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India Song/Son nom de Venise
dans Calcutta désert: The
Compulsion to Repeat

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One no longer hears the term *profilmic event* (used or mentioned), although not such a very long time ago it was a commonplace of film theory. The term has been allowed to obsolesce as attention has shifted instead to the cinematic apparatus and its ideological inscription—to the scene, that is, of writing. The biological metaphor which defines this simple chronology is, of course, in a sense totally inapt. The profilmic event is not the vestigium, the trace, of a theoretical structure which declined—naturally. Rather the cinematic apparatus has been theorized precisely as an intervention between the profilmic—the natural—and the discourse of and about film.

The chronology has, in fact, been described differently, for example by Christian Metz, who in "The Imaginary Signifier" refers to it as a shift "from attention to the *énoncé* to concern for the *énonciation*."¹ *Énoncé* is best translated, as Ben Brewster does in his notes to Metz's essay, as "statement" and *énonciation* as "speech act"—or, one might add for reasons which will become clear, as "speech event." Metz's distinction here is related to the one he makes (following Benveniste) between history and discourse. Attention to the statement alone suppresses the source of the statement, makes of it an object, a found or historical (or profilmic) object which seems to come from nowhere. Concern for the speech act or event, on the other hand, uncovers the presence of a subject, a point of view, of the statement, locates it in a present moment, a *context* of speaker and speech, rather than a historical, an apersonal past.

There is, however, another linguistic distinction to which we can relate the terms of Metz's chronology. Metz himself does not note this relation, but Roland Barthes, in his structural analysis of narratives, does. Barthes describes the contemporary concern for discourse as opposed to history:

It is this formal person [the linguistic first person or enunciator] that writers today are attempting to speak and such an attempt represents an important subversion . . . for it aims to transpose narrative from the

1. Christian Metz, "The Imaginary Signifier," *Screen*, Vol. 16, no. 2 (Summer 1975), 14.

purely constative plane, which it has occupied until now, to the performative plane, whereby the meaning of an utterance is the very act by which it is uttered: today, writing is not 'telling' but saying that one is telling . . . which is why part of contemporary literature is no longer descriptive, but transitive. Striving to accomplish so pure a present in its language that the whole of discourse is identified with the act of its delivery. . . .²

The distinction—between constative utterances, descriptive sentences which can be judged true or false as they have their referents outside themselves, that is, outside language; and performative utterances which have no truth value, but have instead a *force*, a power of effecting, of establishing themselves as, events—is taken from speech act theory.

It must be remembered that it is Barthes who makes this connection, and with reference to literature, between a distinction of French linguistic theory and one of Anglo-American speech act theory. The connection has not been made within French film theory, nor have the implications of this connection been examined, by Barthes or film theorists. It is easy to see, however, how, historically, film theory which first formulated the profilmic as an *event* could come to share some common ground with linguists who define speech as an event. It seems that contemporary film theory began by substituting one event for another, by questioning the theoretical limitations of "profilmic" and not of "event." It progressed, like speech act theory, through a critique of the communications model of language which had preceded it. Metz, in his second book, *Language and Cinema*, had himself proposed a communications model of cinematic language, having five matters of expression, five technico-sensorial unities. Under the influence of debates around the cinematic apparatus which raged in the film journals *Cinéthique* and *Cahiers du Cinéma*, however, he began a revision of his theory which meant, basically, a questioning of the scientific neutrality of the "channel" of cinematic communication, the apparatus, and an introduction of the subject of the enunciation, the performer of the film's utterance. It was Jean-Louis Baudry who most clearly argued, in "The Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus" and "The Apparatus," that the apparatus could not be granted a place apart, but must be examined in the context of its historical development, that is, in the context of the ideology which produced it as an effect. These articles must be read alongside those of Metz written during the same period. For Metz's work becomes a sympathetic response to Baudry, an extension and a clarification of many of Baudry's arguments. Indeed, it seems that the direction which film theory has taken can be traced back to these beginnings. The "subject" with which film theory is now concerned, for example, was introduced

2. Roland Barthes, *Image-Music-Text*, trans. Stephen Heath, New York, Hill and Wang, 1977, p. 114.

into theory at this precise moment, at the same time as, *through* the apparatus—through a metaphor which established a relationship between the psychic and the cinematic apparatus (which was defined not simply as the camera, but the whole machinery of relations and meanings, socio-psychic systems which construct the psyche).

The question which should be asked is how this metaphor, this particular historico-technical metaphor, has effected or precipitated the subject which is the reality of film theory. Film theory turned from consideration of its object as a reproduction of reality, the profilmic, and became a critique of this very notion of reproduction in order to consider film as an intervention, an event, which participated in the production of a subject. What remains unclear in the theory is how this production can be anything but a reproduction, how the cinematic apparatus, effect of an idealist, patriarchal ideology can produce, “effect” anything but a transcendent, male “subject.” Speech act theory finds itself in the same position. A performative utterance (which is, in the end, the main kind which concerns these theorists, just as it is the only utterance admitted as evidence by American law) can only be said to have taken place, its saying is only said to be (or to make it) so, when it has appropriately, correctly, completely, intentionally, and consistently repeated, reproduced a conventional procedure. A performative, then, can not be either true or false because it can *only* be true, that is, according to the laws of logic, identical with itself.

