The Avant-Garde Cinema and the Concept of the Other

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Abstract

This thesis uses the concept of the Other, drawn from Lacanian psychoanalysis, as well as recent French semiotics and discourse theory to critically analyse the avant-garde cinema. It discusses the concept of the Other and its psychoanalytic background and shows how it can be used to describe that against which the avant-garde cinema defines itself and without which the avant-garde cinema could not exist as it does. This leads to a consideration of the avant-garde cinema as a category existing only by virtue of its Other and which can therefore not withstand the pressure of critical inquiry. The thesis finally suggests that the category of the avant-garde cinema be replaced by the notions of signifying practice, configuration of signifiers, and discursive formation as these are elaborated in recent work and discussed in the thesis.

Résumé

Le présent mémoire se veut une analyse critique du cinéma d'avant-garde. Il s'inspire du concept de la psychanalyse lacanienne de l'Autre ainsi que de la sémiotique et de la théorie du discours modernes issues de France. Le concept de l'Autre est discuté dans son champ psychanalytique afin de figurer une instance contre laquelle le cinéma d'avant-garde se définit et sans laquelle ce cinéma ne saurait exister tel que nous le connaissons. Le cinéma d'avant-garde s'avère donc une catégorie entièrement dépendante de son Autre et donc incapable de résister à l'analyse critique. La catégorie du cinéma d'avant-garde serait donc avantageusement remplacée par les concepts de pratique signifiante, de configuration de signifiants et de formation discursive tels que les élaborent des ouvrages récents et que les discute le mémoire.

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PREFACE

I want to advise the reader who may be hoping for, or dreading, another psychoanalytic account of film, that I have not written a thesis on psychoanalysis. It does draw upon some elements of psychoanalysis--notably the concepts of the Other, the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the subject--but the role of psychoanalysis is mostly limited to an attitude of reading and questioning. The role of psychoanalysis, specifically of Freudian and Lacanian analysis, has been growing in film theory over the past few years and constitutes what I consider to be one of the most fruitful areas of research. It is not without its limitations, however, and I have indicated something of these limitations in the final section.

I should refer to the difficulty of some of the concepts and of some of the language. This difficulty has three sources: 1) the genuine complexity of some of the material; 2) our unfamiliarity with the material; and 3) the specificity of the thesis itself which is neither about psychoanalysis nor about the avant-garde cinema in themselves. It is rather about the way in which the concept of the Other can be used to shed light upon the concept of the avant-garde cinema. It is about the relationship between the two. This is somewhat akin to discussing a reflection while being forbidden to mention the mirror. As for the language, it is the language of the field, and it is really no more difficult than any other specialised vocabulary. I have attempted to make it as clear as possible but know I shall not have succeeded in accommodating all possible readers.

Finally, I wish to express my sincerest thanks to my thesis advisor, Dr. David Crowley, who acted as my Other while I was writing, and to my sister, Julie Attallah, who helped me with typing and meeting deadlines.

INTRODUCTION

To enter the field of the avant-garde cinema is to enter a domain wherein many fundamental issues have not yet been defined, let alone resolved. This is the effect partly of the current state of film theory in general, and partly of the avant-garde's specificity within that theory.

Film theory is only now emerging from a relatively long period dominated by the writings of Balazs, Arnheim, Bazin, Laffay, Eisenstein, Morin, Cohen-Séat, etc.[1] This era is ending and has been made unstable due to "the emergence of Marxism, semiology and structuralism into the field of film study."[2] There is a certain "crisis" in the field of film theory which can be further attested by the number of journals and magazines devoted to film and film theory, and their frequently contradictory positions and presuppositions, the upsurge of interest in non-mainstream feminist and avant-garde film, and recent work on film history and hisforiography.[3] All the domains of film theory are coming under closer epistemological scrutiny. There is no single hegemonic paradigm of inquiry. There are, rather, several imperfectly articulated pieces of methodology. This means that long-held, more or less traditional views on realism, genre criticism, the auteur theory, the role of Hollywood studios, etc., are all being critically re-examined as their epistemological presuppositions are being thrown into question.

This thesis is an attempt to deal with the avant-garde cinema from a semiotic and psychoanalytic perspective. Neither semiotics nor psychoanalysis was developed with the study of film in mind though both have had fruitful encounters with it. The semiotics upon which this thesis draws was developed primarily in recent French literary criticism. Its most outstanding

exponent was Roland Barthes. The most interesting and productive of his books, for the purposes of this thesis, is S/Z (1970). French literary criticism is the meeting ground for many diverse practices (psychoanalysis, marxism, materialist linguistics, epistemological deconstruction), and the way in which it raises questions informs this thesis. The psychoanalysis in question is that of Jacques Lacan. Lacan's re-reading of Freud has been excellently discussed by Anika Lemaire in her book, Jacques Lacan (1970), and much of the material on Lacan is drawn from her. Both the semiotics of French literary criticism and the psychoanalysis of Jacques Lacan are centrally concerned with the activity of the signifier, or the process of signification. The insights of both have been brought together and discussed in an extremely useful manner by Rosalind Coward and John Ellis in their book, Language and Materialism: Developments in the Semiology and the Theory of the Subject (1977). Film itself has been envisaged as a signifying practice particularly suited to the insights of semiotics and psychoanalysis. This conceptualisation of film has been principally brought about by the work of Raymond Bellour, Thierry Kuntzel, Stephen Heath, and of Screen and of Cahiers du cinéma.[4] The main exponent of the psychoanalytic/semiotic approach to film has been, however, Christian Metz, and his work, especially Le signifiant imaginaire (1975), deeply informs this thesis.

The work of Metz and others provides the basis for a reconceptualisation of cinema, and of avant-garde cinema. It has seen the necessity of constructing a theory of the subject, derived largely from Lacan, and of seeing film-making and film-viewing as two complementary institutions. This has further allowed film to be discussed as a signifying practice inscribed within various discursive formations.

The avant-garde cinema can then also be viewed as

a signifying practice. As such, it has had to contend with other signifying filmic practices and to define itself in conjunction with or in opposition to them. Principally, however, the avant-garde cinema defined itself in opposition to the dominant practice of Hollywood. It can be said therefore that Hollywood is the Other of the avant-garde. The concept of the Other is derived from the writings of Jacques Lacan. For him, the Other designates a number of things: the Mother, as primordial Other; the Father, as symbolic Other; the unconscious, as discourse of the Other, etc. Essentially, it is taken here to mean that instance which is not the self but without which the self could not even begin to realise its own existence. The concept of the Other has been given some extension in film theory notably in the work of Jean-Pierre Oudart, but also by Dayan and Rothman. Oudart attempts to specify the place of the Other in the narrative film as an "Absent One," that is to say as an off-screen look which determines how things are to be seen before the eye of the spectator comes to look at them. Dayan and Rothman discuss it principally in terms of the cutting of classical narrative cinema. For Dayan, the Other governs the cutting of classical narrative cinema as it both binds the intradiegetic looks of the characters to each other and the look of the spectator to the flow of images. Rothman rejects that view on the grounds that it merely reproduces the logic of cutting for the two-shot without adding any new information

This thesis shows the incidence of the Other on the avant-garde: how the avant-garde constructs an image of its Other and how the Other insinuates itself into the discourse of the avant-garde. The first two parts introduce and discuss the concepts of signifying practice and of the Other, and show their relation to film. The third is both a demonstration of the relation

of these concepts to the avant-garde cinema and a polemical discussion of problems within the avant-garde.

To understand then just how this thesis situates itself within the field of film study, it is best to begin with a working through of the semiotic and other positions which constitute the methodological and epistemological bases of this thesis.

Notes

[1] As regards this era of film study, Christian Metz states: "Il y a là toute une époque de réflexion sur le film, qui trouve son aboutissement et sa synthèse dans l'imposante Esthétique et psychologie du cinéma de Jean Mitry (1963-65).

Epoque qui ne saurait à présent se prolonger sans dommage. Elle tirait sa justification et sa raison d'être (sa relative et réelle fécondité, aussi) de ce que le cinéma était un fait tout neuf et encore étonnant: des livres entiers se consacraient à commenter sa seule existence sans autre précision de point de vue. Le cinéma, aujourd'hui . . . est cependant entré dans les moeurs: il ne suffit plus de s'étonner de lui comme d'une merveille à l'état d'émergence, il faut commencer à le comprendre dans ses divers aspects, et pour cela se faire quelque idée des différents points de vue sous lesquels on peut en aborder l'étude." Christian Metz, Langage et cinéma, 2nd ed. (Paris: Editions Albatros, 1977), p. 6.

[2] Steve Neale, "The Re-appearance of "Movie," Screen, 16, No. 3 (1975), 112.

[3] See, Cinema Journal, No. 14 (1974-75); Charles Altman, "Towards a Historiography of American Film," Cinema Journal, No. 17 (1977); Gerald Mast, "Film History and Film Histories," Quarterly Review of Film Studies, 1, No. 3 (1976); Edward Buscombe, "A New Approach to Film History," The 1977 Film Studies Annual: Part Two; Edward Buscombe, "Introduction: Metahistory of Film," Film Reader, No. 4 (1979); Robert C. Allen, "Film History: The Narrow Discourse," The 1977 Film Studies Annual: Part Two.

[4] For representative examples of work by each of these, see Raymond Bellour, "Le blocage symbolique," Communications, No. 23 (1975); Thierry Kuntzel, "Le

travail du film, 2," Communications, No. 23 (1975); Stephen Heath, "Narrative Space," Screen, No. 3 (1976).

[5] See, Jean-Pierre Oudart, "Cinema and Suture," and Stephen Heath, "Notes on Suture," Screen 18, No. 4 (1977/78); Daniel Dayan, "The Tutor-Code of Classical Cinema," and William Rothman, "The System of the Suture." In Movies and Methods. Ed. Bill Nichols (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976).

PART I

Semiotics

Ferdinand de Saussure is usually credited with having been the first to propose a science of signs: semiology. In an oft-quoted passage from the Course in General Linguistics, his students record him as having said:

> A science that studies the life of signs within society is conceivable; it would be part of social psychology and consequently of general psychology; I shall call it semiology (from Greek semeîon 'sign'). Semiology would show what constitutes signs, what laws govern them. Since the science does not yet exist, no one can say what it would be; but it has a right to existence, a place staked out in advance. Linguistics is only a part of the general science of semiology; the laws discovered by semiology will be applicable to linguistics, and the latter will circumscribe a well-defined area within the mass of anthropological facts.[1]

Whatever objections the use of "science" and the easy passage from "social" to "general psychology" may raise nowadays,[2] Saussure's work was crucial to the establishment of modern linguistics. In the course of his research, he was led to distinguish "langue" from "parole" as the social aspect of language versus its individual use ("Language . . . is the social side of speech, outside the individual who can never create nor modify it by himself; it exists only by virtue of a sort of contract signed by the members of a community."),[3] and

the signified from the signifier as the meaning to be expressed versus that which "expresses" or "represents" it. Such distinctions, however useful, nonetheless brought in their wake certain difficulties which affected not only linguistics but all of semiology.

Essentially, the two distinctions, langue/parole and signifier/signified, assume three presuppositions which will prove to be untenable: 1) a transcendant ego inasmuch as opposed to the social institution of language is posited the possibility of its individual, creative use ("Speaking . . . is individual. It is wilful and intellectual.");[4] 2) that as "representatives" of natural, pre-given meanings, signifiers only represent or stand in for, and in no way constitute those meanings; 3) that sign systems are closed and self-contained inasmuch as the play of "signifiers and signifieds caught in a system of difference which provides the very possibility of their being understood" dispenses with the need of looking outside the system for their meaning.[5]

As Saussure had pointed out, all meaning is defined within a system oppositionally and through a play of difference:

> in language there are only differences <u>without positive terms</u>.[6]

This understanding of meaning originally made it quite easy to study individual sign systems such as chess, table manners, clothing, as though they were independent of each other and especially of language, that is to say as though they contained the truth of their own meaning within themselves. Yet, even as early as "The Rhetoric of the Image" (1964), Barthes had been able to say:

> it is not very accurate to talk of a civilization of the image – we are still, and more than ever, a civilization of writing, writing and speech continuing to be the full terms of the informational structure.[7]

Barthes thereby underlined the fact that various sign systems were not autonomous and that they depended "crucially upon language for their intelligibility, not only as a relay of their meaning, but, vitally, to found their very system of difference. . . ."[8]

This belief in the autonomy of the various sign systems was itself, however, dependent upon the theory of meaning exemplified in the Saussurian signifier/signified relationship.

For Saussure, and classical semiology, the relationship between the signifier and the signified, though arbitrary or unmotivated, was nonetheless socially fixed. This means that though the "idea of "sister" is not linked by any inner relationship to the succession of sounds . . . which serves as its signifier. . . ,"[9] it has nonetheless been agreed by social convention ("a sort of contract signed by the members of a community") that the same succession of sounds, i.e., the same signifier, should always have the same meaning, i.e., the same signified. The third term, the referent, would be the real object in the empirical world.

Such a conception, however, instrumentalises language and reduces the signifier to a function of nominalism. It means, in short, that there are natural meanings lying latent in the empirical world waiting only to be expressed by a signifier. That meaning should be latent in the empirical world would therefore imply the existence of a level of natural, pre-given, pre-signifying meaning. This was the theory of meaning held to by Barthes at the time of Mythologies (1957), and it is

reproduced in the denotation/connotation dichotomy. This dichotomy would have it that there exists a level of "true," denoted meaning to which are added, other, connoted meanings. The function of semiology would therefore be to peel back the connotations in order to arrive at the truth, at the denotation. This reduces the possible multiplicity of meaning to the effect of pathology or of ideology and has the effect of firmly establishing ideology as "false consciousness," a cloud of ideas hovering over the real relations of society and obscuring our view of them.

The denotation/connotation dichotomy further only reproduces the form/content dichotomy with form occupying the position of connotation and content occupying the position of denotation. This approach splits any text between <u>what</u> it says and <u>how</u> it says it, as though the <u>how</u> were not somehow constitutive of the <u>what</u>, as though the content could be emptied of its form, and the text returned to its basic denotative statement in order to arrive at the "truth."

Classical semiology can therefore be seen to be caught up in a subject/object dichotomy. If the function of semiology is to uncover truth, then semiology assumes the position of the subject and the meaning it seeks assumes the position of the object. This constitutes the semiologist, or the speaker in language, as a transcendent, already fully-constituted subject, capable of performing operations upon the object. The object does not affect the subject and the nature of the subject's operations in no way affects the object.

This then is the domain of what Coward and Ellis call a "bourgeois semiology" producing "a semiology that is itself innocent, describing systems that seem to be hermetically sealed. . . ."[10] To posit a natural meaning, with the consequent fixity and autonomy of nominalist sign systems and the necessary transcendence of a

knowing subject, obviously engages certain notions of history, signification, ideology, and the social formation, which are irreconcilably at odds with a materialist semiotics. As Julia Kristeva has stated the situation:

> The theory of meaning now stands at the crossroads; either it will remain an attempt at formalising meaning systems by increasing sophistication of the logico-mathematical tools which ennable it to formulate models on the basis of a conception (already rather outdated) of meaning as the act of a transcendental ego, cut off from its body, its unconscious and also its history; or else it will attune itself to the theory of the speaking subject as a divided subject (conscious/unconscious) and go on to attempt to specify the types of operation characteristic of the two sides of this split: thereby exposing them to those forces extraneous to the logic of the systematic; exposing them, that is to say, on the one hand, to bio-physiological processes (themselves already inescapably part of the signifying processes; what Freud calls 'drives'), and, on the other hand, to social constraints (family structure, modes of production, etc.)[11]

It would appear, therefore, that either we can hold to the theory of the transcendental subject with all the questions it poses (How does the subject acquire its transcendence? How can one account for the variations of the subject at different historical/social periods? How can one account for the fact that different transcendent subjects find different "truths" in the same text? etc.), or we can attempt to understand the social production of meaning and of subjects for those meanings.

This shift has been marked in semiotics[12] itself by the passage, in simplified terms, from the study of langue to the study of parole. Saussure had defined langue as the proper object of study of linguistics, and by extension of semiology. He wanted to study the social institution rather than the individual variations. As such, he wanted to study the énoncé (the enounced; the statement; that which has been stated) rather than the énonciation (the enunciation; the utterance, the act of stating). As we have seen, however, these very distinctions are caught up in a number of idealist/positivist dichotomies which, whatever their effects in the field of linguistics, are untenable for semiotics.[13] Rather than take meaning as given, semiotics attempts to understand how meaning is constructed, how it presents itself as natural, and how subjects are constructed for and by those meanings.

There are here, then, two main areas of investigation which go hand in hand. There is the construction of meaning and the construction of the subject. Semiotics has therefore drawn upon both psychoanalysis and historical materialism to further its research:

> Psychoanalysis shows how the positions of the subject that are necessary for predication are constructed in the interaction of somatic drives and the contradictory outside of sociality. It shows how the accession to language is the crucial moment in the formation of this subject who is able to participate in the social processes of exchange, communication and reproduction. Marxism demonstrates how the positionality of exchange is a necessary fixity (a 'contractual relation') within a social process formed by the articulation of economic, political and ideo-

> logical practices. Furthermore, ideological practice shows that this positionality is produced for a subject within a mode of production. This fixing of positions for the subject can be seen as part of the process analysed in psychoanalysis.[14]

So the social and the individual exist in a relationship of mutual reference, each calling upon or leading into the other. It is also important to specify that the psychoanalysis in question is precisely Lacan's rereading of Freud:

> The importance of Lacanian theory for film lies precisely in the emphasis which he places on language; that is, on a system of signification, as the true route for the elaboration of Freud's ideas on the construction of the individual in sociality and on the place of the unconscious. Such emphasis, because it indicates the construction of the subject in language in relation to the heterogeneous 'outside', has allowed the demonstration of the production of the subject in language in a way that shows how that place is constructed from which self and others are viewed, and provides therefore a way of analysing the relation of the subject to the images by which it represents reality. It thus provides a way of thinking about the work of ideology in fixing images and places of viewing, and also a way to make precise how ideology articulates with the particular determinacy of the symbolic system itself.[15]

This then has entailed, and rests upon, a reconceptualisation of basic Saussurian concepts. It is useful for us to examine three interdependent reconceptualisations: the signifier/signified relationship, the notion of sign system, and the notion of stable meaning.

In the classic Saussurian, or semiological schema, signifier and signified are complementary ("The two elements are intimately united, and each recalls the other.")[16] like the "two sides of a sheet of paper." The one represents or stands for the other. Both are equally important and stand in a symetrical relationship. If, however, we reject this position and recognise, as Stephen Heath states, that:

> 'Reality' . . . needs to be understood not as an absolute and immutable given but as a production within which representation will depend upon (and, dialectically, contribute to) what the French Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser has described as 'practical ideology', a complex formation of montages of notions, representations, images and modes of action, gestures, attitudes, the whole ensemble functioning as practical norms which govern the concrete stance of men in relation to the objects and problems of their social and individual existence; in short, the lived relation of men to their world . . .[17]

then we must recognise the primacy of the signifier in the constitution of that reality, of its signifieds. There is no transparency of the signifier to the empirical world, no "natural" way of doing or of signifying anything. There is no easy passage from the signifier to the signified. The work of semiotics must therefore be a work upon the signifier, a work upon the

way in which, in historically and socially determinate situations, it produces meanings and subjects for those meanings. Hence, the title of what could arguably be called Metz's most important work, The Imaginary Signifier, insists precisely upon the necessity of investigating the "cinematic signifier" and the way in which, in late capitalism, it operates both to produce films and to produce spectators for those films.

Whereas the notion of sign system involves a certain fixity of meaning, a stabilisation of meaning such that it is always given in a systematised form to the transcendent subject, the primacy of the signifier radically challenges the very possibility of the constitution of any such system, of any stabilisation of meaning. To the notion of sign system has therefore been substituted the notion of signifying practice.

The notion of signifying practice recognises the potential infinity of meaning which follows as a consequence of the recognition of the primacy of the signifier. It substitutes to the Saussurian, "socially fixed" signifier/signified relationship, another relationship which has been formalised by Saussure and taken up again by Lacan as follows: $\frac{S}{s}$. The large S stands for the signifier, the small s for the signified, and the bar between the two designates "a separation which excludes a priori any possibility of seeing a term for term equivalence between the signifying chain and the flow of the signifieds. . . ."[18] It is as though signifiers and signifieds constituted two vast, shifting, and quite separate realms which only come together at specific points. The meanings therefore are as variable and shifting as the signifiers and the signifieds. The determination of any one meaning rather than another is dependent upon the specific configuration of signifiers; "the signified is only established by the different combination of the signifiers. . . ."[19] The realm of

signifiers is the "signifying chain," it is the primacy of the signifier in its activity, it is that which the signifying practice attempts to master. A signifying practice is, therefore, a historically and socially determinate way of stabilising the relationship between signifier and signified. Obviously, the manner in which that relationship is stabilised will depend upon a vast array of factors which we could call the mode of production. As Marx said:

> We have seen that the capitalist process of production is a historically determined form of the social process of production in general. The latter is as much a production process of material conditions of human life as a process taking place under specific historical and economic production relations, producing and reproducing these production relations themselves, and thereby also the bearers of this process, their material conditions of existence and their mutual relations, i.e. their particular socio-economic form.[20]

Signifying practice, in the general sense, is that which stabilises production and reproduction:

> Signifying practice . . . is not a superstructure overlaid, as a reflection, on a given mode of production. In any mode of production, signifying practice is that through which the mode of production signifies its stabilisation and its (self) expenditure — the condition of its renewal . . . "Signifying practice and mode of production", therefore, does not at all imply an initial separation of the two which has then to be reconciled, but an

> intrinsic belonging of a mode of sign-production to the mode of production of the socio-economic ensemble.[21]

A specific signifying practice is:

> the process of production of a system of meanings . . . What is involved is working on the system of signification to produce a certain meaning: to do this entails working on the subject and its representations to produce it in place of support for those meanings. The production of a certain meaning from a system of signs necessitates both the identity of the speaking subject in sociality and the position of the subject in ideological representations, as those developments in psychoanalysis that we are interested in have shown.[22]

Any practice within society which produces meanings for someone is a signifying practice, and film is one such signifying practice. In this perspective, signifying practice can be seen as a way of fixing or binding the productivity of the signifying chain. A brief re-examination of the denotation/connotation dichotomy will show this to be the case. The "true" or denoted meaning occurs as a result of the arbitrary fixing of the chain of signifiers. As Barthes points out:

> la dénotation n'est pas le premier des sens, mais elle feint de l'être; sous cette illusion, elle n'est finalement que la <u>dernière</u> des connotations (celle qui semble à la fois fonder et clore la lecture), le mythe supérieur grâce auquel le texte feint de retourner

à la nature du langage, au langage comme nature.[23]

The fixing of the chain of signifiers is as much a function of the reading of the text as it is of the writing or production of the text. As regards the short story by Balzac, Sarrasine, which Barthes analyses in S/Z, one must recognise that for the modern reader to discover the "same" meaning as Balzac intended (assuming, for the purposes of this demonstration, that Balzac as author is transparent to his text, and that he was aware of his ideological choices), requires a work of reading, a deliberate attempt to "re"-discover the very meaning which had necessarily to be posited as existing. Such a work of reading is caught up in the psychologism which maintains that the author is equivalent or transparent to the text, and that the author had the same motivations or desires (notably the desire to insert into the text a meaning similar to the sort of meaning that a modern reader would want to find) as the reader of the text. The operation consists essentially in ascribing to the past the misrecognition of the present. This merely underlines, however, that reading and writing are also both historically determinate practices, and that just as one could write a history of literature, one could also write a history of writing, or a history of reading.

Any signifying practice is also carried out by or within (i.e., in opposition to) an institution. The process of the fixing and binding of meanings within complex and contradictory social formations is an ideological process as it must produce the same meanings, the same coherence, across social contradictions. Ideology is a process carried out by institutions. As Coward and Ellis state the matter:

Ideological representations fix the category

> of subject as a closure, a structural limit. The subject is constituted of, and in, contradiction, but sociality necessitates that there should be a subject in order that any predication, and therefore, communication, can take place. This (necessary) subject of sociality only ever appears as the fixed relation of the subject to what it predicates, and this relation must necessarily be ideological. Thus the imaginary identity of ideology closes off the movement of contradictions, calling upon the subject as consistent. It puts the subject in relation to meaning, a subject who thinks himself/herself to be the point of origin of ideas and of actions. Ideology is thus a material practice in both senses of the term: first because it is produced and reproduced in concrete institutions; second because it produces fixed relations and positions in which the individual represents himself, relations and positions which are a material force in the process of the social formation.[24]

Institutions (to follow Althusser's typology: educational, religious, political, legal, trade unions, communications, cultural apparatuses, and the family)[25] produce discourses[26] which are the very term of the stabilisation of meaning:

> Ideological practice is then doubly material: it works to fix the subject in certain positions in relation to certain fixities of discourse, and it is concretised in certain apparatuses.[27]

And, as Lacan holds, "all discourse is directed to

another, and constructed in this relationship to another. . . ."[28]

In this perspective, then, ideology and culture are co-extensive; two words which describe the same phenomenon. *Signifying practice* is the way in which the coherence of the subject in culture/ideology is produced. Signifying practices therefore bring the realms of signifier and signified to meet at determinate points and in determinate ways in order to produce specific meanings. Their imbrication within the mode of production specifies the way in which they will produce hegemonic and/or oppositional meanings.

