Analyzing Stylistic Patterning in Film to Establish the Cinematographer as a Co-Author: A Case Study of Gregg Toland

Abstract

Can the authorial contribution of the individual cinematographer to classical, narrative-based film be identified and attributed? This article addresses this specific question, but the specific case of the cinematographer must acknowledge the wider debates about film authorship. The article examines contemporary attitudes to co-authorship in film, highlighting the fact that, in terms of cinematography, most commentators still defer to directors when discussing the creation of meaning within images. While examining the works of Gregg Toland and William Wyler, the article evaluates authorial attribution by means of a comparison between the films they made together and the films they made separately. In order to do this, the article defines a method for establishing authorship within the film image. Toland is a prime historical example of a cinematographer whose authorial contribution has been severely underestimated in the pursuit of glorifying the directors he worked with (Orson Welles, John Ford, and William Wyler).

Keywords

André Bazin, The Best Years of Our Lives, cinematography, film authorship,
Introduction

Film authorship theory continues to evolve. The acknowledgement that filmmaking is a collective process has questioned the traditional romantic notion of the single-author director (Carringer 1985; Gaut 1997; Livingston 1997; Grodal 2004; Sellors 2007). Despite some specific studies of certain individuals, for example, cinematographer Gregg Toland (Lieberman and Hegarty 2010; Cowan 2012a), or editor Walter Murch (Murray 2014), a reluctance still exists to attribute authorship to non-directors, including cinematographers (van Oosterhout et al. 2012; Keating 2014; Beach 2015).

In this article I will examine contemporary ideas of film authorship, and how cinematographers are discussed within an authorial context. I will then introduce an analytical methodology for attributing co-authorship specifically to the cinematographer and apply this methodology to the work of Toland, in particular his work with William Wyler. The Toland/Wyler collaboration provides an excellent opportunity for a stylistic comparison to be made between the films that they made together and the films they made separately.

Although Toland is best known for his work with Orson Welles on *Citizen Kane* (1941), their collaboration features two striking anomalies. The first is that *Kane* was their only collaboration. The second is that *Kane* was Welles’ first film and as such, no precedents of his work can be used for comparative analysis. As a result, I generally argue that stylistically Welles was an acolyte of Toland’s. I will reference André Bazin’s influential 1948 essay on Wyler’s work as a counterpoint to my argument, as it is often quoted and remains to this day unchallenged in its conclusions (Bordwell 1997: 64; Cousins 2011: 179).

My main points of argument can be represented by two familiar images (Figure 1 and Figure 2). The first is Susan Kane’s suicide attempt in *Citizen Kane* (Welles et al. 1941), and the second is the telephone booth shot from *The Best Years of Our Lives* (Wyler et al. 1946). Both images are the subject of detailed analysis by Bazin (1967 and 1948, respectively), both images represent a “new style” of filmmaking, which exploited ‘deep focus’ and long takes of continuous action in the 1940s (Madsen 1974: 284), and finally, the authorship of both shots is consistently attributed solely to the director of each film (Bazin 1967: 33; Madsen 1974; Mulvey 1992; Kozloff 2011).
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Figure 1: Susan’s suicide attempt in *Citizen Kane*.

Figure 2: Butch’s Bar scene in *The Best Years of Our Lives*.

Figure 3: Similar compositions to Susan’s suicide in *The Nuisance*...

Figure 4: ... *Mad Love*...

Figure 5: ... and *The Long Voyage Home*. 
Bazin praises the shot from *Kane*, as it exploits elements of its composition to communicate the narrative, particularly the bottle and glass in the foreground being linked to Susan Kane (Dorothy Comingore) in the mid-ground, and Charles Kane (Orson Welles) discovering (and realizing) the situation as he enters through the door in the background. There is a plethora of literature on Welles’ individual genius in creating *Kane*; however, stylistically I can trace the genesis of this shot to *The Nuisance* (Conway et al. 1933) when ambulance-chasing lawyer Jo Stevens (Lee Tracy) gets drunk after realizing his latest client (Madge Evans) is working undercover to expose his dubious practice. She discovers him in this state as she comes through the door in the background. A foregrounded bottle and glass visually underline Stevens’ inebriated state (Figure 3). There is a similar composition in *Mad Love* (Freund et al. 1935) where the placement of the bottle in the foreground emphasizes the fact that Gogol’s Housekeeper, Françoise (May Beatty), is drunk (Figure 4). Moreover, a drink in the foreground in the bar scene in *The Long Voyage Home* (Ford et al. 1940) is a prelude to Olson (John Wayne) being drugged (Figure 5). Although in latter cases, the foreground object is out of focus, the compositional and storytelling ideas are the same in all four shots. The glass is even in the same position in all four frames. These four shots appear in films that have four different directors but the same cinematographer, Toland. This consistent thematic exploitation of the same stylistic technique would suggest an element of authorship on behalf of Toland. I hope that this simple example gives even the staunchest advocate of the single-author theory pause enough to consider my argument. This visual communication of meaning and consistency in the use of techniques across *oeuvres*, whether a director’s or a cinematographer’s, form the basis of my discussion.

**Film Authorship**

Early film theorists acknowledged that film was a collective practice, but viewed the contribution of others as subordinate to the director (Sarris 1962; Mitry 1963; Wollen 1969). Influenced by literary theory, they sought out the single-author equivalent to the novelist (Astruc [1948] 2009).