Baudry, in fact, defines the force which activates and is activated by the cinematic apparatus as the “compulsion to repeat . . . a former condition,” as “desire as such, . . . the nostalgia for a former state.” Cinema, therefore, is like a dream, the fulfillment of a wish for sameness, for “survival and . . . bygone periods,” for a repetition of the oneness, the identity, of and with the beginning.³ Metz also finds the parallel between cinema and dream telling (by which I intend all its possible senses), although he admits that cinema undergoes a process of secundarization further still than the dream. For him also the cinema is “motivated” by the *economy* of the pleasure principle; it is inaugural of a circuit of return. The cinema is, thus, by definition the production of “good objects,” that is, pleasurable films. Metz recognizes the existence of filmic unpleasure, “bad objects” or bad films, but these are not “basic” to the institution of cinema, are simply “local failure[s].”⁴

In the same way Austin defines the difference between the “happy” functioning of a performative and the “unhappy” functioning, that is, the “failure” of a performative to take effect, to take place. He admits that “things can go wrong” and he accounts for these things by the “doctrine of the infelicities.”⁵ This doctrine *extenuates* the possibility of failure, bad illocutionary objects, by attribut-

3. J.-L. Baudry, “The Apparatus,” *Camera Obscura*, no. 1 (1976), 108, 121.

4. Metz, pp. 18-19.

5. J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1962, p. 14.

ing them to "extenuating circumstances." Only successes are counted, failures are voided. The speech event in its total context is overdetermined to reproduce only itself. Compare this to Metz's definition of the institution as "auto-reproduction":

It is the specific characteristic of every true institution that it takes charge of the mechanisms of its own perpetuation—there is no other solution than to set up arrangements whose aim and effect is to give the spectator the 'spontaneous' desire to visit the cinema and pay for his ticket. . . . In this way the libidinal economy (filmic pleasure in its historically constituted form) reveals its 'correspondence' with the political economy. . . .⁶

For Austin it is finally the carrying out of the appropriate intentions of the speaker which is determinant of the performative. Although the presence within the speaker of certain thoughts, feelings, and intentions is listed as one of the conditions of the success of the performative, Austin stresses that this is not one circumstance among others, but *the* condition upon which the others depend. For Metz it is the carrying out of the intention of the institution which defines the success of the cinematic performance, "since the institution as a whole has filmic pleasure alone as its aim."⁷

And so we have the same old story—"cine-repetitions," as Raymond Bellour calls them; cinema repeats itself. For "beyond any given film, what each film aims at through the apparatus that permits it is the regulated order of the spectacle, the return of an immemorial and everyday state which the subject experiences in his dreams and for which the cinematic apparatus renews the desire."⁸ Cinema accomplishes its aim primarily through narrative. Although, as narrative claims to repeat events which have already taken place, it is possible to define it as it defines itself, as "history," as a constative utterance which has its referents outside and prior to itself; it may also be considered a force which insures the taking place of events. In this case there would be an implied performative "I sing" behind each narrative. This is what Barthes isolates as characteristic of contemporary narrative, and what Metz eventually proposes as well. But this direction is prepared for at the beginning by Metz, who takes up the study of the *grande syntagmatique* to rescue cinematic language from its "paradigmatic"—and here we would say constative—"poverty." Narrative, from this perspective, does not merely refer to some prior reality; it predicates. The force of narrative is generated through repetitions which contain differences and, hence, space, mark out its limits, and produce its homogeneity. Bellour puts it succinctly: "Repetition saturates the narrative space."⁹ That is, through systems of alternations

6. Metz, p. 19.

7. *Ibid.*

8. Raymond Bellour, "Cine-Repetitions," *Screen*, vol. 20, no. 2 (Summer 1979), 71.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 70.

(between shots and reverse shots, syntagmatic units, etc.), *mise-en-abyme* constructions, smaller units get locked into, absorbed by the larger unit of the complete narrative, its resolution. Just so does the performative take place, in and only in a total situation, a "saturated context," which is to say, one that is "exhaustively determined."¹⁰ The performative takes place only as it is an exact repetition of a conventional procedure, uttered by a person fully conscious of and intending this procedure, absorbed, as it were, by the convention.

