THE IMAGINARY SIGNIFIER

Psychoanalysis and the Cinema

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Identification, Mirror

'What contribution can Freudian psychoanalysis make to the knowledge of the cinematic signifier?': that was the question-dream I posed (the scientific imaginary wishing to be symbol-ised), and it seems to me that I have now more or less *unwound* it; unwound but no more; I have not given it an answer. I have simply paid attention to what it was I wished to say (one never knows this until one has written it down), I have only questioned my question: this unanswered character is one that has to be deliberately accepted, it is constitutive of any epistemological procedure.

Since I have wished to mark the places (as empty boxes some of which are beginning to fill without waiting for me, and so much the better), the places of different directions of work, and particularly of the last, the psychoanalytic exploration of the sig-nifier, which concerns me especially, I must now begin to inscribe something in this last box; must take further, and more plainly in the direction of the unconscious, the analysis of the investigator's desire that makes me write. And to start with, of course, this means asking a new question: among the specific fea-tures of the cinematic signifier that distinguish the cinema from literature, painting, etc. which ones by nature call most directly on the type of knowledge that psychoanalysis alone can provide?

PERCEPTION, IMAGINARY

The cinema's signifier is *perceptual* (visual and auditory). So is that of literature, since the written chain has to be *read*, but it involves a more restricted perceptual register: only graphemes,

writing. So too are those of painting, sculpture, architecture, pho-tography, but still within limits, and different ones: absence of auditory perception, absence in the visual itself of certain import-ant dimensions such as time and movement (obviously there is the time of the look, but the object looked at is not inscribed in a precise and ordered time sequence forced on the spectator from outside). Music's signifier is perceptual as well, but, like the others, less 'extensive' than that of the cinema: here it is vision which is absent, and even in the auditory, extended speech (except in song). What first strikes one then is that the cinema is *more perceptual*, if the phrase is allowable, than many other means of expression; it mobilises a larger number of the axes of percep-tion. (That is why the cinema has sometimes been presented as a 'synthesis of all the arts'; which does not mean very much, but if we restrict ourselves to the quantitative tally of the registers of perception, it is true that the cinema contains within itself the sig-nifiers of other arts: it can present pictures to us, make us hear music, it is made of photographs, etc.)

Nevertheless, this as it were numerical 'superiority' disappears if the cinema is compared with the theatre, the opera and other spectacles of the same type. The latter too involve sight and hearing simultaneously, linguistic audition and non-linguistic audition, movement, real temporal progression. Their difference from the cinema lies elsewhere: they do not consist of *images*, the perceptions they offer to the eye and the ear are inscribed in a true space (not a photographed one), the same one as that occu-pied by the public during the performance; everything the audi-ence hear and see is actively produced in their presence, by human beings or props which are themselves present. This is not the problem of fiction but that of the definitional characteristics of the signifier: whether or no the theatrical play mimes a fable, its *action*, if need be mimetic, is still managed by real persons evolving in real time and space, *on the same stage or 'scene' as the public*. The 'other scene', which is precisely not so called, is the cinematic screen (closer to phantasy from the outset): what unfolds there may, as before, be more or less fictional, but the unfolding itself is fictive: the actor, the 'décor', the words one hears are all absent, everything is *recorded* (as a memory trace which is im-mediately so, without having been something else before), and this is still true if what is recorded is not a 'story' and does not aim for the fictional illusion proper. For it is the signifier itself, and as

a whole, that is recorded, that is absence: a little rolled up perforated strip which 'contains' vast landscapes, fixed battles, the melting of the ice on the River Neva, and whole life-times, and yet can be enclosed in the familiar round metal tin, of modest dimensions, clear proof that it does not 'really' contain all that.

At the theatre, Sarah Bernhardt may tell me she is Phèdre or, if the play were from another period and rejected the figurative regime, she might say, as in a type of modern theatre, that she is Sarah Bernhardt. But at any rate, I should see Sarah Bernhardt. At the cinema, she could make the same two kinds of speeches too, but it would be her shadow that would be offering them to me (or she would be offering them in her own absence). Every film is a fiction film.

What is at issue is not just the actor. Today there are a theatre and a cinema without actors, or in which they have at least ceased to take on the full and exclusive function which characterises them in classical spectacles. But what is true of Sarah Bernhardt is just as true of an object, a prop, a chair for example. On the theatre stage, this chair may, as in Chekhov, pretend to be the chair in which the melancholy Russian nobleman sits every evening; on the contrary (in Ionesco), it can explain to me that it is a theatre chair. But when all is said and done it is a chair. In the cinema, it will similarly have to choose between two attitudes (and many other intermediate or more tricky ones), but it will not be there when the spectators see it, when they have to recognise the choice; it will have delegated its reflection to them.

What is characteristic of the cinema is not the imaginary that it may happen to represent, but the imaginary that it *is* from the start, the imaginary that constitutes it as a signifier (the two are not unrelated; it is so well able to represent it because it is it; however it is it even when it no longer represents it). The (possible) reduplication inaugurating the intention of fiction is preceded in the cinema by a first reduplication, always-already achieved, which inaugurates the signifier. The imaginary, by definition, combines within it a certain presence and a certain absence. In the cinema it is not just the fictional signified, if there is one, that is thus made present in the mode of absence, it is from the outset the signifier.

Thus the cinema, 'more perceptual' than certain arts according-

ing to the list of its sensory registers, is also 'less perceptual' than others once the status of these perceptions is envisaged rather than their number or diversity; for its perceptions are all in a sense 'false'. Or rather, the activity of perception which it involves is real (the cinema is not a phantasy), but the perceived is not really the object, it is its shade, its phantom, its double, its *replica* in a new kind of mirror. It will be said that literature, after all, is itself only made of replicas (written words, presenting absent objects). But at least it does not present them to us with all the really perceived detail that the screen does (giving more and taking as much, i.e. taking more). The unique position of the cinema lies in this dual character of its signifier: unaccustomed perceptual wealth, but at the same time stamped with unreality to an unusual degree, and from the very outset. More than the other arts, or in a more unique way, the cinema involves us in the imaginary: it drums up all perception, but to switch it immediately over into its own absence, which is nonetheless the only signifier present.

THE ALL-PERCEIVING SUBJECT

Thus film is like the mirror. But it differs from the primordial mirror in one essential point: although, as in the latter, everything may come to be projected, there is one thing and one thing only that is never reflected in it: the spectator's own body. In a certain emplacement, the mirror suddenly becomes clear glass.

In the mirror the child perceives the familiar household objects, and also its object par excellence, its mother, who holds it up in her arms to the glass. But above all it perceives its own image. This is where primary identification (the formation of the ego) gets certain of its main characteristics: the child sees itself as an other, and beside an other. This other other is its guarantee that the first is really it: by her authority, her sanction, in the register of the symbolic, subsequently by the resemblance between her mirror image and the child's (both have a human form). Thus the child's ego is formed by identification with its like, and this in two senses simultaneously, metonymically and metaphorically: the other human being who is in the glass, the own reflection which is and is not the body, which is like it. The child identifies with itself as an object.

In the cinema, the object remains: fiction or no, there is always something on the screen. But the reflection of the own body has disappeared. The cinema spectator is not a child and the child really at the mirror stage (from around six to around eighteen months) would certainly be incapable of 'following' the simplest of films. Thus, what *makes possible* the spectator's absence from the screen – or rather the intelligible unfolding of the film despite that absence – is the fact that the spectator has already known the experience of the mirror (of the true mirror), and is thus able to constitute a world of objects without having first to recognise himself within it. In this respect, the cinema is already on the side of the symbolic (which is only to be expected): the spectator knows that objects exist, that he himself exists as a subject, that he becomes an object for others: he knows himself and he knows his like: it is no longer necessary that this similarity be literally *depicted* for him on the screen, as it was in the mirror of his childhood. Like every other broadly 'secondary' activity, the practice of the cinema presupposes that the primitive undifferentiation of the ego and the non-ego has been overcome.

But *with what*, then, does the spectator identify during the projection of the film? For he certainly has to identify: identification in its primal form has ceased to be a current necessity for him, but he continues, in the cinema – if he did not the film would become incomprehensible, considerably more incomprehensible than the most incomprehensible films – to depend on that permanent play of identification without which there would be no social life (thus, the simplest conversation presupposes the alternation of the *I* and the *you*, hence the aptitude of the two interlocutors for a mutual and reversible identification). What form does this *continued* identification, whose essential role Lacan has demonstrated even in the most abstract reasoning[1] and which constituted the 'social sentiment' for Freud[2] (= the sublimation of a homosexual libido, itself a reaction to the aggressive rivalry of the members of a single generation after the murder of the father), take in the special case of one social practice among others, cinematic projection?

Obviously the spectator has the opportunity to identify with the *character* of the fiction. But there still has to be one. This is thus only valid for the narrative-representational film, and not for the

psychoanalytic constitution of the signifier of the cinema as such. The spectator can also identify with the actor, in more or less 'a-fictional' films in which the latter is represented as an actor, not a character, but is still offered thereby as a human being (as a perceived human being) and thus allows identification. However this factor (even added to the previous one and thus covering a very large number of films) cannot suffice. It only designates secondary identification in certain of its forms (secondary in the cinematic process itself, since in any other sense all identification except that of the mirror can be regarded as secondary).

