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Thesis Title (PhD):

Four Films

Crossing the Boundaries of Modernism and Postmodernism

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## ABSTRACT

This work is based on studying films from the perspective of modernism, late-modernism, postmodernism and film theory. The introduction on the major issues and debates on late-modernism and postmodernism will be followed by the textual analysis of four films: Luchino Visconti's Death in Venice, Michelangelo Antonioni's L'avventura, Alfred Hitchcock's Blackmail and David Lynch's Blue Velvet.

I argue that Death in Venice is a wholly intended modernist film that inscribes itself into the tradition of modernism by re-writing other modernist texts, notably the literary work of Thomas Mann and the modernist theories of Theodor Adorno. In this respect, the film is a late-modern, as it embodies the discourses of modernism.

L'avventura both presents a modernist narration and departure from European cinematic tradition. Its shifting between post-neorealism, an ironic authorship and an organization of desire that propels the narrative suggest a postmodern departure from late-modern cinema.

Blackmail parodies modernism from within. By quoting the styles of modernist movements the film establishes an ironic distance from modernism itself; at the same time, it ironically assimilates an institutionalized narrative that suggests the impossibility of a fully modernist narration.

Finally, I argue that as a postmodern film Blue Velvet surrounds its story material with meta-textual references that subverts the unity between the story and its narration. However, the author's intention to "master" his narrating by a network of extra-diegetic references inscribes a modernist strategy into a postmodern film.

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## PREFACE

The following project is based on the textual analysis of four films and aims at exploring the way in which they relate to late modern and/or postmodern discourses. I am interested in looking at the interaction between specifically filmic discourses and those of modernism, the avant-garde, late-modernism and postmodernism, as well as the formation of new discourses.

The introduction will address theories of modernism and postmodernism that played a significant role in the development of my own thesis. This will be followed by the textual readings of four films, namely, Luchino Visconti's Death in Venice, Michelangelo Antonioni's L'avventura, Alfred Hitchcock's Blackmail and finally, David Lynch's Blue Velvet. My interest in this study, mainly, will be to look at films in the context of late-modern and postmodern debates. My aim is not to justify whether these films are late-modern or postmodern, but to study their process of narration from the perspective of an interaction between specifically filmic discourses and extra filmic discourses such as modernism and postmodernism.

There is no border line between, say, a modernist, a late-modern or a postmodern film. These discourses almost always coexist in a single film. As a result, the discourses of modernism, late-modernism or postmodernism are "hybridized". Often it is impossible to reduce a film to a single discourse.

Revisiting an ironic authorship or modernist styles, themselves, I will argue, is one of the characteristics of postmodern films.

This study will not attempt to single out a theory of postmodernism. Neither will it apply major theories straightforwardly onto films. The usefulness of the theories of modernism and/or postmodernism, I believe, does not lie in their application; or more precisely, such applications can only demonstrate the theories themselves without bringing much insight into the narrational processes of films. Alternatively, I will explore the "formation" of the discursive strands in films, involving both the filmic discourses and those of the modernist and postmodern discourses. I am also interested in the films' resistance against these theories. For this reason my choice of films is rather eclectic. None of the four films I will study are stylistically or generically related. Each of these films, however, opens up possibilities of reading their process of narration in terms of multiple discursive organizations.

I will argue that Luchino Visconti's Death in Venice works through the codes of modernism by making references to other texts and by fragmenting its narrative discourse into different orders of organization; hence it inscribes itself into the tradition of modernist *écriture*. I will then argue that Michelangelo Antonioni's L'Avventura is a borderline-case that mingles late-modern and postmodern discourses. The film's

shifting discourses across Italian neorealism, *post-neorealism*, ironic authorship and narrative organization, propelled by a desire for a lost object, constitute a postmodern situation in which each of these shifting positions constantly undermine or re-define another. I will suggest that Alfred Hitchcock's Blackmail possesses a postmodern character not through its parodic references to modernism, but through its parodying of modernism from within. Finally, I will look at David Lynch's Blue Velvet from the point of view of *recycled* parody as a postmodern feature. Blue Velvet self-consciously writes itself as a postmodern text by reworking conventional forms of parody. Despite its self-consciously postmodern style, Blue Velvet represents an ironic author who "masters" the film by writing it cross-referentially, weaving the narrative with meta-textual references to other films, popular culture and myths of psychoanalytic discourses.

## INTRODUCTION

I will begin with an introduction of the debates on modernism, the avant-garde, late-modernism and postmodernism. Throughout this introduction, I will look at the way in which each cultural movement or phase is defined or justified in relation to the others. Certain continuities in the aims of these movements will also be addressed within a wider context of cultural politics and representation. I will then discuss the related issues such as the problems involved in periodizing these phases, political and cultural project of breaking down the boundary between high art and popular culture and the liquidization of modernist principles.

I will first outline the theories of modernism in the context of the debates of Frankfurt School, Theodor Adorno and Jürgen Habermas. Habermas and Jameson see postmodernism as a dead end, the liquidation of modernism, while Lyotard celebrates postmodernism as a challenge against modernism as an establishment. I will also look at the cross-relations between the avant-garde and postmodernism, modernism and late-modernism and late-modernism and postmodernism which will be relevant in my reading of the films. In this respect I will outline the debates of Peter Bürger and Andreas Huyssen whose works opened up my way of seeing such cross-relations of these discourses. I will finally look at the debates on the politics of postmodern

parody. I will dispute the relevance of the term parody within the context of postmodern theory and formulate the differences between modernist and postmodern uses of parody.

## II

There is a parallelism between the evolution of late-modern discourses and the theoretical support and elaboration of the concept of autonomous art by Habermas and Adorno. In other words, there are many theoretical meeting points between Habermas' dismissal of postmodernism, Adorno's espousal of the autonomous aspects of modernist art and the institutionalization of late-modern discourses. Within this context, I will argue, there is a two way relationship between the debates on the preservation of modernist principles and the realization of these theories by late-modern works. The interaction between Adorno's theory of modern music, Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice* and *Doctor Faustus* and Visconti's re-working of all these texts in his film version of Mann's novella is an instance of this two way process. In order to elaborate a theory of late-modern cinema as a tension and, to some extent, a compromise between a desire to break from the tradition and a tendency to turn modernism into a tradition I will now outline the debates raised by Habermas and Adorno.

Habermas sees modernity as the continuation of certain historical projects launched by the Enlightenment. His view of

modernist art is linked to Adorno's elaboration of autonomous art. Unlike Adorno, however, he suggests that art should be freed from its esoteric forms and be made accessible to the public. For Habermas autonomous art functions as part of the project of modernity, while the postmodern condition constitutes the failure of this overall project. In brief, he considers modernism as a project which aims at integrating the autonomous spheres of science, morality and art in everyday life.<sup>1</sup> According to Habermas, these autonomous spheres acted as the normative values of society in the 19th century. Modernism is not then a movement contained within a certain historical period, but a continuing project launched by the Enlightenment and this project has not yet completed its task of integrating with the life-world (lebenswelt). Habermas defines postmodernism as the betrayal or liquidation of the Enlightenment project by neo-conservatives (postmodernists) along with old-conservatives and young-conservatives. In order to discuss his notion of postmodernism, I will first introduce his account of modernism. He maintains that:

"The project of modernity formulated in the 18th century by the philosophers of the Enlightenment consisted in their efforts to develop objective science, universal morality, law and autonomous art according to their inner logic. At the same time, this project intended to release the cognitive potentials of each of these domains to set them free from their esoteric forms."<sup>2</sup>

The aim of this task was to use this positivist culture for the "rational organization" of everyday life. As part of one unified

project, the three spheres would be based on the institutionalization of professional expertise. Within the intrinsic formation of each of the three domains of culture

...appear the structures of cognitive-instrumental, moral-practical and of aesthetic-expressive rationality, each of these under the control of specialists who seem more adept at being logical in these particular ways than other people are. As a result, the distance has grown between the experts of the culture and that of the larger public."<sup>3</sup>

With the institutionalization of the cultural experts, the traditional substance of the life-world began to impoverish and the three spheres began to transform into their complete autonomy.

Habermas considers these three autonomous spheres as parallel developments. He seems to overlook the fact that there are structural differences within each one of these spheres, each having its own evolutionary institutional logic. Additionally, there are discontinuities and diversions within the progress of each of them, and in this respect the development of "objective science", for example, cannot be compared to the progress of "autonomous art". The development of art towards autonomy which began with the Enlightenment in effect contradicts the integration of art with everyday life. As Peter Bürger points out in his reply to Habermas:

"Ever since the aesthetics of autonomy was institutionalized, attempts to link up with the Enlightenment's concept of literature and to include

cognitive and moral questions in art have been fought by writers and critics (examples would be the rejection of Zola's naturalism and Sartre's *littérature engagée*). Only in the field of commercial and popular literature is a rejection from the perspective of individual life history allowed and thereby implicitly denigrated. In fully developed bourgeois societies "autonomy" and use of art have increasingly come to oppose each other. They will not be so easily reconciled as Habermas' construction of modernity suggests." <sup>4</sup>

From this perspective, it is not possible to consider the development of autonomous art as the progressive agent of the modernist project since art as an institution resists re-integration with everyday life.

At this point, I would like to clarify what Habermas understands by the integration of art with the life-world. Referring to Albrecht Wellmer's formulation of an aesthetic experience which is not imposed by the experts' artistic judgement, Habermas brings forth the possibility of an alternative interpretation, which would alter a way of seeing things through a dialectical relationship between a *life-historical situation* and socio-cultural problems in general. Such an experience does not only renew the way in which we interpret things, but also challenges our historical consciousness, and opens up the possibilities of these moments of illumination referring to one another. Habermas illustrates this process with a passage from Peter Weiss' novel The Aesthetics of Resistance in which: "...a group of politically motivated knowledge-hungry



workers in 1937 Berlin... go back and forth between the edifice of European art and their own milieu until they were able to illuminate both."<sup>5</sup> Habermas' description of the life-world of the 1930s falls short of covering the cultural heterogeneities of the 1980s. Habermas' nostalgic interest in the past indicates his desire to see the continuation of the proletarian movement of the 1930s into the present. He suggests the possibility of an intersection between the spirit of the Enlightenment and the everyday politics of the proletariat which would then reactivate the progress of modernity. Advancing the cognitive potentials of positive science, universal morality and autonomous art in order to set them free from their esoteric forms, however, contradicts with the self definitions of these autonomous spheres. In order to deal with this contradiction, drawing on the work of Theodor Adorno, Habermas regards autonomous art as a phenomenon of cultural rationalisation. According to this view, the conscious creation and realisation of aesthetic values is related to the inner logic of art developing independently from social conditions. Both Adorno and Habermas do not deny the fact that the formation of art as any other cultural artifact is the product of socio-historical conditions. What they reject is the relationship between socially produced influences and art. At this point, however, Habermas' and Adorno's view of art differ. While Adorno uncompromisingly insists on the autonomous status of art, Habermas suggests a further phase in society when art

will be integrated with life. In order to elaborate these two views on the function of art I will briefly introduce the original debate between Adorno and Walter Benjamin on the role of art, which I believe constitutes the base of Habermas' thought. The sole purpose of art, according to Adorno, is to negate the negativity of society, and this negation can only be achieved by emancipating art from its social bonds. As he puts it:

What is social about art is not its political stance but its immanent dynamic in opposition to society...If any social function can be ascribed to art at all, it is the function to have no function...Its social essence calls for a twofold rejection: on the being-for-itself of art, and its ties with society. This dual essence of art comes out in all artistic phenomena, they change and contradict themselves.<sup>6</sup>

Walter Benjamin's theory of art, on the other hand, challenges Adorno's notion of autonomous art. For Benjamin, the task of modern art is to emancipate itself from its mystification, esotericism and autonomy. Unlike Adorno, Benjamin hails the de-mystificatory function of the avant-garde, notably surrealism as well as the technical advance of mechanical reproduction. Benjamin's optimism concerning the role of the mechanical reproduction in demystifying the auratic nature of art, however, becomes irrelevant when it is seen from Adorno's perspective. Adorno insists on the preservation of the autonomy of art despite its institutionalized status, while Benjamin sees the subversion of autonomous art as a necessity.

The close affinity between modernist support of autonomous art and the 'emulation of modernist aesthetics by late-modern works is closely related with the failure of the Enlightenment project. Both for Habermas and Adorno the progress of the Enlightenment is no longer operational. In other words, the social system and the life-world are *decoupled*, to use Habermas' description. As a result this process the esoteric forms of art is no longer accessible to the public. Whereas for Habermas, the bridging the gap between esoteric forms of art and its accessibility is the task of modernity, for Adorno, the esoteric forms of art is the only condition for negating the society. In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Adorno and Horkheimer suggest that since public opinion is already integrated into the 'culture industry' and the linguistic and conceptual conventions can no longer map the project of modernity, the discourses of modernity become fragmentary and reflect the negative knowledge of the society. Instead of mirroring the fragmentary character of the society, however, modernist discourses strategically uses fragmentary and dissonant writing so as to be able to negate the dominant discourses. I will elaborate this point later when I discuss Adorno's espousal of Schoenberg's atonal music. Modernist art then is a negative response to the society and culture. It is autonomous or as Kant describes, disinterested. Further, it remains hostile to popular culture since popular culture is also assimilated and re-produced the culture industry.

Adorno's defence of autonomous art originate in a twofold project. He is interested in subverting the "art for art's sake" notion as much as Benjamin is. To him, 19th century art fallaciously attempts to integrate a self-contained structure, embodying humanist values, morals, and language as a transparent medium and traditional forms in a single work of art. Although Adorno believed in the Marxist transformation of society, he did not believe in the transformative power of art. He also, however, believed in the preservation of the autonomy of art. Modernist art, according to him, has to keep its autonomy as long as it aspires to oppose society. He argues that the opposition to society through artistic practice is radically different from other political channels of opposition. In this respect, the negation of society through art should not conform to social institutions. However, it should be noted that Adorno never suggested that modernist art has managed to maintain its uncompromising resistance against the emergence of popular culture. He frequently states that high-art in industrial societies has always been intertwined with the discourses of popular culture. This is its ironic dilemma. In his study of Richard Wagner's music, Adorno demonstrates the interaction between the modernist characteristics of Wagner's music such as the use of allegory, chromaticism, dissonance and leitmotif. Leitmotif, in Wagner's music, according to Adorno, serves two distinct purposes. First it functions as allegory. In this

respect, the frequent appearance of leitmotif undermines the unity of the work. (I will further elaborate on this point in my reading of Visconti's Death in Venice.) Secondly, leitmotif works as *advertising* in the manner of a signature, orientation and emphasis. Adorno suggests that the commercialisation of the use of leitmotif in Wagner's music announces, foreruns Hollywood film music "where the sole function of the leitmotif is to announce heroes or situations so as to help the audience to orientate itself more easily".<sup>7</sup> In his close analysis of Wagnerian music, Adorno suggests that modernism is not just the *other* of popular culture, but that it is a hybrid construction emerging from its interaction with the culture industry, to use Adorno's term. Modernist art, in other words, is not an autonomous practice as it was conceived of by 19th century aestheticism. Nevertheless, according to Adorno, modernist art can only accomplish its task, i.e. negating the cultural industry by remaining autonomous. Autonomy, here, is understood as art's isolation from other cultural, political and commercial discourses.

In Commitment, Adorno defends autonomous art, not only against popular culture but against committed art too. For Adorno the two are opposed. The more modern art becomes preoccupied with commitment, the more it loses its autonomy. As a result, modern art compromises on its power to negate. In the case of committed art, the form of the work is dominated by content either through

personal choice or the political commitment of the artist. In the former situation, Adorno brings forth the example of Jean-Paul Sartre's plays. According to Adorno, Sartre's notion of the existential choice- or the commitment of the writer "in the present"- contradicts with the form in which they are expressed. In other words, the archetypal situation constructed to demonstrate the irreducibility of freedom defeats itself when it is projected upon conventional forms of representation. Within the pre-determined reality of the form, freedom becomes a false claim. According to him, Sartre's plays:

...are bad models of his existentialism, because they display in their respect for truth the whole administered universe which his philosophy ignores: the lesson we learn from them is unfreedom...In fact as soon as committed works of art do instigate decisions at their own level, the decisions themselves became interchangeable.<sup>8</sup>

For the politically committed work, Adorno's example is Brecht's The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui. His play is based on the analogy between the rise of a mafia cabbage trust in Chicago and the emergence of Hitler. Instead of dealing with the class exploitation and the alliance between the fascists and the ruling class of 1930s Germany, the play concentrates on mocking the little successes of a cabbage mafioso who starts as a house-painter. Adorno criticises the play on the grounds that it reduces fascism to petty crime: thus the real horror of fascism is lost in the misrepresentation.

To quote Adorno:

The true horror of fascism is conjured away; it is no longer a ,slow end-product of the concentration of social power, but mere hazard, like an accident or a crime.<sup>9</sup>

Adorno points out that the real problem in Arturo Ui is not that it is saying that the Nazis who took power in Germany were also gangsters, but that it fails to represent the affinities between fascism and the cabbage trust. Adorno's conclusion is: "For the sake of political commitment, political reality is trivialized: which then reduces the political effect".<sup>10</sup>

Thus, according to Adorno, the process of artistic creation and the representation of the objective world can only interact in accordance with the inner laws of aesthetic form. The image of the objective world is solidly there in the negative representation of art, while that reality is reduced to a mere expression in committed art. Adorno reverses the positivist maxim that: "The artistic form is the device for meaning", to: "art is the negative knowledge of the world".<sup>11</sup> His corresponding examples of autonomous modernist art are Beckett's plays, Kafka's writings and Schoenberg's music. In Beckett's plays, neither the plot nor the characters require an explicit form to express themselves. The plot in Waiting for Godot for instance, is entirely accidental. There is neither a direction nor a resolution in the play. Similarly, neither of the characters' presence reflect any individualistic qualities since they are not self-contained or unified in the sense of the 19th century novel.

They are rather reflections of the split disintegrated subjects of our society. According to Adorno, the "self-propelling" structure of his dramatic works with the reduction of their dynamics "to mere idling, to a shuffling of feet without locomotion...exposes the non-sense gravity of these plays as frivolous play".<sup>12</sup> This is what Adorno means by the absolute negation of empirical reality. While Beckett's plays or Schoenberg's atonal music avoid a formal representation based on an institutionalized form, they produce a moment of negation of the "total institution". Instead of representing a coherent content, these works resist representation and celebrate the moment of their negation. Adorno seeks to elaborate the aesthetics of an emancipated art at a time when modernist representation had already become a norm as high-art. Within this context his notion of "double negation", or negation of the negativity of society can be considered to be a defence of modernist aesthetic practice. In this regard, he can also be seen as an anticipatory theoretician of late-modernism.

Habermas, however, has attempted to radicalise Adorno's notion of autonomous art and its reintegration into the life-world. The oscillation between the preservation of the autonomy of art and its integration in society has its roots in the debate between Benjamin and Adorno. Habermas seems anxious to reject Adorno's uncompromising auratic art which leads to a "strategy



of hibernation", the "obvious weakness" of which "lies in its defensive character".<sup>13</sup> This causes him to reconsider Benjamin's espousal of the subversive potential of mechanical reproduction. Habermas' support of Benjamin's point, however, is not a straightforward one. Martin Jay describes Habermas' observation of the dispute between Adorno and Benjamin:

Adorno was also at fault in reducing Benjamin's position to an announced celebration of modern art's loss of aura, whose ambivalent implications Benjamin, in fact, fully understood. Whereas Benjamin had not mourned the loss of the specially cultic and irrational aspects of the aura, he was afraid that the experiential source of the aura's power, its derivation from a primitive moments of perfect plenitude, might also be entirely forgotten.<sup>14</sup>

This positive aspect of the aura allows Habermas to support the auratic status of art. As he argues:

Since the historical experience of a past *Jetztzeit* needs to be recharged, and because this experience is locked within the aura of a work of art, the undialectical disintegration of the aura would mean the loss of this experience.<sup>15</sup>

Habermas further suggests that Benjamin's major goal was not to preserve the aura of art in an ontological sense but to seek the possibilities of making the esoteric forms of art accessible to the masses. Instead of celebrating the impoverishment of the aura, Habermas suggests that the public should be able to experience the auratic nature of art. Habermas oscillates between his support for the autonomy of art and a desire to integrate art and the life-world. This it seems is the consequence of Adorno and Benjamin's conflicting influences on

him. In his paper Habermas and Modernism, Martin Jay comments:

Not only did he (Habermas) call into question Benjamin's overemphasis on the technology of mass production as an explanation of the change, he also pointed out the cost of a premature integration of art and life. The surrender of artistic claims to autonomy, he warned, "can just as easily signify the degeneration of art into propagandistic mass art or into commercialised mass culture as, on the other hand, transform itself into a subversive counter culture".<sup>16</sup>

Unlike Adorno, however, Habermas does not rely on the negative role of modernist aesthetics alone. He dismisses Adorno's espousal of modernist works which provides negative knowledge about our social reality. Habermas' interest is in the productive forces of the project of modernity in its Enlightenment character rather than in the negation of capitalist societies. Furthermore, autonomous art is only one of the three spheres of society, together with morality and positivist science. As a believer of the validity of the Enlightenment project, Habermas expects to see the cooperation of these three spheres in order to reactivate the project of modernity.

A corresponding example of an artistic movement for Habermas' model would be Italian Neo-realist cinema. Italian Neo-realist cinema was based on a modernist paradigm of representation and gradually moved towards a socially committed attitude due to the influence of political and socio-economical pressures. In spite of the commitment of Neo-realist films towards objective verisimilitude through their tendency to use

non-professional actors and the use of exterior locations, many of the films are based on *found stories*, to use Kracauer's term.

Kracauer defines found stories as:

Being discovered rather than contrived, they are inseparable from films animated by documentary intentions. Accordingly they come closest to satisfying that demand for the story which "reemerges within the womb of the non-story film".<sup>17</sup>

Additionally, these films employ accidental plot twists, episodic plot, cinematic excess and, to some degree open endings, which are all rooted in the modernist tradition. Thus, the plot of Rossellini's Paisà is divided into five episodes and the episodes are independent from each other in terms of narrative continuity. The only common theme which holds these episodes in a single unity is the "change in the British or American soldier's reaction to ...reality and environment, from misunderstanding and hostility to complete integration in the Po river finale, where reeds, swamp water, the very long shots and lack of distinct figures suggest a sad and moving solidarity."<sup>18</sup> The story of De Sica's Bicycle Thief is nothing more than a magnification of a small event-the theft of a bicycle which is required for a job in economically ruined postwar Italy. The simple story line -the search for the stolen bicycle- is interwoven with the economic and social problems surrounding the workman giving the impression that if the workman's misfortune is a mundane story found within everyday life. Kracauer's notion of a found story also explains the non-climatic, open ended closures of certain Neo-realist

films. In Bicycle Thief the workman never finds his bicycle. His future is as uncertain as ever. Since the story is nothing more than a detail taken and magnified from ordinary life, there is can be resolution.

The narration of found stories, the creation of the scenes of excess, accidental appearance of the events and the juxtaposition of interchangeable scenes - "the interchangeability of the rain, the seminarians, the Catholic Quakers and the restaurant scenes, to use Bazin's description, and open endings indicates that Bicycle Thief moves in two opposite directions simultaneously: exotericism and esotericism.<sup>19</sup> Exotericism in this context means the adherence certain subjects and social problems depicted with minimum alteration in order to maintain their everyday appearance. Esotericism, on the other hand, refers to the tendencies in order to sidestep from these commitments to more abstract formal values. It was the exoteric dimension that dominated the Neo-realist ideals. Certain critics regarded the common principles characteristic of Neo-realism such as its objective realism, the use of non-professional actors and the avoidance of studios as a commitment to socially conscious cinema. An orthodox film critic, Umberto Barbaro, for example, supported Neorealism and disapproved of more complex stylistic experiments by Visconti or Antonioni.<sup>20</sup> The film-maker and critic Cesare Zavattini wrote that the strength of cinema lies in

its:

original and innate capacity for showing things that we believe worth showing, as they happen day by-day in what we might call 'dailiness', their longest and truest duration.<sup>21</sup>

On the other hand, the new generation of film-makers like Antonioni, Visconti and Fellini went beyond modernist aspects of Neo-realism and developed more personalised and esoteric styles. Antonioni's L'Avventura, for example, reflects the search for a lost persona, Anna, who has disappeared without a trace. The film deliberately refuses to explain the cause of her disappearance and constantly postpones the outcome of the search. L'Avventura represents the disappearance of Anna as that of a desire(d) object beyond the causal limits of the story. Both the contingent development of the events and Antonioni's style such as long takes, deep focus photography and the camera's tendency to remain in a static position in order to let things enter into or out of the frame as though it were nothing more than a detail from life, take the esoteric dimensions of neo-realist principles to their extreme. One can go further in this comparison and suggest that L'Avventura is a late-modern parody of Bicycle Thief. (A detailed discussion of late-modern parody will follow later in this chapter). On the one hand, both films present a loss (a bicycle in Bicycle Thief and Anna in L'Avventura); both films launch a search which takes over the entire narrative and finally both

films end without a resolution. On the other hand, L'Avventura differs from Bicycle Thief in its degree of abstraction. In other words, Anna's disappearance in L'Avventura is reduced to a play of desire centring around her absence and presence.

One can observe a zigzag pattern in the progress of Italian Neo-realist cinema: The struggle between the two dimensions, namely esotericism and exotericism, and the eventual dominance of the esoteric dimension effectively brought about the end of the Neorealist era.

This historical movent in Italian cinema exemplifies Habermas' project of modernity in reverse. In Habermas' terms, one can suggest that Italian Neorealism came close to integrating itself with the *life-world*. Its adherence to objective verisimilitude and commitment to social issues would establish Neo-realism as a form of art accessible to everyone. However, in opposition to Habermas' expectation of the progress of art towards exotericism, Italian cinema turned away from Neorealism and towards autonomy and esotericism. In Habermas' view, this can be defined as a disruption of the progress of modernity.

Habermas' primary concern about the completion of the project of modernity is not the *deferment* of the integration of

the autonomous spheres of society into the *life-world*, but the liquidation of, the project itself. He identifies postmodernism as the liquidation of the ideals of modernity.

It is the programmatic dismissal of the project of modernity by neo-conservatives, according to Habermas, which characterises their postmodern politics. In art, neo-conservatives claim that "...avant-garde art, having exhausted its creativity, has reached its end and is trapped revolving in unproductive circles".<sup>22</sup> Habermas also refers to the postmodern as a term used in the field of architecture and points out postmodern architecture's failure to hold to the spirit of avant-gardism. The task of modernity, is for him to fill the negative slogan of "postmodernism" with a positive content. By postmodernism, then, Habermas means a historically defined *post-modernism* where all the transformative potentials of modernity have collapsed.

### III

Jean-François Lyotard's position is a direct challenge to Habermas' thought. The question of modernity for Habermas is how to complete it, whereas for Lyotard the question is how to challenge modernity itself. Lyotard considers modernism a continuous subversion of language and other established forms of representation. Quoting one of Thierry de Duve's observations, Lyotard defines the modern aesthetic question not as "What is beautiful?" but "What can be said to be art (and literature)?"<sup>23</sup> Postmodernism, on the other hand, appears at a

point where modernist works fail to catch up with the ideas (ideologies, ideals, etc.,) they challenge. Postmodernism then, comes through the retardation of modernist practices. For Lyotard, postmodernism can only be understood in its dialectical confrontation with modernism. In other words postmodernism does not emerge after a break with modernism but comes forth by working through modernism: "Postmodernism thus understood is not modernism at its ends but in the nascent state, and this state is constant".<sup>24</sup>

Lyotard distinguishes two fundamentally different modes of representation in art: those conforming to the existing norms and those seeking alternative modes of representation. Instead of challenging the subversive functions of experiments in art, Lyotard observes, institutions utilise these innovations in order to enhance their own stability. He writes:

Photography did not appear as a challenge to painting from the outside any more than industrial cinema did to narrative literature. The former was only putting the final touch to the program of ordering the visible elaborated by the quattrocento; while the latter was the last step in rounding off the diachronies as organic wholes, which had been the ideal of the great novels of education since the eighteen century.<sup>25</sup>

In order not to become the supporter of existing norms of representation, Lyotard urges, the artist, or the mode of representation s/he puts forward, must refuse to obey them. When these rules are imposed by a totalitarian regime, the party provides the correct images, the correct narratives and forms.



When the party assumes power, as Lyotard maintains, realism and its complement neoclassicism overpowers the experimental avant-garde by banning or purging. When the power is that of capital, "trans-avantgardist" aesthetics as opposed to anti-modern aesthetics are supported by the conservative institutions of the society. Eclecticism, according to Lyotard, is the degree zero of contemporary cultures. In such societies the boundaries between high culture and popular culture are blurred. Lyotard describes this condition:

It is easy to find a public for eclectic works. By becoming kitsch, art panders to the confusion which reigns in the "taste" of the patrons. Artists, gallery owners, critics, and public wallow in the "anything goes," and the epoch is one of slackening...Such realism (anything goes) accommodates all tendencies, just as capital accommodates all "needs", providing that the tendencies and needs have purchasing power.<sup>26</sup>

Trans-avantgardism, according to Lyotard, is one application of this late-capitalist condition. Referring to Achille Bonito Oliva's definition of trans-avantgardism, Lyotard describes this tendency as a process of mixing experimental avantgardism with the culture industry, hence neutralising the subversive potential of experimentalism. This way of suppressing the avant-garde enables the artist and critic to avoid launching a frontal attack which would put them at risk of appearing neo-academic.

Lyotard's proposed alternative to these *conformist* tendencies in artistic representation is to support the *vital*

link between modernism and postmodernism. Drawing on Kant's notion of the *sublime*, Lyotard defines modernism as the aesthetics of the sublime. The sublime for Kant is the gap between the faculty of conceiving and the faculty of presenting an object in accordance with the concept. We have the ideas, no matter how simply, how big or powerful but we cannot illustrate or describe them. According to Kant, it is a strong and equivocal emotion: it carries with it both pleasure and pain. For Lyotard, Kant's idea of the sublime is the key element of modernist representation. In order to clarify the question of "how to make visible that there is something which cannot be seen" Lyotard quotes Exodus from Kant's text: "Thou shalt not make graven images." The prohibition of making *fake* images of the absolute stresses the point that *the absolute* is present in its sublime existence; nonetheless, *the relative*--as opposed to the absolute--can not grasp and represent the image. In the light of this example, Lyotard defines modernism as an attempt to represent the unrepresentable. In other words, the task of modernism is not just to defy established forms of representation, but to stress the point that the unrepresentable is challengeable. For Lyotard, the unrepresentable in modernism:

... will be "white" like one of Malevitch's squares; it will enable us to see only by making it impossible to see; it will please only by causing pain.<sup>27</sup>

Lyotard, describes two major paths taken by modernism. The first is what Lyotard calls *melancholic*. The melancholic marks the

limits of our faculty of presentation, hence reflects our nostalgia for presence. Among others, this path is taken up by German Expressionists, Malevitch, de Chirico and Proust. Lyotard takes Proust as an example of this direction in modernist representation. Proust challenges the tradition of novelistic writing by replacing the hero with the inner consciousness of time, thus undermining diegetic continuity by deferring the subsequent events of the novel. However, Lyotard suggests that in spite of the novel's consistent dispersal of the unity of the book and its deferral of the novelistic events, the novel rests within the foreclosed space of the novelistic tradition.

A cinematic equivalent of melancholia would be Abel Gance's Napoleon. As a modernist film, Gance's Napoleon avoids montage in the sense of Soviet film-makers, however, he builds up a vast mechanical composition of moments in each frame. In the use of the mobile camera, the camera introduces many images into one, with re-framing, and also makes a single image capable of expressing the whole theme of the film. In Napoleon, Gance "emancipates" the camera not just from its support on the ground but also from relationship with the man who carries it. In Napoleon, Gance brings to the screen the world as it appears to the characters engaged in excited action and violent physical movement. In the Corsican man-hunt sequence, the camera was lashed to one of the galloping horses to shoot the surrounding

countryside as it would have been seen by Napoleon. Later in the same sequence, the camera was placed in a water-proof box and hurled from the top of the cliffs into the sea, to record exactly the visual impression of Napoleon as he dived. More interestingly, as Deleuze suggests, he develops a concept called "simultaneous horizontal montage": On the one hand he uses the invention of the triple screen and polyvision, on the other hand, he takes his use of superimpositions to the extreme. By using a very large number of superimpositions, by introducing small temporal shifts between them, by adding and removing some overtime, Gance seems to be aware that the spectator will no longer be able to grasp what is superimposed. The imagination is surpassed, saturated, going beyond its limits. In this way he presents the feeling of the unlimited and immensity.<sup>28</sup> It is related to feeling of nostalgia because the spectator arrives to the borders and yet he/she can not quite grasp everything. It always remain beyond the spectator. And this perpetual displacement or deferral generates the feeling of melancholia of never arriving yet continually shifting. Like Napoleon, Gance as a modernist film-maker appears as the conqueror of all borders.

Inspite of all these, however, the film follows a straightforward story line-the rise of Napoleon. The film neither aims at subverting the logic of its linear narration nor seeks an alternative to its representation of a god-like Napoleon. In

short, Napoleon draws upon the codes of modernism, notably impressionism, rather than challenging its own representation.

The aesthetics of melancholia, then, is the aesthetics of the sublime. These works reflect a degree of nostalgia for presence. Lyotard writes:

It allows the unrepresentable to be put forward only as the missing contents; but the form, because of its recognizable consistency, continues to offer to the reader or the viewer matter for solace and pleasure.<sup>29</sup>

Lyotard's alternative to Proust or to the path of melancholia is novatio. As opposed to melancholia, novatio is a post-auratic practice in art. Its artistic practice is based on alienation, automatization and commodification. For Lyotard, Joyce's work typifies novatio. Instead of celebrating a distinguished style, Joyce's texts attempt to represent the unrepresentable by experimenting at the level of writing. By subverting the diegetic unity of the text, altering or undermining the grammatical rules and altering the vocabulary, Joyce's texts continuously seek alternatives to resist established styles in writing.

For Lyotard, the aesthetics of melancholia are not subversive enough to challenge modernity. In spite of their offering of solace and pleasure in the manner of Malevitch's White on white, these works remain within the tradition of modernity. The works of novatio, on the other hand, challenge the

very tradition of modernity. At this point, Lyotard defines the practices of *novatio* as postmodern.

The postmodern would be that which, in the modern, puts forward the unrepresentable in the presentation itself; that which denies itself the solace of good forms, the consensus of a taste which would make it possible to share collectively the nostalgia for the unattainable; that which searches for new presentations, not in order to enjoy them, but in order to impart a stronger sense of the unrepresentable.<sup>30</sup>

While modernist works are created through their intention towards the aesthetics of the sublime, the postmodern interpret, attack, and demystify the institutionalized aspects of modernist works in order to challenge modernism itself. For Lyotard, then, the postmodern artist is the forerunner of modernist aesthetics:

The artist and the writer, then, are working without rules in order to formulate the rules of what *will have been done*. Hence the fact that work and text have the characters of an *event*; hence also, they always come too late for their author, or, what amounts to the same thing, their being put into work, their realisation, (*mise en oeuvre*) always being too soon. *Post modern* would have to be understood according to the paradox of the future (*post*) anterior (*modo*).<sup>31</sup>

At this point, Lyotard calls for a war against the ideologies of totalisation and the liquidation of modernism such as trans-avantgardism. I will discuss the issues of cultural politics in relation to Lyotard's notion of postmodernism in the second part of this chapter.

#### IV

Lyotard and Habermas see postmodernism as the radical other

of modernism while Fredric Jameson regards postmodernism as a historical break from it. However, postmodernism is not, for Jameson, a break in a linear continuity of modernism, but a complex transformation of capitalist societies. Postmodernism is not just a movement or an aesthetic style, but an entire transformation of culture, of representation and subjectivity. In short postmodernism represents a turning point in history. Following Ernest Mandel's formulation of capitalism's historical phases, Jameson links postmodernity with late capitalism:

There have been three moments in capitalism, each one marking a dialectical expansion over the previous stage: these are market capitalism, the monopoly stage or the stage of imperialism, and our own--wrongly called postindustrial, but what might better be termed multinational capital.<sup>32</sup>

Relying on Mandel's periodisation of capitalism, Jameson suggests a corresponding development in cultural sphere. According to this scheme, cultures also follow three major stages, namely: realism, modernism and postmodernism.

Jameson suggests there are two major characteristics in postmodernism. The first is not an internal, but an external one. It is a specific *reaction* which emerged in the 1960s against the institutionalisation of modernism as exemplified by Abstract Expressionism. In museums, universities and art foundations, the formerly subversive styles of modernism, he maintains, were canonized. The second characteristic is the *erosion* of the old distinction between high-art and popular culture. Here, Jameson

describes the invasion of the former cultural territories by mass culture. The traditional investment of so-called high or elite culture in canonical modernism is simply impoverished by the emergence of kitsch, television series and Reader's Digest culture. The landscape of advertising, paperback novels of science fiction, fantasy and romance, Grade-B Hollywood films, etc., marked the emergence of a full scale postmodern culture. Jameson suggests that these cultural products no longer maintain the ironic duality between high culture and popular culture as for example in the works of Gustav Mahler and James Joyce. Rather, they absorb and utilise high culture to the point where the borderline cannot be drawn any more.

In addition to these two characteristics, Jameson observes a new phase in the technical discourses of professional philosophy which is even different from relatively recent philosophical discourses such as Sartre's existential thought, phenomenological thought or the work of Wittgenstein. Contemporary theory, such as poststructuralism, marks the end of the rigid categories and genres of classical philosophical discourses without necessarily dismissing their content. Jameson's example is the work of Foucault which can at one and the same time be considered philosophy, history, social theory or political science. Hence the uncertainties of the boundaries of theoretical discourses can also be regarded as the



manifestations of postmodernism. This line of argument is further developed by Gregory L. Ulmer. He suggests that poststructuralist theory and its writing practice is being transformed in the same way that art and literature were transformed by modernist movements. According to Ulmer, the application of modern art such as Dadaist assemblage, montage, the use of allegory, and the critique of mimetic representation are turned into *paraliterature* as a hybrid of theory, criticism, fiction art and science as in the works by Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida. One additional example to Ulmer's would be Umberto Eco's The Name of the Rose.

Jameson links the disappearance of *depth* in society as the major feature of both postmodernism and contemporary poststructuralist theory. He describes this interaction in the following passage:

The exposition will take up in the following constitutive features of the postmodern: a new depthlessness, which finds its prolongation both in contemporary 'theory' and in a whole new culture of the image or the simulacrum; a consequent weakening of history both in our relationship to public History and in the new forms of our private temporality, whole 'schizophrenic' structures (following Lacan) will determine new types of syntax or syntagmatic relationships in the more temporal arts; a whole new type of emotional ground tone--what I will call 'intensities'--which can best be grasped by a return to older theories of the sublime; the deep constitutive relationships of all this to a whole new technology, which is itself a figure for a whole new economic world system; and, after a brief account of postmodernist mutations in the lived experience of built space itself, some reflections on the mission of political art in the bewildering new world space of late multinational capital.<sup>33</sup>

While Jameson sees poststructuralist theory as a postmodern establishment in the sense that it lacks depth, he also claims that (post)structuralist rejection of hermeneutics is in fact another way of affirming the very process of interpretation. Jameson espouses and elaborates marxist hermeneutics in a twofold way. On the one hand he adheres to a Marxist conception of the dialectics between superstructure and infra structure in order to formulate postmodernism as a reflection of late-capitalism. However, Jameson's adherence to Marx's model should not be taken in a linear sense as his model applies to two strata of the superstructure, namely: a "relative autonomy" of the superstructure with respect to the infra-structure, and a "reciprocal action" of the superstructure on the infra-structure.<sup>34</sup> On the other hand, by crossing the boundaries of the works of Lacan, Foucault, Lyotard, Deleuze and Guattari, he brings forward a *post-structuralist* model in order to interpret and diagnose the cultural formation of society and its present cultural dominant, postmodernism. By cultural dominant, Jameson means a force field through which different kinds of cultural impulses, residual or emergent forms reside in the forefront of the culture. The three characteristics of postmodernism, namely the reaction against the legacy of high-modernism, the blurring of boundaries between high-culture and popular culture and finally poststructuralist discourse as postmodern discourse, act as the cultural dominant of the society. The third characteristic

of the postmodern dominant--the uncertainties between the genres and disciplines of philosophical, sociological and literary discourses apply to Jameson's approach itself as he crosses the boundaries between major academic discourses and utilises the core of post structuralist theory in order to formulate his notion of postmodernism.

