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## **Cinemasochism**

**Abstract:** This work deals with the study of sexuality in spectator's relation to the film. Such relation to film image is masochistic in its nature, as cinema is real, material and forcefully affective. The cinesexual relation is inter-kingdom relation because art and physiology are traversed and cross breed. As such, the encounter between the image and the body is one of the silence and avisuality, and spectatorship can be thought as an avisual practice of self. Cinemasochism embraces the impossibility of self in the face of the force of the image without, acknowledging the impossibility within all representation or signification.

**Keywords:** cinesexuality, sexuality, film, gender, avisuality, masochism;

“What opens up does not stop in any direction (...) from which there escapes the very content of desire.”<sup>1</sup>

This chapter orients the loss of the *I* of the spectator through openness to cinesexuality – a risky but nonetheless vitalistic sacrifice toward thinking an ethics of spectatorship. As spectators we come to images. They cannot come to us. There is a want from a speaking position to which the image can neither respond nor alter itself as a response to our demand. All movement must come from the spectator as intra-communicative. When we come to cinema, desire is the coming, but the *I* is that which comes and the *I* is the extent to which we are open to cinesexuality. In reference to desire the deconstruction of the gendered and sexed components of the *I* of the cinesexual event gives way to the sacrifice of the *I* itself. Eventually, and perhaps contentiously, this book will posit the end to gender and sexuality, but in order to do so the preceding *I* must be accounted for and negotiated. *I* is an enunciation which speaks to itself and knows itself. It is also an event made from multiple horizons of possibility and position. The gendered *I* will always have singular components unique to each individual as the extra-individual components are taken in by the self and the self emits versions of those components to the world. The self is world internalized to self and externalized to world while the world is negotiated as self in world,

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<sup>1</sup> Luce Irigaray, *The Irigaray Reader*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1992, 215.

but not external to self. The world is not observed by a self and the self is not an observable entity within the world. The self is a series of finite, albeit infinitesimally reducible and infinitely able to be arranged, mobile points at various positions within various horizons. The proximity of these points to each other defines the extent to which the self is homogenized as singular *I* or provoked into dissipative potentiality. If the point of *gendered I* in the world is very close to *spectator gendered I* then the self is able to conceive self as relatively stable, the systems are resonant rather than traversed. Self is congruous between horizons, or, as Deleuze and Guattari would put it, the self observes other kingdoms but does not enter into inter-kingdom relations through singularities to form hybrid selves. As hybrids cannot reproduce, so the stable self is only reproduction of the same. This is what Deleuze and Guattari, after Spinoza, call self as *habitus*. „We are all contemplations and therefore habits. *I* is a habit.“<sup>2</sup> Contemplation describes a certain distance, which values the entities at each pole rather than the space between these entities and extricates self from world. In cinema the distance creates the spectator as an observer of things, rather than involuting with cinematic planes. The *thingness* of the images is made clear. If *I* is „the habit of saying ‘I’“<sup>3</sup> then kicking the habit involves kicking the conception of *I* as singular, as consistent over all horizons, and thinking elements outside the *I* as independent objects without acknowledging the *I* is a force, or an effectuation with an inherent capacity to affect other *I*'s through shared horizons.

The way the *I* is conceived directly forms the way *not I*'s exist. Just as recognition plays a key role in the perception of images as constant through deferral to already perceived images, memory allows us to recognize our *I* by deferring it back to what we are and will be via what we were. „Thought constitutes a simple ‘possibility’ of thinking without yet defining a thinker ‘capable’ of it and able to say ‘I.’“<sup>4</sup> This is the precise moment we hear common responses to images. “I don’t get it” (The *I* that sees has not seen this before); “I don’t like it” (I wouldn’t like it based on what my perception of the *I* that likes has liked before); “I’m not like that” (I am indeed like that because I am capable of being anything but if I claim the *I* that is perceived by others as this *I* would not be like that then their faith in perception as consistent will blind them to the *I* which is always inconsistent). The majoritarian does not think itself as open percept but knows itself, as thinker (more correctly, knower). To know requires observation and the sense of “I have seen it before, I have been taught what it is and thus this is it.” The *it* has a certain quality, function and nature, itself its own *I* be it animate or inanimate, organic or inorganic.

An opinion of cinema is vindicated by the ways in which images *fit* into our tastes. “I don’t like” is more correctly “I can’t or won’t like it” based on what “I have liked”. Spectatorship is configured as memory, not fabulation. This is an important reason as to why I have chosen certain images from the films this book uses to explore cinesexuality. Like desire itself, which occurs within and in excess of a desiring self, many of the images directly affront the spectator to dislike them. They are not *tasteful*, neither are they *art* in the canonical sense of the word. But I did not choose them because I thought they necessarily will offend or disgust. The *art thing* includes demands as mechanics of perception and these images often make more difficult or adamant demands. Arguably they may also be more obvious about their demand because they are unapologetically fantastic. Certainly if we were to read even the smallest blurb about many of the films before we came to them many spectators would have very definite ideas as to the films’ supposed affects. What I wished here was to show the collapses of the bifurcation of communication where an image emits a particle, form or intensity that the spectator receives and responds to based on a selection of possible responses rather than the unresponsive silence that elucidates

<sup>2</sup> Gilles Deleuze, Guattari, Felix, *What is Philosophy?*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1994, 105.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 48.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* 54–55.

the voluminous unspeakable affects of confounding aspects of pleasure and desire. Certainly the residual particles of the spectator as social self which would come to the film as a thing belonging to a genre and presuming certain content, expecting to be disgusted or offended, or transgressive because they are not so, form part of the plane of spectatorial pleasure, but these particles change their qualities as some encounter the pleasurable aspects of the images while others the unpalatable nature of the pleasures so that the nature of disgust itself changes when it exists in the world. In this way cinema communicates with the world and the spectator becomes nothing more than the residue but everything in that as this residue the spectator is also the problem. Here is the key reason why the content of an image can never be good, bad, ethical, unethical, or anything else. Only the ways in which the spectator as problem communicates itself to itself matter, and is the matter, of cinema. For sexuality, desire and pleasure have too long been understood as good, benevolent or preserving of self. When we open to cinematic pleasure there is a presumption that the pleasure will be nice to us. We trust it. Our passivity comes only from our trusting expectation and not passivity as submission to potentialities. Cinema similarly opens to us in an equivalent manner. Communication begins, not with opinion, but with void. Dialectic trust expects comprehensible images transcribed to and from the world. There is a phantasy of clarity in images. They are transparent to the extent that their signifieds are emphatically clear. Cinesexual openness is different. It understands the indeterminacy and miasmatic depth that exceeds signification and deferral to the world outside of cinema. "This is the reason for [the image's] characteristic passivity; a passivity that makes us submit to it, even when we are summoning it, and causes its fleeting transparency to arise from the obscurity of destiny returned to essence, which is that of a shadow."<sup>5</sup> A double passivity occurs in cinesexual communication, and the destiny of the argument is no destiny at all, only an effectuation of the conditions of the argument and the ways in which to navigate the problems. Problems are not issues which are bad or in need of ablation. They are the in-betweens that encourage exploration and widening. Expectance of an image as indeterminable and incomprehensible but affective shows a great power in passivity and a shift from knowledge to thought. Desire and pleasure teem with molecules of affectivity, each of which have relations within the communication from the image to the spectator and create relations with the spectator's own molecular potentialities. The space between cinema and spectator folds in and unravels the spectator's singularity to evoke an encounter with the spectator's unrepresentable and unspeakable (in the sense it cannot be spoken, not it is blasphemous) pleasure and desire. The spectator communicates with self, but not with words and not as oppositional dialectic. The spectator must disagree with themselves.

### Beyond the Pseudobond

"The masochist needs to believe he is dreaming, even when he is not."<sup>6</sup>

Cinemasochism describes the grace of openness to images. Cinemasochism asks not what the image means but what it does. Particularly in images that push the affect of the image to its extreme – from horrifying to abstract images – submission to the image beyond comprehension takes the viewer outside of film's metonymy, meaning, and time, toward the kind of spatial ecstasy forged within the folding of image with embodied spectatorship. There is a risk in opening ourselves to cinematic affect, in experiencing the pain of loss of reified meaning in images. All spectators who open up to cinema potentially challenge their relationship to cinema in terms of gender, pleasure, and desire.

<sup>5</sup> Maurice Blanchot, *The Gaze of Orpheus and Other Literary Essays*, New York, Station Hill Press, 1981, 80.