At the end of his analysis of cine-repetitions, Bellour includes a reference to Thierry Kuntzel's work on the "scene of repetition" in *King Kong*:

King Kong appears, provoking the full repetition of the cry; the cry, which is now the woman's real cry, was expected, remembered, and almost uttered by the viewer. The latter, of course, knows that he is 'at the cinema' as Metz says. Yet, in the shadow of that knowledge the film does indeed repeat *his own* dream, his desire to dream.¹¹

The *effect* of repetition is clearly identification—which brings with it this "purificatory effect," this catharsis. But we have heard this before: "A tragedy . . . is the imitation of an action that is serious and also . . . complete in itself . . . with incidents arousing pity and fear wherewith to accomplish its catharsis of such emotions."¹² And again: "It is clear that in their play children repeat everything that has made a great impression on them in real life and that in doing so they abreact the strength of the impression, . . . make themselves master of the situation."¹³ As Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe has pointed out, the (speculative) philosophy of tragedy, of representation, has remained, since the beginning, a theory of tragedy's *effect*, of the catharsis of the "menace which the contradiction illustrated by the tragic conflict represented."¹⁴ Repetition has this effect—of heterotautology. Of interiorizing difference, contradiction, distance, making them self-same. Of converting contradictions into "metaphysical pitch and toss,"¹⁵ that is, into an idealization of movement itself whereby pitch is absorbed by toss, hurly by burly, fort by da, death by life, body by soul and so on and so forth. That is to say, into no movement at all, into similarity, the "at home" status of homeostasis.

One may find this argument *heimlich*, and pleasurable for that, for its familiarity. There is certainly no disputing this effect—the "subject effect," the

10. Jacques Derrida, "Signature, Event, Context," *Glyph 1*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976.

11. Bellour, pp. 71-72.

12. Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1449b.

13. Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, trans. James Strachey, New York, W.W. Norton, 1961, p. 11.

14. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, "The Caesura of the Speculative," *Glyph 4*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978, p. 66.

15. Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1967, p. 83. This phrase is quoted from L. C. Knights by Kermode, whose own book remains one of the best considerations of the way beginnings are absorbed by ends.

"cathartic effect," the "performative effect": these *eventual effects*. And one may appreciate the advance of this argument which speaks in terms of forces, of knowledge in terms of relations of power rather than in terms of "true" or "false"; the foundation in psychoanalysis which also tells us that repetition is the reexperiencing of something identical, is a source of pleasure; the advance in considering language, rather than the body, as the "house of being," language rather than biology as destiny. For as this parallel consideration of film and speech act theory has intended to indicate, the exclusion of the pro-filmic by theory from film discourse is a repetition of the exclusion of the body—the external referent—from discourse in general.

Still there are some (not quite included in "one") who are not happy with this resolution. These "infelicitities" are women. For it is they, finally, who are the difference, the external who are repeatedly excluded by the homeostatic system—the constant reproduction of the male by the patriarchal mechanisms of film, language. Film theory has turned from ontological analysis, a concern with essentialist questions about what is, to textual analyses of the effectivity of point of view, of the speech event. Yet the point of view and the structures of voyeurism, exhibition, identification which follow from it are always, repeatedly, male. Women, therefore, can not look, can not be represented—as women. They do not exist, according to Lacan, as women. This very nonexistence is the effect of the repetition of the same. Women are not in a position to contest the force of this conclusion, the "male effect" of repetition. But they must and can find ways to break into this system, this theory, perhaps by first breaking from a theory of effects which remains in their imaginary—that is, consistent and plenitudinous—hold. Psychoanalysis can provide a model for this break, for it has progressed from the "happy" (I am tampering with Lacan's descriptive, "optimistic") days of catharsis upon the discovery, in the transference, of another kind of repetition, repetition in act, by which it recognized the significance of missed encounters, of events that never took place—in an infinity, a beyond, of the pleasure principle. And a before—by which we may be able to break cinema from the hold of the eternal return of the dream analogy: "If there is a 'beyond the pleasure principle,' it is only consistent to grant that there was also a time before the purpose of dreams was the fulfillment of wishes."¹⁶ Freud turned his attention to this beyond when he observed that certain of his patients, in their dreams or in their analysis, exhibited a compulsion to repeat traumatic experiences. It was this observation that forced Freud to supplement his theory of dreams so that it could include those dreams which did not fulfill wishes; to question the priority of the pleasure principle, the tendency of the psychic system towards constancy, and to assert instead a more radical tendency towards zero; to grant a metapsychological status to aggressiveness, that is, to affirm the existence of a death drive. The compulsion

16. Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, p. 27.

to repeat is definitely not, according to psychoanalysis, what Baudry describes. It is definitely not an attempt to return to a previous state of satisfaction; rather it is the return to a trauma which is conceived, psychoanalytically as it is medicosurgically, as a wound, a break in the protective skin which triggers catastrophe, misfortune throughout the whole of the organism.

