THE PLAYING SPECTATOR

A study on the applicability of the theories of D.W. Winnicott to contemporary concepts of the viewer's relationship to film.

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Abstract

This thesis presents an exploration of the relationship of the viewer to film from the perspective of the theories developed by the English psychoanalyst D.W. Winnicott (1896-1971) on *playing, transitional objects, potential space,* and a view of the subject that includes a concept of the *True Self* or *Self.*

The transitional object is defined as the baby's first play object which it uses to achieve subject-object differentiation. Potential space is the transitional psychic area between subjective and objective reality, which Winnicott posits as the location of cultural experience, the adult's form of playing. Playing involves a creative relationship with the subjective and the objective worlds and encompasses both specific, cultural activities and a general orientation to living.

These concepts are applied to film through a model of a *playing spectator,* whose wish for cinema is to take a full part in the film-play as agent and as maker. The vicissisitudes of the spectator's playing from the opening to the ending of the film are traced through analyses of *Meet me in St. Louis* (Minnelli, 1944, USA), which is explored as both a musical and a melodrama.

The specificity of the notion of a playing spectator is clarified through a comparison with contemporary film studies of spectatorship. It has similarities with theories that stress process and movement in the film viewer relationship while the differences arise from the differences between Winnicott's views of subjectivity and those adopted in film studies. The playing spectator engages with a film in ways that partake of both conscious and unconscious processes and makes use of it as her play object to obtain an experience of the Self. From this perspective an argument is made for the psychic significance and value of the experience of cinema for the viewer.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

> Playing is an experience, always a creative experience and it is an experience in the space-time continuum, a basic form of living.
>
> (*Playing and Reality*, D. W. Winnicott, 1971, p.50)

> Winnicott ... reminds us that the world of our perceptions is a dead letter as long as it is not animated by a look.
>
> (J. B. Pontalis, in an interview, in *Winnicott and Paradox*, A. Clancier and J. Kalmanovitch, 1987, p.143)

This thesis presents an exploration of the relationship of the film viewer to the experience of cinema and a study of the nature of the spectator, the subject constituted by that relationship. It addresses the following questions: Why do we desire cinema? How do we come to engage with its stories and its world? What psychic processes are set in play as we watch a film? The aim of the thesis is to reconsider the film-spectator relationship from the perspective of the concepts of *transitional phenomena, potential space, playing* and the *True Self* developed by the English psychoanalyst D.W.Winnicott (1896-1971). In his theory of playing Winnicott posits a location for cultural and creative activity in the psyche as an 'in between', transitional position on the boundary of unconscious and conscious, fantasy and reality, subject and object. The concept of a psychic transitional area bypasses Freud's division of the psyche into conscious and

unconscious, and encompasses a different view of subjectivity from that assumed in contemporary psychoanalytic film studies.[1] In this thesis it becomes the place 'between' the film and the spectator.

In order to examine the applicability of these concepts to film studies, I will posit a model of a 'Winnicottian' or a 'playing' spectator, both as a subject who engages with a film in order to make use of it for her playing and as a subject produced in the film viewing process. I will propose that the spectator's desire for cinema comes from her wish to take a full and varied part in the play-on-screen and that her interaction with the film enables her to do so. Since Winnicott did not elaborate his concept of playing as cultural activity, this exploration of the film-viewer relationship will also amplify and exemplify his account as a specific instance of the adult form of playing.

Since the 1970s mainstream psychoanalytical film studies of the spectator have been largely carried out from within a Freudian-Lacanian framework, focusing on issues of the representation and construction of subjectivity, both in relation to the institution of cinema and to individual films. Much of this work has come from a feminist perspective and has been concerned with issues of gender and sexual difference. In part this arises from the notion of the subject as constituted within the system of sexual difference at the Oedipal stage. The very terms of psychoanalysis posit a gendered subject, however fluidly and problematically; further, as

[1] I exclude Freud's 'pre-conscious' from my discussion because it is posited as the area of half forgotten memory and I am assuming that it therefore belongs to the non-repressed 'conscious' system.

Constance Penley puts it: 'the narrative and symbolic problem of establishing the difference between the sexes is the primary motivating force of the classical Hollywood film' (Penley, 1988, p.3). Contemporary psychoanalytic accounts of film have likewise been commonly framed in terms of gender and sexual difference.[2]

The viewer's relation to cinema is explored in somewhat different terms in Elizabeth Cowie's essay 'Psychoanalysis and film theory in the 1980s'. Cowie points to the tendency of psychoanalytic film theory in the 1970s to conceptualise in different ways the spectator as 'fixed' by cinema or individual films into certain unmovable positions. This encompassed the attempt to equate the subject of psychoanalysis and of ideology which, Cowie argues, is in the end untenable and has largely been abandoned. The 'fixing' of the spectator was propounded from different vantage points in *Screen* during the early 1970s, for example, by Christian Metz, Raymond Bellour, Stephen Heath and Laura Mulvey, whose approaches to spectatorship, Cowie points out, in this way overlapped (Cowie, 1991, p.109); the spectator was seen as fixed in a position of self-miscognition at the Lacanian mirror stage or into unconscious structures of looking and movement through a narrative. One way out of this impasse for the film spectator has been through an exploration of fantasy, the relation of which to playing is discussed in Chapters 3 and 4 of this thesis; however, the basic psychic structuring of fantasy remains also posited as tied into terms of

[2]For example, in Ann Kaplan's edition of essays from the 1980s, *Psychoanalysis and Cinema*, only four of the thirteen do not focus on sexual difference as their major issue; and one of these, Janet Bergstrom's 'Psychological Explanation in the Films of Lang and Pabst' is not strictly about psychoanalysis.

sexual difference (Cowie, 1984; Greig, 1989) however variable the spectator's own position in relation to that structuring might be.

A large body of complex and productive theory and criticism has been produced within the Freudian-Lacanian framework adopted by film studies and the terms of its debates have changed and have become more fluid. Nevertheless, to a large extent it has marginalised — indeed has often specifically excluded as being marred by idealist assumptions or as having no relevance for the female spectator — aspects of the film viewing experience which can broadly be defined in terms of their personal and aesthetic effects: the sense that the process of watching a film can, in itself, be experienced as not only pleasurable but psychically significant for the spectator. The tendency to posit an exploration of the film viewing experience in terms of sexual difference, as an example, precludes discussion of that experience in other terms; questions concerning the spectator's enjoyment of, engagement with, and even her gain from watching a film become conflated with the gender specific issues.

Winnicott's concepts of playing, transitional phenomena and potential space, on the other hand, offer a way of addressing the issue of the spectator's enjoyment of, and stake in, the film directly. Following Melanie Klein, Winnicott worked with a view of subjectivity that is based within a bi-sexual pre-Oedipal stage, of a subject that precedes — and to a large extent is unrelated to — language and sexual division. His theories of playing and creativity therefore override and decentre questions of sexual difference; the process of playing is posited as a fundamental

human process, not dependent on the gender of the subject — although its mode of representation might be.

In the following chapters I will explore the psychic processes and vicissitudes of the spectator's playing, from her first move into the film at its opening to her withdrawal from it at the end. My case study for the spectator's progress through the film is *Meet me in St. Louis* (Minnelli, *1944)*, which, particularly through its status as a mixed-genre film, offers a variety of positions and scenarios for the playing spectator. I will also make reference to Woody Allen's *The Purple Rose of Cairo* (1985), a film about cinematic play and illusion, whose central protagonist serves as an illustrative example of the playing spectator. As I trace the spectator's playing I will specify the nature of subjectivity that a model of a playing spectator entails, indicating points of convergence with and divergence from current psychoanalytic film studies. The thesis therefore also explores the difference to ways of thinking about the spectator that a Winnicottian perspective can make.

In Chapter 2, 'The spectator on screen', I explore the spectator's first movement into a relationship with the film as the moment at which she 'enters' its world — the point at which traditionally she suspends disbelief and makes a move to another psychic state where she accepts the reality of what unfolds on screen in front of her. This exploration of the spectator's move into the film-space will involve a consideration of how Winnicott's notion of potential space can relate to existing accounts of cinematic and narrative space.

In Chapter 3, 'The playing spectator', I take up the central focus of this thesis, the nature of playing and the construction of a playing spectator, to explore the spectator's participation in the film action and to consider how the notion of a playing spectator relates to existing film studies concepts of an active spectator. I will argue that watching a film is an example of what becomes of the child's playing when it is 'diffused' into cultural experience (Winnicott, 1971, p.5). In *Meet me in St. Louis* playing is explored in terms of the film's status as a musical in order to examine the relevance of genre to the notion of playing and to consider ways in which the musical can be construed as a 'playful' genre.

