallible to inform us what is marriage and what is no marriage, unless we can think them set there to no purpose: “It is not good,” saith he, “that man should be alone. I will make him a helpmeet for him” (Genesis 2:18). From which words so plain, less cannot be concluded, nor is by any learned interpreter, than that in God's intention a meet and happy conversation is the chiefest and noblest end of marriage, for we find here no expression so necessarily implying carnal knowledge as this prevention of loneliness to the mind and spirit of man.

(An Existentialist may regard hell as other people, as in Sartre's *No Exit*. But for a sensibility such as Milton's, myself am hell.) A modern reader of this passage is apt to feel that Milton's meaning of conversation in marriage is too remote from what we mean by conversation to apply to the exchanges between the pairs of our comedies. But why? Because Milton means something more by conversation than just talk, because he means a mode of association, a form of life? We might say he means something more like our concept of intercourse, except that our word conversation explicitly, if less generally, also carries the sexual significance as well as the social (as in the legal phrase "criminal conversation"). Contrariwise, Milton does also mean talk, as in the phrase "mute and spiritless mate" from Chapter 3—or at the least he means articulate responsiveness, expressiveness. More important, the films in question recapture the full weight of the concept of conversation, demonstrating why *our* word conversation means what it does, what talk means. In those films talking together is fully and plainly being together, a mode of association, a form of life, and I would like to say that in these films the central pair are learning to speak the same language. (Of course this is learning to hear, to listen, as if loving and honoring were already grasped in the correct or relevant mode of obeying, the promise of which is marriage.) That the language is private or personal or contains privacy is suggested by its being made explicit that they alone know what "the Walls of Jericho" means (though we are privy to its meaning). Their extravagant expressiveness with one another is part of the exhilaration in these films, an experience in turn possible only on the basis of our conviction that each of them is capable of, even craves, privacy, the pleasure of their own company. We understand something like the capacity for their pleasure, under threat by the erotic charge between them, by the demand to forgo one autonomy for another (or one idea of autonomy for another), to cause their hot hostility toward one another.

What this pair does together is less important than the fact that they do whatever it is together, that they know how to spend time together, even that they would rather waste time together than do anything else—except that no time they are together could be wasted. Here is a reason that these relationships strike us as having the quality of friendship, a further factor in their exhilaration for us. Spending time together is not all there is of human life, but it is no less important than the question whether we are to lead this life alone.

In stressing the ascendancy of being together over doing something together, the problem of those narratives requires a setting in which the pair have the leisure to be together, to waste time together. A natural setting is accordingly one of luxury, or as Frye puts it concerning romances generally, a setting for snobs. At least the settings require central characters whose work can be postponed without fear of its loss, or in which the work is precisely the following of events to their conclusions (rather than the gridding of days into, say, the hours of nine to five), as, for example, the work of a newspaper reporter. *Bringing Up Baby* presents the purest example of a relationship in which the pair do next to nothing practical throughout our knowledge of them; what they do is something like play games; you could almost say they merely have fun together, except that it takes the entire course of the film for the man to come to the essential insight about himself that he was throughout having fun. I would like to say

that they achieve purposefulness without purpose. It is because of this purity of action that people sometimes find this the hardest of these films to take.

But is it true of *It Happened One Night* that the pair are really wasting time together? After all, what she is doing is running away, and what he is doing is his job, getting a scoop. I do not wish to answer this merely by saying that it turns out that they are not doing those things really. They may have been doing them and then changed their minds at the last moment. I do not even wish to answer merely that they begin changing their minds almost from the first, say, as a result of the marriage charade. I also wish to ask whether one can accept any such description of their work—as escaping and as scooping—as dictating the way they have throughout behaved toward each other, his fathering and lecturing her, her playfulness and her achievement of humility. I will later dwell on the man's confusion toward the end in leaving the woman asleep and going to sell his scoop. Let me call his confusion, by way of anticipation, a matter of trying to sell the fiction that he has just at the end changed his mind, that this happened just last night, just one night, instead of long ago, and continuously—I mean, sell this to himself.

The recent theme of ambivalence, of the pair's revolving positive and negative charges, together with the theme of activeness and passiveness touched upon before, must also require placement for us in certain texts of Freud—for example, in this juxtaposition from *Civilization and Its Discontents*, footnoting some factors that contribute to civilization's dampening of "the importance of sexuality as a source of pleasurable sensations, that is, as a means of fulfilling the purpose of life":

If we assume it to be a fact that each individual has both male and female desires which need satisfaction in his [or her?] sexual life, we shall be prepared for the possibility that these needs will not both be gratified on the same object, and that they will interfere with each other, if they cannot be kept apart so that each impulse flows into a special channel suited for it. Another difficulty arises from the circumstance that so often a measure of direct aggressiveness is coupled with an erotic relationship, over and above its inherent sadistic components. The love-object does not always view these complications with the degree of understanding and tolerance manifested by the peasant woman who complained that her husband did not love her any more, because he had not beaten her for a week.⁸

This last turn of masculine humor, by the way, is taken up precisely as *It Happened One Night* is winding up. The woman's father asks the man whether he loves his daughter (having already seen it proved that he does not love his daughter's money). One of the man's responses is this: "What she needs is a guy that'd take a sock at her once a day whether it was coming to her or not." The father smiles, understanding this as a trustworthy expression of true love; he has found the man after his own heart; someone, as he will put it to his daughter, to make an old man happy.

Before deciding that we have here one more example of a Stone Age he-man, portrayed by a royal member of the species of the Hollywood he-man, and licensed by the director whose sentimentality is just the other face of the fixated split between the masculine and the feminine, let us continue our supposition that this film has something to teach us about our pursuits of happiness.

