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Editorial

The Queue Project

By Gillian Fuller

All the world's a net! And all the data in it merely packets come to store-and-forward in the queues a while and then are heard no more. 'Tis a network waiting to be switched!

(Vint Cerf, Internet 'Pioneer' and co-author of TCP-IP protocol)

Consider a typical urban scene, say, Town Hall Station, Sydney 3:45pm on a Tuesday. It is the beginning of the afternoon peak hour and the traffic along the concourse begins to build. The movement of bodies is mainly bidirectional – the bulk of the traffic moving towards the entry turnstiles but a small stream of people also move against this purposeful flow, away from the trains and towards the station exits that lead to sunlight, shopping and the business district above. Occasionally clusters form and then dissolve. Someone stops midstream, perhaps to regain orientation in the seemingly mindless flow now bifurcating around them, creating an eddy. Sometimes the cluster appears to harden and begins forming a tail: it becomes a queue.

The queue may appear unified – resolute in its collective stillness, steadfastly holding position amongst the milling, moving crowds. Observe a little longer and one may note that each person in the queue appears a little blasé, preoccupied with their own tasks of text messaging, hunting for change in their bags, reading the paper, or just staring into space. Unknown to each other, they appear indifferent, insular in their thoughts and activities and yet their bodies are synched. If someone in the queue takes a lateral step, some kind of collectively known and viscerally sensed displacement occurs. The queue responds, realigning itself so the aberrant kink is reincorporated and smoothed back into alignment. These bodies seem to be responding to unseen commands, initiated by the viscerally felt interactions of the bodies themselves. A form of collective proprioception occurs. Somehow although not unified, this tail registers displacements within itself self-referentially. Preoccupied with their own tasks, but alert to each other's positions and movements. The closer one gets to the head of the queue, the more closely the bodies press together. The taboo of anonymous touch dissolves – the queue appears to take on the characteristics of Canetti's crowds, they no longer 'fear the touch of the unknown'. But this is not a crowd; its potential for becoming something else is redirected into the serial linearity of a queue.

Most people queue every day without thinking about it. We queue at ATMs, ticket machines, in supermarkets. We also queue when we ring call centres, or when we download data from the Internet. There seems to be an unspoken and largely unquestioned respect for queues. People tend to accept their existence as a type of moral and fair mode of organization. The base syntax of a queue is $x \wedge x$, or one then one. It seems so simple and fair. A neat linear structure that seems to transparently echo a tidy discursive line that says something like 'good things come to those who wait'. A simple redundancy between syntax and semantics in behavioural form, or so the Signifier might say. While queues may be part of a rhetorical regime of distribution economies, they are also embedded within an informational communication economy. They are a type of control architecture where a temporal/spatial position seems to override a social position. Politics appear to dissolve into the distributive architectures of networks, transforming into a series of logical, rather than moral, modulations.

Thus the queue project attempts to locate the political in the regulatory microprocesses of movement and non-movement of bodies by exploring the cultural technics of distribution architecture, logistic organization and what one might call organised directionality of groups. How do the sense experiences of certain architectures transmute into significance and information? But there is another thread that needs to be braided into this story of collective movement and threshold crossing: that is the trope of queue-jumper.

Queue-Jumpers!

> I mean we've always taken refugees and we always will. But what they are doing is queue jumping. I don't care what anybody says and they are not being held unreasonably. I mean I've heard some people describe the conditions in which they're held as concentration camps. That is insulting and demeaning to people who were held in concentration camps during World War II and it's a ridiculous and extravagant and outrageous criticism.
>
> (John Howard, Prime Minister of Australia in a radio talkback interview in 2001 http://sievx.com/articles/psdp/20010817HowardInterview.html)

Howard again, in 2004:

> Look, I took a strong position on border protection. And I make no apology for that. But the proof of the pudding's in the eating. The illegal immigration has stopped.
>
> I mean, it worked. It was right. It protected our borders. It stopped people queue-jumping.
>
> (Interview with Laurie Oakes on *Sunday* August 2004)

Over the past decade or so, the term 'queue-jumper' has become a significant trope in the wedge politics that cyclically dominate Australian public life. The election of the neo-liberal government of John Howard in 1996 powerfully inaugurated another cycle. The refrain of the queue-jumper is pervasive – from both the government and Labor opposition, talk back radio, letters to the editor. In Australia (and elsewhere but not everywhere) queues have a decided moral dimension, where 'to jump the queue' is indexical with impoverished moral values and antisocial civil

THE SEMIOTIC REVIEW OF BOOKS

Volume 16.3 (2007)

Table of Contents

Editorial: 1-5
The Queue Project
By Gillian Fuller

Childness 5-8
By Monica Flegel

Cinematic Musement 8-12
By Roger Dawkins

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disobedience. To call someone (typically an asylum seeker from the developing world who arrives in Australia by boat) a 'queue-jumper' is a form of vilification, justifying all kinds of cruel nonsense from internment in remote desert detention centres to temporary visas. And in a broader social context, we see a rising form of aggression being labelled queue rage. We might think then that queues not only represent a technical structure but might also be seen as one of the dominant ethical indexes of contemporary life. Move but keep your place, move but stay in line. We may move more, but this movement is modulated through the technical/architectural ethos of the queue.

FIFO queue: [First-in, first-out]

FIFO is a basic orderly queue scheduling discipline in which packets are treated equally by placing them into a single queue. They are then serviced in the order in which they were placed. FIFO queuing is also referred to as First-come, First-served (FCFS).

We live in a time in which threshold control and security (from national borders to network firewalls) coalesce to contain the possibility of any type of 'flight'. A refrain emerges that justifies further control: someone has 'jumped the queue' – they have committed a seemingly sacrilegious, immoral and unethical act: they have moved 'out of turn'.

At this point a couple of question are begging to be asked. What's so ethical about a queue? What are the cultural implications of queues as a mode of organization and control?

From appendage to apparatus: What is a queue?

A queue is a structure in which biology, sociology and architecture interpenetrate forming in the process a temporal/spatial mode that coheres through serialised events. The term, queue, derives from the Latin *cauda* (meaning 'tail') and came into the English language and practice (it seems) from French (*former la queue*). Up until the mid 18th century the dominant meanings of the word related to tails or individual appendages that looked like tails, such as plaits and pigtails. In the mid 18th century, according to my Oxford, the term evolved, as the times demanded, to cover a more abstracted idea of a tail – "a line of people, vehicles etc, awaiting their turn to proceed, to be attended to". However the term 'queue' (as in form a line) doesn't really gain public currency until a century after if the archive of *The London Times* is to be trusted on these matters. In 1839 one finds the first mention of queues as waiting lines, but it is always made with reference to French idiom (*former la queue*, or *de faire la queue*). However, by the beginning of the 20th century, the English seem well acquainted with the concept, and articles discussing the problems of beggars approaching captive queuers in theatre lines, the 'usual lengthy waits' at women's toilets, problems with trams arriving 'en queue' at the terminus in Blackfriars and the like proliferate. The queue may have solved the problem of crushes (where ladies would be trampled and their dresses torn) and the unruly behaviour of crowds, but it presented new ones. Endless bureaucracy and an even tighter disjunct between the civil behaviours of queuers and the suspicious activity of the mob who would bypass the order of the line, or even worse use the inherent vulnerability of motionlessness and rigid territoriality for begging, pick pocketing and the like.

But queues are not just visible tails that appear when crowds form around thresholds. They are also part of the fundamental architecture of information society. The concept of queuing theory appears in the field of telephony in work by A.K. Erlang in the early 20th century. Queue theory, in this context, is a mathematical theory that models the stochastic processes inherent in waiting lines (probable rates of arrival, number of servers available, rates of service, priority of service, size of system, size of potential customers/queuers, rates of drop out etc). In other words, queueing theory co-evolves with the flows of traffic associated with networks, modeling randomness as probable patterns of movement. Queuing theory is thus about reducing queues, probabilizing the potential and possible chaos of traffic.

Queues theorized in early telephony, which dealt with switching circuits (in which telephone operators created a circuit between A to B through the manual insertion of plugs in switchboard) differ quite markedly from those that enable data to traverse the Internet. Telephony works along circuits – a continuous dedicated line between two points. Early attempts to use circuit systems as a mode of opening up lines of communication between computers were found to be inadequate. As Leonard Klienrock, who along with Paul Baran from the Rand Corporation, is credited with developing packet switching notes:

> Computers burst data, they transmit then they stop a while, while they're thinking or processing or whatever. And in those days data communication lines were really expensive…. The idea was, don't dedicate a resource to somebody — when I was sitting there, scratching my head, that machine was idle, I'm not using it. You want to do it in dynamic fashion: whomever needs it gets it now. If you're not using it, let somebody else in (Klienrock in Welch 2000).

Thus processing needed to be distributed and the notion of packet switching (breaking data into finite chunks rather than one synchronous circuit) was developed, based on the idea that a single data communication line could process multiple blocks of data from multiple sources on (originally) a first-in, first-out basis (FIFO). Packet-switching allowed for information to disperse and yet still retain coherence by breaking up data into digital packets and tagging each with a set of identifying labels and instructions so they could be located, directed, identified and reassembled after processing. The point here is that packeting and queues enable a resource to be shared efficiently in traffic flows (enabled by routers which identify quickest routes and traffic jams in the systems).

