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Oedipal Net(les) while Playing with De Lauraedipus Mulvey, or, He May Be Off Screen, but. . . .', *Independent*, April 1986, 22.

27. Ibid. 25.
28. Yvonne Rainer, *The Man Who Envied Women*, Filmscript, 58; also cited in Helen Demichiel, 'Rainer's Manhattan', *Afterimage*, December 1985, 19. There is a sense in which Trisha's contorted, and painful effort to express a female identity for which no current word or established visual form will do goes cautiously in the direction of Monique Wittig's much blunter statement, 'Lesbians are not women' ('The Straight Mind,' *Feminist Issues*, 1 (Summer 1980), 110). But the feeling that such is 'the direction of unwomanliness' where feminism at its best does take one is my own personal feeling, not, obviously, Yvonne Rainer's—or at least not yet.

15 The Orthopsychic Subject: Film Theory and the Reception of Lacan

Joan Copjec*

Through his appearance in *Television*, Lacan parodies the image of himself—of his teaching—that we have, to a large extent, received and accepted. Standing alone behind his desk, hands now supporting him as he leans assertively forward, now thrown upward in some emphatic gesture, Lacan stares directly out at us, as he speaks in a voice that none would call smooth of '*quelque chose, n'est-ce pas?*' This '*quelque chose*' is, of course, never made specific, never revealed, and so it comes to stand for a fact or a system of facts that is known, but not by us. This image recalls the one presented to Tabard by the principal in Vigo's *Zero for Conduct*. It is the product of the childish, paranoid notion that all our private thoughts and actions are spied on by and visible within a public world represented by parental figures. In appearing to us, then, by means of the 'mass media',[1] Lacan seems to confirm what we may call our 'televisual' fear—that we are perfectly, completely visible to a gaze that observes us from afar (*tele* meaning both 'distant' and [from *telos*] 'complete').[2] That this proffered image is parodic, however, is almost surely to be missed, so strong are our misperceptions of Lacan. And, so, the significance of the words with which he opens his address and by which he immediately calls attention to his self-parody: 'I always speak the truth. Not the whole truth, because there's no way to say it all. Saying the whole truth is materially impossible; words fail. Yet it's through this very impossibility that the truth holds onto the real.'[3]—the significance of these words may also be missed, as they have been generally in our theories of representation, the most sophisticated example of which is film theory.

Let me first, in a kind of establishing shot, summarize what I take to be the central misconception of film theory: believing itself to be

* Joan Copjec, 'The Delirium of Clinical Perfection' from *Oxford Literary Review*, vol. 8, 1–2 (1986), special edition on 'Sexual Difference' edited by Robert Young, reprinted by permission of *Oxford Literary Review* and the author.

following Lacan, it conceives the screen as mirror;[4] in doing so, however, it operates in ignorance of, and at the expense of, Lacan's more radical insight, whereby the mirror is conceived as screen.

THE SCREEN AS MIRROR

This misconception is at the base of film theory's formulation of two concepts—the apparatus and the gaze—and of their interrelation. One of the clearest and most succinct descriptions of this interrelation—and I must state here that it is *because* of its clarity, because of the way it responsibly and explicitly articulates assumptions endemic to film theory, that I cite this description, not to impugn it or its authors particularly—is provided by the editors of *Re-vision*, a collection of essays by feminists on film. Although its focus is the special situation of the female spectator, the description outlines the general relations among the terms *gaze*, *apparatus*, and *subject* as they are stated by film theory. After quoting a passage from Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* in which Bentham's architectural plan for the panopticon is laid out, the *Re-vision* editors make the following claim:

> The dissociation of the see/being seen dyad [which the panoptic arrangement of the central tower and annular arrangement ensures] and the sense of permanent visibility seem perfectly to describe the condition not only of the inmate in Bentham's prison but of the woman as well. For defined in terms of her visibility, she carries her own Panopticon with her wherever she goes, her self-image a function of her being for another. . . . . The subjectivity assigned to femininity within patriarchal systems is inevitably bound up with the structure of the look and the localization of the eye as authority.[5]

The panoptic gaze defines *perfectly* the situation of the woman under patriarchy: that is, it is the very image of the structure that obliges the woman to monitor herself with a patriarchal eye. This structure thereby guarantees that even her innermost desire will always be not a transgression but rather an implantation of the law, that even the 'process of theorizing her own untenable situation' can only reflect back to her 'as in a mirror' her subjugation to the gaze.

The panoptic gaze defines, then, the *perfect*, that is, the total visibility of the woman under patriarchy, of any subject under any social order, that is to say, of any subject at all. For the very condition and substance of the subject's subjectivity is his or her subjectivation by

the law of the society that produces that subject. One becomes visible—not only to others but also to oneself—only through (by seeing through) the categories constructed by a specific, historically defined society. These categories of visibility are categories of knowledge.

The perfection of vision and knowledge can only be procured at the expense of invisibility and nonknowledge. According to the logic of the panoptic apparatus, these last do not and (in an important sense) cannot exist. One might summarize this logic—thereby revealing it to be more questionable than it is normally taken to be—by stating it thus: since all knowledge (or visibility) is produced by society (that is, all that it is possible to know comes not from reality but from socially constructed categories of implementable thought), since *all* knowledge is produced, *only* knowledge (or visibility) is produced, or *all* that is produced is knowledge (visible). This is too glaring a non sequitur—the *then* clauses are too obviously not necessary consequences of the *if* clauses—for it ever to be statable as such. And yet this lack of logical consequence is precisely what must be at work and what must go unobserved in the founding of the seeing/being seen dyad that figures the comprehension of the subject by the laws that rule over its construction.

