



# **subversive pleasures:**

**Masculinity & Spectatorship in Mainstream Cinema**

**emer williams 1993**

Joint Honours History of Art  
& Visual Communications

subversive literature

1

Manuscript of the ...

The ... of the ...

1991

NC 0020265 7



**national college of art and design**

Joint Honours History of Art & Visual Communications

**subversive  
pleasures:**

**Masculinity & Spectatorship in  
Mainstream Cinema**

*Submitted to the faculty of Art and Design and  
Complementary Studies in Candidacy for the Degree of  
Joint Honours History of Art and Visual Communications  
1993*

**by**

**emer williams**

national college of art and design



Exhibition of the  
National College of Art and Design

Exhibition of the  
National College of Art and Design

Exhibition of the  
National College of Art and Design  
by  
National College of Art and Design

enter william



## Contents

<b>Part 1</b>	Telling Tales	3
	Introduction	4
	The Oedipus Complex	6
<b>Part 2</b>	Polymorphous perversity	9
	The Female Gaze	12
	Identification with Victim	14
	An Unstable Identificatory Position	21
	Hysteria in the Male	23
<b>Part 3</b>	Case Studies	30
	Sunset Boulevard	31
	Once Upon a Time in the West	33
	Eraserhead	35
	Videodrome	38
<b>Part 4</b>	Conclusion	40
<b>Part 5</b>	Bibliography	42
	Filmography	44
	Contents of accompanying video	46



## Telling Tales

Light Sleeper	"You [Dafoe] were an encyclopedia of suicidal fantasies."
The Dark Corner	"You're not so tough Brad, you just think you are, I cracked you wide open and you know it." "I'm backed into a dark corner and I don't know who's hitting me."
The Night Porter	"Tell me [Max] what to do"
Peeping Tom	"You [Mark] walk about the house as if you haven't paid the rent." "I am my fathers son"
Sunset Boulevard	"Waiting, waiting for the gravy train" [Joe] "I [Joe] haven't been keeping myself at all"
Track 29	"I've [Gary] been utterly fed up of being a grown-up for a long time now"
Dead Ringers	"I [Beverly] was hiding..... afraid you wouldn't let me have her" "Beverly, that's a woman's name"
The Wild Bunch	"I'm [Pike] tired of being hunted" "We all dream of being a child again"
Blue Velvet	"Baby [Frank] wants to fuck"
Rio Bravo	"If I ever saw a man holding a bull by the tail you're it"
Out of the Past	"And every night I [Jeff] went to meet her how did I know she'd ever show up? I didn't. How big a chump can you get to be?"
The Incredible Shrinking Man	"I [Scott] had become the hunted" "Giant strength urging me [Scott] to the death struggle (with the "immortal" spider)"



1 Mulvey (1975)1985: 810

2 Sam Spade (Bogart) Maltese Falcon  
1941

3 "Where women are investigated, men  
are tested." (Neale 1983: 16) I class  
Hitchcock's Suspicion as a notable  
exception, we like "monkey face", per-  
ceive Johnny as an enigma - passive and  
feminine.

4 Silverman 1979: 6

5 It is a sentiment stated thrice in the  
film, firstly by Gavin Elster, then Pop  
Liebl and finally Scottie.

## Introduction

As classically epitomised by Sam Spade, the supermasculine problem-solving hero - he of the "more perfect, more complete, more powerful ideal ego" <sup>1</sup> - doesn't mind "a certain amount of trouble" <sup>2</sup>. Problems exist precisely in order to be overcome. Trouble, while it may render him provisionally in a feminine position, paradoxically facilitates the emergence of an unchallengeable maleness with its own particular sense of omnipotence. In other words, the establishment of masculinity is predicated upon its own self-questioning<sup>3</sup>. However if cast in what is regarded as "culturally inadmissible"<sup>4</sup> (a feminine, pre-oedipal, masochistic space,) and "trouble" is not overcome, the privileged and sadistic condition of masculinity, is undermined. The focus of this paper is to examine the extent to which the (male) "freedom power and excitement" cited in Vertigo<sup>5</sup> is challenged within mainstream cinema.

Mulvey and others have argued that Classical Film is constructed with a male spectator in mind, and that the forms of Classical Cinema are founded on the basis of a male fantasy entirely detrimental to women: A Fantasy of sexual difference that privileges masculinity. I wish to propose that this fantasy is not complete, but that masculinity may and is threatened.





6 Stephen King stating clearly the existence of male-to-female identification, cited Clover 1992: 4

7 Stated simply, Mulvey's thesis in a Freudian mode is the by-product of a phallogentric system, where "woman is (passive) raw material for the (active) gaze of the man." (1975: 815) As signifier for lack, the female forces the male to re-experience the castration crisis (unpleasure); this he resolves through voyeurism in which a woman's guilt is established in order to facilitate her castration - power is returned to the male, he saves or punishes. Alternatively the threat is negated through the substitution of a fetish object or treating of woman as a fetish - overvaluation.

Rodowick in "The Difficulty of Difference" has pointed out that Mulvey's failure to regard fetishism as "passive" constitutes a blind spot motivated by the political charge of her argument.

8 Bergstrom "Alternation, Segmentation, Hypnosis: Interview with Raymond Bellour," *Camera Obscura* nos. 3-4 Summer 1979: 97.

*"Carrie's revenge is something any student who has ever had his gym shorts pulled down or his glasses rubbed could approve of."*<sup>6</sup>

Mulvey holds that it is always the male, the (sadistic) bearer of the look, the object the woman, with whom we identify.<sup>7</sup> The female spectator is emasculated or according to Bellour masochistic: "I think that a woman can love, accept and give a positive value to film only from her own masochism and from a certain sadism that she can exercise in return on the masculine subject, within a system loaded with traps".<sup>8</sup> This I reject on a number of levels, failing as it does to consider the possibility of: inherent bisexuality, a female gaze, identification with the victim, fetishistic scopophilia as masochistic, a fluid, multiple succession or simultaneous often contradictory identificatory positions, and presupposes the omnipotence of the male protagonist. These shall be discussed separately. Firstly to facilitate greater understanding, a brief consideration (Freudian) of masculinity follows.





**9** Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*  
The Pelican Freud library vol.4 Pelican  
Books Harmondsworth 1976: 363-4

**10** Freud's reading of Oedipus Rex is selective. If taken in the context of Sophocle's trilogy we see it is no longer incest that is the primary motivation (the marriage to the mother is secondary - a symbol of victory) but a conflict between matriarchal equality and patriarchal dictatorship. The latter, although victorious, has "its principles morally defeated in the Debacle of Creon [with the recognition] that he has achieved nothing but death." Fromm 1982: 27-38

**11** Krutnik 1991: 75

**12** The symbolic describes the patriarchal order proper to which the male child aspires. Successful entry is predicated on the repudiation of the imaginary - the other pole of Lacanian thought.

**13** Freud, "Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego" 1921 *Civilization, Society and Religion* The Pelican Freud library vol.12 Pelican Books Harmondsworth 1976: 363-4

**14** *ibid.*

**15** Freud, "The Ego and the Id" *On Metapsychology, the Theory of Psychoanalysis* The Pelican Freud library vol.11 Pelican Books Harmondsworth 1984: 371. Cf. also Freud's paper "The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex" (1924) *On Sexuality* The Pelican Freud library vol.7 Pelican Books Harmondsworth 1977: 318

**16** Krutnik 1991: 78

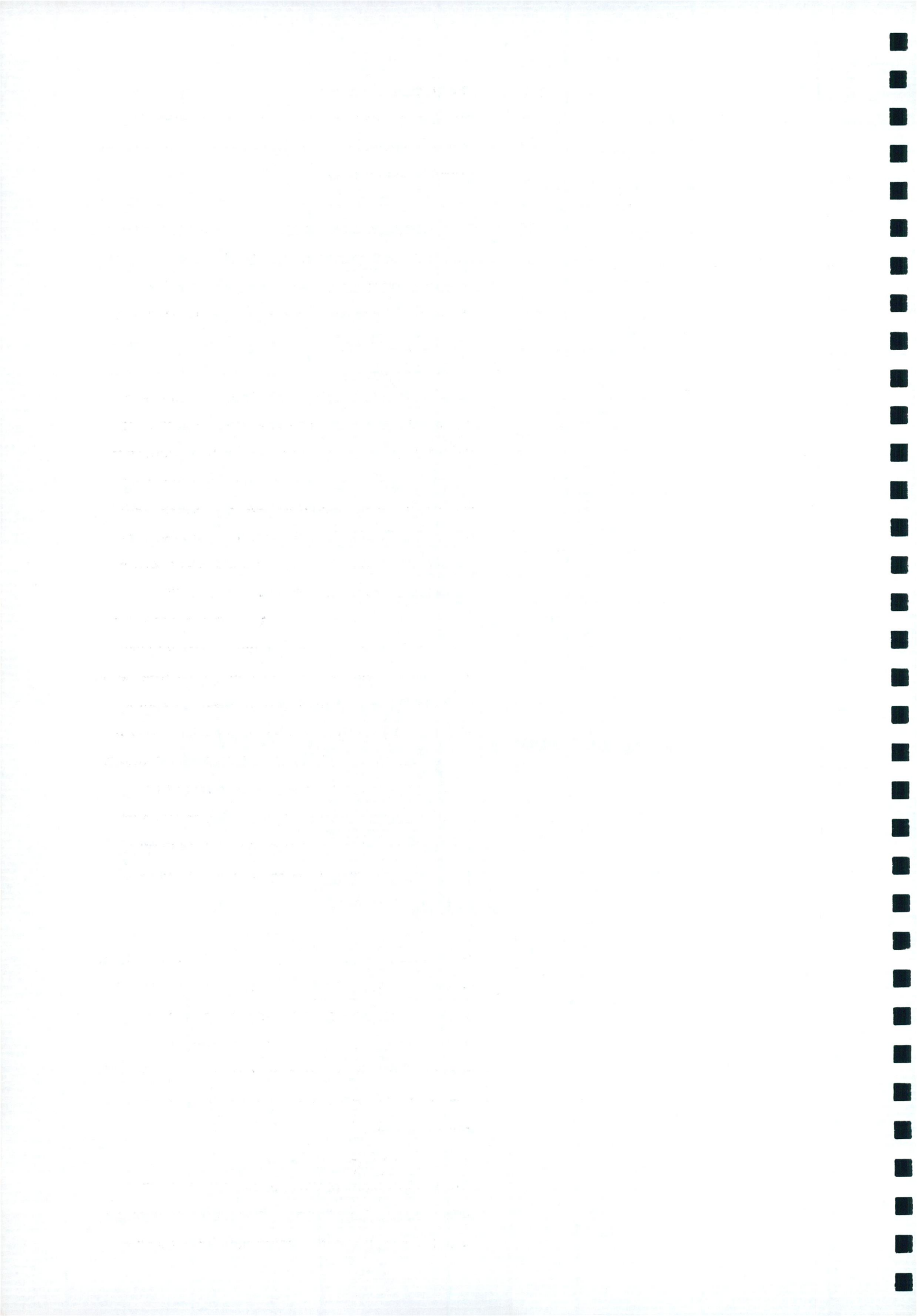
## The Oedipus Complex

*"The lesson ... [he] should learn from the (Oedipus Rex) tragedy is submission to the divine will (patriarchy) and realization of his impotence."*<sup>9</sup>

The Oedipus Complex, albeit a misnomer,<sup>10</sup> is the "critical moment"<sup>11</sup> in the structuring of the child's sexual identity, according to the established norms of patriarchal culture. This is a culture of binary oppositions, with masculinity and femininity based on notions of hierarchical difference, the former embodying primary (positive) qualities, the latter secondary. Essentially the Oedipus Complex describes the sexual desire of the male child (four or five years) towards his mother and ensuing hostility/fear, towards his castrating-rival father, the resolution of which involves dis-identification with the mother and identification with the father, accommodating entry into the symbolic.<sup>12</sup> The moral of the scenario is to accept one's place under patriarchal law or risk retribution, i.e. castration.

According to Freud, contemporaneous with or following male identification with the father, who is regarded as an "ego-ideal",<sup>13</sup> the mother is constituted as primary "object-Cathexis".<sup>14</sup> Just as in intrauterine life, she is all, the father nothing, he is not an object of desire but subject of identification. It is towards her (and the self - primary narcissism) that libidinal charge is directed. The relationship between (a) identification with the father, and (b) desire for the mother, is uneasy. The boy child desires what the father "owns". A further problem is that the male child is the marked inferior to the father who is "symbolically-sanctioned"<sup>15</sup> with the authority to castrate. Hence the child has to choose between the mother, (castration, regression to the pre-oedipal condition, ergo adopt a feminine position,) and an intensification of his identification with the father (trajectory to "normal" masculinity, the castrating power of the father internalised as the "super ego").

"The Oedipal moment serves to effect the polarisation of heterosexual identity."<sup>16</sup> The (father's) possession of the penis becomes the matrix of (his) authority - the physical





**17** Juliet Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis and feminism* Pelican Books Harmondsworth 1975: 404. Lee Comer notes in *Wedlocked Women* Feminist Press Leeds 1974: 13, "girls can cross the boundary to enter, for a short while the company of boys." She continues, "a boy may not join ranks with his inferiors" - he may not be permitted to do so by the establishment. However the motivation of this dissertation is to the contrary: to establish the one-way system as a myth - a myth understood in terms of male hysteria.

**18** Ryan, "The Roots of Masculinity" *The Sexuality of Men* Eds. Metcalf & Humphries Pluto Press London 1985: 26

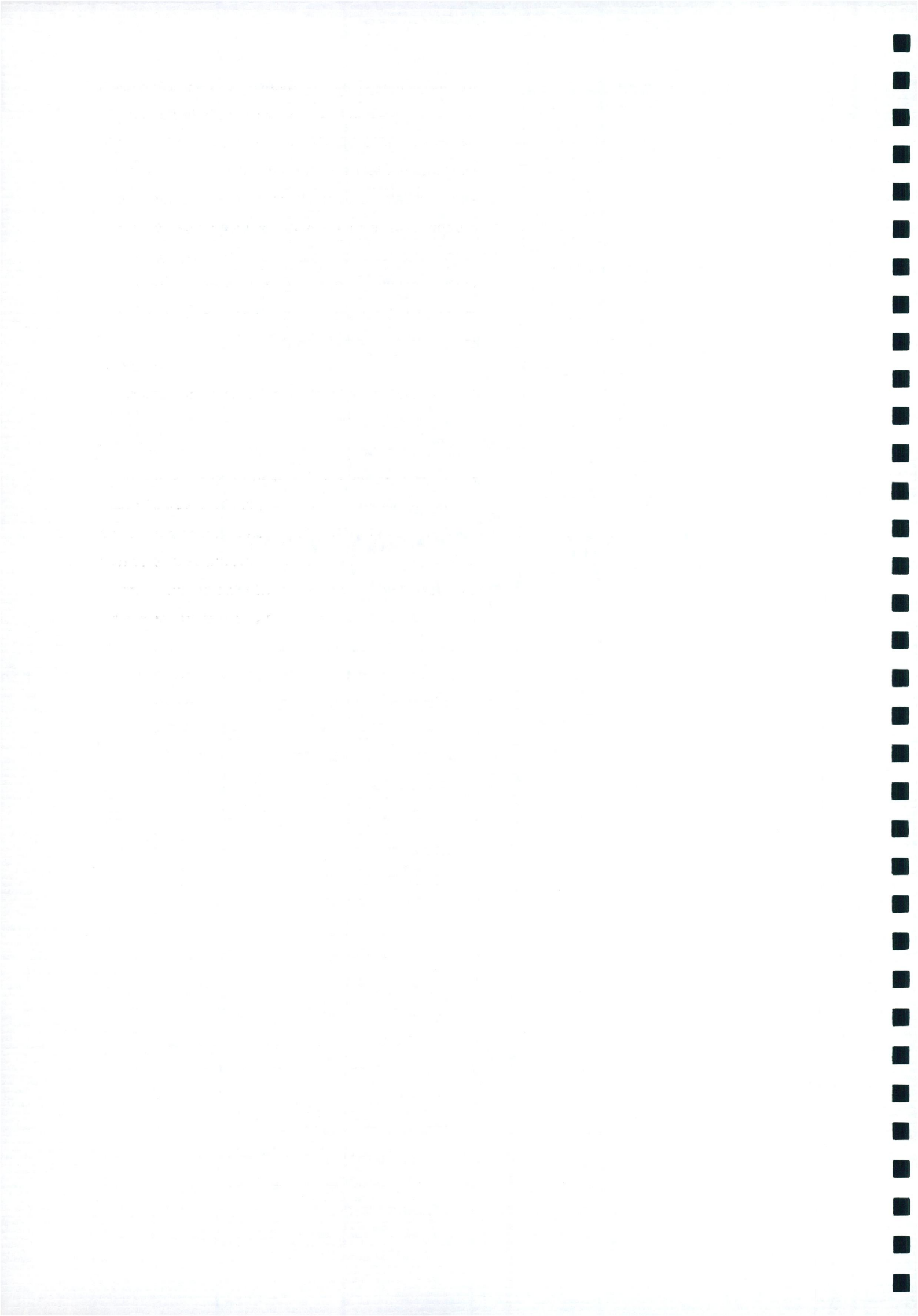
**19** Krutnik 1991: 82

**20** Freud, "Analysis of a phobia in a five-year-old boy" *Standard Edition* vol. 10 p.8 Although Freud recognised birth as castration, he confines the term 'castration complex' to "those excitations and consequences which are bound up with the (potential) loss of the penis."

signifier of masculinity. The mother, once source of plenitude, is now seen as lack (read: castrated), hence the male child regards his possession of the organ as a conditional privilege which on transgression of the law of the father will be abrogated. Therefore although integration into the symbolic isn't a matter of anatomy per se (Lacan's distinction of the penis and the phallus), the female is manifestly excluded. Mitchell writes, "both (female/male) want to take the father's place, and only the boy will one day be allowed to do so."<sup>17</sup>

Whilst Freud believed that the male, with the primary love object (the mother) positioned heterosexually, was privileged, the process of dis-identification, argues Ryan, implicates masculinity as the weaker gender construct with fear and repression central to the development of male sexuality. He writes "Masculinity can be viewed as a defensive construction developed ... out of the need to emphasise a difference, a separateness from the mother".<sup>18</sup> Freud himself has noted that such a schematised overview of sexual development fails to negotiate the inherent bisexuality of all - identification is never simply mother/daughter, father/son. Thus gender identity isn't fixed but exists in a hegemonic state, in which conflicting desires are held in place (potentially transgressive desire is not waived but repressed, "subjected to a process of recathecting or anticathexis"<sup>19</sup>) by (the threat of) patriarchal authority. Ergo the mother in the pre-oedipal realm, superior/external to the phallic order is positioned ambivalently.

The relationship between the fe/male and her/his mother is circumscribed by (the child's) lack - symbolic castration i.e. losses/separations incurred by the child from the moment of birth, "the prototype of all castration",<sup>20</sup> through to the loss of the breast, and the faeces (perceived as extensions of self). This therefore precedes the Oedipus complex. The concept of symbolic castration is particularly pertinent to the formation of the ego described by Lacan's mirror phase as recognition and misrecognition. It is the instant of the constitution of the subject as a distinct entity, occurring (between six and



**21** Lacan, "Of the Gaze as Object petit a" *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* Norton & Co. New York 1981: 153

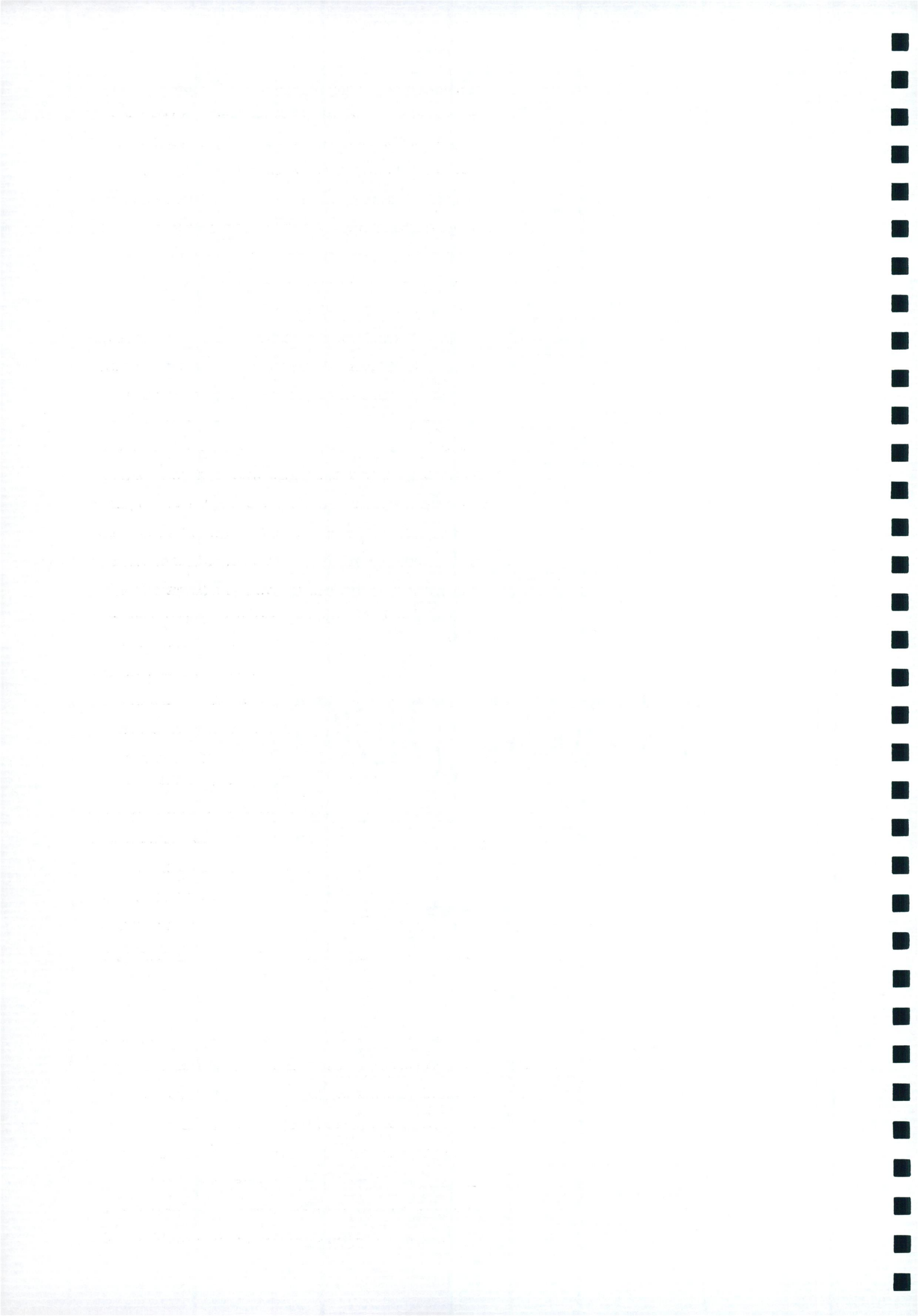
**22** Mary Jacobus, *Reading Women: Essays in Feminist Criticism* Columbia University Press New York 1986:60

**23** Language is a process that involves lack/separation. On the child's realisation of an utterance he sees himself as a separate individual distinct from the mother, further there is lack in the vocabulary. Therefore silence can be linked to narcissism, to the construction of the ideal ego.