If the form of the fixing of meaning is discourse, we must specify that discourse only ever instantiates itself in specific occurrences or practices. Just as language is knowable only through its use in specific circumstances, only through speech, though it is reducible neither to speech nor to its specific occurrences, so discourse is knowable only in its specific instances: the discourse of anthropology, the discourse of Hollywood, the discourse of phenomenology, etc. These instantiations constitute the <u>discursive formations</u>.

> Language, the sentence is inevitably implicated in particular dicursive formations: language has no existence other than in acts of language that engage determinate forms of meaning, pose what I want to say, and the very terms of the 'I want to say', in and from those forms (no one has ever spoken 'language' or 'a language').[29]

Discursive formation is taken here in the acception given by Michel Pêcheux:

> Nous appellerons dès lors <u>formation discursive</u>

> ce qui, dans une formation idéologique donnée, c'est-à-dire à partir d'une position donnée dans une conjoncture donnée déterminée par l'état de la lutte des classes, détermine ce qui peut et doit être dit (articulé sous forme d'une harangue, d'un sermon, d'un pamphlet, d'un exposé, d'un programme, etc.)[30]

This is quite close to the definition given discursive formation by Michel Foucault:

> Dans le cas où on pourrait décrire, entre un certain nombre d'énoncés, un pareil système de dispersion, dans le cas où entre les objets, les types d'énonciation, les choix thématiques, on pourrait définir une régularité (un ordre, des corrélations, des positions et des fonctionnements, des transformations), on dira, par convention, qu'on a affaire à une formation discursive.[31]

Pêcheux is interested in explaining "ce qui peut et doit être dit," and Foucault focusses on the question: "comment se fait-il que tel énoncé soit apparu et nul autre à sa place?"[32] Pêcheux, however, is attempting to account for the way in which a subject is structured in contradiction, for the way in which it can occupy contradictory positions. This results from the fact that he is directly concerned with elaborating a materialist theory of meaning. This aspect is missing from Foucault as he is more interested in describing the mode of constitution of a given discourse.

Hence, a discursive formation is situated within an ideological formation:

> On parlera de formation idéologique pour

> caractériser un élément susceptible d'intervenir, comme une force confrontée à d'autres forces, dans la conjoncture idéologique caractéristique d'une formation sociale, en un moment donné; chaque formation idéologique constitue ainsi un ensemble complexe d'attitudes et de représentations qui ne sont ni "individuelles" ni "universelles", mais se rapportent plus ou moins directement à des positions de classes en conflit les unes par rapport aux autres.
>
> Nous avancerons . . . que les formations idéologiques ainsi définies comportent nécessairement, comme une de leurs composantes, une ou plusieurs formations discursives interreliées, qui déterminent ce qui peut et doit être dit . . . à partir d'une position donnée: le point essentiel ici est qu'il ne s'agit pas seulement de la nature des mots employés, mais aussi (et surtout) des constructions dans lesquelles ces mots se combinent, dans la mesure où elles déterminent la signification que prennent ces mots: comme nous l'indiquions en commençant, les mots changent de sens selon les positions tenues par ceux qui les emploient."[33]

The principal lesson or conclusion to be drawn from Pêcheux's formulation, and it is in strict conformity with the definition of signifying practice as the fixing of the chain of signifiers and of discourse as the form of that fixing, is that meaning is the effect of the discursive formation.

> Cela revient à poser que les mots, expressions, propositions, etc., reçoivent leur sens de la

> formation discursive dans laquelle ils sont produits . . . nous dirons que les individus sont "interpellés" en sujets-parlants (en sujets de <u>leur</u> discours) par les formations discursives qui représentent "dans le langage" les formations idéologiques qui leur correspondent . . . si un même mot, une même expression et une même proposition peuvent recevoir des sens différents tous également "évidents" - selon qu'ils sont référés à telle ou telle formation discursive, c'est parce que, répétons-le, un mot, une expression ou une proposition n'ont pas <u>un</u> sens qui serait "propre" en tant qu'attaché à leur littéralité, mais que leur sens se constitue dans chaque formation discursive, dans les rapports que tels mot, expression ou proposition entretiennent avec d'autres mots, expressions ou propositions de la même formation discursive. Corrélativement, si l'on admet que les <u>mêmes</u> mots, expressions ou propositions changent de sens en passant d'une formation discursive à une autre, il faut admettre que des mots, expressions et propositions <u>littéralement différents</u> peuvent, à l'intérieur d'une formation discursive donnée, "avoir le même sens."[34]

This does not mean, of course, that in given situations individuals choose from a lexicon of meaning-laden words. On the contrary, the word as free-floating signifier enters into a discursive formation where it is bounded by other words which give it its meaning. The success of a usage is a function of the extent to which listeners perceive the meaning as transparent. The production of ideology is successful precisely to the point where listeners recognise in the particular dis-

course, the cluster of meanings with which they experience the world.

Let this, then, stand as an account of how this thesis situates itself within the field of semiotics and discourse analysis, and of how it envisages the study of film. We now turn to an examination of the cinema as signifying practice.

The cinema as signifying practice

The question of the cinema as signifying practice is intimately bound up with its status as an institution, and we may perhaps most fruitfully begin our investigation by asking ourselves the same question as Metz: what is cinema, or, more precisely, how does cinema signify?

The question "what is cinema?" has been infinitely more frequent in the history of film study than the question "how does it signify?" Indeed, the two have been seen as equivalent. It was believed that by providing an answer to the first question, by defining the essential nature of cinema, everything else would be self-explanatory. To the question "what is cinema?", however, there are probably as many answers as there are theorists. Bazin even gave that question as the title of his four volume collection of critical essays, Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?, and he proposed, grosso modo, that the cinema was the most perfect and most objective reproducer of nature, untouched by the human hand, destined, thanks to the evolution of the cinematographic language, to an ever more faithful and realistic reproduction of the empirical world. For Bazin, as for most idealist and phenomenologically inspired writers, the "specifically cinematic," though never clearly defined, is the cinema's unrivaled ability to reproduce nature "realistically." This ability then imposes a number of

moral constraints. Only those styles which best preserve and reproduce the presumed spatio-temporal continuity of the real world (i.e., those styles which are therefore the most "realistic") are worthy of admission to Bazin's pantheon of high cinematic art. These would include depth of field, non-montage or continuity cutting, colour, sound, 3-D, the use of non-professional actors, on-location shooting, etc. Bazin, therefore, ended up favouring Italian neo-realism, documentary, and American films of the thirties.[35]

For Eisenstein, the cinema was not a neutral, a-historical, or non-ideological reproducer of reality, but a potentially revolutionary maker of meanings, whose meanings and whose use were constantly caught up in the very moment of their utilisation, that is to say, in historical struggle. Janet Bergstrom states of Eisenstein:

> his extensive theoretical work . . . is explicitly concerned with how to present specific configurations of meaning to the spectator through particular kinds of formal choices.[36]

Amongst these formal choices were the use of montage, deliberate frame composition, character typing, epic form, etc. Eisenstein was intellectually and historically a member of Russian formalism and his admiration for Griffith may be explained in large part in that he found there some of the original articulations of meaning, precisely the use of formal devices within a narrative framework to convey meaning, even though that meaning was not as he himself would have conveyed it.

Though it might seem, at first glance, that Eisenstein's formalist approach is obviously closer to Metz than is Bazin's idealism, this is only partially true.

Whereas it is clearly the case that Eisenstein's insistence upon the cinema as a maker of meanings is very close to the notion of signifying practice and to Metz's explicit semiotic interest, Eisenstein, as a function of his historical period, pays relatively little attention to the role of the spectator. Bazin, on the other hand, perhaps paradoxically, because of his insistence on psychological verisimilitude, is actually quite close to Metz's insistence on the necessary imbrication of the Imaginary and the Symbolic. Metz's point of view, however, can not adequately be argued through a Bazin/Eisenstein opposition.

For Metz, the most outstanding aspect of the cinema as a signifying practice, at the present time ("On dit très souvent, et on a eu raison, que le cinéma est une technique de l'imaginaire. Technique, d'autre part qui est propre à une époque historique (celle du capitalisme) et à un état de société, la civilisation dite industrielle."),[37] is its status as an institution and the way in which it therefore constructs its subjects. The term "institution" engages a particular articulation of the social and the individual.

As an institution, a number of factors must be recognised. It is perhaps first and foremost, an industry. It has a highly specialised production process, an independent distribution network, it requires large outlays of capital, and it has clearly codified standards for producing its product. In this sense, then, it is socially constituted; it is not dependent upon any individual's private wishes, interests, or scheming (director, writer, spectator, etc.) Not only does it produce a discourse, but it is bounded by a number of discourses. It has its own history, its own theoreticians, its own technical experts; it maintains close ties with the legal apparatus and with the family apparatus; it has a meaning, difficult to define, for vast

numbers of people, whether as entertainment, source of values or of intellectual stimulation, etc.; it maintains very close ties with financial institutions, trade unions, the political apparatus; it is a means of communication, etc. All these factors, which operate quite independently of any individual intervention constitute what is perhaps most clearly cinema's social/cultural/ideological face.

To all of these, however, a factor of equal importance must be added: the psychological aspect. In a social context in which there are no constraints compelling film attendance, it is necessary that the cinema as industry produce products which will provide some sort of satisfaction to large numbers of people. Therefore, though on the one hand the industry seeks to produce films for profit, it must also simultaneously produce a certain pleasure in the spectator. The spectator must want to see the film, and the film must, to a certain extent, meet the spectator's desires. Furthermore, the spectator's past experience of film will inform his/her choice of future films. If the industry failed to produce pleasure, the spectator would be unwilling to pay money to see the film, and without the spectator's money, the cinema as industry would be unable to maintain itself. It must present itself, institutionally, as something desirable. All its products must attempt to produce pleasure such that the pleasure of the past will be inducement for the pleasure of the future.

This institutionalisation of the cinema (i.e., its establishment as an industry with an audience wanting its product) is possible, however, only because of the spectator's historical internalisation of the institution's codes and production process. In other words, it is the process of historical internalisation which permits the constitution of the institution. Had spec-

tators not internalised the codes of mainstream cinema, every film would necessarily begin again at zero. No film would be able to build upon or refer to another. It would have been impossible for film styles to have constituted themselves into specific configurations and to have evolved over the years. Each subsequent film would of necessity be as dramatically incomprehensible as the very first. And yet, historically, quite the opposite occurred. From an initial situation of considerable confusion and uncertainty as to what would get spectators to pay to see films and in which film styles proliferated (or, more precisely, in which there was no film style, or only a very rudimentary one: "Le cinéma a beaucoup tâtonné, depuis 1895, avant de trouver sa formule aujourd'hui dominante."),[38] certain specific configurations came to be stabilised and generalised. Certain tropes and devices began to acquire standardised meanings and to be expected and recognised. It became possible to use these tropes, devices and styles to provide a coherence to what had originally been incomprehensible. This stabilisation and generalisation was possible only because of the historical internalisation of the institution's determinate practices. That is to say that certain configurations, for whatever reasons, produced enough pleasure and found sufficient resonance within spectators for them <u>to want to return and to pay money to see those same configurations again</u>.

It was the extent to which these configurations produced pleasure and were therefore internalised that it became possible for an industry to constitute itself on the basis of the production of those configurations. Those configurations were produced according to determinate practices. It was furthermore the historical internalisation of the determinate practices having produced the pleasurable configurations which made it possible for the industry, in the process of its consti-

tution, to work upon those practices so as to produce the configurations more efficiently and with a higher coefficient of pleasure. Just as work upon the practices required industrial specialisation and therefore greater outlays of capital, so did it attract increasing numbers of spectators, or spectators willing to pay more money to see the greater specialisation. Hence, the appearance of "genres" within the dominant film practice. The genre is a highly specialised configuration requiring an equally specialised spectator who knows the configuration and how to expect pleasure from it. And though the genre may fragment the market, it also strengthens it. Those spectators not likely to go see a western might go to see a thriller, etc. As Metz states:

> L'institution cinématographique, j'y insiste une fois de plus, ce n'est pas seulement l'industrie du cinéma (qui fonctionne pour remplir les salles et non pour les vider), c'est aussi la machinerie mentale – autre industrie – que les spectateurs ont historiquement intériorisée et qui les rend aptes à consommer des films.[39]

The institution, therefore, attempts to produce objects of pleasure which, borrowing a term from Melanie Klein, Metz calls "good objects" as opposed to "bad objects:"

> Pour le spectateur, le film peut à l'occasion être un "mauvais objet"; c'est alors le <u>déplaisir filmique</u> . . . qui définit la relation de certains spectateurs à certains films, ou de certains groupes de spectateurs à certains groupes de films. Pourtant, la relation de

> "bon objet", dans une perspective de critique socio-historique du cinéma, est plus fondamentale, car c'est elle et non point son inverse (qui en apparaît ainsi comme l'échec localisé) qui constitue le but de l'institution cinématographique . . . on va au cinéma parce qu'on en a envie, non parce qu'on y répugne, et on y va dans l'espoir que le film plaira, non qu'il déplaira.[40]

The history of the American cinema, which represents one of the most historically successful attempts at institutionalisation, could therefore perhaps briefly be sketched out as the search for good objects through the adoption of the ideology of realism, the dominance of narratives and of happy endings, the star system, the fragmentation into genres, and the development of a highly specialised production process; all specific strategies intended to increase the spectator's pleasure, all strategies which could increase that pleasure because they found a particular resonance with the historical moment.

The specific articulation, within the institution, of the individual and the social, must not however be seen to rest upon some form of bourgeois psychologism. Metz is not suggesting that Hollywood producers, or whoever, "knew what the public wanted" and therefore proceeded to give it to them. On the contrary, for where would these people (producers, etc.) get their special knowledge? If they were produced within the same social formation as their spectators, how would they, and they alone, have acquired the self-reflexivity

needed to know the tastes of their times, a self-reflexivity apparently denied their contemporaries? Such a line of reasoning necessarily posits a transcendence granting certain people a knowledge which is denied others. Metz, and semiotics, rather suggest that at a given historical moment, both cultural forms and the subjects needed to support those cultural forms, are produced in the same movement or gesture:

> l'envie d'aller au cinéma est une sorte de reflet façonné par l'industrie du film, mais elle est également un chaînon réel dans le mécanisme d'ensemble de cette industrie. Elle occupe l'un des postes essentiels dans le circuit de l'argent, dans la rotation des capitaux sans laquelle on ne pourrait plus "tourner" de films: poste priviligié, puisqu'il intervient juste avant le trajet de l'"aller" (qui comporte l'investissement financier dans les entreprises de cinéma, la fabrication matérielle des films, leur distribution, leur passage en salle, et qu'il inaugure le circuit-retour qui ramène l'argent, si possible augmenté, du budget individuel des spectateurs jusqu'à celui des maisons de production ou de leurs soutiens bancaires, autorisant ainsi la mise en chantier de films nouveaux. L'économie libidinale (plaisir filmique sous sa forme historiquement constituée) manifeste de la sorte sa "correspondance" avec l'économie politique (le cinéma actuel comme entreprise de marché), et elle est en outre — comme le montre l'existence même des "études de marché" — l'un des éléments propres de cette économie . . . la psychologie du spectateur . . . n'est "individuelle" qu'en

apparence.[41]

This, then, situates the cinema as signifying practice. It is an institution producing specific configurations of signifiers under specific socio-historical constraints. The meaning of the configuration is dependent upon the discursive formation within which it is inserted.

Notes

[1] Ferdinand de Saussure, Course in General Linguistics. Trans. Wade Baskin (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959), p. 16.

[2] See, Tel Quel, No. 47 (1971), p. 97, in which Barthes calls this version of semiology "a euphoric dream of scientificity," thereby marking his own break with the quest for "scientific" knowledge outside historical and psychological determinants.

[3] de Saussure, p. 14.

[4] de Saussure, p. 14.

[5] Rosalind Coward and John Ellis, Language and Materialism (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), p. 24.

[6] de Saussure, p. 120.

[7] Roland Barthes, Image-Music-Text. Trans. and ed. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana/Collins, 1977), p. 38.

[8] Coward and Ellis, p. 24.

[9] de Saussure, p. 67.

[10] Coward and Ellis, p. 32.

[11] Julia Kristeva quoted in "Introduction," Edinburgh '76 Magazine. Eds. Phil Hardy, Claire Johnston and Paul Willemen (London: British Film Institute, 1976), p. 4.

[12] The difference between semiology and semiotics is taken here to be the difference between the two theories of meaning exposed by Kristeva. The first is semiology, the second semiotics.

[13] It has been considerable and many of Saussure's formulations are contested. Much recent French discourse analysis is instructive on this point. See, Cl. Haroche, P. Henry, M. Pêcheux, "La sémantique et la coupure saus-

surienne: langue, langage, discours," Langages, No. 24 (1971); Paul Henry, Le mauvais outil (Paris: Klincksieck, 1978); Jean-Louis Houdebine, Langage et marxisme (Paris: Klincksieck, 1977); Michel Pêcheux, Les vérités de la Palice (Paris: Maspéro, 1975); Régine Robin, Histoire et linguistique (Paris: Armand Colin, 1973); Valentin Volochinov, Le marxisme et la philosophie du langage. Trans. Marina Yaquello (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1977).

[14] Coward and Ellis, p. 60.

[15] Rosalind Coward, "Lacan and Signification: An Introduction," Edinburgh '76 Magazine, pp. 6-7.

[16] de Saussure, p. 66.

[17] Stephen Heath quoted in Coward and Ellis, Language and Materialism, p. 35.

[18] Anika Lemaire, Jacques Lacan. Trans. David Macey (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), p. 102.

[19] Coward, "Lacan and Signification: An Introduction," Edinburgh '76 Magazine, p. 16.

[20] Karl Marx, Capital (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1974), III, p. 818.

[21] Julia Kristeva, "Signifying Practice and Mode of Production," Edinburgh '76 Magazine, p. 64.

[22] Coward, "Lacan and Signification: An Introduction," p. 6.

[23] Roland Barthes, S/Z (Paris: Seuil, 1970), p. 16.

[24] Coward and Ellis, p. 77.

[25] Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," in Lenin and Philosophy (London: New Left Books, 1971).

[26] Discourse is taken here in the acception given it by Marc Angenot in his Glossaire (Montréal: Hurtubise, 1980): "Séquence d'énoncés linguistiques "surcodés" par des règles transphrastiques d'enchaînement . . . Ensemble de textes codés par un même ensemble de règles."

[27] Coward and Ellis, p. 73.

[28] Anika Lemaire, p.

[29] Stephen Heath, "The Turn of the Subject," Cinetracts, 2, No. 3/4 (1979), p. 41.

[30] Michel Pêcheux, Les vérités de la Palice (Paris: Maspéro, 1975), pp. 144-145.

[31] Michel Foucault, L'archéologie du savoir (Paris: Seuil, 1969), p. 39.

[32] Michel Foucault, p. 39.

[33] Haroche, Henry, Pêcheux, "La sémantique et la coupure saussurienne: langue, langage, discours," Langages, No. 24 (1971), p. 102.

[34] Michel Pêcheux, pp. 145-146.

[35] André Bazin, Qu'est-ce que le cinéma? (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1958), I. The first two chapters of the book are entitled respectively: "L'ontologie de l'image photographique" and "L'évolution du langage cinématographique." In them, Bazin states most forcefully and eloquently his views on cinema. They stand as the archetypal idealist statement on cinema.

[36] Janet Bergstrom, "The Avant-Garde Histories and Theories," Screen, 18, No. 3 (1978), p. 121.

[37] Christian Metz, Le signifiant imaginaire (Paris: Union Générale d'Editions, 1977), pp. 9-10.

[38] Christian Metz, p. 114.

[39] Christian Metz, p. 13.

[40] Christian Metz, pp. 13-14.

[41] Christian Metz, pp. 14-15.

PART II

Since cinema must be considered as a signifying practice which constitutes subjects for its meanings, the question naturally arises as to just how this process of the constitution of the subject occurs. This is inevitably a difficult question to raise as it will require elaboration both of psychoanalytic concepts and of mainstream or dominant film practice. It will further require that the relevance of the psychoanalytic concepts to film practice be demonstrated. This, therefore, constitutes a necessary détour in the path to an understanding of avant-garde film practice since, though the point of the thesis is to expose neither psychoanalysis nor dominant film practice, both must be examined in some detail in order to understand that which will follow.

The constitution of the subject

Within the debate on the constitution of the subject, two fundamental aspects must be distinguished: 1) the constitution of the subject in sociality as shown by psychoanalysis; 2) the constitution of the subject by the specific signifying practice of cinema. The constitution of the "cinematic subject" is dependent upon, and closely articulated with, the constitution of the "social subject." It is, therefore, with the constitution of the social subject that we shall begin.

As Anika Lemaire points out, the constitution of the subject in sociality is envisaged by Lacan on a number of registers: on the register of the passage from need to demand, and therefore to desire; on the register of the Oedipus complex; on the register of the accession to language and to the Symbolic; on the re-

gister of the subject's splitting by, and alienation in, the signifier.[1] Each of these registers necessarily refers to all the others in that they all deal with the same problematic from the perspective of different questions within psychoanalysis. For our purposes, we shall be able to discuss the constitution of the subject in terms of accession to the Symbolic through the acquisition of language, and in terms of the dialectic of identifications.

What, then, is the subject? One would search in vain through the writings of Lacan himself for a single, unitary, and conclusive definition of this, or any other, term. Anthony Wilden complains that:

> Many problems of interpreting Lacan are difficult to resolve because he does not approach the development of his own theory in an unequivocal fashion. I cannot recall many published passages in which he says, for instance, that at such and such a time he thought one thing whereas now he thinks another. His views are always presented en bloc as if they had never evolved, with the result that one tends to assume that any formula or aphorism which is repeated always more or less means the same thing, whereas closer examination shows that this can not be so.[2]

On the other hand, Christian Metz has commented: "(Je trouve aux Ecrits de Lacan) une sorte de clarté, profondément didactique à sa manière, aveuglante au point qu'on la refoule et qu'on s'évertue à n'y rien comprendre."[3] There is no point in saying that one is right and the other wrong, but in light of a psychoanalytic system which constantly insists upon the impossibility of fixing meanings, on the necessity of deriving meaning from a given network of relationships ("C'est comme

ceci que se file mon discours – chaque terme ne se soutient que de son rapport topologique avec les autres"),[4] it is perhaps naive and/or utopian to wish for the transparency of the signifier which seems to underlie Wilden's objection. On the other hand, the fluidity of meaning does not necessarily add up to "blinding clarity." No doubt, Lacan , just like any other writer, will pose different problems, stylistic or otherwise, to different readers and it is for each to read his writings in the most useful manner possible ("One either takes what they formulate or one leaves them.")[5]

The notion of the subject, and all the others as regards Lacan, will therefore have to be constructed from Lacan's own writings and from the commentaries on them.

In "The Turn of the Subject," an essay on the definition of the subject, Stephen Heath warns, through a number of formulations, that the subject is reducible neither to the ego, nor to the individual, nor to the "I" of language, that the subject is never unitary, or unified, that it is an historical notion constantly in process, and that, finally, it is impossible:

> Critically, Lacanian theory thus says the impossibility of 'the subject' (every schema drawn, every reference to this or that topological figure, every knot tied and untied is an immense effort to represent that impossibility – the process, the division, the articulation of instances).[6]

This "impossibility," however, is not the impossibility of its theoretical realisation; it is its difficulty. The subject is never a fully realised process and it is consequently difficult to locate. A few linguistic examples can nonetheless help us grasp what is at

play.

If one considers the sentence: "I am reading a book," it can easily be split into two separate instances: the enounced (énoncé), which is the sentence as spoken, the largest unit of analysis of classic linguistics, and the enunciation (énonciation), the act of speaking the sentence. There are then two instances which can be called "I": the "I" of the enounced and the "I" of the enunciation; that is to say, the "I" in the sentence, which represents someone, and the "I" which uttered the sentence. And the two need never, in fact never do, coincide. Their non-coincidence is easiest to approach from a distance. Consider an author writing a novel in the first person which begins: "I was born at the stroke of midnight." Clearly, in this case, the "I" of the enounced is not equivalent to the "I" of the enunciation, there is no question of the author (even in an autobiography) being the same as the words on the paper. Something, then, is split between enounced and enunciation; that something is the subject. Furthermore, the subject is quite clearly reducible neither to the enounced nor to the enunciation, and yet, it only ever instantiates itself in the one or the other. This is the condition of its "impossibility."

