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Tele-Visualization: John Frankenheimer's Early Juvenile Delinquent Films

Chang-Min Yu

Despite the extensive interest in his *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962) and subsequent films, John Frankenheimer's works before *Birdman of Alcatraz* (1962), including *The Young Stranger* (1957), *The Young Savages* (1961), and *All Fall Down* (1962), have received scant attention. This conspicuous gap creates many obstacles to our understanding of his career. While he is widely considered to be one of the most talented television directors who switched to film, no one has accounted for such aspects of his transition as how he integrated small screen aesthetics, seen in the television work *The Comedian* (1957), into compositional experiments on the big screen, as in his distilled work in *Seconds* (1966). This lacuna also raises the issue of thematerial coherence—that of themes as unfolded via stylistic figurations—in his films from this period.¹ Are communism and its resulting paranoias a concern in his early films? If so, how does the pervasiveness of the Red Scare take form in a televisual context?

Television in the 1950s played a pivotal role in mediating the political and cultural sphere. Using film to re-mediate Cold War television invites us to reconsider the construction of subjectivity in different medial and cultural situations. Frankenheimer evokes the ubiquitous political menace through the supposedly unidirectional medium of cinema and the inclusion of small screens. The implied distinction here is between medium as an ambient environment (uncontainable communism and juvenile delinquency) and media as informational vehicles of transmission (cinema and television in the traditional understanding) that John Peters sketches out so forcefully in *The Marvelous Clouds* (2015), a distinction between what is “in the air” of a given culture and those mediations that are actually transmitted “into the air.”² Studies on Frankenheimer involving the meticulous combing of production histories and biographical details tend to bury the medial aspect, that is, the stylistic connection to larger issues is lost.³ I propose instead that the cultural in Frankenheimer's works is always and necessarily imbricated with the medial.

Frankenheimer's three early films disclose television aesthetics in two separate ways; one historical and cultural, the other auteuristic and medial. In one regard, it

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would be difficult to come to grips with his early works without contextualizing them in conjunction with juvenile delinquent films. For James Hoberman, these films centered on unruly adolescents were a temporary punctuation to Cold War anxiety and McCarthyist witch-hunting.⁴ While this might be true, Frankenheimer takes the opposite route, traversing from juvenile delinquents to Cold War communists. By exploring this reversal, I contend that these exercises in puberty are decisive for Frankenheimer's later investigation into unstable human mental faculties.

In another regard, Frankenheimer's signature (e.g. extreme close-ups, the collapse of shot and counter shot, and split screen) evolved from his early television training. Moreover, these films are Frankenheimer's televisual characterizations of distressed adolescents under the Red Scare. The prefix *tele* in my title stresses how the mise-en-scène in each film collapses two or more visual planes. The effect disrupts the continuous field of the image, yielding to a spectral existence that, as we are to see, threatens all of a sudden to look back at the audience.

Elia Kazan's *A Face in the Crowd* (1957) offers an exemplary case in point by exposing the complicity between the cultural and the medial, here developed with reference to Hoberman's reading. I will then hone in on a closer analysis of what we might call Frankenheimer's "Delinquent Trilogy" with a glance at the rivalry between cinema and television traced in Paul Young's *The Cinema Dreams Its Rivals* (2005) and at the tacit interplay between big and small screen, a kind of televisual imaginary, as elaborated in Garrett Stewart's treatment of *Rear Window* (1954) in *Closed Circuits* (2015). Contemporaneous exhibits in both studies help point to disruptive tele-visionings in Frankenheimer's early films as optical expressions of the Cold War's paranoid apparatuses.

The young communists

As Frankenheimer was about to release his first film, *The Young Stranger*—a remake of his own episode "Deal a Blow" from the television show *Climax* (1954–1958)—J. Edgar Hoover, then Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, delivered a speech named "The Twin Enemies of Freedom: Crime and Communism."⁵ Hoover argued that these two threats came to infiltrate and erode American society. Crime—specifically juvenile delinquency—resulted from the fact that American families devoted to material improvement no longer had a firm control over their kids. As a result, "a sense of moral responsibility" was lost in these neglected youngsters. According to Hoover, more than 42% of major offenses were committed by people younger than age 18 years. Thus, Hoover claimed that the crime problem was basically a youth problem, the root cause of which was that the home no longer provided the inspiration for the right living.⁶ The home was invaded and its secure space of interiority disintegrated. Hoover focused primarily on the failing home as the besieged moral center of living. He did not specify how "bad" influences snuck into the once solid and unshakable household and

corrupted unsuspecting fledglings. The unmentioned but conspicuous back alley of mass media was the structuring absence of this crisis.

A closer reading of Hoover's speech reveals a spatial metaphor in terms of which communism and crime encroached upon the American turf to dethrone the "Supreme Being" in the cause of secularism. God (or heavenly Father) was no longer the guarantor of moral upholding. This dissolution of moral and spiritual institutions allowed communism to penetrate the social fabric, ranging from credulous progressive-minded liberals to trusting religious clerics. Vigilance was the only means to secure the home front. Hoover's defense of the nuclear family as the base of American democracy revealed how the diplomatic policy of containment, proposed by George Kennan in 1947, had to be enforced at every level of the nation, as if all physical and material defense mechanisms were potentially porous.⁷ Juvenile delinquency was cast as a pervasive problem that undermined American democracy from within, rather than from without.⁸ For Hoover, threat and a corresponding vigilance made up the very medium in which Americans needed to breathe. Frankenheimer would find a way to film this.