Here—one can already imagine the defensive protestations—I have overstated my argument—there *is* a measure of indetermination available even to the panoptic argument. This indetermination is provided for by the fact that the subject is constructed not by one monolithic discourse but by a multitude of different discourses. What cannot be determined in advance are the articulations that may result from the chance encounter—sometimes on the site of the subject—of these various discourses. A subject of a legal discourse may find itself in conflict with itself as a subject of a religious discourse. The negotiation of this conflict may produce a solution that was anticipated by neither of the contributing discourses. Some film theorists have underlined this part of Foucault's work in an attempt to locate possible sources of resistance to institutional forms of power, to clear a space for a feminist cinema, for example.[6] I would argue, however, that this simple atomization and multiplication of subject positions and this *partes extra partes* description of conflict does not lead to a radical undermining of knowledge or power. Not only is it the case that at each stage what is *produced* is conceived in Foucauldian theory to be a *determinate* thing or position, but, in addition, knowledge and power are conceived as the overall effect of the *relations among* the various

conflicting positions and discourses. Differences do not threaten panoptic power; they feed it.

This is quite different from the Lacanian argument, which states that that which is produced by a signifying system can never be determinate. Conflict in this case does not result from the clash between two different positions but from the fact that no position defines a resolute identity. Nonknowledge or invisibility is not registered as the wavering and negotiations between two certainties, two meanings or positions, but as the undermining of every certainty, the incompleteness of every meaning and position.[7] Incapable of articulating this more radical understanding of nonknowledge, the panoptic argument is ultimately *resistant to resistance*, unable to conceive of a discourse that would refuse rather than refuel power.

My purpose here is not simply to point out the crucial differences between Foucault's theory and Lacan's but also to explain how the two theories have failed to be perceived *as* different—how a psychoanalytically informed film theory came to see itself as expressible in Foucauldian terms, despite the fact that these very terms aimed at dispensing with psychoanalysis as a method of explanation. In Foucault's work the techniques of disciplinary power (of the construction of the subject) are conceived as capable of 'materially penetrat[ing] the body in depth without depending even on the mediation of the subject's own representations. If power takes hold on the body, this isn't through its having first to be interiorized in people's consciousness.'[8] For Foucault, the conscious and the unconscious are categories constructed by psychoanalysis and other discourses (philosophy, literature, law, etc.): like other socially constructed categories, they provide a means of rendering the subject visible, governable, trackable. They are categories through which the modern subject is apprehended and apprehends itself *rather than* (as psychoanalysis maintains) processes of apprehension; they are not processes that engage or are engaged by social discourses (film texts, for example). What the *Re-vision* editors force us to confront is the fact that in film theory these radical differences have largely gone unnoticed or have been nearly annulled. Thus, though the gaze is conceived as a metapsychological concept central to the description of the subject's psychic engagement with the cinematic apparatus, the concept, as we shall see, is formulated in a way that makes any psychical engagement redundant.

My argument is that film theory operated a kind of 'Foucauldization' of Lacanian theory; an early misreading of Lacan turned him

into a 'spendthrift' Foucault—one who wasted a bit too much theoretical energy on such notions as the antithetical meaning of words, or repression, or the unconscious. It is the perceived frugality of Foucault (about which we will have more to say later), every bit as much as the recent and widely proclaimed interest in history, that has guaranteed Foucault's ascendancy over Lacan in the academy.

It was through the concept of the apparatus—the economic, technical, ideological institution—of cinema that the break between contemporary film theory and its past was effected.[9] This break meant that cinematic representation was considered to be not a clear or distorted reflection of a prior and external reality but one among many social discourses that helped to construct reality and the spectatorial subject. As is well known, the concept of the apparatus was not original to film theory but was imported from epistemological studies of science. The actual term *dispositif* (apparatus) used in film theory is borrowed from Gaston Bachelard, who employed it to counter the reigning philosophy of phenomenology. Bachelard proposed instead the study of 'phenomeno-*technology*,' believing that phenomena are not given to us directly by an independent reality but are, rather, constructed (cf. the Greek *technē*, 'produced by a regular method of making rather than found in nature') by a range of practices and techniques that define the field of historical truth. The objects of science are materializable concepts, not natural phenomena.

Even though it borrows his term and the concept it names, film theory does not locate its beginnings in the work of Bachelard but rather in that of one of his students, Louis Althusser.[10] (This history is by now relatively familiar, but since a number of significant points have been overlooked or misinterpreted, it is necessary to retrace some of the details.) Althusser was judged to have advanced and corrected the theory of Bachelard in a way that foregrounded the *subject* of science. Now, although he had argued that the scientific subject was formed in and by the field of science, Bachelard had also maintained that the subject was never *fully* formed in this way. One of the reasons for this merely partial success, he theorized, was an obstacle that impeded the subject's development; this obstacle he called the imaginary. But the problem with this imaginary, as Althusser later pointed out, was that it was itself largely untheorized and was thus (that is, almost by default) accepted by Bachelard as a *given*, as external and prior to rather than as an *effect* of historical determinations. The scientific subject was split, then, between two modes of thought: one

governed by historically determined scientific forms, the other by forms that were eternal, spontaneous, and almost purely mythical.[11]

Althusser rethought the category of the imaginary, making it a part of the process of the historical construction of the subject. The imaginary came to name a process necessary to—rather than an impediment—of the ideological founding of the subject: the imaginary provided the form of the subject's lived relation to society. Through this relation the subject was brought to accept as its own, to recognize itself in, the representations of the social order.