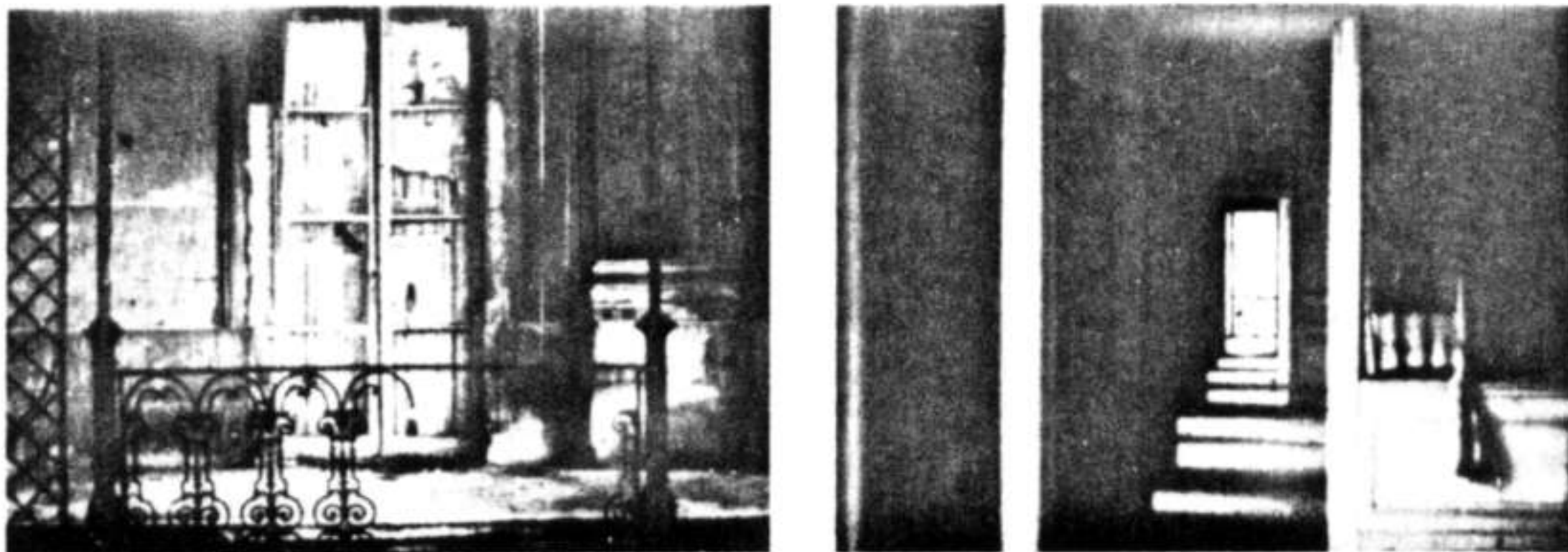
This brings us once again to the question of the profilmic and of the body and their relation to discourse. Most philosophical, psychoanalytic theory has dismissed the essentialist assertion of a simple causal relation between the somatic and the psychic, in which the one is directly eventuated by the other, as theoretically unsound, politically useless. Yet the anti-essentialist position which eschews any but a parallel relation by which soma and psyche are seen to run along side by side, each totally the outside of the other (like two clocks wound by a cosmic grandfather), ends up constructing a kind of monadology which is equally unsound, equally regressive politically. It seems that we must begin to specify a different kind of relation between these two terms, one which focuses on the breaks between them, in order to prepare the way for an introduction of women, the outside, into the systems which repeat their absence. It is important to recognize, however, that this will be no easy task, that it will often look like a return to biologism. Freud himself, who began psychoanalysis with the study of hysteria, that is, the study of the relationship of soma to psyche, came back, in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, to a reconsideration of this same relationship between the biological and the psychological organism. But he passed, as we have said, from a study of catharsis, which is precisely a freeing or clearing a place of dead bodies, to a study, simultaneous with *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, of "The Uncanny," which is the place of the return of bodies once dead.

The pleasure principle would be, according to Freud's definition, on the side of the *heimlich*, the canny which is "friendly, intimate, homelike; the enjoyment of quiet content, etc., arousing a sense of peaceful pleasure and security as in one within the four walls of his house," rather than the *unheimlich*, the uncanny. An example of such domestic pleasure: "A careful housewife who knows how to make a pleasing *Heimlichkeit* (*Häuslichkeit*) out of the smallest means."¹⁷

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Marguerite Duras reused, cited in its entirety, the sound track from her previous film, *India Song*, in the making of *Son nom de Venise dans Calcutta désert*. The second film merely adds a new visual track, consisting almost completely of images of the deserted, deteriorating Rothschild palace near Reims (no human figures appear until the final minutes of the film) to this already-paid-for sound track. A frugal gesture, surely—and some would find *Son nom de Venise*

17. Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny," in *On Creativity and the Unconscious*, New York, Harper and Row, 1958, p. 126.