**24** Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror: the Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema* Indiana University Press Bloomington and Indianapolis 1988: 14

eighteen months) only at the price of the subject seeing itself as other, an image of independence and separateness. Important in the triangular process is the (m)/Other's look, the look from without, which grants the image of self, thus facilitating primary narcissism: "what fundamentally determines me in the visible is the look from outside"<sup>21</sup>. However Kristeva contends that it is not the mother's look that is central but her looking away, similarly Jacobus writes "the child chooses narcissism as a defence against, and as a way of maintaining, the necessary space of 'vide' which enable it to enter into the realm of images (Lacan's 'imaginary') and ultimately into the symbolic realm."<sup>22</sup>

In summary: subjectivity is realised by lack, (separation from the mother's womb/breast, loss of faeces, division in the semiotic, misrecognition in the mirror phase and division of subject in language<sup>23</sup>). At this pre-Oedipal juncture the mother is all, her equation with lack is only a "secondary construction, one which covers earlier sacrifices."<sup>24</sup>





\* See video

**25** Freudian term used to describe the infants unorganised/(bi-) sexual state.

**26** This lack in her discussion provided the basis for **The Female Gaze: Women as Viewers of Popular Culture**. Although Gamman and Marshment must be commended for their recognition of various looks which hadn't been considered by Mulvey, the end result is an over-simplification: identification equates with "fancying" the person. Also they failed to tackle male passivity.

**27** Freud, **Femininity**, vol 22 of **The Complete Psychological Works**, Standard Edition Hogarth Press London 1951

**28** De Lauretis, **Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema**. Indiana University Press, Bloomington 1984: 143

**29** Mulvey, "Afterthoughts" 1990: 35

**30** Peary, **Cult Movies 2**. Dell New York 1983

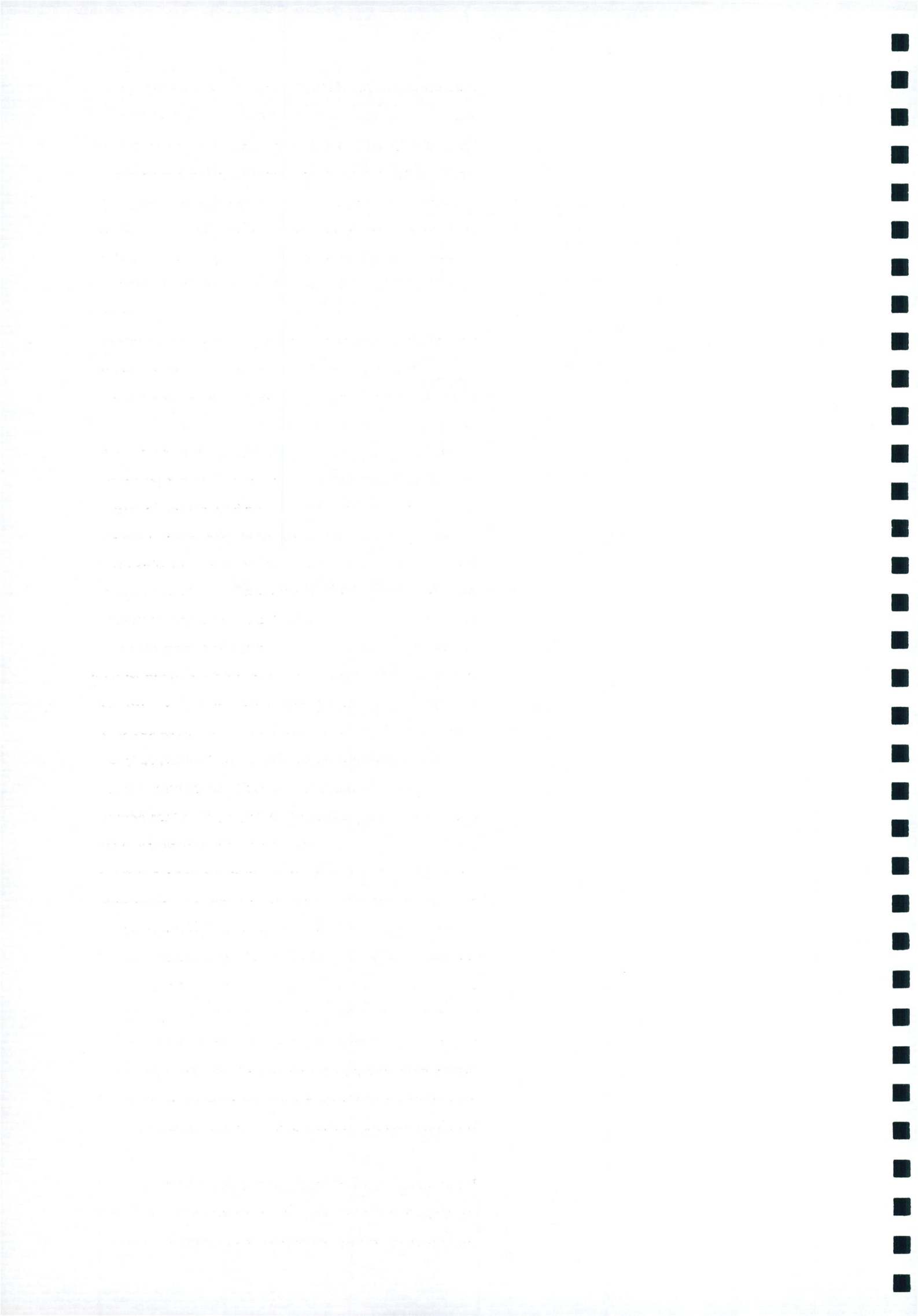
**31** Schoell, **Stay Out of the Shower: Twenty-five Years of Shocker Films Beginning with Psycho**. Dembner New York 1985: 55

## Polymorphous perversity<sup>25</sup>

Mulvey in "Afterthoughts on 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' inspired by *Duel in the Sun*" while not rescinding her 1975 thesis explores the nature of female sexuality, moreover bisexuality, thereby accommodating woman's active desire - looking at men or other women as objects of heterosexual/ lesbian desire\* (Morocco, Desperately Seeking Susan), which her original argument did not.<sup>26</sup>

Like Wood, Mulvey draws on Freud's notion of femininity, which may be regarded as an oscillation between passive femininity and regressive masculinity. "Regressions to the pre-oedipal phase very frequently occur....there is a repeated alternation between periods in which femininity and masculinity gain the upper hand."<sup>27</sup> To support the concept of bisexuality Freud cites a female patient who tore her dress with one hand, (identifying with the male), and brought it to her body with the other, (identifying with the female). The pre-oedipal phase (characterized by narcissism) is as Mulvey notes perceived as active (read: phallic). Fearing castration the male child throws over (pre-oedipal) narcissistic omnipotence in favour of the trajectory to normal masculinity - channelling desire towards a female within a couple, whilst the female is required to repudiate all, thereby rendered passive. However as the primacy of the castration threat is not present for the female to the same degree as the male, her active fantasies are never entirely repressed. De Lauretis also writes of double desire - of active and passive aims, "desire for the other and desire to be desired by the other"<sup>28</sup>. Hence the female is capable of both cross-gender/sexual identification even if as Mulvey suggests, "shift[ing] restlessly in its borrowed transvestite clothes".<sup>29</sup>

Despite Peary's<sup>30</sup> insistence on male to male identification only, which I feel points to a masochistic drive - in Rape/Revenge movies, the rapists (or men as a corporate body) are severely punished. If identification is total then the male leaves the cinema literally dead, chopped to pieces or as in Zarchi's I Spit on Your Grave 1977, deprived of his "offending weapon". While Schoell<sup>31</sup> notes that males cheer on the misogynous outbursts, it is equally



32 Clover 1992: 46 As is social and age groupings.

33 Oakley, *Sex Gender and Society* Temple Smith Melbourne 1972: 158. Also Sex is no object if you write the function right and play the part with conviction" Clover 1992: 232

34 Potter as quoted in Glaessner "Fire and Ice" *Sight and Sound* BFI London vol 2 issue 4 August 1992: 14

35 De Palma cited by Schoell, *Stay Out of the Shower* Dembner New York 1985: 41

36 Silverman 1979: 5

noted that it is his death at the hands of the heroine that receives loudest applause. Similarly in *Vertigo*, if identification is with Scottie who in turn identifies with Madeleine identifying with Carlotta, consequently our ultimate point of reference is woman/death.\* Peary's idea that men identify with the rapist is supported through sex alone and as Clover points out "gender is less a wall than a permeable membrane."<sup>32</sup> Consider King's reading of *Carrie*, cited in the opening of the dissertation in which the audience construed as male identifies with the female - Carrie. Oakley states that to be male or female is "as much a function of dress, gesture, occupation, social network and personality, as it is of possessing a particular set of genitals."<sup>33</sup>

Particularly relevant here is Sally Potter's *Orlando*, based on Woolf's 1928 novel in which "gender is turned on its head."<sup>34</sup> The story is about Orlando who up until thirty was a male, thereafter was a woman. She was not different but just a different sex. Thus pleasure in identification with the woman (marked as both gendered female - passive victim, and male - the final girl) is unquestionable. It is clearly acknowledged by Sarno, director of pornographic sexploitation films whose work is primarily concerned with the female point of view, and by De Palma observing that "women in peril work much better in the suspense genre, you fear more for her than a husky man".<sup>35</sup> Barrowclough in her review of *Not a Love Story* also places identification with the female passive position, the opinion that pornography is not used to celebrate omnipotent male sexuality is echoed too in Soble's *Pornography*. I contend that the pleasure at stake in violence directed towards others may be regarded as projection of the hurt within the spectator, pain made visible; hence as Scott Carey in the *Incredible Shrinking Man* becomes smaller and smaller he also becomes "more tyrannical, more monstrous in [his] domination of Louis". In the same vein Silverman in "Masochism and Subjectivity" writes, "the fascination of the sadistic point of view is merely the best vantage point from which to watch the masochistic story unfold".<sup>36</sup>

Both sexes are free to identify with the opposite, however the cross-over is made easier for the woman as the risks of retribution are less for her. It is accepted that the female





(black/poor) regarded culturally as inferior, may join with the superior (male/white/rich) but to reverse this would upset the patriarchal regime.



38 The concept of masquerade originally developed by Riviere in "Womanliness as a Masquerade" describes the exaggeration of certain qualities which are marked feminine as a defence against the patriarchal establishment. It was introduced into film theory by Claire Johnson (1975) who understood it in terms of cross-dressing but since then has been given more specific meanings. It is Doane's perception of the masquerade that is relevant here. She argues that femininity in excess creates distance between the person and image and thus destabilizes the image, therefore the (male) Look must also be destabilized. If a female can put on a mask, then perhaps conversely she may take it off.

39 The denial of woman's power on anything other than a sexual level is to some degree regressive. Here it is counterbalanced by Alex who like the Final Girl is gendered androgynous / active male.

## The Female Gaze

Although the possibility of the female gaze founded on the concept of constitutional bisexuality has received much attention, it does not belong to the structuring cinematic norms as summarized by Mulvey's pioneering text "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" or visualized by Powell's horror metafilm, Peeping Tom. If its presence is not celebrated there is a tentative acknowledgement that primary identification, (distinct from Freud's usage of the term as primary emotional tie), though predominantly male, is gender neutral (Metz); and Baudry, who emphasizes the patriarchal matrix of the apparatus, does not imply total exclusion of the female. Whilst the focus of this paper is not with the female per se (either side of the camera), the reality of her gaze is important here in so much as it throws masculinity into question. Consider in Vertigo the privileged moment of Judy's letter\* and revelatory flashback in which Scottie is revealed as a pawn in Elster's plans. Tension is created because the film continues to be shot from Scottie's point of view, that of ignorance, thus exposing the apparatus of male anxiety. In short, male identification is "severely disturbed, made problematic".<sup>37</sup>

It is interesting to note that in Rear Window the woman, Lisa, possesses the final look, and it can be argued that through her masquerade<sup>38</sup> (manifest in her reading material - "Beyond The High Himalayas" under the law of the father and "Harpers Bazaar" whilst unobserved) she avoids patriarchal positioning and undermines its authority. It creates a gap between the image and woman.\* Especially pertinent to a consideration of the masquerade as a resistance to male domination/ knowledge is Black Widow in which Catherine reduces the male to passive and gullible.<sup>39</sup>

Intercutting into or ending the film with the female point of view may, (as Hitchcock has suggested in relation to Vertigo) go some way to figure the audience as little boy, passive to the author(ity) of the woman. He writes that the affect of Judy's flashback leaves the spectator asking "what comes next Mommy? .. what will he [Stewart] do





when he finds out? "<sup>40</sup> Modleski argues a similar point but emphasizes that her triumph is at the expense of her life, citing as model the death of Judy (Vertigo). To this may be added the voice-over of the dead Mrs. Bates (Psycho). I suggest that Modleski's fails to negotiate the masquerade which although "containing" the woman allows her to speak. Whilst the film Once Upon a Time in the West, contrary to the symbolic laws of male inheritance, is ultimately the story of the woman and masochistic man. It is Jill and not the men/heroes that assumes control in the new railroad town. The men are dead or dying, literally or emotionally.

Women are not all like Mrs. Ruth Wilcox (Howard's End) who is "happy to leave discussion and action to men," instead they seek to challenge male authority if not overtly (Thelma and Louis), within the structures that bind them (Vertigo).



**41** King Kong (Cooper & Shoedsack 1933) - Denham to Ann. Just as Ann is forced to confront the monster so too is the horror audience. Her reactions may be understood as an instructive mirror (which also heightens effect) for the spectator. Ann's look is trapped, she is held captivated; like the voyeur at the primal scene it is a masochistic look. Likewise the sign in the opening of The Silence of the Lambs "hurt, agony, pain - love it" is directed at the spectator as much as those on the assault course. Clover contends that moreover it is the reactive/introjective position, feminine and painful, that the horror genre invests in, not the assaultive position. 1992: esp 212.

**42** Comiskey and Bryant, "Factors Involved in Generating Suspense" Human Communication Research 9 1982: 57/8. See also Carroll "Towards a Theory of Film Suspense" Persistence of Vision 1 1984: 65-89

**43** Wood 1991: 306

**44** Hitchcock appreciated this, especially in relation to Grace Kelly (Rear Window) See Truffaut Hitchcock Simon and Schuster New York 1983: 73

**45** Such projection facilitates centrifugal/narcissistic identification. At the simplest level identification is seen in terms of narcissism and phantasy. However according to Laplanche and Pontalis, narcissistic identification may be further classified into heteropathic/centripetal and idiopathic/centrifugal. The former involves the spectator identifying with the other, the screen hero (what Mulvey refers to as ideal ego), the latter is projective in which the other is identified with self. The illusion of forcing the screen object to become more like oneself is best seen in The Incredible Shrinking Man: Scott has given up hope of ever crossing the canyon which separates him from the only food supply, primary identification with the camera reveals to us a stick, a substitute bridge that is unobserved by Scott. It is we who point it out, we who project our superior knowledge onto Scott, we who help him to cross.\*

**46** Fenichel, "The Scopophilic Instinct and Identification" (first published in Int. Z. Psa. vol.21 1926: 309-325) republished in Collected Papers of Otto Fenichel First Series 373-397.

## Identification with Victim

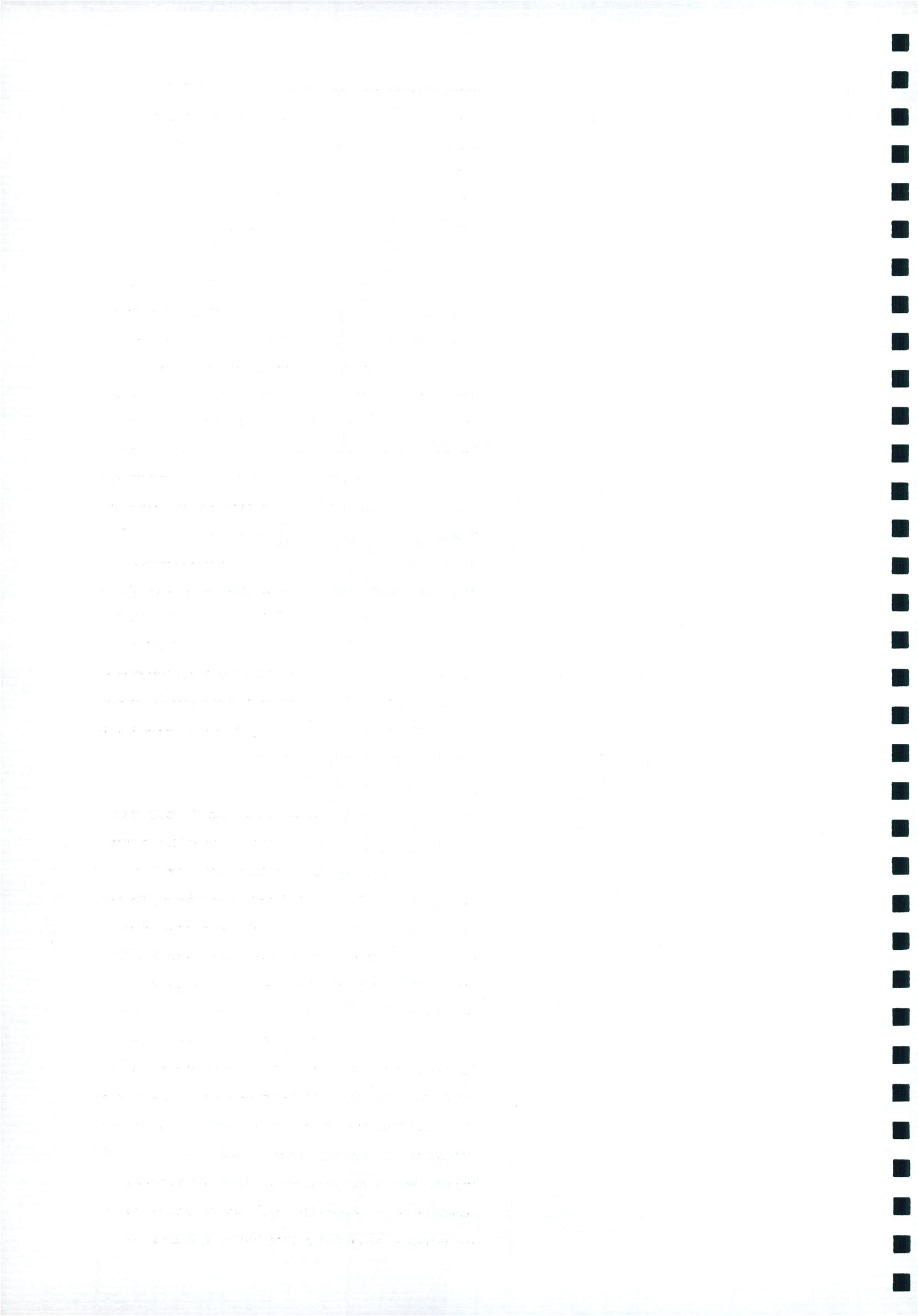
*"Now you look higher. You're amazed. Your eyes open wider. It's horrible, but you can't look away...You're helpless, helpless."*<sup>41</sup>

"The audience evidently 'gets involved with' and anxious about a hero it can like"<sup>42</sup> and according to Comiskey and Bryant attraction is motivated by goodness, moreover a vulnerability or weakness within the character. Similarly Wood notes that "there is a 'natural' (read: endemic to our culture) tendency to identify with the character who is threatened,"<sup>43\*</sup> and where danger is extreme, as in the roof scene in Vertigo, identification is immediate. When the subject is attractive (female), identification is intensified.<sup>44</sup> Clover in Men Women and Chain Saws, a study of gender in modern horror, proposed that victim identification is central to the female victim-hero scenario (Rape/Revenge plots). Involvement in her revenge and subsequent hero status is dependent on an earlier identification with her as victim.