I think we should be surprised, given a certain conventional view of what Clark Gable is, to find him capable of the sharp and playful conversation our

genre requires. Then we must be prepared for astonishment if we are to perceive the region of this he-man temperament called upon in the breakfast sequence that prepares the staging of the marriage charade that first morning after the first night in an auto camp. He has walked into the cabin with a full grocery bag, tossed over to her, still in bed, a package that turns out to contain a toothbrush, gruffly ordered her to get out of bed and to take a shower and get dressed because breakfast will be ready in no time, given her his robe and slippers to wear, and he turns to preparing a meal; he has already, it emerges, pressed her dress. Gable is being parental, and he's so good at it that you don't know whether to consider that the paternal or the maternal side of his character predominates. One would like to say, in view of the representations he has made to be married to her, that he is being a husband who understands that role as a classical commitment to being both father and mother to the woman, except that his behavior so far seems produced not by a response to her but by some conception he has of himself. The revelation of his nurturant side is matched by the revelation of her appreciation of it, neither resenting it nor taking it for granted.

A major thematic development is underway, based on food. Here are the opening words of the film, preceding the initial interview quoted earlier between father and daughter.

- ANDREWS: On a hunger strike, eh? How long has this been going on?
- CAPTAIN: She hasn't had anything yesterday or today.
- ANDREWS: Send her meals up to her regularly?
- CAPTAIN: Yes, sir.
- ANDREWS: Well, why don't you jam it down her throat?
- CAPTAIN: Well, it's not as simple as all that, Mr. Andrews.
- ANDREWS: Ah, I'll talk to her myself. Have some food brought up to her.
- CAPTAIN: Yes, sir.

And then the father's object during the ensuing interview is to get his daughter to accept food from him; he even tries to feed her, but she responds as though he is trying to jam something down her throat; and when she deliberately knocks to the floor the tray of food he has had sent up, he slaps her, upon which she runs from the cabin and dives from the yacht to escape him. The angry refusal of food is thus directly established as an angry, intimate refusal of love, of parental protection; the appreciative acceptance of food in the auto camp cabin asserts itself as the acceptance of that intimacy. This relation has also been prepared earlier by the man's having denied food to her on the bus. It occurs just after he has moved out the flirt by claiming to be her husband. Colbert orders a box of chocolates from a vendor on the bus and Gable sends the boy away. He explains this husbandly act by saying that she can't afford chocolates and telling her that from now on she's on a budget; but the implication is clear enough that he is instructing her not merely in what is worth spending but in what is worth

eating, say in what is worth consummation. (And in what manner what is worth consuming is worth consuming—recall the lecture on doughnut dunking.)

The next night, in the field, she complains of hunger, and when later the man, after disappearing, returns with a bunch of carrots, she refuses them, saying she's too scared to be hungry. The next morning he offers them again:

ELLIE: What are you eating?

PETER: Carrots.

ELLIE: Raw?

PETER: Uh-huh. Want one?

ELLIE: No! Why didn't you get me something nicer to eat?

PETER: That's right, I forgot. The idea of offering a raw carrot to an Andrews. Say, you don't think I'm going around panhandling for you, do you? Better have one of these. Best thing in the world for you, carrots.

ELLIE: I hate the horrid things.

He is exasperated by the irrationality of her refusal of good food, perhaps by the return of her past over her recent show of genuine feeling, and perhaps he would like to jam the good food down her pretty throat.

Ellie's refusal here aligns Peter even more directly with the opening position of her father, and it sets up a repetition of the earlier pair of actions toward food: again Peter denies her something to eat, again for a moral reason, and as a result she soon accepts food that he has provided for her. The man giving them a lift has stopped in front of a lunchroom:

DRIVER: How about a bite to eat?

ELLIE: Oh, that would be love—

PETER: No thanks. We're not hungry.

DRIVER: Oh, I see. Young people in love are never hungry.

PETER: No.

. . .

PETER: What were you going to do? Gold-dig that guy for a meal?

ELLIE: Sure I was. No fooling, I'm hungry.

PETER: If you do, I'll break your neck.

When they get out of the car to walk around and stretch their legs, the driver hurries out of the lunchroom and takes off with their belongings. Peter runs after the car. After a dissolve, Ellie is waiting beside the road and Peter shows up in the car alone. As they drive off Peter asks Ellie to take the things out of the pocket of his coat, which she is holding, to see what they might exchange for

gasoline. One thing she finds in the pocket is a carrot, which, after a hesitation, overcoming something, she begins slowly to nibble, hunching down inside herself. Seeing her eating this food of humility, Peter is won to her. He had liked the taste she showed in people (except for the man she got married to, but then as her father had said, she only did that because he told her not to) but he had despised her sense of exemption from the human condition, a sense he calls her money. Eating the carrot is the expression her acceptance of her humanity, of true need—call it the creation of herself as a human being. No doubt he is also won because eating the carrot is an acceptance of him, being an acceptance of food from him. It is also an acceptance of equality with him, since he has been living on that food. (In one discussion of these matters it was pointed out to me that a carrot is a phallic symbol. I confess to feeling sometimes that certain information is after all really better repressed. But in case someone finds himself or herself saddled with this thought of the carrot, I may mention that thirty years further down the road of feature-film making, this region of male nurturance, connected with the attempted creation of a woman, and of a perfected society, found itself under consideration.)⁹

It is pertinent at this stage of his being won that the food is raw (a point insisted upon by her earlier), which means that he has provided it, out of his masculine capacity, but not prepared it, out of his feminine capacity. Out of *which* masculine capacity—fathering or husbanding? I am reminded here of an observation of Margaret Mead, quoted by Lévi-Strauss in *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*:

An Arapesh boy grows his wife. As a father's claim to his child is not that he has begotten it but rather that he has fed it, so also a man's claim to his wife's attention and devotion is not that he has paid a bride-price for her, or that she is legally his property, but that he has actually contributed the food which has become flesh and bone of her body.¹⁰

I adduce this bit of anthropological observation not as a confirmation, in a conventional or professional sense, of what I have been saying. It is just as much the case that what I have provided is confirmation of that observation—or else my experience of the film is inaccurate and improvident.

