

# La fémis

**This English translation is the sole work of the Festival interns listed on this page. The translation will be edited following the Festival.**

Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Métiers de l'Image et du Son

## *Capturing Female Faces in Film*

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## *Introduction*

I have always been acutely aware of the treatment of the face that a close-up evokes; it is a sort of expressive landscape.

Close-ups expose a naked, true face, revealing emotions from even the slightest expressions.

“I am ready to take in the dullest film if it gives me a beautiful close-up of an actress that I love”.

*Jean Renoir*

The face is the mirror of the soul. The way of illuminating it is in its reflection. The light influences the figures; it highlights some and erases others. One cannot expect to use the same given treatment of light on two different faces and produce an identical result.

By lighting a face, one can deconstruct it to make it either ugly or attractive until it is no longer recognizable. As this human landscape is the birthplace of emotions, the power of light is no longer important, but capable of either being broken down or improved by the visual image.

Furthermore, the human figure is a source of physical composition that in close-ups becomes an independent element. The work of the image is therefore vital.

In my collaborations with actors and actresses, the relationship to the light was always more noticeable with women than with men, and although a large number of actors were very conscious of their visual image, the case of the actresses seems to me more meaningful and more comprehensive in studying the history of cinema.

I will first look at the history of the close-up: seeing how and when it emerged in the cinema, exploring the movement of face lighting styles from Hollywood glamour to modern cinema. I will study the treatment of light as a function of the given era. I will present the evolution of the leading cameraman's work, and the way that the demands of an actress' image change, evidently, from one era to another.

I will then study the structures of image, “the architecture”, in order to understand how certain lighting effects behave on particular forms, and whether or not this plays a role in structure.

I will relate discussions with leading cameramen that address their comprehension of their relationships with the actor as well as the character, the research work according to the style imposed by the screenplay and the director's professional method, the attempts and lessons from which the leading cameraman will “invent” the light of the characters.

In a close-up, when the acting, the light and the makeup come into place, the choice of the makeup artist on a shoot is extremely important. The makeup is a device closely tied to the acting and to the work of the image. I will examine the cameramen in this fashion.

First part:

## ***The Female Face across Ages and Styles***

“In all cases, the close-up is seen as the image excellently generating its own mental distance to the cinema, done by proximity and intense disaffection”. *Jacque Aumont, “The Image”, Nathan Edition, 1990.*

I will approach this historic part of my subject in defining certain symbolic stages and examples.

Thus I will study the evolution of the work of these close-ups, and the way in which actresses have been lit since the beginning of cinema, in function of the cinematographically known technical advances and changes.

At first, filmmakers did not use close-ups; the camera axes varied little enough and the light on faces served above all to affect the film stock.

I will start by posing the technical condition of the beginning of filmmaking, explaining the treatment of the female face from its emergence on screen.

### **1. The Progression of the Close-Up in Cinema and the First Lighting Techniques**

“Cinematography started by using its only light, sunlight; and it followed the sun until California, where it shined the brightest and with the most regularity”. *Joseph Stenberg: Notebooks of the Cinema October 56, No.63.*

The first studios (from about 1895 to 1912) were, in effect, abandoned windowpanes through which the sun was able to penetrate; the film was dependent upon these rays over which they had no control. The first power taken over light was to control its entrance using lighting systems. The sun, therefore, started to be eliminated by reducing and not emphasizing it through the use of vellums (black or white cloths that spread across windowpanes).

Furthermore, given the weak speed of the film alone, the power of the sun could affect the film stock. The first orthochromatic film stocks were very noticeable (6 to 8 ASA initially and up to 20 ASA), and they therefore required an optimal solar light.

In this era cinematographers were more concerned by disturbing the film stock rather than creating a language with the light (beyond this new medium fascinated by for its very realistic resemblance).

After 1912, the first true studios arrived, concurrently with the emergence of the first spotlights with brightness that reinforced the sunlight at the outset, but the principal problem with these spotlights was that they produced a hot light, with a temperature of very low color and therefore (hardly actinic- chemical change from rays in UV spectrum) not very actinic. The first orthochromatic film stocks were almost unaffected by warm tones, every quickly, one would resort to lamps that emitted a cold light: mercury lamps and arc lamps.

*A studio of the “American Film Manufacturing Company” in 1916, the sun is diffused by the thin cotton sheets suspended just above the set, which creates a large extent of lighting, a reflector is held to the right of the camera to soften the light on the actors (a row of “flood” is suspended on top of the walls of the set, but it is dull)*

## **IMAGE**

This poses a problem for the treatment of the face: how can one give effect to warm skin on film stock sensitive to blue?

The actors became covered in a thick white makeup, which masked all the reddish parts of their faces, their lips, the red outline of their eyes, and their faces' complexion.

This harsh makeup was jeopardized by the heat emitted by the arcs (in effect these presented major practical inconveniences, not allowing up to date alternatives to function, they required the use of up-to-date generators to continue to emit a strong heat).

These grand devices (until 1915, the preoccupation was always how it would affect the film stock), installation of batteries of powerful spotlights... restricted the actors and blamed their characteristics. First a technical necessity, this type of makeup entered in the codes of representative institutions where it resided for a while after the arrival of panchromatic film.

### **Griffith and Billy Bitzer**

The first close-ups on actors arrived notably with Griffith (beyond the experiments of Edison or of Fred Ott... not integrated in a narrative), and at the same time in Russia with Eisenstein.

One of his innovations was conceived editing a succession of shots in one same action envisioned under difference angles and point of view in order to create an emotion. He decided then to approach the camera of the actors for the film "*The Musketeers of Pig Alley*" in 1912. He was also one of the first to "dramatize" light.

But, in moving back to the debut of the close-up in its historical context, there was a major backlash from the public in relation to the size of the images. The images of human bodies projected on the large screen, when seen from very close, produced a negative reaction. These images gave the body a monstrous and very unreal character.

"They spoke of 'large heads', of dumb giants, they criticized the directors for ignoring the fact that a head couldn't move by itself, without the help of a body and arms. In short, it seemed unnatural. And yet a short time later, during the twenties, Jean Epstein could say that the close-up was 'the soul of film'. *Jacque Aumont, "The Image", Nathan Edition, 1990.*

From this moment, they slowly started to sculpt the lighting on sets and faces. They became expressive landscapes.

But, at the beginning, a large number of American films were exposed to the light of California, without fineness and much contrast.

Billy Bitzer was one of the first directors of photography to have "worked" the close-up; he was Griffith's leading cameraman.

He started his career in 1896 as director of photography. When he met Griffith in 1908 (during the short film, "*Disastrous Escape*"), they then started a long collaboration that lasted until the end of Bitzer's career. Bitzer, throughout his entire career, was always innovating and refining existing technologies and inventing notably new ones on the close-up takes.

He was one of the originals, for example, to close a scene by closing the diaphragm, thus diffusing the spotlights. This partook in the idea of lighting a film based entirely on the interior of the studio and depending on the aid of artificial light. He very quickly became the first specialist of the close-up, as the inventor of the techniques using back light in hair and the soft frontal light. He used a special close-up lens similar to that of Zeiss (the arrival of the first Zeiss lenses were around 1926).

The work of Bitzer is very interesting on Lillian Gish, notably in “Birth of a Nation”, 1915, especially when it is known that the film was lit using only natural daylight. The light made itself useful in the work of the reflective panels, of the large broadcasting cloths, as well as in the general lighting.

In this film, the use of close-ups is rather rare, which makes a very strong impact.

The first close-up on Lillian Gish is of a tightened size but is still more concentrated on the face thanks to the use of a hidden surrounding round form. This process detaches itself more from the set: there is no longer a surrounding black face. Lillian Gish emerges with a dreamlike impression through the use of this effect. The face is lit across, the light is very soft.

One remarks also that the rendering of the skin is very white as a result of the use of the orthochromatic film stock (there is no detail on the skin at all), accentuated still by the angelic side of the actress.

**IMAGE**

**IMAGE**

*Lillian Gish in “Birth of a Nation”, her face surrounded by black as a result of the use of the diaphragm by Billy Bitzer*

Billy Bitzer already began to use the back light in the actress’ hair, but it wasn’t until 1920 that the effect would begin almost systematically (it is also noted that these films, from the beginning of cinema, were shot outside, and that the actors were usually placed in the back light in comparison to the power of the California sun. One can think, therefore, that the back light is the origin of the constraint technique).

In “*Orphans of the Storm*”, by Griffith (1921), one will note many more close-ups in the editorial script. As soon as there is an emotion, the camera moves closer in order to intensify it.

Here, there is more elaborated light at work on the faces; each actress (the main ones in every case) will have their back light on their hair, as these manners in which the light works are unlikely.

On the reverse angle between the two sisters, the lighting device functions exactly the same on one as it is on the other. Lighting continuity between a close-up and wider shots doesn't exist, notably as a result of the use of the back light for each close-up. There is therefore a pursuit of the development of the woman; of eroticization at this instant (one will note that even the men have “their” backlight in the close-up).

**IMAGE**

**IMAGE**

**IMAGE**

*Field, reverse angle shooting, in the film “Orphans of the Storm”, each actress has her back light, the direction of the light from the set hardly matters*

It must be noted also that after 1916, one starts to use diffuser filters on the heads (the first using this system would be Edward Wynard in “*Fanchon the Criker*” (1915) by James Kirkwood).

Billy Bitzer would go on neutralizing backgrounds, using black and grey backgrounds, to bring all of the attention to the woman's face. This effect is also produced thanks to the emerging use of long focal lengths for close-ups on the actors that completely detach their face from the set; the directors start to use different focal lengths around 1916.

But, it was around 1920 that Charles Rosher and Karl Strüss brought the art of lighting faces to the cinema. These two cameramen were first famous as portrait photographers in the height of the pictorialist period (pictorialism subscribes to the idea that photographic art must simulate painting and etching, and therefore stimulate the composition also).



## 2. The Birth of the Art of Lighting Faces from 1915 to 1930

### Charles Rosher and Karl Strüss

*Illustration of the Pictorialism of the era*

**IMAGE**

**IMAGE**

**IMAGE**

*From left to right: Karl Strüss photography, from Weston and from Puyo.*

Karl Strüss, who at the beginning of his career worked for magazines like Vogue, Vanity Fair, or even Harper's Bazaar (he always said that he didn't do fashion photography), came up with, in 1909, a "soft focus" lens, the "Strüss pictorial lens", that would become a used lens for cinema (the first form of "soft focus" appeared around 1915, which is notable in "*Fanchon the Cricket*" by James Kirkwood). This loss of sharpness was obtained by gently transferring the focus made on the subject. It was not but a year later that the cameraman, John Leezer was at the root of the "soft focus" process, obtained by placing gauze on the lens, getting under way what would be picked up by Billy Bitzer (*source: "Hollywood cameraman"*).

Karl Strüss arrived in California in keeping with the spirit that he would be better than the leading cameramen working in Hollywood.

By applying them to film, the majority of things that he had learned in artistic pictorial photography would help to inspire a sense of beauty in an emerging industry that had only just discovered its power of fascination.

He started to put in place his aestheticism throughout the twenties (he became the leading cameraman for Cecil B. DeMille and the photographer for Gloria Swanson) that would find its success in “*Sunrise*” in 1927, already very influenced by German expressionism.

Charles Rosher, having done significant research on the close-up, in glorifying and in always trying to convey beautiful actresses started off with photography and subsequently became a field cameraman. He then arrived in Hollywood in 1913, and established himself as a leading cameraman. Very quickly, he achieved large success beside the actresses; he became the favored leading cameraman of Mary Pickford for example (who wouldn’t even tolerate being photographed sideways!).

## **IMAGE**

*Photographic illustration by Charles Rosher:*

*A close-up from “Daddy-Long-Legs”, 1919, of Marshall Neilan, lit by Charles Rosher with two directional backlights, coming from each side of her head and with a principle source on the front and two floating headlights on each side of her face, here, there is no diffusion of the image as a result of the use of a filter in the camera*

Beginning in the twenties, it became common practice in the United States to deal with light on the close-ups of actors separately from the light on the set that was seen as a distance shot. And it was in the years surrounding 1917 that leading cameramen like Charles Rosher put in place those which were going to be the standards of lighting on actors, which had already been experimented with in photography.