The way in which store and forward systems operate, particularly in the way that data queues configure movement as a series of spatialized events, and where duration is experienced as delay, points to the productivity of thinking about queues as informationalized rather than just merely ideological or technical apparatuses (although they are these as well). Queues store events, realized through the forwarding processes of packet switching. Data does not 'move down the line', anymore than a person moves down the line of a queue. The queue's form may look like something – a line or a tail – but the queue is a metastable form – stable in its continual variance, complex in its internal and constantly changing dynamics. The processes of 'storing and forwarding' does differ between data and bodies and it may be too much to say that the relationship is analogous, however certain productive insights can be gained by considering these systemic behaviours topologically.

> If there is an informational quality to contemporary culture, then it might be not so much because we exchange more information than before, or even because we buy, sell, or copy informational commodities, but because cultural processes are taking on the attributes of information – they are increasingly grasped and conceived in terms of their informational dynamics (Terranova 2004: 7).

Following Terranova's technocultural recuperation of Shannon's work in information theory, in which information is

FISH queue: [By anaology with FIFO (First-in, first-out): 'First-in, Still Here'].

A humorous means of pointing out that processing of a particular sequence of events or requests has stopped dead. FISHnet may be applied to any network that is running very slowly.

not reduced to 'content' but is rather a statistical measure of uncertainty in a system, one is able to be 'abstract enough' to reconsider an informational milieu that encompasses a range of both hard and soft communicative techniques from a perspective that considers the relations of communication and control across both modalizing (signifying systems of semiotics) and modulating systems (a-signifying semiotic systems, such invocatory commands, programming and coding architecture).

Queues are a form of control. They are material abstractions that structure relations between one and the many. They are both 'stateless', inasmuch as they can form anywhere and each server request is considered independently. This is true technically for TCP/IP – the store/forward protocols of the Internet – but also 'in principle' true for embodied lines. Although queues in both contexts are not without affective residues, the most visible being server burnout and queue-rage. They are also 'state' structures, in the way they produce 'territory', marking out the borders between the orderly queue and unruly and unpredictable mob, and in the way they reproduce across all levels of social interaction – limiting potential into algorithms of probability. To talk about queues is in no way to talk about 'the future' in the sense of potentials of technocultural interaction, despite the fact that queues seem to be proliferating everywhere – from food lines at UN facilities to telequeues to call centres in Asia. Rather, it is to think of the future as a risk to be managed and controlled. Global connectivity and real time technologies should, if one was naïve to the workings of neo capitalist regimes of power, make queues redundant, yet they persist. In a world of speed, they configure time as space and make delay and stillness a political issue by attempting to make Bodies (which can be dividuated and managed) out of the dynamic interconnectivities of Bodies Without Organs. Queues reterritorialize motion as such into direction and sequence.

1 ^ 1 ^ 1 ^ 1 ^ 1 ^ 1 ^ 1 ^ or Informationalizing Social Organization

The queue braids together many complex systems through its intrinsic ability to reconfigure and rearrange bodies and bits. It does this by 'informationalizing' distribution architecture in the mode in which much contemporary media operates. One obvious way that queues informationalize is in their packeting and serializing. There is no synthetic unity in a queue, but there is analytical unity. Or to be more specific you could say there is no synthetic unity (become one and other); but there is a synthetic praxis based on the various protocols and temporal spatial specificities of queuing, that is, a praxis based on an analytic unity (serialization).

Looking at a queue with figures standing, texting, chatting and the like, one might think of Jean-Paul Sartre's holding forth of the queue as exemplary of a *plurality of isolations* (2004: 256) which for him and so many others is an indicative byproduct of the city. The queue concept both abstracts and concomitantly individualizes. The tail ceases being the appendage of an individual human and becomes a form that manifests through gatherings of people – in other words – through crowds. But if we return to Terranova's assertion about informational dynamics, we may want to broaden our terms a bit here and say: queues serialize relations so that many become one, and that this many could be people, planes or information. Bodies and bits in the broadest sense possible.

On an organizational level, queues produce a singular yet collective subjectivity based on serialization. On a micro level, multiplicities emerge, cohere and dissolve. The many that becomes one becomes so through a serialized and event-based temporality. Describing the hypercontrolled bus ticket queues in France where one takes a ticket when arriving at a bus stop to secure one's position in the queue, Sartre writes:

> …to the extent that the bus designates the present commuters, it constitutes them in their *interchangeability*: each of them is effectively produced by the social ensemble as united with his neighbours, in so far that he is strictly identical with them. In other words, their being-outside (that is to say, their interest as regular users of this bus service) is unified, in that it is a pure and indivisible abstraction, rather than a rich, differentiated synthesis; it is a simple identity (Sartre 2004: 259; his italics).

So queues establish one (identity) in relation to another one (identity); one is 3rd not tenth etc. Such interchangeability establishes, as Sartre later notes, the impossibility of deciding. This is what he calls a serial unity – a "homogenous medium of repetition" which determines one's fate as "Other by every other as other" (Sartre 2004: 261).

Command lines, prompts and telequeues – a few semiotic observations

There is a very obvious relationship between data queues in online networks and bodies waiting in line, particularly in wealthy capitalist states. The moving of store-front service provision, most obviously banking and credit services, to call centres and DIY web services, was in theory supposed to reduce queues and the consequent delay experienced by customers. With this move, the queue became less visible, but many of its dynamics remained and in fact became more obligatory. In this final section, I want to briefly examine what some of the social dynamics of these invisible yet still material queues might be, by transversally considering the semiotic operations of control invoked in telequeues. As a brief aside, it should be noted that the queue project is data-driven, comprising analysis of video and audio data of both embodied and digital queues taken from various locations around the world (ie., Sydney, Singapore, Beijing, Moscow, London, Rotterdam, Dubai…). The following telequeue calls originated in Sydney.

KEY:

IVR = Interactive Voice Recording

CA = Called Answered (When the call is answered, I have deemed this to be a threshold event – thus one has breached the head of the queue)

QT = Queue terminates when I hang up the phone.

Example 1. MULTINATIONAL credit card company

[IVR – voice gender: Female (young, perky Australian accent]

[TOTAL CALL DURATION 3:13s]

IVR:

We're always trying to outdo ourselves here at MULTINATIONAL credit card, hope you don't mind helping us out by allowing us to record the odd call to coach and develop our team.

DIALLING

Thanks for calling MULTINATIONAL credit card, at the moment we are snowed under but we would love to speak to you, you can either hold and listen to our funky tunes or give us a call back later.

MUSIC 31:1 -53:5 (*How do I Live without You?*)

IVR: We hope you're enjoying the music and we're glad you're still with us, we'll be with you really soon.

MUSIC 58:2-1:44:7 (*How do I Live without You?*)

IVR: We hope you're enjoying the music and we're glad you're still with us, we'll be with you really soon.

LIFO queue: [Last-in, First-out, also called a LCFS (Last-come, First-served)].

As in a crowded elevator, the last to be added to the data structure will (typically) be the first to be removed from it. LIFO mechanisms include stacks. By extrapolation, FILO ('First-in, Last-out') is used complementarily.

MUSIC: 1:48:6 - 2:35:6 (*How do I Live without You?*)

IVR: We hope you're enjoying the music and we're glad you're still with us, we'll be with you really soon.

MUSIC: 2:39 -3:07:2 (*How do I Live without You?*)

CA QT.

IVRs are a technical and cultural coupling of locational specifics of voice and dialect and the 'non-place' (Auge 1995) techniques of the World Wide Web (all these IVR systems are run through Web-based applications, such as voice XML). MULTINATIONAL credit company is a recent player to credit services in Australia, although its brand it well known via its other products in entertainment and travel. The brand is youth oriented in its origins and continues to mine and evolve its youth associations in its rhetoric of 'fresh approach', no fuss, no frills, and cutting edge of 'where it's at'.

This IVR appears to break some of the generic rules of IVRs in as much as it folds the semantic redundancies of the welcome message (semantic identification and informational start of IVR system) into a barely discernible request for permission to record. It should be noted that all these 'statements' about being recorded are, in fact, legal warnings. To continue in the queue functions as a tacit permission to be recorded. The use of local idiom and accent, plus the use of 'casualness' as semantic masking of an underlying regime of obligation ('hey, it's no big deal') all serve to reinforce the brand. What I would like to draw attention to in this exchange is what one might call a disposition of 'attention' that operates in IVRs and the repetitive returns that acknowledge the caller's ongoing engagement within this system. Often when I talk to people about the queue project, many will discuss the 'docility' of the queue – a presumed 'time out' from struggle and interaction as the queuer waits – as though there were no dynamics to a condition of stillness. However, as Terranova points out:

> Information is not about brainwashing as a form of *media effect*, but it does involve a level of *distracted* perception; it thus informs habits and percepts and regulates the speed of a body by plugging it into a field of action. In this sense, the informational dimension of communication is not just about the successful delivery of a coded signal but also about contact and tactility, about architecture and design implying a dynamic modulation of material and social energies (2004:19; her emphasis).