Even when identification is encouraged with the killer via point of view shot, sympathies may align with the victim. In support I draw on Halloween, The Silence of the Lambs and The Birds. In the first two cases we see through the subjective camera of Michael Myers/Buffalo Bill. It is however a deviant vision - it does not see well, it lacks mastery. If we must stumble we do so with those we fear for - projecting ourselves onto the external object<sup>45</sup> "forcing [the object] to grow like oneself."<sup>46</sup> We see what the killer sees to help us (help the victim) escape. The aerial shot in The Birds is less complicated but more masochistic: it is the privileged position from which to witness our own destruction.\*

Further to identification with the victim which implicates the audience negatively is the (feminine) receptacle condition of spectatorship. Hence even when masculinity per se (i.e. within the cinematic frame, the film's narrative) isn't under question, extradiegetically the male, within the womb like form of the auditorium, itself a signifier of total regression, is. Hitchcock like De Palma plays on the



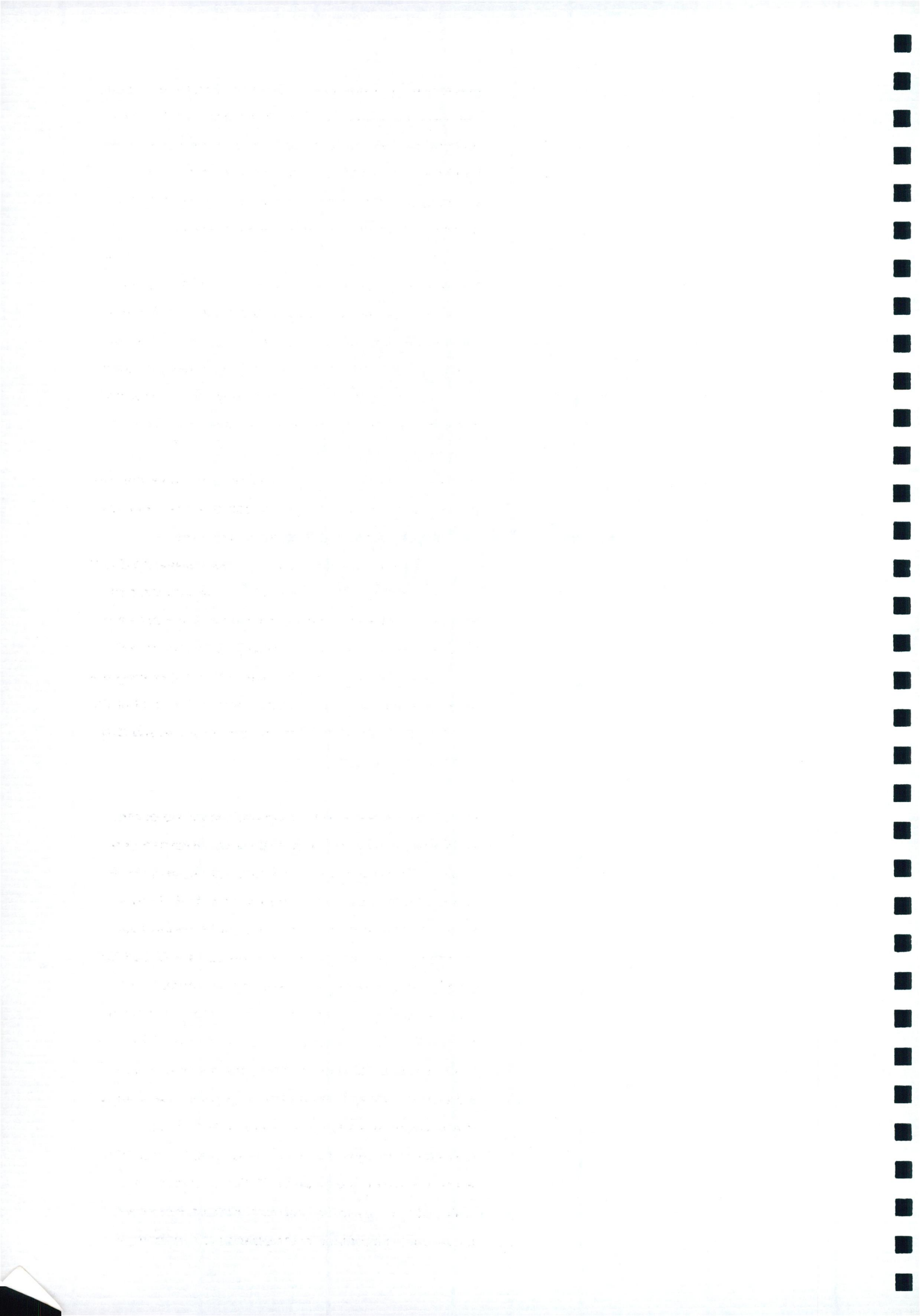


- 47** Hitchcock, interview in *Movie 6*  
cited Wood 1992: 142
- 48** Hitchcock quoted by Spoto, *The Dark Side of Genius: The Life of Alfred Hitchcock* Ballantine New York 1983: 431
- 49** Metz "The Passion for Perceiving" (1975) 1992: 745
- 50** Mulvey (1975) 1985: 816
- 51** Within the patriarchal establishment masochism deemed "culturally inadmissible" (Silverman 1979: 6) has been surrounded in silence - the strongest argument in support of its subversive nature. Silence/denial is evident not only here but in the majority of critics' failure to bring them to task. (Exceptions include Clover, Rodowick, Bergstrom, Studlar, Silverman.) Of note too is the neglect that the writings of Masoch have suffered when measured against those of de Sade.
- 52** Rodowick, "The Difficulty of Difference" *Wide Angle* 15 (1982): 7
- 53** Studlar, *In the Realm of Pleasure: Von Sternberg, Dietrich, and the Masochistic Aesthetic* University of Illinois Press Urbana 1988 esp. chapters 2 & 8

masochistic pleasures of the audience, literally taking them "through the haunted house at the fair ground"<sup>47</sup>. His description of Psycho's shower scene - "The Slashing. An impression of a knife slashing, as if tearing at the very screen ripping the film"<sup>48</sup> - perhaps epitomises best the relationship of Hitchcock as sadist to spectator as victim.

The concept of spectatorship (read: voyeurism) as non privileged (read: masochistic) runs counter to the mainstream cinematic theories - Mulvey and Metz are exemplary. Metz understands voyeurism as essentially a sadistic process with urge towards mastery: (not threat of castration) "for the spectator the film unfolds in that simultaneously very close and definitively inaccessible 'elsewhere' in which the child sees the amorous play of the parental couple, who are similarly ignorant of it and leave it alone, a pure onlooker whose participation is inconceivable."<sup>49</sup> While Mulvey writes "the two looks materially present in time and space are obsessively subordinated to the neurotic needs of the male ego."<sup>50</sup> However I suggest that both Mulvey and Metz are party/victim to patriarchy's repressions;<sup>51</sup> ergo masochism, which makes problematic the relationship of the male subject to the phallic establishment, is rendered invisible - repressed: a two way system construed as one.

Of "the two looks" which Mulvey speaks of, voyeurism and fetishistic scopophilia, it is the latter which is incongruous to her argument. Like Freud's writing on the Fort/Da incident the support/example is contrary to the thesis. In contrast to the former, fetishistic scopophilia does not concern itself with the appropriation of guilt and assertion of power but with an over-investment in the object thus dissolving distance and denoting absence (of the phallus). But absence asserts presence/existence. Rodowick, with reference to Freud has observed that fetishism "is one of the fundamental sources of authority defined as passive submission to the object: in sum, masochism."<sup>52</sup> Likewise Studlar's conception of fetishism, which however is redefined in relation to the pre-oedipal realm, of the loss of the mother.<sup>53</sup> Non distance negates the possibility as onlooker, threatening as it does to over-



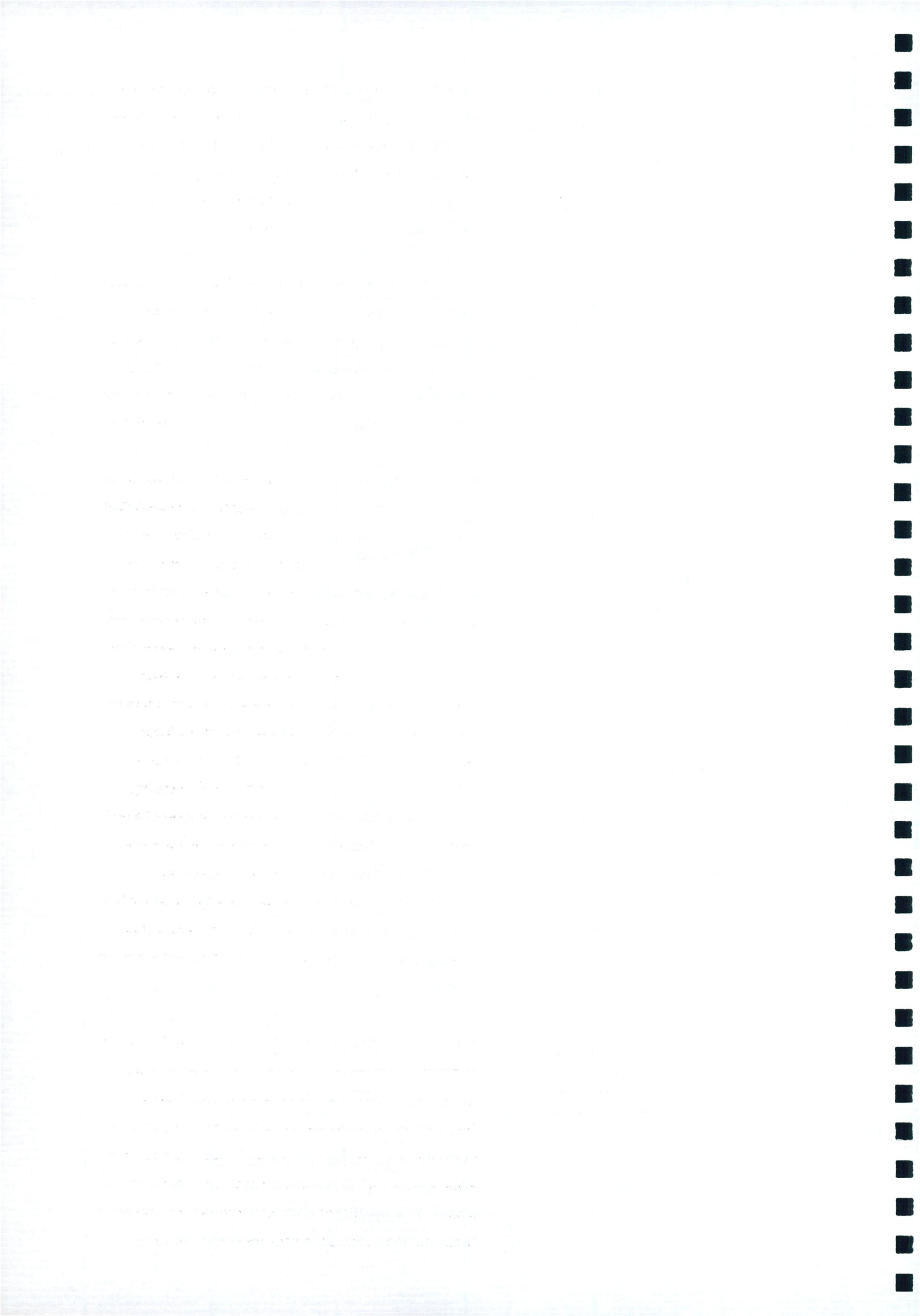


- 54 Silverman 1979, especially p. 6.
- 55 Metz "Identification, Mirror" (1975)  
1992: 736
- 56 *ibid.*
- 57 *ibid.*
- 58 *ibid.*
- 59 Silverman, "To Early/Too Late:  
Subjectivity and the Primal Scene in  
Henry James" *Novel* 21 (1988): 156
- 60 Laplanche, *Life and Death in  
Psychoanalysis* trans. Mehlman John  
Hopkins University Press Baltimore  
1976: 102
- 61 Sacher-Masoch, "A Childhood  
Memory and Reflection on the Novel"  
Appendix 1 in Deleuze *Masochism: An  
Interpretation of Coldness and  
Cruelty* George Braziller, New York  
1971: 232/3
- 62 *ibid.*

power the subject and hence drive the spectator into consummation of the object; the subject and the object are no longer distinguishable. Fetishism in short equates with narcissism - characteristic of the pre-oedipal stage. If located in the pre-oedipal moment, (I don't propose it is) then union is not with self but with the mother (read: death). Silverman casts doubt on Mulvey's assimilation of the castration threat, proposing that the crisis is not induced by the mother's lack but by identification with her. It is one (an identification) that our culture tries to deny, and therefore establishes the woman's guilt in order to differentiate the sexes. Fetishism facilitates identification but a reversal of same; *my mother is like me*, not *I am like my mother*.<sup>54</sup>

Vision, according to Metz, has a double structure, consisting of projective '(the "sweeping" searchlight)<sup>55</sup> and introjective '(consciousness as a sensitive recording surface/screen)<sup>56</sup> movement. But just as Mulvey, no doubt motivated by the political charge of her argument, had failed to acknowledge the passive gaze so too does Metz. Despite his description of our perception as "soft wax"<sup>57</sup> and our condition as "the sensitive surface duplicating the screen,"<sup>58</sup> Metz collapses both movements into that of the camera, thereby negating the strength of the introjective as passive.

I would also argue with Metzian understanding of the child's position within the primal scene. Silverman perceives the spectator as trapped, held captive and "far from controlling the sounds and images...the child...is controlled - indeed overwhelmed by them."<sup>59</sup> Support is found in Laplanche's study of the infant, Tantalus, who is compelled to witness the parent's active desire. He is regarded passive not only in his own inaction but "in relation to the adult fantasy intruding within him."<sup>60</sup> Perhaps this is more clearly expressed on a textual level: Masoch's recollection of a childhood memory in which he witnessed the union of his aunt and her lover. Although not of full understanding his "heart began to pound, for [he] was acutely aware of [his] situation."<sup>61</sup> Discovered, he is whipped: "while [he] writhed under [his] aunt's cruel blows, [he] experienced acute pleasure".<sup>62</sup> Another parallel





**63** "According to (Bertram) Lewin's hypothesis, the dream screen is the dream's hallucinatory representation of the mother's breast on which the child used to fall asleep" Baudry (1975) 1992: 701

**64** Davies's autobiographical film is a materialisation of his memories rather than an accurate reconstruction of a reality. It is a hyper-realism. "He exaggerated the proportions ... brought out the textures and deepened the shadows." Kirkham & O'Shaughnessy "The Long Day Closes" *Sight and Sound* BFI London vol 2 issue 1 May 1992:13

**65 (A)** The cineaste does not suffer motor inhibition: "people frequently walk to the rear of the theatre.. grab a smoke"(Carroll(1988) 1992: 716);

**(B)**the fantasy is public and may be replayed thereby reality can be tested, although it is true that the reality of film (a two-dimensional form on a large screen) may be tested: "he can go up to the screen and touch it"(Carroll (1988) 1992: 717) the film's reality may not - the narrative structure may be subsumed by the protagonists reality;

Cronenberg's *The Naked Lunch*, Videodrome or Scorsese's *King of Comedy* leave the spectator unsure as to the actuality of the films' events - are the images real or merely manifestations of the hero's subjective hallucinations? and **(C)** according to primitive narcissism the breast cannot be located as the site of projection - therefore the screen and breast are not interchangeable. In summary "the filmic state embodies a weaker form of certain economic conditions of sleep" Metz *The Imaginary Signifier* (1975) Bloomington 1982:117

**66** There is a constant oscillation between Mark as aggressor, (sadistic film-maker) and victim (masochistic spectator).

**67** Cowie,"Fantasia" m/f 9 1984: 77

**68** Sandy to Jeffery in cafe.

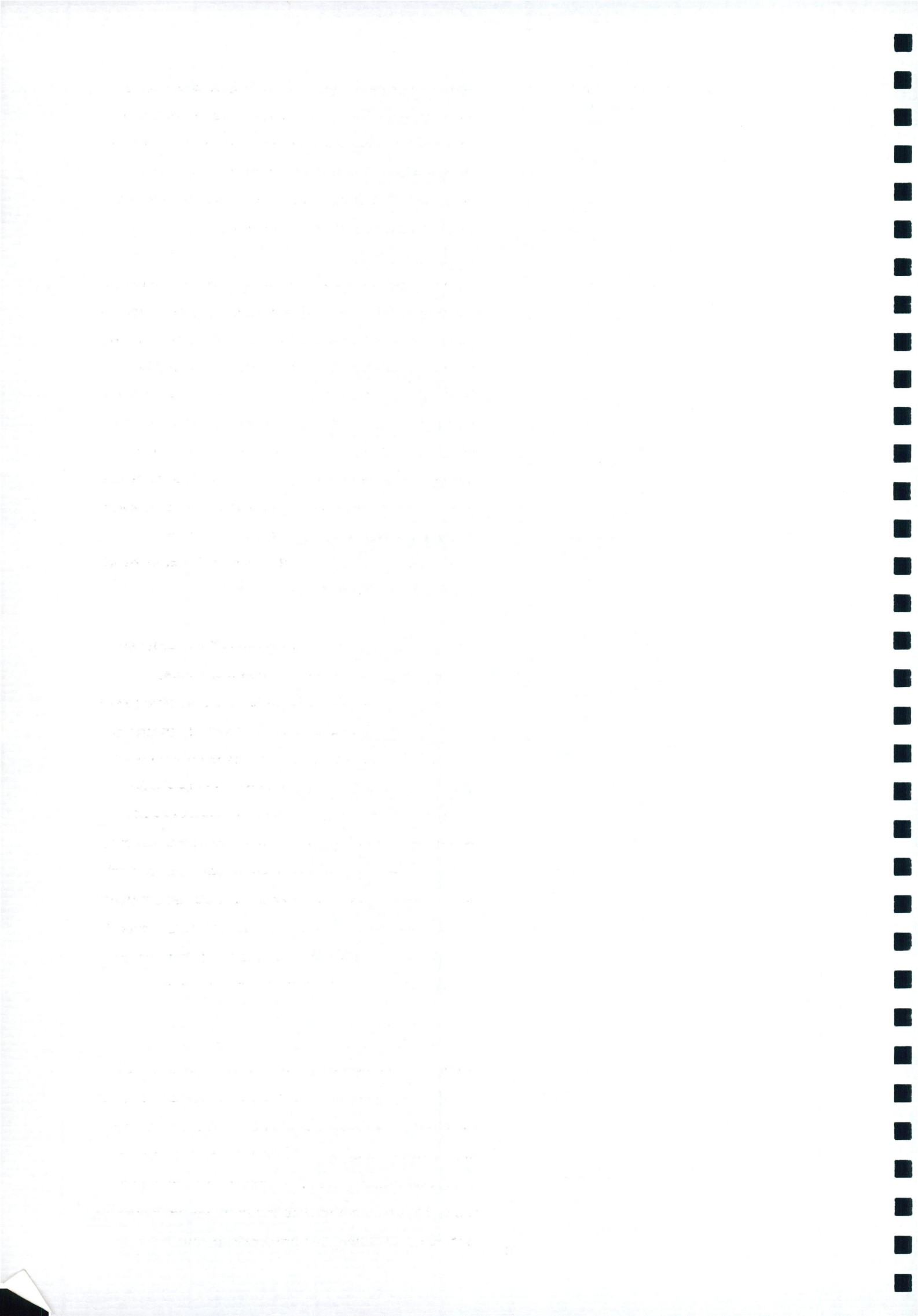
**69** Truffaut *Hitchcock* Simon and Schuster New York 1983: 15

**70** Modleski 1988: 83

is Lynch's postmodern tongue in cheek sexual comedy road map, *Blue Velvet*. The "detective or pervert" Jeffery hidden in the wardrobe assaulted by the primal scene, is passive, helpless and risks punishment from Frank - his substitute father. The assaulted spectator equals the hysterical spectator equals the masochistic spectator.

Baudry's "The Apparatus", drawing an analogy between spectator and dreamer, whose screen is the mother's breast (the dream screen),<sup>63</sup> questions the notion of the audience as privileged. Like the dreamer situated in a darkened room, the spectator's movement and his ability to engage in reality testing are inhibited. On screen, the images presented mirror the hyper-realistic quality of dreams, the larger than life experience (note in particular Terence Davies's *The Long Day Closes*<sup>64</sup>). Psychoanalytical theory holds hyper-realism (of dreams, by extension film) as indicative of regression to the narcissistic phase (pre-oedipal). Carroll challenges Baudry's "The Apparatus" in its entirety and while I concede that his argument is less impressionistic (perhaps he is too literal) and agree that the superimposition of the two worlds is not a true register,<sup>65</sup> I would go along with Baudry's description of the spectator as essentially passive. If Jefferies (*Rear Window*) epitomises the spectator, it is a position of enforced inactivity; similarly placed is Mark (*Peeping Tom*) whose spectatorship is driven by the desire to unite with the position of screen victim.<sup>66</sup> Cowie notes that fantasy the mise-en-scene of desire which exists in dreams, is also evident in film considered as a public fantasy, a public dream.<sup>67</sup> This is validated by Sandy (*Blue Velvet*) who tells Jeffery that his (the film's) plot is a good daydream.<sup>68</sup>

According to Truffaut suspense, the dramatization of the narrative is the spectacle,<sup>69</sup> ergo the narrative - hence spectatorship and "narrativity" are gendered feminine "in that they place the spectator in a passive position and in a submissive relation to the text."<sup>70</sup> For Reik suspense along with display is central to masochism with fantasies marked by identification with victim-to-be, simultaneously fearing and desiring the pain/pleasure fate that while





**71** Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror*  
Routledge New York 1990: 181

**72** Laplanche and Pontalis *The  
Language of Psycho-Analysis* Norton  
New York 1973:78

**73** See Freud, "The Economic Problem  
of Masochism" (1924) *Standard  
Edition* vol 19: 157-170 esp. pp 164/5

**74** Britton, "Blissing Out: The Politics of  
Reaganite Entertainment" *Movie* 31/32  
1986: 2/3

**75** *ibid.*

**76** For example the Slasher, concerned  
with being beaten castrated and pene-  
trated, is located in the anal-sadistic,  
phallic and genital phases respectively,  
whilst the Possession film, focused on  
copulation/impregnation, is situated in  
the genital, gendered feminine.

ordained may be delayed / prolonged. Hence films with  
multivictims. In the case of the single victim, victims are  
supplied via media footage as reference points. Their func-  
tion is not merely to instruct but heighten affect. Although  
the masochistic climax (death) is embraced in Peeping  
Tom,\* generally it is not, the victim-to-be emerges as the  
hero, he becomes the sole survivor. It is a fantasy which  
Ellis notes is characteristically male. Endings are generically  
overdetermined. Film in order to keep the patriarchal sta-  
tus quo in place, substitutes in the eleventh hour the sadis-  
tic point of view for the masochistic. The Incredible  
Shrinking Man provides an interesting variant in that it  
fails to synchronize the two climaxes, instead Scott loses  
the death struggle and becomes the hero only to fade into  
nothing, and acceptance of same.\* To summarize, narra-  
tives which are predicated on suspense, are masochistical-  
ly orientated. As Carroll writes, the "locus of our  
(masochistic) gratification is not the monster as such but  
the whole narrative structure."<sup>71</sup>

Playing contrapuntally alongside this is the concept of  
Wiederholungswang - the compulsion to repeat.