Any psychoanalytical account of film studies entails the fundamental assumption of the unconscious and a divided subject. This problematises a common-sense or anecdotal view of cinematic pleasure and even the notion of 'pleasure' altogether. As Constance Penley puts it, 'desire does not always aim for pleasure': it might for instance originate in the death drive (Penley, 1989, p. 203); psychoanalytic film studies seeks to explore the lure of cinema beyond and at times even in spite of its apparent 'pleasures'. The notion of playing as a transitional position between conscious and unconscious clearly, therefore, cannot account for the whole of the experience of the spectator's engagement with a film. Winnicott retained the Freudian and Kleinian models of the unconscious, and in Chapters 4, 'The breakdown of playing', and 5, 'Replaying loss', I therefore move away from an exclusively Winnicottian position to explore the incursion of the unconscious into playing and the relevance of film studies accounts of the unconscious to the Winnicottian spectator.

Nevertheless there are different views of the nature of the unconscious and Winnicott's different approaches are important to his notion of playing. On the one hand his work and background entailed a commitment to the Freudian view of the repressed unconscious and its variation in Melanie Klein's notion of psychic reality as an earlier and more generalised formation. On the other hand, Winnicott also worked with another view of the unconscious, which I will term the 'creative unconscious'; this underpins and is related to his complex notion of the 'Self' or 'True Self', explored in Chapter 6, 'The spectator finds her Self', the concluding chapter of the thesis. The concept of the Self, with its associated ideas of creativity in relation to playing and cultural activity, marks the point of greatest difference of Winnicott's theories from those of contemporary psychoanalytic film studies. I will argue that it brings together the experience of the playing and the unconscious spectator and offers a re-formulation of the stake for the spectator in engaging with a film. In this chapter I will extend Winnicott's own accounts with a consideration of the work of two other psychoanalysts, Marion Milner and Christopher Bollas, whose ideas on creativity and the Self supplement and elaborate his concepts.

In framing my thesis from a Winnicottian perspective, then, I introduce different concerns from those current in film studies: notions of sexual difference and ideology have been displaced by those of creativity and playing; the transitional object and potential space; the inner and outer world; the Self. While Winnicott does not posit a return to the unified subject — an impossibility with any concept of the unconscious — he decentres the emphasis which has been adopted in film studies on the

split subject with the possibility of an intra- and inter-personal reconciliation and connectedness. This framework has enabled me to construct a model of a playing spectator for whom the lure of cinema is an invitation to a precarious but dynamic and satisfying intermediate area where she can both discover and make her film object, and encounter or create her Self.

The assumption of current psychoanalytical film studies of a subject-in-process that is constructed in and by the film/spectator relationship has produced film analyses that exactly demonstrate the movement of film and spectator in interaction; this is the approach that I have adopted in my analyses. To express this in a Winnicottian way, I focus on the area of the overlap created by the interaction of two separate systems, the film and the viewing subject, where, I will argue, the playing spectator (a new construct) comes into existence.

D.W.Winnicott

D.W.Winnicott evolved his theories that are the concern of this thesis about the nature of the subject, playing and transitional phenomena during his life-time's work as a psychoanalyst and paediatrician. As a paediatrician (his first profession), he retained a model of human development within an environmental setting which reflected his early study of Darwin (Phillips, 1988, pp.3-4). His view of the development of the subject from an innate potential that he was later to term the Self became an important factor in his work. As a psychoanalyst his background was initially classically Freudian but his work was particularly marked by the influence of Melanie Klein, with whom he had a close but ambivalent relationship.[3] He met her when she first came to England in the 1930s and she supervised some of his cases with children; she confirmed his interest in early infancy and his experience (as a paediatrician trying to apply psychoanalysis to his work) that 'babies could be emotionally ill' (Winnicott, 1962, p.172) before the Oedipal stage. Klein's chief theoretical contribution to Winnicott's work was to strengthen and extend into its origins in infancy Freud's concept of 'psychic reality' as a subjective experience which expresses itself in fantasy and has its basis in bodily functions. Her major methodological influence was in her use of playing as a means of analysing children. However Winnicott was to go beyond the idea of playing as a means of therapy to seeing it as its desired outcome. For Winnicott the ability to play becomes the person's ability to forge a creative relationship with both inner, psychic

[3]Rodman (1987) describes the fluctuations in their relationship in his Introduction to Winnicott's letters.

reality and the external world; between the primary process of the unconscious and the secondary process of conscious experience.

Winnicott became a part of the British Psycho-Analytical Society's 'Independent' or 'Middle' grouping, which emerged during the time of 'The Controversial Discussions' between the followers of Melanie Klein and Anna Freud during the 1940s. This grouping at first simply consisted of those in the Society who were neither strictly 'Kleinians' nor 'Freudians'. They were not constituted as a 'Group' until the 1960s and were named officially as the Independent Group in 1973, with the institution of their own training programme, two years after Winnicott's death. Winnicott himself worked within the British Society in a fairly individualistic way but played a leading role in it and it was an important part of the context in which he developed his ideas, some of which, in the end, mark a radical departure from both Freud and Klein (Kohon, 1986, Introduction).

The Middle Group is associated with the development of the theory of *object relations*, a broad term, used variously, which can have reference to both inner and outer relationships. Laplanche and Pontalis define it as:

> ... a term enjoying a very wide currency in present-day psychoanalysis as a designation for the subject's mode of relation to his world; this relation is the entire complex outcome of a particular organisation of the personality, of an apprehension of objects that is to some extent or other phantasied, and of certain special types of defence.
>
> (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1973, p.272)

The differences in usage of the term comes from the greater or lesser emphasis on the fantasy content of the object. For instance, Melanie Klein insisted on the primacy of the infant's internal objects from birth, in what remained essentially her one-person psychology. By contrast, some analysts, particularly in the USA, put much greater stress on external relationships and, as a part of that, the development of the ego (Greenburg and Mitchell, 1983). In America, object relations theory has been taken up in feminist work which focuses on the early, pre-Oedipal experience but this also draws on socio-anthropological studies of mother-baby relationships and so moves away from the primary importance of the psychoanalytic unconscious (Chodorow, 1989; Benjamin, 1988). Winnicott too emphasised the 'environmental' mother, but only in so far as her behaviour is a 'part of the child', and for him it is the impact of her care on the child's psyche, including its unconscious, that is the important focus. This thesis retains the British focus on object relations as dealing with 'the relation of the subject to his objects', which encompasses 'the specific way in which the subject *apprehends* his relationships with his objects (both internal and external). It always implies an unconscious relationship to those objects' (Kohon 1986, p.20, my italics). In his concept of the transitional phenomenon, the baby's use of its first toy or equivalent as a basis for its development as a subject and its ability to make relationships and to play, Winnicott was to introduce a further, 'in between', object.

Laplanche and Pontalis point out that the term 'object' is used as in 'love object', as 'any thing or person to which the instincts are directed', and

they stress that 'relation' assumes an *interrelationship*: not only does 'the subject constitute his objects but they also shape his actions' (1973, p.272). They suggest that the development of object relations theory is part of a general shift in modern thought from consideration of 'the organism in isolation' to 'its interaction with its surroundings' (ibid); in psychoanalysis this represents a shift away from Freud's emphasis on the early, instinctual life. This may be summed up by Winnicott's apparently provocative but actually deeply serious remark, 'there is no such thing as an infant!' (Clancier and Kalmanovitch, 1987, p.7), stressing the early mother/baby 'dyad' as a basis for the development of the infant's propensity to 'relate' to objects from a very early stage, to the extent that (in contrast to the Freudian model) 'the instincts are not pleasure-seeking but object-seeking' (Kohon p.21).

This approach derives in part from Melanie Klein's views on the development of the infant's relation to 'the world of objects', at first through 'part objects', typically the mother's breast, onto which the infant projects its love-and-hate impulses, and which are therefore experienced as absolutely 'good' or 'bad'. The growing ability to relate to and distinguish 'whole' objects, initially the mother, and to compensate for the loss of the original object, is experienced in the 'depressive' position as the wish to 'make reparation', to allay the guilt arising from the destructive impulses directed towards 'her' or, originally, her substitute/part, the breast. For Kleinians the idea of reparation, the restoration of the object to its original wholeness, is a crucial motivator for the artist: 'we constantly find that drawing and painting are used to make people anew' (Klein, 1929, p. 93). Winnicott was to emphasise also the

importance of primary destructive and aggressive impulses for the child in making art or playing.

Winnicott wrote and lectured a good deal in his lifetime but his influence has continued to grow since his death in 1971 with the publication of more of his writings. *Playing and Reality* was published posthumously in 1971. During the 1980s a number of his writings were published (or re-collected) for the first time, for instance, *Home is where we Start from* (1986), *Human Nature* (1988) and the last, *Psychoanalytical Explorations* (1989), which fills out some important aspects of his thinking. A number of biography/commentaries have also been published: for example, Davis and Wallbridge (1981), Phillips (1988), Grolnick and Barkin (1978).