Like many other telequeues, the IVR of MULTINATIONAL credit card company deploys a series of what might be called 'attention' devices that work to keep the caller plugged in. The easy listening standards of Shania Twain, Céline Dion and the like are neither 'funky' nor 'enjoyable', but they maintain an audible orientation in an immersive informatic environment. If the music or the product spruiks are playing, you are still in the queue. When we are in the telequeue we are in a *Zu Befehl* state – we are "like good soldiers … always in a state of conscious expectation of commands" (Canetti 1984: 312). For Canetti, "a soldier is like prisoner who has adapted himself to the walls enclosing him, one who does not mind being a prisoner and fights against his confinement so little that the prison walls actually affect his shape" (1984: 312). This affectual modulation shapes both system and user through a shared architecture of inputs and menus and commands that are so mutually implicative they are no longer generated from the outside (a *Ur* principle of commands for Canetti) rather they take on the more intimate relations of prompts. The command prompt [press 1 for credit cards] signals the computer's need for input for the informational exchange to continue. Commands and the syntax for entering them constitute the interface – a cyborg convergence of 'natural semantics' and computer language in which self/other or inside/outside dissolve in an informational multitude. In a sequence the only way out is to get off the network entirely or find some way to 'jump the queue'. Businesses have already seen the potential in selling speed and this now extends to queues, in which one can buy priority services.

This brings us to our final example and one of the quickest queues I experienced in the pilot stage of this project.

SIRO queue: [Serve In Random Order]

A queue discipline in which at the completion of a service, the server randomly takes one of the waiting customers into service.

Example 2. The Immigration Dob-In Line

[IVR – gender M]

[TOTAL CALL DURATION 42s]

IVR: Welcome to the immigration dob-in line, please hold while your call is transferred to an operator. Your call may be monitored for quality and development purposes. If you do not wish your call to be monitored, please inform the operator. Our client service charter commits us to identify ourselves in our dealings with you. For your benefit you may wish to note the operators name or the time and date of your call today.

Ringing: 34:5 -40:5

CA

QT.

Observations: The sting and the queue-jumper

This vigilante line enables members of the 'public' to inform on people they suspect have entered or are working in Australia illegally. It is part of what appears to be an expanding genre of dob-in lines. For instance, the Tax Department has a dob-in line and the Federal Police also have a 'national security hotline'. The use of the term, *dob-in*, is extraordinarily marked within the local dialect of Australia and makes concealment of the identity of this IVR impossible. Dobbing, similar to British English's 'grassing', is a highly pejorative slang term in Australia that is exclusively associated with betrayal. A crucial constituent within many of the myths of 'egalitarian Australia', the idea of dobbing is antithetical to the myth of 'mateship'. To be a dobber is, to continue in the vernacular, to be a friendless bum sucker – someone who betrays the matey mob to sup at the rim of authority. For better or for worse, this was, and remains a powerful identity trope for Australians. I mention the strong mythical resonances of the term, not because I want to suggest that Australia is egalitarian and the government's use of the term somehow signals a perversion of 'Australian values', rather to draw attention to the Immigration Department's use of the particular intimacies of slang to draw upon the exclusory power of such myths. If queues reconfigure time as territory (or perhaps more precisely as a spatialized technocultural diagram), this territory operates transversally across many fields of action. The use of the term 'dob in' draws attention to who really is 'our mate' in a time of wedge politics. Instead of functioning as reminder that authority is friendless, it serves as the authorizing principle for boundary maintenance. And in a world dominated by movement and speed, these boundaries increasingly take the form of queues. For Canetti, the sting of a command remains forever with us unless we can pass it on immediately. In a time of rising commands both technically and culturally, the need to pass it on rises too. The queue-jumper, the target of the immigration dob-in line, has made the sting of the command palpable to all those who stayed in line and did 'the right thing'. The dob-in line is a literal attempt to incorporate the ethos of national sovereignty (in which we the people are united as one) into the collective but non-unified dividuated ethos of the multitude (Virno 2004).

The one and the many; control architecture for a multitude

Queues work within paradigms of scarcity, control and risk management. Their very existence invokes a shortage of resources, even if this scarcity is, for various reasons, state manufactured. Against the seemingly limitless expansion of capital, queues are control architecture for the many who can no longer be considered a people, but should, following Paolo Virno, be considered a multitude. A queue, unlike a crowd, unlike the people, does not synthesize the Many into a One. Queues are public infrastructures that are experienced privately. Such infrastuctures grasp the field of the many and direct them to the sequenced dividuations of the queue. They also make the complex architecture of network structures more manageable both technically and rhetorically. In a recent article on distributed security control systems, Mark Nunes notes that "apparatuses of capture modulate flows by eliminating the interstitial

and regulating transmission as a mode of order" (Nunes 2005). Queues as apparatuses of motion capture work within the same topology. This is the condition of movement – of the dissolution of the 'people' to the algorithms of the multitude. We live in non-places – never at home – "no longer having at our disposal any 'special' or sectorial ethical-communicative codes" (Virno 2004: 37). The queue is a series of spatially arranged events – there are no places only positions –where proximate social relations are negotiated anonymously and procedurally. They constitute a mode, which is neither here nor there; neither stop nor go, but restrained agitation toward movement. A place to consider how many become one, how crowds becomes queues, and units becomes unities as the spatiotemporal coordinates of store-forward reinvokes the spectres of scarcity and the promises of abundance and a life suspended through anticipation – for those who wait.

Queues are one of the fundamental architectural principles of all networks. They are infinite and stochastic and yet utterly controllable. Queues are a distribution technology: they are a resource for sharing, smoothing the striations that form at thresholds. They produce a particularly linear and commodified form of justice that is proliferating and self-generating into multiple forms. Since the increase of both packeting technologies and global mobility at all scales, the queue increasingly permeates every modality. Queues are not merely technical, they cut across all dimensions and in every direction, moving seamlessly from management to morality and back again. Queues are a type of strange attractor, a singularity that captures the motion of a multitude and directs it into a sequence.

Gillian Fuller is a social semiotician of movement and order. She is Senior Lecturer in Media at the School of Media, Film and Theatre, University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia.

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Childness

Kenneth B. Kidd, *Making American Boys: Boyology and the Feral Tale*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004.

Steven Bruhm and Natasha Hurley (eds.), *Curiouser: On the Queerness of Children*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004.

By Monica Flegel

In "Victorian Childhood," Sally Shuttleworth observes that "scholars in the humanities over the last thirty years have added first gender, and then race, as factors to be considered alongside class in all forms of historical textual analysis." She then asks, "is it now time to add age, and more specifically childhood, to the triumvirate of class, gender and race?" (Shuttleworth 2004: 107). Kenneth B. Kidd, the author of *Making American Boys*, and the many authors who contributed to Bruhm and Hurley's *Curiouser* would undoubtedly answer in the affirmative, having produced texts that clearly argue the importance of interrogating social constructions of the child and of childhood. Though in some ways the most democratic of institutions (because we've all, surely, been a child at some point), childhood is also recognized in these texts as inherently constructed, imagined, and put to use by all and sundry for a variety of political and personal ends. Rather than asking us to please, for the love of god, think about the children, these works ask us to think about what narratives of childhood might mean, and how we might begin to think, instead, about those narratives and the role they play in society. Maybe then, but only then, can we begin to think about the children.

In *Making American Boys*, Kidd takes on an astonishing array of texts, institutions, and discourses that shape the concept of the boy and boyhood in America. Kidd focuses on two distinct yet intersecting narratives: that of boyology – i.e. writing on boys, boyhood, and boy culture (Kidd borrows the term from Henry William Gibson's 1916 book of the same name) – and the feral tale, represented by everything from Kipling's *The Jungle Book*, to Freud's Rat Man, to *Teen Wolf*. Kidd's purpose is to map out the trajectories of both boyology and the feral tale, which are, he asserts, "theoretical as well as descriptive terms" (Kidd, 2004: 1), but it is also to radically historicize a concept – American boyhood – that is, his text suggests, too often essentialized, and then, too often for fairly conservative ends. Kidd persuasively demonstrates the ways in which appeals to the essential, universal "nature" of the boy – appeals that simultaneously propose the malleability of that same boy – often serve to prop up and propagate a subjectivity premised upon the boy's (and inevitably, the man's) own (implied) white, middle-classness, against that of the (implied deviant) racial, class, and sexual other.

Kidd's analysis throughout displays impressive, almost encyclopedic scholarship, made more impressive by the scope of a study which ranges from the nineteenth century to the 1990s, and which takes on psychoanalysis, history, gender studies, theories of biology and evolution, literature, camping, children's literature, jungle boys, and film (among other things). The very scope of the project would suggest a somewhat shallow analysis, but such is not the case: Kidd balances the larger generalizations and copious detail found throughout with convincing, thoughtful, and in-depth analysis of exemplary texts. He chooses such texts wisely, opting for both canonical works such as Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885) and lesser-known works such as *Bomba the Jungle Boy* (1926), for which he has written one of the more amusing summaries I've ever encountered. What results is a complex narrative of the overlapping, sometimes divergent, but often intersecting discourses that shape ideologies of boyhood in America.