Jameson relates these three aspects of postmodernity with the historical impoverishment of unified subjects. According to Jameson, postmodern works reflect the decay or the absence of their self-reflexivity, which is one of the major characteristics of modernist works. In order to illustrate this difference Jameson compares an early modern work--Edvard Munch's painting The Scream--and the work of Andy Warhol. Munch's painting represents an autonomous bourgeois monad, to use Jameson's term, whereas Warhol's paintings reflect the death of such a monad-subject. The Scream contains the major characteristics of modernist paintings such as for example the inner loneliness of the subject. The gesture reflects the scream itself and yet the *silence* of the medium imprisons the action within it. The picture's aim to depict the inner self in pain in a manner reminiscent of Lyotard's conception of the sublime paradoxically indicates the self-conscious impossibility of representing the autonomous bourgeois monad and thus addresses the existence of another subject-monad: the painter. Jameson defines his reading

of Munch's The Scream and Van Gogh's Peasant Shoes as hermeneutic, since both pictures depict their subjects in their *inert, objectal form*, to use his own description. They are interpreted as the truth effect of an extra-pictorial reality. Jameson then moves on to the work of Warhol and suggests that anxiety, alienation and the unified subjectivity of the artist are no longer appropriate in the postmodern world. Warhol's paintings, such as Diamond Dust Shoes, Campbell soup cans or the portraits of Marilyn Monroe do not contain any deeper meaning other than their physical appearance. In other words scratching the surface does not reveal any deeper meaning but the surface itself, or as Jameson puts it in reference to Diamond Dust Shoes:

There is therefore in Warhol no way to complete the hermeneutic gesture, and to restore to these oddments that whole larger lived context of the dance hall or the ball, the world of jetset fashion or of glamour magazines.<sup>35</sup>

The superfluosness of these works does not consist in any content but in a major transformation both in representation and in the artist's subjectivity. However, these two transformations are related. The modernist subject is based on the historical introjection of an autonomous monadic identity. Style is regarded as a signature of the subject's unique personality. As Jameson describes it: "Great modernisms were, as we have said, predicated on the invention of a personal, private style, as unmistakable as your fingerprint, as incomparable as your own body".<sup>36</sup>

Jameson maintains two theories to explain why this historical notion of subjectivity decayed. The first suggests that the historically centred subject vanished in the period of late capitalism where individual styles are absorbed and marginalised by the culture industry. Hence, originality and self-style become increasingly difficult. The second theory maintains that such a subject never existed in the first place. All the assumptions of an autonomous individual were nothing but an historical illusion. Either way, according to Jameson, there is no longer any possibility of producing genuinely self-reflexive works in the fashion of modernism. The first result of decay is the increasing appropriation and blend of historical styles by the works, including modernism. The second result of the decay of self-reflexivity are the discontinuities and lack of coherence in works. In other words, works are no longer created according to modernist styles, but produced with panoply of miss-contextualization and discontinuities. Jameson defines the first characteristic of works as pastiche and the second as schizophrenia.

Pastiche is the final result of the disappearance of individual styles. Referring to Adorno's polarisation of the music of Schoenberg and Stravinsky, Jameson suggests that his dismissal of Stravinsky's eclectic combination of traditional music, wedding and dance music along with his own music as a dead

style defines the strategy of pastiche. Both parody and pastiche imitate other styles, in particular the mannerisms and the significant characteristics of other styles. Parody puts the other styles in brackets and then foregrounds their characteristic features in order to *mock* the original. Jameson points out that the satiric impulse is not always conscious in all forms of parody. One of the basic characteristics of parody is its interdependence with the original. One can only get the parodic message if there is a reference to the original. However, the modernist practices of parody undergo a degree of impoverishment as these distinctive styles are neutralised and utilised by mainstream culture. At this point all the historical practices of modernism become available to the market. The distance between popular culture and high-art becomes narrower and, as Jameson puts it, pastiche eclipses parody. Pastiche marks the death of parody and the end of modernism, while modernist styles become postmodernist codes. These codes are proliferated and sustained by professional and disciplinary jargons and utilised as the signifieds of the modernist heritage. This process, according to Jameson, indicates the reification of Adorno's concerns about popular culture in a negative way: As opposed to Schoenberg's music which resists conformation to popular culture, Stravinsky's music with its eclectic combination of popular music and classical forms anticipates the emergence of postmodernism.<sup>37</sup> As a result our relationship to the past is

also altered. Jameson argues that the organic genealogy of our collective past is reduced to a spectacle or a multidivisional photographic simulacrum.

One of the most characteristic aspects of pastiche, according to Jameson, can be seen in 'nostalgia films'. Nostalgia films emerge as a reaction to a disappearing sense of historicity in late capitalist society. Nostalgia, here, is no longer understood as a modernist experiment to capture memories as in Proust's Remembrance of Things Past, but as a reactionary attempt to represent the past as a spectacle. I will come back to the significance of narration in Remembrance of Things Past later when I discuss the relationship between modernist aspects of authorship and parody. In fact the works of Proust or Virginia Woolf do not attempt to represent the past in the manner of a tableau. On the contrary, such texts struggle to capture the past as Lyotard's conception of melancholia. In the context of modernism, Gérard Genette describes Proust's notion of lost time in the following passage:

For Proust, lost time is not... "past" time, but *time in its pure state*, which is really to say, through the fusion of a present moment and a past moment, the contrary of passing time: *the extra-temporal, eternity.*<sup>38</sup>

Nostalgia films, on the other hand, relinquish such modernist attempts. What they represent is not time in its authentic sense, but a blurred image of the past in contemporary culture. Within

the American context, Jameson's examples are the films representing the ideology of a generation such as American Graffiti, or a specific culture, such as "the first naive innocence of the counter-cultural impulses of early rock-and-roll and youth gangs as in Coppola's Rumble Fish." Jameson stresses the fact that nostalgia films do not aim at imitating an old fashion or a style. Instead, these films codify the past in their representation in the sense of Barthes' idea of connotation. Through the exploitation of what Barthes' termed the referential codes the films superficially represent 'pastness', styles of other film genres, '1930s-ness' and so on. A good example to illustrate this process would be Warren Beatty's Dick Tracy. The film does not only represent the 1930s' through its adaptation of a cartoon genre from the 1930s, but also through its usage of the settings, cars and costumes. More interestingly it mixes the codes of certain historical film genres such as the film-noir and expressionist cinema. Furthermore, it employs animated scenes in order to dissolve the boundaries of cinema and the comic strip. Jameson considers that both films depicting historical subjects and films like Star Wars can be seen as nostalgia films. The question is not to make reference to the past, as he argues, but to mingle the codes of our past culture and contemporary codes. In this respect, Star Wars recycles old examples of science fiction serials such as Flash Gordon or Buck Rogers through its serial form, its characterisation of alien villains versus clean



cut American heroes, the saturation of ray gun scenes and perhaps most importantly, its echoing of the 1950s cold war metaphor: an evil alien empire embodying the communists. Intertextuality is then one of the most characteristic elements of nostalgia films. However, this intertextuality does not only refer to a mixture of styles, but to the blurring of our sense of historicity. The high-tech representation of the past in Dick Tracy or the reshuffling of the styles of past and present in Kasdan's Body Heat are the end results of the alienation from history. Jameson may have been influenced by Lukács' definition of the loss of historicity as a schizophrenic symptom of capitalist societies. This would explain why Jameson chooses pastiche and schizophrenia as the two major characteristics of our late-capitalist culture.

Jameson's second symptom of postmodernity is schizophrenia. He argues that our culture is increasingly dominated by temporal arts, by the practices of *écriture* and textuality as opposed to spatial arts. Temporal arts depending upon the syntagmatic organisation of the works, according to Jameson, are deeply affected by a new phase in our culture: schizophrenia. Jameson regards schizophrenia as a description of cultural activities rather than as the diagnosis of the society or individual

artists. Following Lacan, Jameson considers schizophrenia as a breakdown in the process of signification and defines it as an "isolated, disconnected, discontinuous, material signifier which fails to link up into a coherent sequence".<sup>39</sup> Jameson argues that the result of this break is the transformation of the signifieds into meaning-effects. A new form of signification is created and put forward through the interaction of the signifier, which is the "schizophrenia in the form of a rubble of distinct and unrelated signifiers"<sup>40</sup> As a result, the sense of temporality and orientation vanishes.

The most problematic part of Jameson's argument is his reading of contemporary texts as reflections of a disoriented chaotic state of society where individuals lose their sense of temporality, memory and history. In order to justify the link between schizophrenia and representation, Jameson considers this model as a product of our consumer society. In such a consumer society, individuals are unable to assign the signifiers any temporal and spatial fixed points of identity and reference". It is not clear how the failure of temporality or the breakdown of the linguistic order can be applied to society. Jameson repeatedly stresses that he is not suggesting that the works of some contemporary artists such as John Cage, John Ashbery, Philippe Sollers, Andy Warhol, Michael Snow or Samuel Beckett are schizophrenic; however, he does not clarify how their *écriture*

is affected by schizophrenia. The problem can be seen clearly in Jameson's reading of Bob Parelman's poem China. Jameson's view is that it is 'schizophrenic'. In so far as there is no one-to-one relationship between the fragmented schizophrenic work and an individual's perception of it, it is possible to read it coherently, provided that the reader is not part of the schizophrenic system. I will come back to this point during my overall discussion on postmodern parody.

Both pastiche and schizophrenia for Jameson mark the end of individuality. Unlike the subjects of the modernist period, postmodern subjects no longer resist the lack of depth and historicity in society. Postmodernism does not only lack the critical nature of modernism, but it becomes part of the logic of consumer capitalism. Like Habermas, Jameson dismisses postmodernism as the loss of modernity. Let me now bring together the major issues in the postmodernism debate as introduced by Habermas, Lyotard and Jameson and more recent additions which have introduced other aspects to the debate.

## V

The work of Peter Bürger and Andreas Huyssen suggest certain similarities between the historical avant-garde and postmodernism from the point of view of cultural politics. Bürger points out that Habermas uses the term modernity and avant-garde

synonymously, and in doing so he follows Adorno's usage of the term. One of the most important aspects of Bürger's work is his clarification of the distinction between modernism and the avant-garde. He argues that the major goal of art movements such as Dadaism, Surrealism and post-revolutionary Soviet art was to re-integrate art and life, bridging the gap between the two. Bürger sees this gap becoming apparent as a result of the logical development of the 19th century. The role of the avant-garde in the 20th century then had been to destroy what Bürger calls institution art. Bürger's notion of the institution art here refers to the 'apartness' of art from the life-world. He links this 19th century aestheticism with the institutionalized bourgeois notions of unified, self-centred subjectivity. In the case of the individualised production of the avant-garde work, he points out the same danger of an institutionalization. Focusing on the work of Marcel Duchamp, whose work implies a dismissal of institution art, Bürger points out a further stage which describes the institutionalized position of the artist:

If an artist today signs a stove pipe and exhibits it, that artist certainly does not denounce the art market but adapts to it. Such adaptation does not eradicate the idea of individual creativity, it affirms it and the reason is the failure of the avant-gardist intent to sublimate art.<sup>41</sup>

As a result of this adaptation, Bürger concludes that the historical avant-garde exhausts its subversive value. Accordingly, its repeated applications lose their historical significance.

Andreas Huyssen's work furthers Bürger's points and points out some crucial parallelism between the avant-garde and postmodernism. According to Huyssen, postmodernism is not a liquidation of the modernist project, as Habermas argues, but a continuation of several projects launched by the historical avant-garde. To Huyssen, the differentiation between the historical avant-garde and modernism in their respective discourses can be recast as the opposition between postmodern and late-modern discourses. As Huyssen formulates this point:

What I am calling the Great Divide is the kind of discourse which insists on the categorical distinction between high art and mass culture...The discourse of the Great Divide has been dominant primarily in two periods, first in the last decades of the 19th century and in the first few years of the 20th century, and then again in the two decades or so following the World War II.<sup>42</sup>

Huyssen draws a parallel between the project of the historical avant-garde and postmodern cultural practice in their common aim to merge high art and popular culture. Although postmodern cultural practice has emerged as a commodified and affirmative culture opposed to the political orientations of the historical avant-garde, both the avant-garde and postmodernism seek to subvert the autonomous status of high-art.

Huyssen also points out "a secret bond between avant-garde and official culture in advanced societies".<sup>43</sup> Once the works of avant-garde are neutralised by consumer societies and reduced to their self-image, as he maintains, they live a half life on

Television documentaries, and on exhibitions or on record covers and so on. In a parallel development, the market absorbs the avant-garde and subversive artists and allows them to perform within the commodified peripheries of official culture.

At first sight it seems possible to group these theories in terms of their rejection or espousal of postmodernism. This is where I would like to locate the ideological positions of the thinkers whose works I have discussed so far. After an initial reading, Habermas and Jameson seem to agree in their dismissal of postmodernism, while Lyotard appears to celebrate it. Jameson may agree with Habermas in his consideration of the emancipatory role of modernism as well as his criticism of postmodernism. However, he does not urge the revitalisation of the Enlightenment, nor does he see any critical power to modernism in contemporary societies. Jameson does not see postmodernism as the liquidation of modernism, but as a failure to resist commodification. As a result, modernism does not simply die, but follows the transformation of society in an affirmative manner. In the updated version of his 1983 paper, Jameson considers the possibility of a political postmodernism. Although he confesses an uncertainty about its potential existence, he anticipates its role in society as having to withhold the truth of postmodernism and "...will have as its vocation the invention and projection of a global cognitive mapping, on a social as well as a spatial

scale".<sup>44</sup> Like Lyotard, he sees political postmodernism as a challenge.

While Jameson merely describes the symptoms of postmodernism, Lyotard sees postmodernism as a loss of belief in modernist projects. For Lyotard, there are two kinds of narratives legitimising *knowledge* throughout History. Knowledge (*savoir*), according to Lyotard, "...is a question of competence that goes beyond the simple determination and application of the criterion of truth, extending to the determination and application of criteria of efficiency (technical qualification), of justice and/or happiness (ethical wisdom), of the beauty of a sound or color (auditory and visual sensibility), etc."<sup>45</sup> Knowledge is historically legitimised in two distinct ways. Lyotard defines the traditional way in terms of grand narratives (*grand récits*), a system of knowledge justifying its validity with reference to myths. The modern way or meta-narratives (*métarécits*), is defined in terms of positivism, universal projects and progress. In brief, he defines modernism as meta-narrative, and postmodernism as an incredulity towards meta-narratives. In this respect he attacks Habermas on the grounds that he merely adds another meta-narrative to existing ones without questioning its own validity. In his criticism of Habermas, Lyotard maintains:

Postmodern knowledge is not simply a tool of the authorities; it refines our sensitivity to differences and reinforces our ability to tolerate the incommensurable. Its principle is not the expert's

homology, but the inventor's parology.<sup>46</sup>

As I mentioned, previously, the presence of novatio in art is considered postmodern. In Lyotard's view, the practices of novatio will resist the support of transavantgardism as a metanarrative. However, Lyotard does not specify the chances of the survival of novatio in advanced societies where the avant-garde is absorbed and re-legitimised as official culture by society. Considering Huyssen's observation of the bond between avant-garde and official culture, it is not clear how novatio can maintain its resistance against trans-avantgardism without becoming part of it. There is a similarity between Lyotard's description of transavantgardism and Jameson's observation of pastiche in advanced societies. Just as Lyotard defines transavantgardism as the liquidation of the heritage of avantgardism, Jameson also defines pastiche as an artistic activity, practising the dead styles of modernism and re-generating its self image. Once again, it is not clear how Lyotard's optimistic urge to war against totality, the activation of the differences and saving the honour of the name, can be realised if institutions and culture industry internalises and espouses avantgardism.

Certain texts draw upon and re-work the existing codes of not only modernism but of popular culture beyond the politics of emancipation. Juzo Itami's Tampopo is a clear example of these



codes merging with one other. As a postmodern film Tampopo not only reflects the way in which Japanese and Western cultures intertwine, but also makes complex references to certain genres of American and European films as well as to modernism. For example, one of the most complex and oblique series of references occur during the appearance of the spectator and the *meta-hero* of the film. His desire for food and sex is accompanied by Gustav Mahler's fifth symphony. Later, the themes of blood and death are used as a leitmotif as in Visconti's Death in Venice. In short, Tampopo does not only create metaphors of western and eastern popular culture, by contrasting spaghetti westerns and Japanese karate/noodle masters, but it also parodies modernism via Death in Venice, which is itself a re-working of modernism.

The main difference between Death in Venice and Tampopo is not only in the former's more specific and closer tracing of the codes of modernism as opposed to the latter's more eclectic way of dealing with a wide array of codes but is in both film's discursive response towards modernism and popular culture as well. The above mentioned examples suggests that late-modern texts aim to maintain the supremacy of modernist high-art, while postmodern texts tend to dissolve the boundaries between high-art and popular culture. One can trace the polarized status of late-modernism and postmodernism back to the conflicting relationship between modernism and the historical avant-garde. In other words,

there are continuities in the aims of modernism and late-modernism on the one hand, and the avant-garde and postmodernism on the other. Although, the continuities between modernism and late-modernism seem straightforward, this straightforwardness does not smoothly apply to the link between the avant-garde and postmodernism. Whereas the historical avant-garde movements, such as Surrealism, Dadaism, Futurism and Constructivism were linked with political projects, postmodernism did not emerge as a politically motivated movement.

Postmodernism is not a movement, as was the historical avant-garde. In spite of the fact that postmodernism shares the same culturally subversive function as the avant-garde, it functions as an affirmative cultural condition. In this regard, Hal Foster posits the existence of two paradigms of postmodernism. Namely: a postmodernism of reaction and a postmodernism of resistance.<sup>47</sup> Postmodernism of reaction is defined as the repudiation of modernism. It is the global internalising and utilising of avant-garde styles in the manner of Madonna's video clips echoing dadaist collage works, or Warren Beatty's exhibitionist Dick Tracy or Television series of Moonlighting as a pseudo self-reflexive narration which characterise reactionary postmodernism. Postmodernism of resistance, according to Foster, "seeks to deconstruct modernism and resist the status quo" and desires "to change the object and

its social context". Examples of it would be the films of Jean-Luc Godard, the music of Laurie Anderson and the novels of Angela Carter, Joanna Russ or Samuel Delany. A further elaboration of this distinction is to link the postmodernism of reaction with the practices of pastiche and the postmodernism of resistance with parody. This line of argument is taken by the theoreticians such as Fredric Jameson, Hal Foster, and Linda Hutcheon.

However, it would be contradiction to regard the possibility of resistance within postmodern context because the concept as used by Foster echoes modernist theory. The term obliterates the distinction between the movements of the historical avant-garde such as surrealism, futurism, dadaism and their postmodern counterparts. Even Adorno's notion of modernist negation suggests resistance. To consider postmodern works as a form of resistance is thus misleading, since postmodernism operates *beyond* the avant-garde politics of emancipation. The problem with the term "postmodernism of resistance" is related to the consideration of 1970s culture as homogeneously affirmative. According to this line of argument, as elaborated by Jameson,<sup>48</sup> the culture of the 1960s was political and subversive while the culture from the 1970s onwards underwent a process of commodification and became affirmative. This reflectionist definition of culture as a symptom of capitalism itself is historically dated. Taking such an approach, according

to Huyssen, is to become the Lukács of the postmodern.<sup>49</sup> Even within affirmative peripheries of postmodern cultures, there are discontinuities, self-subversive elements and more importantly, intertwined territories of contemporary politics, progressive movements and sub-cultures. Such intertwined cultural peripheries then, are taken for granted by certain kinds of artists whose works go beyond the categories of the historical avant-garde. For example, the films of Jean-Luc Godard or Pier Paolo Pasolini can no longer be defined in terms of being progressive or affirmative. Although one can see the presence of politically progressive discourses in Godard's films, these elements are intermingled with extra-diegetic quotations such as advertisement clips, interviews and inter-titles. Unlike Brecht's explicitly structured plays, Godard's self-conscious eclecticism blurs the political aims of his films. However, Godard's films also resist the possibilities of an affirmative reading. No matter how contingently arranged, the combination of the fragments of political discourses and of cultural opposition are located within texts themselves. While Brecht's plays utilise a brothel in The Three Penny Opera or a stockyard in St. John of the Stockyards as metaphors of capitalism, Godard's films undermine this hierarchical relationship between capitalism and its metaphors. Although his films also use metaphors, these metaphors themselves are fragmented and almost randomly mixed with other elements. In spite of the fact that these films lack emancipatory

projects as in the case of the historical avant-garde or as in Brecht's plays, they provoke the spectator's relationship with political and cultural eclecticism. In this way, Godard's films bring forth incredulities about the historically dated forms of representation as meta-narratives, to use Lyotard's term. Instead of launching a rather reductive attack against the social order, they challenge representation itself. Godard's films, then, function in a manner similar to Lyotard's notion of *novatio*.

## VI

A further aspect of the debate between postmodernism of reaction and postmodernism of resistance is related to "postmodern parody". As I showed previously, Jameson regrets the loss of modernist parody and defines the postmodern condition partly as the eclipse of parody by pastiche. Arguing the death of parody and the emergence of pastiche as characterizing the arrival of postmodernity, convenient as it may be within the general purport of Jameson's argument have arisen many counter-arguments about the place of parody in postmodern works. Two of the major criticism of Jameson's notion of postmodern pastiche came from Margaret A. Rose and Linda Hutcheon. Rose criticises the way Jameson uses the terms pastiche and parody as allowing him to distinguish postmodern works from those of the modern ones. Rose points out that Jameson not only distorts the historical contexts of pastiche and parody but also blurs the characteristics of postmodern and modern works.<sup>50</sup> Hutcheon, on

the other hand, criticises Jameson on the basis that postmodern works are neither ahistorical, nor are they imitations of dead styles in the sense of pastiche. Instead, according to Hutcheon, postmodern parody is a "value-problematizing, de-naturalizing form of acknowledging the history (and through irony, the politics) of representations."<sup>51</sup>

I will argue that postmodern texts furthers the avant-gardist use of parody while modernist texts develop a an ironic strategy that marks the presence of the author. In order to elaborate on this point I will first distinguish the modernist strategies of irony from the avant-gardist use of parody. The major difference between modernism and the avant-garde, as I have outlined, is the former's preservation of the autonomy of art and the latter's aim at subverting these aims. The task of the historical avant-garde then is twofold. On the one hand, the historical avant-garde aimed at subverting the mimetic tradition of art and 19th century aestheticism as much as modernism did. On the other hand, however, the historical avant-garde went *beyond* the aims of modernism in order to fight the autonomisation and the institutionalization of modernist movements. As part of my overall project I will attempt to show the links between modern and late-modern texts on the one hand and the avant-garde and postmodern texts on the other. I will also relate this to their use of parody.

One of the major characteristics of the avant-garde use of parody is to foreground the hidden conventions of texts; or as the Russian Formalists define it 'baring of the device'. As Yuri Tynyanov formulates this process:

The essence of parody lies in its mechanisation of a certain device, where this mechanisation is naturally only to be noticed when the device which it 'mechanises' is known. In this way parody fulfils a double task: 1) the mechanisation of a certain device and 2) the organisation of new material, to which the old, mechanised device also belongs.<sup>52</sup>

The mechanisation of a certain device and the organisation of new material through the utilisation of the mechanised device applies to the avant-garde texts while a foregrounded use of irony characterizes modernist texts. According to Jonathan Culler, parody pertains to the opposition of different sets of conventions in texts while irony operates at the semantic level of a text, undermining the coherent meaning of the texts. In other words, parody involves the form of the texts and plays with the conventions of the texts whereas irony concerns the foregrounding of its own utterance. Culler describes the ironist strategy by citing Kierkegaard: "The true ironist does not wish to be understood, and though true ironist may be rare we can at least say that irony always offers the possibility of misunderstanding."<sup>53</sup> Irony then constitute a second voice in the text that contrasts with the dominant meaning of the text. In

modernist texts irony plays an enunciative role that marks the presence of its author whose inscription into the text makes counterpoints with the stable meaning of the text. One of the major characteristics of modernist works, however, is their hierarchical organization in which the authorial voice always undermines the semantic unity of the text. As a result, this process also foregrounds the "presentness" of the author.

In a modernist text such as Proust's Remembrance of Things Past the narration of the novel is based on the unfolding of the narrator's inner consciousness. As I mentioned previously the narrator's *remembrance* constantly defers the subsequent events of the novel. There is, however, a hierarchical structure in the novel and the authority of the narrator is never undermined. Similarly, in paintings of Ludwig Kirschner, Oskar Kokoshchka and Giorgio de Chirico, in writings of Thomas Mann and T.S.Eliot and in films of Germaine Dulac, Carl Dreyer or Fritz Murnau, the authorial voice remains a dominant element. The emphasis on the narrator, marking the presence of a living person—a unified subject as an artist or a cineaste behind the work is not the only characteristic of modernist irony. Another characteristic is the use of quotations from other texts and/or styles. The reader may or may not know the source of the extra-diegetic quotations or may even fail to recognise the presence of these quotations. Gustav Mahler's symphonies, for example, constantly



make references to the works of other composers most notably Bach, Beethoven and Wagner. Similarly the novels and the novellas of Thomas Mann make references both to the works and the personalities of Goethe, Nietzsche, Mahler and Schoenberg. Usually, it is not the primary concern of the author whether the extra-diegetic references are understood by the reader.

There is yet another modernist strategy in which the author ironically implies his/her presence by narrating the events elliptically. The first person narrator in Remembrance of Things Past is not the author. Further, Remembrance of Things Past is not a novel of a searching hero. Instead, like the reader, the narrator too searches for the truth. As Wayne C. Booth shows, the first person narrator, Marcel, in Proust's Remembrance of Things Past brings the reader into his own confusion throughout the novel until he discovers art, life, truth and memory which Proust, the extra-diegetic narrator already is aware of. Booth argues that the real ending of the novel is not the resolution of the novelistic events but Marcel's possession of the knowledge which he has been searching for. The final chapter of the novel, hence, brings the real closure of the work: the completion of Marcel's search. Booth writes:

It might be argued that since the "I" differs from Proust himself, the concluding novel-length personal essay is after all, "Marcel's," not the author's. But the whole point of Marcel's disquisition is that he has at last come to the truth about life and art—the truth which Proust himself holds. Though some of the

striking differences between the author and his narrator remain through this final section, the intellectual differences are left behind: author, narrator and reader must see the truth together if the chapter is to succeed as Proust intends.<sup>54</sup>

The play with double narration in Remembrance of Things Past is only ironic. The narrator Marcel postpones the revelation of truth through his own confusions until the end of the book. At the end of the book, however, the texts transcends his knowledge arriving at the level of the author of Remembrance of Things Past. At the final stage then, Remembrance of Things Past emphasizes the presence of its author by bringing Marcel's knowledge to the level of the récit.

The function of irony in late-modern texts is not radically different except that they no longer attempt to emphasize the transcendentalism of their author. Instead, late-modern texts take the practices of modern works for granted and play with the idea of self-reflexivity. Late-modern texts do not attempt to establish their authorial presence in the texts in the manner of classical modernism. This had already been accomplished. Instead, late-modern texts play with the theme and variations of the idea of authorial reflexivity. Fellini's 8 1/2 reflects the existence of the author of 8 1/2 in the film itself by making autobiographical references to Fellini's childhood; it also makes tangential references to his other films. Furthermore, another film-maker, Guido, wants to make an ideal film in addition to a

commercial film which he is already in the process of making. This second film-maker, however, is not a "searching hero" or a narrative agent as in Orson Welles' Citizen Kane or Andrzej Wajda's The Man of Marble. On the contrary, 8 1/2 establishes a circular reflexivity between the diegetic film-maker and Fellini himself. Ironically enough, Guido's frustration with his Marxist scriptwriter, Daumier, makes an autobiographical reference to Fellini who, during the late Fifties attacked the tradition of Neo-realism and asserted the demiurgic status of film-makers. 8 1/2, thus, not only portrays a film about film-making but also reflects the diegetic world of Guido back upon the level of the récit: namely Fellini's 8 1/2. The film in the film, in other words, is 8 1/2 itself. Christian Metz formulates this in the following passage:

Reflections of a cineaste on the reflections of a (different?) cineaste in the process of making a film different from the one that the first is in the process of making, but which will nevertheless become such at the end and double "art within art" construction of all of the filmic unfolding, which deliberately mixes images of several different 'degrees': 8 1/2 by Fellini.<sup>55</sup>

The self-reflexive mechanism of 8 1/2, however, is not radically different from Proust's Remembrance of Things Past. Just as Marcel's process of understanding things brings him to the knowledge of Proust's, (hence his narration reflects the récit of Proust), the diegetic world of 8 1/2 too re-produces the overall image of 8 1/2 including Fellini as the author of the

film.

The identity of late-modern works then lies in their identification with modernist self-reflexivity. In doing so, late-modern works fulfil the historical tasks of modernism. By continuing to produce self-reflexive forms of art, late-modern works also generate ironic utterances in the modernist sense. The works I cited go beyond the reflexivity of device and create a double reflection between the work of art and an imaginary work of art which represents the totality of the work and its author. On the other hand, the creation of self-reflexive works as diadic unities between author and work reaffirm the autonomous status of late-modern works. In this way the unity of the work and its author in a closed system maintain the disinterestedness of the work of art with both popular culture and Habermas' notion of *life-world*.

A direct challenge to the autonomous practices of modernism are the practices of the historical avant-garde. The avant-garde movements such as Surrealism, Dadaism and Futurism fought against the self-enclosed practices of modernism. The subversion of the autonomist art along with other institutions by the avant-garde movements, I will argue, links the avant-garde with postmodernism. Part of the historical task of the avant-garde, as I argued, is to subvert the high-art status of modernist art.

These avant-garde movements not only remained artistic practices but their impact was enhanced by their manifestos and by the intellectual formulations of the theoreticians of these movements. Russian Futurism, for example, emerged within the interactive context of the 1917 revolution, international avant-gardism and Russian Formalist theory. One of the major characteristics of Russian Formalism, which also applies to Dadaism and Surrealism is to use language and popular culture as the raw material for artistic production. In this respect, the productivist theory of factography, creative practices based on factual writings, can be regarded as an extension of Russian Formalism. Mayakovsky's post-revolutionary poetry, for example, was characterized by the adoption of the non-literary models of political leaflets or advertisements.

Futurist poets dislocated words from their grammatical and syntactical orderings and reduced their semantic content into mere sounds, insisting in the self-sufficiency of words. In their manifesto, Slap in the Face of Public Taste, poets Khlebnikov and Kruchonykh encouraged poets to:

enlarge the vocabulary of the people with factitious  
and fabricated words...Declare boundless loathing for  
[ the language handed down to us .<sup>56</sup>

In this way , Russian Formalists aimed at distorting the traditional forms of, not only poetry but, all forms of

literature, theatre and cinema. Like the way Khlebnikov reduces every word into mere formal elements and re-contextualizes them, Dziga Vertov films the scenes of everyday life and edits them without concern for continuity and narrative closure. In The Man with a Movie Camera Vertov constantly re-uses the same footage of every day life in order to break the continuity of each scene. As the result of this circular editing Vertov distorts the contents of the images depicted and puts them in a new context which shows the stages of planning, actual shooting and editing in the film itself. At first sight, both the title of the film and the appearance of the film-maker in the film along with the reflection of the film's production stages seem similar to modernist self-reflexive works. Moreover, the construction of the film blurs the boundaries between the actual film and its making, which comes very close to the self-reflexive narration of Remembrance of Things Past and 8 1/2. However, the authorial reflexivity in The Man with a Movie Camera is ironic. In other words the film shows the man with a movie camera in order to celebrate the camera's superior capabilities to depict images in relation to the human eye. The idea of collecting and editing images then amounts to the same as Khlebnikov's idea of reduction, de-contextualization and reassembling words.

Seen within the context of Tynyanov's formulation of parody, changing and alteration of words and images not only mechanizes

and foregrounds the device but also *skims* the device and jettisons the remaining conventional elements. In other words, avant-garde works only fulfil the first part of Tynyanov's formulation, which is the mechanisation of the device. As I have suggested previously this strategy of avant-garde works anticipates the workings of postmodern texts. I also compared the functions of the avant-garde and postmodern works in terms of their merging of high-art and popular culture through Huyssen's elaboration of two 'Great Divides'. The first 'Divide' separates the politics of the historical avant-garde from that of modernism, while the second 'divide' also establishes a resistance against the emergence of postmodern culture. In this respect, both the avant-garde and postmodern works aim at erasing the distinguishable marks between high-art and popular culture and make these territories dissolve into each other.

The debates on the function of postmodern parody raise the questions of whether this aspect of parody represents the failure of modernist and/or avant-garde principles (Jameson), or a new form of consciousness which foregrounds the problems of history and representation. According to Linda Hutcheon the second is the case. Hutcheon defines postmodern parody as

...a kind of contesting revision or rereading of the past that both confirms and subverts the power of the history of representations.<sup>57</sup>

Postmodern parody acknowledges the fact that we are radically

separated from the representations of past traditions. Unlike modernist parody, Hutcheon maintains, postmodern texts avoid the modernist commitment towards closure or at least distance.<sup>58</sup> She stresses the fact that she does not deny the affirmative and commodified aspects of postmodern representation. However, for Hutcheon, postmodern parody takes the internal conflicts of contemporary texts for granted; it exploits the texts' "insider position in order to begin a subversion from within..."<sup>59</sup> Elsewhere, she suggests that postmodern parody not only exists in its dialectical game with previous works of art but with contemporary art too. In this respect, postmodern parody expands the horizons of the historical avant-garde by making ironic references to other works and by self-consciously dissolving the historical boundaries of representation in order to establish alternative ways of dealing with representation in general. Her notion of postmodern parody is a subversive one:

Postmodern parody is a value-problematizing, de-naturalising form of acknowledging the history (and through irony, the politics) of representation.<sup>60</sup>

Hutcheon criticises Jameson's way of seeing postmodern texts as "nostalgically escapist and imprisoned in the past through pastiche which then prevents it from confronting the present" on the grounds that it is reductive. Hutcheon's point is that there are alternative forms of parody which do not attempt to escape from confrontation with the present but deal with history in ironic ways. Remakes of old film classics, inserting parodic



inter-texts as in Woody Allen's Zelig which combines faked documentary style, interviews with academics about the fictitious character, Zelig, are for Hutcheon exemplary of postmodern parody.

There are, however, two problems in her formulation of postmodern parody. Firstly, she does not justify why re-writing, faking or making ironic references to other texts is necessarily postmodern. She says that Witness is in fact a rewriting of High Noon, because the film not only regenerates the structure of High Noon such as law-officer male versus pacifist woman, but also adds the distancing *irony* of the increased ruralisation of the modern world. It is not clear why a re-writing - no matter how ironic - or, more precisely a re-make of High Noon works as postmodern parody. Re-makes are the most conventional and spectator-guaranteed practices of the film industry, especially in the United States. Further, it is not clear why the differences between the two films should even be regarded as ironic. Secondly and more importantly, she takes her characterisation of postmodern parody as self-evident. In other words, she defines her own notion of chronologically *post-modern* parody; she does not, however, link these characteristics with theories of postmodernism in general.

I have already discussed the major two definitions of postmodern parody, namely: the affirmative one which attempts to

escape tackling with the present by turning towards the imitation of dead styles (pastiche) and nostalgia, and a more deconstructive one which turns the inner problems of contemporary texts inside out without necessarily resolving the problems of representation. In this final part of my discussion of postmodernism, I will elaborate a characteristic of postmodern parody which can neither be seen as pastiche, nor can it be defined as a subversive and consciousness-raising form in Hutcheon's sense. Instead, these texts go beyond the functions of historically defined forms of parody including postmodern parody. In lieu of establishing a dialectical game with a *device* in the sense of Tynyanov, or of establishing an ironic criticism of culture, these works simply exploit forms of parody without being truly parodic. In other words, these works establish a system-immanent way of utilising parody. A wide array of films from different film genres fall into this category: Milos Forman's Amadeus, Maurizio Nichetti's The Icicle Thief--a multi layered parody of a film within film where the director of The Icicle Thief, television commercials during the breaks of its live broadcasting, and the film itself as a parody of De Sica's Bicycle Thief intermingle--and Matthew Robbin's Batteries Not Included. Amadeus, for example, creates a supra-historical image of Mozart whose characteristics identify Mozart as a historical figure and an image of a 'genius' belonging to the 1980s. The narration is based on a popular, mythic notion of genius. Amadeus

(ironically enough, after watching Amadeus we can no longer refer to the diegetic character as 'Mozart') not only sees the other musicians in the palace as a dying generation but rejects the history of music as if his music sprang from nothing but himself. This idea of genius is conflated with the 20th century concept of the whiz-kid, whilst his image in the film refers to late 20th century: his wig echoes a punk's hairstyle, and his wife calls him 'Wolfy'. The distortion of history in Amadeus thus neither attempts to establish nostalgic links with the past in order to escape from the present, nor does it imitate old styles or old forms of parody. The discourse of the film is affirmative: Amadeus uncritically defines the notion of genius by disregarding history and further assimilates this notion into the 20th century. The conformism of the discourse stems from the tendency to reduce a historical figure into today's norms of creativity and success. Because of these aspects of Amadeus, the film's parodic status is self-cancelling. The first level of parody in Amadeus is based on the re-contextualization of the mythologized identity of Mozart within the cultural norms of the late 20th century. The second level of parody occurs through the bracketing of this recontextualization as itself historically specific, which allows the spectator to see this two-level process of de-historization as ironic. As a result, parody loses its original aim, and recycling itself without actually being functional. Parody is therefore merely re-presented without actually being

parodic. In other words the text simply regenerates the image of parody. Thus, recycled parody simply enhances the established ideology by promoting system-immanent criticism and/or institutionalized parody. I will explore a variation of this notion of recycled parody in my reading of David Lynch's Blue Velvet.

## VII

Subsequent chapters will concentrate on the textual readings of individual films. Although the theoretical issues I have outlined so far will be of primary concern to these readings, the textual analysis of each film will determine the final outcome of my readings. In other words, the analysis of the narrative significance, the role of enunciation and authorship and the analysis of filmic and extra-filmic discourses rather than an application-based approach will be my first priority. Additionally, I have allowed my readings a degree of self-direction even when they have contradicted with certain theories of late-modernism and postmodernism that I have outlined here.

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**Between Tradition and Modernity:  
Luchino Visconti's *Death in Venice***

In this chapter I will explore the modernist significance of narration in Visconti's Death in Venice, interrelating the film with Mann's influence on Visconti's style, his intertextual references and Visconti's authorship. I will argue that the modernist aspects of Visconti's Death in Venice are the result of a "hybrid" discourse that is based on Visconti's attachment to modernism, Marxism and to his own social background: the tradition of aristocracy.

Through the analysis of Visconti's Death in Venice I will try to open up two lines of argument that will be elaborated by the successive readings of other films in my thesis: Firstly, the discourses of modernism are formed by the co-presence of other discourses that either enhance the modernist significance of a given text or function as a retarding force that weakens the modernist aspects of its narration. Both discourses are at work in Death in Venice.