<sup>6</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1994, 72.

*Masochism* should not be defined as a narrative of suffering laid down entirely in advance, nor should libidinality be oriented around waiting and the intensity of the moment before the cinematic event. Cinemasochism occludes traditional masochism in the very loose drawing up of a contract between a party desiring to exploit the openness and vulnerability required of the masochist and the facilitator of the masochistic acts and effects. Both masochism and cinemasochism express a desire to lose the self that involves an encounter of the infinite outside within the self; this is a (non-nihilistic) sacrifice of self. Deleuze points out that both sadism and masochism are a binding of thanatos to eros, but while sadism (especially that of early gaze theory) is exothanatographic or expressed outward onto the sacred object, masochism folds thanatos toward the self.

Feminist, structuralist, and psychoanalytic film theory have long been seduced by a sadistic conception of the gaze expressed through the dialectic of the phallic eye and the non-consenting *to-be-looked-at* object. The power distribution within this dialectic of the phallic sadist and objectified masochist is not a clear binary, and its complexities are interrogated by Deleuze in *Coldness and Cruelty*.<sup>7</sup> Throughout, Deleuze is adamant that the sadist and masochist inevitably reverse their proclivities, not as expiation for personal guilt, but as the culmination of an expiation of the larger (though also internalized) structures of prohibition and punishment associated with sadism and masochism. Beyond his claim that reversal only affirms the supremacy of the primary power, cinemasochism suggests a turn toward a non-dialectical encounter with the outside or an alterity within self – the ecstasy of a – signification and the experience of cinesexuality. Deleuze’s *switch-hitter* sadist and masochist emphasize that one cannot be a single element of a dialectic without the possibility of becoming, or even aspiring, toward the other opposing element: not the sadist-become-masochist, but rather the sadist become object of sadism and masochist become facilitator of masochism. In both turns, the subject (in cinema, the spectator) neither controls the gaze (it is controlled inevitably by camera, form, and affect), nor submits entirely to a passive spectatorship. Deleuze collapses this dialectic in *Cinema 2*. Hearing is not passively understanding the spoken, nor seeing apprehending a thing external to the spectator. “Interactions *make themselves seen* in speech acts.”<sup>8</sup> Deleuze considers each image as having its own unique singularity, which can refer infinitely to other planes, descriptions, or meanings.<sup>9</sup> Image-event ruptures intensities outward, the self is compelled into “the void where it undoes, its forms intersect to form a discourse appearing with no conclusion and no image, with no truth and no theatre, no proof, no masks, no affirmation, free of any centre...a discourse that constitutes its own space as the outside toward which, and outside of which it speaks...But this discourse as a speech that is always outside what it says, is an incessant advance toward that whose absolutely fine-spun light has never received language”<sup>10</sup>. The event of cinema disengages us from the world while making the everydayness of the world seem unbearable. Through openness, the sacrifice of masochism, we become what Rancière calls the emancipated spectator. Sacrifice opens up to freedom not annihilation.

What do masochism and cinematic spectatorship share in their traditional conceptions? Both involve a contract between two entities, ritual, expectation of satisfaction, narrativized desire, and expression submitted to pre-established meanings and functions. When pleasure in a pre-established object of desire or experience encloses the intensity of pleasure as possibility, objects are materially cut from their unique powers as they claim to reflect material objects outside of the

<sup>7</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Masochism: Coldness and Cruelty*, New York, Zone Books, 1994.

<sup>8</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time Image*, London, Athlone, 1989, 227.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* 46.

<sup>10</sup> Michel Foucault, “Thought from the Outside”, u: Michel Foucault, Maurice Blanchot, *Foucault/Blanchot*, New York, Zone Books, 1997, 24–25.

image – signifiers of something else, but not possible affective energies unto themselves where the familiar image become unfamiliar. Traditional material and philosophical dialectics rely on Deleuze and Guattari's three phantoms that interrupt desire as flow: "namely internal lack, higher transcendence, and apparent exteriority."<sup>11</sup> Inserting an image into signification defines it as lacking in itself until it is able to emerge through an established metaphor (an exterior object defined) and metonymic structure (the relations between objects). Meaning is made apparent through the function of making it appear via something else, prior to the image as event, or pleasure as rupture. The compulsion to experience images and pleasures via their emergence through transcendental meaning acknowledges and circumscribes the force of all flows that exceed lack, transcendence, and a relation to established significations. Philosophy is a technique of spectatorship, the true philosopher of cinema is the spectator. Our becomings hinge upon the question of what we risk in opening our selves up to being affectuated.

Masochism is a traditionally *perverse* form of sexuality. Even the most *realistic* of representations perverts the world. When cinema exploits overtly impossible situations the perverse possibilities of the world are emphasized. "Each of the nuances of the seemingly obscene is an incremental break with the repressive codes of prescriptive power."<sup>12</sup> Perversion is foregrounded where the relationship of meaning with its analogous significations in the *real* world is particularly tentative, emphasizing resonances as in excess of their correspondence to real forms and events. Deleuze and Guattari mock the tenets of subjectification and signification of subjectivity from self and world. Failure to organize oneself as organism is depraved, failure to interpret and be interpreted is deviant.<sup>13</sup> These veer from majoritarian patterns. Through disoriented desire and unbound pleasure perversion changes the territory. At its simplest, perversion alters trajectories of self, pleasure, and relation to world while altering the world's territories of normalcy. Both masochism and spectatorship pay very little attention to the dialectically opposed other as a sentient or actual other. Image and punisher are facilitators, rather than objects of desire and pleasure. Masochism thus involves "the process of turning around upon the self [which] may be regarded as a *reflexive* stage, as in obsessional neurosis ('I punish myself'), but since masochism implies a passive stage ('I am punished, I am beaten'), we must infer the existence in masochism of a particular mechanism of projection through which an external agent is made to assume the role of the subject"<sup>14</sup>. Against the sadistic gaze, our relationship with the image is entirely submissive. The other is disinterested and we have no control over the images. Images unfurl without our intervention. We only have the mediated intervention of making meaning from the images.

The extent to which we subjugate images to meaning, or release them as flows able to affect us, is the active making-passive of the spectator as submission to cinema. Masochistic pleasures of horror images are an obvious example of forsaking the power to look for submission to the affects produced by what is seen. Similarly, avant-garde cinema requires a submission to images that disputes their reliance on deference to signification.

Cinema's affect suspends power just as it suspends reality. "We should note here", Deleuze writes, "that the art of suspense always places us on the side of the victim and forces us to identify with him, whereas the gathering momentum of repetition tends to force us onto the side of the torturer and make us identify with the sadistic hero."<sup>15</sup> But the image is not a subject, so with which victim do we identify in moments of submission to affect? Like the traditional masochist,

<sup>11</sup> Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, London, Athlone, 1987, 156–157.

<sup>12</sup> Herb Blau, *The Audience*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins, 1990, 129.

<sup>13</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus...*, op. cit. 159.

<sup>14</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Masochism: Coldness and Cruelty...*, op. cit. 105–106.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* 34.

the spectator sacrifices self in their willingness to be punished by cinema. This is essentially the willingness to punish the self through an encounter with images. The question is *what powers are we punishing?* Becoming-minoritarian punishes majoritarianism as system not identity. There is no necessary contradiction in situating cinema as actively affective alongside an active spectator only in the extent to which they both make themselves passive. When binary structures are dissolved, so too are polar and segmentarily linked correspondences of terms such as *active/passive*, *subject/object*, and *punishment/submission*. Involution is a non-narrative consistency. It is not suspended, it is suspension. No binary terms means *no leading to...* . Suspension is desire outside of temporality, a segmentation where the nostalgic past ensures the desired future. It creates a pure space outside. Desire and pleasure are singular flow. As Deleuze and Guattari explain: "It is claimed the masochist, like everybody else, is after pleasure but can only get it through pain and phantasms, humiliations whose function is to allay or ward off deep anxiety. This is inaccurate. The masochist's suffering is the price he must pay, not to achieve pleasure, but to untie the pseudobond between desire and pleasure as an extrinsic measure."<sup>16</sup>

To be *after*, to seek something that comes after, after the wait, after the suspense, necessitates a temporal trajectory of a future imagined, and thus somewhat established in the present. Repetition excavates the past, bringing it into the present to allow it to colonize the future. Here time contracts into what Deleuze and Guattari call the *pseudobond* between desire (a desire *for* pleasure, attainment, pain, the dissipation of suspense) and pleasure (pleasure *in*, within a moment, or within the thing or effect of what was desired). This recalls and conjoins the antagonism Foucault and Deleuze have for the words desire and pleasure respectively. Desire is measured by the extent to which it fulfils the expectation of pleasure. Neither term is defined by its *intrinsic* qualities. Their success is measured by their relation to pre-formed phantasies of satisfaction. Expectation, repetition, and narrativized desire express temporality as a series of divided events (equation not consistency). Nonetheless, Deleuze explains, "we must conclude that the pleasure principle, though it may rule over all, does not have the highest or final authority over all (...) there is a residue that is irreducible to it; nothing contradicts the principle, but there remains something which falls outside of it and is not homogenous with it – something in short, *beyond...*"<sup>17</sup>.