Laplanche and Pontalis explain Wiederholungswang as an  
uncontrollable unconscious urge to repeat a disturbing  
but forgotten instance.<sup>72</sup> Based in unpleasure - historical  
suffering, a sexualised lack, it is epitomised by the fort/da  
game, a continuous cycle of the throwing away and  
reclaiming of an object. The Freudian interpretation that it  
is a means towards mastery, however ignores that the first  
part, the casting away, a metaphor of maternal separation  
was enacted with greater frequency and effect. The birth  
trauma is not the only incident replayed, but the proto-  
type can be multiple, situated in one or all of the child's  
developmental stages.<sup>73</sup>

Britton in "Blissing Out" has noted the "highly ritualised  
and formulaic character"<sup>74</sup> of mainstream generic cinema,  
and observes that pleasure arises from its predictability.  
Like Freud's grandson "the only occasion for disappoint-  
ment [is a] modulation of the formula."<sup>75</sup> Although most  
clearly evident in the archetypal form of horror, especially  
in its subgeneric level,<sup>76</sup> it resides in all genres.





**77** In Out Of The Past every attempt to rewrite history results in a repetition of the past, Whit is shot for a second time, and once again Jeff plays female to Katie who invites him to pick up their (romantic) relationship.

**78** Mulvey cited Marcus 1991: 102

**79** Cited Clover 1992: 55. For Jackson (Fantasy Methuen London 1981) and Nash ("Vampyr and the Fantastic" Screen 17 1976) uncertainty of vision is necessary for the fantastic.

**80** Her gender is compromised by the function she is required to play. This is evident in her interests, her name, her sexual reluctance. In short "the Final Girl is boyish." Clover 1992: 40

**81** I was prompted to include this title as it is the only movie that has ever caused me to have a nightmare. I'll present this as a measure of the disturbing quality of Schoedsack/Pichel's 1932 film that it made such a profound graphic impact on my subconscious, an experience shared by others who have participated in this cinematic "pleasure." See Kuntzel "The Film Work 2" (1975) Camera Obscura 1980 referred to in Andrew 1984: 144/6.

**82** Andrew 1984: 148

**83** Baudry, "Le Dispositif" Communications 23 1975: 69/70. Metz, Imaginary Signifier (1975) Bloomington Indiana University Press 1981 :49

"Norman the gentle" in The White Room forms a mirror to our compulsive (read: masochistic) condition of spectatorship: "he tried not to come back...(he does)...night after night; after night."\* Positioned likewise is Mark (Peeping Tom) who as Mrs. Stevenson says, "every night you turn on this film machine." Compulsive repetition, the replay of history, is invoked in Vertigo's Judy / Madeleine / Carlotta scenario and obliquely in Out Of The Past<sup>77</sup> or Liam Nesson's loop-like Irish short. Consider too the unresolved ending of The Birds - are the birds gathering for another attack? or Basic Instinct - is there to be another ice-pick murder?

Film located in the whys, whats and wherefores, plays on the spectators desire to see, to know, by implication to possess, in short, is located in curiosity, a condition which Mulvey proffers "as particularly but not exclusively feminine as fetishism is masculine."<sup>78</sup> For Jentsch, intellectual uncertainty (consequently curiosity), is the prerequisite of all horror,<sup>79</sup> this claim is supported by: the androgynous Final Girl;<sup>80</sup> the "play of pronoun function": this describes the condition in which we are often placed in the first person, without knowledge of our identity,\* I refer to films like, Dressed to Kill, Cruising, Psycho; the gender identity game: here the protagonist questions the notion of gender as predicated upon ones sex, moreover it is explored through cross-dressing consider Victor/Victoria, Switch, Some Like it Hot. Similarly the fantastic may be translated as joy in the uncertainty: The Most Dangerous Game,<sup>81</sup> sadistic (read: assaultive) in its iconography (the door knocker) and hero-as-hunted equation, is a symphony of doors. As signifiers of activity, but an activity hidden (the primal scene?) curiosity is aroused. Here, to open one door is to face another and as the spectator is "forever blocked or rather held off,"<sup>82</sup> knowledge is never entire. Consequently as the viewer can never possess the film, satisfaction is incomplete - the primary wish: to master and possess what is seen (Metz and Baudry) is frustrated.<sup>83\*</sup>

Finally in relation to the audience I would like to quote Silverman's thoughts on suture - "a constant fluctuation between the imaginary plenitude of the shot and loss of





84 Silverman 1979: 4

85 Andrew 1984: 144

the shot and the loss of that plenitude through the agency of the cut."<sup>84</sup> She concludes that the spectator is always masochistic. The audience throughout the film, identifying with the overwhelming presence on screen, more often than not regressing into the pre-oedipal realm, is placed on the negative side of the binary opposites (i.e. passive/masochistic as opposed to active/sadistic). We derive pleasure in our inferior position: identification with the victim, uncertainty in vision/identity, suspense, compulsive repetition, only because we are "confident we shall return (to the patriarchal status quo of the films opening) satisfied and unharmed."<sup>85\*</sup>



## An Unstable Identificatory Position

*"primal fantasies are characterized by the absence of subjectivity"*<sup>86</sup>

**86** Laplanche and Pontalis cited Creed 1988: 115

**87** Laplanche and Pontalis "Fantasy and the Origins of Sexuality" **Formations of Fantasy** Eds. Burgin Donald, & Kaplan Methuen London 1986: 26

**88** Freud, "A child is being beaten" : A Contribution to the Study of the Origin of Sexual Perversions" (1919) **The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological works of Freud**. vol 17. Ed Strachey Hogarth Press & the Institute of Psychoanalysis 1958: 186

**89** Laplanche and Pontalis, op. cit., 22-23.

**90** This is verifiable on a personal level: in a recent dream of mine in which a child was abducted I identified with the young girl, (I felt the pain of her arm being grabbed) her distraught parents, the sadistic kidnappers and was also present as a detached onlooker

**91** Neale 1983: 5

**92** See Penley "Feminism, Film Theory, and the Bachelor machines" **The Future of an Illusion**. The term describes a male closed self-sufficient system embodying motion, control over time, the mechanical, animation, voyeurism, ergo may be applied to the cinema.

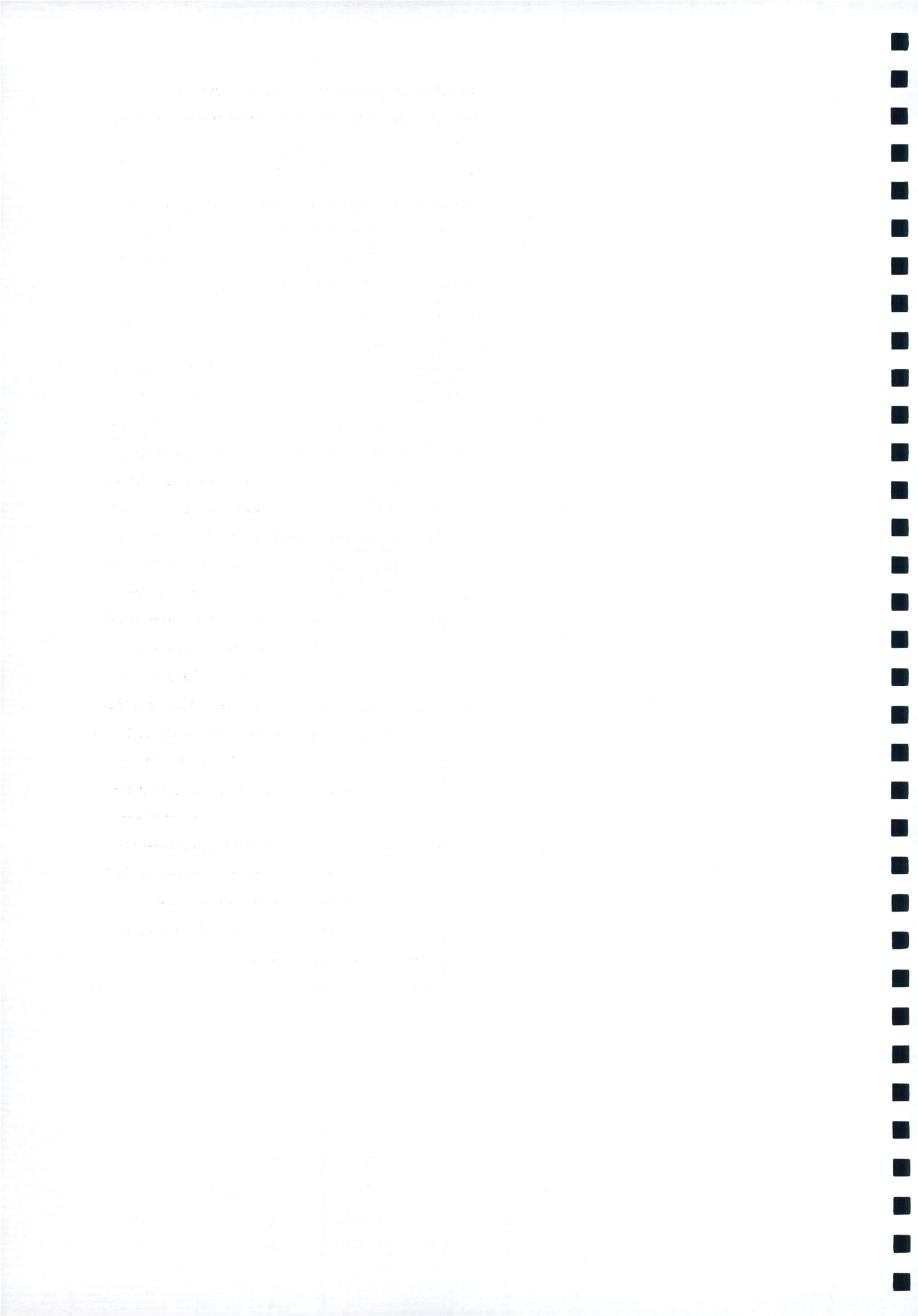
**93** Distinct from female masochism, it is the perversion in men. See Clover 1992 esp. 215

**94** Barthes, **Le Blocage Symbolique** :235

Identification in the cinema is not simple. On the contrary it is highly complex, involving for a multiple succession or simultaneous, often contradictory positions. Laplanche and Pontalis write that the spectator "cannot be assigned any fixed place...although always present in the fantasy, may be so in a desubjectivized form that is to say, in the very syntax of the sequence in question."<sup>87</sup> For Cowie too, fantasy has several points of entry. This dispersal of the subject may be seen in Freud's patient's fantasy "a child is being beaten".<sup>88</sup> The scenes described are as follows: (a) "My father is beating the child" (b) "I am being beaten by my father" (c) "I am probably looking on". Parallel to this is the fantasy of seduction, here the patient identifies with the father seducing, the daughter seduced, and the term seduces.<sup>89</sup> Such scenarios clearly illustrate the possibility of the patient/viewer identifying with subject, object, the scene as a whole, or utterance itself.<sup>90</sup>

Identification is not as fluid as I have made it seem. Neale reminds us, "there is a constant work to channel and regulate identification in relation to sexual division, orders of gender, sexuality and authority marking patriarchal society."<sup>91</sup> This is not to say it is always successful, it is my purpose to expose the failings of the "bachelor machine"<sup>92</sup> making visible male hysteria and feminine masochism<sup>93</sup>. Another restriction to layered multi-placed identification, and what gives weight to Mulvey's theory, is the prominence of castration in films. (Barthes sees all stories as treating of Oedipus<sup>94</sup>) Creed believes that male and female spectators must identify differently with regard to the castration fantasy as it is concerned with the origins of sexual difference.

I will now treat the shower scene in *Psycho* as a study of shifting empathies.\* Although in the shower it is we, identifying with Marion, who washes our guilt away, pleasure exists simultaneously in our sexually intrusive gaze, our desire to possess a woman that we already have seen





**95** See Rothman, *Hitchcock: The Murderous Gaze* Harvard University Press Cambridge 1982: 296

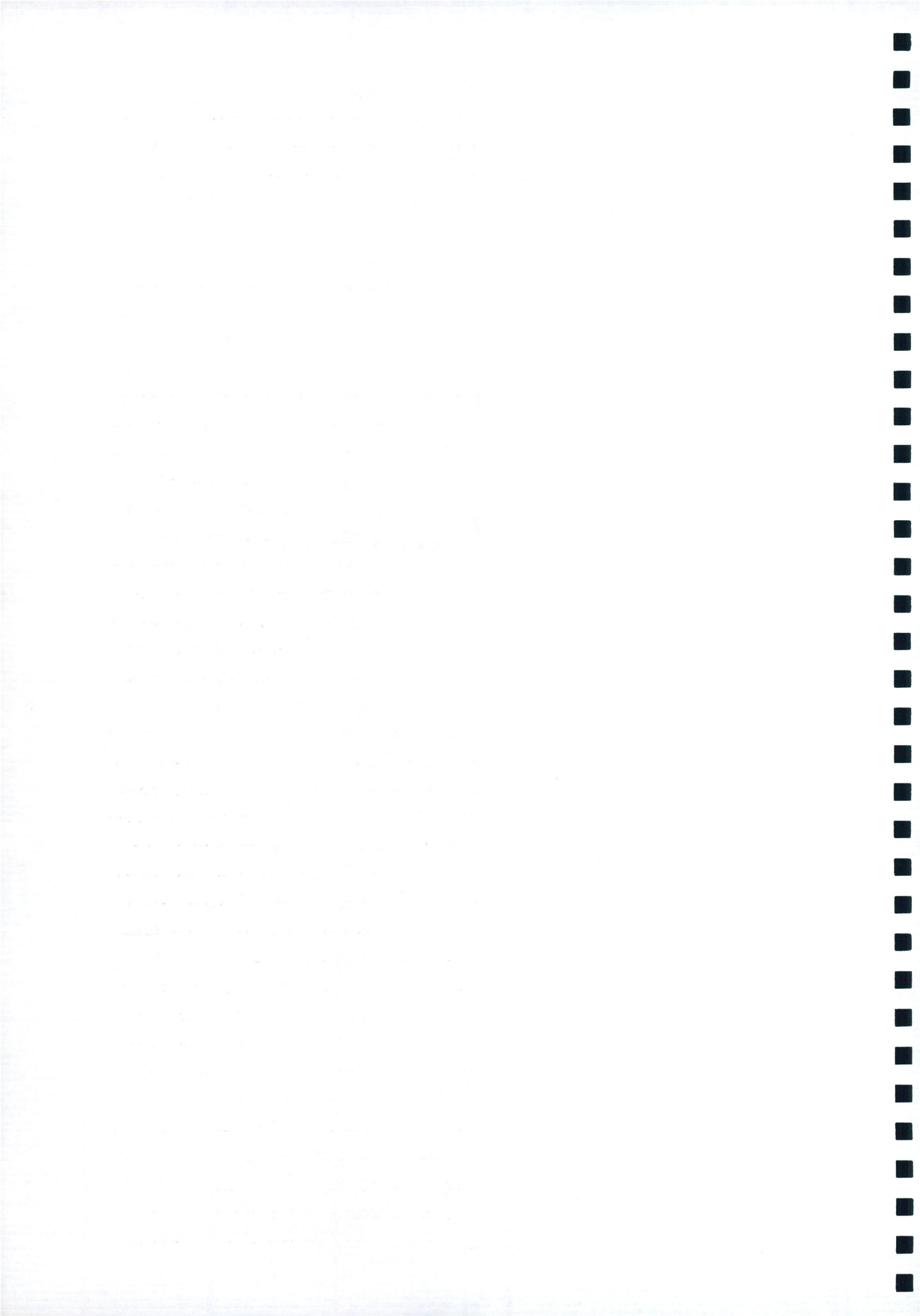
**96** Mulvey (1975)1985: 810

**97** Hitchcock has carefully built identification with Marion: in the lovers' dispute we side with her: it is not her/our fault that we take the money but Sam's. We are also encouraged to believe that the money is more morally correct in the possession of Marion/us rather than the over-powering father, who "buys off unhappiness" / buys control over his daughter. Also instrumental in identification build up is the use of the subjective camera during the journey to the Bates Motel.

**98** Adams 1988: 8

undress.<sup>95</sup> Superior knowledge of her vulnerability (our awareness of the murders presence) makes for tension, making problematic our earlier split; in our urge to possess we wield the knife, but prior identification, our passivity, camera angles, all presume us as the body penetrated. We are also the "scene". On the killers exit, abandoned, we become the blood, the water, are swallowed and swallow. From this abyss we reemerge as a non gaze. Dead.

Reviews of the film ascribe the new identificatory position to Norman, this is realized to the full in Hitchcock's subjectivized camera work - his hands are our hands. I propose that our identification with him is not motivated by pity as proffered, but a sense that he represents a "more complete, more powerful ideal ego,"<sup>96</sup> - his control clearly evident in the clean up.\* As "saviour" to both Marion and his mother, there is a sense in which we (as murderer) too need Norman. In this regard parallel to Lecter (*Silence of the Lambs*) can be drawn. On registration of Marion's (our) death, Hitchcock through a framing device associated with voyeurism desubjectizes it, thus enabling a slide from the masochistic to the sadistic, the assaultive gaze recalling as it does our former desire to possess her. We now "possess" her. We are the murder. However as the camera pans the room, and focuses on the money (we stole) it returns us to identification with Marion.<sup>97</sup>\* Essentially the spectator in *Psycho* is schizophrenic having not one point of entry to the fantasy but several. Just as Dora takes up both masculine and feminine roles, she "must suck and be sucked,"<sup>98</sup> we too are all. In *Psycho* all characters are one.



## Hysteria in the Male

*"A man's presence is dependent upon the promise of power which he embodies...his presence may be fabricated in the sense that he pretends to be capable of what he is not. But the pretence is always towards a power which he exercises over others"*<sup>99</sup>

**99** Berger, *Ways of Seeing* Penguin  
Harmondsworth 1972: 45/6

**100** Bergstrom "Alternation  
Segmentation Hypnosis: Interview with  
Raymond Bellour" *Camera Obscura*  
nos. 3-4 Summer 1979: 93

**101** Bellour.

**102** Judith Williamson in her introduc-  
tion to *Out of the Past*

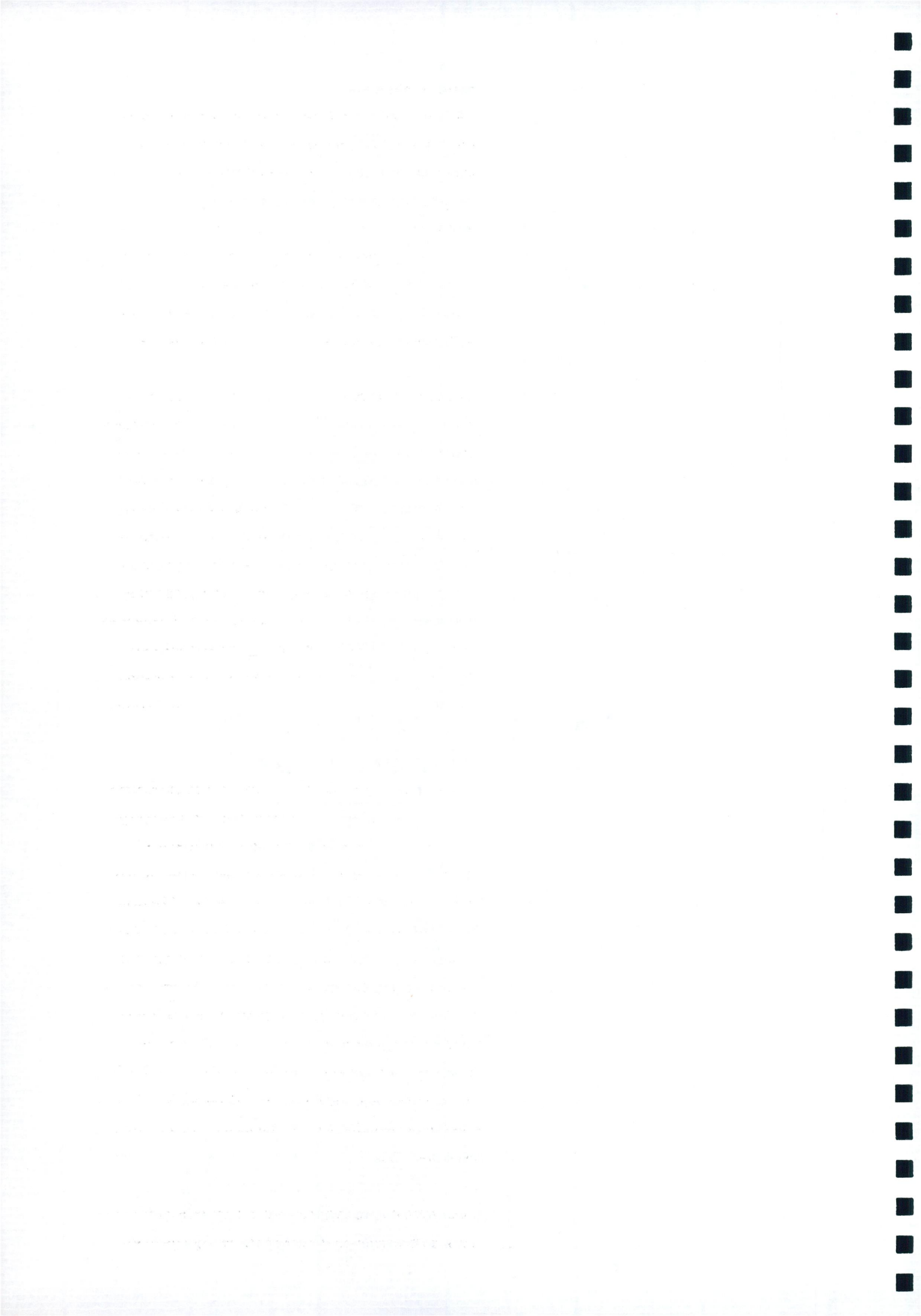
**103** Hirsch 1981: 157

**104** Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and  
Gender from the Greeks to Freud*  
Harvard University Press Cambridge  
1990

In this section I will explore the fabrications of masculinity that Berger speaks of and note the failure, moreover the impossibility, of ever living up to the phallus.