James Gilbert argues in *A Cycle of Outrage* (1988) that the problem of juvenile delinquency had surfaced time and again throughout the twentieth century, first as the phenomenon of "'flaming youth' in the era of the great silent films of the 1920s."⁹ Gilbert considers these worries to be an episodic notion that has a long history within American culture. With different degrees of indignation, what was noted along this sedimented narrative are the malicious effects of mass media and popular culture.¹⁰ This is the means of infiltration that Hoover failed to specify in his vehement tirade against crime and communism. The domain of media, not unlike communism and crime, was becoming less linear and more encompassing. In 1956, however, the director of American surveillance might have seen the futility of speaking out against the ever-expanding sphere of media. The omnipresence of popular culture and mass communication made senders and receivers of seditious messages less likely to be traced. All that could be tracked down was only the personal histories of presumed agents inside of media industries and branches of government. This became the main tactic of blacklisting.¹¹ A second plausible strategy was to fortify the home front. If all adolescents could receive the right values and education (that is, by blocking other subversive transmissions), Hoover believed that the crisis that was rattling the American ethical, spiritual and ideological boundaries could be averted.¹²

In response to worried parents, Tennessee Senator Estes Kefauver held hearings in the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee to clarify the causes of juvenile delinquency. Following his investigation into organized crime in the early 1950s, Kefauver continued to excavate the depths of declining American society to tap the juvenile problem's immense popularity. Comic books, television, and motion pictures were three main culprits exposed under his tenure. The surrounding controversy hence targeted the role that mass media played in perpetuating insidious values and ideologies.¹³ These inquiries into the cause of pubertal deviations turned out to be

fruitless, since the cause-and-effect logic was still searching for a distinct point of origin without recognizing the mass-mediated transformation of American culture. To the anxious defenders of conservative values, the social filters of narrative media, in print and screen form alike, as well as of popular music, had themselves become modes of infiltration.

Indeed, critics like Mark Thomas McGee attribute the increase in youth aggression to communist menace: “A whole lot of threatening events had transpired since the Amboy Dukes violently protested their impoverished environment but one of the most significant contributing factors was that the Russians had their own atomic bomb.”¹⁴ Hoberman’s *Army of Phantoms* (2011) conveys a comparable sentiment: “Graffiti scrawled on these irradiated monuments belies a rebellious desire for some other America—if only one knew where to find it.”¹⁵ Moreover, rock and roll, typically heard in the films of the time, was further chastised as communist sabotage. The music played on the soundtrack prompted adolescents to raise ruckuses in theaters, attesting to “some Godless conspiracy to undermine the family unit and sabotage the appreciation of ‘good’ music.”¹⁶ These criticisms were symptomatic of populist fear of an enveloping message coming from nowhere and everywhere. Communism, the presumed godless and homeless conspiracy plotted by international and domestic criminals alike, was not the equally sinister influence as stated in Hoover’s speech. It is the most important factor in the discourse of juvenile delinquency. The indeterminable influence of mass media and their likely communist subversion will reemerge in the later discussions of Frankenheimer’s style.

The roaring fifties

For many, U.S. adolescents of the 1950s provoked criminal as well as cultural problems. Experts were confused by these young people, their mentality, and their way of life. In April 1955, *Life* magazine published a photo essay on the emerging teenage culture with “equal measures of warning and assurance.”¹⁷ Youth behavior, appearance, and activities all defied the imagination of older generations. Teenager lingo needed to be translated into “laymen’s terms” for adults. Their blue jeans and leather jackets were regarded as outlandish. Rock and roll, as embodied by Elvis Presley, was salacious and inappropriate. It was hard to decide if these young people were just rebels against traditional values, or juvenile delinquents scheming to overthrow American society. The new attitude of having fun was, in a certain sense, almost indistinguishable from delinquency. A sense of confusion ensued. Were the teenagers truly corrupted? Or were they just a new generation yet to be understood?

Seen from today’s perspective, the crusade against teenage culture in the 1950s originated from typical generational divides. Elders felt as if they were losing hold of future hopes. Yet adolescents not only stirred worries, they also shaped the culture of the time in recognizable and unprecedented ways. In short, they became their own masters. The recasting of an adolescent phase of development by

psychologist G. Stanley Hall in the early 20th century gradually gathered momentum till the juvenile became an important category that influenced the American way of life.¹⁸ Thomas Doherty puts it in succinct terms: “There were more of them; they had more money; and they were more aware of themselves as teenagers.”¹⁹ Adolescents were indeed harbingers of post-war American fashion, especially when it came to the comic book, music, and film industries. By 1956, most of these mass entertainments had already been established for several decades (with the exception of comic books). But the notion of teenagers as a lucrative market came much later, as if suddenly there was a big share of a market up for grabs. And, to no one’s surprise, the film industry, ruined by the 1948 Paramount decree and the invasion of television, was ready to strike, though belatedly.

Doherty notes that it took Hollywood a long time to figure out who was really its target audience. An August 1956 report by *Variety* indicated that “no determined effort has been made to extract the full capacity of the 13 to 19 group by making pictures especially geared for the youngsters or building performers with ‘built-in’ teen appeal.”²⁰ The pleas of pollsters and exhibitors fell deaf. Hollywood still prided itself as a business that provided entertainment for families whose control was firmly in the hand of the father. Sadly, the family was a territory that was long lost to television. It was not until the huge successes of *Blackboard Jungle* (Dir. Richard Brooks, 1955) and *Rebel without a Cause* (Dir. Nicholas Ray, 1955) that Hollywood recognized its new target audience. The battle against television was already lost. But the war still seemed winnable, as long as Hollywood could identify the right audience to target.

Even if a new exploitation cycle of juvenile delinquent films might provide a partial solution to Hollywood’s financial set-backs, the problem of adolescence was left unresolved and later smoothed by another generational shift of the 1960s.²¹ Television was ignored in discussions surrounding adolescents and screen culture. It was relegated to the side of family and instrumentalized as a unifying force. Furthermore, television’s impact on the public was slighted by the 1953 Senate hearings during which industry officials appealed that the newly created 1952 television code, already in effect, was mitigating possible violations in the depiction of immorality and violence.²² However, the small screen and its ubiquitous transmission remained crucial “in forming public opinion and a burgeoning concern for delinquency.”²³ In this regard, Hoberman’s *An Army of Phantoms* furnishes correspondences between communism, juvenile delinquency, and the demonization of television by cinema.