The "I" is part of a category of discourse known as shifters. Typically, shifters are one of the very last elements of language to be acquired by children:

> It is well known that personal pronouns present important difficulties for the child, who usually tends to prefer the apparent solidity of a proper name . . . to an "alienable" word like "I", which seems to be the property of others and not something designating the child himself.[7]

It is, therefore, not unusual to hear children of a certain age refer to themselves in the third person: "Johnny wants do do . . ." instead of "I want to do. . . ." Likewise, the psychotic is s/he who has not mastered shifters such that the superego which produces feelings of guilt and anxiety and which belongs to the "I," is no longer recognised as "I" when it is projected into the outside world where "I" becomes "you" or "they":

> in psychotics one does observe a frequent use of he/it designations. Unable to circumscribe himself, the psychotic sees himself as another, as a thing in the world on which he pronounces utterances in the third person.[8]

To underline the non-coincidences of the two instances, and the logic of this position, Lacan produces the following example:

> L'important, pour nous, est que nous voyons ici le niveau où – avant toute formation du sujet, d'un sujet qui pense, qui s'y situe – ça compte, c'est compté, et dans ce compté, le comptant, déjà, y est. C'est ensuite seulement que le sujet a à s'y reconnaître, s'y reconnaître comme comptant. Rappelons l'achoppement naïf où le mesureur de niveau mental s'esbaudit de saisir le petit homme qui énonce – J'ai trois frères, Paul, Ernest et moi. Mais c'est tout naturel – d'abord sont comptés les trois frères, Paul, Ernest et moi, et puis il y a moi au niveau où on avance que j'ai à réfléchir le premier moi, c'est-à-dire moi qui compte.[9]

The difficulty in mastering shifters, then, lies in that they actualise the fundamental split in the subject. Nonetheless, that split is not usually recognised as such. Quite the contrary, the subject of the enounced is usually felt to be entirely present and transparent to the subject of the enunciation. This identity of the two is an illusion of the ego which can be used to fix an ideological identity, and it institutes the subject of phenomenology, the transcendent ego.

The paradoxical nature of this apparent transparency is, however, easy to demonstrate. There is a class of enounceds known as performatives; these are statements such as "I promise," "I swear," I am pleased to meet you," etc. In these, the split between the subject of the enounced and the subject of the enunciaappears to be completely closed up:

> When I say 'I promise', I pose myself as the subject of an action that is really mine in language: I accomplished the action (to say 'I promise' <u>is</u> to promise) and, exactly, that accomplishment is the achievement of a stable, unified 'I', full of the action that is mine - only I can promise - and the holding of language entirely to that action of mine - the utterance is the action. Subject of the enunciation and subject of the enounced come together. 'I' has the identity of my action that this utterance is.[10]

Even performatives (especially performatives), however, do not dispense the subject from posing itself as the subject of a proposition and in the very act of posing itself, from revealing its split:

> I - individual, speaking being - pose myself as 'I', the subject of a proposition, a statement, some meaning, and find myself as 'I' in the division of 'I' in language, its production of the possibility of the place 'I', its excess to that product, the stated, fixed 'I'. 'I' is split, never complete, a simple identity: I am subject of statement and of language.[11]

This is a problem of representation. In order to represent itself to itself and to others, the subject must assume a form which is not itself. The representation of itself is, therefore, also its alienation from itself, in that which represents it. That which represents the subject is a signifier; but it never represents it directly to another subject, for any other subject also represents itself as a signifier. As Lacan says: "Le signifiant . . . représente un sujet pour un autre signifiant."[12]

If performatives, then, seem to realise a unity of the subject, which unity is of course never more than imaginary, there is a class of statement, at the entirely opposite end of the spectrum, which seems to pose no subject whatsoever. These are statements usually described as being in the third person or as being apersonal, such as: "Once upon a time, there were three bears" or "The sun will rise tomorrow at 5 a.m." These are statements which seem to pose no subject: none is included in them and they seem to be aimed at no one in particular. Yet, a moment's reflection reveals that someone had to say them; they are not just well-formed English sentences lying latent in the empirical world, waiting only for the appropriate moment in order to acquire meaning. Somebody, somewhere, at some time, had to utter them. Their peculiarity, therefore, is that they efface the traces of their own enunciation. We do not

know who said them, and though that may often appear to be rather trivial and unimportant, it is precisely the absence of a subject of enunciation which allows another highly significant operation to occur. Though we do not know who said them, we nonetheless understand them, and we understand them because as the receivers, or supports of the statements, we are already caught up within them. As the subject of enunciation is effaced, the subject of their support is instituted in its place as the site of meaning. Stephen Heath uses a revealing example: "He who died on the cross to save us never existed." In order to understand this statement, "I" must know English:

> the sentence is involved and involves me in the fact of the English language. But my relation to English is not a unified and uniform 'knowledge': I do not know 'the English language', there is no 'fact of the English language' in this sense, it is not some simply given coherence, a unity. My relation is a definite history of and in language: through family and school and work to the various distributors of language available to me - to me, not equally and similarly available to everyone, every one person, class, sex, race, and so on - in my society . . . a relation that has indeed a crystallisation in a specific institution of English, which institution is what I know and live, including in its support and production of class division and conflict.[13]

That such a conception of language is at odds with the most influential recent theories of language (notably Chomsky) is readily acknowledge by Heath.[14] He points to the idealist bases which subtend a Chomskian understanding of language, to which reproach could be

added the work ranging from Volochinow to Pêcheux (see endnote 13, Part I, p. 34, of this thesis).

So, already, the sentence is caught up, not just in a state of language and of its institutionalisation, but also within discursive formations which are the sentence's history. This sentence, clearly, comes in part from a discourse of Christian belief: its production in specific circumstances, within specific institutions, its address to specific individuals, for determinate reasons. It also draws in part upon a discourse of opposition to that belief with all the history that implies. This history of the sentence, that is to say the discursive formations upon which it draws and within which it situates itself, also includes the subject of reception of the statement, and positions or constructs that subject of reception in a specific relationship to the history of the sentence:

> The sentence moves me - speaker or listener, writer or reader - to a position, the assertion of the non-existence of 'He who died...'; even if I wish to deny the assertion, I must take up its - that - position. At the same time, the act of the assertion itself is involved in a recognition of 'He who died...', an acknowledgement of an effective existence . . . 'He who died...' that is, may or may not be judged to have existed but that judgement either way is the recognition of 'He who died...' as a discursive reality, which discursive reality is a historical mesh of past and present social practice and practices in which I am here placed and in relation to which 'I am' in the sentence, and that historical mesh is not then 'extra-discursive'; its reality includes the effectivity of discursive formations, language as condition-and-effect

of social practice.[15]

What happens, therefore, in the case of statements with no apparent subject of enunciation, is that the subject which supports the statement--"speaker or listener, writer or reader"--is taken up into the sentence and transformed into the subject of enunciation. The support-subject must (does) of necessity identify with a certain stage of development of the English language, with all the contradictions, and sexual, historical, and class positions which that implies, and must (does) also assume the specific historical mesh of a given statement, whether that support-subject wishes to support the historical mesh or not. In other words, in order to understand the sentence, the support-subject must accomplish all the tasks which would normally have devolved to the subject of enunciation.

Heath further analyses the sentence for, unlike the other examples of subject-less statements, this one includes a specific, not just an implicit, addressee: "us." "He who died to save us. . .":

> 'us' involves me in the utterance of the sentence, the fact of its enunciation, points the address of the sentence . . . The 'us' is a knot of join and division, there is no simple position for 'me'; my relation . . . is always for me, through and through, a historical and social relation that engages the terms of my subjectivity in the actual conjuncture of this utterance in the manner that is not the simply determined closure of a position. I am in play in any position I have in the sentence: for example, as between its anti-Christian position and its statement of that position in an assertion of non-existence which leaves aside the question of the historical existence

> and significance of Jesus of Nazareth by its adoption of the 'he who died...' formula which, in turn traps me in the address of an 'us' that, even as in the movement of the sentence I perhaps elude its religious embrace, catches me in the position of an ideology of a common humanity, the 'us' of 'my fellow men', that is strong in the specific institution of English I know.[16]

The same can be said of such seemingly anodine sentences as "The sun will rise tomorrow at 5 a.m." Each has a history, each draws upon a number of discursive formations, each involves the support-subject in a certain relationship to their status as examples of the English language, and to their history. The support-subject is taken up into them, already included, as the subject of their enunciation. Their specific enunciation is, therefore, naturalised as "my" enunciation. This is the very operation of narrative: to produce a subject-less discourse which is then naturalised as the discourse of the support-subject.

"The sun will rise tomorrow at 5 a.m." involves the support-subject, on the one hand, in the language and tradition of meteorology, but also, and at the same time, in a discourse on the constancy of the universe ("The sun <u>will</u> rise..."); the particular forcefulness of the verb, and the confidence and self-assurance it expresses, involves the support-subject in the discourse of a universe unfolding as it should, even though the support-subject may wish to deny and to struggle against that particular discourse. And, paradoxically, in its very scientificity ("at 5 a.m."), it returns to an archaic and presumably disproven theory: "The <u>sun</u> will rise..."; when in fact everyone knows that it is the earth which will revolve. Somehow, the discourse of universal stability, the history of that discourse, overflows into

the discourse of present-day scientific meteorology. But it could be objected that "it's only an expression," and it is precisely the extent to which it is "only an expression," transparent and full to itself, not needing to be questioned, that we are inscribed, caught up within the discourse, constituted as subjects who recognise the fullness of meaning in the world around them and in themselves: "the success of a usage is a function of the extent to which listeners perceive the meaning as transparent. The production of ideology is successful precisely to the point where listeners recognise in the particular discourse, the cluster of meanings with which they experience the world." (See, pp. 23-24, Part I, of this thesis).

And yet, the statement includes useful information. Knowledge about the sun's position is not negligeable; it may indeed be valuable. But it further occurs that the knowledge in question is produced only through the interplay of a certain number of highly determinate discourses, the history of these discourses weighing upon the production of knowledge. This knowledge, then, unless we posit a value-in-itself of all knowledge, serves determinate historical interests which it occults by proposing itself as a statement without a subject which must be naturalised by the support of that statement.

So, we seem to have everything from statements full of the subject (performatives) to statements totally devoid of the subject (narrative), and everything in between. In all cases, the status of the subject is problematic. The subject is not the ego; the ego is the instance which imagines itself as unified ("The ego is the site of the subject's imaginary identifications."),[17] and it is not the "I," the signifier which represents and which, in the very process betrays the fundamental split in the subject. The subject is that which is split between them. This is the term of its "impossibility." Furthermore, it is always only ever produced

in a specific "historical mesh." It is therefore never stable, unitary, or fully constituted:

> The process of the subject in language is exactly that: a process, not a structure of language.[18]

This is the other term of its "impossibility." It is not unitary. The "unitary subject" is the "individual" which is a determinate ideological representation of that (unified) subject.

The distinction between the two types of enunciation, performatives and narrative, has been formalised by Emile Benveniste (Problèmes de linguistique générale, 1966) as the distinction between discourse and history. Discourse here should not be confused with discourse as it has so far been defined.

The concept of the split subject has been most forcefully articulated by Lacan. It is for him the point of origin of the destabilisation of Western thought. He begins with a simple example: "I am a liar," and asks what its effectivity may be in the analytic situation. For him, it is an error to presume that if someone says "I am a liar" that that person is telling the truth and therefore not a liar, and so on:

> Il est tout à fait faux de répondre à ce je mens que, si tu dis je mens, c'est que tu dis la vérité, et donc tu ne mens pas, et ainsi de suite. Il est tout à fait clair que le je mens, malgré son paradoxe, est parfaitement valable . . . Dès lors du point où j'énonce, il m'est parfaitement possible de formuler de façon valable que le je - le je qui, à ce moment-là, formule l'énoncé - est en train de mentir, qu'il a menti peu avant, qu'il ment

> après, ou même, qu'en disant je mens, il affirme qu'il a l'intention de tromper . . . Cette division de l'énoncé à l'énonciation fait qu'effectivement, du je mens qui est au niveau de la chaîne de l'énoncé . . . c'est un je te trompe qui résulte.[19]

If the subject says "I am a liar," the speaking subject is not the same as the shifter, and in fact, the speaking subject is telling the truth; it is saying "I deceive you" or "I intend to deceive you," for in the very moment of saying the "I" of "I am a liar," it is incapable of lying. So, in the analytic situation, this is a way for the subject to say the truth. It also, of course, points to the subject's radical decentering, its non-presence to itself. This non-presence then founds Lacan's commentary on the Cartesian subject, the subject of Western discourse who says "I think therefore I am." The status of the subject is as precarious and shifting here as in any previous example. The "I" who says "I think" is not the same as the "I" who thinks. Lacan rephrases the matter of the subject in these terms:

> I think where I cannot say that I am, where I must posit the subject of enunciation as being separated by a line from the being.[20]

This way of positing the subject ("I think therefore I am") further exemplifies the central error of psychology: "Cette erreur est de tenir pour unitaire le phénomène de la conscience lui-même. . . ."[21]

In psychoanalysis, the splitting of the subject is a given which occurs in a number of ways. In dreams, for example, the subject is constantly in play but may not realise it. In fact, the area which was staked out by Freud as the province of psychoanalysis--dreams, parapraxes, jokes, the unconscious--is one in which the

subject is constantly decentered and not present to itself. A simple example from the case of the wolf man shows clearly the subject's split and absence. The wolf man relates a dream and commits a slip of the tongue in so doing:

> I had a dream of a man tearing the wings off an Espe. You know that insect with yellow stripes on its body, that stings. Espe, why that's myself.
>
> The wolf man's dream is, of course, about a Wespe (wasp in German) and S.P. are his initials.
>
> As we know, the wolf man's basic problem is castration. In this slip of the tongue, he admits through the suppression of the W, to his own castration, but he of course does so in a manner which escapes his own consciousness.[22]

The subject, then, is this always split process; that which "slides in a chain of signifiers."[23] Two questions must, however, be raised in relation to it: if the subject is split, what does the splitting? And why does the subject not experience itself as split, why is it capable of positing a unified Cartesian subject?

For Lacan, it is language, that is to say accession to the Symbolic, which causes the fundamental split in the subject. We can begin to understand this by examining the fort/da game which Freud observed his grandson playing at the age of eighteen months.[24] The child had a reel to which was attached a length of string. It would throw the reel out of its cot and say "ooh," which Freud recognised as "fort" (gone), and then pull the reel back and say "aah," which meant "da" (here). In Freud's eyes, this was an attempt on the child's behalf to mas-

ter the painful experience of its mother's absence:

> The game thus had the signification of a renunciation. It allowed this 18-month-old child to bear without protest the painful lived experience of his mother's alternating disappearance and reappearance. By means of the game in which he repeated with an object - the reel and the string - the coming and going of his mother, the child assumed an active part in the event, thus ensuring his domination over it.[25]

So, the child passes from a real, lived experience to a symbolic representation of it. It is only at the symbolic level that the child can master the event, but the symbolic level immediately masters the child. In order to express its mastery, the child must use those elements put at its disposal by the Symbolic (language, kinship relations, relations of authority, forms of social exchange). What is more, the Symbolic only refers to itself and not to the real.

This non-referentiality of the Symbolic is manifest in the way in which the alternating phonemes come to have meaning. O and A only represent presence and absence inasmuch as O is not A and vice versa. Immediately, the child is swept into a play of difference which is the only way it can signify the real. The phonemes are part of the discourse of the Symbolic. O and A become not just parts of language but signifiers in the unconscious whose signifieds are presence and absence. The child is therefore caught up in a system of synchronic ($O \neq A$) and diachronic (O = fort, A = da) differences:

> If a signifier refers to a signified, it is only through the mediation of the entire system of signifiers: there is no signifier that

doesn't refer to the absence of others and that is not defined by its position in the system.[26]

According to Lacan, therefore, this action "élève le signe à la fonction du signifiant, et la réalité à la sophistique de la signification. . . ."[27]

> Par le mot qui est déjà une présence faite d'absence, l'absence même vient à se nommer en un moment original dont le génie de Freud a saisi dans le jeu de l'enfant la recréation perpétuelle. Et de ce couple modulé de la présence et de l'absence . . . naît l'univers de sens d'une langue où l'univers des choses viendra à se ranger.
>
> Par ce qui ne prend corps que d'être la trace d'un néant et dont le support dès lors ne peut s'altérer, le concept, sauvant la durée de ce qui passe, engendre la chose.[28]

Nous pouvons maintenant y saisir que l'enfant ne maîtrise pas seulement sa privation en l'assumant, mais qu'il y élève son désir à une puissance seconde. Car son action détruit l'objet qu'elle fait apparaître et disparaître dans la provocation anticipante de son absence et de sa présence. Elle négative ainsi le champ de forces du désir pour devenir à elle-même son propre objet. Et cet objet prenant aussitôt corps dans le couple symbolique de deux jaculations élémentaires, annonce dans le sujet l'intégration diachronique de la dichotomie des phonèmes, dont le langage existant offre la structure synchronique à son assimilation; aussi bien l'enfant commence-t-il à s'engager dans le système du discours concret de l'ambiance, en re-

> produisant plus ou moins approximativement dans son Fort! et dans son Da! les vocables qu'il en reçoit . . . Ainsi le symbole se manifeste d'abord comme meurtre de la chose, et cette mort constitue dans le sujet l'éternisation de son désir.[29]

This, then, is how language for Lacan institutes a fundamental split in the subject; by giving the subject symbols which can act as signifiers; signifiers because they can represent the subject ("a signifier represents a subject for another signifier") and because they can signify the subject's relation to the real and to its own desire; signifiers which, however, always pre-exist the subject and take it up into a play of differences:

> The symbol is different from what it represents, this is its condition; thus, if the subject who is called 'John' or who translates himself in discourse as 'I' saves himself through this nomination insofar as he inscribes himself in the circuit of exchange, he becomes, on the other hand, lost to himself, for any mediate relationship imposes a rupture of the original continuity between self and self, self and other, self and world.[30]

Language, then, is not the product of the subject; the subject is the product of language. Language pre-exists the subject; it is the field of the Other:

> Le signifiant se produisant au lieu de l'Autre non encore repéré, y fait surgir le sujet de l'être qui n'a pas encore la parole, mais c'est au prix de le figer . . . Que l'Autre soit pour le sujet le lieu de sa cause signifiante, ne fait ici que motiver la raison pourquoi nul

sujet ne peut être cause de soi.[31]

This, then, is the reality of the Symbolic: it is the field of social mediations into which the child is born, which splits the subject, within which the subject must assume positions provided for it there, and which, therefore, provides the subject with its identity:

> The three major symbolic orders we know of are:
> logico-mathematical symbolism
> language
> social and cultural symbolism
> The last of these attests to our adherence to an order of values (philosophy, fatherland, religion). It introduces something more than life, something like a vow, a pact or a law.[32]

The Symbolic is not the subject; to that extent we may call it the Other. For Lacan, however, the Other covers a vast array of meanings:

> It is not possible, for instance, to define the Other in any definite way, since for Lacan it has a functional value representing both the "significant other" to whom the neurotic's demands are addressed (the appeal to the Other), as well as the internalization of this Other (we desire what the Other desires) and the unconscious subject itself or himself (the unconscious is the discourse of - or from - the Other). In another context, it will simply mean the category of "Otherness" . . . Sometimes "the Other" refers to the parents: to the mother as the "real Other" (in the dual relationship of mother and child), to the fa-

> ther as the "Symbolic Other", yet is never a person. Very often the term seems to refer simply to the unconscious itself.[33]

Anika Lemaire notes exactly the same difficulty and adopts the strategy of stringing together a number of quotations exemplifying the various possible meanings. Rather than fall into a total relativism as to the meaning of the Other, however, we can immediately put forward a few hypotheses which draw on what seems to be common to all the usages, and we can move on to another area, the mirror phase, in which the Other is unambiguously manifest, and which is directly relevant to the problem of cinema.

All the uses of the Other point clearly to the fact that it is not the subject; in fact, the subject is an effect of the Other, which is to say that the Other preceded the subject and subjectivity. The Other provides the subject with its identity and with positions for its subjectivity. Let us consider, for a moment, kinship designations: father, mother, sister, brother, son, daughter, etc. We know that a father is such only in relation to both a mother and a son or a daughter, but from whose point of view are these nominations produced? For a father to consider himself as "father," rather than as husband in relation to a wife, or as a man in relation to other men and women, there must be a term somewhere outside the kinship structure that can guarantee the coherence and stability of the nominations. The kinship structure is purely a synchronic system of negatively defined relationships. The outside term is the Other which guarantees and anchors the system:

> Signification is possible only with the construction of the Other as the place of the signifier; that is, the construction of an outside referent by which the individual

speech act or word is verified.[34]

> The interlocutory relations of the persons (I-thou-he) are mediated by reference to the Other (the Ancestor, the Absent, the Dead), a fact underlined by the custom of naming a new-born infant after his grandfather.[35]

The Other provides coherence; it is an instance from which the subject derives and to which it appeals.

The mirror phase

The Other is centrally manifest in the mirror phase. The mirror phase takes place any time between six and eighteen months. Lacan describes it as follows:

> un nourrisson devant le miroir, qui n'a pas encore la maîtrise de la marche, voire de la station debout, mais qui, tout embrassé qu'il est par quelque soutien humain ou artificiel . . . surmonte en un affairement jubilatoire les entraves de cet appui, pour suspendre son attitude en une position plus ou moins penchée, et ramener, pour le fixer, un aspect instantané de l'image.[36]

According to Lacan, the mirror phase "prefigures the whole dialectic between alienation and subjectivity,"[37] and it "situates the instance of the ego in a line of fiction, of alienation."[38] The child apprehends its own image before it and suddenly realises itself to be an object in the world, not a continuous extension of the world. This separation of self from non-self prefigures castration.

> L'assomption jubilatoire de son image spéculaire par l'être encore plongé dans l'impuissance motrice et la dépendance du nourrissage qu'est le petit homme à ce stade infans, nous paraîtra dès lors manifester en une situation exemplaire la matrice symbolique où le je se précipite en une forme primordiale, avant qu'il ne s'objective dans la dialectique de l'identification à l'autre et que le langage ne lui restitue dans l'universel sa fonction de sujet.[39]

The apprehended image is in the field of the Other:

> Mais certes, c'est dans l'espace de l'Autre qu'il se voit, et le point d'où il se regarde est lui aussi dans cet espace. Or, c'est bien ici aussi le point d'où il parle, puisqu'en tant qu'il parle, c'est au lieu de l'Autre qu'il commence à constituer ce mensonge véridique par où s'amorce ce qui participe du désir au niveau de l'inconscient.[40]

Furthermore, the image of itself which the subject sees, by splitting the subject, constitutes the ego:

> The ego is not the subject, it is closer to the persona, to appearance, to a role than to consciousness or subjectivity. The ego is situated on the side of the Imaginary, whereas subjectivity is situated on the side of the Symbolic. The ego is the site of the subject's imaginary identifications.[41]

> Mais le point important est que cette forme situe l'instance du moi, dès avant sa détermination sociale, dans une ligne de fiction,

> à jamais irréductible pour le seul individu, - ou plutôt, qui ne rejoindra qu'asymptotiquement le devenir du sujet, quel que soit le succès des synthèses dialectiques par quoi il doit résoudre en tant que je sa discordance d'avec sa propre réalité.[42]

The ego takes on the form of an ideal ego as it perceives an image of perfect bodily coordination in an environment which the image dominates:

> C'est que la forme totale du corps par quoi le sujet devance dans un mirage la maturation de sa puissance, ne lui est donnée que comme Gestalt, c'est-à-dire dans une extériorité où certes cette forme est-elle plus constituante que constituée, mais où surtout elle lui apparaît dans un relief de stature qui la fige et sous une symétrie qui l'inverse, en opposition à la turbulence de mouvements dont il s'éprouve l'animer.[43]

The mirror phase, therefore, introduces the first imaginary identification: an identification with the subject's own image. This marks the structure of the mirror phase as one of misrecognition in that the subject misrecognises itself in the mirror: it recognises another real being rather than an image of itself:

> The ego is the mirror image with its inverted structure, external to the subject and objectified. The entity of the body has been constituted, but it is external to the self and it is inverted. The subject merges with his own image and the same imaginary trapping by the double can be seen in his relationships

> with his fellows. It should be noted that the subject is ignorant of his own alienation and that this is how the chronic misrecognition of self and the causal chain determining human existence takes shape.[44]

This also explains why the subject does not experience itslef as split, and why it can posit itself as transcendent: because the ego institutes a sense of unity in the place of the Other. It mistakes the representation for the thing itself. The structure of misrecognition produces two contrary effects: a fascination with specular unity and representations of the human form ("des correspondances qui unissent le je à la statue où l'homme se projette comme aux fantômes qui le dominent, à l'automate enfin où dans un rapport ambigu tend à s'achever le monde de sa fabrication.")[45] and, from the subject's own felt motor uncoordination, the phantasy of the fragmented body ("le corps morcelé"): "il apparaît alors sous la forme de membres disjoints et de ces organes figurés en exoscopie, qui s'ailent et s'arment pour les persécutions intestines qu'à jamais a fixées en peinture le visionnaire Jérôme Bosch. . . ."[46]

According to Stephen Heath, therefore, this structure of misrecognition is reproduced in classical narrative cinema which "plays on the passage between fragmented body and the image possession of the whole, making identifications, remaking identity."[47] We would, therefore, in this perspective, rediscover and re-evaluate such cinematic tropes as the close-up, the long shot, use of frame edge, montage, shallow and deep focus, etc. They become modalities for establishing certain forms of specular unity.