A woman occupies "a central place only to the extent that it's a place assigned to her by the logic of masculine desire."<sup>100</sup> In contrast to male power the female is weak - male security rests on the repression of the feminine.<sup>101</sup> Alternatively difference may be denied, thus locating femininity as a narcissistic mirror. She may be hard, soft, masculine, feminine, but always a signifier of male anxiety or want, women "aren't rounded characters, they are the walking, talking, glistening, projections of male fears and desires."<sup>102</sup> Like Madeleine (*Vertigo*) occupying a dreamlike space, they "seem merely to be stimulating human action."<sup>103</sup>

Woman for man is ambiguous, all powerful, yet situated in the symbolic nothing. Her terrifying aspect for man is not that she represents "lack" but that she signifies symbolic castration, difference, moreover a possibility of extra, literally so in the "fabulously rare" Claire Niveau, the ultimate generative archaic mother (*Dead Ringers*). To equate woman with "lack" is a comforting wishful fantasy, a secondary construct that fails to accommodate the notion of interiority which the pre-eighteenth century one-sex model did, if not successfully. Described by Laqueur, this system of analogues, is as Clover notes especially pertinent in the reading of fantasy, facilitating as it does slippage and fungability of the sexes.<sup>104</sup> Constituted as Otherness, she is regarded as something alien even ahuman, understood as the epitome of nature in all its contradictions, both benefactress and depraver - the maternal waters where living is begotten and through Eve returned. As difference, her point of refer-





**105** "[women] look alright on the outside but their insides are deformed"  
(Bev, Dead Ringers)

**106** There are however exceptions: e.g. Sally in The Texas Chain Saw Massacre. Her masculine qualities become clear if she is compared to the rest of the group: Franklin, the (frightened) crippled brother, the other girl who is marked feminine through her interest in the supernatural (the stars) and her sexuality which is manifest in her clothes and boyfriend (Sally's relationship is never made overt by physical contact, it is only implied). The other males who "wander" are guilty of feminine curiosity. Sally despite at first running in circles has a mission and succeeds.

**107** Lacan, Écrits: A Selection (trans Sheridan) Norton New York 1977: 1/7  
See also Laplanche and Pontalis The Language of Psycho-Analysis Norton New York 1973: 251

**108** Silverman, The Acoustic Mirror  
1988: 31

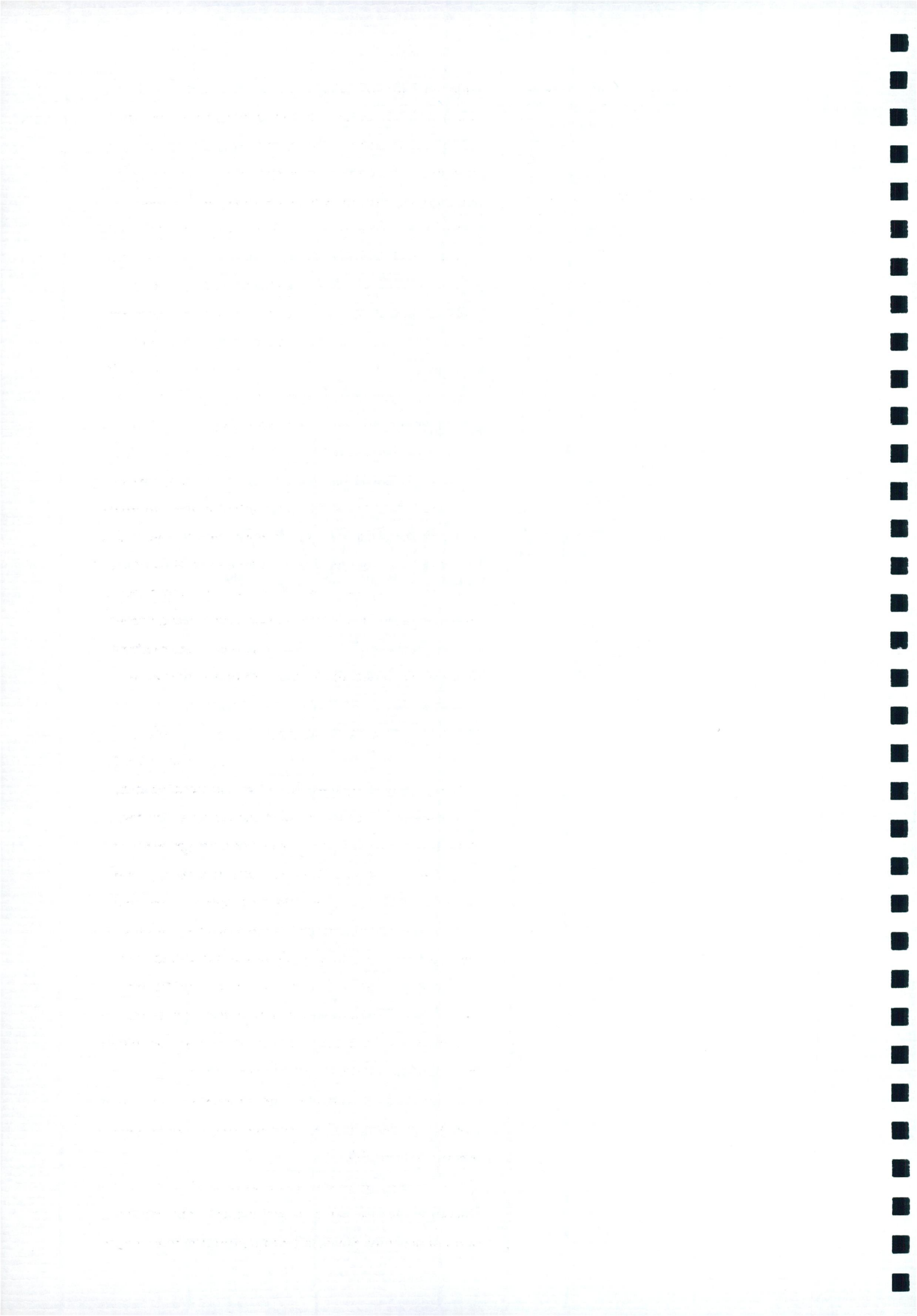
**109** Pacteau, "The Impossible Referent: Representation of the Androgyne"  
Formations of Fantasy Eds. Burgin Donald, & Kaplan Methuen London  
1986: 69/70

ence is not the Symbolic, ergo the male perceives the "black hole" as giving birth to the monstrous (consider Lynch's Eraser Head, more recently Alien 3) or as all devouring. This monstrous aspect, threatening to mutilate and transform the vulnerable male, allows Williams in "When the Woman Looks" to draw a parallel between the monster/freak and woman. Rose (note via her name, her alignment to nature) in Cronenberg's Rabid is the ultimate vampire as woman. Therefore connection between the woman and the grotesque signals male hysteria.

If Horror juxtaposes female and unnatural,<sup>105</sup> Science Fiction, along with the Slasher, with characters gendered androgynous denies difference. To negate her sexuality is to refuse her power - Stephen King's Carrie only gains access to the supernatural via her maturation to womanhood. The Final Girl despite her anatomical femaleness, is by virtue of her repressed/undiscovered sexuality, her name, (Ripley, Laurie, Marti)<sup>106</sup> her initiative, technical competence and fearlessness, essentially a parody of masculinity. At the end of Rear Window it is an elaborate denial of difference, the little boy's fantasy, that allays Jefferies phallic panic. As already noted, difficulties proceed from refusal made visible.

I would closely relate fetishism to the fantasy of dismemberment which is enacted and evoked in Rear Window (Mrs. Thorwald and Misses Torso and Lonelyhearts respectively). Contemporaneous with auto-erotism, it is located in the mirror phase, the moment of subjectivity. According to Lacan, pleasure in identification with the mirror object as a whole ideal entity is predicated on a fantasy of other as mutilated, deformed.<sup>107</sup> Just as the female bears "through endless renarrativization of the castration crisis"<sup>108</sup> the mark of castration in the form of the wound (lack), she in order to persuade the male of his own completeness, must be dismembered - "the injury to a body that wants itself whole is repaired through abolition of the other."<sup>109</sup>

The power the male exercises over the female is a measure of his masculinity. Possession of her, through marriage,



**110** Without a past she cannot imagine  
a future but is forced to live only in the  
present.

**111** Showalter *The Female Malady:  
Women, Madness and English  
Culture, 1830-1980* Virago Press London  
1987: 173

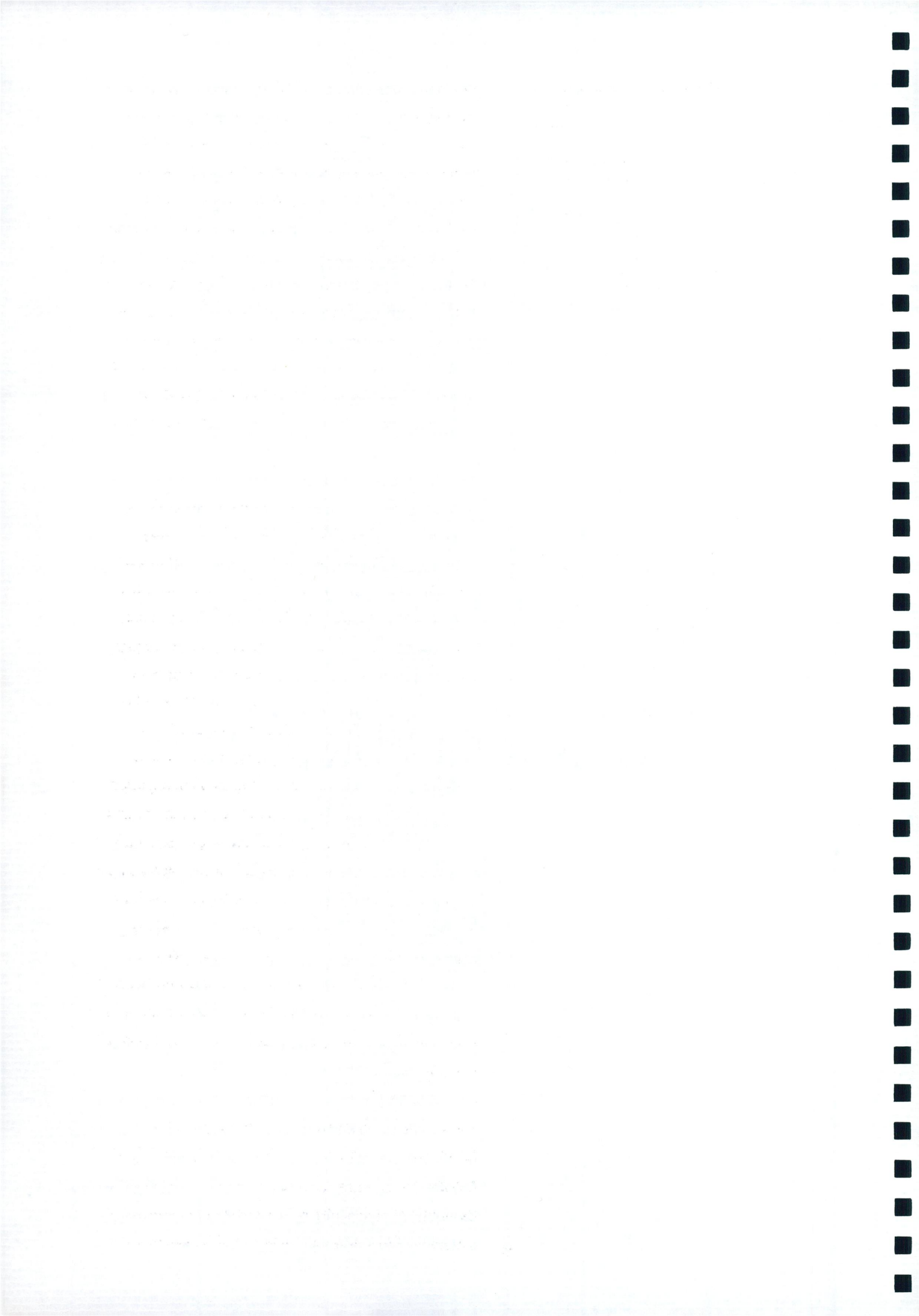
**112** "Woman, for man is death"  
Cixous, "Castration or Decapitation?"  
(trans. Kuhn) *Signs* 7 No. 1 Autumn  
1981: 48

resolution of the Proppian tale, facilitates entry proper to the symbolic. If he can't own her, the promise of male inheritance is undermined. In short he does not exist. He is nothing, literally so in North By Northwest and Blue Velvet, (the "O" of Roger O. Thornhill and "Jeffery Nothing". It is very often through name that crisis of identity is suggested, Beverly in Dead Ringers has a girl's name, Scottie in Vertigo is addressed by a multiple, Rupert Pupkin (King of Comedy) carries Jerry's monogram. To have one name is to have one identity). Ergo it is crucial for Scottie (Vertigo) to assure Madeleine of her sanity in order for him to retain his, just as it is for Deckard (Blade Runner) to convince Rachael of her history.<sup>110</sup>

To refuse the woman, a choice permitted by the Western, is to regress to pre-oedipal omnipotent narcissism. Non-resolution of the Oedipus complex results in death. For me Jerry (King of Comedy) is not dethroned by the agency of his "son" alone, but by his failure to accept the princess, Masha, who promises: "I'm gonna love you like I never have loved before" perhaps this is incestuous, motherly love. Refusal of his trophy amounts to an abdication.

Overt obsession with the woman is a double - motif variation on the theme. Perceiving the woman as key to his destiny, she becomes an obstacle, something to be mastered. Fearing rejection and non-admission to the symbolic, he lives according to its signifier (penis/gun), thus love is perverted to destruction /death (Laura, Bad Timing, The Dark Corner). Violence against the female may equally be interpreted as male resistance, repression, against the feminine aspect of his character. Showalter notes in relation to the male hysteric that the "quarrels with the feminine element in their own psyches became externalised as quarrels with women".<sup>111</sup> The (hysterical) man, signifies death for woman but woman, for (masochistic) man is death.<sup>112</sup> Romantic love, based in narcissistic desire - to find one self in the (m)other, results in death. This primal desire - re-incorporation with the (m)other, a return to dual unity and complete symbiosis, cannot by its very nature be realised. Ergo the ultimate fantasy becomes death. In Dead Ringers Claire Niveau is







**113** This is especially evident in the Museum: see Modleski 1988: 93/4. Desire to possess and desire to merge are not synonymous but because of their polarisation there does exist a constant oscillation between the two.

**114** Tetsuo (Akira) an orphan was a victim of bullying who had always relied on his friend to get him out of trouble. Likewise in Mad Max, Max is seen as a child/feminine (caring/acceptance of submission to the father). His masculinity is a hysterical response to the deaths of his friend and his family. For a discussion of Robo Cop as infantile vulnerability juxtaposed against super-machismo invulnerability: see Williamson, J Deadline at Dawn Marion Boyars London 1993:68/71

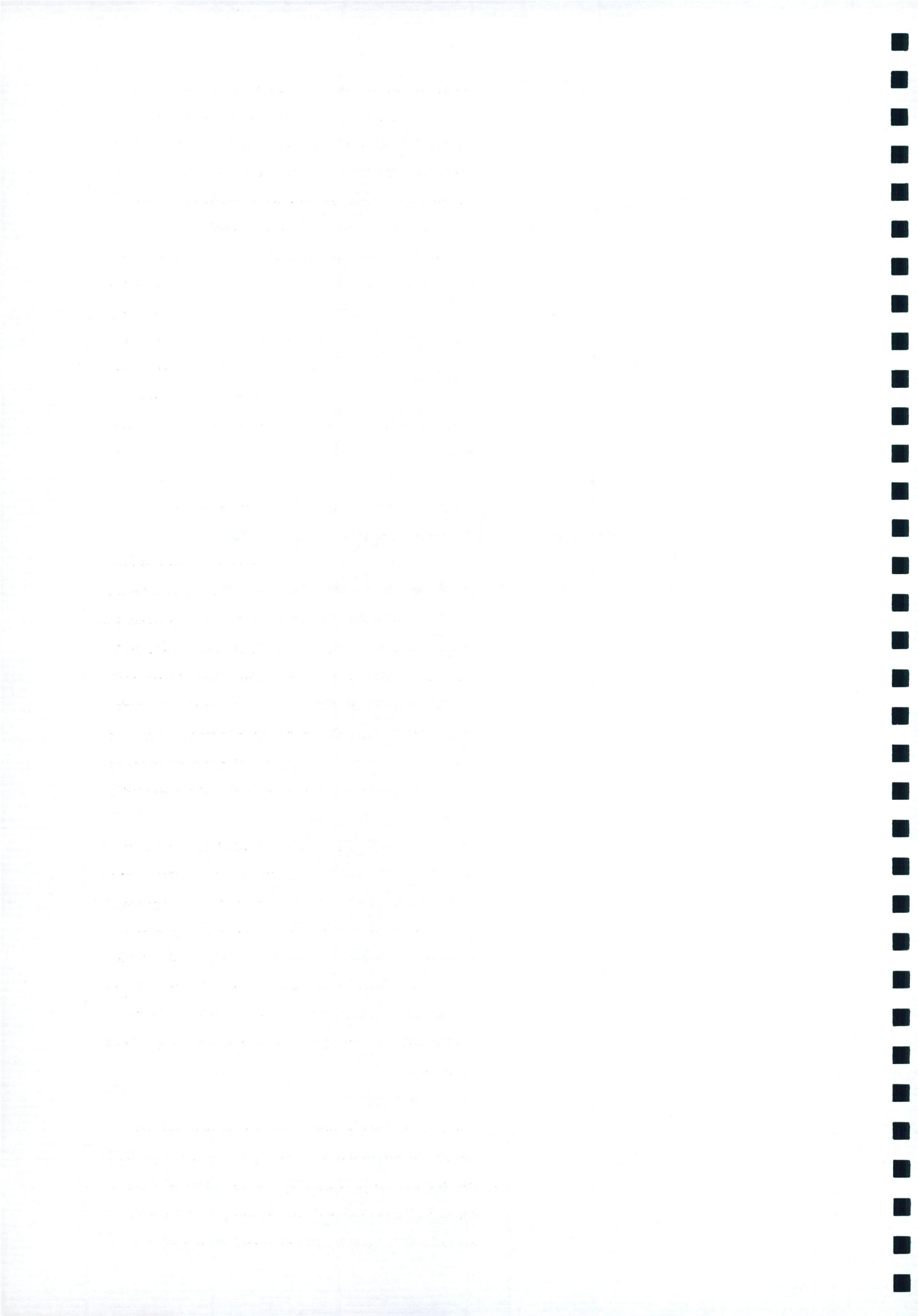
**115** In Sassoon's Base Details, although there is bitterness directed against those "short of breath, ... Guzzling and gulping in the best hotels" and praise for the real men, the men of action, there is acknowledgement that the heroes, described as "glum heroes," are essentially the helpless cannon - fodder of men in control. Thus real men who live according to the signifiers of masculinity (the body and its metaphors) are no different from the hysteric women whose form of expression is through her body.

**116** Neibuar 1989: 208

understood by Beverly as maternal, her presence inspires the need for separation with (self) Elliot, and reunion with the mother. Following the operation, Elly dead, Bev rings Claire. However on realising he too is dead, he fails to announce himself and instead joins Elly in (narcissistic) death. Her love for Bev alone frustrates the masochistic fantasy, this is noted by Elliot. She cannot be site for a reenactment of the original state - a three-way symbiotic union.\* Contrary to Mulvey's perceptions of Vertigo, I regard Scottie's affair (his desire to merge is invoked in the fetishistic camera-work<sup>113\*</sup>) with Madeleine as indicative of a masochistic urge which is celebrated in his dream of looking and falling down into an empty grave. He dies Madeleine's death.

Just as the female body-in-excess (Rita Hayworth) is a manifestation of male crisis, so too is the male body. While the woman threatens, the man, as living phallus, tells of the living phallus(y) and its impossible demands. In order to keep the boundaries of binary oppositions well defined, he is a negative stereotype, where the physical/visible is all (the probability of the hard exterior concealing a frightened boy is explored to some extent by Akira<sup>114</sup> and Robo Cop). Intelligence is equated with impotence, conceiving of stratagems is dismissed as time-consuming moreover futile, the men are regarded as soft, wimpish cowards, "who toddle safely home and die - in bed"<sup>115</sup> (Laura and Heartbreak Ridge). It is ironic that intelligence is primary to the patriarchal law. To be a "man" is to be active. To be a man is to rely on violence. Stallone's "Rambo" "capable of feats that would make Superman envious,"<sup>116</sup> situated in the maelstrom of emotionless, mindless, brutal violence, for me epitomises best masculinity-in-excess, his popularity indicating male hysteria at large (likewise Cobra and Clint Eastwood's Harry Callahan).