Kidd identifies "boyology" as a distinctly American phenomenon, and uses the term "to describe more broadly the American preoccupation with this boy and his authorized worker from the postbellum period through the late 1990s" (2). Boyology and boy work identified and identify the boy as a coherent subject, as a sort of specimen, whose ways, language and culture can be both studied and cultivated. Though the term emerged with American pseudo-scientific study of "the boy" in the early twentieth century, Kidd traces its indebtedness to nineteenth-century advice literature, including the amusingly if accurately entitled *Farming for Boys* (1868), and to nineteenth-century fiction – in particular, Bad Boy books, such as Thomas Bailey Aldrich's *The Story of a Bad Boy*

(1869) and Wilbur Peck's *Peck's Bad Boy and His Pa* (1883). From "literary boy work," Kidd moves on to "institutional boy work," represented by organizations such as the YMCA and the child study movement. One of the strongest aspects of Kidd's study is that while he relies upon demonstrating how shared narratives operate within and cross between different disciplines, he is also sensitive to generic difference. Thus, while discussing the ways in which both literary and institutional boy work rely upon shared constructions of boyhood as homogeneous, as transhistorical fact, and as opposed to the feminine, the domestic, and the savage other, Kidd also analyzes the ways in which Bad Boy books in particular work as narratives of "masculine development" that separate "those with literary potential [i.e. white, middle-class boys] from those without it," specifically, the savage other with whom the Bad Boy is always compared (53). Premised as they are on "realist" responses against feminine, sentimental fiction, and representing as they do the "friendships and affiliations" (53) shared between Bad Boy authors themselves, these texts link "the subject of boyhood to the legitimate practice of authorship in the realist mode" (61). Such attention to the different "sayables" of discrete genres keeps Kidd's text from flattening out the complexities of intertextuality and interdisciplinarity with too rigid a framework.

While boyology is a distinctly American phenomenon, the feral tale – "a literary but still folkloric narrative of animal-human or cross-cultural encounter" (3) – has international roots; Kidd, however, is concerned primarily with how the feral tale is reworked in order to serve explicitly American ideologies of boyhood. He convincingly argues that a shift occurred between the early- and the mid-nineteenth century in terms of the focus and meaning of the feral tale. Kidd begins with two of the most famous feral child cases: Victor, the wild boy of Aveyron, who was discovered in 1799 and was the subject of François Truffaut's 1969 film, *The Wild Child*, and Kaspar Hauser, discovered in Nuremberg in 1828 and mysteriously killed in 1833. Both cases, Kidd suggests, operate as Enlightenment narratives about "the redeeming power of culture" (87). Though things ended badly for both boys, studies of them worked to confirm that what they lacked was, precisely, civilization; as Kidd observes, "Victor's ultimate failures helped [Dr. Jean-Marc-Gaspard] Itard prove that 'moral superiority which has been said to be *natural* to man, is merely the result of civilization, which raises him above other animals by a great and powerful stimulus'" (88). By mid-century, however, tales of feral children centered upon India, and while Victor and Kaspar were used to demonstrate the central importance of Western culture, the Indian wild child was used to represent the necessity of Imperialist intervention and the lacks of Indian culture itself, "offering both a portrait of Indian rural life and an affirmation of British superiority" (89).

Kidd argues that the dual nature of the wild child – representing both the somewhat salvageable and the irredeemably lost – works its ways into early child-saving narratives in the United States, in which articles such as "Wolf-Reared Children" (1882), by Charles Loring Brace, construct direct analogies between wolf-children in India and the street children of New York. Kidd argues that unlike the wolf child of India, however, the exemplary saved boy of Brace's article "is poor and badly trained but decidedly human and even vaguely Caucasian" (97). Feral child narratives, that is, provided a flexible form of representation that could account for both those children who could be reached by the benefits of Western civilization – those who were, presumably, open to education and to the benefits of hard work, thriftiness, and sobriety – and those children who remained, as it were, beyond the pale: such narratives acknowledge, Kidd observes, that for every saved boy, "there's a lifelong pauper. Street rats will never evolve, and it's okay to abuse them" (98).

Kidd argues that boyology and the feral tale converge through Freud, through Scouting, and through 1990s pop-psychology narratives of boys at risk. Freud's Oedipal narrative and Kipling's *Jungle Book* fantasy both demonstrate that "to achieve human estate, the feral boy is required to leave behind his animal mother and assume the paternal role" (10). Kidd suggests that the feral boy becomes domesticated through such narratives, to the extent that "by the early twentieth century, the feral boy had come to represent the ideal American male self" (105). Cub scouting, initially disliked for its feral imagery, became very popular by the mid-1950s, a fact Kidd links to the popularization of Freud's theories in the US: "It's easy to see the Oedipal logic of the Scouting program. Den mothers cultivate in Cubs an appreciation of home, and scoutmasters take over when boys come of age and embark on more outward-bound adventures. The wolf-boy of folkloric derivation and psychoanalytic and social science inflection thus became a standard American conceit by mid-century" (152). If it was a standard conceit, it was also an extremely powerful one, as Kidd demonstrates in his final analysis of the "new boywork" of the 90s. Making reference to "the mythopoetic men's movement of the 1980s and 1990s" (171), which called for men to return to the wilderness and to discover the wild man within as ways of reasserting masculinity in a culture of, presumably, castrating feminists, Kidd argues that boy-work books such as Bruce Brooks's *Boys Will Be* (1993) and Michael Gurian's *The Wonder of Boys: What Parents, Mentors, and Educators Can Do to Shape Boys into Exceptional Men* (1996), rely upon appeals to biology to construct "an upbeat, quintessentially American understanding of the boy as unproblematically wild" (168). Such books, Kidd warns, "refuse the idea of gender in favor of a biological separation of the sexes," and "tend to ignore the axes of definition and displacement such as gender, race, and class" (170).

In the end, Kidd – whose humor is notable throughout – expresses a sense of hopelessness on the topic of his conclusion: "Can this boyology be saved?" In the face of narratives of boyhood and masculinity that continually rehearse and reinscribe sexist, patriarchal, and racist narratives, so that "even the most progressive of new boyology manuals look like business as usual," Kidd confesses, "I find myself wishing that most of the forms of boy work I've identified would simply go away" (189). Such a confession is in keeping with a text that operates primarily as a critique of cultural constructions of childhood, rather than as a guide out of them. For this and for other reasons, Steven Bruhm and Natasha Hurley's collection, *Curiouser: On the Queerness of Children* (2004), complements Kidd's text nicely. Both texts take on dominant narratives of childhood in Western society, and both do so through an analysis of sex, gender, and – in a surprising correlation – camping. As well as critique, however, *Curiouser* also provides essays which seek to reimagine the child in ways that might (perhaps, hopefully) allow new avenues for adult relationships with children, for adults' relationships to their own childhoods, and for child autonomy. Taking on the fascinating, volatile, and always difficult territory of childhood sex and sexuality, *Curiouser* seeks to understand and undermine the "dominant narrative of children: children are (and should stay) innocent of sexual desires and intentions. At the same time, however, children are also officially, tacitly, assumed to be heterosexual" (ix). The authors within the volume interrogate this official story, investigating who tells it, to whom, and in what ways (ix). They also, however, seek to get to know and to make their audience get to know the "queer child," that dangerous figure whose "play confirms neither the comfortable stories of child (a)sexuality nor the supposedly blissful promises of adult heteronormativity" (ix).

The influence of James R. Kincaid, author of *Child-Loving: The Erotic Child and Victorian Culture* (1992) and *Erotic Innocence: The Culture of Child Molesting* (1998), is evident throughout the volume, which is divided into two sections: the first, "Sexing the Child" focuses on child sexuality, the second, "The Queers We Might Have Been" focuses more specifically on the queer child – "queer" encompassing both the inherent alterity of the child subject, as well as the "homoerotic, sexually performing child" (xv). Kincaid's basic argument is restated here: the erotic child has been manufactured to tell us "what 'the child' is, and also what 'the erotic *is*'" (9). These two categories so overlap that "we are instructed to crave that which is forbidden," creating a crisis "we face by not facing it, by becoming hysterical, and by writing a kind of pious pornography, a self-righteous doublespeak that demands both lavish spectacle and constant guilt-denying projections onto scapegoats" (11). Our culture, that is, makes children sexy, demands that children be sexy, while all the time denying children sexual autonomy and decrying sexual interest in children. In the midst of an almost all-pervasive interest in sexual molestation and child pornography, and of the periodic blaming of home, institution, predator, and even the child itself for the current state of affairs, what we need, Kincaid argues, is scandal: "Scandal is the enemy of cultural hegemony; it is the offense that frees us from piety" (13). Only through scandal and disgrace, Kincaid urges, can we

begin to "revise the narrative, perhaps into one kinder to us and to children as well. For one thing is clear: our present gothic scapegoating stories, our stories of denial and projected desire, are doing few of us any good" (15).

Kincaid's point is well made. Both texts, Kidd's and Bruhm and Hurley's, assert continually that "the child" that is at stake in so many of these narratives is not a real child: in Kidd's text, "the boy" is revealed to be a construction of overlapping stories by authors and institutions; in "Live Sex Acts: (Parental Advisory: Explicit Material)," Lauren Berlant argues that "the little girl, the child, or youth … invoked in discussions of pornography, obscenity, or the administration of morality" might actually be an endangered living being, but these figures are more frequently "fetishes, effigies that condense, displace, and stand in for arguments about who 'the people' are" (67); and in "How to Do Things with Perversion: Psychoanalysis and the 'Child in Danger,'" Paul Kelleher reminds the reader that the popular figure of the endangered child "refers not to a group or class of children, or any one identifiable child, but rather the figure of *no child in particular*, a figure whose lack of particularity enables a great deal of thinking and speaking" (151). Always represented, never representing, always spoken for, never allowed to speak for themselves, real children remain utterly elusive both within these particular texts, and in all the texts that they study, and it is the child's status as utterly representable, both *Making American Boys* and *Curiouser* suggest, that makes it so useful in cultural narratives. But if it is true of all writing about children, as Jacqueline Rose famously asserted about writing *for* children, that "there is no child behind the category 'children's fiction,' other than the one which the category itself sets in place, the one which it needs to believe is there for its own purposes" (Rose, 1993:10), it is no less true that narratives of and about childhood do materially effect the lives of actual children. In Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's uncovering of the "War on Effeminate Boys," and in Judith Halberstam's critique of the "social reorientation" of the "masculine tomboy" (Halberstam 211), and even in Kidd's seemingly despairing turning away from boyology in all its current forms, one can ascertain that Kincaid's call for scandalous rewrites of childhood and childhood sexuality is particularly worthy of an answer.