The invasion of television

At the very end of his book, Hoberman singles out Elia Kazan’s and Budd Schulberg’s *A Face in the Crowd* (1957) as a sign that the first phase of Cold War was approaching its end. In the film, television was the sole avatar of mass communication, which succeeded radio in reaching the depth of every American heart. It

revolutionized the mediascape of postwar America simply by conflating politics, advertisement, and entertainment. The charismatic hillbilly persona, Lonesome Rhodes (Andy Griffith), ushered in a new age in which the small screen came to dominate how American people thought and acted. In an early scene, Lonesome endorses his mattress company sponsor in an improper way. Soon, he receives a call from the company's lawyer who demands to screen the script of the show in advance. Lonesome refuses, and his departure from the show raises hell. Our media-savvy protagonist is very much aware that, once broadcast via television, his seemingly innocuous statement could easily spark riots. This manipulation of the collective will triumphs because Lonesome knows that the public wants to maintain an illusion of independence from the indoctrinating mass communication while simultaneously denying their complicity in this aggrandizing media complex. The mattress store might be ravaged, but sales shoot through the roof. The scene evokes a narrative central to the controversies of films and comic books of this period. Onscreen violence incites off-screen unrest. But this time, it was adults rather than adolescents who were brainwashed by mass entertainment. Television, not juvenile delinquency films or sensational comic books, led the attack.

In *A Face in the Crowd*, the disavowal ("I know, but...") to the invasive television underlines the medium's paradoxical discourse. Television did not live up to its ideal as a window open to a distant planet from which the nuclear family was safely distanced. Wasn't television supposed to be the medium that allowed its spectator to see from afar? Addressing how the cinema conceived of its rivals, Paul Young refers to a 1944 *Atlantic Monthly* advertisement for DuMont Laboratories. The image it depicts is that of a family cozily sitting on a sofa in front of a television, receiving images from the light beam projected from the planet earth. Young contends that "this ad speaks to a powerful fantasy in which television automatically produces community."²⁴ Television's advantageous positioning in the private sphere guarantees the continuous flowing of its messages into every household. The distanced subjectivity of television, set apart from the tumultuous exterior environment, is posited by Young as "public-in-private," in contrast to classical cinema's "private-in-public" subjectivity.

The "public-in-private" character of television brings another presence to the household, a presence whose penetrating diffusion of radio and the further authority of the image compete with the authoritarian voice inside the family. Remember how Lonesome sides with hardworking housewives to ridicule the cranky husbands who only dare to vent their frustration at home. Later, when the hillbilly raises money for the poor and strayed African-American mother, his (tele-)vision becomes the organizing vision of the United States, promoting racial integration and social mobility. In other words, tele-audio-vision usurped the throne that previously had belonged only to cinema in public and to patriarchs in private. Television replaces the cinematic apparatus as the sole representative of the truth. In this case, the televisual truth is short-lived, because as Young so convincingly argues, television fantasy films "portray television as an electrical alchemist that

transmutes objective reality into lies”; hence, cinema can reaffirm its superior status over other mass media by giving its audience a “purer” reality.²⁵ Later, while Martha (Patricia Neal) watches Lonesome’s performance on television, his (ex-) wife barges in, blackmailing Martha for alimony. In this scene, the image on the small screen splits the vision field into two. Lonesome televisually projects a benign fantasy of candor and trustfulness into Martha’s domestic space. But located on the big screen, Mrs. Rhodes grabs Martha’s attention, dragging her out of her wishful dream.²⁶ The spell-binding television broadcast of a lone “face in the crowd” and its false intimacy must be broken by the faces before the crowd (a variant of Young’s distinction) that constitute theatrical cinema and, here, its corrective ironies.

This parallax view unsettles the supposedly unified field of vision and the domestic space that it re/presents.²⁷ In *A Face in the Crowd*, the megalomaniac idolization of Lonesome and his televised enterprise are eventually punctured by cinema. However, the infiltration of the small screen into every household would, as I have suggested, soon challenge patriarchal authority. This might be Hoover’s ultimate nightmare. Hoover thought parental oversight was the only problem that had to be dealt with. In a preface to André Bazin’s writing on new media of the 1950s, Dudley Andrew reminds us that “Bazin wrote often of TV as the replacement for the hearth around which the family gathers to be warm and comfortable while watching – often inattentively – images that have been scrupulously sanitized.”²⁸ Bazin’s idealization of television recalls the DuMont advertisement; television, indeed, might be a hearth, but it is hard to tell what would come down from its chimney. A Santa Claus? Or a communist devil?²⁹ Every household now had a small screen consciousness that subverted it from within. No wonder Hoberman ends his exploration with *A Face in the Crowd*. The cause of juvenile delinquency (mass media) and the infiltration of communism (uncontainable seepage) seem to converge on television as a destabilizing force. This is precisely the conjuncture within which Frankenheimer would develop his signature style of obsessive framing, (semi-) subjective point of views, and the proliferation of small screens in his cinematic formulation of adolescence.

Tele-visioning

Frankenheimer’s tele-visual *modus operandi* during this early phase compartmentalizes the image without actually invoking television. In fact, the small screen never really appears fully functional in these narratives. Its presence is, perhaps, intentionally obscured by the director in his own personal transition between media platforms. In *The Young Stranger*, the only television is in the parents’ bedroom, its screen hidden from view. Spectators cannot really tell if this is the reason that their young son is ignored. The television in *The Young Savages* is in one street boy’s home, not even turned on and thus marginalized. Such details do not contradict my argument, for the compartmentalization of the image is not limited to the

onscreen presence of video interface. For Frankenheimer, television is only one of his tele-visual tactics deployed to interfere with the supposedly complacent and self-fulfilling screen world. He is more concerned with tele-visioning as a cinematic process of embedded framings and a spatial configuration in which other “openings” to adjacent or absent spaces (windows, photographs, pictures, etc.) erupt.³⁰

In his *Closed Circuits*, Garrett Stewart recruits the concept of “tele-visioning,” with an emphasis on distanced viewing for another crucial film of televisual fantasy, *Rear Window*. For Stewart, the Hitchcock classic’s inset apartment windows elicit an eerie sense of *optic recession*, a *mise en abyme* of portals into the lives of others.³¹ Out of the protagonist’s own rectangle, there seem to be more windows for him (and the viewer) to enter on the other side of the courtyard. Without showing the actual box, a montage displays channels to peek into at will on the other side. The repression of television speaks to a competition between cinema and television in which the former simulates the latter’s medial capability. Thus, an imaginary scenario can be laid out as follows: within every household, there could be a television, a small window that opens to another familial drama; in other words, a recession that invites the audience to pass through one interface after another. Even if this invitation is repressed by the media competition as fantasized by the film, the inward gravitational vector justifies the protagonist’s tele-visioning impulse with telephoto lenses. This viewing arrives at its climax when the spied-upon killer comes to realize his own being-looked-at-ness and returns the gaze, thus endangering the secure viewing position. In another perspective born at this intersection of visions in the wake of the encounter, the repressed opposite bank of apartments—Jeff’s side—is exposed to form another picture unseen by us. Optic recession leads to optic secession.

