

an anthropophagic devouring of varied cultural stimuli in all their heterogeneity. Tropicalist filmmakers framed a resistant strategy premised on a low-cost "aesthetic of garbage." Where Rocha's earlier metaphor of an aesthetic of hunger had evoked famished victims redeeming themselves through violence, the garbage metaphor conveyed an aggressive sense of marginality, of surviving within scarcity, of being condemned to recycle the materials of dominant culture. A garbage style was seen as appropriate to a Third World country picking through the leavings of an international system dominated by First World capitalism.

In their attempts to forge a liberatory language, alternative film traditions draw on para-modern phenomena such as popular religion and ritual magic. In some recent African films such as *Yeelen* (1987), *Jitt* (1992), and *Kasarmu Ce* (This Land is Ours, 1991), magical spirits become an aesthetic resource, a means for breaking away, often in comical ways, from the linear, cause-and-effect conventions of Aristotelian narrative poetics, a way of defying the "gravity," in both senses of that word, of chronological time and literal space. The values of African religious culture inform not only African cinema but also a good deal of Afro-diasporic cinema, for example Brazilian films like *Barravento* (1962) and *A Força de Xango* (The Force of Xango, 1977), and African American films like Julie Dash's *Daughters of the Dust*, all of which inscribe African (usually Yoruba) religious symbolism and practice. Indeed, the preference for Yoruba symbolism is itself significant, since the arts – music, dance, costume, poetry, narrative – are at the very kernel of the Yoruba religions themselves, unlike other religions where the performing arts are grafted onto a theological/textual core. Aesthetics and culture, in this sense, are inseparable.

## From Linguistics to Psychoanalysis

Within First World film theory, meanwhile, linguistically oriented semiology was giving way to a "second semiology," where psycho-

analysis became the preferred conceptual grid, as attention shifted from film language and film structure to the "subject-effects" produced by the cinematic apparatus. The encounter between psychoanalysis and the cinema was in one sense the culmination of a long flirtation, since both were born around the same time (Freud first used the term "psychoanalysis" in 1896, just one year after the first screenings of the Lumière films in the Grand Café). There had also been character-oriented psychoanalytic studies of the cinema prior to the second semiology, such as *Movies: A Psychological Study* (1950), where Martha Wolfenstein and Nathan Leites argued that the cinema crystallized the common dreams, myths, and fears of the general population, and *Hollywood: The Dream Factory* (also 1950), where Hortense Powdermaker described, in quasi-ethnographic terms, the Hollywood "tribe" that manufactured these same dreams and myths.

There was also the pioneering work of sociologist, psychologist, and filmmaker Edgar Morin. In *Cinéma, ou l'homme imaginaire* (1958) Morin revisited the venerable trope of "cinema magic," but this time in order to highlight cinema's capacity to infantilize and overpower the spectator. According to Morin the spectator does not merely watch a film; he or she lives it with a neurotic intensity, as a form of socially approved regression, a theme which would be taken up by the psycho-semioticians. The cinema, for Morin, implicates spectators in their very depths. Both contemporary and archaic, the cinema as an "archive of souls" allows us to photograph our own movements, attitudes, and desires. Imbuing the cinema with their own sensibility and imagination, spectators experience powerful emotions and even a cultic devotion.

Beginning in the mid-1970s, and notably with the special 1978 issue of the French journal *Communications* devoted to "Psychoanalysis and the Cinema," semiotic discussion came to be inflected by psychoanalytic notions such as scopophilia, voyeurism, and fetishism, and by Lacan's conception of the mirror stage, the imaginary, and the symbolic. While North American "ego psychology" stressed the development of the individual, conscious self, Lacanian psychoanalysis privileged the id, the Unconscious, and the notion of