This last statement of Althusser's position is important for our concerns here because it is also a statement of the basic position of film theory as it was developed in the 1970s, in France and in England by Jean-Louis Baudry, Christian Metz, Jean-Louis Comolli, Stephen Heath, and others. In sum, the screen is a mirror. The representations produced by the institution of cinema, the images presented on the screen, are accepted by the subject as its own.[12] There is, admittedly, an ambiguity in the notion of the subject's 'own image'; it can refer either to an image *of* the subject or an image *belonging to* the subject. Both references are intended by film theory. Whether that which is represented is specularized as an image of the subject's own body or as the subject's image of someone or something else, what remains crucial is the attribution to the image of what Lacan (not film theory, which has never, it seems to me, adequately accounted for the ambiguity) calls 'that belong to me aspect so reminiscent of property'.[13] It is this aspect that allows the subject to see in any representation not only a reflection of itself but a reflection of itself as master of all it surveys. The imaginary relation produces the subject as master of the image. This insight led to film theory's reconception of film's characteristic 'impression of reality'.[14] No longer conceived as dependent on a relation of verisimilitude between the image and the real referent, this impression was henceforth attributed to a relation of adequation between the image and the spectator. In other words, the impression of reality results from the fact that the subject takes the image as a full and sufficient representation of itself and its world; the subject is satisfied that it has been adequately reflected on the screen. The 'reality effect' and the 'subject effect' both name the same constructed impression: that the image makes the subject fully visible to itself.

The imaginary relation is defined as literally a relation of recognition. The subject reconceptualizes as its own concepts already constructed by the Other. Sometimes the reconstruction of representation is thought to take place secondarily rather than directly, after there has

been a primary recognition of the subject as a 'pure act of perception'. This is, as we all know, Metz's scenario.[15] The subject first recognizes itself by identifying with the gaze and then recognizes the images on the screen. Now, *what* exactly is the gaze, in this context? Why does it emerge in this way from the theory of the apparatus? What does it add—or subtract—from Bachelard's theory, where it does not figure as a term?[16] All these questions will have to be confronted more fully in due course; for now we must begin with the observation that this ideal point can be nothing but *the signified of the image*, the point from which the image *makes sense* to the subject. In taking up its position at this point, the subject sees itself as *supplying* the image with sense. Regardless of whether one or two stages are posited, the gaze is always the point from which identification is conceived by film theory to take place. And because the gaze is always conceptualized as an analogue of that geometrical point of Renaissance perspective at which the picture becomes fully, undistortedly visible, the gaze always retains within film theory the sense of being that point at which sense and being coincide. The subject comes into being by identifying with the image's signified. Sense *founds* the subject—*that* is the ultimate point of the film-theoretical and Foucauldian concepts of the gaze.

The imaginary relation is not, however, merely a relation of knowledge, of sense and recognition; it is also a relation of love guaranteed by knowledge. The image seems not only perfectly to represent the subject, it seems also to be an image of the subject's perfection. An unexceptional definition of narcissism appears to support this relation: the subject falls in love with its own image as the image of its ideal self. *Except* narcissism becomes in this account the structure that instruments the *harmonious* relation between self and social order (since the subject is made to snuggle happily into the space carved out for it), whereas in the psychoanalytic account the subject's narcissistic relation to the self is seen to *conflict with and disrupt* other social relations. I am attempting to pinpoint here no minor point of disagreement between psychoanalysis and the panoptic argument: the opposition between the unbinding force of narcissism and the binding force of social relations is one of the defining tenets of psychoanalysis. It is nevertheless true that Freud himself often ran into difficulty trying to maintain the distinction and that many, from Jung on, have found it easier to merge the two forces into a libidinal monism.[17] But easier is not better; to disregard the distinction is not only to destroy psychoanalysis but also to court determinism.

Why is the representation of the relation of the subject to the social necessarily an imaginary one? This question, posed by Paul Hirst, should have launched a serious critique of film theory.[18] That it did not is attributable, in part, to the fact that the question was perceived to be fundamentally a question about the content of the concept of the imaginary. With only a slightly different emphasis, the question can be seen to ask how the imaginary came to bear, almost exclusively, the burden of the construction of the subject—despite the fact that we always speak of the 'symbolic' construction of the subject. One way of answering this is to note that in much contemporary theory the symbolic is itself structured like the imaginary, like Althusser's version of the imaginary. And thus Hirst's criticisms are aimed at our conception of the symbolic construction of the subject, in general. That this is so is made explicit once again by the *frugality of Foucault*, who exposes to us not only the content but also the emptiness of some of our concepts. For Foucault successfully demonstrates that the conception of the symbolic on which he (and, implicitly, others) relies makes the imaginary unnecessary.

. . .

What is the difference, then, between Foucault's version and psychoanalysis's version of the law/desire relation? Simply this: while Foucault conceives desire not only as an *effect* but also, as I have pointedly remarked, as a *realization* of the law, *psychoanalysis teaches us that the conflation of effect and realization is an error.*

. . .

