

CINÉ-TRACTS

A JOURNAL OF FILM AND CULTURAL STUDIES

11

IMAGING



IDENTIFICATION

- FASSBINDER AND GERMANY
- THE THRILLER FILM
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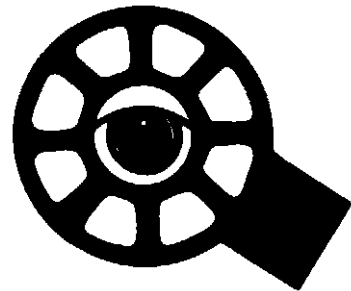
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BUTTERCUP POPCORN

AN INTRODUCTION

Is it proper to yell "Movie!" in a crowded firehouse?

Steve Martin

What if we all grew up to be what we wanted? We would be a country of firemen, ballerinas, and cowboys.

Lily Tomlin

Seek in the discourse not its laws of construction as do the structural methods, but its conditions of existence.

Refer discourse not to the thought, to the mind, or to the object which might have given rise to it, but to the practical field in which it is deployed.

Michel Foucault

The organizers and participants at the March, 1980 international film theory conference held at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee heeded Foucault's advice. We were concerned with cinema and film's "practical field," our "conditions of existence" within the terms of the historical cinematic contract as symptomatic of the larger social contract. To a degree, this topic made more specific certain problems posed at two previous conferences, **The Cinematic Apparatus** in 1978 and **Cinema and Language** in 1979 while circling back to 1977's topic, **Performance**, with alternate approaches, with the knowledge gained in the intervening years. While the results of 1978 and 1979 are being published by MacMillan of London, it is appropriate that these essays appear in two successive issues of this journal, as did the **Performance** essays in Volume 1, Number 2 of **Cine-tracts**, "Theoretical Perspectives in Cinema." It was through that initial and fruitful collaboration with the editors, particularly Ron Burnett, and the resultant publication that our research focused into a three-year investigation of contemporary film theory and history. The work of the 1977 and 1980 projects, we feel, is politically and intellectually coherent.

The very term of the title, "Cinema and Film: Conditions of Presence," brings into play an examination of the founding notion of film's "absence," the absence or lack posited immediately in psychoanalysis' foundation, and superimposed in theoretical writings over the terrain of the subject. With the notion of "presence" as an instigation, cinema and film's "conditions" — the terms of cinema's mutual, historical agreements with audiences — were mapped onto four seminar topics: Film Body, Identification, Exhibition/Reception, and Imaging. Intersecting all the areas were two terms, "politics" and "subjectivity," their histories, their heterogeneity, their implication in social practices. The seminars addressed the following questions:

Film Body

What are the terms, effects, and history of the illusion of the body's presence in film? What are the causes of the increasing corporeality of this body through history, and what governs the changes in representational practices? What is the erotic of the body in relation to the relay of the look? How does this differ for the male and female spectator?

Identification

What is the history of the concept of identification in cinema? What is its status in respect to other signifying practices? What is at stake in the different instances of identification, their historical transformation, and their relation to sexuality?

Exhibition/Reception

How do we understand — theoretically, historically, in the very machines and processes and contexts — the showing of films? What is involved in the reception of films, their experience, the construction of their meanings? What are the terms of reception's history? What kind of reception theory needs to be developed in relation to cinema and film?

Imaging

By what semiotic processes do images on the screen produce imaging on and off screen, articulate meaning and desire, for the spectators? What historical factors (from unconscious production, memory and fantasy to social discourses and audience expectations) intervene in imaging? As an imaging machine developed to construct images of social reality and the spectator's place in it, what is at stake for feminism in relation to subject construction and/or political intervention?

The selected papers suggest some answers to these queries and provide new frameworks for investigation by re-examining the assumptions of earlier, influential texts. The essays in this issue were initially delivered in the Identification and imaging seminars. The second issue represents some of the work that took place in the Film Body and Reception exhibition seminars, with essays by Linda Williams, Douglas Gomery, Michael Budd, Patricia Mellencamp, and Herbert Blau.

The critical terms, "politics, subjectivity, history," circulated not only through the papers and discussions but in the conferences's film texts and their authors' remarks as well: Michelle Citron and **Daughter Rite**; Sally Potter and **Thriller**; Anthony McCall, Andrew Tyndall. Claire Pajakowska, Jane Weinstock and **Sigmund Freud's Dora**; Robert Nelson and **Suite California Stops and Passes, I and II**; Jonathan Curling and **Song of the Shirt**; and Abraham Polonsky with **Body and Soul** and **Force of Evil**. These films grounded our work. The conference, sponsored by the Center for Twentieth Century Studies and funded again by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, realized one of our most crucial, often elusive objectives: productive interchange between scholars and artists. Such collaboration cannot be fully documented in these pages: the critical interventions during the event, the constant challenges to and clarifications of theoretical and historical premises and assumptions. Particularly Dudley Andrews, Sandy Flit-terman, Claire Johnston, Deborah Linderman, Phil Rosen, Maria-Antonietta Machiocchi and Maureen Turim were lucid, embodied voices of critique, forcing answers rather than begging the question.

The collective conference apparatus itself is also missing from the printed page. The topic was initially outlined by Stephen Heath and me, then defined by the seminar coordinators, Teresa de Lauretis, Mary Ann Doane, Phil Rosen, and Linda Williams. The event was made possible by Carol Tennesen, the conference coordinator, and Jean Lile of the Center for Twentieth Century Studies whose efficient and intelligent presence is indeed a necessary condition of these events. The apparatus steadfastly remains. Like the swallows to Capistrano, participants do return only to leave again, the presence/absence of film conferences. As two stanzas of Don Druker's "epic" post-poem state:

Every year we're put upon
To keep abreast of Jacques Lacan
To cast our vision ever higher
Imagining the signifier...

Our enemies say "parasitical,"
We're being much too analytical;
But I'm not taking any bets
That humanists can outdo Metz.

Not humanists but perhaps feminists will untangle the sometimes restrictive confines of theory, just as current historical writings are challenging the theory-machine and its assumptions of cinema and film's conditions of presence. These issues are dedicated to that politically necessary task.

by Patricia Mellencamp
Conference Director

IMAGING

TERESA DE LAURETIS

Cinema has been studied as an apparatus of representation — an imaging machine developed to construct images or visions of social reality and the spectators' place in it; but cinema is also a signifying practice, is directly implicated in the production of meaning, social values, and subjectivity. The feminist critique of representation and other analyses of visual pleasure and signification through images have raised many questions that require critical attention and further elaboration. In very general terms, what are the conditions of presence of the images in cinema and film? And viceversa: what are the conditions of presence of cinema and film in imaging, of cinema as imaging?

More specifically, what is at stake, for film theory and for feminism, in the notion of "images of woman," "negative" images (literally, **clichés**) or its alternative, "positive" images? This positive-negative polarity assumes, rather simplistically in my opinion, that images are directly and immediately absorbed by the viewers, who are thus presumed to be either historically innocent or purely receptive, to exist in the world outside of, or immune from, social practices and discourses. But if the historical innocence of women is no longer a tenable critical category for feminism, then what? Then perhaps we should think of images as productive of contradictions in both subjective and social processes. This leads to a second set of questions: by what processes do images on the screen produce imaging on and off screen, articulate meaning and desire, for the spectators? How are images perceived? How do we **see**? How do we attribute meaning to what we see? And do those meanings remain linked to images? What about language? What relations does language, or sound, bear to images? Do we image as well as imagine, or are they the same thing? Thus we must ask: What historical factors intervene in imaging? Historical factors which include social discourses, genre codification, audience expectations, but also unconscious production, memory, fantasy and so on. Finally, what are the 'productive relations' of imaging in film-making and spectating — productive of what? productive how?

These questions are in no way exhaustive of the intricate problematic of imaging; moreover, they demand consideration of several areas of theoretical discourse that have been engaged in the study of cinematic signification and representation: semiotics, psychoanalysis, ideology, reception and perception theories. The following remarks will address some aspects of imaging, some points at issue in the theoretical accounts of the image given by semiotics and by the psychophysiology of perception. They are intended by no means as fully formulated hypotheses, but rather in the spirit of a re-reading or revisiting of our collective theoretical past which is often full of surprises, not all of them pleasant, nor all unpleasant.

Proemium

It is customary to begin such epic tales with a classical verse as propitiatory invocation. Therefore: In the beginning was the word. In its earlier stages semiology was developed in the Wake (as in *Finnegans*) of Saussurian linguistics as a conceptual, analytical framework to study sign systems — or better, to study a certain functioning of certain elements, called signs, in the

social production of meaning. In the Saussurian account, the system of language is defined by a double articulation of its elementary units, its signs, the smallest meaningful units of language (morphemes, roughly corresponding to words). The first articulation is the combination, linking or sequential ordering of morphemes into sentences according to the rules of morphology and syntax; the second articulation is the combination of certain distinctive units, sounds in themselves meaningless (the phonemes), into significant units, into signs, according to the rules established by phonology. Each sign, said Saussure, is constituted by an arbitrary or conventional (socially established) bond between a **sound-image** and a **concept**, a signifier and a signified. Note that from the very beginning in semiology the idea of image, of representation, is associated with the signifier, not with the signified, which is defined as 'concept'.¹ This may be partly responsible for the disregard in which the signified (hence meaning) was held. If we were to call the signified "a mental image," thereby associating meaning with representation rather than with the purely conceptual, we would have, I think, a better sense of the complexity of the sign. For representation (verbal, visual, aural) is in both components of the sign; better still, representation is the sign-function, the social work of the sign.²

The Saussurian account prompted the assumption that analogous operations were at work in non-verbal sign systems — systems composed of images, gestures, sounds, objects — and the representational apparatuses utilizing them, such as painting, advertising, the cinema, the theatre, dance, music, architecture. If the first thorough semiological investigations of cinema yielded the result that no exact parallelism, no homology with verbal language could be drawn, nonetheless semiotics has continued to be concerned with the modes and conditions of iconic coding, the rules of visual communication. So it may be useful to reconsider the debate around cinematic articulation which took place during the Pesaro Film Festival (Mostra del nuovo cinema) in Italy, in 1966 and 1967, and practically set off the semiological analysis of cinema.³

Cinematic Articulation and Iconicity

The debate on articulation in the early years Of semiology seemed to crystallize an opposition between linguistic and iconic signs, between verbal language and visual images; their difference appeared to be inherent in two irreducible modes of perception, signification, and communication: the first, verbal language, appeared to be mediated, coded, symbolic; the second, iconism, immediate, natural, directly linked to reality. Cinema was at the very center of this theoretical storm.

According to Metz's first paper on the topic, "LeCinéma: langue ou langage?" (1964), a position which he later revised, cinema can only be described as a language without a code, for it lacks the second articulation (the phonemic level) altogether: though meaningful, cinematic images cannot be defined as signs, in the Saussurian sense, because they are motivated and analogical rather than arbitrary or conventional; and because each image is not generated by a code with a series of fixed rules and (largely unconscious) operations as a word or sentence is; the cinematic image is a unique, a one-time-only combination of elements which cannot be catalogued, as words can be, in lexicons or dictionaries. Saussure had said that language is a storehouse of signs, from which all speakers equally draw: no such thing can be claimed for cinema: for the images it puts together there is no paradigm, no storehouse. In the cinematic image, said Metz, "meaning is released naturally from the total signifier without recourse to a code."⁴

Pasolini, on the other hand, maintained that cinema is a language with a double articulation, though different from verbal language, in fact more like written language. The minimal units of cinematic language are the various objects in the frame or shot (**inquadratura**); these he called **cinémi**, by analogy with **fonémi**, phonemes. The **cinémi** combine into larger units, the shots, which are the basic units of cinema corresponding to the morphemes of verbal language. In this way, for Pasolini, cinema articulates reality precisely by means of its second articulation: the selection and combination of real, profilmic objects in each shot. It is these profilmic events, or objects in the real (including people, landscapes, etc.) which constitute the paradigm of cinema, its storehouse of signs, of image.⁵

Yet, contended Eco, the objects in the frame are not like the phonemes of verbal language. Even leaving aside the problem of the qualitative difference between objects and their photographed image (a difference central to semiotics: the referent, the real object, is neither the signified nor the signifier), the objects in a frame are already meaningful units, thus more like words. In fact, for Eco, the code of cinema could be better described as having not two, as for Pasolini, nor one, as

for Metz, but three articulations. Let's call **seme** (semantic nucleus, meaningful unit) each recognizable shape (Pasolini's 'object'); each seme will be made up of smaller **iconic signs** such as /nose/ or /eye/ which could be even further analyzed in **figurae** (e.g. angles, curves, light-dark effects, etc.) whose value is not semantic but positional and oppositional like the phonemes. The iconic signs (nose, eye, street) would thus be formed from a paradigm of possible iconic **figurae** (angles, curves, light); this would be the third articulation. In turn the iconic signs would combine into a seme (human figure, landscape), the second articulation; and the combination of semes into a frame would constitute the first articulation. But the process doesn't stop there. Not only do semes combine to form a frame, but given that cinema is pictures in motion, a further combination takes place in the projected film, in the passage from frame (or photograph) to shot. Here each iconic sign and each iconic seme generates what kinesics calls **cinemorphs**, i.e. significant units of movement, gestural units. If, continues Eco, kinesics has difficulty in identifying the non-meaningful units, the **figurae**, of a gesture (the equivalent of phonemes), cinema does not: it is a specific property of the camera that it can break down the unity of perceived movement, the gestural continuum, in discrete units which in themselves are not significant. It is precisely the motion camera that provides a way to analyse kinesic signs in their non-meaningful, differential units, something human natural perception is incapable of doing.⁶

Eco's reasoning is correct; however, a further distinction must be made. Even in this case the breakdown is mechanically imposed, no less than it was in futurist paintings; the 'units of movement' are established by the speed of the camera, they are not discrete units in the gesture itself, whereas phonemes are distinguishable and in finite number in language. Then, since cinema depends on the objects whose imprint the light rays inscribe on the film stock, it is important to distinguish between the articulation of **real** movement (the movement of the objects, studied by kinesics), cinematic movement (the movement of the frames effected by the pull-down mechanism in the camera or the blades of the projector shutter), and apparent movement or motion (perceived by the viewer). And here semiotics must rejoin the study of visual and motion perception.⁷ But let's assume with Eco that cinema, considered as a sign system (independently, that is, of a viewing situation and actually considered only as image-track), has a triple articulation; this would explain, for instance, the greater perceptual richness we experience, the so-called impression of reality and the conviction that cinema is better equipped than verbal language to transmit, capture or express that reality — hence, he suggests, the various metaphysics of the cinema. But even though we may correctly speak of a triple articulation of the cinematic signs, is it worthwhile to do so? The notion of articulation is an analytical notion, whose usefulness rests on its ability to account for the phenomenon (language, cinema) economically, to account for a maximum of events with a minimum of combinable units. Now the "phenomenon," the events of cinema are not the photograph, the still image, but at the very least the shot, image(s) in motion which construct not only linear movement but also depth, an accumulation of time and space that is essential to the meaning, the reading of the image(s). If cinema as a language can be said to possess a triple articulation, film as discourse is constructed on, and puts into play, many other codes, verbal, iconographic, stylistic, perceptual, narrative... Therefore, and this is Eco's conclusion at that point, honesty requires that we ask ourselves if the notion of triple articulation itself is not possibly complicit with a **semiotic** metaphysics.⁸

Let me take up that almost casual remark in order to conclude the re-reading of that phase of the debate. As Eco suggests, the determination of an articulated code (double or triple articulation, or whatever), even if possible, would offer neither an epistemological nor an ontological guarantee (guarantee of knowledge or guarantee of the event, of **what cinema is**). Moreover, the concern with minimal units and the homogeneity of the theoretical object implicit in that notion of articulation, and methodologically central to classical semiology, has tended to hide or make non-pertinent the other components of the signifying process; for example, to hide the fact that cinematic signification and signification in general are not just linguistic or systemic, but discursive processes: that is to say, they are intertextual (they engage and overlay multiple codes) and contextual (they involve a distinct communicative situation, certain conditions of enunciation and address, of reception, and a material specificity). Therefore, it is the usefulness of that notion of iconic and cinematic articulation that must be questioned, and its pretension to provide the proper semiotic definition of the phenomenon cinema.

This said, however, iconicity — the terms of the articulation of meanings to images — does remain an issue for semiotics and for film theory. It should not be cast aside as irrelevant, false or superseded, for at least two reasons. On one front, it is important to pursue the question of

iconicity, of the visual aspect of representation in the relation of meaning, as a kind of theoretical resistance: one should not simply yield to the current trend in semiotics toward an increasing grammatization of discursive and textual operations, toward, that is, logico-mathematical formalization. On another front, it continues to be necessary to reclaim iconicity, the visual component of meaning (including above all visual pleasure and the attendant questions of identification and subjectivity) not so much **from** the domain of the natural or **from** an immediacy of referential reality, but **for** the ideological; to wrench the visual from its vision, as it were; or, in Metz's terms, to reclaim the imaginary of the image for the symbolic of cinema.⁹

This is no simple task. For while most forms of visual communication are by now accepted as conventional (coded), so that the very notion of 'reality' has changed (the paradox of live TV is that reality is only accessible as televised, as what is captured by an action camera; the paradox of current Hollywood cinema is that reality must surpass in visual fascination the horrors of, say, Carpenter's **Halloween** or Romero's **Dawn of the Dead**, must be fantasm-ageria, revelation, apocalypse here and now), perhaps the very terms of the reality-illusion, nature-culture dichotomies have been displaced: cinema is no longer reality unmediated, pristine, originary (the pastoral landscape unfolding in full color, bathed in the stereophonic sound of Beethoven's sixth, on the wide screen of the death chamber in **Soylent Green**). Today's cinema is hyperreality (the canned Muzak and soft pastels of **American Gigolo**) absolutely coded, artificial, artful, made-up, simulated, masqueraded, transvested — but **permanently** perverted, irreversibly transformed (the metacinematic metaphor here would be the eyes to Tommy/David Bowie in **The Man Who Fell to Earth**). Thus it is not by chance that all the nature-culture thresholds are being thematized and transgressed in recent movies: incest, life/death (vampires, zombies and other living dead), human/non-human (aliens, clones, demon seeds, pods, fogs, you name it), and sexual difference (androgynes, transsexuals, transvestites and transylvanians). Boundaries are very much in question; the ancient rites of passage no longer work.

This hyperreality, this total simulation as Baudrillard would say, is precisely, conspicuously **imaged**, visually and aurally represented (think of Truffaut playing the xylophone in **Close Encounters of the Third Kind**); and language becomes more and more incidental — in the sense of incidental music — often simply redundant as it is in the soap opera, or vaguely evocative, allusive, mythical — the hollow men of Eliot hyper-recited by Kurz/Brando in **Apocalypse Now**, the operatic arias in Bertolucci's **Luna**, whose function is to allude, refer to — not engage — a symbolic order, an abstract code: not to engage the code of opera, in all its cultural, historical weight as Visconti does in **Senso**, or in its narrative, thematic and rhythmic closure as Potter does in **Thriller**, as Rainer does in **Film About a Woman Who**. The opera in **Luna**, Coppola's **Golden Bough** are codes no longer, not yet, perhaps never to be intelligible, for it doesn't matter. What matters is once again the spectacle. Contradiction, paradox, ambiguity in the image as well as in the textualized overlay of sound, language and image no longer produce distancing effects by baring the device of cinema and thus inducing rationality and consciousness; they **are** the spectacle, the no longer simple but excessive, 'perverse' pleasure of current cinema.

In short, **cinema's imaging**, its complex iconicity, its textual overlay of visual, aural, linguistic and other coding processes continues to be a crucial problem. I want to suggest that, the old polarity natural-conventional having been displaced not only in film or semiotic theory but in the social imaginary, in the reality effect produced by the social technology that is cinema, the question of representation, the articulation of meaning to image language and sound, and thus "the process of the engagement of subjectivity in meaning"¹⁰ — cinema's imaging for the spectators — must be re-posed in terms that are themselves to be elaborated, recast or posed anew. Where shall we look for clues or ideas? My present inclination is to go back and read again, re-think through some of the notions we have taken for granted or prematurely disposed of.

I will go back briefly to the debate on articulation (the question, What is cinematic articulation, how is cinema articulated and what does it articulate? is still very much at issue). Then, with reference to some recent neuropsychological studies of perception, I will sketch out a few implications for a further exploration of the notion of imaging.

Eco's critique of iconism, of the so-called 'iconic signs,' which he only outlined at the time of the Pesaro debate, has been more fully developed in **A Theory of Semiotics**. There he argues that "iconism in fact covers many semiotic procedures (p. 190)... is a collection of phenomena

bundled together under an all-purpose label (just as in the Dark Ages the word 'plague' probably covered a lot of different diseases)" (p. 216). Thus the difference between the word /dog/ and the image of a dog is not "the trivial one between iconic (motivated by similarity) and arbitrary (or 'symbolic') signs. It is rather a matter of a complex and continuously gradated array of different modes of producing signs and texts, every sign-function (sign-unit or text) being in turn the result of many of these modes of production" (p. 190), every sign-function being in fact a text. Even if in a given iconic continuum, an image, one can isolate pertinent discrete unites or **figurae**, as soon as they are detected, they seem to dissolve again. In other words, these "pseudo-features" cannot be organized into a system of rigid differences and their positional as well as sematic values vary according to the coding rules instituted each time by the context. Thus, he concludes. there is no such thing as an iconic sign; there are only visual texts, whose pertinent units are established — if at all — by the context. And it is a code (a purposefully established correlation between expressive and semantic units) that "decides on what level of complexity it will single out its own pertinent features" (p. 235). Therefore the very notion of sign becomes "untenable when confused with those of significant elementary **units** and **fixed** correlations" (p. 216). It is precisely in studying iconic signification that one sees "the classical notion of sign dissolve into a highly complex network of changing relationships" (p. 49).