the "subject." Synthesizing psychoanalysis with the philosophical tradition, Lacan explored the subject in its multiple senses – psychological, philosophical, grammatical, logical – contrasting the sovereign self of "ego psychology" with the "subject of the unconscious." Lacan was also concerned with "identification," the process by which the subject constituted itself by appropriating aspects of other human interlocutors such as parents. The term "other," for Lacan, designated the symbolic place where the subject was constituted in relation to his or her "desire." Lacan conceived desire not as a biological impulse but rather as a phantasmatic movement toward an obscure "object" exercising spiritual or sexual attraction. Catalyzed by the Law, desire was by definition unsatisfiable since it was a desire not for an achievable object but rather for "the desire of the other," a struggle for amorous recognition reminiscent of the Hegelian dialectic between master and slave. As Lacan summed it up in a La Rochefoucauld-like aphorism: "Love is giving what one does not have to someone who doesn't want it." (One is reminded of Denis de Rougemont's melancholy anatomy of passion in his *Love in the Western World*, where desire is indelibly marked with pathos and impossibility.) The differences between "French Freud" and American ego psychology also reflect large-scale cultural/political contrasts between the optimistic country of pragmatic success and the pursuit of happiness, and the more pessimistic "old world" country emerging from two world wars and a Holocaust on its own soil. While ego psychology was concerned with therapy and cure, Lacanian psychoanalysis was more concerned with developing a powerful intellectual system which synthesized the anthropology of Lévi-Strauss, the philosophy of Heidegger, and the linguistics of Saussure. By cinematic analogy, Lacanianism favored the tense ambiguities of European psychoanalysis (the art film) over the (Hollywoodian) "happy end" of ego psychology.

In film theory, at any rate, it was the French Freud that predominated. The focus of interest, in the psychoanalytic phase of semiotics, shifted from the relation between filmic image and reality to the cinematic apparatus itself, not only in the sense of the instrumental base of camera, projector and screen, but also in the sense of the

spectator as the desiring subject on which the cinematic institution depends as its object and accomplice. The psychoanalytic approach highlighted the meta-psychological dimension of the cinema, its ways of both activating and regulating spectatorial desire. The practitioners of this approach were not interested at all in what other "psychological" approaches had classically been interested in: the psychoanalysis of authors, plots, or characters. Rather, the interest shifts, in this phase, from questions such as "What is the nature of the cinematic sign and the laws of their combination?" and "What is a textual system?" to other questions, such as "What do we want from the text?" and "What are our spectatorial investments in it?" Many of the psychoanalytic questions were interarticulated with Marxist issues of ideology. How is the spectator/addressee "interpellated" as subject? What is the nature of our identification with the cinematic apparatus and with the stories and characters offered by the cinema? What kind of subject-spectator is fashioned by the cinematic apparatus? Why does the cinema provoke passionate reactions? What explains its fascination? Why does so much seem to be at stake? How do films resemble dreams or daydreams? What are the analogies between the condensations and displacements typical of the "dreamwork" and the textual "work" of film? Can the cinema serve as the "poor man's couch," as Félix Guattari suggested? How do film narratives replay the Oedipus story, the conflict of law and desire?

Although much has been made of the faddish nature of the shift from linguistic semiotics to psychoanalysis, in fact this change forms part of a coherent trajectory toward the "semio-psychoanalysis" of the cinema. Linguistics and psychoanalysis were not chosen for arbitrary voguish reasons but because they were seen as two sciences that dealt directly with signification as such. The shift was facilitated by the fact that Jacques Lacan, the major influence in psychoanalytic film theory, had placed language at the very center of psychoanalysis. If classically the Unconscious was seen as a prelinguistic, instinctual reserve, for Lacan the Unconscious was an effect of the subject's entry into the linguistic (symbolic) order. Language was the very condition of the Unconscious. Rather than read the Oedipus Com-

lexbiologically, Lacan read it linguistically. The reference to linguistics, Lacan promised, "will introduce us to the method which, by distinguishing synchronic and diachronic structurings in language, will enable us to understand better the different value that our language assumes in the interpretation of the resistances and the transference" (Lacan, 1997, p. 76). Lacan's nostrum that the "Unconscious is structured like a language" provided a further bridge between the two fields of language and the psyche. (Voloshinov and Bakhtin, from a different angle, had performed a linguistic reading of Freud in their 1927 book *Freudianism: A Marxist Critique*.)

Psychoanalytic theorists were especially interested in the psychic dimension of the film medium's overpowering "impression of reality." They were concerned, that is, with explaining the extraordinary *power* of the cinema over human feelings. The persuasiveness of the cinematic apparatus was analyzed as deriving from a number of factors – the cinematic situation (immobility, darkness), the enunciatory mechanisms of the image (camera, optical projections, monocular perspective) – all of which induce the subject to project him or herself *into* the representation. Picking up on the cues provided by the earlier work of Edgar Morin, 1970s theorists like Jean-Louis Baudry, Christian Metz, and Jean-Louis Comolli saw the question of the impression of reality as inseparable from the question of spectatorial positioning and identification. Baudry was the first to draw on psychoanalytic theory to characterize the cinematic apparatus as a technological, institutional, and ideological machine with strong "subject-effects." In "Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematic Apparatus" (1971) Baudry argued that the apparatus flattered infantile narcissism by exalting the spectatorial subject as the center and origin of meaning. Baudry postulated an unconscious substratum in identification, in the sense that cinema, as a simulation apparatus, not only represents the real but also stimulates intense "subject-effects."