Nonetheless, further consequences can be drawn from the mirror phase. By instituting the subject, it also institutes a distinction between the self and the non-self, it introduces discontinuity where before there had

been undifferentiation:

> La fonction du stade du miroir s'avère pour nous dès lors comme un cas particulier de la fonction de l'imago, qui est d'établir une relation de l'organisme à sa réalité - ou, comme on dit, de l'Innenwelt à l'Umwelt.[48]

The distinction between Innenwelt and Umwelt disrupts the child's former sense of undifferentiation, of being-at-one with the universe. The breast for example, which had previously been expereinced as an extension of the child's own body, now is understood as belonging to the outside world and, therefore, as lacking for the child. That which lacks is annotated by Lacan as "the object (a)" ("L'objet a est quelque chose dont le sujet, pour se constituer, s'est séparé comme organe. Ca vaut comme symbole du manque, c'est-à-dire du phallus, non pas en tant que tel, mais en tant qu'il fait manque. Il faut donc que ça soit un objet - premièrement, séparable - deuxièmement, ayant quelque rapport avec le manque.")[49] It is lack which causes the breast, or the object a, to appear as an organ and which causes desire to be born: the child now desires that from which it is separated. An organ is, therefore, something separable from the body, and for the separation to be conceivable, the subject must have arisen in the field of the Other. Separation, of course, refers to castration. During the Oedipus complex, separation will be organised around the phallus as that which lacks in the subject. The phallus is, for Lacan, the original, primordial signifier:

> Car le phallus est un signifiant . . . c'est le signifiant destiné à désigner dans leur ensemble les effets de signifié, en tant que le signifiant les conditionne par sa présence

de signifiant.[50]

At first, the child wishes "to be" the phallus for its mother:

> the child does not merely desire contact with his mother and her care. He wishes to be everything for her, to condition her life, he wishes, perhaps unconsciously, to be the complement of what is lacking in her: the phallus. He is the desire of the mother's desire and, in order to satisfy that desire, he identifies with its object, with the phallus.[51]

The Oedipus complex,[52] however, forbids the child from "being" the phallus for the mother. It must be content "to have" the phallus:

> For the young child whose ambition is to seduce the mother, to be for her the phallus, the unique object of her desire, to succeed in sublimating the Oedipus is in fact to accept reality: differences in age, time and generation. It means accepting that he has a real penis and a limited power. It means internalising the Law of the Father (the superego) and waiting for biological maturity in order to be able to fulfil his wish.[53]

The phallus, then, is that which lacks in the subject. It is the object (a). All that which is separable from the body (the breast, feces, the look, the voice) lacks, and causes an organ to appear. That organ, in its separability, refers metaphorically to the phallus:

> Pour nous, dans notre référence à l'incon-

> scient, c'est du rapport à l'organe qu'il s'agit. Il ne s'agit pas du rapport à la sexualité, ni même au sexe . . . mais du rapport au phallus, en tant qu'il fait défaut à ce qui pourrait être atteint du réel dans la visée du sexe.[54]

Claude Bailblé gives a good summary of this entire process:

> The child of two to six months smiles angelically . . . It is at the happy stage when I and All are one, when everything is indistinct, nothing is thought, everything is immediate . . . . It is completely immersed in the original experience of pleasure, almost outside time, merging into the immortality and the transparency of the every-where . . . At around six months, the child stops smiling at anyone but its mother, the first protector and aid. It starts to love a Being - the primordial Other. It now knows that it exists, discovers the inside and the outside, and realises that what it sees is, merely the image plane in its eye of what used to be the undifferentiated All. The eye becomes separated from what it sees, becomes an organ, the symbol of a primordial lack. With this original loss comes the awareness of the Subject; all that the child has left is the sight of things as they appear, and that apperance becomes a lack.[55]

We can say, therefore, with Lacan that "L'objet (a) dans le champ du visible, c'est le regard."[56] At the level of the scopic drive, the look, the gaze ("le regard"), is the metaphor of castration. This will have

rather far reaching implications for any "art of the visible" such as cinema.

Before moving on, let us first consider the Other as it appears in the mirror and in the field of the visible. The translator's introduction to Lacan's Ecrits: A Selection, advises that: "Lacan refuses to comment on either term (autre or Autre), leaving the reader to develop an appreciation of the concepts in the course of their use."[57] The appreciation we make of it is that, inasmuch as the Other is that which causes the subject to emerge in the first place ("le sujet n'est sujet que d'être assujettissement au champ de l'Autre"),[58] inasmuch as the Other is that to which the subject appeals (as in "desire is the desire of the Other," such that my desire is what I imagine the Other's to be; it is to the Other that I appeal for love, knowledge, truth, etc.), and inasmuch as the Other is, therefore, that which governs the evolution of the subject, the Other is that without which no self-definition is possible.

We may also define the Imaginary as the site of specular unities and identifications (capture of the subject by its own unified image, dreams, phantasies, etc.), the site of dual relationships (mother-child, love), and the field of the ego ("The ego is absolutely impossible to distinguish from the imaginary captures which constitute it from head to foot; by another and for another.")[59]

> Lacan defines the essence of the imaginary as a dual relationship, a reduplication in a mirror, an immediate opposition between unconsciousness and its other in which each term becomes its opposite and is lost in the play of reflections . . . It covers everything in the phantasy which is an image or representation . . . The imaginary is the psychoanalytic

> register par excellence, but psychoanalysis has taught us to find traces of it in language, where words overlap with symbols multiplied a hundredfold, and where organization ultimately depends upon such a slender thread that it is not aberrant to wonder whether language really is the agent of inter-human dialogue.[60]

The Symbolic, by contrast, is the field of mediate relationships, the transcendence of dual relationships (the Oedipus complex), the site of language; it is the system of rules, laws, relationships, customs, beliefs, practices, etc., into which we are born.

The Other and the Symbolic tend to overlap. We, therefore, further define the Symbolic as the field of subject positions to be assumed by the subject; and the Other as the ways in which the Symbolic instatiates itself in the everyday life of the subject. The Other is always produced in the field of the Symbolic. Language, for example, is a symbolic production, but it is only inasmuch as all discourse is directed to some Other that it becomes possible to speak and that discourse becomes imbued with meaning. It is the child's realisation of the Other which brings it into symbolic positions.

The cinema as signifying practice (II)

How, then, does the cinema produce subjects for its meanings? In order to answer this, we must recognise immediately that the cinema, whatever imaginary elements it may set into play, is always already a symbolic production. It is produced in sociality, and according to the logic of the secondary processes, as defined by Freud. A film is not a dream; it is part of language. The cinema as signifying practice, therefore, necessarily

depends upon the subject's having already been produced in sociality, a subject whose ego has already been formed in the mirror phase, and by other imaginary captures, a subject which has been socially positioned by the Oedipus complex:

> Le spectateur de cinéma n'est pas un enfant, et l'enfant qui en est réellement au stade du miroir (de six à dix-huit mois environ) serait assurément incapable de "suivre" le film le plus simple . . . A cet égard, le cinéma est déjà du côté du symbolique (ce n'est que normal): le spectateur sait qu'il existe des objets, que lui-même existe comme sujet, qu'il devient un objet pour autrui . . . Comme toute autre activité largement "secondaire", l'exercice du cinéma suppose que soit dépassée l'indifférenciation primitive du Moi et du Non-Moi.[61]

What subject positions does the cinema, therefore, provide? We already touched on the question of subject positions when dealing with two types of enunciation: performatives and narrative, a distinction which has been formalised as an opposition between <u>discourse</u> and <u>history</u>. As we saw, the place of the subject is taken up by both types of enunciation. Whether one says "I want to talk to you" or "The sun will rise tomorrow at 5 a.m.," the subject is always assigned a position in the enunciation, which position is the very condition of the enunciation's intelligibility. Subject positions, as Heath showed ("He who died on the cross . . ."), impose a vast array of ideological presuppositions. The enunciation moves the subject to adopt those positions. The enunciation, furthermore, necessarily presupposes a split subject: a subject capable of predication, and therefore realising

itself as separate from the world and from language, and posing itself as subject of the world and of language. In the terms of Benveniste, then, those enunciations which pose their subject immediately are "discourse," and those which elide it are "history."

> Discourse and history are both forms of enunciation, the difference between them lying in the fact that in the discursive form the source of enunciation is present, whereas in the historical it is suppressed. History is always "there" and "then", and its protagonists are "he", "she" and "it". Discourse, however, always also contains, as its points of reference, a "here" and a "now" and an "I" and a "you".[62]

Cinema, in its historically dominant mode which is the mode of the Hollywood film[63] presents itself as history:

> Dans les termes d'Emile Benveniste, le film traditionnel se donne comme histoire, non comme discours. Il est pourtant discours, si on le réfère aux intentions du cinéaste, aux influences qu'il exerce sur le public, etc.: mais le propre de ce discours-là, et le principe même de son efficace comme discours, est justement d'effacer les marques d'énonciation et de se déguiser en histoire.[64]

This, furthermore, is exactly the definition Barthes gives of the classic readable text (the Romantic novel, for example):

> car l'être de l'écriture (le sens du travail

qui la constitue) est d'empêcher de jamais répondre à cette question: Qui parle?[65]

So, the work of the historically dominant institution of cinema, as of narrative, is to efface the traces of its own enunciation such that one can never say who speaks. Who says: "The young man looked about the room" or "I was born at the stroke of midnight"? If it is a book, we can always check the author and reply: "It is Balzac or Charles Dickens who says these things." But such a reply is possible only at the expense of conflating the subject of the enunciation with the subject of the enounced (Charles Dickens is the "I" who was born at the stroke of midnight), only at the expense of positing a transparency between author and text, between signifier and signified, and only at the expense of ignoring how any enunciation moves the subject to adopt certain determinate positions (the subject must know who the "I" is, must move to an understanding of a report on birth, must feel the history of a phrase such as "at the stroke of midnight," etc.) This transparency can also only be posited at the expense of ignoring the discursive formations upon which these enunciations draw and which give them their meaning. Who speaks? The Other speaks.

Who speaks in a Hollywood film? Various answers have been given: the auteur, the producer, the studio, the genre, etc. Each of these answers undoubtedly contains a grain of truth, but much more escapes them. Either they posit a transcendent ego (such as the auteur) capable of manipulating elements, and consequently other people, thereby eliding the socio-historical determinations which largely shape the elements and the way they are to be manipulated; or, they posit a more or less formalist, more or less economistic (the studios, the genre) determinism, which elides the contradictions of history and the whole dimension of how institutions get

to be the way they are and how they interact with those who have internalised them. Again, we can only suggest that in the Hollywood film, that is to say in enunciations which elide the traces of their own enunciation, it is the Other who speaks. That means that the Other constructs the subject as the locus of a certain meaning. If we can specify how the Other speaks, we shall have simultaneously specified how the cinema as signifying practice in its historically dominant mode constructs subjects for its meanings, or in other words, what subject positions the cinema provides to the spectator.

If the cinema is massively historical in Benveniste's sense, how does it move the subject to adopt its positions?

> The psychoanalytic approach cannot rest content with the observation that the internal construction of a film is one which situates the events portrayed as lacking any enunciating subject. For psychoanalysis is crucially concerned with the intersubjectivity of the construction of meaning. In the absence of a subject of enunciation on the side of the film it is hard to see what position is possible for that other subject, that of the spectator him/herself. The spectating subject requires the relation to an other in order to situate itself, and somewhere the film must provide it with that other.[66]

The "relation to an other" is provided for the spectator in the "relations of specularity." By relations of specularity, we mean to take into account the fact that the classical narrative film is massively concerned with how it looks, with how characters and things in it look. It is furthermore only supposed to be shown under highly determinate conditions which favour the specta-

tors' appreciation of its look. The traditional studio technology with its attendant ideologies of professionalism and realism as well as all the procedures involved in getting the "right" shot, the "right" lighting, the "right" framing, etc., attest to the vast efforts deployed to create a unified, visually continuous image.

The relations of specularity are unusual, however. They are by definition voyeuristic: everything in the viewing situation points to that fact; yet, it is a specific type of voyeurism. The film is an object which offers itself to be seen, which knows it is being looked at, but which continually denies that fact. In this sense, a type of voyeuristic relationship, promoted by the screening conditions,[67] is established:

> Le film sait qu'on le regarde, et ne le sait pas . . . Celui qui sait, c'est le cinéma, l'<u>institution</u> (et sa présence dans chaque film, c'est-à-dire le discours qui est derrière l'histoire); celui qui ne veut pas savoir, c'est le film, le <u>texte</u> (le texte terminal): l'histoire. Durant la projection du film, le public est présent à l'acteur, mais l'acteur est absent au public; et durant le tournage, où l'acteur était présent, c'est le public qui était absent . . . L'échange du voir et de l'écran va être fracturé en son centre.[68]

All shots, however, are by definition filmed from somebody's point of view: not from the point of view of the characters, not from the point of view of the spectators, not even from the point of view of the director, though the look of the shot can subsume any or all of these points of view. The film is shot from the point of view of an ubiquitous, all-perceiving eye: the Other.

The point of view of the Other, that is to say the way in which the film gives itself to be seen (its relations of specularity), consists of things such as: how objects and characters are placed in relation to the camera, how scenes are framed, lighted, edited, etc. The film rests the eye ("Le peintre, à celui qui doit être devant son tableau . . . donne quelque chose en pâture à l'oeil, mais il invite celui auquel le tableau est présenté à déposer là son regard, comme on dépose les armes."),[69] it takes hold of the look and gives it satisfaction (in the Freudian sense, satisfaction is not attaining the object but the mere exercise of the drive). The classical narrative cinema takes the look of the spectator and merges it with the look of the Other. Something is shown to the camera lens; the way it is shown, its lighting, angle, duration, framing, etc., is a function of the look of the Other (i.e., the way things should be shown for them to be aesthetically pleasing, for them to make sense, for them to put the point across, for them to look funny, etc.). That same scene/seen is then re-presented to the look of the spectator. So that the spectator will not be aware of the look of the Other (and this is how the film effaces the traces of its own enunciation), the film image must conform to an ideology of realism, the screen must be a unified field, the camera movements must not be jarring, the whole must be properly framed and lighted, the actors must not acknowledge the look of the Other, nothing must ever make the spectator aware of that other look that was there before his/hers:

> The film, therefore, can hold a discourse towards the spectator as that which exhibits itself to be seen, or for that matter, as that which enables the spectator to see (identification with the camera as voyeur)

> or as an alternation of the two , . . (which incidentally means that what is exhibited is to some extent irrelevant).[70]

What is shown becomes relevant, of course, at the level of "secondary identifications" (identification with the human form) and of fetishism. Claude Bailblé adds:

> In the cinema . . . we cheat. We want to see without being seen, to look without being looked at - in short to associate ourselves with the movements of the man with the camera, to espouse his point of view without reservations. We credit the eye of the camera with the ability to dominate space from every point of view, while seeing only what is meaningful everywhere; in addition, it has the powerful asset of perspective centred upon an 'objective' principal point. By identifying with it we become all-knowing voyeurs, while at the same time being helplessly exposed - as in a dream - to all the images that present themselves.[71]

In the absence of any linguistic positions ("I," "you"), the film institutes a voyeuristic looking at/being looked at relationship. In this, it appeals directly to the scopic drive. Because the spectator, however, has already been through the mirror phase and the Oedipus complex, the looking at/being looked at dialectic can be subverted. It is not necessary that the spectator see him/herself on the screen, and from the point of view of the institution of cinema, it is best that the spectator not feel him/herself to be seen in the act of looking.

> One thing that must of course be avoided is a look coming out from the screen which would counteract this hypostasis of sight. We must never feel that we are being looked at. So what is the spectator seeking on the screen? We are seeking looks with which to deceive our eye, but looks which do not look at us. And in following each look as it occurs we forget that it is all bounded by the four corners of the screen. For the look is the vanishing point which shows the intentions and indicates the desires of the characters - which is why actors are made to play facing the camera as much as possible, but without looking into the lens . . . if the most unimportant extra in a corner of the picture casts a glance at the camera (the viewer - for the camera is centred), it opens up a gaping hole in the set-up, a new vanishing point - the to-camera look - through which the whole filmic reality threatens to drain away. That is because the to-camera look turns the unidirectional nature of the set-up back on itself. 'I can see but not be seen' becomes 'I am seen' and, what is worse, seen with a false sight, a sight that is being re-presented. This knocks the bottom out of the role of omniscient voyeur which the spectator unconsciously adopts by identification with the camera.[72]

The film is, therefore, constructed under the gaze of an all-seeing Other which hides its own presence and which determines the relations of specularity:

> Captured by the look, the Subject yields to

> the viewpoint which frames the film. This viewpoint of an Other transposes the past into the present of representation. It is a foreclosed viewpoint, and the spectator places himself in ghostly double-exposure over a vision that has already taken place, yielding power for pleasure . . . Another look was there before his, that of the Other, to which the actor's look was a response - for it is quite clear that it is not the spectator that was being looked at, but the set-up.[73]

The function of elision of the Other is quite clear:

> Si le film traditionnel tend à supprimer toutes les marques de son énonciation, c'est pour que le spectateur ait l'impression d'être lui-même ce sujet.[74]

Since the story appears to be told by no one, it is the spectator who assumes the position of the narrating instance and who therefore identifies with him/herself as pure look:

> Au cinéma, c'est toujours l'autre qui est sur l'écran; moi, je suis là pour le regarder. Je ne participe en rien au perçu, je suis au contraire tout-percevant . . . je suis en entier du côté de l'instance percevante: absent de l'écran, mais bien présent dans la salle, grand oeil et grande oreille sans lesquels le perçu n'aurait personne pour le percevoir, instance constituante, en somme, du signifiant de cinéma (c'est moi qui fais le film) . . . Le spectateur, en somme, s'identifie à lui-même, à lui-même comme pur acte de perception

(comme éveil, comme alerte): comme condition de possibilité du perçu et donc comme à une sorte de sujet transcendental, antérieur à tout il y a . . . Et il est vrai que, s'identifiant à lui-même comme regard, le spectateur ne peut faire autrement que de s'identifier aussi à la caméra, qui a regardé avant lui ce qu'il regarde à présent, et dont le poste (= cadrage) détermine le point de fuite.[75]

What we have here, then, is also quite a dramatic reversal on the question of what the ego identifies with. The ego (the subject as it presents itself to itself and to others) must engage with an external subject position. This is a precondition of intelligibility. As Metz states:

Mais alors, à quoi s'identifie le spectateur durant la projection du film? Car il faut bien qu'il s'identifie: l'identification sous sa forme première a cessé de lui être une nécessité actuelle, mais il continue, au cinéma - et sous peine que le film devienne incompréhensible, et considérablement plus que les films les plus incompréhensibles - à dépendre d'un jeu d'identification permanent sans lequel il n'y aurait pas de vie sociale (ainsi, la conversation la plus simple suppose l'alternance du je et du tu, donc l'aptitude des deux interlocuteurs à une identification réciproque et tournante). Cette identification continuée . . . quelle forme revêt-elle dans le cas particulier d'une pratique sociale parmi d'autres, la projection cinématographique?[76]

The immediate answer to the question of identification has

usually been that the spectator identifies with the characters or actors in the film, without ever specifying the nature of that identification. There is no denying that some sort of identification does indeed occur with film actors, but it is not easy or unproblematic. Benjamin noted some time ago (The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction), for example, that something distinguished film actors from theatre actors. There are different types of identification with the actors, and these types have different consequences. Cinema tends to build up star systems, and a movie star's life tends to be an amalgm of screen roles, imagined real life, and private life, whereas theatre actors have traditionally been quite separable from their roles. Furthermore, the two types of actors maintain different relationships with their audiences: theatre actors are physically present, may look directly at the audience, and a theatre role can be played by any actor: film actors are physically absent, must not look at the camera, and their roles, once filmed, can never be incarnated by anyone else. But that is not all: not only are there different types of identification, engendering different audience/text relationships, but the film actor need not be anybody special, in any sense of the word. Hitchcock has repeatedly demonstrated that it is perfectly possible to make the spectator identify with any screen character, and with many different characters often in rapid succession. So, we are not dealing with any actor or person in particular, someone who is a good actor, or beautiful, or whatnot. These are secondary attributes as far as the cinema is concerned. In fact, we may dispose of the human form altogether for, as documentaries and actorless films show, or as passages from acted films from which the characters are absent (i.e., long, descriptive passages are not uncommon) show, enjoyment and identification continue to be entirely possible.[77]

What is it, then, about the cinema which distinguishes it from other forms of representation, and which could account for the particular relationships it institutes? We can dispense immediately with a search on the side of the signified as though each form had a meaning it could best express. Besides leaving the question of the form's specificity completely untouched (why is this form best suited to that meaning?), it merely institutes an idealist essentialism. What, then, defines the cinematic signifier in relation to other types of signifier (theatrical, linguistic, painterly, literary, etc.)? In Metz's terms, the cinematic signifier is marked by an unusual degree of perceptual fullness in combination with a radical physical absence. The cinema can re-present or reproduce the signifiers of all the other arts, and add to them elements which they may lack: to music it adds sight; to theatre, space; to painting, movement and time, etc. Yet, at the same time, it is also founded on a radical absence. Everything it shows is, by definition, absent. Perceptual fullness and physical absence are also the terms which define dreams and hallucinations, with the difference that a dream is an hallucination which proposes itself as a perception, whereas a film is really a perception which proposes itself as an hallucination. It is, therefore, the cinematic signifier's particular relationship to the visual field (presence/absence, the way things look) which defines it.

What is this relationship? It is one in which the spectating subject, caught in a state of motor incapacity, is given to see a unified visual field of perfect motor coordination dominated by the images in that field. This is a re-activation of the mirror phase, except that the mirror phase happens with the splitting of the subject, whereas cinema happens after the subject has been split. The spectator need not therefore be present on

the screen, in the field of the Other, as the child is in the mirror. This is what marks the cinematic signifier, in Metz's terms, as imaginary. It is the site of specular unities and identifications, just like a mirror image. Unlike the theatrical or literary or other signifier, the illusion produced by the cinematic signifier is not to be situated solely at the level of the diegesis, but at the level of the signifier's very (im)materiality:

> Le propre du cinéma n'est pas l'imaginaire qu'il peut représenter, c'est celui que d'abord il est, celui qui le constitue comme signifiant (l'un et l'autre ne sont pas sans rapport; s'il est si apte à le représenter, c'est bien parce qu'il l'est; pourtant, il le reste lorsqu'il ne le représente plus).[78]

The cinematic signifier is imaginary in that, like the mirror image, it is the site of specular unities and identifications. In the mirror image, the look is in the field of the Other and it constitutes the subject as split. It institutes the possibility of being looked at-- which is the recognition of the look of the Other. The look of the Other is analogous to a belief in magic which is born of the belief in the all-powerfulness of thought: there just might be some force somewhere which is capable of doing anything it wants (God, the Father, Ancestors, ghosts, magic: all are so many instances of the Other). The look, therefore, is not something that belongs to the subject, but something that belongs to the Other.

> Il me faut, pour commencer, insister sur ceci - dans le champ scopique, le regard est au-dehors, je suis regardé . . . C'est là la fonction qui se trouve au plus intime de l'insti-

> tution du sujet dans le visible. Ce qui me détermine foncièrement dans le visible, c'est le regard qui est au-dehors. C'est par le regard que j'entre dans la lumière, et c'est par le regard que j'en reçois l'effet. D'où il ressort que le regard est l'instrument par où la lumière s'incarne, et par où - si vous me permettez de me servir d'un mot comme je le fais souvent, en le décomposant - je suis photo-graphié.[79]

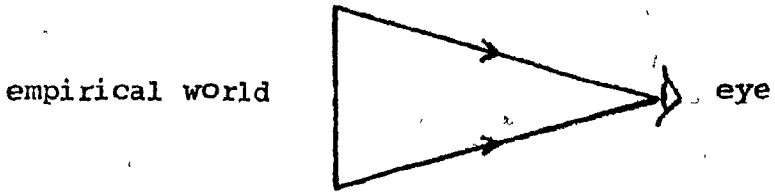
The look is the signifier which, in the scopic register, constitutes the subject and in which the subject alienates itself (always offering itself to be seen as it imagines itself to be seen by the Other, always looking for itself there -- in those imaginary captures -- where it is not). Just as I can only speak from where I can not say that I am, so can I only see from where I can not see myself. The inability to see oneself (though phenomenology is founded precisely on the belief that it is possible to see oneself seeing), coupled with the possibility of being seen by others, therefore introduces the phantasy of the all-seeing being (God, the Other, conscience, etc.).