Winnicott's work is recognised in psychoanalytic circles in France. *Playing and Reality* (1971) was published there soon after its publication in the UK, and Pontalis, who co-translated it, writes about Winnicott's particular contribution to psychoanalysis (Pontalis, 1981, chs.9, 10). A book on Winnicott's life and work was published in France in 1984 (Clancier and Kalmanovitch, 1987). Conversely, Winnicott himself acknowledged the influence of Lacan's mirror stage on his paper, 'Mirror-Role of Mother and family in Child Development' (Winnicott, 1971, Ch.9); he and Lacan seem at one time, to have been on good terms.[4] André Green, a French psychoanalyst, has combined aspects of Winnicott's and Lacan's thinking

[4] A warmly expressed letter from Lacan to Winnicott written in 1962, reprinted in *October*, 1987, has at its context Lacan's conflicts with the International Psychoanalytical Association.

both in his clinical and literary work. Julia Kristeva (1980) draws on it in her theory of the pre-Oedipal mode of discourse, the 'semiotic'.

Winnicott's approach to and expression of his ideas encourage their appropriation by others; he does not write as a systematic theorist, far less as an academic. Rather he writes from his own experience of patients over the years and his published works include writings for both lay and professional audiences. As commentators (for instance, Clancier and Kalmanovitch, 1987; Adams, 1988) have noted, there is a quality of what he might have called playing in his writing, which is in part to do with his insistence on 'being himself' in a context which tended to encourage conformity. When he is writing about his own ideas he seems to be exploring as he writes (a good many of his published essays are based on talks) and he proceeds in rather elliptical leaps and bounds; he refers to his influences rather cavalierly, insisting on the impossibility of being able to acknowledge his sources consistently.[5] He invents his own terms, such as 'potential space', which he tends to describe rather than define, and often ignores established psychoanalytic terms. His writing opens up ideas rather than forecloses them.

Winnicott's use of Freud illustrates his approach. While he purported to adhere to Freud's basic ideas and techniques (taking them as read, as a

[5] In a talk delivered to a group of senior British analysts, in 1967, 'D.W.W. on D.W.W.', Winnicott attempted to review the influences of other analysts on the development of his work: he began by a statement of regret for 'not properly correlating my work with the work of others', and he ended by expressing a wish to 'make amends'. (Winnicott, 1989, p.5671). However, for many, it is precisely his individualistic quality which makes his writing interesting. He is also indicates that otherwise he could not have developed his own ideas.

child might those of a parent), yet in some ways his move away from Freud was more radical than he himself acknowledged (Phillips, 1988; Guntrip, 1971), for instance in his emphasis on the provision of a 'holding environment' for his patients to grow in, rather than on interpretation, particularly with 'borderline' cases. As Greenburg and Mitchell put it: 'His manner of juxtaposing his innovations with prior theory becomes understandable only within the framework of his allegiances: [he had] a loyalty to the classical tradition not strong enough to affect the basic structure of his thought, but sufficient to proclaim that which was not there' (Greenburg and Mitchell, 1983, pp. 81-2).

Winnicott was more explicit in his distancing of himself from Klein; in particular he rejected her concept, developed from late Freud, of a 'death drive' and of an original, primary 'envy' of the baby for its mother, even before, in Winnicott's terms, it had 'separated' from her.[6] His increasing stress on the need to withhold interpretation, in order not to 'impinge' on the patient, and to enable the development of autonomy, was also part of his disagreement with Klein and Kleinians, who insisted on the centrality of interpretation in therapeutic technique.

Altogether, Winnicott's refusal to consider the possibility of the death drive and his insistence on the importance of play, creativity and the necessity of 'feeling real', into which surfaced every now and then the concept of the True Self, may be contrasted with Freud's stress on work and understanding; the picture emerges of an optimistic rather than the

[6] A series of papers critical of her concept, written over a period, are put together in *Psychoanalytic Explorations*, 1989.

pessimistic view of life which both Freud and Klein tended to present. For Freud's confrontation between the pleasure and reality principles (the unconscious and conscious) Winnicott was to substitute a mediating process of playing in a 'third' transitional area between them. In place of Klein's primary envy he posited a non-malign, healthy 'destructiveness'.

Adam Phillips cites an early paper that Winnicott presented on Klein's notion of 'manic defence', which she postulates as a reaction against the guilt of the depressive position. Winnicott stresses the 'normal' enjoyment of a music hall performance as an aspect of mental health, not as defence against the 'demands of the depressive position'. For him, the point of the performance is precisely that it is: 'a denial of deadness.... Sooner or later, one adds: "here is LIFE" (Phillips, 1988, p.60). Long before he formulated his ideas around playing, Winnicott was looking at performance as a sign of psychic health, as something to be celebrated rather than explained. In these terms, 'entertainment' is not 'mere escapism' or sublimation of repressed sexuality, or even just wish-fulfilment, but rather represents an aspect of psychic health.

In the UK, object relations has been largely ignored in recent mainstream psychoanalytically oriented cultural and film studies, which have focused on the Lacanian-derived view of the relationship of subjectivity to language, ideology and sexual difference and which have generally been influenced by French literary theory and criticism. There are fundamental differences between the two approaches. For instance, Klein's view of art as reparation — the restoration of the object that has been destroyed — necessarily favours the traditional approach to a work of art that values its

unity (Klein, 1929) whereas the post-Lacanian critic looks for its gaps and points of incoherence. The Kleinian emphasis on interpretation is reflected in criticism which looks for 'meanings' behind the content of the work which those critics who stress the processes of reading find reductive and simplistic.[7] Such differences have their roots in their proponents' different views of subjectivity: object relations theories stress the development of the ego and the possibility of integration between conscious and unconscious whereas Lacanians stress the irrevocable split and the divided subject. A typical response to Winnicott is expressed by the authors of *Formations of Fantasy* who see object relations as having an idealist view of: 'the world of "objects" as preconstituted, as always already "there" for recognition' and therefore as ignoring the 'constitutive role of representation in the cultural production of "reality"' (Burgin et al., 1986, p.4).

However something of Winnicott's considerable influence in the USA may be seen in litererary and cultural studies which involve a consideration of Nancy Chodorow's work, for instance in Linda William's (1984) essay on the maternal melodrama, which is based on the notion that the mother-child relationship opens a space for a feminine discourse, as explored by Chodorow in *The Reproduction of Mothering (1978).* Nancy Chodorow (1989) and Jessica Benjamin (1988), in relation to literature, also draw on Winnicott's views on sexual difference: in an essay in *Playing and Reality* he introduces the notion (within his general assumption of a

[7] A recent example of such a Kleinian approach is the Rustins' book of post-war children's stories in which they seek to show how the authors 'have found symbolic equivalent or containers for states of feeling' (Rustin, 1989, p.3).

bisexual theory) of a fundamental difference between a masculine 'doing' and a feminine 'being'. Several essays on literature are included in Grolnick and Barkin (1978) and, in the UK, *Winnicott Studies, the Journal of the Squiggle Foundation* publishes articles on art and literature from a Winnicottian perspective: for example, Peter Fuller (1987) writes on the relationship between Henry Moore's accounts of the mother baby relationship in his drawings and sculpture. However these examples tend towards a formalist or an interpretative approach and are outside the present film-studies approach to the text and the reader/spectator.

The object relations move from a focus 'from what happens within the psyche to what happens between one psyche and another' (Wright, 1984 p. 79), however, may clearly be applied to the relationship between text and reader, particularly in terms of the transference, where the object is invested with the subject's unconscious fantasy. Furthermore, psychoanalysis stresses that the relationship of subject to object must always be seen from the subjective point of view and in terms of fantasy and the unconscious: the establishing of the subject and therefore also of the object is never unproblematic, and is a struggle which is endlessly repeated throughout a life, a repetition of disentangling and of endless inner negotiation in every encounter with the external world: as Winnicott frequently stressed, no-one is 'free from the strain of relating inner and outer reality' (Winnicott, 1971, p.13).[8]

[8] In a letter to Melanie Klein, he writes of his own 'illness' which is 'not far away from being the inherent difficulty in regard to human contact with external reality' (Rodman, 1987, p.37).

Winnicott himself pointed to the application of his ideas to 'cultural life' (Winnicott, 1971, passim), and in general his interests and concerns would seem to be of direct application to art, particularly to studies of the 'reader' (in which I include the 'spectator'). Elizabeth Wright (1984) points to Winnicott's concern with the developing baby's ability to make use of illusion through its play objects, which 'raised the question of the kind of interplay that was going on between the inner world and outer world, between fantasy and reality' (Wright, 1984, p.92). She discusses how Winnicott's ideas on illusion suggest a 'suspension of disbelief.' However she too goes on to make the objection that, for Winnicott, 'objects are already made, not found' (ibid). This critique echoes that of others who write from a materialist perspective: that Winnicott ignores the basic problem that 'subjects are produced within social processes' (Lorenzer and Orban, 1978, p. 274). While it is true that, given his background, Winnicott tended to regard the material world as a given, and that this is how he presents 'external reality', yet he displays no such certainty in his dealings with patients, nor in his explorations of his ideas; subjectively every individual has continually to re-negotiate his or her relationship with the world, which in this sense can never be taken for granted. This negotiation is played out within the third area, through the person's use of transitional objects; for the playing film spectator, I will argue, it takes place through her relationship with a film.