So far so good. But let me play, for a moment, the devil's advocate, Pasolini's advocate in this case. Let me go back from this recent position of Eco's to some of Pasolini's statements, perhaps easily dismissed because, in his own ironic words, "so extravagantly interdisciplinary." Pasolini's often quoted slogan, "cinema is the language of reality," was in part provocatively outrageous, in part very earnestly asserted. To be exact, the words he used (it is the title of one of his 1960s essays on cinema, reprinted in his book **Empirismo eretico**, Heretical Empiricism). were "cinema is the written language of reality," which he explained as follows: as the invention of the alphabet and the technology of writing revolutionized society by "revealing" language to men (men, this is also the word he used — I am translating and paraphrasing, not revising), making them conscious of spoken language and **thus instituting a cultural consciousness of thought as representation** (while earlier thought and speech must have appeared as natural), cinema is a kind of "writing" (**scrittura, écriture**) of reality, that is to say, **the conscious representation of human action**, hence "the written language of human action," "the written language of reality."¹¹ For Pasolini, human action, human intervention in the real is the first and foremost expression of men, their primary "language." In this sense he says, what Lenin has left us — the transformation of social structures and their cultural consequences — is "a great poem of action."

From Lenin's great action poem to the short pages of action prose of a Fiat worker or a petty government official, life is undoubtedly moving away from the classical humanistic ideals and is becoming lost in pragma. **Cinema** (with the other audio-visual techniques) **seems to be the written language of this pragma**. But this may be its salvation, precisely **because it expresses it** from within: being produced out of this pragma, (cinema) reproduces it.¹²

Another statement: cinema, like poetry (poetic writing as a practice of language) is "translinguistic"; it encodes human action in a grammar, a set of conventions, a sign-vehicle; but as soon as it is perceived, heard, received by a reader/spectator, the convention is discarded and action is "recreated as a dynamics of feelings, affects, passions, ideas" (p. 209) in that reader/spectator. Thus in living, in practical existence, in our actions, we represent ourselves, we perform ourselves (the Italian verb **rappresentare** denotes both represent and perform/enact) and watch others representing/performing/enacting themselves. "Human reality is this double representation in which we are at once actors and spectators: a gigantic happening, if you will" (p. 210). Cinema, then, is "the 'written' (recorded, stored) moment of a natural and total language, which is our action in the real" (p. 210).

It is easy to see why Pasolini's arguments could have been so quickly dismissed. He himself, only half-jokingly, asked: "What horrible sins are crouching in my philosophy?" and named the "monstrous" juxtaposition of irrationalism and pragmatism, religion and action, and other negative, even "fascist" aspects of our civilization (p. 240). I'd like to suggest, however, that an

unconventional, less literal or narrow reading of Pasolini's pronouncements, one that would accept his provocations and work on the contradictions of his heretical empiricism, could be very useful to resist, if not to counter, the more subtle seduction of a logico-semiotic humanism.

A few random observations:

1. Pasolini imagines **cinema as the conscious representation**, "the written language," of **social practice** (he calls it action, reality — reality as human practice). Is this not what much militant cinema, many "independent" filmmakers are in fact doing or trying to do? Especially if we take the words "human action" out of their usual (fascist, says Pasolini, let us say liberal-bourgeois or sexist) ideological context and translate them as "social practice," isn't cinema indeed a representation of that?

2. Cinema, like poetry, Pasolini says, is **trans** linguistic: it exceeds the moment of the inscription, the code, the technical apparatus, to become "a dynamics of feelings, affects, passions, ideas" in the moment of reception. (And note the emphasis on the subjective in three of the four terms.) Cinema and poetry, that is, are not languages (codes, grammars, articulatory mechanisms, abstract rules) but discourses, practices of language, of representation — signifying practices, we would say today; he said "the written language of pragma."

3. "In our actions, in practical existence, we represent/perform/enact ourselves. Human reality (social practice) is this double representation in which we are at once actors and spectators." Compare that statement with the following, by Judith Mayne:

One of the most basic connections between women's experience in this culture and women's experience in film is precisely the relationship of spectator and spectacle. Since women are spectacles in their everyday lives, there's something about coming to terms with film from the perspective of what it means to be an object of spectacle and what it means to be a spectator that is really a coming to terms with how that relationship exists both up on the screen and in everyday life.¹³

I could continue recontextualizing, intertextualizing, overtextualizing Pasolini's extravagant (in 1966) statements, but I must go back, go on, to the question of imaging. The point I wished to make, in relation to Eco's important redefinition of iconicity as a **textual**, discursive process, was this: the context of cinema as Pasolini outlines it, the context which makes certain "features" pertinent and thus produces meaning, is not only a discursive context (linguistic, iconic) as Eco's is; Pasolini's is the context of social practice, that human action which cinematic representation articulates and inscribes from both sides of the screen, as it were, for filmmakers and spectators as subjects in history.

An example of what can literally be called the cinematic articulation of human action may serve to demonstrate a definite relation between articulation and imaging. We know that the camera can be used, and has been used, to study the relation of movement to time and space; we also know that such studies, whether scientific or aesthetic, are always embedded in concrete historical practices, often indeed are aimed toward very specific economic or ideological objectives.

A particular device, a motion camera connected to a clock, was developed by Frank Gilbreth, a management expert, to determine time-motion ratios for industrial workers and thus to impose on the workers a higher rate of productivity. The "Gilbreth Chronometer" is described in **The Book of Progress** (1915):

Every film (frame) reveals the successive positions of a workman in performing each minute operation of the task entrusted to him. The position of the chronometer pointer in successive films indicates the length of time between successive operations. These films are studied under a microscope, and a careful analysis of each operation is made to develop the standard time for each... Any workman may, for a time, deceive an inexperienced efficiency engineer... but the camera cannot be

deceived... The film records faithfully every movement made, and subsequent analysis and study reveals exactly how many of these movements were necessary and how many were purposely slow or useless.¹⁴

This apparatus that "cannot be deceived" is used to set a "standard time" of industrial production that eliminates "useless" movements thus maximizing output. The imposition of such standard time seriously restricts the workers' investment of fantasy (to borrow a term and a concept from Oskar Negt) in the work, fantasy that will then be invested in "leisure-time" activities. Thus the industrial limitation of fantasy, the quantitative and qualitative restrictions on work-related imaging are but the underside of cinema's binding of fantasy to certain images, cinema's articulation of meaning and desire, for the spectators, in particular representations. What we call genres — the narrative filmic organization of content according to specific cinematic codifications in the western, the horror film, melodrama, film noir, the musical, etc. — are also ways in which cinema articulates human action, establishes meanings in relation to images, and binds fantasy at once to images and meanings. This binding of fantasy to certain representations, images and meanings, affects the spectator as a subjective production: the spectator is "stitched in" the film's spatiotemporal "movement," is the point of intelligibility and origin of those representations, the subject of desire and the "figure-for" those images and meanings. Cinema in these ways affects the social production of subjectivity. Disinvestment of fantasy in work-related imaging (the effect of the Gilbreth chronometer), and investment of fantasy in film's imaging (the movies as the great escape): both are modes of production of subjectivity effected by cinema through the articulation of human action, cinema's imaging.

Mapping

The central image of the next set of remarks is the notion of mapping in semiotic and visual perception theories. Although I will not claim a strict logical progression of the argument, as I said earlier, perhaps some connections can be drawn here as well.

According to physiologist Colin Blakemore, our apparently unified view of the outside world is in fact produced by the interconnected operations of diverse neural processes. Not only are there different kinds of neuron or nerve cells in the brain and in the retina (the retina, the photo-sensitive layer at the back of the eye, is actually part of the cortex, composed of the same tissue and nerve cells); and not only do those nerve cells have different functions (for example "the main function of the nucleus is not to process visual information by transforming the messages from the eyes, but to filter the signals, depending on the activity of the other sense organs");¹⁵ but each neuron responds to a specific responsive field and its action is inhibited or excited by the action of other, adjacent cortical cells. Different parts of the retina project through the optic nerves to different parts of the visual cortex and of the brain stem (the superior colliculus, in the lower part of the brain), producing two maps of the visual world or rather a discontinuous map in which are represented certain features of objects (edges and shapes, position, orientation). In other words, these interacting processes do not merely **record** a unified or preconstituted visual space, but actually constitute a discontinuous **map** of the external world. "Map" is the term used by Blakemore: the activity of the optical and cortical cells constitutes, he says "a mapping of visual space on to the substance of the brain" (p. 14).

The perceptual apparatus, then, does not copy reality but symbolizes it. This is supported by the fact that "unnatural" stimulations of the retina or cortex (surgical, electrical or manual) produce visual sensations; hence the familiar comic book truth that a blow on the head makes one see stars. This happens because "the brain always assumes that a message from a particular sense organ is the result of the **expected** form of stimulation" (p. 17). The term "expected" here implies that perception works by a set of learned responses, a cognitive pattern, a code; and further, that the principle of organization or combination of sensory input is a kind of inference (it has been called "unconscious inference").¹⁶ The perceptual apparatus, moreover, is subject to adaptation or calibration, i.e. expectations are readjusted on the basis of new stimuli or occurrences; finally, perception is not merely patterned response but active anticipation. In the words of R.L. Gregory, perception is "predictive": "the study of perception shows that nothing is seen as 'directly' as supposed in common sense."¹⁷ To perceive is to make a continuous series of educated guesses, on the basis of prior knowledges and expectations, however unconscious.

The term "mapping," interestingly enough, is also used by Eco to define the process of semiosis,

sign-making, the production of signs and meanings. Mapping for Eco is the transformation of percepts into semantic units into expressions, a transformation that occurs by transferring, mapping, certain pertinent elements (features that have been recognized as pertinent) from one material continuum to another; the particular rules of articulation, the conditions of reproducibility or of invention, and the physical labor involved are the other parameters to be taken into account in Eco's classification of what he calls the modes of sign production. Eco's emphasis is a productivist one: his view of sign production, and especially of the mode he calls invention, associating it with art and creativity, is from the perspective of the **maker** — the speaker, the artist, the producer of signs; it stems from his formation in aesthetics as well as classical marxism. He defines invention as code-making, thus:

We may define as invention a mode of production whereby the producer of the sign-function chooses a new material continuum not yet segmented for that purpose and proposes a new way of organizing (of giving form to) it in order **to map** within it the formal pertinent elements of a content-type. Thus in invention we have a case of **ratio difficilis** realized within a heteromaterial expression; but since no previous convention exists to correlate the elements of the expression with the selected content, the sign producer must in some way **posit** this correlation so as to make it acceptable. In this sense inventions are radically different from recognition, choice, and replica.¹⁸

Radically different because, establishing new codes, inventions actually change social reality.

The perceptual model, on the contrary, is focused on the spectator, so to speak, rather than the filmmaker. While Eco's model requires that, in order to change the world, one has to produce new signs, which in turn will produce new codes and different meanings or social values, the other model says nothing about purposeful activity and rather stresses adaptation to external events. But that adaptation is nonetheless a kind of production — of sensation, cognition, memory, an ordering and distribution of energy, a constant activity (some would say, strategies) for survival. pleasure, self-maintenance.

As we cannot discuss these models in greater detail now, let me just make some provisional connections, and perhaps displace others:

1. The notion of mapping implies that perception and signification are neither direct or simple reproduction (copy, mimesis, reflection) nor inevitably pre-determined by biology, anatomy or destiny; though they are socially determined and overdetermined. Put another way, what is called (re)production — as women well know — is never simply natural or simply technical, that is, spontaneous, automatic, without labor, without pain, without desire, without the engagement of subjectivity. Even for those signs that Eco calls replicas (a strictly coded sign, like the word /cinema/: linguistically speaking, when I utter that word, I merely 'reproduce' it from the language, I do not invent it, I cannot be creative by changing the phonemes or the morphological aspects of the word), since they are always produced in a communicational context, their (re)production is still embedded in a process of enunciation and address that requires the mapping of other elements or the making pertinent of other features, and that involves memory, expectations, decisions, pain, desire — in short, the whole discontinuous history of the subject.
2. If subjectivity is engaged in semiosis at all levels, not just in visual pleasure but in all cognitive processes, in turn semiosis (coded expectations, patterns of response, assumptions, inferences, predictions, and fantasy I would add) is involved in sensory perception, inscribed in the body — the film body, the human body.
3. The notion of mapping suggests a continuous and discontinuous process of perceiving/representing/meaning (I'd like to call it imaging) that is neither linguistic (discrete, linear, arbitrary) nor iconic (unified, analogical, motivated) but perhaps both, or perhaps neither. And in this imaging process are involved different codes and modalities of semiotic production, as well as the semiotic production of difference.

Difference. Inevitably that question comes back, we come back to the question of imaging difference, the question of feminism. Which is not, can no longer be a question of negative or positive images, of simple opposition, even of dialectical contradiction. How can the question of representation, the articulation of meanings to images and of the social to the subjective, be posed other than from within the discourse of polarity, opposition, dialectics? But within it, woman's position is an impossible one: for her no term of reference exists, no appropriable point of enunciation (what does it mean to speak, to write "as a woman"?). For historical women the non-coherence, the division of woman in the social, in discourse, lies in her finding herself in a void of meaning, the empty space between the signs, where no demand is possible and no code available: the place of the woman spectator in the cinema, between the look of the camera (the masculine representation) and the image on the screen (the specular, fixed, feminine representation), neither one nor the other but both, in double and opposite identification.

Paradoxically, perhaps, the only way to position oneself outside that discourse is to displace oneself within it, to refuse the question as it is formulated in its terms, or to answer deviously — though in its words, even to quote — but against the grain. So, to the question "What does feminism have to do with all the preceding questions, arguments, re-readings, points at issue?" I will respond not as a woman but with a parable.

After sunset, on the terraces of the palace, Marco Polo expounded to the sovereign the results of his missions. As a rule the Great Khan concluded his day savoring these tales with half-closed eyes until his first yawn was the signal for the suite of pages to light the flames that guided the monarch to the Pavilion of the August Slumber. But this time Kublai seemed unwilling to give in to weariness. "Tell me another city," he insisted.

"...You leave there and ride for three days between the northeast and east-by-northeast winds..." Marco resumed saying, enumerating names and customs and wares of a great number of lands. His repertory could be called inexhaustible, but now he was the one who had to give in. Dawn had broken when he said: "Sire, now I have told you about all the cities I know."

"There is still one of which you never speak."

Marco Polo bowed his head.

"Venice," the Khan said.

Marco smiled. "What else do you believe I have been talking to you about?"

The emperor did not turn a hair. "And yet I have never heard you mention that name."

And Polo said: "Every time I describe a city I am saying something about Venice."

"When I ask you about other cities, I want to hear about them. And about Venice, when I ask you about Venice."

"To distinguish the other cities' qualities, I must speak of a first city that remains implicit. For me it is Venice."

"You should then begin each tale of your travels from the departure, describing Venice as it is, all of it, not omitting anything you remember of it."

The lake's surface was barely wrinkled; the copper reflection of the ancient palace of the Sung was shattered into sparkling glints like floating leaves.¹⁹

FOOTNOTES

1. "The linguistic sign unites, not a thing and a name, but a concept and a sound-image (**image acoustique**). The latter is not the material sound, a purely physical thing. but the psychological imprint of the sound, the impression that it makes on our sense. The sound-image is sensory, and if I happen to call it 'material,' it is only in that sense, and by way of opposing it to the other term of the association, the concept, which is generally more abstract." Ferdinand de Saussure, **Course in General Linguistics** (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959), p.12.
2. For the redefinition of the sign as sign-function, see Umberto Eco, **A Theory of Semiotics** (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1976).
3. The debate is succinctly summarized in Eco, **La struttura assente** (Milano: Bompiani, 1968). pp. 149-60, and in Stephen Heath. "Film/Cinetext/Text," **Screen**, vol. 14, no. 1/2 (Spring/Summer 1973), 102-27.
4. "The expressiveness of the world (of the landscape or face) and the expressiveness of art (the melancholy sound of the Wagnerian oboe) are ruled essentially by the same semiological mechanism: **'Meaning' is naturally derived from the signifier as a whole, without resorting to a code**. It is at the level of the signifier, and only there, that the difference occurs: in the first case the author is nature (expressiveness of the world) and in the second it is man (expressiveness of art)." Christian Metz. **Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema**, trans. by Michael Taylor (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1974), p. 79. My emphasis.
5. Pier Paolo Pasolini, "La lingua scritta dell'azione," **Nuovi argomenti** (aprile-giugno 1966), reprinted in **Empirismo eretico** (Milano: Garzanti, 1972).
6. Eco, **La struttura assente**, pp. 154-58.
7. Cf. Joseph and Barbara Anderson, "Motion Perception in Motion Pictures" and Susan Lederman and Bill Nichols, "Flicker and Motion in Film," both in **The Cinematic Apparatus**, ed. by Teresa de Lauretis and Stephen Heath (London: Macmillan, 1980).
8. Eco, **La struttura assente**, p.159.
9. Cristian Metz, "The Imaginary Signifier," **Screen**, vol. 16, no. 2 (Summer 1975), 14-76.
10. Stephen Heath. "The Turn of the Subject." **Cine-Tracts**, 7/8 (Summer/Fall 1979), 44.
11. Pasolini, "Battute sul cinema," originally published in **Cinema e Film**, 1 (Inverno 1966-67), now in **Empirismo eretico**, pp. 238-39. My emphasis
12. Pasolini, "La lingua scritta della realtà," in **Empirismo eretico**, p. 211; his emphasis. All further page references in the text are to this edition.
13. Judith Mayne, "Women and Film: A Discussion of Feminist Aesthetics," **New German Critique**, 13 (Winter 1978). 86.
14. The Book of Progress, ed. by Alfred A. Hopkins (New York, 1915), quoted by Stuart Ewen, "The Bribe of Frankenstein" (manuscript).
15. Colin Blakemore, "The Baffled Brain" in **Illusion in Nature and Art**, ed. by R.L. Gregory and E. H. Gombrich (New York, 1973), p.26. All further page references in the text are to this edition.
16. Cf. Hermann von Helmholtz, **Handbook of Physiological Optics**, Trans. and ed. by J.P. Southall (London and New York, 1963).
17. R.L. Gregory, "The Confounded Eye" in **Illusion in Nature and Art**, p. 61.
18. Eco, **A Theory of Semiotics**, p. 245.
19. ItaloCalvino, **Invisible Cities** (New York, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974), pp. 85-86.

IMAGISTIC REPRESENTATION AND THE STATUS OF THE IMAGE IN PORNOGRAPHY

CLAIRE PAJAKOWSKA

The London Rape Crisis Centre monitors the press, keeping newspaper clippings showing instances where a rape story is placed alongside a page three pinup. There are several hundred examples. Each time this happens they write to the newspaper protesting that this kind of layout parallels the titillation of the pinup with the titillation of the rape story. The newspapers consistently deny that the image and the story are in any way connected, pointing out the hairline that separates each from the other.¹

Despite the denials of the newspaper editors, the contiguity of image and text **is** significant, although to characterize it as a causal relationship is too simple. The story provides the reader with a brief fantasy of committing rape, strictly defined as a mere fantasy by means of the inevitable narrative resolution, its moment of closure, which is the news of the punishment of the rapist, who is thus constructed as criminal, who is not the **he** of the reader. In this the Law holds firm, rape is forbidden, rapists are criminals, and it is precisely as the forbidden that it can be enjoyed as a fantasy.

Another group working on the relation between pornography and rape is the most recent and militant campaign within the American Women's Liberation Movement, the new "Women Against Pornography" group, whose constituency runs into thousands including both feminists and the far-right anti-obscenity moral reformers. Their doxa: pornography causes rape. Susan Brownmiller, the main organizer of the movement, describes pornography as "the undiluted essence of anti-female propaganda" and claims that "rape, wife battering, incest and street violence are stimulated and in fact taught by pornography. To the rapist or the sadistic wife beater a hard core porn magazine is a do-it-yourself manual for violence."² There is obviously a political problem here in that this feminist position on pornography is completely compatible with and complementary to certain mainstream moralities. This problem is repetitive: compare the campaign in the 1830s and 40s in Britain where the Moralist Feminists, ostensibly fighting for continence laws in order to reduce the incidence of wife beating by drunken husbands, became the site for recuperation into the erotophobic morality of dominant ideology.³ Again, the 1840s Natural Rights reformers ended up by passing the anti-homosexuality legislation which meant that until 1967 homosexuality was a criminal offense. Later in the 1860s, the Ladies National Association for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts, campaigning against the institution of Morals Police and for a Criminal Law Amendment Bill which was intended to make quite radical changes in the definition of and culpability within prostitution, was similarly transformed into a crusade for purity and the preservation of the family. The present campaign also holds certain clear if unspoken assumptions about the rightful place of sexual practice, the most liberal of which is close to the post sixties "sexual liberation" whereby "anything goes provided it takes place in a natural meaningful relationship" and doesn't involve violence. This set of assumptions reconfirms the marginality of sexual behaviour such as s&m, transvestism, transexualism, paedophilia, homosexuality and lesbianism, and prostitution.