An insufficient explanation, and for two reasons, the first of which is only the intermittent, anecdotal and superficial consequence of the second (but for that reason more visible, and that is why I call it the first). The cinema deviates from the theatre on an important point that has often been emphasised: it often presents us with long sequences that can (literally) be called 'inhuman' – the familiar theme of cinematic 'cosmomorphism' developed by many film theorists – sequences in which only inanimate objects, landscapes, etc. appear and which for minutes at a time offer no human form for spectator identification: yet the latter must be supposed to remain intact in its deep structure, since at such moments the film *works* just as well as it does at others, and whole films (geographical documentaries, for example) unfold intelligibly in such conditions. The second, more radical reason is that identification with the human form appearing on the screen, even when it occurs, still tells us nothing about the *place of the spectator's ego* in the inauguration of the signifier. As I have just pointed out, this ego is already formed. But since it exists, the question arises precisely of *where it is* during the projection of the film (the true primary identification, that of the mirror, forms the ego, but all other identifications presuppose, on the contrary, that it has been formed and can be 'exchanged' for the object or the fellow subject). Thus when I 'recognise' my like on the screen, and even more when I do not recognise it, where am I? Where is that someone who is capable of self-recognition when need be?

It is not enough to answer that the cinema, like every social practice, demands that the psychical apparatus of its participants be fully constituted, and that the question is thus the concern of general psychoanalytic theory and not that of the cinema proper. For my *where is it?* does not claim to go so far, or more precisely tries to go slightly further: it is a question of the

point occupied by this already constituted ego, occupied during the cinema showing and not in social life in general.

The spectator is absent from the screen: contrary to the child in the mirror, he cannot identify with himself as an object, but only with objects which are there without him. In this sense the screen is not a mirror. The perceived, this time, is entirely on the side of the object, and there is no longer any equivalent of the own image, of that unique mix of perceived and subject (of other and I) which was precisely the figure necessary to disengage the one from the other. At the cinema, it is always the other who is on the screen; as for me, I am there to look at him. I take no part in the perceived, on the contrary, I am *all-perceiving*. All-perceiving as one says all-powerful (this is the famous gift of 'ubiquity' the film makes its spectator); all-perceiving, too, because I am entirely on the side of the perceiving instance: absent from the screen, but certainly present in the auditorium, a great eye and ear without which the perceived would have no one to perceive it, the instance, in other words, which *constitutes* the cinema signifier (it is I who make the film). If the most extravagant spectacles and sounds or the most unlikely combination of them, the combination furthest removed from any real experience, do not prevent the constitution of meaning (and to begin with do not *astonish* the spectator, do not really astonish him, not intellectually: he simply judges the film as strange), that is because he knows he is at the cinema.

In the cinema the *subject's knowledge* takes a very precise form without which no film would be possible. This knowledge is dual (but unique). I know I am perceiving something imaginary (and that is why its absurdities, even if they are extreme, do not seriously disturb me), and I know that it is I who am perceiving it. This second knowledge divides in turn: I know that I am really perceiving, that my sense organs are physically affected, that I am not phantasising, that the fourth wall of the auditorium (the screen) is really different from the other three, that there is a projector facing it (and thus it is not I who am projecting, or at least not all alone), and I also know that it is I who am perceiving all this, that this perceived-imaginary material is deposited in me as if on a second screen, that it is in me that it forms up into an organised sequence, that therefore I am myself the place where this

really perceived imaginary accedes to the symbolic by its inauguration as the signifier of a certain type of institutionalised social activity called the 'cinema'.

In other words, the spectator *identifies with himself*, with himself as a pure act of perception (as wakefulness, alertness): as the condition of possibility of the perceived and hence as a kind of transcendental subject, which comes before every *there is*.

A strange mirror, then, very like that of childhood, and very different. Very like, as Jean-Louis Baudry has emphasised,[3] because during the showing we are, like the child, in a sub-motor and hyper-perceptive state; because, like the child again, we are prey to the imaginary, the double, and are so paradoxically through a real perception. Very different, because this mirror returns us everything but ourselves, because we are wholly outside it, whereas the child is both in it and in front of it. As an *arrangement* (and in a very topographical sense of the word), the cinema is more involved on the flank of the symbolic, and hence of secondariness, than is the mirror of childhood. This is not surprising, since it comes long after it, but what is more important to me is the fact that it is inscribed in its wake with an incidence at once so direct and so oblique, which has no precise equivalent in other apparatuses of signification.

IDENTIFICATION WITH THE CAMERA

The preceding analysis coincides in places with others which have already been proposed and which I shall not repeat: analyses of *quattrocento* painting or of the cinema itself which insist on the role of monocular perspective (hence of the *camera*) and the 'vanishing point' that inscribes an empty emplacement for the spectator-subject, an all-powerful position which is that of God himself, or more broadly of some ultimate signified. And it is true that as he identifies with himself as look, the spectator can do no other than identify with the camera, too, which has looked before him at what he is now looking at and whose stationing (= framing) determines the vanishing point. During the projection this camera is absent, but it has a representative consisting of another apparatus, called precisely a 'projector'. An apparatus the spectator has behind him, *at the back of his head*,[4] that is, precisely where phantasy locates the 'focus' of all vision. All of us

have experienced our own look, even outside the so-called *salles obscures* [= cinemas], as a kind of searchlight turning on the axis of our own necks (like a pan) and shifting when we shift (a tracking shot now): as a cone of light (without the microscopic dust scattered through it and streaking it in the cinema) whose vicariousness draws successive and variable slices of obscurity from nothingness wherever and whenever it comes to rest. (And in a sense that is what perception and consciousness are, a *light*, as Freud put it,[5] in the double sense of an illumination and an opening, as in the arrangement of the cinema, which contains both, a limited and wandering light that only attains a small part of the real, but on the other hand possesses the gift of casting light on it.) Without this identification with the camera certain facts could not be understood, though they are constant ones: the fact, for example, that the spectator is not amazed when the image 'rotates' (= a pan) and yet he knows he has not turned his head. The explanation is that he has no need to turn it really, he has turned it in his all-seeing capacity, his identification with the movement of the camera being that of a transcendental, not an empirical subject.

All vision consists of a double movement: projective (the 'sweeping' searchlight) and introjective: consciousness as a sensitive recording surface (as a screen). I have the impression at once that, to use a common expression, I am 'casting' my eyes on things, and that the latter, thus illuminated, come to be deposited within me (we then declare that it is these things that have been 'projected', on to my retina, say). A sort of stream called the look, and explaining all the myths of magnetism, must be sent out over the world, so that objects can come back up this stream in the opposite direction (but using it to find their way), arriving at last at our perception, which is now soft wax and no longer an emitting source.

The technology of photography carefully conforms to this (banal) phantasy accompanying perception. The camera is 'trained' on the object like a fire-arm (= projection) and the object arrives to make an imprint, a trace, on the receptive surface of the film-strip (= introjection). The spectator himself does not escape these pincers, for he is part of the apparatus, and also because pincers, on the imaginary plane (Melanie Klein), mark our relation to the world as a whole and are rooted in the primary figures of orality. During the performance the spectator

is the searchlight I have described, duplicating the projector, which itself duplicates the camera, and he is also the sensitive surface duplicating the screen, which itself duplicates the film-strip. There are two cones in the auditorium: one ending on the screen and starting both in the projection box and in the spectator's vision insofar as it is projective, and one starting from the screen and 'deposited' in the spectator's perception insofar as it is introjective (on the retina, a second screen). When I say that 'I see' the film, I mean thereby a unique mixture of two contrary currents: the film is what I receive, and it is also what I release, since it does not pre-exist my entering the auditorium and I only need close my eyes to suppress it. Releasing it, I am the projector, receiving it, I am the screen; in both these figures together, I am the camera, which points and yet which records.

Thus the constitution of the signifier in the cinema depends on a series of mirror-effects organised in a chain, and not on a single reduplication. In this the cinema as a topography resembles that other 'space', the technical equipment (camera, projector, film-strip, screen, etc.), the objective precondition of the whole institution: as we know, the apparatuses too contain a series of mirrors, lenses, apertures and shutters, ground glasses, through which the cone of light passes: a further reduplication in which the equipment becomes a metaphor (as well as the real source) for the mental process instituted. Further on we shall see that it is also its fetish.

In the cinema, as elsewhere, the constitution of the symbolic is only achieved through and above the play of the imaginary: projection-introjection, presence-absence, phantasies accompanying perception, etc. Even when acquired, the ego still depends in its underside on the fabulous figures thanks to which it has been acquired and which have marked it lastingly with the stamp of the lure. The secondary process does no more than 'cover' (and not always hermetically) the primary process which is still constantly present and conditions the very possibility of what covers it.

Chain of many mirrors, the cinema is at once a weak and a robust mechanism: like the human body, like a precision tool, like a social institution. And the fact is that it is really all of these at the same time.

And I, at this moment, what am I doing if not to add to all these reduplications one more whereby theory is attempting to set itself up? Am I not looking at myself looking at the film? This *passion for seeing* (and also hearing), the foundation of the whole edifice, am I not turning it, too, on (against) that edifice? Am I not still the voyeur I was in front of the screen, now that it is this voyeur who is being seen, thus postulating a second voyeur, the one writing at present, myself again?

ON THE IDEALIST THEORY OF THE CINEMA

The place of the ego in the institution of the signifier, as transcendental yet radically deluded subject, since it is the institution (and even the equipment) that give it this place, surely provides us with an appreciable opportunity the better to understand and judge the precise epistemological import of the idealist theory of the cinema which culminates in the remarkable works of André Bazin. Before thinking directly about their validity, but simply reading texts of this kind, one cannot but be struck by the great precision, the acute and immediately sensitive intelligence that they often demonstrate; at the same time they give the diffuse impression of a permanent ill-foundedness (which affects nothing and yet affects everything), they suggest that somewhere they contain something like a weak point at which the whole might be overturned.