Meet me in St. Louis

Meet me in St. Louis (Minnelli, MGM, 1944), the major film example for this study, is set in St. Louis at the time of the St. Louis International Fair in 1904. The film is based on the childhood memoirs of Sally Benson, published as a book with the same title. The film's slight narrative plot is constructed out of one episode in the book (Minnelli, 1974). The Smith family is disturbed when Mr Smith announces that his firm wishes him to move to New York. This causes conflict between him and the rest of his family: his wife, his five children (a boy, two girls of near-adult status and two younger girls), a grandfather and a cook. The conflict is resolved when the father gives in. Otherwise the film is constructed around seasonal events in the family's lives, and divided into seasonal episodes: Summer, Autumn, Winter, Spring. The film ends with the opening of the St. Louis Fair, with the coupling of the older children and the family's differences resolved.

Before embarking on my own analyses of the film I will consider the range of responses to the film since it was made, which have a part in constructing the film for the viewer, in order to place my own readings of it. In the mythology of the cinema *Meet me in St. Louis* is a film that viewers 'love' and that families sit down together to watch, these days in front of the television. In their book *Film Art* (1986) Bordwell and Thompson use it as an example of a film which, fairly straightforwardly, reaffirms the dominant American ideology: it presents the American small town, epitomised in a large 'ordinary' family, that offers all that its inhabitants can ever wish for, an uncomplicated blend of tradition and

hope for the future (in the Fair) and above all an assertion of family values.

In spite of a slight, apparently light-hearted, plot, with musical and comic aspects, the film leaves a vivid visual and emotional impression, and I have been intrigued that, at certain moments, it can be unexpectedly and forcefully moving in ways that cannot be explained by its celebratory and sentimental stance (which in any case seems very dated today) and pleasing mise en scène. It is this dichotomy between its surface style and forcefully moving moments that I am interested in exploring from a Winnicottian perspective: why do audiences continue to enjoy and engage with the film and what are the different range of pleasures it makes available to the spectator?

The film can be said to contain a celebratory and a 'dark' side; this division is manifested in oddities, ruptures and disjunctions in the film's surface structure and is reflected in very different readings of it. These range from publicity accolades, authorial and genre studies (of its status as a musical), to analyses which set out to contest and deny the film's affirmative ideological position. A recent study of Minnelli's films by James Naremore brings together these approaches and restates the 'meaning' of the film as 'the way it turns a vision of home into an ideal entertainment' (Naremore 1993, p.89). Psychoanalytical readings have focused on the film's 'dark', unconscious side and have sought to expose its celebratory status as a sham. In my reading of the film I will argue that, from within psychoanalysis, a Winnicottian perspective offers an affirmative reading which throws light on the spectator's stake in the film and that the film

can be 'reclaimed' for the enjoyment and use of the playing spectator. I will focus particularly on the film's portrayal of the Smith family, the point of a good deal of the critical discussion about the film, both positive and negative, and the source of the film's emotional charge.

St. Louis incorporates characteristics belonging to a number of different genres, including 'romance', comedy, and even the horror film, but most notably the Hollywood musical and, less obviously, the family melodrama. In this way, I will argue, it makes available different and shifting positions for the spectator: that as a musical it transgresses conventional cinematic realism and gives a place for playing in the Winnicottian sense, and as a family melodrama it can 'move' the spectator on an unconscious level.

Celebration

The myth of St. Louis is that it is a pleasure-giving film. Advertisements put out at the time of its first showing in 1944 promote it as a studio product from MGM, known for lavish productions under Arthur Freed:[9] 'Two great stars captivate America in a Glorious Love Story with Music, Excitement, Technicolor!' Even here, however, a possible ambiguity in the film's genre status is suggested by the publicity, which names the film a 'romance' but depicts two females as its main stars, one of them a child. This indicates the greater importance of the family than the couple in this film, as well as the promotion of its 'child star', which extended to the

[9]These examples of promotional material come from the British Film Institute Press Book for the film.

selling of 'Tootie dolls' and clothes. In line with common practice, the director's name, 'Vincente Minnelli', is placed in very small letters at the bottom of the advertisements, after the writers of the screenplay, Irving Brecher and Fred. F. Finkelhoffe, and the author of the book on which it was based, Sally Benson.

The viewer is promised a Hollywood period spectacular:
'Gay, Glorious Love Story with Music and Technicolor'. The advertisement shows period sketches of the Fair and of the film songs. Another advertisement has a 'strip' of four sketches down one side, promising: 'EXCITEMENT, (Margaret O'Brien, the loveable kid sister ... turns that Hallowe'en party into a near catastrophe); 'ROMANCE ('Judy Garland and the boy-next-door in a scrappy, happy love affair'). Later (anti-celebratory) critics, however, were to give alternative and less innocent interpretations of the 'scrappy' love affair and the 'grand climax' of the ending (Wood, 1979; Britton, 1978).

The film became an immediate box-office success and was followed by a number of imitations (Altman, 1989, p.323; Naremore, 1993, p.72). Since then it has become celebrated as a 'classic'. In the UK it continues to be shown quite regularly on British television, particularly at Christmas, presumably partly for its Christmas scenes, strongly connoting sentiment, nostalgia and the family. It is also shown fairly frequently at the London National Film Theatre. Programme Notes for showings in the late 1980s indicate that, by this time, the film had gathered a status as 'special': the film was shown as one of 'Three of the Best'. The Notes include an extract from the publicity for a 1978 New York retrospective of 'The Films of

Vincente Minnelli', which highlights the Minnelli/Garland partnership (they were married for a time and their own myth is perpetuated in their star daughter, Liza Minnelli), suggesting that the relationship brought out in each other, and in the film, previously unknown qualities: 'It took Minnelli to transform Garland ('in her first-grown up part') into something more interesting and desirable ... endowed her with a glamour she had not previously possessed and would never again achieve on screen'. On the other hand, Garland's 'severity, her emotional intensity, released a depth of feeling never before evident in Minnelli's work ... He gave her style and she gave him warmth'. Here the celebratory tone has extended to Minnelli as director.

A musical

The 'celebratory' construction of the film continues in popular accounts of it as a musical; in reading it as a genre movie the focus turns to elements in the film that are common to its classification and to questions of audience expectations. Although the word does not appear on the original advertisements, the musical is the most obvious classification for the film, one of a famous batch produced in the 1940s and 1950s by Arthur Freed at MGM, many with Minnelli as director and Judy Garland, known for her musical roles, as star: the film contains seven song-and-dance numbers. In line with other musicals the film has a slight plot concerning the family's threatened move and its resolution. As a musical the film's theme is to do with 'coupling' (Altman, 1991) and with the celebration of St. Louis as the site of the family-community's desires.[10]

[10]*St. Louis* as a musical is explored further in Chapter 3, on Playing.

J.A. Casper's *Vincente Minnelli and the Film Musical* (1977) combines a celebration of Minnelli as director with a celebration of the musical. The book ends with a panegyric to Minnelli's musicals: 'A Minnelli musical brings back fantasy ... to contemporary life ... and upholds life values which modern man has abandoned' (Casper, 1977, p.166). The musical is 'a world of movement, change, transformation, transcendence and a celebration of it is desired in one's depths' (p.164). In similar celebratory terms (of the musical in general) Rick Altman ends his book on the American musical with a lament for the lost values of music making (as opposed to consumption). He hopes (in an address to the reader) that this book 'will send you back to the musical' and, further, 'make you return to the piano, your clarinet, or simply your vocal chords (Altman, 1989, p.364).

The celebration of the musical has been complexly problematised in film studies since the 1970s. Nevertheless the terms in which Casper describes the musical's pleasures are similar to those of Richard Dyer (1977) and Jane Feuer (1982) who analyse and critique it as a genre. As a musical *Meet me in St. Louis* is expected to give an almost irresistible pleasure.

Minnelli as author

The context for Casper's elevation of Minnelli's musicals onto a 'spiritual' plane is, precisely, that he is writing not about musicals in general but about those of Minnelli: Casper's book is a celebration of the director-as-author of the films that bear his name (Casper, 1979). Adopting the now popularised traditional authorship approach introduced by the *Cahiers du*

Cinéma in the 1950s which regards the director as the creative source of a film, Casper assumes that the musicals that Minnelli directed can be viewed as a part of a coherent body of work which expresses his unique vision.[11] Today this approach has become entrenched into popular film discourse and in naming *Meet me in St. Louis* as a 'Minnelli' film, expectations which are largely to do with his 'style' and the 'beauty' of his mise en scène are activated for the viewer.

This view of Minnelli can be seen in writing from the late 1950s and early 60s. For example, an article in *Film Quarterly* describes *Meet me in St. Louis* as 'Minnelli's masterpiece in the lyrical evocation of an era' (Johnson, 1958, p.24). An article by Mark Shivas in *Movie* (1962), the British journal which deliberately took up an authorial approach, uses an interview with Minnelli on his approach to making a film as a starting point for exploring his 'methods'.