The cinemasochist's un-making of signification is not a pre-symbolic infantile situation. Kristeva's abject semiotics of infantile return recalls the *naughtiness* of watching extreme films because it permits Kleinian aggressive infantile sadism. Asemiosis is the beyond. Transgressive gazes or images reiterate the binary of licit and illicit pleasures and images. Guattari sees "the capitalist eros [as making] itself the accomplice of what is forbidden. This economy of transgression polarizes the desiring production in a game of mirrors that cuts it from all access to the real and catches it in phantasmatic representations"<sup>18</sup>. Like cinema itself, capitalist eros uses forms and desires as deferred objects of worth. Deferring objects to empty signifiers delays their affects, mirroring which reflect endlessly, concealing transgression's possible material subversions through signifying the conditions of their possibility. All signifying systems from law to art play this game of delay – traditional masochism's *too late!* All exploit their capacity to endlessly refer desires and pleasures to dematerial empty economic structures. Each desire event is bled of singularity, and thus the power to proliferate or differentiate.

Cinema is real, material and forcefully affective. The world of capitalist eros is a world-made-cinema, as reflection rather than creation. Even in cinema which adheres to the most traditional significations and patterns there is always a residue of pleasure, a *cinematic* feel or a risky, exces-

<sup>16</sup> Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus...*, op. cit. 155.

<sup>17</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Masochism: Coldness and Cruelty...*, op. cit. 112.

<sup>18</sup> Felix Guattari, *Soft Subversions*, New York, Semiotext(e), 1996, 152.

sive, asemiotic moment where the spectator could turn toward or return from the affectivity of spectatorship in the same way that Guattari sees all representation as selecting to be either repetitive or revolutionary. Cinemasochism is therefore a becoming-masochist through becoming pure image intensity. The spectator's becoming passes through the agony of the loss of signification. This is an agony within which the minoritarian culture has had to exist. Women, racial others, and perverts are denied signification beyond their isomorphic inferiority to the majoritarian. Isomorphism creates a myth of *two* within a binary, refusing the specificity of the second term which is defined only through its failure to fulfill the elements of the dominant, concealing the debt the majoritarian owes to the minoritarian. The presence of a failed majoritarian is the condition of the majoritarian's possibility. The image as invoking force without signifying form or function is the first painful moment of loss toward our voluminosely joyful cinesexual becomings – a minoritarian spectatorship. This is an ethically risky project because, neither naming nor being named, it is the active becoming-passive of no longer controlling meaning and self and self as meaningful.

The cinemasochist shows power in passivity and action in grace, a key term toward an ethics of spectatorship and which will underpin the conclusion to *Cinesexuality*. The hybrid fold of image and spectatorial flesh evokes the becoming of cinema and all becomings are hybrid. The image is unraveled into an immanent constellation. If, as Guattari claims, *enjoyment=possession*<sup>19</sup> can we allow the image to enjoy us by relinquishing our power over it? Or is giving power to the image a shift away from the power we give to the hierarchy of discursive and capitalist structures where spectators “can only desire the objects that market production proposes to them; they must not only submit to the hierarchy but, even more, love it as such”<sup>20</sup>? Lacking innate force, here the spectator simply transmits the dominant ideologies through all systems, in a way that leads Lyotard to characterize the reading viewer as both *victim* and *client* of art.<sup>21</sup> Alternatively, in becoming-cinemasochist the spectator expresses innate force as transmitted through the energy of the image.

As a first moment toward minoritarian cinema can all cinema become *woman's* cinema, and can we even speak of women's cinema in terms of representation? As Phelan<sup>22</sup> among others has suggested, is *not* being represented a form of a *feminine* representing system, the asemiotic as visual invisibility? What are at stake in cinemasochism, however, are excessive, rather than absent, elements of representation. The pleasures of becoming-female spectator are thus close to cinemasochism. In a first move, becoming-cinemasochist might imagine the sadistic gaze as passing through the masochistic female spectator. Cinemasochism, however, does not insert itself into the cinematic system of gendered character identification. All spectators relinquish their place of power. Perception as apprehension is *enjoyment=possession*. Associations of masochism with femininity remain unsettlingly binary in their logic. Diverging from this system, Lyotard suggests that “The central problem is not the representational arrangement and its accompanying question, that of knowing how and what to represent...the fundamental problem is the exclusion and foreclosure of all that is judged unrepresentable [woman as singularity] because non-recurrent”<sup>23</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. 145.

<sup>20</sup> Idem.

<sup>21</sup> Jean-François Lyotard, *The Lyotard Reader*, New York, Semiotext(e), 1989, 179.

<sup>22</sup> Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, London–New York, Routledge, 1993.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. 176.

Cinema is real, in its presence, affects and the events it creates. But there is nothing *real* about cinema in that it is not what it shows. Therefore, how can we express desire for the image within *real* sexual paradigms? We could just as easily assert that there is nothing *real* in sexuality that can be subsumed and known through psychoanalytic, neurophysiological, biological, historical or creative discourses on sexuality and desire. Nonetheless these discourses create and are created by a social reality. The notion cinema is alien to everyday life is arbitrary. Because of its impossible worlds, cinema presents a particular risk of offence and pleasure, as well as the threat of losing the actual in the material world of the represented. Cinesexuality may interrogate desire along unfamiliar lines, even if desire is not acknowledged as already and always unfamiliar. In fantasy or extreme gore images, abstract images that experiment with form, line and color, or perhaps even images which only offer space for a more *feminine* spectator position, spectators must lose themselves to an event that may cause unpleasure or difficulty, or may simply confound. The viewer suffers under these images. Becoming-cinemasochist is a becoming with the image's own becomings necessitating a shift in discursive patterns beyond the actual content (and consent) of the image. In this manner, we cannot be prescriptive about which films or images would be more or less appropriate for cinemasochistic explorations. Are there images that demand more of our masochism, enforce more pain, alienate us more readily from signification? Should we experience cinemasochism with female authored images, abstract images, gore images, images that disgust rather than seduce us? Or is cinemasochism more powerful with respect to the very images that conserve traditional economies of signification?

### Human Sacrifice

Cinemasochism creates a space outside of time, but within the world – what Deleuze and Guattari call *haeccectic immanence*, Blanchot a *going under* and Foucault *an encounter with the outside*. Even concepts emergent through the pre-thought – creation as recreation – are plenitudes that exceeds and escapes the limits of thought. The authority to desire the image authors and authorizes its pleasure. To address this or challenge it by desiring the licit or illicit maintains the horizon of signification. The silence of images and languages makes their libidinal intensity flow. For Lyotard, submission to this silence-pleasure is fundamental to desire. Representation and intensities that emerge only through signification dam desire and regiment it in a majoritarian system: “This silence is not blind and does not require that one make certain of what comes about through a language, even one of hands or skin. We love the language of hands or skin but here it would be unsubtle. To resort to it here would be to obey the ideology of sex. To suggest to someone: let's fuck, would truly be to treat oneself as *representing* the sexual liberation movement.”<sup>24</sup>

Lyotard does not discuss cinema in *Libidinal Economy*. However, his exploration of libidinality is explicitly visual, and more resonant still with cinema, cuts the world up into minute intensities and inflections born of subtle gestures and movements, as well as close-ups of skin, inorganic objects, and such-like. This form of libidinality seems more cinematic than his work specifically on *Acinema*.<sup>25</sup> This is perhaps an example of sexuality as cinema, rather than a cinema that evokes sexuality.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. 29.

<sup>25</sup> Jean-François Lyotard, *The Lyotard Reader...*, op. cit. 169–180.