In *Cinematic Authorship* Paisley Livingston questions, “...whether a ‘traditional’ conception of authorship should be applied to cinema...?” (1997: 132). Livingston holds, “that many films emerge from a process of collective or individual authorship; others may have makers, but no author(s)” (133). He identifies the
generalized problem that there is not an agreed definition of a film author, even within the single-author theory, so he suggests one:

author = (def) the agent (or agents) who intentionally make(s) an utterance, where ‘utterance’ refers to any action, an intended function of which is expression or communication. (Livingston 1997: 134)

Livingston further qualifies “expression” as being not required to be “sincere, original, or even skillful...” (135). Within this context we are released from the obligation of having the film’s author responsible for the underlining thematic ideas of a film’s narrative, which was a major pre-occupation, and prerequisite, for Wollen and the auteur theorists.

C. Paul Sellors modifies Livingston’s definition, as he prefers the verb “to token”, rather than “makes”, as it includes a range of activities and “implies symbolic systems” (2007: 265). Sellors claims that Livingston’s definition does not differentiate between intended meaning in a work and meaning interpreted from an “expression or communication” by the viewer, and offers a variation of Livingston's definition of a filmic author.

Filmic author - the agent or agents who intentionally token(s) a filmic utterance, where ‘to token’ refers to any action, an intended function of which is to make manifest or communicate some attitude(s) by means of production of an apparently moving image projected on a screen or other surface and a filmic utterance is the result of the act of tokening in this medium. (Sellors, 2007: 266)

Both Livingston’s and Sellors’ definitions could clearly apply to the work of the cinematographer. Both define a co-author as someone who makes an intentional attempt to represent and communicate meaning.

The Cinematographer

The creative contribution that cinematographers make to the films they shoot has rarely been categorized, classified or collectively identified. Vladimir Nilsen (1937) and Sharon Russell (1981) are rare exceptions in that they attempt to theorize the function of the cinematographer. I have also made a recent contribution to this field (Cowan 2012b). The majority of writing on cinematography almost exclusively concentrates on the technical aspects of the role. In his introduction
to *Cinematography*, Patrick Keating (2014) identifies three main questions that persist in the study of cinematography: technology, authorship, and classicism (2).

The technology question includes not just the chronological study of the invention and introduction of new technologies into the filmmaking process, but how these introductions either lead stylistic change or were lead by cinematographers’ creative needs. To an extent, the technology/stylistic debate is the most commonly held in critical, analytical works on cinematography, for example, explicitly (Ogle 1972; Salt 1983; Bordwell 1997; Higgins 2007), but the subject is often implicitly the focus of studies of cinematographers’ work. The few volumes dedicated to interviews with cinematographers (Ettedgui 1998; Schaefer and Salvato 1984; Ballinger 2004; Fauer 2008, 2009; Goodridge and Grierson 2012; Van Oosterhout *et al.* 2012) predominantly discuss technology. Cinematographers cast as technical facilitators for directors seems to be the prevailing attitude. An example of this can be seen in *A Hidden History of Film Style: Cinematographers, Directors and the Collaborative Process* (Beach 2015). The collaboration Christopher Beach infers in his title is that of cinematographers technically facilitating directors’ visions, for example, “Wyler... harness[ed] Toland’s developing technique for a thematic purpose” (69).

Though Keating claims that authorship is a key issue when discussing cinematographers’ work, when he talks about advances in cinematic narrative meaning in the silent film era, he defaults to talking about directors: “By the last decade of the silent period, most Hollywood directors were dissecting narrative action into shorter and closer shots [my emphasis]” (2014: 27). Keating almost exclusively talks about cinematographers within the context of technology, technique and style, rather than the creation of meaning within the image, which would be a pre-requisite for an authorial input according to Livingston and Sellors.

In a specific example, Keating contrasts the use of camera movement in *Girl Shy* (Newmeyer and Taylor *et al.* 1924), which “follows the protagonist in a predictable way”, with the use of camera movement in *Sunrise* (Murnau *et al.* 1927) which “demonstrated new ways of integrating the camerawork with narrative” (31). Keating states, “Murnau is using his camera to tell a story”, seemingly crediting any authorial intention to the director and not the two cinematographers who worked on the film, Karl Struss and Charlie Rosher. Struss himself contradicted this idea in an interview: “Murnau left the whole visual side of the picture to us he concentrated entirely on the actors” (Higham 1970: 126). Defaulting to referencing
directors when discussing authorship is still quite common, even in books devoted to cinematographers and cinematography. In his contribution to *Shooting Time: Cinematographers on Cinematography* on the history of film Peter Verstraten (2012) talks of Renoir, Bresson, Weine, Welles, Sternberg, Rossellini, Griffiths, Gance and Sirk, crediting them with composition of shots (34-36), stylistic innovations (33; 37), use of lenses (46), editing choices (2-34), and narrative innovations (39). In fact he references more than a hundred directors in his chapter but only one cinematographer, Christopher Doyle (51).

The Cinematographer’s Authorial Role

Nilsen considers what he calls the “optical interpretation” of a scene that is enacted in front of the camera and its possibility for “expressive technique” (1937: 16, 15). For me, it is this basic premise that provides the foundation for analyzing the authorial contribution of the cinematographer. Nilsen pre-empts Raymond Durgnat’s (1967), Janet Staiger’s (2003), and Sellors’ (2010) notions of performative intervention in the filmmaking process as a means of creating meaning.

Nilsen divides the development of cinematographic art into three chronological stages. The first is the “reproduction period”, during which the aim was simply the mechanical reproduction of the objects in front of the camera. Nilsen points out that the expressionism often cited in *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (Weine et al. 1920) is almost exclusively restricted to the art direction and set construction, not the camera work, and its cinematography can be categorized as almost entirely “reproductive” (1937: 159). According to Nilsen the “reproduction period’ was followed by the “pictorial period” where cinematographers began to be influenced by other pictorial art forms, which resulted in an experimentation with lighting techniques (153-165). “Pictorial” cinematography considers many of the aesthetic concerns of painting and photography; it is categorized by a superficial concern for the construction of the image. Nilsen’s final stage in the development of cinematography is the “representational treatment” of the visual composition of a film, which can be traced *a posteriori*.