> "It's an unconscious process — you must wait, hoarding impressions. As you mull it over, you begin to see a form, a style. This is the crucial moment — you have to resist all outside influences, for everything brings back memories of something else, and another style may superimpose itself on what you have in mind. This is the tricky point: you must wait until you are sure that you can hold onto the essential thing — the style you want. You can't see a single detail — you don't know how to put it all together, but that doesn't matter; you can see this form, this style. I think it is largely a matter of intuition".
>
> (Shivas, 1962, p.17)

[11]Other approaches to authorship will be considered in Ch. 3.

Shivas explores the outcomes of the process in the methods that Minnelli uses to 'stage' a story': his use of actors; his camera work 'always at the service of his actors, tending to move from a larger view of the scene, closing in on the important characters, first establishing their surroundings, and then allowing the actors to take over'. Minnelli explains his liking for long takes: 'they give the actors a greater chance to be natural and to sustain the mood' (ibid).

Shivas sets out to demonstrate Minnelli's qualities as a 'stylist', which has become the hallmark of favourable critical views of his films: that they can give the spectator a visual, aesthetic pleasure which can override what might be thought of as a thematic or dramatic banality (Minnelli never wrote his own screenplays.) Minnelli was a stage-designer before he went to Hollywood, was interested in surrealism and admired the films of Welles and Ophuls. His interest in 'style' gives Minnelli and the viewer a reason to admire the musical: 'I didn't look down on musicals as so many people who were doing them did, treating them as a romp' (quoted in Casper, 1977, p.33). Important to an interest in film's formal properties is the notion that the mise en scène itself makes meaning; the director's task is to deploy cinematic means to 'express' his vision: 'realism in the surroundings is replaced by a dramatically meaningful decor' resulting in 'an intensified realism' (Shivas, 1962, p.17).

Thomas Elsaesser's essay on Minnelli, first published in 1969, is a more extensive 'celebration' of what he considers to be unique in Minnelli's films; ten years later in an 'Afterword' he qualifies his essay as being overly authorial (Elsaesser, 1969/79). His essay is typical of the approach to

authorship in its attempts to crystallise his own experience of the impact on him of Minnelli's films. Elsaesser asserts that Minnelli's films are important, that they speak to the spectator (mainly by means of the mise en scène) of something fundamental about the human condition; of the 'discrepancy between an inner vision ... and an outer world that appears as hostile' (p.18). As an example in *Meet me in St. Louis* he cites the father's wish to change jobs and go to New York and his subsequent change of mind as: '... [Minnelli's] optimism about the individual's potential to make the world conform to his dreams and an equally acute sense of the tyranny over others implicit in it realisation' (p.19). Drawing on psychoanalytical concepts — the drive, desire, projection and gratification — he asserts the 'seriousness' of Minnelli's films which, for him, go 'beyond' escapism and beyond 'style' to the assertion of human creativity and urge to self-expression and the realisation of his dreams.[12]

After celebration

In contrast to the readings that celebrate *Meet me in St. Louis,* two critics writing at the end of the 1970s, Robin Wood (1979) and Andrew Britton (1978), set out to expose these pleasures to critical scrutiny. Both essays aim to reveal how in apparently celebrating the family, *Meet me in St. Louis* in fact represents an attempt to cover up family conflict and oppression. Wood argues that by the 1970s the film looked very different from when it was produced in 1944, partly because of changes in perceptions of the

[12] It is notable however that Elsaesser's contrast between energy and constraint recalls that of writers on the musical in gereral. For example, Collins, Dyer, Feuer, Sutton, in Altman, 1981, all describe the difference between the numbers and the narrative in similar terms.

family, claiming that the post-war 'myth' of the happy family had been exposed and what in the film had previously looked like a 'celebration' had become a display of 'the psychopathology of the family' (Wood, 1979, p.9). Britton's purpose, rather more subtly, is to expose the contradictions between the film's surface celebration of the family and its underlying unconscious critique of it.

Both Wood and Britton take little account of the film's status as a musical and turn to other genres in their analyses. Wood names the film as a 'family comedy', which sets up the father as the butt and victim of its jokes; he loses in the conflict about the move, and is dominated, by stealth, by his wife and family. However, Wood argues that the comedy has turned sour: all the film's sexual relationships look pathological and the film now has horror film overtones (Wood, 1979, p. 11). Britton puts a similar case in his discussion of the film's evocation of nostalgia. He places the film in what he terms the 'alternative small town tradition' as a 'modified pastoral' but does so in order to stress 'its Satanic opposite'.

Although Britton acknowledges the film's appeal to audiences more than Wood does, in their denial of audiences' pleasure in *Meet me in St. Louis* both essays may be seen as illustrations of what Bill Nichols criticises as film studies' 'Great Refusal' of Hollywood cinematic pleasure. Nichols claims that, during the 1970s, particularly in *Screen*, the post-structuralist political readings of Hollywood cinema that set out to expose the capitalist and patriarchal ideology which it transmitted and helped to sustain, were dominated by a puritanical 'work ethic' approach: in analyses which attempt to account for and at the same time to subvert the viewer's

pleasure, 'the old aesthetics of pleasure is now seen as the pathology of pleasure ... we must learn how to refuse the pleasures that excuse and perpetuate contradictions of sex, race, class and nation' (Nichols, 1985, p.19); a 'counter aesthetics of psychopathology has emerged that takes it upon itself to tear the veil of innocence from the face of culture' (p.20). Nichols' criticism of this approach is that the 'will to knowledge ... can all too readily take precedence over play, leisure ... and the pursuit of pleasure' (ibid). Although neither Wood nor Britton wrote for *Screen*, their essays markedly show the influence of the 'aesthetics of psychopathology', by which, in its political film studies project of the 1970s, *Screen* attempted to jolt the spectator out of his or her acquiescence in the pleasures of Hollywood cinema. This thesis attempts to address this 'imbalance,'

***Meet me in St. Louis* as a family melodrama**

Although they do not use the term, in focusing on 'the psychopathology' of the family, both Wood and Britton read *Meet me in St. Louis* as if it were a Hollywood melodrama, particularly in the case of Britton who is interested in it as a 'woman's film'. Melodrama is a more problematic genre category than the musical, 'newly discovered' by film studies in the 1970s (Gledhill, 1987, p.1) and used to deal with questions of ideology, gender and cinematic pleasure. The collection of essays from the 1970s and 80s in Christine Gledhill's *Melodrama and the Woman's Film*(1987), which traces the genre's critical history, demonstrate generational and sexual conflict and the establishing of sexual and gender identity as melodrama's major preoccupation. These conflicts, whether overtly or covertly, are Oedipal and 'invite' a psychoanalytical reading.

The essays in Gledhill's collection are divided into those that deal mainly with Hollywood family melodrama of the 1950s and those concerning 'women's films' of the 1940s. While both categories pursue similar family scenarios, she suggests that the woman's film, with a female main protagonist and identificatory figure, opens up a space for female discourse whereas the family melodrama usually presents a male point of view. However, these categories are not usually clearly demarcated, since all melodrama is concerned with the establishing of sexual identity and the point of view is rarely fixed: *Meet me in St. Louis* speaks from its women characters' point of view, and the family disagreement around the father's projected move to New York is played out in terms of gender. However the conflicts it presents involve the question of the whole family's survival, as do Minnelli's family melodramas of the 1950s.

Gledhill argues that the melodrama has two conflicting impulses: in seeming to represent with verisimilitude 'ordinary' families, it adopts the realist, illusionist format of Hollywood fictional cinema, with a tight narrative structure and trajectory and usually unobtrusive mise en scène. However, its need to express issues of sexual difference and subjective family conflict shifts it towards 'heightened' or exaggerated non-verbal expression as a means of articulating what realist Hollywood cinema tends to repress. Both aspects may be seen in *Meet me in St. Louis.*

As Minnelli, who in the 1940s directed musicals, turned to melodrama in the 1950s, an authorship reading might be expected to discover a nascent melodrama in *Meet me in St. Louis,* produced in 1944. Interestingly,

Elsaesser (1969), part of whose article on Minnelli is printed in Gledhill's book on the melodrama, as well as in Altman's (1981) earlier collection on the musical, names *Meet me in St. Louis* as one of Minnelli's 'non-musicals' (Elsaesser, 1969, p.17). This invites us to look for parallels between this film and Minnelli's later melodramas and to read it as an example of 'a musical turned inside out', where 'tragedy is present as a particular kind of unfreedom, as the constraint of an emotional or artistic temperament in a world that becomes claustrophobic, where reality suddenly reveals itself as mere decor, unbearably false and oppressive' (ibid). Since the film is also classed as a musical, following Elsaesser we would expect it to present a dialectic movement between what Elsaesser presents as opposites: energy and constraint, freedom and oppression, with the result that the film can give rise to the opposing readings, celebratory and pessimistic, that I have noted here. From this description it may clearly be argued that *St. Louis* has elements of both genres; that it is two films. Its opening announces the film as a musical; however, as Dyer points out, four of its seven numbers appear before the start of the main 'plot', which is initiated by the father announcing his move to New York, towards the end of the second, Autumn episode (Dyer, 1977, p.188). This puts the family into danger, the conflict threatening its continuity, but the threat is averted by the father's giving in and changing his mind at the end of the following, Winter, episode, when the family unit is restored and consolidated by the coupling of the older children. The final, Spring, episode is a cursory fulfilment of the film's initial promise of the opening of the Fair and of its coupling, which was set in motion in the first episode and which, according to Altman (1989), is the basis of the musical's narrative form. Once the family conflict is resolved, the musical part of

the film returns in this final episode, although the episode is low on spectacle and lacks the final big number originally intended for it (Shipman, 1992, p.157).

