Cassavetes, *Opening Night* (1977-78)
Cassavetes often referred to as a “maverick” of independent cinema financed own films w/ money from acting jobs

*A Woman under the Influence* (1972)
*The Killing of a Chinese Bookie* (1976)

“There is a compromise made if you work on a commercial film and the compromise isn’t how or what you do, the techniques you use, or even the content, but really the compromise is beginning to feel a lack of confidence in your innermost thoughts. And if you don’t put those innermost thoughts on the screen then you are looking down on not only your audience but the people you work with. And that’s what makes so many people working out there unhappy. They say: ‘Well, I’ll make a lot of money and than I’ll come back and do this later on.’ The truth of the matter is, of course, that they never do. These innermost thoughts become less and less a part of you, and once you lose them you don’t have anything else. I don’t think anyone does it purposely. It’s just that a lot of people are not aware of losing those things. I found myself losing them too, and then suddenly I woke up by accident, by sheer accident of not getting along with something, with something inside?” (Cassavetes, quoted in Ray Carney, *The Films of John Cassavetes*, 34)
Film has a variety of techniques for putting viewer at unease, in uncertainty
a) What is logical cause & effect?
   Out of order sequence of play-within-play
   What is history of characters, i.e. Myrtle & Maurice?
   Little jump cuts in scene to draw intention into question
   linguistic non-sequiturs
     “people who talk about their children are perverted”

b) Camera does not always show who addressed
   “What’s wrong with you?” spoken by wife in play-in-play
   addressed to husband, or Myrtle?
   next line is “What kind of woman are you”?

c) Hand-held cameras

d) Obscured views of Nancy in dressing room & bathroom
   no framing or establishing shot to contextualize

e) Hall of mirrors

What is story?
So is Myrtle just an out-of-control female drunk, or does she have a point?

Is this a misogynistic film or not? Is the “maverick” a misogynist figure?

How do some of the characters compromise themselves? How do some of them compromise Myrtle by the way they address, describe, interpellate her?

Is Nancy just a useful fiction for character? What happens in scene where Myrtle enters playwright’s room and beats her head against door?

Why does Myrtle need Nancy? Why does she kill her?

Does Myrtle win or lose? Does she find hope, love, respect in last scene?
“It’s never as clear as it is in the movies. People don’t know what they are doing most of the time, myself included. They don’t know what they want or feel. It’s only in the movies that they know what their problems are and have game plans for dealing with them . . . Film is an investigation of our lives. What we are. What our responsibilities in life are – if any. What we are looking for. Why would I want to make a movie about something I already understand?” (Cassavetes, quoted in Carney 312)

Next time: Fanon, “On National Culture”
psychologist, Marxist from Martinique
became a spokesman for African & colonial independence