Optic recession evokes an ever-deepening cinematic space while optic secession obstructs such a subsidiary depth of field to reveal the psychological, narratological and medial premises from which the enunciation is possible. In the case at hand, recession is summoned by various embedded framings, while secession occurs when impeded, distant tele-visioning engenders a partitioning of the image. The blockage is exacerbated, in the mode of secession, by reversing the recessionary vector of viewing as the aggressive puncture of the screen figured by the returned look. The distinction turns on a matter of “withdrawal” in two different senses: setting back the visual field versus setting it out of normal operation altogether. In the etymological and typical sense of “secede,” imaging refuses the unified field of spectacle, drops out, and re-volts, turning back upon the views by defying the framed view. When our cone of vision is intercepted by the return of the look, the closed circuit of cinema is short-circuited.³² Once this underlying possibility is exposed and witnessed, even when the returned look is absent, the effect may still summon a residual specter, whose Latin etymology is the term *speciō*, to look.³³ This phantasmal look heightens the implicit perception of the repressed foundation of cinematic figuration, the mechanical perspective from which a secure diegesis can be built. Put otherwise, optic secession lacerates the sacred coherence of the

image, a dissolution Hoover was so wary of in terms of familial footing; God, Father, and the cinema as the threatened holy trinity.³⁴ Tele-visioning is the way Frankenheimer found to capture this medial environment suffused with spatial vocabularies of infiltration and containment, embodied by communism and juvenile delinquency. We might even say, following Young's logic of competition, that optic recession and secession are the ways by which cinema simulates both communist percolation and adolescent degradation. Here, the concept of media again demonstrates an ambivalent application: between being, in one respect, a linear vehicle, a singular cone, an abstract transmission, and, in another, a dispositif (in the sense of a cognitive disposition) of cultural, political and medial confluences. The imagined chasm between the two is where tele-visioning occurs.

The relevant point here is to show how Frankenheimer gives us multiplied tele-visionings and spatial schisms that jeopardize the stability of the cinematic image in his juvenile delinquency films. Each of the films I will be discussing has its own televisual trope. *The Young Stranger* is reminiscent of early live television drama, with a predominance of close-up shots. Frankenheimer generally relies on in-screen framing to separate the protagonist from his surroundings. Walls, floors, and car frames are the most frequent examples. *The Young Savages* concentrates instead on the figure of the blind gaze, the floating specter that protrudes from glasses and posters. *All Fall Down* makes use of photos and windows, whose rectangular frames are similar to that of television. These square views are usually positioned askew, in the background or to one side, creating a dialogic relation with characters in the foreground. The tension between these frames and angles of vision carves out a space that is always in flux. In each case, then—via framed vision, internal optics, and internally reframed visual apertures—Frankenheimer's compositions telescope the apparatus and its protocols. The intersected lines of sight serve to evoke other techniques of mediation (from broadcast images to photographs) and modes of ocular access (windows and portals) that put visibility *per se* at an analytic distance from the screen frame itself, shaping a perilous situation for the characters. Which is to say that television, though in part the repressed source of this aesthetic, is only one manifestation—often merely tacit—of what we might call Frankenheimer's tele-scopics.

Guilty until proven innocent

As the first installment of Frankenheimer's adolescent trilogy, *The Young Stranger* tells the story of Harold Ditmar (James MacArthur), who happens to get into a fight in a theater, where the manager accuses him of juvenile delinquency. Sergeant Shiply (James Gregory) and the boy's father Tom (James Daly) refuse to believe Hal's explanation that he acted in self-defense. Later, young Hal ventures to the theater and pleads with the manager to phone his father to prove his innocence. When the latter refuses and tries to drag the boy out, Hal gives him another punch. Ending up in the station, Hal tries to tell the truth yet again, and this time the

detective is finally convinced. When discussing his cinematic debut, Frankenhimer claimed that “the camerawork was very sloppy” because the cinematographer and the rest of the crew refused to follow his orders.³⁵ Even so, his televisual acumen emerges from the film’s composition, in particular its use of environmental geometry to embed frames within the frame. This is not an uncommon technique, but within the development of Frankenhimer’s career, these splitting demarcations should be considered as *tele-visioning degree zero*.

The film begins with an adolescent face designed by Saul Bass, with no facial outline to separate eyes, nose, and mouth from the background whiteness. The title imposes itself at the center of the image, as if signifying the film’s mission: to understand this face, to find a frame for this growing boy, televisual or cinematic. This image gives us a first hint that the teenage subject tries to individuate himself from his native environment. This line of inquiry would be picked up later in the opening credits of *Seconds*, also designed by Bass. In the case of the latter, a bandaged face struggles to form an individual face from shots of separate features, echoing the whole theme of reinventing one’s personhood. Here, the face already plays an important role, embarking on a process of finding oneself and forming an identity—from adolescence to adulthood. In order to legitimize itself as a proper subject, the adolescent needs to find a steady and reliable frame to become an active agent by realizing his sensori-motor schema à la Deleuze.³⁶ Namely, he has to know a framed situation to which he can react. Put otherwise, this unformed face needs a crowd within which it can find its social context. However, the borderless face here is confronted with uncertainties that bedevil this subjectivization.