Although there are two musical numbers in this middle (melodrama) section of the film, even these seem to function as a part of the domestic drama: 'Have yourself a merry little Christmas' is an intimate song, sung by Esther to comfort her sister. The last song of the film (apart from the replay of the title song), 'You and I', is peculiarly domestic. After their quarrel about the proposed move it reunites the parents at the piano in a duet that they sang when they were young and is marked by intimate and 'ordinary' touches: the father fails to reach the high note, the mother has to exercise her fingers before starting. The couple are presented as 'ordinary', not as stars, and as parents, not a romantic couple (although the film here allows them a touch of romance, the number's main function is to bring the family together). These two numbers work to deny the spectacle and overt staging that characterises a musical, replacing them by a sense of ordinariness and domesticity. However they both also speak of a nostalgic world which, although it is beyond reach, in the future or the past, the film makes possible; the domestic melodrama becomes shot through with the utopian aspiration of the musical.

At other, highly charged, moments in the film, however, a different way of approaching the question of these two genres in *Meet me in St. Louis* becomes relevant: the view that the musical and the melodrama also have elements in common. Flinn (1992) refers to their obvious similarities in the importance of music as a signifier and points out that both genres also

deploy stylised mise en scène to represent characters' emotions. In the musical, characters may break into song; in the melodrama, the setting and the action are exaggerated.

In the following chapters I explore the film spectator relationship in analyses of short sequences from *Meet me in St. Louis.* Broadly, I focus on the film as a musical in my account of a 'playing' spectator, and on its melodrama aspects in considering the 'unconscious' spectator (when her playing breaks down); this encompasses two kinds of different but related pleasures. However this division suggests a static schematisation which is sometimes belied in close analysis of all the elements of particular sequences, when classification by genre becomes less relevant. The unconscious may make its mark regardless of genre, and the playing spectator moves about fluidly in her relation to the film. The essential quality of playing is that it is a process and always in movement.

CHAPTER 2 THE SPECTATOR ON SCREEN

> The line becomes a space; the metaphorical boundary that divides internal from external, that either/or in which the object has traditionally been entrapped, expands into the ... playground of transitional phenomena.
>
> ('Potential space in psychoanalysis: the object in the setting', André Green, 1978b, p.177)

> Events take place, a place for someone, and the need is to pose the question of that one.
>
> ('Narrative Space', Stephen Heath, 1981, p.69)

> ... to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for those shadows of the imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, that constitutes poetic faith.
>
> (*Biographia Literaria*, S.T. Coleridge, 1817, p.169)

In this chapter I will explore the spectator's 'entry' into the film as she begins to engage with it; I will argue that this involves her use of the film as a transitional play object and that, to begin playing, she must make a psychic move both into what Winnicott terms her own, internal transitional area of 'potential space' and 'into' the space on screen.

The film as a transitional object

How does the spectator come to cherish the film she watches? The relationship of the (Winnicottian) playing spectator to the film is founded on the trace of the baby's devoted relationship with the transitional object, which for Winnicott marks the originary point of playing. Winnicott's paper 'Transitional objects and transitional phenomena' was first published in the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* in 1953, but the concept, which is probably his best known contribution to psychoanalytic thinking, began to gain much more general currency when the paper appeared with others related to his notion of playing in *Playing and Reality* in 1971. Winnicott derives the concept from the commonly observed but hitherto un-theorised behaviour pattern in babies from a few months old of using a blanket or soft object as a comforter and play object, to which they become extremely attached and which 'survives' both their loving and aggression. Behaviour patterns such as 'babbling' and rhythmic rocking may serve a similar function, and since it is the *use* that the baby makes of an object or activity that is at stake, Winnicott came to prefer the term 'transitional phenomenon' to avoid over-emphasis on an actual, material object.

The transitional phenomenon has a crucial function in the infant's development from what Winnicott posited as its primary state of being 'merged in' with the mother to recognising both itself and her as separate. He expresses this as the:

> ... intermediate area of experience, between the thumb and the teddy bear, between oral eroticism and the true object-

> relationship, between primary creativity and projection of what has already been introjected, between primary unawareness of indebtedness and the acknowledgement of indebtedness.
>
> (Winnicott, 1971, p.2).

It is the formulation of this 'in between ' area, the notion of a 'third' area between Freud's pleasure and reality principle, on which Winnicott is so insistent here, that marks his departure from — or addition to — classical psychoanalysis.

Although the transitional phenomenon may be associated with reality testing in the Freudian sense, the crux of the concept is the ambiguous nature of the object: it is neither wholly internal nor wholly external; neither wholly imagined nor wholly concrete. While, in a sense, it 'stands for', and is symbolic of, the mother/breast, it is equally important and valued by the child for itself. Above all, the object's status as being *both* objective and external, *and* imagined and inner is crucial in its being neither under magical omnipotent control (as would be the internalised breast in the Kleinian model) nor wholly outside, beyond control. Most importantly, this ambiguous, intermediate status is unquestioned, 'a paradox not to be resolved' (Winnicott, 1971, p.xii). The object is both inner and outer.

In due time the object becomes decathected and the child loses interest it, although it might be revived in times of stress. Nevertheless it leaves its trace and the experience of the third area provides a 'resting place' for the individual 'engaged in the perpetual human task of keeping inner and outer reality separate yet interrelated' (Winnicott, 1971, p.20). The experience of the transitional phenomenon is dispersed

into the public domain of play, cultural activity and religion, which similarly provide an experience whose reality status need not be challenged; within these fields the shared nature of illusion adds to their pleasure. However, where beliefs or experiences are not shared or a reality status is claimed beyond what is generally accepted, then difficulties and arguments about those 'beliefs' arise. (It is noticeable, for instance, how frequently those who talk about their religion refuse to engage in debates about 'evidence' for it, claiming that their faith has nothing to do with such an argument, as if, precisely, it lies in another area or domain altogether. Similarly, people talking seriously about the characters and events in television soaps do not question their reality; rather, engaging in gossip about them, they claim a reality status which they choose not to challenge.)

An American collection of essays, *Between Reality and fantasy: Winnicott's concepts of Transitional Objects and Phenomena* (Grolnick and Barkin, 1978), indicates the range of directions in which Winnicott's concept may be taken: its contributions, which often reflect the American psychoanalytical focus on the development of the ego, comprise discussions on the philosophical, clinical and cultural dimensions of the transitional phenomenon and build up a more elaborated picture of the concept from different viewpoints, including discussions of poetry and art. In an essay on the function of the transitional object, 'Between reality and fantasy', Muensterberger uses Freud's much cited account of the 'fort da game' where a baby repeatedly throws away and retrieves a cotton reel as an example of the *activity* of the use of the transitional object; from being 'controlled' by being put in a position of passively accepting the absence of the mother, the baby transforms the situation into a game and uses the object for its

playing. From representing the mother the object becomes 'valued' for itself and enables the mother's absence to be accepted; the transitional object defeats passivity.

The transitional object is further specified in a comparison with 'pre-cursor' and 'fetish-like' objects. Grolnick and Barkin (1978) argue that in addition to a fetishised object, whose use appears at the Oedipal stage, relates to the fear of castration, and is associated with significant sexual or aggressive discharge, there also exists an earlier fetish-like object which may have the attributes of the transitional object (p.541). However, instead of being used adaptively and playfully, it is used repetitively and compulsively, as if its function is solely to *avoid* separation; the function of the true transitional object, on the other hand, includes negotiating that separation. In 'Transitional object origins and the psychosomatic symptoms' Gaddini (1978) puts forward the notion, which she formulated with Winnicott's concurrence (Winnicott, 1971, p.xiii), of 'precursor objects', which may also develop into fetishised objects. These serve a comforting and consoling function and in this represent a replacement — and only a replacement — for the mother, their function being to do with maintaining the stage of hallucinatory unity. Very often they are 'provided' for, even imposed on, the child by the mother, which negates its ability to make and create its own object world.

These examples highlight the specificity of the transitional phenomenon, which is to do with its paradoxical status as the first 'not me' object (Winnicott, 1971, p.2), which is also 'myself' as it is also, at the same time, both the mother and not the mother. Related to this is its availability for creative play and its function of connecting the

subject to the world of objects. The use of the transitional object always implies an engaged *activity* on the part of the baby.