In "The Apparatus" (1975) Baudry explored the oft-cited similitude between the scene of Plato's cave and the apparatus of cinematic projection, arguing that the cinema constituted the technical realization of a perennial dream of a perfect, total simulacrum. The

shadowy images on the screen, the darkness of the movie theater, the passive immobility of the spectator, the womb-like sealing off of ambient noises and quotidian pressures, all foster an artificial state of regression, generating "archaic moments of fusion" not unlike those engendered by dream. Thus a kind of double whammy operates in the cinema: extremely strong visual and auditory stimuli inundate us at a moment when we are predisposed toward passive reception and narcissistic self-absorption. The film, like a dream, tells a story – a story rendered in images and therefore resonant with the logic of a primary process which "figures itself forth in images." Specifically cinematic techniques such as superimposition and the lap-dissolve "mime" the condensations and displacements through which the primary-process logic of dreams works over its phantasized objects.

The cinema, for Baudry, constitutes the approximate material realization of an unconscious goal perhaps inherent in the human psyche: the regressive desire to return to an earlier state of psychic development, a state of relative narcissism in which desire could be satisfied through a simulated, enveloping reality where the separation between one's body and the exterior world, between ego and non-ego, is not clearly defined. In apparatus theory the cinema becomes a very powerful machine which transforms the embodied, socially situated individual into a spectatorial subject. In effect, Baudry put a negative spin on Bazin's positively connoted "myth of total cinema." The film as window-on-the-world became barred, like a prison.

For 1970s psychoanalytic theory, Lacan's notion that desire is not a matter of desiring the other but of "desiring the *desire* of the other" seemed a marvelously apt description of the processes of identification in the cinema. Psychoanalytic theory largely absorbed the Lacanian vision of the deluded subject of the cinema. Given an initial lack of being (*manque à être*), the initial loss of an originary plenitude linked to a dual relation with the mother, human beings were seen as constitutively alienated, split from themselves, with psychic "identity" consisting of a flimsy *bricolage* of ephemeral identifications. These ephemera congealed into a kind of identity only during the phase Lacan called the mirror stage, the stage in the child's de-

velopment where hyperactive perception coincides with a low level of motor activity. Lacan describes how the infant ego is constituted by the child's identification with and misrecognition of the lure of the mirror image, which offers an imaginary picture of his own autonomous self-presence. Both Metz and Baudry compared the spectator's situation to the mirror stage, with Metz pointing out that the mirror analogy was only partially accurate; the cinema, unlike the mirror, does not reflect back the spectator's own image.

From a feminist perspective, this theory was now seen as giving expression to a masculinist denial of sexual difference. The self-deluded, ideologically coherent subject constructed by dominant cinema, for these feminist theorists, was gender-specific. Taking a term coined by Marcel Duchamp and elaborated by Michel Carrouges, feminist critic Constance Penley (1989) later compared the Baudry model of the apparatus to a "bachelor machine," i.e. as a closed, self-sufficient, frictionless machine controlled by a knowing overseer subject to a fantasy of closure and mastery, ultimately as a compensatory pleasure and consolation for male lack and alienation. Joan Copjec (1989) argued that apparatus theory constructed a paranoid anthropomorphic machine producing only male subjects, as a "delusional defense against the alienation that the elaboration of cinema as a language opened in theory."

In "The Imaginary Signifier" Metz argued that the doubly imaginary nature of the cinematic signifier – imaginary in what it represents and imaginary by the nature of its signifier – heightens rather than diminishes the possibilities of identification. The signifier itself, even before coming to form part of a fictive imagined world, is marked by the duality of presence/absence typical of the Lacanian imaginary. The impression of reality is stronger in film than in theater because the weak phantom-like figures on the screen virtually invite us to invest them with our phantasies and projections. The cinema spectator identifies, first of all, with his or her own act of looking, with "himself as a pure act of perception (as wakefulness, alertness); as condition of possibility of the perceived and hence as a kind of transcendental subject" (Metz, 1982, p. 51). What Metz calls primary identification, then, is not with the events or characters de-

icted on the screen but rather with the act of perception that makes these secondary identifications possible, an act of perception both channeled and constructed by the anterior look of the camera and the projector that stands in for it, granting the spectator the illusory ubiquity of the "all-perceiving subject." The spectator is caught in a play between regression and progression. The images received come from without, in a progressive movement directed toward external reality; yet due to inhibited mobility and the processes of identification with camera and character, the psychic energy normally devoted to activity is channeled into other routes of discharge.