Sexuality includes all possible intensities and potentialities of desire, a devastatingly simple but enormous concept. Perhaps this is why many continental philosophers see desire as ubiquitously informing thought. We return to form, as sexual dialectics (object choices) require desire for reified and recognized forms which orient and reify the form that desires. In traditional masochism while abstract pain is the object the reification of a surviving self after that pain orients the sexual ritual. The form of desire and ritual of pleasure will follow according to the possibilities laid down by the object orientation. This outdated and much deconstructed matrix retains one element even in queer theory – the presence of a thing which is usually a human. Two issues are raised here. The first is the idea of the *thing* as an entity, or rather a node of intensity, with which we have entered into a relation. Each film has been traditionally understood as a thing, but less unto itself than a means by which things are presented to the spectator. The second is that the thing will be a human thing. Film is dismembered into a series of images within a frame which teems with humanized forms, be they forms of other humans available for possible desiring dialectics with the spectator or forms as symbols of human concepts. Cinematic images are themselves things. While enclosing multiplicities, an image is nothing but unto itself its own unique phylum. It does not disappear in its referral to the non-cinematic, it does not exist purely to re-present through image, motion and sound, something which is outside of itself. We do not see things we know *in* images. The cinematic image is not humanized, understood through humanistic compulsions to dialectics and arche-narratives of socio-ideological human subjectivity in the world. We and our lover must become inhuman. Taking the image as a thing makes us encounter its inhumanity, or incommensurability with anything other than its self. For this reason when we open ourselves to entering into a cinesexual relationship, it is not the image that should be humanized but we that become inhuman. Lyotard cites Apollinaire: “More than anything artists are men [sic] who want to become inhuman.”<sup>26</sup>

The cinesexual relation is inter-kingdom relation because art and physiology are traversed and cross breed. Minoritarian spectatorship suggests the cinematic image, or art, is a thing which elicits becomings. According to Lyotard and Apollinaire spectators are artists, actively creating the relation with the art-thing by uncreating their selves. The order of the cinematic dialectic changes. The spectator is *occupied* by the image rather than the image being colonized – read or known – by the spectator. This is not a reversal, but an immanent multiple apprehension. “If the other person is identified with a special object, it is now only the other subject as it appears to me; and if we identify it with another subject, it is me who is the other person as I appear to that subject.”<sup>27</sup> Because cinema is strictly not a subject the spectator’s alterity to the other subject folds or pleats back on itself, so the spectator must, in the face of the unresponsive image, take themselves as the other of the other subject. The self appears to self as desiring and as desired but as desired cannot be desired because the image – and all inorganic interkingdom objects of desire – is not able to be affected. The self as desired must remain completely unknown and while being present, presents the unrepresentable in the spectator, robbing the spectator of self present to self and thus de-humanizing, or inhumanizing them. “The affect is... man’s non-human becoming”<sup>28</sup>, because art cannot be affected except to the extent it is encountered inhumanly and thus presents its affects differently.

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<sup>26</sup> Jean-François Lyotard, *The Inhuman*, Cambridge, Polity, 1991, 2.

<sup>27</sup> Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, op. cit. 16.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. 172.

## Communication in Silence

“How can the mind situate itself, get in touch with something that withdraws from every relationship? (...) It is presence as unrepresentable to the mind, always withdrawn from its grasp. It does not offer itself to dialogue and dialectic.”<sup>29</sup>

What cinema does share with other modes of visual transmission is that it is a communicative medium. While it is clear all events are points of communication, even the silent self teems with communicative trajectories, cinema is understood and exists within the same set that includes and comes to exist via technological advance. The communicative success of any medium is now associated with its development, its *bettering*. The inhuman aspects of art have shifted from sublimating the human to de-corporealizing it through the ablation of the need for a body in modes of communication; why talk when you can call? Why call when you can text? Why have sex with a human when you can have cyber sex? Why have flesh breasts when you can have plastic ones? As technology homogenizes the alterity of bodies into necessary evils required to facilitate technological modes of communication, so too the specificity of these modes is homogenized. Mobile phones take photos, computers make calls, portable music players show cinematic images. I make no judgement here, nor am I lamenting the present for a nostalgic past. These shifts have always occurred, the only difference here being the velocity at which they currently happen. Many studies have been made on the different ways in which images are received through format rather than content. Communication is here understood as the emission of a force from one entity to another that then is responded to. The space between the two is the space of communication. This relation is clearly a chronocentric dialectic, even if it is bi-directional. Tactically communication is a putting forth of a message, an idea, any interjection that it is wished will extend to another, be received and potentially responded to, unless the communication is wished to be passed on. What causes the beginning of a communication? As concepts come from problems, communication is the symptom of the drive toward resolution. Many issues arise here. Communication as opinion is considered a subjective inclination commenting on or attempting to resolve a problem. As rationalization it is *the way* to resolve the problem, totalizing all the effects the problem has caused and thus those affected. Problems cannot be resolved in that they have no beginning or end. Similarly all issues have the residue which escapes their ability to be conceived, thought or known (these three words are themselves problematic). Problems do not exist. They come from the voids which are in-between ideas. They are the very matter of the residue of issues. The drive to totalizing resolution and empirical truth ignores the space between issues and attempts to suture issues and cover up the spaces. In these systems the problem is compelled, not to be addressed or discussed, but to go away. Like totalizing rationalizations – truths – problems are not taken as new but invoked as the same old problems with continued discussions which do not acknowledge the newness of each problem as the gaps change as territories of ideologies, issues and ideas shift.

“Communication always comes too early or too late.”<sup>30</sup> Concepts are implanted into cinema. Problems which occur in cinematic narratives are seen as art’s way of addressing and resolving human issues, which is why so many images endlessly repeat the same narratives and moral fables with trite and happy resolutions. The event of cinema is precisely the problem of communication. If we read images expectantly, anticipating how we will read them by what we already know, cinema communicates too early. If we reflect and contemplate communication is too late.

<sup>29</sup> Jean-François Lyotard, *The Inhuman...*, op. cit. 142.

<sup>30</sup> Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, op. cit. 28.

Either way, like the traditional masochist, we never come on time, or more correctly, out of time in space. When cinema as event is experienced as immanent there is neither time nor resource for communication. When we desire we communicate to ourselves in a language which has no words and we cannot know and so we are compelled to translate it – enclose it in a person or insert it into our sexuality.

The spectator of course cannot exist in an eternal spatial present at the event of cinema. The spectator is responsive (the after) as well as the *I* that comes to the event (the before). All existence is always and already multi-horizon events, and the importance of any event is a matter of intensification and velocity of certain horizons and trajectories which cut across these horizons to form new horizons. The spectator expresses and responds to itself and to the world. A response can be comparative, evaluation based on former encounters. It can come from the becomings events invoke. To be affected involves becoming through the world – contemplation as becoming not observing. “We are not in the world, we become with the world; we become by contemplating it. Everything is vision, becoming (...) This is true of all the arts.”<sup>31</sup> The extreme or unpalatable nature of the images explored in later chapters exploits the *I* that would not like or would not enjoy certain kinds of concepts before encountering them. This *I* speaks not in contemplation of its own becomings but of re-habituating the pre-event *I* by contemplating an image as always *outside of me*. The image’s effects are similarly made consistent. The *I* therefore is de-habituated as a new *I*. The shift from knowing to thinking is encountered. *I think* is very different to *I know* which is more “it is known to me in a way it is known objectively to all other ‘I’s”.

At best *I think* comes from navigating ignorance with a desire to express affectuation without deferral or reification of the affect. It may be nothing more than an expression of a shift from knowing to encountering the unknowable. *I think* allows *I do not think* to exist simultaneously (disagreement). *I know* is concomitant with *I do not know*, suggesting there is something to be known, waiting to be revealed, brought to light, but always pre-existing before the encounter. We could even say here it is preferable to stick with the concept of *knowing* but only on the side of *ignorance* which is infinity as it shows the inability to ever know once truth is repudiated. “Just as being an ‘artist’ means not knowing there is already an art, not knowing there is already a world, so reading, seeing, and hearing works of art demands more ignorance than knowledge. It demands a knowledge filled with immense ignorance.”<sup>32</sup> Foucault suggests a shift from *I think* (which in this instance I would say aligns more with his work on the enunciative function – the social vindication of saying *I know* via systems of knowledge) to *I speak*. Speech is an act. “‘I speak’ refers to a supporting discourse that provides it with an object.”<sup>33</sup> The supporting discourse is what both makes the speaking subject possible and what is not evident in the speech. The subject itself is nothing more than what the discourse speaks of or about, speech disappears, so does the subject, the discourse and the object spoken about, as soon as the subject is silent. Immediately speech is spoken it is freed from the speaker and becomes speech to the speaker as well as to the spoken to. What is said “in the first person as an ‘I’ has been expressed anew by [the spoken to] as an ‘other’ and as though he had thus been carried into the very unknown of his thought: where his thought, without being altered, became absolute other”<sup>34</sup>.