The most common practice of this light on faces was having one key light directed on the

face coming from one side of the camera, one weaker light coming from the other side of the camera and one backlight hitting the hair and the back of the actor. These well spread axes depended on the axis of the actor's look. "The actor must keep this same position, before the development of softer lights, the very directional style of the lights limited the actors in their movements and their head positions, not making the unsightly shades very apparent". *Michael D. Margulies, ASC in "Film Lighting" by Kris Malkiewicz, edited by Prentice Hall Press, 1986.*

In addition to the good position of the lights directed on the face, the power of the principal light and of the recovery was good. In effect, before, it was rather common to see on each side of the camera two lights of equal power, which produced two thick shades on each side of the nose.

The progress of Charles Rosher in this "respect" of the actor's face could be illustrated by the difference in his work between two films, "*The Sowers*" (1916, by William C. De Mille) and "*The Secret Game*" (1917, by William C. De Mille). In the first, the light on the actress is flat, due certainly to the equal power of the recovery and the principal light, but in the 1917 film, the position and power of these lights are better judged. The principal light is always placed higher than the look; it isn't until later that the axis will start to be moved up, a "key light".

As with the photography of "*Daddy-Long-Legs*", at the beginning of the twenties, one saw the appearance of a modification to the use of a unique back light. This process could be combined with a unique principal light, without adjustment for giving a sort of alternative to the three point lighting. One again sees the combination of four point lighting that was used less initially:

**IMAGE**

**IMAGE**

**IMAGE**

The framework of “*Sunrise*” was co-signed by Charles Rosher and Karl Strüss, and was given an Oscar that was shared by the two men. Excluding the beauty placed on the actresses, light dramatized itself and gave a sense to the visual image of the characters; it is completely immersed in the German expressionism.

In this film, there are two entities, the country woman, representing purity, love...and the city woman, full of corruption.

The light on the first is very soft, slightly sideways (the triangle technique is found here again), caught by another weaker source, the other in her hair is very light and soft. The execution is very delicate, even though one can't affirm the use of a “soft focus”, the skin is very white but, there are shades of gray. One can assume that the film was shot with a panoramic film stock (the arrival of the panchromatic is dated around 1925, here the faces are no longer white like masks, there are shades of gray).

The woman “of vice” is shown in a very erotic sense, with stronger, more forceful light.

**IMAGE**

**IMAGE**

**IMAGE**

**IMAGE**

*The country woman and the mistress (the city woman) in “Sunrise”.*

At the end of the film, the “country” woman is still put in more beauty, in the same manner, a more marked light, lips and eyes more made-up. She became again the one to be loved, and from this made an object of desire in the eyes of the countryman.

### **IMAGE**

Very quickly, the leading cameramen researched to develop the actresses, glorify them in the first place, and return their expressive traits.  
This entire period heavily influenced Hollywood and the classic period.

### **3. The Influence of German Expressionism, 1920 through 1930**

During the twenties and thirties, a new style emerged with heavily theatrical lighting: German expressionism.

Here, the light was much stronger on the faces.

The expressionist light followed a German romantic tradition, an ideology, but was also completely dependent upon not too much present to disturb the orthochromatic film stock, “it is from the theater that cinema took it all: its extreme acting, its scene, its angular sets, its powerfully evocative lighting”. *Fabrice Revault D’Allonnes, “Light in Cinema”, Edition of Cinema Notebooks, 1991.*

This very directional and concentrated light went into the depth of the faces.

The leading symbolic cameramen of these styles were Karl Freund, Fritz Arno Wagner or still Eugen Shüfftan, they would mark American and international filmmaking, inheriting photographic expressivity.

#### **Fritz Arno Wagner**

Fritz Arno Wagner began his career as a field cameraman in New York, but it was in Germany, his home country, where he became a leading cameraman in 1919. During the twenties, he became the most popular leading cameraman in Germany and would play an important role in the expressionist movement. In 1922, he lit “*Nosferatu*”, Murnau’s first big success.

This film dignified the expressionist style, allowing for a very suspenseful experience.

This film was colored, this effect presented itself during the expressionist period and allowed for feelings sometimes warm in the day and suspenseful and cold at night, signaling the presence of “*Nosferatu*”.

All in all, “*Nosferatu*” aimed to enrich and fuel this suspenseful feeling, the features and sounds of the faces were strongly sculpted and contrasted, and the carnations more “textured”. The cameraman dared the contrast, on the set and with the characters, the light was the story. He utilized harsh lights, with or without adjustment. The lighting on the female character was never flat, sometimes it exposed a part of the face, and sometimes, it lit itself allowing harsher shades to appear on it.

## IMAGE

## IMAGE

*The woman in “Nosferatu”, contrast and shadows*

As with all these “threats” to the camera operation of the actress, this one stayed very beautiful and desirable.

The work of Fritz Arno Wagner was also very interesting in Murnau’s “*Faust*”, where the lighting of the faces was this time dramatized more “violently”.

### Karl Freund

Karl Freund was a leading cameraman of Czech descent; his biggest successes are associated most with German cinema, the majority from Murnau but also Wegner’s “*le Golem*” or Dreyer’s “*Mikael*”.

In 1924, Freund worked for Murnau who knew the celebrity two years beforehand, following “*Nosferatu*”. They would work together again on “*The Last of the Men*” and then on “*Faust*” in 1926.

In 1927, he met Fritz Lang, and they collaborated on “*Metropolis*”, on which Freund’s work is remarkable.

Here the make-up was sharpened, which comes to confirm the frightening climate established by the lights and the set. Knowing that the use of the panchromatic film stock had already emerged two years before, at the moment of the direction of “*Metropolis*”, being from May 1925 to October 1926, one can consider that they used this type of film stock, giving credit to its considerable technical advantages (calling all, as well as this film stock not titled 10 ASA in its beginning, 20 in the thirties and 80 in the forties, it necessitated still more light).

The use of light is very dramatic and symbolic. For example, Freund made a contrast between the false and true Maria. The first flash of one thousand bursts reflected the light on the entire body. The true Maria, the first time she arrives on screen, is enveloped in a mark of light.

In more than the light for each character, the face suffers from “attacks” of light. Freund dared a strong dramatization of light, in “burning” the face of Maria; it is then discovered by the professor. From the large, severe shades that appeared on Maria’s face, came still these “threats”.

Freund created from a contrast on Maria, credible presence of the woman in the set, in the beginning of the film, she is captive in the laboratory of the “crazy scientist”, who wants to take her face to give to the machine. The light pierces difficultly by the window; the place is very somber, in the basement. The dramatization of the space and the suspenseful atmosphere evokes a certain feeling of treatment towards the characters.

**IMAGE**

**IMAGE**

*The character of Maria trapped in the laboratory of the crazy scientist in “Metropolis”*



Always in this idea of sculpting lines and texturing, the work of photographer Helmar Lerski has also strongly influenced the way of lighting of cameramen like Eugen Shüfftan (particularly the lighting that arrived in his paroxysm, but also later in “*Eyes Without Faces*” by Franju). One finds again the influence of his work in “*The Passion of Joan of Arc*” by Dreyer, lit by Rudolph Mate where there is a true search to the level of the return of the skin.

**IMAGE**

**IMAGE**

*Photographs by Helmar Lerski*

Dreyer’s Joan of Arc was a large revolution in the level of the treatment of the skin but also of the composition of the frames, this way of framing the large shots was very new and staggering, the observer was the closest he could be to the face and the image came to touch the truth of the skin’s texture, of its form.

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“It’s from now on for me a film of surprising singularity. Not only as a result of the systematic utilization of close-ups, but because these close-ups don’t manage to function like the field-reverse angle shooting. It is no longer that I am successful in analyzing the sentiment that gives me these close-ups: these heads are not only isolated by the frame, but truly decapitated, sectioned by the edges of the frame. And I would think back to the image of Marie-Antoinette at the beginning of the Revolution seeing all of a sudden in the frame of the window the face of her friend, the princess of Lamballe, filed to the end of a pike. *The Passion of Joan of Arc* seems to propose another perception of the close-up which competed in the majority of films where it is assimilated in an effect of magnification: the close-up grows, comes together. According to Dreyer, it isolates, it separates the head from the rest of the body. One could almost say, in his opinion, Joan of Arc wasn’t lit, but decapitated. It is thus the guillotine that invented the close-up, well before the film industry!” *Andre S. Labarthe (interview recorded by Bertrand Keraël for the BIFI June 16 2004).*

**IMAGE**

**IMAGE**

**IMAGE**

**IMAGE**

*Maria Falconetti in “The Passion of Joan of Arc”*

The face is framed in a strongly tilted and low angled shot, sectioned. Joan is conveyed very humanly, the texture of her skin is visible and bright, then she becomes holy, her face immaculate, transparent. On very clear background, Fabrice Revault D’Allonnes speaks of “purity and cruelty from Dreyer, an obtuse purity that is made, not stopped from frightening”. *“The light of cinema”, Fabrice Revault D’Allonnes, notebook of cinema.*

Rudolph Mateschke showed in 1928 through his work for “Joan of Arc”, he would then return with Dreyer for other films. In 1932, also interested in the level of image work, “Vampire”, his vaporous photography, gave a strong dreamlike impression, thanks to the use again of gauze on the lens and overexposure.

#### 4. The Golden Age of American Cinema, 1930 through 1950

Hollywood's classic Golden Age from the 1930s to the 1950s, was strongly influenced by Charles Rosher's "pictorial" images in the art of face lighting, by of the dramatization of German expressionism, and by many European films: "this photographic quality of European films, these pictorial values evidently provoke the covetousness of American cinema and these could draw, during three decades, the essential constituents of its golden age." (*Cinematography Number 68*), (American cinema borrows from European cinema, notably in Tournier, an esthetic reality, styled through games, lighting, decorations "The bluebird", "Prunella" source: *Cinematography Number 1*).

"The classic triple imperative of dramatization, organization into a hierarchy, and readability that exemplarily incarnate the Hollywood image, does not initially stray from tensions within its own terms" (*Fabrice Revault D'Allones, "Light in Cinema"*).

One can also discuss the choice in lighting, the organization of hierarchy of the lighting, and the star-system that take place at this time.

Beginning in 1930, several technological advances come to mark the cinema of the era. First of all, panchromatic film stock, even though it appeared in 1923, began to be truly useful in 1925, and made it into 'unanimity' in the early '30's. This type of film, extremely advantageous for the leading cameramen, was sensible to all spectrums of lighting, and since then the image has become more moderate. One loses the contrast that is imposed by the orthochromatic film stock.

This support requires even more lighting, but the '30s were also marked with the arrival of new spotlights and accessories that permit the cameramen to be much more precise in their work, notably the spotlights with Fresnel lens and lighting with incandescent tungsten lamps. The range of spotlights becomes diversified; one can choose a source of function in its power. The cameramen can also use the soft sources or highly directionally aimed sources. (It is important to note that the equipment used up until 1940, the heavy Mole Richardson and Kliegs, these powerful arc lamps provoked in their subjects lighting that would burn the retinas, "Kleig eye" because of strong rates of UV from the lamps. The working conditions of the actors were therefore very difficult.)

The usage of the long focal was intensified. The anti-reflection treatment of the objectives is generalized only after the Second World War. The lack of treatment often blurs images and creates halos around images that are very well-lit in the '30s.

The famous make-up artist Max Factor is at the beginning of what one calls panchromatic make-up which better reflects the lighting. (With the arrival of color, he also gave “pancake” make-up, perfectly suiting the new support, while the other products change to reds or greens with the proceeding Technicolor.)

All these new techniques go towards the sense of a perfectly selective, elective, and highly sophisticated lighting of classic cinema.

The major studios had a big role in the implementation of classic estheticism. In effect, it was they who sometimes dictated the manner in which to use lighting with the actors. This speaks to the “butterfly style” known well as the “Paramount” style (“Hollywood portrait”, by Roger Hicks and Christopher Nisperos, edited by Collins and Brown, 2000) (principal lighting, placed upright very lightly brought forth by the axis of the camera, producing shadows on the nose, and small wings, and hence creating the name *butterfly*).

The two studios reflective of this idea of classic cinema are MGM and Paramount, which clearly imposed its rules: the actors, the directors, the head cameramen, were all under contract over several years; they represented the “image” of the company.