In a conference on pornography in New York last October, women spoke at what is called a Speakout about the way in which pornography affects our sexual practice. The term **interference** came up repeatedly as they described scenes of natural libidinal flows directed towards their sexual partner (usually 'non sexist' men) which were brusquely interrupted by a memory of an obscene image which succeeded in turning desire into a self conscious and sordid revulsion. Here again there is a problem for me as, unlike a clinical analyst, I cannot read feminist speech as purely symptomatic, as psychotic. Feminism is correct in identifying a particularly crucial knot of violence and sadism in the articulation of masculinity/femininity in the core of these representations, and Susan Brownmiller is correct, not in her present campaign, but in her earlier differentiation⁴ between, for instance, women's rape fantasies and the experience of being raped, insisting that the fantasy should not be misunderstood as a desire to be raped. This differentiation is useful in looking at the way in which pornography functions.

If pornographic images (especially in film) work within the same register as fantasy — predominantly the register of the Imaginary — then pornography is more likely to cause masturbation than rape. Brownmiller echoes psychoanalytic theory in the same way that feminist practice has often paralleled the preoccupations of psychoanalytic theory — in denying the veracity of logical relations and in interpreting these as fantasies. It is in this context that it would be useful to look at the psychoanalytic concepts of the function of the image both in terms of the status of the image in the formation of the subject, and in terms of the production of imagistic representation by the subject. In understanding **how** it is that our sexualities are constructed in pornography, in imagery, through language and even in theory, we can then examine how resistance to those representations is articulated. Recently the disparate voices of feminism and psychoanalysis have converged and we can now turn to the work of three women analysts, Luce Irigaray, Michele Montrelay and Eugénie Lemoine-Luccioni.

Scenes of ejaculation are crucial to the narrative structure of pornographic film due to their function as signifying the truthfulness of the sexual act represented — as proof — and are placed in a narrative structure that is founded on repetition alone. Irigaray claims that REPETITION, the mechanism fundamental to pornographic representation, is not in true with female sexuality which is, she claims, constructed in a temporality which is a continuum, where every new time is lived as a first time. Whilst men for the most part structure their sexuality as a scene, their scene, and repeat it indefinitely.

Irigaray writes on the function of ejaculation in porn film:

This disgust that women have spoken of experiencing during these scenes doesn't seem to me to be a spontaneous reaction. Unless, and it is often the case, men use their ejaculation/semen as an instrument of domination setting it up in rivalry with milk.⁵

Irigaray goes on to say that maybe it is men who have a problematic relationship to their semen, not knowing how to 'situate themselves' in relation to it, often experiencing ejaculation as a loss of their 'vital substance,' a liquifaction of their solidity as the emission of semen often accompanies or precedes detumescence (subsidence of the erection). The fact that semen leaves traces of the orgasm, it stains, for many men evokes the prohibition of masturbation. She suggests that the acute anxiety men feel at the thought that their semen might remain unproductive is a fear they project onto women, expecting women to feel dissatisfied if it is deprived of its signification of fecundity, if it is deviated from its final goal of introjection into the female body, if it is misspent through perversion of the sexual act. But Irigaray suggests that this is not a problem that belongs to women, that this is simply the mechanism of attributing to women the patterns of masculine desire; women, she suggests, do not need to **have** children. It is men who need to have them because they can't **make** them, and must prove to themselves their ability to father. Their culture is founded on the father-son relation which alone guarantees the continuation of the Name, of property, of Capital both economic and symbolic. This said, pornographic film is useful; it allows us to look at these projections on a screen, to analyse them with some distance as **we** are no longer functioning as screens ourselves.

The problem with this argument, apart from the almost caricatural identification of gender difference, and a positing of some essential femininity that could remain alien to and outside of masculine desire and its repetition, is that for Irigaray as for Brownmiller film is assumed to work

by selecting parts of our sexualities. But what form of sexuality is it that remains **outside** of representation, of signifying practice? Is this exemption of women from the perversion of repetition simply another kind of purism — (a purism which echoes not only the voices of the women at the Speakout but also the recuperation of nineteenth century feminism) — whereby women, as virginal, experience everything anew for the first time? The criteria we use to examine film must not be of another order than those we bring to bear on political practice.

Apart from privileged scenes like ejaculation, how does film produce and construct certain prescribed sexualities, marginalize others? How is the sexual pleasure of the scopic drive articulated with the ideational content of these images where the depiction is of a sexual act? Does this increase scopic pleasure? Or is it the excitation of another register altogether?⁶

To understand the formation of scopophilia as a sexual drive, and its relation to the instinct belonging to sight, we have to examine the relation of these to signification itself. Jean Laplanche suggests that the vital instincts (e.g. sight) are not reducible to signification although the ensuing drives, which are sexual in the proper sense (e.g. scopophilia) are certainly constructed through a metaphoric and metonymic process of derivation — that is through language.⁷ If the metaphoric and metonymic systems of slippage from the vital instinct to sexual drive are recognizable as homologous to Jakobson's two axes of language, or of speech, what are the equivalent axes in the register of the visual? Or is metonymy intrinsic to imagery in the same way that metaphor is characteristic of speech, is the equation of repression?

Lacan proposes that the **image** is to the **imago** what **parole** is to **langue**:

If the transient images determine such individual inflexions of the tendencies it is as variations of the matrices that those other specific images which we refer to by the ancient term **imago**, are constituted for the instincts themselves. Among these imagos are some that represent the elective vectors of aggressive intentions, which they provide with an efficacy that might be called magical. These are the images of castration, mutilation, dismemberment, dislocation, devouring, bursting open of the body, in short the imagos I have grouped together under the apparently structural term of **imagos of the fragmented body**.⁸

It should be noted that a characteristic of the imago is its imbrication in the aggressive instincts and its representation by fragmentation, the **divided** subject. However from this formulation in 1948, Lacan moves to the later formulation of the gaze as **object petit a**,⁹ which involves a very different conception of the divided subject, closer to Laplanche's conception. I will return to this later. But Lacan is not the place to look for an understanding of the image — his insistence is on the Letter.

There are, however, two further enquiries into the specificity of visual signification and its relation to language. Firstly, Barthes in **The Rhetoric of the Image** points out that images are rarely used without some form of written text, the latter having two functions, **anchorage** and **relay**. Anchorage is denominative: it fixes the signification of the image by selecting possible identifications and interpretations from the polysemy that is supposed to be characteristic of images, polysemy having an unfixedness that is "terrorizing." Relay is specific to diegesis and, although rare in fixed images, is central to film — in the form of dialogue for instance, which not only selects the signification of the image but also advances the action by setting out meanings that are not found in the image itself. This 'image itself' for Barthes is composed of two types of visual message: iconic denotation, the literal image, and iconic connotation, the symbolic image. although the distinction is academic for, as he points out,

The first is in some sort imprinted on the second; the literal message appears as the **support** of the symbolic (coded iconic) message.¹⁰

This distinction between the coded and non-coded message, and the use of the category, message, is a derivation of the linguistic paradigm; there is little in Barthes' theorization of the image that differentiates language from image as a form of signification. However, it is interesting

that he uses a Peircian notion of the three part sign for the analysis of pictorial representation as opposed to the Saussurean sign for the earlier work on the language of mythologies.

The three levels of signification according to Peirce are the icon, the index, and the symbol. The icon, insofar as it is a diagram, reflects the internal relation of the signified in the signifier; and insofar as it is an image, reproduces the factual qualities of the signified in the signifier. It is this level of the iconic that is Barthes' concept of iconic denotation. The index infers the presence of the signified by a relation of connection between signifier and signified, implying contiguity. The symbol is closer to being a learned and imposed rule according to which a certain signifier is linked with a certain signified. A slight modification of the latter definition (expedient to Lacan) does, however, allow signifiers having some metaphoric similarity with their signifieds to be assimilated to symbols. What is important here is that the icon is lowest in this hierarchy of increasingly abstract relations of signification, and functions in a sort of sub-linguistic capacity. Before going on to suggest what kind of position vis-à-vis unconscious representation this sublinguistic operation accords the image, we should note a difference between two kinds of symbolizations, differentiating between the linguistic sign, which is the conceptual signified in the classic realist text, for example, and the psychoanalytic sign which is a manifestation of a complex or wish.

According to Lacan and Laplanche the iconic sign, the image, is positioned on the top level of the unconscious, close to the preconscious in which the transposition is very weak, meaning that identical images can occur in both the conscious and unconscious simultaneously.¹¹ A problem here is that none of these topographical models really coincides with the various diagrammatic models of the unconscious and it is impossible to superimpose them and thereby posit analogous systems or representations. Is this due to what Derrida calls the "congenital Phonologism" of the psychoanalytic methodology?¹² Must we reduce the picture to a series of rhetorical figures, decoding the picture surface as if it were a literary text? Jean Paris argues that the recent structuralist attempts to annex the visual arts has not effected sufficient change in the foundation of the semiotic methodology. He quotes Umberto Eco: "One can doubt the linguistic nature of these phenomena."¹³ Jean-Louis Schefer states: "Painting is **not** a language."¹⁴ Christian Metz writes: "It is natural that any semiological reflection about images must **begin** by stressing the concept of analogy." But this beginning which would block further steps is rejected as soon as it arises: "There is in fact an intellectual attitude that could be called a fixation to iconicity."¹⁵ By emphasizing the difference between images and words, this attitude systematically downgrades the latter, it frustrates the imperialistic claims of these theoreticians: "A semiology of images will not develop outside of a general semiology" (Barthes).¹⁶ Since this mathematically definitive science exists mainly in the imaginations of its promoters, to which methods is it going to resort but to the very ones it pretended to get rid of? Which concepts is it going to use? Syntagms, paradigms, generation, competence/performance, form, substance, distinctive unit, pictemes? From Saussure to Hjelmslev, from Martinet to Barthes, the elements of the most orthodox linguistics are used: "Linguistics is not a part, not even a privileged one, of a general science of signs but on the contrary it is semiology that is a part of linguistics" (Barthes).¹⁷ "The image is but what we can **read** in it" (J.L. Schefer).¹⁸ Paris identifies a counter-imperialism where, starting from Phenomenology — Merleau-Ponty's Primacy of Perception up to Lyotard's **Désirévolution Dérive à partir de Marx et Freud** — a new mysticism is reinstated, the eye organ of all senses is ascribed the power of offering Bergson's 'immediate data' before constructions, or as Lyotard has it "before any order."¹⁹ But how do "configurations" exist prior to any "construction"? (The irony is that Paris points angrily to the structuralist linguistic hegemony for these very reasons and yet concludes by culling a Chomskyan methodology for the analysis of Renaissance paintings). The attempt to trace the specificity of the image through semiotic methodology alone seems to finish with either Barthes or Paris, each of whom finally places, locates the image within linguistics.

Another enquiry into the specificity of the image comes from Julia Kristeva in "**Ellipsis on Fear and Specular Seduction**" where she claims an important differentiation between the two different kinds of looks at work in the spectator subject. In constructing a concept of the **specular image** which is more comprehensive than simply the mirror image, she posits a relation between the ideational content of imagery and its tendency to be specularized by the subject, to become an image that **fascinates**.²⁰ Again following Laplanche's explanation of the scopic drive and its origin in the self preservative instincts in which looking at objects has a necessary function for

purely pragmatic reasons, the pleasure in viewing is fully constituted as a sexual drive only when its object finally becomes a sexual object, which, according to him, must be the phallus. Thus scopophilia is imbricated in the castration complex, the double process of acknowledgement and disavowal, and the ensuing signifying chains of fetishism. Laura Mulvey, in her article on visual pleasure, has described the way in which this construction of the image "woman" acts both as castrated Other and as fetish or phallic substitute simultaneously, accounting for the often violent and sadistic treatment of women in the narrative structures of the classic realist film, particularly Hollywood films. As signifier of castration "woman" comes to be punished or killed, even in some cases where she is also fetishized.²¹

Pornographic film raises difficulties for Mulvey's schema of the deployment of the castration anxiety in film. One of the most frequent images in the visual vocabulary of pornography is that of the vulva, female genitalia. Given the dualist logic according to which gender difference is represented in the Symbolic, such images signifying lack should theoretically produce anxiety and not, as is empirically known, produce erections and masturbation in the male spectator. According to Mulvey, the particular fetishes which are provided in (filmic) representation are those of certain cyclic narrative forms, replaying scenarios of desire (similarly identified by Irigaray); the figure of the woman as a whole becomes the phallus. The massive diffusion of vaginal imagery might lead us to search these images for other traces of fetishism; we know from Freud that the fetishist can substitute such ephemeral and insubstantial signifiers as 'a shine on the nose' for a penis. Thus we find stiletto heels, fur bedspreads, riding crops, varnished fingernails. John Ellis even suggests that female sexual pleasure itself can become the fetish. He argues that women's pleasure has been promoted to the status of a fetish:

Female sexual pleasure has become perhaps the dominant fetish within current public pornographic representation as a result of the expansion of the very restricted and clandestine 'hardcore' representations into the more public arena of 'soft-core'.²²

It is difficult here to assess whether he is speaking of an empirical moment or a symbolic representation — but either way I don't think he is right. In psychoanalytic theory perhaps *jouissance* as a neologism has come to be fetishized, but in pornography I don't think that it is women's pleasure that is at stake. Maybe the articulation of the castration anxiety in porn films can be understood only in shifting our area of study away from the film text, from studying its 'smallest unit of signification,' and towards the conditions of its reception. Examining the kinds of active spectatorship in the spectator subject's unconscious pleasure in viewing, the scopic satisfaction of primary identification, we also encounter the more conscious activities — masturbation for example.

While we know that fetishism entails a chain of substitution of phallic signification **and** the disavowal of sexual difference, and that certain images of women can come to take on that signification, there is also a possibility that pornographic representation — especially vaginal imagery — might be a way of allowing the subject to fetishize his own penis, through masturbation especially; the penis is also capable of taking on the signification of the phallus. In this way the subject confirms that he is **not** castrated, which is what fetishism hinges on, the denial of castration, not necessarily concern over whether women have penises or not.

Although the castration anxiety can be, and in the case of porn film obviously **is**, played out in relation to symbolized sexual difference and the denial of empirical gender difference, this is not its exclusive or even fundamental terrain. Scopophilia, according to Freud, comes to be constituted as a search for the maternal phallus by way of the **primal scene** in which there is nothing, empirically, to characterize the female genitalia as an absence or lack.²³

This opens up two directions for inquiry into the question of sexual difference in castration. The first is the examination of how symbolic castration is articulated in female sexuality. Can women be fetishists? What is the little girl's relation to the Oedipal instance and what is her 'negative' entry into subjectivity? Eugénie Lemoine-Luccioni's writing works through this direction, and I will return to her work more fully later. The second direction is to reread any specific case of scopophilia (in the cinema for example) taking into account the other elements involved; once we have shifted the object of the scopophilic drive from being the phallus alone to being the primal

scene (as mythic instance), we can reconsider the importance of movement, sexual **activity**. Kristeva reevaluates the element of movement, of activity as a central constituent of visual pleasure, especially in film. Within her semiotic reading of the perceptual register, Kristeva reclassifies the propping of the sexual on the instinctual by reintroducing the term "lektonic traces," originally from pre-Socratic philosophy. These are said to exist in the image in excess of its denotative functions. Thus there is a difference between the legibility of an image and its potential fascination, which could constitute the specifically sexual pleasure involved in viewing over and above that pleasure afforded the epistemological drive by the legibility of the image.²⁴ Both the legibility and the fascination of the image, the two gazes identified earlier, are combined in an act of identification. This turns upon Lacan's description of the mirror phase as the earliest instance of recognition of the image, binding Kristeva's argument to the rigid definition of the image in the mirror stage. She questions the literalization of the mirror apparatus in order to broach the complex process of identification, to give the act a meaning outside of clinical ontological development, but nevertheless does not question the Lacanian assumption that the mirror moment is somehow a first moment, a founding moment from which there will be subsequent repetitions that constitute symbolic identification.

Once again this raises the problem of how this initiation into the double, the self/other logic of Imaginary division, comes to be a passage into full symbolic subjectivity. Michèle Montrelay suggests that this passage is overdetermined as feminine due to women's sexuality being organized in narcissistic modes, and argues that the mirror moment itself must not be seen as a founding moment but as a recurrence of an earlier loss that begins to construct the ego. In **L'Ombre et le Nom (The Shadow and the Name (or Noun))**, she redefines the process of the visual register in identification in the following way:

The mirror stage is the reflection of, and veil over, the trace of the separation from the Other, the mother. Lacan's analyses show that the specular image only functions as a reference point when it is a signifier, that is one element of the chain where the desire of the other is articulated.²⁵

For Montrelay the mirror image, then, repeats and conceals this first trace. What can we know of this trace? Nothing as long as reality — that construct of the Imaginary — screens the Real:

The first trace continues to exist, to insist. It is repeated: the unconscious which is substantially measured by this trace can only be so in a traumatic mode. Which is why Freud's concern for a long time was to trace repetition in order to conquer it.²⁶

Montrelay's suggestion that the mirror stage is itself a repetition of an earlier experience of differentiation between self and other, and the importance of repetition of the identification act itself in order to bring it into significance, bears several references to Freud: the play of recognition in the fort/da game, and more specific to the image, the formulation in the essay on **Negation** of 1925:

All images, representation (Vorstellung) originate from perceptions and are repetitions of them. So that originally the mere existence of the image serves as a guarantee of the reality of what is imagined. The contrast between what is subjective and what is objective does not exist from the outset. It only arises from the faculty which thought possesses for reviving a thing that has once been perceived by reproducing it as an image.²⁷

This formulation "works" within Freud's 1917 model of the conscious, pre-conscious, unconscious topological system which is, in turn, taken up by Laplanche in his dissent from the Lacanian unconscious understood as being entirely the effects of speech. While agreeing that the unconscious is composed of signifiers. Laplanche goes on to say:

These signifiers do not however have the status of our verbal language and are reduced to the dimension of the Imaginary — notably the visual imaginary. These are imagos.²⁸

It seems that a necessary precondition of any work on imagistic representation that might displace the present structural linguistic hegemony is a historical account of the transformations of Freud's formulation of the unconscious — from the neurological to the mechanistic, through to the topographical and with this, their equivalent forms of representation (in the way that Lapianche traces the transformations of the formulation of the ego).²⁹ As they stand, these various isomorphic models do not superimpose. In this way, without conceptualizing the register of the visual as a homogenous field, we might discover how, as a **montage**, the imagos are positioned in relation to the drives: the gaze as object 'a' of the scopic drive. If we abandon the dream of integral lucidity as being also a flight into the opacity of the Imaginary, we begin to encounter the Real problems.

The paradigmatic accounts of subjectivity produced in psychoanalytic theory are ahistorical. That is, both politically paralyzing and inherently phallogocentric, as they take existing language structures as the givens of the inquiry. Lemoine-Luccioni is trying to redefine the formalizations of the subject's passage into full symbolic activity by tracing the trajectories of female sexuality through its insufficient theorization in existing clinical analysis. The underlying thesis of her book **Le Partage des Femmes**³⁰ is that woman lives according to an order of Imaginary partition (separation) — which precipitates her into a convalescent narcissism.

First of all to explain the content of this notion of partition/separation, we have to locate it as an organization from which the subject passes into symbolic castration through identification; an identification which has no effect until, as Montrelay pointed out, a symbolic division has intervened via a process of symbolization that is inherently female, right from the mirror stage. A number of instances are sufficient to establish the feminine Imaginary from this model of separation: the woman has two sexual organs, not alike, the vagina and the clitoris; and she is of the same gender as the parent that gives birth to her. This doubling, this order of the double, is underscored by the instances of pregnancy and childbirth. The woman in becoming a mother is no longer one but two. From her point of view it is she that doubles and redoubles, not the father. These givens are as much imaginary as real, but will always confound the arithmetic of identification constituted of an oscillation between zero and one.

Imaginary partition is organized around the transition from the double to the loss — and from this to the loss of the phallus. But symbolic castration in the ontogenesis of femininity must be seen in terms of the overlooked and yet fundamental events of a woman's organic or physiological life: first her periods (called **pertes** or losses in French) and second, chronologically, childbirth or the separation from that part of herself that had imaginarily come to complete her during pregnancy, when her menstrual loss, her periods had themselves stopped (loss of periods being the first signs of pregnancy).

When she falls pregnant this part of herself is no longer periodically visible.³¹

These events, and all the losses in a woman's life, although not constituted as a category capable of scientific use, are sufficient to circumscribe a phenomenon of the Imaginary partition as the psychic organization that is properly female. Woman lives in fear of losing part of herself. A husband may come to be that half that is always lost, and although this fear of losing might be explained as an inverted aggressivity or anxiety, Lemoine-Luccioni doesn't intend to explain it.

It is important, simply, to stress that she lives the slightest, most legitimate absence as a definitive separation — 'it's absurd, she says, but I can't help it.' Rather than castration anxiety women, we maintain, experience the anxiety of division, of partition.³²

To repeat, the loss of part of herself is not to be assimilated into the fear of losing the penis in a man — the loss of an organ — a loss which will never actually happen, and the loss of a very specific organ as it is the sexual organ.

Even when she says that if her husband were to leave her she would feel amputated, she would in any case be amputated of an organ that is not hers.³³

So can we use the term castration when it comes to women? The question is formulated by the

term itself which posits that the lacking thing, the fundamental lack, must be taken on by the sexual organ and its signification, without which we cannot, properly speaking, use the term castration. If we try to analyse the precedents, we remember that in order for there to be a symbolic chain there must be a lack which engenders a demand. For the woman there **is** a real loss, or imaginarily experienced division as part of herself, herself insofar as she is **one**. Her demand is to be given back to herself.