To watch is a negotiative practice in which the spectator speaks to images by experiencing them through a self that speaks to itself – what do I think, how do I understand these images, how am I desiring? Images speak back by repeating the questions we as spectators asks, but ask only

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. 169.

<sup>32</sup> Maurice Blanchot, *The Gaze of Orpheus and Other Literary Essays...*, op. cit. 92.

<sup>33</sup> Michel Foucault, “Thought from the Outside”..., op. cit. 1997, 10.

<sup>34</sup> Maurice Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1993, 341.

of ourselves. The image cannot speak in dialogue but nonetheless returns our speech to us. The speech here asks only *how do I see?* When we come to the cinematic image we speak our position as spectator, the image returns our speech to us to the extent it challenges our openness to see and to experience pleasure – and therefore ourselves – differently. Open spectatorship makes us encounter the unknowable within thought, the more-than-us which is always within but never present to us. The spectator's many languages – of spectatorship, of self, of the world, of relevant concepts of gender, sexuality and so forth – must continually speak to each other as each speaks to a work of art. The compulsion to speak comes from inability to know, which technically does not require speech, as knowledge is exterior to the speaker. This internal cacophony of self is simultaneous with the many communications between elements of self and outside world. Language is play event more than transmission of knowledge, creation which must create because each language is different, it can be heard but not understood, pointing to the thinkable which cannot be thought but that provokes thought. This, according to Foucault, is the space of “listening less to what is articulated in language than to the void circulating between its words, to the murmur that is forever taking it apart”<sup>35</sup>. This deconstructs myths of logic, origin, truth and other forms of speech which come as *the I know*, or what Foucault criticizes as speech that “goes without saying”<sup>36</sup>. What goes without saying is the speech that conceals its conditions of possibility. When these conditions are excavated, the speech must be said and the speaker becomes subjective and accountable. The speech of cinema and the speech of the spectator is dialectic transmission of knowledge. When we experience images, sounds and all elements of cinema through the excesses, slippages and seepage which take a knowable image apart our own selves are taken apart and we become through the voids within us – voluminous but unthinkable. We are no longer the who we are that *goes without saying*. The most rudimentary *I desire* that goes without saying is shattered. Beyond *I desire this character because I am heterosexual – that goes without saying to I desire this because it is beautiful/clever* and so forth we reach the *I desire* which is spoken but which speaks back to the self as illuminating the self's own conditions of possibility and further the infinite possibilities of self – *I am desire, I exists through desire and desire through me*. If unthinkable voids become the primary elements of spectatorship then reflection is impossible because there is no thing upon which to reflect. Nothing goes without saying. Here is thought as movement to infinity.

If the void cannot be known it cannot be repeated but its compulsion to movement continues. Cinema is always outside what it says through recognisable image and representation but its encounter as a non-reified plane beyond objects, acts and functions within a frame, shows and elicits desire as having never received language. The spectator cannot reflectively describe – desire is the speaking of the void. Cinesexuality is the silence which is nonetheless present and encountered, the ignorance that is knowable but never known. Blanchot points out that language (particularly in literature but I would suggest all art) is strange because it speaks to us disinterestedly, it speaks directly to us when we are enamoured of it but only because it is speaking outside of itself. When we desire this strangeness however it also does not speak to us in a way we can understand or describe. It is present – too present, and invisible – not enough. Strange language is outside itself in that it is only within us that it is heard (for we must listen to it). We listen to the language that cannot be heard, but this doesn't mean it is not there. “It is the silence that is speaking, that has become this false speech that we do not hear, this secret speech without a secret.”<sup>37</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Michel Foucault, “Thought from the Outside”..., op. cit. 25.

<sup>36</sup> Michel Foucault, *Power*, London, Penguin, 1994, 447.

<sup>37</sup> Maurice Blanchot, *The Book to Come*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2003, 219.

Blanchot claims a “writer is one who imposes silence on this speech”<sup>38</sup>. After the death of the author, the writer is the reader and vice versa. The spectator creates images by listening to (which includes looking at) them. The function of speech is not to apprehend and agree or disagree but to encounter the loss that is the ever present voluminous absence in speech. When Blanchot says it is false, he does not oppose the false to the true but only the false to the world where language never needs to negotiate truthfulness. Language is all and always false because it is never present to itself or us. We cannot hear it to translate and comprehend it, and we become frustrated that there is a certain *thing* to hear, a truth, a message, a meaning. When there is no truth all is false. The creative writer and the creative spectator impose and welcome the silence in all speech. Then the only question to ask is *what happens?* Even this question without an answer is better configured as *there is a happening*. Here the relation between language, image and desire emerges. We cannot know when what we encounter is silent, just as we can never know, speak or confess desire. To make language silent resonates with desire’s limitless excess as indescribable. Foucault talks of the imperative to speak our desire as a means by which we are socially controlled (including controlling ourselves) but only with the language that limits the conditions of possibility of desire.

### Cinema... my love: Avisuality

“What does *friend* mean when it becomes a conceptual personae or a condition for the exercise of thought? Or rather, are we not talking of the lover?”<sup>39</sup>

When cinema language becomes asignifying, what happens to the mode of apprehension of the image? Asemiotic elements act as art-formed things. The act of watching avisually makes the ability to perceive the spectators gaze as volitional subject force impossible. As asemiotic spectators we lose signification toward minoritarian perception. Can we extend Guattari’s idea to speak of *avisuality*? While the image expresses as asemiotic, we must activate this asemiosis. Spectatorship is asignifying and asignified but because we are here talking about a multi-sensorial medium that is arguably primarily visual, spectatorship can be thought as an avisual practice of self, that which sees but not necessarily to know or apprehend – seeing in the dark or seeing the invisible that is the visual. The act of seeing is an act of thinking, and to see avisually resonates with representing asignificantly. The spectator is a conceptual persona. According to Deleuze and Guattari a conceptual personae is a thinker, but only to the extent that thought is made intensive through the thinker. The thinker does not speak about or of the world, but rather makes territories of thought. Thought as potentiality comes before the conceptual personae so *I speak* is more adequately described as *thought speaks through me*. Deleuze and Guattari call this speech stammering, or what Deleuze elsewhere has called *stuttering*.<sup>40</sup> The conceptual personae does not stammer so much as the stammering of the world comes through the thinker. “The role of conceptual personae is to show thought’s territories, its absolute deterritorializations and reterritorializations”<sup>41</sup>. The concept is not an object but describes a territory. Deleuze and Guattari call this *geophilosophy*. This term resonates with Guattari’s ecosophy which will form a crucial part of the concluding chapter on the ethics of spectatorship. The conceptual persona is one point of the territory of geophilosophy that shifts the territory through thought as the concept shifts through the thinker. Cinema spectatorship describes a geophilosophical territory and thought the extent to which cinema as

<sup>38</sup> Idem.

<sup>39</sup> Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, op. cit. 3–4.

<sup>40</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition...*, op. cit. 1994.

<sup>41</sup> Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, op. cit. 69.

its own stammering entity makes all other territories stammer. This occurs directly through the spectator as thinker and creator. Cinema is its own conceptual persona in that it speaks to – or through – us by creating a condition of thought. Dialectics of reading and recognition take the cinema lover as a transcendental one who knows. Cinesexuality is the territory of the spectator speaking to self and world through the conceptual persona of the image-lover, which speaks but always in a language that is indifferent and ambiguous and which, as we, exceeds itself. What are some of the techniques or tactics for addressing the image-lover to invoke shifts in the territory? First we must *want* before and beyond the images wanted. Cinesexuals are always in constant want of cinema. Not films or images of any particular sort but that *cinema-ness*. The want comes before the object and thus the object cannot be understood as an object, only a conceptual persona. We seek to look before anything can be seen. The want is “the irrational impulse by which we try to open eyes that are already closed, open them to life; this impulse is connected to desire, which is a leap, an infinite leap, just as inspiration is a leap. I want to *read* what has nevertheless not been written”<sup>42</sup>. Here Blanchot refers to literature (not as deciphering meaning but simply encountering literature) but this want can potentially be extended, albeit with nuance, to all art.