Psychoanalysis denies the preposterous proposition that society is founded on desire—the desire for incest, let us say once again. Surely, it argues, it is the *repression* of this desire that founds society. The law does not construct a subject who simply and unequivocably has a desire, but one who *rejects* its desire, wants not to desire it. The subject is thus conceived as split from its desire, and desire itself is conceived as something—precisely—unrealized; it does not actualize what the law makes possible. Nor is desire committed to realization, barring any external hindrance. For the internal dialectic that makes the being of the subject dependent on the *negation* of its desire turns desire into a self-hindering process.

Foucault's definition of the law as positive and nonrepressive implies both that the law is (1) unconditional, that it *must* be obeyed, since only that which it allows can come into existence—*being is*, by definition, *obedience*—and that it is (2) unconditioned, since nothing, that is, no desire, precedes the law; there is no cause of the law and we

must not therefore seek behind the law for its reasons. Law does not exist in order to repress desire.

. . .

Again: the claims of conscience are used to refute the experience of conscience. This paradox located by Freud will, of course, not appear as such to those who do not ascribe the claims *to* conscience. And yet something of the paradox *is* manifest in Foucault's description of panoptic power and film theory's description of the relation between the apparatus and the gaze. In both cases the model of self-surveillance implicitly recalls the psychoanalytic model of moral conscience even as the resemblance is being disavowed. The image of self-surveillance, of self-correction, is both required to construct the subject and made redundant by the fact that the subject thus constructed is, by definition, absolutely upright, completely correct. The inevitability and completeness of its success renders the orthopedic gesture of surveillance unnecessary. The subject is and can only be inculpable. The relation between apparatus and gaze creates only the mirage of psychoanalysis. There is, in fact, no psychoanalytic subject in sight.

ORTHOPSYCHISM

How, then, to derive a properly psychoanalytic—that is, a split—subject from the premise that this subject is the effect rather than the cause of the social order? Before turning, finally, to Lacan's solution, it will be necessary to pause to review one extraordinary chapter from Bachelard—chapter 4 of *Le rationalisme appliqué*, titled 'La surveillance intellectuelle de soi'[19]—where we will find some arguments that have been overlooked in more recent theorizations of the apparatus.[20]

Although Bachelard pioneered the theory of the institutional construction of the field of science, he also (as we have already said) persistently argued that the protocols of science never fully saturated, nor provided the content of, this field. The obstacle of the imaginary is only *one* of the reasons given for this. Besides this purely negative resistance *to* the scientific, there is also a positive condition *of* the scientific itself that prevented such a reduction from taking place. Both these reasons together guarantee that the concepts of science are never mere realizations of possibilities historically allowed and scientific thought is never simply habit, the regulated retracing of possible paths already laid out in advance.

. . .

Bachelard's chapter ends up celebrating a kind of euphoria of free thought. As a result of its orthopsychic relation to itself, that is, before an image that it *doubts*, the scientific subject is jubilant. Not because its image, its world, its thought reflects its own perfection, but because the subject is thus allowed to imagine that they are all *perfectible*. It is this sense of the perfectibility of things that liberates thought from the totally determining constraints of the social order. Thought is conceived to police, and not merely be policed by, the social/scientific order, and the paranoia of the 'Cassandra complex' (Bachelard's designation for the childish belief that everything is already known in advance, by one's parents, say) is thereby dispelled.

. . .

This scenario of surveillance—of the 'joy of surveillance'—is consciously delineated in relation to Freud's notion of moral conscience. But Bachelard opposes his notion to the 'pessimism' of that of Freud, who, of course, saw moral conscience as cruel and punishing. In Bachelard, surveillance, in seeming to offer the subject a pardon, is construed as primarily a positive or benign force. Bachelard, then, too, like Foucault and film theory, recalls and yet disavows the psychoanalytic model of moral conscience—however differently. Bachelard's orthopsychism, which is informed in the end by a psychologistic argument, cannot really be accepted by film theory as an alternative to panopticonism. Although Bachelard argues that a certain invisibility shelters the subject from what we might call (in the panoptic, not in the Lacanian sense) 'the gaze' of the institutional apparatus, the subject is nevertheless characterized by an exact legibility on another level. The Bachelardian subject may not locate *in its image* a full and upright being that it jubilantly (but wrongly) takes itself to be, but this subject does locate *in the process of scrutinizing* this image the joyous prospect of righting itself. Film theory's correct subject is here replaced by a self-correcting one.

Yet this detour through orthopsychism has not led only to a dead end. What we have forcibly been led to consider is the question of deception, of the suspicion of deception that must *necessarily* be raised if we are to understand the cinematic apparatus as a *signifying* apparatus, which places the subject in an external relationship to itself. Once the permanent possibility of deception is admitted (rather than disregarded, as it is by the theory of the panoptic apparatus), the concept of the gaze undergoes a radical change. For, where in the panoptic apparatus the gaze marks the subject's *visibility*, in Lacan's

theory it marks the subject's *culpability*. The gaze stands watch over the *inculpation*—the faulting and splitting—of the subject by the apparatus.