Secondly, there is a continuity between modern, late-modern (and postmodern) discourses and each of these discourses affects the others both progressively and retroactively. In Death in Venice, for example, the film furthers the modernist discourses by re-writing them, hence it exemplifies the progression of the discourses from modernism to late-modernism. This furthering process of modernism follows Adorno's notion of double negation

that constitutes the work's resistance against institutionalized forms of representation. The retroactive aspect of late-modernism, on the other hand, is related to the way in which the works lean towards the aura of the historical-modernist texts. Death in Venice, for example, pays homage to modernism by its elaborate adaptation of Thomas Mann's literary style into film. This, however, does not suggest that Visconti's Death in Venice is an imitation or a mere pastiche of Thomas Mann's writing. However, the film identifies itself with the writing style of Mann in order to parallel an author-centred cinema rooted in the tradition of modernism.

Death in Venice is the first film that will allow me to open up a discussion on the continuities and breaks between modernist, late-modern and postmodern films. One of the contrasting aspects between Death in Venice and the other three films I will analyze is the former's dedication to modernism and the latter films' ironic distance from it. This distinction, however, is not a monolithic one: The degrees of moving away from a wholly intended modernism appear in different forms and narrative strategies in different films. In the following, I will present a modernist reading of Visconti's Death in Venice and discuss the late-modern aspects of the film.

Although Thomas Mann's novella already has the character of

a modernist work, Visconti's film not only re-writes and extends the novella beyond Mann's text but also emulates the "tradition" of modernism, most notably the musical works and figures of the Second Vienna School and Theodor Adorno's theory of modern music by using "direct quotations". In making these extra-diegetic references, the film builds a "deeper meaning" which is not immediately accessible to the average film-goer. Quotations of extra-diegetic material is one way that Visconti echoes Mann's work in which the revealing of references depends upon specialized knowledge.

Throughout his literary career Mann showed a great deal of interest in modernist techniques such as the use of the interior monologue, literary montage and his adaptation of the musical use of the leitmotif in literature which undermines the narrative continuity of time and space. Visconti's Death in Venice also inscribes itself as a modernist work and goes beyond the novella by employing gaps in the narration of the novella and furthering the use of intertextual references, a technique of interrelating extra-diegetic figures and concepts which is already used in the novella. Furthermore, like Mann, Visconti also adapts the use of leitmotif, a musical technique used by Wagner, into film as a modernist device.

One of the most crucial aspects of Mann's work, as well as

Visconti's, is their combination of critical realist tradition, and modernism.<sup>1</sup> Modernism and critical realism, especially in Lukács' work, are historically polarized as two fundamentally opposing approaches in writing.<sup>2</sup> Mann's interest in modernity, in this respect, is not based on its break with tradition. On the contrary, his novels show a great deal of interest in the tension between the 19th century Prussian values and the emergence of modernity. Lukács' theory of critical realism explains part of Mann's fascination with the values of the *fin-de-siècle* as a transition period from the 19th century tradition to modernity.

Visconti's conception of history derives from a combination of his aristocratic background and his Marxism. Visconti grew up in the surroundings of an old aristocratic Lombard family, and later went to France to become an assistant to Jean Renoir. It was the Marxist views of Renoir and the Popular Front of the mid 1930s that influenced Visconti's political views.<sup>3</sup> In line with Lukács' theoretical framework, Visconti's work is attributed to the tradition of critical realism, most notably by the Italian critic, Guido Aristarco.<sup>4</sup>

Lukács' account of critical realism tends to give credit to a nostalgic portrayal of the bourgeois tradition in its decline and exclude the modernist aspects of the works. Mann's and Visconti's works, however, do not follow this line in a

straightforward sense. In their work neither a nostalgia and fascination, nor a modernist desire to break from the tradition dominates the other.

In defending of critical realism, Lukács dismissed modernist writing on the grounds that it negates history, either by having its characters strictly confined within the limits of his/her own experience or by not having any personal history except that he/she is "thrown-into-the-world, meaninglessly and unfathomably."<sup>5</sup> As an alternative to modernism, Lukács celebrated Mann's portrayal of time and milieu that are firmly rooted in a specific social and historical situation. Contrasting with Kafka's nihilistic portrayal of modern life, Lukács hailed Mann's writing that "shows up distortion for what it is, tracing its roots and its concrete origins in society."<sup>6</sup> Moreover, Lukács accepted the facades of modernist elements in Mann's work on the basis that they are reduced into mere techniques of narration and critically distanced.<sup>7</sup> In order to elaborate on the interaction between critical realist and modernist influences in Visconti's Death in Venice I will first outline two influential readings of the film, analyzing the "overdetermining" role of Visconti's attachment to the aristocratic tradition as well as his critical realist/Marxist distance to it.

In their *Cahiers du Cinéma* article, Serge Daney and Jean-

Pierre Oudart argue that Visconti's cinematic style is inscribed in a tradition that includes Mann's writing and Lukács' critical realism.<sup>8</sup> In this respect, Daney and Oudart suggest, Visconti's work is an *écriture* of critical realism, or what Lukács calls a classical bourgeois realism that reiterates "the myths of decadence, disorder, contradictions, and decline of the ruling classes."<sup>9</sup>

According to Daney and Oudart, the inscription of the social framework in Visconti's films is based on the fictive relationship of two elements: Firstly, the portrayal of the aristocratic milieu derives from the tradition of Italian theatre and opera that represent the bourgeois class as an organized spectacle. Secondly, this spectacle privileges the spectator who witnesses the decay of his/her milieu. In both cases, Daney and Oudart argue, Visconti's subjectivity is subsumed within these two elements. Thus, Visconti belongs to the same tradition of theatrical representation that treats bourgeois life as a spectacle while privileging its spectator enabling hi or her to see it from a critical distance. Daney and Oudart further argue that Visconti's subjectivity is also contained within the mythical decline of the aristocracy depicted in the film and Aschenbach's conflicting relationship with his social environment (attraction towards the decadent life of the aristocracy and his resistance to it). In other words, Visconti inscribes himself

into a similar split-identification with the aristocratic life depicted in the film and a critical distance to it. His "neurotic" identification with the narrative, in this respect, is twofold: On the one hand his portrayal of the aristocracy is a self-destructive one, as he identifies with not just the aristocracy as a class, but its process of decline. On the other hand, the eruption of Aschenbach's sexual desires, revealing the suppressed and disguised practices of that class also involves Visconti's subjectivity. I will come back to this last point later.

This view of Visconti's inscription into critical realism that portrays the aristocracy in its twilight is also shared by Geoffrey Nowell-Smith who suggests that Visconti has never been a Marxist in the full sense of the term but a realist who has used a Marxist-inspired view of history as an element in his films in order to establish a critical distance from that of the 19th century realism.<sup>10</sup> In Senso, Nowell-Smith argues, the style of 19th century realism with the strong influence of melodrama and its Marxist, or more precisely Lukácsian, criticism as a "leftist camouflage to his (Visconti's) own concern with decadentism" are combined into one.<sup>11</sup>

Both Daney and Oudart's and Nowell-Smith's statements on Visconti's self-inscribed critical realism apply to Visconti's



modernist *écriture*. In this respect, Visconti's films search for a modernist style that is inherent in the works of Mann and Adorno. In this respect, Death in Venice, for example, balances what it has in common with the style of the novella and its departure from it.

A nostalgic embodiment of its modernist predecessors, I will suggest, is the major factor behind the discursive organization of Death in Venice. A tension between tradition and a break with tradition has always been apparent in modernist works. In other words, modernist works needed to establish their own tradition of subversion in order to exist as a movement. Their adherence to the pre-existing discourses of modernism then always operate at a meta-level. In the following, I will read Visconti's Death in Venice from the point of view of three orders of organization through which the film can be seen as a modernist modern work.

As I mentioned previously, Visconti's Death in Venice is a modernist re-writing of Mann's novella that departs from the literary boundaries of the latter. Visconti's Death in Venice in this sense both interprets the novella and produces a different text which can not be seen as an adaptation in the traditional sense. Visconti's film, in other words, shifts the context of the novella onto a level which deals with an alternative discursive

organization and subject matter. This new discursive organization alters three major elements of any narrative text, namely the time, the space and the characters.

The use of time in Visconti's Death in Venice is deliberately kept ambiguous. The story does not explain what happens to Aschenbach's wife before his trip to Venice. Similarly, there are no chronological events taking place between Aschenbach's loss of his daughter, or his failure as a composer and his trip to Venice. The film, in other words, avoids certain events which are expected in the chronological order of the story.

The ambiguous treatment of both the story's space and the distribution of the characters are interrelated. Aschenbach for instance, is no longer the famous writer the novella introduces, but a composer. The background information on him is revealed by the use of an additional character named Alfried who appears both in the past and the present in the story. One of the most significant examples of the interchangeability of the past and the present is revealed in Alfried's humiliation of Aschenbach after an unsuccessful concert. Alfried first appears at the end of the concert and then during Aschenbach's dream in the present. The ambiguity, whether that concert fiasco was a daydream or whether both the concert and Alfried's following appearance as

a voice over at Aschenbach's bed was a flashback, implies that the characters of the film and their story space are not necessarily linked. To sum up, those three discursive elements - time, space and characters - are not necessarily coordinated with each other.

One clear result of this intentional ambiguity is that the film does not allow the spectator to construct the fabula of the film: Aschenbach's past, the present state of his relationship with his wife, his previous musical career or his relationship to Alfried cannot be weaved into a story without gaps. The resistance against the construction of the fabula of the film also addresses the presence of its authorial narrating which does not concern itself to narrate a story. Instead, the film's way of providing extra-diegetic material encourages the spectator to interpret the film for a deeper meaning.

The treatment of the subject matters in Visconti's Death in Venice are also different from those in the novella. At this level of the story, the film not only deals with the crisis in Aschenbach's musical composition but it also relates this to the impasse in creativity that the 19th century art and culture reached. The film also suggests a way out of this impasse by introducing the principles of modern music espoused by an intra-diegetic character, Alfried.

The significance of Visconti's authorial treatment establishes yet another order in the narration which is also related to modernist writing. In this respect, Visconti's visual treatment of the milieu of the *fin-de-siècle* Venice foregrounds an enunciative style which marks his presence as *matteur en scène*. Moreover, by having Tadzio looking at the camera, Visconti enters into the fictitious space of the film, or, as Daney and Oudart argue, his direction becomes part of the fiction itself.<sup>12</sup> There are, in other words, multiple orders of organization in Visconti's Death in Venice, and the novella is the first point of departure but not the whole of the text.

## II

In order to formulate the multiple discourses in Visconti's Death in Venice I will suggest reading the film through three different orders and seeing their cooperation in synchronic progression. The first order is in the presence of Thomas Mann's novella on which, to a certain extent, the film is based. As I will discuss further, the film not only sidesteps a faithful presentation of the novella, it also produces other stories within it. The reader of the novella, for instance, knows that Aschenbach's wife died long ago, the spectator, however, is not given any information about what happened to her before his departure to Venice. Aschenbach's dialogues with Alfried are superimposed onto the novella independently from the

spatio-temporal logic of the story. From the examples given above it can be seen that the film sometimes depends on the novella or alters it while sometimes introducing texts from outside.

The first order constitutes the "literary source" of the film, for which the novella stands as the reference point for the spectator to grasp all the alterations that have been employed. This order is also a stand point through which the spectator interrelates the novella with Mann's other works and Visconti's interest in Mann's critical realism and the aristocratic life at the *fin-de-siècle*.

The second order constitutes the "literary other". As the term implies, this order consists in what is not present in the novella. Both the order of the story-events presented in the film and texts quoted from other texts will be covered by this order. The story-events in the film do not only follow an order different from the novella, but produce discontinuities within the story-line as well. Even though the quoted texts produce this second order which steps outside the novella, they do not construct a coherent text outside that of the novella.

There are two independent references in the film which imply that Aschenbach is both Gustav Mahler and a fictitious character, Adrian Leverkühn of Thomas Mann's Doctor Faustus at the same

time. As I will discuss later Alfried's appearance strongly echoes the devil in Thomas Mann's Doctor Faustus, who offers his help for Leverkühn to overcome his difficulties in composition. The decline of Aschenbach's musical composition, in this context, parallels the limitations of creativity in self-contained, culturally sterile music, argued by the devil in Doctor Faustus:

...Art becomes critique. That is something quite honourable, who denies it? Much rebellion in strict obedience is needed, much independence, much courage. But the danger of being uncreative - what do you think? Is it perhaps still only a danger, or is it already a fixed and settled fact?<sup>13</sup>

Extra-diegetic references in Death in Venice are further elaborated by the juxtaposition of Aschenbach and Gustav Mahler whose references are present both in the soundtrack - the adagietto of his 5th symphony being played frequently during the film - and in the flashbacks as biographical references, most significantly of the death of his six-year old daughter. While Gustav Mahler dies in 1911, his wife lives for another forty years; in the film, Gustav Aschenbach arrives in Venice and then dies. The first flashback revealing Aschenbach's past takes place while he unpacks in his hotel room in Venice. Apart from Aschenbach's weakness and his doctor's order for a complete rest, the segment introduces Alfried for the first time as Aschenbach's old friend. The following flashback in Aschenbach's study juxtaposes him and Gustav Mahler by having Alfried playing the piano transcription of Mahler's 5th symphony. After the first

Doctor Faustus reference (Alfried's view on modern music based on the ideas put forward by the devil in Doctor Faustus), this biographical reference to Mahler establishes the second order of organisation, namely the literary other.

The first reference to Mahler's personality is in the picture of Frau von Aschenbach in Aschenbach's hotel room. Even though it is the photograph of Marisa Berenson (Frau von Aschenbach), like Aschenbach's youth in the flashbacks, her close resemblance to Alma Mahler (Mahler's wife) constitutes a Mahler reference. Later, in the middle of a heated debate on music, Alfried plays the fourth movement of Mahler's 4th symphony in spite of Aschenbach's protest and he tells him that it is his (Mahler's) music he is playing. In the following scenes the film shows Mahler, his wife and their daughter happily rolling on the grass. Aschenbach's extra-ordinary resemblance with Mahler in the flashbacks and the following scene where Mahler and his wife attends to the funeral for their daughter constitutes the third Mahler reference. Even though it is certain that the fiasco of Aschenbach's conducting his own music still refers to Gustav Mahler, such a reception by the concert goers had never happened in Mahler's musical career. In Death in Venice the leaps between the references deliberately produce uncertainties about their validity. Even though the film is very clear about the identification of Aschenbach with Mahler, no explanation comes

forth about this identification throughout the narrative.<sup>14</sup> As a result, the Mahler reference remains an independent element in the story; it occupies the narrative and multiplies the sources of information which can no longer be traced back to a single origin.

The lack of correspondence between the factual life of Gustav Mahler and the Mahler references, superimposed onto Aschenbach, encourages the spectator to move away from the narrative and construct a higher order based on themes and ideas. In this respect, for example, those two references, one being to Doctor Faustus, the other to Gustav Mahler's life, should not be taken as related: The crisis in composition, which is the subject matter of Doctor Faustus, for example, does not apply to Gustav Mahler's musical career. Additionally, what should be noted with regard to the dialogues is the replacement of Leverkühn (who was originally fashioned after Arnold Schoenberg in Doctor Faustus) with Aschenbach in the film. The second order - or the literary other - of the film then, is the part which covers the departures from the novella, that is assemblages of the texts, those that are not included in the novella.

The third order of Death in Venice involves Visconti's style, which leaves the marks of his enunciative treatment in the film. Visconti's treatment of the film not only constructs the



second order of the film that re-writes the novella but organizes a system of look between Tazio and Visconti as an absent figure behind the camera.

As I mentioned briefly, Visconti's authorial treatment emulates Thomas Mann's literary style. Both Mann and Visconti portray their time and milieu from an impressionistic point of view which accentuates their subjective point of view. The term impressionism here refers to a specific kind of depiction based on the subjective gaze. The representation of this subjective gaze, in other words, transforms the world of objects into desired images. In his representation of the beach scenes, Visconti mixes two different genres in painting, namely Art Nouveau of the *fin-de-siècle* and Impressionism. This is most evident in the scene where he "quotes" the mise-en-scène of Claude Monet's painting La Plage de Sainte-Adresse. The most significant feature of this scene is in the enchanting (or fetishistic) quality of the two landed boats that are projected onto the milieu of the aristocracy. While the Impressionist approach accentuates the subjective point of view, the portrayal of the visually rich fin de siècle decor enhances the nostalgic effect of the film.

Like the settings of Death in Venice, Visconti's exploratory use of the camera is also related to his impressionistic style.

Just as Mann describes Aschenbach's social surroundings in detail in the novella, Visconti's slow pans, serpentine tracking shots and zoom shots depict Aschenbach's milieu in a descriptive but also selective manner. Thus, the camera shows the lavish interior of the hotel lobby with its cosmopolitan patrons or crowded activities on the beach, teenage girls buying jewellery, children playing, vendors selling fruit and so on. This subjective depiction of the surrounding transforms the story-content into a visually rich filmic material in which Visconti's personal interest in the life style of the aristocracy is emphasized.

The portrayal of the surroundings as such aligns Visconti's subjective view with Aschenbach's. The slow pace of the camera movements, for example, reflects Aschenbach's subjectivized perception as well as intra-diegetic presentation of time in the narrative. In other words, the duration of the shots revealing Aschenbach's field of vision depends on the subjective perception of his gaze. Tevvy Ball notes that "the stillness of the images often seems to evoke perception of a frozen moment, given a long duration in Aschenbach's mind because of the depth of the impression it makes."<sup>15</sup>

Furthermore, the milieu in the film appears to represent Aschenbach's divided perception of it in oscillation, namely his attempt to sublimate his desire for Tadzio and the real of his

desire that is related to the corruption of his principles, decay and death. In this context Björn Andresen was carefully chosen and made up in order to create an Apollonian image of youth with a Boticellian touch, connoting Italianness, which, in Aschenbach's view, represent an ideal combination for beauty.<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, by zooming into Tadzio, Visconti's use of the camera assumes the role of Aschenbach's subjective gaze and reveals his desire for Tadzio.

One of the most crucial differences between the novella and the film is Tadzio's looking back at Aschenbach throughout the film. This exchange of gazes between Aschenbach and Tadzio is an attempt to fulfil Visconti's own desire in terms of vision via Aschenbach. Tadzio's return of Aschenbach's gaze has no relevance in the story world of the film since such an exchange of the gazes does not alter the order of the events. Within the first order of organisation, namely the novella, this look is extraneous since it has no applicability to the filmic representation of the novella. In the novella Tadzio's look is never explicit. Moreover, it is not clear whether Tadzio actually looks at Aschenbach or whether it is Aschenbach who fantasises Tadzio looking at him. The introduction of Tadzio's look into the film then does not derive from the novella. I will argue later that Tadzio's look plays a significant role at the second order of organization (interpretative level) in relation to Mann's

Doctor Faustus.

The mutual pleasure of looking between Aschenbach and Tadzio implies the presence of Visconti, who has Tadzio looking back at Aschenbach frequently in the film. In other words, there is a multiplication of Tadzio's function in Visconti's Death in Venice which allows Visconti to fulfil his pleasure in looking via the cinematic apparatus. This multiplication links Tadzio as a fictitious character to Visconti as the author of the film beyond the given boundaries of the first two orders. In sum, Visconti's treatment here deals with the representation of his subjective gaze on the one hand and the fragmentation of the story on the other, in order to multiply the function of Tadzio which allows him to establish an alternative system of look between Tadzio and himself. This constitutes the third order.

## III

The most elaborate and subtle aspect of the film is the second order, that is the literary other. The references the film makes to Gustav Mahler and to Doctor Faustus does not seem concrete. Moreover, the reason why the film constructs such an order is not clear. The answer of these question, I will suggest, lies in the films' embodiment and furthering of Mann's self-consciously modernist literary style. Just as the novella makes

extra-diegetic references to persons, themes and concepts the film too elaborates this style only that it plays the variations of Mann's style in order to inscribe itself into the same literary tradition.

In Mann's writing the use of extra-diegetic references undermine the diegetic coherence of his works. One of Mann's greatest interest in writing had been to subvert the linear continuity of his narratives and develop a form of "supra-diegetic" narrating. In this form, as in Magic Mountain and Doctor Faustus, the hierarchy of the narrative is intentionally scattered and weakened. However, Thomas Mann's interest in writing is not to create a disordered narrative technique for its own sake but to develop a technique to fill the gaps in the narrative and to tie the scattered pieces together in order to extend the immediate meaning of the text into higher interpretative orders. Mann achieves this in two combined ways: Firstly he introduces extra-diegetic material into the narrative that would require a puzzle-solving mind in order to understand and interrelate these references.

Secondly, he adapts the musical use of leitmotif into literature that functions as a diegetic device in order to interweave the fragmented narrative pieces. This is not to suggest that these orders become a unified text through the

employment of leitmotifs. Even though the leitmotifs introduced seem to hold the narrative together, they actually imply the absence of a unity. Both the use of extra-diegetic references and the use of leitmotif, in this respect, work together in order to create an inorganic unity. Moreover, I will argue, the extra-diegetic references are also used as leitmotifs in Visconti's Death in Venice.

Leitmotifs interact with the theme of a text in order to "ascend" from the narrative. Theme is defined by Ducrot and Todorov as a semantic category in a given text.<sup>17</sup> It is either the major preoccupation of a given text or the entire literature. In Death in Venice (both in the novella and in the film) the theme is the conflict between fulfilling a moral life and the corruption of the senses. The motif, on the other hand, relates to a "minimal thematic unit".<sup>18</sup> In Death in Venice death works as a motif since it is metaphorically related to corruption and decadence; hence, it appears at different levels of the narration. However, Death in Venice also constructs a parallel theme to the conflict between moral life and corruption; that is Aschenbach's conflict between adhering to the 19th century artistic values and the emergence of modern art. Death as a motif and a metaphor interweaves these two themes.

When a motif occurs and re-occurs throughout the text and

takes on a specific role, Ducrot and Todorov argue, it constructs, by the analogy to music, a leitmotif.<sup>19</sup> Through the successive operation of the leitmotifs the text gradually occupies itself with setting up a relationship between the theme and the motifs without being dependent on the spatio-temporal logic of the story. It should be noted here that the literary equivalent of the leitmotif was originally developed and extensively used by Thomas Mann throughout his novels as a modernist device. In order to elaborate on the relationship between the use of leitmotif and modernism I will first outline the musical evolution of the leitmotif.

The leitmotif technique is extensively used by Wagner in his operas as a structural device. Throughout the 19th century, the musical structure of tonality had been significantly weakened. The classical period had largely relied on the hierarchy of the tonal system. In other words tonality and form were independent in the classical period. Since the initial tonality of a piece was at the same time its centre of gravity, departures from it created tension, while returning to it meant resolution. The development of musical ideas and their relationship to each other in the classical period were often motivated by that built-in tension of tonality. Especially during the second half of the 19th century, the afore-mentioned hierarchy of tonality was undermined, not through an external interference but through the

exploration of some latent properties of the tonal system itself. The tonal language became more and more complex to the point where the "tension/resolution" duality nearly ceased to serve as an architectural device. The harmonies themselves were now extremely rich while their relationship to each other became highly ambiguous and complicated. One of the questions with which the nineteenth century composer was confronted was how to arrive at a convincing musical form with the nebulous harmonic language of the period. In the case of Wagner the answer to this question was leitmotif.

Among its other implications, the leitmotif technique has two major functions in Wagner's work. Firstly, the leitmotif has a binding power over the music which would otherwise have lacked the mnemonic reference points to understand it. Secondly, they have an allegorical value which establishes the association of musical and textual ideas in the opera. One cannot talk about "development" in its classical sense with reference to Wagner's operas. The contrary is more so the case. A development section in the classical context for instance, is partially the consequence of a thematic treatment of the musical material. In Wagner's music, however, the thematic material is kept to a minimum while the motivic material constitutes the most significant structural element. Adorno, in his In Search of Wagner, comments on this aspect of Wagner's music:



Music can only be bodied forth in the present as a result of the most intense effort of memory and anticipation. This effort is the task of authentic thematic work, something evaded in Wagner's case by the trick of using extra-musical mnemonics in the form of motives charged with allegorical meanings.<sup>20</sup>

The lack of development in Wagner's music has a certain bearing on the manipulation of time. The mnemonic units, the leitmotifs in other words, occur throughout the music unchanged and unaltered and this does create an illusion of suspended time or a permanent present. It was this aspect of the leitmotif technique that Mann tried to put to use most extensively in his The Magic Mountain. He characterizes an author's drive to reproduce himself in his own works with the following words:

He strives, that is, to overcome the laws of time and continuity. He tries to produce himself completely in each thing he writes, but only actually does so in the way The Magic Mountain does it; I mean by the use of leitmotif, the magic formula that works in both ways, and links the past with the future, the future with the past. The leitmotif is the technique employed to preserve the inward unity and adding presentness of the whole at each moment.<sup>21</sup>

Both Mann's and Visconti's Death in Venice disintegrates the spatio-temporal order of the story by the use of leitmotifs, for example Aschenbach's daydream in the novella and Alfried's dialogues with Aschenbach in the film. The use of the leitmotifs link the discontinuities of the story and encourages the reader as well as the spectator to focus on the motifs independently from the spatio-temporal logic of the story. In both the novella and the film, in other words, there are motifs and leitmotifs reproducing themselves throughout the narrative. The leitmotifs

themselves also, however, fragment the motifs and the integration of the story and weave them in alternative orders in order to emphasize their own presence. In order to elaborate the significance of the leitmotifs in Death in Venice I will first look at their function in the novella.

The novella opens at the outskirts of Munich where Aschenbach walks to the North Cemetery. On the way back from his walk, he takes a tram to return to the city centre and gets off in front of a stonemason's yard, facing a Byzantine mortuary chapel. While reading the words on the grave stones he sees a traveller described by Mann as being "...of medium height, thin, beardless, and slightly snub nosed; he belonged to the red haired type and possessed its milky freckled skin".<sup>22</sup> The North cemetery and the Byzantine chapel constructs the image of death while sight of the traveller inspires the idea of the exotic and unknown places where Aschenbach is tempted to go.

In the novella certain leitmotifs unfold other motives which produce more leitmotifs in a chain reaction outside the spatio-temporality of the story. This can be seen in the novella where the traveller produces not only the idea of travelling as part of the story's causality, but his travelling links itself up to the desire for travelling to those exotic places which unconsciously provokes Aschenbach's sexual temptations. His

hallucination described in the novella also links his insuppressible sexual desires, his desire for travelling to the distant and exotic places as well as the Orient, which Venice stands at the border of. As the novella describes it:

Desire projected itself visually: his fancy, not quite lulled since morning, imaged the marvels and terrors of the manifold earth. He saw...Hairy palm trunks rose near and far out of lush breaks of fern, out of bottoms of class vegetation, fat, swollen, thick with incredible bloom. There were trees, mis-shapen as a dream, that dropped their naked roots straight through the air into the ground or into water that was stagnant and shadowy and glassy-green, where mammoth milk-white blossoms floated, and strange high-shouldered birds with curious bills stood gazing side wise without sound or stir. Among the knotted joints of a bamboo thicket the eyes of a crouching tiger gleamed-and he felt his heart throb with terror, yet with a longing inexplicable. Then the vision vanished. Aschenbach, shaking his head, took up his march once more along the hedge of the stone-mason's yard.<sup>23</sup>

Here, there is the interaction of two leitmotifs. On the one hand, the traveller provokes Aschenbach's suppressed desires; this provocation turns back to death as a motif through the cemetery. The inter-weaving of Munich, death, travelling and Venice at the beginning of the novella is described by Erich Heller in his study of Thomas Mann:

For it is, of course, already Venice which is present in the glistening desertion, the gleam of the departing day, the Byzantine structure, the ornate facade, the hieratic designs, and the apocalyptic beasts, while the untenanted graveyard may somehow belong to the to the domain of the stranger of whom it is impossible to tell "whether he had come out of the chapel through the bronze doors or mounted unnoticed from outside", as suddenly as he will soon vanish again out of Aschenbach's sight.<sup>24</sup>

The unknown whereabouts of the traveller and the far exotic

places in Aschenbach's hallucination establishes the motif of travelling. However, the traveller's resemblance to two other figures in the novella also relates him to the image of death. Thomas Mann's descriptions of characters often make references to actual people or images from art history. Erich Heller suggests that with few additions the description of the traveller would resemble Albert Dürer's image of death. In a development of the motif, (both in the novella and in the film) Aschenbach comes across an old man on the ship which is taking him to Venice, who tries to look young: "One of the party, in a dandified suit, a rakish panama with a coloured scarf, and a red cravat, was loudest of the loud: he outcrowded all the rest."<sup>25</sup> Later, death makes yet another appearance, this time in the shape of a musical clown, the performer of the band of street musicians. He appears as "scarcely a Venetian type, half pimp and half-comedian, a man of slight build with a thin, under-nourished face...his shabby felt hat rested on the back of his neck, a great mop of red hair sticking out in the front."<sup>26</sup> Like the traveller and the old man on the ship, he also had a red cravat. Finally, Aschenbach transforms himself into their image by having his hair dyed and his skin covered with white talcum powder. In this way, the leitmotif completes its function and withdraws from the narrative.

One of the most characteristic aspects of the leitmotif is

its resistance to narrativization. Its presence in the narrative, in other words, is unmotivated. The most characteristic filmic example of this, unmotivated use of the leitmotif is in the scene in the train station where a man dies of cholera. His slumping without making a sound foregrounds the graphic quality of the scene beyond the continuum of the narrative, and presents it just as a theme of death. Daney and Oudart note that the death of the man in the station is not an explanatory shot, or a shot of an unexpected event. Moreover, the scene is not incorporated into the point of view system of the narration. It occurs not within the narrative space but as an event of its own. "Death here is this unassimilable supplement which the real/fictive does not take over and repress in the form of a corpse."<sup>27</sup> The lack of narrative motivation in this example works as a leitmotif precisely because it introduces the theme of death and withdraws from the narrative. Needless to say, death comes back again in the form of death messengers, cholera, overripe strawberries and so on. By its brief and non-motivated appearance, the scene also connects to other leitmotifs in order to piece together a unity of the theme that creates a sense of the presence of death throughout the narrative.

More than in the novella, the use of the leitmotifs in Visconti's Death in Venice subverts the temporal order of the story. This can be seen in Alfried's paradoxical appearance,

which occurs not only in the past but in the present of the story too. The film, deliberately keeps the relationship between Aschenbach and Alfried ambiguous. In the following, I will focus on certain segments in which the use of leitmotifs weaves the temporal order and gathers together certain fragments from other texts that are essential in the construction of its subject matter.

After the very first information during the first segment which shows Aschenbach travelling in a ship to a destination which is not indicated to the spectator, the second information is the name of the ship: Esmeralda. Since the film excludes the opening of the novella which introduces the background of Aschenbach as well as the travelling foreigner who provokes Aschenbach's desire for travelling, the significance of Esmeralda as the name of the ship appearing only in the film, does not shed light on the introductory stage of the narration. As a name "Esmeralda" reappears later in the film, this time as a prostitute. In the context of leitmotifs, these two occurrences of Esmeralda make an oblique reference to another novel by Thomas Mann: Doctor Faustus.

The Esmeralda leitmotif first appears in Doctor Faustus when the protagonist Adrian Leverkühn's father opens books with illustrations in colour of Nature's ambiguous creatures during

Leverkühn's and Zeitblom's (the narrator) childhood. Esmeralda stands for an exotic butterfly in that book "in transparent nudity, loving the duskiness of heavy leafage and called *Hetaera esmeralda*."<sup>28</sup> This leitmotif of Doctor Faustus has two functions in Visconti's Death in Venice. Firstly, it refers to Aschenbach's awakening sensuality and connotes his desire to follow the unpredictable flying path of the butterfly to travel to unknown places. Additionally both the ship (Esmeralda) as vessel which carries Aschenbach inside her and those of the unknown places where Aschenbach wishes to go connote a womb and female domain.

Secondly, this quotation excludes some spectators who do not know Doctor Faustus. Since this Esmeralda quotation operates in the interpretative order of the novella, this leitmotif further excludes some spectators who know and expect to see the novella in the film. However, Visconti's approach is not meant to be exclusive, but aims at developing a cross-referential Faustian motif which is obliquely related to Death in Venice. In this respect, Tadzio's looking back at Aschenbach serves the function of Esmeralda's seduction. In Doctor Faustus, it is the devil who sends Esmeralda to Leverkühn to awaken his sensuality which, for the devil, is the first step to emancipation from a self-contained form of art produced only by hard, meticulous and painstaking work, based on the normative values of the 19th .

century Europe. As the devil later explains in Doctor Faustus: "You, my good man, well knew what you needed, and took the right road when you made your journey and *salva venia* summoned your French beloved to you."<sup>29</sup> Visconti's Death in Venice further superimposes Esmeralda as a leitmotif of seduction with Tadzio and by doing so the film inscribes itself into a Faustian problematic, which, for Mann, represents the problem of modern art.

The most significant part of the story that intertwines Visconti's Death in Venice and Doctor Faustus is the segment at the hotel lobby where Tadzio plays Beethoven's Für Elise. The segment opens with Aschenbach walking towards the lobby while Für Elise fades in. The camera pans from Aschenbach to Tadzio, who is playing the piece. Aschenbach can no longer suppress his desire, however, instead of making an advance he tries to escape by asking the *maître d'hôtel* about the reason of the disinfection in Venice. After the *maître d'hôtel* has left, the music unfolds Aschenbach's memories and the next flashback shot takes him back to his youth when he visited a brothel. At the brothel, Aschenbach (who closely resembles Mahler as in other flashback scenes) expects to see Esmeralda, whom he seems to know already; she is playing Für Elise on the piano. By the insertion of this scene Death in Venice links Aschenbach not only with Gustav Mahler but with Adrian Leverkühn too.<sup>30</sup>



In Doctor Faustus, when young Leverkühn arrives in Leipzig to study music, he asks a porter to show him a restaurant. However, the porter, who was a disguised pimp, fools him into going to a brothel instead of a restaurant. This is how he meets with Esmeralda. After his meeting with Esmeralda Leverkühn cannot compose without thinking of her and looks everywhere to see her again. Zeitblom--the narrator in Doctor Faustus--describes Adrian Leverkühn's relationship with Esmeralda:

A trace of purifying love can be attested as soon as the instinct wears the face of human being, be it the most anonymous, the most contemptible. And there is to say, that Adrian went back to the place on account of one particular person, of her whose touch burned on his cheek, "the brown wrench" with the big mouth, in the little jacket, who had come up to him at the piano and whom he called Esmeralda.<sup>31</sup>

Aschenbach in Visconti's Death in Venice seems to step in to the same story world Leverkühn lives in. Because of Aschenbach's inability to unify intellect and carnal desire, he can not consummate his desire for Esmeralda and leaves the brothel by slamming the door. Here again Death in Venice creates another confusion. By quoting the Esmeralda leitmotif from Doctor Faustus, Death in Venice juxtaposes Aschenbach, Mahler, and Adrian Leverkühn; and by doing so it undermines the cumulative information focused on Aschenbach since no such discontented love affair applies either to Aschenbach in the novella, or to Mahler according to bibliographical references, or finally to Leverkühn.

There is, however, a link between Aschenbach and Leverkühn



in this particular context. Both Esmeralda for Leverkühn and Tadzio for Aschenbach stand for seducers. They have no function other than creating desires. Hence the relationship between Esmeralda and Tadzio operates as a leitmotif in the film. While Esmeralda is sent by the devil, Tadzio is sent by nobody. In this respect, Tadzio does not stand as the agent of seduction as Esmeralda does. It is Aschenbach who brings upon himself his own seduction by Tadzio's presence.

In Visconti's narrating, it is not important to show events as actual facts or functions propelling the story forward. In the diegetic context of the film the flashback scene where young Aschenbach visits Esmeralda at the brothel might be an imagined scene; or, furthermore, it might even be imagined by Visconti himself as the projection of his fantasies upon Aschenbach. Unlike Leverkühn, Aschenbach's relationship with Esmeralda does not carry forward any consequential events. The film does not treat this event as part of the diegesis. The only function of this scene, like the other flashbacks and Aschenbach's arguments with Alfried, is to elaborate the subject matter. There are scenes in Death in Venice which only serve to weave motifs by disregarding the space and time logic of the story. The construction of Death in Venice, in this regard, suggests what T.S.Eliot writes at the beginning of Four Quartets:

Time present and time past  
Are both perhaps present in time future

And time future contained in time past  
 If all time is eternally present  
 All time is unredeemable.<sup>32</sup>

The introduction of the Faustian motif into Death in Venice underlines the films' commitment to modernist art. In Doctor Faustus, the hallucinatory pact between the devil and Adrian Leverkühn provides a solution for Leverkühn's crisis for composition. The devil sees the problem in the following:

But the sickness is general, and the straightforward ones shew the symptoms just as well as the producers of back-formations. Does not production threaten to come to an end? And whatever of serious stuff gets on to paper betrays effort and distaste...Composing itself gets too hard, devilishly hard. Where work does not go any longer with sincerity how is one to work? But so it stands, my friend, the masterpiece, the self-sufficient form, belongs to traditional art, emancipated art rejects it.<sup>33</sup>

Both Doctor Faustus and Visconti's Death in Venice urge an emancipation from 19th century values such as sincerity, detachment, serenity and self-control in the sense of the Apollonian motto: "Know thyself" as the first condition to regain inspiration.<sup>34</sup> Hence, the devil dismisses exterior reasons, such as the social conditions, to explain why composition becomes so difficult:

True, but unimportant. The prohibitive difficulties of the work lie deep in the work itself. The historical movement of the musical material has turned against the self-contained work.<sup>35</sup>

In Death in Venice Alfried puts forward ideas like those of the devil. As Alfried describes his view: "Evil is a necessity. It is the food of genius.", or in Doctor Faustus, the devil tells:

The artist is the brother of the criminal and the madman. Do you believe that any important work was ever wrought except its maker learned to understand the way of the criminal and madman?<sup>36</sup>

In terms of the function of the devil, one of the major difference between Doctor Faustus and Death in Venice is that in the former the devil persuades Leverkühn to agree with his ideas whereas in the latter Alfried cannot change Aschenbach's view. As the result of Aschenbach's rejection of a break from the tradition he celebrates his concert fiasco. Aschenbach's decline, for Alfried, marks the end of the traditional art and an artist's leaning towards moral standards. Hence, Alfried celebrates Aschenbach's failure by laughing and jeering at him:

You cheat! You magnificent swindler! (Referring the booing audience) What more do they want? Absolute serenity, perfection, abstraction of the senses, all done and your music still bores!

This Faustian view of artistic creation should also be considered as Aschenbach's alter-ego. In this regard, Alfried's speech can be seen as the "other" of his divided self which could let him escape from his self-enclosed blockage. In this respect, the polarisation of Alfried's behaviour i.e, first acting like a disciple of Aschenbach and later on mocking his way of life and his work, can be seen as Aschenbach's own evaluation of his attitude. Interestingly enough, the more he disagrees with Alfried in his arguments the more he contradicts his words with his actions and becomes the slave of his desire for Tadzio. If, however, both Tadzio and Alfried are nothing more than

Aschenbach's own projection, Alfried's view on liberating one's senses in order to be able to compose and his later mocking of Aschenbach follows a parallel pattern with Aschenbach's affair with Tadzio. In other words, Alfried's view on artistic creation justifies Aschenbach's escapist trip to Venice as well as his sexual attraction to Tadzio, while his disappointing performance at the concert and Alfried's jeering parallel his death. After his jeering, Alfried further comments about Aschenbach's overall achievements as a failure:

Wisdom, truth, human dignity all finished. Now there is no reason why you cannot go to your grave with your music. You have achieved a perfect balance. The man and the artist are one. They have reached the bottom together. (break) You have never possessed chastity. Chastity is the gift of purity not the result of old age and you are old Gustav, and in all the world there is no purity so impure as old age.

This comment also stands as the justification of Aschenbach's death. Aschenbach's death while the black dye of his hair starts dissolving echoes Alfried's last speech. His costume and make-up link him to nothing but the leitmotif of death which appears throughout the narrative with the traveller's red hair, hat and cravat. Furthermore, his deadly white face with talcum powder and the dissolving dye of his hair conclude the image of death.