The studios created in all pieces their Stars, be it Joan Crawford, Greta Garbo or even still Ava Gardner for MGM and Mary Pickford, Clara Bow, Audrey Hepburn...for Paramount (without forgetting the well-known male stars).

These actresses were students to a rank of Stars, Goddesses, and Seductresses: untouchable women. All the casting of these women should only glorify them, make them canon law of beauty, objects of desire.

It is also at this moment that cinema became an industry in the United States. The Stars would attract the public; they would arouse desire and admiration. The people that the public saw on the shiny magazine paper were the same people they saw in the films.

The cameramen had the role, therefore of glorifying the actress, this star-system was materialized by a few couples of cameramen-actresses, such as: Williams Daniels/Greta Garbo, James Wong Howe/Myrna Loy for MGM, Charles Lang/Audrey Hepburn, Lee Garmes/Marlène Dietrich for Paramount, and Georges Barnes/Joan Blondell for Warner (these last couples did not end up getting married). (In France, one must take note of couples like Lucien Ballard/Merle Oberon, and Christian Matras/Yvonne Printemps who were also married).

The manner of lighting for these stars was always the same, one sometimes asked to copy the work of the photographers for the close-ups in the cinema. Certain directions were given by the cameramen, such as “Put your shadows where you want but not over your face,” reports cameraman Georges Folsey.

For MGM, Louis B. Mayer repudiated the overly elevated contrasts and welcomed equal lighting. Warner’s style was supported by longevity and nocturnal ambiances that corresponded with his social and black films.

John Alton gives a lesson of lighting of the female face in his book “Painting with

Light,” a manner adopted by many leading cameramen of the era: “key flattering light, for the big screen for women is without a doubt in the lighting of the face, placed a bit higher than the height of the eyes. Light on the face is not necessarily a soft light, exaggerate a light contrast kicker and another contrast just behind the head of the subject, facing the axis of the camera, and a certain roundness of the face will appear, giving even more beauty.”

This system destined to reveal the structure of faces through shadows, became a classic point of lighting. For Joe Biroc, the lighting of faces was at that point such a priority that he would eventually deny all realist logic: “If a character finds himself directly beside a window through which the sun is shining, and if the origin of this lighting gives a result that does not satisfy, I do not hesitate to light from a completely opposing direction.” (Charlie Vandamme “Actress Lighting”)

### Lee Garmes

I am interested in starting with the trio of Lee Garmes-Dietrich-Stenberg, a trio emblematic of the typical Hollywood glamour style.

Lee Garmes debuted in the capacity of leading cameraman in 1918 with “Hope Chest,” where he did the lighting for Dorothy Gish, and then more than 4 other films with her.

He started doing the lighting for Marlène Dietrich in 1930 with the film “Morocco” (“Burning Hearts”) produced by Joseph Von Stenberg.

Rembrandt has always been Garmes’ favorite artist, he uses a great deal of his north-light technique, “I fell in love with the north-light, and used it as my signature” (Lee Garmes for “Hollywood cameramen”). This lighting, obtained by a spotlight raised towards the face at an angle of 45 degrees, served greatly for certain women.

He would use this technique for a larger number of female actresses with whom he worked, and notably for Dietrich, for which he says: “the Dietrich face is my creation.”

However, in lighting Dietrich in “Morocco,” not having had the time to do tests for the actress, he watched “The Blue Angel” and based it off of this film.

“I lit her with side light a half tone so that one half of her was bright and the other half was in a shadow. I looked at the first day’s work and I thought ‘my God I can’t do this, it is exactly what Bill Daniels is doing with Garbo!’ So without saying anything to Jo’ (Joseph Stenberg), I changed the North light effect. He had no suggestions for changes, he went ahead and let me do what I wanted.”

Lighting for Dietrich was found and maintained throughout the entirety of her career.

The first thing that one remarks while watching “*Burning Hearts*” is the total absence of link shot between the large shots and close-ups. The lighting for Dietrich for the big screen is zenithal, re-releases her high cheekbones (this morphology becomes one of the major characteristics of Dietrich’s face, which was very popular during this era, she herself would even

go to have her molars pulled out in order to increase her roles) and the oval shape of her face, bringing all our attention to her eyes. This lighting also creates a very mysterious side to her seductive character.

The big screen had an important impact for her because there were very few close-ups in the film.

The false link shot is due firstly to the usage of soft focus filters, the 'nearly' systematic usage of the North light, and if she was given light from the side of a major shot, from the faint overexposure of her skin and the contrast with her very dark hair.

The attention is carried even more so on the face when Garmes places Dietrich in deep shadows when she comes back from cutting her mane.

One can remark that even in the major shots, the focus is brought only to her face, often the clothes and the rest of the body are less exposed (as well as the other characters!)

## **IMAGE**

### *Marlène Dietrich in "Morocco"*

In "Shanghai Express," one can feel the influence of expressionism, Garmes' lighting in very sculpted, ambiance lighting with large shadows on the set. He dares to put the shadow on the star's face, which divides it. Marlène does not lose any of her beauty; she simply becomes much more mysterious.

Then Garmes returns to the eternal North light. This lighting on the actress is very precise, one can point out that the displacements of the actress are reduced greatly; her lighting can therefore stay the same throughout the film, no matter the set or ambiance lighting. There is no evolution of the lighting on her face.

But here, the link shot is already a bit more respected, the cameraman finds a system to always maintain the backlighting of her face in all the types of shots, in reinforcing his two sources on the big screen. There is no more of a difference in direction of lighting than in the close-up.

This lighting works very well for Marlène, one of the magnificent shots of her is where she leans back against the train wall, looking upwards; another is in where she is lighted with a prolonged north light without making any adjustments.

## IMAGE

## IMAGE

### *Marlène Dietrich in "Shangai Express"*

This actress was aware of her physique and knew which lighting would suit it best, to the point of instructing the lead cameraman in his work, "educated by Stenberg of the importance of photography and endowed with infallible instinct, Dietrich licked her finger to be able to taste the intensity of the light: she knew the exact temperature that would make her most photogenic" (*Cinematography Number 1*), another lead cameraman relates that she used a mirror in order to see her lighting, and would make corrections based on the reflection that she saw as most fit.

One may sometimes feel that the star was less pretty by profile than by face, therefore the cameramen avoided as much as possible in the cut-outs to film the actress from the side.

Certain actresses' obsessions to always show their best profile confers a very static attitude within their industry, going all the way to the appearance of having less emotional expressions on their faces, in order to deny the emergence of a wrinkle, or asymmetry...

Jacques Aumont spoke of masks in order to describe Marlène Dietrich's face "a head, an inexpressive mask through which hardly any inkling of a soul passes through" (*From the Face to the Cinema*).

This manner of being must have been quite an ordeal for the head cameramen, and in seemingly similar conditions a contradiction has arisen, between the lighting of the character and that of the star: "In the most exaggerated situations, the director of photography is brought in to



envision the lighting of the star” (who could, of course, be a man) primarily in terms of conformity to myth. The quality of his work is most importantly measured by his aptitude in exalting the mythical image of the actor. In this case, lighting the star is actually lighting two people who, if the project is incoherent, could be antagonists to one another.” (*Charlie Van damme, “Actress Lighting”*).

The film can find itself in two premises, as Fabrice Revault D’Allonnes emphasizes: “In the classic camera acting of an actor, and all the more a star (especially a female star), it is without a doubt that it is tied at the highest point to the triple emerging stakes. Camera acting is not only a purely esthetic approach: it is also about choosing the right face of the actor, especially of the star (hierarchy), in making him expressive (dramatization), but without damaging or disfiguring him....dramatization demands and pushes this idea forward.” (*“Lighting in Cinema”*).

### **Williams Daniels**

Williams Daniels, during his time, was tied to actress Greta Garbo. His career lasted 50 years, from “Foolish Wives,” (1922, by Erich Von Stroheim) to “Move,” (1970, by Stuart Rosenberg). He worked on other films before 1922 for which he was not credited. But, he was especially known for being Greta Garbo’s cameraman and worked regularly with director Erich Von Stroheim.

For the film “*Queen Christine*” in 1935, Greta Garbo disguised herself as a man; however, we are still in the presence of the actress, of the star. She was lighted in the same manner as all the other films she had done, and was also heavily made-up. As if it would be impossible to take away her femininity or her photogenic character.

As Lee Garmes described, Daniels’ lighting on Garbo used a principal source from her side, recaptured by another spotlight on the other side, forming a light contrast on her face, which creates a beautiful model. During the course of the film, her lighting was always done in the same manner, bi-chromatic, without mattering the place or moment. Realism was not the word of charge in the film.

**IMAGE**

**IMAGE**

## IMAGE

### Greta Garbo in “Queen Christine”

However, Daniels defended himself from the accusation of having confided Garbo into one particular style; he proposed instead that he had done a number of faces for Garbo, and that his job changes considerably in accordance to the story.

“I didn’t create a ‘Garbo face.’ I just did portraits of her I would have done for any star. My lighting of her was determined by the requirements of a scene. I didn’t, as some say I did, keep one side of her face light and the other dark. But I did always try to make the camera peer into the eyes, to see what was there.” *William Daniels*

In a less recent film, “The Flesh and the Devil,” from 1926, Daniels dared to use contrast on the face; he used violent lighting for the lower part of the face, a luminous base normally banned by the cameramen. Here it was more realistic and the lighting radically dramatized the image without affecting her photogenic tendencies. This sequence’s lighting gives a very particular ambiance, Garbo looks beautiful, but it is a dangerous and mysterious beauty.

**IMAGE**

**IMAGE**

**IMAGE**

*The different faces of Greta Garbo in “Flesh and the Devil”*

Garbo’s exceptional ability to be photogenic was able to work well with a lot of lighting. The Garbo/Daniels pair lasted for several years, Daniels was very fond of the actress; he was her cameraman for a large number of films directed by all sorts of different people.

## **James Wong Howe**

Another very important lead cameraman of this period in Hollywood is James Wong Howe. Arriving in California at the age of 5, he worked as assistant cameraman for De Mille's films, and then as photographer of film sets. He made much more money selling his photos of the stars than in working with the studios. However, it was when actress Mary Miles Winter asked if he would like to photograph her that James Wong Howe began to receive some acclaim.

James Wong Howe produced a series of photos of the actress, in which her blue eyes seem glassy, very clear in the orthochromatic film (one sometimes calls it the fish look), standing out as dark and very deep. Howe used black velour during his photo sessions with the actress, and he became aware that this would reflect with her eyes and make them even darker still.

Mary Miles Winter asked James to do the same thing in the film, as her leading cameraman. Soon enough, all the blue-eyed actors wanted him to photograph them as well, and from here his career took off.

In 1922, he did the lighting for "Drums of Fate," with Mary Miles Winter, and then many others; he became well known for doing a good job of lighting for the actresses.

James Wong Howe is also one of the rare cameramen that seek to respect the logic within lighting, all in searching for the best atmosphere but without altering the photogenic quality of any of the actresses.

"I have a basic approach that goes on from film to film: to make all the sources of light absolutely naturalistic." (James Wong Howe, "Hollywood cameraman").

In the film "The Untouchable" ("The Thin Man," 1934) one can already see the many differences in the codes of directing.

Here, James Wong Howe, influenced by German cinema of the 1920s, gives the film an expressionist tendency, covering the walls in heavy shadows.

Always in the ideology of realism, Howe set the shadows of the male character upon the actress, something that was never done during the era. He justified his lighting with the light that already existed on the set. The horizontal beam of light or the upwards tilt are frequently used, effects that are justified by the lampshade set on a table. In one sequence, a strong nose shadow that is climbing light is projected on Myrna Loy's face (we are far from the key light: 45 degrees!)

Howe himself justifies his contrasts with the outside fields in closed shots. The lighting varies throughout the film, there is no 'one' lighting for the actress. He does not overexpose female faces. It is important to note that the film does not center itself on the actresses; their characters are not objects of desire. Myrna Loy plays a female detective who is clumsy and often makes funny faces, which adds to her charm.

Howe knew how to combine two approaches, all the more style-conscious in lighting his characters instead of the actors, and much more attentive to the atmosphere and the truth of the characters instead of the star-system.