A number of the essays in Grolnick and Barkin's volume explore the question of the derivatives of the transitional phenomenon. Winnicott postulated that the transitional object is gradually decathected and loses its emotional charge as it is dispersed into cultural activity. The notion of a transitional 'function' that continues to serve as a 'bridge' between the familiar and unfamiliar is an important thread running through several accounts. If the object itself is decathected, nevertheless the process of its use by the child is arguably internalised in order for the transitional process to continue into adult life. As Barkin (1978) puts it, 'it is because the functions are internalised into both self and object representations that the transitional object is not mourned' (p.527) and he concludes that aspects of transitional objects and phenomena are internalised into both self and object representations. In an essay written much later, 'Psychoanalytic critique of productivism', Robert Young describes his Filofax as a specific example of an adult's transitional object; 'the texture and luxury of the feel of it' recalls the child's sensuous 'comfort' which it gets from the transitional object, valued both for itself and the mother's presence that it represents (Young, 1991, p.513).

Gilbert Rose goes further in systematically finding a place for the derivatives of the transitional phenomena, in an essay entitled 'The creativity of everyday life' (Rose, 1978). Citing the new physics and systems theory, he, too, criticises Winnicott's apparent assumption of a 'fixed' reality which can be objectively perceived. Instead he postulates a world of energy 'in constant flux' where the 'organism is viewed as

an open system in exchange with its environment' (p.349). The function of art and other cultural forms — and, indeed, the form-making capacity itself — is to bring about the subject's 'orientation to the world', through a process of 'abstraction and selection' whereby he builds up a construct of himself within his setting: his "Umwelt". This Rose sees as a means of the 'mind' constituting itself 'in dynamic relation with the outside' (ibid). Rose's contribution to Winnicott's concept is in his description of it as a life-long negotiation with the outside world as a reconstruction of the individual's sense of reality; he proposes the term 'transitional process' to indicate that 'the differentiation of self and reality is a continuing and mutual everyday process ' (Rose, p.353). This emphasises that the person continually and actively, as a life-time endeavour, remakes his or her world in every new encounter. Like Winnicott himself, Rose presents this as a process that applies as much to the receiver as to the producer of cultural artefacts. Playing thus extends from being a specific activity, constituting a 'relief' from the negotiation with the outside world, to its function of a bridging between subject and object, the individual and the environment.

For Winnicott, the transitional object relates to the development of the capacity for illusion-making, the basis for playing. Grolnick and Barkin claim that Winnicott is the 'first psychoanalyst to have attempted to trace the developmental line of illusion formation' (1978, p.542), which is dependent on the use of the transitional object:

> As the ego's capacity to experience illusory phenomena differentiates itself from the infant's delusionary and hallucinatory world, reality testing, at first a crude device, gradually evolves into a function capable, in its own service, of suspending its own

> activity, of oscillation, and even playfulness; ultimately the capacity for illusion, for "as if" and "lets pretend" can develop (ibid)

In Winnicott's scheme, the first stage in this development is the baby's total illusion of the mother/breast as a part of itself and therefore as magically and omnipotently under its control — an 'hallucinatory stage', which for the observer is simply a 'delusion'. Illusion-making starts to comes in with the initial conjunction between the mother's presentation of the breast at the moment that the infant needs and hallucinates it; Winnicott describes the process as the illusion 'that there is an external reality that corresponds to the infant's own capacity to create' (Winnicott, 1971, p.12). This experience takes shape in the transitional object with which the baby can play because of its ambiguous status of being both found and made. This marks the beginning of an 'interchange' between mother and baby where previously they were one; it is an area of ambiguity which is experienced as play rather than as anxiety.

The transitional object also marks the beginning of the baby's capacity to make use of symbols in a way that can be compared with the adult's use of culturally acquired symbols (for example a rose; a cross). The object is concrete and experienced in its own terms, as itself; in that it also represents the mother, it accumulates accretions of meaning, associations to do with the sensations of the experiences of 'mothering', so that its value 'for itself' comes to include the simultaneous apprehension of these associated experiences. Since the mother is not at first perceived as separate from the infant, these experiences also belong to itself; the transitional object has acquired

attributes of both subject and object. The experience of the object therefore encompasses aspects of the baby's sense of itself as a part its environment. The baby's cherishing of the transitional object includes an appreciation of itself and its mother, which invests the object with aspects of the inner and the outer world. The value of the experience of the transitional object for the person's growth is that it enables any object or activity to be similarly endowed with inner and outer associations, so that the external world can be 'loved' because, without delusion, and without losing its specificity as object, it also stands for 'myself'.

Winnicott's view of illusion is clearly different from the traditional one of 'false sensory perceptions' (Grolnick and Barkin, 1978, p.542). In his essay 'Discussion of Anthony Flew', countering Flew's criticism of Winnicott's concepts, Flarsheim (1978) argues that, for Winnicott, illusion is to do with the enrichment of the perception of external reality that can derive from its 'integration with internal reality' (p.508); he cites the *American College Dictionary* definition of illusion as 'perception of a thing which gives its qualities not present in reality'. This may be contrasted with, on the one hand, hallucination (a total belief in the internal world) and on the other a 'totally unimaginative perception of the external world' (ibid). The acceptance of the paradoxical status of the transitional object marks the capacity for illusion-making and enables the subject to engage in fictional activity.

The transitional object and film

At this point we may say that a film can represent a transitional object for the spectator in specific ways, by comparing Winnicott's list of the

attributes of the transitional object with those of a film for the spectator. These points will be developed further in the course of the thesis. (This 'List' is taken from *Playing and Reality,* p.5).

> Summary of special qualities in the relationship
> The infant assumes rights over the object, and we agree to this assumption. Nevertheless some abrogation of omnipotence is a feature from the start.

Viewers have the feeling that a film belongs to them, that it is their object, for their privileged use. Privately and in their talk about the film, they will assume those rights of ownership. At the same time the film remains itself and the spectator knows it.

> The object is affectionately cuddled as well as excitedly loved and mutilated.

A film is 'loved' by viewers and can elicit sexually derived responses, which may be conscious or unconscious.

> It must never change, unless changed by the infant.

Predictability is an important feature of popular cinema, in its genre and narrative structure as well as in the phenomenon of sequels. Viewers become angry when films do not fulfil their expectations. (This response is illustrated in *The Purple Rose of Cairo,* discussed in the next section, in the fury of the audiences when the film's hero steps out of the screen and changes the film.)

> It must survive instinctual loving, and also hating, and, if it be a feature, aggression.

The film can be experienced as both a good and a bad Kleinian object: loved and as irrationally hated (Metz, 1982, p.6 and 7). (The necessity for the spectator to be able to 'use' the film-object for her own purposes

but for the film also to 'survive' is taken up in Chapter 6 on the 'Use of an object'.)

> Yet it must seem to the infant to give warmth or to move, or to have texture, or to do something that seems to show that it has a vitality or reality of its own.

The film object may both represent something other than itself and, at the same time, be fully, lovingly and excitedly valued for what it is in the here and now; spectators love a film (any film), not only for what it is 'about'.

> It comes from without from our point of view, but not so from the point of view of the baby. Neither does it come from within; it is not a hallucination.

The photographic moving image creates a mysterious reality impression, yet as a play of shadows it eludes the spectator's grasp; it is a material object that exists 'out there' on screen but also seems to be a product of the spectator's imagination.

One of the peculiar fascinations of film is its ability to seem to be projected from the spectator's psyche: 'the film is what I receive and also what I release' (Metz, 1982, p. 51). The illusionism of cinema comes from the ability of a film to become endowed with aspects of the spectator's inner world while at the same time it remains itself as outside, a separate and autonomous object. The spectator 'believes' in the film, as she continually creates and transforms it into her own unique, transitional object.

This 'belief' does not necessarily depend on the film's own illusionist operations since the spectator may be drawn into a similar relationship with a very wide range of types of cinema, quickly adapting to changing practices. Similarly, the 'shared', public nature of cinema allows its secondary, pre-and-post production discourses, including publicity and reviews as well as viewers' own talk about it, to be based on a mutual understanding that somehow the film events have the status of 'truth'. When we engage with a film we make a move into a psychic state where we suspend judgement about its reality status and accept it on its own terms. This psychic move, I will go on to argue, is a move into the 'potential space' between subject and object where the film takes on the status of a transitional object.

The spectator finds her place.

The playing spectator's wish to take a part in the film-play activates a psychic movement into the space of the action on screen. I will argue that this move is effected through the interaction of the film's spatial operations and the spectator's psychic shift into her 'potential space', the psychic area that Winnicott posits as the location for cultural experience. To put it the other way round, she internalises the film space — the combination of space and movement — and the film 'enters' her psyche. The process of luring and allurement of the spectator into the film is therefore one of activating her wishes, even longings, to be 'there', on screen, playing her part; the screen space makes available to her a playspace and, conversely, her ability to make use of her own potential space enables her to engage with the film and take up her place in it.

In this examination of potential space, my focus moves away from the film as a transitional object to look at the *relationship between* the spectator and film in terms of the space and the movement between them. The exploration of the placing of the spectator will encompass and bring together different kinds of space: material, cinematic space and metaphoric, psychic space. In this chapter I consider mainly the spatial operations of film whereas in the next I explore the spectator's engagement with the narrative action. However, within the film narrative system this distinction between space and narrative is clearly somewhat artificial and is not always sustainable, as the title of Stephen Heath's essay, 'Narrative Space' (1981), considered below, suggests.