It is certainly no accident that the main form of idealism in cinematic theory has been phenomenology. Bazin and other writers of the same period explicitly acknowledged their debt to it, and more implicitly (but in a more generalised fashion) all conceptions of the cinema as a mystical revelation, as 'truth' or 'reality' unfolding by right, as the apparition of what is [*l'étant*], as an epiphany, derive from it. We all know that the cinema has the gift of sending some of its lovers into prophetic trances. However, these cosmophanic conceptions (which are not always expressed in an extreme form) register rather well the 'feeling' of the *deluded ego* of the spectator, they often give us excellent descriptions of this feeling and to this extent there is something scientific about them and they have advanced our knowledge of the cinema. But the *lure of the ego* is their blind spot. These theories are still of great interest, but they have, so to speak, to be

put the other way round, like the optical image of the film.

For it is true that the topographical apparatus of the cinema resembles the conceptual apparatus of phenomenology, with the result that the latter can cast light on the former. (Besides, in any domain, a phenomenology of the object to be understood, a 'receptive' description of its appearances, must be the starting-point; only afterwards can *criticism* begin; psychoanalysts, it should be remembered, have their own phenomenology.) The '*there is*' of phenomenology proper (philosophical phenomenology) as an ontic revelation referring to a perceiving-subject (='perceptual *cogito*'), to a subject for which alone there can be anything, has close and precise affinities with the installation of the cinema signifier in the ego as I have tried to define it, with the spectator withdrawing into himself as a pure instance of perception, the whole of the perceived being 'out there'. To this extent the cinema really is the 'phenomenological art' it has often been called, by Merleau-Ponty himself, for example.[6] But it can only be so because its objective determinations make it so. The ego's position in the cinema does not derive from a miraculous resemblance between the cinema and the natural characteristics of all perception; on the contrary, it is foreseen and marked in advance by the institution (the equipment, the disposition of the auditorium, the mental system that internalises the two), and also by more general characteristics of the psychical apparatus (such as projection, the mirror structure, etc.), which although they are less strictly dependent on a period of social history and a technology, do not therefore express the sovereignty of a 'human vocation', but inversely are themselves shaped by certain specific features of man as an animal (as the only animal that is not an animal): his primitive *Hilflosigkeit*, his dependence on another's care (the lasting source of the imaginary, of object relations, of the great oral figures of feeding), the motor prematurity of the child which condemns it to an initial self-recognition by sight (hence outside itself) anticipating a muscular unity it does not yet possess.

In other words, phenomenology can contribute to knowledge of the cinema (and it has done so) insofar as it happens to be like it, and yet it is on the cinema *and* phenomenology in their common illusion of *perceptual mastery* that light must be cast by the real conditions of society and man.

ON SOME SUB-CODES OF IDENTIFICATION

The play of identification defines the cinematic situation in its generality, i.e. *the* code. But it also allows more specific and less permanent configurations, 'variations' on it, as it were; they intervene in certain coded figures which occupy precise segments of precise films.

What I have said about identification so far amounts to the statement that the spectator is absent from the screen *as perceived*, but also (the two things inevitably go together) present there and even 'all-present' as *perceiver*. At every moment I am in the film by my look's caress. This presence often remains diffuse, geographically undifferentiated, evenly distributed over the whole surface of the screen; or more precisely *hovering*, like the psychoanalyst's listening, ready to catch on preferentially to some motif in the film, according to the force of that motif and according to my own phantasies as a spectator, without the cinematic code itself intervening to govern this anchorage and impose it on the whole audience. But in other cases, certain articles of the cinematic codes or sub-codes (which I shall not try to survey completely here) are made responsible for suggesting to the spectator the vector along which his permanent identification with his own look should be extended temporarily inside the film (the perceived) itself. Here we meet various classic problems of cinematic theory, or at least certain aspects of them: subjective images, out-of-frame space, looks (looks and no longer the look, but the former are articulated to the latter).

There are various sorts of subjective image and I have tried elsewhere (following Jean Mitry) to distinguish between them.[7] Only one of them will detain me for the moment, the one which 'expresses the viewpoint of the film-maker' in the standard formula (and not the viewpoint of a character, another traditional sub-case of the subjective image): unusual framings, uncommon shot-angles, etc. as for example in one of the sketches which make up Julien Duvivier's film *Carnet de bal* (the sketch with Pierre Blanchar, shot continuously in tilted framings). In the standard definitions one thing strikes me: I do not see why these uncommon angles should express the viewpoint of the film-

maker any more than perfectly ordinary angles, closer to the horizontal. However, the definition is comprehensible even in its inaccuracy: precisely because it is uncommon, the uncommon angle makes us more aware of what we had merely forgotten to some extent in its absence: an identification with the camera (with 'the author's viewpoint'). The ordinary framings are finally felt to be non-framings: I espouse the film-maker's look (without which no cinema would be possible), but my consciousness is not too aware of it. The uncommon angle reawakens me and (like the cure) teaches me what I already knew. And then, it obliges my look to stop wandering freely over the screen for the moment and to scan it along more precise lines of force which are imposed on me. Thus for a moment I become directly aware of the *emplacement* of my own presence-absence in the film simply because it has changed.

Now for looks. In a fiction film, the characters look at one another. It can happen (and this is already another 'notch' in the chain of identifications) that a character looks at another who is momentarily out-of-frame, or else is looked at by him. If we have gone one notch further, this is because everything out-of-frame *brings us closer to the spectator*, since it is the peculiarity of the latter to be out-of-frame (the out-of-frame character thus has a point in common with him: he is looking at the screen). In certain cases the out-of-frame character's look is 'reinforced' by recourse to another variant of the subjective image, generally christened the 'character's point of view': the framing of the scene corresponds precisely to the angle from which the out-of-frame character looks at the screen. (The two figures are dissociable moreover: we often know that the scene is being looked at by someone other than ourselves, by a character, but it is the logic of the plot, or an element of the dialogue, or a previous image that tells us so, not the position of the camera, which may be far from the presumed emplacement of the out-of-frame onlooker.)

In all sequences of this kind, the identification that founds the signifier is *twice relayed*, doubly duplicated in a circuit that leads it to the heart of the film along a line which is no longer hovering, which follows the inclination of the looks and is therefore governed by the film itself: the spectator's look (= the basic identification), before dispersing all over the surface of the screen

in a variety of intersecting lines (= looks of the characters in the frame = second duplication), must first 'go through' – as one goes through a town on a journey, or a mountain pass – the look of the character out-of-frame (= first duplication), himself a spectator and hence the first delegate of the true spectator, but not to be confused with the latter since he is inside, if not the frame, then at least the fiction. This invisible character, supposed (like the spectator) to be seeing, will collide obliquely with the latter's look and play the part of an obligatory intermediary. By offering himself as a crossing for the spectator, he inflects the circuit followed by the sequence of identifications and it is only in this sense that he is himself seen: as we see through him, we see ourselves not seeing him.

Examples of this kind are much more numerous and each of them is much more complex than I have suggested here. At this point textual analysis of precise film sequences is an indispensable instrument of knowledge. I just wished to show that in the end there is no break in continuity between the child's game with the mirror and, at the other extreme, certain localised figures of the cinematic codes. The mirror is the site of primary identification. Identification with one's own look is secondary with respect to the mirror, i.e. for a general theory of adult activities, but it is the foundation of the cinema and hence primary when the latter is under discussion: it is *primary cinematic identification* proper ('primary identification' would be inaccurate from the psychoanalytic point of view; 'secondary identification', more accurate in this respect, would be ambiguous for a cinematic psychoanalysis). As for identifications with characters, with their own different levels (out-of-frame character, etc.), they are secondary, tertiary *cinematic identifications*, etc.; taken as a whole in opposition to the identification of the spectator with his own look, they constitute secondary cinematic identification in the singular.[8]

'SEEING A FILM'

Freud noted, *vis-à-vis* the sexual act[9] that the most ordinary practices depend on a large number of psychical functions which are

distinct but work consecutively, so that all of them must be intact if what is regarded as a normal performance is to be possible (it is because neurosis and psychosis dissociate them and put some of them out of court that a kind of commutation is made possible whereby they can be listed retrospectively by the analyst). The apparently very simple act of *seeing a film* is no exception to this rule. As soon as it is subjected to analysis it reveals to us a complex, multiply interconnected imbrication of the functions of the imaginary, the real and the symbolic, which is also required in one form or another for every procedure of social life, but whose cinematic manifestation is especially impressive since it is played out on a small surface. (To this extent the theory of the cinema may some day contribute something to psychoanalysis, even if, through force of circumstances, this 'reciprocation' remains very limited at the moment, the two disciplines being very unevenly developed.)

In order to understand the fiction film, I must both 'take myself' for the character (= an imaginary procedure) so that he benefits, by analogical projection, from all the schemata of intelligibility that I have within me, and not take myself for him (= the return to the real) so that the fiction can be established as such (= as symbolic): this is *seeming-real*. Similarly, in order to understand the film (at all), I must perceive the photographed object as absent, its photograph as present, and the presence of this absence as signifying. The imaginary of the cinema presupposes the symbolic, for the spectator must first of all have known the primordial mirror. But as the latter instituted the ego very largely in the imaginary, the second mirror of the screen, a symbolic apparatus, itself in turn depends on reflection and lack. However, it is not phantasy, a 'purely' symbolic-imaginary site, for the absence of the object and the codes of that absence are really produced in it by the *physis* of an equipment: the cinema is a body (a *corpus* for the semiologist), a fetish that can be loved.

4

The Passion for Perceiving

The practice of the cinema is only possible through the perceptual passions: the desire to see (= scopic drive, scopophilia, voyeurism), which was alone engaged in the art of the silent film, the desire to hear which has been added to it in the sound cinema (this is the *'pulsion invocante'*, the invocatory drive, one of the four main sexual drives for Lacan;[1] it is well known that Freud isolated it less clearly and hardly deals with it as such).