By the experience of the work of those camera-men [*sic*] in whom we find intelligent creation, i.e. creation pre-supposing deliberate exploitation of the expressive resources and methods of cinema technique, we can trace the process of formation of visual ideas which
Nilsen comes close to defining authorial analysis methodology long before Andrew Sarris (1962), and Peter Wollen (1969), and his “intelligent creator” comes close to embodying Livingston’s (1997) and Sellors’ (2007) definition of an author. Nilsen implies that the creative cinematographer draws inspiration from the thematic ideas of the narrative, and therefore the latter will serve as a tool in the analysis of the former.

I would consider Nilsen’s three chronological categories of cinematography, reproduction, pictorial, and representational not as stages in the evolution of cinematographic art but as three methods of applying cinematographic technique in a film. Reproductive cinematography implies the use of anonymous, standard methods, which equates to Sellors’ notion of authorless films (2010: 110), and Livingston’s notion of films that have makers rather than authors (1997: 133). If the form of the film expresses nothing, if it falls within Nilsen’s categorization of a reproductive film, then no author can be identified, as there are no distinguishing authorial traits. Pictorial cinematography may well display stylistic traits that could be identified and attributed but also falls short of true meaningful, representational treatment, and therefore authorship, as it does not, “... make manifest or communicate some attitude(s)...” (Sellors 2007: 266). My introductory example of Toland’s four bottle shots use technique to communicate meaning. Moreover, they all utilize the same stylistic technique, to communicate the same meaning. Evan Lieberman and Kerry Hegarty’s insightful 2010 essay on Gabriel Figueroa and Toland highlights the way that the two cinematographers are virtually using the same techniques, but they are utilizing them to create completely different meanings.

Collaborative Authorship

Studying authorship in any given film requires untangling what Richard Corliss describes as “a giant matrix” of collaboration ([1974] 2008: 147), and what Grodal describes as “a crossroads of many different oeuvres” (2004: 7). In further evidencing Toland’s (co-)authorial signature, it is useful to examine his relationship to Wyler. This is a study suggested by Wollen more than forty-five years ago:
There are any number of specific problems which stand out: [when analyzing the work of an auteur]... Welles’s relationship to Toland (and - perhaps more important - Wyler’s). (1969: 113-115).

I believe I am the first academic to undertake Woolen’s suggested study, which raises many issues about the academic and critical understanding of a director’s role and why Wyler would be considered a “molehill” (Cameron [1962] 2008: 31b), despite directing some highly critically acclaimed films.

Collaboration between Toland and Wyler

Toland and Wyler worked together on six full feature films over a ten year period: *These Three* (1936), *Dead End* (1937), *Wuthering Heights* (1939), *The Westerner* (1940), *The Little Foxes* (1941), and *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946). Their partnership came to an abrupt end when Toland died in 1948, at the age of forty-four, but the films that they made together are widely considered as some of the best films of the 1930s and 1940s.

Despite having already directed thirty-two silent films, and nine sound pictures, Alex Madsen, Wyler’s authorized biographer, describes *These Three* as, “in many ways a brilliant first for Wyler” (1974: 131). This is particularly significant, as it is the first time that Wyler worked with Toland. Madsen praises its naturalism, realistic dialogue, fluid camerawork, and its use of framing and lighting to build mood. He attributes all this creativity to Wyler, citing it as a case of auteur filmmaking (131-132). However, the respected playwright Lillian Hellman wrote the script, based on her own play *The Children’s Hour*. Toland’s contribution lifted the photography, and, of course, Wyler’s work with the actors resulted in convincing performances. Toland, Hellman and Wyler also later collaborated on *Dead End*, and *The Little Foxes*, two other highly acclaimed films. We can widen this creative circle further as all three of these films were produced by Samuel Goldwyn, and edited by Daniel Mandell, who also edited *Best Years*.

It is also interesting to note Madsen’s description of Wyler’s account of his first encounter with Toland. Wyler states that he was used to telling the cinematographer what lens to use and where to put the camera, but he didn’t do that with Toland: “We would discuss a picture from beginning to end, its overall ‘feel’ and then the style of each sequence. Toland was an artist” (Madsen
1974: 137). This also indicates a shift in Wyler’s way of working, toward a more collaborative approach. Wyler, as reported by Madsen, is much more open about the process by which the photography developed and readily acknowledges a degree of collaboration in an interview with Curtis Hansen.

> With [Toland], I would rehearse and show him a scene. Then we would decide together how to photograph it. I would have certain ideas and he would contribute to those, and together we would determine what was best. (Hansen 1967: 28)

Wyler suggests a very collaborative approach. The complex nature of collaborative authorship compels us to consider the work of key collaborators when they work together and contrast that with instances of them working apart. Therefore, it is important to consider Wyler’s body of work in more detail.

**Wyler’s Aesthetic**

In *William Wyler, or the Jansenist of Directing*, originally published in *Revue du Cinéma* in 1948, Bazin argues that Wyler is “… a skilful ‘scientist’ of mise-en-scène” (1997: 17). However, the two films that he predominantly highlights to prove Wyler’s skill are *The Little Foxes* and *The Best Year of Our Lives*, both shot by Toland. Bazin observes the stylistic differences in other Wyler films: “Nothing is stranger to the form of *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946) than the form of *The Letter* (1940)” (1). I would contend that *The Best Years of Our Lives* is completely different from *The Letter*, as the latter is photographed by Tony Gaudio, who also shot *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (Curtiz et al. 1938), and *High Sierra* (Walsh et al. 1941). Bazin makes another comparison.