**IMAGE**

**IMAGE**

**IMAGE**

*Myrna Loy in "The Thin Man"*

In "Zenda's Prisoner" (1937, John Cromwell), Howe works with the model of the face without forcibly adding backlighting, for the first big shot of the film, he uses the North light in making it showcase the handsome traits of Madeleine Carroll's face. But this lighting will not be systematic; she is also photogenic when having lighting from the side, contrasted. Howe uses varying lighting for her in order to make her truly magnificent in each big shot.

In the movie, the woman is already highly eroticized with white and pure skin, therefore Howe uses filters. But, the relationship between the actress and the male character work well together,

the filter is soft and light enough, perhaps he also used a filter for the man in the main shot?

**IMAGE**

**IMAGE**

*Madeleine Carroll in “ Zenda’s Prisoner ”*

James Wong Howe’s step was definitively modern; he passed to color in 1950 with success, with “The Eagle and the Hawk,” a film in Technicolor, where the cinematographic techniques did not cease to add to the precision of the image. Other problems arose for the cameraman with the advent of color, the objectives of anti-reflective processing and an increasingly spotted image. This progress made the details of the skin stand out, and all the little flaws that had once been invisible. Classical cinema and its overexposing black and white erased all imperfections.

(the Technicolor process developed starting in 1935 and maintained its dominance until halfway through the ‘50s, but one returns to a weak sensibility, arriving after Eastman color which gave a more realistic appearance, restoring a large array of colors.)

## *5. Modern Cinema from 1945 to 1960*

It is with modern cinema, starting with Italian neorealism after the New Vague, that a rupture between the hierarchy of lighting and sophistication of photogeneity that a new more modern take to photography is imposed.

“There is an opposition of two conceptions of beauty on the face: classic, fussy, made-up, ‘thick and heavily done’ (according Almendros’ expression); or a modern beauty, brute, frank, and above all simple and sober, natural.” (Fabrice Revault d’Allones, “Light in the Cinema”).

The conception of cinema after the war breaks with the estheticism of classic cinema “Beauty is not more than the abstract and bluntness of photogeneity, less still than that which is made up and fabricated in glamour, but an interior personal beauty is a true reflection of the soul.” (“From the Face to the Cinema” J. Aumont). Jacques Aumont discusses the humanist face; it is the identification between a face in the movies and a human face. There exists some forcing from the documentary side: in Italian neo-realism, the actor is both the subject and the model. For Pasolini or even Visconti, the actors are amateurs, in “The Gospel According to St. Matthew”, the actor interpreting Christ is an amateur, and incarnates a model which is Christ.

Modern cinema pursues this concept but by other means.

The major changes in what is called modern cinema are in the granting of liberties for the camera and actor.

The camera becomes lighter, the films, more sensitive, (100-250 Asa in 1950, in black and white), the projectors (spotlights) flood, the usage of natural light which radically changes the style of the image, light is no longer optional, no longer allocated to play either a dramatic or significant role. It also becomes softer.

One will study the readability, lighting for the actor is sometimes done by a small projector (spotlight) placed above the camera. “The New Vague was born, principally, from the desires of film directors outside traditional and creative ties, and it is for these concise reasons of market economy, that lead to a rupture between the classic middle ground and the very little rigidity of cinematographic productions. This necessity of creation with technological means and reduced artistry contributed to a postponement in the questioning of method used in the industry, which had had the tendency to get stuck in its routines.” (H. Alekan “From Lights and From Shadows”)

One of the great novelties was of no longer having to separate the actors from the set, but instead of integrating them into one unified concept.

The actresses were made-up very little if at all; beauty is seen as natural, and one no longer seeks to idealize female characters.

## Nestor Almendros

Almendros, like a true cameramen of the New Vague, developed a modern art of full face lighting in response to the classical art of lighting, heading towards a documentary style inspired truth and sobriety.

In “My Night at Maud’s” (1969, Eric Rohmer), the face is submissive to the natural light, no longer overexposed, the face is equal to everything else. The character moves around in the set to the points where the lighting is equal. Naturalist lighting gives us the opportunity to see the face as it truly exists.

The woman is desirable because of her postures and attitudes. Almendros no longer unequally distributes the lighting, usually favoring women over women, nor does he use filters over the camera.

The lighting for the characters comes from existing lighting in the decorations or from outside; from street lamps, nighttime, the sun, the daylight...

The style is much more impressionist than by definition, characterized by a tendency to point out elusive impressions, and the mobility of phenomena, over its stable and conceptual aspects.

## IMAGE

## IMAGE

### *Francoise Fabian in “My Night at Maud’s”*

This estheticism was able to show the photogenic aspects of actress Anna Karina in “Living Her Life” Jean Seberg in “A Piece of Soufflé”. The actresses are very beautiful and carry with them a very modern image of femininity. Jean Seberg, in contrast with classical actresses, more often seems like the anti-woman, a missing boy, with short hair and androgynous allure.

Karina understood (because she had been a fashion model) the angle and expression



required so that her charm would come across as direct as possible. She also knew how to keep her 'veil' for long periods of time, how to keep one's attention, lowering her head in order to better uncover her face and express herself, at that instant and particular moment, the perfect and exact emotion. She possessed, in her shots, a supreme control of the image that she projected. These are the faces where sensuality joined candor; the woman is lively, vivid, and desirable, and carefree, the body is liberated.

The New Vague style did not neglect, as others had beforehand, the concept of lighting on the face. In "Living Her Life", Coutard very lightly overexposes 'Nana's' face, in maintaining a natural effect.

The actresses were never put under prolonged lighting.

If a scene were to take place outside with heavy natural sunlight, the actress would be placed under the shadow, or in backlight.

## **IMAGE**

### *Anna Karina in "Living Her Life"*

For Almendros, the camera becomes selective: "The truth is that the camera lenses love some women more than the others. The mystery of being photogenic has to do with bones. A person who has no bones is very difficult to light, the great beauty of the screen such as Garbo, Crawford... all have well structures faces. The nose was sufficient and well defined; they had cheek bones, well drawn eyebrows, splendid jaws.

A good bone structure in the face gives the light something to hold on to and allows it to create an interplay of shadows. If the face is flat, the light has nowhere to fall."

The arrival of color films did not change the style of photography; instead one went even more towards realism with its support.

However, one backtrack many studios did was towards a type of lighting that was very stylized, reborn from the leading cameramen themselves. This concept must adapt to the type of film or scene, because it is what ultimately determines its estheticism.

Truffaut, one of the many who worked with Almendros, also went towards the re-dramatization of lighting. But, Almendros, unlike Truffaut, always wanted to make sure to not overly diffuse his sources and effects; he always legitimized his effects by the presence of his sources within the image. (“Adèle H.”, “The Two English Women”...)

In “The Last Metro,” (1980, Truffaut) Almendros uses prolonged lighting; his film about the universe made this type of lighting the most esthetically pleasing for the given scenario.

Deneuve was glorified more because of her costumes, haircuts, and make-up, than because of lighting. Her lighting was often softly and lightly done from the side to her face, in contrary to the more common cut to the back approach. However, the film was registered in a sort of realism, therefore one should favor the link-shot; if one were to add lighting in the closed shot, it would not be noticeable.

The treatment of the face will, in reality, always be influenced by the methods set in place by the golden age of Hollywood. The face of a woman will always demand/command a great deal of attention. However, the style of the film will dictate the manner in which to use lighting for the face.

Despite everything, Almendros searches for ways to avoid overdoing the sources and effects within his films. He always legitimates his effects with the presence of the sources inside the image.

The cameramen-actresses pairs were established after the New Vague, such as Adjani-Lhomme, who together, made more than five films. In the same way as Nestor Almendros, Pierre Lhomme was completely tied to the estheticism of the New Vague in the beginning of his care, notably with Eustache, with whom he filmed “The Mother and the Prostitute”. He also did the lighting for films such as “Quartet” by James Ivory, where his sense of the esthetic was pushed to the extreme.

The accuracy of lighting on a particular actress is very sought-after; the cameraman must tie realism (likelihood) and the coherence of the lighting in relation to the scenario and the character, without destroying the photogeneity of the actress.

## 6. “Experimentations” with the Face

### Sven Nykvist

Another one of the well known leading cameramen, who anchored himself around the concept of lighting the “character” instead of the star, and has always tried to stick to the true sense of the scenario, was Sven Nykvist who worked with Bergman for a large portion of his life.

Sven Nykvist started to work with Bergman in 1953 for “The Night of the Stall keepers”; this collaboration will be seen again in 1960 for “The Source”, in the era from which the New Vague was born in France. “Both of them were tired of the lighting in studios. One wanted realism. One started by researching lighting.” (Sven Nykvist, Interview for the Cinema Notebooks Number 385, June 1986)

Nykvist pushed the director towards the direction of estheticism, far from the theatrical styles of his first films, towards simplicity and naturalism, even if he had never wanted to get stuck doing the same type of photo. He always tried to do different films and find a different style for each film.

“When you do complex staging you have to remember that you aren’t lighting for exposure. You are creating an ambiance, and you have to figure out how you are going to light into the actor’s eyes, or when appropriate, mask them. I have no preference for hard or soft light or any other style or technique. You should use the light that’s right.” Sven Nykvist

Bergman always worked with extremely beautiful women, who were all remarkably photogenic, he spoiled them, he had a terribly cruel relationship with his characters, and one always felt that he had a desire to degrade his actresses, to remove their plastic beauty or their youth, already seen earlier in “Monika.”

Their suffering is seen on the faces of the women that he filmed, and it does not increase throughout the course of the stories. “The face is like something that gnaws from within, not being able to contain itself, the whole being is eroded.” (“From the Face to the Cinema”, J. Aumont).

One can note certain figures that are used by Bergman and Sven Nykvist:

- a squished face, in a frame in order to help another face
- the face on screen from the front angle, very close
- the face eaten away by light and shadow
- and again, opposition: one face from the front view, and the other in profile

In “The Silence”, death takes shape very early in the face of Ingrid Thulin; she is sick and coughs a great deal. In the first sequence in the film, onboard the train, the lighting for the actress done while she is in the shower is severe, harsh, giving her face the allusion of a deathly mask.

The camera comes very close to these actresses, letting show the bags under their eyes, wrinkles,

and the pores of the skin. Bergman and Nykvist film faces with the intention of giving them a monstrous characteristic.

Ingrid Thulin's face will totally change with lighting, she becomes contrasted, sharp: a face of agony.

The cameraman will always use lighting tilting upwards, in order to make the bags under the eyes of the woman, stand out.

In "Persona," the usage of the close-up and of contrast is even more frequent. There is a remarkable evolution in the treatment of faces, in the beginning of the film, Nykvist depicts the faces with a soft light, they are filmed at a distance, and the viewer discovers two beautiful actresses.

However, the camera comes closer and closer, almost dissecting the face. This epidermic technique is due to the great precision of the film.

He dares to move closer to the faces, almost to the point of deforming them sometimes, with the usage of a large angle, these effects work perfectly for the direction or staging.

Here they experimented with a new way to focus the faces, in very close shots first, and then in placing the two actresses in the same frame.

Little by little, the directions become longer and straightforward, clearly separating the face into two sections. The faces have a good and a bad side.

Along with the coherence in relationship to the set, there is a sense in the lighting for the characters that does not enrich dramatization. Bibi Anderson becomes Liv Ullman; she is illuminated in the same contrast and bichromatic fashion.

He also overexposes and uses strong backlighting. He floods his characters in the night. Liv Ullman's face fills itself with this nighttime light in the beginning of the film and in this title, is magnificent. In her hospital room, while the lines become blurred, the light of her eyes continues to pierce through the darkness. One does not see any of her other traits, just two small white points that shine through the blackness.

**IMAGE**

**IMAGE**

*Bibi Anderson and Liv Ullman in the beginning of the film "Persona"*

**IMAGE**

*Liv Ullman's face is "attacked" by the lighting, deformed a bit by the focal short. The skin sweats and the make-up is vulgar.*

**IMAGE**

*Bibi Anderson "becomes" Liv Ullman, bichromy of lighting.*

**IMAGE**

*Opposition: face from the front and from profile.*

**IMAGE**

*The camera comes very close to the actress, dissecting her face.*

**IMAGE**

*The contours of the face are outlined by the whiteness.*

“The characters do not occupy the entire screen; they are entered in a whiteness.” (Assayas and Björkman - Conversation with Bergman, Paris, Cinema Notebooks, 1990). The contours are sometimes burned and are based in white that surrounds or engulfs the face, which redesigns a new line.

