Bordwellian. But it's great interpretations that make me love to study film. Colin's piece on "Style as Sample" I think is a great piece—and a promising clarification of how to make specific contributions to film knowledge, without making practical film knowledge the whole horizon of Film Studies. To be honest though, I still don't really understand the metaphor—and I think I'd have to wait for Colin's feature length essay to really get at the issue. My point: Our three pieces are quite different. Brian's piece was meant to be less a 'position' piece, and more a suggestive and enticing introduction to the Gallery; my piece was meant to synthesize my interest in the

technical 'design' of a film with my interest in style's 'something more'; while Colin was responding to his

discovery of Goodman's 'sample' metaphor and how that might relate to Bordwell. We each imply certain positions on style, but as three pieces speaking at the concept of film style I'm not sure how fairly comparable they are. That said, I think we all agree that each of us have—through our pieces, and through the Gallery—

gotten closer to the idea of film style. I think that for the remainder of this forum, we need to make headway in

And you guys may balk, but I'd love to hear if you had similar encounters with film style (or style in general) as wayward youths. Film studies isn't autobiography—with apologies to Jonathan Rosenbaum—but coming to an

Let me take a brief detour that I think will address a few points you both mention and demonstrate how our

separate notions of style are not as incompatible as it might initially appear. This demonstration may fail, but I

All three of us identify separate (but perhaps in some way(s) related) notions of why style is of value to people (scholars and non-scholars alike)—so this speaks to the value issue. We each bring up contexts of value or of

importance: history, beauty and overarching design or the "something else." These contexts are ones in which

understanding of what a concept is ordinarily (before we make it extraordinary) is a communal experience.

summarizing our realizations. Realizations about the concept of film style, and how it is used.

CB (Feb 4th)

think it's worth a shot.

different people imbue style with value.

be "wholes" that are greater than the sum of their parts (or Adam's "something else"). But these features retain their separateness—to a degree—as observable, empirically verifiable parts. The features are what I call "samples;" samples that are insufficient on their own to explain away the beauty or design or form of the scene because they merely reveal aspects of themselves. A stylistic feature in this sense might be said to be selfabsorbed—drawing attention to itself because of what it is. Almost out of spite or, conversely, of willing engagement, or, to offer a third possibility, out of some fundamental need to make meaning of this selfabsorption, this gravitational pull, this tendency on the part of the feature to try to seduce the viewer with a salacious wink, we place (another crude term because it implies intentionality) a stylistic feature or a series of them into wider contexts of significance; in this way a feature (or sample) might be said to have two kinds of value: intrinsic and extrinsic. What does this mean, you might ask? Well, let's try to work this out. The extrinsic value of a sample is the place of the part in the whole—its role; what it contributes to the feeling we get in one of those great style moments; that which we have trouble qualifying and quantifying. As far as intrinsic value goes, in talking about it, I don't think that I'm saying that Goodman or Bordwell or Salt or Burch decodes the riddle of the unqualifiable moment by reducing it (in the spirit of "scientism") to mere totalities (as opposed to wholes) and then by placing the real value in the lap of the features or parts that pass our litmus paper tests for "style." I think we can maintain the extrinsic value (in all its forms: historical, aesthetic, or that which we call "stylish" or "something more") even as we talk about and develop means for refining our vocabularies to describe the intrinsic value of features on their own. Otherwise put, I really do think that we're all playing for the same

team—I really do. In fact, Brian, I'd say that these 'means' help us develop appreciation for the beauty of the features at both levels—macro and micro. As a kind of preface to my own foray into anecdote, I want to mention

that my concern for developing an appreciation of the micro level beauty of a feature or sample is entirely

motivated by a deep desire—a drive—to refine and continue to refine my appreciation for macro-level beauty, to develop a more "serious" (pace Sontag) sensibility for beauty in film, so that I expressly don't miss out on the "something more" to be detected in all films or in films of all shapes and sizes. As recently as two years ago, I'd

never have been able to see the beauty—micro-level beauty, beauty of the sample or feature—in either unremarkable and unsuccessful films like KILL BILL, Disney's BLACK HOLE, 8 FEMMES, MILLENNIUM MAMBO, Mamoulian's DR.JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE and Frankenheimer's THE TRAIN. What these each lack in terms of "success" or macro-level beauty they make up for with a wide range of micro-level, sample beauty. Moreover, I'd never have been able to discover layers of significance (which is not to say "meaning") in certain Bresson films, or in PERSONA or FLOWERS OF SHANGHAI or AGE OF INNOCENCE (each of which exudes macro-level beauty). This really is about finding new ways to be (soberly) responsive to the works I encounter. Now, the anecdote. Adam first noticed style with the release of BATMAN? I can't put a precise date on my own "awareness" of asking questions about the why, how, and what; it came slowly as I read critics. I am in Film Studies solely due to my interest in the sensibilities that are attracted to the movies, to my desire to figure out these sensibilities, and to emulate the best parts and jettison the problematic parts—in a word, to develop a sophisticated taste for film. Taste as I see it cannot be reduced to a method or set of rules or a context or a series of guidelines; taste is intuitive, which is not to say that it is not a form of knowledge. It is; it's a form of user's knowledge—and filmgoers are users. One particular area of fascination for me is the view—the judgment, or species of judgment—that states that in order for a work of art to be successful, all the parts must fit—must be "necessary" in the eyes of the reader/viewer/listener. In film, this view (and we're all familiar with it) contends that style must mirror content (which we can take to mean "plot") or else all those elements that don't fit are mere "stylization." (This is Sontag's take.)

experiences that would not have otherwise been available to me. I'm currently, for instance, reading back issues of Cinefex. People seem to have a sense of when special effects work and when they don't, but what do the experts, the technicians themselves, say about this? Surely there are other ways of talking about CGI effects than merely to say "that looks real" or "that looks fake." If I can learn to see the way they see, to talk the way they

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This view is attractive, very attractive. While I can't locate when I became aware of style, I can say when I wanted to enter Film Studies, which may be associated to my discovery of style's importance. The very first book I ordered online was in 1998 and it was Mario Falsetto's Stanley Kubrick: A Narrative and Stylistic Analysis. That one passage in which he reads the ending of 2001 (pp. 111-118) inspired me instantaneously to consider a career as a film academic. Falsetto makes everything in that scene "fit." Here, plotting has no significance, no meaning, without form (and style). Critics with sophisticated taste, from Ferguson to Farber to Sontag (I'm sure there are others), however, have all considered or tinkered with the idea that a stylistic feature need not be plot motivated in order to be of value, in order to "fit." This is what, to make a long story short (too late!), led me to Burch and Bordwell and Goodman. This not only opens up new opportunities for research in academia, but leads directly to a very rich array of film

broader estimations of value, of beauty.

I believe that the contributors to the Gallery would be able (if not compelled) to isolate a number of underlying features that while they perhaps contribute to the "construction" (a crude term) of the experience that led them to value and then chose the moment, remained in a number of cases unaccounted for in the write-ups themselves. (This would also go for the ordinary filmgoer, albeit one with an unusually developed sense of why and how films are made. It certainly applies to Jerry White's SOLARIS moment, which is important for what I've said above and will say below.) These features would be the parts that make up the style moments, which incidentally I take to

talk, then my film experiences will be all that more rich. Then I'll be able to see the intrinsic value of the visual effects sample from a given film that tends to be dismissed by critics as a general failure, which will enrich my

Next entry :: >>>

Style Forum Part 2

The forum is continued in Part 2.