THE MIRROR AS SCREEN

Film theory introduced the subject into its study, and thereby incorporated Lacanian psychoanalysis, primarily by means of 'The mirror stage as formative of the function of the "I."' It is to this essay that theorists made reference as they formulated their arguments about the subject's narcissistic relation to the film and about that relationship's dependence on 'the gaze'. While it is true that the mirror-phase essay does describe the child's narcissistic relation to its mirror image, it is, nevertheless, *not* in this essay but in Seminar XI that Lacan himself formulates *his* concept of the gaze. Here, particularly in those sessions collected under the heading 'Of the Gaze as *Object Petit a*', Lacan *reformulates* his earlier mirror-phase essay and paints a picture very different from the one painted by film theory.

Lacan tells his tale of the relation of the subject to its world in the form of a humorously recondite story about a sardine can. The story is told as a kind of mock Hegelian epic, a send-up of the broadly expansive Hegelian epic form by a deliberately 'little story' that takes place in a 'small boat' in a 'small port' and includes a single named character, 'Petit-Jean'. The entire overt plot consists in the sighting of a 'small can'. A truly short story of the object small a; the proof and sole guarantee of that alterity of the Other which Hegel's sweeping tale, in overlooking, denies.

. . .

What is it that is at stake here? Plainly, ultimately, it is 'I'—I, the subject, that takes shape in this revised version of the mirror stage. As if to underline the fact that it is the I that is the point of the discussion, Lacan tells a personal story. It is he, in fact, who is the first-person of the narrative; this portrait of the analyst as a young man is his own. The cameo role in Seminar XI prepares us, then, for the starring role Lacan plays as the narcissistic 'televanalyst' in *Television*. 'What is at stake in both cases,' Lacan says in *Television* about his performance both there and in his seminars, in general, 'is a gaze: a gaze to which, in neither case, do I address myself, but in the name of which I speak.'[21] What is he saying here about the relation between the I and the gaze?

The gaze is that which 'determines' the I in the visible; it is 'the instrument through which . . . [the] I [is] *photo-graphed.*'[22] This might be taken to confirm the coincidence of the Foucauldian and Lacanian positions, to indicate that, in both, the gaze determines the complete *visibility* of the I, the mapping of the I on a perceptual grid. Hence the disciplinary monitoring of the subject. But this coincidence can only be produced by a precipitous, 'snapshot' reading of Lacan, one that fails to notice the hyphen that splits the term *photo-graph*—into *photo*, 'light', and *graph*, among other things, a fragment of the Lacanian phrase 'graph of desire'—as it splits the subject that it describes.

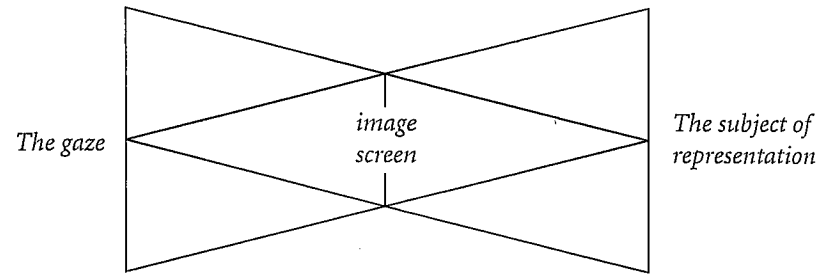
Photo. One thing is certain: light does not enter these seminars in a straight line, through the laws of optics. Because, as he says, the geometric laws of the propagation of light map space only, and *not* vision, Lacan does not theorize the visual field in terms of these laws. Thus, the legitimate construction can*not* figure for him—as it *does* for film theory—the relation of the spectator to the screen. And these seminars cannot be used, as they are used by film theory, to support the argument that the cinematic apparatus, in direct line with the camera obscura, by recreating the space and ideology of Renaissance perspective, produces a centered and transcendent subject.[23]

This argument is critiqued in the seminars on the gaze as Lacan makes clear why the speaking subject *cannot* ever be totally trapped in the imaginary. Lacan claims, rather, that 'I am not simply that punctiform being located at the geometral point from which the perspective is grasped.'[24] Now, film theory, of course, has always claimed that the cinematic apparatus functions *ideologically* to produce a subject that *mis-recognizes* itself as source and center of the represented world. But although this claim might seem to imply agreement with Lacan, to suggest, too, that the subject is *not* the punctiform being that Renaissance perspective would have us believe it is, film theory's notion of misrecognition turns out to be different from Lacan's in important ways. Despite the fact that the term *misrecognition* implies an error on the subject's part, a failure properly to recognize its true relation to the visible world, the process by which the subject is installed in its position of misrecognition operates without the hint of failure. The subject unerringly assumes the position the perspectival construction bids it to take. Erased from the process of construction, the negative force of error emerges later as a charge directed at the subject. But from where does it come? Film theory has described only the construction of this position of misrecognition. Though it implies that there is

another *actual*, nonpunctiform position, film theory has never been able to describe the construction of *this* position.

In Lacan's description, misrecognition retains its negative force in the process of construction. As a result, the process is conceived no longer as a purely positive one but rather as one with an internal dialectic. Lacan does not take the single triangle that geometrical perspective draws as an accurate description of its own operation. Instead he *re*diagrams this operation using, instead, *two interpenetrating* triangles. Thus he represents both the way the science of optics understands the emission of light *and* the way its straight lines become refracted, diffused (the way they acquire the 'ambiguity of a jewel') once we take into account the way the signifier itself interferes with this figuring. The second triangle cuts through the first, marking the elision or negation that is part of the process of construction. The second triangle diagrams the subject's mistaken belief that there is something behind the space set out by the first. It is this mistaken belief (this misrecognition) that causes the subject to *disbelieve* even those representations shaped according to the scientific laws of optics. The Lacanian subject, who may doubt the accuracy of even its most 'scientific representation', is submitted to a *superegoic* law that is radically different from the optical laws to which the film theoretical subject is submitted.