Cinesexuality as the want before the object of desire involves a condition of expectancy of thought, as much a desire to thought as to images. In Blanchot’s work, to open our eyes is not to *see* but to experience and take pleasure from seeing without recognizing, a kind of blind vision. Where the writer silences language, the spectator makes the visible invisible. If the language of Deleuze and Guattari’s speaking thinker is stammered and stammers all language, then the cinesexual’s vision is always blurred and blurs all images. Blanchot’s use of Orpheus here is interesting as it describes a relationship of desire without an object or knowledge. Orpheus “wants to see [Eurydice] not when she is visible, but when she is invisible, and not as the intimacy of a familiar life, but as the strangeness of that which eludes all intimacy”<sup>43</sup>. Becoming-woman necessitates seeing in the dark. Eurydice is encountered through a forbidden turn to the underworld, to darkness which is nonetheless a vista that is encountered, and she a woman who is apprehended and *seen* but only as unseeable. According to Blanchot this turn encounters death – the death of images as inherently meaningful and self-present, thus present to us. Images are always shades even when they are illuminated. They have “veiled presence” which conceals “infinite absence” and Orpheus’ error is that “he wants to exhaust the infinite”<sup>44</sup>. Seeing as revelation attempts to close off infinity. It wants to exhaust it to change it from thought to knowledge and shade to solid. We can see images but the cinesexual seeks the unseeable but nonetheless visible – the invisible that is the visible. Blanchot describes openness to this a rapture or an innocent *Yes*.<sup>45</sup>

Foucault’s three problems with discourse, as described by Blanchot, are raised here. Foucault critiqued “Interpretation (‘the hidden meaning’), originality (the bringing to light of a unique beginning...), and, finally, what he himself called ‘the sovereignty of the signifier’ (the imperialism of the phoneme, of sound, tone and even rhythm)”<sup>46</sup>. Interpretation reveals an image as a reiteration of a former known image. Originality reveals an image not as unique but as it compares to and differs from pre-formed images. The sovereignty of the signifier attempts to nomenclature all aspects of an image as part of established systems, where the image and all its components are *things*. By bringing her to light Orpheus originates Eurydice, literally giving birth to her.

<sup>42</sup> Maurice Blanchot, *The Gaze of Orpheus and Other Literary Essays...*, op. cit. 95.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. 100.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. 100–101.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. 97.

<sup>46</sup> Maurice Blanchot, “Michel Foucault As I Imagine Him”, u: Michel Foucault, Maurice Blanchot, *Foucault/Blanchot*, New York, Zone Books, 1997, 74.

Perhaps optimistically Blanchot's criticism of Orpheus' compulsion to know through seeing is an antagonism of the age-old question of *what do women want* which translates as *how can I see women* beyond objects of desire which, in film studies, has asked *how do women gaze?* By seeing Eurydice Orpheus sees his object of desire and thus sees and knows himself. He fears his death through an encounter with the inapprehensible visible. His death is heralded by "the day the light goes out, the era without language will arrive not because of silence but because of the recoil of silence, the rending of the silent density and, through this rending, the approach of a new sound"<sup>47</sup>. The approach of a new sound depends on our approach to it. All images are invisible and dead to themselves. Illumination comes from established conditions of seeing. When the lights go out we must see differently, through a luminescent darkness.

Like the secret, the image in the dark is not one to be revealed but which creates (or makes creative) possibilities of *sight*, the invisible visible, the unthought in thought. What Blanchot fails to mention is that Orpheus' is a turn toward the illumination of a woman. Blanchot does not mention the desire implicit in the Orphean myth. If the phallic gaze seeks to see to know forsaking seeing is forsaking knowledge which in turn forsakes self. Desire for Eurydice needs to be a desire for a less-than-whole or an invisible in order to affirm the visible and whole desiring male. Loose connections could here be made with psychoanalysis and Irigaray's claim that the horror of castration anxiety comes not from ending up as a woman with *nothing to see* but accepting that woman has more than and less than the phallus to see, and because sight is not privileged, to touch, to smell and so forth.<sup>48</sup> If Orpheus sees in the dark and sees without a desire for illumination he sees as a woman. Eurydice is dead but if Orpheus were to make her invisible rather than dead he would become the writer that again silences language, the spectator that turns the light out. Knowledge of the object is essential to knowledge of the desiring self. Orpheus needs Eurydice as dead in order to himself be alive; "be dead evermore in Eurydice so as to be alive in Orpheus."<sup>49</sup> While Blanchot is suggesting here that only when language is silenced can it come alive in the writer/reader, I think he fails to address the gender and desire issues implicit in the ethical investments toward silence, invisibility and unthought.

To think creates other selves within the self and the self disappears back into Hades, always receding and never revealed. Eurydice's Hades is the hell where people *live*. They do not disappear, they cannot be heard or seen in the same way but they remain alive. Hell is not the below but the outside, not the false but the new trajectory. When Eurydice recedes Orpheus encounters a work "that has suddenly become invisible again because it is no longer there and has never been there. This sudden eclipse is the distant memory of Orpheus' gaze, it is a nostalgic return to the uncertainty of the origin"<sup>50</sup>. For the female or feminized spectator, surely there has never been an origin except as originating from phallic discourse (where silencing writing and darkening images is adamantly discouraged)? Recognizing or even claiming to see images makes them consistently present to themselves and to all spectators, returning them to the myth of origin, both in former representations and in the world. Knowledge attempts to reify an origin, creating in an object a memory that affirms its future. The origin is an epistemological symptom of the crisis of knowledge as never able to exhaust itself, to find the conclusion that matches the origin. Foucault calls this technique of philosophy transcendental reflexion "which concerns that theme of the origin, that promise of the return, by which we avoid the difference of our present... to divert attention by pursuing the pleasant games of genesis and system, synchrony and development, relation and cause, structure and history"<sup>51</sup>.

<sup>47</sup> Maurice Blanchot, *The Book to Come...*, op. cit. 218.

<sup>48</sup> Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1985, 47–48.

<sup>49</sup> Maurice Blanchot, "The Original Experience", u: Clive Cazeaux (ed.), *The Continental Aesthetics Reader*, London, Routledge, 2000, 349.

38 <sup>50</sup> Maurice Blanchot, *The Gaze of Orpheus and Other Literary Essays...*, op. cit. 103.

<sup>51</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, London, Routledge, 1992, 204.

Refusing an origin allows apprehension of an image to become subjective, multiple, contingent and mobile. Its affectuations are freed, only if we ourselves refuse our own origin as subjects to confirm and guarantee the extent and ways in which we are different to ourselves, because the spectator is all in the philosophy of cinematic images: “all humanist ideologies (...) above all concern the status of the subject.”<sup>52</sup> Desiring encounters with cinema always involve a certain active forgetting of our own desires and of the phantasy of origin of meaning. We come, cinesexually to images with the negligence Foucault encourages. Foucault points out that “we go toward the light in negligence of shadow, until it is discovered that the light itself is only negligence, a pure outside equivalent to a darkness that disperses.”<sup>53</sup> Illumination is a phantasy and darkness a quality of sight which is the same as but of a different kind to lightness. Darkness disperses possibility but it is not necessarily blindness and does not await illumination. We can always see images in cinema but we think to the extent that these images are always in the dark to us. Images are poignantly neglectful of us. They do not respond. They do not speak. They are not present. They are constantly appearing and disappearing simultaneously and this is what Blanchot calls communication.<sup>54</sup> We speak as them and they through us by silencing them and making them invisible. Neither we nor they are present and knowledge turns to thought.

Avisuality invoked by asemiosis is a-ontology. When speech is silent and invisibility visible we encounter the unthought in thought. In image cinema causes a sighted blindness and in language an aural silence. Like darkness, these afflictions – or what Blanchot calls *ailments* – are not absences but conditions of apprehension and levels of openness to thought. Similarly to neglect is not to ignore or refuse, but to create a seductive dance and make an encounter strange. *Don't neglect me* demands of the lover a turn toward the *me* that is offered as an object – an illuminated Eurydice. When the lover is neglectful the self shifts and alters as it navigates attention. Because images are unresponsive encounters occur between our viewing selves and our other selves within. We become, as thinkers, ethical toward ourselves beyond obligation to the other. The cinesexual lover shows negligence of the speech or origin of images, a kind of disinterested desire. Negligence creates unexpected desiring encounters. We do not choose objects of desire, they come to us. Any image may elicit a desiring encounter through moments or connections with other images. An image can never be a lover as a singular hermeneutic entity but only to the extent that it is cinema. Our love is a love in *passing*.