So how do we go about rewriting the narratives about childhood in our culture? Bruhm and Hurley argue that "verbs matter to the configuration of childhood sexuality in that they displace sexuality from the present to the future or the past (that is, the future anterior) …. In this sense, the queer child gets displaced grammatically into a different temporal register, a register that allows the dominant narrative to consign the child to a cultural unconscious" (xviii-xix). Bruhm and Hurley refer specifically here to narratives of normative sexuality that always posit child queerness as a passing phrase: as one that will be replaced by heterosexuality in adulthood, and/or as one that only the perverse or immature will retain past that point. However, the verb tenses of which they speak cannot be entirely avoided in the essays in their own volume: to speak of the queers "we might have been" and to imagine narratives of childhood that "could be" is to, in some ways, rely upon the same utopianism or nostalgia already so much a part of narratives of childhood. One can adopt these verbs, however, while also dismantling the teleological narrative of heteronormativity that so often accompanies them. The essay that most clearly and unabashedly engages with utopian ideals is Andre Furlani's "Guy Davenport's Pastorals of Childhood Sexuality." Focusing on Davenport's fictions that imagine child and adolescent sexuality as "the core human experience, as an idyll the adult must endeavour to recover, as a means of interrogating ideologies, [and] as a stage of vitality primitive to the mature conceptualizations of taboos" (227), Furlani argues that Davenport's stories depend on their "status as fantasy," an artifice that "allows him to explore proscribed areas of childhood sexuality, but also to confine it outside the norms such fiction would challenge" (226). This statement would seem to suggest that Davenport's fantasies *as* fantasies fail to threaten social constructions of the child, but Furlani's essay nevertheless succeeds in capturing the powerful nature of these fantasies to such an extent that this assumption is itself challenged.

Often drawing upon the ideas of nineteenth-century French utopian Charles Fourier, Davenport's fictions – such as *Apples and Pears*, "The River," and "O Gadjo Niglo" – represent children as "a discrete and oppressed social class" (232-33), but they also construct spaces in which children are allowed to freely experiment and engage in sexual relationships; as Furlani notes, "Davenport gives to his stories the full sexual emphasis that Fourier viewed as the necessary precondition for a utopian project" (230). Thus, in *Apples and Pears*, a Dutch philosopher founds "a commune out of a De Stijl townhouse in downtown Amsterdam during the nuclear arms buildup in 1981" (229). Children and adults live freely and enjoy a variety of non-coercive sexual relationships within this commune, resulting in a narrative in which "nuclear arsenals, the surrogate wars of the Cold War superpowers, child neglect and child abuse, homophobia and consumer greed, not the sexual impulses of children and teens, are the perversities bewailed" (230). The fact that this narrative seems so utterly innocent, utopian, and quite frankly, impossible in today's world, speaks loudly to the problem *Curiouser* wants to take on: why is child autonomy, not just in terms of sexuality, but in terms of society itself, so utterly impossible to imagine? And without that autonomy, can child sexuality ever be understood as something other than a threat to the child? Furlani is correct that the fictional, pastoral nature of Davenport's texts does safely frame such narratives of child sexuality in the realm of fantasy, but fictions such as his also, nevertheless, serve to place the hysterical nature of most current talk of child sexuality in sharp relief. Though I agree with the editors that utopianism and nostalgia continually construct the child as "caught between … two worlds, one dead, the other powerless to be born" (xiii), I also see the usefulness of fictions such as Davenport's in denaturing the templates of child sexuality to which we currently subscribe.

Nostalgia is more in evidence than is utopianism in *Curiouser*, particularly in Kathryn R. Kent's "'No Trespassing': Girl Scout Camp and the Limits of the Counterpublic Sphere," and Michael Warner's fabulous "Tongues Untied: Memoirs of a Pentecostal Boyhood." Both writers, however, seek to forge connections with their childhood past and their adult present: rather than childhood figured as a lost, innocent space, or as, even more problematically, a queer space that one is perversely trapped in as a queer adult, these authors seek to demonstrate the continuity of past and present. In an essay that is part memoir, part theoretical exploration of the counterpublic – i.e. a social sphere "in which 'subordinated social groups' construct oppositional narratives of subjectivity and resistance" (175) – Kent questions, among other things, the extent to which the formation of her own queer identity was the result of her immersion in Girl Scout culture. As she observes, "if what I believe – in essence, that I was 'taught' to be a lesbian, 'brought up' to desire other women – has resonance, then counterpublic spaces such as Girl Scout camp may tell us something about how gay, lesbian, and queer identities and practices have been replicated and sustained since early in the twentieth century" (185). Kent is negotiating difficult territory here, for if one great social fear continually elicited by the thought of homosexual adults mixing with children is that of molestation, the other is that of recruitment: in a culture in which heterosexual recruitment of children is the accepted norm, providing children with anything resembling "pro-gay" messages is still seen as entirely suspect. Kent uses her intelligent analysis of the relationship between the nationalist, middle-class imperatives of the Girl Scout organization and the operations of the queer counter-public within that organization to open up questions about lesbianism itself: "The phrase 'scouting for girls' epitomizes this tension; it may be interpreted simultaneously as a metaphor for the imperialist urge to reformulate individual girls into good American women and as a playful invocation of lesbian cruising. Is lesbian identity, as a set of practices, styles, and counterpublic identifications, itself a form of imperialism?" (186). Although Kent's concerns about the extent to which she struggled against her own queerness "out of a fear" that she was "succumbing to peer pressure" (185) seems starkly out of place in a volume that seeks to denaturalize the peer pressure of compulsory heterosexuality, her admission nevertheless displays a desire to examine her connection to her past that balances the nostalgia evident throughout.

Unlike Kent's essay which suggests a direct correlation between a queer childhood and a queer adulthood, Warner's essay initially sets up a tension between past and present: admitting in the opening line, "I was a teenage Pentecostalist," Warner remarks that "because that is so very far from what I am now – roughly, a queer atheist intellectual – people often think I should have an explanation, a story" (215). Warner

gives that story, but it's not the one his opening lines would seem to suggest: a substantive, traumatic, or even rhapsodic break from an entirely different existence. Warner admits that "from the religious vantage of my childhood and my adolescence, I am one of Satan's agents. From my current vantage, that former self was exotically superstitious." He goes on to say, however, that "I distrust both of these views of myself as the other …. What if that life and this one are not so clearly opposed?" (216). Challenging the typical understanding of childhood as always constructed by the adult who looks back upon it, Warner reminds us that our adult selves – or what we think we might become – are also constructed and imagined by that child who looks forward. Seeking continuities between the two allows Warner both to value those things in his religious past that might, at first glance, seem utterly divorced from his present and to acknowledge those things in his present that his childhood self might always already have been and felt. His statement that "religion supplied me with experiences and ideas that I'm still trying to match" (216) certainly rang true for me, as did his moving claim that "religious culture gave me a passionate intellectual life of which universities are only a pale ivory shadow" (216). Warner is not relying upon a construction of childhood as innocent and ideal here; rather than nostalgia as that which is "dead," Warner instead utilizes child experience to challenge his adult assumptions about the sacred and the profane, about the secular and the religious. When he proclaims that "Jesus was my first boyfriend. He loved me, personally, and he told me I was his own" (221), Warner opens up a space in which to complicate the choice between sex and religion, in which he can understand that "religion makes available a language of ecstasy, a horizon of significance within which transgressions against the normal order of the world and the boundaries of the self *can be seen as good things*" (221).

The nostalgia in both Warner's and Kent's articles, problematized though it is in Kent's text by her concerns about lesbian "imperialism," is incredibly important. By looking back at a queer childhood from the vantage point of a queer adulthood that can question, evaluate, and most importantly, remember that childhood (however intangible and untrustworthy a thing memory might be), these writers challenge the assumption that child queerness represents a phase, something that "will pass" (xviii), that *should* pass if one is to become a mature (heterosexual) adult. Even more significantly, texts such as these that capture the joys of that queer childhood – as Kent notes, "in the camp, hugging, kissing, giving back rubs, and holding hands (especially on sentimental occasions, such as the last night of camp) were *natural*, produced by nature, by being one's 'real' self" (177) – work against an overarching social narrative that pathologizes and fears that queer child. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's "How to Bring Your Kids Up Gay: The War on Effeminate Boys," though first written in 1989, seems as timely now as it was then. Focusing on the diagnosis of "gender identity disorder in childhood" included in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-III)*, Sedgwick convincingly argues that while current psychoanalytic discourse does not construct homosexuality as pathology, that it still, through the inclusion of "gender identity disorder" participates in the fantasy of the eradication of homosexuality. Discouraging effeminacy in boys as a necessary precursor to the child's "explorations of what it may be to *be* masculine – that is, for a male person to be *human*," contemporary psychoanalytic discourse, Sedgwick argues, "while denaturalizing sexual object choice … radically renaturalizes gender" (143). She goes on to say that:

> The renaturalization and enforcement of gender assignment is not the worst news about the new psychiatry of gay acceptance, however. The worst is that it not only fails to offer but seems conceptually incapable of offering even the slightest resistance to the wish endemic in the culture surrounding and supporting it: the wish that gay people *not exist*. There are many people in the worlds we inhabit, and unmistakably among them are psychiatrists who have a strong interest in the dignified treatment of any gay people who may happen already to exist. But the number of persons or institutions by whom the existence of gay people is treated as a precious desideratum, a needed condition of life, is small (145).