The establishment of the second order enables Visconti both to identify himself with the "Aschenbach complex" and to look at this from a critical distance by mastering the narration of the film through his elaborate adaptation of the novella. In other

words, by introducing Aschenbach's conflict through the employment of additional figures into the film such as Leverkühn, Mahler, Alfried and, through their presence, Thomas Mann, Visconti represents his own divided views and an imagined totality of these views at the same time. In the following section I will argue that Visconti's authorial position in the film further allows him to share Aschenbach's voyeurism without losing his privileged distance from the fiction-world of the film.

## IV

As I suggested previously, there is an exchange in looks in Death in Venice in which Tadzio's looking back to Aschenbach has no function in terms of propelling the story forward. I also suggested that Tadzio's returning gaze can be interpreted as one of Aschenbach's fantasy projections. Indeed, Tadzio's looking back does not just happen once as in the most climatic point in the novella, but occurs frequently in Visconti's film.

Aschenbach's presence both in the novella and in the literary other is "cancelled" in the third order where Visconti enters into the narrative. Thus, Visconti's treatment of Death in Venice, produces a new narrative order which does not correspond to Thomas Mann's novella any more. In Mann's novella, Aschenbach is presented as the central character in the

narrative. His desire for Tadzio remains as the propelling element of the, narrative. Although Aschenbach's desire also propels the film's narrative his character (Aschenbach) is fragmented, multiplied and intertextualized. Furthermore, Visconti's treatment of Death in Venice, associates Aschenbach's gaze with the author of the film (Visconti). In this way, the filmic text shifts the narrative motivation from Aschenbach's own desire into the self-reflective treatment of Visconti. Visconti's self-reflective presence, however, can not be reduced into the other motifs such as that of the Faustian theme or the parallelism between Aschenbach and Gustav Mahler. Mahler's figure, for example represents both Mann's and Visconti's nostalgic identification with *fin-de-siècle* artists who combine the values of aristocracy as well as their corruption. Visconti is rather present in the filmic text in terms of his *dialogic* relationship with the novella. Visconti's self-reflective presence in the film alters the formula of the novella: the desirer (Aschenbach) and his desired object (Tadzio) establish a new relationship: the desirer (Visconti) who is present in the narrative but not in the image track and his desired object (Tadzio) who is both present in the narrative and the image track.

This way of re-presenting Death in Venice also alters the literary function of Tadzio and treats him as a fantasy

projection. In this regard, Tadzio's looking back does not have any function in the novella. In the film, however, Tadzio returns his gaze not only to Aschenbach but to Visconti as well. Seen within this context, Death in Venice is self-reflexive in two ways. On the one hand, the film contains its film-maker; moreover, Visconti's function in the film as the desirer plays a significant role in the construction of the narrative motivation. On the other hand, Tadzio's representation as the projection of Visconti's own fantasy marks the presence of the film-maker who fulfils his voyeuristic desire.

Daney and Oudart argue that Visconti's treatment of Death in Venice is a typical example of the European cinema tradition where the auteur/cinephile "phantasmically" takes the place of the director (making the pleasure of the spectacle the object of his reflections), hence the process of filming becomes the fiction itself.<sup>37</sup> "This fiction consists of the eroticized and/or 'politicized' relation between a look and an object (a political and an erotic overdetermination of the function of the Name of the Author, the fetish of the foreclosed writer, of the agent of the production of the filmic inscription."<sup>38</sup> In the final analysis, this comes to, Daney and Oudart argue, the erotic relationship between the real agent of the filming and his actor, rather than an erotic relationship between Aschenbach and Tadzio.



As soon as Aschenbach dies, Tadzio's look reaches the gaze of Visconti. Whereas Aschenbach is the victim of his desire, Visconti's "voyeuristic" treatment serves its purpose without victimizing himself. Through the role of its auteur, Death in Venice moves away from the boundaries of the of the novella and yet produces another text by paying a homage to Thomas Mann's Death in Venice.

Aschenbach's failure - a failure of breaking from traditional art as well as a failure to emancipate himself from pursuing a "correct life" according to social values - has affinities with Visconti, whose authorial enunciation is included in the film. Like Aschenbach, Visconti also belongs to the aristocratic tradition that regrets its decline. Visconti then partly identifies with Aschenbach's self-conscious experience of his own decadence and his witnessing of the decay in general. Unlike Aschenbach, however, Visconti (of Death in Venice) is aware of the historical downfall of 19th century classicism. Furthermore, Visconti sees the tradition in its changing perspective or more precisely he comprehends modernity as a tradition of change. In this respect Visconti's discourse, like Mann and Leverkühn, remains in the rift between tradition and modernity.

## NOTES:

1. "Bourgeois critical realism", according to Lukács, is the evolution of the "great realism" of the first half of the 19th century novelistic tradition, motivated by the "humanist revolt against imperialism. Lukács defines it in the following:

The national roots of this movement are extremely various; the stylistic expressions still more so. All the more striking then, seen from the perspective of our time, is the common ideological basis of this "humanist revolt". It is only necessary to look at writers like Anatole France and Romain Rolland, Shaw and Dressier, Heinrich and Thomas Mann to see what I mean by this common basis. Contemporary bourgeois realism--many of whose exponents span the modern period--represents, essentially, a continuation of this revolt.

Source: György Lukács, The Meaning of Contemporary Realism, London: Merlin Press, 1963, p.16

Critical realism, for Lukács, is the last evolutionary phase of literature that leads to his notion of socialist realism which is different than that of the Zhdanov's version. Lukács interprets Mann's work in terms of class struggle, as a novel of decay and decline of the bourgeois. As Lukács writes on this point:

Mann envisages the perspective of socialism without abandoning the position of a bourgeois [...] Leverkühn's final monologue (in Doctor Faustus) reveals the perspective of a new society, of socialism, under which the artist will be freed from his former enslavement.

Source: The Meaning of Contemporary Realism op. cit. p.78-79

It should be noted that although Mann was not directly influenced by Lukács' formulation of the term critical realism, an indirect effect of Lukács' influence is evident in his writing. In the case of Visconti, however, the influence is much more direct. As I will argue later, Visconti had self-consciously adapted his filmmaking style into Lukács' notion of critical realism.

2. Among others, modernist writing was sharply criticised by Alfred Kurella and György Lukács, while modernism was defended by Ernst Bloch and Bertolt Brecht. Reference:

Aesthetics and Politics, London: New Left Books, 1977

3. Visconti's background information is gathered from :

Tevvy Ball, "Evolution of Vision in the Films of Luchino Visconti" in Italian Cinema: Literary and Socio-Political Trends, Los Angeles: Centre for Italian Studies for the department of Italian, UCLA, California, 1975, p.206 and 219

4. Reference: Guido Fink, "'Neorealismo' Revisited", 20th Century Studies Canterbury: University of Kent at Canterbury, No.5, September 1971, pp.73-74

I will discuss the influence of left-wing film criticism in Italian cinema in the following chapter.

5. György Lukács, The Meaning of Contemporary Realism p.21

6. György Lukács, "Franz Kafka or Thomas Mann?" in The Meaning of Contemporary Realism, London: Merlin Press, 1962, p.79

7. Despite Lukács' claims about the historical causality of Mann's work, most notably in Doctor Faustus, Mann was always interested in breaking away from the "laws" of causality. Mann's references to Nietzsche's concepts throughout his works suggests his interest to break away from the laws of causality and historical materialism. The references of great interest in Nietzsche's ideas in Mann's works reflect his pro-modernist view against a Lukácsian view of historical materialism. See also Mann's view on the use of the leitmotif later in the chapter.

8. Serge Daney and Jean-Pierre Oudart, "The Name of the Author (on the place of *Death in Venice*)", Cahiers du Cinéma (English Translation), vol.3. London: Routledge, 1980, p.306

9. Ibid. p.306

10. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, Visconti, London: Secker & Warburg in association with the British Film Institute, 1973, p.191

11. Ibid. p.191-92

12. Serge Daney and Jean-Pierre Oudart, "The Name of the Author" 320

13. Thomas Mann, Doctor Faustus, London: Secker & Warburg, 1949, pp.239-240

14. The novella also implies a resemblance between Aschenbach with Mahler: Both Aschenbach and Mahler share the same forename, Gustav. The novella's description of Aschenbach's "Jewish" profile also resembles Mahler. However, in the novella, Thomas Mann never explicitly suggests that Aschenbach is Mahler.

15. Tevvy Ball, "Evolution of Vision in the Films of Luchino Visconti" *Op.cit.* p. 222

16. Almost all Mannian characters are the children of a nordic father and an Italian mother. Characters such as Tonio Kröger or Adrian Leverkühn contain both Apollonic and Dionysic qualities. In the case of Death in Venice, it is the "focalized" (Tadzio), to use Genette's term, who is the child of an Italian mother and a Polish father. In this respect, Tadzio's purity is contrasted with Aschenbach's "corruption".

17. Oswald Ducrot and Tzvetan Todorov, Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Sciences of Language Baltimore: University of John Hopkins Press, 1979, p.220

18. *Ibid.* p.219

19. *ibid.* pp.219-220

20. Theodor Adorno, In Search of Wagner Northfolk: Verso Books, 1984, p.99

21. Thomas Mann, "The Making of The Magic Mountain" in The Magic Mountain, New York: Vintage Books, 1969, p.718

22. Thomas Mann, Death in Venice, London: Penguin Books, 1955, p.8

23. Thomas Mann, Death in Venice, Tristan, Tonio Kröger, translated by H.T.Lowe-Porter. London: Penguin Books, pp.9-10

24. Erich Heller, The Ironic German: A Study of Thomas Mann, London: Secker & Warburg, 1958, p.103

25. Thomas Mann, Death in Venice, p.21

26. *Ibid* p.67

27. Serge Daney and Jean-Pierre Oudart, "The Name of the Author", p.318

28. Thomas Mann, Doctor Faustus, London: Secker & Warburg, 1949, p.14

29. Ibid. p.229

30. Tevvy Ball points out that Visconti uses music in a Proustian manner in the memory-unfolding scene where Tadzio plays Für Elise. According to Ball, Esmeralda's playing of Für Elise resembles the incidence in Swann's Way when Swann has an affair with Odette, who often plays the Vinteuil Sonata on the piano for him. Later when Swan hears the same piece again, Ball quotes from Swann's Way, and:

all his memories of the days when Odette had been in love with him, which he had succeeded, up till that evening, in keeping invisible in the depths of his being, deceived by this sudden reflection of a season of love, whose sun, they supposed, had dawned again, had awakened from their slumber, had taken wing and risen to sing maddeningly in his ears without pity for his present desolation, the forgotten strains of happiness.

Reference: Tevvy Ball, "Evolution of Vision in the Films of Luchino Visconti" Italian Cinema: Literary and Socio-Political Trends, Published by the CENTRE FOR ITALIAN STUDIES for the DEPARTMENT OF ITALIAN, UCLA, Los Angeles, California, 1975, p.221

Visconti's interest on the work of Proust may be seen in the context of his other films such as The Damned and The Leopard and of course his project of filming A la Recherche du Temps Perdu.

31. Thomas Mann, Doctor Faustus, pp.153-154

32. T.S. Eliot, "Four Quartets" in The Complete Poems and Plays, London: Faber and Faber, p.171

33. Thomas Mann, Doctor Faustus Quoted from: Andreas Huyssen, After the Great Divide, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986, p.144

34. In Goethe's Faust the devil provides rationality for Faust, while, the social evolution of this rationality based on the Enlightenment is seen as an obstacle and a crisis in Doctor Faustus. For Leverkühn it is impossible to escape from the rational logic of composition. What he needs from the devil, in this respect, is inspiration to be able to overcome the cultural expectations of the society.

35. Ibid. p.144

36. Thomas Mann, Doctor Faustus p.229

37. Daney and Oudart, "The Name of the Author (on the 'place' of *Death in Venice*)", p.320

38. Ibid. p.320

**Late-Modernism and Beyond:**

**Antonioni's *L'avventura***

The plurality and interplay of styles and genres in Michelangelo Antonioni's L'avventura exhibit the characteristics of both late-modern and postmodern discourses. While L'avventura on the whole maintains a modernist narration it constantly undermines the domination of any of its styles, including modernism by continuously shuffling them. I will argue that L'avventura is both late-modern and postmodern because it draws upon a modernist mode of narration while utilizing other discursive strands too. As a result the style of L'avventura is ambivalent, and it is this ambivalence I will address in this chapter.

Four discourses are put into play in L'avventura: Discourse of Italian neorealism and its under-motivation, authorial narration, *post-neorealism*, and the *structuration* of a desire which propels the narrative. What characterizes L'avventura is that no one discourse becomes dominant. While a highly complex and stylized narration accentuates the supremacy of authorship over narration, this authorial discourse does not add a symbolic dimension to the narrative as is the case in "art cinema". Despite the loose boundaries of the term "art cinema", one can relate this genre to the symbolic aspects of, say, Ingmar Bergman's Seventh Seal. In this respect, the knight's confrontation with "death" constitutes the operation of a symbolic discourse in the film. L'avventura, on the other hand,



avoids such a metaphoric narration. At the same time, the transformation and reduction of the story into the search for a lost woman, the constant deferral of diegetic information and finally, the narrative dissolution allow the text to elude the frame of classic narrative texts where the characters function as agents responsible for the progression of events. As a result, a network of diegetic motivations, such as the realistic and the artistic, that are present in present in L'avventura are put in a mixing process with an economy of desire generated by the absence of the main character.

This chapter will explore the interrelation of these discourses. It will examine the way in which the variety of narrative motivations of L'avventura interact with its narrative logic. I will suggest that the impoverishment of realistic motivations as well as a cause-and-effect-based narration results in narrative dissolution and an open ending. As a result, the elliptical narration of L'avventura and its refusal to explain the disappearance of the lost person follows a modernist path. Yet, unlike a wholly intended modernist work such as Death in Venice, L'avventura's authorial narration is combined with the narration of a *non-modernist* work which results from the crisis in the narrative motivations including the verisimilitude. The particular absence of motivation in L'avventura cannot be totally attributed to the "author" and the Italian neorealist tradition

which is crucial in this context. I will argue that it is the role of the Italian neorealist tradition and Antonioni's post-neorealism that is central in producing the problems of non-motivation in L'avventura.

The authorial narration in L'avventura is complex. The self-conscious presence of an authorial style in L'avventura is related to modernism. Certain aspects of the narration of L'avventura reflect the inscription of its authorial style hence an enunciative act of an individual/author behind the narration. In L'avventura the inscription of its authorial style constitutes a modernist subject, while the dominance of this author is undermined by the work of the other discourses of its narration. I will elaborate on the interrelations of modernism, enunciation and authorship in my reading of Hitchcock's Blackmail.

The "author" Antonioni is portrayed very clearly in Sam Rohdie's excellent comparative study of Antonioni's films.<sup>1</sup> Although Rohdie does not claim that his work is an authorial approach, the book provides a study of Antonioni's style, his themes and his personal view of cinema by comparing and interrelating the films throughout his career. The common characteristics of Antonioni's films, according to Rohdie, are that all his films present a journey or an investigation taken

not just by the characters but by the narrative of the film; the objects are presented in a manner in which they lose their distinctive patterns and dissolve into the overall visual milieu. Rohdie notes that the characters too in Antonioni's films are "emptied", their substance is taken away from them and reduced into their mere visual appearances. During the search for Anna on Lisca Bianca island, for example, Claudia mistakes Giulia for Anna, or elsewhere, the film makes the spectator mistake Patrizia for Claudia. These moments of illusion temporarily detach these incidents from the diegesis, weakening the certainty of the narrative, hence foregrounding the visual style of the author.

Rohdie's approach comes close to Peter Wollen's early work on authorship, presented in Signs and Meaning in Cinema. Like Wollen, Rohdie avoids building a romantic image of Antonioni as a self-contained modernist artist. This view was previously taken by Seymour Chatman in his work on Antonioni.<sup>2</sup> Instead of taking such a view, Rohdie studies the evolution of Antonioni's films, his writings and his polemics against the critics. The earlier theories of authorship, notably the *Cahiers du Cinéma* debate and Peter Wollen's introduction to the auteur theory focus on the similarities of a director's complete films as well as the distinctive qualities of his/her individual films. In a similar way, Rohdie approaches Antonioni's style, analyzing the common patterns as well as the unique elements of his films.

Rohdie points out that Antonioni's films favour visual representation above ideas, experimentation over social realism, and loose continuity over a plot-based narration. Moreover, Antonioni's modernism, for Rohdie, is not the fulfilment of certain modernist expectations such as the avoidance of conventional forms of representation and of narrative based on motivation and closure. Instead, Rohdie sees Antonioni's modernity in his constant "disturbance" of the continuity of narrative and in his continuous search to break linear forms of representation.

For Rohdie, Antonioni's modernism lies in his experimentation, for Chatman Antonioni's only four great films, L'avventura, La Notte, L'eclisse and Il deserto rosso realize a proper modernist narrative. The preceding or the following films of his "great tetralogy", for Chatman, move away from a modernist narration. As opposed to Chatman's approach, Rohdie does not search for modernist style in Antonioni's films. His approach to his films figures an artist who breaks the rules and undermines traditional norms in order to look for a new style. I will later argue that this continual break with established forms and a continual search for alternative styles can be seen in terms of Lyotard's notion of postmodernism in the manner of *novatio*.

Rohdie's approach integrates Antonioni's distinctive style

with his personal detachment from the dominant views on filmic representation. While I agree with Rohdie's overall view on Antonioni's films my approach differs in the way in which Antonioni's authorship operates. My argument is that although abstract and distinctive, Antonioni's style does not stem from his radical, humanist and modernist character alone. But rather that his authorship itself is framed and continually re-defined through the interaction of various intertextual influences. These influences on his films are mainly the historical progression of film criticism in Italy, notably Guido Aristarco and Luigi Chiriani, their definition of Antonioni's style as naturalist or formalist and Antonioni's response to these critical views. I will discuss this issue more fully later. A further problem of attributing Antonioni's "unique" style to his personal career is that it overlooks the extra-locality of his personal style, which is formed by the co-presence of other styles and influences such as neorealism, experimentalism and a self-ironic authorship as distinct from a subjective, expressive authorship.

I consider Antonioni's authorship and the traces of the other discourses in L'avventura as one of constant disseminations. Thus his authorial style constantly slides under the other operating discourses in the film which simultaneously disorient, reframe and reevaluate its preceding position. My focus on the issue of authorship aims at locating the moments

when an authorial style emerges, dominates the other discourses of the narration, or withdraws and becomes a subordinate factor. These are also the moments of the inscription of a "personal" and "distinctive" styles in the manner of modernism.

The fourth discursive strand in L'avventura is the structure of desire immanent in the narrative. The absence of Anna in the film generates desire at different levels in the text. First, Anna's disappearance launches a search by Sandro and Claudia throughout the narrative. The search, in this respect, establishes an enigma which is expected to be resolved through the advance of the narrative. Secondly, Anna's disappearance starts up a complex relationship between Sandro and Claudia. Although Sandro suffers from Anna's loss, his desire for her makes him turn to other women such as Claudia and then become frustrated and alienated from them because they are not Anna. Claudia's relationship with Anna and Sandro is even more complex. During her search for Anna she becomes involved with Sandro. Although she genuinely wants to find Anna, the more she involves with Sandro the more afraid she becomes of confronting Anna. Furthermore, her awareness of the fact that she is attracted by Sandro as long as she substitutes for Anna frustrates her own desire. In this respect, she desires not just Sandro but also *be* Anna rather than simply filling her void. Thirdly, Anna's absence and the search for her proceeds the narrative without

diegetic motivation. As I will argue later it the desire to find Anna, substitute for her or defer the search which propels the narrative. I will also argue that the narrative unfolding motivated by this economy of desire furthers Antonioni's narrating style based on the absence of diegetic motivation.

In order to elaborate my argument and facilitate my reading of L'avventura, I shall now outline the diegetic events of the film.

## II

*Anna (Lea Massari) tells her father (Renzo Ricci), a wealthy retired diplomat, that she is going on a boat trip. He says to her that her boyfriend, Sandro (Gabriele Ferzetti), will never marry her. Anna tells him that she is the one who does not want to marry him. Claudia (Monika Vitti), Anna's best friend, arrives and they leave to go to Sandro's place. As they arrive, Anna hesitates to go up to his flat. She tells Claudia about her uncertainty. Sandro, however, sees them from his balcony; Anna goes up to his flat, takes her clothes off and they make love. Claudia waits outside, near an art gallery.*

*In the cabin cruiser, along with other friends, Anna, bored with the others' small-talk, dives overboard for a swim. Sandro follows her. Giulia (Dominique Blanchar), a young woman living*

together with an older man, Corrado (James Adams), who seems to have lost his interest in her, and Claudia also go in for swim. Corrado, Raimondo (Leio Luttazzi)--a womanizer--, and Patrizia (Esmeralda Ruspoli), a wealthy married woman, stay in the boat. Soon after they dive in, Anna screams, shouting that she has seen a shark. In panic, everyone goes back to the boat. In the boat, while they are changing their swim suits, Anna tells Claudia that she made up the shark story. Claudia tries to understand her attitude but Anna refuses to talk about it. She gives her black blouse to Claudia which she admires. As they arrive at the Basiluzzo island and everyone goes ashore with the exception of Patrizia, who is busy with her jigsaw puzzle, and Raimondo, who is trying to seduce her.

On the island, Corrado, avoiding Guilia, goes to see the ancient ruins with Claudia. Anna and Sandro remain together and talk about their relationship. Uptight and discontent, Anna tells Sandro that his love is not enough for her. She rejects Sandro's marriage proposition and tells Sandro that "I don't feel you any more". Exasperated by the argument, Sandro lies down.

As the wind blows harder, they prepare to leave the island. They then discover that Anna is missing. Despite their thorough search they can not find any trace of her. Sandro and Corrado discover a shack belonging to a fisherman. They decide to stay



on the island while the rest of the group get ready to return. Claudia joins Sandro and Corrado at the last minute. The three of them spend the night in the shack, waiting for the storm to end. Inside the shack, Claudia blames Sandro for Anna's disappearance and Sandro strongly defends himself. At daybreak Claudia goes out to find Sandro who is watching the sunrise. She apologizes for what she said. They look at each other with affection.

The rest of the group returns with the police and some professional divers. The dive and search for Anna's body but fail to find any trace of her. A diver finds an ancient vase which, temporarily diverts their attention from Anna's disappearance. Meanwhile Anna's father arrives and interprets the Bible, passed on to him by Claudia as one of Anna's belongings, "a good sign" that leaves the possibility of a suicide out of question. He recognizes Anna's blouse on Claudia, which puts her in an awkward position. She apologetically explains why she is wearing it.

Sandro decides to inquire about the recent arrest of some smugglers, returns to the cruiser to get his suitcase, and finds Claudia in the cabin. He kisses her and she responds to him in a somewhat confused manner. Later, Claudia decides to comb all the islands until she finds Anna. The interrogation of the

smugglers gets nowhere except that Sandro receives an advice from one of the officers to see a journalist who might have some information about Anna's disappearance. He finds Claudia at the train station, follows her onto the train, trying to persuade her to have an affair. With some reluctance and confusion, she persuades Sandro to leave her alone. Leaving Claudia at the next station, Sandro tries to meet Zuria, a journalist of sensational events, hoping to receive some information about Anna. He finds Zuria in the middle of an overexcited crowd watching the arrival of a voluptuous woman, Gloria Perkins. After having talked to Zuria, Sandro decides to go to a pharmacy in Troina, one of Zuria's stories as to where Anna could have been.

Claudia returns from her fruitless search and arrives at the villa, where Patrizia and her husband (Sandro's boss) live. Along with other people, the rest of the cruise group is also invited. Claudia tries one of Patrizia's brunette wig s on and it makes her look like Anna. Claudia is also seemingly very anxious about the arrival of Sandro. Instead of going to a party, she leaves with Sandro to Troina.

What they find in Troina is nothing more than a piece of unreliable information. Nevertheless, they decide to follow that lead and go to Notto. Sandro, finally, persuades Claudia to have an affair. They pass a deserted town, stop nearby a rail-track,

and make love. In Notto, Sandro goes to the hotel to check on Anna. Claudia is worried about finding Anna as she begins to have an affair with Sandro. She waits for him to return from the hotel in anguish. Sandro returns with no news and they spend the night in Notto. As they go up to the church roof and play with the bells, Claudia inspires Sandro to go back to designing buildings rather than to estimate the costs of the buildings for Ettore (Patrizia's husband). In return, Sandro asks her to marry him. She rejects his proposition first and then decides to wait until Anna's disappearance is resolved.

In Taormina, they go to a party in a hotel, arranged by Patrizia and Ettore. Sandro goes down to meet with others, while Claudia prefers to go to sleep straight away. He sees Ettore who is anxious to talk business with him. Gloria Perkins, who is among the guests, attracts his attention twice.

Meanwhile, Claudia cannot sleep. She gets up before dawn. Finding that Sandro has not returned, she goes down to look for him. She finds him on a couch, making love with Gloria Perkins. Claudia runs away in shock. Running after her, Sandro finds her outside, standing by a bench. He sits on the bench quietly. Claudia stands behind him and touches his hand, implying that she is ready to forgive him.

L'avventura is deeply rooted in the cinema's recent past, namely, Italian neo-realism and the debates and trends following the collapse of the neo-realist movement. Although post-neorealist features dominate the film stylistically, there is a deliberate continuity between neo-realist films and L'avventura. Like De Sica's Bicycle Thief and Rossellini's Pàisa, for example, L'avventura decentralizes its characters and treats them and their environment on equal terms without giving any priority to the protagonists.

André Bazin sees neorealism as an ontological representation which treats the characters and the milieu according to the way they happen to appear. This approach, Bazin suggests, is based on the avoidance of arbitrary plots and expressionist narration. Neorealist films rather depict a life in the way life itself takes its course. The characters, for example, are often represented as the way they would normally, spontaneously, respond to any given event in real life, or as Bazin writes, they are "caught in the maze of plot like laboratory rats being sent through a labyrinth."<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, for Bazin, the aesthetics of neorealist films are based on their emulation of life as it is. Moreover, like most neo-realist films, L'avventura also uses cinematic excess, dispersal and suspension of subsequent events and especially like Bicycle Thief, along with the thematic

similarities such as the search for its lost object, the film has an open-ending. I will discuss the dispersal and the suspension of narrative events and the use of cinematic excess later in the chapter.

Bazin argues that elliptic narration in neorealist films is the result of the way these films emulate reality in the sense that we cannot know everything in life. Elliptic narration in neorealist films, thus, is not the result of a stylistic choice as in modernist films; "it is a lacuna in reality, or in the knowledge we have of it, which is by its nature limited."<sup>4</sup> Unlike Bicycle Thief and Pàisa, however, L'avventura foregrounds elliptic and stylistic treatment for its own sake and divorces itself from a commitment to explore life in an ontological sense.

The discursive shifts between neo-realist and post-neorealist films are immanent to larger discourses and paradigms such as autonomous art versus socially committed art (exoterism) and late-modernism versus postmodernism. These paradigmatic shifts, as I argued in my first chapter, do not follow a linear progress. Each of these paradigms act upon one another and often create a network of hybrid discourses which then produce alternative trends in late-modern cinema, as in the films of Fellini or Paolo and Vittorio Taviani. La Notte di San Lorenzo

made by the Taviani brothers, for example, combines a fragmenting style of editing, long-duration shots, deep focusing, pans and the use of off-screen space. In this way, the film's style oscillates between an artificially fragmented reality and the depiction of a scene within which the continuity of time and space is maintained.

Furthermore, the practice of film-making and the theoretical and critical discourses in many post-neorealist films influence one another. Three major film makers of the post-neorealist era, namely Fellini, Visconti and Antonioni moved beyond neorealism both stylistically and politically, while the film critic of Cinema Nuovo, Guido Aristarco criticized a late Rossellini film, Viaggio in Italia, on the grounds that it betrayed neorealist cinema. The influence of the anti-fascist left-wing culture in Italy was much stronger than in most European countries, hence the emergence of the Marxist film journal, Cinema Nuovo. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith comments:

It is a feature of Italian cultural life that it is often demanded of an artist that he should possess, as it were, a Marxian super-ego and that he should be able to justify himself and his activity in terms of what is, all said and done, a very inadequate theory of artistic practice, the theory of critical realism.<sup>5</sup>

Some of Fellini's films following the collapse of neo-realism, notably 8 1/2 and La Dolce Vita, satirized the role of left-wing film critics in Italian cinema. Aristarco's response to Fellini's cynical remarks about the Cinema Nuovo approach typifies the

relationship between the film critics and the film-makers:

...What is the trouble between Fellini and *Cinema Nuovo*? We were among the few who defended Fellini; we backed him as far as *I Vitelloni*. But we expressed our doubts regarding *La Strada*. There is one viewpoint, that of *Cinema Nuovo*, holding forth a knowledge of and faith in man, his ability to dominate and modify his world, to solve problems within himself and outside himself—in a word, realism...<sup>6</sup>

It should also be noted that the progression of left-wing film criticism moved onto a more reductive marxist criticism, disposing of neorealism on the grounds that it only represents superficial realism. In this context, Antonioni's films were regarded as anti-realist and 'bourgeois' by leftist critics such as Umberto Barbaro until the release of Zabriskie Point in 1970, which, he argued, reveals a commitment to leftist politics.

Within the context of this institutionalized film criticism, Antonioni's style was also dismissed by Aristarco in favour of Visconti.<sup>7</sup> Drawing upon Lukács' notion of realism, he argued that neo-realist cinema, with reference to Antonioni, Fellini and Zavattini, closely follows a Zolaesque naturalist/descriptive style, while Visconti's films, like for example Senso, reflect a progression towards a higher form of realism, enabling his films to narrate fully complex characters (types) in the sense of Balzac and Tolstoy. I have already discussed this last point in depth in my chapter on Death in Venice. As a result of this institutionalized criticism, film-makers took positions against neorealism and/or realism. The impact of this film criticism, I

will argue, caused an interaction between the film-makers's gradually progressing view against the social criticism and their style.

The continuity of a neorealist style as well as a tendency to break away from it can also be observed on various levels of the narration in L'avventura. The influences and the counter-influences of film criticism in post-neorealist films often function as meta-discourses. The multiplicity of each of these discourses, namely the neorealism, its negation and a modernist style, itself suggests the film's constant search for a new style. This search, as I suggested previously, also aims at challenging the boundaries of late-modernism as an established practice of modernism. However, the formation of these meta-discourses, such as the preservation of the modernist styles and the way in which they re-write each other are also the characteristics of the postmodern condition as they present incredulity towards more established discourses in cinema. The appearance and the disappearance of meta-discourses are no longer caused by the historical evaluation of the movements but by their crisis in maintaining their status. This can be seen in the context of meta-narratives replacing one another. In this respect, for example, the shift from the socially committed and exoteric aspects of neo-realist cinema to significantly more autonomous and abstract styles suggests the post-neorealist



films' transformation of meta-discourses.

In terms of Lyotard's argument, outlined in my first chapter, *L'avventura* shows both an aspect of *novatio* and *melancholia*. It shows the characteristic of *novatio* in the sense that the work constantly moves away from a dominant style in search of a new style. L'avventura is also *melancholic* as it aims at a representation which is all at once elliptic, referential to neorealism and, to some degree, self-consciously modernist. The *melancholic* aspect of L'avventura is the result the film's leaning towards the styles and the politics of modernity. In this respect the works reflect only the facades of modernist discourses which are reduced into their mere presence in the manner of late-modernism. However, as I will argue later, the distance L'avventura takes against the established discourses of modernism is more radical than, for example, Blowup. In the following I will look at the influences of modernist, late-modern and the neorealist discourses on L'avventura in order to discuss their meta-textual role which, to my argument, constitutes a postmodern representation.

One of the most characteristic aspects of late-modern texts is their avoidance of narrating a full story in the classical sense. As I argued previously, L'avventura intertwines an elliptic representation based on Bazin's notion of ontological

realism and an alternative modernist form based on ellipticism which aims at 'breaking away from classical narration. The fragmented discourses of modern and late-modern texts do not generate any coherent form of narrative in the sense of 19th century novels. Unlike in modernist texts, however, the fragmentation in many late-modern discourses no longer looks for alternatives in self-reflexive representation. Contrary to modernist forms, late modernist works often institutionalize their self-consciously elliptic narration. What late-modern texts tend to do is to regard modernist self-reflexivity as the prerequisite for the emergence of a text. Late-modern works thus retrospectively build their own texts through modernism. The lack of causal links and the avoidance of a closure, in this respect, act as variations on the codes of modernism.

As opposed to this view, theoreticians like Ihab Hassan and John Fletcher suggest that in so far as the works aim at a modernist path, they remain authentically modernist. They both believe that the practices of modern art continually sharpen the subversive edge of the modernist discourses. This view also implies their optimism towards the future practices of modernist art. Writing prior to Lyotard's notion of postmodern texts, Hassan sees the evolution of the subversive aspects of modernism as postmodern beyond any given period. Postmodern works, for Hassan, further their subversive, elliptic and plural discourses

which are opened up by modernism.

John Fletcher exemplifies such a situation in Alain Robbe-Grillet's Jealousy in the following:

The new novelists maintain that they no longer can be made convincing, so the writer might as well own up to his impotence and not seek' to deceive anyone about the reality of his creations. Detailed psychological analysis of the feelings and the motives of a character sound more and more 'phoney' to the reader. So, instead of doing a 'straight' study of a jealous man in the classical manner, Robbe-Grillet wrote a novel which itself *constitutes* a fit of jealousy, becoming gradually more and more irrational and fanciful as the obsession feeds upon itself.<sup>8</sup>

It is not clear, however, whether the examples of Nouveau Roman or post-neorealist films constitute a challenge to their modernist predecessors or simply try to preserve certain characteristics of modernism. Fletcher's passage suggests that the Nouveau Roman develops the modernist path but not necessarily challenge the modernist literature itself. In line with Fletcher's argument, one can suggest that L'avventura also pushes to the limits the postponing of the narrative resolution. This, however, does not suggest that the narration of L'avventura crosses the boundaries of modernism. My argument here is that the evolution of modernism into late-modernism and the transition from self-reflexive and coded texts to much more stylized and minimalist texts, (establishing the 'sovereignty of the void', to use Ihab Hassan's description)<sup>9</sup> are themselves characteristics of the postmodern condition. Seen within this context, late-modernism as institutionalized modernism

constitutes a substitute--a meta-narrative--for modernism. Late-modern texts, in other words, are symptoms of postmodernity because they aim at reconstituting modernist meta-narratives. Referring to an audio-visual performance based on multiple discourses, Lyotard dismisses the performance on the grounds that it fails to overcome the boundaries of modernism. Lyotard formulates the experience through his observation of John Cage's response towards this self-consciously "postmodern" performance:

John Cage, who was with us there, stood up afterwards and, with uncharacteristic vehemence, withdrew his support from the work, protesting that, despite its clever deconstructive apparatus, it remained dedicated to expressing the lack of meaning for a subject. In short, it was modern, in other words, romantic.<sup>10</sup>

The performance Lyotard refers to can be defined as late-modern. Seen in this context, late-modernism is postmodernism's Other in the sense that it tries *not* to challenge modernism.

A comparison between Antonioni's Blowup and L'avventura sheds light to the differences between the late-modern and the postmodern texts. Even though L'avventura is an earlier film, its narrative logic precedes Antonioni's other late-modern film, Blowup, made in 1966. As in L'avventura the narration of Blowup is based on absence and narrative dissolution. However, unlike Blowup, the narrative form of L'avventura eludes a modernist narration by making use of a void in the narrative.

Before I elaborate this point further, I shall briefly

outline the story of Blowup. The protagonist in Blowup is a photographer. The story is based on his discovery of an unidentified object in a photograph he took in the park. As he blows up the photograph in the dark-room it reveals a human body. He immediately goes to the park and confirms the presence of the body. The next day, however, when he returns to it, he finds that it has disappeared. In order to reveal more details he further blows-up the photograph. His attempts to solve the mystery of the missing body, however, take him nowhere. At the end, he sees a group of mime players performing a tennis game without a ball. When the players see him passing by, they gesture him to throw the imaginary ball back to them. He hesitates first and then decides to join their game, pretending to catch the ball and throws it back.

One of the crucial difference between L'avventura and Blowup lies in their closure. Blowup ends with a metaphorical closure: the hero's joining the imaginary ball game stresses a modernist point that the narration is based on a void. The game functions without a ball just as a narrative can operate without a goal. Blowup, in other words, denies a narrative closure; or, to put it differently, the avoidance of revealing the mystery behind the lost body manifests a rejection of classical realist narration.

Unlike Blowup, however, L'avventura does not attempt to

fulfil such a goal. The absence of a metaphoric closure as well as the combination of an elliptic narration with a self-motivated narrative based on desire disseminates the film's modernist character as a dominant discourse. Instead, L'avventura encourages the spectator to "read" its multiple styles and genres, its departures from these boundaries and more interestingly its mixture of these elements in a continuous narrative frame. L'avventura, in this context, is an "open text" which encourages the reader to look at its intertextual character.<sup>11</sup>

While L'avventura presents itself as a modernist text it moves away from a modernist narration. L'avventura in this regard takes a more radical step than Blowup. Blowup achieves a modernist narration simply by negating the conventions of narration based on causality, while L'avventura reverses this modernist representation: Instead of constructing a narration based on negation, to use Adorno's term, L'avventura presents a narrative motivated by absence. In Adorno's terms, Blowup can be seen as a modernist work based on a double negation. In Blowup an open ended story, or an unresolved detective plot becomes the object of an authorial treatment which is also based on a rejection of conventional representation. Adorno's collaborator, Max Horkheimer, formulates this in the following:

"A successful work, according to immanent criticism, is not one which resolves objective contradictions in a spurious

harmony, but one which expresses the idea of harmony negatively by embodying the contradictions, pure and uncompromised, in its innermost structure".<sup>12</sup>

In a similar sense, the narrative of Blowup embodies two orders of "negative" representation. Firstly, it rejects any narrative motivation, most notably the generic motivation, i.e., fulfilling the conventions of a detective genre. A fulfilment as such would simply defeat the film's uncompromising negation of the generic motivations.

Secondly, and more importantly, the narrative does not concern itself in telling a story and resolving the mystery but rather occupies itself with the placement and the displacements of objects which have no narrative significance. Rohdie comments that, in Blowup, there is a narrative correspondence between the displaced objects, objects that are taken out of their context, and bodies in space.<sup>13</sup> The central object which is photographed by Thomas and then goes missing is the corpse in the park. Throughout the narrative he collects or comes across various objects: a propeller, a broken electric guitar or even a woman of whom he takes a picture in the park with her lover. She offers to make love with Thomas in exchange of the film. In response to her offer, Thomas takes another picture of her in a different milieu. Rohdie further argues that Thomas's desire to capture objects and displace their context, his voyeuristic desire to frame objects and women parallels the camera, and I would

add, the narrative itself. The interest of the narrative then is only tangential to the mystery. The narrative motivation is nothing more than a desire to look at or "spy on" people. What is resolved or unresolved about the mystery remains beyond the scope of the narrative.

To sum up, in Blowup the narrative *is* the void, whereas in L'avventura, as in Bicycle Thief, the missing object is not a central void but the main agency of the narrative. In this respect L'avventura goes beyond the prospects of modernism by subverting its central void from within. In other words, establishing a central void and unsettling this central void by turning it to a driving force of the narrative at the same time indicates the film's departure from a modernist representation.

In this context, despite its similarity to Antonioni's other late-modern texts such as Blowup, L'avventura cannot be seen simply as a late-modern film. Its traversing position from one discourse to another itself indicates a postmodern condition within which these discursive shifts and overlapping occur. Blowup rests in the boundaries of late-modernism without being postmodern, since it aims at a modernist narration based on the sovereignty of the void. Hence it follows the modernist tradition in a linear sense without constituting a meta-narrative. L'avventura on the other hand sidesteps from this one dimensional



modernism and oscillates between multiple meta-narratives to a degree where the text can no longer be distinguished from the meta-texts.