Nykvist has a deep knowledge of the faces of actresses, and it is certain that they have a lot of confidence in him; he has collaborated on several films with Bibi Anderson and Liv Ullman.

“That’s a problem today,” he says. “You are always working with new actors. You can’t always tell immediately how their faces will take light. The truth of the character is in their eyes. That’s how the audience gets to know them as human beings. It opens up their souls. When I was working with Ingmar and Liv Ullman, there were a few other actors who were always in his films. I can see it looking back on those movies now. I knew everything about photographing them. I learned to know their faces.”

Today, what is an attractive picture? To emphasize the actress, glorify her with all means? Or to research the truth of the character, a realistic beauty, the meaning, sometimes in suffering like in “Persona.”

Second part:

## *Study of the Face*

Portraiture holds an important place within the art of photography, and it deserves particular attention through the study of light.

Certain characteristics have been accepted by different societies as alluring, strange, hideous, peculiar, and unsettling. These characteristics can be either exaggerated or diminished by the clever use of lighting, makeup, hairstyle, wardrobe, and scene setting.

The face is handled neither well nor poorly in the absolute of photography. Thus, it is necessary to adapt and truthfully capture it in each situation.

Before filming an actor or actress, it is necessary to watch them, considering the best and worst way to illuminate them.

“How do you film an actor that you have come to know, film him well, film him poorly, portray him as beautiful or ugly. They emanate what is seen in his traits and the contours of his face. But not to film him for what he is: beautiful, transparent, hard, but to film him as the film wants, shooting and illuminating his character. To make light of his feelings and emotions. To illuminate him in his universe, in one way or another.”

*(Jacques Aumont, “From Face to the Cinema”).*

The human face has a universal shape, even if certain characteristics, such as big eyes or large ears, are more or less pronounced between one person and another. Despite these differences and difference in skin tones, the main effects of the lighting remain the same.

One thing is certain: when the face is illuminated in certain ways, unsightly shadows appear. These shadows can be less obvious with certain individuals: a person with a small nose will have a less bothersome shadow. The use of light can also change the appearance of age and beauty.

I have decided, thus, to follow this advice from Conrad Hall: “the best way to learn how to light the human face, whether it is stationary or moving, is through experimentation. The still camera, Super 8 film or video are affordable tools for such studies. Even careful observation of people in everyday light can be helpful” *(Kris Malkiewicz, “Film Lighting”).*

Through a study of photography, I will attempt to understand how lighting affects and interacts with the shape of the face, and how these effects suit certain faces, acknowledging their

irregularities and attempting to correct them.

Thus, to conduct this study, I chose a woman without any strong, marked facial characteristics. I will begin in the most basic manner possible: with one person and one spotlight.

To produce this series of photographs, I used a digital camera with an 85 mm lens and a directional, non-diffusing spotlight. The idea was to exaggerate the effects of the lighting in each of the positions. Through the completion of this process, I hope to discover the pitfalls and the possibilities of lighting, and thus strengthen my personal knowledge. Certain things seem obvious, but in an attempt to really know a face, to know its bumps and pitfalls into which one can fall, I needed to complete this study.

I decided to take these photos in black and white because I do not study skin tone, hairstyle, or wardrobe; my study extends only to form. I will later address questions about makeup and hairstyle.

I will begin by producing the spotlight's basic effects on the face, aligning the light either horizontally or vertically with the subject. I used directional lighting from a 300 watt Fresnel spotlight.

For now the model is situated facing the camera; I will later revisit other possible positions for the subject.

#### The vertical direction of lighting

**IMAGE**

**IMAGE**

**IMAGE**

**IMAGE**

A

B

C

D

Here, the lighting is placed from high to low, behind the subject and vice-versa, following the face's frontal axis.

Only when the camera is placed on this axis does the lighting have the tendency to flatten the model (A). This lighting can eventually help diminish wrinkles on a blemished face. When filming this way, however, there is the risk of blinding the subject with the spotlight.



The higher that the spotlight is raised and the more shadows that appear, the more attractive the model's face becomes (B).

Shadows, which have the tendency to age their subject, appear under the eyes, the eyebrows, the nose, the mouth, and the chin. This type of lighting accentuates the face's structure, and this lighting technique can be utilized to restructure a face that seems a bit too round or too flat. With faces that are very drawn or thin, however, this effect can bring out too many of the higher parts of the bone structure.

The trap for this type of lighting would be that their characteristics, when seen from too high in this way, become flat, crushing their traits. When seen from too low in this way, one loses the looks of the shadows and the lighting is too strong on their forehead. This lighting, at 45 degrees in front, is very symmetrical and can appear unnatural (C).

This lighting technique is Marlene Dietrich's famous North light, which fits particularly well, with high cheekbones and big eyes. Furthermore, because the nose is not too long, the lighting does not create an unsightly nose shadow. This facial structure corresponds perfectly with this lighting.

But the higher the light source climbs, the more accentuated the face's descending lines become (D). The face seems to close up, giving the impression that the length of the face is shrinking. The horizontal lines are accentuated by the shadows, which are created by the arch of the eyebrows, the line of the mouth, and the chin's shadow that covers the neck. This very hard lighting ages the subject.

After raising the light source up to 60 degrees, the model becomes very hard, but interestingly dramatic (E). The eyes are black, the nose appears longer, the face is very emaciated, creating a shadow that covers the chest; the eyelashes' shadows appear on the cheeks.

At 90 degrees, the lighting flattens the top of the head and the shoulders. The nose is well-lit, while the rest of the face is very dark (F).

Certain facial structures must be studied more thoroughly. Using light from above, how does light illuminate eyes that are sunken in by the eyebrows? Each camera man has his own solution...

In *"Film Lighting,"* Richmond Aguilar advises to illuminate from a lower point in the front: "you cannot go around to the side with your light and very high, because the eyes will be shadowed." But resolving this problem can create another when "the bridge of the nose is also a feature to be careful about because you might be able to get the light into the eyes from a certain position, only to see that it casts a bad nose shadow."

The solutions to retrieve light reflected from the eyes can be annoying for the actor. The camera man must then predict the tactic he can use, as Ralph Woolsey of ASC explained (*"Film Lighting"*), "Once on a western, we had a leading actor who wore one of those hats with a straight brim, pulled down right over his eyes. To fill the eyes in the outdoor scenes, I started to use a small hand-held reflector, down under the camera lens. And he said 'No, no you cannot use that. I can't stand it'. I was a little surprised because he was an experienced actor, but I replied, 'Ok, but you'll look like a raccoon if I don't'. We then agreed not to use it, and look at the dailies for proof. Of course nobody could see his eyes on the screen, and he agreed to the reflector right away."

**IMAGE**

**IMAGE**

G

H

The underlying lighting produces lively shadows that go towards the top (G and H), the model is very unusual. For the most part, the shadowed spots are under the eyebrows, the nose, and the chin. These parts of the face are completely illuminated, and strange, infrequent shadows appear. When the eyes are illuminated further, the effect is more strange and ungracious.

This procedure is used sparingly and is compensated by placing a key light up higher to erase the ungracious shadows and eliminate wrinkles.

Lighting from the horizontal direction

**IMAGE**

I

**IMAGE**

J

**IMAGE**

K

When one places the light source on the side of the face (I), the shadow that begins small at the tip of the nose spreads out onto the cheek (J). The opposite side of the face becomes slowly more obscure, dividing the face in two (K).

An ungracious shadow appears in the inner corner of the eye.

If, one lights both sides of the face, a line is drawn down the center of the face, from the forehead to the chin.

The light reflected by the eyes can become a trap. In this photo (I), the spotlight reflects only in the right eye, making the face unsymmetrical. One eye appears bigger than the other, and our attention is drawn to the more illuminated eye.

At times the eyes are in need of some additional light, but it must be measured and controlled; it cannot become an additional light on the rest of the face. Thanks to the reflective properties of the eye, some additional light can leave the eyes in obscurity without increasing their exposure. Each cameraman, in this manner, creates a little gleam within the eyes.

“To obtain a sparkle in the eyes, such a light must be placed close to the lens. But because of the eye’s curve, the eyes of certain people receive that light in their eye, from the side”. (*Gerald Millerson, “Lighting for Television and Motion Picture”*).

The little light mounted on the camera is traditionally known as the “Obie” Light, leading cameraman Lucien Ballard was one of the first to use this effect for his wife, actress Merle Oberon.\*

A traditional attitude of several filmmakers, most notably in Hollywood, was to want to see the eyes of an actor if they cost a lot of money, following the reasoning that most expensive actors see themselves receiving the most sophisticated reflection in their eyes. But this idea of light was abandoned, little by little... “The thought expressed by many cameramen comes to mind: What you don’t light is often more important than what you do light.” (K. Malkiewicz, “*Film Lighting*”).

NB:

*\*The eye’s reflection, other than its aesthetic effect, can become a staging effect, such as in “Blade Runner” where Jordan Cronenweth gave strange looks to “replicants” by a round reflection formed around his iris. He used a system of half-aluminum mirrors placed in front of the lens at 45 degrees, which reflected a little source of light (most are fixed on the camera). The light reflected by the mirror reaches the eyes’ optic axis. It is thus possible to maneuver the camera with a light staying focused on the optic axis. (K. Malkiewicz, “*Film Lighting*”)*

The face situated three-quarters to the side:

**IMAGE**

**IMAGE**

**IMAGE**

**IMAGE**

L

M

N

O

When the face moves to a three-quarters position, the effects of the lighting change. Faces that could have been good models in a profile position do not correspond with those in a three-quarters position.

If the principle source of light comes from the side of the face, a little shadow on the nose is found, (particularly if the light comes from a higher or lower source), and the side closer to the camera shades itself slightly (M). This effect reveals the shape of the face, its’ surfaces and contours.

If the principle source of light is placed further behind the head, the anterior shadows of the camera enhance the nose and the cheek (N). This wing (the “nose’s shadow”) becomes more and more important, stretching its breadth more and more.

One of the most interesting models would be produced by a light coming from the side of the face, with the smallest nose shadow possible (L).

High and low angles create similar effects on the face when facing the camera. The light source facing from that side is a bit more interesting when applied to the face (the side of the face on the axis of the camera).

An interesting effect is produced when the light brushes the distant side of the camera, lighting up that single side; it carves the silhouette of the face (O).

## **Problems that were encountered:**

### The nose:

The shadows can make the nose appear longer, crooked or broken than it is. A big shadow on the nose shadow will be more disturbing because it will change shape and height when the actress talks or turns her head. The same shadow can form a triangle on the cheek. A mustache effect can appear on the upper lip, the two “wings” under the nose coming from two main light sources positioned symmetrically.

A highlight on the tip of the nose will make the shadow reappear again.

### The eyes:

The eyes can be partially or totally shadowed by shadows from the nose or the eyebrows. If the light is to one side, a shadow can appear in the inner corner of the eye.

A soft light creates “black eyes,” pockets, or the appearance of a skull. Eyelashes can also produce shadows on the cheeks.

Without light reflecting into the inner eye in certain photos, one can appear “dead” or without expression. On the other hand, a very strong reflection from the eyes or multiple reflections also appear strange.

### The hair:

Very dark hair without highlights can appear to be a mass that lacks texture. An excessive amount of light on the hair will make it too shiny. Backlighting that is too high can flatten the top of the head...

### The ears:

If the ears are lit by a backlight, they will be enhanced and appear translucent.

The shadows of the ears can also appear in profile shots.

### The chin:

The chin’s shadow on the chest or on the shoulders can, at times, be very unattractive if it is too distinct.

All of these effects are even more pronounced with directional lighting. The more marked the shadows, the more difficult they are to correct.

The way the light is used of course depends upon the screenplay.

Soft lighting marks the features of the face less and can do a tremendous amount for the model.

Therefore, I will carry out another series of portraits that use reflected light.

**IMAGE**

**IMAGE**

**IMAGE**

P

Q

R

When the light brushes the side of the face, the nose's shadow is less obstructive, and each shadow is more diffused.