I quote it rather to help measure a question that is bound sooner or later to make its way to this discussion—namely, whether I am seriously suggesting that Frank Capra is to be understood as intending to draw the distinctions I have invoked between providing and preparing food and the parallels between the woman's two refusals of the offer of food and the pair of denials of food to her, followed by her acceptance of humbler food, and so on. If such a question is asked rhetorically, I might reply that it strikes me as based on a primitive view of who Frank Capra is, or any authentic film director, and a primitive view of what a Hollywood film is, or film generally, and a primitive view of what having an intention is. Or, I might rather say that one would do well to try conceiving of Capra as possessed of as usable a set of intellectual operations as your average primitive mind. Naturally, these impatient replies do not answer questions, raised nonrhetorically, about how to understand what the director of a film is and what his or her intentions are, which, first of all, means to understand what a film is. The primitive mind, the human mind, can mean things

because it has the medium of human culture within which to mean them, and mean itself, where things stand together and stand for one another. The genre of remarriage is a small medium of this sort, wherein distinctions can be drawn and, hence, things intended.

The intentions can get reasonably refined. We are about to consider the sequence in which the crisis of the film occurs on the line “Boy, if I could ever find a girl who’s hungry for those things . . . ,” and I claim that the energy of the emotions we have seen concerning food is concentrated into that idea of hunger. The film can be said to be about what it is people really hunger for, or anyway about the fact that there really is something. (Sometimes, it is not denied, this really is literal food, as in the Depression vignette of a mother on the bus fainting from what her crying child informs us is hunger, and Ellie gives the child the bulk of the money she and Peter have between them. One must have a heart of stone to witness Capra’s virtuosity in pathos without laughing.) And, one way or another, an early exchange as Peter is preparing their beds of straw in the open field may make itself felt as a summary of what the film is about.

ELLIE: I’m awfully hungry.

PETER: Aw, it’s just your imagination.

(Not unworthy of Beckett.) Will it be objected that we can hardly be expected to remember such transient identifications on just one viewing—particularly, I might add, since the style of such films, of film as such, tends to throw lines of significance away, quite as if transience, hence improvisation, were part of the grain of film. But does this assume that films are on the whole *meant* to be viewed just once? Films such as this one are meant to *work* on just one viewing, but that is something else. (It is not another matter, however, because the issue of the transient speaks to what we are to understand as the popular in art.) However, I wish to be reasonable about the question of intention. I earlier quoted a passage that contains the juncture

How about a bite to eat?

Oh, that would be love—

and to that I am willing to say that, if you don’t see in it another announcing of the film’s subject, I will not insist upon it. I might still go on to ask how far one is prepared to go with Freud’s insistence that the life of the mind contains no accidents. If this is modified to say that, in matters native to oneself, one does nothing by accident, then I will simply claim that making Hollywood romances is something native to Frank Capra.

(In trying for a laugh about Capra’s “Depression vignette,” I am not denying that the Depression has a bearing on the appearance of this and our other films. I am rather insisting that these films may themselves be capable of reflecting on what it is that causes them, hence that they may have some bearing, for example, on our experience and understanding of the Depression. I do not find it helps very much to say, as I believe it is common to say, that people who had too little money in the thirties enjoyed watching people who had too much, enabled either to identify with those pleasures or to repudiate them. Even if

these are the ways in which certain films of the period (or of any period) were and are appropriated, and meant to be, it does not say why our films are as they are. And without knowing how to think in detail about how they are, why the specific events in them are as they are, we are not apt to propose much in the way of an explanatory causal process between them and something else. In a film that is in a certain sense about hunger, together with imagination, it may be that we are asked to reflect that the Depression is one of the formative crises of the imagination of America, one of the times we were forced, or permitted, to imagine most fundamentally what it is we want of our society, what we ask of the social as such. Since I think that this is indeed a forming preoccupation of our genre as a whole, I think it will be possible eventually to see that in some sense the Depression has everything to do with its appearance.)

The woman's eating of the carrot closes the sequences of the night in the field and the following day on the road, and prepares for the pair's third night together, their second in an auto camp cabin, which sees the climactic transgression of the blanket-wall-screen barrier.

We have noted the particular familiarity in which the pair have now become a couple, preparing for bed; and I have called attention to the intimacy of their speaking of never seeing one another again. There ensues an exchange of words that we must hear at length. He is in his bed, smoking, thinking. She is sitting on her bed getting undressed and into her pajamas, that is, his pajamas, as on that distant night before last.

ELLIE: Have you ever been in love Peter?

PETER: Me?

ELLIE: Yes, haven't you thought about it at all? Seems to me you could make some girl wonderfully happy.