## IV

The central element in the interplay of neo-realism and post-neorealism in L'avventura is the treatment of ordinary events as spectacles or the rendering of ordinary events in their accidental development without ordering the narrative into a form based on a causal development of the events. One of the major characteristics of neorealist cinema, according to Bazin, is their combination of "image-facts" which makes the narrative possible.<sup>14</sup> Image-facts are not equal to shots but fragments of concrete reality. Their meaning is not yet framed by the narrative. Instead, these image-facts appear as the concrete images of the reality which is, unlike an artificially structured narrative, discontinuous and accidental in their happening. Bazin describes neorealism as a new form of reality that weakens the logical connections of events and undermines their organic *wholeness*. Each event depicted by the camera has no value in itself. In fact, the concrete "image-facts" have no potential to propel the narrative. Neither have they any value to increase the dramatic tension of the narrative. Instead, each unit has its own dramatic power and intensity. The "centrifugal properties"

of these images then generate an inner quality of life in the film which is, no longer driven by the codes of narrative. Bazin's most quoted passage on the Bicycle Thief illustrates this:

The film unfolds on the level of pure accident: the rain, the seminarians, the Catholic Quakers, the restaurant—all these are seemingly interchangeable, no one seems to have arranged them in order on a dramatic spectrum. The scene in the thieves' quarter is significant. We are not sure that the man who was chased by the workman is actually the bicycle thief, and we shall never know if the epileptic fit was a pretence or genuine. As an "action" this episode would be meaningless, had not its novel-like interest, its value as a fact, given it a dramatic meaning to boot.<sup>15</sup>

To a certain extent, this also applies to L'avventura. Throughout the film events occur accidentally: Not only the disappearance of Anna, but the search for her and the affair between Sandro and Claudia unfold in a contingent manner. Almost every action in the film gives the impression that it happens randomly without a narrative motivation. In L'avventura, arbitrary events follow other arbitrary events without any causal logic behind the narrative. During Anna's search in the island, for example, they accidentally discover an amphora. This arbitrary event suddenly diverts everybody's attention from the search into the historical value of the amphora. The sudden arrival of Anna's father once again diverts the attention and as a result Raimondo drops the amphora. While these spontaneous events disperse the dramatic investment of the narrative, the characters react to the centrifugal force of the events, linking

one incident to another. Many of the deeper narrative events in L'avventura are also based on contingency. The affair between Sandro and Claudia unfolds on the basis of their immediate reaction to the preceding event: Sandro decides to meet with Claudia at the last minute before she leaves by train. Although Claudia convinces him to leave her alone it is the departure of the train which makes him follow her onto the train. From that point onwards, the affair between Claudia and Sandro develops through a series of accidental events: In *Notto*, at the roof of a church, while playing with the church bells, Claudia inspires Sandro to go back to architecture, his former profession. As an immediate reaction to that, he proposes that she marry him. Later on, in a hotel in Taormina, Sandro sleeps with Gloria Perkins, a brunette who resembles Anna. Sandro's spontaneous temptation to have a one-night stand with her seems to underline for Claudia that her relationship to Sandro will never fill the void created by Anna. Once again, Gloria Perkins' mere presence makes Sandro react. In L'avventura, as in Bicycle Thief, priority is given to individual events which are not motivated by narrative codes; or as Gilles Deleuze describes it: "it is as if the action floats in the situation, rather than bringing it to a conclusion or strengthening it".<sup>16</sup>

Unlike classical realist films where the functions of objects and settings are subordinate to the demands of a given

genre, in neorealist cinema objects and settings claim a greater degree of sovereignty. As Bazin argues: "Each image being on its own just a fragment of reality existing before any meanings, the entire surface of the scene should manifest an equally concrete density".<sup>17</sup> Nonetheless, their importance is self-contained. The aim of the camera in neorealist films is to render life with minimum possible alteration; hence the contiguity of the images depicted create a sense of life-likeness. Bazin's model stresses a parallel between the exploratory function of the camera and the way in which the characters view their milieux in these films. Gilles Deleuze further suggests that not only the viewer but also the protagonists of the neorealist films invest the settings and objects with their gaze.<sup>18</sup>

In Visconti's Ossessione, for example, the protagonist's observation of life's conditions brings his reaction forth. In Ossessione, as in other neorealist films, the characters are also part of the "fact-images". Even the femme-fatale character, Giovanna, functions as part of the milieu rather than an *actant*, to use Greimas' term. The film implies that had the protagonist not intervened in their slow and orderly lives, the couple would have continued their "pathetic" lives without change. However, unlike Vicki in Fritz Lang's Human Desire who tries to persuade Jeff to kill her husband, Giovanna in Ossessione does not want to give up the security that her repulsive husband provides.

Instead, Giovanna's being "too good" and/or "too attractive" to belong to such a milieu provokes Gino to take her away from her husband.

A similar point can be made in relation to Rossellini's Germany Year Zero where the little boy's suicide attempt comes as a result of his observation of economic conditions which do not allow him to earn money. As in Ossessione, here too, the reaction of the protagonist brings an element of change in the narrative. The change itself, however, usually has a tangential effect on the continuity of the events: An intervention, in other words, only changes the direction of the events temporarily. Soon after that intervention things go back to their previous order. When Giovanna is killed in an accident Gino is left alone, and this puts him back into the same position he was in at the beginning of the film.

In post-neorealist films, despite their break from neorealism, the relationship between the objects and settings and the hero's reaction to it remain unchanged. In Death in Venice, for example, the milieu of fin-de-siècle Venice along with the Polish family and the boy, Tadzio, lead Aschenbach to his death. Although Aschenbach is here represented as a sovereign subject--in the sense of 19th century realist novels where dynamics of the protagonist's personal history permeates the novel--his

observation of Venice and his involuntarily persistent gaze aimed at Tadzio play a crucial role in his breakdown.

At this point I would like to focus on three interrelated aspects of neorealist films and their successors. Firstly, in post-neorealist films political commitment towards social issues no longer play a crucial role. In Bicycle Thief, during the search of the stolen bicycle, the spectator observes the difficult conditions of life in postwar Italy from the point of view of the boy. Here the camera's depiction of life through the eyes of a child maximizes the effect of the cinema of showing as opposed to narrating. Likewise, the observation of the poverty of postwar Germany through the eyes of a child in Germany Year Zero serves a similar purpose. In both cases, the social concerns of these films go hand in hand with their style of depiction. In this regard it is possible to suggest that neorealist films emerged both as a movement and as a genre, combining socio-historic motivations with generic ones. In later films, however, this socio-political dimension disappears and the portraying effect remains as a stylistic property.

Secondly, stripped from their social context, post-neorealist films establish particularly loose connections with the causality of events. It is as though the milieux and the characters are no longer inter-connected with the spatio-temporal

forces of the diegesis. In this respect, priority is given to an accidental situation of which the diegetic events take place. One of Rossellini's late films, Stromboli exemplifies this: Karen marries a local fisherman and comes to Stromboli to escape from an internment camp in postwar Italy. As she begins to face the cultural differences, her problems of adaptation along with her self-pity turn her life into a nightmare. Here, two significant events, a sequence of tunny-fishing and the eruption of the volcano simply accompany her personal conflict without altering the logic of the story. These "floating" elements, in other words, are part of the concrete reality within which Karen's personal conflict takes place.

Thirdly and finally, both neorealist films and post-neorealist films tend to show a *microscopic* view of life described by Sigfried Kracauer as "found stories".<sup>19</sup> In neorealist films, no matter how small the events, they are interconnected with social issues. In Rossellini's Rome Open City, for example, all the seemingly small details such as the child's relationship with the priest, prostitution, betrayal and execution are interconnected with the resistance movement against the Nazi occupation. These depicted events, however, do not function in a metaphorical sense. They are rather multiple aspects of life itself, metonymically connected to each other.

This characteristic of neorealist films continues in later films with an exception: In post-neorealist films, there is a greater degree of abstraction in the representation of events. They are no longer interconnected with the dynamics of socio-economic problems but with the immediate appearance of a life that is timeless (Stromboli), ordinary (Ossessione) and often banal (Viaggio in Italia). In Antonioni's La Notte (1960) and Il Deserto Rosso (1964) everyday life becomes the dominant element on the screen. In Blowup, a human corpse becomes a spectacle which then, by its disappearance, leaves all the questions about its murder open. As in neorealist films, the narrative in Blowup is not based on the causality of the murder which is expected to be resolved at the end of the film. Rather, it is just a *found*, microscopic element among the other things in life. In these films, in short, the milieu is no longer socially integrated to an extra-filmic reality. In the following section I will read the film in its dual relationship, namely its continuation and its break, with neorealism.

In the opening scene Anna meets her father who is complaining to a worker about the emergence of the new and ugly buildings around his neighbourhood. As Anna approaches him they first talk about the yacht trip Anna is planning to take with her friends and then about her boyfriend who, in her father's opinion, will never marry her. The dialogue between Anna and her



father functions like an establishing shot. It introduces the approaching event, the yacht trip, as well as her attitude towards her relationship; she tells her father that it is she who doesn't want to marry him. On the other hand, her father's talk with the worker about new houses has an oblique relationship with the narrative. Unlike his dialogue with Anna, this one has complete autonomy in the film as the subject of the conversation is in no way related to the film. It appears more like an image-fact in the Bazinian sense.

Just as films like Rome Open City and Bicycle Thief depict events that are spatially fragmented and discontinuous vis-à-vis the centre of the action, L'avventura too connects scenes or themes that have only metonymic connections with main event. Although the discussion about the new buildings precedes the dialogue between Anna and her father, it is presented simply because it is spatially and temporally linked with the subsequent action. Being the first dialogue in the film, however, it destabilizes the hierarchy of introductory information and undermines its establishing function. One can suggest that the scene reveals the differences between Anna and her father, in the sense that she belongs to a younger generation living in the cities and is impatient, almost neurotic, while he is an older man retiring from his diplomatic job, who intends to live quietly and peacefully on his private estate.

Seymour Chatman suggests that both the architecture and the dialogue function as *co-metonym* in the sense that both subjects are integral parts of modern life itself; instead of using these themes as metaphors of modernity, the film embodies them.<sup>20</sup> This is to suggest that the style of the film is formed by its direct association with the material, i.e., modern life. Hence, the scattered and disoriented dialogues, Anna's "neurotic" behaviour and the coexistence of different people, their lack of communication are all part of the modern life itself. The opening scene of L'avventura then, panoramically views the milieu as the way it appears, gathers together fragments of life, no matter how eclectic they are, and in doing so establishes a non-linear and sketchy narration.

L'avventura moves away from neorealist films by using objective details to a greater degree of abstraction and by creating a mere "excess". Cinematic excess here refers to the film's representation of its objects and characters beyond the spatial and the temporal frame of narrative. The use of such excess in a film indicates the use of the devices for their own sake hence foregrounding the apparatuses of the narration. This, in the context of Russian Formalist views, refers to modernist representation. The use of the device for its own sake should also be attributed to the author of the film since it is the treatment of the author who chooses to reject a narrative based

on motivation.

A spatial excess takes place when Sandro and Claudia stop in a deserted town. One of the most significant element in the scene is the abandoned buildings and the echoing voices of Sandro and Claudia. Although the depiction of the building does not contribute to the proairetic or the hermeneutic progress of the film it makes reference to fascist architecture and, through its likeness, the paintings of Giorgio de Chirico. However, these references have no metaphoric relevance in the scene. By foregrounding the desertedness of the milieu the scene undermines the proairetic and the hermeneutic progress of the narrative. The film makes a metonymic shift from the spatial continuity of the scene on to an odd looking building which then freezes the continuity rather than subverts it.

The temporality of the events depicted in the manner of excess equals their duration in real life. The dialogue between Anna and her father is an example of this:

Father: I thought you'd already sailed.  
 Anna : Not yet, Papa.  
 Father: Don't they still wear sailor's caps with the  
 name of the yacht on them?  
 Anna : No, Papa. Not any more.

Events depicted in this manner serve to undermine the diegetic continuity of the film. Similarly, after Anna's disappearance, for example, Sandro interrogates the owner of the shack where he

and the others take shelter. The old man explains that the place belongs to Australians; he too lived in Australia for thirty years. He then starts explaining, in English, who is in the photographs on the wall. His presence and this long introduction have no role in the search, thus appears to be a pure excess. The film's depiction of this event suggests that his being there is an accident.

The presence of this scene functions in a way similar to Bazin's notion of the realist effect. By using the metaphor of the equilibrium profile of a river, Bazin suggests that every new invention or technique confronts and disturbs the established forms of filmic narration. In this respect, the conventional aspects of filmic narration stands for the effortless flow of the river in its bed which was smoothly dug and eroded for years. But if a geological change occurs, the river has to rework its bed in order to regain its smooth flow. For Bazin, the sudden change of the bed is the technical breakthrough or the influence of a new style while the flow of the river is the ongoing film production along with its codes and conventions. For Bazin, a geographical collision occurs at the moment a river starts to dig its bed again in order to reach a new equilibrium. A similar collision takes place when a new technique or a style disrupts the continuity of preceding ones. The films then undergo a transition-period in order to adapt to those innovations. This

causes a direct contact with the canons of filmic narration and the new techniques which Bazin calls the realist effect.<sup>21</sup>

In a way analogous to Bazin's explanation, a similar confrontation occurs in the interaction between the extra-diegetic material in the film, i.e., the old man and his shack, and the diegetic continuity of the film. The narration of the film has to confront the immediate presence of this extra-diegetic event. It is the conflicting positions of these two aspects, namely excess and the diegetic continuity, which generates the realist effect.

On the one hand the narrative operates as an agent of internalization: The owner of the shack has to be assimilated into the narrative. Hence, he becomes the suspect in Anna's disappearance. On the other hand, the immediate presence of the scene resists narrativization. It only relates to the narrative because it is spatially continuous with the milieu which is framed by the diegesis. However, the space where the old man and his shack is depicted and the space of the diegesis do not overlap. In neorealist and post-neorealist films there is always such a left-over, an extra-diegetic space which cannot be contained by the diegesis. The moment of conflict caused by the co-presence of these two aspects then creates the realistic effect.

A further neorealist aspect of L'avventura is the role of the contingent events in narration. Contingency is one of the most characteristic aspects of neorealist films. Bazin illustrates a range of contingent events in Bicycle Thief. In Bicycle Thief the contingency of events, as in the scene of the rain, temporarily disrupt and to some extent divert the continuity of events. In L'avventura, however, the contingency of events goes beyond temporality and directly alters the direction of the narrative. The sequence where Anna and Claudia arrive at Sandro's flat is an example of this: Anna seems hesitant to meet with Sandro. As soon as she decides to leave the place without seeing him, Sandro calls her from his balcony and tells her that he is coming down. Anna, however, decides to go up to his flat. The film gives the impression that had Sandro not seen her by chance they would not have gone to the yacht trip and Anna would not have vanished.

Such an accidental event can establish a full narrative, as is the case of Hitchcock's North by North West. Here Thornhill's exit to phone his mother coincides with the paging of Kaplan by the KGB agents and causes Thornhill's/Kaplan's kidnapping and hence an investigative narrative is propelled by his curiosity to find out why he was kidnapped. There is, however, a difference between the role of the accidental nature of events in the two films. In North by North West, the narrative

invests in the coincidence by which Thornhill appears to respond to the paging, of Kaplan. In other words, the narrative is contingent on an elaborate plot behind this mistaken identity.

In L'avventura, on the other hand, there is no such narrative investment in the meeting between Anna and Sandro. As I mentioned before, the most characteristic aspects of L'avventura is that there is no single event in the film which would function as the agency of the narrative. Instead, every successive event occurs as though it is an accidental or spontaneous response to the preceding one. Despite Anna's reluctance to see Sandro, for example, as soon as she comes up to his flat she unexpectedly takes off her clothes and makes love with him. In the mean time Claudia waits outside, passively spies on Anna and Sandro through the window until he draws the curtain. She doesn't show any reaction to the fact that she is being ignored by them. The film does not build any pressure or expectation based on the progression of events. Having her vision blocked by the curtain, for example, Claudia walks around for a while and enters a nearby art gallery. With its portrayal of the interior of the gallery, along with the people discussing the paintings, the film creates a purely excessive scene, dispersing the possibilities of a diegetic coherence. The way the film gathers together a series of arbitrary and unmotivated scenes, as Geoffrey Nowell-Smith suggests in a different context, implies

that the meaning in the film is forever in the state of flux.<sup>22</sup>

Unlike Bicycle Thief where the fragmented and elliptic portrayal of the streets of Rome corresponds to the way the characters see it, in L'avventura the scenes often sidestep from the continuity of the diegesis. The scene in the art gallery exemplifies this. During the love-making scene Claudia's look at their bedroom reflects her voyeuristic interest in their affair. Having her field of vision blocked, she goes into the art gallery. The insertion of the scene of the art gallery suggests that the purpose of it exists solely as a contingent element, a coincidental presence nearby Sandro's flat. Although the art gallery scene itself has no diegetic motivation, Claudia's being in the gallery with no interest in the exhibition underlines her frustrated desire in the affair.

This scene is also an example of the realist effect where a scene of excess (the art gallery scene) and the process of narrativization clash. Her desire to desire Sandro as Anna would, as opposed to desiring him just she herself does is the first introduction of Claudia's relationship with Sandro. This is also one of the narrative moments in the film where the excess of signification of both the love-making scene and the art gallery scene come to be motivated by the transformative power of narration. In other words, despite the lack of narrative action



and the long duration of these two parallel events, it is the inner dynamics energy of these two scenes which sets narrative to propel forward. I will come back to this point when I discuss the narrative significance of L'avventura.

The sequence of the yacht trip, portraying the outing group, turns an ordinary social occasion into a pure spectacle. Once again, the scene adds to the narrative nothing other than the portrayal of their banality as "image-facts". In this sequence Anna makes her last social gesture after she goes swimming. Soon after that she screams and tells everybody that she has seen a shark. Later in the cabin, however, she tells Claudia that she has made up the shark scene. Two characteristic aspects of neorealism are intertwined here: Firstly, ordinary series of events are treated as spectacles. Although the conversations and jokes of the group are extremely banal, the film portrays them in a way they would appear in a piece of cinema-vérité. No matter how ordinary and unimaginative they may seem, the scene does not attempt to exaggerate or ridicule their petit-bourgeois way of life. On the contrary, the portrayal of ordinary events becomes a spectacle; or as Deleuze describes, "the everyday is identified with the spectacular".<sup>23</sup> Secondly, Anna's immediate response to their small-talk appears as a reaction contingent to the milieu. Even though her intrusion into their conversation and her going for a swim interrupts the continuity of the present situation,

it creates a new sense of continuity which is based on the spontaneous reaction to the preceding event.

Until Anna's disappearance, nothing propels the diegesis forward. Until this event the film has presented several tableaux, none of which cause or even give hints about her disappearance. Her disappearance seems like an ordinary but concrete fact occurring beside the continuum of events. While for instance the film introduces a friction between Guilia and Corrado in a continuous manner, no continuity is established about Anna's disappearance. In this sense, as in Bazin's description of the elliptic narration of neorealist films, Anna's loss can be seen as a solid fact which escapes everybody's attention, including the camera's, just as many events escape our attention in real life. The presentation of the search for her on the island also underlines this: while the rest of the group comb the island from one end to the other, the discontinuous set-ups of the camera position disorient the spectator's sense of direction. Hence it reduces the scene of the search into itself beyond the spatio-temporal continuity of the film.

Anna's disappearance is a major turning point in the story. It results in a search for Anna, lasting until the end of the film. The search is singly represented in the manner of a report without any commentary in the sense of meta-discourse. The more

they look for Anna, however, the more they lose the logical ground of Anna's whereabouts. Sandro, for example, randomly chooses to follow one of the reports out of three given to him by Zuria. The way Sandro and Claudia look for Anna stylistically follows the neorealist films, as their attempts to find Anna resemble the helplessness of somebody looking for a needle in a haystack.

From a Bazinian point of view then, L'avventura is a neorealist film as it embodies a genuine search without clues and any sense of direction. L'avventura then fulfils some significant characteristics common to many neorealist films.

At this point, I will move on to a discussion of the overlapping modernist-*abstract* aspects of L'avventura which to some extent traverse the boundaries of neorealism. I have already mentioned the elliptic and fragmented nature of narration in neorealism which is also characteristic of modernist texts. Furthermore, my comparison of Blowup and L'avventura from the point of view of the lost object significantly marks the modernist treatment of both films. Just as the film establishes a neorealist style throughout its narration, similarly it establishes a modernist narration which occasionally becomes a dominant element in the film.

Firstly, the title of the film is open. In the English context, "The Adventure" does not mean anything other than a mere noun. Its contents and connotations are missing. There is no clue about any genre or subject matter. Titles usually allow filmgoers to enter into a narrative. High Noon, for example, cues the filmgoer about an action that takes place at high noon. Alternatively, The Swiss Family Robinson contains a self-enclosed meaning. The cues here are both metonymic and metaphoric. The title is metonymic as it is related to the novel Robinson Crusoe, hence the filmgoer gathers that a family will be trapped on a deserted island. On the other hand, part of the title, Swiss Family, connotes a nuclear family representing the values of the West; like the family of Victor Frankenstein in Mary Shelley's novel, they are from a country at the centre of Europe. Understanding a title like Rome Open City on the other hand, requires both extra-filmic knowledge--the status of Rome, half-invaded by Nazis and half-invaded by allied troops--and the knowledge of the episodes which reveal the complex social fabric of Rome.

"The adventure", however, does not cue the spectator for a narrative. In the Italian context, L'avventura could be an affair. In this sense the title cues a narrative. Nonetheless even the implication of the title-a love affair- does not unfold a narrative for the spectator. The reason for this is that the

connotation of the title is only metonymically linked to the story. This means that only the unfolding of the film reveals the reason why this title was chosen. One can then see the irony in it, as Sandro tells Claudia that every affair is a new adventure. This explanation, as Claudia realizes, highlights the fact that their relationship itself is also an adventure, just another affair. The link between the title and the film, in this sense, reverses a conventional order. In conventional films it is the title that cues the narrative, whereas in L'avventura it is the film itself which cues the title. The entry into a narrative is impossible since the narrativity of the title is neutralized.

Besides its open ended narration, the most characteristic aspects of modernism in L'avventura can be found in its cinematic form. I would like to discuss three aspects of the film's cinematic form which characterize its modernist aspects.

The first is the use of off-screen spaces and the temporal relationship between the camera and the objects. It should be noted that these characteristics also belong to Renoir's style and to most of the neorealist films. Bazin, for example, celebrates the use of off-screen space as the true nature of cinema. The coexistence of on-screen and off-screen space makes the continuity and the complex relationship between the characters, object and the milieu similar to real life. As Noël

Burch notes, an object can move around six off-screen spaces, namely, four sides of the screen, behind the screen and the space in between the screen and the projector.<sup>24</sup> Bazin would call this as the continuity beyond the frame.

In this respect, L'avventura is no exception. Often if a character or an object, say a car, goes off-screen neither the camera movement nor the next cut re-frames it. This is often the case when Sandro and Claudia drive in their search for Anna. It is as if so long as the car goes off-screen the camera ignores it. A further aspect of the camera's relationship with screen space and the space of the gaze is temporality. The camera often remains in a fixed position, portraying the scene with no concern with time, while the objects entering and exiting the frame only have a temporal relation to it. While in the same shot a car enters the frame and then exits, the camera continues to shoot the same space which, at this point, no longer has any continuity with the diegetic space. The function of the camera is neither to maintain the diegetic continuity, nor is it to aim at a continuity beyond the frame, as in neorealist films but to portray the landscape as it is in a supra-diegetic manner. Privileging the space as space beyond the continuity, in this respect, emulates the foregrounding of form over content, which is one of the most common characteristics of modernism. Moreover, from a modernist point of view, the relationship between the

camera and its objects suggests, if not a break, at least a resistance to that mode of narrative representation based on spatio-temporal unity. Here, as a result of the way the camera operates, it assumes the role of a modernist subject rejecting the conventional forms of representation.

L'avventura also breaks the 180 degree-rule in two incidents. Both take place on the island during the search for Anna, one sequence following the other. The first break occurs immediately after the first exchange of gazes between Claudia and Sandro. Sandro looks to the right. A cutaway shows the old fisherman walking forward. The following cut shows Sandro walking to the right, giving the impression that he wants to talk to the fisherman. Had they met midway on the following shot this would have been a continuity effect beyond the frame. Instead, the following shot shows the man walking from left to right while the camera pans with him. The sequence deliberately confuses the old man's walking direction and Sandro's. The logic of the editing betrays our sense of direction.

In the following sequence Sandro walks towards the camera, while Claudia walks off-screen to the left. He gazes in what we take to be Claudia's direction, building up the expectation that the next shot should reveal the object of his gaze. The next shot, however, is a close up of a crater on the rocks filled

1



2



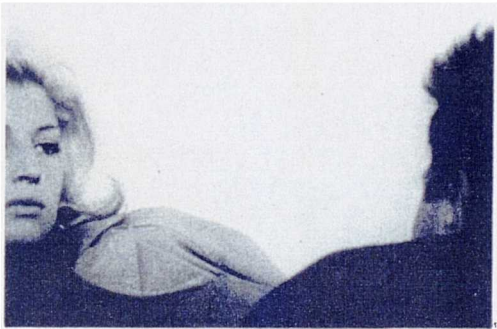
3



4



5



6





with water. A pair of hands appear while the rest of the body remains off-screen (frame 1); the camera then moves upwards and reveals Claudia washing her face. As she lifts her face and stares in the direction of the camera, the spectator may expect that she is looking at Sandro. While the camera remains in its fixed position Sandro appears from behind her (frame 2). He sits near Claudia as she washes her face. She doesn't seem to notice Sandro. Then a 180 degree cut occurs as she looks at Sandro, her back facing the camera (frame 3). As she moves to the left, a cut takes place, revealing her on the left side of the frame while Sandro stares at her from the right side (frame 4). She then moves towards the left (frame 5) but the next shot, once again, shows her entering the frame from the right (figure 6). Both the camera position and discontinuous editing achieve a disorientation effect.

While violation of the 180 degree rule in L'avventura suggests a break with continuity editing this break also amounts to the same thing as breaking with neorealism, since these films had never shown any interest in deliberately relinquishing the 180 degree rule. This is not to suggest that neorealist films follow the 180 degree-rule in the sense that classical Hollywood films do: The use of off-screen zones already accesses space beyond the imaginary borders of the 180 degree space. Furthermore, discontinuous cuts, notably in Rossellini's Paisà,

also undermine the 180 degree-rule and create an ambiguity in spatial continuity. In none of these films does the break with the 180 degree-rule systematically undermine continuity in space. Unlike its use in Yasujiro Ozu's films its use in L'avventura is not systematic.

As I mentioned previously, the break with continuity editing in L'avventura only occurs in two scenes. In this respect its use is not systematic. However, unlike in neorealist films, the violation of the 180 degree-rule is clearly marked. In these scenes the ambiguity of space is created for its own sake as a series of discontinuous cuts which only occur in two scenes. L'avventura then does not allow itself to be seen as part of a genre or style. This disruption of continuity, however, marks an enunciative act on behalf of the director in the modernist manner.

The third modernist aspect of L'avventura can be seen in its visual representation or more precisely in the way in which the film combines the deep and flat surfaces together. During the search for Anna on the island, the camera depicts people in deep focus shots, accentuating the surface qualities of the environment. Similarly the film shows Claudia twice in deep focus shots, crossing the corridors, first at Patrizia's villa and then at the hotel in Taormina when she looks for Sandro. In addition

to the use of deep-focus, the time of the action and the time of its representation correspond to each other. In this way, as Geoffrey Nowell-Smith notes, these shots are treated independently from the continuity of scene, hence the shot itself becomes the scene.<sup>25</sup> As opposed to these deep shots L'avventura often reveals the characters in extreme close up shots, minimizing the distance between the object and the background. Here, once again, Antonioni's use of close-ups does not indicate any emotional density or a cuing of the importance of a feeling. These shots rather retain their autonomy, no matter how confusing they may appear.

In their hotel-room in Notto, while they argue about making love, the camera frames Claudia's face in an extreme close shot. In fact, only a detail of her face appears on the screen. The unexpected appearance of the shot disrupts the continuity and hence foregrounds the style. However, the abstract quality of the shots do not simply follow a modernist tradition in academic sense. Instead, by reducing Claudia's face into a flat and fragmented image the camera treats it just an image among other images that precede or follow that shot. In a manner similar to Bazin's notion of elliptic narration in neorealist cinema, Seymour Chatman argues that the abstract quality of Antonioni's shots stem from their concrete relation with reality. In this respect, those extreme close-up shots are related to the way

images appear in everyday life. Similarly, an eclectic surrounding of the characters are related to the camera's metonymic interest with the surrounding elements. Thus, the abstract character of the shots (flat or deep shots, shots on abstract or geometric shapes) "speak the character's uncertainty about the new order of things."<sup>26</sup>

Drawing on Wilhelm Worringer's paper Abstraction and Empathy, Chatman suggests that Antonioni's films represent the abstract qualities of modernist art. Abstract art, according to Worringer, is a product of angst, showing itself in the forms of obscurity, relativity and contingency. Chatman goes on to suggest that Antonioni follows a similar path by using an abstract and minimalist style, flattening background space, portraying close up faces divided by plain vertical lines, often reducing the three-dimensionality into two. Chatman stresses the point that there is no connotative or symbolic message behind the abstract qualities of Antonioni's style. As he quotes Antonioni: "...It's a way of approaching the character through material objects rather than through her life." In Chatman's view, Antonioni's style is genuinely modernist because it actualizes an abstract style rather than drawing on certain styles of modernism. Modernist elements in L'avventura, however, are not permanently dominant in the narration as is the case of neorealist elements in the film. They are, as I suggested, mingled with the other

styles. Their use is unsystematic and due to this unsystematic treatment they are self-undermining. This self-undermining also applies to the authorial treatment of the film. In this respect, the domination of the author, his/her centrifugal control over the style withdraws.

Ben Brewster compares Bazin's conception of the realism which is based on the continuous disturbance of the established styles and an ongoing search for alternatives, with Roman Jakobson's account of realism. Jakobson formulates two diametrically opposed notions of realism. The first approach suggests that an artistic work is realist when it follows the norms of what constitutes a work as realist. A realist work, according to this approach, is the one that follows the preexisting models. Lukács, for example, urged the writers to emulate the style of the 19th century novelists, exemplified by Tolstoy and Balzac. As opposed to this view, a second approach suggests that a work is as regarded as realistic in so far as it abandons the existing forms of realism and continuously searches alternative forms in order to achieve a greater sense of reality.<sup>27</sup> However, Jakobson maintains that even a work that continuously moves away from preexisting forms establishes its own tradition of representation. Brewster suggests that such a process parallels Bazin's metaphor of the equilibrium profile of a river.

Both Jakobson's second category of realism, namely the artist or the critic who is in favour of experimentation and the subversion of the established forms of representation, and Bazin's openness to innovation in cinema corresponds to Lyotard's notion of *novatio* which can be defined in this context as an artistic practice which seeks alternatives to break with the dominant forms of art and representation. This concept also parallels Bazin's description of the river which begins to erode its bed in order to reach a new equilibrium. However, it should be noted that *novatio* is not a movement but a term used to describe the moments when the established forms of representation, including canonized modernism and the avant-garde are challenged.

Seen from the perspective of Lyotard's argument, Bazin's conception of cinematic innovation and the search for new styles in order to confront with reality in different forms, suggest a postmodern element in both neorealist and post-neorealist films. For Lyotard, the art of *novatio* is the art of the postmodern. By its very character the *novatio* moves away from what is in the process of being established. Bazin also acclaims certain phases in the evolution of cinema which corresponds to a search for new ways to represent reality. Among others, he celebrates neorealist films' break with the use of montage, either visible in the manner of Soviet cinema, or invisible as is the case in

Hollywood cinema, the elliptic narration of these films, which brings them closer to reality or the decentralisation of the dramatic action, exemplified in his readings of Rome Open City and Bicycle Thief.

One can regard L'avventura in a similar perspective. L'avventura, in this sense furthers what Bazin hails as the search for new styles and experimentation in neorealist cinema. With a further analogy, I would suggest that the difficulty of defining the elusive style of L'avventura, its mingling of multiple styles and influences, makes it confront the canons of modernist representation which also corresponds to the equilibrium-profile of a river. As I discussed previously, being close to a late-modern style and yet constantly disturbing the codes by which a work identifies itself as late-modern, is one of the most distinctive characters of L'avventura. I thus suggest that this elusiveness of style in L'avventura, its way of causing "trouble" for late-modern works in their search for tradition, are what make the film postmodern. The discourses of neorealism and post-neorealism undermine simple authorship and draw L'avventura away from a modernist project towards a postmodern project and representation.

The fourth discourse in the narration of L'avventura is the structuration of its narrative desire. Although there is a structural connection between desire and narrative in every text, L'avventura creates a *desiring* position which acts mainly as an agent of the narrative. My main point here is that instead of establishing certain narrative functions in order to propel the narrative, L'avventura structures its narrative through its embodiment of desire in the narrative. This desire is generated not so much by Anna's absence but by Claudia's entrapment in a situation within which she has to substitute for Anna in order to be desired. Instead of establishing certain narrative functions, L'avventura creates a self-motivating desire in order to advance the narrative.

In order to clarify the interaction between narrative and self-motivating desire I will first look at the narrative significance L'avventura from the point of view of Barthes' formulation of the narrative codes. My point here is to try to show that the dynamics of L'avventura's narrative do not emerge from the functions of its narrative in the "classical sense" but from the organization of the potential "desiring" positions which motivates and transforms the narrative.

In his analysis of Balzac's Sarrasine Barthes formulates five codes that construct the texts.<sup>28</sup> Among these five codes



the first two are the codes of narrative, namely the proairetic code (code of action) and the hermeneutic code (code of truth). The proairetic code refers to a series of successive actions which make the narrative advance from one stage to another. The hermeneutic code, on the other hand, allows the narrative to unfold through the introduction of an enigma, its suspension and closure. Barthes also attributes these two codes to the logico-temporal order of the classical texts: The codes can only function progressively and their direction is irreversible. "What blocks its reversibility", Barthes argues, "is just what limits the plural nature of the classical text."<sup>29</sup> Only the subversion of these "blocks", according to Barthes, allows modern texts to emerge. In L'avventura, neither the proairetic codes nor the hermeneutic codes operate "singly" as in classical texts. In other words, the drive of the narrative does not depend on the succession of the events.

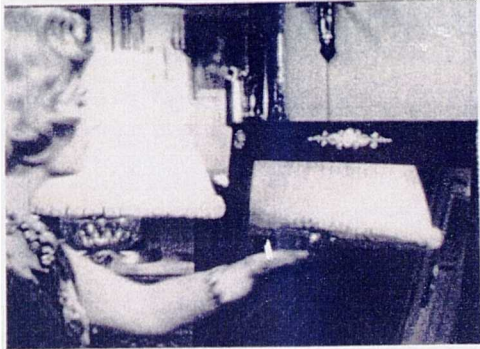
As I argued in the context of Bazin's theory of continuity, the events in L'avventura are not confined to the causal logic of the narrative. From the point of view of the proairetic codes the interrelations of events are weak or often inexistent. For example, there is no narrative function in the film which would lead to Anna's disappearance. Similarly, no event gives them a clue about what happened to her. This is mainly because the narrative of L'avventura does not involve significant events.

Even the events which have a less significant role in terms of their narrative function occur almost contingently and then leave the narrative without altering the direction of events. A typical example of this happens during the scene on the roof of the church where Claudia encourages Sandro to go back to his former profession. This causes him to propose marriage to her. However, like the rest of the events, the narrative unfolds on the basis of the uncertainty of their relationship, hence no successive events follow Sandro's proposition.

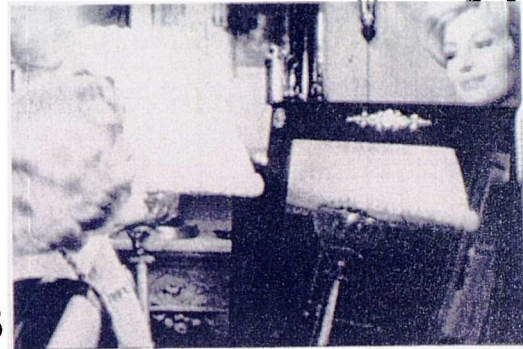
A similar logic applies to the working of the hermeneutic code. Although the film keeps the revelation of Anna's whereabouts in suspense, the narrative does not follow a straightforward suspense formula in the manner of an introduction of an enigma, its investigation, and finally a resolution. The only notable function of the hermeneutic code is "what happened to Anna?". The other hermeneutic codes, such as "who is the old fisherman living on the island where Anna has disappeared?", "is there any connection between the group of smugglers arrested by the police and Anna's disappearance?" or the various reports about missing young women, passed on to Sandro by Zuria, do not contribute to the closure of the narrative. On the contrary, these questions remain unanswered, and often divert the search itself, most notably in the case of Zuria's reports. There is a parallelism between the misguidance of the search and the

narrative resolution. In classical films the resolution of the enigma is postponed by the introduction of sub-enigmas, however, the resolution is always implanted in the narrative. In L'avventura, on the other hand, they do not work to postpone the narrative closure as in the classical narrative model. The film appears to offer a search but the presentation of the search undermines the proairetic codes resolving the enigma. According to Barthes, one of the major characteristics of modernist texts is their break with the classical paradigm based on a closed narrative structure. L'avventura, in this respect, not only abandons the narrative codes of classical forms, namely proairetic and hermeneutic codes, and, by doing so, it impairs the spectator's expectations of the narrative continuity. The narrative of L'avventura, then, does not advance through the operation of the narrative codes. Instead, the narrative builds an economy of desire based on the absence and presence which generates the dynamics of the narrative.

The relationship between Anna and Sandro provokes Claudia's own desires. She suffers from not being Anna. As I argued previously, her spying on Sandro's bedroom already implies her frustration at being excluded. Sandro reveals his attraction towards Claudia immediately after the disappearance of Anna. Although Claudia tries to deny it, she too desires Sandro. However, she soon discovers that for Sandro she is a mere



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substitute. His desire is constantly motivated by Anna's absence. Anna's absence makes her more desirable. By the same token, Claudia's presence makes her gradually less desirable. Claudia's failure to replace Anna makes Sandro continuously desire Anna. This is why he sleeps with Gloria Perkins, an Anna look-alike with dark hair. Similarly, Claudia understands the fact that she would only be desired in so far as she can substitute Anna; this is highlighted in the film by her being blond as opposed to dark, like Anna. At the party at Patrizia's house she puts on a black wig which subtly indicates her desire to look like Anna (See frames 7-10)

Due to an elaborate arrangement of the mise-en-scène, the spectator first mistakes Patrizia for Claudia. Only when turns around the spectator finds that it is Patrizia trying a blond wig. Claudia's later appearance from right frame immediately opens up the theme of Claudia's desires and frustrations. Having seen Patrizia with a blonde wig seems to frustrate Claudia as Patrizia seems almost identical to her. The following shot from the reverse angle reveals Patrizia as though she is Claudia's mirror image. Patrizia's likeness in appearance blocks Claudia's identification with Anna. As an immediate response to this Claudia puts on a black wig.

Her impossible desire-wishing to be in the place of absent

Anna-is then the major motivation in the narrative. Claudia's identification with Anna becomes even more evident when she says to Sandro at the hotel room in Notto "Tell me that you want to embrace my shadow on the walls". The irony of her comment is that it is she who becomes the shadow of Anna. Nonetheless, having her own shadow embraced by Sandro implies her wishful transformation into Anna. When she superimposes her body onto Anna's, her shadow no longer represents herself as Anna's substitute but the shadow of the desired object, the very position for desire in its absence.

From the narrative point of view it is the absent position of Anna which motivates desire. However, the question of whether Claudia identifies with Anna or with her absence position is open. If she merely wants to substitute Anna this would only explain her wish to satisfy Sandro's desire for Anna. However, considering her own desire may suggest that it is the absent-position of Anna which she desires. In other words it is not merely Anna which she identifies with but the absence of Anna which generates a desire to desire rather than merely being desired. The narrative, in this respect, is propelled by these conflicting positions of desire without the aid of any external narrative motivations.