> For instance, the script of *Mrs. Miniver* (1942) is not so inferior to that of *The Best Years of Our Lives*: but *Mrs. Miniver* is marked by pedestrian direction and does not move toward any particular style. The result is rather disappointing. By contrast, in *The Best Years of Our Lives* Wyler’s ethical reverence for reality found its aesthetic transcription in the mise-en-scène. (Bazin 1948: 5)

Again I would contend that the reason for the difference between *Mrs Miniver* and *Best Years* is the influence of Toland, as implied by Wollen (1969: 113-115). I would argue that the varying quality, or style, of the visualization of Wyler’s films would indicate that the cinematographers had far more creative responsibility for
the images with Wyler than they are credited for. This way of working is outlined explicitly by Wyler in relation to his attitude and approach to working with actors:

I don't expect just obedience. That's not good enough. I don't like an actor who says, “Okay boss, what do you want me to do?” I say, “What do you want to do? You read it. You know what’s in it. Show me. Show me what you want to do.” I’ve got an idea, but maybe he’s got a better one and I want to see it. Maybe together, we will find one better still. (Hanson 1967: 29)

It is arguable that this reflects his approach to working with other collaborators. When Bazin states that there are no consistent motifs in Wyler’s work, he betrays the flaw in early authorship analysis, as he contrasts this with the consistency of motifs in John Ford’s generic films ([1948] 1997: 1). Almost inevitably, films within the same genre, in this case Westerns, are going to have the same generic elements. Hence, I would suggest that Ford, Alfred Hitchcock, and Howard Hawks were much easier directors for the early single-author critics to discuss, as they were all genre directors. Pauline Kael makes a similar point in her denouncement of the auteur theory. She speculates that Hitchcock is considered an auteur and Carol Reed not, “... because Hitchcock repeats while Reed tackles new subject matter” (Kael [1963] 2008: 49). Wyler’s films vary much more than Ford’s in terms of genre. They range from contemporary social-realist drama, Best Years, to period costume drama, The Little Foxes, to comedy, The Good Fairy (1935), including Westerns, The Westerner and The Big Country (1958), and later historical epics, Ben Hur (1959). With a body of genre films it is relatively easy to link content and style, although some observers have begun to identify nuances in the films of the so-called auteurs.

John Ford is a director of a marked personal style, but again his films look entirely different one from another, the style emerging rather in the personal response to people: affectionate, warm, with a rural decency and intimacy. An Arthur Miller Ford (How Green Was My Valley, Tobacco Road), will look, with its shiny surface and brilliant contrasts, entirely different from a Joe August Ford, shadowy and soft, a Bert Glennon Ford, romantically diffused and quietly glowing, an Archie Stout Ford, rough and harsh, with a jolting unevenness of visual tone, or a Gregg Toland Ford, with deep focus and ceilinged sets ahead of Citizen Kane (The Long Voyage Home). (Higham 1970: 8)

The generic differences in Wyler’s films do make the identification of consistent stylistic elements across his film more difficult, however, for me, Bazin’s key
observation is the consistency he sees with “psychological scenarios set against social backgrounds” ([1948] 1997: 1). Wyler himself stated that, “I think the director’s most important function centers around the performances of his actors... There is no such thing as good direction with a bad performance” (Hanson 1967: 28-29).

For me this indicates Wyler’s “signature”, a clear and thorough understanding of the psychology of his characters and his intention to emphasize and communicate this psychological realism through the actors’ performances. Whereas Bazin dismisses this, “The style of a director cannot be defined, however, only in terms of his predilection for psychological analysis and social realism...” ([1948] 1997: 1-2), I believe this is the fundamental strength of Wyler’s work, and what makes him a great director. The process that the actors and director go through, in terms of interpreting a script, would involve understanding and developing the psychological motivations of the characters, and often finding ways of performing a script that will communicate this to an audience, through not only the dialogue, but also intonation, tone and pacing of speech, as well as facial gestures and body language. These are precisely the meaningful, performative interventions that filmmakers make in order to qualify as authors (Durgnat 1967; Staiger 2003; Livingston 1997; Sellors 2010). Bazin dismisses the idea of judging a director solely on the performances of the actors, however, he is willing to isolate visual style as a single factor by which to judge a director’s work.

If we are to credit Wyler with an aesthetic then it would be his preference for simplicity, as Bazin finally concludes, his “science of clarity” (Bazin [1948] 1997: 17), for the long take, and few cuts, that create an intertextual realism. The four-minute take of the family lawyer (James Stephenson) confronting Leslie Crosbie (Bette Davis) with The Letter, is a typical example, and there are the long takes in The Best Years of Our Lives. What differs, of course, is the style of the photography. This is where Toland, and his work with staging in depth becomes relevant in the work of Wyler.

**Toland’s Influence**

Toland was working with staging in depth from 1931, as is evident in Tonight or Never (Figure 6), other examples include Mad Love (Figure 7) and Splendor (Nugent et al. 1935) (Figure 8). He had not yet perfected the technicalities of
‘deep focus’, but he is clearly working with staging in depth before his association with Wyler or Welles. By contrast, I have yet to see any examples of Wyler working with staging in depth before his association with Toland.

I also feel the technique is less motivated by allowing the viewer to “make his own cuts” as highlighted by Wyler (Bazin [1948] 1997: 9), than by the desire to exploit the spatial relationship of the characters within the frame to tell a story. That would be the essential difference between the long takes in The Letter (and other non-Toland Wyler films) and those in Toland/Wyler films.