PETER: Sure I've thought about it. Who hasn't? If I ever met the right sort of a girl, I'd—. Yeah, but where are you going to find her, somebody that's real, somebody that's alive? They don't come that way any more. I've even been sucker enough to make plans. I saw an island in the Pacific once. Never been able to forget it. That's where I'd like to take her. But she'd have to be the sort of girl that'd jump in the surf with me and love it as much as I did. You know, those nights when you and the moon and the water all become one and you feel that you're part of something big and marvelous. Those are the only places to live. Where the stars are so close over your head that you feel you could reach right up and stir them around. Certainly I've been thinking about it. Boy, if I could ever find a girl who's hungry for those things—

And now the crisis. We have cut to close-ups of Ellie two or three times during Peter's speech, and at last we cut to her just coming toward him around the blanket. She pauses, holds on to the blanket's edge, and we reframe to a tighter close-up of her in soft focus, the visual field blurred as if seen through a mist of happiness, or a trance of it. Then she approaches his bedside, falls to her knees, throws her arms around his neck, asks him to take her with him, and declares her love for him. He seems unmoved, paralyzed, and tells her she'd better get

back to her bed. She apologizes, hurriedly retreats back to her side of the barrier, throws herself onto her bed, and sobs. The camera has jumped back as she returned to her side, allowing the blanket to be seen from the edge, dividing the screen frame in half, and depicting the full geography of transgression. It seems, in itself, hardly significant, nothing more than an auto camp cabin. Then, a dissolve from her asleep back to him with his cigarette burnt down conventionally states a lapse of some minutes. He calls out, "Hey, Brat. Did you mean that? Would you really go?" It is late for that question, and he seems stupefied. I understand him as trying to awaken from a trance. He gets up and looks over the barrier to discover that she is asleep, and he hurriedly dresses and leaves, we discover, to sell their story to his old editor. He tells him that he's in a jam and needs a thousand bucks. He says, mysteriously, that it is to tear down the Walls of Jericho. What is going on?

We understand her well enough. The man's recital of his wish for love is something we have seen penetrate her as she follows it; her body expands with the imagination of what he is envisioning; her head arches back as her eyes close; her state is depicted as openly, as theatrically, as Bernini depicts a statue of St. Teresa. She is drawn toward Peter's vision, hence to Peter. (Though someone may rather characterize her the other way around, as being drawn to Peter and hence to his vision. But we have before this had sufficient evidence that she is already drawn to Peter, if this means attracted to him; and what draws her to him has always been something like his vision. The question that remains is what draws her to declare herself. And if this is a matter of asking why she listens to him now, that becomes the question why he speaks now. He speaks of love because she has asked him to. Then why does she ask him now, and why does he answer? It would be an answer to both questions to say that she has accepted the carrot.) The soft focus is a sign of her yielding, that she is tender. The stars in her eyes signal a trance. But are they not the stars present in his words, hence shared, hence objective? It is the man whose behavior is mysterious.

When he becomes aware of her presence, what does he see? Are we to take it that, unlike the case of the woman, the soft focus is something he sees as well as some way in which he sees it? He sees that some vision qualifies her state, that she is entranced, but it is not evident to him what or how she sees. This seems to be what the closer reframing on her means as she rounds the edge of the barrier: since the first framing of her is presented as from Peter's point of view, it follows that the succeeding reframing is exactly not from that point of view, but rather that what it presents is something still private to her (and us). We have to imagine that Peter surmises something of her mood, since the first and second framings of her are not unrelated (which is what the idea of reframing should convey). It is this that leaves him, that turns him, cold to her—say objective—as she throws herself at him. His focus is going hard again. Here is Capra taking on responsibility for the Hollywood device of soft focus, raising for us the ontological question: If soft focus registers a modification of viewing, how is hard focus different? Is it merely one modification among others, or is it privileged to escape modification altogether? Or should we seek to define it as a modification of viewing but nevertheless a privileged one? Gable's shift of mood from soft to hard provides one interpretation of (what seems to be) ordinary

focus, an interpretation of it as cold, or let us say inquisitive. Focus is a necessary condition for viewing film, as is each condition for exposing film. These conditions are no more to be sidestepped in viewing film than the pure forms of sensible intuition (that is, space and time) in *The Critique of Pure Reason*. If we are to find a way to speak of these conditions of viewing film as transcendental, we must equally find a way to speak of them as empirical, for certainly they are only to be discovered empirically, or rather discovered in what I call acts of criticism.

The woman believed she was walking into the man's dream or vision. So she was, and it woke him up, or brought him to. Why? Is it because she is not the figure of his vision or because she is? Both.

That she is the woman of his dreams seems to me specifically announced in his recital of his dream, his expression of it, no more importantly by what he says than by his saying of it to her, in those circumstances. His invocation of "those nights when you and the moon and the water all become one and you feel you're part of something big and marvelous. . . . Where the stars are so close you feel you could reach right up and stir them around" is of something he is wishing for all right, but more directly I take it as something he is recalling, their previous night together, in the open. The transcendentalism of his vision of oneness with the universe is an exact response to the American transcendentalism of Capra's exteriors, a mode of vision inherited from German expressionism, both in the history of Hollywood and in the history of philosophy. (Capra's handling of emotion, or sentiment, what I earlier referred to as his virtuosity of pathos, seems to me rather to bear an Italian stamp—the equivalent, and surely the equal, of Puccini's.) Kant finds that man lives in two worlds, and camera and screen seem an uncanny, unpredictable realization of the human aspiration, or projection, from the one to the other. (I would like film's manifestation of this idea of Kant's to be thought of in connection with my speaking of film as giving to its subjects an inherent self-reflection, a mutual participation of objects and their projections.¹¹)

What happened one night is that the man took the woman to his island. He carries her across a body of water that Capra's camera, in something like soft focus, shows so brilliant with reflected skylight that there seems no horizon, no break between the earth and the heavens, so that you feel you might reach anywhere and stir the stars. And the place he takes her to is as isolated as an island and is home to him, as is shown by his knowing where the carrots are, and they and the moon and the landscape all become one, as movingly a part of something big and marvelous as any expressionist painterly composition by a movie camera can achieve. The way he carries her across the water is emphasized by his lecturing to her to the effect that what they are doing is by no means piggybacking. He is here not treating her, I mean carrying her, as a child, but over his shoulder. If you call this a fireman's carry, then say that it is accordingly a carry of rescue, as of a hardy damsel. And if we shall not refer to it as the style of a caveman, let us at least note that it takes the posture of abduction.