In the same way as directional lighting, the higher the light climbs moving along the side, the more it shows hollows, bulges, or wrinkles (Q and R). When the light comes towards the model from a slight angle, a shadow appears under the eye accentuating its rings (S and T).

**IMAGE**

**IMAGE**

**IMAGE**

S

T

U

Here, the light has a slight angle (S) that has a tendency to age the subject, the same as when it is overexposed (T). When the shadows cannot be eradicated, there is a tendency to instead increase the highlights on the forehead and the nose.

In photo U, the subject is illuminated in the same way as the two previous photos, but an adjustment of the reflected lighting eliminates the rings under her eyes.

This kind of lighting is more difficult to direct if the person is in motion...

Backlighting:

**IMAGE**

**IMAGE**

**IMAGE**

V

W

X

Backlight solely on the camera's axis reinforces the contours and textures of the shoulders and hair against a dark background from which the subject stands out (V) with a big shadow appearing on the subject's chest. When color film stock was created, there was a tendency to use less backlighting since characters naturally stood out from the background thanks to the difference in their colors. Too strong of a backlight can be obtrusive and make an image look slightly more dated. A diffused backlight would be less noticeable, although it will always separate the character from the background.

One variation of backlighting is to use one or two light fixtures bordering the side of the face (W). This effect removes the contours, giving the image a more glamorous side, although its effects strongly depend on the hairstyle of the subject and the shape of their face. This effect has the tendency to elongate the face, which becomes tricky when working with subjects who have large foreheads.

On the other hand, if the light is placed too close to the side of the face and can reach the tip of the nose (X), it can produce an illuminated spot at the face's center, which is not the best effect.

This system of backlighting does not automatically give strong depth to the image. "You see unnecessary kickers every night on every channel on television. Lots of guys put them in out of habit, I guess, because of the 'key light, back light, fill light' principle. Sometimes it is nice to have a face that is just almost melting into the background; it depends on what you are doing" *Jordan Cronenweth (K. Malkiewicz, "Film Lighting")*.

Each face is different and has its faults, which one can erase or decrease. For certain subjects there is a transformational effect between the people one sees and the image that the camera sends back to us. This transformation can be in ratio, in age... Certain people can appear strangely different when filmed from the left or the right; faces are rarely symmetrical.

Lighting can be corrective, but if the subject is moving, the desired results may be unfeasible to achieve, and irregularities can be accentuated if close attention is not given.

Cinema is a video of running time; not the capture of a single instant like photography. It is thus necessary to anticipate the lighting on the actors' movements and on the direction of their gaze... The actor must become an ally to the lighting point of view. The lighting must be able to move with them and be present in each one of their movements. Most of the time it is difficult to create accurate lighting for the face. It is necessary then to remain flexible and to allow the actor to take several liberties. Vilmos Zsigmond examined this subject for the *American Cinematographer's* site in October 2004.

"I always try to let the actors move around. I hate to force an actor into one spot. You have to give actors freedom. I tell them, 'The marks are there for us to know where you are so we can keep you in focus.' They shouldn't have to look for their marks. If I can, I try to give them something like a chair or a table to use as a mark, because they can relate to that object the way they would in the theatre. When I shot *The Long Goodbye*, the great actor Sterling Hayden told me he's always had a fear of missing his marks, and *The Long Goodbye* was the first time he didn't have to think about it. And he said it made his performance better."

More than choosing the axes of the light and the camera well, the leading cameraman has evermore possibilities with using the many lenses, filters, and film stocks on today's market. I will tackle, in the following section, this question through interviews with leading cameramen: what type of film stock and what lenses do they like to use to illuminate the face in a given scene?



### Third part:

## *Interviews*

When lighting the face, one can destruct it, deface it, or embellish it to the point where it cannot be identified with its original form. Since the landscape of the human face is the place where emotions are born, the power of lighting becomes very important and the leading cameraman plays an essential role. An emotion might be broken or altered through his visualization.

“The biggest offense that a cameraman can make is to ruin, with a rudimentary technique, the state of an actor’s soul.” (Anatoli Golovnia)

Furthermore, the human face is a wellspring of artistic composition and during a close-up it becomes a sovereign element.

I have met many leading cameramen to learn their approach to working with the female face, an art that has been changing since the golden age of Hollywood, the New Wave... What does it mean to illuminate an actress today, and what are the stakes? These are the questions that I will pose to them during our interviews.

For Henry Alekan “the art of illuminating the woman’s face is to respect its clarity, simply capturing the heightened sensitivity of Vivien Leigh’s face in ‘Anna Karina’ or Audrey Hepburn’s face in ‘Roman Holiday,’ making Catherine Deneuve’s face appear more oval than seemingly square or quelling Sophia Loren’s doubts about her nose, that she believes to be exaggerated, softening some of her sharp, angular, chiseled face...”

I will record Ricardo Aronovich, Regis Blondeux, Eric Guichard, Denis Lenoir, and Pierre Lhomme’s comments.

### The first time...

Sven Nykvist found it unfortunate to always be working with different actresses. He liked to work with Ingrid Thulin and Bibi Anderson whose faces he knows by heart. He felt that he could take liberties to try new things with them, and that they had confidence in him.

Today it is rarer that a leading cameraman always works with the same actress. It is necessary to see, understand, and adapt to the forms of her face in a short amount of time.

What do leading cameramen see when they look at the face of an actress whom they will illuminate for the first time?

Regis Blondeau looks at the face's details. By examining its form, he knows which lighting will be used or excluded.

*“When I meet an actress that I will illuminate for the first time, I do not see anything special in particular: from the height of the cheekbones to the arch of the eyebrows, the shape of the nose, the texture of the skin, the oval of the face, the design of the lips, the contours of chin, all of which can ‘snag’ the light. The face is a complex relief, with its’ share of potential shadows. This ‘scan’ remains discrete. I then discuss this with the actress, and I try to assess her level of anxiety in comparison to her ability to take attractive photographs. This anxiety is very natural since photography, for the most part, shares and reveals the worst qualities from an elusive, internal vigor.*

*However it may be, my feelings are that cameramen are not plastic surgeons, they can only capture, see, and possibly reveal the beauty of the face, but never fabricating all of its parts.”*

This first approach is not that of an observer, but a trust between the leading cameraman and the actress that is born at this moment.

But of course, the leading cameraman does not only look at the actress' capacity, but he projects the film's character onto her face, adapting her to be transformed as it was scene or read thanks to the script.”

*“I try not to look too much at the actress” confides Eric Guichard, “because for an actress who arrives on the set, it's hard, even harder than for us. She knows the stakes and the difficulties, and often she knows her face better than us photography directors.*

*I primarily tried to look all in all at the aesthetics of the face, taking a more free approach, which I don't like because it closes me into a relationship of habits and methods that one can apply to the face.*

*To study the face is thus to have read the script, to have discussed it with the director, how does he want to film it? What is the aesthetic of the film? What freedom does he want? Today we have more freedom than before. In the past, actresses were directed in an extremely precise and much orchestrated manner, so today we ask for more freedom, first from actresses and then directors equally.”*

This is also the moment when problems to be avoided with an actress and the difficulties present in the form of her face are realized.

Ricardo Aronovich shares his remarks:

*“I see the bone structure, which we falsely term one's photogenic quality. It exists, despite everything, in Hugo Santiago's film “The Others”. I had problems with an actress; the light shined on her face but could not catch anywhere, a face a little round and flat. I had enormous difficulties with the lighting, but it was the only time that happened to me. But I have worked with extremely pleasant actresses like those in ‘Klimt’, actress Saffron Burrows had a bony*

*physical structure that was indeed amazing. I admit that 'I fell in love with her'. This feeling of love or desire is important to the leading cameraman's work; it helps with filming, and it is slightly similar to how it is to be the director."*

This practice remains difficult; it is necessary that the lead cameraman be able to observe the actress quickly, learning her traits and the forms of her face, all while maintaining a distance that will not leave her feeling scrutinized. The best distance is not so close as to tweeze the eyebrows, but be observant of reactions. At times it is difficult to dare to ask something from an actress, not to make her uncomfortable in her element, not to rush it. The initial contact and air of confidence are fundamental when forging a possibly delicate relationship with an actor.

After this first meeting, another approach to the face will be taken through film trials that register the face in two dimensions; the perception that it had before can be changed. The face is rediscovered, both its qualities and its flaws.

### **Film Trials:**

Through the trials, the face is discovered in practice, each time more precisely than in the past. It is necessary to be efficient, because it is rare that actors like this step, and their time is precious. It is also the time to attempt things, only to the point where they can stay in the character's spotlight.

It's also the beginning of collaborating with the hairstyle and makeup crew. Ricardo Aronovich admits this has a particular importance.

*"I enlighten in a basic way to be able to judge the makeup and see the face, I don't like that the makeup is felt. I want to have the feeling that the person is living and that they are not made up for the film, therefore I see possible awkwardness. For me, if the pores of the face are lost, then the actress turns into a porcelain doll.*

*One very important thing in my opinion is that a film actress can go out into the street like that, without anyone making comments about her makeup; for me, makeup is successful if it makes slight improvements, hardly correcting... If I am unaware of a surplus of makeup, the camera is too (I prefer therefore not to use makeup on men).*

*Previously, in the time of silent films and black and white, one could apply lots of make up to the actors' faces because the film stock behaved differently. Alas, this has dragged on until today!*

*I also want to see if the lighting of the set works with the actors."*

Regis Blondeau's approach lies in the use of restraint with the light during his trials: *"One can try different axes, but in the end the softest lighting (and often the most direct) is most suitable. Of course, the risk is to be too flat. In this case, the best approach from my experience is to look for the contrast and to cut the ambience lighting in relationship to dark surfaces (sheets, poly paint, etc). I prefer this solution more than lighting that is too lateral or in three quarters view, because this lighting often verges on making nasty shadows on the nose or at the corners of the eyes."*

But if the film requires the use of dangerous lighting, in the sense that it destroys the face, it is at this moment that a good piece of work is at stake.

Eric Guichard attempts to justify "looking for things", *"I very much like to work with the makeup artists. I also love to film the actors in their setting. One has a real spotlight and one sees the pressures too. I find that actresses appreciate it and they do not feel the impression they are being studied or dissected on a backdrop that will become neutral in the studio. The difficulty is then to interpret these tries. The point of them is to find the logical intersection where a level of photogenic quality is respected as are the intentions one wants to show in the film."*

Alas, film budgets often become more and more tight, reducing makeup trials into a luxury, having a major consequence on the treatment of the face.

### **Filming the Face Well**

How can one film and illuminate the face well? Each cameraman has his own techniques. For Pierre Lhomme, "dangerous lighting" that damages the face must be avoided.... But if the film requires it?...

And is there an ideal focal distance, an ideal light fixture for each face?

When illuminating a face well and accurately meeting the script's demands, distance is primary question for Eric Guichard.

*"To respect the quality of being photogenic, that's to be at the right distance, and from that right distance, one will determine quite a few things like the angle of the shot, the distance from the light, the type of light fixtures chosen. One feels that the question of distance is sometimes not asked. For example, Zulawski asks this question all of the time. He asked me 'at what distance do you like to film actresses?', he likes to work with short lenses and to be close to the actresses. As a result, this implies a particular light fixture if the camera is a meter away from the actress. In general directors choose the distance with the actresses; it's rare that one is*

*stuck to the actress. Bloisser said that it was with Zulawski that he learned the most about an actress' photogenic qualities (at the time Zulawski was together with Sophie Marceau, therefore distance was essential). How is one going to feel comfortable with an actress if they know they have to film her on 150 mm? The positioning itself is not done in the same way if one must be filmed on 50 or on 35 mm. The risky take and the used sources will not be the same. Coming from documentary, I always asked myself this question, because in documentaries one cannot be at a bad distance or else it is all spoiled.*

The question of distance is very important; one must be able to speak to the director very early. However, a leading cameraman can have his preferences. Regis Blondeau prefers to work shots close together with medium focal length between 50 and 75 (35 mm, in 1.85 format). *"The fact of working closer to the actors with 50 mm (with a lens in close focus), does not allow for faces to be flattened (paying attention to the risk of deforming them, however), and to keep an eye on the maximum number of decorations in the background. In my opinion this is what brings someone to the more dynamic and graphic side of the frame and less abstract than the telephoto lens."*

The question of distance is thus asked for technical reasons. The lenses and the camera see all; they do not lie and can be very cruel.