The modernist aspects of L'avventura benefits the

structuration of desire as the unresolved situation of the narrative which constantly postpones closure. The narrative transformation of L'avventura motivated by the implantation of the positions of desire further decenters the presence of the other discourses I have discussed so far. This very structuration also undermines the modernist discourse it employs by making use of Anna's absence as the propelling force of the narrative. In this respect, L'avventura is more radical than Blowup as it brings its lost object of desire into the narrative, rather than using it in a metaphoric sense. Instead of rejecting the conventional forms of representation and narrative closure, L'avventura undermines conventional forms from within: If Anna is the object of desire, the ending frustrates this desire by refusing to resolve the riddle of her disappearance. The game with the desire of a lost object and its substitution must go on. L'avventura in this respect neither attempts to preserve the sovereignty of its absent object, nor does it conform to a conventional resolution for its narrative.

## NOTES:

1. Sam Rohdie, Antonioni, London: BFI Publishing, 1990  
The other significant studies on the authorship of Antonioni are the following:

Ned Rifkin, Antonioni's Visual Language, UMI Research Press, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1982.

This book analyses Antonioni's visual style from the point of view of the choice of the places, framing, visual dynamics and the camera movements, the use of colour and "mastery". The other substantial study of Antonioni is,

Seymour Chatman, Antonioni or, the Surface of the World, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1985.

This work interrelates Antonioni's films in terms of plots, themes, character traits, settings and cinematic form. The emphasis is given to Antonioni's "Great Tetralogy", namely L'avventura, La notte, L'eclisse, and Il Deserto Rosso. Chatman celebrates these four films as Antonioni's peak films. After these, Chatman argues, his films begin to lose their abstract and subtle character.

2. Seymour Chatman, Antonioni, or the Surface of the World, University of California Press.

3. André Bazin, What is Cinema? Vol. II, p. 66 University of California Press.

4. Ibid., p. 66

5. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, Luchino Visconti, London; Secker & Warburg in association with the British Film Institute, p. 193

6. Guido Aristarco, "Guido Aristarco Answers Fellini". Quoted from Frederico Fellini: Essays in Criticism Ed. by Peter Bondanella, p. 64, New York: Oxford University Press, 1978

7. References on the accounts of Umberto Barbaro and Guido Aristarco are taken from the article: "Neorealismo" revisited by Guido Fink, 20th Century Studies, No. 5, September 1971, pp. 73-74

8. The Nouveau Roman Reader (Preface), By John Fletcher, John Calder (Publishers) Ltd. 1986

9. Ihab Hassan, The Dismemberment of Orpheus: Toward a Postmodern Literature, University Of Wisconsin Press.



10. Philosophy and Printing in the Age of Their Experimentation: Contribution to an Idea of Postmodernity By Jean-François Lyotard in The Lyotard Reader Ed. by Andrew Benjamin. Basil Blackwell, 1989

11. Umberto Eco defines two kinds of texts according to their openness to the reader. The closed texts such as Superman comics, the novels of Eugene Sue or Ian Fleming "apparently aim at pulling the reader along a predetermined path, carefully displaying their effects so as to arouse pity or fear, excitement or depression at the due place and at the right moment." As opposed to the closed texts, the open texts aim at giving unexpected solutions to the reader, hence challenging every coded intertextual frame as well as the reader's predictive indolence. Given Eco's definition, L'avventura can be seen as an open text in the sense that it unfolds the possibilities for the spectator to read its multiple discourses, its authorial treatment and its borderline position in late-modernism and postmodernism debate.

Umberto Eco, The Role of the Reader, Hutchinson University Library, London, 1979, p.8

12. Max Horkheimer, Quoted by Martin Jay in The Dialectical Imagination Boston: Little Brown Press.

13. Sam Rohdie, Antonioni, p.67-68

14. André Bazin, What is Cinema? Vol.II, p.37, University of California Press.

15. Ibid. p.59-60

16. Gilles Deleuze, Cinema 2: The Time Image, p.4, The Athlone Press.

17. André Bazin, What is Cinema? Vol.2, p.37

18. Gilles Deleuze, Cinema 2 p.3

19. Sigfried Kracauer, Theory of Film, New York: Oxford University Press, 1960, pp.245-246

20. Seymour Chatman, Antonioni or the Surface of the World, Columbia University Press

21. André Bazin, What is Cinema? vol.1, p.31 and,

Ben Brewster, "Film" in Exploring Reality, London: Allen & Unwin,

1987, pp.158-159

22.Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, "Shape Around a Black Point," in L'avventura Ed. by Guido Fink and Seymour Chatman. Rutgers Films in Print. p.199

23.Gilles Deleuze

24.Nöel Burch, Theory of Film Practice New York: Preager, 1973, p.21

25.Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, "Shape Around a Black Point" in L'avventura ed. by Guido Fink and Seymour Chatman. Rutgers Films in Print p.199

26.Seymour Chatman, Antonioni or, the Surface of the World, p.119

27.Jakobson's account on realism is gathered from:  
Ben Brewster, "Film" in Exploring Reality, pp.159-160

28.Roland Barthes, S/Z, Hill and Wang, New York, 1974,

29.Roland Barthes, S/Z, p.30

**Authorial Text and Postmodernism:**

**Hitchcock's *Blackmail***

This chapter will explore the structure of enunciation and narrative signification in Hitchcock's Blackmail pointing out particularly the way in which the authorial subject interacts with the narration. One of the most distinctive aspects of Blackmail's narration is its "workings" within various discourses of modernism, which take place on two levels. At the first level Blackmail reflects certain modernist trends more or less contemporary with the film itself. Here, Blackmail simply exhibits various aspects, most notably expressionism, the use of montage and self-reflexivity associated with the modernist form. These aspects situate Blackmail as modernist. At the second level, however, these modernist aspects become the object of a second level of representation which is no longer a matter of mere reflection or imitation, but has to do with the narration of the work as a modernist text. At this level, all modernist elements of the film go beyond their mirror image as mere reflections and interact with the story as a principle of its narration. This interaction, however, is not confined to the service of the story as in case of "classical narrative texts", described by Colin MacCabe.<sup>1</sup> On the contrary, these modernist devices interfere with the continuity of the story in order to multiply the discourses. For example, the use of montage in the scene where Alice tries to slice bread, by looping of the word "knife" after it has been uttered by her neighbour, not only "expressionistically" underlines Alice's turbulent state, but also foregrounds the enunciative function of the discourse.

Similarly, the expressionistic shadow-lighting at the scene of the rape attempt both represents the violence of the action descriptively and reflects the presence of narration as a different voice from that of the story event.

My argument is that instead of quoting modernist devices borrowed from other trends, Blackmail seems to employ such elements in order to search for an alternative way of narrating: search for alternative is also one of the central principles of modernism. For though Blackmail might seem similar to other modernist texts in terms of its foregrounded discourses, the film in fact self-consciously divorces itself from aiming for originality and uniqueness which is of course one of the characteristics of modernist representation. Instead of following modernist texts as the established forms of representations, Blackmail seeks new ways of representation via modernism. This crucial sidestepping from modernism suggests a new position in representation which goes beyond modernism. While modernist trends problematize their own representations, for example by foregrounding the presentness of their own discourses and aiming at a subversion of the classical norms of representation, the same trends inevitably establish their own norms. The self-awareness of the limits of being modern, I would suggest, causes the discourse of Blackmail to be post-modern. This postmodernity, however, is not the successor of modernism. On the

contrary, Blackmail forms a discourse which was once sought by modernism. In other words, what modernism fails to achieve is what Blackmail achieves without being modern. With some approximation, this particular position of Blackmail can be seen within the context of Jean-François Lyotard's definition of postmodernism. According to Lyotard, postmodern texts "...are not in principle governed by the pre-established rules, and they cannot be judged according to a determining judgement, by applying familiar categories to the text or to the work."<sup>2</sup> In a postmodern work, as Lyotard suggests, those rules and categories are what the work of art itself is looking for. Similarly, Blackmail goes beyond the peripheries of modernism and constructs a discourse where the established norms of modern trends can no longer remain as the criteria for judgement. The paradoxical position of Blackmail's being both inside and outside modernism at the same time suggests a break from modernist representation, for which subversion of the classical becomes the rule. Whereas Lyotard theorizes the postmodern as a work which formulates the rules of what will have been done the discourse of Blackmail reverses this process and rules out what has been established by modernism as a rule; it does this by revisiting it at a point where it seems to have lost its subversive function.

Seeing Blackmail within this context already suggests

Hitchcock as a subject of the discourse rather than as an autonomous agent/artist. The awareness of modernism as an already established 'form of representation places his narrating as a parody of modernism. The text self-consciously allies itself with institutionalized forms of representation rather than attacks them. Additionally, the growing awareness of the limitations of the subject as the author, along with the increasing unavailability of the individual style, to use Fredric Jameson's description, results in the subject/author parodying his/her own modernist position.<sup>3</sup> Self-conscious parody in modernism becomes conscious self-parody in postmodern texts. At the textual level, Blackmail implies the self-destructive position of its modernist subject. The narrating of the text with the element of self-reflexivity and parody, borrowed from modernism implies the postmodern aspects of the text, while Hitchcock's relationship with the film suggests a new consciousness of a subject/artist divorced from modernism. My approach to Hitchcock's narrating is twofold. I will try to locate the role of Hitchcock's authorial discourse as a disappearance, while trying, at the same time, to formulate the system of exchange between the artistic treatment and the self-propelling narration in absence of its author as that of a postmodern discourse.

One feature of the modern as well as the late-modern discourse is the way it seeks to institutionalize the autonomy

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of the work as the expression of its individual artist. However, the discourse of Blackmail, Hitchcock's first sound film made in 1929, relinquishes such a project. It should be noted that Blackmail was made as a commercial film and its "silent" style was the result of film history's transition to sound technology. At the time of Blackmail's production the producers of British International Pictures were doubtful of the commercial success of sound movies, which resulted in Hitchcock reshooting certain scenes for sound and releasing both sound and silent versions. Ironically enough, Hitchcock's use of sound films here is intertwined with the commodified style of the talkies. This is clear in Blackmail's poster which introduces the film as "100% Talkie, 100% Entertainment. See & Hear it. Our mother tongue as it should be spoken..." already marks out a process of commodification. As I will argue, the relinquishing of the self reflexivity of the modernist discourse in Blackmail does not evacuate the role of the artist, but rather suggests an integration of the artistic treatment of the text with other discourses. The unified subject/artist of the modernist tradition, in other words, is transformed into a subject who produces an awareness of the creative self as an illusion. The author that co-produces the text of the other discourses is an illusory self.

In order to approach the function of the author subject in

relation to his/her utterance as part of a given discourse, I will employ Emile Benveniste's concept of enunciation.<sup>4</sup> I will then consider these functions in relation to Blackmail in the light of Lacan's notion of subjectivity on two levels: first, the subject of enunciation and second, the subject of the enounced. As Lacan suggests, the enunciating subject and the subject of its enunciation are never one and the same thing. The gap is the result of the oscillation between the enunciation of the self and the discourse of the other.<sup>5</sup> Within this context, the relinquishment of modernist self-reflexivity not only rules out the role of the subject as author, but also puts the subject into a new position, where he/she enunciates through the discourse of the other beyond his/her control.

I shall examine the textual layers of Blackmail such as the fabula, the narrative and the story in relation to the enunciation of the text. I will try to elaborate on the previously mentioned new position of the subject in the discourse of the other which then, becomes the subject of the text. Seen through this position, the subject as the other and the other as the subject produce the text in oscillation. In order to facilitate my later discussion I will give a summary of the film.

Blackmail is the story of a relationship between a shop keeper's daughter Alice White (Anny Ondra) and a Scotland

Yard detective, Frank Webber (John Longden) who are blackmailed in connection with a murder case. The film opens with a raid by Scotland Yard's flying squad which introduces Frank, one of the Scotland Yard detectives. The raid ends with the arrest of a criminal. Following this sequence, Frank meets his girlfriend Alice at the police station. Alice is angry with Frank because he is late for their appointment. They take a tube train which is the occasion of Hitchcock's appearance and are then seen arriving at a large tea-room. Throughout the tea-room scene Alice deliberately keeps quarrelling with Frank, trying to get more attention from him. When she fails, she decides to keep an assignation she has arranged tentatively with an artist named Crewe (Cyril Ritchard), and turns down Frank's proposal to see a detective film about Scotland Yard. She hesitates because Crewe has not appeared yet, changes her mind several times and finally rejects Frank's offer upon seeing Crewe. Exasperated with Alice, Frank leaves in spite of her efforts to calm him down; he then regrets it and goes back, just in time to see her leaving with Crewe. As Crewe walks her home, he persuades Alice to come up to his studio. In the meantime an unknown man tries to eavesdrop on their conversation in the street. Crewe stops in the foyer and checks his mail, has a word with his landlady about a note he has received and finally joins Alice to go up to the top floor of the building. Alice is uncomfortable, apparently feeling a bit odd about her assignation as Crewe brings drinks. She looks down at

the street where she sees a passing policeman. She looks at a picture of a jester, painted by Crewe, and laughs at it. As she looks around she finds Crewe's palette and asks him to teach her how to paint. When she has painted a face on the canvas Crewe helps her to complete it with a female nude. Being encouraged by Alice's desire to appear as one of his models he persuades her to put on a ballet dress. While she is taking off her dress behind the screen and putting on the ballet dress, Crewe plays the piano and sings. Being seduced by Alice's new appearance and encouraged by her vivacity, he tries to kiss Alice. Realizing she has gone too far, she struggles against him and decides to leave. While she takes off the ballet dress behind the screen, Crewe pulls her dress over the screen and continues to sing. She tries to get it but Crewe drags her to his bed where he tries to rape her. During the struggle, she finds a kitchen knife near the bedside and stabs him to death. Though in a state of shock, Alice gets rid of any possible evidence, crosses her signature from the picture which she has painted with Crewe and finally leaves the place. On the way home, she wanders around for several hours, through central London, Piccadilly Circus, etc. She hallucinates and sees the neon cocktail shaker in a Gordon's "White Purity" hoarding dissolve into a stabbing knife. Alice finally arrives home and sneaks into her bed just before her mother comes to wake her.

Meanwhile, Scotland Yard is informed of the murder by Crewe's landlady and Frank, assigned to the case recognizes Alice's glove at the scene of the crime. Hiding the glove from the other detectives, he immediately visits her father's shop where the family also lives and talks to Alice privately inside the glass telephone booth in the shop. Soon after Frank shows the glove to Alice, a stranger called Tracy (Donald Calthrop) intrudes upon their conversation. He first tells them that he need to call Scotland Yard urgently and then asks Frank about the murder case. While he continues to talk about the murder he pulls the glove from Frank's pocket and tells Frank that he has the other glove. Confident that his blackmail attempt will succeed, Tracy invites himself to breakfast with Alice's confused parents. However, when Frank finds out that Tracy was seen by Crewe's landlady the night before, and thus becomes the chief suspect, the tables are turned and he begins to threaten him--in spite of Alice's protests. In panic, Tracy escapes and there follows a classic chase scene which results in him falling to his death through the roof of the British Museum. Meanwhile, Alice writes a note declaring her intention to confess, since she cannot allow an innocent man to suffer because of what she has done. When she arrives at the office of the chief inspector's room, she finds Frank with the inspector, and before she makes her confession, the telephone rings. The inspector tells him to handle the matter and Frank takes Alice away. At the counter, the same

*uniformed police officer, who had previously whispered a joke in Alice's ear, advises Frank to be careful; otherwise he could lose his job to a lady detective (Alice). As she tries to join their laughter, her expression freezes and the last shot of the film shows what Alice sees: the picture of the laughing jester which had been in Crewe's studio, pointing at her.*

I would like to approach both the artistic treatment and the self reflexivity of the text from the viewpoint of the structure of enunciation. As Roland Barthes suggests in Writing Degree Zero, "Style points to the living person who authors the text".<sup>6</sup> In contrast to narrating past events as histoire, to use Emile Benveniste's term, modernist texts reflect their author's desire to foreground their personal style. Hence, foregrounding a personal style emphasizes the presence of an implied author in the text. Such foregrounding can be seen in Blackmail, where the enlarged shadows of Alice and Crewe characterize the style of Hitchcock. The dramatic effect of these shadows serves the narration and the description of the diegetic events as well as the self referentiality of the scene. This self referential aspect of the scene has an excess value since it has no diegetic function. I would argue that the effect of the shot is due to the appearance of "artistic style" (expressionism). Modernists, in this regard, believed that the expression of their "distinctive" style (enunciation) equals to

self-expression.

In Benveniste's context, this strategy can be seen as the discursive function of the text. Whereas *histoire* narrates already-happened events, discourse distinguishes itself from that of *histoire* by explicitly foregrounding its moment of narration. On the other hand, the narration of the past events does not emphasize the presence of its author. Benveniste's notion of discourse and histoire is based on his distinction of the terms of French tenses: The difference between the perfect and the aorist (simple past tense) is that the first establishes a link between past events and the present in which one refers to the event whereas the aorist completely separates past and present.

In Benveniste's model, certain tenses of the verb like the present, future, passé, composé or pluperfect are attributed to discourse, while narrative in the strict sense is marked by the use of the third person and by tenses such as the aorist and pluperfect. Benveniste formulates:

Like the present tense, the perfect belongs to the linguistic system of discourse, since its temporal reference is the moment of speech, whereas the reference of the aorist is to the moment of event.<sup>7</sup>

Todorov and Ducrot suggest that Jakobson's model of linguistic communication also constitutes a process of

enunciation. Certain grammatical functions like the first person pronoun "I" and its implicit "you", the adverbial shifters such as "here", "now", "yesterday", "today", "tomorrow" mark the presence of the addresser and the addressee, hence an enunciative process.<sup>8</sup> Benveniste distinguishes between the forms which contain reference to the moment of enunciation and the forms which do not. First and second person pronouns take part in the discourse since their utterances are included in their speech. When a narrative is told in the aorist tense, as Benveniste shows in a passage from Balzac's Gambora, the text excludes the signs of discourse. Benveniste argues:

In truth there is no longer even a narrator. No one speaks here, events seem to tell themselves.<sup>9</sup>

In Gambora, during the presentation of the facts by the observer, there is no intervention of the speaker in the recounting of the events. As opposed to *histoire* Benveniste defines discourse as "every enunciation assuming a speaker and hearer, and in the speaker the intention of influencing the hearer in some way."<sup>10</sup>

Using this approach, I will try to show the way in which the process of enunciation is closely linked to the artistic treatment as well as to the self-reflexivity of the text. One can see that Benveniste's notion of discourse covers the role of author/narrator as the enunciator of the text. The enunciation of the author, in other words, becomes the discourse of the text.



My approach here assumes that in artistic texts there are multiple possibilities to inscribe an enunciative narrating beyond the linguistic signs of discourse. Within this context, I will take Benveniste's approach one step further and suggest that the enunciative aspect of a text remains the first condition for a modernist text. The text not only reflects the presence of its author, but the process of its own enunciation as well. In order to define this particular process of authorial discourse, I will suggest the term "double enunciation". In this regard, the first representation can only be read as part of a larger system by the establishment of the second level representation. Likewise, the self-reflexivity of a given text both activates the sign of enunciation as the first representation and, in addition, foregrounds this enunciation as process. Without this second representation, any letter written in the first person pronoun would be considered a modernist text. However it should be noted that only the foregrounding of the enunciation process marks the authorial treatment of the text. In his essay "The Spectator in the Text: The Rhetoric of Stagecoach", Nick Browne suggests that each camera set-up is an enunciation because each shot shows the scene from a different point, establishing a view.<sup>11</sup> Each set-up relates from the viewpoint of spatial and temporal continuity, to the action of the fiction. In the scene from Stagecoach (Ford, 1939), which Browne analyzes, [when Ringo Kid unwittingly invites the prostitute to join the disapproving social superiors

at the table for lunch,] the camera shifts back and forth from reflecting a general view to reflecting the personal views of certain characters. This shift between the two views marks the authorial presence of the film-maker as being ironical. Thus, the discourse of Stagecoach remains hostile to Lucy by showing Dallas from her (Lucy's) disapproving point of view. The enunciative act thus gives an alternative view of a gesture, commenting on the first representation. The authorial treatment in Stagecoach, however, remains at the level of the first enunciation since the shifts between the camera set-ups only refer to the interpretation of the author without making its authorial treatment self-reflexive. This example helps us to distinguish between the first level of enunciation which does not necessarily mark the text as self-reflexive and the second level of enunciation which is the basic category of a modernist discourse.

While modernist texts emphasize the role of a unified subject as the author of the text, Blackmail moves away from this modernist discourse. In Blackmail, the second enunciation juxtaposes its authorial discourse with other extra-textual discourses. When this juxtaposition occurs, the text enunciates itself through the channels of extra-textual discourses. This particular process in Blackmail can be shown through the analysis of the three layers of the text, namely the fabula, the story and the narrative.

Mieke Bal defines the fabula as a series of logically and chronologically related events that are caused or experienced by actors. A story is the pre-condition of the fabula.<sup>12</sup> A story that has been ordered into a fabula, however, is still not a text. Only the interaction of the fabula, the story and the narrative constructs the text. As opposed to the fabula, Bal distinguishes the story thus:

A story does not consist of material different from that of the fabula, but that this material is looked at from a certain, specific angle. If one regards fabula primarily as the product of imagination, the story could be regarded as the result of that ordering.<sup>13</sup>

The series of story events are independent of both the fabula and the medium. The same fabula can be constructed via different stories. The most obvious example of this usage is in remakes. While High Noon (Zinneman, 1952) and Outland (Hyams, 1981) share a similar fabula, they represent two different stories and genres. The story events establish all the logical relationships of disjunction, conjunction, exclusion and inclusion, and most frequently and importantly, causality - a causality which works within the network of consequences, conditions of existence and motivations. In Blackmail, Alice's assignation with Crewe, Crewe's rape attempt, her stabbing Crewe to death and Frank's finding of Alice's glove are the consequences of the story events, while Tracy's being nearby Crewe's apartment during the assignation is a condition of existence. If Tracy as an actant had not happened to be nearby Crewe's apartment, he would not be

able to play his role as a blackmailer, thus the causality of the story events would suffer. Similarly, if Crewe's landlady had not seen Tracy and reported this to Scotland Yard, he would not become the prime suspect. The condition of existence, in other words, works as a pretext which carries events from one state to another. Finally, Frank's hiding of Alice's glove from the other detectives, and Tracy's use of the second glove are the motivations of the story. Motivation in relation to blackmailing is the only position which links the story and the narrative. I will return to this point when I discuss narrative.

A central aspect of Blackmail's fabula is the way the filmic narrating employs a particular system of looks among its characters according to their positions based on the story. This system of looks corresponds to three levels of the story construction; namely, the observation, the interpretation and finally the blackmailing. It should be noted that the events such as Frank's finding of Alice's glove in Crewe's studio, Tracy's finding the second glove, which allows his blackmailing attempt, and finally Frank's blackmailing of Tracy have no necessary significance in themselves but their significance is established in the system of looks. It is this system of looks, together with the superior knowledge of certain characters in relation to others, which is the central mode of motivation and through this the narration establishes the significance of Blackmail's story

organisation.

As will be discussed later it is the narration which establishes the significance of Blackmail's story organisation. The exploitation of the evidence in the murder case by Tracy and Frank is constructed through the motivation of each character's interpretation. During this process of interpretation, which is based on the system of looks, each character uses his or her privileged position against the other. In a discussion, Peter Wollen has pointed to this system of looks which is based on both Jacques Lacan's reading of Edgar Allan Poe's The Purloined Letter and Roland Barthes' notion of the hermeneutic code.<sup>14</sup> Barthes' formulation of the hermeneutic code is based on three levels. On the first level, an enigma has to be described, distinguished and formulated. At the second level, this enigma has to be held in suspense, and finally at the third level, it has to be solved and disclosed.<sup>15</sup> Wollen's formulation of Hitchcock's narration draws upon Barthes' elaboration of the three levels of the hermeneutic code, describing them in terms of three looks, namely seeing, interpreting and knowing. The three looks, as Wollen describes them, are:

1. A look that sees nothing; 2. A look which sees that the first sees nothing and deludes itself as to the secrecy of what it hides; and 3. A look which sees that the first two looks leave what should be hidden exposed to whomsoever would seize it, "the second believing itself invisible because the first has its head in the ground, and all the while letting the third calmly pluck its rear," as Lacan



The chain of blackmailing

puts it.<sup>16</sup>

Alice's look is the first look which sees nothing. After stabbing Crewe to death, she tries to destroy all the evidence of the murder. However, she underestimates the possible observation of other people, and, more importantly, she leaves her gloves behind. Frank's look, on the other hand, is the second look, for when he finds Alice's glove, he knows that Alice knows nothing about his knowledge of her involvement in the murder case, but by overlooking the possibility that the second glove might have been found by someone else, he overestimates the privilege of his knowledge. The consequences of Tracy being nearby Crewe's apartment, hearing Alice's cry and finally getting inside to see what has happened makes him the person of the third look. Tracy's knowledge of the whole situation appears in two steps. When he finds the second glove, he only sees what Alice does not see. His picture of the murder only completes itself when he sees Frank showing the other glove privately in the telephone booth. At this stage, Tracy also knows that Frank does not know as much as he does. This application of Wollen's model suggests that all the events are narrated according to the consequential logic of the story. While the hermeneutic process narrates its story events according to the conventions of the hermeneutic code, yet the text rules out the possibility of an external observer's narration. Indeed, the closed universe of this hermeneutic process introduces an enigma, holds it in suspense and discloses

itself through the hierarchical looks of its characters. The exclusion of a diegetic narrator, I will suggest, is the result of Blackmail's narration in histoire mode. In Benveniste's terms, no one narrates the story. Events of the fabula simply happen according to their diegetic logic. My argument here, then, denies a direct Hitchcockian authorial discourse.

Hitchcock's films, however, are noted precisely for the appearance of the director in some sense proclaiming himself as the author, and Blackmail is no exception to this. On the underground train which Frank and Alice take to go to a tea-room for their appointment, Hitchcock appears sitting on a seat at right angles to Frank's. A little boy first plays with Hitchcock's hat, then Frank's and finally attempts to play with Hitchcock's hat once again. He changes his mind, however, after seeing Hitchcock's angry face. It is crucial for my argument to note that, in this instance, while Hitchcock marks the presence of his authorial discourse, it is not the same as the sovereign subject with a sense of irony as author of the text, which Raymond Bellour suggests in his reading of Hitchcock's Marnie :

Thus in Marnie, what Hitchcock sees or imagines (in the same way as Mark or Strutt, but this time as her next-door neighbour in a hotel) is what we see: The same woman, still seen from the back, but wearing a robe, progressive focalisation of the voyeuristic impulse.<sup>17</sup>

Bellour's example suggests that Hitchcock's appearance as the familiar signature of the film's director not only inserts a





self-reflexive element into the film, but also establishes a system of looks in which Hitchcock shares the voyeuristic look both of the male character, Mark or Strutt in Marnie (1964), and of the spectator. As Bellour formulates this system of looks:

A new level of intensity is reached in the system of signature, when, from being symbolically included in the logic of phantasy, it can assume a specific position in the cinematographic apparatus whereby it asserts itself as enunciation: representation in the scene, in the axis of that which gives it substance, i.e. the look of that camera.<sup>18</sup>

Hitchcock's appearance in Blackmail, however, does not establish an enunciative function of the look. First of all, Hitchcock's seated position does not allow him to see what Frank sees. More importantly, the particular mise en scène does not inscribe Hitchcock in the chain of the look. The difference between Hitchcock's position in Marnie and that in Blackmail is based on a crucial difference between Marnie and Blackmail in terms of their fabula organisations.

In Marnie, the desired object of the filmic text - Marnie - is not accessible to the characters. Though she is held within the system of their looks, she is not physically present to them; they are in an office, she is elsewhere. Due to the consequential logic of the fabula, Marnie is kept absent because of her robbery. There is, however, a resemblance between her diegetic status as an elusive dramatis persona and her representation by the discourse. Her absence and presence in the text, I suggest,

work within the dialectics of two opposing or reversible elements. This dialectic proceeds through the absence and presence, or accessibility and inaccessibility of the desired object, namely Marnie's body. In other words, the object of desire of the text is not only Marnie as the dramatis persona of the story, but her elusiveness at the level of the representation as well. To sum up, there is an immanent desire in representation which economizes the appearance of the central element or the dramatis persona of the narrative. This economization or even absenting of the desired object, however, undergoes a process of assimilation and represents itself through the diegesis. In short, the restricted representation of a desire object in narrative and its diegetic counterpart co-exist as recto and verso. This dialectic play between desire and absence is formulated by Sandy Flitterman as:

The absence of the object is the condition of desire; here the structure of fantasy crystallises around the desire for the woman-image.<sup>19</sup>

Desire here is understood not as a relation to the real object independent of a subject, but as a relation to a representation. Desire for Alice in Blackmail, however, is not based on her absence. On the contrary, her entrapped presence serves to produce a different kind of desire: the desire for the surveillance, control, blackmail and silencing of women. Unlike Marnie, Alice regrets that in her crime she has gone too far. In Blackmail, Alice's self-conscious social guilt is taken for

granted for the sake of the closure of the text. As I will discuss further, Hitchcock's intervention in Blackmail is not based on the optical point of view shared by Hitchcock and Mark Rutland as in the case of Marnie. This exclusion from the chain of the look means that he is not an enunciator in Bellour's sense but rather suggests another system of enunciation in which Hitchcock can be related to Frank and Alice. The timing of the appearance is a strategic one. He chooses the last scene before the diegetic conflict begins in which to appear. Once the conflict, Alice's assignation, the murder and the blackmailing begin, Hitchcock leaves the text. In other words, his final detachment from the game marks his explicit distinction from the other characters. It could be said that in Marnie also, where Hitchcock retreats into his room, he is retiring from the system of looks set up between himself and the spectator. His withdrawal from the text parodies his authorial position in the text. Through his enunciative appearance, Hitchcock shows his desire to see the subsequent events of the narrative. His position is similar to the laughing jester who points at Alice, but the jester functions in the intra-diegetic space of the text while Hitchcock enunciates from the extra-diegetic space.

If we move from the discussion of the link between the system of the looks and the story organization to the narrative, we can see the narrative structure of Blackmail as the confrontation

between order and disorder. Disorder is Alice's assignation, the murder and finally the blackmailing. Order is the elimination of the blackmailer at any cost as well as the return of Alice as a non transgressive-here silenced-object. The transformation from the unbalanced state of events back to a new order is the direction of any narrative. In this way, the narrative affects the order of the diegetic events as well as the fabula. If the fabula is a series of logically and chronologically ordered events, the narrative transformation clearly penetrates this order and affect the organization of the story. Similar to the interaction between the narrative and the fabula, the narrative also acts upon the story. As a result, the story as the realisation of the fabula, conforms to the narrative transformation. As Stephen Heath describes this action:

Simple definition: a narrative action is a series of elements held in a relation of transformation such that their consecution--the movement of the transformation from the ones to the others--determines a state S' different to an initial state S. Clearly the action includes S and S' that it specifies as such beginning and end are grasped from this action, within the relations it sustains; the fiction of the film is its "unity", that of the narrative. A beginning therefore, is always a violence, the interruption of the homogeneity of S (once again, the homogeneity S itself--being recognized in retrospect from that violence, that interruption)... The task of the narrative, the point of the transformation is to resolve the violence, to replace it in a new homogeneity.<sup>20</sup>

In Blackmail, the interruption of the homogeneity arises from an argument between Alice and Frank and her ambiguous attitude to Frank, which results in her assignation with Crewe. This

interruption transforms the first order, that of homogeneity, into a conflict. Narrative transformation, however, should not be identified with the events of the story. The story events are committed to a spatio-temporal order in a linear direction. Narrative transformation, on the other hand, lies in a more abstract and non-linear level than those of the causal chain of the events. In Blackmail, Alice's behaviour remains at the level of the story, whereas conflicting desires, namely Frank's desire for Alice and what I deduce to be Alice's desire to manipulate Frank's behaviour, constitute the first motivation for the narrative's transformation.

In order to develop my argument let me lay out the movements between the story, the fabula and the narrative in Blackmail more systematically. The fabula of Blackmail is based on the consequences of an assignation, a rape attempt, a murder in self-defence, a blackmailing and finally a counter-blackmailing in order to eliminate the original blackmailing. The story of Blackmail, on the other hand, consists of a relationship between a Scotland Yard detective and the daughter of a shopkeeper. The story also includes Alice's involvement with an artist and a blackmailer. Finally, the narrative is a system constituting a desire in texts to transform events from one state of condition to another.

To consider narrative, however, a mere a mechanism of transformation, excludes the authorial discourse of its individual narrator. The story, on the other hand, together with its system of looks, allows the intervention of Hitchcock in its specific structure. In the case of Blackmail, the desire(s) of the narrative and the film-maker interact, allowing one to see the common motives which can apply both to the narrative and to the story. Indeed, both the narrative and the fabula follow a similar path in order to lead the series of events from homogeneity to conflict and finally to resolution. The narrative, in this particular context, establishes a self-propelling mechanism of desire which rules out the possibility of an artistic intervention. Hence, the authorial treatment is constructed within the desires of the narrative and reflects its conformity with certain ordering systems such as blackmailing, transgression of the law and the subordination of women. The authorial treatment, then, becomes part of the machinery of these ordering systems.

However, it is the link between the story and the narration which suggests the possibility of enunciation. Just as the mode of oral story-telling oscillates between the previously told story and the presence of the story teller, equally, filmic narrating oscillates between its order of the story events and the way in which these events are treated from a visual

viewpoint. At the level of the filmic narrating of the story, the discourse is, no longer concerned with the spatio-temporal order of the story. The discourse here is rather concerned with the "dressing" of the story. Although this dressing is confined to one single story at each time, certain codes, common to all narrative texts, work through the text in order to establish their "aspects", to use Mieke Bal's term. Roland Barthes defines the code thus:

...each code is one of the forces that take over the text (of which the text is the network), one of the voices out of which the text is woven. Alongside each utterance, one might say that off-stage voices can be heard: they are the codes: in their interweaving, these voices (whose origin is "lost" in the vast perspective of already written) de-originate the utterance: the convergence of the voices become writing...<sup>21</sup>

In the following section I will examine the formation of Blackmail's story through the cinematic codes elaborated by Christian Metz.<sup>22</sup> My aim here is to show the way in which the deployment of the cinematic codes establishes the "aspects" of the filmic story. Metz begins his argument by describing the differences between film and cinema. According to Metz, films reflect all the traits which appear as the end result of a given product. As opposed to film, cinema covers filmic facts playing only a partial role in one or the other of the codes specific to cinema. Cinema, in other words, is the totality of the codes employed by various films while film is a message. In this regard, codes do not exist in films, or putting it more crudely, the film-maker does not employ codes to make his/her filmic



material speak to the spectator. Codes are in fact constructs of specific concepts introduced by the semioticians of film. Hence codes have an existence but it is not a material one. They are the opposite of the material expression. Metz further distinguishes two characteristics of codes, namely general codes and particular cinematic codes. General codes are shared both by the cinema and the culture. They are not inside the zone of the cinematic codes but they rather surround it. In Ingmar Bergman's Shame, for example, while Jan is stupefied with drink, Jacobi (the major) and Eva make love in the greenhouse. The love scene is followed by a shot depicting some money left on the bed. Whereas the money in relation to the lovemaking connotes prostitution as a cultural code, the close up insert of the money in the film functions as a particular cinematic code. Similarly the insert of a Super 8 film in Wim Wenders' Paris Texas or in Martin Scorsese's Raging Bull connotes the picture of a *happy family* as well as operates as a particular cinematic code.

Particular cinematic codes, on the other hand only appear in films. Metz' example of a particular cinematic code is "accelerated montage" used in D.W.Griffith's Intolerance. The film is composed of four distinct narratives, each of which reflects an instance of fanaticism, prejudice and intolerance in different historical periods and geographical parts of the world. As Metz formulates it, parallel montage or acceleration plays a

central role in the system of the film. At the beginning of the film, each narrative unit is presented at considerable length before passing on to the next. As the narrating unfolds, however, the images of each episode keep shuffling with each other's and the rhythm of the intermixing accelerates "until a final crescendo where the mixture becomes a visual whirlpool and induces in the spectator a sort of four-termed mental superimposition, the symbolic intention of which is clear, and even emphasized."<sup>23</sup> The similarities of the message revealed in all four episodes causes the montage to move faster and increases the speed of the cuts from one episode to another. The usage of the accelerated montage delivers a message which no spectator can fail to see: the representations of time and space in each episode merge and deliver a single picture of *human nature* dominated by prejudice, fanaticism and intolerance. This accelerated montage is exclusive to cinema. Modernist applications of this techniques in literature will never achieve the same result, as they merely echo it. The accelerated montage, therefore, is a particular cinematic code.

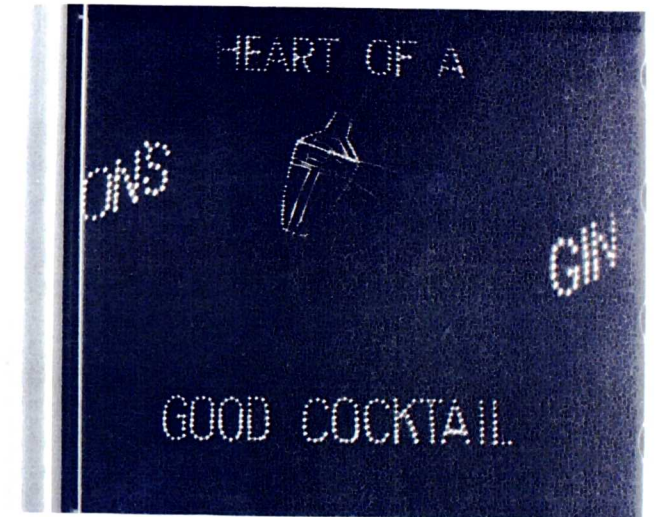
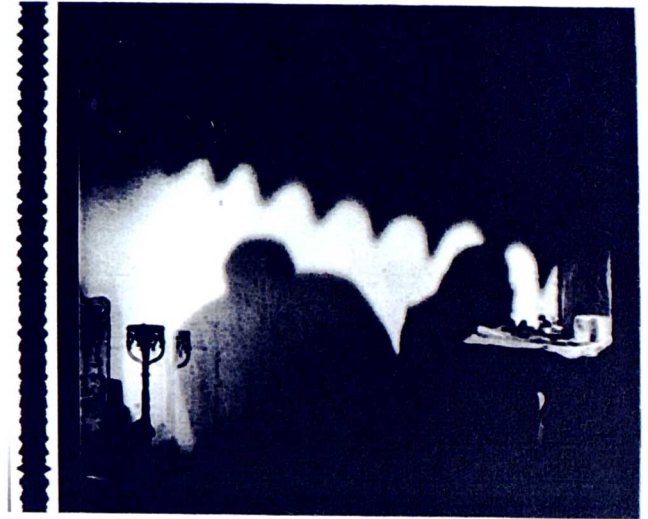
Metz further divides particular cinematic codes into general cinematic codes and sub-codes. Metz argues about the usage of the panoramic shot, which can be defined as a general cinematic code since it can be used in a large spectrum of films. In spite of its commonness, however, the panoramic shot marks the presence

of the cinematographer and as a result it is largely restricted by classical, Hollywood cinema. In Stagecoach, as the Group  $\mu$  writers argue, a panning shot reveals the presence of the Indians before the passengers in the stagecoach are aware of them, thus marking the presence of the camera.<sup>24</sup> As I mentioned previously, a particular arrangement of editing in Stagecoach which had been argued by Nick Browne, also marks the presence of the director. The common characteristics of the sub-codes then are their applicability to all the films and also to particular genres, periods or to certain groups of art cinema. The use of extreme close up shots of faces, for instance, can be found in almost all the films and yet when it is used in Sergio Leone's The Good, The Bad and The Ugly or in Ingmar Bergman's Persona, it marks a particular genre or the style of an auteur. This is why Metz later replaces his term "sub-code" with "particular cinematic code". A general code can turn into a general cinematic code and finally becomes a sub-code. Hitchcock's marking his presence in almost all his films, for example, is partly a general code which is reminiscent of modernist self reflexivity, and partly a sub-code since his appearance in his films establishes a common characteristic. Let me now go back to the story of Blackmail and discuss the links between these codes and the cinematic formation of the story.