Then we have again to ask why he withdraws from her when she is drawn past the barrier to his side of things; moreover, when her being drawn seems to remove the remaining impediment to the marriage of their minds. In the previous sequence she accepted her relation to common humanity, and in crossing

the barrier she accepts the role of Israelite; the initiating sound has come from her side of things. What is the matter? Why, after all, is he surprised by her? Why can he not allow the woman of his dreams to enter his dream? But just that must be the answer. What surprises him is her reality. To acknowledge her as this woman would be to acknowledge that she is "somebody that's real, somebody that's alive," flesh and blood, someone separate from his dream who therefore has, if she is to be in it, to enter it; and this feels to him to be a threat to the dream, and hence a threat to him. To walk in the direction of one's dream is necessarily to risk the dream. We can view his problem as one of having to put together his perception of the woman with his imagination of her. This would be precisely to tear down the Walls of Jericho. It is a way to frame a solution to the so-called problem of the existence of other minds.¹² The genre of remarriage invites us to speak of putting together imagination and perception in terms of putting together night and day—say, dreams and responsibilities. Each of its instances has its own realization of this project. But the sublimest realization of it in film is Chaplin's *City Lights*.

Surely, it will be said, a simpler explanation for Peter's rejection of Ellie's advances is that legally she has a husband. But, first of all, Peter could have said that; and second, that seems not to bother him a few moments later when Ellie is back on the other side of the barrier. And how would this explanation accord with Peter's leaving to get a thousand dollars in order to tear down the Walls of Jericho, and by selling their story? It is a very mysterious nest of actions.

Whatever the actions mean, the fundamental fact about them is that he leaves, he continues his withdrawal from her, he panics. It is that fact that any explanation must explain. I know he has his reasons and his intentions to return and so on (including some reason why he doesn't wake her and tell her his plans or indeed go so far as to take her with him?). Maybe he thinks that after the hard night confessing her love and sobbing she needs a good sleep. As he heads back with his money and his elation (as if he has escaped from something) he says to his car, "Come on baby, come on, we've got to get there before she wakes up." He has wanted her asleep during this escapade. He does not want her to wake up to the fact that he abandoned her when she crossed the barrier to him; he wants to be able to give her a good, daytime reason for his paralysis; so he abandons her again. What he goes on to do must therefore remain mysterious, as cover stories will. This failure on his part is never fully compensated for. It remains an eye of pain, a source of suspicion and compromise haunting the happy end of this drama. So, at any rate, I assume in looking further for explanations.

There is another cultural or psychological interpretation of his withdrawal, another impediment that the man may feel the woman has transgressed; one that is not an alternative to her metaphysical transgression in presenting herself as somebody real, somebody alive; but rather one in which the cultural and the metaphysical interpret one another. This is the natural cultural impediment of their having ostensibly based their relationship on the tie between father and daughter, according to which they are not free to take one another as independent sexual objects. But we have all started from familial attachments, and if we

are to proceed in satisfaction—call this marriage—exchanges of one mode of love for another are to be negotiated. What is the particular problem of the central pair of *It Happened One Night*?

But having seen that they have a problem, at least that the man has one, why suppose that this is particular, if this means peculiar to them? It may just be peculiar to romance that it studies the problem of the romance of love not as an individual but as a metaphysical problem, projecting characters free of private problems (free of economic struggles, for example), or rather characters whose problem is exactly that of metaphysical privacy. They trace the progress from narcissism and incestuous privacy to objectivity and the acknowledgement of otherness as the path and goal of human happiness; and since this happiness is expressed as marriage, we understand it as simultaneously an individual and a social achievement. Or, rather, we understand it as the final condition for individual and for social happiness, namely the achieving of one's adult self and the creation of the social. (This does not deny that privacy is also a happiness and publicness also a loss, even the publicness of marriage; hence, it does not deny that comedy cannot just be happy.)

If we express the condition of marriage as one in which first a kinship is to be recognized and then an affinity established, we have a possible explanation for a genre of romance taking the form of a narrative of remarriage: a legitimate marriage requires that the pair is free to marry, that there is no impediment between them; but this freedom is announced in these film comedies in the concept of divorce. (In *The Lady Eve* the woman sets as her sole condition for giving the man a divorce that he come and "ask me to be free." I am encouraged in this connection by Bernard Knox's "*The Tempest* and the Ancient Comic Tradition,"¹³ to think through the films of remarriage, especially in their relation to Shakespearean romance, as comedies of freedom.) But then this implies that a prior marriage or affinity is in question. This original affinity may or may not be depicted as a legal one; but it is essential that its originality be seen to be, let us say, a natural one. In *The Philadelphia Story* the pair are said twice to have "grown up together"; in *Bringing Up Baby* they are shown becoming children again (something Howard Hawks pushes to extravagant literality in *Monkey Business*); in *The Awful Truth* they are finally referred to by childlike figurines; in *It Happened One Night* the whole escapade of escape may strike one as a set of games, but especially the game of playing house, or playing at being married. But this natural relationship is a kinship from which freedom to marry is precisely to be won. Without the kinship, the eventual marriage would not be warranted; without the separation or divorce, the marriage would not be lawful. The intimacy conditional on narcissism or incestuousness must be ruptured in order that an intimacy of difference or reciprocity supervene.¹⁴ Marriage is always divorce, always entails rupture from something; and since divorce is never final, marriage is always a transgression. (Hence marriage is the central social image of human change, showing why it is and is not metamorphosis.)