Marguerite Duras. *Son nom de Venise dans Calcutta désert*. 1976.

pleasurable to watch (few have even had the chance to see it, however, so seldom is it screened)—but clearly an economic failure. An homage, it would seem, to the death drive rather than the pleasure principle. Bellour has included the “remake” among his list of cine-repetitions (cine-pleasures), noting that it is a particularly “triumphant” form, for it simultaneously repeats and interlocks its historical past and its historical present. But Duras is no careful housewife and her “remake” is directly ruinous of the very image of “home,” of the *heimlich* notion of historical context. The repetition which is involved in the making of *India Song/Son nom de Venise*, this doubling of the “son,” alienates the name, here a place name, from itself. Replaces the singularity of name, origin, place—familiarity, finally—in the uncanny of “désert.” Naming is an effect of repetition, but Duras’s films desert the *da* of repetition, the “here” of the *énonciation*, of the speech event, the effect of mastery, for the *fort* of alienation. Hers are not films of illusionary effects, but of the lost causes of repetition, of the xenopathology of the proper, the home.

That I suggest *India Song/Son nom de Venise* be read in tandem with *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, as an example of the repetition compulsion delineated there, will perhaps surprise no one. Certainly not those familiar with Duras’s other works. Marie-Claire Ropars-Wuilleumier has isolated from these, three novels (*Le Ravissement de Lol V. Stein*, *Le Vice-Consul*, *L’Amour*) and three films (*La Femme du Gange*, *India Song*, *Son nom de Venise*) which she refers to as the *cycle durassien*.¹⁸ Each of these works cycles around, repeats, and disfigures the same “protextual” event, the ball at S. Thala, the Michael

18. Marie-Claire Ropars-Wuilleumier, *L’Avant Scène Cinéma*, no. 225 (April 1979), 5.

Richardson-Lol V. Stein-Anne Marie Stretter configuration. I am also suggesting, however, that all of Duras's films, from *Hiroshima Mon Amour* to *Le Camion*, display the workings of this compulsion, extend their analyses, like Freud's own, from a recognition of traumatic war neuroses to a theory of the drives, beyond the pleasure principle. Like Freud also, the films displace the trauma from the immediacy of the present, the present unfolding of the film, exteriorize it in some vague profilmic, make of it an event which never takes place. *Le Camion*, in which Dépardieu and Duras read the script of a film that they would have made had they had the economic means, is most ostensibly concerned with this not-taking-place of the profilmic, but *India Song*, which substitutes the reception of the middle section for the traumatic ball at S. Thala, and *Son nom de Venise*, which substitutes other images for even this substitution, defer, take the place of the profilmic event, preventing it from taking place. The profilmic maintains a genitive relation to the film, but it is partitive rather than possessive.

The question the films and their repetitions compel us to ask is *where* can we locate possession when it is defined by an utterance which can not hold its own, but rather must always depend for its meaning on its context—is always only partial, ideologically inscribed? The performative utterance which distinguishes itself from the constative does so by virtue of the fact that it is in possession of its own referent, which means that something is being done at the moment of the person's uttering. But when Austin allows himself to "step out into the desert of comparative precision," he momentarily loses track of this person who utters. Although the performative usually takes the form of the first-person singular, present indicative, active (as in Benveniste's "discourse"), sometimes this active and singular first person's presence is not indicated grammatically (or lexicographically) in the sentence. In other words, sometimes there is no "I" to indicate the utterance's source, who is thus left out of the "picture," or the "speech-situation." When this happens, when the purely grammatical context is not sufficient to define the "happiness" of the performance, Austin, who is at this point marking his break from "obsessional logicians," looks to the extra-grammatical, to another context, for clues. The speaker, not present in the grammatical sense, is "referred to" (Austin places the phrase in quotation marks to indicate his distance, the difference he implies by his use) in verbal utterances by the physical-speaking presence, in written utterances by the signature, of the source of the utterance. The utterance is thus "tethered" to its source, whose word becomes its bond. Derrida's critique of speech act theory, in "Signature, Event, Context" ("Sec"), ends with this discussion of signatures. There are, no one will deny, effects of signature observable in everyday life, but Derrida is interested in the xenopathology (the alterity tied to repetition), rather than the effect of these effects. In order for a signature to be effective, it must have a recognizable, that is, a repeatable form, and it must be able to function in the absence of the signatory. The pleasure, the constancy of the signature effect—the recognizability and economic circulation it ensures—is thus marked by the absence, even the radical absence—the death—of

the signatory. The utterance functions in the absence not only of its source, but also of its referent and its context. These absences are not merely "infelicities," but the condition, the mark of any utterance, any sign, oral or written. The identity or identifiability of a sign, that is, depends upon its being recognizable outside its source, referent, context—in their absence. Identity, therefore, is assured only by otherness, the otherness of the sign to itself. By way of clarification Derrida offers this:

By virtue of its essential iterability, a written syntagma can always be detached from the chain in which it is inserted or given without causing it to lose all possibility of functioning, if not all possibility of "communicating," precisely. One can perhaps come to recognize other possibilities in it by inscribing it or *grafting* it onto other chains. No context can entirely enclose it.¹⁹

It is this "untetherability" of the utterance which constructs it from the beginning in repetition and in otherness and suspends its source in the position of receiver.