The way Toland positions characters in the frame adds to the meaning of an image (Lieberman and Hegarty 2010: 38). For example, in The Dark Angel (Franklin et al. 1935) when the children have a picnic the young Kitty Vane (Cora Sue Collins) is sat next to the young Alan Trent (James C. Baxter). Their relationship that will dominate the narrative of the film. The young Gerald Shannon...
(Jimmy Butler) is sat on the opposite side of the frame, and apart (Figure 9). Although he also loves Kitty, he is placed apart as Kitty’s interest is in Alan. Exactly the same principle can be seen in an early scene in *These Three*, Toland’s first film with Wyler, when Karen (Merle Oberon) and Martha (Miriam Hopkins) have a picnic lunch with Dr. Joseph Cardin (Joel McCrea). Karen and Joseph will start a relationship, and even though Martha also loves Joseph she is separated out on the opposite side of the frame (Figure 10); like Gerald in *The Dark Angel*, she will be the one left on her own. The two shots are almost identical; their compositions are a visual representation of the triangular relationships. This is Toland’s influence on Wyler. The way he uses the camera adds to our understanding of the characters, the narrative, or the thematic ideas of the film. This is Nilsen’s notion of representational cinematography. The “functional context” (Bordwell et al. 1985: 341) of a technical element is where Toland’s authorial contribution can be identified. This concept is also similar to Durgnat’s notion of “content-style” (1967: 27), which describes the concept of embedding meaning into the treatment of material.

**Wyler pre-Toland**

Looking at *Counsellor at Law* (Wyler et al. 1933), shot by Norbert Brodine, a film Wyler directed before his association with Toland, we can see none of the visual treatments employed by Toland/Wyler. Brodine shoots it in a very pedestrian manner. There is one striking visual moment when George Simon (John Barrymore) swings his office chair around to gaze out of a huge picture window,
over-looking the city. The following shot tracks into his face, and we suddenly realise he is contemplating throwing himself out. One of the other interesting techniques occurs early in the film when Mr. Weinberg (Marvin Kline) emerges from an office, and crosses the reception hall. The shot appears to be a plain long shot of the hall, but as the character approaches the camera, it tracks back to reveal that the camera is on the opposite side of a glass door; the character approaches the door and opens it. This shot is repeated later in the film when George Simon crosses the reception hall.

A similar shot occurs in the Brodine/Wyler film *The Good Fairy*: when an orphan resident approaches the director of the orphanage’s office, the camera tracks backwards to reveal that we are now seeing the girl approaching the director’s office through a glass door. This window view reveal technique can be seen in *These Three*, when Karen and Martha are sitting in the evening, after their courtroom defeat. The camera tracks back to reveal the rain on the window. I would argue that in *These Three* the technique is used more representationally as Karen and Martha, following the loss of their slander case, appear trapped in their house. They have retreated to hide from public gaze. The camera movement signifies this. The technique has no thematic relevance in the Brodine/Wyler films. A further example of this technique can also be seen in *Forsaking All Others* (Van Dyke et al. 1934), which Toland shot before his association with Wyler. Mary escapes to the country with Paula (Billie Burke) when she is jilted at the altar. When Jeff (Clark Gable) arrives, Paula is first seen through the doorway, which creates a prison feeling. The camera tracks back away from the door to reveal Jeff and his friend Shemp (Charles Butterworth) as Paula steps out of the house. Although the shot does not start with a clear frame, the movement backwards is being used emblematically to represent Paula and Mary’s exile.

The technique is developed further in *Dead End* as ‘Baby Face’ Martin (Humphrey Bogart) exits the tenement building, after he is rejected by his Mother, and walks across the street to a café bar, trying to escape his past, but he remains trapped by it. From what appears to be a long shot of the street the camera tracks backward to reveal the inside of the bar and the fact that we were looking at the street through the window of the café. The camera continues to track back as ‘Baby-Face’ Martin enters the building and walks up to the bar in the foreground. Toland then uses this technique in *Citizen Kane* in the much commented upon Kane Boarding House sequence, tracking backwards from the young Kane (Buddy Swan) playing in the snow, into the Boarding House, leading Mrs Kane...
(Anges Moorehead) and Thatcher (George Coulouris) through one room, to a table, followed by Mr. Kane (Harry Shannon). The young Charles is trapped outside, unable to influence his own future (Figure 11). Mrs. Kane and Thatcher sit together arguing against Mr. Kane, who is on the opposite side of the frame. The final composition of this shot clearly emblemizes the relationships of the characters, as with the two earlier picnic scenes.

Each tracking shot gets more complex in both its execution, and its meaning. This is a technique that develops with time, perhaps initiated by Wyler (or Brodine), developed by Toland/Wyler through *These Three* and *Dead End*, reaching a particular zenith with Toland/Welles in *Kane*. Wyler alone uses the technique for visual interest (pictorial), whereas Toland uses it to emblemize narrative points (representational) regardless of the director.

A similar example is the infinite mirror shot in *The Good Fairy*, shot before Wyler
worked with Toland. It is a reflection of Luisa (Margaret Sullivan) in a department store (Figure 12), clearly using the same device as used in *Citizen Kane* (Figure 13) after Susan leaves Charles. I wish to emphasize that the point that I am making about Toland is not that he invented these techniques, nor that he just repeatedly uses them. The important element of the comparative analysis is that he uses them for the same storytelling purposes, the same thematic meaning. Their “functional context” is consistent.

Toland was using mirrors as a consistent visual motif, representing characters’ internal conflicts from 1931. In *Tonight or Never* Nella (Gloria Swanson) is torn between her engagement to the Count (Warburton Gamble), and her desire for Jim Fletcher (Melvyn Douglas), who she believes is the Marchesa’s lover (Figure 14). The same device is used in *Forsaking All Others*, when Mary (Joan Crawford) contemplates having an illicit affair with a married man (Figure 15).