These two sexual drives are distinguished from the others in that they are more dependent on a lack, or at least dependent on it in a more precise, more unique manner, which marks them from the outset, even more than the others, as being on the side of the imaginary.

However, this characteristic is to a greater or lesser degree proper to all the sexual drives insofar as they differ from purely organic instincts or needs (Lacan), or in Freud from the self-preservation drives (the 'ego drives' which he tended subsequently to annex to narcissism, a tendency he could never quite bring himself to pursue to its conclusion). The sexual drive does not have so stable and strong a relationship with its 'object' as do for example hunger and thirst. Hunger can only be satisfied by food, but food is quite certain to satisfy it; thus instincts are simultaneously more and less difficult to satisfy than drives; they depend on a perfectly real object for which there is no substitute, but they depend on nothing else. Drives, on the contrary, can be satisfied up to a point outside their objects (this is sublimation, or else, in another way, masturbation) and are initially capable of doing without them without putting the organism into immediate danger (hence repression). The needs of self-preservation can neither be repressed nor sublimated; the sexual drives are more

labile and more accommodating, as Freud insisted[2] (more radically perverse, says Lacan[3]). Inversely, they always remain more or less unsatisfied, even when their object has been attained; desire is very quickly reborn after the brief vertigo of its apparent extinction, it is largely sustained by itself as desire, it has its own rhythms, often quite independent of those of the pleasure obtained (which seemed nonetheless its specific aim); the lack is what it wishes to fill, and at the same time what it is always careful to leave gaping, in order to survive as desire. In the end it has no object, at any rate no real object; through real objects which are all substitutes (and all the more numerous and interchangeable for that), it pursues an imaginary object (a 'lost object') which is its truest object, an object that has always been lost and is always desired as such.

How, then, can one say that the visual and auditory drives have a stronger or more special relationship with the absence of their object, with the infinite pursuit of the imaginary? Because, as opposed to other sexual drives, the 'perceiving drive' – combining into one the scopic drive and the invocatory drive – *concretely represents the absence of its object* in the distance at which it maintains it and which is part of its very definition: distance of the look, distance of listening. Psychophysiology makes a classic distinction between the 'senses at a distance' (sight and hearing) and the others all of which involve immediate proximity and which it calls the 'senses of contact' (Pradines): touch, taste, smell, cœnaesthetic sense, etc. Freud notes that voyeurism, like sadism in this respect, always keeps apart the *object* (here the object looked at) and the *source* of the drive, i.e. the generating organ (the eye); the voyeur does not look at his eye.[4] With orality and anality, on the contrary, the exercise of the drive inaugurates a certain degree of partial fusion, a coincidence (= contact, tendential abolition of distance) of source and aim, for the aim is to obtain pleasure at the level of the source organ (= 'organ pleasure'[5]): e.g. what is called 'pleasure of the mouth'.[6]

It is no accident that the main socially acceptable arts are based on the senses at a distance, and that those which depend on the senses of contact are often regarded as 'minor' arts (e.g. the culinary arts, the art of perfumes, etc.). Nor is it an accident that the visual or auditory imaginaries have played a much more im-

portant part in the histories of societies than the tactile or olfactory imaginaries.

The voyeur is very careful to maintain a gulf, an empty space, between the object and the eye, the object and his own body: his look fastens the object at the right distance, as with those cinema spectators who take care to avoid being too close to or too far from the screen. The voyeur represents in space the fracture which forever separates him from the object; he represents his very dissatisfaction (which is precisely what he needs as a voyeur), and thus also his 'satisfaction' insofar as it is of a specifically voyeuristic type. To fill in this distance would threaten to overwhelm the subject, to lead him to consume the object (the object which is now too close so that he cannot see it any more), to bring him to orgasm and the pleasure of his own body, hence to the exercise of other drives, mobilising the senses of contact and putting an end to the scopic arrangement. *Retention* is fully part of perceptual pleasure, which is thereby often coloured with anality. Orgasm is the object rediscovered in a state of momentary illusion; it is the phantasy suppression of the gap between object and subject (hence the amorous myths of 'fusion'). The looking drive, except when it is exceptionally well developed, is less directly related to orgasm than are the other component drives; it favours it by its excitatory action, but it is not generally sufficient to produce it by its figures alone, which thus belong to the realm of 'preparatives'. In it we do not find that illusion, however brief, of a lack filled, of a non-imaginary, of a full relation to the object, better established in other drives. If it is true of all desire that it depends on the infinite pursuit of its absent object, voyeuristic desire, along with certain forms of sadism, is the only desire whose principle of distance symbolically and spatially evokes this fundamental rent.

The same could be said, making the necessary modifications of course, about the invocatory (auditory) drive, less closely studied by psychoanalysis hitherto, with the exception of writers like Lacan and Guy Rosolato. I shall merely recall that of all hallucinations – and what reveals the dissociation of desire and real object better than the hallucination? – the main ones by far are visual and auditory hallucinations, those of the senses at a distance (this is also true of the dream, another form of hallucination).

THE SCOPIC REGIME OF THE CINEMA

However, although this set of features seems to me to be important, it does not yet characterise the signifier of the cinema proper, but rather that of all means of expression based on sight or hearing, and hence, among other 'languages', that of practically all the arts (painting, sculpture, architecture, music, opera, theatre, etc.). What distinguishes the cinema is an extra reduplication, a supplementary and specific turn of the screw bolting desire to the lack. First because the spectacles and sounds the cinema 'offers' us (offers us at a distance, hence as much *steals* from us) are especially rich and varied: a mere difference of degree, but already one that counts: the screen presents to our apprehension, but absents from our grasp, more 'things'. (The mechanism of the perceiving drive is identical for the moment but its object is more endowed with matter; this is one of the reasons why the cinema is very suited to handling 'erotic scenes' which depend on direct, non-sublimated voyeurism.) In the second place (and more decisively), the specific affinity between the cinematic signifier and the imaginary persists when film is compared with arts such as the theatre in which the audio-visual given is as rich as it is on the screen in the number of perceptual axes involved. Indeed, the theatre really does 'give' this given, or at least slightly more really: it is physically present, in the same space as the spectator. The cinema only gives it in effigy, inaccessible from the outset, in a primordial *elsewhere*, infinitely desirable (= never possessible), on another scene which is that of absence and which nonetheless represents the absent in detail, thus making it very present, but by a different itinerary. Not only am I at a distance from the object, as in the theatre, but what remains in that distance is now no longer the object itself, it is a delegate it has sent me while itself withdrawing. A double withdrawal.

What defines the specifically cinematic *scopic regime* is not so much the distance kept, the 'keeping' itself (first figure of the lack, common to all voyeurism), as the absence of the object seen. Here the cinema is profoundly different from the theatre as also from more intimate voyeuristic activities with a specifically erotic aim (there are intermediate genres, moreover: certain cabaret acts, strip-tease, etc.): cases where voyeurism remains linked to

exhibitionism, where the two faces, active and passive, of the component drive are by no means so dissociated; where the object seen is present and hence presumably complicit; where the perverse activity – aided if need be by a certain dose of bad faith and happy illusion, varying from case to case, moreover, and sometimes reducible to very little, as in true perverse couples – is rehabilitated and reconciled with itself by being as it were undividedly taken in charge by two actors assuming its constitutive poles (the corresponding phantasies, in the absence of the actions, thus becoming interchangeable and shared by the play of reciprocal identification). In the theatre, as in domestic voyeurism, the passive actor (the one seen), simply because he is bodily present, because he does not go away, is presumed to consent, to cooperate deliberately. It may be that he really does, as exhibitionists in the clinical sense do, or as, in a sublimated fashion, does that oft noted triumphant exhibitionism characteristic of theatrical acting, counterposed even by Bazin to cinematic representation. It may also be that the object seen has only accepted this condition (thus becoming an 'object' in the ordinary sense of the word, and no longer only in the Freudian sense) under the pressure of more or less powerful external constraints, economic ones for example with certain poor strippers. (However, they must have consented at some point; rarely is the degree of acceptance zero, except in the case of *victimisation*, e.g. when a fascist militia strips its prisoners: the specific characteristics of the scopic arrangement are then distorted by the overpowerful intervention of another element, sadism.) Voyeurism which is not too sadistic (there is none which is not so at all) rests on a kind of *fiction*, more or less justified in the order of the real, sometimes institutionalised as in the theatre or strip-tease, a fiction that stipulates that the object 'agrees', that it is therefore exhibitionist. Or more precisely, what is necessary in this fiction for the establishment of potency and desire is presumed to be sufficiently guaranteed by the physical presence of the object: 'Since it is there, it must like it', such, hypocritical or no, deluded or no, is the retrenchment needed by the voyeur so long as sadistic infiltrations are insufficient to make the object's refusal and constraint necessary to him. Thus, despite the distance instituted by the look – which transforms the object into a *picture* (a '*tableau vivant*') and thus tips it over into the imaginary, even in its real presence – that presence, which persists, and the active consent

which is its real or mythical correlate (but always real as myth) re-establish in the scopic space, momentarily at least, the illusion of a fullness of the object relation, of a state of desire which is not just imaginary.