This unstable maturation rife with political, anti-Semitic, and sexual problems exemplifies how Cold War anxieties permeate Hal’s puberty. This is especially the case when Hal is brought to the police station for the first time. When the boy next to him asks the reason, he replies, “I’m a communist,” as if this were something that did not require a second thought. A delinquent is considered to be a communist on the inside, within national and familial boundaries. Communism surfaces when the cause of juvenile delinquency is unclear. This theory will recur in *All Fall Down* through insinuations. Moreover, this initial depiction of juvenile delinquency mixes with fears about other transgressions. In the course of the film, Tom repeatedly disparages Hal for acting “smart-aleck,” a word that Joseph Litvak deconstructs thoroughly for its anti-Semitic connotation in *The Un-Americans* (2005).³⁷ The Jewish implication returns in Hal’s retort; when asked where he thinks he would end up, his irreverent answer is “the gas chamber.” True, this method of execution was not uncommon in the 1950s, but its Holocaust overtone is evident. Jewishness appears as another factor that muddles distinguishable identity formations. To complicate the matters, adolescent sexuality is likewise cast as a problem. As the story goes on, Hal’s best buddy Jerry Doyle (Jeffrey Silver) keeps his distance because Jerry’s father believes the Young Ditmar is a “bad influence.” Trying to reconcile, Hal goes to Jerry’s home. His friend is shown bare-chested, mowing the lawn. They make up with each other in a boyish wrestling match.



Figure 1. Hal as a televised image.

Their fun is stopped short by the return of Mr. Doyle. His severe gaze falls upon two boys who seem to be caught in the middle of something. The conflation of homosociality and homosexuality adds another layer of meaning to the already entangled issue of the juvenile.

The juvenile problem posed by the film comes from a broken family picture that no longer guarantees the unity between a patriarchal control and the linear perspective of cinema. Tele-visioning in this film first appears in a long shot with Hal in the foreground and all the other guests at a party in the background. He never goes into the backyard, even when his father gives him an expensive-looking jacket as an invitation. The backyard seems to refuse his entry. His cinematic space is never congruous with that of the others. Between Hal and his parents, the most obvious line of demarcation is the curved car frame. When Hal's mother Helen (Kim Hunter) brings him to fetch his own car, their faces are framed within different car windows, sometimes overlapping. And in the previous scene where Tom brings Hal home, the car frame firmly separates them, leaving no room for communication. These curved openings to a second space recall early models of television sets with their round corners and sleek shapes, thus making the absence of actual television more noticeable. Juvenile delinquency is implicitly equated with television, however, when Hal's mom occupies the cinematic frame (Figure 1). Her son now becomes another image on television. Delinquency is guaranteed by this logic of equivalence. These shot compositions might not be as forceful if we were simply to see them as isolated illustrations of alienated family members. In fact, these multiplying visions provide evidence that a once smooth field of vision starts to crumble and create incompatible interpretations of the diegetic events. How should an adolescent behave to emerge as an agent in a Bildungsroman narrative, if there are always conflicting visions of normality, his parents' and his?

The director uses the divided cinematic image to expose the foundational gaze of the camera and its stake in forming subjectivity. The suturing process is challenged since the image is often divided to begin with. Optic secession—here as the partitioned image of an adolescent searching for unification and reconciliation—and subjectivization are closely intertwined. These experiments to test the inherent instability of tele-visioning are formative for Frankenheimer's later works. The destabilizing picture and its possible gaze emerge from time to time to slash open the containment of the domestic space, the foundation of a well-educated, non-deviant teenager. This is also the reason why an outside intercessor is needed to enable the final reconciliation in *The Young Stranger* and *The Young Savages*. In the end, Sergeant Shiply comes to accept Hal's honesty and Tom comes to believe that his son is merely suffering from growing pains. Old Ditmar no longer needs to convince others that Hal's fitful aggression is just natural, for he comes from a good family in Beverly Hills, as if this good neighborhood could isolate him from worldly turbulence. This protected domestic space would, however, be used ironically in Frankenheimer's next film.

The little boy is watching you

Set in real locations in New York, *The Young Savages* highlights juvenile delinquency by casting real gangster boys on the street. The film recounts the investigation of a district attorney, Hank Bell (Burt Lancaster), into the murder of a Puerto Rican blind boy, Roberto Escalante (José Pérez). Three teenage hoods caught in the chase include Danny DiPace (Stanley Kristien), whose mother Mary (Shelley Winters) was Hank's childhood sweetheart. The prosecutor promises to all interested parties that he will bring justice to this case. In the process, he gradually realizes that things might be more complicated than he had thought. The blind boy turns out to be a gang leader who pimped for his sister. Of three accused murderers, one is mentally challenged, another deeply troubled, and Danny might be innocent. The film ends with each teenager given a "just" sentence in keeping with his degree of participation. In the previous section, we have seen how environmental framing constitutes tele-visioning degree zero. I intend to clarify its fuller televisual force by analyzing the transience of the spatial arrangement and the figure of death looking back that recurs throughout *The Young Savages*.

Frankenheimer moves from the familiar/familial space to numerous transitory locales—bars, poolrooms, metro trains. The domestic space no longer occupies the narrative foreground, paralleling the loss of security and stability that the previous film upheld flimsily and then undermined. Mary's place has many entrances; the Puerto Ricans' gang leader Zorro (Luis Arroyo) lives in a crowded apartment, where privacy is barely sustained by a thin curtain. The only secure home is Hank's, and his beautiful daughter turns out to be decent. The spatial transience and porousness accentuate that, in the inner city, it would be unlikely to fence off outer influences, even when a parent cared for his or her child wholeheartedly. For



Figure 2. Roberto's disappearance into the cinematic apparatus.

example, when Mary is led to believe that her son really committed the crime, her despair and confusion point to the incomprehensibility of juvenile delinquency. The spatial instability of these scenes allegorizes the medial situation, the cultural atmosphere in which these young gangsters find themselves while seeking their identities and direction.