Mirrors are used prominently in *Mad Love*. When Dr. Gogol (Peter Lorre) first thinks of transplanting a murderer’s hands onto pianist Stephen Orlac (Colin Clive), he does so through a mirror. As he ponders the dilemma of his desire to help Orlac’s wife, Yvonne (Francis Drake), the camera tracks into his reflection in the mirror, and it is his other self, the cold-hearted and egocentric side of his personality, represented by his reflection, that seems to come up with the idea (Figure 16). This split personality is emphasized much more strongly later in the film, when, after Yvonne rejects him, he comes up with the idea to murder Orlac’s father and frame Yvonne’s husband for the crime. He begins the scene despairing over Yvonne’s rejection of him in front of a large mirror (Figure 17); as the
camera tracks into the large mirror his reflection tells him to return to the surgical procedure that he has just abandoned as his colleagues will be laughing at him. Another image of Gogol in a second full-length mirror across the surgery changes to that of him dressed in his evening wear, saying that nothing matters other than Yvonne in his arms (Figure 18), the image returns to normal as Gogol steps into the frame drawn to a third mirror. The sequence cuts to another shot showing this third reflection, again in evening dress, which tells him that he must do something to get rid of Stephen Orlac (Figure 19), before returning to a normal reflection of Gogol in his surgical outfit.

The use of multiple mirrors in this scene is fairly complex, and the first horizontal mirror can be seen in the full-length mirror, almost creating the infinite image familiar in Kane. Lieberman and Hegarty acknowledge German Expressionism’s influence on Toland (2010: 35), and I would consider that collaborating with Freund on Mad Love would have been a seminal moment for Toland. The majority
of his celebrated expressionistic work occurs after this film.

Another, brilliant multi-mirror sequence occurs in *The Best Years of Our Lives*. The scene in which Marie (Virginia Mayo) and Peggy (Teresa Wright) discuss their men in the ladies’ restroom is shot through three mirrors, reminiscent of the triple mirror scene in *Mad Love*, although this sequence in *Best Lives* is shot as one take, as Peggy realises that Marie is not in love with her husband, Fred, and is mainly interested in money and having fun. Marie begins by enthrusting over Peggy’s date, Woody. The camera pans to Marie as she begins to reveal her true nature. Marie encourages Peggy to marry Woody because he has money (Figure 20). This revealing of Marie’s selfish motivation is represented by a double image of her. Peggy, however, is shocked at Marie’s mercenary approach to marriage, which is represented by Marie’s mirror image. Peggy is further encouraged to break-up Marie and Fred’s relationship, despite any moral objections to the sanctity of marriage she may have. At this point, the camera pans top show a double image of Peggy in another mirror, representing her inner conflict (Figure 21).

The cross-fertilization of visual ideas is inevitable during the collaborative process of filmmaking: both directors and cinematographers are influenced by each other, and, of course, the work they see in other films. Their techniques also may develop as their careers progress. They learn new techniques, and try out new visual ideas, some they adopt or adapt, some they discard. This is what makes authorship in collaborative filmmaking difficult to attribute, for example, dutch-tilts are used during chase and action scenes in *Les Misérables* (Boleslawski *et al.*).
1935), a technique that Toland never uses again. Similarly I have only seen two films in which the use of characters looking directly into the camera occur in films shot by Toland, one is *Splendor* (Nugent *et al.* 1935), and the other is *Kane*. Are these techniques Toland tried and then discarded, or do these isolated examples suggest the directors’ influence rather than Toland’s? By examining the body of work of each director in these cases this question may be answered.

**Intermezzo**

Wyler was initially hired to direct *Intermezzo: A Love Story* (Ratoff *et al.* 1939), and started pre-production work with Toland. However, producer David O. Selznick dismissed him from the project before filming began (Madsen 1974: 172). Interestingly David Thomson, in his biography of Selznick, recounts the creative responsibility for the visualisation of the film falling to Toland (Thomson 1993: 318-9).

*Intermezzo* was shot between the Toland/Wyler films *Dead End* (1937) and *Wuthering Heights* (1939). Wyler in the meantime directed *Jezebel* (1938). This provides an ideal opportunity for a stylistic comparison between *Jezebel* and *Intermezzo*, as references between Toland/Wyler films and Wyler’s non-Toland films. Immediately Madsen makes one telling observation about *Jezebel*. “*Jezebel* was three great months’ work for Wyler. He didn’t have Toland on the camera, but Ernest Haller’s black and white photography was impeccable, even if without Tolandian ‘touches’.” (Madsen 1974: 161). However if we look more closely at the visual style of the films, *Intermezzo* has more similar visual characteristics to other Toland/Wyler films than does *Jezebel*. We can see some typical Toland techniques in *Intermezzo*. When Anita (Ingrid Bergman) first breaks off with Holger (Leslie Howard), she says that she feels ashamed, and guilty. She gets Holger to look at themselves in a mirror: “Look in the mirror. How do we look, to you?” This is a typical Toland motif, using the mirror for self-reflection, emblemising the double-life, inner-conflict, of their affair (Figure 22).

*Jezebel* contains none of the obvious ‘deep focus’ shots of Toland’s work, on the contrary, there are some shallow focus shots that one would not see in a Toland shot film at this time. Scenes are characterized by more intercutting than a Toland/Wyler film. A multiple mirror is used in the film, but unlike Toland’s films, where he uses it to represent a conflicted moment for a character, here it is used as Julie
Figure 22: *Intermezzo*’s explicit use of a mirror to emblemise their double life.