It is this last recess that is attacked by the cinema signifier, it is in its precise emplacement (*in its place*, in both senses of the word) that it installs a new figure of the lack, the physical absence of the object seen. In the theatre, actors and spectators are present at the same time and in the same location, hence present one to another, as the two protagonists of an authentic perverse couple. But in the cinema, the actor was present when the spectator was not (= shooting), and the spectator is present when the actor is no longer (= projection): a failure to meet of the voyeur and the exhibitionist whose approaches no longer coincide (they have 'missed' one another). The cinema's voyeurism must (of necessity) do without any very clear mark of consent on the part of the object. There is no equivalent here of the theatre actors' final 'bow'. And then the latter could see their voyeurs, the game was less unilateral, slightly better distributed. In the darkened hall, the voyeur is really left alone (or with other voyeurs, which is worse), deprived of his other half in the mythical hermaphrodite (a hermaphrodite not necessarily constituted by the distribution of the sexes but rather by that of the active and passive poles in the exercise of the drive). Yet still a voyeur, since there is something to see, called the film, but something in whose definition there is a great deal of 'flight': not precisely something that hides, rather something that *lets* itself be seen without *presenting* itself to be seen, which has gone out of the room before leaving only its trace visible there. This is the origin in particular of that 'recipe' of the classical cinema which said that the actor should never look directly at the audience (= the camera).

Thus deprived of rehabilitatory agreement, of a real or supposed consensus with the other (which was also the Other, for it had the status of a sanction on the plane of the symbolic), cinematic voyeurism, *unauthorised* scopophilia, is from the outset more strongly established than that of the theatre in direct line from the primal scene. Certain precise features of the institution contribute to this affinity: the obscurity surrounding the onlooker, the aperture of the screen with its inevitable keyhole effect. But

the affinity is more profound. It lies first in the spectator's soli-
tude in the cinema: those attending a cinematic projection do
not, as in the theatre, constitute a true 'audience', a temporary
collectivity; they are an accumulation of individuals who, despite
appearances, more closely resemble the fragmented group of
readers of a novel. It lies on the other hand in the fact that the
filmic spectacle, the object seen, is more radically ignorant of its
spectator, since he is not there, than the theatrical spectacle can
ever be. A third factor, closely linked to the other two, also plays a
part: the *segregation of spaces* that characterises a cinema perform-
ance and not a theatrical one. The 'stage' and the auditorium are
no longer two areas set up in opposition to each other within a
single space; the space of the film, represented by the screen, is
utterly heterogeneous, it no longer communicates with that of the
auditorium: one is real, the other perspective: a stronger break
than any line of footlights. For its spectator the film unfolds in
that simultaneously very close and definitively inaccessible 'else-
where' 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. In this respect the
cinematic signifier is not only 'psychoanalytic'; it is more pre-
cisely Oedipal in type.

In this set of differences between the cinema and the theatre, it is
difficult to be precise about the relative importance of two types
of conditioning, and yet they are definitely distinct: on the one
hand the characteristics of the signifier (alone envisaged here),
i.e. the supplementary degree of absence that I have tried to
analyse, and on the other the socio-ideological circumstances
that marked the historical birth of the two arts in a divergent
manner. I have broached the latter topic elsewhere in my contri-
bution to the *Hommage à Emile Benveniste* (= Part II of this book)
and I shall only recall that the cinema was born in the midst of
the capitalist epoch in a largely antagonistic and fragmented
society, based on individualism and the restricted family (=
father–mother–children), in an especially super-egotistic bour-
geois society, especially concerned with 'elevation' (or façade),
especially opaque to itself. The theatre is a very ancient art, one
which saw the light in more authentically ceremonial societies, in
more integrated human groups (even if sometimes, as in Ancient

Greece, the cost of this integration was the rejection into a non-
human exterior of a whole social category, that of the slaves), in
cultures which were in some sense closer to their desire (= paga-
nism): the theatre retains something of this deliberate civic ten-
dency towards ludico-liturgical 'communion', even in the
degraded state of a fashionable rendez-vous around those plays
known as '*pièces de boulevard*'.

It is for reasons of this kind too that theatrical voyeurism, less
cut off from its exhibitionist correlate, tends more towards a
reconciled and community-orientated practice of the scopic per-
version (of the component drive). Cinematic voyeurism is less
accepted, more 'shame-faced'.

But it is not just a question of global determinations (by the
signifier or by history), there are also the personal efforts of the
writers, producers and actors. Like all general tendencies, the
ones I have signalled are unevenly manifest from work to work.
There is no need to be surprised that certain films accept their
voyeurism more plainly than do certain plays. It is at this point
that the problems of political cinema and political theatre would
come in, and also those of a politics of the cinema and the theatre.
The militant use of the two signifiers is by no means identical. In
this respect the theatre is clearly at a great advantage, thanks to
its 'lesser degree of imaginariness', thanks to the direct contact it
allows with the audience. The film which aims to be a film of
intervention must take this into account in its self-definition. As
we know, this is by no means easy.

The difficulty also lies in the fact that cinematic scopophilia,
which is 'non-authorised' in the sense I have just pointed out, is
at the same time authorised by the mere fact of its institutionalis-
ation. The cinema retains something of the prohibited character
peculiar to the vision of the primal scene (the latter is always sur-
prised, never contemplated at leisure, and the permanent
cinemas of big cities, with their highly anonymous clientele enter-
ing or leaving furtively, in the dark, in the middle of the action,
represent this transgression factor rather well) – but also, in a
kind of inverse movement which is simply the 'reprise' of the im-
aginary by the symbolic, the cinema is based on the legalisation
and generalisation of the prohibited practice. Thus it shares in
miniature in the special regime of certain activities (such as the

frequentation of 'maisons de tolérance', very well named in this respect) that are both official and clandestine, and in which neither of these two characteristics ever quite succeeds in obliterating the other. For the vast majority of the audience, the cinema (rather like the dream in this) represents a kind of enclosure or 'reserve' which escapes the fully social aspect of life although it is accepted and prescribed by it: going to the cinema is one lawful activity among others with its place in the admissible pastimes of the day or the week, and yet that place is a 'hole' in the social cloth, a *loophole* opening on to something slightly more crazy, slightly less approved than what one does the rest of the time.

THEATRE FICTION, CINEMA FICTION

Cinema and theatre do not have the same relation to fiction. There is a fictional cinema, just as there is a fictional theatre, a 'non-fiction' cinema just as there is a non-fiction theatre, because fiction is a great historical and social figure (particularly active in our Western tradition and perhaps in others), endowed with a force of its own which leads it to invest various signifiers (and inversely, to be more or less expelled from them on occasion). It does not follow that these signifiers have an even and uniform affinity with it (that of music, after all, finds it particularly uncongenial, and yet there is such a thing as programme music). The cinematic signifier lends itself the better to fiction in that it is itself fictive and 'absent'. Attempts to 'defictionalise' the spectacle, notably since Brecht, have gone further in the theatre than in the cinema, and not by chance.

But what interests me here is rather the fact that this unevenness is still apparent if one compares only the fictional theatre with the fictional cinema. They are not 'fictional' in quite the same way, and it was this that I had been struck by in 1965 when I compared the 'impression of reality' produced by these two forms of spectacle.[8] At that time my approach was a purely phenomenological one, and it owed very little to psychoanalysis. However, the latter confirms me in my earlier opinion. Underlying all fiction there is the dialectical relationship between a real instance and an imaginary instance, the former's job being to *mimic* the latter: there is the representation, involving real ma-

terials and actions, and the represented, the fictional properly speaking. But the balance established between these two poles and hence the precise nuance of the *regime of belief* that the spectator will adopt varies tolerably from one fictional technique to the other. In the cinema as in the theatre, the represented is by definition imaginary; that is what characterises fiction as such, independently of the signifiers in charge of it. But the representation is fully real in the theatre, whereas in the cinema it too is imaginary, the material being already a reflection. Thus the theatrical fiction is experienced more – it is only a matter of a different 'dosage', of a difference of economy, rather, but that is precisely why it is important – as a set of real pieces of behaviour actively directed at the evocation of something unreal, whereas cinematic fiction is experienced rather as the quasi-real presence of that unreal itself; the signifier, already imaginary in its own way, is less palpably so, it plays more into the hands of the diegesis, it tends more to be swallowed up by it, to be credited to its side of the balance-sheet by the spectator. The balance is established slightly closer to the represented, slightly further from the representation.

For the same reason, fictional theatre tends to depend more on the actor (representer), fictional cinema more on the character (represented). This difference has often been emphasised by the theory of the cinema, where it constitutes an already classical theme. In the psychoanalytic field it has also been noted, by Octave Mannoni in particular.[9] Even when the cinema spectator does identify with the actor rather than with the part (somewhat as he does in the theatre), it is with *the actor as 'star'*, i.e. still as a character, and a fabulous one, itself fictional: with the best of his parts.

It may be said that there are much simpler reasons for this difference, that in the theatre the same part can be interpreted by various actors from one production to another, that the actor thus becomes 'detached' from the character, whereas in the cinema there are never several productions (several 'casts') for one film, so the part and its unique interpreter are definitively associated with one another. This is quite true, and it does affect the very different balance of forces between actor and character in theatre and cinema. But it is not a 'simple' fact, nor is it inde-

pendent of the distance between the respective signifiers, on the contrary, it is but one aspect of that distance (merely a very striking one). If the theatrical part can have a variety of interpreters, that is because its representation is real and mobilises people who are really present each evening (and who are not therefore necessarily always the same). If the cinematic part is fastened once and for all to its interpreter, it is because its representation involves the reflection of the actor and not the actor himself, and because the reflection (the signifier) is *recorded* and is hence no longer capable of change.

5

Disavowal, Fetishism

As can be seen, the cinema has a number of roots in the unconscious and in the great movements illuminated by psychoanalysis, but they can all be traced back to the specific characteristics of the institutionalised signifier. I have gone a little way in tracing some of these roots, that of mirror identification, that of voyeurism and exhibitionism. There is also a third, that of fetishism.