The Occult although apparently concerned with the female story, is at a subtextual level a study in machismo as negative. In the Witchboard, Linda's finance Jim, rejecting the masculine trajectory (leaves medical school, cannot marry/confess love) in favour of its signifiers (he



117 See Creed 1990: 133.

118 Benvenuto & Kennedy *The Works of Jacques Lacan: An Introduction* Free Association Books London 1987: 186

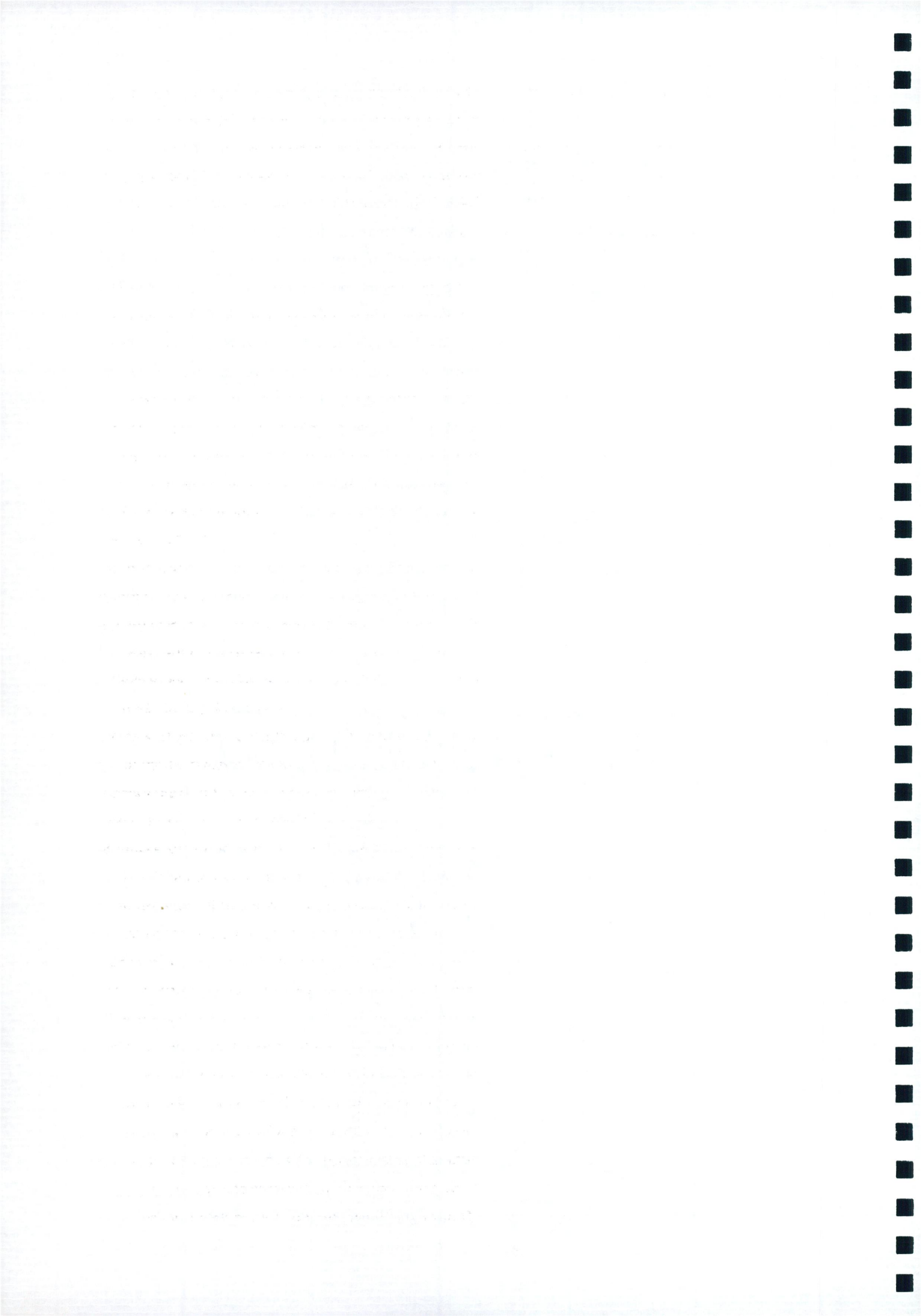
119 Ross in "Beyond the Phallic Illusion: Notes on Man's Heterosexuality." *The Psychology of Men* Ed. Fogel et al. Basic Books New York 1986

works on a building site, drinks, fights) is figured not unlike a Schwarzenegger character. After all he has as Brandon perceives "ice in his veins." Rehabilitation, so as not to lay bare the male crisis, cannot be direct; thus trouble is projected onto the female. In order for Jim to opened up, for acknowledgement of his femininity to be legitimised, Linda must go a step further - be opened to the point of entry and be possessed. For her to remained unmoved is to blow the male cover. It is important to note that the female despite a temporary aberration is relatively unchanged, (a-b-a) while the male trajectory is linear (a-b-c). In short the genre (the occult) calling for a new man is a critique of patriarchal-informed oppositions: a telling sign is that it is uninterested in the castration crisis but in the concept of woman's interiority and slippage of the sexes between the masculine and the feminine.

Similarly in the "woman's weepie" and suspense thriller male crisis in contrast to female hysteria is realised through the psychological not the physical. (*Random Harvest* 1942 and *Spellbound* 1945).<sup>117</sup> To speak through the body is the ultimate admission to failure, an acknowledgement that all the avenues of expression are closed off. Carrie's strength is lessened by the fact her power exists outside the symbolic. Therefore the male's loss of memory does not reflect as negatively as the woman's disfigurement.

Another form of male hysteria is that of the man as mother, which I see as a product of the one sex system. Albeit an essentially male construction in that it privileges visibility over invisibility, ("the visibility of the phallus predominates over the black hole of the female genitals"<sup>118</sup>) heat over coolness/dampness, by its nature - a system of analogues allows for slippage/cross-over of the sexes. The fantasy of femaleness (I include cross-dressing) disrupts the phallic-centred system and interest in such fantasies waxed when psychoanalysis entered the phallogentric phase proper.<sup>119</sup> Although most prevalent in Science Fiction, (*Frankenstein*, *The Fly*, *Blade Runner*, [here translation is literal - they produce an offspring] *Dead Ringers*, *Coma* [within the medical profession their God-like powers are mediated, they help to create life but are not the







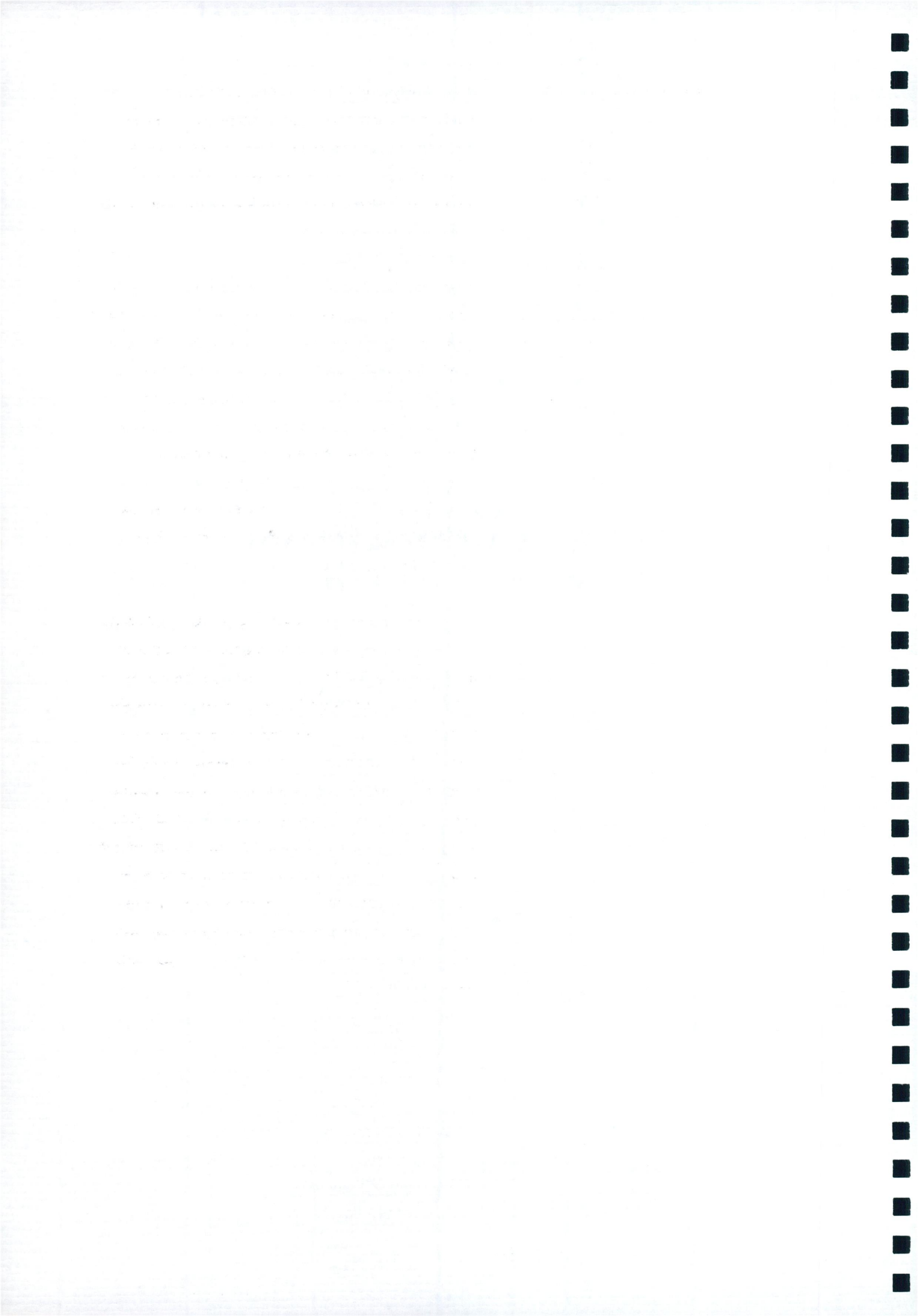
120 Shelly, *Frankenstein* Dilithium  
Press New York 1988: 29

121 *ibid*: 28

122 In the male fantasy of "A child is being beaten" the boy child has two positions open to him, (a) he is passive/feminine in relation to the father (b) he is feminine/passive in relation to the mother who is endowed with masculine attributes (she is dressed as the father). In the first instance the relationship is homosexual, in the second it is heterosexual.

physical/only mothers]) it is evoked in other genres (All that Heaven Allows). The patriarchal reading is: for man to learn and control "the secrets of Heaven"<sup>120</sup> "the hidden laws of nature"<sup>121</sup> (creation) is to realise himself as a God. This idea is shattered if one considers the (majority of) film endings. Both readings point to hysteria.

I have described male aggression against the woman as symptomatic of the repression of his femininity which as Easthope notes can never be suppressed. Similarly I argue homophobia as a projection of (male) fear and tendency towards homosexuality. The homosocial, a requisite of masculinity in its hegemonic forms, though legitimating the bonding of men with other men, also signifies, in accordance with innate bisexuality, the potential of latent/repressed homosexuality. To replace the female as love object/possession throws the concept of binary oppositions and therefore the essence of masculinity as a relational term into question, scuttling the notions of inferior and superior as these are coded gender-wise. According to the Oedipal scenario it is the possession of the woman (not a man) that signifies a successful resolution of the complex. Films such as *Witchboard*,\* *Point Blank*, *Blue Velvet*,\* *Performance*,\* *Out of the Past*, all play to a greater or lesser extent the homosocial/sexual game. Through the juxtaposition of Chas, representative of the unquestioned male - hard, macho, aggressively heterosexual and Turner, the bisexual product of counter (read: subversive) culture, Roeg's *Performance* becomes a study of masculinity, a study reflected in the film's structural divisions. A study which upsets the patriarchal status quo. Chas, like the hyper-masculine hero, "knows who [he is]". However his obsession with his personal appearance goes beyond narcissism and is a materialisation of a subconscious anxiety over his identity.\* His violent attitude towards Joey, an ex-friend, "the ponce" is a manifestation of his fear and hatred of his homosexual tendencies which he seeks to repress. His preference for the skinny boyish Lucy if not homoerotic is heterosexually feminine.<sup>122</sup> By the end of the film, the line that distinguishes masculinity and femininity is deconstructed. The stronger maleness is the weaker.



**123** Neale *Genre* BFI London 1980: 58

**124** Willemsen "Voyeurism, the Look and Dwoskin" *Afterimage* no. 6 1976: 43

**125** Neale op. cited

**126** Wood 1991: 339

Performance and Dead Ringers are exceptional: in general, the challenging of the male is not overt but, as I have pointed out in relation to Witchboard exists as underside to, but also as the reason behind the female story. Equally it is she we gaze at: our (real) desire directed towards the male is contained by its deflection towards the female. But what happens if there is a distinct absence of women, in for example the Western? How then is the gaze "rendered innocent"<sup>123</sup> and disavowed - or is it? Firstly with reference to Willemsen I will establish that contemplation of the male body is a source of pleasure for the male spectator. Considering that scopophilia is primarily auto-erotic, taking as object its own body, a male body;<sup>124</sup> it follows that the screen hero facilitates immediate gratification (whereas the body of the woman needs translation). In the Western, like the Musical, the gaze is uncoded, thus opening "a space for the male as privileged object of the look."<sup>125</sup>

The male is precariously placed by the patriarchal order. Although he is privileged, rendered God-like, it is a privilege that relies on a denial of a two-way system: a denial epitomised by Mulvey's refusal to present fetishism, the opposite of voyeurism as masochistic, or Metz's understanding of vision as fundamentally sadistic despite his observation that all vision constitutes of a double movement - active and passive. For the bachelor machine to work, the feminine must be refused thus the bisexual self and the Other(female) as active are repressed. However repression is never complete, "what is repressed is never annihilated: it survives in the unconscious as a constant potential threat,"<sup>126</sup> thus the foundations of masculinity are not secure.





### **Case Studies**

The four films chosen which I offer as representative of the different genres (film noir, western, fantasy, science-fiction/horror) are as follows:

**Sunset Boulevard** 1950 Billy Wilder

**Once Upon a time in the West** 1968 Sergio Leone

**Eraserhead** 1978 David Lynch

**Videodrome** 1982 David Cronenberg

These will be considered only to the extent that they illustrate some of the forms masculinity in crisis takes.



127 Agee, (1950) 1982:67

128 Work is seen as "the very foundation of masculinity" Tolson 1985: 56

129 See Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror* 1988: especially 52/54

### Sunset Boulevard

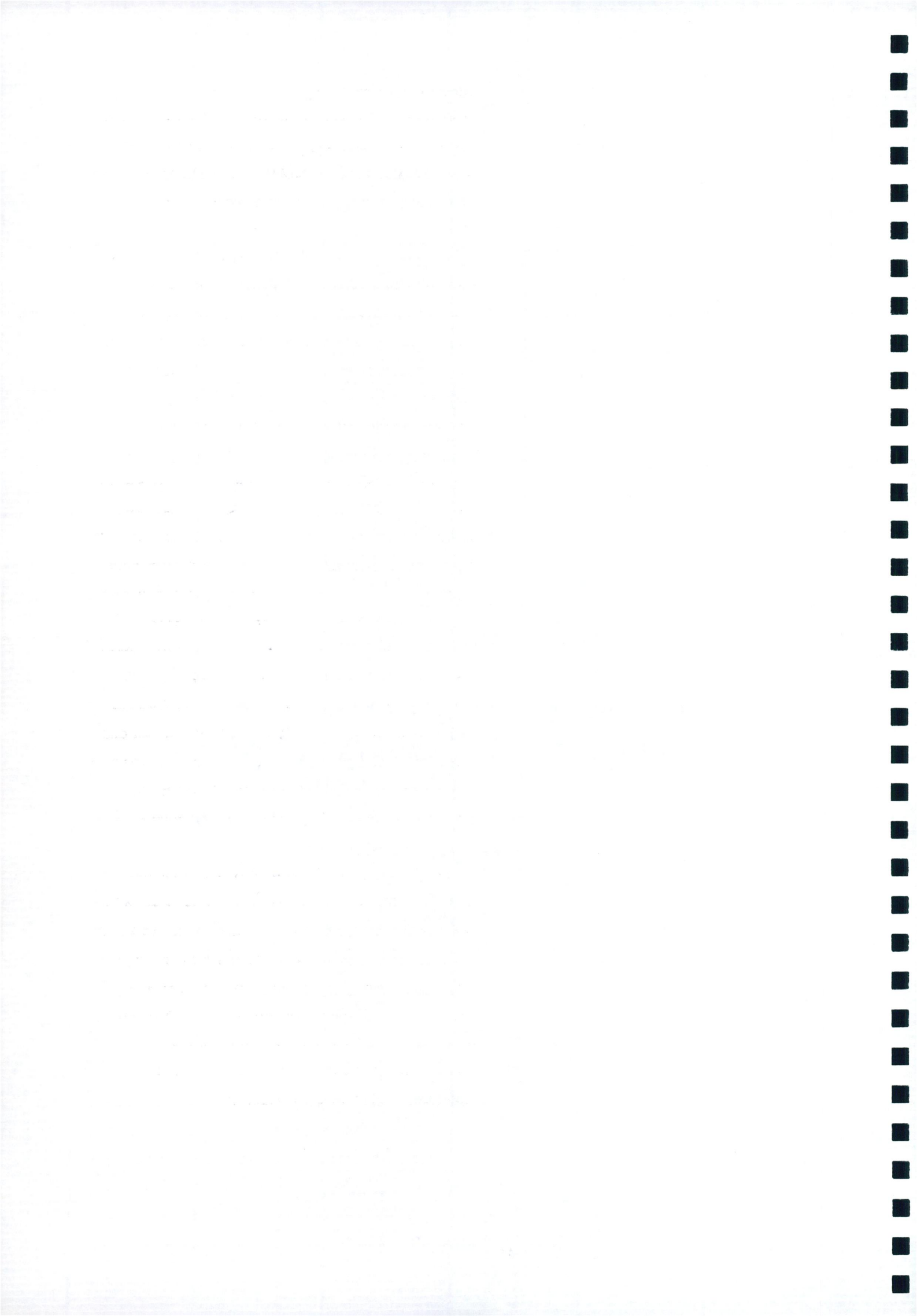
*"One of those rare movies which are so full of exactness, cleverness, mastery, pleasure, and arguable and unarguable choice and judgement, that can be talked about almost shot for shot and line for line for hours on end."*<sup>127</sup>

Sunset Boulevard, a reversal of the Echo [Joe Gillis] and Narcissus [Norma Desmond] myth, is ultimately the story of masculinity in crisis, of passive man (Max as servant, Joe as employee, gigolo) in relation to castrating woman. A narrative in which the male transcends only via the cinematic. I refer to the disembodied voice-over that promises "the whole truth" ergo facilitating a shift in emphasis from image to sound, the latter interpreted first. However the closer our anti-hero comes to the diegesis; this is first signaled in the voice-over's assumption of the first person - Joe Gillis whose masculinity is questioned (his car and job - signifiers of the symbolic are under threat<sup>128</sup>) and ultimately undermined (on New Year's Eve he accepts gigolo status, this is marked feminine) the less in control he is. Thereby the story returns to the Medusa. A similar structure is found in Laura.<sup>129</sup>

Even prior to this, the sense of who controls the narrative is unclear: "I (Gillis) dropped the hook and she fell for it," sits uncomfortable beside the fact that Max had earlier (i.e. before the bait) prepared his room. For the most part that which is not contained within the diegesis but grafted onto it (Joe's voice-over) amounts to little more than a justification of his feminization. Exemplary is: "I didn't argue with her, you don't yell at a sleepwalker. *He* may fall and break *his* neck." (emphasise mine). Like Noah in The Adjuster (Egoyan 1991) offering himself sexually as diversion to his clients who are "in a state of shock," it may be regarded as a projection of Ellis's own condition.

Gillis protecting his maleness enters the crumbling mansion of Norma Desmond to ironic effect; he is propelled ("You there, why are you so late, why have you kept me waiting so long?") into the wrong man role. The plaything of a malevolent noir fate epitomised by Jeff

Bailey/Markham (Out of the Past) or Bradford Galt (The





131 The dead Chimpanzee, leopard-skin turbans, trim and upholstered car, her snake bracelet and her animalistic features, her hair alive with snakes, her hands like sharp claws.

132 See Williams "Power, Pleasure, and Perversion" *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the "Frenzy of the Visible"* Pandora 1990: esp 202/3

Dark Corner). Simultaneously the power of the woman is announced both visually and (con)textually. Its source is her possession of money, primary in the hierarchical signifiers of patriarchal authority. (As Mr Choo Choo in Once Upon a Time in the West remarks, "There are many kinds of weapons and the only one that will stop that (gun/male organ) is this (money)"). Like Cathy (Out of the Past), a phallic mother, she also lays claim to the former - the gun. Consequential Joe regresses to when he was twelve, dependent and powerless "caught like the cigarette in the contraption on her finger." A humiliation recognised by outsider ("After all if the lady's paying") and self ("I haven't been keeping myself at all") alike.