The eye, which as an organ marks the subject's split form itself and from the world, can only see from one point, but it can be seen from everywhere:

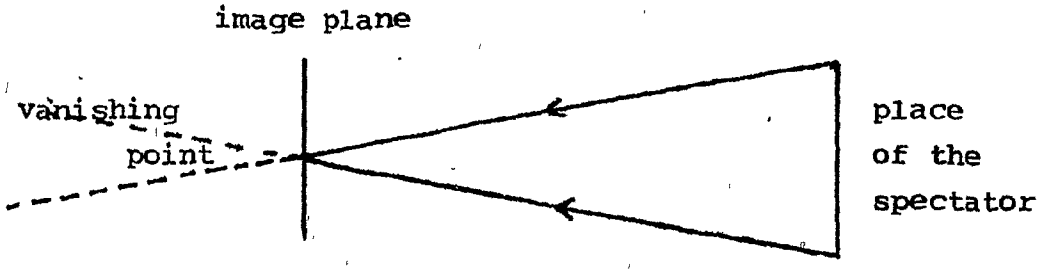
> I am looked at from everywhere, whereas I see from only one point. Hence the fantasy of an all-seeing absolute being who is everywhere and can see everything.[80]

The eye, then, is that point in space which attracts all light rays to it. This is usually represented in classical Renaissance perspective as a cone converging

on a point:

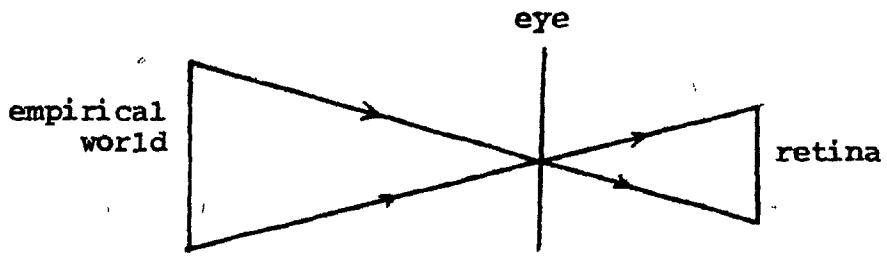


However, as can clearly be seen, the eye is only ever at one point, whereas the empirical world can see the eye from everywhere. This is usually re-presented in classical Renaissance perspective in the opposite manner: the painting, or image plane, is conceived as being that which attracts all light rays to itself:



What has happened, is that the diagramme for the eye has been inverted for the image plane. The vanishing point and the eye both play exactly the same function vis-à-vis one another. It could be said that there is an eye in the painting (or the representation). The dotted lines extending beyond the image plane indicate that the real world continues beyond, and that in fact, the image offers itself as a window on that world.

If we think for a moment, however, it immediately strikes us that, as the eye is a lens, it also has an image plane, the retina, onto which light rays are projected by the crystalline lens:

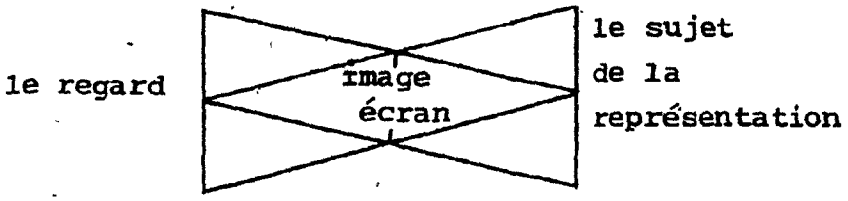


The eye, therefore, is as much a screen as it is a lens: it attracts light rays and it projects light rays, it can be seen and it sees.

The codes of Renaissance perspective are the ones which have been naturalised in Western society and which the cinema reproduces:

> Does that mean that space, as we see it today, necessarily constitutes itself according to the Renaissance norms of perspective? Conversely, was not the child of Antiquity without knowing about perspectiva artificialis just as able to go down stairs, point out an object some way away or judge distance? The truth of the matter is that representation using perspective is only one system of mapping out space, though no doubt more accurate than the others. It is no accident that it coincided with the beginning of international trade and the major discoveries of the explorers. The ultimate in curved space - that occupied by the globe itself - had to be codified with the maximum precision in maps and plans (the planisphere), using calculations based in part on astronomy: this corresponded with the rise of the commercial class at the beginning of its conquests.[81]

Which is to say that scopic castration, or the register of desire, and the historical moment, produce a system of mapping out space.* A diagramme from Lacan shows how the look operates for and upon the subject:



> j'ai dessiné les deux systèmes triangulaires que j'ai déjà introduits - le premier est celui qui, dans le champ géométral, met à notre place le sujet de la représentation, et le second, celui qui me fait moi-même tableau. Sur la ligne de droite se trouve donc situé le sommet du premier triangle, point du sujet géométral, et c'est sur cette ligne-là que je me fais aussi tableau sous le regard, lequel est à inscrire au sommet du second triangle.

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* The question of scopic castration is important but not central. It serves to indicate that castration is also played out at the level of the look because the look is detachable from the body. It is inasmuch as the look can be detached that the look is not the eye, and that a "lack" is consequently installed between the eye and the look, that the whole register of desire is brought into play. The desire is to fill the lack, or, more precisely, to fill it while preserving it, for this is the aim of all drives and of the scopic drive. Without the intervention of the register of desire, there would be no need for the child to learn to see, i.e., to learn to focus, to gaze, to stare, to look away, to fear being seen, etc., and no need for the social organisation of the look, that is to say, no need for perspective or any other mapping system. What occurs here, then, is the meeting of an irreducible desire born of castration ("lack") at the level of the look with a mode of production giving a particular social organisation to the look and to space.

> Les deux triangles sont ici superposés, comme ils sont en effet dans le fonctionnement du registre socpique.[82]

In the empirical world, then, "I look" but "I am looked at," and it is only inasmuch as I am looked at that I can begin to look. The difference between the one and the other is slight indeed and as phantasies or dreams show, the subject can easily vacillate from the one to the other:

> If I look, I reduce space to the point at which I grasp it, so that I forget I can be seen; if I feel that I can be looked at, I can be seen from everywhere by an all-powerful force - for as we have seen it is the property of the scopic drive to go both ways.[83]

In the cinema, the Other is almost entirely effaced; its look is not returned. In the cinema, one can look and not be seen. The voyeuristic looking at/being looked at dialectic is broken. It is broken so that the look of the spectator can merge with the look of the Other, so that the spectator can be instituted as the enunciating subject in the place of the Other. The spectator, therefore, identifies with the camera which is the look of the Other. To identify with the look is to identify with oneself inasmuch as one can look.

The pleasure to be derived from looking places us squarely on the ground of the scopic drive. A drive is, in Lacan's terms:

> (la pulsion est) précisément ce montage par quoi la sexualité participe à la vie psychique.[84]

That is to say that, inasmuch as it introduces sexuality, it introduces something irreducible, something which can not be satisfied by any object. The pleasure of the look can be called scopophilia. Scopophilia is a component drive of sexuality. Lacan mentions four component drives: oral, anal, scopic, and invocatory (having to do with the voice).[85] Drives have their seat in an organ, or more strictly in what Lacan calls "une structure de bord,"[86] a cut or an edge in the body which as such distinguishes the inside from the outside and therefore admits of tension. Drives, however, are never reducible to that organ or to whatever object(s) may satisfy that organ. That which satisfies the organ fails to satisfy the drive. In fact, nothing satisfies the drive except the drive itself:

> Quand même vous gaveriez la bouche - cette bouche qui s'ouvre dans le registre de la pulsion - ce n'est pas de la nourriture qu'elle se satisfait, c'est comme on dit, du plaisir de la bouche . . . Cela se fait sans doute avec la bouche qui est au principe de la satisfaction - ce qui va à la bouche retourne à la bouche, et s'épuise dans ce plaisir que je viens d'appeler, pour me référer à des termes d'usage, plaisir de la bouche.[87]

Indeed, the drive seeks its object <u>as lost</u>:

> Ce qu'il cherche à voir, sachez-le bien, c'est l'objet en tant qu'absence. Ce que le voyeur cherche et trouve, ce n'est qu'une ombre, une ombre derrière le rideau . . . Ce qu'il cherche, ce n'est pas, comme on le dit, le phallus - mais justement son absence.[88]

Scopophilia is therefore the pleasure afforded by the cinema. We need hardly underline again, that the cinema presents its objects precisely as absent. What it shows is fairly irrelevant. Its pleasure is in what it does to the look. It gives the look exactly what the look wants: the exercise of the drive, organ pleasure of the eye. It merges the look of the spectator with the look of the Other, thereby giving the eye the perspective of the all-powerful, all-seeing being. It takes the look, shows the look to itself, and covers up the fact that the look has been seen. The classic narrative cinema goes one step further:

> The cinema satisfies a primordial wish for pleasurable looking, but it also goes further, developing scopophilia in its narcissistic aspect. The conventions of mainstream film focus attention on the human form. Scale, space, stories are all anthropomorphic. Here, curiosity and the wish to look intermingle with a fascination with likeness and recognition: the human face, the human body, the relationship between the human form and its surroundings, the visible presence of the person in the world.[89]

The cinema doubly marks its imaginary function: the look is that drive which comes to life in the mirror phase, the fascination with the human form, with identities, with specular unity are effects of the mirror phase.

> it is the birth of the long love affair/despair between image and self-image which has found such intensity of expression in film and such joyous recognition in the cinema audience . . . the cinema has structures of fascination strong

> enough to allow temporary loss of ego while simultaneously reinforcing the ego. The sense of forgetting the world as the ego has subsequently come to perceive it (I forgot who I am and where I was) is nostalgically reminiscent of that pre-subjective moment of image recognition. At the same time the cinema has distinguished itself in the production of ego ideals as expressed in particular in the star system.[90]

The relations of specularity are overlaid, in classical narrative cinema, by a diegesis which complicates matters:

> There are in the cinema so many more forms of potentially discursive relations to take account of. This has to do with the fact that the film is simultaneously spectacle, reproduction and narrative, and the organisation of (say) spectacle along the axis of narrative poses enormous problems of articulation. The voyeurist/exhibitionist relation often overlays somewhat uneasily on the construction of the film as narrative sequence. Hence the frequent difficulty in deciding which axis to privilege and whether the film as a whole has a single discursive structure at all.[91]

We can say, nonetheless, that the cinema in its historically dominant mode constructs subjects for its meanings through a particular relation of specularity which depends upon the subject's already having been produced in sociality. It is in the relations of specularity that can be found the subject positions which constitute the cinematic subject. That relation is a voyeurist/exhibi-

tionist relation. The film offers itself to be seen to a spectator secure in the knowledge that s/he can not be seen in return. The voyeuristic relationship is fractured. The fracturing of that relationship is the essential mechanism by which the look of the Other, in function of which the entire film was constructed, hides itself. When the Other hides itself by using a number of devices which deny its structuring effectivity, we can say that the classic narrative cinema effaces the traces of its own enunciation. Some of these devices are: never allowing an actor to look at the camera, eye-line matches, constructing a steady, unified, continuous image, merging the look of the spectator with the look of the Other. These devices irrevocably mark the cinematic signifier as an imaginary signifier. The Imaginary is, by definition, the field of specularity, of imaginary captures (images). These imaginary captures constitute the ego, thereby signalling the subject's profound and fundamental split.

The cinema, then, reproduces the imaginary function: it is also a field of specularity and goes out of its way to reproduce the unified, visual field which is the infant's experience of the Other at the mirror phase. Like the mirror phase, it combines perceptual fullness with physical absence. Like the mirror phase, it proposes ego ideals, and contributes to the constitution of the ego. Like the mirror phase, it installs a fundamental misrecognition: the child sees another in the mirror which it takes to be itself thereby misrecognising its alienation in the image; the cinema proposes an image enounced by an other (the Other) and the spectating subject takes itself to be the enunciating instance of the image. In both cases, the realisation that the look belongs in the field of the Other is a painful experience: when the child believes itself to be seen, this produces feelings of guilt and anxiety; when an actor looks at the camera,

this demonstrates to the spectating subject that it is engaging in a voyeuristic activity, thereby not only destroying the illusion of being the enunciating subject, but also reactivating the feelings of guilt and anxiety which the cinema as institution had sought to evacuate. The illusion of enunciating the image rests upon the phantasy of an all-seeing Other. That phantasy is a product precisely of the eye's function as that which can see from only one place but which can be seen from everywhere. That function is most clearly demonstrated in Renaissance perspective which the cinema meticulously reduplicates. Renaissance perspective plays out the phantasy of the all-seeing Other by constructing a subjectless image of the world which merges the look of the spectator with the look of the Other. An analogous phantasy is a belief in magic, which is simply a belief in a force which can do whatever it wants. This force is the externalisation of the child's own wishes. Just as the child sees and knows that it can be seen from everywhere thereby instituting the all-seeing Other, so the child thinks and knows that thought can emanate from everywhere thereby instituting an Other of all-powerful thought. The child may wish for the death of a parent but fears that the same could be wished of it. The all-seeing Other is sometimes represented as an "evil eye," the <u>invidia</u> or <u>fascinum</u>.

The cinema is imaginary in all that deals with the image and the look. It is also, however, a symbolic production. Unlike the infant at the mirror phase, the spectating subject need not see him/herself on the screen in order to be able to engage relations of specularity. Furthermore, the Oedipus phenomenon has situated the spectating subject in relation to positions of exchange, thereby enabling that subject to follow a more or less complex diegetic unfolding. To the extent that the cinema is an institution, producing films in coordination

with a given mode of production, always under highly determinate historical circumstances, it is on the side of the Symbolic. It is, therefore, as are all institutions, a difficult tangle of Imaginary and Symbolic.

The cinema provides several pleasures. One of them is narrative pleasure. Another, the one we have examined, is scopophilia: visual pleasure. So far, we have seen that everything about the cinema has to do with the look: the look of the characters, the look of the spectator, the look of the Other. The cinema offers various contents to be seen. This can be pleasurable. More importantly, however, is that it offers objects --films--to the exercise of the scopic drive. It provides a pleasure in that it gives something, anything, to the eye. It proposes, literally, good objects. None of these objects can ever satisfy the drive, however, and so it always moves on to new objects. The contents given to the eye tend to be very powerful--their power is derived, in part, from the way in which they satisfy the sexual component brought into play by the scopic drive. Here, the relationship between the content and the drive becomes complex. Obviously, the determination of whether a particular film will be judged by the subject to be a good or a bad object, does not depend solely on the scopic drive. Other factors, other types of pleasure, other specular identifications (with the characters, for example), will also greatly influence the goodness or badness of the object. The relations of specularity, therefore, also include ways of showing men and women. The scopic drive is, then, being given two types of things to see: the look, purely and simply, which is pleasurable, and the look of specific contents, which can be equally pleasurable. The drive tends, however, though this is in no way essential to it, to elect specific objects: a certain form, a certain smell, etc. The look becomes programmed to certain contents. As Laura Mulvey has

shown, in Hollywood, the relations of specularity revolve mainly around representations of women.[92] Here, the content tends to swamp the scopophilia. Of course, like language, which is only knowable through words, the look is only knowable through what it looks at. The peculiarity of the cinema is, however, as Mulvey points out specifically in relation to women, its ability to structure what is looked at with a way of looking, the look structured by the Other:

> This is what makes cinema quite different in its voyeuristic potential from say, striptease, theatre, shows, etc. Going far beyond highlighting a woman's to-be-looked-at-ness, cinema builds the way she is to be looked at into the spectacle itself. Playing on the tension between films as controlling the dimension of time (editing, narrative) and film as controlling the dimesnion of space (changes in distance, editing), cinematic codes create a gaze, a world, and an object, thereby producing an illusion cut to the measure of desire.[93]

The look is always inscribed in any film. We shall now show that in the avant-garde cinema the look is inscribed as a fetish. If the classical narrative cinema constructs a transcendent subject unaware of its split, the avant-garde cinema constructs a perverse subject both aware and unaware of its split.

Notes

[1] Anika Lemaire, Jacques Lacan. Trans. David Macey (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), chapter 5 to 15.

[2] Anthony Wilden, The Language of the Self (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1968), p. 182.

[3] Christian Metz, Le Monde, 4 March 1978, p. 2, col. 5.

[4] Jacques Lacan, Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse (Paris: Seuil, 1973), p. 84.

[5] Jacques Lacan, Pref., Jacques Lacan by Anika Lemaire, p. vii.

[6] Stephen Heath, "The Turn of the Subject," Cine-tracts, 2, No. 3/4 (1977), p. 39.

[7] Wilden, The Language of the Self, p. 161.

[8] Lemaire, Jacques Lacan, p. 54.

[9] Lacan, Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse, p. 24.

[10] Heath, "The Turn of the Subject," p. 37.

[11] Heath, "The Turn of the Subject," pp. 36-37.

[12] Lacan, Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse, p. 144.

[13] Heath, "The Turn of the Subject," p. 40.

[14] Heath, "The Turn of the Subject," p. 42, n. 21.

[15] Heath, "The Turn of the Subject," p. 41.

[16] Heath, "The Turn of the Subject," p. 41.

[17] Serge Leclaire quoted in Lemaire, Jacques Lacan, p. 72.

[18] Heath, "The Turn of the Subject," p. 40.

[19] Lacan, Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse, pp. 127-128.

[20] Lacan quoted in Lemaire, Jacques Lacan, p. 152.

[21] Lacan, Ecrits (Paris: Seuil, 1966), p. 831.

[22] Lemaire, Jacques Lacan, p. 150.

[23] Lacan quoted in Heath, "Notes on Suture," Screen, 18, No. 4 (1977/78), p. 50.

[24] Sigmund Freud, Beyond The Pleasure Principle, trans. James Strachey, Vol. XVIII of The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud (London: Hogarth Press, 1955).

[25] Lemaire, Jacques Lacan, p. 52.

[26] Lacan quoted in Rosalind Coward and John Ellis, Language and Materialism (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), p. 96.

[27] Lacan, Ecrits, p. 805.

[28] Lacan, Ecrits, p. 276.

[29] Lacan, Ecrits, p. 319.

[30] Lemaire, Jacques Lacan, p. 68.

[31] Lacan, Ecrits, p. 840.

[32] Lemaire, Jacques Lacan, p. 55.

[33] Wilden, The Language of the Self, p. 264.

[34] Coward and Ellis, Language and Materialism, p. 177.

[35] Lemaire, Jacques Lacan, p. 62.

[36] Lacan, Ecrits, pp. 93-94.

[37] Lemaire, Jacques Lacan, p. 177.

[38] Lemaire, Jacques Lacan, p. 80.

[39] Lacan, Ecrits, p. 94.

[40] Lacan, Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse, p. 132.

[41] Leclaire quoted in Lemaire, Jacques Lacan, p. 72.

[42] Lacan, Ecrits, p. 94.

[43] Lacan, Ecrits, p. 95.

[44] Lemaire, Jacques Lacan, p. 178.

[45] Lacan, Ecrits, p. 95.

[46] Lacan, Ecrits, p. 97.

[47] Stephen Heath, "Screen Images, Film Memory," Edinburgh '76 Magazine. Eds. Phil Hardy, Claire Johnston and Paul Willemen (London: British Film Institute, 1976), p. 37.

[48] Lacan, Ecrits, p. 96.

[49] Lacan, Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse, p. 95.

[50] Lacan, Ecrits, p. 690.

[51] Lemaire, Jacques Lacan, p. 82.

[52] Lacan adopts the Freudian notion of the Oedipus complex but relativises it to a certain extent. For Lacan, it is a universal structure but one not necessarily articulated around the parents and the child as Freud discovered it. He sees that articulation as a specifically Western configuration. In other societies, it would take on other configurations. Edmond Ortigues' book, L'oedipe africain (Paris: Plon, 1966), is an excellent demonstration of Lacan's thesis. Nonetheless, the Oedipus complex remains for Lacan the principal structuring moment of the subject's accession to the Symbolic. It situates the subject in relation to structures of kinship, and therefore of exchange, in relation to culture, to language, to the Law, and therefore to desire, and to sexual differentiation. In Jacques Lacan, pp. 91-92, Lemaire summarises Lacan's position as follows: "The Oedipus is articulated in the forms of the social institutions and of language of which the members of society are unconscious - unconscious as to their meaning and, above all, to their origin. The Oedipal unconscious is homologous with these symbolic structures. The Oedipus is the drama of a being who must become a subject and who can only do so by internalizing social rules; by entering on an equal footing into the register of the symbolic, of Culture and of language . . . we can say that the Oedipus is the unconscious articulation of a human world of culture and language; it is the very structure of the unconscious forms of society."

[53] Lemaire, Jacques Lacan, pp. 179-180.

[54] Lacan, Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse, p. 94.

[55] Claude Bailblé, "Programming the Look," Screen Education, Nos. 32/33 (1979/80), p. 101.

[56] Lacan, Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse, p. 97.

[57] Alan Sheridan, Introd., Ecrits: A Seclection, by Jacques Lacan (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1977), p. xi.

[58] Lacan, Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse, p. 172.

[59] Lacan quoted in Lemaire, Jacques Lacan, p. 73.

[60] Lemaire, Jacques Lacan, pp. 60-61.

[61] Chrisitan Metz, Le signifiant imaginaire (Paris: Union Générale d'Editions, 1977), p. 66.

[62] Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, "A Note on History/Discourse," Edinburgh '76 Magazine. Eds. Phil Hardy, Claire Johnston and Paul Willemen (London: British Film Institute, 1976), p. 27.

[63] Of the constitution of a dominant mode, Metz, Le signifiant imaginaire, p. 113, states: "Sous mes yeux se déroulent les images du film hollywoodien. Hollywoodien? Pas forcément. Les images d'un de ces films de narration et de représentation - d'un de ces "films", tout court, dans le sens du mot qui est aujourd'hui le plus répandu - d'un de ces films que l'industrie du cinéma a pour fonction de produire."

[64] Metz, Le signifiant imaginaire, p. 113.

[65] Roland Barthes, S/Z (Paris: Seuil, 1970), p. 146.

[66] Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, "A Note on History/Discourse," Edinburgh '76 Magazine, p. 28.

[67] See, Metz, Le signifiant imaginaire, chap. 4, "La passion de percevoir."

[68] Metz, Le signifiant imaginaire, p. 117.

[69] Lacan, Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse, p. 93.

[70] Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, "A Note on History/Discourse," Edinburgh '76 Magazine, p. 29.

[71] Claude Bailblé, "Programming the Look," Screen Education, p. 113.

[72] Claude Bailblé, "Programming the Look," Screen Education, pp. 113-114.

[73] Claude Bailblé, "Programming the Look," Screen Education, p. 114.

[74] Metz, Le signifiant imaginaire, p. 119.

[75] Metz, Le signifiant imaginaire, pp. 68, 69, 70.

[76] Metz, Le signifiant imaginaire, pp. 66-67.

[77] Metz, Le signifiant imaginaire, p. 67.

[78] Metz, Le signifiant imaginaire, p. 64.

[79] Lacan, Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse, p. 98.

[80] Claude Bailblé, "Programming the Look," Screen Education, p. 112.

[81] Claude Bailblé, "Programming the Look," Screen Education, pp. 107-108.

[82] Lacan, Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse, p. 97.

[83] Claude Bailblé, "Programming the Look," Screen Education, p. 113.

[84] Lacan, Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse, p. 160.

[85] See, Lacan, Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse, pp. 85, 164.

[86] Lacan, Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse, pp. 154, 157.

[87] Lacan, Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse, p. 153.

[88] Lacan, Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse, p. 166.

[89] Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," Screen, 16, No. 3 (1975), p. 9.

[90] Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," Screen, p. 10.

[91] Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, "A Note on History/Discourse," Edinburgh '76 Magazine, pp. 29-30.

[92] Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," Screen, 16, No. 3 (1975).

[93] Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," Screen, p. 17.

PART III

In this third chapter, we propose to examine the avant-garde as a signifying practice constituted in terms of its Other, using the debates and writings surrounding the avant-garde as our starting point, in order to discover how the avant-garde has constructed itself as a function of the Other. The construction of the avant-garde, however, is in no sense a straightforward or unitary enterprise. Its self-construction is spread out across a number of debates, writings, arguments, and conceptualisations. To treat it as a unitary object or undertaking would be an error. It must be approached as a series of interlocking and overlapping discourses.

Psychoanalysis and the avant-garde cinema

We have so far suggested some of the mechanisms at work in film in general and have insisted particularly on the constitution of the cinematic subject. We must, therefore, ask ourselves two questions: 1) what privilege, special importance, or particular relevance does the avant-garde cinema enjoy within a psychoanalytic perspective; in other words, why study the avant-garde instead of classical narrative? 2) what is the effectivity of psychoanalysis as regards the avant-garde cinema?

The first question seeks some homology or special relationship between psychoanalysis and the avant-garde cinema. One is immediately tempted to find that special relationship in the fact that the avant-garde poses clearly, even self-consciously, the question of the constitution of the subject. This is hardly the case, however, for <u>all</u> avant-garde films and probably not even for the majority of them. Furthermore, since

all films are by definition signifying practices, they all necessarily pose that question. Indeed, the work of the Cahiers du cinéma collective, of Raymond Bellour, Stephen Heath, and others, has abundantly shown that even the most classical of classical Hollywood narratives is infinitely fertile ground for a psychoanalytic approach. Indeed, the classical narrative may even be the best ground for such an approach because it has so manifestly discovered precisely the mode of subject-production which provides the most pleasure for the most people. So, it is not as if only the avant-garde constructed subject-positions or were aware of so doing: indeed, most avant-garde films do not conceive of themselves in terms of subjectivity and some narratives do. Furthermore, the avant-garde can not be argued as being a privileged field for the application of psychoanalysis, for any film will serve just as well as any other, nor can one argue that the avant-garde somehow mobilises psychoanalysis or its categories or its problematic, that it is in some sense a mise-en-scène of psychoanalysis, in a more compelling manner than any other type of film, for again, as the aforementioned studies have amply shown, any film, and perhaps most of all those films which are the most embedded in the very texture of the social formation, can lay claim to this privilege.