Metz had especially interesting observations about the question of pleasure and displeasure in the cinema. Some films, for example pornographic films, might generate displeasure by touching too closely on the spectator's repressed desires, thus triggering a defensive reaction. Building on Melanie Klein's analysis of the role of objects in the infant's fantasy life – the child's tendency to project libidinal or destructive feelings onto certain privileged objects such as the breast – Metz spoke of the critical tendency to confuse the actual film as a sequence of images and sound with the film experience such as it has pleased or displeased, in function of the phantasies, pleasures, and fears triggered in specific spectators by the film. Thus spectators–critics misconstrue an aesthetic question – the quality of the film – with a psychoanalytic question: Why did this film please or displease *me*? (A classic example of this confusion occurred with Woody Allen's *Stardust Memories*, which critics, many of them former admirers of Allen, took as an attack on themselves (rather than as a witty and self-mocking exercise in intertextuality) and which they therefore condemned in the most violent possible bad-object language as "vicious," "mean-spirited," and "poisonously bad.") Metz also put the theorist on the couch, since film theorists were not immune to such projections. Thus Metz analyzed the various forms of "love" for the cinema, ranging from the fetishism of the collector to the critic–theorist who sees most films as "bad objects" yet maintains a "good object relation" with the cinema as a whole. Metz became the psychoanalyst of the film theorists, much as Lévi-Strauss had been the ethnologist of the anthropologists.

On a more positive note, ~~cinema can also mean the rupture of solitude.~~ The material existence of filmic images, for Metz, creates the feeling of a "little miracle," a sharing of phantasies, ~~not unlike that "temporary rupture of solitude" called love:~~ "This is the specific joy of receiving from the external world images that are usually internal . . . of seeing them inscribed in a physical location (the screen), of discovering in this way something almost realizable in them" (Metz, 1977, pp. 135-6).

Metz's analysis explains what might otherwise be a conundrum: the pleasures generated even by films which at first glance seem to be dystopian, threatening, even repulsive. Disaster films, for example, play on our most elemental insecurities about nature, yet such films often become monstrous hits. Such films, despite their superficial disagreeableness, ultimately reassure, in a Metzian perspective, because they ~~give material form to our fears, thus reminding us that we are not alone!~~ <sup>they give</sup> ~~We are not crazy to feel such anxieties, such films seem to be telling us, since our fears are so palpably present there on the screen, inscribed in images and sounds, recognized and felt by other spectators as well!~~

Psychoanalytic criticism also prolonged earlier work on the relation between film and dream. Hugo Mauerhofer had suggested in "The Psychology of Cinematic Experience" (1949) that what he called the "cinema situation" shares a good deal with the dream situation, notably passivity, comfort, and withdrawal from reality. Suzanne Langer (1953) argued that film exists in a "dream mode," in that it creates a "virtual present conjoined with a feeling of immediacy, an impression of reality." It was only with the ~~special issue of Communications on "Psychoanalysis and the Cinema,"~~ however, that the film-dream analogy was explored in depth. In "The Fiction Film and its Spectator" Metz offered the most systematic exploration yet of the analogies and disanalogies between film and dream, much as he had earlier explored the analogies between film and language. For Metz, the impression of reality offered by film derives from a cinematic situation that encourages feelings of narcissistic withdrawal and dreamy self-indulgence, a regression into primary process conditioned by circumstances similar to those which under-

lie the illusion of reality in dream. The conventional fiction film invokes a lowering of wakefulness that triggers a state close to that of sleep and dreaming. This lowering of wakefulness implies a withdrawal of concern from the external world and a heightened receptivity to phantasized wish-fulfillment. In the cinema, unlike dream, we do not literally confuse our phantasies with perceptions, since here we are dealing with an *actual* perceptual object – the film itself. While dream is a purely internal psychic process, film involves real perception, potentially common to other viewers, of actual images recorded on film. The dream, as Metz points out, is doubly illusion: the dreamer believes more than the spectator, and what he or she "perceives" is less real. The continuing perceptual stimulation of the cinema prevents unconscious wishes from taking a completely regressive path, therefore, and what is illusion of reality in dream is merely an impression of reality in film. Yet the parallels between the conditions of film viewing and those of dreams help explain the quasi-hallucinatory degree of this impression of reality that films can achieve.