The force of this film is to picture the unsettling presence that pulverizes its superficially solid and secure representation. This time, the director emphasizes on how to dislocate the gaze of the camera by inserting figures of seeing into the diegesis, rather than on framing devices. The most interesting interfacing effect appears at the beginning of the film when Roberto's glasses reflect three assaulters rushing towards him, and the subsequent kaleidoscopically fragmented vision of his own death (Figure 2). This figuration of death distinctively showcases the core of Frankenhaimer's aesthetics: that is, a vision forever split. A precedent can be found in Alfred Hitchcock's *Strangers on a Train* (1951), in which the carnival playground killing reflected in one side of Miriam's glasses strains the spectatorial tension and sense of powerlessness via double mediation, first through the filmic, and then through the reflective, surface. The murderous vision further dramatizes the separation of audience and diegesis.³⁸ In Frankenhaimer's reprise, just before the killing, we see a vision of aggressors reflected on the glasses, the kind of confrontation that is usually shown in a counter shot. This collapse of the shot and counter-shot dynamic disrupts the normative visual flow of the narrative: the audience sees the blind boy watching (impossibly). Then, the question becomes: who is our stand-in? This might suggest a significant failure of the suturing process. Moreover, what follows makes the surveilling economy more perplexing. When the camera shows us the glasses with one side shattered, it also displays the other intact side, a surface that crisply screens Roberto's own death. The fissured side metaphorizes the vanishing of life, but the unharmed side seems to displace the vision of this blind boy elsewhere. It is as if a residual trace of Roberto's consciousness is now within the cinematic apparatus itself, drifting and surveilling. A specter in the fullest sense, both literal and metaphorical.

Roberto's gazing, displaced from the first scene, now returns in other formats. This is a *figural transference*, by which the image is unavoidably tainted with a spectral disturbance, as if its phantom gaze is figurally transferred to other analogous images.³⁹ In this film, the permeation of Roberto's blinded gaze reaches its most disquieting peak in the funeral scene. We are confronted with the domineering proliferation of this figure; the protest sign with a drawing of Roberto looking ahead slips into almost every shot of the scene, sometimes to the side and sometimes directly positioned at the center of the frame. In other scenes, guards in the court or prison stare at the audience from a distance, evoking Roberto's specter. They always stand between Hank and his interlocutor, reminding the audience of the blind gaze that is cast back onto us. In addition, this anxious feeling resurrects the other blind figure we see in close-up at the top of the court building: Lady Justice, with her blindfolded eyes, who promises to bring justice to every case under her jurisdiction. Tele-visioning here is turning from a partitioned field of vision to split visions that crisscross. This explains why Frankenheimer seldom uses the shot-reverse-shot formula to dissect a sequence of dialogue: he always strives to keep the competing visions in one shot to build up the paranoid tension.

Juvenile delinquency in *The Young Savages* seems to coincide with the constant flux of unstable visibility and therefore an outside intervener is, again, necessary to exorcise the spectral quality of each scene. Hank takes up the responsibility. Bosley Crowther thought the scriptwriters "have kept [Hank] so much to the fore that it becomes his mental anxiety more than the plight of the hoodlums that seems to be paramount here."⁴⁰ Crowther is onto something, but what he fails to realize is that the anxiety stems not from Hank, but from the unsettled optic of the film and its relation to precarious adolescence. Deathly looks materialize from scene to scene through figural transference. This insistent looking will reemerge in other ways in Frankenheimer's next film.

The recessionary and secessionary screens

The last film of Frankenheimer's juvenile trilogy, *All Fall Down*, is about the disillusionment of Clint (Brandon deWilde) with his delinquent brother Berry-Berry (Warren Beatty). When Clint goes to Florida to find his brother, he learns that his brother is nothing but a drifter, living on women. When the prodigal Berry-Berry finally returns, he sets his eyes on Echo (Eve Marie Saint), Clint's first-ever crush. The two immediately hook up and cast Clint aside. Berry-Berry eventually breaks down when Echo tells him that she is pregnant. She drives over a cliff, pushing Clint toward a showdown with his brother. In the end, Clint overcomes his fascination with Berry-Berry and abandons his irresponsible brother. Other than cashing in on Warren Beatty's popularity from *Splendor in the Grass* (1961), this innocuous-seeming film has many provocative details that link communism and juvenile delinquency.

In the middle of the film, Clint refuses pancakes from his mother Annabelle (Angela Lansbury) in favor of a self-made vegetable juice with raw cabbages and carrots. Annabelle, exasperated, turns to the father Ralph (Karl Malden) and starts to enumerate the effects of his pernicious belief in the family. She angrily claims that “it’s all part of your contempt to the family unity. You think mother is a dirty word. No wonder everyone around here thinks we’re communists!” Then they start spouting heated words to each other. Ralph cannot take this anymore and runs downstairs to his underground “cell” to grab a drink. This offhand comment on communism and its corrupting influence on the family reiterates the by-now-mundane connection. The father might or might not be a communist, but his convictions turn Clint into a vegetarian (another sign of deviance) and subvert the family unit. Later, when Ralph brings three homeless people home for Christmas, he likewise shows himself to be a good communist who is willing to share his own prosperity with the poor. Annabelle, on the other hand, buys them off with three new ten-dollar bills, seducing them to leave. This gesture points to the internal conflict of the family in which capitalism attempts to guard the boundary and communism intends to make it more penetrable. These are cultural clues that relate the film back to its era. The medial hint, on the other hand, is subtler.

Prior to the mention of communism, Annabelle complains about Clint’s singular behavior. For one thing, the young boy eavesdrops on every dialogue in the house and records them in his notebooks. The sinister atmosphere at home seems to turn him into a spy. Apart from his newfound vegetarian identity, Clint becomes a wafting, surveilling gaze that hides behind windows and in tunnels. In connection to *The Young Savages* and *The Manchurian Candidate*, the omnipresent surveying is incorporated into this young adolescent figure. This is most discernable in the last confrontation between Berry-Berry and Echo when the boy sneaks a look at their interaction through the underground window. His face is almost undiscernible, leaving two tiny sparkles in the background from which the audience can feel his probing look. We are uncertain about the extent to which communist beliefs pollute this young boy. But the destabilizing effect almost equates juvenile delinquency with the seeping and all-seeing communism, best exemplified in George Orwell’s *1984* (1948).⁴¹ We might say this is less a question of causation (that communism results in adolescent abnormality) than of an ungraspable spectrality, a seeing without being seen. A question, following the previous two films, that hovers above this film can be phrased in this way: If cinema is a window open to the world, then what will happen when there is another window within the cinematic window, like the case of Jeff in *Rear Window* (but without any lenses as our impulsive visual extension)? Does this circumstance exert a force of optic recession or secession?