The nosology of voices in *India Song*, the tabulation of the different disturbances between them and the visual images of the film, has been undertaken elsewhere.²⁰ It is sufficient to recall here that the voices are not "tethered" to the visual images as utterance to source, and so when one of the final, and most "authoritative" voices of the film is identified as Duras's own, it barely has the effect of "signature," barely closes a full meaning over the images. *Son nom de Venise* further attenuates this effect by contextualizing the voices differently. Placed within a film that images the hollows of deserted rooms, empty spaces, the voices become uncanny echoes of voices themselves.

They become, that is, the acoustic equivalents of the mirror reflections which reverberate through the previous film, which are so endemic to it that they make *India Song* a reverberation of itself. Duras has turned the canniness from her four-walled house, made it uncanny, by covering one of these walls with a mirror. The function of mirrors, of course, is to allow the self to observe itself. But the doubling, the repetition, which mirrors perform in order to serve the self's

19. Derrida, p. 182.

20. Marie-Claire Ropars-Wuilleumier in her introductory essay in *L'Avant-Scène* and "The Disembodied Voice (*India Song*)," *Yale French Studies* no. 60 (1980). Also Michel Marie, "La parole dans le cinéma français contemporain: l'exemple d'*India Song*," and Marie-Françoise Grange, "Un système d'écriture: *India Song*," both in *Ça cinéma*, no. 19 (1979). See also Elizabeth Lyon's "The Cinema of Lol V. Stein," *Camera Obscura*, no. 6 (1980). Although this article focuses more on the primal scene of fantasy and less on the voices that narrate it, I include it here to indicate the extensive work that has already been done on the text of *India Song*. While my essay supports the work of textual analysis, it is obvious that it does not engage in it, even as it is committed to the analysis of one textual nexus. It inserts itself instead in the space of otherness opened up by textual analysis—its insistence, in principle, on the way particular texts *disturb* codes of cinema, their authority, binding, and finitude, the way they differ from the very codes which maintain their identity—inserts itself as a kind of contextual analysis.



Marguerite Duras. India Song. 1975.

narcissistic regard and, hence, its self-protection, entails²¹ an exteriorization as well which makes the self foreign to itself, makes it its own aggressor. It is the central section of *India Song* which has the highest concentration of mirror images. For this section is a series of alternating exterior and interior shots, and all the interiors are of the physical space of the drawing room, which has a mirrored rear wall. The diegetic space of this section is that of a reception, of the "pursuit of Anne-Marie Stretter, her hunting down by death, by . . . the Vice-Consul of Lahore."²² Anne-Marie *Guardi*-Stretter, one should say, her Venetian name, a command to look, doubled by a foreign name and on *that* account hunted down by death. It is in this section—obedient to all the laws of classical beauty, laws of repetition, symmetry, harmony, in which perception is doubled, precisely a *reception*—that the primary object of narcissism, Anne-Marie *Guardi*-Stretter, is

21. Part of the context, the total speech act which defines the performative, are the other propositions which the performative proposition "entails." To say that *p* entails *q* is to say that the truth of *q* is not in conflict with the truth of *p*. Those schooled in this type of logic will find the Freudian concept of the death drive, which is entailed by the pleasure principle, difficult to grasp.

22. Marguerite Duras, "Notes on *India Song*," *Camera Obscura*, no. 6 (1980), 45.

suspended in the space of a mirror, and is there, in the mirror, met by the principle of death. Her mirror image, which stands between her and the Vice-Consul, does not protect, but is turned instead to receive the bearer of her extinction. The Vice-Consul, exiled by a xenophobic, conservative society, invades it, nevertheless, as one of its own invited guests.

As we pass from a discussion of the relationship of the sound to the image track, of the "disembodied voices," their disembodiment from one film and grafting onto another, to a discussion of the diegetic space of bodies and sounds, we pass to an important criticism which is sometimes lodged against the work of Duras. Though everywhere her disjunctive use of sound and image is acknowledged as "progressive," her films are sometimes accused of replaying a regressive essentialism. The sensuousness of the images, the mysterious rhythms and silences of speech which yoke women to a sublime language of madness and love, the forests which are symbolic of the priority of nature, all suggest, so the interpretation goes, that it is the natural body which is the real voice of the films and that we are being asked to listen to its direct speech. Besides reiterating the point of this essay, that the disjunction, through doubling, of speech from itself renders direct speech—the full presence of speech to a total context within which it takes place—impossible, something more must be said about this relation of body to speech, and of body to speech act theory.