The privilege of the avant-garde, then, is not in that it constructs subject-positions, but in the way in which it constructs them. It is -- and this is almost the definition per se of the avant-garde in the Twentieth Century -- its (self-conscious) assumption of the tropes, forms, and devices of dominant cinema, its deconstruction[1] and questioning of those devices in the hopes of achieving some sort of transformation. In other words, just as psychoanalysis stands to the unconscious, so the avant-garde cinema stands to the rest

of cinema. It proposes itself as the site of a knowledge about its object, but a knowledge that can only be acquired over and against that object. In this sense, then, it might be said to have a privileged relationship to psychoanalysis precisely because it sees problems where others see only givens. This self-construction as a meta-discourse on film necessarily engages the theorist's Imaginary. It is work upon the specular fascination of the image, upon that which is the very stuff of its own existence, the basic matter and form of its expression. It defines itself as a work upon precisely that which captures, fascinates, and gives itself as unfragmentable: the image. It attempts to break with the Imaginary, it attempts perhaps a refusal of the Imaginary, and psychoanalysis can help to understand the nature of the break and the reasons for its success or failure. So, it is not so much the avant-garde in itself which holds a special relationship to psychoanalysis, but rather the fact that the avant-garde harbours the same questioning attitude towards its object and finds itself in the same position vis-à-vis its object as psychoanalysis does vis-à-vis its own. Needless to say, not all avant-garde films carry the questioning attitude through to the utmost extent, with the greatest awareness, skill, or success, and it is naturally those avant-garde films that make the greatest effort in this direction which will interest us the most. Christian Metz defines the study of film thusly:

> Toute réflexion psychanalytique sur le cinéma, ramenée à sa démarche la plus fondamentale, pourrait se définir en termes lacaniens comme un effort pour dégager l'objet-cinéma de l'imaginaire et pour le conquérir au symbolique.[2]

That is to say that the cinema, as we already know, offers itself as something to be loved, enjoyed, or desired, and that the avant-garde establishes itself as a difficult knowledge upon that pleasure or fascination. Indeed, the avant-garde film defines itself vis-à-vis film in much the same way as current film theory does:

> le problème du cinéma ne fait que se redoubler en un problème de la théorie du cinéma, et nous ne pouvons prélever la connaissance que sur ce que nous sommes (ce que nous sommes en tant que personne, ce que nous sommes en tant que culture et société). Comme dans les luttes politiques, nos seules armes sont celles de l'adversaire, comme en anthropologie, notre seule source est l'indigène, comme dans la cure analytique, notre seul savoir est celui de l'analysé . . . C'est le <u>retournement</u> et lui seul . . . qui définit la prise de posture où s'inaugure la connaissance. Si l'effort de la science est constamment menacé d'une rechute dans cela même contre quoi il se constitue, c'est parce qu'il se constitue tout autant <u>dans</u> que contre lui . . . Le travail du symbolique, chez le théoricien qui voudrait cerner au cinéma la part de l'imaginaire et celle du symbolique, est toujours en danger de s'engloutir dans l'imaginaire que nourrit le cinéma, qui rend le film aimable, et qui suscite ainsi jusqu'à l'existence du théoricien (="l'envie d'étudier le cinéma", comme on le dit plus couramment).[3]

The reasons which push film theory into a psychoanaly-

tic perspective are precisely the ones which define a privileged relationship between psychoanalysis and the avant-garde. The avant-garde cinema seeks to be knowledge about cinema in the same way as, though in an other matter of expression than, film theory. It also constantly runs the risk of being swallowed up by the very pleasure which motivates/fascinates it, and of reproducing rather than analysing it. In the case of the avant-garde cinema, the mechanisms of defence which would ward off any such temptation appear to have been firmly established as the unremitting vilification of narrative films carried out by most avant-garde theorists would seem to imply. In this sense, they are caught in the dialectic of the good and the bad object, in the process of creating a void for the pleasure of filling it up again. The Hollywood film, which is the good object, must be cast in the role of that which is bad, it must literally be turned into a bad object, so that the avant-garde can then represent itself as the good object, the object to be loved instead of Hollywood:

> C'est très souvent pour exalter un certain cinéma qu'on en a violemment attaqué un autre: l'oscillation du 'bon' et du 'mauvais', l'immédiateté du mécanisme de restitution apparaissent alors en toute clarté.[4]

To replace one object with another, of course, is not necessarily to overcome fascination, but to define it differently.

The avant-garde, then, is in a situation analogous to that of psychoanalysis or of anthropology. Its knowledge can only be acquired from within, despite, over and against that which it studies. Only the native knows the culture, only the dreamer understands

the dream, and yet these are precisely the people in the least advantageous position to deliver that knowledge for they are held, produced, fascinated by it. That knowledge does not offer itself as something external and objective, it occurs, if at all, as something profoundly internal and constituent. It is precisely in the distance which the avant-garde seeks to maintain vis-à-vis that which fascinates it, and the knowledge it seeks to produce, that it holds a privileged relationship to psychoanalysis. It is an attempt to "symbolise the Imaginary." Pscyhoanalysis is the science of that transformation, it can provide the means for the symbolisation.

The second question, regarding the effectivity of psychoanalysis, is really only the inverse of the first. Inasmuch as we define the importance of the avant-garde within a psychoanalytic perspective, we also define precisely the effectivity of psychoanalysis vis-à-vis the avant-garde. The role of psychoanalysis, here, is not to stand as a body of knowledge that can tell us <u>about</u> the avant-garde, or as a technique which can explain the secrets of the avant-garde. These are the usual conceptualisations of psychoanalysis vis-à-vis cultural production, and there are a number of reasons why they will not work. The specific object of psychoanalysis is the unconscious whereas the unconscious is not the specific object of the avant-garde cinema (its object is cinema). If psychoanalysis were here to be envisaged in its traditional role, one would have to immediately admit that the films and theories of the avant-garde can not be analysed because they neither dream nor speak and consequently have no unconscious. They would be unavailable to the knowledge of psychoanalysis. Films and theories are at best the products of an unconscious. A psychoanalytic interpretation would therefore have to show how the uncon-

scious of avant-garde theorists and filmmakers accounts for their products. This would necessitate the analysis of all such people and even if that were possible or desirable, there is no evidence to suggest that the sum of individual analyses could account for the sum of avant-garde production. At best, each analysis might be able to account for peculiarities but it would not account for regularities across products, regularities such as style, concern, subject-matter. The point once again is that the object of psychoanalysis is the unconscious and not the functioning of cultural products. The elements of similarity across products must therefore be accounted for in more "social" terms. It is the concept of the Other which, when applied to the relationship between cultural products and to that against which they define themselves, can be useful in admitting of precisely a social explanation, because it aims not at the individual or the unconscious, but at the process of structuration within which individuals operate.

From psychoanalysis is drawn, on the one hand, a mode of questioning, and on the other hand, the specific concept of the Other. This concept has so far been used in two slightly different ways which it is useful to specify. We proposed the general definition of the Other as that without which no self-definition is possible, and proceeded to demonstrate its effectivity as off-screen look. It occurs, therefore, on the one hand, as a body of ideas, discourses, or practices which have been rejected (that without which no self-definition is possible), and on the other hand, as an active structuring agent (the off-screen look). The reason for this dichotomy is obvious: the Other can only ever express itself in historically determinate situations, in actual practices, through the lives and bodies of concrete individuals. So, even though it is

a body of ideas which has been rejected, the effectivity of that rejection expresses itself in practical ways. The logic of that which has been rejected insinuates itself into the discourse of the avant-garde such that when the avant-garde speaks, it does so in the language of the Other. Its activity as off-screen look is the reinscription of the Other into signifying practice through the life and body of an historically determinate individual: the avant-garde theorist or filmmaker.

How, then, does the Other manifest itself in the case of the avant-garde cinema? To answer that question directly raises problems, for by answering it one immediately begins to specify: the Other manifest itself this way or that. An ideal avant-garde is thereby constructed when in fact the avant-garde is the field of a dispersion. There is not one, single, unitary avant-garde. There are several avant-garde practices spread out over time and space.

The notion of avant-garde

The term avant-garde produces no unanimity amongst those to whom it
what the word actually designates (a genre, a movement, an attitude), as to what its history or periodisations are, as to whom or which films it should include, as to its relations to other films or arts, as to what its objectives are or ought to be. To enter the domain of the avant-garde is to enter the field of a dispersion. In this respect, it is not very different from the overall situation of film theory in general.

The very notion of avant-garde, then, is problematic. In her introduction to A History of the American Avant-Garde Cinema, Marilyn Singer states:

> For each age, for each place, for each time, there has always been an avant-garde. Hector Berlioz . . . Beethoven . . . James Whistler . . . Gertrude Stein . . . These and other

> artists were avant-garde; their work was misunderstood, mocked, even banned or destroyed.[5]

She then approvingly quotes Amos Vogel:

> It appears that in every generation there exists an amazing dichotomy between artists and audiences; what is involved is a new, and therefore disturbing approach to form and content. The artists, as usual, are ahead of their audience. They see farther. They are more sensitive. The audience is shocked: it does not know what to think . . . All of this figures for the art form of cinema.[6]

These two quotations accurately represent fairly common beliefs about the avant-garde, artists, and art in general, and variations of this position govern all of the traditional writing, and much of the theoretically informed discussion of the avant-garde. This position, however, immediately raises difficulties because it posits the avant-garde as universal, because it suggests that the avant-garde is essentially defined by its advance on its own time, and because by analogy it unproblematically extends to the cinema a situation which may or may not exist in the other arts.

The first point of interest is the insistent assimilation of film to art, both by association (Berlioz, Beethoven), and by explicit statement ("the art form of cinema"). Not only is the concept of art not discussed--it is presumably something desirable--but the attitude is reminiscent of the early struggles for film respectability so clearly played out in the writings of a Lindsay or an Arnheim.[7]

The quotations furthermore describe a process of the avant-garde becoming the mainstream. The artists mentioned may once have been considered avant-garde but they now constitute the mainstream. If the avant-garde becomes mainstream, then the two are distinguishable strictly in terms of their temporal relationship to one another: Beethoven is no longer avant-garde but John Cage is, and given enough time, Cage will not be either. Avant-garde and mainstream therefore become, for all intents and purposes, exactly the same thing. This should cause us to seriously doubt if "for each age, for each place, for each time there has always been an avant-garde." The very notion of avant-garde appears to be a construct of modernism and prior to the modernist age it makes little sense to speak of an avant-garde. Furthermore, within modernism itself, what might be called avant-garde is already the mainstream, without the need for the passage of time. For example, it is not as though Andy Warhol, who has been characterised as "avant-garde," were painting in opposition to academic art for there is none any longer. The "avant-garde" is all there is. If in relation to film it may appear that we can continue to say that avant-garde filmmakers do in fact film against an academic style, then there is an abusive assimilation of Hollywood to academicism, and the entire problem is compounded by the fact that film was born into modernism and that the cycles and periodisations of the various social practices are quite different and autonomous from one another. How reasonable would it be to say that Chaucer was the avant-garde of his day, that Confucius was the avant-garde of his, or that Glen Miller was the avant-garde of his? Can we seriously speak in these cases of an "amazing dichotomy" induced by "a new, and therefore disturbing approach to form and content"? The problem is simply this: if

there has always been an avant-garde, if it has always been "misunderstood, mocked" or worse, if there has always been "in every generation . . . an amazing dichotomy between artists and audiences," then the relationship between artists and audiences must by definition have always been the same. If it had varied, then artists might not have always been in advance of their audience. And indeed, a quick glance at the history of Western art will dispense with that illusion. The relationship between artists and audiences has been highly variable, dependent more upon conditions of production and exchange than upon artistic essentialism. The composition of audiences, and of those who were artists, has changed enormously over the centuries. Since that relationship has been unstable at best, it is quite impossible to speak of an inevitable distance between artists and audiences. Some audiences were perfectly in tune with or even anticipated formal change.

The difficulty with the dichotomy rests upon the fact that the notion of avant-garde carries the connotation of rupture when in fact it also designates unbroken linear progression. If we consider that some films are avant-garde and that their avant-gardism keeps having to get more extreme as the mainstream catches up with them, then we have constructed a model in which the new flees ahead of the old, in which the old keeps getting newer and the new keeps getting older. We have constructed a system of gradual change in which some artefacts lead the way for others. It is difficult to say whether the history of art can be usefully constructed around such lineages or whether art progresses at all. Indeed, if art does progess, does that mean that next year's films will be better than this year's? It appears, therefore, that far from being universal, the very notion of avant-garde is quite dependent upon a given artist/audience relationship it-

self produced by the conditions of production and exchange at a given time.

The "amazing dichotomy" is a persistent notion, however, for it does in fact seem to be the case, at least in the present day. It rests upon the notion, however, that everybody has equal access to all cultural production and that as an unfortunate matter of taste, the majority has rejected the avant-garde. This of course is not true. The people who may have rejected Beethoven do not, for example, appear to have been the lumpenproletariat, and even if they should reject him today, it does not appear that it would be out of a disagreement with formal change. Nonetheless, if we temporarily accept the notion of dichotomy at its face value, outside of historical and class determinants which make it a rather insignificant concept, we are faced with a paradox. On the one hand, we know that the dichotomy is reproduced in every generation, even though (because?) the artist/audience relationship has not changed, and that it takes a new form in every generation, that is to say that the distance between artists and audiences is incarnated differently each time though it remains the same distance (the enumeration of Berlioz, Beethoven, Stein, etc., surely indicates the constancy of the rupture under its various forms). What is more is that the old distance of a previous generation is assimilated by a new generation. The avant-garde becomes the mainstream. So, in the face of generational acceptance, the same artist/audience relationship perpetually regernerates the same distance. How is it possible for the rupture to remain a rupture when it is so clearly assimilated? Does one generation forget what the previous one knows so that the rupture can be reproduced? If so, how can the new generation have come to accept the art form which the previous generation had rejected, and still be faced with the

same "amazing dichotomy"? Clearly, the most amazing aspect of this dichotomy is that it should still serve as a theoretical tool. A way out of the paradox is suggested through recourse to the artist's sensitivity. ("The artists, as usual, are ahead of their audience. They see farther. They are more sensitive."). How do the artists, who are after all contemporaneous with their audiences, acquire the sensitivity which others seem to lack? Even more mysteriously, why do suceeding generations come to accept the "avant-garde" that their predecessors had rejected? Is it because suceeding generations have themselves, on a mass scale, become more sensitive? What would account for so massive an increase in sensitivity (or sensitivity increased just enough to accept the old but not the new)? And what could possibly account for the rejection by still more distant generations of an avant-garde that had at one time been accepted?

Obviously, this whole approach is caught up in romantic notions of individual creativity and genius whereas the facts clearly exceed such a conceptualisation. The question of artistic production and of its reception can not be satisfactorily posed in terms of individual creativity for such an approach invariably raises more questions than it answers.

If we were to concentrate somewhat more on the specificity of the artist/audience relationship, something which the romantic approach with its insistence upon the individual specifically forbids, then it might be possible to discover other less contradictory and less problematic determinants at work in any "new .... approach to form and content." It is fairly easy, in support of this contention to cite numerous examples in which artistic intentionality was quite insignificant vis-à-vis the ideological/political/institutional constraints at play: the Reformation and

Counter-Reformation, commissions by royal families and heads of state, religious painting, Hollywood film production, Harlequin romances, etc.

It would seem, therefore, that far from being a phenomenon symptomatic of every age, time, and place, the avant-garde is an historical construct of modernism tied more closely to specific historical contradictions than to a transhistorical or transcultural artistic essentialism.

Though the notion of avant-garde may be a construct of modernism, we are still faced with the fact that within that construct several practices contend. The various practices are informed by different conceptualisations of the role of art, of the nature of the Other, etc. To say this of course is to recognise the avant-garde cinema as a signifying practice caught up in the movement of social contradiction and inscribed within various discursive formations. As a signifying practice, it constructs subject positions by arranging signifiers into certain configurations. The specific way in which this signifying practice arranges signifiers causes those configurations to be called avant-garde. The subject-positions must be sufficiently marginal to attract attention to themselves. The reasons for this can only be found in the conflict of social practices. Some practices become institutionalised and hegemonic, others remain peripheral.

We shall deal with the avant-garde cinema of the nineteen fifties, sixties and seventies, taking European and American practices together. The choice of these dates and groupings is not gratuitous. In the nineteen fifties, an indigenous American avant-garde had begun, and a European one had already been established. Furthermore, Hollywood was incontestably institutionalised. From that point onwards, we are therefore afforded a fairly clear demonstration of the

interaction of two broadly conceived practices which will be the site of the intervention of the Other. We should not fail to mention the relative abundance of material on this period and its continuing importance to theoretical debates which make it possibly more relevant than the French avant-garde of the nineteen twenties, for example. It would be possible to study the French avant-garde of the nineteen twenties in the same manner but the coordinates would be different. The Other would be spread out across a number of social practices which it would take some considerable time to reconstruct, whereas from the nineteen fifties onwards, it tends to be concentrated on Hollywood--hence the importance of its institutionalisation--and we can safely assume familiarity with Hollywood. Also, since the nineteen fifties, the avant-garde has undergone some interesting shifts such that there is now an avant-garde which detaches itself from the avant-garde, a post-modernist avant-garde which is in some ways critical of the avant-garde.

The Other

Hollywood, and all that implies, stands as the Other of the avant-garde cinema, a constructed Other. The avant-garde constructs Hollywood as it wishes to hate it. P. Adams Sitney, one of the leading American avant-garde film theorists, writes in Visionary Film:

> The precise relationship of the avant-garde cinema to American commercial film is one of radical otherness. They operate in different realms with next to no significant influence on each other.[8]

Sitney opposes them as two autonomous and already fully constituted realms. If they are autonomous realms there is no need to oppose them except perhaps in a

didactic, demonstrative sense (avant-garde films do this, whereas Hollywood films do something else). The opposition, however, is somewhat more dramatic. In Parker Tyler's words "big commercial film has so long neglected its natural opportunities"[9] that the art of film has degenerated into "one of the bad habits of society . . . Technical flash and professional splash have been exactly what "entertainment film" has substituted for serious themes and truly artistic treatment."[10] Here, the avant-garde has a moral function over and against Hollywood's "immorality":

> It is the moral preservation of the film as a noncommercial exploration of technical and aesthetic possibilities.[11]

This assessment, which gives the avant-garde an ethical purpose while defining it strictly as a formalism, is echoed throughout the writings on the avant-garde. Hollywood's "badness," its "flash" and "splash," its absence of "serious themes" or "true art" is attributable to its institutionalisation and consequent commercialisation. Parker Tyler again states:

> In the big industrial studios, the camera--now as large as a public monument--is a sort of gargantuan fetish, a Frankenstein's monster that can swallow and reproject vast panoramic spaces as on the new grandeur screens. So it is a fitting symbol of commerce. The Experimental cinema is not at all like that, being as personal as a hunting rifle when compared to the collectiveness of a canon on a battleship. If, in the art of painting, the brush is traditionally the indispensable instrument of work, in the art

> of film, this instrument is the camera. The commercial industry regards the camera only as a carry-all, an ingenious baggage compartment into which an art is stuffed and then purveyed in "magic reels" to be unloaded in theaters. Actually, the camera contains as many secrets of "significant form" as does a pencil, a brush, or, for that matter, the spout used by modern painters who pour their forms on canvas.[12]

Tyler of course replays the assimilation of film to art and casts Hollywood as that which has no significant form. It is variously "commerce" and an "industry." It is "big," "large," "gargantuan," and "collective." Yet, he also expresses a fascination with the image, with the camera that has become fetishised, with the "vast panoramic spaces" and the "grandeur screens"--he himself confesses that the camera contains "many secrets of significant form"--he even goes so far as to speak of "magic reels." The ambivalence towards the fascination of the image and the need to construct Hollywood as a bad object is important because it pervades the avant-garde's relation to its Other.

In nineteen fifty-nine, disappointed with the "official cinema," Jonas Mekas called for the establishment of a new American cinema, a cinema which would "break the stifling conventions of the dramatic film."[13] A new generation of filmmakers with shared characteristics would establish it:

> Basically, they all:
>
> mistrust and loathe the official cinema and its thematic and formal stiffness;
>
> are primarily occupied with the emotional and

> intellectual conditions of their own generation as opposed to the neo-realists' preoccupation with materiality;
>
> seek to free themselves from the overprofessionalism and overtechnicality that usually handicap the inspiration and spontaneity of the official cinema, guiding themselves more by intuition and improvisation than by discipline. (As the postwar emergence of neorealism freed cinematography from the conventions of studio lighting, thereby coming closer to visual truth, so the new generation of film-makers may eventually free direction, acting, and sets from their dead and commercial conceptions and go on to seize the truth of their experiences and dreams.)
>
> Obviously, this is not what the "professionals" want. These film-makers will be severely criticized and, perhaps, even accused of betraying cinema. However, they come closer to the truth with their nakedness than the "professionals" with their pretentious expensiveness.[14]

These denunciations sound like the inverse of envy, almost as though avant-garde theorists regretted the absence of money, technical professionalism, and popular acceptance but had decided to make virtue of necessity by denouncing their presence in the other camp. Here, we find also the exact avant-garde scenario: a group of individuals, artists, ahead of their time, struggling against a hegemonic practice in the face of scorn and misunderstanding. Consequently, in contrast to Hollywood's corruption and distance from genuine values, the avant-garde proposes the rediscove-

ry of "truth," both of oneself and of the world, through the liberation of the image, as though the truth could be acquired through vision. The equation of vision and knowledge is another theme which mimicks the most classical Hollywood-based ontologies and which runs throughout the avant-garde. It recurs in the ideology and in the phenomenologically inspired nature of much avant-garde theory.

In nineteen sixty-one, Mekas' call was answered by the formation of the New American Cinema Group which published this statement:

> The official cinema all over the world is running out of breath. It is morally corrupt, aesthetically obsolete, thematically superficial, temperamentally boring. Even the seemingly worthwhile films, those that lay claim to high moral and aesthetic standards and have been accepted as such by public and critic alike, reveal the decay of the Product Film. The very slickness of their execution has become a perversion covering the falsity of their themes, their lack of sensitivity, their lack of style . . . As against the other arts in America today . . . our rebellion against the old, official, corrupt, and pretentious is primarily an ethical one . . . In joining together, we want to make it clear that there is one basic difference between our group and organizations such as United Artists. We are not joining together to make money. We are join-

ing together to make films.[15]

John Hanhardt, Associate Curator of Film at the Whitney Museum of American Art, writing in A History of the American Avant-Garde Cinema, proposes a very similar view of Hollywood and echoes the same concerns with truth, knowledge, vision, and formalism:

> The avant-garde film of Europe of the 1920's, and in America with increasing activity since the early 1940's, aspires to a radical otherness from the conventions of filmmaking and the assumptions and conditions which inform the dominant view and experience of film . . . This cinema subverts cinematic convention by exploring the medium and its properties and materials, and in the process creates its own history separate from that of the classical narrative cinema . . . [This cinema] encouraged its private use by artists who share it with others and sought to liberate their visions and ideas through the manipulation of the camera apparatus, lenses and celluloid.[16]

Paradoxically, the perceived oppositions between the avant-garde cinema and its Other (Hollywood) have been most clearly stated by two theorists who are at opposite extremes of the theoretical spectrum, Gene Youngblood and Peter Gidal. Youngblood's Expanded Cinema is a systems theory approach to film perhaps most notable for its liberal mixture of bio-ecological mysticism and cybernetics (a brief rundown of some chapter headings is a good indication: Radical Evolution and Future Shock in the Paleocybernetic Age, The Intermedia Network as Nature, Global Closed Circuit:

The Earth as Software, The Human Bio-Computer and His Electronic Brainchild, The Artist as Ecologist, etc.), whereas Gidal is a Marxist of extremely polemical bent informed by the latest debates in French cultural theory. That they should both have conceptualised social change at the level of filmic practice in essentially the same terms may not be so much a comment on the efficacity of marxism or systems theory as on the power of the Other to insinuate itself into the discourses of people almost despite their stated political positions. The empirical fact remains, however, that it is quite possible to reject the activity of the Other, if only because it is possible to reject the positions of Gidal and Youngblood. This would lead one to suspect that it is the very nature of the object of study, film, which so effectively substitutes the discourse of the object for the discourse about the object. Youngblood states the oppositions, centrally in a chapter entitled "Art, Entertainment, Entropy," on a moral/formal plane,[17] whereas in Structural Film Anthology Gidal states them on a political/formal level.[18] Essentially the same presuppositions subtend both sets of oppositions. Youngblood opposes Hollywood (the commercial cinema) to the avant-garde (the synaesthetic cinema) in the following way:

COMMERCIAL/SYNAESTHETIC
passive/active
redundant/original
unhealthy/healthy
entertainment/art
manipulation/expanded awareness

profit motive/personal vision
exploitation/explanation
conditioned formulas/creative process
gives what we want/gives what we don't know we want
plot, story/plotless, open structure

As Youngblood states:

> Commercial entertainment works against art, exploits the alienation and boredom of the public, by perpetuating a system of conditioned response to formulas. Commercial entertainment not only isn't creative, it actually destroys the audience's ability to appreciate and participate in the creative process . . . By perpetuating a destructive habit of unthinking response to formulas, by forcing us to rely ever more frequently on memory, the commercial entertainer encourages an unthinking response to daily life, inhibiting self-awareness. Driven by the profit motive, the commercial entertainer dares not risk alienating us by attempting new language even if he were capable of it. He seeks only to gratify preconditioned needs for formula stimulus. He offers nothing we haven't already conceived, nothing we don't already expect. Art explains; entertainment exploits. Art is freedom from the conditions of memory; entertainment is conditioned by the past. Entertainment gives us what we want; art gives us what we don't know we want.[19]

Gidal's argument has been usefully summarised by Constance Penley as follows:[20]

NARRATIVE/EXPERIMENTAL
idealism/materialism
ideology/knowledge
reproduction/production
narrative/non-narrative
illusionist time/real time
signified/signifier

In Gidal's own words:

> In dominant cinema, a film sets up characters (however superficially deep their melodramas) and through identification and various reversals, climaxes, complications (usually in the same order) one aligns oneself unconsciously with one or more characters. These internal connections between viewer and viewed are based on systems of identification which demand primarily a passive audience, a passive viewer, one who is <u>involved</u> in the meaning that word has taken on within film-journalese, i.e. to be not involved, to get swept along through persuasive emotive devices employed by the film director. This system of cinematic functioning categorically rules out any dialectic . . . The commercial cinema could not do without the mechanism of identification. It is the cinema of consumption, in which the viewer is of necessity not a producer, of ideas, of knowledge.[21]

Clearly, the avant-garde constructs a jaundiced view of Hollywood. The Hollywood film has only faults. To it is attached every undesirable and reactionary attribute. Perhaps the question we should now ask

ourselves is whether it is all true, whether the Hollywood film really is the way the avant-garde says it is. On the one hand, some of the attributes seem reasonable enough. The profit motive does loom large, most Hollywood films proclaim themselves unabashedly to be entertainment. The entertainment even fits what appear to be predetermined formulas. These films do mobilise enormous illusionistic techniques. On the other hand, the vigour and breadth of the condemnation, the ease of the oppositions should give us serious pause for reflection. Is the equation of narrative with commercialism, entertainment and passivity justified? Is it true that narrative or commercial cinema manipulates and that the avant-garde expands awareness or that narrative conveys ideology and that the experimental cinema conveys knowledge? Could there be an ideology of knowledge, could the synaesthetic cinema "manipulate" while/in order to "expand awareness," must narrative necessarily mean commercialism, must entertainment be bad, etc.? The problem here is that Hollywood is being constructed as too convenient, too easily dismissable an object, and its construction fails to grasp the complexity of Hollywood both as an institution and as a series of films; mostly, it fails to address itself to the central question of Hollywood's massive popularity.