Celebrating the queer child, imagining not just "the queers we might have been," but the queers that children could be if given the space to do so, as Judith Halberstam does, for example, in her brilliant "Oh Bondage Up Yours! Female Masculinity and the Tomboy," becomes, in the light of Sedgwick's argument, an absolute necessity – a stance that has to be taken in order to treat queers as a "precious desideratum," as a "needed condition."

But it has to be taken not just on behalf of gay people, but on behalf of children – feral, queer, or otherwise. For if Sedgwick's and Halberstam's articles reveal a not-entirely-obscured social fear and hatred of effeminate boys and masculine girls, Kidd's text and many of the articles in *Curiouser* suggest a pervasive oppression of and mistrust of children at large. From Kidd's analysis of representations of "street rats and slum kids" to Ellis Hanson's analysis of the gothic child in "Knowing Children: Desire and Interpretation in *The Exorcist*," we are continually reminded that dominant narratives of childhood that insist on that child's innocence, dependence, and need for restriction are predicated upon fears of what we imagine that child will be without those things. How else are we to explain a culture that claims to protect, cherish, and nurture the child while denying that same child rights and freedoms, and while reveling in narratives of the sadistic, the violent, and the evil child? If we are to add childhood to the triumvirate of race, class, and gender, we need to remember that unlike those categories, there is currently no real possibility for the oppressed subject to write back, to use his or her own experience to challenge narratives produced by the privileged – in this case, by all of us adults who currently write about children. As both *Making American Boys* and *Curiouser* attest, however, the dominant narratives about childhood already in circulation have great power, and choosing not to write new narratives or to take on old ones only serves to keep those narratives in place.

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Cinematic Musement

Johannes Ehrat, *Cinema and Semiotic: Peirce and Film Aesthetics, Narration and Representation.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005.

By Roger Dawkins

Johannes Ehrat's *Cinema and Semiotic* is a philosophy/film theory study. The best way to describe reading it, however, is to use a metaphor and say that Ehrat's book is something like the difference between Francis Ford Coppola's (1979) *Apocalypse Now* and Elia Kazan's (1951) *A Streetcar Named Desire*. It is a pioneering book; in the spirit of *Streetcar's* cutting edge engagement with controversial issues of alcoholism, adultery and rape, *Cinema and Semiotic* is at the forefront of applications of Charles S. Peirce's Semiotic to cinema. While *Cinema and Semiotic* is a pioneering study, something that overpowers this potential somewhat (while reading its 600 pages), is its very level of detail. On the whole the full force of *Cinema and Semiotic*'s contribution to film-

theory gets lost in the density and sheer length of its argument. Like *Apocalypse Now* it's full of provocative, insightful and startling moments, but also like *Apocalypse Now* it's drawn-out, too dense, too murky and not exactly sure of its own end result. It's my opinion that *Cinema and Semiotic* could have been more precise in the manner of the direct, creative economy of cinematic expression typical of *Streetcar*.Generally, *Cinema and Semiotic* fits into the branch of film theory concerned with the relevance of Peirce's Semiotic for understanding how cinematic images create meaning through their function as *signs*. Treating the image as sign is part of an attempt to put into concrete and quantifiable terms the otherwise impressionistic and ambiguous question of how images mean something. Basically, it involves understanding an image (or any other *thing*/object for that matter) as something with its own properties that comes to have a meaning based on a person's interpretation of these properties in a given context.

There has been a long tradition of analysis treating film as a system of signs, but the turning point came in the 60s with the work of Christian Metz. Key to Metz's thesis is the idea that cinematic images are linguistic signs, meaning they function as signs similar to the signs of natural language. In other words, images signify based on their difference from a transcendent structure of meaning (a kind of grammar), and based on their difference from each other in chains of meaning. The use of Peirce's Semiotic as a tool for analyzing cinema has been less widespread, probably because of the complexity of Peirce's writings and the fact that his ideas are spread through his multiple volumes of work (Metz's seminal essay, "The Cinema: Language or Language System?" is a much more accessible starting point to the cinematic sign than the entirety of Peirce's *Collected Papers*). Consequently, the application of Peirce to the cinema from about the 70s onwards mainly focuses on using the most accessible concepts of his work. Instead of determining the sign as linguistic, Peirce claims three principle signs: signs of quality, signs of action, and signs of law. The latter is most closely aligned to the linguistic sign. Also, while linguistics determines the sign according to two halves, the sign itself (Signifier) and its concept (Signified), Peirce determines a tripartite sign comprised of the sign itself (Representamen), the object of the sign (Object) and the interpretation of the sign (Interpretant).

Ehrat's aim is to go deeper than the typical applications of Peirce and write a definitive account of how Peirce's Semiotic works. Part and parcel, he writes, is his intention to make perfectly clear the promise of an application of Peirce to the cinema. This promise reveals itself when Peirce's Semiotic is realized as a tool of "discovery": "Semiotic … is a method of discovery…. It implies that something exists to be discovered and that there is someone who discovers it. It does not imply that something is already in their conventions and variations" (11). At this point it sounds like Ehrat shares the underlying philosophy driving Gilles Deleuze's film theory: that film-theory is the process of applying concepts to the image (from philosophy, ontology, metaphysics, art) in order to create new concepts.

This statement about discovery and its similarity to Deleuze's philosophy is a bit problematic. The brand of discovery mentioned by Ehrat, where it is implied that Peirce's Semiotic enables the analyst to see previously hidden elements of the image, ends up falling by the wayside. Ehrat's study inevitably boils down to a grand attempt at clarifying the whole of cinematic meaning. In this respect, he uses Peirce to peel back the covers on how cinema works, and he talks frequently about how Peirce lends more *precision* to understanding the image. While clarifying how something works is an important task in itself, clarification doesn't lend itself to the kind of discovery Ehrat mentions. In this respect there's a useful example in Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition* that illustrates the difference between discovery and clarification. Clarification involves the provision of *solutions*, while discovery involves working through the *problem*, sketching out or defining the field of the solutions. For example, Deleuze writes (after Leibniz) that swimming a particular stroke such as freestyle is a solution to the problem of jumping into the ocean (165). In itself, the solution isn't that exciting, but what's exciting and stimulating is thinking about the problem and the way the differential articulations of our body integrate with the differential articulations of the sea (its waves, tides, currents). The solution isn't a representation, but the articulation of the same sea elements in a different way. Focusing on the problem rather than the solution leads to the potential of creating more solutions, potentially infinite solutions. The idea of limitless creation, of the possibility of critical engagement and the *production* of meaning is a recurring concept in Ehrat's text and is identified as one of the great potentials of Peirce's Semiotic, but Ehrat doesn't put that potential into practice himself. His clarification of how images work to create meaning is impressive in its philosophical content and complexity, but doesn't pry open the critical engagements of readers with his text.

In *Cinema and Semiotic* Peirce is used to investigate and clarify three related areas of film theory. First of all, Ehrat aims to clarify the "nature" of film. Using Peirce he refutes "axiomatic assumptions" insisting that cinema is a relational sign process that is not trapped by "ontological assumptions" regarding matter and time (558). As a sign process, cinema is an ongoing text of meaning making that is dynamic and changing and not rightfully limited by codes and/or ideology (4). Second, Ehrat analyzes cinematic narration. He discusses how narration works, and the relationship between narration, cinematic time (in terms of temporal logic), and duration (558). Third, Ehrat discusses cinematic enunciation as a means of addressing what he calls the "aesthetic question." A study of cinematic enunciation involves analyzing how cinema as a whole, as a *text*, creates meaning. Ehrat writes that enunciation refers to "the rules a text must establish in order to produce … meanings," and that, "texts merely ascertain through rules that certain types of cognition are facilitated and other types are impeded" (558). Yet Ehrat's inevitable aim is to analyze how ambiguous or "vague" meaning is created – or what he eventually calls "aesthetic meaning." These three areas of debate investigated in *Cinema and Semiotic* are not themselves new, but Ehrat claims Peirce's Semiotic provides a "novel" and complete account of their intricacies. While this may be the case, had Ehrat been more concise, and had he emphasized more the field of the problem rather than the definitive solutions offered, *Cinema and Semiotic* would be more rewarding.

Before Ehrat examines the three areas of film theory mentioned above, he provides quite a thorough account of the principles of Peirce's Semiotic. Ehrat explains how Peirce's Semiotic hinges on the tripartite division of reality, and consequently the sign. For Peirce, reality is made of three categories of being: Firstness, or being as possibility; Secondness, or being as actuality; and Thirdness, or being as generality. Furthermore, Peirce's concept of the sign is divisible into three parts: the Representamen, Object and Interpretant. Each category of being involves its own kind of Representamen, Object and Interpretant specific to that category. For example, Secondness involves a sign *here and now*, a physical sign-object relation, and an interpretation relative to that actual event; in other words, a propositional interpretation. The categories are hierarchical, meaning that the categories and their signs constitute a continuum of being: starting with possible being (what is most vague in the world, such as qualities and feelings), including actual being (actual events localizable in a specific space-time), and culminating in general being (actual events that are not just *events*, but general occurrences or happenings). Ehrat is detailed in explicating these principles of Peirce's Semiotic; in fact, I think his text is too detailed, too dense and could benefit from some of the economy and precision of authors such as Gerard Deledalle, James Jakób Liszka and Floyd Merrell.