Just as Eraserhead treats woman as Medusa and beast so too does Sunset Boulevard. "The power is in her eyes, the snakes in her hair,"<sup>130\*</sup> the animalistic in her surrounds<sup>131\*</sup>. It is only when Norma's eyes are covered, her claws bandaged, that Joe is safe in her embrace: the scene following her attempted suicide. Aside from locating Joe as o/(a)bject of erotic gaze, a feminine space, most pertinent here is the drive in the leopard skin upholstered Isotta-Franchini - the day Norma decides she is bored with his look\* - is the comment that to be on the side of the camera is to be hurt. This is realised in Betty's nose job and Norma's "merciless" beauty treatment (a sentiment echoed more forcefully ten years later in Peeping Tom).<sup>132\*</sup>

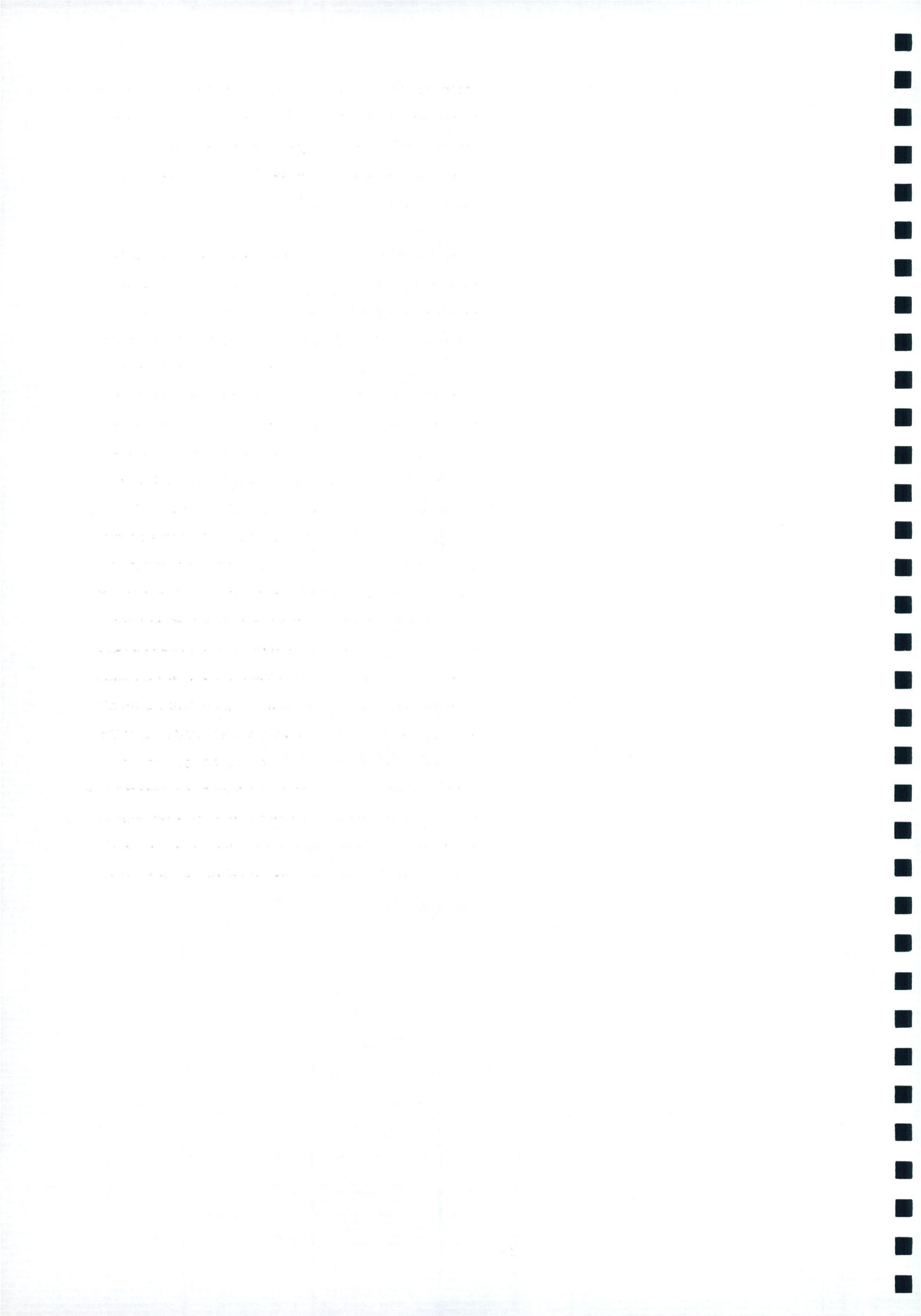
Just like Jeff (Out of the Past) assertion of masculinity comes too late. Roles have been reversed, Norma/Cathy although deprived of the symbolic, possess the signifiers, those which "while waiting, waiting for the gravy train," the male has ceded thus is rewarded with death as a woman who transgresses the father. The fact that "the poor fool" has Norma's garden as his grave, encourages a comparison with the chimp. Joe's arrival coincides with the departure of "King Kong's grandson."



Once Upon a Time in the West  
(C'era una volta il West)

Leone's modernist film is perhaps the finest spaghetti western and is certainly the last of the true westerns (it is not cynical about itself or its subject, in this case one and the same thing). OUTW is concerned, as the original title suggested ("Once Upon a Time there was the West") with the passing of the old west and its characters. Treating of the disintegration / destruction of the hero, like Le Samourai, The Wild Bunch or Performance, it challenges the fantasy of mastery which Mulvey proposed as inherent to narcissistic identification. It is not the "more perfect, more complete, more powerful ideal ego[s]"<sup>133</sup> that inherit the West, but the ex-whore, Jill. The Good, Mr. Harmonica, who has "something [inside him] to do with death" like Thornton who has fulfilled his masculine contract (The Wild Bunch) as Jeff failed to do, (Out of the Past) is left to wander aimlessly in the Imaginary. This phallic playground is indicated via the mise-en-scene, consider the cinematic framing of The Wild Bunch,\* or Eraserhead\* in which the imaginary is shot through a gate post and radiator respectively, in OUTW it is evoked in Harmonica's turning away from the rail road. The Bad, Frank and the Ugly, Cheyenne are dead. Jill, is rewarded not just because the men transgress the symbolic but that she by her acceptance of domesticity upholds the law of the father. Also she is immune to the only power that the true men can inflict on her ("all I need is a boiling hot bath and I'll be the same as before") because essentially true men are not true men, but "big tough ones with a handful of holes (washers, dead victims)" (The Wild Bunch) blocked from the symbolic and only speaking through a regressive narcissistic delusion of omnipotence.

Narcissism is evident in the male's reticence with language. As a process involving lack it signifies castration. A castration (threat of) figured fetishistically in Bishop's wound (The Wild Bunch)\*. Exemplary is the description of OUTW as an opera in which all the arias are stared not sung, (in silence the omnipotent male is born\* - Nathan (Rio Bravo) "not talkin' just doin' ") consider also OUTW's opening, which is not unlike Campion's Passionless





**134** A male can sustain a "look" if he is pursuing a narrative aim i.e. winning the fight, crossing a frontier

Moments (esp. "Focal Lengths") Here, in the male action genre there is pleasure in seeing the male exist.<sup>134</sup> Moreover intra/extra-diegetic looking (as a source of pleasure) at the man is motivated by witnessing the male mutilated and restored through violence.\*

At moments of gunplay the narrative, the (voyeuristic) look freezes and the spectacle takes over. The struggle is ritualised, the violence cathartic thus indicating the significance, the purity of the gun - an embodiment of the man. Ergo the male becomes the unmarked object of desire. Contemplate the fetishistic parody of the final confrontation between Harmonica and Frank, following extreme close-ups of both, the eyes of the latter eventual fill the screen.\* Alternatively the ritual gunfights of the Leone Dollar films, Fuller's Forty Guns (1957) or Peckinpah's Ride the High Country (1961). For me it is Peckinpah's poetic, slow-motion violence epitomised by The Wild Bunch that marks, quite overtly the male as object. The death of Pike Bishop is romantic, the movement choreographed, the hero ennobled.\* It is a film that places the male in a feminine space not just in terms of the fight, but like the musical employs the male, Angel (to a lesser extent Harmonica in OUTW) as pure spectacle within a recessed area of the diegesis (as in the scene in which Angel sings\*). It is of note that it is he, the "woman" who worships Theresa as a Goddess from afar (overvaluation), his people without access to the signifiers, (guns) becomes the damsel in distress and consequently heralds the fall of the "true" men.



**135** The "Heaven's Girl's" song, quoted in its entirety; note the merging of persons - the I and You are collapsed into one suggesting a denial of separation / indication of union.

**136** Newman *Nightmare Movies*  
Bloomsbury London 1988:137

## Eraserhead

*"In Heaven everything is fine, in Heaven everything is fine, in Heaven everything is fine. You've got your girl I've got mine. In Heaven everything is fine, in Heaven everything is fine, in Heaven everything is fine. You've got your girl you've got mine."*<sup>135</sup>

"Set in the slums of Oz"<sup>136</sup> *Eraserhead*, Lynch's first feature, is a study of male anxiety: fear of sexuality, woman, parenthood, commitment in relationships, in short masculine responsibility. It traces via the nightmarish dreams of Henry the male masochistic trajectory; union with the "Heaven Girl" (read: back to the womb/death) and the fall of the father (the symbolic represented in the Lever man - industry/control).

The film opens with a sleeping man superimposed on the subject of his dream - the womb, of emptiness/fullness. Spherical, it recalls the cyclic quality of life. (A quality intrinsic to the film.) Just as we entered the ear in *Blue Velvet*, we now enter, juxtaposed against the phallic, the "black hole."\* (The mise-en-scene, an oblique reference to the notion that masculinity/maleness, is supported by female inferiority/otherness.)

Throughout the film we perceive Henry, a child of the maternal playground, in the feminine, whether in relation to the symbolic or the imaginary. His potency is defined by the father and not by self, he is the passive instrument through which phallic power (the lever man, industry-the pencil company) works, literally so when he is an eraser. Man as God, the creator of life, (distinct from the one-sex fantasy of femaleness - giving birth) is overtly evoked in the man-made chickens. Consider too their scale which magnifies that of man. However it is a myth dispelled with the spurting of chicken blood, rendering man if not as failure as human. Henry's inability to carve within the matriarchal family (i.e. equal the mother) portends his fate - submission to the mother.

Denied access to the Gaze, Henry's vision epitomised by the apartment's single window is walled. Blocked off, it

1. The first part of the document is a letter from the President of the United States to the Congress, dated January 3, 1862. It is a very important document, as it contains the President's annual message to Congress.

2. The second part of the document is a report from the Secretary of the Interior, dated January 10, 1862. It contains information about the land and mineral resources of the United States.

3. The third part of the document is a report from the Secretary of the Treasury, dated January 15, 1862. It contains information about the financial condition of the United States.

4. The fourth part of the document is a report from the Secretary of the War, dated January 20, 1862. It contains information about the military condition of the United States.

5. The fifth part of the document is a report from the Secretary of the Navy, dated January 25, 1862. It contains information about the naval condition of the United States.

6. The sixth part of the document is a report from the Secretary of the Department of the Interior, dated February 1, 1862. It contains information about the land and mineral resources of the United States.

7. The seventh part of the document is a report from the Secretary of the Department of the Treasury, dated February 5, 1862. It contains information about the financial condition of the United States.

8. The eighth part of the document is a report from the Secretary of the Department of the War, dated February 10, 1862. It contains information about the military condition of the United States.

9. The ninth part of the document is a report from the Secretary of the Department of the Navy, dated February 15, 1862. It contains information about the naval condition of the United States.

10. The tenth part of the document is a report from the Secretary of the Department of the Interior, dated February 20, 1862. It contains information about the land and mineral resources of the United States.

11. The eleventh part of the document is a report from the Secretary of the Department of the Treasury, dated February 25, 1862. It contains information about the financial condition of the United States.

12. The twelfth part of the document is a report from the Secretary of the Department of the War, dated March 1, 1862. It contains information about the military condition of the United States.



137 Heath, "Difference" Screen 19  
no.3 Autumn 1978: 92

138 See Note 109

139 Comparison may be drawn to the  
grandfather in The Texas Chain Saw  
Massacre.

becomes a mirror, the look directed inward, thus is a site of regression. Just as in Sunset Boulevard, it is the woman who is the true possessor of the "Look" (Mary at the door window) moreover the Gaze, (Mrs. X, whose treatment of her potential son-in-law recalls that of Mrs. Stevenson (Peeping Tom) and his next door neighbour - both mother figures). "If the women looks, the spectacle provokes, castration is in the air, the Medusa's head is not far off".<sup>137\*</sup> Hence to negate her threat Henry averts his eyes/back away.

To deprive of sight is to deny Knowledge, as Henry admits: "I don't know much about anything." When in the company of women (mothers) his intellectual uncertainty ("Do I cut them just like regular chickens?) and nervousness ("I'm nervous") extends to his identity, manifest in his failure to announce himself as he does with Mary's father, who is likewise a parody of maleness. To deny Knowledge is to render him as a child, figuratively, in his exclusion from the primal scene. His fantasy of (Mary's) dismemberment is to the same effect. Primary identification with the camera translates Henry's desire into our own.<sup>138\*</sup>

Eraserhead suggests woman's power derives from her monstrous aspect, her difference, her interiority - the grandmother (a comment on the nuclear family) is the single best signifier of something going on inside.<sup>139\*</sup> As her point of reference is not the symbolic she, a law unto herself, cannot be subject to patriarchal authority, hence Henry's protestation "that (the birth of his child) is impossible, it's only.." is interrupted by the fact "it's premature, but there is a baby." An entity which can hardly be described as human - the product of a female. Like the Deuce twins (A Z and Two Noughts) Henry tries to understand the process of decay/deformity, therefore an analogy of larva to sperm, sacred box to womb is drawn,\* the latter being the location of metamorphoses, the site of contamination by which the innocuous is deemed horrific. The resultant offensive life forms (which he rips out from his sleeping wife\*) may double as umbilical cords, reminders of symbolic castration, thereby reg-

1. The first part of the document is a list of names.

2. The second part of the document is a list of names.

3. The third part of the document is a list of names.

4. The fourth part of the document is a list of names.

5. The fifth part of the document is a list of names.

6. The sixth part of the document is a list of names.

7. The seventh part of the document is a list of names.

8. The eighth part of the document is a list of names.

9. The ninth part of the document is a list of names.

10. The tenth part of the document is a list of names.

11. The eleventh part of the document is a list of names.

12. The twelfth part of the document is a list of names.

13. The thirteenth part of the document is a list of names.

14. The fourteenth part of the document is a list of names.

15. The fifteenth part of the document is a list of names.

16. The sixteenth part of the document is a list of names.

17. The seventeenth part of the document is a list of names.

18. The eighteenth part of the document is a list of names.

19. The nineteenth part of the document is a list of names.

20. The twentieth part of the document is a list of names.

21. The twenty-first part of the document is a list of names.

22. The twenty-second part of the document is a list of names.

23. The twenty-third part of the document is a list of names.

24. The twenty-fourth part of the document is a list of names.

25. The twenty-fifth part of the document is a list of names.

26. The twenty-sixth part of the document is a list of names.

27. The twenty-seventh part of the document is a list of names.

28. The twenty-eighth part of the document is a list of names.

29. The twenty-ninth part of the document is a list of names.

30. The thirtieth part of the document is a list of names.

31. The thirty-first part of the document is a list of names.

32. The thirty-second part of the document is a list of names.

33. The thirty-third part of the document is a list of names.

34. The thirty-fourth part of the document is a list of names.

35. The thirty-fifth part of the document is a list of names.

36. The thirty-sixth part of the document is a list of names.

37. The thirty-seventh part of the document is a list of names.

38. The thirty-eighth part of the document is a list of names.

39. The thirty-ninth part of the document is a list of names.

40. The fortieth part of the document is a list of names.

41. The forty-first part of the document is a list of names.

42. The forty-second part of the document is a list of names.

43. The forty-third part of the document is a list of names.

44. The forty-fourth part of the document is a list of names.

45. The forty-fifth part of the document is a list of names.

**140** The oral mother is a figure of plenitude

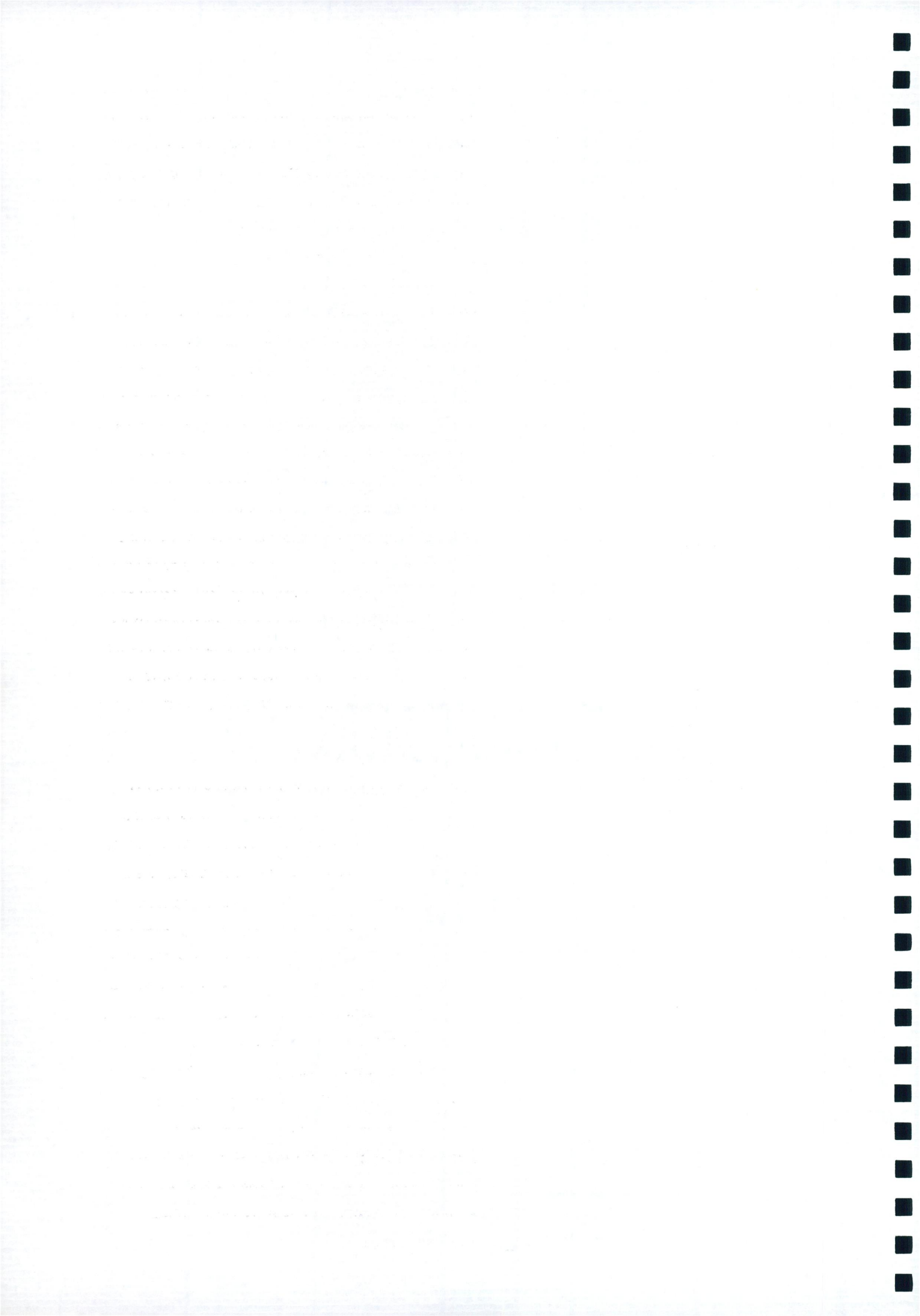
**141** It is man-made in that it was occasioned by Henry, but also on another level, which recalls the male fantasy of giving/taking life and its ultimate failure: the blood and guts that seep out of the child echoes that of the chicken and Henry's own head.

**142** Studlar 1985: 609

**143** Deleuze, op. cited :56

istering union with the mother as an unobtainable desire. It is important to note how the oral mother<sup>140</sup> - "the cheek puffed lady," the inadmissible beyond the patriarchal prison, crushes the foetuses/cords. She is at once a figure of separation but her refusal to look is indicative of her denial of same, ergo facilitating union.