We seek cinema but the moments we love and elicitions of desire are not pre-formed. Lyotard calls this love of art *passibility*: “Passibility as the possibility of experiencing.”<sup>55</sup> He claims the art must seize us, not we it. In *Libidinal Economy* Lyotard suggests love is the demand of the lover to *use me*. Of cinema we ask *use me to think*. Passibility is not the same as passivity. “Passibility: the opposite of impassibility? Something that is not destined for you, there is no way to feel it. You will only know this afterwards. (And in thinking you know it, you will be mistaken about this ‘touch’).”<sup>56</sup> To be passibly touched challenges the idea of volitional intervention into a work of art which suggests we know what we like or seek before it arrives. The before precludes and confirms the after. In possibility the after is a kind of reeling at the surprise of the unexpected moment and nature of the touch, the event of which we can know, but not the essence or meaning. Passibility implies event/time that has passed. If it requires a certain want (without object or aim) it must include the prelude of the possible. Does it describe that which comes to pass, the contraction of coming and passing? If so, movement is also implied, where

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. 204.

<sup>53</sup> Michel Foucault, „Thought from the Outside“..., op. cit. 32.

<sup>54</sup> Maurice Blanchot, *The Book to Come...*, op. cit. 142.

<sup>55</sup> Jean François Lyotard, *The Inhuman...*, op. cit. 110–111.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid. 118.



impasse stops movement. The simple idea of taking pleasure in what we would not presume is pleasurable is an impasse that is possibility, showing the impasse as a myth we use to cover the constant possibility and passibility art and the lover invoke in us. The extreme nature of many of the films discussed in the book and the pleasures their moments afford may offer examples of passibility as the touch we would actively avoid but which touches us anyway. The touch itself does not have to be pleasurable in a benevolent way. Any touch that moves from knowledge to thought, or from thought to ignorance, is a moment of possibility. Coming to these images with disinterest rather than extreme expectation of unpleasure (to have seen the film before the film is seen, the opposite of Orpheus' unseeing sight) will correlate with our openness to thought. For Deleuze and Guattari there is no language for desire. For Blanchot there is no language for language. To hear silence, to see but not know are submissive acts of desire. Desire is force without object or form, a communion which hurts and through the grace of submission transforms desire into love.

### Cinecstasy

“Where there is force of violence all is clear but when there is voluntary adherence, there is perhaps no more than an effect of inner violence concealed amidst the most unshakeable consent.”<sup>57</sup>

Resonant with Blanchot's claim, through cinemasochism there is *voluntary adherence and inner violence*, emphasizing the indiscernibility between the inside and outside. Indiscernibility suggests that redoubled (rather than dialectical) submission is infinite, because it is not about a better quality or quantity of traditional masochism – it is only about infinite openness. Unlike traditional masochism, but like becoming, the seduction of images in cinemasochism is not turned on and off, nor is it repeatable in narrative and affect. Rather, this seduction reverberates and mystifies the self through the force of desire, which resonates with the ritualistic act of masochism, whether through viewing or torture. Without at least the tactical signification of object and act can we ask what, why, and how we desire? (For example, an abstract image is different, although perhaps no less libidinal, than images which offer forms.) Images can not be wholly free of nor wholly converted to meaning, just as desire itself exceeds its conversion into systems, whether heterosexual, homosexual, or perverse. Foucault's sense of conversion emphasizes signifying an image requires an active conversion to an established meaning, an act of power not a mechanical reflex of recognition of the world. Cinemasochism exploits other libidinal activities putting signification at risk. The self is signified within the systems to which images are converted, the self is put at risk in the space of power and catalyzes becomings as minoritarian ethics. “This kind of symmetrical conversion”, Foucault writes, “is required of the language of fiction. It must no longer be a power that tirelessly produces images and makes them shine, but rather a power that undoes them, that lessens their overload, that infuses them with an inner transparency that illuminates them little by little until they burst and scatter into the light of the unimaginable.”<sup>58</sup> The wonder of images folds with the viewer; it makes *us* shine. The image unravels our selves onto a plateau of intensity, bursting and scattering us. But how does the image fold into us? How do our own signified bodies open up to the image? Here masochism goes beyond the act of watching affective images. Our own capacity to affect ourselves, to exceed our own signification, becomes in the act and affect of cinematic viewing.

<sup>57</sup> Maurice Blanchot, “Michel Foucault As I Imagine Him“..., op. cit. 90.

<sup>58</sup> Michel Foucault, “Thought from the Outside“..., op. cit. 23.

Bataille writes that “he who already knows cannot go beyond a known horizon”<sup>59</sup>. The horizon of cinema is not found at the seam where screen buttresses against flesh, but at the threshold of thinking toward the unthought. Knowledge of what the images may signify, what desire may be signified there, and through which systems it is authorized is the horizon. Thought is the beyond. The encounter between screen and spectator is not a horizon describing a limit, and end or an edge, but the inflected emergence of thought that is unthought. The horizon is the point that demands the beyond through which we pass, an edge rather than an end. Here the potentials of alterity proliferate within and between each term, invoking their becomings but now as becoming-imperceptible – cinema as perceived, but perception as unthinkable thought. As signified sexualized selves, we are sacrificed by folding with the outside within us. We are faced up against the image’s inability finally to be thought. We sacrifice the phantasy of thinking the self when we open up to cinemasochism, but not in hope of thinking the new or the yet to be thought. There is no tapping into some stream of desire yet to be revealed. Desire through cinemasochism resonates again with traditional masochism in the vertigo of being faced with an unthought that cannot be thought and a desire that cannot know itself – we recede from this desire and this thought the closer we believe ourselves to be.

The presence of viewing teases out the unfathomable to show “the invisibility of the visible is invisible”<sup>60</sup>. Image as invisible visible event is primarily a spatial experience. The image is not defined through representation of forms connected in causal time. As forms related in time are undone, we cannot know what we see as we nonetheless see. Intersections of images are not narrative and thus without their metonymic relations the forms themselves cannot *be*. No masks of signification, no performance mirroring actual relations but also no true in the material actual. Foucault’s incessant advance moves toward something unseeable within or beneath the seen, eliciting the unseeable that is all we see and because of which we use usually chronocentric signifying techniques of seeing and knowing. What it inevitably expresses is the unseeable within the desiring self. Rethinking masochism as suffering in the face of the outside within self, rids desire of the narrative of the time to come (seen in most narratives of desire, whether masochistic or not). Or as Bataille puts it, “At some moment I must abandon myself to chance or keep myself under control (...) without such free play the present instant is subordinated to preoccupation with the time to come”. Actual and impossible, unthought desire folds the self within the infinite outside-within-itself in the face of cinema as the most indifferent of lovers. Cinema has a force that is not responsive. But in the encounter with absolute indifference our flesh is no less enflamed, our desire no less transformative. As desire reveals only the impossibility of its own revelation, the self transforms beyond any project or narrative. This is why we cannot be cinemasochists in the same way that Deleuze defines masochism. The ultimate suffering comes from teetering on the brink of the abyss that is our own desire – a vacuum that is not empty but outside, that does not exist to be thought or known, but is no less abundant for being so. Our masochistic suffering comes from the impossibility of the agony that is our own desire and the pleasure of its impossible revelation. We are open to chance, knowing we are without a chance oriented toward a result. Chance of what? Nothing, simply chance. This occurs no matter what we see, but the will to openness can be figured here as a minoritarian subjectivity.

<sup>59</sup> Georges Bataille, *Inner Experience*, Albany, SUNY, 1988, 3.

<sup>60</sup> Michel Foucault, “Thought from the Outside”..., op. cit. 24.

## The Gift of Spectatorship

“But who is this we, which is not me?”<sup>61</sup>

Why is cinemasochism sacrificial? Foucault claims the outside is out of time because it shows arrival and memory as impossible in the face of an encounter, which, folding the self with its outside, folds the outside in. If self and desire form a constellation, this encounter implodes with and beyond itself. Drawn inside the image outside, the world involutes us into the inside of self, which is the outside-of-self in the face of the self inside the image and world. This outside-of-self does not refer to that which is outside of self, but rather the outside which is *within* the self. Desire reflects here the inner experience outside of the world – the encounter as ecstasy, so often described by its intensification of pleasure as suffering or pain. But while all erotic encounters encounter the self ex-stasis – outside-of–self, yet irreducibly inside this flesh – the viewing self desires the outside of a sexual matrix that discursively replaces the self back into a temporal narrative of desire. Making the sexual act signify is an attempt to suture the minoritarian qualities of desire, and making the image signify or structuring its relations dialectically ablates the inherent infinite possibility of all spectatorial encounters. (There is always a remainder, however.) Signification cannot reveal the *unrevealable* that is the outside within ourselves. It reveals, rather, the unrevealability of desire as it (not affects) but embodies us. Masochism, by making the self aware of its own desire to not-be (in a non-nihilistic sense to not be *as* but to *become otherwise*), emphasizes that the self is not everything, but also that it is *not everything to the self*.