Since the famous article by Freud that inaugurated the problem,[1] psychoanalysis has linked fetish and fetishism closely with castration and the fear it inspires. Castration, for Freud, and even more clearly for Lacan, is first of all the mother's castration, and that is why the main figures it inspires are to a certain degree common to children of both sexes. The child who sees its mother's body is constrained by way of perception, by the 'evidence of the senses', to accept that there are human beings deprived of a penis. But for a long time – and somewhere in it for ever – it will not interpret this inevitable observation in terms of an anatomical difference between the sexes (= penis/vagina). It believes that all human beings originally have a penis and it therefore understands what it has seen as the effect of a mutilation which redoubles its fear that it will be subjected to a similar fate (or else, in the case of the little girl after a certain age, the fear that she has already been subjected to it). Inversely, it is this very terror that is projected on to the spectacle of the mother's body, and invites the reading of an absence where anatomy sees a different conformation. The scenario of castration, in its broad lines, does not differ whether one understands it, like Lacan, as an essentially symbolic drama in which castration takes over in a decisive metaphor all the losses, both real and

imaginary, that the child has already suffered (birth trauma, maternal breast, excrement, etc.), or whether on the contrary one tends, like Freud, to take that scenario slightly more literally. Before this *unveiling of a lack* (we are already close to the cinema signifier), the child, in order to avoid too strong an anxiety, will have to double up its belief (another cinematic characteristic) and from then on forever hold two contradictory opinions (proof that in spite of everything the real perception has not been without effect): 'All human beings are endowed with a penis' (primal belief) and 'Some human beings do not have a penis' (evidence of the senses). In other words, it will, perhaps definitively, retain its former belief *beneath* the new one, but it will also hold to its new perceptual observation while *disavowing* it on another level (= denial of perception, disavowal, Freud's '*Verleugnung*'). Thus is established the lasting matrix, the affective prototype of all the splittings of belief which man will henceforth be capable of in the most varied domains, of all the infinitely complex unconscious and occasionally conscious interactions which he will allow himself between 'believing' and 'not believing' and which will on more than one occasion be of great assistance to him in resolving (or denying) delicate problems. (If we were all a little honest with ourselves, we would realise that a truly integral belief, without any 'underside' in which the opposite is believed, would make even the most ordinary everyday life almost impossible.)

At the same time, the child, terrified by what it has seen or glimpsed, will have tried more or less successfully in different cases, to *arrest* its look, for all its life, at what will subsequently become the fetish: at a piece of clothing, for example, which masks the frightening discovery, or else precedes it (underwear, stockings, boots, etc.). The fixation on this 'just before' is thus another form of disavowal, of retreat from the perceived, although its very existence is dialectical evidence of the fact that the perceived has been perceived. The fetishistic prop will become a precondition for the establishment of potency and access to orgasm [*jouissance*], sometimes an indispensable precondition (true fetishism); in other developments it will only be a favourable condition, and one whose weight will vary with respect to the other features of the erotogenic situation as a whole. (It can be observed once again that the defence against desire itself becomes erotic, as the defence against anxiety itself

becomes anxiogenic; for an analogous reason: what arises 'against' an affect also arises 'in' it and is not easily separated from it, even if that is its aim.) Fetishism is generally regarded as the 'perversion' par excellence, for it intervenes itself in the 'tabulation' of the others, and above all because they, like it (and this is what makes it their model), are based on the avoidance of castration. The fetish always represents the penis, it is always a substitute for it, whether metaphorically (= it masks its absence) or metonymically (= it is contiguous with its empty place). To sum up, the fetish signifies the penis as absent, it is its negative signifier; supplementing it, it puts a 'fullness' in place of a lack, but in doing so it also affirms that lack. It resumes within itself the structure of disavowal and multiple belief.

These few reminders are intended above all to emphasise the fact that the dossier of fetishism, before any examination of its cinematic extensions, contains two broad aspects which coincide in their depths (in childhood and by virtue of structure) but are relatively distinct in their concrete manifestations, i.e. the problems of belief (= disavowal) and that of the fetish itself, the latter more immediately linked to erotogenicity, whether direct or sublimated.

STRUCTURES OF BELIEF

I shall say very little about the problems of belief in the cinema. First because they are at the centre of the third part of this book. Second because I have already discussed them in this part apropos of identification and the mirror (Chapter 3): I have tried to describe, outside the special case of fiction, a few of the many and successive twists, the 'reversals' (reduplications) that occur in the cinema to articulate together the imaginary, the symbolic and the real; each of these twists presupposes a division of belief; in order to work, the film does not only require a splitting, but a whole series of stages of belief, imbricated together into a chain by a remarkable machinery. In the third place, because the subject has already been largely dealt with by Octave Mannoni in his remarkable studies of the theatrical illusion,[2] with reference to the fictional theatre. Of course, I have said above that theatrical fiction and cinematic fiction are not fictional in the same way; but this deviation concerned the representation, the

signifying material and not the represented, i.e. the fiction-fact as such, in which the deviation is much smaller (at any rate so long as one is dealing with *spectacles* such as theatre and cinema — written fiction obviously presents somewhat different problems). Mannoni's analyses are just as valid for the fiction film, with the single reservation that the divergences in representation that I have already discussed (at the end of Chapter 4) are borne in mind.

I shall rest content to adapt these analyses to a cinematic perspective, and not feel obliged to repeat them (not so well) in detail. It is understood that the audience is not duped by the diegetic illusion, it 'knows' that the screen presents no more than a fiction. And yet, it is of vital importance for the correct unfolding of the spectacle that this make-believe be scrupulously respected (or else the fiction film is declared 'poorly made'), that everything is set to work to make the deception effective and to give it an air of truth (this is the problem of *verisimilitude*). Any spectator will tell you that he 'doesn't believe it', but everything happens as if there were nonetheless someone to be deceived, someone who really would 'believe in it'. (I shall say that behind any fiction there is a second fiction: the diegetic events are fictional, that is the first; but everyone pretends to believe that they are true, and that is the second; there is even a third: the general refusal to admit that somewhere in oneself one believes they are genuinely true.) In other words, asks Mannoni, since it is 'accepted' that the audience is incredulous, *who is it who is credulous* and must be maintained in his credulousness by the perfect organisation of the machinery (of the machination)? This credulous person is, of course, another part of ourselves, he is still seated *beneath* the incredulous one, or in his heart, it is he who continues to believe, who disavows what he knows (he for whom all human beings are still endowed with a penis). But by a symmetrical and simultaneous movement, the incredulous person disavows the credulous one; no one will admit that he is duped by the 'plot'. That is why the instance of credulousness is often projected into the outer world and constituted as a separate person, a person completely abused by the diegesis: thus in Corneille's *L'Illusion comique*, a play with a significant title, the character Pridamant, the *naïf*, who does not know what theatre is, and *for whom*, by a reversal foreseen in Corneille's plot itself, the representation of the play is given. By a partial identification with this character, the spec-

tators can sustain their credulousness in all incredulousness.

This instance which believes and also its personified projection have fairly precise equivalents in the cinema: for example, the credulous spectators at the *'Grand Café'* in 1895, frequently and complacently evoked by the incredulous spectators who have come *later* (and are no longer children), those spectators of 1895 who fled their seats in terror when the train entered La Ciotat station (in Lumière's famous film), because they were afraid it would run them down. Or else, in so many films, the character of the 'dreamer' — the sleeping dreamer — who during the film believed (as we did!) that it was true, whereas it was he who saw it all in a dream and who wakes up at the end of the film (as we do again). Octave Mannoni compares these switches of belief with those the ethnologist observes in certain populations in which his informers regularly declare that 'long ago we used to believe in the masks' (these masks are used to deceive children, like our Father Christmas, and adolescents learn at their initiation ceremonies that the 'masks' were in fact adults in disguise); in other words, these societies have always 'believed' in the masks, but have always relegated this belief to a 'long ago': they still believe in them, but always in the aorist tense (like everyone). This 'long ago' is childhood, when one really was duped by masks; among adults, the beliefs of 'long ago' irrigate the unbelief of today, but irrigate it by denegation (one could also say: *by delegation*, by attributing credulity to the child and to former times).

Certain cinematic sub-codes inscribe disavowal into the film in the form of less permanent and more localised figures. They should be studied separately in this perspective. I am not thinking only of films which have been 'dreamt' in their entirety by one of their characters, but also of all the sequences accompanied by a 'voice-off' commentary, spoken sometimes by a character, sometimes by a kind of anonymous 'speaker'. This voice, precisely a voice 'off', beyond jurisdiction, represents the rampart of unbelief (hence it is the opposite of the Pridamant character, yet has the same effect in the last analysis). The distance it establishes between the action and ourselves comforts our feeling that we are not duped by that action: thus reassured (behind the rampart), we can allow ourselves to be duped by it a bit longer (it is the speciality of naïve distanciations to resolve themselves into

alibis). There are also all those 'films within a film' which downgear the mechanism of our belief-unbelief and anchor it in several stages, hence more strongly: the included film was an illusion, so the including film (the film as such) was not, or was somewhat less so.[3]

THE CINEMA AS TECHNIQUE

As for the fetish itself, in its cinematic manifestations, who could fail to see that it consists fundamentally of the equipment of the cinema (= its 'technique'), or of the cinema as a whole as equipment and as technique, for fiction films and others? It is no accident that in the cinema some cameramen, some directors, some critics, some spectators demonstrate a real 'fetishism of technique', often noted or denounced as such ('fetishism' is taken here in its ordinary sense, which is rather loose but does contain within it the analytical sense that I shall attempt to disengage). As strictly defined, the fetish, like the apparatus of the cinema, is a *prop*, the prop that disavows a lack and in doing so affirms it without wishing to. A prop, too, which is as it were placed on the body of the object; a prop which is the penis, since it negates its absence, and hence a partial object that makes the whole object lovable and desirable. The fetish is also the point of departure for specialised practices, and as is well known, desire in its modalities is all the more 'technical' the more perverse it is.