*"The value of these shots is always a delicate problem. With the current optic resolutions, a very large close-up can quickly become a slightly embarrassing exploration of the skin. Trying to find the best distance, being wary of the 'combo' (everything seems small on the control monitor) and bringing to the director's mind that the film will be projected on the big screen afterwards, where this magnifying effect will fully play out.*

*It is of course necessary to avoid too much of an upwards tilt towards an actress as much one can. It is not unusual that actresses require the axis of camera's lens to be raised slightly in a way showing less of their chin, the underside of their neck, or their nostrils, which can be ungracious. Certain actresses prefer to see themselves in this type of view, in this type of profile, or in three-quarters."*

*"The work of scene selecting then makes allowances for these 'constraints'"* Regis Blondeau.

The choice of close-up shots must thus correlate with the other shots, coming before and after it. The question of continuity must also be asked.

Ricardo Aronovich's choice of lens for close-ups will be revolutionary, maintaining the idea of fluid continuity between shoots: *"I often choose a focal distance that is close to the focal distance of the close-ups. But for me, without going so far, Bresson's choice to work with a single focal distance follows this same idea. If the general shot is in 40 mm, I will do the close-ups on 50 mm so there is not a brutal change. If I always use 5.6 diaphragm, even with a 50 mm, the background is not completely fuzzy. It's something that I see often in films on the television, when one comes to a large shot and all of a sudden one cannot discern the background, it's*

*because they used 100 mm or 200 mm. This disturbs me when the geography changes and the background can no longer be perceived.”*

The setting, the costumes, the hair style, and the makeup have an importance in the direction of close-ups, although they are varied. Other members of the trade will partake in good shooting of the face. The way in which a lead cameraman illuminates his actors will influence the decoration and the costumes.

For Regis Blondeau *“to illuminate (or not) the backdrop of the decorations is going to have a lot of influence on the aesthetics of a close-up. A face that stands out or blends in with the background does not have the same power. Since I have a tendency to want a rather muted light and without perceiving its source, my spotlights are diffused in multiple directions and strongly shine a lot of light. This is why the tonality or the proximity of the actors to the walls behind them has a direct influence on the final work. It is for this, therefore, that I work very openly with the diaphragm in a way that makes little use of the amount of light so that the sources quickly “die” behind the actors and thus avoids intensely lighting certain parts of the set.”*

### **Some Limitations...**

While shooting a film, the leading cameraman can be confronted with many problems like ones that relate to the actress' physique: its faults cannot be seen, age must be erased... which can sometimes contradict the character.

Like Marlene Dietrich who knows the exact placement of light sources where they emit light, certain actresses think that they must know how they are being filmed, but that is not always the case. Pierre Lhomme has faced this type of problem. *“In a film with Brigitte Bardot, I was the cameraman and she asked him to raise the camera, because someone had said that she was prettier from above, around 15 cm on top of her gaze. Me, I was appalled, but I did it! I did it so that she would be happy, because otherwise she would have been frustrated with our work, which would have an impact on the film. It's so annoying when actors have their own preconceived ideas about what goes for or against them.”*

*These limitations always depend on the context...“that is to say the notoriety of the actress and of the director at work. As a result, the problem can arise a little, a lot, passionately, but never not at all.”* For Regis Blondeau *“The light of a film can construct itself under sometimes strange limitations, which can partially incorporate it in this way. Having said that, it's not really a Cornelian problem, because I like to retouch the light and to tone it down in relation to the panoramic shots to in all cases. This creates a positive complicity with the actress and shies me away from compensating the eventual toughness of a light exaggerated by diffusion filters that are too strong (I only use the first ratios in the range of diffusing filters, my favorites*

are the Gold FX, the Black Pomist, the old Mitchell diffusers, and the last to come: the Glimmers) otherwise one risks disrupting the film's visual continuity. I fear this type of textured image link-shot. A filter that diffuses too strongly seems to teleport the actress into another film. To me this process seems to be outdated, for all of those reasons remain, it's the reason that the setting up of a close-up is never safe and always requires particular attention."

To illuminate a star becomes somewhat contradictory with the story being told, since the golden age of the 1930s, a star was paid for so that one saw their eyes. Certain actors wanted to see their gaze at all costs. For Ricardo Aronovich, these limitations can be harmful to the film's continuity. How can the leading cameraman face these types of problems?

"In 'Time Regained,' at a moment when Catherine Deneuve stops herself at the threshold of a door way and I had already left the lighting such that it had been foreseen for that moment there. And I had hardly re-illuminated the eyes. I then had moans as to why she wasn't illuminated enough. So one turned around and I purposely used too much light and in fact they used the foreground that we had turned. This proves that changing the lighting in the same situation does not work. If you are going from a panoramic shot to a tightened shot, there is an appalling jump of the image. I am against the re-illumination of close-ups, there is little that can be done, but I will never change design of the lighting on the set. I re-illuminate at 5%, it's not visible. One of my obsessions is the perfect continuity of light."

Lighting can help us to understand the character, to make them change, to stick to their moods, and can possibly modify the appearance of their face?

### **Can appearances be modified?**

Lighting can embellish, rejuvenate, and damage...but the goal is always to stay within the constraints of the screenplay, the intentions of the director.

Is it easy to change reality with tools that are available to us? And in relation to an actress, will she accept these changes for a role?

"In lighting that can change, the face is always itself, either completely or not at all, but it is never another face, never different." (Philippe Rousselot for "Light Number 2")

For the film "Carrington," Denis Lenoir evolved the treatment of the image for Emma Thomson's face: "The story takes place over 20 years seeing 30 years. The character that Emma

*plays is 18 years old in the beginning of the film and 40 by the end. Therefore, in post-production, I used a graduated form of internegative flash. The film is told in chapters. Therefore, for chapter one, I used the biggest flash, less for chapter two, three, even less still, etc....And at the end, none at all, and this treatment helped to go along with the idea of aging. The flashing immensely diminished the contrast and added granularity.”*

To change the age by the treatment of the film...Make-up can also help, but stays very visible when it is in terms of aging, and the gradation is less evident. Make-up and the treatment of the image go together as a pair.

Actresses like Greta Garbo or Marlène Dietrich were always in employed in films as the same character, without much attention to the role; they remained “Greta” and “Marlène.”

Today, it is regrettable for an actress to always have the same roles in cinema. Certain directors only like to hire actors with a lot of fame to be able to go with them where the audience might not have expected. And, the leading cameraman supports these choices with different treatment on the face of an actress.

Eric Guichard reappears on one of his last film sets with Sandrine Bonnaire and Catherine Frot: *“When one has the means of the most important photographer, one has to go there, one can amuse another, amuse oneself and change a face. This is also the role of the manager of photography; it is so that actor X or Y is not that which we are accustomed to seeing.*

*From the film that I’ve just finished with Safy Nebbou, one attempted to find another approach, another point of view so that Sandrine Bonnaire would not be the Sandrine Bonnaire that one sees in many films, but that she would be the character of the story. She also liked to say that one could not film her as “Sandrine Bonnaire,” but like the character that she was playing. Catherine Frot was also treated very differently from the usual, she comes from comedy, and her image is well noted in public, then, I think that Safy took Catherine Frot into her terrain which is not the one which we are accustomed to seeing her and for the ultimate blow, there is another texture of skin and of how the face is shown...*

*Safy did not want to be filtered, did not want the audience to feel things that were artificial; one went to find objectives that weren’t necessarily the best in terms of cut but that were almost the same used for Catherine Frot without filter, without using any tricks.”*

Pierre Lhomme tells us that he did not succeed in making Isabelle Adjani ugly in Camille Claudel. *“A miraculous beauty can sometimes be a handicap. In Camille Claudel, we had all the trouble in the world in trying to make Isabelle ugly. On the film set, with her tramp make-up, she had a smudged face, a dilapidated air, and with the rushes one had the impression of ugliness. Her beauty went against that which she was playing.”*

But, the cameraman is not all alone in terms of photogeneity and the changing of the actress; she herself is too, in her expressions... “Ugliness can be played, too.” (Pierre Lhomme). She can deform her face with frowns, attitudes...

For Régis Blondeau, it is the person who is being portrayed, that is in charge of emotions, not the lighting. “An emotional value that I would gladly recognize in lighting is benevolence.”



## Today...

There was a Hollywood style, very centered on the valuation of the beauty of the actor; the New Vague where an actor was given lighting from a completely natural source, a total reduction. Where was the modern tendency situated in all of this? What is the demand for directors?

There is sometimes a desire to find actors to take their image "by opposition," work on the image becomes truly passionate. Each film set is a new set of risks.

Even with all of these demands, the lead cameraman must go quickly for a production; what do the actress and directors ask for?

*"Today a director wants more liberty, and an actress does as well. In the Golden Age of Hollywood Cinema, it would take two hours to do lighting for the big screen, and after it would be for a pose, a photographic pose. The actor today needs bigger and more engulfing lighting. The director also makes more plans.*

*In this era, actress knew that the lighting was the sculptor of their personalities, and in all cases, lighting was an integral part of the character and played an important role. Today, actresses do not use lighting in the same manner. For example, Catherine Frot does not want to be in the constraints of a specific place; she wants to act just as if she were in a theatre scene. An actress like Sandrine Bonnaire knows that lighting can help her create her character.*

*This is what has changed: before, the actress never questioned herself - she knew that the lighting shaped her character" Eric Guichard.*

Sometimes, it can be very difficult to have actors on set in order to light for a scene; there is sometimes an intense impatience in working with the technique. *"They are in character but not in the characters that could be better expressed by means of the technique" Eric Guichard.*

Ricardo Aronovich has a very critical outlook for images that one can see today, there are, of course, films that detach themselves from this tendency: *"I see a lot of close ups today that have too much make-up or too much lighting, humbly illuminated, on television and even in feature films, men and women. I sometimes get the impression that this has become a convention of cinema. And yet, my idea is that if the lighting of a set is well done from the beginning, there is no reason to redo the lighting of the actors."*

This tendency can be explained because of the fact that people see more images on television. *"Their sight has changed, and for the moment it is more of a bad thing; they are accustomed to a standard of image that is not forcibly of the standards where one wants to go. These images, a bit shiny and flat, a lot of color, this is what is provided by the television all day long. Therefore, people who want to then go to the cinema are not apt to see very dark nights, half-lit, or silhouettes of people."* Eric Guichard

The viewer is accustomed to more and more realism, false link shots, tactless special effects...these happen with difficulty. With the number of images that one sees each day, our look is sharpened, and certain things become ridiculous at times.

For Régis Blondeau, the tendency is in hyperrealism, *“Like in life but ‘better,’ more exacerbated. The final product seems natural, but there is a sophistication in the ambiance by a fine handling of chromatic balances and contrasts, of justified lighting directions and of lighting induced accidents. In this sense, it is a synthesis of the two schools. But, we cannot forget that whilst the cameramen of the New Vague vulgarized the usage of indirect lighting, therefore soft lighting, this is not in contradiction with the enhancement of an actress. This was not, perhaps, the original reason, but it is indubitably a consequence that has influenced the technique of lighting for the face.”*

### Make-up

The job of the lead cameraman is in being in close collaboration with the make-up department; the demands vary in accordance with the role that is being interpreted, but also in accordance to the treatment of the image that the director of photography would have chosen. Is make-up different for each film? Or if it is produced in HD? The definition is constantly enhanced by the new advancements in technology, in optics, and in chemistry...

For Eric Guichard, the Kodak film lends itself to aging. Everything is a question of contrast. A smooth face has few zones of contrasts, but wrinkles and irregularities are sources of contrast. The recording backup will strongly influence these characteristics. Make-up also creates shadows and lighting, the white “bomb” of surfaces and deepened shadows.

*“Fuji saturates very quickly in color and it is necessary to be careful with the skin, Fuji is also more sensitive to dominance. In a very green interior, it becomes more difficult on the faces, if one has some remains of green light, it is less evident than when using a Kodak. If I should be in cold tones, Fuji would work well...”* Eric Guichard.