All Fall Down eventually strikes a balance in the equivocation between recession and secession. The recessionary desire is evoked by many of Berry-Berry’s photographs. The secessionary probing and reframing is the means by which the young boy orients himself in this familial setting. The first tele-visionings that stand out

in the domestic space are Berry-Berry's pictures; the residual figural transference is carried in these instances. Their circulation imbues the uncanniness of his absent presence in the house, applying a centripetal force towards the handsome face of Warren Beatty. Crowther mercilessly bashed the premise that "everyone in the story is madly in love with a disgusting young man who is virtually a cretin."⁴² Indeed, if Berry-Berry is untrustworthy and hedonistic, he is also the product of this family. Ralph did not make him a communist, but a decrepit delinquent who is no longer a juvenile. The numerous photographs of Berry-Berry slit open the image field over and over. It is this position that Clint wants to occupy in order to become a disembodied gaze that could disrupt the normative situation. Clint worships what Berry-Berry represents: the spectrality that the young boy imitates through eavesdropping. However, this subjectivity is devious, for it shares with crime and communism the quality of inscrutability, the impossibility of establishing an origin, a sender, or a cause. Tele-visioning, deep down, is this evasiveness.

Other tele-visionings in this film combine the framing technique in *The Young Stranger* and visions of the gaze in *The Young Savages*. Most significantly, Frankenstein uses the transom above the kitchen door as his tele-visual casing (Figure 3). No longer only a circumstantial composition or flattened planar image, then, this is a television *writ small* that screens (in the double sense) the background to the foreground, spatially sequestering the depth of field. When Berry-Berry consents to sit down with his parents, Clint rushes upstairs to tell Echo the good news. Their figures are enclosed within a small viewing window. This visual recession partitions the image into two depth sectors so as to heighten the dramatic intensity. However, the audience of this tele-visioning remains unknown in the diegesis, since none of the character is observing the couple. Surely it is for us who sit in front of the screen, but it also emphasizes the crevice of the image and its implication for the



Figure 3. The transom as the embedded television.

“family unit.” Young’s televisual formula is completely internalized by recasting the “public-in-private” viewing situation diegetically. By evoking television, the film recedes within. The transom’s scenario, with Clint’s shy excitement and Echo’s almost maternal sentiment towards him, seems more intimate than ever. This scene illustrates that while the public-in-private quality of television creates intimacy by bonding families in front of small screens, it can also contravene the other intimacy shown on the small screen of the transom. Television shows us a private life that is publicized. If, as we have seen in other cases, optic secession results from the returned gaze, the splitting transom invokes television as a squared viewing whose audience is evoked but missing: the specter of an audience. Via embedded framings, the distinction between what recedes and what secedes ultimately comes down to the economy of the gaze and how the film shapes medial parameters—in this case, television framed by cinema—to outline the partition of the image, the fragmentation of the space, and the elusive enunciation of each medium.

At the end of the film, Clint is determined to leave his brother’s path. There is no need for an outsider to reconcile different visions, since, unlike the segregated Hal or the spectral Roberto, Clint finds his own way to split from the dominant vision and positions himself at a vantage point that allows him to see the other competing forces. When he walks out of the cabin, his confident posture and frontal marching dominate the image. The disequilibrium of the image is ultimately eliminated. The subject comes out of his adolescence as a fully functioning agent, at least on the surface. Yet this agent might be easily manipulated (indeed like the televisual audience), as seen in *The Manchurian Candidate*, since the film already gives us a primal scene complicated by communism and pubertal deviance.

Conclusion

When canonizing and cataloguing all the important directors from 1929 to 1968, Andrew Sarris put John Frankenheimer under the category of “Strained Seriousness.” These are the directors who love moralizing so much that they sacrifice the perfect dramatic balance that elevates a director into the pantheon. Sarris considers Frankenheimer “a director of parts at the expense of the whole... [his] vaguely environmental focus on delinquency, criminality, libertinism, and hypocrisy... suggested a modern form of consciousness in search of more sophisticated means of expression.”⁴³ The standard-bearer of American auteur theory makes an astute observation here. Frankenheimer is indeed a director of parts, for it is impossible to provide a single perspective in his films, given their saturation by communism, juvenile delinquency, and mass media in the Cold War context. Yet tele-visioning is exactly that “sophisticated means of expression” that Frankenheimer, pace Sarris, has sought and found. In his works, cinema or other media always seek for an optic consciousness to absorb their surrounding cultural sphere. Hesitating between optic recession and optic secession or medium and media, these films

clarify how the cultural and the medial are indivisible. In my opening paragraphs, I pointed out that Frankenheimer took an unexpected course in the sense that he made *The Manchurian Candidate* after three films on juvenile delinquency, not the other way around – as Hoberman’s Cold War narrative might suggest. This double back, it seems now, proceeds from the fact that juvenile delinquency was not only a deflection of the Cold War’s panic over communism (though these issues are interlaced), but itself a new form of consciousness—one might say a ground of vision—that is perpetually refracted through the proliferation of screens, both big and small.