The film opens up with the close up image of the rotating

wheel of the Scotland Yard's flying squad van. The next shot makes it clear that a group of detectives are in the midst of a raid. Since no further information is given about the raid, the sequence appears as a mere event and is not linked to the next sequence. In addition, the raid contributes to the hermeneutic--it causes Frank to be late for his meeting with Alice--while there are certain descriptive elements in the sequence that work through the general codes which do not serve to activate the narrative. Since the raid does not imply a predictable subsequent action, it does not propel the narrative forward. In contrast to narrative action, this kind of descriptive narration can be considered extra diegetic narration. However, it should be noted that the raid sequence generates a certain condition of viewing by which the spectator builds his/her expectations. Both from the narrational and descriptive point of view, this sequence refers to the detective genre.

The accelerating rhythm of the music during the credits continuing into the first sequence is linked to the action without any dialogue until the end of the sequence (silent cinema as a general cinematic code of its time). Both the codes of silent cinema, based on the music-accompanied representation, and the use of montage work through the codes of reference. It should be noted that Blackmail employs Anny Ondra as a silent actress, while another actress, Joan Baker stands near the microphone and



Modernism bracketed

says the lines. Alice's *silent* acting, along with the absence of dialogue during the opening raid sequence gives the overall impression of a silent film in spite of the dubbed dialogue.

The sequence also employs codes familiar to the formal history of film. Russian Montage is recalled by the abrupt changes in camera angles as opposed to the convention of continuity editing. In a related sense the inserted shot of the flying-squad van making a U-turn is filmed by a camera placed within the vehicle, the pan shot operating near the limits of the 180 degree rule, disorientating the spectator's attention in a manner reminiscent of modernist self-reflexivity. Still within the same sequence, the film style echoes German Expressionism even more directly where Frank and another Scotland Yard detective are seen in the mirror by the suspected criminal. The shot reflects Frank and another Scotland Yard detective in chiaroscuro lighting, a code specific to expressionistic painting but one which was also favoured in German Expressionist films. In this sense, the sequence is simultaneously narrational, descriptive and referential, shuffling certain self-referential modes of representation familiar within the modernist style, and utilizing them for narration and description.

In Blackmail the narrative, in which every action implies a new one, begins during the second sequence when Frank meets

Alice. In the first sequence, however, priority is given to the general codes (extra cinematic), the most significant of which is the semic code. Roland Barthes defines it thus:

As for the semes, we merely indicate them--without, in other words, trying either to link them to a character (or a place or an object) or to arrange them in some order so that they form a single thematic grouping; we allow them the instability, the dispersion, characteristic of motes of dust, flickers of meaning.<sup>25</sup>

During the raid sequence the semic codes connote the efficiency, the professionalism of Scotland Yard in general. The most interesting aspect of this raid is that it will be repeated during the pursuit of Tracy: not only identical shots, but the same background music and the same close-up of the van's wheel seen in the opening shot of the film. This serves to suggest that the pursuit of Tracy is characteristic of the well-oiled machinery of Scotland Yard. The purpose of foregrounding these semic codes is to emphasize the presence of law and order in general which is used in order to establish the conditions of the existence of the fabula. In this respect, the portrait of Frank in police uniform in Alice's room, Frank's role as a detective who is put in charge of the Chelsea murder, and the presence of a policeman on the street while Alice is in Crewe's studio form a thematic grouping which connotes "The Law".

Another use of the general cinematic code in the sense of semic codes is the sexual violation of the woman, namely Alice.

The gloves which feature prominently in the story events connote Alice's sexuality: they relate metonymically to her body. From the semic point of view, the pair represents her femininity. Gloves here work as a signifier of a lost object that positions the desire of the "guilty" subject in relation to the desire(s) of the other. When Alice leaves them at a table, she asks Frank to bring them back. This action is echoed when Frank as well as Tracy find her gloves at Crewe's studio later on. As a result of the association of Alice--and her desire--with her lost gloves, her body is also perceived as fragmented. We can, therefore, suggest that her body is further fragmented when the pair of gloves is split between Frank and Tracy.

My final example of the use of codes in relation to the production of the story aspects of Blackmail is the sequence showing Alice and Crewe in his studio. In spite of the dialogue, the code of silent acting as a general cinematic code dominates the sequence. As I will argue, this code also functions as a particular cinematic code in order to highlight the insecurity and the guilt complex of Alice. The most crucial point, however, as I will argue is that the uses of this silent acting as a particular code underlines the symbolic silencing of Alice, and this is a mark of the enunciation. The growing awareness of the social meaning of Alice's assignation is shown through her body language and facial expressions until the time when she sees the

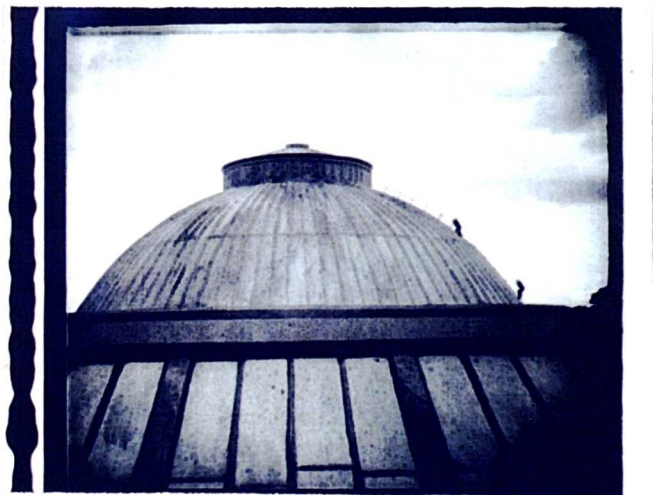


jester painted by Crewe and laughs at it. The jester here has a catalytic function which serves to suspend Alice's social guilt and to release her desire to act the role of a femme fatale. However, it also foreshadows the ironic situation of Alice, namely her laughing at the jester initially and being laughed at by the same jester at the end of the film.

After allowing Crewe to complete her painting by adding a female nude, her desire to be desired as a femme fatale becomes even more evident when she agrees to be one of his glamorous models. The split-screen effect shows Alice's desire to fulfil the voyeuristic desire of Crewe as a painter. Alice takes off her own clothes on one side of the artist's screen while on the other side Crewe sings and plays the piano with his back to Alice, whose undressing in order to change clothes to sit as a model for the painting suggests--according to cultural and referential codes--a striptease. Alice drops her femme fatale role as soon as Crewe attempts to kiss her. Her desire to seduce Crewe transforms itself into a repulsion as well as anxiety and horror as she realizes the consequences of her behaviour. The reflection of her guilt is significant during her second undressing, this time in order to put her own dress back on again which is represented in the exact repetition of the previous split-screen shot. When she realizes that her own dress has been taken by Crewe, her fear and misery is reflected once again through her



two sides of Alice's assignation



"Law" and transgression in Blackmail



Meta-laughter as the finale of Blackmail



body language. In the gesture and style of silent expressionistic acting, which can be seen in Fritz Lang's Metropolis (1926) when Maria tries to escape from Rotwang in the catacomb, Alice's body here also becomes all impulse and instinct as a result of Crewe's intention. While the representation of Crewe remains the same in each split-screen shot, that of Alice changes from these gestures of acting provocatively and seductively into another Alice realizing herself to be trapped by that same behaviour. Ironically enough, her "silent acting" figures the psychological effects of her entrapment by the consequences of the assignation and the murder. It can be said, therefore, that her behaviour is determined by her introjection of societal role requirements. And finally, her "silent acting" figures the psychological effects after her murdering Crewe, Tracy's blackmailing and Franks transgression of the law in order to clear her. The progression of these events functions as the representation of power and social order, which works to *silence* her. During the finale of the film, when Frank and the porter at the New Scotland Yard building laugh at the idea of Frank's losing his job to a lady detective (Alice) and almost simultaneously the painting of the jester as if it is still pointing and laughing at her, she tries to join their laughter, but unsuccessfully. Her entrapment by blackmailing, later being rescued by Frank with the price of Tracy's death, and finally being forced to laugh at the porter's joke, all refer to the idea of her symbolic silencing. At this

level, the self-conscious foregrounding of Alice in the silent acting of Anny Ondra, as a particular cinematic code, does not mark a double enunciation as in modernist films but suggests a co-operation between the authorial treatment of Blackmail and the institutions of power through which the desire in narrating expresses itself at the stake of Alice's representation.

I have already discussed the relationship between the author and the three orders of Blackmail's textual organisation, namely the fabula, the diegesis and the narrative. Finally, I would like to discuss a specific relationship between the story presentation of the characters and the involvement of the author as a desiring subject. The characters function both in the order of the story and, at the same time, as the agents of a text which is not limited to the structure of the story. As I discussed previously, the interaction between the functions of the story organisation is based on the causality of the text. This causality, as I suggested, works within the consequences, conditions of existence and motivations of the characters within the world of the story. Seen within this context, all characters function in a network in order to produce a pretext for the transformation of the events.

There is, however, another aspect of the characters' function in which each co-operate with the author/subject of the text

beyond their respective story function. This excess value of the characters, I will suggest, arises as a result of the authorial function in the text. In other words, there is a common interest between the actions of each character and the involvement of the author. This common interest is the result of the author's split subjectivity in a binary opposition between acting as an imaginary unified subject and being a subject of extra textual discourses, which together make up the totality of the text. As the product of this binary oscillation, the author/agent narrates the text via the discourses of other institutionalized modes of narrating. The film, as the end-result of this process reflects the acts of the characters in a system running parallel to their functions in the story. To sum up, the use of the characters is split between their story function and their representation through the authorial discourse which is itself divided in terms of being a production and the multiplicity of extra-textual discourses which act upon the author-subject.

In order to further my argument on the representation of Blackmail and the involvement of its author as a split subject I would like to analyze the links between the functions of the fabula, the overdetermining factor of the extra-textual discourses and finally the construction of desire in narrative. I would like to employ Jacques Lacan's notion of imaginary and symbolic identification to describe the way in which each

character appears as a function of the desires constructed through the interaction of extra-textual discourses. During the formation of Blackmail's text, I will suggest, the author/subject of the film oscillates between being the author of the film and the spectator of the film. In other words, the author of Blackmail partly "foreshares" the voyeuristic pleasure of the film's spectator during the process of his authorship. The oscillation between being the author and the spectator of his own film is the result of Blackmail's textual mechanisms which produce the desire for its spectator to "introject" and "project" the filmic text simultaneously. During the process of introjection the author as spectator identifies with his filmic text as the signified of his own desire in narrative. This oscillation, however, does not suggest an equality between these two processes, that is, between authorship and spectatorship. In order to construct a filmic text, the author has to be guided by the voyeuristic drive of the spectator first. The spectator expects to fulfil his/her own "lack" during the spectatorship. However, the spectator's lack is never totally supplied by the film itself. My main point here is that the desire of the author as well as that of the spectator are constructed around the same split subjectivity; i.e. around, in Lacanian terms, the self and the other. In order to further my discussion, let me elaborate on an analogy between the author's and the spectator's relationship to the film and Lacan's notion of imaginary and



symbolic identifications of the subject.

According to this analogical approach, the spectator's relation to the screen is an imaginary one. The subject becomes a spectator through the signified of the image. As Joan Copjec defines this relation:

... the impression of reality results from the fact that the subject takes the image as a full and sufficient representation of itself and its world; the subject is satisfied that it has been adequately reflected on the screen...The imaginary relation is defined as literally a relation of recognition. The subject reconceptualized as its own concepts already constructed by the Other.<sup>26</sup>

During the spectatorship, the subject is also guided by a fetishistic illusion and identifies with the narrative image on the screen. However, the illusion is not just the identification with the image and the assumption that what is being "introjected" from the screen is a substitution for the spectator's own lack. Putting it more precisely, the illusion is not only on the side of the spectator but on the side of the screen as well. The spectator usually does not realize that his/her own desire is guided by an illusion, or in Slavoj Žižek's words, by a fetishistic inversion.<sup>27</sup> What the spectator overlooks is not just the fact that the identification with the screen image is an illusion, but that during the film the spectator faces his/her own lack. In other words, it is during the film that the spectator approaches a fantasy-framework which determines his/her own mode of acting in reality itself. In his

interpretation of Lacan, Žižek suggests that the subject's involvement with the Other is the result of a double illusion.

As Žižek argues:

(the illusion) consists in overlooking the illusion which is structuring our real, effective relationship to reality. And this overlooked, unconscious illusion is what may be called the *ideological fantasy*.<sup>28</sup>

The spectator knows that watching a film will not substitute for his/her own desire and yet he/she cannot be "realistic enough" to choose not to see a film. This is precisely because the spectator is under the illusion that the illusionary mechanism of a film offers a temporary escape from the "real" of his/her own desire. What the spectator does not realise is that the identification with the narrative image involves a dialectical process with the "real" of his/her own desire.

At this point, let me go back to the process of the authorship and try to describe the difference between the author and the spectator in terms of their involvement with the film. As I described previously, the function of the author stands between being the "originator" of his/her own discourse as a finished product and a spectator who expects his/her desire to be substituted. Unlike the spectator who comes to see a film as a consumer, the author has to construct the film by bringing specifically filmic discourses and extra filmic discourses together. The author's difference from the spectator is his/her ability to foresee what he/she would like to see as a spectator.

In this sense, the author first internalizes the spectator's desire to see films in order to construct his/her own film. The spectator's desire cannot be substituted by the film, nor can the author's enunciative treatment of his/her film be constructed around a similar lack. The author's attempt to realize a film is based on a desire which cannot be supplied by the film itself. In other words, the author's attempt to realize a substitution for the spectator as well as for himself is an impossible project. What he/she does not want to face is the fact that the film can not substitute the spectator's desire. Putting it differently, the film itself is also structured around the same lack as that of the spectator.

The author of Blackmail establishes his filmic discourse through the multiplicity of extra-filmic discourses within which his split subjectivity foresharing the desire of his spectator is also included. During this process, his employment of the specifically filmic discourses dissolve into the extra-filmic discourses. I will finally suggest that, seen within this context, the split subjectivity of the author becomes part of his own text. At this point, I would like to go back to the beginning of my argument and suggest that the void of the authorial discourse in Blackmail is not the result of its author's intention to put his presence forward as a missing content but that this void is itself the end-result of the text. In this

respect, one may compare the hybrid characteristics of the film's representation i.e., its mixing major styles of modernism with those of popular culture as well as the institutionalized modes of narrating with Charles Jencks' definition of postmodernism. Jencks defines postmodern texts as "doubly coded": One half Modern and one half something else.<sup>29</sup> This mixture then attempts to communicate both with the general public and a more specialized audience which is aware of the specific styles of modernism. In the case of a filmic text, foregroundings of modernist styles coexist with narrational and descriptive functions. In Blackmail, the first coding--or, in my model, the double enunciation makes reference to modernist styles while the second coding wraps up the first coding with institutional modes of narrating. However, it should be noted that Blackmail not only reflect a hybrid discourse through the mixture of these two levels in the sense of Jencks' model but manifests the limits of the self-contained authorial discourses. While modernist texts aim at presenting their agent/author as the centre of the text, Blackmail abandons this project and reflects the problematic nature of its authorship in presentation itself. In Lyotard's view, modernist texts allow the unrepresentable to be put forward as present whereas in postmodern texts such as Blackmail, the unrepresentable, i.e. the author is put forward as absent.<sup>30</sup> In modernist texts, the lack is the unrepresentability of the author as a unified subject while in postmodern texts the lack is the

lack of the modernist crisis as such.

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**Parody of a Self-Parodic Text:**

**Lynch's *Blue Velvet***



The narration in David Lynch's Blue Velvet is organized around multiple layers of meta-textual inserts and narrative units that are intertwined with the discourse of the story. These extra-diegetic inserts and narrative units occupy the story space often without a diegetic relevance. The narrating of Blue Velvet, in other words, is multiplied by extra-diegetic references. However, this multiplication of the narrating and the use of references has a fundamental difference from the way they are used in say, Death in Venice. While the use of the references operates according to a central logic in Death in Venice, the use of references in Blue Velvet is based on agglomeration. Most of the inserts are only metonymically related to the story as in the case of, for example, Jeffrey's fetish for Heineken beer, or the film's elaborations on the theme of "The Sandman". While the presence of the extra-diegetic references in Death in Venice deepen the meaning of the film, in Blue Velvet, references only play the variations of the theme at the surface level without contributing to the content. These extra-diegetic elements function both as the integral parts of the story and as independent units that "pluralize" the meaning.

I will argue that the absence of a central logic in Blue Velvet's narrative organization that allows the nebulae of meta-textual elements is one of the major characteristics of postmodern texts where the instability of meaning, confusion and ironic use of parody dominates the narrative. I will also argue

that Lynch's inscription of a complex network of references into the film suggest a modernist desire to establish himself as an author in the manner similar to the European art cinema.

David Lynch's Blue Velvet introduces several "paradoxical" entries into its narrative: The film opens with a closed dark blue velvet theatre curtain. Following the blue curtain the narrative unfolds through the entries of several doors and a severed human ear. This blue curtain never opens and yet, metaphorically speaking, its appearance implies that the diegetic space of Blue Velvet is kept behind that curtain. I will suggest that parodization of the verisimilitude in general through the deployment of its multiple discourses is the major characteristic of Blue Velvet's narrating. The closed curtain appears one more time, after the closure of the narrative. The filmic text is *wrapped up* with the theme and image of blue velvet in both the diegetic and extra-diegetic orders of the narrative organisation. Given all this, the theme and/or the image of blue velvet in various forms such as the curtain at the beginning and the end of the film, a robe which Dorothy Valens wears or a velvet shred Frank plays with create a multiple connotative network.

Firstly, the pre-diegetic appearance of the curtain echoes the title of the film through which it is represented. The simultaneous presence of the song "Blue Velvet" and the curtain

makes reference to another multi-referential cult film, Kenneth Anger's Scorpio Rising, the soundtrack of which contains Blue Velvet. Secondly, the intra-diegetic representation of blue velvet occurs with the appearance of Dorothy Valance (Isabella Rossellini) in a blue velvet robe which arguably makes reference to Sacher-Masoch's novella Venus in Furs, in which Venus appears naked in furs in order to provoke the hero's masochistic desire for her. In both cases, the soft and textured garments (the velvet robe or the furs) connote femininity on the one hand and sexuality with reference to Freud's interpretation of the furs as pubic hair on the other. I will later discuss the usage of the blue velvet robe further in relation to the narrative and the chain of desire. Finally, Dorothy Valens' singing of Blue Velvet while Frank (Denis Hopper) rubs a shred of her blue velvet robe between his fingers makes complex Oedipal references, which I will also discuss later.

Through the other "openings" such as that of the severed ear and several doors which lead Jeffrey (Kyle MacLachlan) to Detective Williams, and Sandy, the narrating of Blue Velvet plays hide-and-seek with the small and peaceful order of Lumberton and the "strange world" of Frank. While doors give access to Detective Williams and Sandy in Lumberton's small world, the severed ear leads Jeffrey to the depths of Frank's "psychotic" world.

In short, the narrating of Blue Velvet is established through the use of certain intra-diegetic and extra-diegetic devices which constantly interpenetrate with the diegesis. In this respect, I will argue, the film does not represent a mimetic image of the world but a reshuffling of its multiple discourses. In other words, the immediate representation of the *life-like* narratives, both in terms of the images and the story, are replayed and/or quoted as extra-filmic discourses. In this chapter I would like to discuss the way in which the filmic discourse divorces itself from the truth of the verisimilitudinous tradition, establishing a closed diegesis based on the quotation of other discourses. I will also look into the function of parody in relation to the interplay of extra-textual discourses. My aim here is to show how a non-verisimilitudinous work can combine such discourses in an eclectic way without having a master motivation while producing a story based on quotations.

The film not only quotes or emulates certain narratives such as detective genre, such as a small-town American life as in the Invasion of the Body Snatchers (Siegel, 1956), a love story, and an Oedipal trajectory, but it also inserts extra-diegetic extracts from popular culture. Perhaps the most significant example of these inserts is the image-play with Heineken beer. Through Jeffrey's fixation with Heineken beer the filmic discourse invites the spectator to recall the advertisement

slogan for Heineken: "Heineken refreshes the parts other beers cannot reach." Here again "the refreshment of the parts" contributes to the meta-textual network of the film as the phrase connotes sexual potency and competition.

One can also argue that there is a self-ironic analogy between the Heineken slogan and the multi-discursive organisation of Blue velvet's text. In this regard, Blue Velvet refreshes its parts by quoting extra textual narratives. The erection of Mr. Spock's ears in Star Trek does not propel the narrative but contributes to the creation of a fantastic effect; similarly the oblique reference to the Heineken slogan in Blue Velvet self-consciously suggests the utilisation of the same fantastic effect throughout the narrative. Perhaps the closest analogy to Blue Velvet's discourse is the construction of the monster in Mary Shelly's Frankenstein. Like the assemblage of the pieces of the corpses which bring life to the monster in Frankenstein, Blue Velvet combines the impoverished narratives of the other texts.

This way of reading the functions of the quotations and inserts allows me to suggest that the narrating of Blue Velvet itself is the product of a hybrid construction which subverts its own narrative(s). I will also argue that the filmic discourse challenges the spectator to detect the self-conscious mixture of images from popular culture and certain theoretical concepts

and/or references which address the film's own discourse. These theoretical, reworkings function as a meta-text which is intertwined with the diegesis. My main concern here is to investigate the film in terms of its multiple discourses, namely the use of meta-textual narration as ironic self-parody. In this respect, the function of the meta-text not only adds counterpoints to the diegetic text as in Bertolt Brecht's *Lehrstück* plays, but also parodies its own presence. In Measures Taken, for example, every character has a double function allowing the play to propel its dramatic action as well as stop this dramatic action and perform a song with a political message beyond the diegetic continuity of the play. While Brecht's Measures Taken employs a meta-textual enunciation in order to counterpoint the diegetic events as in the song of the rice merchant, Blue Velvet assimilates its meta-textual construction right into the diegesis. The most significant examples of this situation occurs during the parodization of the Oedipal conflict revolving around Jeffrey, Frank and Dorothy. At this level the discourse of Blue Velvet plays with the theme and variations of a complex chain of identifications based on a notion of Freud's sado-masochism as well as the dual identification of the Oedipal child with both its mother and father; this, however, does not modify the diegesis as such.

Beyond the blue velvet curtain, where the diegesis of Blue

Velvet unfolds, the first sequence depicts glimpses of Lumberton's peaceful life including houses with white picket-fences and red roses, a fire truck with firemen greeting the town people, a painted blue sky and a school teacher helping children to cross the street. The combination of these scenes connotes the trouble-free middle class life in Lumberton where people know and respect one another. Such images also imply that even crimes are unlikely to be committed in such a community. In short, the representation of Lumberton fits into the German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies' definition of *gemeinschaft*, where social relations are primary and economic relations are secondary.<sup>1</sup> Most typically, the representation of *gemeinschafts* such as family reunion or any connotation of community life is already parodic (self-mocking) since its lack of authenticity is implicit in its representation.

In Fritz Lang's Human Desire, for example, Jeff's reunion with Alec, his wife and Ellen refers to all other representations of reunions, because a "family" reunion is an institution in itself. In this regard, the representation of Lumberton as a small community is no exception. Its peacefulness, people's knowing each other and absence of trouble are clearly connoted in the first sequence of Blue Velvet. The representation of such images, however, establishes a second level which goes beyond the level of the parodization of community lives. In other

words, images such as the white picket-fences around the houses, roses and firemen waving their hands are themselves parodic.

Instead of depicting the life of Lumberton in a verisimilitudinous fashion, Blue Velvet foregrounds the nostalgic aspects of the town in the manner of a caricature. Seen within this view, one can suggest that Blue Velvet parodies its own parodied images. This second level of parodization, however, does not enhance the first level, which is that of the small community life. On the contrary, this second parodization subverts its own images which are implicitly parodic. The representation of this sequence demands from the spectator a self-conscious round-trip between the parodic images of Lumberton and the existential impoverishment of those "authentic" images at the level of the second parodization. The most interesting aspect of this representation is its refusal to justify its process of double parodization.

Instead of highlighting its self-conscious parodization in an ironic way, Blue Velvet blurs the hierarchical differences between the two levels of its parodization. This divorce from a self-conscious play with its multiple levels of parodization, I will suggest, is a subversion of the modernist representation. I will come back to this point during my discussion on the parodization of the Oedipus complex, which also stands for the



parodization of Blue Velvet's meta-textual commentary.

The second sequence introduces the accident of Jeffrey's father, as the first diegetic event. While watering his garden, he is presumably hit by the hose. In the presentation of the event of his injury, the film deliberately refuses to explain its causality. While such an ambiguous figuring of the event does not convince the spectator about the cause of the accident, the progression of the discourse introduces an Oedipal narrative within which the withdrawal of Jeffrey's father from the diegesis acquires meaning. In other words, the ambiguity of the accident invites the spectator to interpret the functional aspect of the event as an Oedipal story where the hero needs the impotence of the father in order to indulge in his Oedipal fantasies. As I will argue below, it is worth noting that a little boy witnesses the "castration" of Jeffrey's father, which is related to the formation of the Oedipal trajectory in the narrative. Throughout the narrative progress, the Oedipal construction works as a parodic meta-text which makes comments on the diegesis.

The scene also makes reference to a Lumiere film L'arroseur Arosé, which can be interpreted as an Oedipal conflict between father and son.. In the Lumiere brothers' L'arroseur Arosé a little boy presses his foot on the hose while the gardener, who has the same role as a father is watering the garden.

Consequently, the gardener pulls his ear for punishment. In this regard, Blue Velvet echoes L'arroseur Arosé with aggravated violence against the human body. While the gardener in L'arroseur Arosé only pulls the boy's ear, Chris' (the kidnapped father's) ear in Blue Velvet appears mutilated. Additionally, the similarity of the scenes in terms of watering the garden as well as the father son relationship is striking.

This reference, however, is not a straightforward one. There is a crucial difference between the two films, which underlines the Oedipal commentary of Blue Velvet's diegesis. In L'arroseur Arosé it is the father who punishes the boy, while in Blue Velvet, the father himself gets injured and is replaced by his son. In spite of the surface similarities between the sequences including the emphasis on the ear in both films, Blue Velvet's reference to L'arroseur Arosé is an oblique one. In other words, Blue Velvet encourages the spectator to see not only the reference it makes to L'arroseur Arosé but also its reversal in order to interpret the Oedipal commentary. In other words, the father in Blue Velvet is rendered impotent within the context of the Oedipal conflict, whereas in L'arroseur Arosé, the sequence implies that the boy is threatened with castration by his father. It should be noted that the father's accident is not an absolute necessity for the diegetic organization of the story. The rest of the diegesis would still unfold in a more or less similar

direction even if the father were not injured. However, his absence invites the spectator to deal with the second level of the diegesis, which is that of the parodic meta-text.

At this level, the Oedipal commentary does not alter the diegesis but rather accompanies it. This means that neither the diegesis nor the parodic meta-text affects each other's discursive organisation. There is, however, one crucial difference between the diegesis and the meta-text in terms of their degree of activity. The meta-text fills the spaces in the diegesis without altering the discursive construction and multiplies its semantic levels, while the diegesis itself only appears as a convenient narrative form for the meta-text.

Even though the diegesis of Blue Velvet has its own independent structure, its discursive organisation is designed to optimize the parodic role of the meta-text. This can be seen in the scene where Jeffrey's father gets injured at the beginning of the film. After his fall, the hose remains erect and continues to ejaculate water. While he is convulsing in pain, a little boy observes the scene. From the viewpoint of the meta-text, the scene connotes the impotence of the father as part of the Oedipal trajectory of the diegesis. The most crucial element in the scene, however, is not the accident itself but the observation of the scene by the little boy. Whereas the boy's witnessing of

the accident has no function from the diegetic point of view, his observation of, the accident as a non-diegetic event produces further connotations such as Freud's notion of the primal scene as well as the boy's Oedipal fantasies in defeating the authority of the Father.

Drawing on the Russian Formalists' definition of motivation as the primary means by which the work makes its devices plausible, Kristin Thompson argues that cinematic excess emerges when motivation fails to function.<sup>2</sup> In Blue Velvet, however, excess does not come at the moments when diegetic motivation fails, but appears as a product of the meta-text. Whilst the presence of the boy remains only as an excess within the diegetic space, his witnessing of the accident builds upon the Oedipal meta-text itself and reworks its variations throughout the narrative. I will elaborate on this point through my textual analysis of Blue Velvet.

In spite of its Oedipal commentary, the film does not attempt to convince the spectator in terms of establishing Jeffrey as an Oedipal hero. His clumsy look, kicking stones and very naive comments such as: "It's a strange world, isn't it?" underline his childishness. However, this childishness itself sets a pretext for his Oedipal fantasy trip. His finding of a severed ear on the way back from his hospital visit, which

underlines his new life without a father, sets an intra-diegetic opening. As I suggested previously, the ear functions both metaphorically and metonymically. First of all, it is metaphoric because its vaginal likeness suggests an opening for Jeffrey's adult fantasies. Here, the meta-diegetic commentary addresses the parodization of certain dream objects which make reference to their dream images. Referring to Sigmund Freud's The Interpretation of Dreams, I would like to suggest that the oblique reference to Freud's title itself opens up the possibility of interpreting Jeffrey's involvement with Frank and Dorothy as a dream/fantasy. The camera's tracking into this severed ear and the following opening of Detective William's door, on which Jeffrey knocks, implies this possibility. In terms of its diegetic function the ear is also metonymic. The narrating of Blue Velvet organizes its diegesis through the discovery of the ear by Jeffrey. It should be noted here that the two orders of Blue Velvet, namely the diegesis and the meta-text, are intertwined without the domination of one order of organization over the other.

The next diegetic unit establishes a detective story based on that severed ear. Within this sequence, the scene at the police laboratory where the postmortem examiner confides: "It looks like the ear was cut off with scissors", is cut by an exterior shot in which the location of the severed ear is

restricted by police signs. A scissor cuts the ribbons on which is written: "Police Line Do not Enter." Aside from its parodic resemblances of this cutting with that of the severed ear, the scene connotes Jeffrey's desire to become involved with the mystery of the ear, which is not present in his routine life. The cutting of the line also suggests a crossing from the territories of Jeffrey's previous world into a fantasy world. In this respect, this cutting of the borderline also looks like an opening into the "strange" world of Frank. While the "openings" of Blue Velvet lead Jeffrey right into the psychotic world both metaphorically and metonymically, the scene with the police line represents his desire to get involved with something prohibited. From this point onwards, the narrating of Blue Velvet sets an imaginary space, which exceeds the spatio-temporal boundaries of the diegesis.

The other events involving Jeffrey, Frank and Dorothy take place within this exceeded diegesis. Here, once again the notion of excess appears when the representation of the diegetic reaches its causal limits. In other words, the diegetic representation of Blue Velvet only establishes a pretext for Jeffrey's Oedipal fantasies. At the level of the excess which can also be defined as the meta-text, the narrating sets an imaginary space within which Jeffrey's fantasies literally occur as intra-diegetic events. Within this context, Frank's perverse world is excessive

to the narrating of Blue Velvet. Throughout the unfolding narrative, Jeffrey becomes part of the "strange" world. One can suggest that Frank's perverse world appears in the narrative as the projection of Jeffrey's Oedipal fantasies. In other words, Frank's violent and pervert life can be seen as a manifestation of Jeffrey's Oedipal desire for Dorothy. Indeed, Jeffrey's interest in Dorothy always conflicts with that of Frank's. One can further suggest that the revelation of Jeffrey's Oedipal fantasies leads him to identify with Frank, who takes possession of Dorothy. Within this context, Dorothy's demand: "Hit me!" can be interpreted as one of Jeffrey's own fantasy. (Ironically enough, Sandy tells Jeffrey: "Sometimes I am not sure whether you are a detective or a pervert")

In other words, Dorothy's desire to be hit is the other side of the same picture. Jeffrey imagines Dorothy as masochistic first and then identifies with Frank who possesses her. Frank's diegetic function here is a dual one: On the one hand, he represents a castrating father. His kidnapping of Dorothy's son, his abusive treatment of Jeffrey and his possession of Dorothy underline this image. On the other hand, Frank is in the oscillating position of a father and a child who desires his mother. This second image of Frank is precisely what Jeffrey identifies with. Identification with the father, however, conflicts with the threat of castration. The threat of castration

here is linked to the function of the father as an agent of prohibition. Here, it would be useful to relate the function of Frank with Freud's notion of the "uncanny" which operates as another meta-textual level in the film.

Freud relates the uncanny to the anxieties of childhood memories. Simultaneously desiring the mother and being the subject of castration is the uncanny aspect of the Oedipus complex. The uncanny, according to Freud, oscillates between two polarised meanings, namely the canny heimlich, homely, expected etc., and its opposite: the uncanny unheimlich, hidden, or dangerous. Thus, Freud defines:

"The uncanny is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and familiar."<sup>3</sup>

In Blue Velvet Lumberton's peaceful life is contrasted with Frank's repressive and perverse world, in which is Jeffrey's Oedipal fantasy is represented. In E.T.A. Hoffmann's The Sandman, Nathaniel's image of a father is represented in a divided *father-imago*: his own father and Coppelius, as well as Professor Spalanzani and Coppola the optician. Within the context of the Oedipal meta-text in Blue Velvet too, the figures of the father and Frank represent the two opposites into which the *father-imago* is divided by ambivalence. In both Blue Velvet and The Sandman, the Oedipal child's death wish against the threatening father results in the death or at least an implied castration of the



benign father. The apparition of the threatening father finds its expression in the boy's desire to subvert the authority of the Oedipal father. In other words, the familiar the heimlich refers to its inversion the unheimlich when it is exposed. Thus the uncanny appears as a threat to the existing order. In Blue Velvet, the unfamiliar comes to light through Jeffrey's desire to step out of his peaceful and ordinary world, which can be defined as *heimlich* in Freudian terms. The oscillation between Jeffrey's everyday world and that of Frank's, suggests the instability of the boundaries between the two worlds in Blue Velvet.

The lack of stability is the most crucial aspect of Freud's uncanny. As mentioned previously, it is not clear whether Frank's world exists as part of the diegesis or it only appears as a projection of Jeffrey's Oedipal fantasies. In other words, the ambiguity of Frank's world can be seen as the reflection of Jeffrey's oscillation between the ordinary Lumberton life and his repressed fantasies. In this respect, Jeffrey's identification with Frank is the return of his repressed fantasies.

In her reading of Freud's The Uncanny, H el ene Cixoux writes:

"What is intolerable is that the Ghost (or the vampire) erases the limit which exists between two states, neither alive, nor dead; passing through, the dead man returns in the manner of the Repressed. It is this coming back which makes the ghost what he is, just as it is the return of the Repressed that inscribes the repression."<sup>4</sup>

Similarly, in Blue Velvet, the uncertainty of Frank's world in terms of whether it exists or not, creates an uncanny effect. Within the context of Cixoux' text, the return of the repressed in Blue Velvet is the absence of the father, which I will look at later. According to Todorov, a person having an unfamiliar or fantastic experience must make a choice between one of the two possible solutions:

...either he is the victim of an illusion of the senses, of a product of the imagination-and laws of the world then remain what they are; or else the event has indeed taken place, it is an integral part of the reality-but then this reality is controlled by laws unknown to us."<sup>5</sup>

While Blue Velvet leaves both possibilities open, the uncanny or the fantastic occurs as a result of this uncertainty.

By creating the effects of the uncanny or the fantastic, the narrating of Blue Velvet also foregrounds its self-reflexive commentary through its meta-text. Putting it in different terms, the meta-textual commentary, i.e. the parody and self reference invites the consciousness of the spectator to take up ironic distance to the diegesis. As a result, Blue Velvet subverts the potential identification of the spectator with the uncanny situation. Just as a Brechtian play demands a conscious distancing from the narrative, Blue Velvet parodies its own uncanny effect at the level of its meta-diegesis. By "quoting" and playing with the theme and variations of the Oedipus complex

as well as other extra-diegetic material, Blue Velvet subverts the work of its narrating in the establishment of the diegesis, the effect of the uncanny, and excess. These processes of subversion, however, do not impoverish these effects. On the contrary, to keep its order of organization among the discourse of subversion.

One of the most characteristic aspects of Blue Velvet's narrating is its gathering together of various discursive fragments without any hierarchical order. This way of assembling its multiple discourses makes any reductive reading impossible. In other words, the narrating of Blue Velvet is organized like a network which absorbs multiple discourses in selection and combination. Because of the irreducibility of Blue Velvet's multiple discourses into a single system, I would like to continue reading the film descriptively according to its successive diegetic events. This way of reading, I believe, is the only way to address the subtle relations of Blue Velvet's multiple discourses.

The introduction of Sandy comes through the descriptive portrayal of the narrating. When Detective Williams takes Jeffrey into his study, the camera first frames Sandy's portrait on the wall and then shows other details. In this way, the narrating introduces Sandy in relation to Detective Williams, who appears .

as a father-figure. Detective Williams underlines his position as a father figure by advising Jeffrey not to become further involved with the mystery of the severed ear. This prohibition ceases to be one as soon as Sandy approaches Jeffrey. The mysterious emergence of Sandy out of the darkness accompanied by stereotyped mystery music suggests that her stylised appearance is related to the beginning of Jeffrey's fantasy trip. As a meta-textual commentary, Sandy's passing information about the mystery to Jeffrey provokes his desire to undermine the authority of Detective Williams, her father. The narrating then sets a parodic beginning for a relationship between them when Jeffrey meets Sandy at her high school. On their way to the restaurant, Sandy tells Jeffrey that she has a boyfriend. Sandy's reluctance to start a relationship with Jeffrey does not divert the succession of the diegetic events. At the restaurant, Jeffrey tries to persuade Sandy to help him sneak into Dorothy's apartment. His attempt to persuade her also reflects his unconscious desire to gain adult experience through the following statement: "There are opportunities in life for gaining experience and knowledge. Sometimes it is necessary to take a risk. Someone can learn a lot of things by getting into that woman's apartment. You know, sneaking in, hiding and observing." and later in a different meeting: "I am seeing something that was always hidden"- "secrets"- "mysteries". These words establish a commentary on Jeffrey's increasing desire to attain adulthood.

The logic of these words are further linked with his peeping at Dorothy undressing and later with her relationship with Frank.

During their talk at the restaurant Jeffrey convinces Sandy about the feasibility of his plan, and in the subsequent scene he climbs the stairs of Dorothy's apartment. The way in which he does this unmistakably echoes the scene in which his mother watches a thriller on television. This way of paralleling a diegetic event with an intra-diegetic image undermines the effect of verisimilitude and more importantly foregrounds its playing with multiple discourses in order to subvert the discourse of its diegesis. In order to get into Dorothy's apartment, he pretends to be a pest controller.

Throughout the whole narrative, Blue Velvet exploits the connotations of the words *pest* and *bug* in various ways. First of all, Jeffrey's impersonation of a pest controller refers to his spying mission. However, the meaning of bug as the installation of a microphone in an apartment connotes not only Jeffrey's spying on Dorothy but also the voyeurism behind his intention. Secondly, in slang bug means a microbe, especially one causing a disease. In this sense "bug" is also related to Jeffrey's desire to enter the perverse world of Frank. After making love with Jeffrey, Dorothy tells him: "Now I've got your disease in me." Referring to Jeffrey's semen, this statement connotes the

disease of "reproduction". Reproduction here, is linked to the identification of complex Oedipal roles taken up by Jeffrey, Dorothy and Frank. I will discuss these identifications when I read the triangular relationship between Jeffrey, Dorothy and Frank. Finally bugs as creatures are shown both during the opening and ending of Jeffrey's Oedipal trip. At the beginning of the film, the camera tracks the insects in the garden after the accident. Showing the extreme close up image of insects here works as an "opening". This opening with insects is later linked to the disease of reproduction. At the end of the diegesis a bug appears for the last time. This time, however, it is eaten by a mechanical bird which is connected to Sandy's dream about robins bringing love. To sum up the idea of the bug, it works as one of the central metaphors of Blue Velvet through which the narrating disperses the diegetic importance of the events and emphasizes their extra-diegetic presence in the film.