So it is no wonder that Peter is confused by Ellie's appearance to him, and he is not to be blamed for an act of rupture, or abandonment, that he cannot heal. We might understand his leaving her asleep as his intuition that they require, and his going in search of, a divorce; and understand his failure to accomplish this as his discovery that it cannot be accomplished alone. His task

reverses, or reinterprets, the story of Sleeping Beauty: the prince wishes for the maiden to stay asleep until he finds his way to the authority to kiss her, but a witch has put a curse on her to awaken, after a hundred years, a moment too soon.

Another witch must have modified the curse so that the faithfulness of the prince attracts the favor of the maiden's father. Classical comedy often presents the escape from the father as the expulsion from the woman's life of an old male figure, someone in the role of "senex." In the film comedies of remarriage it seems to be a law that if the woman's real father is present, he is never on the side of the senex, or father figure, but always on the side of the man with whom his daughter has throughout the drama been seeking, and seeking to avoid, divorce. The magic in the relation between father and daughter is noted in two junctures of *It Happened One Night*, which I take as comic confessions that this film knows its complicity in the tradition of romance. The first is the daughter's being awakened the first morning of her escape by the sound of her father's airplane passing overhead, as if she had been dreaming of him in pursuit. The second is the father's arranging to put a headline in the newspaper, which is then revealed as being in the hands of his daughter; he contrives to get a message to her, not knowing where she is, not by using the personal columns of the paper but by using the medium of the newspaper as such as his personal means of communication with her. This Prospero is playing his own Ariel. (The image of the airplane sets up a further comic moment of contrast with the senex-husband, who insists on entering the wedding ceremony from an "autogyro," an act of vanity, of the merely autoerotic. Yet this dunce *ex machina*, by his "dumb stunt" [as the father calls it], helps the sudden averting of the catastrophe, by displaying what a male catastrophe he is. The spirit of comedy continues to work in mysterious ways.) The role of the fantastically rich father shows the limitation of the (modern) father's powers. He can no longer *give* the bride, he can merely use his personal standing with her to persuade her to give herself to a better man. When he says he can buy off her legal husband with a pot of gold, he is admitting that a true husband cannot (any longer) be bought, perhaps because the honor of a modern husband lies not in the greatness of his price but in his having no price, as if we are no longer in a position to tell the difference between a gift and a bribe. Even if reduced in this way, however, this father participates in his ancient role of magus in ousting the senex, in lending what authority he has to his daughter's flouting of convention. His limitation also emphasizes that she is, as France says of Cordelia, her own dowry. Otherwise, there is no romance.

To be your own dowry turns out to mean to give yourself. And the woman gives herself to the man who genuinely wins her. The woman's giving herself looms so large as a feature of modern (European) marriage that I cannot forbear giving a final citation from Lévi-Strauss that speculates on its origins. It has a foundation in

the *swayamvara* marriage, to which a whole section of the Mahabharata is devoted. It consists, for a person occupying a high social rank, in the privilege of giving his daughter in marriage to a man of any status, who has performed some extraordinary feat, or better still, has been chosen by the girl herself. . . . [S] *swayamvara*, the marriage of chance, merit, or choice [rather than of gift by kindred], can really

only have meaning if it gives a girl from a superior class to a man from an inferior class, guaranteeing at least symbolically that the distance between the statuses has not irremediably compromised the solidarity of the group, and that the cycle of marriage prestations will not be interrupted. This is why the lower classes have a major interest in the *swayamvara*, because for them it represents a pledge of confidence.¹⁵

This natural explanation for the popularity of these comedies also provides terms for an account of two respects in which *It Happened One Night* differs from each of the other main instances of the genre of remarriage, from *Bringing Up Baby*, *His Girl Friday*, *The Awful Truth*, *The Philadelphia Story*, *The Lady Eve*, and *Adam's Rib*. First, the man is emphatically from a lower social rank than the woman. Second, there is nothing that corresponds to the feature of "the green world," a natural setting to which in the other instances the action moves, most often from the city of New York, in order for the principal pair to gain perspective on themselves and to regain their origins with one another. (In "Pursuits of Happiness" I observe that in more than half of these comedies this place of perspective is called Connecticut.) Instead, we have here a picaresque form, the narrative is on the road, and instead of memory and reciprocation, *adventurousness* is given the scope it requires in order to win out.¹⁶

That the barrier works like a movie screen means that our position as audience is to be read in terms of the man and woman's positions with each other, and especially in terms of the man's, for it is with him that we first watch the screen take on the characteristics of a movie screen, and his problem of putting together a real woman with a projected image of her seems a way of describing our business as viewers. In "Pursuits of Happiness" I argue that the insistence on the identity of the female star in the films of our genre presents analogous issues for the characters and for their audience, and is a way of insisting on the cinematic status of the film we are viewing. In *It Happened One Night* a subordinate, or personal, assertion of the reality of Claudette Colbert is her stopping a car by showing her leg, one of the two most famous events in the film (the other is the companion piece of Gable removing his shirt) apart from the blanket-wall itself. When these very stockings she straightens, through which she affords this revelation (the clothes she is wearing are all she has, the rest were stolen with her suitcase), were laid by her across the top of the Walls of Jericho soon after it was first constructed, the man was stirred by the imagination of them. But now, seeing the stockings on the live woman, he is apparently left cold. Of course, the timing and the placing do not exactly set the scene of desire, even, I would imagine, for a fetishist. And yet, I think there is more to his disapproval of her gesture than an expression of anger at the spectacle she has made of herself, and more than his knowledge that her resourcefulness has in this instance outstripped his. In the succeeding shot, as they are shown being driven along, his gloominess as well as her lightness of spirit proceed as well from her having insisted, for his benefit, upon her physical identity. (I know of no one who fails to find Gable an extraordinarily charming and powerful presence in this film, even to find his intelligence and wit something of a revelation, given the way he is seen in his more explicitly adventure films. But a number of people, mostly it