Notes

1. For a fuller elaboration, see Stewart’s *Between Film and Screen*, p. 25.
2. See Peters, *The Marvelous Clouds: Towards a Philosophy of Elemental Media and Speaking into the Air: the History of an Idea of Communication*.
3. The most comprehensive monograph on *The Manchurian Candidate* is Matthew Jacobson’s and Gaspar González’s *What Have They Built You to Do?* Meanwhile, one exception that singles out Frankenheimer’s medial intervention is Corey Creekmur’s “John Frankenheimer’s ‘War on Terror,’” in *A Little Solitaire: John Frankenheimer and American Film*, pp. 103–116.
4. Hoberman, *An Army of Phantoms: American Movies and the Making of the Cold War*, pp. 330–339.
5. For a detailed consideration on Hoover’s intrusion into Hollywood productions, see Sbardellati’s *J. Edgar Hoover Goes to the Movies*.
6. Hoover, “The Twin Enemies of Freedom: Crime and Communism,” in *Vital Speeches of the Day*, p. 105.
7. See X (Kennan), “The Sources of Soviet Conduct,” in *Foreign Affairs*.
8. For a thorough examination of the televisual reorganization of the family space in the post-war years, see Spigel’s *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America*. Perhaps not so coincidentally, Spigel begins her theorization with the most famous juvenile delinquent film, *Rebel without a Cause*.
9. Gilbert, *A Cycle of Outrage: America’s Reaction to the Juvenile Delinquent in the 1950s*, p. 3.
10. See also Spigel, *Make Room for TV*, pp. 53–55.
11. For the most detailed record of this history, see Navasky’s *Naming Names*. For a psychoanalytic account, see Litvak’s ingenious deconstruction of the naming name logic through his syco-analysis, *The Un-Americans: Jews, the Blacklist, and Stoolpigeon Culture*.
12. For an in-depth analysis of the idea of boundary and border in terms of American citizenship in the Cold War, see Auerbach’s *Dark Borders: Film Noir and American Citizenship*. Furthermore, in the opening paragraph, Auerbach dissects a report submitted by “Confidential Informant T-10,” a. k. a. Ronald Reagan, who explicitly refers communist purge as “cleansing their own household.” This is another instance that the metaphor of domesticity dangles upon the 1950s.
13. Gilbert, *Cycle of Outrage*, pp. 143–162.
14. McGee, *The J.D. Films: Juvenile Delinquency in the Movies*, p. 18.
15. Hoberman, *Army of Phantoms*, p. 359, original emphasis.
16. McGee, *J.D. Films*, p. 41.
17. Gilbert, *Cycle of Outrage*, p. 11.
18. Doherty, *Teenagers and Teenpics: Juvenilization of American Movies*, pp. 33–34.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 34.

20. Ibid., p. 49.
21. Gilbert, *Cycle of Outrage*, pp. 212–217.
22. In the concluding chapter of *The Seduction of the Innocents*, Wertham does include one last warning against television. However, the debates in this period mostly clustered around the content shown on the small screen, rather than around the form and its subjectivizing process. Hence, my argument here attempts to supplement existing scholarship. See Spigel, *Make Room for TV*, pp. 53–55.
23. Ibid., p. 145.
24. Young, *The Cinema Dreams Its Rivals: Media Fantasy Films from Radio to the Internet*, p. 148.
25. Ibid., p. 137.
26. Numerous films have attempted to incorporate smaller screens into their narratives, such as *Metropolis* (1927) and *Modern Times* (1936). These integrated screens do have varying levels of disrupting effect, so I am not arguing that television screens are more effective in slicing open the smooth surface of the big screen. In the context here, I simply want to emphasize this historical juncture in which television has layered connotations.
27. This view is related to the return to suture theory in general, especially Slavoj Žižek's *The Fright of Real Tears* (2001), Seung-hoon Jeong's *The Cinematic Interface* (2014) and Stewart's *Closed Circuits* but here I focus only on specific strategies of how Frankenheimer executes tele-visioning, rather than on the long history of apparatus theory.
28. Andrew, *André Bazin's New Media*, p. 12. Andrew's introduction to the volume, alluding to Jacques Rivette's admiration of *Voyage to Italy* (Dir. Roberto Rossellini, 1953) and its "TV aesthetics," briefly touches upon television's influence on the *nouvelle vague*. See Bazin's *New Media*, pp. 19–20.
29. My reading of television can be said to be the underside of Bazin's "ontology" of television, in which he senses a democratic potential being realized by the shared liveness and directness. This intimacy, I contend, constantly risks the danger of mass hypnosis and hallucination, as seen in *A Face in the Crowd*. Moreover, liveness is not necessarily a positive quality: contemporaneity can also mean two-way collective synchronization and an urgency to keep up with live transmission. This dilemma is the premise of *The Comedian*, in which the comedian issues his commands to his crew via electronic interfaces. In turn, he is also attached to this temporal stringency that he could not afford to make mistakes in real-time channeling.
30. Noël Burch systematically categorizes six off-screen spaces. Each side of the screen opens to an off-screen space. The other two unseen spaces are located "behind the camera," and "behind the set." Doors and windows lead to the last kind of off-screen space, which embodies the assumed spatial continuity of the diegesis. Yet these entrances and exits can potentially thwart the spatial configuration of a film, even more so when mediated by other picturing mediums. See Burch's *Theory of Film Practice*.
31. Stewart, *Closed Circuits: Screening Narrative Surveillance*, p. 122.
32. Marc Vernet's *Figures de l'absence* guides my theorization here. What I am pinpointing here, *an impersonal look at the camera*, comes forth at the crossing of Chapter 1, "The Look at the Camera," and Chapter 2, "On this Side: the Look of the Camera."
33. Its noun derivation in Latin, *specio*, means *mirror*. This etymological extension also speaks to the non-reciprocal dynamic of cinema, intensified by televisual screens: looking forward and the reflected looking.
34. Spigel notes that Thomas J. Lane, representative from Massachusetts, once praised the parents who demanded the "juvenile delinquent called television" be cleaned up. This

curious equation again speaks to the inherent spatial instability of the newly popularized medium. See Spigel, *Make Room for TV*, p. 54.

35. Pratley, *The Films of Frankenheimer: Forty Years in Film*, p. 16.
36. See Deleuze's *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, pp. 141–177.
37. Litvak, *The Un-Americans*, pp. 1–49.
38. Wood, *Alfred Hitchcock: the Man Who Knew Too Much*, p. 76. He also cites Krohn's comments that see Bruno (Robert Walker) as a reflection of Cold War paranoia.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 73.
40. Crowther, "Lancaster Stars in 'Young Savages,'" *New York Times*, p. 31.
41. McCarthyism, in terms of its discursive formation, also shares some similarities with communism, such as the tactics of infiltration and brainwashing. This is why some 1950s films, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (Dir. Don Siegel, 1956) for instance, can be allegorized in either way. See Smith's *Film Criticism, the Cold War, and the Blacklist: Reading the Hollywood Reds*.
42. Crowther, "All Fall Down," *New York Times*, p. 41.
43. Sarris, *The American Cinema: Directors and Directions, 1929–1968*, p. 193.

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