Ehrat's citation of Peirce's balloon example is useful in illustrating the sense in which the categories and their signs constitute a continuum of being. Peirce imagines a balloon floating in the air, which pops (then people notice), then people analyze the situation and assume it popped because of something to do with the relationship of the balloon's pressure and atmospheric pressure (147). Ehrat explains

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in Peirce's terms: before the balloon pops (and anyone notices it), the possibility of it popping and the possibility of the pop illustrates Firstness; once it pops, its popping is an actual event and illustrates Secondness; finally, when the cause of the popping is interpreted in terms of the balloon's pressure, it illustrates Thirdness. In sum, this example makes clear how Thirdness is the culmination of Firstness and Secondness.

Peirce's tripartite division of reality is at the foundation of Ehrat's discussion of the first area of film theory: the nature of film. Essentially, Ehrat uses Peirce quite convincingly to emphasize how the cinematic sign is a more fluid site of meaning than argued by conventional (linguistic) film theory. He explains how cinema (in principle) as a representation is a mode of being, and this is in so far as it involves the viewer's action of encountering cinematic images and interpreting them (113). Representation is a mode of being, and this mode of being can be of the nature of Firstness, Secondness or Thirdness; a representation can be predominantly made of signs of Firstness, Secondness and Thirdness. But according to Ehrat, cinema is predominantly made of signs of Firstness, of Icons. The Icon is a sign that stands for its object based on some resemblance of sign and object (the contours of a map are an Icon of a real geographical location). Since the Icon *stands for* its object and the object is not an actual thing that physically determines the sign, it is only a possible object (for instance, it is not present to the same extent the wind determines a weathervane or what Peirce calls an Index). The Icon is specific to Firstness because, insofar as its object is a possible object, it is illustrative of being as possibility. Furthermore, the interpretation of the object provoked by an Icon, since the object is only given as a possible object, is the most vague; it is what Peirce calls a Rheme. In terms of Ehrat's discussion of the nature of film, he explains that the image is predominantly Iconic because of its photographic status and the fact that, when narrative conventions of cause and effect are ignored, the image is a sign of pure possibility. He makes his point by critiquing the commonplace assumption that the image is a real representation of reality. For Ehrat, a picture is a "color," a "form," a "vector," and he asks: what do these say, if anything, about reality (132)? He writes: "A moving picture offers little to express a rule that would suggest how such a picture must be taken or interpreted" (145).

Emphasizing the nature of the image in this way is Ehrat's method of arguing that the image (as Icon of possible meaning) is naturally a fluid and dynamic sign. This is in contrast to linguistic theories concerned with codes and a more rigid and static idea of meaning. But an emphasis on the Iconic nature of the image and the potential of vague meaning is problematic in *Cinema and Semiotic*. Ehrat states that the image is Iconic; its meaning is not fixed, but is open to interpretation and is fluid. But this raises the question: can its meaning *stay* fluid and its interpretation *remain* one of vagueness? Is this concept of an Icon's vague meaning another way of saying it is an amorphous blob of a sign that needs to be moulded into shape by codes, conventions and/or ideology? Ehrat needs to address this problem more explicitly.

Peirce's Semiotic also enables Ehrat to develop an argument about the importance of Icons, and the associated vagueness of their meaning, for an intellectual and creative spectator position. Yet Ehrat isn't clear enough about what's at stake with his claims to the Icon and vague meaning, nor is he clear enough at this stage of his argument *how* cinema is productive of Icons. Thus a few detailed cinematic examples are absolutely necessary. Ehrat does mention that "'vague' does not mean unclear" (141), yet he doesn't really explain in enough detail what it *does* mean, except to suggest that vague meaning is akin to considering the behaviour of an object in all foreseeable and imaginable circumstances while still being open to the future possibility of further circumstances (144–145). It can be gleaned that an interpretation of possibility is one that considers variations of existing interpretations, or variations of those variations.

Rather than provide a variety of examples illustrating his thesis, Ehrat chooses to analyze a key example in detail: Jean-Luc Godard's (1985) *Hail Mary* [*Je vous salue, Marie*]. For Ehrat, Godard's film is an example of cinema that celebrates the image's Iconic nature. Thus with his analysis of Godard, Ehrat addresses one of the problems I addressed earlier (can the image's meaning *stay* fluid and its interpretation *remain* one of vagueness?). He tells us that Godard's film, in the relations of its sequences, emphasizes the Iconic nature of the image. Implied, then, is that the Iconic nature of the image is something typically clouded by narrative conventions. Therefore, it needs to be rediscovered. Godard's film is a good example for Ehrat's discussion, but in its self-conscious complexity, it's a rather obvious one. (Can't Peirce's Semiotic open the door on *all* films, and benefit our understanding of even the most mainstream productions?)

Ehrat is quite clear in explaining how *Hail Mary* is Iconic, and his explanation helps us understand a little more the nature of vague meaning. Ehrat explains how it is the "juxtaposition" of images/sequences that makes them Iconic, and he specifies a kind of juxtaposition that is not "forced" on the viewer (266). With this he is explaining how images/sequences are not perceived in a causal relationship. He then states that the end result is "rhetoric reasoning." While images are "connected narratively … at the same time rhetorical connectors make images an element in their own line of communication" (263). Basically, Ehrat is arguing that the repetition of images/sequences allows for their narrative significance, but more importantly, their juxtaposition creates another register of meaning alongside the narrative (265–266). Juxtaposition, then, is one way the Iconic nature of images is rediscovered. Furthermore, vague meaning in this sense seems to be identified with the kind of meaning attached to an interpretation of the existence of images in their own right (i.e. non-narratively). Again, Ehrat's thesis is a bit problematic. Is this an interpretation of an image in opposition to its possible narrative meaning, in the shadow of narrative? Is this kind of meaning any more fluid, creative or dynamic than narrative meaning?

Granted, it would be extremely difficult to explain in more specific terms the nature of the interpretation of possibility and vague meaning; nevertheless I think Deleuze's method of approaching this same problem is testimony to the success of this aspect of his cinema books. Deleuze is quite clear how Metz's determination of the sign as linguistic and his emphasis on the code reduce to the power of thought. It does this by limiting thinking to the representation of codes, to the figurative, rather than stimulating thought for thought's sake (the act of thinking itself, not in opposition to anything else). Ehrat reviews key film-theoretical discourse (semiology, production aesthetics, Deleuze, cognitivism), but his writing isn't transparent enough. Combined with an abundance of typographical errors in longwinded passages, as well as the (frustrating) absence of English translations of key primary theoretical passages, the specific importance of Peirce's contribution to film theory gets quite lost. Ehrat writes that semiology (Metz and Eco) limits the possibility of "sophisticated meanings" in the cinema, but it's not apparent enough what an unsophisticated meaning is, and what exactly is implied by its alternative (179, 189, 190). *Cinema and Semiotic* just isn't clear about the particularities of how Peirce improves and clarifies existing film-theoretical discourse.

In the remainder of *Cinema and Semiotic* Ehrat discusses the two other areas of film theory I mentioned earlier: narration and cinematic enunciation. Both of these build on the previous concepts developed in his discussion of the Icon; namely, the importance for cinema of vague meaning.

Ehrat's analysis of narration ties neatly into a discussion of the Icon and vague meaning and ends up as a discussion of time. Ehrat states that Peirce's Semiotic aids "a more adequate understanding" of cinematic narration and time (317). He's correct, and this is the case because Peirce's Semiotic maintains the aspects of Ehrat's discussion in a straightforward, coherent structure. For instance, he describes the relationship between narrative, time and Peirce's categories. Ehrat explains how narrative, in its most fundamental sense, is time as experience or Firstness. He also explains how narrative, inevitably, is time as comparison of events or Secondness. And, he explains how narrative, ultimately, is time as law uniting events into a general relation or Thirdness. For Ehrat, time as Firstness is apparent in narrative cinema when it appears to stand still – not still as in stagnant and stopped, nor in the sense of an anxious or endless moment that is the culmination of action; Ehrat gives the example of the conclusion of Fred Zinnemann's (1952) *High Noon*. He is describing *still* in the sense of action's aimlessness.[1] Time as Firstness results in the same interpretive effect as the Icon.

Using Carl Th. Dreyer's (1955) *The Word* [*Ordet*] as his only detailed example, Ehrat

illustrates his discussion of how some films hinge on the Firstness of time, thus emphasizing the vague meaning specific to the Icon. He identifies the Firstness of narrative time as a "temporal reiconization" (321). *The Word* is a case in point because:

> Time stands still … the main character is only dead and nothing more. The clock stands still. All other actors do not go anywhere but merely back and forth and back again. The camera performs the same slow, endless, lateral movements back and forth without purpose. Even the mourners' song is monotonous (342).