The view of Hollywood as a dream factory suggested that the dominant industry promoted escapist fantasy. Screen theory, similarly, stressed the negative, exploitative dimension of film dream. But while theory was right to denounce the alienations provoked by dominant cinema, it is also important to recognize the desire that brings spectators to the movie theater. The perennial comparison of film and dream points not only to film's potential for alienation but also to its central utopian thrust. Dreams are not merely regressive; they are vital to human well-being. They are, as the Surrealists emphasized, a sanctuary for desire, an intimation of the possible transcendence of dichotomies, the source of kinds of knowledge denied cerebral rationality.

Psychoanalytic questions, while not on the surface political, could also be easily pushed in a political direction. What is the "libidinal economy" of the cinema? How does Hollywood, for example, exploit the spectator's voyeuristic and regressive tendencies in order to maintain itself as an institution? In "The Imaginary Signifier" Metz distinguished two "machines" operating within the cinematic institution: first, the cinema as industry, producing commodities whose

sale as tickets provides a return on investment; second, the mental machine which spectators have internalized and which adopts them for the consumption of films as pleasurable "good objects." One economy, involving the generation of profit, is intimately linked to the other, involving the circulation of pleasure (the third "machine" is critical discourse about the cinema). Metz in this context psychoanalyzed and institutionalized the underlying springs of cinematic pleasure: identification (first with the camera and then with characters); voyeurism (observation of others from a protected position); fetishism (the play of lack and disavowal); and narcissism (self-aggrandizing sensations of being an all-perceiving subject). Metz thus tried to answer a very important question: Why do spectators go to the cinema if they are not forced? What pleasure are they seeking? And how do they become part of an institutional machine that both delights and deludes them? Answering such questions about the imbricated functions of the real, the imaginary, and the symbolic in film reception might even have a feedback effect, yielding a new contribution to psychoanalysis itself.

The psychoanalytic critics also deployed the notion of the Oedipus Complex in the analysis of the cinema. In a Lacanian perspective, the Law catalyzes Desire. The cinema is oedipal not only in its stories—usually stories about a male protagonist overcoming his problems with the paternal Law—but also in its incorporation of the processes of disavowal and fetishism, whereby the spectator is aware of the illusory nature of the cinematic image and yet believes in that image nevertheless. This belief, furthermore, is premised on the spectacle being placed at a safe distance, and in this sense depends on voyeurism (with sadistic overtones). The cinema was clearly founded on the pleasure of looking, conceived since its origins as a place from which one could "spy on" others. What Freud called *scopophilia*—the impulse to turn the other into the object of a curious gaze—is one of the primordial elements in cinematic seduction. Indeed, the titles of some of the earliest films bear witness to this fascination: *As Seen Through a Telescope* (1900), *Ce que l'on voit de mon sixième* (What one sees from my sixth floor, 1901), *Through the Keyhole* (1900), and *Peeping Tom in the Dressing Room* (1905). The

cinematic apparatus for Metz combines visual hyperperception with minimal physical mobility; it virtually demands an immobile secret viewer who absorbs everything through the eyes. The precise mechanism of gratification "rests on our knowing that the object being looked at does not know it is being looked at" (Metz, 1977). The voyeur is careful to maintain a gulf between the object and the eye. The voyeur's *invisibility* produces the visibility of the objects of his or her gaze. It is the breaking down of these processes, the shattering of an illusory voyeuristic distance, that is allegorically staged in Hitchcock's *Rear Window*, where the protagonist is caught in the act through a series of scopic inversions which turn him into the object of the gaze. Psychoanalysis, as we shall see later, formed part of many subsequent movements such as film feminism and post-colonialism, and certainly inflects the work of later figures such as Kaja Silverman, Joan Copjec, and Slavoj Žižek.

## The Feminist Intervention

At its height, the left wing of semiotic film theory hoped for a creative amalgam of the projects of the "Holy Trinity" (or Sinister Triumvirate, depending on one's point of view) of Althusser, Saussure, and Lacan. In an amicable division of labor, Marxism would provide the theory of society and ideology; semiotics would provide the theory of signification; and psychoanalysis would provide the theory of the subject. But in fact it was not an easy task to synthesize Freudian psychoanalysis with Marxist sociology, or historical materialism with a largely ahistorical structuralism. Indeed, the post-1968 period witnessed an overall decline in the prestige of Marxism and the emergence of the new politics of social movements such as feminism, gay liberation, ecology, and minority empowerment. The decline of Marxism had to do not only with the transparent crisis of socialist societies (a point sometimes exploited to obscure the fact that global capitalism was also in crisis), but also with increasing skepticism about all totalizing theories. Gradually, the focus of radi-