In coitus, the detumescence and the withdrawal of the penis are inevitably significant and take on (prior to childbirth) all of these other losses. They are marked retroactively from the sign and the phallus. What remains clear is that in coitus that part from which she is separated and which will always conceal or reveal an earlier loss, has never been part of her. She passes then from the real loss of an imaginary half of herself to the imaginary loss of an organ which comes to be superimposed onto her partial losses. Later, at the moment of childbirth, the real deprivation of part of herself will become Imaginary frustration, in re-evoking the older loss of that other part of herself, her mother, from a fantasized wholeness. This can also become symbolic castration if it enters into a symbolic chain of signification.

The woman, herself, lacks nothing, in the sense that no organ can come to be missing from her. On the contrary it seems that she has an organ too many, the clitoris; how then does she come to see herself as lacking a penis? (Leaving aside, for a minute, the fact that men **experience** her as **lacking**, and transmit, or in Irigaray's terms, project, this feeling to her, although this fact is far from negligible.) Lemoine-Luccioni argues that the expulsion of the baby during childbirth and the withdrawal of the penis during coitus constitute real separations. These are also informed by the scotomization of the anal drive, inasmuch as being a partial drive it is directed towards the Other from whom she waits for a reply. The woman separates herself from something in exchange for something else; she asks of the other, the man, to be taken — she gives herself — but as always in this exchange of gifts it is hard to tell whose gain it is:

As a child the girl wanted a baby from her father, as a gift, as a consolation of some sort after acknowledging that her mother was occupied elsewhere: with the father again.³⁴

If the woman lacks nothing, what is the object of her demand? And how does she pass from imaginary partition to symbolic castration? And how does she move from narcissism to an objectal libido?

The passage, according to Lemoine-Luccioni, is effected through an act of **identification**. There is the problem of the dilemma in the choice of identification: whether to identify with a man as the alternative to identification with a woman, or the female (to be seen) position which, given the existing structures of signification, would result in masochism.

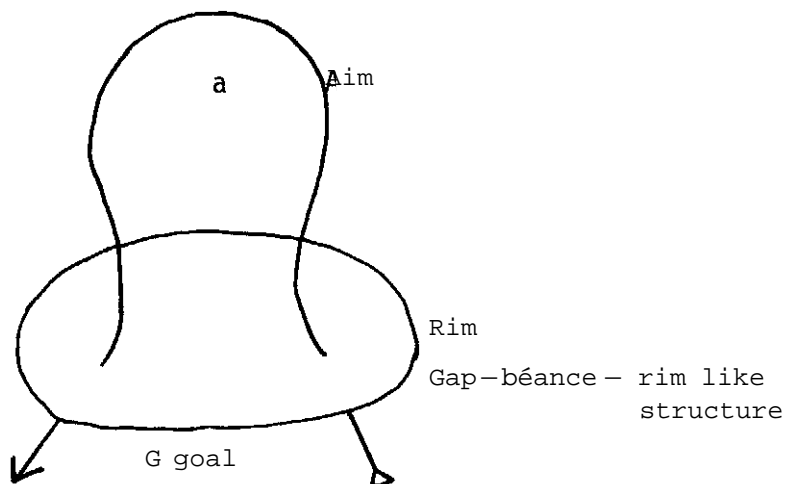
But the choice is never posited as an either/or and the woman is always to some extent a hysteric. In identifying with the man, the woman imagines herself to be lacking a penis (while none is lacking in the male on the empirical level) and in this way she makes symbolic the lack that all the phenomena of partition, loss, have constituted. She passes from the imaginary loss of part of herself to the imaginary loss of the male sexual organ, and then to the symbolizable loss of a sexual organ, the phallus, which might be any number of things. In the other alternative, that of feminine identification, the woman takes herself as lost object (mother), and the symbol of the lost unity would be the body as complete, without gaps.

To explain the way in which the mirror image can only be either an opening onto the symbolic (male identification) or else a narcissistic containment (female identification) for the woman, we have to go back to the scopical drive and examine the way in which it also is marked as privileged in the construction of female subjectivity. With the mirror image, the girl who is already divided, not simply the **hommelette** of Lacan — scrambled — but who is **divided**, would hesitate to risk a new schism, one which would project the ego into a distance. For the girl, this distancing is a difficult experience. She tends to oscillate in the image that she believes to guarantee her the equally containing, limiting gaze of her mother, originally, and that comes to be the omniscient gaze of the father. She prefers to believe in this image and believes it to be herself. She confuses herself with this complete figure, without gaps, which would conserve the limitations and security of parental power. So the object of the fort/da game, the mother, is replaced in this reenactment of separation by her own persona, represented by her body as it is in the mirror image.

But in offering herself to the gaze, giving herself to be seen, according to the sequence — seeing, seeing herself, offering herself to be seen, being seen — the girl provokes in the Other, the man, a reply that gives him pleasure.

Every partial drive is evocative, here we are talking of the same thing when we say provocative.³⁵

An evocation or provocation which is addressed to the look of the Other can only come about if the look of the same, the mother's gaze, has failed the child, so that the look of the Other can occupy that space. It is in this space that the symbolic articulation is introduced. In order to follow the symbolic articulation of the gaze as objet petit 'a,' Lemoine-Luccioni uses one of Lacan's schemas.³⁶ This is the first link of the Symbolic chain.



The Aim and the Goal (that would be the satisfaction of the drive) do not coincide; if they did the arrow would go straight on. It is this circumscription of the objet 'a,' and its introjection, that is the aim. But the drive does not double back on itself, something has happened. This something is what is known as **the incursion into the field of the other**, where a response or a reply has been procured (provoked).

This schema also holds true for the scopic drive, after the mirror phase has been broached. When the narcissistic resistance of the woman succeeds in deflecting the 'arrow' of the drive, to the extent of making it double back on itself, we get what is called "alienated identification." This replaces an act of discovering the other (albeit through the interpretation of the object 'a,' the signifier). It is this deflection that occurs in voyeurism, where the scopic drive, stopping short of the object, doubles back on itself thus making the gaze itself the object 'a.'³⁷

Alienated identification occurs if the Other, the mother, fixes the girl's image, as if it were her own image; and it is escaped only when it is the father who has the function of interrupting the reflexive gaze, in which case the girl can lose her image of misidentification and can gain her desire. It is the other of the mother that becomes her object of desire, and it is to him, the father, that she offers herself to be seen. The severance of the 'arrow' (the trajectory of the scopic drive that had formerly ordered or structured the girl) operates from the moment the girl offers herself to be seen instead of losing herself in the mirror.

It is in this 'giving up to be seen' that the scopic drive proper to women makes her find her status as Subject, as it is through this partial drive that she manifests and displays her desire for the other. This then is the choice for the female subject: either to become the object of her father's desire, or to identify with him and incorporate the paternal phallus. This, then, is the hysteria that is not only Dora's but of all women attempting to constitute themselves in phallogocentric languages.

For many women Lemoine-Luccioni's work seems to confirm rather than alter the discourse of

psychoanalytic theory, and in so doing to confirm the phallocentrism of that discourse. Yet the specific displacements that her work is effecting **are** politically significant. To question the primacy of the castration anxiety at the moment of entry into the Symbolic is to demand a radical reconsideration of 'pre'-Oedipal sexuality in terms other than that of the 'dialectic of the Imaginary.' If the terms of the triangulation whereby subjectivity is mapped can no longer function as unproblematic referents, it is because the positions of fixity of the Imaginary, Symbolic and Real were in themselves an imaginary fixity. Through the theorization of the function of the Mother as first Other from which all others, objets 'a,' are derivations, a displacement is effected; the Oedipal instance can no longer be seen as the source and solution to symptom formation; the castration complex itself can be understood as symptomatic.

With Lemoine-Luccioni as with Irigaray, Montrelay and Kristeva the theory changes its status from that of being a science to that of being a practice, whether clinical, textual or political. And when we are examining specific signifying systems such as pornography this practice entails that the existing analyses of visual pleasure and fetishism have to be re-thought to be able to account for structures of spectatorship that are not simply undifferentiatedly masculine and 'individual.' More importantly this practice means that we have to examine the premise that in fetishism the instance of the threat (of castration) and the instance of perception of the vulva are the same.

An adequate theory of fetishism has to displace the premise of the primacy of the Oedipal moment by examining the territory delineated as pre-Oedipal and by accounting for the further complexities incurred by the original bisexuality of the subject. All of these problems are raised in the simple fact of considering a female subject (Lemoine-Luccioni), which calls into question the psychoanalytic premise of the homologous structuration in male and female subjectivity. Then we can begin to trace the specific ontogenetic trajectory of female subjectivity, through which an inevitable displacement of the primacy of symbolic castration can be made, which is in turn a displacement of the phallocentrism of psychoanalytic theory, the only discourse through which we can understand the phallocracy of dominant ideology. Nevertheless it is tempting to ascribe this work and immediate effectivity outside of the parameters of the discourse, to 'psychologize' the contradictions that feminism is faced with on economic, legal and institutional levels, or to 'interpret' the campaigns and slogans that we continue to need as a provisional form of political change.

But it is not in this immediate sense that psychoanalysis is consonant with feminist practice. What we can do is to examine the representations through which we are constructed, within which we are given identity, and which constitute the material of discourses such as pornography. Psychoanalytic theory can open up the space within which we can begin to speak about our sexualities, their representations, with a voice other than that of censorship. Not simply to refuse these representations in a mental anorexia but to use them in order to ask ourselves, What are our sexualities, our desires? And 'What do we want'?

Footnotes

- 1 London Rape Crisis Centre (P.O. Box 42, London N65BU); Thanks to Hannah Kanter for her discussion on rape.
- 2 Susan Brownmiller in a broadsheet from the Women Against Pornography conference, New York, September 1979. W.A.P. 579, Ninth Ave. NYC 10036.
- 3 Ellen Dubois — discussion at a workshop on sexuality at the Simone de Beauvoir Conference, August 1979, NYU, Washington Sq.
- 4 Susan Brownmiller. **Against Our Will — Men Women and Rape**. (Secker & Warburg, 1975), p. 309-322.
- 5 Luce Irigaray. "Un Autre Art de Jouir," in **Les Femmes, la Pornographie, L'Erotisme**, eds. M.F. Hans & Lapouge, (Seuil, 1978), p.43 &302.
- 6 **Sigmund Freud's Dora: A Case of Mistaken Identity**, Jay Street Film Project, NYC 1979.
- 7 Jean Laplanche, **Life and Death in Psychoanalysis**, (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), p.8.
- 8 Jacques Lacan, "Aggressivity in Psychoanalysis," **Ecrits**, (Norton. 1977), p.11.
- 9 Jacques Lacan, **The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis**, (Norton, 1978), p.67.
- 10 Roland Barthes, "The Rhetoric of the Image," **Image-Music-Text**, (Hill & Wang, 1977), p.37.
- 11 Jean Laplanche & Serge Leclaire, "The Unconscious: A Psychoanalytic Study," **Yale French Studies**, No. 48. See also the critical study of the article by Anika Lemaire, (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), p. 113.
- 12 Jacques Derrida, "Freud et la Scène de L'Ecriture," **L'Ecriture et la Difference** (Seuil. 1967), p. 111, first published in **Tel Quel** No. 26.
- 13 Umberto Eco, "L'Analyse des Images," **Communications**, No. 15 (1970). p.
- 14 J.L. Schefer, *Ibid.*, p.
- 15 Christian, *Ibid.*, p.
- 16 &
- 17 Roland Barthes, **Elements of Semiology**, (Cape, 1967) p. 11.
- 18 quoted by Metz in **Communications** No 15, p.9.
- 19 J.F. Lyotard, **Discours/Figure** (Klincksieck, 1972). p. 41, see also Jean Paris, **Painting and Linguistics** (Carnegie Mellon, 1977).
- 20 Julia Kristeva, "Ellipse sur la frayeur et la seduction speculaire," **Polylogue** (Seuil, 1977) p. 374
- 21 Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," **Screen**, Vol. 16, no. 3.
- 22 John Ellis, "On Pornography," **Screen**, Vol. 21., No. 1, p. 103.
- 23 See Sigmund Freud, "Instincts and their Vicissitudes," Vol. 14., p. 130.
- 24 Julia Kristeva, p. 378.
- 25 Michele Montrelay, **L'Ombre et le Nom** (Minuit, 1977). p. 50.
- 26 *Ibid.*
- 27 Sigmund Freud, "On Negation," **S.E.**, Vol. 19, p. 237.
- 28 Laplanche & Leclaire, "The Unconscious, a Psychoanalytic Study."
- 29 Jean Laplanche, **Life and Death In Psychoanalysis**, (Baltimore & London: John Hopkins University Press, 1976).
- 30 Eugénie Lemoine-Luccioni **Le Partage des Femmes**, (Seuil, 1976).
- 31 *Ibid.*, pp.80-81.
- 32 *Ibid.*, p. 81.
- 33 *Ibid.*, p. 82.
- 34 *Ibid.*, p. 83.
- 35 *Ibid.*, p. 85.
- 36 See the **Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis**, p. 178: see also Lemoine-Luccioni, p. 86, and Montrelay, p. 115.
- 37 Jacques Lacan, pp. 182-3.

SCREEN

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MISRECOGNITION AND IDENTITY

MARY ANN DOANE

In the theorization of the cinema, the term "identification" has consistently been used to indicate a blockage of any active work of deciphering on the part of the spectator. Identification as a mechanism is conceptualized as reducing the gap between film and spectator, masking the absence upon which the cinematic representation is founded. Image and sound, reconfirming each other's depth, proffer to the viewer a lived space inhabited by bodies similar to his or her own. Nevertheless, although the film's task may appear to be that of drawing the spectator in, of obliterating a distance, it must not be too successful — as indicated by the anxiety elicited by incidents which seem to act as witnesses to the completion of identification. James Naremore describes one of these: "In November 1960, a nineteen-year old boy from Milwaukee stabbed a girl to death. He entered a plea of not guilty by reason of insanity; just before the stabbing, his lawyers explained, he had seen **Psycho**."¹ Regardless of the validity of the lawyers' theory of determination, the incident's description evokes the horror of a representation which fails to "keep its distance," a representation which appears to break down and merge with the real. The boy, in claiming in some sense to become Norman Bates, operates a perversion of the mechanism of identification — the film is made **too** present. Cinematic identification can operate "properly" only on condition that a limit is acknowledged and a distance maintained. Rather than effecting a complete collapse of spectator onto character (or film), identification presupposes the security of the modality "as if."

Nevertheless, the vague reference to a certain closeness or adherence of spectator to film appears to be the only characteristic which the various usages of the term identification hold in common. The concept disperses itself across a number of different registers and has been used to indicate a variety of relationships from emotional bonding to epistemological mastery. At least three different instances of identification in the cinema can be readily isolated: 1) identification **with** the representation of a person — the spectator is given double access to this represented person, through the concepts of character and star, 2) the identification of particular objects, persons or actions **as** particular objects, persons or actions. Identification here is a form of classification or categorization and involves the replay of what is already known. 3) the type of identification which Metz refers to as "primary" — "primary," because it is the "condition of possibility of the perceived."² Here, the spectator identifies with "himself" as "look" — as pure capacity for seeing. It is the very institution of the cinema which, by positioning its spectator as punctual source of a unified image, posits simultaneously the coherency of subject and scene. The spectator become the unified ground of knowledge, of the knowable. Hence, for Metz, this is the fundamental form of identification in the cinema — the form which makes all other types of identification possible and throws the cinema ineluctably onto the side of the imaginary. While the three types of identification just outlined may appear to be drawn from entirely different and alien problematics, they are inextricably linked.

It is the first form of identification — that involving character and star — which is, perhaps, not only the most familiar but the least clearly defined. Dependent as it is on the notion of the integral person filmed, this "secondary" (in Metz's classification) mode of identification presupposes a disavowal of the two-dimensionality of the image and an investment in the reality-status of the diegesis. For, the connection established between spectator and character is vaguely one of empathy, sympathy or even, if the identification is truly successful, substitutability — not "I am like the character" but "I am the same as the character... in this respect at least." More accurately, perhaps, it is a position with respect to narrative actions and depicted experiences which becomes exchangeable and it is this very exchangeability which tends to break down the boundary between spectator and scene.

The mechanism of identification with a character in the cinema pivots on the representation of the body. Narrative is a **mise-en-scène** of bodies and while images without bodies are perfectly acceptable within its limits, it is the character's body which acts as the perceptual lure for and the anchor of identification. In psychoanalytical theory, the ego is the site of identity, conceivable only in terms of the form or limit offered by the bodily envelope. The tendency toward unification which is characteristic of the ego is strongly linked to an image — that of the body. This is the case not only in the Lacanian description of the mirror phase but in Freud's somewhat enigmatic formula in **The Ego and the Id**: "The ego is first and foremost a bodily ego; it is not merely a surface entity, but is itself the projection of a surface."³ In this sense, it is not only the protagonist of a film who initiates the mechanisms of identification, but any represented body on the screen — offering, sheerly by means of its recognizable form, a reconfirmation of the spectator's own position and identity.

Overlaying and inseparable from identification with the character is identification of and with the star — where the codification relating body and identity is particularly strong. Grounded in the pleasure of tautology, this kind of identification relies on the pure recognition of the star as star. In the words of Stephen Heath, "the star is exactly the conversion of the body, of the person, into the luminous sense of its film image."⁴ The star, as "a piece of 'pure cinema,'"⁵ reasserts the power of that cinema, its hold on the imaginary of the spectator. The presence of the star insures that I do not identify with the character as "real person" but as super-person, as "bigger than life," as part of a spectacle performed **for me**. What is involved here is less an identification with a person than an identification with a moment of cinema. The entrance of Rita Hayworth in Charles Vidor's **Gilda** is exemplary in this respect. A shot in which Ballen/George MacReady asks his new wife — "Are you decent?" — is immediately followed by an empty frame whose function is simply the establishment and holding of a space. Gilda/Rita Hayworth, tossing her hair back with an almost violent gesture, rises into the frame and answers, "Me?" (later adding, after a reverse shot of Johnny/Glen Ford and as she pulls her dress strap over her shoulder, "Sure, I'm decent."). The affective value of that moment, strengthened by both lighting and the movement **into** the frame, is tied to the spectacle of the recognizable face — the very ability of the cinema to manufacture the pleasure of recognition. The film itself prepares the gap which Rita Hayworth fills. And the fact that there always appears to be more of the spectacle, and hence more of the cinema, in the representation of the woman is not without ideological implications. Gilda moves into immobility; the woman is given all at once in the totalization of the fetish.

Identification of and with the star bleeds over into the second type of identification outlined above — identification of objects or recognition of the represented. This type of identification is taken for granted, given the potential for iconicity which the narrative film necessarily exploits. In fact, it is this type of identification which can most accurately be said to situate the cinema in the realm of the imaginary — perpetuating as it does the idea of a one-to-one correspondence between sign and referent. Metz, in "Le perçu et le nommé," goes so far as to suggest that even in the case of the abstract or avant-garde film, there is a kind of drive to recognize on the part of the spectator, to translate visual forms and sounds into the familiar. To recognize is to trace back to something already known and the cinema perpetually exploits what Freud isolated as the compulsion to repeat. The condition of recognizability is not the accretion of metonymic detail which would add up to a realism but, as Metz points out, the reference to the "pertinent traits"⁶ which are coded as defining the object, so that in caricature, for instance, a particular stroke of ink is capable of evoking the recognition of a famous nose. The narrative cinema relies heavily on the economy offered by such a system as well as the potential fascination contained in its dialectic of concealing and revealing. For Bazin, this was the fascination of the sequence shot in **Citizen Kane** in which Susan Kane attempts to commit suicide. The camera is located behind a night table on

which appear a large glass (taking up almost a quarter of the image, as Bazin notes) with a spoon and a open medicine bottle. Susan's bed is in shadow but her labored breathing is audible. The door of the bedroom is visible far in the background and a knocking sound is heard. Bazin points out the fact that spectatorial recognition is here more strongly related to auditory space than to visual space:

Without having seen anything but a glass and heard two noises, on two different sound planes, we have immediately grasped the situation: Susan has locked herself in her room to try to kill herself; Kane is trying to get in. The scene's dramatic structure is basically founded on the distinction between the two sound planes: close-up, Susan's breathing, and from behind the door, her husband's knocking. A tension is established between these two poles which are kept at a distance from each other by the deep focus.⁷

For Bazin in this analysis, to recognize is to make the image readable as a scene. Implicit in his description of the scene is the notion that its "art" is constituted by a reduction in the number and kinds of signifiers necessary for recognition. And this particular scene is exemplary in the extent to which it is the sound which constitutes its readability, its recognizability, rather than the image.

Nevertheless, despite the extent of the contribution of sound to the cinema as we know it, the third type of identification outlined above is founded on a visual analogy — that of the mirror. Metz claims that it is "primary." Metz attempts to demonstrate how the positioning of the spectator in the cinema is analogous with the positioning by the mirror in the Lacanian schema. The mirror phase of the imaginary order reveals that there is a fundamental lack of reality in the image which constitutes the child's first identification. That image is only a reflection (and a **virtual** one) and although it reassures the subject that he is indeed unified, that reassurance is a misleading one and has no knowledge value. Similarly, the cinema presents us with more to perceive (when compared with the other arts), but it is characterized by a founding absence — what is there to be seen is not really there.