seems to me, women, cannot warm up to Colbert. She is sometimes found brittle, or shallow, and in any case too obscure in her emotions to warrant and satisfyingly return the attentions paid her by Gable. I have felt this, but my settled view of her in this film is that her performance, though something less than Gable's, is yet a fine match for it. It may be that Colbert lends herself to a kind of abstract view, so that one takes oneself to know what she is like without really looking at her concretely and in detail. I suggest that one make an effort to force oneself away from Gable for a moment and pay special attention to her throughout the sequence of the marriage charade and to the way she delivers her lines before and after she exhibits her leg ["I'll stop a car and I won't use my thumb," "It proves that the limb is mightier than the thumb"]. But I do not wish to insist upon this. I merely say that if you can't respond to Colbert's individuality in something like the way one responds to Gable's, this film is going to have trouble bearing the weight I place on it.)

The Lady Eve employs the most extreme device in its demonstration that acknowledging the identity of the woman requires putting two versions of her together, one in which the woman apparently plays her own twin. *It Happened One Night* employs the most economical device in its demonstration that this putting together is a spiritual task, a task of education. (This is a way of summarizing different emphases that show up between one film that declares the nature of a film screen by holding up a mirror and another that declares it by hanging up a blanket.) Both films further specify their own presence as films by suggesting that one of the pair is a surrogate for the film's director (where this role is not particularly distinguished from the film's author, if this means its screen writer). In *The Lady Eve* it is the woman who directs the action (as it is in *Bringing Up Baby*); the man is her audience, gulled and entranced as a film audience is apt to be. In *It Happened One Night* it is the man who directs, and the woman is not so much his audience as his star. The main bits of evidence for Peter as director are, of course, the events that allow us to interpret his creation of the barrier as the setting up of a screen. And we have remarked on his invention of their stagings of marriage. (I will not dwell on it, but Peter's treatment of Ellie in getting her ready to act the abused wife, the extraordinary gestures in which he musses her hair and unbuttons her blouse and rearranges her skirt at her knees, is at once a declaration of his parental powers but also of something else between them as out of the ordinary as anything in film I know of—I am at the moment calling this his direction of her.) Recall as well that in telling her of his reasons for their sharing one cabin and his insistence on following her around for her story, he has said: "And if you get tough, I'll just have to turn you over to your old man right now. Savvy? Now that's my whole plot in a nutshell. A simple story for simple people." The next morning when she says he thinks her running away is silly, he denies it, saying that it is too good a story, thus distinguishing her story from his plot, which is to force her to yield up her story "exclusive." Ellie's reply is to be considered. "You think I'm a fool and a spoiled brat. Perhaps I am, but I don't see how I can be. People who are spoiled are accustomed to having their own way. I never have. On the contrary, I've always been told what to do and how to do it and where and with whom." This is a reasonably literal description of what it is like to be a film star, and no less an accurate description of the way Peter treats her.

We have available a reading of the allegorical confusion Peter suffers in leaving Ellie while he goes to sell their story. The telling of the story is to have the effect of authorizing their marriage, of divorcing them from their pasts, she from her father and her legal husband, he from his private fantasy; of making something public. He calls it "the biggest scoop of the year." But what is the scoop, what is *their* story? He tells the editor he needs the thousand to tear down the Walls of Jericho and that her marriage is going to be annulled so that she can marry someone else, namely him. But that is *not* news, because his abandoning her means precisely that he does not know, or have it on good authority, that they can marry. He is behaving as though announcing the event in the newspaper will not only make it public but make it happen. And maybe this could work, for some story other than his own. When the editor acquires conviction in the story, from the authority of the story itself, in the face of clear evidence against it, what he says to Peter in consolation is that, with a great yarn, something always comes along and messes up the finish. This would presumably be reality. It is not Peter who has messed up the finish of the yarn; on the contrary, the only yarn is the one he has written for the editor, and the editor accepts the finish. He accepts what we have accepted. Their story has already happened; it cannot be *made* public if *this* is not public. What has made it public is a film, and in that sense a yarn. A newspaper story, coming after the fact, has no further fact to come after here. That the yarn that has happened has no assured finish in the future happiness of the pair, and is in that sense messed up, is part of the logic of the human work of construction, of art, of its transience and its permanence, as John Keats and Wallace Stevens best say; and part of the logic of the human emotion of love, what Freud calls its biphasic character; not something that this man is singularly to be blamed for.

It is notable that Peter never does transgress the barrier. When Ellie does not respond to his belated question about whether she really means what she has so passionately declared, he looks over its top, and, when he is dressed to leave, blows a kiss over it. As a man he is merely playing out the string of his confusion. Seen as a surrogate for the film's director, he is playing out the condition of film and its subjects, that their maker has to kiss them goodbye, that he or she is outside, that when the play is done his work is absolutely over, unlike the case of theater. He has become the work's audience, the viewer of creation, its first audience, but with no greater power over it therefore than any later one. He puts himself in the hands of higher powers, not unlike the duty of a romantic hero. He has accomplished his remarkable feat. His reward must be *conferred*.