Thus with respect to the desired body – to the body of desire rather – the fetish is in the same position as the technical equipment of the cinema with respect to the cinema as a whole. A fetish, the cinema as a technical performance, as prowess, as an *exploit*, an exploit that underlines and denounces the lack on which the whole arrangement is based (the absence of the object, replaced by its reflection), an exploit which consists at the same time of making this absence forgotten. The cinema fetishist is the person who is enchanted at what the machine is capable of, at the *theatre of shadows* as such. For the establishment of his full potency for cinematic enjoyment [*jouissance*] he must think at every moment (and above all *simultaneously*) of the force of presence the film has and of the absence on which this force is constructed.[4] He must constantly compare the result with the means deployed (and hence pay attention to the technique), for his pleasure

lodges in the gap between the two. Of course, this attitude appears most clearly in the 'connoisseur', the cinephile, but it also occurs, as a partial component of cinematic pleasure, in those who just go to the cinema: if they do go it is partly in order to be carried away by the film (or the fiction, if there is one), but also in order to *appreciate* as such the machinery that is carrying them away: they will say, precisely when they have been carried away, that the film was a 'good' one, that it was 'well made' (the same thing is said in French of a harmonious body).

It is clear that fetishism, in the cinema as elsewhere, is closely linked to the good object. The function of the fetish is to restore the latter, threatened in its 'goodness' (in Melanie Klein's sense) by the terrifying discovery of the lack. Thanks to the fetish, which covers the wound and itself becomes erotogenic, the object as a whole can become desirable again without excessive fear. In a similar way, the whole cinematic institution is as it were *covered* by a thin and omni-present garment, a stimulating prop through which it is consumed: the ensemble of its equipment and its tricks – and not just the celluloid strip, the *'pellicule'* or 'little skin' which has been rightly mentioned in this connection[5] – of the equipment which *needs* the lack in order to stand out in it by contrast, but which only affirms it insofar as it ensures that it is forgotten, and which lastly (its third twist) needs it also not to be forgotten, for fear that at the same stroke the fact that *it* caused it to be forgotten will be forgotten.

The fetish is the cinema in its *physical* state. A fetish is always material: insofar as one can make up for it by the power of the symbolic alone one is precisely no longer a fetishist. At this point it is important to recall that of all the arts the cinema is the one that involves the most extensive and complex equipment; the 'technical' dimension is more obtrusive here than elsewhere. Along with television, it is the only art that is also an industry, or at least is so from the outset (the others become industries subsequently: music through the gramophone record or the cassette, books by mass printings and publishing trusts, etc.). In this respect only architecture is a little like it; there are 'languages' that are *heavier* than others, more dependent on 'hardware'.

At the same time as it localises the penis, the fetish represents by synecdoche the whole body of the object as desirable. Simi-

larly, interest in the equipment and technique is the privileged representative of *love for the cinema*.

The Law is what permits desire: the cinematic equipment is the instance thanks to which the imaginary turns into the symbolic, thanks to which the lost object (the absence of what is filmed) becomes the law and the principle of a specific and instituted signifier, which it is legitimate to desire.

For in the structure of the fetish there is another point on which Mannoni quite rightly insists and which directly concerns my present undertaking. Because it attempts to disavow the evidence of the senses, the fetish is evidence that this evidence has indeed been *recorded* (like a tape stored in the memory). The fetish is not inaugurated because the child still believes its mother has a penis (= order of the imaginary), for if it still believed it completely, as 'before', it would no longer need the fetish. It is inaugurated because the child now 'knows very well' that its mother has no penis. In other words, the fetish not only has disavowal value, but also *knowledge value*.

That is why, as I said a moment ago, the fetishism of cinematic technique is especially well developed among the 'connoisseurs' of the cinema. That is also why the theoretician of the cinema necessarily retains within him – at the cost of a new backward turn that leads him to interrogate technique, to symbolise the fetish, and hence to maintain it as he dissolves it – an interest in the equipment without which he would not be motivated to study it.

Indeed, the equipment is not just physical (= the fetish proper); it also has its discursive imprints, its extensions in the very text of the film. Here is revealed the specific movement of theory: when it shifts from a fascination with technique to the critical study of the different *codes* that this equipment authorises. *Concern for the signifier* in the cinema derives from a fetishism that has taken up a position as far as possible along its cognitive flank. To adapt the formula by which Octave Mannoni defines disavowal (= 'I know very well, but all the same . . .'), the study of the signifier is a libidinal position which consists in weakening the 'but all the same' and profiting by this saving of energy to dig deeper into the 'I know very well', which thus becomes 'I know nothing at all, but I desire to know'.

FETISH AND FRAME

Just like the other psychical structures that constitute the foundation of the cinema, fetishism does not intervene only in the constitution of the signifier, but also in certain of its more particular configurations. Here we have *framings* and also certain *camera movements* (the latter can anyway be defined as progressive changes in framing).

Cinema with directly erotic subject matter deliberately plays on the edges of the frame and the progressive, if need be incomplete revelations allowed by the camera as it moves, and this is no accident. Censorship is involved here: censorship of films and censorship in Freud's sense. Whether the form is static (framing) or dynamic (camera movements), the principle is the same; the point is to gamble simultaneously on the excitation of desire and its non-fulfilment (which is its opposite and yet favours it), by the infinite variations made possible precisely by the studios' technique on the exact emplacement of the *boundary* that bars the look, that puts an end to the 'seen', that inaugurates the downward (or upward) tilt into the dark, towards the unseen, the guessed-at. The framing and its displacements (that determine the *emplacement*) are in themselves forms of 'suspense' and are extensively used in suspense films, though they retain this function in other cases. They have an inner affinity with the mechanisms of desire, its postponements, its new impetus, and they retain this affinity in other places than erotic sequences (the only difference lies in the *quantum* which is sublimated and the *quantum* which is not). The way the cinema, with its wandering framings (wandering like the look, like the caress), finds the means to reveal space has something to do with a kind of permanent undressing, a generalised strip-tease, a less direct but more perfected strip-tease, since it also makes it possible to dress space again, to remove from view what it has previously shown, to *take back* as well as to retain (like the child at the moment of the birth of the fetish, the child who has already seen, but whose look beats a rapid retreat): a strip-tease pierced with 'flash-backs', inverted sequences that then give new impetus to the forward movement. These veiling-unveiling procedures can also be compared with certain cinematic 'punctuations', especially slow ones strongly

marked by a concern for control and expectation (slow fade-ins and fade-outs, irises, 'drawn out' lap-dissolves like those of Sternberg).[6]

'Theorise', he says . . .
(Provisional Conclusion)

The psychoanalytic constitution of the cinema signifier is a very wide problem, one containing, so to speak, a number of 'panels'. I cannot examine them all here, and there will surely be some that I have not even mentioned.

However, something tells me that (for the present) I can stop here. I wanted to give a first idea of the field I perceive and, to begin with, to assure myself that I was indeed perceiving it (I was not certain of it all at once).

Now I shall turn back on this study itself as an unfolding of my initial dream. Psychoanalysis does not illuminate only the film, but also the conditions of desire of whoever makes himself its theoretician. Interwoven into every analytical undertaking is the thread of a self-analysis.

I have loved the cinema, I no longer love it. I still love it. What I have wished to do in these pages is to keep at a distance, as in the scopic practice I have discussed, that which in me (= in everyone) *can* love it: to retain it as *questioned*. As questioning, too, for in wishing to construct the film into an object of knowledge one extends, by a supplementary degree of sublimation, the passion for seeing that made the cinephile and the institution themselves. Initially an undivided passion, entirely occupied in preserving the cinema as a good object (imaginary passion, passion for the imaginary), it subsequently splits into two diverging and reconverging desires, one of which 'looks' at the other; this is the theoretical break, and like all breaks it is also a link: that of theory with its object.

I have used words like 'love of the cinema'. I hope I will have been understood. The point is not to restrict them to their usual meaning, the meaning suggested by 'archive rats' or fanatical

tural phenomenon in two respects: (i) it is not exactly a *consequence* of the 'base' since it forms part of it, in addition to the strictly infrastructural deter-minations; and (ii) it represents the biological element in man: as such it is distinct from the 'social base' and 'as it were *laterally engaged* with it'.

7 In many Hollywood film scripts, for instance, cf. Marc Vernet's article 'Mise en scène: U.S.A. – Freud: effets spéciaux' in *Communications*, 23 (1975) 223–34.

8 Raymond Bellour, when he read this article in manuscript, pointed out to me that this paragraph is debatable, and at all events incomplete: indeed, as Lacan emphasises, the *Psychopathology of Everyday Life* and *Jokes* are in a sense the direct 'sequel' to *The Interpretation of Dreams*; these books constitute a kind of single demonstration in three parts, and a highly coherent one, which (in some respects) already contains the totality of Freud's discovery. All three works, more so than others, deal directly, via numerous concrete examples, and not just in the specific region of the 'pathological', with the very move-ments of the mind, its trajectories, its 'processes', its modes of progress and ordering. In other words, the essentials of the discovery of the unconscious, along with its consequences in the preconscious (= the problem of the 'second censorship', which Freud held to be identical to the first from the dynamic viewpoint; cf. p. 31).

For this reason, the *Psychopathology* and *Jokes* ought not to be listed separ-ately; they belong, as prime candidates even, to the first category, that of the 'theoretical' works.

And yet (and this is not, I think, contradictory) there is something which sets them apart, and stresses what they have in common with each other. This is what I was trying to define, and I have not changed my mind. But I was only seeing one aspect of the question, and Raymond Bellour was right to remind me about the other.

9 D. Percheron, 'Rire au cinéma', *Communications*, 23 (1975) 190–201. J.-P. Simon, *Trajets de sémiotique filmique A la recherche des Marx Brothers*) (Editions Albatros, 1977); on the metapsychology of the comic film see in particular the section headed 'Le film comique entre la "transgression" du genre et le "genre" de la transgression'.