If Hollywood really is as the avant-garde claims, why is it so dominant? To explain its dominance strictly in terms of its economic infrastructure hardly explains why audiences were originally willing, before the existence of the infrastructure or the institution, to pay to see early narrative films thereby allowing both the infrastructure and the institution to become established. To explain it in terms of a conspiracy or of manipulation fails to explain how some people managed to escape both the

manipulation and the conspiracy in order to propose a counter cinema. Likewise, to say that the audience is conditioned or has poor taste or is simply stupid augurs poorly for the success of the avant-garde enterprise. If the audience really is abject, why would it respond to the avant-garde? Furthermore, how does the audience manage to be abject while those who supposedly produce the abjection, and who are the audience's contemporaries, manage to totally escape the abjection and acquire the information necessary to make others abject? The convenience of these dichomies elides the central question: why is the Hollywood-type film so popular and so dominant? Addressing that question would cause the avant-garde to constitute itself differently. The early history of film indicates a plethora of styles and possible directions, but one type of illusionism came to dominate: the narrative realist film. It was not foisted on the public, the public was not coerced into accepting it. Quite the contrary, the public voted with its feet. Box office returns showed the popularity of some films and not of others. As we have previously stated, Hollywood as institution was built upon the internalisation of codes and not vice versa. That is to say that Hollywood imposed neither itself nor its discourse. The conditions for its institutionalisation existed before its appearance and those conditions called forth its appearance. That is to say, in essence, that the Hollywood film is popular and dominant because the state of ideology/culture produces it as such, not because of some sleight of hand. The question of its popularity must, therefore, be addressed by the avant-garde. The avant-garde's avoidance of precisely that question is the surest guarantee of all of its construction of Hollywood as its Other. It is only in terms of that Other that the avant-

garde finds any justification or self-definition. The avoidance of any questions on the pleasure of the Hollywood film can be explained by the fact that the Other structures the avant-garde. To question pleasure is to recognise not only the effectiveness of Hollywood films but also their "goodness." If they are "good," then, either the avant-garde has no real purpose or it has misconstrued its purpose and its methods. The Other, then, reinscribes itself within the discourse of the avant-garde causing it to reduplicate the discourse of the Other.

The reinscription of the Other

The reinscription of the Other occurs as the assumption by the avant-garde of the categories and ideologies of the dominant cinema. Through its insistence on the act of seeing and its fascination with the mechanisms and machines of that vision, the avant-garde reproduces the ideology of realism as well as the techniques of the dominant cinema: both fetishise the look. This leads to the same conflation of vision and knowledge in the avant-garde cinema as in the dominant cinema. It is extended to the phenomenological discussion/description of avant-garde films and to the search for an essence.

Let us examine the two lists of oppositions once again. A common theory underlies them both. Whether it be in the terminology of Gidal or of Youngblood, both necessarily posit a type of image which has an actual effect upon the viewer and/or upon the viewer's world. That is to say that they both posit an image which, on the one hand, captures the look of the world directly and without mediation, and which, on the other hand, is therefore able to capture the look of the subject. As Ken Kelman writes, avant-garde filmmakers "project genuine experience and direct vision."[22]

Or Sheldon Renan: "Some underground films are good. Some are bad. A few are great. But whatever they are, underground films are the film artist's unmitigated vision."[23] Both posit a type of image that causes the viewer to become active, that is to say to become aware of the image as image, and therefore of the act of seeing. As Gidal states:

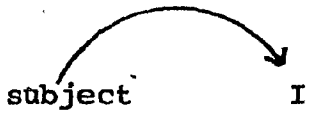
> viewing such a film is at once viewing a film and viewing the 'coming into presence' of the film, i.e. the system of consciousness that produces the work, that is produced by and in it.[24]

The consequence, then, is that some images directly affect the viewer. They capture the world in a direct and unmediated manner and when the viewer looks at them s/he sees the world. Needless to say, this is precisely the theory that holds that some images are so powerful, usually so powerfully corrupting, that viewers must be protected from them. This is exactly the rationale for censorship. In the terms of Gidal and Youngblood, however, the effect here is all for the good. So, despite the fact that they both call for the viewer's awareness of the image as image and of the act of seeing, they both also paradoxically celebrate the fascination of the image by positing an image that is transparent to and which effaces itself before reality. Both posit the possibility of seeing oneself seeing. They both posit an "I" which can say "I see myself seeing" in that the "I" becomes aware of the act of looking. In Gidal's words:

> A film practice in which one watches oneself watching is reflexive: the act of self-perception, of consciousness <u>per se</u>, becomes one

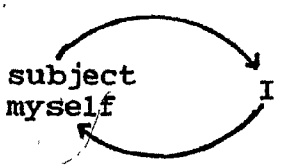
> of the basic contexts of one's confrontation with the work.[25]

Here, however, the "I" and the "myself" are not split. They both refer to the unified subject as punctual source of its own knowledge. The looking subject posits an "I" which is its representative, the "I" of the enounced:



The "I" of the enounced then appears to posit itself:

The "myself" is of course another representative of the original looking subject. The "I" of the enounced rediscovers itself in the "myself" of the enounced thereby denying any split. It is able to posit itself and to recover itself. The distance between the subject (of enunciation) and the "I" of the enounced is totally collapsed because the "I" of the enounced, which could have signalled the split in the subject, is here immediately caught up in the "myself" of the enounced, which is precisely the instance which posited the "I" in the first place:



If the distance between the two were recognised, the "I" could never see "myself" seeing. "I" could only know that "I" was a representative, a signifier of something which is not seen (the subject), which escapes every time "I" try to get nearer. It can only be known through its representatives and every approach of it (the subject) is an approach of the signifier, and the signifier is also its alienation from itself. The "I" and the "my-

self" are therefore but two terms of the same subject locked in eternal contemplation of each other. A contemplation which both affirms and extends the fascination of contemplation, a contemplation which locks the subject into its imaginary identifications, which posits it as unitary and unified. We are returned to the transcendent ego of phenomenology which reproduces the central error of psychology: "Cette erreur est de tenir pour unitaire le phénomène de la conscience lui-même. . . ."[26]

The belief in direct vision and the unified subject are precisely the constituents of the ideology of realism as propounded by Hollywood. The very work of the classical Hollywood narrative is to efface the traces of its own enunciation, that is to say to constitute a unified subject (of enunciation) by giving itself as an image of reality, as transparent to the empirical world thereby installing direct vision such that vision of the film is vision of reality itself. It is recognised, however, that the classical narrative realist film is not reality but rather a mode of representation, a specific configuration of signifiers, the work of a signifying practice. The avant-garde's mode of representation is likewise a specific configuration of signifiers, the work of another signifying practice. The error of the avant-garde appears to lie, not in recognising Hollywood as a form of illusionism, but in mistaking its own illusionism for reality. As Constance Penley states:

> Is presenting an image of a filmic process, even the process of the 'coming into presence' of the very image we are watching, a way of making that process, the image of that process, more 'there', less imaginary, (because truly 'present'), more directly apprehendable by perception? If the cinematic

signifier shares the characteristic structuration of the Imaginary, then to insist on the presence, the 'materiality' of the image, would that not be to simultaneously (unconsciously) insist on its absence, would it not risk moving the imaginary quotient up yet another notch? To show the film in its materiality - for example, to film a strip of film, or to emphasize the screen as surface through projecting not images, but clear light onto the screen - is to show the film in its 'materiality' at the very moment that it is no longer film. The piece of film footage we see is not the film, the film exists only when it is projected; the empty, white screen is also not the film, the film exists in a dialectic of image and screen - when we see a screen, even in all its 'materiality', we are just seeing a screen . . . The imaginary can only endlessly be played out, its endless metonymy can only be stopped into fictions of materiality, never materiality itself.[27]

The avant-garde reaffirms the fascination of the image. Not only, however, do these theories posit direct vision and hence a unified subject, but they also establish vision as an epistemological tool. Vision can allow one to know about the process of production of the image and about the act of seeing itself, thereby breaking the fascination of illusionism. Vision becomes equated with knowledge:

> for almost all . . . filmmakers within the American avant-garde, the cinema is an instrument of discovery, a means of coming to

know more, or more clearly, what is most essential.[28]

Seeing is knowing. As Annette Michelson succinctly puts the case: "Epistemological inquiry and cinematic experience converge, as it were, in reciprocal mimesis."[29]

As the vision has defined itself as knowledge about itself, what is mostly to be seen, according to avant-garde writings, is an "image of consciousness." Gene Youngblood writes: "When we say expanded cinema we actually mean expanded consciousness."[30] P. Adams Sitney writes of Stan Brakhage that his work describes the "birth of consciousness,"[31] of Bruce Baillie's Castro Street that it is "the image of Consciousness."[32] He refers to avant-garde filmmakers in general as "mythologists of consciousness."[33] Of Wavelength Michael Snow says: "I wanted to make a summation of my nervous system, religious inklings and esthetic ideas."[34] Annette Michelson: "There is a metaphor recurrent in contemporary discourse on the nature of consciousness: that of cinema."[35] Constance Penley again writes:

> Throughout A History of the American Avant-Garde Cinema we see the same emphasis. Writing of Maya Deren's A Study on Choreography for the Camera Lucy Fisher says: 'Thus the fluid transitions of Beatty's dance movements seem to stand as analogues for the movements of consciousness' (p73); Stuart Liebman describes Brakhage's 'great project' as 'the representation of the movements of consciousness itself' (p97); Fred Camper insists that Jordan Belson's films are 'not images at all, but forms of consciousness' (p125); Ellen Feldman: 'The use of persistence of vision becomes the foundation for creating an analogy between the

> processes of viewing film and that of consciousness' (p149) and 'the film structure functions as both analogue and an instant of consciousness.'[36]

Gidal adds: "the act of self-perception, of consciousness per se, becomes one of the basic contexts of one's confrontation with the work."[37]

In all of these instances, the subject is the transcendent ego of phenomenology locked in eternal self-contemplation. Not surprisingly, then, most of the avant-garde writing tends to be specifically phenomenological:

> The American criticism discussed here takes the phenomenological gestalt of cinema, and of avant-garde films in particular, for granted, both theoretically and historically. It takes its critical cues from what is has determined to be the nature of film and especially of these films. Thus, everyone is in agreement. The filmmakers write their Metaphors on Vision (Brakhage), Snow will talk of his project of making a film (Wavelength) that would be 'a definitive statement of pure film space and time . . . all about seeing", Warhol will remind us to 'just look'. The films themselves will be seen as the exemplary phenomenological event by their very nature.[38]

Metz links phenomenology with idealism and notes that:

> Ce n'est certainement pas par hasard si la figure majeure de l'idéalisme dans la théorie cinématographique a été la phénoménologie, dont se réclamaient explicitement Bazin et d'autres auteurs de la même époque, dont

> dérivent plus implicitement (mais de façon plus généralisée) toutes les conceptions du cinéma comme dévoilement mystique, comme "vérité" ou "réalité" se déployant de plein droit, comme apparition de l'étant, comme épiphanie . . . ces conceptions . . . rendent assez bien compte du "sentiment" qu'éprouve le Moi leurré du spectateur . . . Mais c'est le leurre du Moi qui est leur point aveugle . . . Le "il y a" de la phénoménologie proprement dite (philosophique), comme révélation ontique renvoyant à un sujet-percevant (= "cogito perceptif"), à un sujet pour lequel seulement il peut y avoir quelque chose, entretient des affinités étroites et précises avec l'instauration du signifiant de cinéma dans le Moi . . . avec le spectateur réfugié en lui-même comme pure instance de perception . . . Dans cette mesure, le cinéma est bien un "art phénoménologique" . . . Mais il ne peut l'être que parce que ses déterminations objectives le rendent tel. La position du Moi au cinéma ne tient pas à une ressemblance miraculeuse entre le cinéma et les caractères naturels de toute perception, elle est, au contraire, prévue et marquée d'avance par l'institution (outillage, disposition de la salle, dispositif mental qui intériorise tout cela).[39]

In other words, the phenomenological orientation of the avant-garde rejoins the most classically realist theories of a Bazin. Both classical realism and the avant-garde posit a unified subject, the subject of its own consciousness which it can see. This is the transcendent ego of phenomenology, the Moi leurré, the ego

which mistakes its representatives for itself and thereby denies its split. The "there is" ("il y a") of phenomenology necessarily implies this unified subject for whom there is something. The correlates of the unified subject are, therefore, on the one hand, the discourse of phenomenology, and on the other hand, the ideology of realism or of direct vision ("toutes les conceptions du cinéma comme dévoilement mystique, "vérité" ou "réalité"). The place of the ego is entirely determined, however, as Metz points out, by the institution of cinema which is such that it posits a unified subject. Here then, the Other, that is to say Hollywood, its ideology and its institution, are totally internalised or reinscribed within the discourse of the avant-garde. The subject upon which the avant-garde works, about which it seeks to produce knowledge, is precisely the subject as given by the institution of Hollywood. As Metz says:

> pourtant c'est le cinéma et la phénoménologie dans leur commune illusion de maîtrise perceptive, qui doivent être éclairés par les conditions réelles de la société et de l'homme.[40]

Consequently, though the avant-garde sets itself up as knowledge about the Imaginary, it is unable to break the hold of the Imaginary, and the discourse about the the object becomes the discourse of the object.[41] The long, detailed, phenomenological descriptions of avant-garde films reproduce and extend the discourse of the films themselves just as the avant-garde reproduces and extends the fascination of the image found in dominant cinema.

The correlate of the definition of film as the scene of consciousness, is the definition of the essence of cinema as lying in precisely those elements which

make consciousness more present. As vision and consciousness are conflated, the essence lies in the material base of cinema and in those techniques which constitute the very image. Sitney describes the project of the avant-garde as an attempt to "define . . . art in terms of the essence of [the] materials and tools."[42] John Hanhardt writes: "This cinema subverts cinematic convention by exploring the medium and its properties and materials."[43] Of Malcolm LeGrice, Constance Penley makes this broader point:

> Like almost all other writers on experimental film (David Curtis, Standish Lawder, Gene Youngblood, etc.) LeGrice emphasizes the close dependence of the avant-garde aesthetic on technological development. More so than with popular cinema, all the advances in avant-garde 'film thought' have depended on the refinement and expansion of the technological possibilities.[44]

Both the avant-garde and classical realism are greatly concerned with the "specifically cinematic," that is to say with the essence of film. Where classical theories saw it in the most perfect reproduction possible of the empirical world, the total effacement of the cinema before that world, what Bazin called "plus de cinéma," no more cinema, the avant-garde locates it in the technology of the cinema, that is to say in the foregrounding and deconstruction of the very processes which permit the existence of an image. This concern with technology is itself reminiscent of the technicism of Soviet filmmakers of the twenties, or indeed of Hollywood's own massive deployment of technology, and also of Bazin's technological determinism.[45] For Bazin, the technological evolution of the cinema was of paramount impor-

tance in affecting film styles and was forever opening new possibilities for greater and greater realism. The avant-garde's concern with technology, the fact that it depends so massively on technological change and on the investigation of technology (flicker films, zooms, camera-shake, loss of loop, film scratches, rephotography, projection set-pieces, etc.) appears as a fetishisation of the apparatus and a remanifestation of Bazinian idealism. As Metz states:

> Ce n'est pas par hasard qu'il existe au cinéma, chez certains opérateurs, certains metteurs en scène, certains critiques, certains spectateurs, un véritable "fétishisme de la technique".[46]

This fetishism is the ultimate capture by the Imaginary in the face of a denial of that capture. Avant-garde films are involved in showing the techniques which create illusionism. Showing the techniques is no less illusionistic than showing anything else. The more one insists upon the cinematic signifier, upon its presence, the more one also insists upon its absence because the cinematic signifier combines a high degree of perceptual presence with total physical absence. As Metz has argued, the cinematic signifier is imaginary in its very constitution not in what it may come to represent. If the goal of avant-garde cinema, then, is to break illusionism by expanding awareness or vision, we must question the effectivity of its strategies. What does it mean to show the process of production of illusion in a way which can itself only ever be illusionistic? On the one hand, the foregrounding and deconstruction of the techniques is a denial of illusion. The denial of the illusion is, however, the surest avowal of the illusion's power.

As in a dream, the thought that it is only a dream is a way of controlling anxiety so that the dream may go on.[47]

> The use of self-reflexive aesthetic strategies . . . whether or not the images show the functioning of the camera, projector, editing equipment or use "filmic material processes" as subject matter: celluloid scratches, splicing tape marks, processing stains, finger prints, image slip, etc. . . . If we take Metz's thesis that the primary identification is with the camera, then we must immediately question the "objectivity" of the strategy of showing the spectator those "protheses" of his own body, of his own vision: it is quite likely that this could <u>reinforce</u> the primary identification.[48]

The techniques both deny, and through the very need to deny, affirm the fascination of the image. They are a fetish.

> Quant au fétiche lui-même, dans ses manifestations cinématographiques, qui ne verrait qu'il consiste au fond dans l'<u>outillage</u> du cinéma tout entier (= la "technique"), ou dans le cinéma tout entier comme outillage et comme technique, pour les films de fiction et pour les autres? . . . Ainsi, par rapport au corps désiré--au corps de désir, plûtot--, le fétiche est dans la même position que l'outillage technique par rapport au cinéma dans son ensemble. Fétiche, le cinéma comme performance technique, comme prouesse, comme <u>exploit</u>: exploit qui souligne et

> accuse le manque où se fonde tout le dispositif (l'absence de l'objet, remplacé par son reflet), exploit qui consiste en même temps à faire oublier cette absence.[49]

Metz goes on to point out that film theory is also rooted in the fetishism of technique ("le théoricien du cinéma conserve forcément en lui . . . cet intérêt pour l'outillage sans lequel il ne serait pas motivé à l'étudier.") He points specifically to:

> les cadrages, et aussi certains mouvements d'appareils . . . ouverture et fermeture progressives en fondu, iris, fondus-enchainés.[50]

To which we might add all those techniques so prominent in the avant-garde whose function is to foreground the look by giving something to see, thereby emphasising the frame edge (Warhol's Blow Job for example, or even Sleep, Wavelength, etc.) or which trouble vision, deliberately not giving any easily recognisable object to see (almost all of Brakhage, for example).

Though the avant-garde may break narrative, it in no way breaks illusionism. On the contrary, it fetishises the illusion. Although the avant-garde establishes itself as knowledge about something, it does not necessarily manage to break away from its object or to produce the knowledge. This fetishistic activity is also the way in which the Other operates as off-screen look. In classical narrative cinema, the Other subsumes the look of the spectator in order to establish the spectator as the subject of enunciation; in avant-garde film, it reifies the look.

> These minimalist efforts, in their attempt to strip away all problematic significations and replace them with a hyper-rational and conscious knowledge, identify this enterprise as the cinema of lack par excellence: it constructs emptiness and insufficiency only in order to fill it . . . But even if fetishism is basic to art-making, there are still degrees of the quest for an unproblematic center of signification, a unified and coherent subject, a position of pure mastery, a phallus which is not decomposable. And, it is through the look, that is, across the specular regime, that the subject assures himself of the integrity of the object and thus of his own body. The minimalist film work, then, serves a defensive function for the spectator, assuring the subject control over his own body across an identification with the camera (as carrier of the look) which then reorganizes space, time and signification according to the needs of his own narcissism . . . The defenses against the drives are as important as the activity of the drives themselves and the notion of cinematic "pleasure" will have to be complicated through an analysis of the possibilities of defense afforded by the cinema.[51]

The avant-garde cinema appears, therefore, as a defence against the pleasure of the look afforded by the dominant classical realist narrative. It both affirms that pleasure and denies it. Laura Mulvey has suggested that the pleasure of the classical narrative cinema lies in how it structures the look into narrative, allowing phantasies to be played out in relation to char-

acters:

> The magic of the Hollywood style at its best (and of all the cinema which fell within its sphere of influence) arose, not exclusively, but in one important aspect, from its skilled and satisfying manipulation of visual pleasure. Unchallenged, mainstream film coded the erotic into the language of the dominant patriarchal order. In the highly developed Hollywood cinema it was only through these codes that the alienated subject, torn in his imaginary memory by a sense of loss, by the terror of potential lack in phantasy, came near to finding a glimpse of satisfaction: through its formal beauty and its play on his own formative obsessions.[52]

But, as Penley adds:

> In terms of a political filmmaking practice, a practice whose emphasis is on transformation rather than transgression, is there any way to eliminate the imaginary relation between spectator and screen? Is there any way to systematically subvert this relation without ending up in the impasse described above.[53]

The question is important for it is only by breaking the imaginary hold of the image that the avant-garde can free itself from its Other to reconceptualise its entire problematic. In the face of a highly persistent imaginary capture which is the very stuff of the cinematic signifier and which structures

the entire institution of cinema, the obvious answer appears to insist more upon symbolic relations and less upon imaginary ones. Barthes suggests that the film experience be "complicated":

> Comment se décoller du miroir? . . . Certes, il est toujours possible de concevoir un art qui rompra le cercle duel, la fascination filmique, et déliera l'empoissement, l'hypnose du vraisemblable (de l'analogique), par quelque recours au regard (ou à l'écoute) critique du spectateur; n'est-ce pas cela dont il s'agit dans l'effet brechtien de distanciation? Bien des choses peuvent aider au réveil de l'hynose (imaginaire et/ou idéologique), les procédés mêmes de l'art épique, la culture du spectateur ou sa vigilance idéologique: contrairement à l'hystérie classique, l'imaginaire disparaîtrait, dès lors qu'on l'observerait. Mais il est une autre manière d'aller au cinéma (autrement qu'armé par le discours de la contre-idéologie): en s'y laissant fasciner <u>deux fois</u>: par l'image et par ses entours, comme si j'avais deux corps pervers prêt à fétichiser, non l'image, mais précisément ce qui l'excède: le grain du son, la salle, le noir, la masse obscure des autres corps, les rais de la lumière, l'entrée, la sortie: bref pour distancer, "décoller", je complique une "relation" par une "situation".[54]

Paying attention to what exceeds the relation (the Imaginary). What exceeds it is the sound of the voice, the darkness, etc.: the history of the institution. In the same vein, Constance Penley suggests:

> There is perhaps only one way to complicate this particular (imaginary) relation: language can offer us an oblique route through the image; it can "unstick" us a little from the screen as Barthes would say . . . Images have very little analytical power in themselves; their power of fascination and identification is too strong. This is why there must always be a commentary <u>on</u> the image simultaneously with the commentary <u>of</u> and <u>with</u> them.[55]

Barthes and Penley are, here, both calling for a more materialist approach and underlining again the greater or lesser futility of work on the processes of perception, by themselves. Heath states:

> [This] is where it becomes possible to say that the narrative space of film is today not simply a theoretical and practical actuality but is a crucial and political avant-garde problem in a way which offers perspectives on the existing terms of that actuality. Deconstruction is quickly the impasse of formal device, an aesthetic of transgression when the need is an actuality of transformation, and a politically consequent materialism in film is not to be expressed as veering contact past internal content in order to proceed with "film as film" but rather as a work on the constructions and relations of meaning and subject in a specific signifying practice in a given socio-historical situation, a work that is much less on "codes" than on the operations of narrativisation. At its most effectively

> critical, moreover, that work may well bear little resemblance to what in the given situation is officially acknowledged and defined as "avant-garde"; in particular . . . it may well involve an action at the limits of narrative within the narrative film, at the limits of its fictions of unity.[56]

What we have, then, across these three quotations is a call for work on history: the history of the institution, of the viewing situation, of the dominant form of cinema. That work would necessarily recognise the specificity of the signifying practice and, therefore, only study it in determinate socio-historical situations. It would not be work upon codes, for to recognise codes, to foreground and deconstruct them, only leads to the impasse we have encountered so far in our discussion of the avant-garde cinema. It would be a work upon the history of these codes. That avant-garde already exists.