Figure 23: Dmitri’s status emblemised in *We Live Again*.

Figure 24: Kay looks down on Dave in *Dead End*.

Figure 25: Mary manipulates her Grandmother in *These Three*.

Figure 26: Hogler’s wife occupies the moral high ground in *Intermezzo*.

Figure 27: ... a similar idea in *Wuthering Heights*.
(Bette Davies) prepares to confront Preston (Henry Fonda). She is a confident character with no inner doubts.

Toland also exploits staircases to illustrate the balance of power in the relationships between the characters in some scenes. Toland often repeats this technique. In *We Live Again* (Mamoulian *et al.* 1934) Dmitri’s (Fredric March) hierarchical superiority over his Aunts (Ethel Griffies and Gwendolyn Logan) is represented by his placement halfway up the stairs above them (Figure 23). In a tragic scene from *Dead End* ‘Baby Face’ Martin’s Mother (Marjorie Main) condemns him as a murderer and rejects him from the steps of her apartment, literally looking down on him. The other example from *Dead End* shows the high class Kay (Wendy Barrie) being appalled by the living conditions of the lower class Dave (Joel McCrea). Again, their positioning, and the composition of the frame represent this visually (Figure 24). Another example can be seen in *These Three*, which emphasizes Mary’s (Bonita Granville) manipulative power over her Grandmother (Alma Kruger) (Figure 25). In *Intermezzo*, the moral superiority of Holger’s wife (Edna Best), is represented by her position halfway up a staircase when Hogler returns home after his affair (Figure 26), as is Edgar’s (David Niven) over Cathy at one point in *Wuthering Heights* (Figure 27). *The Little Foxes* contains many examples of the use of stairs, which fit this pattern. However, a stairway shot is used in *Jezebel* but again it is used in contrast to Toland’s usual use of the motif as a signifier of power. It occurs when Julie realises that she has lost Preston, so she is at her weakest moment, but she is in a dominant position on the stairs, and in the frame (Figure 28). This contrasts with their use in both *Dead End*, and *Wuthering Heights*, which bookend *Jezebel*.
The Best Years of Our Lives revisited

*The Best Years of Our Lives* stands as a fitting climax to the Toland/Wyler films. It is a moving, gripping, and sincere film that marries form and content exceptionally well. Madsen, Wyler’s biographer, makes a great deal of the critical impact of *Best Years*. He claims it “... became a touchstone in the evolution of French criticism and provoked one of the most penetrating critical essays in film history” (Madsen 1974: 271). Bazin makes the point that *Best Years* has more consistency in style than other films using ‘deep focus’.

Indeed, Toland’s talent [lies] in an ability to maintain a consistent flow from image to image, besides his sense of framing... Toland maintains a consistent flow not only in the sense that he creates the same sharp surface in the conventional shots, but also because he creates the same surface even when he must encompass the entire mass of set, lights, and actors within a virtually unlimited field. (Bazin [1948] 1997: 11)

One of the important visual motifs in the film is the emotional unity of the three veterans emblemized by them consistently being framed together in a single image; on their initial journey home on the plane (Figure 29) and in the taxi (Figure 30), and later that night when they are reunited in Butch’s bar, the camera pans slightly to deliberately exclude everyone else from the frame to create another shot of unity (Figure 31). This unity is broken initially when each of

Figure 29: The three Veterans grouped together in *Best Years*.

Figure 30: Together again in the taxi.
them is dropped off at their respective homes after their flight home. Fred (Dana Andrews) watches Al (Fredric March) through the back window of the taxi, after he is dropped off. The characters are visually separated by the window (Figure 32). This motif is used again in the famous telephone booth shot (Figure 2). In the scene Al tells Fred to break off his burgeoning relationship with Al's daughter Peggy, which Fred agrees to do. He tells Al what he will say to Peggy: “I won’t see her anymore. I’ll call her up and tell her so.” Fred immediately goes to the telephone booth in order to call Peggy and end their relationship. Al is distracted by Homer (Harold Russell) demonstrating the results of his piano lessons with Butch (Hoagy Carmichael). This scene is perhaps one of the most famous in Best Years, and Bazin spends a great deal of time analyzing it.

I contend that Bazin misinterprets what he calls “the true drama” ([1948] 1997: 14) of the scene, which he states is Fred’s telephone call. This is a literal analysis of the narrative, that is, script, which does not consider the “functional context”, or “content style”, of the visual structure of the film. We know what is going on in the telephone booth, because Fred has already told Al at the table what he will say to Al’s daughter. The “true drama” of the scene lies in the unity of the veterans.

Bazin states that the foreground action is simply there to balance the surface composition, “hence the idea of a diverting action in the foreground, secondary in itself, whose spatial prominence would be conversely proportional to its dramatic significance” (15). This “inverse prominence” is not a technique Wyler seems to have used before or since. Bazin cites one similar example, which I will discuss later. I believe that the significance of the composition and the two parallel actions...
lies with the unity of the three veterans, which Al is breaking apart. This breakup is emphasized by the frame within a frame that Fred occupies in the telephone booth. For the first time since their arrival home, he is physically separated from Al and Homer. This is a departure from the earlier shots of unity (Figures 29-31), and has a parallel in the shot of Fred leaving Al behind in the taxi when the veterans are first spilt up (Figure 32).