The unique position of the cinema lies in this dual character of its signifier: unaccustomed perceptual wealth, but unusually profoundly stamped with unreality, from its very beginning. More than the other arts, or in a more unique way, the cinema involves us in the imaginary: it drums up all perception, but to switch it immediately over into its own absence, which is nonetheless the only signifier present.⁸

Since the mirror phase can be understood as the primary identification of the subject, it would seem that it could valuably be used as a model for the understanding of cinematic identification. And this is precisely what Metz does. However, there is an essential difference between the mirror phase and the situation of the cinema. Anything may be "reflected" on the screen except the spectator's own body. Since the spectator cannot identify with his own image, Metz poses the question, "With what does the spectator identify?"

Metz briefly considers the possibility of identification with a character, but rejects it because character identification can only take place in the case of the narrative-representational film. Since Metz is interested in the "psychoanalytic constitution of the signifier of the cinema as such," these identifications, when they occur, must be secondary. But in the viewing of any kind of film, the spectator understands that he can simply close his eyes in order for the film to disappear — that he is, in a sense, the condition of the possibility of the film. The projector behind him and the camera before it are also recognized as conditions of the possibility of the film and the "looks" of all three coincide (they all face in the same direction). Metz concludes that the primary cinematic identification is the spectator's identification with his own look and, consequently, an identification with the camera. This is, most importantly, an identification **of** the viewing subject as a "pure act of perception."⁹ Metz's description of primary cinematic identification here rejoins contemporary film theory's obsession with assigning the spectator a position — a project which brings to bear on its object such Freudian concepts as scopophilia/exhibitionism, fetishism, and the metapsychology of dreaming. The spectatorial

position described by film theorists is not a geographical but an epistemological position, one which dictates a particular relationship between subject and object. Coherency of vision insures a controlling knowledge which, in its turn, is a guarantee of the untroubled centrality and unity of the subject.

All of these concepts utilized by the discourse of positionality in film theory rest upon the assumption that the spectator's investment in the film is based upon the activity of **misrecognition**. The spectator mistakenly identifies discourse as history, representation as perception, fiction as reality.¹⁰ And the film is described as promoting this misrecognition, exploiting its pleasurable effects. For the pleasure of misrecognition ultimately lies in its confirmation of the subject's mastery over the signifier, its guarantee of a unified and coherent ego capable of controlling the effects of the unconscious. This is, essentially, a guarantee of the subject's identity. Thus, there is a sense in which the concepts of scopophilia/exhibitionism, fetishism, and the dreamer/spectator are subsumed beneath that of primary cinematic identification. Primary cinematic identification entails not only the spectator's identification **with** the camera but his identification **of** himself as the condition of the possibility of what is perceived on the screen. The film viewer, according to Metz, is positioned by the entire cinematic apparatus as the site of an organization — the viewer lends coherence to the image and is simultaneously posited as a coherent entity.

I have argued elsewhere¹¹ that there are difficulties with Metz's use of the mirror analogy — most acutely in his obsession with locating a primal scene for the cinema, an original grounding event which would accurately define or delineate spectatorship. A corollary of this difficulty concerns the conceptualization of identification as instantaneous — a conceptualization which presupposes an undialectical notion of temporality in the film viewing process. Metz upholds the priority of a before/after distinction — the look of the spectator is the originary moment within his system. Finally, identification cannot be located solely in the axis of the look. Yet, Metz's emphasis upon primary identification isolates the image as the determinant cinematic unit and bestows upon perception the quality of immediacy. It is this immediacy imputed to the process of identification which needs to be questioned along with the strict separation effected between primary and secondary identification.

Nevertheless, it seems to me that the strength of Metz's analogy between the cinema and the mirror phase makes it resistant, in some way to these objections — gives it a truth whose form might be compared with that accorded by Freud to the neurotic obsession. For the model of the screen as a mirror holds a certain fascination — not only "outside" the cinema, in its theorization, but within it as well. We have only to think of **Madame de...**, **Lady from Shanghai**, **All That Heaven Allows**. The use of a mirror within a scene strikes us as almost automatically constituting an "insight" about the cinema itself. For it aligns the cinema with specular identification which, while it may not be mechanically and formally linked to the structure of a founding "look," is nevertheless a strong constituent of the classical cinema. The idea of the mirror and its force in the imaginary of film theory — despite the fact that it privileges the visual signifier over the auditory, the moment over temporality — can be linked to the notion of visual captivation by an image, facilitated in the cinema by the darkness of the surrounding auditorium and the immobility of the spectator. The very brilliance of the screen **draws** the eye.

Identification, from this perspective, is inseparable from narcissism or the drama of the ego which the mirror implies. In its primary form identification is quite simply, as Lacan points out, the process of **assuming an image**:

We have only to understand the mirror stage **as an identification**, in the full sense that analysis gives to the term: namely the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image — whose predestination to this phase-effect is sufficiently indicated by the use, in analytic theory, of the ancient term **imago**.¹²

The transformation effected in the mirror phase is that from a fragmented body-image to an image of totality, unity, coherency. Hence, it is not so much tied to the empirical event of seeing oneself reflected in a mirror as to the ability to conceptualize the body as a limited form. As

Laplanche points out, the earliest identification is "an identification with a form conceived of as a limit, or a sack: a sack of skin."¹³ Freud's description of narcissism rests on a reference to the treatment of one's own body as a sexual object. Furthermore, incorporation and introjection are seen by Freud as prototypes of identification when "the mental process is experienced and symbolised as a bodily one (ingesting, devouring, keeping something inside oneself, etc.)."¹⁴ An image of the body anchors the ego which in its turn is the point of articulation of identification. Any "body" can be used as a mirror — but in psychoanalytical theory it is most frequently, and significantly, the body of the mother. In identification, the other — whether person or image — is used as a relay, a kind of substitute to conceal the fact that the subject can never fully coincide with itself.

The function of primary identification is, therefore, to establish an outline, a boundary between inside and outside — to trace the form of a unity capable of operating as a desiring subject (Laplanche speaks of the ego as "indeed an object, but a kind of relay object, capable of passing itself off, in a more or less deceptive and usurpatory manner, as a desiring and wishing subject."¹⁵). Primary identification, then, involves the very constitution of the ego and hence acts as the precondition for the attachment between subject and object which we think of as secondary identification. The history of the subject's secondary identifications is the history of its positioning in an intersubjective economy which, in Freud, is dominated by the Oedipal complex. Identification with the father, the support of the super-ego, becomes the model for all secondary identifications. (Thus, in the classic schema, the woman's super-ego is necessarily weaker than the man's.)

Metz follows the lines of this argument in distinguishing between primary and secondary cinematic identification and therefore assumes a strict division between a primary identification which is founding and secondary identifications with characters. Laura Mulvey, on the other hand, in her article on "Visual Pleasure," leaves room for the possibility of articulating a common space within which both primary and secondary identification operate. In fact, in her argument primary identification is from the beginning inflected by, overlaid by secondary identification. Instead of specifying the misrecognition of the mirror phase as the misrecognition of an image as a reality, an absence as a presence, Mulvey links it to the posited superiority of the ego ideal.

The mirror phase occurs at a time when the child's physical ambitions outstrip his motor capacity, with the result that his recognition of himself is joyous in that he imagines his mirror image to be more complete, more perfect than he experiences his own body. Recognition is thus overlaid with mis-recognition: the image recognised is conceived as the reflected body of the self, but its misrecognition as superior projects this body outside itself as an ideal ego, the alienated subject, which, re-introjected as an ego ideal, gives rise to the future generation of identification with others.¹⁶

In this description, the first secondary identification can be traced to the "primary" identification of the mirror phase and the opposition between primary and secondary is collapsed. Furthermore, in all of the discussions which abolish the necessity of the (empirically verifiable) mirror and substitute for it the existence of a recognizable human form (e.g. the mother), primary and secondary identification appear to merge. For, secondary identification is dependent upon positing the existence of an object "outside" the subject — an object with a recognizable, more perfect and complete form — an object which can be incorporated, introjected, mimicked.

Yet, the thrust of Mulvey's argument is that, in patriarchal society, this kind of misrecognition and this kind of identity are, quite simply, not available to the woman. Her discussion deals only with the male spectator (as articulated in the use of the pronoun "he") and, by implication, situates female spectatorship as the locus of an impossibility. Mulvey's division of the classical text into two components, spectacle and narrative, and her correlation of these tendencies with the psychical mechanisms of scopophilia and identification with an ego ideal, support her analysis of the cinematic representation of woman as a form of reassurance of male mastery. Built into the mode of seeing legalized by the classical text is the exclusion of the feminine. It is necessary to relate the problematic of identification outlined above to that of sexual difference and its inscription in the cinema in the terms of its address.

Secondary identification, in its classical description, is clearly compatible with, fully implicated in the mechanisms of patriarchal society. In Freudian terms it is articulated with the father, the super-ego, and the Oedipal complex and in Mulvey's discussion it represents a bond established between the spectator and the male protagonist, a bond authorizing a shared power over the image of the woman. Primary identification, on the other hand, is more difficult — situated as it is in most discourses on the nether side of sexual difference, before language, the symbolic order, the Law of the Father. Does it really define a moment which is neuter, which pre-dates the establishment of sexual difference? Can anyone look into the mirror? The answer to his question necessarily has serious repercussions for the entire discussion of spectatorship and sexual difference in the cinema.

The work of Luce Irigaray suggests that the woman does not have the same access to the mirror-definition as the man. For Irigaray, the woman is relegated to the side of negativity. Because she is situated as lack, non-male, non-one; because her sexuality has only been conceptualized within masculine parameters (the clitoris understood as the "little penis"), she has no separate unity which could ground an identity. In other words, she has no autonomous symbolic representation.¹⁷ But most importantly, and related to this failure with respect to identification, she cannot share the relationship of the man to the mirror. The male alone has access to the privileged specular process of the mirror's identification. And it is the confirmation of the self offered by the plane-mirror which, according to Irigaray, is "most adequate for the mastery of the image, of representation, and of self-representation."¹⁸ The term "identification" can only provisionally describe the woman's object relations — for the case of the woman "cannot concern either identity or non-identity."¹⁹

Why then, in the films cited previously — **Lady from Shanghai**, **Madame de...**, **All That Heaven Allows** — is it the woman who is linked with the mirror? The fact that narcissism and the mirror are violently yoked to the figure of the woman (in the cinema, in psychoanalysis, and in the codifications of common sense) can only be a decoy — concealing the fact that she **is** the mirror for the male and hence has no access to the identity it proffers.

Such an analysis, however, which forces an adherence of the cinema to the apparatus of the mirror, would seem to be totalizing — permitting no possibility for the development of an alternative filmmaking practice. This is precisely why it is necessary to emphasize that the mirror-effect is not present as a precondition for the understanding of the image, as Metz implies in his description of primary cinematic identification, but as the after-effect of a particular mode of discourse which has been historically dominant but will not always be so. In terms of the aesthetic practices with which we are faced however, as Silvia Bovenschen points out, traditional patterns of representation have allowed the woman two options, equally restrictive:

...identification on the part of women could take place only via a complicated process of transference. The woman could either betray her sex and identify with the masculine point of view, or, in a state of accepted passivity, she could be masochistic/narcissistic and identify with the object of the masculine representation.²⁰

In the realm of artistic practice, identification on the part of the female reader or spectator cannot be, as it is for the male, a mechanism by means of which mastery is assured. On the contrary, if identification is even "provisionally" linked with the woman (as Irigaray does), it can only be seen as reinforcing her submission.

From this perspective, is it accidental that Freud's description of identification with respect to the woman frequently hinges on the specific example of pain, suffering, aggression turned round against the self, in short, masochism? In **The Interpretation of Dreams**, it is the hysterical symptom which acts as the point of articulation for identification. Apropos of the discussion of a dream in which a woman identifies her friend with herself and then proceeds to dream of an unfulfilled wish, Freud claims —

Identification is a highly important factor in the mechanism of hysterical symptoms. It enables patients to express in their

symptoms not only their own experiences but those of a large number of other people; it enables them, as it were, to suffer on behalf of a whole crowd of people and to act all the parts in a play single-handed.²¹

In his subsequent reference to the contagion of a hysterical spasm by all the members of a hospital ward, it becomes even clearer that, for Freud, the sign written on the body of the female hysteric is a pivot for the exchange of masochistic identifications.

While this is a relatively early account of identification, aligned with the first topography of psychoanalysis and preceding the description of the ego as a veritable sedimentation or history of object choices, later attempts to rethink identification in the context of the second topography and the intersubjective economy of the Oedipal complex retain this link between the woman and masochism. The chapter entitled "Identification" in **Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego** begins with a delineation of the little boy's identification with his father as an ideal — a "typically masculine" process — and its relation to the Oedipal complex. The little girl's case is put differently however. As Freud notes, the mechanism of identification seems peculiarly resistant to a metapsychological definition and it is as though Freud's text can only traverse and re-traverse a number of scenarios. The first involves the identification of a little girl with her mother — articulated by the fact that the little girl assumes the neurotic symptom exhibited by the mother, a painful cough. The symptom, according to Freud, expresses the little girl's guilty desire to usurp her mother's place with respect to the father. And the imaginary dialogue Freud attributes to the symptom underlines its masochistic effects: "You wanted to be your mother, and now you **are** — anyhow so far as your sufferings are concerned."²² Freud's second scenario dramatizing the relation between the little girl and identification is a simple rewriting of the scene described earlier in **The Interpretation of Dreams** — the scenario merely undergoes a change in location — from a hospital ward to a girls boarding school. While in the case of the boy, the super-ego is the relay of identification, in the girl's situation, it is the symptom which becomes the "mark of a point of coincidence between two egos which has to be kept repressed."²³

While these instances in no way exhaust Freud's conceptualization of identification, they do indicate a difficulty in the theorization of feminine identification which is rearticulated in film theory. Contemporary film theory delineates certain structures of seeing — scopophilia or voyeurism, fetishism, primary identification — which align themselves with the psychoanalysis of the male. The woman is nowhere a spectator in the proper sense of the term. In this regard, it would be interesting to note the contours, the different registers which define the specificity of those discourses which purportedly assume the woman as addressee. In what way, for instance, does the "woman's film" of the 1940s and 50s claim to be the possession of the woman and to locate her as the focal point of its address? Films like **Mildred Pierce**, **Reckless Moment**, **Possessed**, **Stella Dallas**, **Suspicion**, and **Rebecca**, dealing with derangement, the excesses of the maternal, paranoia, and suffering, would seem to substantiate the claim that identification for the female spectator can only be simultaneous with a masochistic position. This type of text defines the woman's pleasure as indistinguishable from her pain. Nevertheless, this description can only circumscribe the specificity of feminine spectatorship **within** patriarchy. There are also the inevitable contradictions of a discourse which appeals to voyeurism, fetishism, and "primary" identification while simultaneously claiming the woman as addressee. It is the mapping of these contradictions which is essential.

To speak of identification and the cinema, therefore, is not to pinpoint a mechanism which is ideologically neutral, which resides outside of sexual definitions. It is rather to trace another way in which the woman is inscribed as absent, lacking, a gap, both on the level of cinematic representation and on the level of its theorization. As long as it is a question of mastery of the image, of representation and self-representation, identification must be considered in relation to its place in the problematic of sexual difference.

FOOTNOTES

1. **Filmguide to Psycho** (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973). p. 72
2. "The Imaginary Signifier," **Screen**, 16, No. 2 (Summer 1975), p. 51
3. **The Ego and the Id**, trans. Joan Riviere, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company. Inc., 1960), p. 16.
4. "Film and System: Terms of Analysis," Part II, **Screen**, 16, No. 2 (Summer 1975), p. 105.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 104.
6. **Essais Sémiotiques**, (Paris: Editions Klincksieck, 1977), pp. 141-3.
7. **Orson Welles: A Critical View**, trans. Jonathan Rosenbaum, (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), p. 78.
8. Metz, "The Imaginary Signifier," p. 48.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 51.
10. See, along with "The Imaginary Signifier," Jean-Louis Baudry, "The Apparatus," trans. Jean Andrews and Bertrand August, **Camera Obscura**, No. 1 (Fall 1976), pp. 104-26 and Metz, "History/Discourse: Note on Two Voyeurisms," trans. Susan Bennett. **Edinburgh '76 Magazine**, No. 1, pp. 21-25,
11. "The Film's Time and the Spectator's 'Space,'" paper presented at Fifth International Film Theory Conference, Center for 20th Century Studies. Univ. of Wis.-Milwaukee, March 26-30, 1979, forthcoming in **Cinema and Language** (MacMillan).
12. **Ecrits: A Selection**, trans. Alan Sheridan, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1977), p. 2.
13. Jean Laplanche, **Life and Death in Psychoanalysis**, trans. Jeffrey Mehlman (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), p. 81
14. J. Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis, **The Language of Psycho-Analysis**, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1973), p. 207.
15. Laplanche, p. 66.
16. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," **Screen**, 16, No. 3 (Autumn 1975), pp. 9-10.
17. See **Ce Sexe qui n'en est pas un** (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1977), pp. 23-32. I am very aware of the danger of essentialism in Irigaray's work — of her tendency to refer to femininity as an essential entity defined by inherent characteristics. Nevertheless, her work also, unlike many feminist theories which do not risk essentialism, avoids the simple re-articulation of patriarchal definitions of woman (even if they are re-articulated only in order to act as the object of a critique a process which can be seen as a never ending cycle of recuperation), The question — too complex to be dealt with in the context of this article — is whether an attempt to provide the woman with an autonomous symbolic representation is synonymous with essentialism.
18. Irigaray, **Speculum de l'autre femme**, (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1974). p. 93.
19. *Ibid.* This conceptualization of the woman's relation/non-relation to identity and hence the process of identification necessarily problematizes certain feminists' demands for "stronger female characters" or role models.
20. "Is there a Feminine Aesthetic?," **New German Critique**, No. 10 (Winter 1977), p. 127.
21. **The Interpretation of Dreams**, trans. and ed. James Strachey, (New York: Avon Books, 1965), p. 183.
22. **Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego**, trans. James Strachey (New York: Bantam Books. 1960), p. 48.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 49.

THRILLER

AN INTRIGUE OF IDENTIFICATION

JOAN COPJEC

When Sally Potter's film, **Thriller**, was screened at the 1979 Edinburgh festival, it was described epithetically as "a feminist mystery film." The film can also be described as a reworking of Puccini's opera, **La Boheme**, from Mimi's, or a feminist, perspective. "Feminist" in both descriptions serves as the vantage point from which an attempt is made to modify, to say something new about something else — about the mystery film or **La Boheme**. Yet the danger of the modifying position is in its secondary status; the modification can be seen as an aberrant form that returns the original in a ideal state. About women, then. Logically, that is according to the laws of logic, neither Potter nor I nor any woman can say anything about the class of women. For we are caught in a vicious cycle paradox. Self-membered of our class, we can not make any new statements about it. Boxed in by this abstract definition of herself, a woman speaks as a woman, her voice box producing a box voice — an epiphenomenon of her class, and as that class is defined by her physiology, of her body. Women, in short, are trapped by box logic.

It will be objected that men too fall prey to this paradox of logic: the return of the same, identity, is both the object and the obstacle of logical thought. We insist, however, that "women" are caught up in an additional logical snare whereby they are defined and fail by analogy with "men." It is this ana-logo-centricism which attains knowledge by misrecognizing difference which is attached and unraveled by "deconstructive" criticism but which remains, in certain quarters, resistant and intact. For what is at stake in the undoing of a system based on the notion of truth as self-identity is, of course, identity-itself/oneself. What makes **Thriller** such an exciting film is the way it presents not only a new perspective, but the problem of the possibility of the new.

Where identify may be termed the stake of the logical system, identification has been termed, by Paul Ricoeur, "the thorn in the side of psychoanalysis."¹ The concept has had a long and very difficult history and has never been adequately or uncontroversially defined. As it has been articulated by film theory, it has inherited some of these difficulties and has intensified them. Briefly, proleptically in order to telescope my argument, I suggest that film theory has itself telescoped the psychoanalytic concept of identification. It has dealt with its inherited difficulties by attempting to overlook them. We must once more entangle, intrigue the concept before we can disentangle it. Film theory's privileging of the visible has lost the opportunity of analyzing the way auditory perceptions, or precepts and authorial prohibitions precipitate identifications. It has neglected the subtlety of the Freudian discovery that "the installation of the superego can be described as a successful instance of identification with the parental agency."² "Agency," that is, and precisely **not** parental figure, for "a child's superego is in fact constructed on the model not of its parents, but of its parents' superego..."³ Film theory has, by setting up the film and the spectator as the totalized terms of its analysis, unwittingly perhaps, insisted on the simple and uncontested dichotomy of inside and outside which in turn supports a reality/fiction opposition.

The breakdown of the exclusiveness of these oppositions is accomplished in psychoanalytic theory through the analysis of the relationship which identification instantiates between the object and the superego. Finally, the attention to the spectator-film relationship has reduced the dynamics of identification to a singular relationship and has distorted the outlines of the actual viewing situation. One of the most important concerns of psychoanalytic theories of identification has been to define the role it plays in group formation and the socialization of the individual. The spectator examined by film theorists is one who has been extracted and isolated from the group, the viewing audience.

Once we return to some of the intrications of the theories of identification, it soon becomes clear that "identification" is involved, is the term for, not a singular but a doubled concept. For "identification" names both a process and its effect, the "subject effect," which it produces. To confuse the two, to conflate the conditioned effect with its preconditions, is to create a screen memory of the psychoanalysis of identification. To say that identification is the precondition of the understanding of a film is to commit this same error. Identification **is** related to understanding, but not hierarchically as cause to effect. Rather both are constituted as effects of a process of deferring the recognition of difference. Identity is not of the order of the Real as those who conflate the two meanings of "identification" must, in the end, assert, but of the Symbolic and the Imaginary.