10 Things never happen in isolation when an idea or a research tendency is 'in the air', called for by the general development of the intellectual field. When this article first appeared in the spring of 1975 I was becoming interested in the possibility of the 'nosographic' approach, and was keen to locate it, as it were in advance, in the varied field of the research undertakings which might link the cinema-object and the tools of psychoanalysis. But there did not seem to be a fully developed example, nothing in the way of a detailed study say of a whole film or a major film-maker. By a striking convergence it was in autumn 1975 that Dominique Fernandez' *Eisenstein* appeared (Paris: Ed. Grasset), a study applying the psychocritical method to the life and work of the great Soviet film-maker.

11 Thus, in the book by Dominique Fernandez I referred to a moment ago, the editing codes that Eisenstein was fond of (extreme fragmentation, discontin-uity, etc.) are linked to his deep anxieties and the desire he experienced to symbolically deny his childhood (see in particular pp. 167–9).

12 'Interminable script' says one of my students (Jorge Dana), for in a film,

everything can be diegeticised.

13 *Language and Cinema* (Paris: Larousse, 1971), trans. D.J. Umiker-Sebeok (The Hague: Mouton, 1974). Cf. in particular chs. v and vi, pp. 53–90 in the French; 70–120 in the English.

14 Danielle Digne, 'L'Empire et la marque', unpublished thesis (Mémoire de troisième cycle) 1975.

15 *The Interpretation of Dreams* (vol. v) p. 499; and 'A Metapsychological Supple-ment to the Theory of Dreams' (vol. xiv) p. 229.

16 *Language and Cinema*, trans. Umiker-Sebeok, pp. 78–9.

17 E.g. in section 1 of 'The Unconscious' (vol. xiv) pp. 167 and 170. I use this definition of 'latent' because it is convenient here; it corresponds to the unconscious in the descriptive, not the topographical sense, and therefore does not exclude the preconscious. But it is well known that elsewhere Freud reserves the term 'latent' for the preconscious alone, thus tending to set it up in opposition to the 'unconscious'; on the topic of dreams, for example, Freud sometimes distinguishes between the 'latent content' and the 'uncon-scious desire', although in other passages the first of these terms covers the whole.

18 'The Unconscious' (vol. xiv) pp. 173, 191, 193–4, and *The Interpretation of Dreams* (vol. v) pp. 615, 617–8.

19 [Gilles Deleuze has written many works of philosophy, including studies of the English empiricists, Spinoza and Nietzsche. In 1973, together with Félix Guattari, he published *L'Anti-Œdipe*, a critique of Freud (also directed against Lacan) that re-emphasises Freud's notion of a libidinal economy, arguing that human beings are 'desiring machines', mechanisms channell-ing and rechannelling libidinal flows, that societies are no more than exten-sions of this channelling, and that Freud's (and Lacan's) insistence on the Œdipus complex represents a blocking of the productivity of these machines in the interests of the institution of the family and the repressive political apparatuses that institution gives rise to. Jean-François Lyotard has written studies of the visual arts from a similar (but not identical) position: cf. *Discours, figure* (Paris: Editions Klincksieck, 1971).]

20 *Le Fœtus astral* (Paris: Christian Bourgois, 1970).

21 Special number on 'Psychoanalysis and the cinema', 23 (1975) the title of the article is 'Le blocage symbolique'.

22 *Language and Cinema*, trans. Umiker-Sebeok, especially ch. vi. 3.

23 See *Language and Cinema*, trans. Umiker-Sebeok, especially ch. x. 7.

24 For example 'Le travail du film II' in *Communications*, 23 (1975).

25 See *Language and Cinema*, trans. Umiker-Sebeok, ch. x, entirely given over to this problem.

26 *Muriel* (Paris: Editions Galilée, 1975) by Claude Bailbé, Michel Marie and Marie-Claire Ropars offers a remarkable study of one of these intermediate positions.

CHAPTER 3: IDENTIFICATION, MIRROR

1 'Le temps logique et l'assertion de certitude anticipée', *Ecrits*, pp. 197–213.

2 'The Ego and the Id' (vol. xix) pp. 26 and 30 (on 'desexualised social senti-

ment'); see also (on the subject of paranoia) 'On Narcissism: an Introduc-
tion' (vol. xiv) pp. 95–6, 101–2.
3 See p. 81 note 6.
4 [*Derrière la tête* means 'at the back of one's mind' as well as 'behind one's
head'.] See André Green: 'L'Ecran bi-face, un œil derrière la tête', *Psycha-
nalyse et cinéma*, 1 January 1970 (no further issues appeared), pp. 15–22. It
will be clear that in the passage that follows my analysis coincides in places
with that of André Green.
5 'The Ego and the Id' (vol. xix) p. 18; *The Interpretation of Dreams* (vol. v) p.
615 (= consciousness as a sense organ) and p. 574 (= consciousness as a
dual recording surface, internal and external); 'The Unconscious' (vol. xiv)
p. 171 (psychical processes are in themselves unconscious, consciousness is
a function that *perceives* a small proportion of them), etc.
6 'The Film and the New Psychology', lecture to the Institut des Hautes
Etudes Cinématographiques (13 March 1945), translated in *Sense and Non-
sense* (Evanston, Illinois: North-Western University Press, 1964) pp. 48–59.
7 See section ii of 'Current Problems of Film Theory', *Screen*, 14, 1–2 (1973)
pp. 45–9.
8 On these problems see Michel Colin, 'Le Film: transformation du texte du
roman', unpublished thesis (Mémoire de troisième cycle) 1974.
9 *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* (vol. xx) pp. 87–8.

CHAPTER 4: THE PASSION FOR PERCEIVING

1 See especially *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, trans. A.
Sheridan (London: The Hogarth Press, 1977) pp. 180 and 195–6.
2 'Repression' (vol. xiv) pp. 146–7; 'Instincts and their Vicissitudes' (vol.
xiv) pp. 122 and 134n.; 'The Ego and the Id'(vol. xix) p. 30; 'On Narcissism:
an Introduction' (vol. xiv) p. 94, etc.
3 More precisely: lending themselves through their peculiar characteristics to
a perversion which is not the drive itself, but the subject's position with
respect to it (*The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, trans. Sheridan,
pp. 181–3). Remember that for Freud as well as for Lacan, the drive is
always 'componential' (the child is polymorphously perverse, etc.).
4 'Instincts and their Vicissitudes' (vol. xiv) pp. 129–30.
5 'Instincts and their Vicissitudes' (vol. xiv) p. 138.
6 Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, trans. Sheridan, pp.
167–8.
7 See the paragraph with this title in Jean-François Lyotard's article
'L'acinéma', *Revue d'Esthétique*, 2–3–4 (1973) pp. 357–69.
8 C. Metz, 'On the Impression of Reality in the Cinema' in *Essais sur la signifi-
cation au cinéma*, vol. i (Paris: Klincksieck, 1968), translated as *Film Language:
a Semiotics of the Cinema*, M. Taylor (New York: O.U.P., 1974).
9 See O. Mannoni, 'L'Illusion comique ou le théâtre du point de vue de l'ima-
ginaire' in *Clefs pour l'imaginaire ou l'autre scène* (Paris: Editions du Seuil,
1969) p. 180.

CHAPTER 5: DISAVOWAL, FETISHISM

1 'Fetishism' (vol. xxi) pp. 152–7. See also Octave Mannoni's important
study, 'Je sais bien, mais quand même...' [I know very well, but all the
same....] in *Clefs pour l'imaginaire ou l'autre scène*.
2 'L'Illusion comique ou le théâtre du point de vue de l'imaginaire.'
3 A startling (though only partial) resemblance with the case of 'dreams
within a dream'; cf. *The Interpretation of Dreams* (vol. iv) p. 338.
4 I have studied this phenomenon at slightly greater length in 'Trucage et
cinéma' in *Essais sur la signification au cinéma*, vol. ii (Paris: Klincksieck, 1972)
pp. 173–92.
5 Roger Dadoun, '"King Kong": du monstre comme démonstration', *Littéra-
ture*, 8 (1972) p. 109; Octave Mannoni, *Clefs pour l'imaginaire ou l'autre scène*,
p. 180.
6 Reading this article in manuscript, Thierry Kuntzel has pointed out to me
that in this paragraph I perhaps lean slightly too far towards fetishism and
fetishism alone in discussing filmic figures that depend just as much on *cine-
matic perversion* in general: the hypertrophy of the perceptual component
drive with its *mises-en-scène*, its progressions-retentions, its calculated post-
ponements, etc. This objection seems to me (after the event) to be correct. I
shall have to come back to it. Fetishism, as is well known, is closely linked to
perversion (cf. pp. 69–71), although it does not exhaust it. Hence the diffi-
culty. For the cinematic effects I am evoking here (playing on the framing
and its displacements), the properly fetishistic element seems to me to be the
'*bar*', the edge of the screen, the separation between the seen and the unseen,
the 'arrestation' of the look. Once the seen or the unseen are envisaged
rather than their intersection (their edge), we are dealing with scopic per-
version itself, which goes beyond the strict province of the fetish.

'THEORISE', HE SAYS... (PROVISIONAL CONCLUSION)

1 Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, trans. Sheridan,
p. 22. [Lacan contrasts a *cause*, as an occult property, with a *law*, in which
'causes' are smoothly absorbed as variables in a function; the unconscious,
however, will remain a cause in the occult sense, because its order exceeds
any particular function: it is the Law rather than a law, *enunciation* rather
than *statement*, '*lalangue*' rather than a *langue* – hence its privileged manifes-
tation in the lapse, the mistake, the point at which discourse 'limps'.]