The unrevealable, like the invisible, is not waiting-to-be-revealed. It is that which can never be revealed, because it goes to the beyond that is thought and hence the possibility of revelation. Possession by a lover or an image is not possession by an entity outside the self, but rather the self’s possession of the outside entity as well as the inevitable possession of the self by the outside-of-the-self. Possession is the making apparent of the self one can never possess. I am not possessed, the one that is me is possessed – taken by that which is outside the *self*. Through ecstatic encounters with the outside-of-self, the cinematic is taken outside. It does not simply pierce us to launch us upon ecstatic trajectories, but also resides within us outside of its signification as a cinematic image in the world. For this reason, the image is also dead to the world, yet very much enlivened within the ecstatic cinesexual plane. It, too, is dead to signification, having become folded within an expressive outside-of-self.

Unique particulars of desire that make us love an image or cinematic sensorium like we love another are proliferated through the extent to which they take us to the outside of self and we take them outside of themselves. As Derrida explains “how can another see into me, into my most secret self, without me being able to see in there myself and without my being able to see him in me? And if my secret self, that which can be revealed only to the other, to the wholly other (...) is a secret that I will never reflect on, that I will never know or experience or possess as my own”<sup>62</sup>. Implicit in *unknowing*, *unthought*, and *unrevealable* is the falsity of “there is something to know/think/reveal”. The self cannot reflect because the self cannot know the question; there is no question and there is no answer beyond the beyond itself. We therefore die to ourselves *as* we are dead to the world and, unable to be disclosed to the other, dead to the object of desire as a desirable corresponding object. Is the moment of desire outside of the world and the inner self the gift to the lover, the gift of the self we cannot know but give nonetheless? The self we give is not the self we know we give. The image similarly gifts itself beyond its seriality or signification. The gift can-

<sup>61</sup> Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, “How to make yourself a Body Without Organs”, u: Françoise Péraldi (ed.), *Polysexuality*, New York, Semiotext(e), 1981, 266.

<sup>62</sup> Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1992, 92.

not be made as a gift that fills a place, completes an absence, or resolves impossibility. The gift of ecstasy knows not what it gives and gives precisely that which it cannot know. It is the gift that acknowledges that the self has nothing it can willfully give which will causally effect the receiver in any known way. This is why desire is risky. It must first open up to the self as unthinkable. Hart sees Blanchot's concern as a giving up both as giving away and giving ourselves up to, but his insistence on spirituality is too resonant with Bataille's conflagration of spirituality and sacrifice, albeit one is ecstasy, the other sacred. This connection is explored as a contestation by Holland who reads negation as affirmation.<sup>63</sup> I prefer to understand affirmation as materially voluminous, hence Foucault (and Foucault's reading of *Inner Experience* with Blanchot). Ffrench<sup>64</sup> and Kaufman<sup>65</sup> similarly emphasize the most important shared element which is Bataille's is a sacrifice without theatre, and Blanchot's without symbol. The masochistic self does not die in its sacrificial, Bataillian sense. Rather, it demands of cinema *use me*: "The passion of passivity which stimulates this offer is not one single force, a resource of force in a battle, but it is force itself, liquidating all stases (...) 'Use me' is an order and a supplication, but what she demands is the abolition of the I/you relation (which is, like the master/slave relation, reversible) and also the use relation (...) not let me die by your hand (...) She wants you to die with her, she desires that the exclusive limits be pushed back, sweeping across all tissues, the immense tactility, the tact of whatever closes up on itself without becoming a box [dialectic spectatorship] and whatever ceaselessly extends beyond itself without becoming a conquest [desire=possession]."<sup>66</sup>

Like Deleuze and Guattari's *woman* of becomings, Lyotard explicitly makes the collapse of the dialectic and the sacrifice of self female, thus characterizing a self which is both libidinally and actually sacrificed in majoritarian culture, or one which is not granted a self to sacrifice – a becoming-Eurydice. In this way, the cinemasochistic ecstasy is a feminine or feminist project, a form of becoming-woman. Sacrifice of self in ecstasy could similarly be seen as a feminist turn, relinquishing signification or even conception of self.

When the outside within dissipates the self into the inside without, an infinity of folded relations are formed and the constellation is redistributed. The solitude of ecstasy includes the other which is self and the self in the outside, or given to the outside – the gift that knows not what it gives, but can only offer the pure openness of the gifted self. Is becoming-woman or becoming-cinemasochist a gift of or toward alterity? Desire is the gift of the outside-of-self to self, without revelation or presence but no less apparent. As Derrida points out, we cannot die for the other, but only offer our own death as a gift, which "has no need of the *event of a revelation or the revelation of an event*. It needs to think the possibility of such an event but not the event itself"<sup>67</sup>. If we can never know what we give to the other, we can only sacrifice what we know of the self in our gift.

Thus all vitalistic sacrifice is masochism, and masochism is itself a gift that opens outward; it is no longer Deleuze's entirely reflexive masochism. Masochism is the gifting of self to other as the collapse between two elements, and accepting the other of self that may be encountered, but not revealed. Desire gives the other of self, or the outside, to self and gives self to the risk and chance of the outside-of-self. The gift cannot be *in exchange* for something else. The gift of death in desire is the death of the subject as enclosed, hermeneutic, sexually regulated and signified, the death which is necessarily desire. It does not exchange the *I* for a new self, it simply gifts the self which

<sup>63</sup> Kevin Hart, *The Dark Gaze*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2004, 28.

<sup>64</sup> Patrick Ffrench, "Friendship, Asymmetry, Sacrifice: Bataille and Blanchot", *parrhesia* 3, 2007, 32–43.

<sup>65</sup> Eleanor Kaufman, *The Delirium of Praise*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins, 2001.

<sup>66</sup> Jean-François Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy...*, op. cit. 63, 65, 66.

<sup>67</sup> Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death...*, op. cit. 1992, 49.

is all (as) we encounter (the we) we cannot know. Desire folds outside in on self. The self is folded in on itself and out toward the world, becoming crevice into which the outside slips and offering planes of self slipping outside but invisible to self. The outside-of-self is then gifted to the outside as our thought (but not knowledge) of it is invoked by the outside. If neither the invisibility in the visible, nor the unthought in desire, can be known, then the outside of self expresses the self or unsubject of self. Cinemasochism embraces the impossibility of self in the face of the force of the image without, acknowledging the impossibility within all representation or signification. There is no other position in opposition to self, but the subject no less dissipates into what Guattari calls the degree zero point of implosion. Dissipation is violence in the sacrifice of self, or Blanchot's inner violence in the face of an unshakeable consent that makes us tremble, which Derrida characterizes as the "I which trembles in secret"<sup>68</sup>, for which there is no answer. The *I* is a trembling, desire a redistribution of trembling, masochism the unbearable pain within the pleasure of desire, and cinema a lover we take, a becoming alliance, an image with which we fold and to which we consent, giving the gift of self we cannot give, to die in the ecstasy of the outside-of-self.

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## Filmmazohizam

**Apstrakt:** Ovaj rad se bavi aspektom seksualnosti gledaoca u odnosu na film. Takav odnos prema filmskoj slici je *po prirodi* mazohistički, s obzirom na to da je film stvaran, materijalan i silovito afektivan. Sineseksualni odnos je međudnos zbog toga što se slika i telo međusobno prožimaju i ukrštaju. Kao takav, susret između slike i tela jeste susret tišine i avizuelnosti, a gledalaštvo se može misliti kao avizuelna praksa sopstva. Filmmazohizam prihvata nemogućnost sopstva u suočenju sa silom spoljašnje slike i prepoznaje nemogućnost svake predstave ili značenja koji bi ležali unutar tog sopstva.

**Ključne reči:** filmoseksulanost, seksualnost, film, rod, avizuelnost, mazohizam;