Graph. Semiotics, not optics, is the science that enlightens for us the structure of the visual domain. Because it alone is capable of lending things sense, the signifier alone makes vision possible. There is and can be no brute vision, no vision totally independent of language. Painting, drawing, all forms of picture making, then, are fundamentally graphic arts. And because signifiers are material, that is, because they are opaque rather than translucent, refer to other signifiers rather than directly to a signified, the field of vision is neither clear nor easily traversable. It is instead ambiguous and treacherous, full of traps. Lacan's Seminar XI refers constantly, but ambiguously, to these traps.



When Lacan says that the subject is trapped in the imaginary, he means that the subject can imagine nothing outside it; the imaginary cannot itself provide the means that would allow the subject to transcend it. When he says, on the other hand, that a painting, or any other representation, is a 'trap for the gaze', we understand this phrase as echoing the expression 'to trap one's attention'. That is, the representation *attracts* the gaze, induces us to imagine a gaze outside the field of representation. It is this second sense of trapping, whereby representation appears to generate its own beyond (to generate, we might say recalling Lacan's diagram, the *second* triangle, which the science of optics neglects to consider) that prevents the subject from ever being trapped in the imaginary. Where the Foucauldian and the film-theoretical positions always tend to trap the subject in representation (an idealist failing), to conceive of language as constructing the prison walls of the subject's being, Lacan argues that the subject sees these walls as *trompe l'oeil*, and is thus constructed by something *beyond* them.

For beyond everything that is displayed to the subject, the question is asked, 'What is being concealed from me? What in this graphic space does not show, does not stop *not* writing itself?' This point at which something appears to be *in*visible, this point at which something appears to be missing from representation, some meaning left unrevealed, is the point of the Lacanian gaze. It marks the *absence* of a signified; it is an *unoccupiable* point, not, as film theory claims, because it figures an unrealizable ideal but because it indicates an impossible real. In the former case, one would expect to find at the point of the gaze a signified, but here the signifier is absent—and so is the subject. The subject, in short, cannot be located or locate itself at the point of the gaze, since this point marks, on the contrary, its very annihilation. At the moment the gaze is discerned, the image, the entire visual field, takes on a terrifying alterity. It loses its 'belong-to-me aspect' and suddenly assumes the function of a screen.

Lacan is certainly *not* offering an agnostic description of the way the real object is cut off from the subject's view by language, of the way the real object escapes capture in the network of signifiers. He does not assume an idealist stance, arguing the way Plato does that the object is split between its real being and its semblance. Lacan argues, rather, that beyond the signifying network, beyond the visual field, there is, in fact, nothing at all.[25] The veil of representation actually conceals nothing; there is nothing behind representation. Yet the fact that representation *seems* to hide, to put an arbored screen of signifiers in

front of something hidden beneath, is not treated by Lacan as a simple error that the subject can undo; nor is this deceptiveness of language treated as something that undoes the subject, deconstructs its identity by menacing its boundaries. Rather, language's opacity is taken as the very *cause* of the subject's being, that is, its desire, or want-to-be. The fact that it is materially impossible to say the whole truth—that truth always backs away from language, that words always fall short of their goal—*founds* the subject. Contrary to the idealist position that makes *form* the cause of being, Lacan locates the cause of being in the *informe*: the *unformed* (that which has no signified, no significant shape in the visual field) and the *inquiry* (the question posed to representation's presumed reticence). The subject is the effect of the impossibility of seeing what is lacking in the representation, what the subject, therefore, wants to see. The gaze, the object-cause of desire, is the object-cause of the subject of desire in the field of the visible. In other words, it is what the subject does not see and not simply what it sees that founds it.

It should be clear by now how different this description is from that offered by film theory. In film theory, the gaze is located 'in front of' the image, as its signified, the point of maximal meaning or sum of all that appears in the image *and* the point that 'gives' meaning. The subject is, then, thought to identify with and thus, in a sense, to *coincide with* the gaze. In Lacan, on the other hand, the gaze is located 'behind' the image, as that which fails to appear in it and thus as that which makes all its meanings suspect. And the subject, instead of coinciding with or identifying with the gaze, is rather *cut off from* it. Lacan does not ask you to think of the gaze as belonging to an Other who cares about what or where you are, who pries, keeps tabs on your whereabouts, and takes note of all your steps and missteps, as the panoptic gaze is said to do. When you encounter the gaze of the Other, you meet not a seeing eye but a blind one. The gaze is not clear or penetrating, not filled with knowledge or recognition; it is clouded over and turned back on itself, absorbed in its own enjoyment. The horrible truth, revealed to Lacan by Petit-Jean, is that *the gaze does not see you.* So, if you are looking for confirmation of the truth of your being or the clarity of your vision, you are on your own; the gaze of the Other is not confirming; it will not validate you.

Now, the subject instituted by the Lacanian gaze does not come into being as the realization of a possibility opened up by the law of the Other. It is rather an impossibility that is crucial to the constitution of the subject—the impossibility, precisely, of any ultimate confirmation

from the Other. The subject emerges, as a result, as a desiring being, that is to say, an effect of the law but certainly not a realization of it, since desire as such can never be conceived as a realization. Desire fills no possibility but seeks after an impossibility; this makes desire always, constitutionally, contentless.