This example demonstrates how the time of *The Word* is a product both of the film's content and form. Also, Ehrat explains in the following how a reiconization is effected:

> Having the quality of duration ("leaden," as it were) as First, there being no emphasis on the Second (i.e., degenerate) as Struggle or difference, the Third of this Sign can only be a Generalization of the Quality of duration. This corresponds perfectly to the feeling of "numbness" in connection with dying (343).

In this case, interpretation (Third) is an interpretation of a First (since there is no Second presented). Interpretation, then, is an interpretation of time as First. At this point in his discussion, Ehrat ties together the vague meaning of an Icon with the experience of time in the cinema:

> Objects freed from time can stand isolated in themselves …. The narrative … has reached the new age of eternity with no further vector in it. Thus it can also transform through its temporality the normal pragmatic logic of things, expressed in the teleology of the Pragmatic Maxim as "all conceivable consequences" (344).

Such an interpretation involves a consideration of "all conceivable consequences" and this implies all consequences usually masked by the sign's role in the narrative. But what are these *consequences*, if not variations of narrative, for how can a sign be considered truly independent of its context and not simply in opposition to it?

The final chapter of *Cinema and Semiotic* is dedicated to Ehrat's discussion of cinematic enunciation. Cinematic enunciation refers to the textual rules by which a film produces meaning, and this takes into account psychological theories of meaning, behaviour and consciousness: "The purpose of enunciation is precisely to tie the 'text' or 'technique' to consciousness or existence" (399). It seems that this discussion of enunciation is the culmination of Ehrat's study, for chapter six ("Enunciation in the Cinema") develops his thesis on the sign and meaning into the broad level of the film as a whole. Ehrat states that Peirce's contribution to a theory of cinematic enunciation is that, unlike Metz, he does not rely on the determining force of linguistic universals. Peirce's Semiotic is *pragmatic*, in the sense that it develops its theory strictly in terms of the object/text that lies before it. Ehrat explains: "What enunciation is, in a Peircian framework, cannot be determined by language or by a pattern of social interaction, even though it may also manifest itself as such. The root of enunciation must be sought in meaning, not in trivial circumstances" (399).

Ehrat uses the concept of cinematic enunciation to move towards a discussion of aesthetic meaning in the cinema, which reads like a similar yet more sophisticated product of what Ehrat previously called vague meaning. Aesthetic meaning is associated with an idea of the highest kind of thought possible in the cinema: sublime thought.

There are two steps before aesthetic enunciation, and therefore two rungs of enunciation lower on Ehrat's aesthetic ladder: narrative enunciation and rhetorical enunciation respectively. Narrative enunciation is straightforward in that it refers to the cinematic "marks" that make a temporality probable as the motivation of action and subjectivity. There is the potential for creative ambivalence based on narrative enunciation's manipulation of cinematic subjectivity (435). Rhetorical enunciation is much more interesting for it involves a more dynamic notion of meaning.

Ehrat explains rhetorical enunciation and the kind of meaning involved:

> Its most outstanding feature … is a cognition that is not 'finished' but occasions a new Interpretation …. It can pass from an invention of a still hypothetical general rule to testing by concrete instances (inductive step), and from there (the deductive step) to corrections and refinements of the rule and so on …. Rhetorical arguments, then, produce what Peirce calls 'musement' – an abductional play with thoughts …. This starts another 'experimentation' in the mind, which plays with more or less probable Generalities for all the results (439).

Rhetorical enunciation involves meaning that is bound to a certain context, yet nevertheless creative and new. This discussion gives us more of a grasp on what Ehrat has previously described in terms of opening up the sign to *all conceivable circumstances* – in other words the vague meaning of the Icon (but he doesn't state this connection himself). He explains how rhetorical enunciation is the product of cinematic *tropes*. A trope refers to the process by which meaning is embellished or augmented, it "argues the plus of meaning by implying more" (446). Ehrat gives a few brief examples from the cinematic canon, for instance Orson Welles' (1958) *A Touch of Evil*, Jacques Tati's (1958) *My Uncle* [*Mon oncle*] and Alfred Hitchcock's (1958) *Vertigo*. He clearly argues that tropes are created in cinema through added emphasis when the camera "dwells on an element": "This tends to decontextualize that element: 'emphasis,' therefore, is a base figure for making single objects meaningful" (446).

Aesthetic enunciation produces cognition of "pure presence" (479). This produces no more than a quality of feeling, which necessarily is an experience of time. Although unacknowledged, Ehrat's description is very much in line with Deleuze's thesis on the experience of a pure moment of time attached to what he calls cinema's "time-images." For instance Ehrat writes: "The feeling produced by this Sign before it produces pleasure or pain is similar to the halting of time, to stasis – at least in its aesthetic essence." Moreover, Ehrat explains that aesthetic enunciation, although tied to the experience of pure Firstness in the cinema, refers to a cognitive experience *beyond* the vague meaning attached to Icons. Such is when there is a complete absence of "precision" attached to the interpretation of Icons (487), resulting in "regress into a wider space of mere possibility" (489).

Ehrat does a good job of making quite transparent the interpretation involved, explaining how an aesthetic meaning is produced when the Third determined by the Icon is less *fully determined* and more a "fragile state of being" (493). Also, he does provide some discussion of how aesthetic enunciation is produced: citing the "debris of action, its stalling indirection, its unforeseeable momentousness" (502), and identifying aesthetic enunciation with certain kinds of "modern cinema" noted for its inconclusive narratives (503). But I still think Ehrat needs a deeper and more thorough analysis of varied concrete examples of how aesthetic enunciation in the cinema is created. It's at moments like these that the strength of Deleuze's cinema books is glaringly apparent – a strength residing in his expansive taxonomy of cinematic examples. The differences between Deleuze's examples are of as much explanatory importance as Deleuze's own exegesis. A scientific approach more closely aligned to something like the tabular style of Deledalle's *Charles Peirce's Philosophy of Signs: Essays in Comparative Semiotics* or Raymond Bellour's *The Analysis of Film* might be more effective still for explaining complex semiotic theories such as Peirce's.

In these later pages of *Cinema and Semiotic* the most fecund aspect of Ehrat's analysis is his discussion of rhetorical enunciation. Aesthetic enunciation and a theory of the sublime are fascinating, but to what practical purposes can they be applied? Ehrat himself isn't clear enough on the implications of his discussion of the three kinds of enunciation or what's at stake in his discussion. The points he raises about rhetorical enunciation, however, are original and provocative in their own right. Rhetorical enunciation is especially relevant to key contemporary issues in film theory, such as a film's potential to educate viewers on a *particular* topic without resorting to stereotypes, and clichés. Rhetorical enunciation states that a viewer's interpretation of a sign involves "corrections and refinements" of the rule, "an abductional play with thoughts." Practically, we might understand this process to mean the testing of concepts against existing concepts, the augmentation of concepts without losing complete sight of the original meaning of those concepts. To describe this in simple terms, rhetorical enunciation might involve *putting one's own spin on a concept interpreted*

from a sign. This kind of interpretation is surely valuable when it comes to using semiotics to assess the ethical implications of a text. I'm thinking, for example, of cinematic texts that are concerned with the representation of Indigenous peoples and the potential importance of signs that encourage testing, indeed, challenging stereotypes.

On the whole, Ehrat doesn't consider the implications of his discussion; in other words, he doesn't consider what is at stake in the cinema and film theory with his application of Peirce. *Cinema and Semiotic* is packed full of answers to the question *What is cinema?* and his application of Peirce's Semiotic is quite thorough in clarifying the *nature* of cinema and its images. These are solutions, but the problem itself (the question of what his application of Peirce can provide for a reader to take away from *Cinema and Semiotic*) needs more emphasis. In short, Ehrat offers detailed solutions to problems the readers just aren't sure about. There's no denying that Ehrat is a leading expert in Peirce's Semiotic, and that his study is extremely detailed and thoroughly researched (although inadequately proof read), but an even better study would provide more varied examples and more exposition of the practical consequences of Peirce's Semiotic, thus lending itself more to critical engagement with cinema. Of course, not every study of the cinema needs to do this, but *Cinema and Semiotic* is a book that sets out self-consciously to clarify the whole of the cinema. So isn't such a study tied to more consideration of the practical implications of signs and interpretations and a range of different films including mainstream commercial features? Part and parcel of the same issue is Ehrat's homogenization of the audience as an undifferentiated mass interpreting signs in the same way. Of course, strictly philosophical approaches to cinema that don't dwell on the practical questions I mention are incredibly valuable. But Ehrat's study, admirable for its cutting edge detail on Peirce, leaves me wondering about its audience. It's thorough, yet dense – too dense at times and too long. It's less about exploring problems and more about defining solutions, and in this sense it's very exclusive. Perhaps the ideal reader is a trained philosopher with a sound grasp of Peirce's multiple volumes, able to read French and English, and who watches Godard, Dreyer and other *auteurs* from the canon in their spare time.

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[1] One of the most oft quoted concepts of Deleuze's cinema books is his idea of the time-image. This image is realized in the cinema when time simply exists, as a duration; for example, when characters wander aimlessly in Neorealist films; or when actions and reactions are short-circuited; or when logical relations of sequence are not apparent (Deleuze's most famous example: *Last Year at Marienbad*, or a more contemporary example: *In the Mood for Love*). Ehrat's discussion of time standing still is remarkably similar to Deleuze's time-image, and it's interesting that he doesn't mention this similarity at this point of *Cinema and Semiotic*.

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