In the bar scene, Homer, as a physically crippled veteran, is experiencing his rehabilitation, thanks to Butch, and the support he receives from Al. However, the emotionally crippled veteran, Fred, is being rejected. The comparison of foreground and background action wholly contains the dramatic significance of the scene. Al is unconditionally supporting veterans with small loans at the bank, however he is unwilling to support Fred when his own daughter is involved. The fact that Fred breaks up the relationship as soon as Al objects to it demonstrates the integrity of his character. This again is an important aspect of the scene, and therefore it is important that we see Al witness the telephone call, as it is the beginning of his reassessment of Fred. I believe my interpretation of the Butch’s bar scene is in keeping with the visual metaphors used throughout the film. It is a clear example of representational cinematography, which reveals a meaningful, authorial contribution.

Despite what I consider Bazin’s misinterpretation of this particular scene from Best Years, his analysis continues to be accepted, and repeated unchallenged (Bordwell 1997: 64; Cousins 2011: 179). Bazin does compare Horace’s (Herbert Marshall) death scene in Little Foxes (Figure 33), with Butch’s bar sequence.
from *Best Years* (Figure 2). His intention is to compare the shots in terms of their staging in depth ([1948] 1997: 14-16). Both have important elements simultaneously happening in the foreground and the background, although Horace is out of focus in the shot from *Little Foxes*. My reading for the shallow focus in *Little Foxes* is so the audience will concentrate on Regina’s reaction, and lack of action, as the main point of the scene. Bazin again states that, “The action in the foreground is secondary” (14), but I believe again this is not a fully realized interpretation of the scene. “The crucial action” (Bordwell 1997: 65-67) is not Horace collapsing on the staircase. That is only part of the narrative significance of the scene, what is the essential narrative element of the scene is that Regina does not help him. This is what Toland/Wyler emphasize with the use of shallow focus. They keep Regina in focus, and Horace out of focus, in an effort to ensure that the audience understands this concept. Regina is contributing to, or indeed causing, her Husband’s death. Wyler himself is fairly clear on this. The main thing in the scene is not the man trying to go up the stairs to get his medicine; it’s Bette Davis sitting on a couch. It’s all going on behind her. You see her being completely still, not moving, not getting him the medicine, when he couldn’t really walk. (Wyler 1981: 129)

**Conclusions**

Bazin ([1948] 1997: 1) highlights the difference in visual style between *The Letter*, and *The Best Years of Our Lives*. He also contrasts *Best Years* with the “pedestrian direction” of *Mrs. Miniver* (5). I would also use that description for *The Heiress* (Wyler et al. 1949). Although it does have a few instances of visual flourish, it does not have the tight compositions, the use of foreground and deep focus of the Toland/Wyler films. Wyler directed *The Heiress* a year after Toland’s death, and as with *Jezebel, The Letter*, and *Mrs. Miniver*, it displays little visual invention. Wyler directed *Counsellor at Law, The Good Fairy* and *Dodsworth* (1935) before he worked with Toland. They also show little visual flair and virtually no instances of representational cinematography.

As the examples of Wyler’s films that show visually creative cinematography, *These Three* (1936), *Dead End* (1937), *Wuthering Heights* (1939), *Little Foxes* (1941), and *Best Years* (1946) are chronologically interspersed with those of “pedestrian direction”, *The Good Fairy* (1935), *Jezebel* (1938), *The Letter* (1940), *Mrs. Miniver* (1942), and *The Heiress* (1949), then it would seem evident that
the cinematographer has a considerable creative impact on Wyler’s films. Toland shot the first group of films. Again, as with Welles (Cowan 2012a: 243), it should be made clear that Wyler’s work with actors is exceptional, and this is partially where his talent lies as a director. He has guided more actors to Academy Award nominations than any other director (thirty-one), if we can use this fact as an American peer review guide. His work with both cinematographers and actors can be seen to support the idea of collaborative authorship. Wyler is not an inferior director, as the auteurists would have us believe. In those Wyler films that the visual style is pedestrian, the multiple author critic would see fault with the cinematographers’ work, not necessarily the director’s.

**Finding Authors in Collaborate Work**

The process of attributing stylistic or authorial credit to a film needs to consider the various creative contributions made by those within a collaborative team. By looking at the work of Toland/Wyler and comparing them with the films that they both made without each other, we can begin to see certain authorial traits that may belong to Wyler, for example, the psychological realism in performance, and we can see certain techniques he tends to employ, for example, the window view reveal. However, the same applies to Toland; we can begin to identify a certain authorial style, for example, his use of mirrors to represent inner conflict, stairs to emblemize power, and placement of characters within the frame to signify their relationships, all of which Nilsen would describe as “representational photography”, creating meaning within the visual treatment of the script. This analysis fulfills Livingston and Sellors’ definition of a filmic author.

**A Paradigm of Collaborative Film Authorship**

I have attempted to include all those that have the potential to make a creative, meaningful “filmic utterance” into my paradigm of film authorship originally published in 2012 (2012b: 94, revised) but updated here (Figure 34). It is a paradigm rather than a fixed model, as each of these individual contributions to a film may not be creative, performative interventions. It is necessary for the critic to analyze and attribute authorial traits. Whereas film criticism has historically concentrated primarily on the body of work of directors, I contend that their analytical work needs to be increased by the power of eight, as the diligent
analyst needs to consider the “crossroads of oeuvres” (Grodal 2004: 7), inherent in my paradigm, in any given film.

Stylistic patterning can provide a useful indication of authorial contribution across a number of traditional film production roles, if one considers the oeuvres of the various collaborators. Repeated techniques and stylistic similarities are not enough to qualify for authorial status. Livingston and Sellors require an intention to communicate meaning within any performative intervention. Apart from close textual analysis, Livingston encourages us to also investigate the casual history of a film’s making (1997: 146). I have attempted to establish a methodology for comparing the oeuvres of collaborators, in this case Toland and Wyler, as an additional analytical approach. Much more work needs to be done to (re)discover other co-authors, both historically and in contemporary filmmaking.

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