Narcissism, too, takes on a different meaning in Lacan, one more in accord with Freud's own. Since something always appears to be missing from any representation, narcissism *cannot* consist in finding satisfaction in one's own visual image. It must, rather, consist in the belief that one's own being exceeds the imperfections of its image. Narcissism, then, seeks the self beyond the self-image, with which the subject constantly finds fault and in which it constantly fails to recognize itself. What one loves in one's image is something *more* than the image ('in you more than you').[26] Thus is narcissism the source of the malevolence with which the subject regards its image, the aggressivity it unleashes on all its own representations.[27] And thus does the subject come into being as a transgression of, rather than in conformity to, the law. It is not the law, but the fault in the law—the desire that the law cannot ultimately conceal—that is assumed by the subject as its own. The subject, in taking up the burden of the law's guilt, goes beyond the law.

. . .

The effect of representation is the suspicion that some reality is being camouflaged, that we are being deceived as to the exact nature of some thing-in-itself that lies behind representation. In response to such a representation, against such a background of deception, the subject's own being breaks up between its unconscious being and its conscious semblance. At war both with its world and with itself, the subject becomes guilty of the very deceit it suspects. This can hardly, however, be called mimicry, in the old sense, since nothing is being mimed

In sum, the conflictual nature of Lacan's culpable subject sets it worlds apart from the stable subject of film theory. But neither does the Lacanian subject resemble that of Bachelard. For while in Bachelard orthopsychism—in providing an opportunity for the correction of thought's imperfections—allows the subject to wander from its moorings, constantly to drift from one position to another, in Lacan 'orthopsychism'[28]—one wishes to retain the term in order to indicate the subject's fundamental dependence on the faults it finds in representation and in itself—grounds the subject. The desire that it precipitates *transfixes* the subject, albeit in a conflictual place, so that

all the subject's visions and revisions, all its fantasies, merely circumnavigate the absence that anchors the subject and impedes its progress.

Notes

1. In *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1977), 274, Lacan speaks of the 'phantasies' of the 'mass media', as he very quickly suggests a critique of the familiar notion of 'the society of the spectacle'. This notion is replaced in Lacan by what might be called 'the society of [formed from] the nonspecularizable.'
2. *Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon*, 1906; all translations of ancient Greek terms are from this source.
3. Jacques Lacan, *Television/A Challenge to the Psychoanalytic Establishment*, ed. Joan Copjec, trans. Denis Hollier, Rosalind Krauss, and Annette Michelson, (New York: W. W. Norton, 1990), 3.
4. Mary Ann Doane points out that it is our very fascination with the model of the screen as mirror that has made it resistant to those theoretical objections that she herself makes ('Misrecognition and Identity', *Ciné-Tracts*, 11 (Fall 1980), 28).
5. Mary Ann Doane, Patricia Mellencamp, and Linda Williams (eds.), *Re-vision* (Los Angeles: The American Film Institute, 1984), 14. The introduction to this very useful collection of essays also attempts to detail some of the historical shifts in feminist theories of representation; I am only attempting to argue the need for one more shift, this time away from the panoptic model of cinema.
6. See, especially, Teresa de Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987).
7. F. S. Cohen, in 'What is a question?' makes this important distinction clearly: 'Indetermination or doubt is not, as is often maintained, a wavering between different certainties, but the grasping of an incomplete form' (*The Monist*, 38 (1929), 354 n. 4).
8. Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon, 1986), 186. The interview with Lucette Finas in which this statement occurs was also published in *Michel Foucault: Power, Truth, Strategy*, ed. Meaghan Morris and Paul Patton (Sydney: Feral Publications, 1979). The statement is quoted and emphasized in Mark Cousins and Athar Hussain's excellent book *Michel Foucault* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1984), 244.
9. Although some might claim that it was the introduction of the linguistic model into film studies that initiated the break, it can be more accurately argued that the break was precipitated by a shift in the linguistic model itself—from an exclusive emphasis on the relation between signifiers to an emphasis on the relation between signifiers and the subject, their signifying effect. That is, it was not until the *rhetorical* aspect of language was made visible—*by means of the concept of the apparatus*—that the field of film studies was definitively reformed. I am arguing, however, that once this shift was made, some of the sophistications introduced by semiology were, unfortunately, forgotten.

   To define a *break* (rather than a continuity) between what is often referred

to as 'two stages', or the first and second semiology, is analogous to defining a break between Freud's first and second concept of transference. It was only with the second, the privileging of the analyst/analysand relationship, that psychoanalysis (properly speaking) was begun. Biography rather than theory is the source of the demand for the continuity of these concepts.