I said early on that in working like a movie screen the barrier represents both an outer and inner censoring, and more recently that the man's problem in connecting the woman's body and soul, that is in putting together his perception and his imagination, his and her day and night (so that his capacity for imagination becomes his ability to imagine *her*), is a framing of the problem of other minds. Putting these notions together in turn, I would read the instruction of the barrier along these lines. What it censors is the man's knowledge of the existence of the human being "on the other side." The picture is that the existence of others is something of which we are unconscious, a piece of knowledge we repress, about which we draw a blank. This does violence to others, it separates their bodies from their souls, makes monsters of them; and presu-

ably we do it because we feel that others are doing this violence to us. The release from this circle of vengeance is something I call acknowledgment. The form the man attempts to give acknowledgment is to tell their story. The film can be said to describe the failure of this attempt as a last attempt to substitute knowledge for acknowledgment, privacy for community, to transcend the barrier without transgressing it. Only of an infinite being is the world created with the word. As finite, you cannot achieve reciprocity with the one in view by telling your story to the whole rest of the world. You have to act in order to make things happen, night and day; and to act from within the world, within your connection with others, forgoing the wish for a place outside from which to view and to direct your fate. These are at best merely further fates. There is no place to go in order to acquire the authority of connection. The little community of love is not based on the appeal of the law nor on the approach of feeling. It is an emblem of the promise that human society contains room for both, that the game is worth the candle. You cannot wait for the perfected community to be presented. And yet, in matters of the heart, to make things happen, you must let them happen.

REFERENCES

¹I respond a little differently to Wittgenstein's observation in the Foreword to *The Claim of Reason* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).

²A reliable transcript of the dialogue, together with, instructively, a pervasively inaccurate set of descriptions and "stage directions," is in *Four-Star Scripts*, Lorraine Noble (ed.) (New York: Doubleday, Doran and Co., 1936).

³I claim in "Ending the Waiting Game: A Reading of *Endgame*" that Beckett achieves a new way for theater of accomplishing this point of mimesis. *Must We Mean What We Say?* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp. 128-30.

⁴"Pursuits of Happiness: A Reading of *The Lady Eve*," *New Literary History*, (Spring 1979): 581-601.

⁵In "The Availability of Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy," *Must We Mean What We Say?* p. 65.

⁶"Pursuits of Happiness." I offered a course jointly with William Rothman in the fall of 1978 taking off from the material I had developed about this subject of remarriage and relating it to adjacent genres in (primarily) the Hollywood constellation of genres and to other films in which the actors and directors worked who were mainly responsible for the comedy of remarriage. Beyond the many points of profit in that explicitly joint enterprise, I note here how important the conversation and the writing of William Rothman have been more generally to my thinking about film and other matters in recent years. I would also like to note my indebtedness to Norton Batkin. He and Marion Keane assisted in the course based on the comedy of remarriage, and their contributions to the discussions of the films would often make themselves felt as I pushed my readings further. I have, finally, gratefully incorporated into the present version of this essay many of the resourceful comments given me on its preceding version by Jay Cantor, Arnold Davidson, and Susan Wolf.

⁷Robert Sklar's *Movie-Made America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976) has a good account of this event and useful references.

⁸Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents* (London: Hogarth Press, 1930), p. 77 note.

⁹In Dušan Makavejev's *Sweet Movie*, an account of which is contained in my essay "On Makavejev On Bergman," *Critical Inquiry*, Winter 1979: #8.

¹⁰Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), p. 487.

¹¹See foreword to the enlarged edition of my book. *The World Viewed* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979).

¹²See my essay "Epistemology and Tragedy: A Reading of *Othello*" in *Daedalus*, Summer 1979.

¹³Reprinted in the Signet edition of *The Tempest*, Robert Langbaum (ed.).

¹⁴Another observation from *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* bears on this logic. Lévi-Strauss describes a ritual of the Ifugao of the Philippines that prescribes a sham fight to be undertaken between the families of the bridegroom and the bride in order to establish that they are on different sides of the matrimonial fence, pp. 83-84.

¹⁵Lévi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, pp. 472, 476.

¹⁶It is a nice problem what this claim comes, that one feature appears "instead of" another. It

is a claim about what constitutes a genre. It picks up an idea, broached in "A Matter of Meaning It" in *Must We Mean What We Say?* and touched on in *The World Viewed*, that a narrative or dramatic genre might be thought of as a medium in the visual arts might be thought of, or as a "form" in music. This idea is a shift away from conceiving of a genre as a group of things that have a set of features in common (an idea, it seems to me, that underlies certain "structuralist" writings), and rather suggests that the members of a genre share the inheritance of certain conditions or procedures of composition, and that in primary art each member of such a genre represents a study of these conditions or procedures ("limitations"?), something I think of as a bearing of the responsibility of the inheritance. In practice, this means that there is no list of features that all the instances have in common, both because nothing a priori is included or excluded as a feature until an act of criticism defines it in specific cases, and because any list must be open to the discovery or creation of further instances. This openness, however, goes in my mind with a completely closed critical responsibility, to see that any property announced as a feature of the genre either indeed holds of each instance without exception, or else that its absence in a given case can be explained by its possessing some other feature "instead of" the common one. A test of this compensation is that this feature will, in turn, contribute to a description of the genre as a whole. In the most recent case we have to take the discovery of adventurousness in a primary instance of the genre as projecting the hypothesis that a version of something we will want to call adventurousness functions in each of the other instances, as if it is the work of romance to show marriage itself as an adventure. If we are to try to think of a genre in terms of things with shared features, in my view a genre will have to be thought of as a group of things that have *all* their features in common (with the "instead of" proviso).