Cinematic identification has been described virtually exclusively as being of the order of the Imaginary. It is defined by analogy with Lacan's mirror phase, that is, the period of the construction of the Imaginary, in which the subject's ego is formed according to an image which she perceives outside and alien to herself. There is one difference, however, between the cinematic and the premiere performance before the mirror. The cinematic spectacle is missing one of its principals. As Christian Metz is the best-known and most articulate proponent of this line of analysis, we quote him:

The spectator is absent from the screen: contrary to the child in the mirror, he cannot identify with himself as an object, but only with some objects which are there without him. In this sense the screen is not a mirror. At the cinema, it is always the other who is on the screen; as for me, I am there to look at him. I take no part in the perceived, on the contrary, I am **all** perceiving... because I am entirely on the side of the perceiving instance: absent from the screen, but present in the auditorium⁴

The structure of this description is significant; it is, of course, the classic logical structure with definiens on the one side and definiendum on the other, a precise separation of geographic/cognitive spaces which are held apart in an oppositional structure which forbids a contamination of one side by the other.

Jacqueline Rose has already pointed out that the phenomenon of transitivity demonstrates that the subject's mirror identification can be with another child.⁵ But although it is necessary to be reminded that Lacan has used the physical apparatus of the mirror as a **metaphor** and that, in fact, the infant can and does assume another child's image as her own — it is not sufficient. It is not only that the subject locates her own image in another, but also that she locates the other in her own. As Grace Kelley watches **Dial M for Murder**, or Mimi the opera **La Boheme**, it is not fully she, her own image which is returned to her. The "own image" which Metz finds missing from its place on the screen has been irretrievably lost by psychoanalysis which has challenged the notions of identity, self-presence, continuity on which analogical/metaphorical thinking is based. The mirror phase itself introduces a structure, the Symbolic, which will become the foreign agent of this challenge.

Psychoanalysis, in its theorizing of the primal scene away from the visible, has examined the construction of identity by means of a process which defers it, and the construction of a present by a process always premature or tardy with respect to it. When Freud says that hysterics suffer from reminiscences, he is not referring to memories of past presences, but to experiences which were never present as such. Emma's hysteria arose not from a trauma which was ever present at any moment, but from a relation between two scenes, neither of which was traumatic in itself. Analysis works not by uncovering the analogue which was the cause of a symptom, but by examining symptoms as effects, repetitions of symbolic structures. But where many film

theoretical issues have advanced through the study of film as a signifying system which produces rather than simply reflects or preserves meaning, the concept of identification has limped behind. Film theory has maintained a traditional understanding of identification as the establishing of an analogous identity of one individual with another and describes it as such by means of an analogy with the mirror phase which is itself an analogy. Box-logic, this; but the returns of such an economy are great. The cinematic theorist, like the spectator and like the child before the mirror, has reason to be jubilant, transcendent, because he has globally ingested the world of the film. Underlying the process of identification, which Freud links to the oral phase of the libido's development, there is surely such a fantasy of incorporation. The fantasy that one has insides, an interiority that contains, that preserves, the self.

Yet Freud was himself never satisfied with his analysis of identification. His attempt, **In Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego**, to systematize, his taxonomy of three, distantly resembles a certain Chinese encyclopedia. The first type of identification, the primal form of an emotional tie with an object, the tie between the pre-Oedipal boy and his father, has clear theoretical limitations. For it relies on a direct and immediate perception of resemblance, **before** any such resemblance can be constructed. Identification is thus described as **cause**, as precondition of the Oedipus complex. Although Freud himself notes the problematic nature of this type of identification, he does not abandon it, but keeps it here in this originary position, as un-caused cause.

After this, the second: identification is here described as the regressive replacement for an abandoned object choice. This second type indexes Freud's most sustained theoretical analysis of an abandoned object choice, developed a few years earlier in **Mourning and Melancholia**. Here clearly, identification does not square with analogy, is not a cause, a precondition, but an **effect**. Identification is not between a subject and an object which is present to it, but is a result of the loss of an object. Whereas in the first example of identification the system itself might be described as economic, in the second, economy becomes an effect of the system's dyssymetry. Identification is the economic redistribution of cathexes which results from the subject's trying to maintain itself in the face of the absence of the object which it had formerly cathected.

Thus the shadow of the object fell upon the ego and the latter could henceforth be judged by a special agency as though it were an object, the forsaken object. In this way an object-loss was transformed into an ego-loss and the conflict between the ego and the loved person into a cleavage between the critical activity of the ego and the ego as altered by identification.⁶

Underlying identification, again, there is this economic fantasy of incorporation. But the subject, attempting to swallow/digest death, lets in the other, a foreign body at the same time and by the same opening. The object is kept in a place which can no longer be properly called "inside," for it is kept there as other. Identification is a repetition on another site, a parasite, of the relationship with the other.

And lastly, the third. This description overlaps the description already given in the second, repeats it. In both, identification is described fairly clearly: **not** "simply imitation, but assimilation on the basis of similar aetiological pretention."⁷ The assumption of a **position** and not an identity. But this clarity is obscured by Freud's concentration on the horizontal relationship by which is implied an identifier and an identified — an analogue and an analogy. The third description is extended in a kind of lateral slide beyond the overlap of the other two. The narrative, as related by Freud, is as follows:

One of the girls in a boarding school has had a letter from someone with whom she is secretly in love which arouses her jealousy... she reacts to it with a fit of hysterics; then some of her friends who know about it will catch the fit... the mechanism is that of identification based upon the possibility or desire of putting oneself in the same position... and under the influence of a sense of guilt, they also accept the suffering involved in it.⁸

The identification takes place across the group, among the girls in the boarding school. It is, in

fact, this group which is the subject of the book of which this discussion of identification is only a chapter. "Identification" is a concept developed within the concept of the group. Whereas Freud's predecessors had defined groups primarily by the relationship of the members to each other, Freud diverges from them here by considering their mutual relationship as product, as effect of their several relationships to the leader. In other words, groups are formed from structural relationships the individuals have, not among themselves, but to a third term which is **not** an object or leader as Freud himself says, but a signifying system — as we learned from his study of mourning and melancholia. Such a process of identification differentiates identity from itself and sets it out in relation to repetition and otherness — as iterable.

The above brief reminders are meant to serve as indications of the restricted economy of the cinematic analysis of identification, an economy that operates in forgetful dependence on the general economy of the Freudian system. When Metz refers to the "already constituted ego" of the film spectator, when he says that "cinema demands that the psychical apparatus of its participants be fully constituted,"⁹ he forgets, if only momentarily, what the spectator also forgets, that the psychical apparatus is never fully constituted in the sense of its ever being complete, a product, as we have said, of an infinitely iterable process. Identification is not an encounter of one fully present subject with another— fully present. Identification is not a vehicle which transports the spectator out of him/herself to another temporary dwelling, not a simple annexing of the unfamiliar by the familiar.

Although the subject may have this fantasy which classical cinema may very well accommodate, identification is not a simple appropriation of the other, a simple adding on to the self. Identification, linked as it is to the oral phase, surely involves a fantasy of incorporation. But one must not leave the fantasy unexamined, not confuse the effect with the process, but must instead explore the conditions, the exclusions and prohibitions, of the fantasy's production. We must look in the direction, examine the relationship, of those who eat at the same table. For film is, after all, a communal meal.

There is a certain discourse which is both mindful of the importance of the group in the construction of the individual and anxious to disentangle effects from their processes of production, which demands that politically "progressive" films break from "classical" films by refusing to offer its spectators a means of identification. But by this it means an **image** with which a spectator can establish a relationship of analogy. This discourse still commits itself to a strict separation of outside and inside and is still tied to a system of thought that defines process and representation as an adding to, rather than a displacement of the Real. Against this definition of identification as an adding onto the subject, we must begin an analysis of identification as a placement of the subject with respect to the text.

It is in the context of this problematic of identification which has begun to shift its terrain from the Imaginary to the Symbolic, that **Thriller** is placed. For the film is defined by the very parameters of this shift and poses many of the same questions as its instigation. While the reflection of the "mirror-phase" is everywhere visible in it, with the figures peering into, sitting beside, imaged in mirrors, the film bears little resemblance to the kind of system imagined by Metz's article. The relationship of camera to screen is not one of casting light upon in a stream of look. Camera movement is often strongly marked as belonging to someone and thus someone other than the spectator and at one point actually casts a shadow on the scene which is already and always heavily shadowed throughout the film. These are scenes which are empty of reflective mirror light, scenes onto which the "shadow of the object" has fallen. If we are to understand identification here it will have to be in terms of melancholia rather than mirrors. Almost immediately the film poses the question of identification, for let's face it, Mimi, the protagonist, is dead, and the possibility of identification in any traditional sense, difficult. Identification instead is a relationship set up by a lost object, a symbolic post-Oedipal interchange and the Imaginary's role one of constance rather than pre-existence.

It is, in fact, quite enlightening to note the similarities in structure between the dramas of **Oedipus** and **Thriller**. Both are moved through protagonists with whom it is impossible to identify in any direct, immediate, or total sense. Where our argument is that this is always the case, these dramas, rather than obscure the fact, confront it directly as part of their strategy. Mimi, as we have said, is dead and Oedipus has committed parricide. These two deeds, in deed, parricide and death, mark from the outside the exact borders, the outposts, of the Symbolic and it is these

two deeds which mark the Real outside of their respective dramas, for each of the two are constructed from two different narratives, the narrative of the crime (which remains outside/the Real) and the narrative of the investigation (which is its symbolic performance). The first, which instigates the second (which is made present by the second) is a never-present past, a traumatic event that was never experienced as such. Oedipus, not knowing who his real parents were, did not experience as traumatic the murdering of that man and the marrying of that woman, his father and mother. And since it is the peculiar nature of death that it can only be experienced vicariously, we can say that Mimi never experienced the trauma of her own death.

It will be noticed that the description of these dramas follows the general description of the detective/thriller genre: Two narratives, one of the crime, the other of the investigation. The search of Oedipus and Mimi for their own identity is carried out in the hermeneutical genre par excellence in which the process of identification always finds its object. But these are two very strange detective stories which seem to lose sight of their initial objective. **Oedipus** begins with the question, "Whokilled Laios?" and **Thriller** with the question, "Who killed me?" but in neither case is the enigma resolved by the uncovering of an object/subject which was fully present at the scene of the crime. The questions are answered, but not at a point; the investigator of each crime although he/she begins by seeking an object/subject outside the self placed in its relation to the crime, ends by placing him/herself in a relation to a family, a group. The terms of rivalry, of aggressivity, which defined the crime are resolved by the formation of a symbolic relationship. Oedipus' investigation leads him to establish his relationship to Jocasta and Laios, to find his place in a family, in the Oedipal triangle; Mimi's leads her to establish her relationship to Musetta. Since identification is iterable, one's identity is not defined as self-identity, as a unique attachment, self-presence to the crime, but as a relationship with others, as membership in a group.

Although both **Oedipus** and **Thriller** are replete with images of vision, eyes, mirrors, sight, it is primarily through the medium of the **voice** that their narratives are related. Verbal reports constantly recreate spectacles never seen, spectacles which remain outside and haunt the investigations. An analysis of the workings of identification in these two dramas would not begin with the identify of their subjects. In **La Boheme**, the opera, however, the voice becomes, is subsumed by spectacle, is made spectacular. The story is a classic love story which exhibits some classic psychical symptoms of the fantasy of incorporation which underlie the process of melancholic identification. Rudolpho, who loves Mimi, and also knows that he will lose her through death, (he separates from her for awhile because he cannot bear her illness) consumes her. We must understand this to be the mechanism since Rudolpho and the other men who are introduced first — a kind of complete system into which Mimi enters in the first scene — are the actants of the narrative, his/their actions are the narrative actions. To say that Mimi dies of consumption is to do more than restate the diegesis. **Thriller** underscores this point by doubling Rudolpho's singing of his love for Mimi with Mimi's coughing. Her loss is his gain; his love has taken her breath away. Mimi, in short, is amortized by the narrative. She is excluded from the narrative so that she can remain forever included in it, so that Rudolpho can maintain himself, his own integrity, and self-identity. And while she is thus consumed, she herself, weaned as she is from the narrative (Act II serves primarily to initiate this process) and from Rudolpho (Act III narrates this), she (propelled toward an anorexia nirvana), eats nothing. If this description bears any resemblance to the descriptions of fetishism or the **aufhebung**, it is because it is intended that the parallels be drawn. In this double movement of negation and uplifting, man denies and idealizes his relationship to woman — he defines her by analogy with himself, his own self-reflection, his own interiorized memory.

Thriller, which narrates a kind of traumatic amnesia, is halted often before the full realization of death by this literalized image of **aufhebung** — the image of a woman lifted up and carried out of the scene. And by summarizing **La Boheme**, its division into four acts, the film makes clear the way this interning (interring) of difference which:

a) results in an enclosed system of balanced equations of symmetries: Musetta (the negated term) carried off in Act II; Mimi (the idealized term) carried on in Act IV; Act I Mimi loved for, Act III abandoned for her illness; and

b) is founded on a construction of difference as visible: "She comes in. They fall in love." Exactly. Love at first sight. The narrative, so boldly stated, seems to need no elaboration. Everything is obvious and eternal.

The film, which changes the diva of opera into an **operant** (active, seeking clues not already given to her by the order of the visible, the experience of which she had while missing its meaning) and a **revenant**, changes all. The restricted economy of the fantasy of incorporation according to which there is no expenditure without return is set in place by its relation to that which it had excluded. Mimi, the interiorized memory/return, becomes the literal return, exteriorized **as** memory. She returns from the visible into which she was inscribed to assert her identity outside it, an identity by means of return, by repetition. Two of the opera's dispenses, voice and number, return together in mutual support — as the single voice which narrates from a number of different positions. And shatters the notion of that logical space which can be occupied by only one person at a time. Identity is here in this illogical space occupied severally. The film finally, and initially, laughs at such notions of singular, self-contained space, of identification, analogy which appropriates all negativity, including death, to the self. It finds laughable the notion that women should undergo a sacrifice without return.

Women, it says, did not jump into the arms of man in some originary moment, but have been jumping into the arms of men, repeatedly, for centuries. And yes, this is important, the recognition of the repeatedness of this arabesque gesture. It means that the image has not been given for once and all, but is constructed again and again. Only realizing this can any intervention be made, can some identification be set up among women that is not eternal and incarnate, but produced as a symbolic system. Without this realization, in short, we haven't a ghost...

FOOTNOTES

1. Paul Ricoeur, **Freud and Philosophy**, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1970), p. 131
2. Sigmund Freud, "New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis." **The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud**, vol. XXII (London: The Hogarth Press, 1955), pp. 63-4. (Subsequent citations of this series will be annotated as S.E.) See also the German version, referred to as G.W. vol. XV, p. 70.
3. Freud, **S.E.**, vol. XXII, p. 67; **G.W.**, vol. XV, p. 73.
4. Christian Metz, "The Imaginary Signifier," **Screen**, vol. 16, no. 2 (Summer. 1975), pp. 50-1
5. Jacqueline Rose, "The Imaginary — the Insufficient Signifier," unpublished BFI paper, November, 1975.
6. Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," **S.E.**, vol. XIV, p. 249; **G.W.**, vol. X, p. 435.
7. Freud, "The Interpretation of Dreams," **S.E.**, vol. IV, p. 150; **G.W.**, vols. II-III, pp. 155-6.
8. Freud, "Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego," **S.E.**, vol. XVIII, p. 107; **G.W.**, vol. XIII, p. 117.
9. Metz, op. cit., p. 50.

FRAGMENT OF AN ANALYSIS OF SIGMUND FREUD'S DORA

SARAH BERNSTEIN

Sigmund Freud's case history of Dora¹ has been an influential study in the area of the psychology of women, in as much as it establishes in Dora the precedent for a definition of woman as hysteric, neurotic, etcetera. However, perhaps the most important feature of the case history for feminist readings has been the fact that Dora left analysis before the "cure," rejecting not only Freud (and his ego) but also his diagnosis, and the institution of psychoanalysis. Out of the concerns of a woman's group which was conducting a reading of the case history grew the film **Sigmund Freud's Dora: a Case of Mistaken Identity**, produced in 1979 by Claire Pajakowska and Jane Weinstock (two members of the group) in conjunction with Anthony McCall and Andrew Tyndall. This collectively produced film not only poses questions about the "facts" of this particular case history, but textual analyses as well:

The psychoanalytic method itself is a process of reading the language and symptoms of the patient; Freud's case history is a reading of that reading, which we in turn read.²

For us, the audience, to take **our** turn at reading by watching and listening to the film is not an easy process: the film's activity of reading simultaneously interrogates the case history and the notion of representation upon which our spectatorship rests.

The film is divided into three sections based on a dispersal of sources of enunciation: first, the monologue of the talking lips; second, the dialogue between Freud and Dora; third, the letters from Dora to her mother. The first section, a single take, serves the narrative function of posing the enigma — the contradictions in psychoanalysis "which now functions almost as an Ideological State Apparatus, and its intellectual **history**, which has been a history of fashions"³ — while at the same time replacing the case history within a larger historical and theoretical construct. The shot consists of an extreme close-up of bright red lips in profile (Suzanne Fletcher), speaking the case as if from Dora's point-of-enunciation ("he said," "I said"), although the language of the monologue (for example, the above quotation) would hardly seem to be Dora's alone. Superimposed to the left of the lips is a year-by-year series of titles which ironically juxtaposes events in Dora's life and the case history against a selectively historical account of the late nineteenth century:

1889

Dora wets her
bed.
Second
International
founded in
Paris.

1892

Dora's father
is nursed by
Frau K.
Alexandra
Kollantai
reads Marx
in Paris.

1905

First
revolution in
Russia.
Dora's case
history is
published.
—etc.⁴

Already in the first shot, in the confusion between what appears to be simultaneously both Dora's **and** the film's reading of Freud, and of what appears to be historical fact, there is a movement toward the displacement of the spectator.

The second section is organized into four scenes: The Kiss, The Exchange, The First Dream, The End (each demarcated with corresponding inter-titles). Each scene is further fragmented into three segments, beginning with a television commercial, continuing with a short clip from pornographic film, and concluding with shot-reverse-shot dialogue between Freud and Dora (Joel Kovel and Silvia Kolbowski). Each scene focuses on a particular issue in Dora's analysis. As the intertitles indicate.

Scene I (The Kiss)

- Advertisement for liquid Tylenol which emphasizes a woman's difficulty in swallowing.
- Pornographic footage of a woman sucking a penis in close-up.

The dialogue between Dora and Freud, who both face the camera in close-up, circulates around the first kiss of Herr K. In Freud's interpretation, Dora's aversion to the kiss is manifested in the symptom of her spasmodic cough. Although both Dora and Freud speak in lip-sync, the speech is singularly Freud's ("I said," "she said").

Scene II (The Exchange)

- Advertisement for Pine Sol, in which a woman and her cleaning woman discover that, since they use the same cleaning agent, they'll "get along just fine."
- Pornographic footage of two women (in long shot) caressing each other's semi-nude bodies.

The dialogue elaborates Freud's interpretation of Dora's position in the relationship between her family and the K's. While Dora maintains that she was an object of exchange between her father and Herr K., "the price of (Herr K's) tolerating the relations between my father and his wife," Freud intones that "thoughts of this kind cloak others," that Dora's descriptions of Frau K. are in words "more appropriate to a lover than to a defeated rival."⁵ In this scene both Dora and Freud are seen in three-quarter profile, both facing screen left, in close-up; and while Freud wears the same three-piece suit throughout the film, Dora is now in red rather than the muted tones she wore in the previous scene. The speech is directly conversational and not quoted as in Scene I. The tone of voice is still flattened just as is the image. In these first three scenes Dora and Freud are in front of a backdrop.

Scene III (The First Dream)

- Advertisement for Tickle deodorant in which various women praise Tickle's "big wide ball."
- Pornographic clip of a woman masturbating (long shot).

The dialogue is a description and interpretation of Dora's dream; Freud creates a chain of associations which begins with Dora's readiness to "give her father what her mother withheld from him"⁶ — manifested in the image of her and her mother's "jewelcase" — and concludes with Freud speaking Dora's desire "to have a kiss from me,"⁷ based on the fact that all three men (Dora's father, Herr K., and Freud) are smokers. At this point Freud knocks a huge ash, which has been developing through out the course of the dialogue, off the end of his large cigar. Both Dora and Freud are seen in torso shots from the neck down, seated in three-quarter profile; Dora faces screen right while Freud faces screen left. Dora is dressed again in the muted tones of The Kiss, and holds a clutch purse in her lap. The quality of the speech is again different: what is spoken here in "dialogue" by both Dora and Freud, who constantly interrupt each other, is altogether a past tense, first person account from Freud's point-of-enunciation (it is he who speaks the first person), although like the dialogue in the Exchange and unlike that of the Kiss, there is nothing to mark its "quoted" quality.

Scene IV (The End)

- Advertisement for Feminine Deodorant Spray: a woman

explains how the product helps control "feminine odor" and makes her feel fresh and clean all day.
— Pornography segment of a male/female bondage scene.