Bodies act, but do speeches . . . act? *Do* they, really, or is this just a metaphor? Perhaps not, since even psychoanalysis through its own metaphor, the transference, asserts that we can do things with words, cure things with talk. Derrida's critique of speech act theory is founded in psychoanalytic theory, its concept of the unconscious which undoes Austin's concept of context as a fully determinable entity. This unconscious is the effect of speech, of the rupture from the body which is the condition of speech and of representation in general. To say, however, that this rupture excludes the body from speech and from the psyche which speech structures, to say that the somatic and the psychic bear no relation to each other is to misread the theory which began with Freud and his compulsive return to the biological order. It is in the works of the French psychoanalysts, Jean Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis, and the Hungarian, Nicholas Abraham, that we find the most extended analyses of the somatic-psyche relationship which is inherent in Freud's theories. Abraham, in "The Shell and the Kernel," deals directly with this relationship as it is developed in *The Language of Psycho-analysis* and Derrida introduces himself (his own theoretical complicity) and Abraham's work in "Metapsychoanalysis," and "Fors." Briefly, the relation, specified in all these works, between the two terms, soma and psyche, is one of mission, of psychical representatives, delegates, and foreign service. Laplanche and Pontalis define "psychical representative" in their dictionary of psychoanalysis:

This term cannot be understood save by reference to the concept of *instinct*—a concept which in Freud's view bridges the gap between the

somatic and the mental. On the somatic side, the instinct has its source in organic phenomena . . . but at the same time, by virtue of its aim and of the objects to which it becomes attached, the instinct undergoes a 'vicissitude' that is essentially psychical in nature. This borderline position of the instinct no doubt accounts for Freud's calling upon the notion of representative—by which he means a kind of *delegation*—of the soma within the psyche . . . though in principle he is nothing more than the proxy of his mandator, the delegate . . . enters into a new system of relationships which is liable to change his perspective and cause him to depart from the directives he has been given.²³

Laplanche, in *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis*, extends this Freudian analogy into a detailed account of *anaclysis*,²⁴ or, as he translates it, "propping"—the process by which the drive leaning on the instinct, much as a delegate leans on the mandator by performing its function, deviates metaphorically from its aim and metonymically from its object. The deviation is caused by fantasy, the introjection, the reflection, of a scene of satisfaction into the subject. The fantasy is, of course, not the scene itself, but a representation which points to its absence. The instinct, turned away from the vital order of the biological towards the object of the displacement, is turned onto the subject itself, wherein the fantasy resides, to become the drive. It is this moment of reflection which constitutes sexuality, which is nothing else but this perverse movement, this deflection of instinct by fantasy. And as the fantasy disjoins the biological subject who needs from the sexual subject who desires, as it is an *infraction*, a trauma, it is the first psychic pain. The sexual drive which emerges from the fantasy is thus established as primarily masochistic. The ego is the first fantasmatic, the first sexual, object which is produced. In defining the *limits* of the psychic apparatus (as its surface, which is contiguous with the body and everything else outside, and its form, which is a metaphor of the body) it also defines the threshold through which pain breaks. The ego, then, which is the ballast of the psychic system, that which binds energies and seeks equilibrium by maintaining them at a certain minimal level, seeks, in short, the preservation of the system, introduces a masochism which threatens the system with annihilation.

From this brief summary we can make two important points about the relationship of the body to the psychic apparatus: although we cannot say that the body causes the psyche, we can say that it has a structuring function, is its

23. J. Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis, *The Language of Psycho-analysis*, New York, W.W. Norton, 1973, pp. 364–365.

24. As it is translated by Laplanche and by psychoanalysis generally, *anaclysis* comes from the Greek verb, *anaklino*, which means "to lean one thing against another," "to lean back." In fact, Liddell and Scott define it as a noun which is derived from the verb, *anakaleo*, which means "to call up, especially the dead; to call back, especially from exile." This definition seems more appropriate and accurate.

organizing metaphor; body and psyche are related through the radical *insufficiency* of the former. The biological fact of prematuration entails that the satisfaction of the infant is attainable only from the field of another, or more precisely, of others, since the supplementary field of the other, the body's context, can never be saturated, determined fully. Desire corresponds to what Derrida, in "Sec," calls *restance*, a neologism translated as "nonpresent remainder." It is a metonym, the contiguous margin of body and psyche, the measure of their difference, their inadequation.