It is of note that Henry, brother of Jeffery (Blue Velvet) and Mark (Peeping Tom) is not only a victim of the monstrous but as Frank in Blue Velvet, is himself monstrous, realised in the interchangeability of offspring and self.\* (A narcissistic doubling which signifies the castration fear). Just as Bev (echoing Claire) separates/kills Elly (Dead Ringers)\*, so too does Henry cut the cord and similarly merges in the death, the substance that oozes out of the child engulfs Henry. It is a man-made death.<sup>141</sup> Here however there is a graphic image of Henry breaking back into the womb and joining the Heaven Girl. The ultimate goal - death, the "final mystical solution"<sup>142</sup> to the masochistic fantasy is attained\*. This state is hinted at throughout the film: consider his foetal position, his floating/drowning in the amnion, (union with his neighbour) and his tentative movement towards the Heaven Girl, which is interrupted by the father. A figure who burns on their union\*. The father is dead/expiated ("he is nothing"), in contrast the mother assuming all symbolic functions is a source of plenitude - she is all.<sup>143</sup>





## Videodrome<sup>144</sup>

*"The battle for the mind of North America will be fought in the video arena, the 'Videodrome'. The television screen is the retina of the minds eye. Therefore the television screen is part of the physical structure of the brain. Therefore whatever appears on the television screen emerges as raw experience for those who watch it"*<sup>145</sup>

**144** It was this film that convinced me of my argument that cinema is located in the masochistic

**145** Professor O'Blivion Videodrome

**146** Pevere 1983: 138

**147** Predictability is primary to pleasure. It renders the spectator God-like - all knowing.

**148** Williams divides S/M into three categories: amateur sadomasochism, sadie-max, and aesthetic sadomasochism. The first two groups (especially amateur s/m) concern themselves with the frenzy of the visible and try to suggest reality - they offer the raw experience. In Videodrome because we inhabit the first person (Renns') P.O.V. which becomes/consumes the diegesis's P.O.V. we see the experience as the reality. See Williams 1990: esp. 196/206

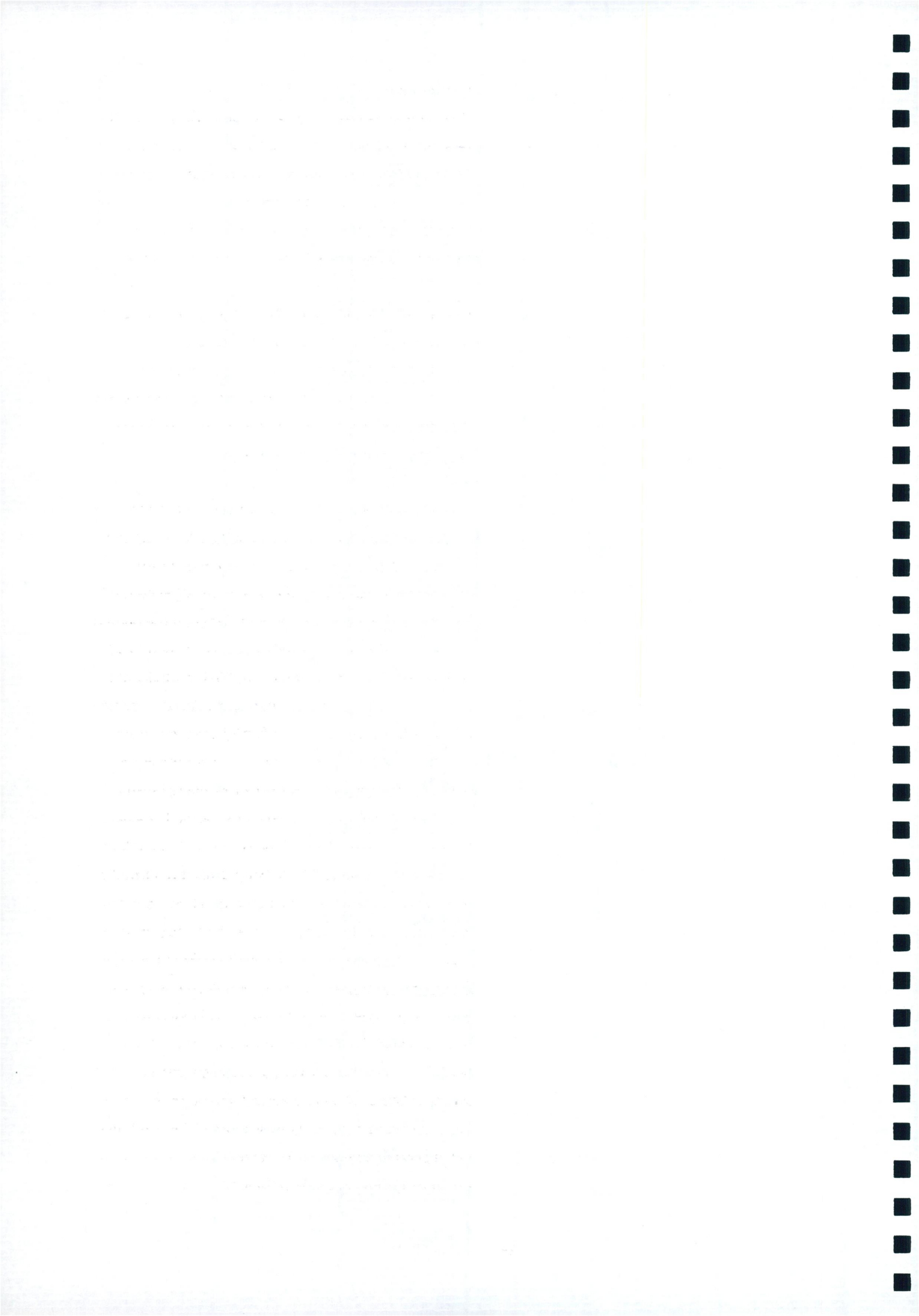
**149** John Carpenter's understanding of movies Moving Pictures 16 Jan 1993

**150** Metz (1975)1992 :736

**151** *ibid*

Videodrome albeit located in the horror genre is infact "a lame horror"<sup>146</sup>: it is difficult to follow and is unpredictable.<sup>147</sup> It is however an interesting metafilm and a social critique that presents spectatorship as a feminizing experience and like Williams, Cronenberg explores the reality and effects of S/M<sup>148</sup>: the subgenres, amateur sadomasochism and snuff movies. Here there is no plot, no characters but a single scene of torture/murder. Just as Renn, the seedy producer of soft-core pornography, who is exposed to the "flickering light [that] goes right into your brain and affects your emotions and your thinking."<sup>149</sup> literally becomes a woman (marked in the pulsing vagina-like slot in his stomach\*) and joins the cult of suicidal females, we too are victims and find out that "it (the S/M) is for real,.. it has a philosophy and that's what makes it dangerous".

Essentially Videodrome is an extreme literalization of masochism within cinema. O'Blivion's comprehension of the television screen as the "retina of the minds eye", is not unlike Metz's description of the introjective movement of vision where the retina is "a second screen,"<sup>150</sup> "a sensitive recording surface"<sup>151</sup> thereby the spectator is positioned passively - ergo is unable to engage in reality testing (this applies to both Videodrome and the pirate videos). Is the explosion of the protagonist to be read as death or a black out? Likewise the notion of fetishism as dissolving distance and leading the spectator to be engulfed via total identification with the object of his vision is rehearsed. Nicky, both as muse and oral mother sucks Renn's head\* into the screen this is as a consequence of her lips, her mouth filling his eyes. Its curvilinear form (the ending is not resolved) emphasises the masochistic point.



**152** For a more full consideration of slippages see video.

**153** Freud, "Analysis Terminable and Interminable" *Standard Edition 23*: esp 252

**154** Beck is a police officer

Interest lies not in the limited power a woman may exercises through her threat to castrate as in the relationship between Jeffery and Dorothy (Blue Velvet\*) but instead in her threat to devour: figured in Nicky's consumption of Renn, moreover in her concealment of more, the phallic - her interiority. This is evoked in Max's (gendered female, anatomically androgynous) ability to pull the gun out from within his female condition.\* This may be cross-referenced against Thelma and Louis, the more sophisticated, less potent version of I Spit on Your Grave where rape, the ultimate signifier of femaleness occasions an aggressive, masculine if regressive response. Regressive in that there is a refusal to accept the symbolic order but a return to pre-oedipal omnipotence.

Another film that facilitates a slippage from male to female is Arthur's The Rape of Richard Beck.<sup>152</sup> Beck perceives himself as the "modern equivalent of a tribal hunter, the bad guys [are] the quarry, [he is] in control". However the film's events transform him into the hunted, the female, "the pig" that squeals when stabbed (read: raped). The film is important not in the fungability of the sexes per se but in locating passivity in relation to another man and the castration which might proceed from that as the bedrock of male anxiety.<sup>153</sup> For Beck as for his father there is a question as to whether being raped is better than dying as suggested by the rapist. For a man to be raped is to strip him of the symbolic: "you might as well take his badge."<sup>154</sup> Like Point Blank it is a film that plays on and makes overt the homosexual desires within a homosocial context in which "wanting" the prey is juxtaposed with the sexual: "you want him don't you" (The Rape of Richard Beck), "Does he (Reece) (sexually) want you?" "Do you (sexually) want him?" "I (Walker) want him," because of the lead up to the statement "I want him" the implication is sexual, a notion enhanced by the the mounting of Walker by Reece (who promises eternity - eternity in death?) at the reunion party. This is echoed in the poolroom between Walker and his sister-in-law, an action that culminates in their union.





**155** Gunning, "An Unseen Energy Swallows Space: The Space in Early Film and Its Relation to American Avant-Garde Film" *Film Before Griffith* Ed. Fell University of California Press Berkeley L.A. London 1983: 363

The early seventies witnessed an abundance of films in the shock / horror mode (*Halloween*, *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, *Carrie*, *Alien*). *Jaws* (1975) which takes the animosity of nature as a given, is notable in that it manages to combine elements of the male action/detective genres (corruption in the policital machine, the war between the good guys and the bad - the Shark, and the internal divisions in same), with the massacre, paranoia (revolt of the machine/technology and omnipresent but hidden evil/threat), and the "unkillable psycho" genres.

**156** Kirby 1988: 128

**157** As noted identification is not predetermined by gender: anybody form or even the scene/utterance may constitute an opportunity for identificatory investment,

**158** Clover 1992: 229

## Conclusion

This dissertation has attempted to show that cinematic pleasure may be aligned with the masochistic. This pleasure can be located even in the beginning of film: consider the analogy of train to cinema and the early train wreck movies, or Lumière's *L'Arrivée d'un train* in which the locomotive rushed towards the audience in 3/4 view impinging on the spectators' space.\* The appeal of this genre is shock/fear - "enjoyable anxiety"<sup>155</sup>. As Kirby writes "the fantasies of being run over and assaulted, penetrated, produce a certain pleasure of pain - beyond the pleasure principle and in the realm of repetition compulsion - which is as much about will-to-submission, to loss-of-mastery, as it is about will-to-mastery/control."<sup>156</sup> This is a pleasure which undermines the foundations of privileged masculinity, a pleasure which has been denied but not fully repressed, and one moreover rendered innocent by over-determined endings which reposition the spectator according to patriarchal norms: on the positive side of the Freudian binarisms.

However the pleasure in cinema, allowing as it does for multiple identificatory roles,<sup>157</sup> is neither pure masochism (Silverman) nor pure sadism (Mulvey) but a continual oscillation between the two poles (Freud as early as 1905 wrote that the sadist is also (always) the masochist) albeit more inclined towards the former. As Clover notes: "the ethnic evidence suggests that the first and central aim of horror cinema is to play on the masochistic fears and desires in its audience - fears and desires that are repeatedly figured in the feminine."<sup>158</sup>

Cinema, while playing in the Imaginary, simultaneously exists in the symbolic, in the world of language, of lack. If viewed as art, as a discourse, film demands an active exchange which inhibits the spectator's regression into the Pre-Oedipal. Roeg's *Bad Timing* Godard's *Vivre sa Vie* or Cronenberg's *Videodrome* with narrative intransitivity and multi-layered diegeses are open texts which raise more questions than answers, hence they demand not a passive consumption but an active reading.



160 The first film I saw that deviated from the Hollywood form was *Carrie* (Wyler 1952). It was a Saturday afternoon, and I could only have been between the age of six and eight. Its failure to save Olivier from disaster had a grave affect on me. Prior to this (perhaps too cynical for a child) I was aware that happy endings were impossible as they did not represent reality. I had always said that if I were to make a film it would follow the text to a logical conclusion, but after *Carrie* I realised that to depict reality was to create tension and have the pleasure that I had already derived undermined. Even at that age I understood the need for an Augustian sense of order. Pleasure exists in the illusion that we have overcome the challenges, that we have succeeded. To refuse the illusion renders us as impotent masochists - victims of the symbolic, victims of fate, "As Flies to wanton boys are we to the Gods. They kill us for their sport." (Gloucester King Lear Act 4 Sc. 1) I recall not looking at the Saturday matinee for sometime after.

To conclude: in cinema the male both on screen and off may be and is troubled. The screen hero's masculinity is questioned by: his fear of woman as signifier of lack which threatens - "no male is spared the fright of castration at the sight of a female genital,"<sup>159</sup> but moreover it is undermined by: woman signifying something extra - the concept of interiority. This notion situates her beyond the symbolic and thereby collapses the idea of the "superior male". Also relevant are - his fear of the father, his fear of failure in relation to the masculine contract - he is passive if he succeeds, regressive if he fails; and his objectification by the other characters and audience alike. For the male spectator, trouble is manifest in the: (repetitive) compulsion to go to the theatre (the womb-like auditorium); witnessing a ritualised and predictable form of expression; symbolic castration via identification with a more powerful ideal ego, that he can never emulate; masochism via identification with the victim; feminization via identification with the female; and through the narrative, the suspense, the intellectual uncertainty which gives rise to the feminine drive (*curiosity*). In short, the cineaste preferring the inferior (masochism, fetishism) to the male superior role (sadism, voyeurism) defies the law of the father but through the hermetic closure of happy endings is reinstated into the symbolic - the previous pleasures are denied. However enjoyment of such pleasures (masochistic) are predicated on the knowledge/hope that the status quo (sadistic) will be attained.<sup>160</sup>







## Selective Bibliography

- Adams, Parveen "Per Os(cillation)" **Camera Obscura Male Trouble Issue No.17** May 1988 John Hopkins University Press
- Agee, James "Sunset Boulevard" 1950 **Sight and Sound: A Fiftieth Anniversary Selection** Ed. Wilson Faber & Faber in ass. with BFI London 1982
- Andrew, Dudley "Identification" in **Concepts of Film Theory** Andrew Oxford University Press. Oxford 1984
- Baudry, Jean- Louis "The Apparatus: Metapsychological Approaches to the Impression of Reality in Cinema" in **Film Theory and Criticism** (Fourth edition) Eds. Mast, Cohen & Braudy. Oxford University Press. New York, Oxford 1992
- Bristow, Joseph "How Men Are" **New Formations** No.6 Winter Routledge London 1988
- Carroll, Noel "Jean- Louis Baudry and 'The Apparatus' in **Film Theory and Criticism** (Fourth edition) Eds. Mast, Cohen & Braudy. Oxford University Press. New York, Oxford 1992
- Clover, Carol **Men, Women and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Horror** BFI 1992
- Cook, Pam "Masculinity in crisis?" **Screen** 23:3-4 Sept/Oct 1982
- Creed, Barbara "A Journey Through Blue Velvet" **New Formations** No.6 Winter Routledge London 1988
- "Phallic Panic: Male Hysteria and Dead Ringers" **Screen** 31:2 Summer 1990
- Fromm, Erich **Greatness and Limitations of Freud's Thought** Abacus London 1982
- Green, Ian "Malefunction" **Screen** vol.25 nos. 4/5 July/October 1984 pp.36-48
- Hirsch, Foster **The Dark Side of the Camera: Film Noir** A. S. Barnes & Co. San Diego, New York 1981
- Kirby, Lynne "Male Hysteria and Early Cinema" **Camera Obscura Male Trouble Issue No.17** May 1988 John Hopkins University Press
- Krutnik, Frank **In a Lonely Street, Film Noir, Genre, Masculinity** Routledge London 1990
- Lawrence, Amy **Echo and Narcissus** University of California, Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford 1991



- Marcus, Laura** "Taking a Good Look" **New Formations** No.15 Winter  
Routledge London 1991
- Metz, Christian** "Identification, Mirror" & "The Passion for Perceiving" from  
The Imaginary Signifier (1975) in **Film Theory and Criticism**  
(Fourth edition) Eds. Mast, Cohen & Braudy. Oxford University  
Press. New York, Oxford 1992
- Modleski, Tania** **The Women Who Knew Too Much, Hitchcock and Feminist  
Theory** Methuen London 1988
- Mulvey, Laura** "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975) in **Film Theory  
and Criticism** (Third edition) Eds. Mast & Cohen. Oxford  
University Press. New York, Oxford 1985
- "Afterthoughts on 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema'  
inspired by *Duel in the Sun*" **Psychoanalysis and Cinema** Ed  
Kaplan Routledge New York 1990
- Neale, Steve** "Masculinity as Spectacle" **Screen** 24:6 Nov/Dec 1983
- Neibaur, James L** **Tough Guy, The American Movie Macho** Mc Farland &  
Company Inc. Jefferson, North Carolina 1989
- Penley, Constance** **The Future of an Illusion, Film, Feminism and  
Psychoanalysis** Routledge London 1989
- Pevere, Geoff** "Cronenberg Tackles Dominant Videology" **The Films of  
David Cronenberg** Ed Hardling New York 1983
- Silverman, Kaja** "Masochism and Subjectivity" **Framework** No.12 1979
- "Masochism and Male Subjectivity" **Camera Obscura  
Male Trouble Issue No.17** May 1988 John Hopkins University  
Press
- Studlar, Gaylyn** "Masochism and the Perverse Pleasures of the Cinema"  
**Movies and Methods Vol 2** Ed. Nichols University of  
California Press London 1985
- Tolson, Andrew** **Limits of Masculinity** Tavistock London 1985
- Wood, Robin** **Hitchcock's Films Revisited** Faber & Faber London 1991
- Williams, Linda** "Power, Pleasure, and Perversion" in **Hard Core** Pandora 1990
- "When the Woman Looks" in **Film Theory and Criticism**  
(Fourth edition) Eds. Mast, Cohen & Braudy. Oxford University  
Press. New York, Oxford 1992





## Selective Filmography

Akira	1987 Katsuhiro Otomo
The Alien Series	1979 Ridley Scott 1986 James Cameron 1992 David Fincher
An American in Paris	1951 Vincente Minnelli
L'Arrivée d'un Train	1895 Lumière Brothers
Bad Timing	1980 Nicolas Roeg
Basic Instinct	1991 Paul Verhoeven
The Birds	1963 Alfred Hitchcock
Black Widow	1987 Bob Rafelson
Blade Runner	1982 Ridley Scott
Blue Velvet	1986 David Lynch
Carrie	1952 William Wyler
Carrie	1976 Brian De Palma
Cobra	1986 George Pan Cosmatos
The Dark Corner	1946 Henry Hattaway
Dead Ringers	1988 David Cronenberg
Eraserhead	1978 David Lynch
The Incredible Shrinking Man	1957 Jack Arnold
Halloween	1978 John Carpenter
Heartbreak Ridge	1986 Clint Eastwood
King of Comedy	1982 Martin Scorsese
Laura	1944 Otto Preminger
The Long Day Closes	1992 Terence Davies
Maltese falcon	1941 John Huston
Morocco	1930 Josef von Sternberg
Most Dangerous Game of All	1932 Ernest B Schoedsack/Irving Pichel
North by Northwest	1959 Alfred Hitchcock
The Night Porter	1973 Lilina Cavani
Once Upon a time in the West	1968 Sergio Leone
Out of the Past	1947 Jacques Tourneur
Peeping Tom	1960 Michael Powell
Performance	1970 Nicolas Roeg
Point Blank	1967 John Boorman
Psycho	1960 Alfred Hitchcock



<b>Rabid</b>	1977 David Cronenberg
<b>Rambo Series</b>	1982 Ted Kotcheff
	1985 George Pan Cosmatos
	1988 Peter MacDonald
<b>The Rape of Richard Beck</b>	1987 Karen Arthur
<b>Rear Window</b>	1954 Alfred Hitchcock
<b>Robocop</b>	1987 Paul Verhoven
<b>Sunset Boulevard</b>	1950 Billy Wilder
<b>Suspicion</b>	1941 Alfred Hitchcock
<b>The Texas Chain Saw Massacre</b>	1974 Tobe Hopper
<b>Vertigo</b>	1958 Alfred Hitchcock
<b>Videodrome</b>	1982 David Cronenberg
<b>The White Room</b>	1991 Patricia Rozema
<b>The Wild Bunch</b>	1969 Sam Peckinpah
<b>Witchboard</b>	1987 Kevin S. Tenney





## Contents of Video (in order)

See video card inlay for real time  
positions on tape

### **Man as Object of Female Gaze/Sexuality**

Sunset Boulevard

Morocco

Eraserhead

Blue Velvet

Performance

### **Woman as Death**

Vertigo

### **The Masquerade**

Miss Sadie Thompson

Rear Window

### **Identification with the Victim**

The White Room

Rear Window

### **Against P.O.V. / Identity Game**

The Birds

Halloween

### **Projective Identification**

The Incredible Shrinking Man

### **We are the Victim**

Vertigo (*letter and mirror scene*)

The Incredible Shrinking Man (*Water is kicked into our faces*)

Videodrome (*See identification with the victim- final scene*)

### **Repetitive Compulsion**

The White Room

### **The Masochistic Fantasy**

Peeping Tom

The Incredible Shrinking Man

### **Shut Off (from the primal scene)**

Rear Window

Eraserhead (*note interchangeability of the mutant/  
monstrous and victim*)

### **Belief in the Happy Ending**

The Birds (*Melanie attacked in Attic Room*)

### **Towards a new reading of the Shower Scene**

Psycho

### **Desire to Merge (Death)**

Vertigo (*museum*)

### **Claire as a destructive element**

Dead Ringers (*her refusal of the three-way symbiotic union*)



**Male Masquerade shattered**

Performance (consider too the homosexual aspect)

**Mirrors as a symptom of a troubled identity**

Performance

**To be on the Side of the Camera is to be Hurt**

Peeping Tom

**Woman as Medusa/Animal**

Sunset Boulevard

**The Imaginary suggested via the Mise-en-Scene**

The Wild Bunch

Eraserhead

**Threat of Castration figured as a Wound**

The Wild Bunch

**Seeing the (Silent) Male Exist**

Once Upon a Time in the West

The Wild Bunch

**Slow Motion Violence**

The Wild Bunch

Once Upon a Time in the West (note the importance of the gun in the western - it is an embodiment of the male, also Bishop's shooting of the mirror which portends his fate, destruction of the more powerful ideal ego, destruction of self)

**Man as Spectacle/The Musical**

The Wild Bunch (Angel)

An American in Paris

**Eraserhead**

*The Ear/The "Black Hole"* (Blue Velvet / Eraserhead)

*Umbilical Cords*

*Final Scene - the masochistic ending*

*Mary's Dismemberment* (regression to mirror phase)

*The Grandmother* (the notion of interiority)

*Box /Womb & Sperm / Larva analogy*

*Union with Neighbour*

**(Other) Regressions - to the birth scene/womb**

Dead Ringers

Blue Velvet

**Interchangeability of Monster and Victim**

The Birds

Blue Velvet

**Feminization/Rape**

Videodrome





**Fetishization leading the spectator to be consumed by the  
object of his/her vision**

Videodrome

The White Room

Performance

**Masochism as Privileged**

Blue Velvet

Videodrome

**Slidings/Echoes (read: Feminized)**

Vertigo

Point Blank

Peeping Tom

Eraserhead (*Mrs. X. seduces Henry* - consider this in relation to  
the following excerpt)

**Homosexual**

Blue Velvet

Point Blank

Witchboard

Dead Ringers

**L'Arrivée d'un Train**