The dialogue revolves around Dora's taking leave of analysis. The mise-en-scene is now radically different. Dora is dressed in black, her face made-up; she is standing in front of a bookcase containing, among other things, copies of **Screen**, **Das Kapital**, and the **Standard Edition of Freud's Works**. Thus although she is now located in a "real" space, its lack of depth and anachronistic mise-en-scene make it a space as undefinable as that of the previous three scenes. Compounding this ambiguity is the location shot of Freud outside, his hair blowing in the wind, facing screen left against a distant background of river docks. Adding even further to this spatial complexity is the fact that the dialogue maintains its shot-reverse-shot format, with both figures speaking in lip-sync, in the same present tense, conversational style as in Scene II. Dora and Freud discuss Dora's identification with a governess: she'd waited two weeks before telling of Herr K's advances, in effect given notice — "two weeks then — the time characteristic for a person in service." Abruptly Dora announces her intention to leave analysis, and upon her declaration that she came to this decision "two weeks ago, I think," Freud says, "You give me two weeks notice just like a governess." The final shot in the scene is the bookcase, but Dora is no longer there; Freud reflects in voice-over what made her leave: "This was an unmistakeable act of vengeance on her part."⁸

While there is seemingly a personal encounter between Dora and Freud in the dialogue segments of this middle section, this encounter, as well as the television advertisements and pornography which frame it are all represented as representations: the filmed television ads include the image of the television set; audible projector noise is heard on the soundtrack during the otherwise silent pornography segments whose graininess of image suggests re-photography; although the dialogue segments are in a shot-reverse-shot format, we are never given an establishing shot, and while both figures speak in lip-sync and voice over, the tonelessness of their voices suggests recitation and quotation (explicit quotation in Scene I) rather than the conversation expected of the "talking cure." The metonymic juxtaposition of these three types of discourse not only serves to call into question the "actuality/reality" of representation (a one-to-one relationship between sign and referent becomes questionable), but also interrogates the activity of spectatorship, insofar as representations construct the perception of images and their "messages." Thus, while pornography (as well as advertising) is often seen to be somehow outside of "legitimate" discourse, these "legitimate" modes of discourse (e.g., Freud's text and psychoanalysis) must necessarily be read as containing the same problematics of representation as pornography. For instance, in Scene IV, Dora's "declaration of independence" must not only be read in terms of the iconography of the other dialogue segments, but also in light of the specific advertisement and pornography clip which immediately precede it. Both the advertisement and the pornography contain images of bondage: the woman in the ad, having washed away her femininity (the "odor") in a bathtub, is next seen "bound" head to toe in her clothing — ascot scarf and trenchcoat, etc.: the film clip is bondage of a more explicitly sexual and immediately readable sort. After seeing these it is so easy to see Dora, her face now heavily "made up" (her make-up had previously been "invisible"), wearing black, as a free heroine for having rejected Freud? Likewise, as noted before, her space is still as flat and ambiguous as before; it is Freud who ventures outside.

The third, and final section of the film — that of the mother reading the postcards — has five separate scenes. In each, Dora's mother (Anne Hegira) is seen seated at a table, facing us, in medium close up in front of the same drab backdrop of the earlier dialogues. The postcards she picks up and reads each bear doubled images. In Scenes I, III, and V, she is dressed in white or grey, and reads in a "soft" voice the series of postcards as if it were one long letter: each of these scenes begins with "Dear Mother" and concludes, "Love, Dora." In Scenes II and IV, she wears black, her voice is harsher and flatter, and she reads a single card with no salutation or closing.

The first scene is Dora's exploration of her dream of the Dresden Madonna in which she poses questions about the representation of woman and the look of women at such representations. The postcards refer both to the pornography of the middle section of the film and to da Vinci's Madonna. The second scene interrogates Charcot's photographs of hysterics: "his search for the visible demands and object... it is that which culturally and historically has always constituted the object — a woman";⁹ the post-card bears the image of Dora as seen in the third dialogue. The third scene raises questions about the ramifications of the case history for feminism: Dora writes

her mother about her reading group as if from a contemporary perspective. On the postcards are "male hero"¹⁰ images — Che Guevara, Christ, Elvis Presley, Freud, etc., as well as the bookcase (sans Dora) of the final dialogue. The fourth scene shows us a postcard image of the bookcase again; the mother's voice wonders if resistance is possible from within the confines of phallogentric language. The fifth and final scene questions the place of the mother, the "not there" of the case history; the postcards contain images from classical paintings of the Madonna, Christ and Saint Ann. At the conclusion of this fifth letter, the image fades to black and Del Shannon's "Runaway" is heard on the soundtrack as the credits begin. These monologues of the mother are yet another examination of Dora's case, yet in these final moments what the mother speaks is both hers and Dora's — the source of enunciation is dispersed over what is simultaneously both Dora's and her mother's speech. But these speeches are always already the film's reconstruction, just as "the descriptions Freud gives of Dora are not innocent documentary facts... (and)... the presentation of her sexuality is... a function of these analytic and narrative processes"¹¹

Sigmund Freud's Dora follows a pseudo-narrative structure with characters, unfolding action, repetitions and rhymes (particularly visual, e.g., lip-stick, the postcards quoting images from earlier sections of the film, the interplay of similar activities in the TV ads, the pornography and the dialogues). The rigorous mise-en-scene of saturated colors plays upon the iconography of certain modes of dress: Freud's conservative suit, Dora in white, red or black, made up or not, her mother in white or black. This tight structure of segmentation and repetition sets up an expectation of closure while paradoxically questioning the narrative structures, the modes of discourse and representation which establish these expectations. Most importantly, the film interrogates its own point of address within the various levels of discourse, a strategy which in turn displaces the spectator/auditor from the comfortable place of consumption into a position of work — not to "get it" but to "use it." Is it perhaps possible that the very nature of this **reading** and its collective, rather than singular or hierarchical, conditions of production of **Sigmund Freud's Dora** opens up precisely this activity in the spectator?

NOTES

1. Sigmund Freud, "Fragment of An Analysis of a Case of Hysteria," in **Dora: an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria**, edited with an introduction by Philip Reiff (Collier Books: New York, paperback edition), 1979
2. Anthony McCall, Claire Pajakowska, Andrew Tyndall, and Jane Weinstock, leaflet describing the intentions of the film, published for the screening Of the film at the Collective for Living Cinema in New York City.
3. McCall, et al, unpublished script for the film **Sigmund Freud's Dora**, 1979, p. 4. I gratefully thank Anthony McCall for making this script available to me.
4. Script, p. 3
5. Script, pp. 14-15.
6. Script, p. 17.
7. Script, p. 21
8. Script, pp. 24-25
9. Script, p. 30.
10. Script, p. 31
11. Leaflet.

PRIMARY IDENTIFICATION AND THE HISTORICAL SUBJECT: FASSBINDER AND GERMANY

THOMAS ELSAESSER

The entire cinematographic apparatus is aimed at provoking... a
subject-effect and not a reality-effect.

J.L. Baudry

Film Studies returns to the question of identification¹ in the cinema, which used to be one of the main concerns of mass-media studies in the '40s and '50s, with a symptomatic ambivalence. American social psychologists like Martha Wolfenstein and Nathan Leites² — indebted to Siegfried Kracauer and, at one remove, the Institute for Social Research — represented the very type of approach from which film theory dissociated itself in order to establish a "theory of the visible." And yet, by a completely different route, Baudry and Metz seem to confirm a fundamental insight of media-psychology: the cinema as an institution confines the spectator in an illusory identity, by a play of self-images, but whereas media-psychology sees these self-images as social roles, for Baudry they are structures of cognition.

Two kinds of determinism seem to be implied in the perspectives opened up by Baudry's description of the 'apparatus': a historical one, where the development of optics and the technology of mechanical reproduction produce the cinema, as a specific visual organization of the subject, and an ontogenetic one, where the cinema imitates the very structure of the human psyche and the formation of the ego. The 'apparatus' seems to be locked into a kind of teleology, in which the illusionist cinema, the viewing situation and the spectator's psyche combine in the concrete realization of a fantasy that characterizes 'Western man' and his philosophical efforts towards self-cognition.

While in Baudry's writing, one can still make out a historical argument which, however remotely, underpins his ideas about the condition of a contemporary epistemology, Metz has used Baudry in **The Imaginary Signifier** in order to establish a classification system rather than an ambivalently evolutionary ontology. With this, the historical determinants seem to be entirely displaced towards other parts of the 'institution-cinema,' and the question of identification — in the concept of primary identification — is recast significantly, so as to make as clear a distinction as possible between his work and work concerned with role definition, stereotyping and role-projection.

Metz' and Baudry's arguments have several important implications for film-studies. For instance, part of the aim of auteur — or genre-studies and close textual analysis has been to identify levels of coherence in a film or a body of films. In the light of **The Imaginary Signifier** one might be better advised to speak of a 'coherence-effect,' and to call the very attempt to establish coherence a displaced subject-effect. The task of analysis or interpretation comes to an end at precisely the point where the spectator-critic has objectified his or her subjectivity, by fantasmaticizing an author, a genre, or any other category, to act as a substitute for the 'transcendental subject' that Baudry talks about. The perversity of this conclusion can only be mitigated, it seems, if one reminds oneself that Metz' distinction between primary and secondary identification is a procedural one, defining a certain logic operation. Or as Alan Williams put it: "The first and most fundamental level of meaning in cinema is (...)that of the coherence of each film's overall surrogate 'subject.'"³ This leaves open the possibility that the surrogate subject is differently constituted from film to film.

The more immediately apparent consequence of accepting Metz' position affects independent or avant-garde film-making practice.⁴ Baudry's argument implicitly and explicitly designates the cinema as 'idealist' in the philosophical sense, not because of a specific historical or ideological practice, such as Hollywood classical narrative, but by its "basic cinematographic apparatus." An unbridgeable subject/object division renders the object forever unknowable, and consciousness grasps the outer world only in terms of its own unconscious/linguistic structure. The cinema, in this respect, is an apparatus constructed by a Kantian epistemologist. Metz' distinction of primary identification amplifies this point. The filmic signifier is an imaginary one because perception in the cinema always involves between spectator and image the presence of a third term which is hidden: the camera. It is the repression of this absence and deferment in the act of perception that turns the subject/object relation into an imaginary one. Primary identification designates the unperceived and unrecognized mirroring effect that such a constellation produces for the viewer, with the consequence that all possible identifications with the characters in particular are modelled on and circumscribed by a structure of narcissism which inflects the viewer-screen relationship at any given moment.

Perception in the cinema is voyeuristic not because of any particular kinds of representations or points of view. It is not the implied hidden spectator which a scene sometimes addresses, but the always hidden camera which the scene cannot exist without that turns all object-relations in the cinema into fetishistic ones. They hold the subject in a position of misrecognition or self-estrangement, regardless of whether the film in question is representational or not, avant-garde or narrative-illusionist. A film either fetishizes the characters or it fetishizes the apparatus. According to Metz, there is no escape from this closed circle.⁵ In this respect, the cinema is indeed an "invention without a future" because it systematically ties the spectator to a regressive state, in an endless circuit of substitution and fetishization.

Such pessimism has been questioned, not least because it seems to invalidate the political and cognitive aims of radical avant-garde film-making. Suspecting a logical flaw, Geoffrey Nowell-Smith⁶ has challenged Metz' distinction, by arguing that it is difficult to see how one can talk about primary and secondary identification, if one means by this an anteriority, in a process that is essentially simultaneous and dynamic. Consequently, Nowell-Smith wants to argue that "pure specularity," the transformation of Freud's secondary narcissism into the imaginary reintegration of the subject's self-image, is an abstraction, and no more than a misleading theoretical construct. In any concrete act of viewing, the spectator is involved in identifications which are 'primary' and 'secondary' at the same time (if only by the metonymization of shots), and every fragmentation, be it montage, point of view shots or any other principle of alternation breaks down primary identification.

The very fact that something is posited as primary should make us instantly suspicious. To say something is primary is simply to locate it further back in the psychic apparatus. It does not, or should not, invite any conclusions about its efficacy. I would argue, therefore, that the so-called secondary identifications do tend to break down the pure specularity of the screen/spectator relation in itself and to displace it onto relations which are more properly intra-textual, relations to the spectator posited from within the image and in the movement from shot to shot.⁷

Metz might well reply that he is not talking about a perceptual anteriority, but a conceptual *a priori*, and that he is not interested in concrete acts of viewing as much as in a classification of distinct categories. However, much of Metz' argument is buttressed by Baudry's essays, whose Platonic ontology of the cinema is historicized only at the price of turning it into a negative teleology. At times, it appears that Metz accepts or is indifferent to the suggestion that the cinema is inescapably idealist. Confronted with the question whether 'primary identification' is coextensive with the cinematic apparatus as analyzed by Baudry and to that extent, unaffected by textual or historical production, Metz conceded, without much enthusiasm or conviction, that conceivably, if the nature of the family were to change radically, so might the cinematic apparatus.⁸

Film Studies has responded to these problems not only by a renewed interest in theory. Equally significant is the attention given to alternative or deviating practices in the history of cinema regarding the relationship of spectator to film, and the kind of 'materialism' or 'specularization' which it undergoes. The Japanese cinema (Ozu, Oshima, Mizoguchi) has become a privileged area for such investigations, in terms of narrative space, point of view shots, or culturally different codes of representation and identification.⁹ This paper is an attempt to isolate another deviating practice, within the European context, which has developed as closely as the Japanese cinema in a reciprocity and rivalry with the 'dominant' practice of classical narrative. The recent German cinema seems to me to represent both a confirmation of Baudry's and Metz' arguments, and at the same time offers a textual practice which might make apparent a dimension elided or repressed in **The Imaginary Signifier**. In particular, I am wondering whether the mirroring effect of cinema, the specularization of all subject/object relations, their rigid division (which is the 'other scene' of primary identification), and the return of a transcendental subject may not point to internalized social relations whose dynamic has been blocked, a blockage that Metz and Baudry have theorized and systematized.

In choosing the films of Fassbinder, I am guided by the fact that his work has given rise to the most widespread discussions about spectator-positioning and types of identification/distanciation. Thus, a certain familiarity can be assumed for the terms of the argument and the examples cited.

Most of Fassbinder's films are centered on interpersonal relationships and problems of sexual and social identity, in a way that is recognizable from classical Hollywood cinema; and yet, even on casual inspection, his work seems to confirm quite strongly a heavy investment in vision itself, and a concentration on glance/glance, point-of-view shots and seemingly unmotivated camera-movements that foreground the processes of filmic signification. Accordingly, one finds two Fassbinder's in the critical literature. a) the German director who wants to make Hollywood pictures and whose audience-effects keep a balance between recognition and identification through genre-formulae and the use of stars, while at the same time distancing the spectator, placing him/her elsewhere through stylization and artifice. Tony Rayns, for instance, sums up some of these points when he argues that "Sirk taught Fassbinder how to handle genre, which became an important facet of his audience-getting strategies."¹⁰ b) the modernist in Fassbinder, whose cinema is self-reflexive to the point of formalism, and whose deconstruction of narrative involves him in fetishizing the apparatus. Cathy Johnson writes:

Fassbinder's highly visible cinematic signifier points to a fetishization of cinematic technique. Because all fetishism is an attempt to return to the unity of the mirror stage, one suspects Fassbinder of indulging in the very pleasure he withholds from his audience. Fassbinder is finally a director who approaches the Imaginary by means of a powerful attachment to and manipulation of cinematic technique as technique, while simultaneously barring entry to those of his audience who seek the Imaginary in the invisible cinematic signifier."

I think one needs to argue that these positions contradict each other only insofar as they see audience-getting and audience-frustrating as opposite aspects of a basically unproblematic category, namely the spectator. It seems to me that Fassbinder's highly systematic textuality is not so much a fetishization of technique as the result of inscribing in his films and addressing a historical subject and a subjectivity formed by specific social relations. What is historical, for

instance, in films like **Despair**, **The Marriage of Maria Braun**, or **Germany in Autumn** is the subject—as much as the subject-matter.

In West Germany, the 'spectator' is a problematic category first of all in a sociological sense. Given that most film-production is state — and TV-financed, the audience does not recruit itself through box-office mechanisms but via diverse cultural and institutional mediations. And yet, film-makers want to create an audience for themselves, not only by being active in restructuring the distribution and exhibition machine of cinema, but also by trying to bind potential audiences to the pleasure and habit of "going to the cinema." Paradoxically, however, the most common form of binding in the commercial cinema, through character identification, is almost completely and consistently avoided by directors like Fassbinder, Herzog, Wenders, Syberberg or Kluge as if somehow in the absence of a genre tradition, or an indigenous commercial cinema, audiences needed to be addressed at a different level.

It has been argued that the German cinema, and Fassbinder in particular, show in this respect the influence of Brecht: characters do not embody their parts but enact roles. But it seems to me that the viewer/film relation and the relation of the characters to the fiction which they enact is considerably more complex. In one sense, the two structures mirror each other infinitely and indefinitely, yet — as I shall argue there is built into them an asymmetry, an instability that brings the relations constantly into crisis. Where Fassbinder seems to differ from both classical narrative and from modernist, deconstructive cinema is in his attitude to voyeurism and fascination. It is rarely fetishized in the form of action or spectacle, and does not seem to derive from primal scene or castration fantasies, as in the suspense — or horror-genre. Yet neither is it ascetically banished, not even in the long frontal takes of the early films. Instead, the awareness of watching marks both the entry-point of the spectator into the text, and the manner in which characters interact and experience social reality. One is tempted to say that in Fassbinder's films all human relations, all bodily contact, all power-structures and social hierarchies, all forms of communication and action manifest themselves and ultimately regulate themselves along the single axis of seeing and being seen. It is a cinema in which all possible subject-matter seems to suffer the movement between fascination and exhibitionism, of who controls, contains, places whom through the gaze or the willingness to become the object of the gaze. It is as if all secondary identifications were collapsed into primary identification, and the act of seeing itself the centre of the narrative.

Faithful to a persistent Romantic tradition, German directors seem to be preoccupied with questions of identity, subjectivity, estrangement. Foundlings, orphans, abandoned children, social and sexual outsiders wherever one looks. Yet narrativization of these quests for identity are almost never coded in the classical tradition of conflict, enigma, complication, resolution. Instead of (Oedipal) drama, there is discontinuity, tableau, apparent randomness and fortuity in the sequence of events. One might say that in Fassbinder, but it is also true of Wenders and Herzog, there is a preference for paratactic sequencing, with little interest in action-montage. Identity is a movement, an unstable structure of vanishing points, encounters, vistas and absences. It appears negatively, as nostalgia, deprivation, lack of motivation, loss. Characters only know they exist by the negative emotion of anxiety — the word that in the German cinema has become a cliché: **Angst vor der Angst**, the title of one of Fassbinder's films, and also an important line in both **Alice in the Cities** and **The American Friend**. As in **Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter**, it almost graphically marks the place, the position where the ego, the self, ought to be, or used to be, but isn't. It is the empty center, the intermittent, negative reference point which primarily affects the protagonists, but which in another movement, is also the empty place of the spectator; and one of the most striking characteristics of the films of Wenders, Fassbinder and Herzog are the ingenious strategies employed to render the position of the camera both unlocalizable and omnipresent, de-centred and palpably absent.

"I would like to be what someone else once was" is the sentence uttered by Kaspar Hauser, the foundling, when he was first discovered standing in the town square. The historical phrase appears in Herzog's **Enigma of Kaspar Hauser** as "I want to be a horseman like my father once was." As an attempt to formulate one's identity, such a project is symptomatic in its contradiction and impossibility. It tries to inscribe an Oedipal supercession in a temporal — historical succession: I/someone else, I/my father is the unthinkable equation, immersed in the Heraclitean flux of identity, difference, deferment. In Wim Wenders' **Alice In the Cities**, the same impossibility articulates itself in terms peculiar to the cinema. Traveling through America in search of himself,

the hero takes pictures with his polaroid. But by the time he looks at them, they never show **what** he saw **when** he saw it. Delay and difference as functions of an identity mediated by the presence/absence of the camera. Visiting a former girl-friend in New York, the hero has to agree with her when she says: "You only take pictures so you can prove to yourself that you exist at all." The cinema as mirror confirming an illusory identity, in the form of a double matrix of estrangement. Film and subjectivity find a common denominator in the German word **Einstellung**, whose polysemic etymology is often drawn on by Wenders in his writings. In filmmaking, the term applies both to the type of shot (i.e. the distance of camera from object) and the take itself (e.g. a long take). But outside filmmaking it means 'attitude, perspective, moral point of view,' and is literally derived from 'finding oneself or putting oneself in a particular place.' Language here anticipates the image of a spatial and specular relation, which only the cinema can fully realize.

In Fassbinder's **Merchant of Four Seasons**, Hans, the hero — another outcast seeking an identity by trying to take the place where someone else once was — explains how he lost his job: "The police had to sack me from the force for what I did. If I couldn't see that, then I wouldn't have been a good policeman. And I was a good policeman. So they had to fire me." Such double-binds, where identity is coextensive with its simultaneous denial, fatally flaw all attempts at reintegration in Fassbinder, and they form the basis for a structure of self-estrangement that in other films appears as a social problem before it becomes a definition of cinema. In Margareta von Trotta's film, **Sisters, or the Balance of Happiness** one finds the line: "It's not me that needs you, it's you who needs me needing you." The story concerns a woman who systematically tries to turn her younger sister into a double and idealized self-image of herself, until the weaker one commits suicide in order to punish the stronger one. As a symptom of the split subject, the configuration described here has much in common with recent trends in the commercial cinema, especially as reflected in sci-fi and horror thrillers. To find the same material in the German cinema reminds one of its origins in German Romanticism and expressionist cinema. The situation where a character seeks out or encounters an Other, only to put himself in their place and from that place (that **Einstellung**) turn them into an idealized, loved and hated self-image, is of course the constellation of the Double, analysed by Freud in terms of castration-anxiety and secondary narcissism. If one can agree that, especially in the light of Metz' and Baudry's use of Lacan's mirror-phase, the problematic of Other and Double has emerged as the cinematic structure **par excellence**, then its predominance in the representation as the cinematic theme **par excellence** of German films seems to demand further exploration. In classical narrative, the double and the split subject make up the repressed structure of primary identification. It appears that in the German films, because this structure is actually represented on screen, it points to a repression elsewhere, which in turn might serve to 'deconstruct' primary identification.