Baudry, in "Ideological Effects," links his project to Derrida's by citing his essay "Freud and the Scene of Writing." The two projects are, indeed, generally consonant—both attempt to define the ideological stake of the Western metaphysical tradition in maintaining a concept of an originating subject and—specifically in these essays—both are concerned with the relationship between the historico-technical fact of the nonpsychic apparatus and the analogy with the psychic apparatus which it makes possible. But there are also important differences. Baudry describes the "return effect" in cinema as the repetition of a time when "representation and perception were not yet differentiated." Derrida's essay, on the other hand, is a direct refutation of such a distinction, is "polemical on the very threshold of what we persist in calling perception."²⁵ Perception is, according to his reading of Freud, from the very first, repetition and representation, which is to say that it exists only as a relationship of the body to otherness. Desire is, for Baudry, a "nostalgia for a state in which desire has been satisfied through the transfer of a perception to a formation resembling hallucination which seems to be activated by the cinematic apparatus."²⁶ Derrida would disagree, insisting instead upon his concept of *restance*. Desire has definitely never been satisfied; it is instead that which is missed by satisfaction. This error, in considering desire as a matter of sufficiency rather than insufficiency, is compounded by Baudry's further, concluding speculation that unconscious desire represents itself to the subject through the cinematic apparatus. By folding this summary statement over his own analysis of the ideology of scientific invention, the system of science, he begins to undermine his project. Desire becomes an originating force with an attainable end and systems of ideology are given an unconscious aim. The cinematic apparatus becomes, once again, a tool that restores the integrity of the subject, supplies the subject's demand. Derrida avoids this incipient anthropomorphism by relating the technical apparatus of the writing pad to the insufficiency of the psychic apparatus, by exposing its supplementary (rather than complementary) status. The invention becomes the effect of the psyche's Being-in-the-worldness, its insertion into an otherness upon which it depends. It is proof of the psyche's inability to maintain itself even as it is the psyche's metaphor. There may be no way of getting

25. Derrida, "Freud and the Scene of Writing," in *Writing and Difference*, ed. and trans. Alan Bass, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1978, p. 113.

26. Baudry, p. 121.

around the observation that the apparatus fulfills an ancient dream of man, but at least we can see by Derrida's analysis that this dream is itself a psychic supplement, the indication within the subject of its unfulfillment.

It may be necessary to add that the target of this essay is neither Metz nor Baudry, both of whose work has made some of these arguments possible, has propelled the valuable work of textual analysis as well as the work on the apparatus. Rather it is an attempt to locate those points to which the *reductio ad absurdum* of their arguments attaches itself. In "The Uncanny," Freud quotes and affirms this important observation of Otto Rank: "The 'immortal soul' was the first 'double' of the body. This invention of doubling as a preservation against extinction has its counterpart in the language of dreams, which is fond of representing castration by a doubling or multiplication of the genital symbol."²⁷ It is important to guard against a tendency in film theory to make of language or the cinematic apparatus an "immortal soul" with a life all its own, unthreatened by the death drive, to guard against a "multiplication of the genital symbol" by subscribing to a nominalism that begins with and repeats endlessly the name of the father. This can only be done by recognizing that language and the apparatus are constructed out of relations of otherness, which means also, of otherness to the body. To say that there is no outside of language, no extra-textual, is not to say that there is an inside which is not Imaginary. Being, in short, is no more housed in language than it is in the body; it resides rather in the otherness of body and language each to the other. Otherness, death, the body are the preconditions of language and are operant there, represented in its repetitions. What is most compelling about the compulsion to repeat is the way it returns difference always at the expense of the same. And desire is the xenogenetic offspring as well as the compulsion of this difference of repetition. It is always as other, in some other place, that desire is. Therefore, as Lacan is fond of repeating, the question which it poses for the subject is not *what* (this is a question for demand), but *where* it desires.

Laplanche makes a crucial distinction between the hallucination of satisfaction and satisfaction through hallucination. Hallucination of satisfaction, "the reproduction of the pure feeling of discharge even in the absence of discharge," is, in fact, impossible to conceive. For what need would provoke the organism to hallucinate if satisfaction were self-contained? Satisfaction through hallucination, "by virtue of *the very existence* of the hallucinatory phenomena,"²⁸ implies the insufficiency of the organism which must supplement itself, introduce into itself fantasmatic objects produced by the symbolizing mechanisms of hallucination. Those theorists who maintain that at the cinema only men can look would have to

27. Freud, "The Uncanny," p. 141.

28. Jean Laplanche, *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis*, trans. Jeffrey Mehlman, Baltimore and London, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976, p. 71.

deny this very existence of cinema, of representation in general, would have to ask us to believe that we hallucinate satisfaction.

The cinema of Marguerite Duras not only exists, but exists to point out the very conditions of its existence. It makes a statement against a patriarchal monadology by representing the xenophobia at work within pleasure itself. To call it essentialist by merely pointing to its mysterious rhythms and its silences is to invoke an argument which may itself be essentialist. It is to ignore the importance as well as the limits of context, the predicative movement of conflict. For the mysterious, the exotic of place, is set precisely and conflictually within the familiar of the same, and the repetition of trauma, of difference, within the repetition of pleasure. It presents not a cinema of the sublime, of the sublimity of desire, but rather of the limits of the pleasure principle to which desire attests, through its disjunction of image and sound, a hendiadys of desire.