> The recent work of several women filmmakers focussing on feminist concerns is less a work on "codes" and "perceptual processes" than it is on narrative, fiction and the construction of another subject relation to the screen. It is not the Modernist pressure towards finding the most "advanced" solution to formal problems which motivates filmmakers like Chantal Ackerman, Marguerite Duras, Yvonne Rainer, Babette Mangolte, Jackie Raynal and others . . . It is the pressure of a specific socio-historical situation which demands this response, a situation in which narrative and the subject placement it invokes is dominant . . . The

> strategies of these feminist filmmakers point to a manner of reworking subjectivity within an analysis of social/sexual relations which avoid the sorts of transgressions of the symbolic paternal function which risk ending in identification with patriarchy.[57]

What is the subject constituted by the avant-garde? It is a subject which has entirely internalised the institution of the dominant cinema and which fetishises that institution and its codes. It is, strictly speaking, a perverse subject: one which knows it is split and yet denies it, one which affirms the Imaginary while trying to break with it. Hence, its identification with patriarchy which constructs sexual difference such that perversion (fetishism) is one of its modalities. The question of the constitution of the subject, therefore, is closely linked to the question of sexual difference and of the way in which that difference expresses itself in given historical regimes (i.e. patriarchy).

The cinema is a play between framentation and wholeness of the image, the dominant cinema tending to restore wholeness. The avant-garde appears to insist upon fragmentation and the pleasure is derived from the knowledge that it will not restore wholeness. The knowledge, to be precise, is of wholeness, of the dominant cinema, and the enjoyment resides in the recreation, through negation, of that pleasure. The avant-garde denies, and in so doing, affirms: the fetishistic position by definition. Though the look of the Other is here inscribed as absent, the look of the spectator is not merged with it. The look of the spectator is made to want to see beyond the image. The avant-garde is a <u>mise-en-scène</u> of desire, giving something beyond which the eye asks to

see.

> Dans l'apologue antique concernant Zeuxis et Parrhasios, le mérite de Zeuxis est d'avoir fait des raisins qui ont attiré des oiseaux. L'accent n'est point mis sur le fait que ces raisins fussent d'aucune façon des raisins parfaits, l'accent est mis sur le fait que même l'oeil des oiseaux y a été trompé. La preuve, c'est que son confrère Parrhasios triomphe de lui, d'avoir su peindre sur la muraille un voile, un voile si ressemblant que Zeuxis, se tournant vers lui, lui a dit - Alors, et maintenant, montre-nous, toi, ce que tu as fait derrière ça. Par quoi il est montré que ce dont il s'agit, c'est bien de tromper l'oeil. Triomphe, sur l'oeil, du regard.[58]

This discussion of the avant-garde in the light of the concept of the Other has taken us to a point which marks its limit: the question of history. That is to say that the concept of the Other, though it allows us to discuss imaginary captures, necessarily refers us to the Symbolic, in that the types and shapes of captures always exist at specific socio-historical times. To say that the avant-garde fetishises the look is meaningless unless it is specified how that comes about, unless some evidence can be offered. Any evidence offered will simultaneously and necessarily be evidence of how the look is fetishised at a specific time, in a specific place, in a specific way. So, though we are dealing with a problem of the Imaginary, it only occurs in the Symbolic. This would appear to be a limit to all work which defines itself as being upon the Imaginary. Even Freud did not simply discover the Oedipus complex, but

he discovered it under a specific form. This is the necessary imbrication of Imaginary and Symbolic which has been a thread throughout this thesis, moving from semiotics, discourse theory, and discursive formations in the field of the Symbolic to signifying practice, the look, and the subject in the field of the Imaginary. The movement now returns us to the Symbolic for the question of the Other raises very real questions for any semiotic or historical conceptualisation of the cinema.

If we may now take it as demonstrated that the dominant classical Hollywood narrative is the Other of the avant-garde and that it structures the avant-garde's self-definition and practice, we may indicate some of the historical problems raised by the concept of the Other, problems which lie beyond its scope and which mark its limit, but problems which may also in their turn return upon the Imaginary.

Some problems of history

Any understanding of the avant-garde cinema requires a more than simply passing knowledge of the narrative realist Hollywood cinema; it is eminently a problem of film history. It should then not logically be possible to speak of an avant-garde film practice prior to the consolidation of narrative film practices. Yet, narrative film practices themselves are at best a shifting and unstable configuration. Even if the example of Hollywood is taken as the archetype and epitome of a dominant film practice, the history of Hollywood would show quite clearly that styles, economic infrastrucutres and conceptions of realism, to name only the most obvious, had changed quite dramatically. This is an extremely difficult problem to resolve for clearly institutionalisation did not happen overnight nor in a simply linear manner. Different codes were internalised

and were dominant at different times. Institutionalisation is an ongoing process expressing itself in more or less stable but always temporary configurations. It is the ongoing nature of the process of institutionalisation that makes it difficult to speak of the avant-garde in general or of any particular avant-garde without immediately specifying its Other. As it is an ongoing process, to grasp it is invariable to grasp it at a single, given, highly determinate time, thereby circumscribing any possible avant-garde to just a few films. In that case, either the avant-garde is posited as too vast--because the specificity of its Other is ignored--or as too constricted--because the specificity of its Other is taken into account. Hence, the need to find some element of pertinence to define the avant-garde other than the historical contemporaneity of a number of films. Hence, also, the obvious difficulty of this thesis to select any specific avant-garde. It was resolved, in this case, by insisting on a time period when the institution of Hollywood, the Other, was incontestably consolidated. Then, the thrust of the analysis was to show not what the various films had in common (which could be an attempt at essentialism) but to show that their Other was constant--and constant because it had been more or less stabilised as an institution. The difficulty of establishing any single avant-garde is reflected in avant-garde writings. Sitney dates the American avant-garde, what he calls the visionary film, from 1943 to the present without mentioning whether or not it has reached the end of its historical existence. Parker Tyler dates the "underground film" from 1957.[59] David Curtis sees fifty years of relatively constant evolution beginning in France in 1919.[60] Youngblood does not seem to go back much beyond 1960. In the light of an inability to fix with any immediate precision the date of the consoli-

dation of a dominant film practice (should it be before or after the arrival of sound, before or after the establishment of A and B films, before or after the U.S. anti-trust suits, would there be two or several historically definable institutions, etc.), the way then seems open to suggest that before any such consolidation, all films were more or less avant-garde. Though films such as The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari, Man With a Movie Camera, Battleship Potemkin, etc., have long ago passed into the pantheon of history's remarkable films, they also maintain a reputation precisely for their "avant-gardism" and have been appropriated by various tendencies precisely because of this quality. Vertov's films have variously been hailed as the fore-runners of the documentary in all its transformations (direct cinema, cinéma vérité, war documentary, etc.), and of the avant-garde cinema. Similar appropriations have been made as regards innumerable other films. It was only through time and within specific filmic practices that given devices, styles, techniques, etc., became integrated into the mainstream dominant film practice and ceased to be part of a specialised, more or less marginal, avant-garde practice. The distance between Birth of a Nation and Entr'acte may, therefore, not be as great as the distance between either of these films and any more recent Hollywood films.

Obviously, this casts rather serious aspersions upon the film histories which already exist, those which record the succession of events and those which construct a parallel and separate history of the avant-garde cinema as though it existed outside of, or in mere opposition to, other film practices. These histories have for the most part been constructed without reference to history in general and

most film histories are 'inventories' of

> directors and stars and most equate the growth of film with changes in its technology. The difficult task of constructing a methodology for investigating film and its past - for coming to grips with the social, political, and economic forces which are the motor of its history - this task has been laid aside and the end result [is] a series of books that catalogue almost all the same things.[61]

The situation as regards the avant-garde cinema is hardly any better:

> Visionary Film and A History of the American Avant-Garde Cinema are the first critical histories of the American avant-garde film . . . together with The Essential Cinema . . . Although [none] claim to be exhaustive or definitive, they discuss very nearly the same filmmakers and cover the same years . . . The fact that there is such consensus on the 'sublime achievement' . . . of the American avant-garde according to the first scholarly books devoted to it suggests that a particular corpus and a particular interpretation of its development are quickly becoming standardised, thus threatening the critical recognition of those films which are not included.[62]

The films least discussed by these histories also tend to be those films which work upon narrative and fiction, that is to say, precisely those films which break with the Imaginary, precisely those films which share neither the presuppositions nor the discourse of the "traditional" avant-garde.

That film histories should all appear to operate from the same a-historical paradigm is unsatisfying in itself, but even more distressing from an avant-garde perspective is that the history of the avant-garde should so easily be constructed in isolation from the rest of cinema.

The question of how specific practices become part of dominant or of avant-garde film practices and of how the discursive formations in which the practices are necessarily embedded (i.e., a zoom in a western is not the same as a the zoom in Wavelength, not because of some inherent quality of the zoom but because of the text in which it occurs) affect these appropriations could very well provide another key to the history of the avant-garde film practice.

Interestingly, avant-garde theorists are constantly posing the problem of discursive formations, as an unavoidable consequence of trying to write the history of a signifying practice, though they do not formulate it as such. Hans Richter writes:

> It is true that the commercial entertainment-film uses many of the liberating elements discovered since 1895 by Méliès, Griffith, Eisenstein, and others.[63]

And in attempting to distinguish her film practice from that of others, Maya Deren said:

> We have the fantasy films of Jean Vigo . . . and we have the avant-garde films that are set to poems or to poetic prose . . . then there's what I would term the "severe formalism" of Sergei Eisenstein . . . There are, of course, the Cocteau myth films . . . And we might also include a special class of na-

> turalistic poetry documents . . . Now these are, admittedly, only the main leads of a very broad field, indeed. Many definitions are required in order to isolate the poetic content and the poetic potentialities in these various manifestations.[64]

And Parker Tyler in a rare moment of insight states the case in terms of "stealing":

> the small independent avant-garde as a whole can always come up with a fresh approach, a new technical method, an isolated "idea" . . . the sad irony is that some technical feat . . . is exactly what, since it is free-floating, is the easiest to steal.[65]

The problem for these writers is that rather than recognise the films as specific configurations of signifiers, they want to essentialise them and see them as expressions of the artist's individual genius. This is another effect of the Other. Avant-garde criticism reproduces the idolatry of the dominant cinema. It even has its own "auteurism" for the avant-garde is the cinema of auteurs par excellence.

If we can fairly pose the hypothesis, then, that under certain historical circumstances, i.e., before the consolidation of a dominant film practice, all film practices are more or less "avant-garde," then we might also fairly propose that a more useful object of study would be, not the avant-garde cinema, however it is defined, but rather the history of cinematic practices and of their appropriation to different dominant or avant-garde practices. This would lead to a breaking down of any rigid distinctions between dominant films and avant-garde films. It would tend to constitute

them as socially defined poles or tendencies. This poses the study of film as the study of signifying practices and the study of praetices as the study of discursive formations.

Even if we adopt the point of view of discursive formations with its subsequent relativisation of the notion of avant-garde, we are still left, in a purely phenomenal sense, with large blocs of films having undeniable distinctions amongst them. This is important to understand for the whole thrust of the debate so far may appear to have been to relativise notions of the avant-garde and of the dominant cinema to such an extent that meaningful distinctions between types of film have become impossible. It could appear that this project serves to blur distinctions and to make definitions more difficult rather than clearer. That would be the opposite of what is intended.

The temptation, when faced with the task of defining a type of cinema, is to have recourse to the metaphor of genre, to say that the avant-garde cinema, like the western or the gangster film, is a genre. This methaphor is, however, inadequate. Let us consider the western and the avant-garde as genres.

Whenever we look at a western or an avant-garde film, we realise that they are not exactly like everything else in society. We define them by difference. We begin, therefore, by positing a background against which are played out a number of differences and which give these differences their meaning. The answer to what constitutes difference is what gives us the notion of genre.

Usually, the difference of the western and of the avant-garde film is answered as follows: the western is different from the non-western because of its subject matter (the settling of the western U.S. by white men between 1860 and 1880, order vs solipsism, civilisation

vs barbarity, etc.), because of its treatment of the subject matter (use of space and natural elements, actors whose demeanour suggests ruggedness, etc.), because of its believed effects (reaffirmation of the triumph of good over evil, pride, patriotism, etc.). The avant-garde film is different from the non-avant-garde because of its subject matter (personal/intellectual/artistic exploration/self expression), because of its treatment of that subject matter (formal devices), and because of its believed effects (greater awareness of film as medium, etc.).

Clearly, these answers all hinge on the second element: the treatment of the subject matter. If the settlement of the western U.S. were not treated with wide open spaces, etc., it would not be a western but possibly a documentary. If the avant-garde film were not treated formalistically, it would not be avant-garde but possibly a narrative biography. The manner in which subject matter is treated constitutes a convention. Certain conventions signify certain genres. Yet, these usual definitions of genre are unsatisfying either because they impose a priori categories or because they are essentialist.

If we say that the western is characterised by x and y conventions, we have selected out a number of arbitrary characteristics and said that all objects exhibiting those characteristics will be westerns. What is the justification for selecting those characteristics and not others? A given choice of characteristics can only be justified on the basis of pre-existing conceptions of what the western is. But if we put aside our preconceptions, we are faced with a number of arbitrary characteristics. It would be possible for anyone to select any other imaginable characteristics and create any other imaginable category. There is no necessary link between the category and its characteristics other

than that we have chosen to see a necessary link. To proceed in this manner says more about the selecting agency than it does about the object of study.

It could be, and is, argued that such categories are not arbitrary or a priori but derived from actual observation. This still does not answer the question of why the observer observed some characteristics and not others. Nonetheless, one could argue that any category naturally groups dissimilar objects and that when the same dissimilar objects are found together time and again, a category exists. Such a category is of course applicable only to a closed system for if a category were observed to include all the usual dissimilar objects save one, or with one too many, then it would cease to be the category in question. To say, therefore, that all western have certain characteristics implies that all westerns have been produced and that no new ones will ever be produced. This is essential lest a new western introduce a new characteristic and thereby destroy the existing category. On the other hand, it implies that should any new western ever be produced, it will somehow partake of the essential nature of all previous westerns. If one begins to define the category "western" as soon as the first western is produced, then either the category only contains that one western or else it is constantly being modified and destroyed as a category in order to accommodate all the new westerns which bring new elements into play. Since, obviously, all westerns have not yet been produced, we are not yet dealing with a closed system and such a category (the western as genre) can not yet exist.

To avoid such a logical obstacle, it is usually argued that a category such as the western exists above and beyond all the specific examples of the category yet to be or that have been produced, that is to say that there exists an essence of the western. Bazin

argued along precisely these lines when he posited the existence of a "superwestern" from which all other westerns derived and of whose essence they all partook. How did Bazin know that a film was a western? Because it partook of the essence of westerns. What was the essence of westerns? It was composed of the mass of all western films. The essence justified the corpus and the corpus justified the essence. Bazin began by assuming the existence of that which he set out to prove and then, upon having discovered what he had constructed in the first place, congratulated his logic for having been so effective. We are then arguing that all westerns share some third element, across all their similarities and dissimilarities, which marks them unmistakably as westerns. That third element has to be some ideal-perfect state of the genre which all other representatives of the genre only approximate to a greater or lesser degree. This establishes genres as tautological essences and mystifies them more than it explains them. In fact, it situates them beyond the realm of explanation.

The same problems occur vis-à-vis the avant-garde as genre. The term avant-garde, however, serves a convenient purpose. It has a certain cultural reference which vast numbers of people recognise. Sociologically, therefore, it does refer to something identifiable. In the area of film theory, however, it is a tautology best replaced by the notions of signifying practice, configuration of signifiers, and discursive formation.

As a signifying practice, film is also a social practice. That is to say that it is carried out under specific social and historical conditions and therefore always takes on a specific form. For the signifying practice of film to be realised under its specific form nowadays requires a great deal of self-consciouness just to get the product finished. If the makers of a

western were not aware of the nature of their product, they would be incapable of defining their work within the dominant filmic practice, incapable of using the right conventions, incapable of offering their product as western, and hence, incapable of reaching that segment of the population willing to pay to see a western. This of course reintroduces the question of conventions for even (especially) the conscious makers of a western must make use of convention. Conventions are themselves social practices which signify the western and also the producers' own awareness of what they are doing. The western and the avant-garde cinema have their own methods of financing (corporate, private), their own place of production (studio, filmmaker's available space), and their means of distribution (institutional and widespread, informal and restricted), and it is ultimately these factors which determine the existence or non-existence of the genre. The producers must be aware, must conceive of themselves as producing the product in question: specific legal, financial and practical considerations determine the modes of production, and specific modes of circulation/distribution determine the realisation of the product in the appropriate market. The fact that the producers are aware of themselves producing a specific product and that the consumers of the specific product are likewise aware of consuming it, that the product should offer itself as specific, all these are social practices determined, amongst others, by the construction of an Other against which that practice may define itself. As social practices change so do the various awareness, the manner in which the product is offered, the very product which is to be offered. This is the only way we can account for the fact that the avant-garde cinema and the western have changed so much since the twenties.

Unless we understand the avant-garde (and other)

cinema as social practices caught up in the specific determinations of production, distribution, and consumption, at determinate historical times, we can not, on the one hand, even begin to describe that cinema, even in its broadest outlines, and on the other hand, can not account for its evolution except by positing that evolution as the successive posing and resolution of purely aesthetic problems, totally internal to the medium, and without any reference whatsoever to the outside world. This elides altogether the role of history which presides at the creation of any and every social product, and cuts the bridges between the avant-garde and other cinemas. Such an a-historical notion of aesthetic change leads right back to essentialist and a priori categories.

Again, therefore, the notion of avant-garde cinema can be usefully replaced by the notions of signifying practice, configuration of signifiers, and discursive formation. The sociological usefulness of the term "avant-garde" does not dispense with more rigourous theorisation.

Notes

[1] Deconstruction refers here to a greater or lesser degree of self-conscious manipulation of these devices. As when Brakhage uses camera shake, for example, as a critique of the Hollywood ideology of smooth, stable surfaces. It therefore implies a certain awareness of various uses of the devices. In this sense, furthermore, deconstruction is a hallmark of formalism. Deconstruction, then, is not intended in the sense of "Derridian" deconstruction, that is to say in the sense of a tracking down of the epistemological formulations of a civilisation or culture.

[2] Christian Metz, Le signifiant imaginaire (Paris: Union Générale d'Editions, 1977), p. 9.

[3] Christian Metz, Le signifiant imaginaire, p. 11.

[4] Christian Metz, Le signifiant imaginaire, pp. 17-18.

[5] Marilyn Singer, Introd., A History of the American Avant-Garde Cinema, John Hanhardt, ed. (New York: The American Federation of the Arts, 1976), p. 11.

[6] Amos Vogel quoted in Marilyn Singer, A History of the American Avant-Garde Cinema, p. 11.

[7] See, Vachel Lindsay, The Art of the Moving Pictures (1915) (Reprint New York: Liveright, 1970); Rudolf Arnheim, Film As Art (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957).

[8] P. Adams Sitney, Visionary Film (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. viii.

[9] Parker Tyler, Underground Film (New York: Grove Press, 1969), p. 2.

[10] Parker Tyler, Underground Film, p. 5.

[11] Parker Tyler, Underground Film, p. 178.

[12] Parker Tyler, Film Culture Reader. Ed. P. Adams Sitney (New York: Praeger, 1970), p. 43.

[13] Jonas Mekas, Film Culture Reader, p. 74.

[14] Jonas Mekas, Film Culture Reader, p.

[15] Collective statement, Film Culture Reader, pp. 80, 81, 82.

[16] John Hanhardt, ed., A History of the American Avant-Garde Cinema, p. 21.

[17] See, Gene Youngblood, Expanded Cinema (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1970), pp. 59-65.

[18] See, Peter Gidal, ed., Structural Film Anthology (London: British Film Institute, 1976).

[19] Gene Youngblood, Expanded Cinema, pp. 59, 60.

[20] Constance Penley, "The Avant-Garde and Its Imaginary," Camera Obscura, No. 2 (1977), p. 8.

[21] Peter Gidal, Structural Film Anthology, pp. 2,3.

[22] Ken Kelman, Film Culture Reader, article #39.

[23] John Hanhardt, ed., A History of the American Avant-Garde Cinema, p. 17.

[24] Peter Gidal, Structural Film Anthology, p. 2.

[25] Peter Gidal, Structural Film Anthology, p. 10.

[26] Jacques Lacan, Ecrits (Paris: Seuil, 1966), p. 831.

[27] Constance Penley, "The Avant-Garde and Its Imaginary," Camera Obscura, p. 11.

[28] P. Adams Sitney, Visionary Film, p. 270.

[29] Annette Michelson, Structural Film Anthology. Ed. Peter Gidal, p. 38.

[30] Gene Youngblood, Expanded Cinema, p. 41.

[31] P. Adams Sitney, Visionary Film, p. 173.

[32] P. Adams Sitney, Visionary Film, p. 171.

[33] P. Adams Sitney, Visionary Film, p. 375.

[34] Michael Snow, Structural Film Anthology. Ed. Peter Gidal, p. 38.

[35] Annette Michelson, Structural Film Anthology. Ed. Peter Gidal, p. 36.

[36] Constance Penley and Janet Bergstrom, "The Avant-

Garde Histories and Theories," Screen, 19, No. 3 (1978), pp. 116-117.

[37] Peter Gidal, Strucutral Film Anthology, p. 10.

[38] Constance Penley and Janet Bergstrom, "The Avant-Garde Histories and Theories," Screen, p. 118.

[39] Metz, Le signifiant imaginaire, pp. 74-74.

[40] Metz, Le signifiant imaginaire, p. 78.

[41] Penley and Bergstrom, "The Avant-Garde Histories and Theories," Screen, state: "Criticism's function will be to refine our seeing and affirm the modernist credo of knowledge through self-consciousness. The discourse about the object becomes (is the same as) the discourse of the object."

[42] P. Adams Sitney, Visionary Film, p. 235.

[43] John Hanhardt, ed., A History of the American Avant-Garde Cinema, p. 21.

[44] Constance Penley, "The Avant-Garde and Its Imaginary," Camera Obscura, p. 20.

[45] See, André Bazin, Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?, I, especially his essay "L'évolution du langage cinématographique," in which he explicitly and consistently links an increase in screen realism to advances in technology: sound, colour, cinemascope, etc., all give a more "realistic" image of the empirical world thereby allowing the image to become that much more transparent to its object.

[46] Metz, Le signifiant imaginaire, p. 101.

[47] See, Sigmund Freud, "The Interpretation of Dreams," Vol. IV-V of The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. Ed. and trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), ch. VI (I).

[48] Constance Penley, "The Avant-Garde and Its Imaginary," Camera Obscura, p. 17.

[49] Metz, Le signifiant imaginaire, pp. 101-102.

[50] Metz, Le signifiant imaginaire, p. 104.

[51] Constance Penley, "The Avant-Garde and Its

Imaginary," Camera Obscura, p. 24.

[52] Laura Mulvey, "Narrative Cinema and Visual Pleasure," Screen, 16, No. 3 (1975), p. 8.

[53] Constance Penley, "The Avant-Garde and Its Imaginary," Camera Obscura, p. 25.

[54] Roland Barthes, "En sortant du cinéma," Communications, No. 23 (1975), pp. 106-107.

[55] Constance Penley, "The Avant-Garde and Its Imaginary," Camera Obscura, p. 25.

[56] Stephen Heath, "Narrative Space," Screen, 17, No. 3 (1976), pp. 108-109.

[57] Constance Penley, "The Avant-Garde and Its Imaginary," Camera Obscura, pp. 25-26.

[58] Jacques Lacan, Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse (Paris: Seuil, 1973), p. 95.

[59] Parker Tyler, Underground Film, p. 10

[60] David Curtis, Experimental Film: A Fifty Year Evolution (New York: Dell, 1971).

[61] Ron Burnett, Cinetracts, 1, No. 1 (1978), p. 63.

[62] Penley and Bergstrom, "The Avant-Garde Histories and Theories," Screen, pp. 122-123.

[63] Hans Richter, Film Culture Reader, p. 16.

[64] Maya Dereh, Film Culture Reader, p. 172.

[65] Parker Tyler, Underground Film, p. 196.

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