Fassbinder's filmic output is instructive in that a certain line of development becomes clear in retrospect. What gives the impression of continuity despite the change of genres — gangster parody, melodrama, international art-film — is that an obsession with mirroring, doubling, illusory self-images evolves from being a generalized cinematic theme to becoming a specifically German theme, or at any rate, the occasion for historicizing the obsession.

In the early gangster films (**Gods of the Plague, American Soldier**) the heroes' desire revolves not around the acquisition of money or women, but is a completely narcissistic desire to play their roles 'correctly.' Both men and women have a conception of themselves where their behaviour is defined by how they wish to appear in the eyes of others: as gangsters, pimps, tough guys, prostitutes, femmes fatales. They play the roles with such deadly seriousness because it is the only way they know how of imposing an identity on aimless, impermanent lives. What authenticates these roles is the cinema itself, because it provides a reality more real, but it is a reality only because it implies spectators. The characters in **Katzelmacher** are passive not because they are marginals, and spectators of life. Their endless waiting wants to attract someone to play the spectator, who would confirm them as subjects, by displaying the sort of behaviour that would conform to the reactions they expect to elicit. The audience is inscribed as voyeurs, but only because the characters are so manifestly exhibitionist. Substantiality is denied to both characters and audience, they de-realize each other, as all relations polarise themselves in terms of seeing and being seen. Except that to this negative sense of identity corresponds an idealism as radical as that of Baudry's 'apparatus': to be, in Fassbinder, is to be perceived, **esse est percipi**. To the imaginary plenitude of classical narrative, Fassbinder answers by showing the imaginary always constructing itself anew.

The sociological name for this imaginary is conformism. The melodramas seem to offer a social critique of pressures to conform and the narrow roles that prejudice tolerates. But what if conformism was merely the moral abstraction applied to certain object-relations under the regime of the gaze? An example from **Fear Eats the Soul** might illustrate the problem. Ali and Emmi suffer from social ostracism because of a liaison that is considered a breach of decorum. But the way it presents itself is as a contradiction: the couple cannot be "seen together," because there is no social space (work, leisure, family) in which they are not objects of extremely aggressive, hostile, disapproving gazes (neighbours, shop-keepers, bartenders). Yet conversely, they discover that they cannot exist without being seen by others, for when they are alone, the mutually sustaining gaze is not enough to confer or confirm a sense of identity. Love at home or even sex is incapable of providing the pleasure that being looked at by others gives.

The final scene resolves the contradiction. At the hospital where Ali is recovering from an ulcer, a doctor keeps a benevolent eye on the happily reunited couple. It is a look which only we, as spectators can see, in a mirror placed on a parallel plane to the camera. The need which is also an impossibility of being perceived by others and nonetheless remain a subject, produces both the sickness and the cure (in this case, a wishfulfilling regression to a mother-son, nurse-invalid relationship under the eyes of an institutionally benevolent, sanitized father-figure). Only the spectator, however, can read it as such, because the mirror inscribes the audience as another — this time, "knowing" gaze.

It is a configuration strongly reminiscent of **Petra von Kant**. As the drama of double and Other unfolds between Petra and Karin, the spectator becomes ever more aware of Marlene as his/her double within the film. Instead of adopting the classical narrative system of delegating, circulating and exchanging the spectator's look, via camera position, characters' points of view and glance-off, Fassbinder here 'embodies' the spectator's gaze and thus locates it, fixes it. Marlene's shadowy presence in the background seems to give her secret knowledge and powers of mastery. Yet this other character virtually outside or at the edge of the fiction, is offered to the spectator not as a figure of projection, merely as an increasingly uncanny awareness of a double. But to perceive this means also to perceive that Marlene only **appears** to be the puppeteer who holds the strings to the mechanism called Petra von Kant. As soon as we recognize our double, we become aware of the camera, and in an attempt to gain control over the film, fantasmatize an author, a coherent point of view, a transcendental subject. We are plunged into the abyss of the **en abîme** construction: Marlene is inscribed in another structure, that of the camera and its point of view, which in turn stands apart from the structure in which the spectator tries to find an imaginary identity. **Petra von Kant** is dedicated to "him who here becomes Marlene": who, among the audience, realizing that the dedication addresses them, would want to become Marlene?

Fassbinder's characters endlessly try to place themselves or arrange others in a configuration that allows them to re-experience the mirror-phase, but precisely because the characters enact this ritual of miscognition and dis-piacement, the spectator is not permitted to participate in it. Explicitly, this is the subject of **Despair**, in which the central character, attempting to escape from a particular sexual, economic and political identity, chooses as his double a perfect stranger, projecting on him the idealized nonself, the Other he wishes to be. When this surrogate structure collapses, the hero addresses the audience by a look into the camera, saying: "don't look at the camera — I am coming out." If in Metz' term, the screen becomes a mirror without reflection, in Fassbinder's films we see characters act before a mirror, but this mirror is not the screen, except insofar as it coincides with the place where the camera once was. A dimension of time, of delay and absence is inscribed, in such an insistent way as to make it impossible for the spectators to use the screen as the mirror of primary cinematic identification.

Instead, one constantly tries to imagine as filled the absence that provokes the characters' self-display. The paradox which I have been trying to describe is that in Fassbinder's films the protagonists' exhibitionism is only partly motivated by the action, however theatrical, and does not mesh with the spectators' voyeurism, because another, more urgent gaze is already negatively present in the film. Another Fassbinder film, in which this absent gaze is both named and erased is **The Marriage of Maria Braun**. Hermann, Maria's husband, has a role similar to that of Marlene in **Petra von Kant**. His disappearance, coinciding with the fall of Hitler, becomes a necessary condition for the fiction to continue. The *idée fixe* of true love, on which Maria bases

her career, is only disturbed by the periodic return of the husband, from the war, from prison, from making his fortune in Canada. It is for him that she does what she does, but only on condition that his place remains empty — reduced to the sign where someone once was. Absence turns her object-choice into an infatuation, which — expelled and fantasmatized into an *idée fixe*, — becomes a transcendental but alienated self-image. Maria represses the return of the source of idealization, thereby also repressing the knowledge of the source of her economic wealth. Her life and identity appear under the sign of a marriage whose consummation is forever postponed and deferred.

The apparent perfunctoriness and lack of plausibility that strikes one so disagreeably about motive and motivation in characters like Maria or the hero of **Despair** render palpable that not only is the visual space centered elsewhere, but so is the narrative. The characters, motivated by attracting a confirming gaze and simultaneously repressing it, display a symptomatically 'paranoid' behaviour. An ambiguity arises from the fact that the split corresponds to a repressed desire, where the anxiety of knowing oneself to be observed or under surveillance is overlaid by the pleasure of knowing oneself looked at and looked after: Fassbinder's cinema focuses on the pleasure of exhibitionism, not voyeurism.

Increasingly, and explicitly, this exhibitionism is identified with German fascism. In **Despair**, for instance, Nazism appears as both the reverse side and the complementary aspect of the protagonist's dilemma: to escape the sexual and social demands made on him, Hermann's personality splits — into a paranoid and a narcissistic self, and he dresses up in someone else's clothes. Meanwhile, in the subplot, the personality split is metonymically related to economics, the change from small-enterprise capitalism to monopoly capitalism, and the proletarianization of the middle classes, who believe in the world-Jewish-Bolshevik conspiracy as a way of relieving anxiety about the future. The white-collar supervisor Muller, who works in Hermann's family firm, resolves **his** identity crisis also by dressing up: one morning he appears at the office wearing the brownshirt uniform of the SA. The exhibitionist-narcissist of practically all of Fassbinder's films here assumes a particular historical subjectivity: that of the German petit-bourgeois, identifying himself with the State, and making a public spectacle of his good behaviour and conformism. Compared to Muller, Hermann's paranoia is sanity itself and to narcissism as repressed paranoia in Hermann corresponds exhibitionist aggression in Muller. Conformism appears as the social side of the Imaginary which breaks down and constructs itself always anew in Fassbinder's films. To vary Brecht's poem **The Mask of Evil**, one might say that Fassbinder's films, optimistically, show how painful and difficult it is to fit in, to conform.

The structures of self-estrangement, of mirroring and miscognition, of positionality and identification with the Other, the double binds, structures that have habitually been interpreted as coinciding with the construction of the basic cinematic apparatus: might they not here be equally amenable to a historical reading? For instance, in terms of fascism, or more generally, as the need even today of binding a petit-bourgeois audience in the 'social imaginary' of secondary narcissism. What, Fassbinder seems to ask, was fascism for the German middle- and working-class which supported Hitler? We know what it was for Jews, for those actively persecuted by the regime, for the exiles. But for the a-political Germans who stayed behind? Might not the pleasure of fascism, its fascination have been less the sadism and brutality of SS-officers, but the pleasure of being seen, of placing oneself in view of the all-seeing eye of the State. Fascism in its Imaginary encouraged a moral exhibitionism, as it encouraged denunciation and mutual surveillance. Hitler appealed to the **Volk** but always by picturing the German nation, standing there, observed by "the eyes of the world." The massive specularization of public and private life, diagnosed perhaps too cryptically by Walter Benjamin, as the "aestheticisation of politics": might it not have helped to institutionalize the structure of 'to be is to be perceived' that Fassbinder's cinema problematizes? But what produces this social imaginary, once one conceives of the Imaginary outside of cinema or the individual psyche? And conversely, what or whom does the cinema serve by reproducing in its apparatus socially paranoid and narcissist behaviour?

Such questions raise the political context in which Fassbinder works, what is usually referred to as the 'repressive climate,' the 'counter-revolution' that has taken over in West Germany. As the government perfected its law-and-order state in over-reaction to terrorist acts and political kidnapping, the experience of the semi-politicized student movement and many of the intellectuals was a massive flight into paranoia. In the face of a bureaucratic surveillance system ever more ubiquitous, Fassbinder toys with another response: an act of terrorist exhibitionism which turns

the machinery of surveillance — including the cinema — into an occasion for self-display. For in his contribution to the omnibus-film **Germany in Autumn**, he quite explicitly enacts the breakdown of authority, the paranoid narcissistic split which he sees as the subjective dimension of an objectively fascist society. In this film — structured around the question of the right to mourn and to bury one's dead, of letters sent by dead fathers to their sons, of sons of the Fatherland forced by the state to commit suicide, so their bodies can return home for a hero's funeral, of children who kill father-figures and father-substitutes, and then commit suicide inside state prisons — Fassbinder concentrates single-mindedly on himself. Naked, in frontal view, close to the camera, he shows himself falling to pieces under the pressure of police-sirens, house searches, and a virtual news blackout in the media. During the days of Mogadishu, when German soldiers carried out an Entebbe style raid to recapture a hijacked plane he enacts a spectacle of seedy, flamboyant paranoia: that of a left-wing, homosexual, drug-talking artist and film-maker (the Jew of the 70s?) hiding out in his apartment, while his mother explains to him the virtues of conformism in times of political crisis and why she wishes the state was ruled by a benevolent dictator whom everyone could love. Fassbinder makes the connection between paranoia and narcissistic object choice by a double metaphor, boldly cutting from his mother saying that she wishes Hitler back, to himself helplessly embracing his homosexual lover, as they roll on the floor, just as in **Despair** the employee Muller puts on a Nazi uniform; while Hermann goes off in search of a double.

What becomes problematic for Fassbinder is ultimately the question of sexual and social roles, and the impossibility of deriving stable role-models from a 'normal' Oedipal development. In the absence of constructing identity within the family (Fassbinder always demonstrates the violence and double binds that families impose on their members), the need to be perceived, to be confirmed, becomes paramount as the structure that regulates and at the same time disturbs the articulations of subjectivity. This means that the cinema, spectacle, the street, as places where the look is symbolically traded, become privileged spaces that actually structure identity outside the family, and in effect **replace** the family as an identity-generating institution. A film like **The Marriage of Maria Braun** on one level, depicts a socialization process that enforces identity not through Oedipal conflict, substituting an object choice to escape the threat of castration, but through a structure modelled on the reaction formation to the loss of a particularly extreme substitution of the ego by an object. And under these conditions, the individual's most satisfying experience of subjectivity may be paradoxically as an exhibitionist, a conformist, in the experience of the self as object, not for anyone in particular, but under the gaze of the Other — be it history, destiny, the moral imperative, the community, peer-groups: anyone who can be imagined as a spectator. What may once have been the place of the Father, the Law, Authority and its castrating gaze,¹² here manifests itself as the desire to identify with a lost object, the benevolent eye of the 'mother' as we know it from the mirror-phase. It would therefore be wrong to say that the palpable absence of the camera marks necessarily the place of the Father.

Conformism used to be the big subject of American schools of sociology and ego-psychology. David Riesman's idea of 'inner-directed — other directed' (**The Lonely Crowd**), Erik Erikson's "approval/disapproval by a significant other," Melanie Klein's "good/bad object" in various ways all used Freud's papers on narcissism or his **Mass Psychology and the Ego** to conceptualize changes in social behavior in the face of a weakening family structure. In Germany, two books by the director of the Sigmund Freud Institute in Frankfurt, Alexander Mitscherlich, discuss the social psychology of German fascism and the post-WW II reconstruction period. In **Society without the Father**, for instance, Mitscherlich argues that fascism, in its appeal to Germans of all classes, represents a regressive solution to the "fatherlessness (...) in a world in which the division of labour has been extended to the exercise of authority."¹³ Instead of assuming that Hitler figured as the Father, one has to imagine him fulfilling the role of a substitute for the primary love-object:

(The mass leader), surprising as it may seem, (...) is much more like the image of a primitive mother-goddess. He acts as if he were superior to conscience, and demands a regressive obedience and the begging behaviour that belongs to the behaviour pattern of a child in the pre-Oedipal stage. (...) The ties to the Fuhrer, in spite of all the protestations of eternal loyalty, never reached the level (i.e. Oedipal) so rich in conflict, where the conscience is formed and ties with it are established.¹⁴

According to Mitscherlich, this helps to explain why Hitler vanished so quickly from the minds of Germans after 1945 and why the collapse of the Third Reich did not provoke the kinds of reactions of conscience, of guilt and remorse that 'the world' had expected. In **The Inability to Mourn** he writes:

Thus, the choice of Hitler as the love object took place on a narcissistic basis; that is to say, on a basis of self-love (...) The possibility of any dissociation from the object is lost; the person is in the truest sense of the term "under alien control" (...) After this symbiotic state has been dissolved, the millions of subjects released from its spell will remember it all the less clearly because they never assimilated the leader into their ego as one does the model of an admired teacher, for instance but instead surrendered their own ego in favour of the object. (...) Thus, the inability to mourn was preceded by a way of loving that was less intent on sharing in the feelings of the other person than on confirming one's own self-esteem. Susceptibility to this form of love is one of the German people's collective character traits. The structure of the love-relation of the Germans to their ideals, or the the various human incarnations of those ideals, seems to us to underlie a long history of misfortune. (...) Germans vacillate all too often between arrogance and self-abasement. But their self-abasement bears the marks not so much of humility, as of melancholy (...).¹⁵

The West German economic miracle was sustained psychologically by defense mechanisms. The work-ethic, ideologies of effort the performance principle took on such ferocious proportions because of the "self-hatred of melancholia."¹⁶ Why did West Germans rebuild such a conservative and conformist society? Democracy came to them imposed from without, and once again "under alien control," they reconstructed their Imaginary in the image of American consumer-capitalism. In parabolic fashion, this is the story of **The Marriage of Maria Braun**, whose heroine's ambiguous strength lies precisely in her "inability to mourn." Benevolent eyes, such as those of Chancellors Adenauer or Schmidt, gaze in ghostly fashion out of portraits whose frame once contained that of Hitler.

To support a film-analysis, however cursory, with such metapsychological observations courts many risks: can complex social and historical developments be reduced to and modelled on psychoanalytical concepts derived from clinical practice with individuals? Are generalizations about the national character not bound to remain at best abstractions, at worst mystifications that involve a mysteriously collective unconscious? Implicitly analogizing capitalism and the family structure as Mitscherlich does runs counter to the work, say, of R.D. Laing, or Bateson, where it is the family that becomes the place of contradictions specifically produced by capitalism. More serious still is the danger of collapsing a particular form of textual production such as the cinema, with a naive reflection theory, so favoured by sociologists of film or literature.

What is different between the Freud of Riesman, Erikson, Klein on the one hand, and that of Lacan, Metz, or Baudry on the other, is that the latter emphasize over and over again, the specularity of relations which for the former are somehow substantial, physical, like the symptoms displayed by Freud's hysterical patients. Lacan's insistence on the image, the eye, in the deformation of the self — however incomplete this would be without his notion of textuality — shows the extent to which he has in fact read Freud in the light of concrete historical and social changes. Conversely, what separates Fassbinder from Mitscherlich, and what makes me risk speaking of a 'social imaginary without fear of getting it confused with some 'collective unconscious' is Fassbinder's commitment to the primacy of vision and the representation of interaction and action in terms of fascination and specular relations.

If fascism is then only the historical name given to the specularization of social, sexual and political life, then the concepts of Freudian psychoanalysis can indeed be pertinent, once Lacan has taught us how to read them. But by the same token, it suggests itself that Metz' primary identification partakes, as a theoretical construct or a descriptive category, in a historical development call it, for the sake of the argument, the specularization of consciousness and social production — which his categories do not adequately reflect. In particular, to talk about primary

and secondary identification as if it were a closed system, risks conflating important distinctions, and, in the case of Fassbinder, and other 'deviant' cinematic practices, tends to institutionalize a deconstructive, overly theoretical reading, where a historical reading might also be essential.

This said, it can be argued that in the case of the New German Cinema, we may actually have an interesting example of a productive misreading. One of the problems of the New German Cinema is that it is only slowly and against much resistance finding the audience inscribed in its texts — German intellectuals and the middle-class. The major successes have been in the capitals of Western Europe and on American university campuses, i.e., with an audience who, ignoring the peculiar historical inscriptions that the texts might carry, have been happy to appropriate the films on the basis precisely of a familiarity with models of narrative deconstruction, modernist self-reflexivity, whether of the kind typical for certain European films, or of the critical readings that film-scholars have produced for the classical Hollywood narrative. In turn, the popularity which the films of Fassbinder, Herzog, Wenders have achieved abroad, and above all the critical attention given to them by magazines, at conferences or in seminars, have, in a considerable way, strengthened their directors' chances of gaining more financial support in their own country from the government. This repeats the structure (on the level of production) which I tried to indicate is present in the texts themselves: the Germans are beginning to love their own cinema because it has been endorsed, confirmed and benevolently looked at by someone else: for the German cinema to exist, it first had to be seen by non-Germans. It enacts, as a national cinema, now in explicitly economic and cultural terms, yet another form of self-estranged exhibitionism.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 The reader is asked to forgive a rather large assumption made here. In the context of the conference it was necessary to presuppose the audience's familiarity with three essays that discuss (primary/secondary) identification, the 'apparatus' and 'subject-effect': Jean Louis Baudry, "Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus", *Film Quarterly*, 28, no. 2 (Winter 1974-75); Christian Metz, "The Imaginary Signifier," *Screen* vol. 16, no. 2 (1975); Jean Louis Baudry, "The Apparatus," *Camera Obscura*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1976).
- 2 Martha Wolfenstein/Nathan Leites, *Movies — A Psychological Study*, (New York; Atheneum, 1970 1950).
- 3 Alan Williams, *Max Ophuls and the Cinema of Desire*, (New York, 1980).
- 4 See Constance Penley, "The Avant-garde and its imaginary," *Camera Obscura*, vol. 1, no. 2 (1977).
- 5 See Interview with Christian Metz, *Discourse*, no. 1 (1979).
- 6 Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, "A Note on History — Discourse," *Edinburgh '76 Magazine*, no. 1, (1976) pp. 26-32.
- 7 *Ibid.*, p. 31.
- 8 Interview, *Discourse*, no. 1, (1979).
- 9 See, for instance, Kristin Thomson and David Bordwell, "Space and Narrative in the Films of Ozu," *Screen*, vol. 17, no. 2 (1976); Edward Branigan, "Formal Permutations of the Point of View Shot," *Screen* vol. 16, no. 3 (1975); Stephen Heath, "Narrative Space," *Screen* vol. 17, no. 3 (1976); Noel Burch, *To the Distant Observer*, (London, 1979).
- 10 Tony Rayns, ed., Fassbinder, *British Film Institute*, (London 1980), p. 4.
- 11 Cathy Johnson, "The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant," *Wide Angle*, vol. 3, no. 4 (1980), p. 25.
- 12 See *Cahiers du Cinema's* reading of "Young Mr. Lincoln," *Screen*, vol. 13, no. 3 (1972).
- 13 Alexander Mitscherlich, *Society Without the Father* (1969), p. 283.
- 14 *Ibid.*, p. 284.
- 15 Alexander Mitscherlich, *The Inability to Mourn*, (1975), pp. 60-61, 63-64.
- 16 *Ibid.*, p. 63.

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