One must be very careful, and communicate the choices of lighting and of treatment of make-up, if one lights too “coolly”, the make-up should not try to warm the skin, and vice versa. Régis Blondeau gives another example of the treatment without whitewashing. *“There are particular cases where the chemical treatment of the image denatures the tints, like ‘without whitewashing’ which significantly lowers the general saturation of colors. It is, therefore, sometimes necessary to adjust the ray of blushes and lipsticks a bit, so that the*

*carnations will be less 'gray.' With that being said, this genre of effects on the image is practiced knowing the cause and in assuming as much."*

It is necessary to also make sure not to over differentiate the make-up for men and women. *"Me, what I like best are couples, I don't like to disassociate the make-up for an actress from that of the actor with whom she will act, there should be combinations for the two. If you have a beautiful close-up of an actress of whom the man next to her is not made-up well, it will be very difficult for the eye. One should measure the textures in a controlled way, find a balance."* Eric Guichard

For Ricardo Aronovich, make-up should be very discrete, with the precision of our modern day shooting, it is necessary to be very careful; Régis Blondeau has the same approach. *"With today's movies, I am a partisan of the 'worker for the eye,' in being confident in what one sees on the set. This is why many make-up artists finish their work with the lighting plan and demand lighting in their offices, equivalent and in relation to the one on set. As for the colorimetric characteristics of each brand, essentially that of Fuji or Kodak, they are well known and integrated at the moment of testing and discussed as a result, in case to case basis. But still even here, the eye is the judge of peace.*

*For HD, the balance of control monitors is the only solution so that everyone can talk about the same thing.*

*One new given is in the numerical treatment of the image. Postproduction creates new possibilities of the final product of the faces: smoothening traits, erasing wrinkles, coloring eyes, etc. The possibilities are just as costly as they are endless. The image of cinema, following the example of the photo, can in present day be subjected to retouches, corrections, so far as interventions that can sometimes escape the cameraman's domain of competence. The lead cameraman should share his prerogatives more often, something that demands as much openness in spirit as it does in being alert."*

### **The Evolution of Work**

On each film set, there is a new experience and one learns new things. The job of the lead cameraman is permanently evolving. I ask myself, therefore, the question from the beginning, if the manner of lighting women has changed from film to film....

At which moment does one become conscious of actors, of their faces? For some, the portrait is the first element of a film, and cinema begins with a face.

Denis Lenoir admits having a crazy time in learning this concept. *"I acquired a very late knowledge of lighting on faces. I have the impression that I did not use lighting on actors before*

'95 or '94; before, I had only had very young actors, with Assayas he was about 18 or 20 years old. I used lighting on the set and the actors moved around in it. And then I did 'Carrington,' with Emma Thomson who was 35 years old, and a film with Catherine Deneuve 'The Match of Failure,' these two films were dissolved. And I found myself confronted for a year by actresses who were no longer in their youthful prime, and I learned a lot in this moment. I added fluorescent lighting under the camera - these types of things that I learned and improvised on the job, and then I learned to avoid certain types of lighting."

The job also evolves with the means that are obtained - technology advances without stopping. Ricardo Aronovich has changed his way of lighting thanks to the evolution of tools that are now at his disposition.

Sources are softened as well, spotlights of the '30s did not structure the face in a way that would allow chemistry, thus today's choice has become very important.

Props have evolved too; all of this conditions the manner in which to treat the face. *"Contrast, sensibility, therefore the response of films has changed. The quality of the objectives has too, especially in full overture. One can allow the usage of less lighting, of having more subtle effects and yet less aggressive for the actor. For example, the famous small "mizar" (type of star) for the point in the eye is less necessary than in other times. It will be replaced by a small fluorescent tube. The same goes for the reflectors on polished and blinding surfaces: one will prefer them to large white clothes for the exterior. There are many ways to make differences that will make the job of the actors much more comfortable."* Régis Blondeau

The lead cameraman can respond to demands with more liberty on directors' and actors' parts, thanks to evolution of techniques in which more solutions are offered to him.

Does one start with preconceived notions or with particular cravings that end up erased over time?

Denis Lenoir started off finding "a bigger and more chic" way to put an actor in blackness during a set time. This idea had moved away from him bit by bit, and is now something he does not do anymore.

For Ricardo Aronovich, the manner of lighting has evolved in the sense that he prefers to take it away than to add it.

The job of the lead cameraman has evolved with technique. The female image on the big screen has changed year to year, from style to style...

His job is also to go towards the actors, to reassure them. To be liberal in his work. A relation of complicity and of confidence should take hold, the view of the lead cameraman towards the actress should be sharp, "to know how to look...". *"I think that the view towards the actors is a very important thing."* Pierre Lhomme.

An actress needs to be reassured of her physique most of the time, and it is the lead cameraman that will do so. Pierre Lhomme describes that the first time that he saw Isabelle Adjani, she only talked to him about her faults, so that he would pay attention to them; in a way his listening was done in order to be proper, but they worked again and again for a number of films together following this first encounter.

For each shoot, Denis Lenoir had with him a set of twins that he has been using since “*Tandem*” “*when the camera is not close to the actor, in long focal range so long that I can’t focus it, I leave my twins and I look at their faces and the way that they move in the light,*” and the actors really like this system, they know a benevolent eye is falling upon them.

It’s by instilling that confidence that one can also go farther. Romy Schneider wrote in a book that she loved to make films with Ricardo Aronovich because when it was necessary, he “damaged it for the good cause”.

All of this is a question of looking and speaking with the actors “her sharp mouth cut with the extreme delicateness of a billhook, hooking the light by the inside and out” said Cocteau of Katherine Hepburn. While Faye Dunaway demanded that her lead cameraman know precisely the nature of the filters used to light her face. Marlene Dietrich confided that “the only man to seduce on a set, that’s the lead cameraman”.

Fourth part:

***The End of Study Film:***  
**White Noise**

I tried to understand how a character is illuminated according to dramatic art and according to their emotions. The role of the lead cameraman is to show the actress' face in the most captivating and expressive manner possible, according to the given scene. The image has the power to change reality.

The story:

An actress on a film set lost ground. The role that she plays is not for her, she is fifteen years older than the young girl she sensibly is. She is also a woman of forty years who is wondering about her power of seduction, and she is terrorized by the time that has past. Her doubts are such that they make her fall into a sort of schizophrenic madness. She never reaches a solution to playing this role. She begins to mix reality and fiction, throwing herself thirty years ahead or twenty years behind. The doubles come to haunt her.

I chose to use several formats. Each change of treatment corresponds at times with the fiction or the reality that she lives.

The idea is to give her different faces; across each format the face changes in its appearance.

### Choice of actress:

It was necessary that I searched for the face and the actress some time before actually finding them. To play the role, the actress would have to be in her forties, but it is her face that I will use in “reality”, her face that she will see getting older. A face marked some, with some signs of time, but that was possible to rejuvenate.

## **IMAGE**

The actress in the film has a very interesting face; it's very angular with high cheekbones, each part is very drawn, from the mouth to the nose. The lighting “hangs” after several tries with other actresses the Nestor Amendros reflection takes a lot of direction: “A person who does not have prominent bones in their face is very difficult to illuminate. The true beauties on the screen all have beautiful facial structures. A good bone structure in the face gives the light something from which to hang and helps to create interesting shadows...”.

Dorothy Briere's face corresponds with these criteria; her photogenic level distinguishes her from all of the other actresses seen previously. It was necessary then to find her older and younger “doubles”...

### Different treatments:

How does the format or the treatment change the appearance of the face?

My research is largely based on the study of skin textures, returning the face to different backdrops, and different ways of filming.

The film wherein Laura plays takes place in the 1950s, Laura prepares herself to go to the dancehall...

Here I chose to shoot in black and white, and the faces are exhibited. The sequences are shot with Orwo film stock, 100 ASA, to look like a “film in a film” in the 1950s style.

## **IMAGE**

The face is super exposed at more than 1 diaphragm, seen sometimes at 1.5 diaphragm. The super exposed black and white erase imperfection, to this is added the use of Mitchell filters. The treatment softens the face and erases contrasts. The skin lost its details, its pores, and its wrinkles.

I would like to have the black and white contrast, and whiter faces, and a less granular film, called 100 ASA.

## **IMAGE**

The return to reality is filmed with Kodak 5218 film stock, this film stock returns flesh that is more faithful and the colors less saturated, with little grain. The color would appear to be the reality of the face hidden by black and white. The color contrasts and the densities are uncovered, the pores of the skin, the appearance of wrinkles.

I did not see to show the face.

The skin takes a texture, live.

## **IMAGE**

Another texture of the image is researched with the use of the video; the support corresponds between the filming and the “making off.” This image is an oppression more for Laura’s character.

Here the image is granulated; there is a big loss of definition.



The image translates its hallucinations; the camera scope adds also this sentiment of anxiety and oppression.

The camera always had to keep a distance in relationship to the actor, it is the attention of every look, it is constantly watched. The video and its grain attack the face, the mix to the matter.

### IMAGE

The end of the film is shot with Kodak 5218 film treated without bleaching, I researched the contrast, Laura sinks in more and more of her craziness. Her fears grow, ones of becoming outdated, of assuming a role that is not for her. The treatment without bleaching enhances the contrast and reserve. The areas of shadow of the face get denser. The negative was gently underexposed.

Laura finishes by being pursued by her other faces. In this last sequence the light “damages” the faces, it is contrarily very harsh at the beginning of the film and in the black and white, where the idea was of covering, here the light burns, cuts, intensifies. I would like to utilize the headlights rather directionally harsh, without almost any diffusion.

### IMAGE

### IMAGE

### IMAGE

Here, the bony structure stands out more.

“What one looks for on the face, is time, but as long as it signifies death” *Jacques Aumont* (“*Face in the Cinema*”).

The treatment of the image passes from softness to severity in function of the states of souls of the actors. The light of the sequences of “realities” is more enveloped, leaving the appearance of the true nature of the face. The end of the film, the treatment makes itself harsher, the lack of bleaching is more “cruel” with the face; the light cuts and again cuts the face. It is in the last shot that the light becomes totally natural and very soft, natural, exposing it little by little.

I attempted to make the light adhere to the emotions and thoughts of Laura, even though the treatment of the image can change from aspects, the actor has the biggest part in this change. He must be capable of identifying himself with any character, all acting, taking all faces. The actress ruins herself alone, and freezes when she knows that such or such expression will screw up her eyes, or deform her mouth... The leading cameraman is not the only one who has a lot to do with the beauty or ugliness of the actor.

## Conclusion

The production of this dissertation would allow me better knowledge through the history and the work of leading cameramen, the human perception by the bias of the close-up, even though it doesn't remain the primary approach, experience is the only true training.

Cinema was reinvented from new styles, the work of image is itself also transformed. With the material at disposal the possibilities are infinite. There are today many tendencies, that where the actor must accept given materials, takes are precise and decided well before shooting, but this manner of procedure isn't the most utilized today. The actors can in being afraid and feeling deprived of all freedom, while constraints can become accessories of acting. The other tendency is that the framework and light are deduced from the acting, the given marks to the actors are rather minimal, and the scene and the actors take more freedom. Realism is the word of order.

The intentions of the director must be clear from the beginning. But if the style is realistic, that doesn't signify that one must ignore the faces.

An actual tendency can be sometimes standardized from the images, and the film aligns itself on rules of beauty from publicity, clips or from television. In a goal to touch the largest public? Because it can't find its style alone? The risk taken makes progress; too much caution in the treatment of the image can be dangerous for a film.

The relationship leading cameraman/actor can be very pleasant and rich if confidence exists between the two. The work of the leading cameraman isn't only technical and artistic, it is also human, it is clear that it is necessary to watch actors, in order to film them well. This watching wasn't for me, evident in the first appearance, the actors are far from technical, sometimes a gap can create itself between the two, one can have a tendency to take the actors for objects, and they can take us for technicians devoid of sensitivity. "The first fundamental duty of the cameraman is to broadcast completely, on the screen, as much the external aspect of the actor, as his physical state internally. It is a difficult task, and it is difficult to explain the way by which it is reached" Anatoli Golovnia, *"Exposing a Story"* by Ricardo Aronovich, ed. Dujarric.

But the leading cameraman will always participate with the actors in the dramatic interpretation of the narrative.

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