10. The best discussion of the relations between Bachelard and Althusser can be found in Etienne Balibar, 'From Bachelard to Althusser: the concept of "epistemological break"', *Economy and Society*, 5: 4 (November 1976), 385–411.
11. This image of the scientist discontinuous with him- or herself can be given a precise figuration, the alchemical image of the Melusines: creatures composed partially of inferior, fossilelike forms that reach back into the distant past (the imaginary) and partially of superior, energetic (scientific) activity. In *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 109, Bachelard, whose notion of the unconscious is more Jungian than Freudian, refers to this image from Jung's *Psychology and Alchemy.*
12. The one reservation Metz has to the otherwise operative analogy between mirror and screen is that, at the cinema, 'the spectator is absent from the screen: contrary to the child in the mirror' (Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 48). Jacqueline Rose clarified the error implied in this reservation by pointing out that 'the phenomenon of transitivism demonstrates that the subject's mirror identification can be with another child', that one always locates *one's own image in another* and thus the imaginary identification does not depend on a literal mirror ('The Imaginary', in *Sexuality in the Field of Vision* (London: Verso, 1986), 196). What is most often forgotten, however, is the corollary of this fact: one always locates *the other in one's own image.* The effect of *this* fact on the constitution of the subject is Lacan's fundamental concern.
13. Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts*, 81.
14. It was Jean-Louis Baudry who first formulated this definition of the impression of reality. See his second apparatus essay, 'The Apparatus', in *Camera Obscura*, 1 (Fall 1976), esp. 118–119.
15. Metz's two-stage scenario is critiqued by Geoffrey Nowell-Smith in 'A Note on History/Discourse' (*Edinburgh* '76, 26–32); and by Mary Ann Doane in 'Misrecognition and Identity'.
16. I have elsewhere referred to the gaze as 'metempsychotic': although it is a concept abhorrent to feminist reason, the target of constant theoretical sallies, the gaze continues to reemerge, to be reincorporated, as an assumption of one film analysis after another. The argument I am making is that it is because we have not properly determined what the gaze is, whence it has emerged, that we have been unable to eliminate it. It is generally argued that the gaze is dependent on psychoanalytic structures of voyeurism and fetishism, presumed to be male. I am claiming instead that the gaze arises out of *linguistic* assumptions and that these assumptions, in turn, shape (and appear to be naturalized by) the psychoanalytic concepts.
17. Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen's interesting book, *The Freudian Subject* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1988) grapples with this *necessary* distinction—with results very different from Lacan's.
18. Paul Hirst, 'Althusser's Theory of Ideology', *Economy and Society*, 5: 4 (November 1976), 385–411.

19. In order to dissociate his concept of science from that of idealism, conventionalism, and formalism, Bachelard formulated the concept of 'applied rationalism': a scientific concept must integrate within itself the conditions of its realization. (It is on the basis of this injunction that Heisenberg could dismiss as illegitimate any talk of an electron's location that could not also propose an experimental method of locating it.) And in order to dissociate his concept of science from that of the positivists, empiricists, and realists, Bachelard formulated the concept of 'technical materialism': the instruments and the protocols of scientific experiments must be theoretically formulated. The system of checks and balances according to which these two imperatives operate is what Bachelard normally means by *orthopsychism.* He extends the notion in *Le rationalisme appliqué*, however, to include the formation of the scientific subject.
20. Gaston Bachelard, *Le rationalisme appliqué* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1949), 65–81.
21. Lacan, *Television*, 7.
22. Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts*, 106.
23. See especially Jean-Louis Baudry, 'Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus' (first published in French in *Cinéthique*, 7–8 (1970) and, in English, in *Film Quarterly*, 28 (Winter 1974–1975)) and Jean-Louis Comolli, 'Technique and Ideology: Camera, Perspective, Depth of Field' (first published in French in *Cahiers du cinéma*, 229, 230, 231, and 233 (1970–1971) and circulated in English translation as a British Film Institute off-print). This historical continuity has been taken for granted by film theory generally. For a history of the *non*continuity between Renaissance techniques of observation and our own, see Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer.* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1990). In this book, Crary differentiates the camera obscura from the physiological models of vision that succeeded it. Lacan, in his seminars on the gaze, refers to both these models as they are represented by the science of optics and the philosophy of phenomenology. He exhibits them as two 'ways of being wrong about this function of the subject in the domain of the spectacle.'
24. Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts*, 96.
25. The questions Moustapha Safouan poses to Lacan during Seminar XI (*The Four Fundamental Concepts*, 103) force him to be quite clear on this point: 'Beyond appearance there is nothing in itself, there is the gaze.'
26. This is the title given to the last session of the seminar published as *The Four Fundamental Concepts.* Although the 'you' of the title refers to the analyst, it can refer just as easily to the ideal image in the mirror.
27. Jacqueline Rose's 'Paranoia and the Film System' (*Screen*, 17: 4 (Winter 1976–1977)) is a forceful critique (directed specifically at Raymond Bellour's analyses of Hitchcock, but also at a range of film-theoretical assumptions) of that notion of the cinema that sees it as a successful resolution of conflict and refusal of difference. Rose reminds us that cinema, as 'technique of the imaginary' (Metz), necessarily unleashes a conflict, an aggressivity, that is irresolvable. While I am, for the most part, in agreement with this important essay, I am arguing here that aggressivity is *not* dependent on the shot-countershot structure. It is not the reversibility of the look but the unreturned look, the look that will not turn the subject into a fully observable being, that

threatens the subject. Lacan says himself (*The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis* (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 1978), 232), 'The phenomenon of aggressivity isn't to be explained simply on the level of imaginary identification.'

28. In 'Another Lacan' (*Lacan Study Notes*, 1: 3) Jacques Alain Miller is concerned to underline the clinical dimension of Lacan's work, particularly his concept of 'the pass'. The difference between the 'deconstructionist' and the Lacanian notion of fantasy is, thus, also made clear.

Phase III. Race, Sexuality, and Postmodernism in Feminist Film Theory