After meeting Dorothy for the first time during his spraying of her apartment, Jeffrey is caught between the desire to go back and the desire to possess Sandy. He asks Sandy for help in order to penetrate into Dorothy's apartment again the following day. When Sandy tells him about her date with Mike, he expresses his disappointment by saying: "Well, that's that." Jeffrey's emotional blackmail proves successful and Sandy agrees to ditch her boyfriend and meet him. In short, the narrating establishes

an oscillating relationship for Jeffrey between Dorothy and Sandy. This oscillation plays a central role in Jeffrey's Oedipal fantasies. After their dinner at the Slow Club, where Dorothy sings Blue Velvet as "The Blue Lady", Jeffrey and Sandy leave the club in order to sneak into Dorothy's apartment. Inside, the camera frames Don's (Dorothy's kidnapped son) clown hat in his room. It should be noted that Dorothy's husband's name is also Don (Donald), which creates an intentional confusion between the two figures as the Oedipal child and the father. Furthermore, Dorothy calls Frank "baby". These are the preliminary implications of the film to introduce the complex identifications of the characters based on the Oedipus complex.

The meta-textual commentary here exploits the fantasy link between Jeffrey and Don, within which Dorothy appears to be a mother substitute for Jeffrey. The complex Oedipal relations begin as a chain reaction soon after Jeffrey fails to hear Sandy's warning signal and hides in Dorothy's closet.

Jeffrey's observation of Dorothy occurs in two stages. In the first stage, he watches Dorothy undress from a completely voyeuristic position, just as a pre-Oedipal child would observe his mother in absence of his father as an agent of prohibition. However, his voyeuristic observation is interrupted when Dorothy finds him in her closet. Threatening him with a kitchen knife she interrogates him. The interrogation clearly establishes the

shifting roles of both Jeffrey and Dorothy within the Oedipal conflict. On the one hand Jeffrey's innocent observation is related to his perversion. When Dorothy finds him in her closet and forces him to undress, his voyeurism turns back on himself. On the other hand, Dorothy introjects the image of masculinity and abuses Jeffrey in retaliation. The following dialogue sets up the first stage of their relationship:

Dorothy: "Why are you here?"  
 Jeffrey: "I wanted to see you."  
 Dorothy: "What did you see?"  
 Jeffrey: "I saw you undress."  
 Dorothy: "Are you the sort of boy who steals into girl's apartments to watch them undress?"  
 Jeffrey: "No-this is the only time."

and later on:

Dorothy: "What do you want?"  
 Jeffrey: "I don't know."

This short interrogation produces an analogy between Jeffrey's being found in an awkward position in the diegesis and his blockage as an Oedipal hero. Within this analogy, he is threatened by castration. Ironically enough, this threat does not come from a father figure, but from a mother figure who identifies herself with the father. When Dorothy threatens Jeffrey with her impending knife close to his genitals and demands him to take off his clothes, she takes the same position as Frank, who treats her in a similar way. The spectator only understands her oscillating behaviour after seeing her relationship with Frank, who himself oscillates between the two positions of identification: namely the "bad" father and the



Oedipal child who is afraid of his "castrating" father. Jeffrey's position also changes according to the shifting positions of Dorothy's identification from being a victim-mother into a threatening father. When Dorothy plays the role of the threatening father (Frank), Jeffrey's position shifts from Oedipal desire to an Oedipal crisis in which the child faces the threat of castration. As a result of her identification with the threatening father, Dorothy forces Jeffrey to make love with her. During the love-making scene, however, Dorothy's position shifts back to her previous identity which is that of the victim-mother. Her begging Jeffrey to hit her, on the other hand, reflects the masochism behind her sadistic identification with the position of Frank.

Frank's appearance shifts the positions of every character into even more complex identifications. When Frank knocks on the door, Dorothy hides Jeffrey back in the same closet, from where he can peep at them. The apparent symmetry of this with his earlier hiding, however, changes immediately upon the arrival of Frank. Frank plays first the role of a threatening father, which then gradually changes into an Oedipal child who wants to "fuck" his mother. He is afraid of the light as well as of Dorothy's looking back at him. He holds and rubs the velvet shred through which the narrating of Blue Velvet implies his becoming a child connected to his mother's body with an umbilical cord. He wears .

an oxygen mask, which is presumably the life-giving placenta at the other end of the umbilical cord. The oxygen mask implies a dyadic unity between mother and child. After putting the mask onto his face he sits over Dorothy's body lying on the floor and screams: "Mama! Baby wants to fuck!" and later swears at his imaginary father: "Mother fucker! You fucker's fucker!" In parallel to his utterances, he stands on top of Dorothy's body and moves and shakes his body up and down in what seems a fantasy rape. Here he replaces the place of the father who makes love to his mother. But when Dorothy looks back at him, he swears at her: "Don't fuckin' look at me!" This utterance can be read as a fantasy projection which is subject to turn back on to him. Frank's wish is to escape from his Oedipal desire. He is caught up in the Oedipal trap between a phallic mother and an Oedipal child. This is why he constantly oscillates between two positions, namely an Oedipal child and a castrating father. Realisation of this sort of consciousness during the process of the imaginary (the projection of the mother as a desire-object) occurs by the returning of the gaze of the mother, which disrupts that fantasy projection. Ironically enough, Dorothy also quotes Frank and tells Jeffrey "Don't look at me!".

Once Frank appears, Jeffrey's identity shifts back and forth between his "self" and the "other" (Frank). Frank represents what Jeffrey has lacked in his life up to now - an adulthood

experience, that "strange world". Frank therefore stands as the projected image of Jeffrey's repressed "other". Through the course of Jeffrey's relationship with Dorothy, he finally meets Frank. This meeting opens up a chain of identifications between Jeffrey and Frank. Needless to say the most complicated shifts between their positions occur during the brothel scene where they meet with Ben, the drug dealer. While Frank meets Ben for business, Frank's gang allow Dorothy to see her kidnapped son. As she enters the room where her son is kept, Jeffrey deliberately tries to look and see Dorothy's son. From Jeffrey's optical point of view, the camera zooms into the door, however, his desire is thwarted when one of the gang slams the door. Beyond the closed door Jeffrey hears Dorothy's motherly voice talking to Don, mixed with her screams of "No!, no!". The likeliest explanation of her polarized response to Don is her confusion of her son with a threatening father figure which are both identified by Frank in oscillation.

The linking of Jeffrey with Frank suggests four different alternative identities. First of all, Jeffrey moves between Lumberton's orderly world in analogy with the name-of-the-Father, and the other by which he desires to escape from this repressed world. His "otherness" is further divided into two identities which oscillate from one position to the other. The first one is that of the bad father through which Jeffrey can escape from his

Oedipal conflict. In identifying with the perversion of Frank he can deny the authority of the name-of-the-Father. The film sets up a wish to escape from Oedipal desire i.e. the desire for the phallic, which is itself castrating. To achieve this, Jeffrey first projects himself as the double of Dorothy's child who is threatened by the "bad" father. He only identifies fully with Frank (bad father) when his identification with Don (Dorothy's son) is also complete. In other words, Frank's oscillation between two positions of identification, namely the Oedipal child who desires his mother and the threatening father who appears as an agent of prohibition of his desire, play against each other in a vicious circle.

The emergence of the desire for the mother is represented in Blue Velvet through another central metaphor which is that of the drug. While Dorothy sees her kidnapped son in the brothel, Frank meets with Ben who gives him a drug tablet. He calls the tablet a candy coated clown, which refers to the song he sings later. The same song also makes reference to Hoffmann's short story The Sandman.<sup>6</sup> It is through the reading of this that Freud develops his notion of the "uncanny" as the return of the repressed. Ben's song here deals with the theme of the repressed as well as the attempt to escape from that repression. In order to facilitate my argument about the song, let me quote it:

A candy coloured clown I called the sandman  
Tiptoes to my room every night

Just a sprinkle of stardust and the whisper:  
 Go to bed and everything is alright.  
 I close my eyes then I drift away.  
 And the magic' night cause I to say  
 I will pray like the dreamers do.  
 Then I fall asleep to dream  
 My dreams of you.  
 In dreams I walk with you  
 In dreams I talk to you  
 In dreams you are mine  
 All of the time forever in dreams.

The song makes reference to both Hoffmann's tale within the context of Freud's reading, and that of the drug through which one can cross the boundaries of desire and repression. Firstly it refers to The Sandman.

In Hoffmann's story the Sandman refers to the image of the threatening father who appears in the shape of a benign father in a cyclical fashion: Professor Spalanzani turns into Coppola the optician who is Coppelius/The Sandman. When Nathaniel (the hero) asks his mother about the sandman he receives the following answer:

"There is no sandman my dear child. When I say the sandman is coming, all that means is that you are sleepy and cannot keep your eyes open, as though someone had sprinkled sand into them."<sup>7</sup>

As Nathaniel is not satisfied with his mother's explanation, he further inquires about the sandman and finally hears the most satisfying answer:

"Oh Nat, don't you know that yet? It is a wicked man who comes after children when they won't go to bed and throws handfuls of sand in their eyes so that they jump out of their heads all bloody, and then he throws them into his sack and carries them to the crescent

moon as food for his little children who have their nest up there and crooked breaks like owls and peck up the eyes, of the naughty children."<sup>8</sup>

The first line of Ben's song makes both metaphoric and metonymic references to the story. "A candy colour clown" in the song refers both to the drug tablet which Ben calls a "candy coated clown" and Dorothy's son who is represented by his clown hat in Dorothy's apartment. The drug here is the metaphor of the imaginary process through which Frank and presumably Ben identify themselves with a little child who desires his mother. At this level, the metaphor works within the context of the meta-text. Candy-colour clown also refers to Dorothy's son whose desired position plays a crucial role in the diegesis. His kidnapping stands for Frank's desire to displace the other (the child). In other words, the oscillation between the repressed (the imaginary father) and the lack (the place of the child), sets the theme of the sandman. This condensed image of sandman sprinkles the "disease" which is that of the desire to subvert authority and possess the mother as well as the punishment for that desire.

If the sandman in Blue Velvet is related to the repressed and the lack, Sandy is linked to Jeffrey as his ideal partner in his orderly world. "Sandy", as opposed to the sandman, stands for Jeffrey as his love-object onto whom Jeffrey will transfer his drive following his successful passage through the Oedipal crisis. Frank's perverse world has to be demolished for him to

overcome his Oedipal crisis. A final confrontation with Frank would be an ideal solution for Jeffrey to overcome his Oedipal crisis; however, Dorothy's presence makes this clear-cut separation problematic. The scene where Jeffrey and Sandy meet Dorothy after a party clearly reflects the lack of a borderline between the two worlds. Dorothy appears stark naked in front of her house, where her husband was killed. Her bodily presence between Jeffrey and Sandy plays a retarding role in Jeffrey's attempt to overcome his Oedipal crisis. Dorothy's presence in a "wrong" place, where Jeffrey is not supposed to expose his Oedipal fantasies, subverts the conventional relationship between Sandy and Jeffrey. Sandy's caricatured desperation, however, suggests that even in an embarrassing situation such as being exposed to Dorothy's desire, is still part of Jeffrey's Oedipal crisis which he has yet to overcome. In order to do so, Jeffrey has to kill Frank, who represents in oscillation his desire for the mother and the bad father as the agent of repression.

The resolution of the diegesis clearly underlines Jeffrey's successful passage through the Oedipal crisis. When he unites with Sandy and the rest of the family including his father, Frank's psychotic world ceases to exist. Dorothy is also excluded from his world, instead appearing as a repeated dyadic unity between mother and son. The final shot where Dorothy and her child with his clown-hat are sitting on a park bench underlines

their roles within the frame of the Oedipal narrative within which the child is likely to follow Jeffrey's path. The closure of the diegesis does not therefore bring any closure of the meta-text. On the contrary, the playing with the repetition of the image of the child marks its non-closure. The continuous play with the extra-textual discourses including the parodic meta-text takes over the diegetic unity of the film and continuously expands the text.

One of the most significant aspects of Blue Velvet's meta-text is the way in which its elements dissolve into each other. The song for example does not only function as a theme song, as in Fred Zinnemann's High Noon, but appears both within and outside of the diegetic space. It appears both before the opening and after the closure of the velvet curtain, which sets the spatio-temporal boundaries of the diegesis. Additionally, the song partly appears during the broadcasting of "Radio Lumberton", which blurs the diegetic boundaries of the text. Another significant example is the clown-hat of Dorothy's son. This hat is related both to Jeffrey's desire to be in Dorothy's son's position and to Ben's song, in which the hat refers to a candy-coated clown, a metaphor for a drug. My final example for the merging elements in Blue Velvet's meta-text is the sound similarities between The Sandman and Sandy. As I mentioned previously, the Sandman in Blue Velvet works as a metaphor for



the threatening father while Sandy, as Jeffrey's love-object anticipates his successful journey through the Oedipal crisis.

In the last two examples the meta-text foregrounds the resonances between the image of the 'clown'-hat and the 'candy-coated clown', as well as the 'Sandman' and 'Sandy' in order to emphasise its parodic role. The parodic meta-text in Blue Velvet, I would like to suggest, is not a self-parody as in René Magritte's Ceci n'est pas une pipe where the image of a pipe and that of the enunciative text appear in collision, but a parody of an already self-parodic text in which the meta-text assimilates its diegetic counterpart without the control of an authorial voice. The parodic element in Blue Velvet is the result of the playing and reworking of the meta-textual elements in the diegesis. This playing and reworking is not just a parodic enunciation of the text but a *recycling* of the meta-textual aspects implicit and explicit in any narrative. The narrating of Blue Velvet traces the discourses of other texts which are already considered postmodern. For example, all the meta-textual elements which I have discussed are drawn on the diegesis without being motivated by the narrative in an eclectic manner. Moreover, the meta-textual elements themselves are discontinuous and the meaning they generate does not match with the diegetic events. In this respect the film foregrounds its own discrepancies without aiming at parodying any conventional text

in modernist sense. As a result, Blue Velvet creates variances between the story and the connotative world that surrounds it. This aspect of Blue Velvet corresponds to what Linda Hutcheon terms postmodern parody:

Not only is there no resolution (false or otherwise) of contradictory forms in postmodern parody, but there is a foregrounding of those very contradictions.<sup>9</sup>

The connotative network of references in Blue Velvet also reveals the enunciative narration of Lynch. The film's saturated commentary on the narrative in this respect marks the author of the film who controls all levels of meanings, discontinuities and self-contradicting moments of narration. One can suggest that there are similarities between Visconti's use of extra-diegetic references with Lynch's authorship in Blue Velvet. Both films use references which require an active mind to solve the meaning and depth behind the narrative. However, the function of these references are diametrically opposed: Death in Venice creates a deeper level by integrating its narration with the tradition of modernity. Every level of meaning is related to modernity; hence, its references orbit around a master logic. In Blue Velvet, on the other hand, the references often have no reason to be present in the film. The meanings of the references are also excessive. They often do not reveal a deeper level of meaning. Even if the spectator starts to piece together say the theme of the Sandman and Freud's notion of the uncanny this does not guide him/her to

gain a deeper meaning.

Nonetheless, like Death in Venice, Blue Velvet too establishes an enunciative narration. While Death in Venice foregrounds a self-conscious narration, the enunciative act in Blue Velvet comes forth not through Lynch's distinctive style in the sense of Visconti but through the levels of connotations, quotations and inserts which, at the end, constitute Lynch's authorship. Instead of inscribing himself into the narration in the sense of European art cinema tradition, Lynch lets his image of authorship being established through the traces of discourses and levels of connotations he builds. In other words, his authorship is the product of the discourses that he gathers together in his own film. This could be seen as a subversion of European cinematic tradition to which Visconti also belongs. One can further suggest a parallel between Blackmail's parodization of historical modernism and Blue Velvet's undermining of the tradition of late-modern cinema. In this respect both films move away from the modernist ends of art cinema.

## NOTES

1.Ferdinand Tönnies, Community and Society, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press

2.Kristin Thomson, Eisenstein's Ivan the Terrible, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987, p.294

3.Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny" in Art and Literature Pelican Library, Vol.14, p.363

4.Hélén Cixoux, Fiction and Its Phantoms in New Literary History, Vol.7, Spring 1976, p.543

5.Tzvetan Todorov, The Fantastic Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1973, p.25.

The link between "the fantastic" and "the uncanny" is thoroughly explored in Thomas Elsaesser's "Social Mobility and the Fantastic: German Silent Cinema" and James Donald's "The Fantastic, the Sublime and the Popular; or, What is at Stake in Vampire Films?". Both essays appear in Fantasy and Cinema, ed. James Donald, BFI Publishing, London, 1989

6.E.T.A. Hoffmann, "The Sandman" in Tales of Hoffmann, London:Penguin Classics, 1982

7.Ibid.p.87

8.Ibid. p.87

9.Linda Hutcheon, The Politics of Postmodernism, London: Routledge, 1989, p.94

## CONCLUSION

This study has been based on the readings of four different films, Death in Venice, L'avventura, Blackmail, and Blue Velvet, examining their textual organisation from the view-point of modernism, late-modernism and postmodernism. Each film analyzed here has certain discursive characteristics that have opened up discussions about their relationship with modernist, late-modern and postmodern discourses. I have tried to apply the theories of modernism, postmodernism and film theory to these four films while looking at the interaction between these discourses and specifically filmic discourses.

I began developing a methodology by using the theories of modernism and postmodernism elaborated by Theodor Adorno, Jürgen Habermas, Jean-François Lyotard and Fredric Jameson. My major interest throughout this thesis has been to combine these theories with film theory in order to look at the modernist and the postmodern traits organized into filmic discourses. With the exception of Death in Venice, none of the films I have chosen for this study can be defined as strictly modernist, late-modern or postmodern. These discursive traits are continuous in both modernist and postmodern works and every text, to some extent, consists of both continuities and break-off points between these discourses.

The continuities and the breaks occurring between modernist

and postmodern works can be seen through a comparison of the two distinct textual strategies used, Visconti's Death in Venice and David Lynch's' syndicated cartoon strip which anticipates the narrating of Blue Velvet: In two different scenes of Death in Venice, the first showing Aschenbach pleased about returning to Venice after loosing his trunk, the second one showing him helplessly chasing Tadzio in the streets of Venice in agony and self-humiliation, the same part of the adagietto of Mahler's fifth symphony is played.

In his dog-cartoon strip David Lynch uses the same strip, consisting in two pictures, but each time he writes different dialogues for it. He then has his cartoon strip published simultaneously in various newspapers across the United States.

The presentation of music as an autonomous material in Death in Venice undermines its use in classical narrative cinema. In Death in Venice the use of music is modernist, as its sovereign treatment makes counter-points with the image-track without subordinating one to another. More importantly, however, the relationship of the music with the scenes charged with two opposite dramatic situations operate in line with Adorno's notion of negation and Schoenberg's atonal music, denying a matching between narrative action and music. In other words, the sovereignty of music in these two scenes avoids the formal use

of devices based on an institutionalized form of representation (i.e, Classical Hollywood Cinema).

In David Lynch's cartoon strip this strategy is reversed: the image and the text no longer make counter-points as in Death in Venice. Instead, the relationship between the dialogue and the images are completely arbitrary: In each completed cartoon strip a different text is superimposed onto the same two-pictured strip; hence, the strip simultaneously deny the "referentiality" of their images and constitute alternative meanings. Blue Velvet furthers this strategy by weaving its story with an array of extra-diegetic elements, imposing alternative readings onto the film. While the story remains the same, the possibilities of reading the combined text is multiplied.

Death in Venice resists the assimilation of its diegetic material into the narrative and foregrounds its self-reflexive representation, whereas Blue Velvet both advances and liquidates these modernist strategies: It continues by undermining classical paradigms such as hierarchical representation, subordination, and closure. But it also liquidates modernist representation by moving away from such purposive ends.

At an early stage of this study I tried to develop a methodology in order to determine the narrative significance of postmodern films. I also aimed at locating the possible breaks

between modernist and postmodern films. However, as my study progressed it appeared that the continuities between these two phases are greater than the discontinuities. The continuities between these phases work in two ways: Firstly, postmodern films further the modernist strategies to the extent that the original aims of the modernist texts may be lost. As a result, the clear distinctions between modernist and postmodernist texts also dissolve. Both modernist and avant-garde strategies such as shock, self-reflexivity, attempts to mingle high-art and popular culture, for example, and absorbed by postmodern texts. The shock techniques of the historical avant-garde, for example, are assimilated "to reaffirm perception rather than change it."<sup>1</sup> Most clear examples of this assimilation can be seen in the films of Steven Spielberg and George Lucas.

Secondly, postmodern texts also "revisit" modernism by embodying certain modernist forms of narration such as self-reflexive authorship. David Lynch's authorial treatment of Blue Velvet is an example of this. There is a third category in which texts move around the territories of both strategies. In the case of L'avventura and Blackmail for example, it is not clear whether these films are modernist-postmodern films or postmodern films featuring modernist styles as in the case of the first category.

Theories of late-modernism and postmodernism do assert a



break between modernism and postmodernism. Such an approach would not go beyond putting the applicability of these theories to test without saying much about films themselves. Moreover, the theories of Habermas, Lyotard and Jameson do not provide a specific methodology to study films. As a result, I tried to develop a number of different methodological approaches in order to combine textual readings of films with those of the theories of late-modernism and postmodernism. In order to do so I have crossed the boundaries and interrelated many of the theories that seemed appropriate for my approach.

The major theories of late-modernism and postmodernism of Adorno, Habermas, Lyotard and Jameson tend to explain the postmodern characteristics of texts as symptoms of socio-cultural changes. Their overview on social changes and the "postmodern" condition of culture cannot be directly adapted to film studies without developing a methodology to deal with the specificity of narrative organization in films. Moreover, with the exception of Fredric Jameson's theories, the major theories do not include films in their field.

One of the problems of Jameson's approach is that his reading of films does not embody textual analyses of film. Films, for Jameson, are reflections of the late-capitalist, postmodern condition. He reads films at a meta-level: instead of analyzing and interrelating filmic discourses, he singles out the semantic

organization of films, their thematic units and the significance of ideological formations that overdetermine overall narration in order to search the condition of postmodernity.

I will try to show how the films I have considered might correspond to the theories in which Habermas, Lyotard and Jameson would read the four films I have analyzed and compare their method with my own reading. This approach will enable me to compare their notion of postmodernism and the methodologies they develop with my approach to these films. Hence, it will allow me to illustrate the strength and the weaknesses of their theories in the context of film studies.

Death in Venice would appear to be an example of Habermas' notion of autonomous art. Following the Enlightenment concept of autonomous art, he believes that the progression of art along with the autonomous spheres of science and morality would contribute the rational organization of everyday life. As I argued in my introduction, Habermas accepts Adorno's notion of negative art as an evolution of autonomous art. In this respect, Habermas would see Death in Venice in line with modernist art that narrates itself as a modernist work. However, Death in Venice presents two views of autonomous art: the autonomy of art based on the values of the Enlightenment is characterized by Aschenbach in Death in Venice, while the autonomy of artistic

creation is advocated by Alfried who echoes Adorno's views of modern art. In his paper Modernity: An Unfinished Project, Habermas does not make it clear which version of autonomous art he has in mind for the completion of the project of modernity. Moreover, as I discussed previously, he does not explain how autonomous art can bridge life and art, hence fulfil the project of modernity.<sup>2</sup> Although Death in Venice inscribes itself into a modernist narration, its espousal of modernism does not intend to integrate life and art. On the contrary, Visconti's Death in Venice carries forward the aura of modernist tradition.

Habermas' notion of paradigmatic shift from the project of modernity to postmodernity has some applicability in the evolution of Italian neorealist cinema. One can suggest that Italian neorealist cinema came close to fulfilling Habermas' expectations from art. From a political point of view neorealist cinema is an exoteric form of art that is capable of integrating art and life. Defenders of neorealism, such as Umberto Barbaro and Luigi Chiarini had similar views. However, as I discussed it in the introduction, Italian cinema moved away from neorealism to a more esoteric and autonomous form of art, which in Habermas' view would have been a step backwards in the completion of modernity.

Neither Blackmail nor Blue Velvet fit into Habermas' scheme.

They are neither autonomous nor exoteric in order to bridge life and art. Blackmail, in fact, parodies modernism and the autonomous notion of art from within. Furthermore, the film reworks the transgression of law and order in society which manifests the liquidation of the Enlightenment ideals. The narrating of Blackmail then would be regarded by Habermas as neo-conservative, hence postmodern. Blue Velvet only carries forward the "liquidation" of modernism which Blackmail commences and self-consciously writes itself as a postmodern text.

While the role of art in Habermas' model is ambiguous and does not make clear what constitutes a modernist or a postmodernist work, Habermas' approach may be useful in studying the shifts in the politics of representation, i.e. Italian neorealism versus post-neorealism, French New Wave cinema versus the sleek style of Jean-Jacques Bènéix, or affirmative postmodernism versus the postmodernism of resistance. This line is also taken by Hal Foster.

From Lyotard's point of view Death in Venice follows the "pre-destined" path of modernism. Instead of challenging modernist representation it celebrates it. Hence it is *melancholic* and modernist. Both L'avventura and Blackmail constitute an elaborate dialectic between modernism and postmodernism. L'avventura goes beyond a modernist representation

by experimenting and to some extent negating the very boundaries of modernism. The film constantly moves between discourses such as ironic authorship, neorealism, post-neorealism and a self-propelling mechanism of desire. Moreover, each of these discourses constantly defines and undermines the other. It is then the self-undermining of each of these discourses that constitutes the *novatio* aspects of L'avventura.

Blackmail follows a similar path and moves away from modernism by quoting modernist forms of narrating. By doing so it frustrates its own modernist narrating. In other words, it reverses the process of *melancholia* by subverting the innovative forms of modernist narrating. Blackmail's negation of modernism can also be seen as a self-ironic play with meta-narratives. In this respect Blackmail thwarts modernist forms of narration and adopts an institutionalized narration of which the film seems to suggest an inevitable alternative to the autonomous/modernist narrating.

In my view, Blue Velvet could not fulfil Lyotard's criteria for the postmodern. Lyotard's view of the postmodern or *novatia* is close to Peter Bürger's description of the historical avant-garde. According to Bürger the historical avant-garde constantly aimed at subverting what he calls institution-art. In a similar way, Lyotard expects postmodern works to subvert all forms of

institutionalized artistic practice, whether totalitarian or pluralist. His notion of *novatia* is puristic enough to exclude the works of 'trans-avantgardia' on the basis of cultural pluralism. In this context Blue Velvet too would be seen as a reactionary cultural product, mixing avant-garde techniques (meta-text in the form of quotations and inserts) with popular forms and culture-industry. One can see, in this respect, the parallels between Lyotard's view of popular culture and Adorno's.

I will finally look at these four films from the point of view of Jameson. One of the most significant aspects of Death in Venice is that it is a film of regret in the sense that the film is nostalgic for the past it presents. However, the representation of nostalgia operates quite differently from those of the "postmodern-nostalgia films" Jameson defines. In Jameson's view, nostalgia films are characteristic of post 1960s' tendency to imitate dead styles which encourage the viewer to escape from the present to the past. These films create an image of the past that is based on the pastiche of say 1930s' films which are re-appropriated to the present. In doing so, these films present both a missing and regained past. Jameson describes this tendency as the historicity of the present:

Historicity is, in fact, neither a representation of the past nor a representation of the future (although its various forms use such representations): it can first and foremost be defined as a perception of the

present as history; that is, as a relationship to the present which somehow allows us that distance from that immediacy which is at length characterized as a historical perspective.<sup>3</sup>

Death in Venice represents the past that constitutes the presentness of its discourse. In other words, the past in Death in Venice is a projection of Mann's and Visconti's own nostalgic attachment to the *fin-de-siècle*. However, the way nostalgia films restructure the past and project it onto the social present is not exclusively the characteristic of postmodern films. In other words there is no film which could "authentically" represent the past without inscribing the ideology of the present onto the past. A dialectic between a nostalgia for the past and an attempt to escape from it is one of the major motivation of modernist texts. Death in Venice in this respect, parallels Merchant Ivory's Heat and Dust which is also based on the co-presence of the nostalgia to the past and its modernist framing.

Death in Venice is also a work of pastiche. One can argue that the settings of *fin-de-siècle* Venice, the inscription of Art-Deco and Impressionist styles shows the film's tendency to re-present the styles of the past. Additionally, Visconti's Death in Venice closely follows the modernist writing of Thomas Mann. However, the use of pastiche here does not constitute a postmodern condition; instead, it marks the modernist crisis in representing the past, hence foregrounding its own enunciative

process. Margaret Rose, however, has argued that Jameson distorts the concept of *pastiche* that comes from a term used in painting, *pasticcio analogen*, "meaning the compilation of motifs from several sources and to have been in usage for several (modern) centuries." Rose also notes that Jameson's examples of the use of pastiche come from the writings of Thomas Mann and Theodor Adorno, both modernist writers.<sup>4</sup>

L'avventura, in Jameson's terms, would seem to stand as a "high-modern" film that marks the crisis in generic conventions. In his reading of Stanley Kubrick's The Shining, Jameson argues that with the arrival of media society, namely television, wide-screen cinema, "the golden age of Hollywood genres", musicals, westerns and *film noirs* break down.<sup>5</sup> The newer films, according to Jameson, are closely linked to bestsellers and the development of various branches of the culture-industry. The younger film-makers are no longer able to follow the styles of Hitchcock or Ford, not even able to remake old films in the traditional sense. As a result, "metageneric" productions emerge as a solution to this crises. Films of Robert Altman, Stanley Kubrick, Roman Polanski or Nicolas Roeg mix different genres in a self-reflexive, auto-referential and intertextual mode, while another set of film-makers such as Bernardo Bertolucci or George Lucas "inauthentically" represent the glossy images of the past. In both cases, however, the films combine different genres and this



marks a crisis in representation.

If what Jameson suggests is the case, L'avventura represents the zero-degree of this crisis. Like those "metageneric" films, L'avventura also mixes genres (detective films or road movies) these generic features, however, appear in the film with zero motivation. In other words, their function in the narrative is secondary to the other concerns of its narrating such as ironic authorship, the presentation of the film in a modernist manner and so on. L'avventura, then, might be seen (also in my view) as a high-modern film that could open up the first category of the metageneric films, namely the self-reflexive and intertextual films.

The very early date of Blackmail would trouble Jameson's category of postmodern texts that begin to emerge in sixties. However, apart from the problem of periodization, the film's way of mixing deferent modes of narration (including its combination of silent and sound cinema) and, in fact, meta-modernist styles (Expressionism, and the use of montage) precedes his category of meta-generic films.

Jameson attributes Blue Velvet to the category of "postnostalgia" films that follow the seventies' and early sixties' nostalgia films. For Jameson, the allegorical processing

of the past that establishes the image of the past as glossy and desirable opens up a way for post-nostalgia films: It is the contradictory combination of the elegance of nostalgia films and the representation of the sixties' popular culture "that acts as an allegory of its own coming into being." The presentation of the sixties' popular culture shifts the representation of the "other" not as a sublime, unrepresentable entity but as an ordinary thing. Blue Velvet, for example marks the end of both seeing the present as history and history as a combination of a lavish and decorative past by merging these very images of the past and the popular culture of the present (rock culture, punk and drugs). In Jameson's view, then, Blue Velvet subverts its own image of otherness by presenting say, Frank Booth, not as a frightening and evil but as a "thing" which is distasteful and banal.

This approach misses one of the most significant aspect of Blue Velvet's narrating, that is, the extra-diegetic meta-textual references and self-consciously post-modern écriture of the film. These references, as I mentioned previously, subvert its reading as a closed text by superimposing different texts onto the diegesis. This intertextual aspect of the film raises questions about the postmodern use of parody which, according to Jameson, does not exist. Parody, for Jameson, is a modernist device that is eclipsed by the pastiche of the postmodern phase.

The use of parody in Blue Velvet, however, does not foreground the conventions of the text as in the avant-garde texts of which Tynyanov defines the modernist function of parody as the mechanization of the device, but to further this function to the extent that there is nothing left to foreground.<sup>6</sup> Hence the parodic function of Blue Velvet becomes a matter of play without a purpose.

In Jameson's system Blue Velvet is still a reactionary film that represents an evolution of nostalgia films by incorporating the nostalgic representation of the sixties. Apart from this evolutionary aspect, "regrettably", it is still a work of pastiche.

One of the postmodern characteristics of culture and artistic practice is that the stable distance between high-art and popular culture is no longer available. Moreover, like the moments of lap-dissolves in cinema, both aspects of art and culture are undergoing a merging process. This applies to film too: The art cinema of the seventies is opening up to more mixed and hybridized forms of popular cinema which often gain a cult-status rather than the artistic respect that the films of Bergman, Visconti or Antonioni established. Moreover, certain film-makers of both European and American cinema gather together conflicting influences, mingling the strategies of art cinema and

popular cinema. Among others, the films of Jim Jarmuch, Luc Besson, the late films of Robert Altman and Kubrick, van Hoeven and Lynch reveal this combination.

This is not to suggest that all these film-makers are "going postmodern". On the contrary, the mixed influences and shifting grounds in cinema are the revelation of both late-modern and postmodern influences. As I argued previously, both modernism and postmodernism are two-way processes and films still follow either paths or both. Nichetti's The Icicle Thief is a modernist satire of postmodern culture since it carries forward a clear message: the commercialized media culture hopelessly blurs the distinction between high art and trash-culture. On the other hand, Blue Velvet's self-consciously postmodern strategies fold back upon modernism, while, for example, the modernist intentions of Peter Greenaway or Jim Jarmuch reach postmodern dimensions.

The postmodern theories of Habermas, Lyotard and Jameson are based on hierarchical models. Their aim is to define the break-off points between modernism and postmodernism. A postmodern approach to cinema, hence, provokes one to take a similar line. Habermas and Jameson reject the affirmative character of the postmodern condition, while Lyotard's thought suggests further alternatives and innovation through the absence of grand narratives. However, Lyotard's approach too aligns itself with

Adorno's theory of modernism art by urging art to negate pluralism, reactionary art and trans-avantgardism.

A non-hierarchic approach to modernism, late-modernism and postmodernism on the other hand, will open up the possibilities of reading films in terms of multiple discourses interacting with each other, hence avoiding the possible reductive approaches when applied to cinema or any other text. It is possible to observe the changes and the formations of new styles and discourses in relation to postmodernism. Throughout this study I tried as much as possible to avoid using "postmodernism" in order not to emphasize that it is a movement in a manner similar to modernism. However, *more recently*, both popular culture and the art world espouse the postmodern culture and reproduce postmodern(ism) in a re-cycling process and this is yet another postmodern trait. Recent examples of this would be the presentation of Eight Documenta Exhibition in Kassel, the impact of MTV and Lynch's Twin Peaks on other television programs or the films like Altman's The Player. The popularity of postmodern culture I believe, functions like a *deus ex machina* that generates the existing discourses and styles of postmodernism in cinema.

## NOTES

1. Andreas Huyssen, After the Great Divide, Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1986, p.15

2. Jürgen Habermas, Modernity: An Unfinished Project in *New German Critique*, No.22, 1982

3. Fredric Jameson, Postmodernism, or, The cultural Logic of Late Capitalism London: Verso, 1991, p.284

4. Margaret A. Rose, Parody/Postmodernism in *Poetics*, Amsterdam: North-Holland, no.17 (1988) p.51

5. Fredric Jameson, Signatures of the Visible London: Routledge, pp.82-99

6. Yuri Tynyanov (Quoted by Margaret Rose, Parody/Meta-Fiction Croom Helm London, 1979, p.164) Dostoevskij und Gogol: "Zur Theorie der Parodie", in *Russischer Formalismus*, texts edited by Juri Striedter (München, 1971), pp. 300-716.

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Death in Venice (Morte a Venezia), 1971

Production Company: Alfa Cinematographica  
Executive Producers: Mario Gallo, Robert Gordon Edwards  
Producer: Luchino Visconti  
Production Manager: Anna Davini  
Director: Luchino Visconti  
Assistant Director: Albino Cocco  
Script: Luchino Visconti, Nicola Badalucco.  
Novel: Death in Venice (Der Tod in Venedig)  
Written by Thomas Mann

Director of Photography: Pasquale De Santis  
Editor: Ruggero Mastroianni  
Art Director: Ferdinando Scarfiotti  
Music: Gustav Mahler  
Musical Director: Franco Mannino  
Costumes: Pierro Tosi  
Sound: Vittorio Trentino

Cast:  
Gustav von Aschenbach: Dirk Bogarde  
Tadzio: Björn Andressen  
Tadzio's Mother: Silvana Mangano  
Frau von Aschenbach: Marisa Brenson  
Alfried: Mark Burns

Romolo Valli, Nora Ricci, Carole André,  
Leslie French, Franco Fabrizi, Antonio Appicella,  
Sergio FGarfagnoli, Ciro Cristoforetti, Luigi Battaglia,  
Dominique Darel, Masha Predit.

Running Time: 125 minutes

L'avventura, 1959

Production: Amato Penn for Cino del Duca, Produzioni Cinematografiche Europee (Rome) and Société Cinématographique Lyre (Paris).

Script: Michelangelo Antonioni, Elio Bartolini and Tonio Guerra, based on Antonioni's own story.

Photography: Aldo Sacavarda

Sets: Piero Poletto

Costumes by : Adriana Berselli

Music: Giovanni Fusco

Sound: Claudio Maiselli

Editor: Eraldo Da Roma

Assistant Directors: Franco Indovina, Gianni Arduinni, Jack O'Connell

Cast:

Sandro: Gabriella Ferzetti

Anna: Lea Massari

Claudia: Monica Vitti

Giulia: Dominique Blanchard

Anna's father: Renzo Ricci

Corrado: James Addams

Gloria Perkins: Dorothy de Poliolo

Raimondo: Lelio Luttazzi

Patrizia: Esmeralda Ruspoli

Professore Cucco, Enrico Bologna, Franco Cimino,  
Angela Tomasi di Lampedusa, Vincenzo Tranchina

Running time: 145 minutes

**Blackmail (Sound Version) 1929**

**Production Company: British International Pictures**

**Director: Alfred Hitchcock**  
**Play by: Charles Bennett**  
**Film Editor: Emile de Ruelle**  
**Art Director: W.C. Arnold**  
**Assistant Director: Frank Mills**  
**Dialogue: Ben Levy**  
**Photography: Jack Cox**  
**Music Score: Campbell and Connely**

**Made and Recorded at Elstrae, London**  
**Distributed by Wardour Films Ltd.**

**Cast:**

**Alice White :Anny Ondra**  
**Alice's voice :Joan Barry**  
**Frank Weber :John Longden**  
**Mrs. White :Sara Allgood**  
**Tracy :Donald Calthrop**  
**Artist :Cyril Ritchard**  
**Mr. White :Charles Paton**  
**Artist's landlady :Hannah Jones**

**Harvey Braban, Hohny Butt,**  
**Percy Parsons, Alfred Hitchcock**

**Running time: 85 minutes**

Blue Velvet, 1986

Production Company: De Laurentis Entertainment Group

Director: David Lynch

Director of Photography: Frederick Elmes

Sound Design: Alan Splet

Production Designer: Patricia Norris

Editor: Duwayne Dunham

Music: Angelo Badalamenti

Script: David Lynch

Executive Producer: Richard Roth

cast:

Dorothy Vallens: Isabella Rossellini

Jeffrey: Kayle Maclachlan

Frank Booth: Dennis Hopper

Sandy: Laura Dern

Hope Lange, George Dickerson, Dean Stockwell,

Running time: 115 minutes