Winnicott's notion of potential space is closely related to that of the transitional object but he uses the term to extend his exploration of transitional phenomena in infancy into the question of the 'location of cultural experience' in adulthood. He chose to delineate this psychic state metaphorically in terms of a 'space' or 'place':

> I am making an examination in terms of the position, relative to the individual in the world, in which cultural experience, play, can be said to 'take place'.... I put forward the hypothesis that the position is the potential space between the baby and the mother.
>
> (Winnicott, 1971, p.107)

Part of Winnicott's purpose in positing the transitional area of potential space was to fill a gap in Freud's topography of the psyche. As he puts it: 'Freud did not have a place in his topography of the mind for the experience of things cultural.... he did not get so far as to tell us where in the mind cultural experience is' (Winnicott, 1971, p. 95).

In two short late pieces, 'The location of cultural experience' (originally published in 1967) and 'The place where we live' (Winnicott, 1971, chs.7 & 8) he hypothesises a 'third area' between the outer and inner psychic domain, whose origin is the 'place in space and time where and when the mother is in transition from being merged in with the infant and alternatively being experienced as an object to be perceived rather than conceived' (p.96). On the one hand there is the 'inner life' ranging from 'instinctual experience' to 'contemplation' and on the other, the outer, shared reality; this marks the difference between the 'subjective object' which belongs to the perception of inner reality and is

essentially a part of the subject, and the 'object objectively perceived', which is a developmental achievement for the subject. Potential space is at the 'interplay' between them: between there 'being nothing but me and there being objects and phenomena outside omnipotent control' (p.100). This intermediate area is where play 'takes place' and it expands into 'creative living and into the whole cultural life of man' (p.102). For the adult, then, cultural life is 'located' in the 'potential space between the individual and the environment, that which initially both joins and separates the baby and mother' (p.103). In this account of potential space Winnicott posits a continuity from the baby's use of the transitional object into the child's make-believe, and then into the adult's various forms of playing; what he calls the 'cultural field'.[1]

However this internal 'space' is only 'hypothetical' — hence 'potential' space — since, although it can later, in pathology, become 'an infinite area of separation' (Winnicott, 1971, p.109), it is not, in fact, usually actualised. Instead it is 'filled' with 'objects and creative playing' (ibid), so that a 'connectedness' between the individual and the outside, initially the mother, is retained and developed. Where the potential space is 'filled' in this way, it is because the baby has developed confidence and trust in the mother (newly a separate not-me object) remaining available on the margin or boundary of that space, so that the baby is psychically never 'alone', even when physically alone. Winnicott explores this state in his paper 'The capacity to be alone' (1958): the child develops the capacity to be alone,

[1]This continuity is questioned by some commentators, for example Phillips; 'the cultural field is curiously undifferentiated' (1988, p.117). I take this point further in Chapter 3, on playing, and in Chapter 6, in my account of the work of Marion Milner.

psychically satisfied because of the presence of the mother. For the adult, the need for the actual mother's presence has dropped away, and, where the transitional process has been successfully negotiated, such activities as playing, imaginative and cultural activity, and religion have filled the gap, the capacity to be alone achieved.

The psychic movement into potential space involves a shift in discourse and in the spectator's dealings with her external and internal world, which has been likened (for example, by Wright, 1984, p.92) to Coleridge's 'willing suspension of disbelief' [which] 'constitutes poetic faith' (Coleridge, 1817, p.169): the condition where the human imagination animates the outer world and similarly enables the 'reality' of the external world to act upon the products of the imagination, so that there comes about a link between them. In this suspension of disbelief — a suspended state — the spectator can accept that the fictional events on screen are happening, without needing to question their reality status further. She can wait in front of the empty screen, without need for further action, for the film to unfold — on screen and inside her. The spectator's 'willingness' to enter this state comes not from a conscious decision on her part but from the wish and capacity both to engage with the film and to move into that psychic state where she does not question the veracity of what she sees in front of her. At this moment questions of belief and disbelief become irrelevant and are not asked.

It is possible to take Winnicott's account as it stands and accept that, as a 'cultural experience' film must be located in potential space. But in positing a connection between material, cinematic space and the psychic phenomenon of potential space, I am extending Winnicott's

question of where 'is' the individual who is playing to consider 'where' the spectator is 'placed', both in relation to cinematic space in general and at specific moments during a film. In pursuing this question I am assuming an activating process in cinema-spectator relations which can translate cinema's material phenomena into psychic ones, an assumption which underlies the psychoanalytic approach to the spectator.

As an illustrative example of the film spectator's psychic move into potential space and screen space, I examine Woody Allen's *The Purple Rose of Cairo* (1985) which is a play on, and about, cinematic illusionism. In particular it explores what can happen when the spectator's 'conviction' of the 'truth' of a film narrative is taken to its absurdly logical conclusion: the film character with whom the heroine (played by Mia Farrow) is in love joins her in the theatre, and she in her turn later goes onto the screen to take part in the film. The film playfully subverts the strict division between screen and auditorium, between fiction and fact, and inner and outer reality, both for its characters and for the spectator, and depicts the space between reality and fantasy where the spectator (both the spectator-in- the-inner film and the 'real' viewer of the film in the cinema) can play out her desires untroubled by questions of reality.

The movement of the spectator in that intermediate space is illustrated and figured in the striking moment of cinematic play when Tom, the hero of the inner film-within-the-film, steps out of the screen to join his fan in the auditorium. Cecilia (Farrow) is a poor young housewife who is bullied by her husband and who goes every day to see the same film as a way of escaping her problems and dreary existence in the

Depression. She falls in love — it is not clear whether with the hero or with the film-viewing process itself.

The spectator has already been placed in an ambiguous relationship to both the films on screen, the Woody Allen film, shot in colour, and the black and-white-inner film that Cecilia is watching. The spectator has been given an image of the film star, Farrow, playing a fictional film character, Cecilia, who is herself also watching a film. It is an image in which the spectator has already been encouraged to invest some identificatory emotion: partly, even before coming to the cinema, because of Mia Farrow's status as star and her relationship with Woody Allen, and partly, now, during the film, as Cecilia, to be sympathised with as victim of her husband's bullying and as someone caught up by the fantasised pleasures of cinema. The film opens with a close-up of her rapt face, an identificatory technique conventionally used to invite the spectator to 'read' and perhaps to 'be' that character. Cecilia's character's situation is presented as 'reality' with its details of the bleakness of life in a small American town during the Depression, which can only be escaped by watching the movies. It is a 'reality' that the spectator has been lured into believing by this point in the film, as a base against which to gauge subsequent events and a contrast with the 'fiction' of the film Cecilia is watching — a pastiche of a thirties B-movie, clearly marked by the character's stylised acting and stilted dialogue as 'unreal' (and incidentally as a bad movie).

As well as being placed in the position of the knowing spectator watching a film character watching a film, the spectator is also 'given' the film as her own: at first the film is shown being played in the small town theatre with both film and audience on screen — then, in the

next shot, the whole screen is filled with the black-and-white film so that the spectator is put in the place of Mia Farrow and given her point of view in the audience. Partly, then, the spectator is with the 1930s audience, on screen in the 1930s auditorium, along with, even in the place of, Mia Farrow; partly in her own seat watching the whole scene from the outside, perhaps also watching herself watching. However, where she is placed is not a question the spectator asks herself as she watches a film, until she is jolted out of her absorption in the narrative.

This 'jolt' suddenly takes place. Intriguingly the same clip of film has been played several times over (indicating the number of times that Cecilia has seen it), but this time Tom suddenly pauses in the middle of a line of dialogue, interrupting a gesture, while he turns from left to right of screen as if he has just noticed something. He looks straight out to camera — a look that is rare in classic Hollywood cinema and certainly new in this clip — and into the 1930s auditorium: to the audience there; to Mia Farrow; to us, the spectator; and says 'You must love this movie'.

Tom's move off-screen is achieved in a series of quick cuts. As he speaks there is general consternation in the theatre and screams from members of the audience. Tom first addresses Cecilia from the inner film screen, his audience also in view; there is a cut to Mia Farrow, in close-up, horrified, filling our screen; then a cut back to the black-and-white film, which now fills our screen. Tom walks towards Cecilia, right up to camera (the spectator) saying "I've got to speak to you". A very quick cut to an anonymous fainting spectator is followed by a quick cut back to the black-and-white film screen, which is now shown

again in frame along with the cinema audience. This time, Tom, appearing for the first time in colour like the rest of the audience, stands against the screen from which he has stepped out. The move has looked like magic, the achievement of a cinematic impossibility.

However this piece of cinematic illusionism is so quickly carried out that in a sense the spectator accepts it as 'real', simply as a part of the narrative and, at the same time, she laughs at the joke in which she has been implicated in several, pleasurable ways: as victim of the trick because she believed it; as receiver of Mia Farrow's wish-fulfilment; and as sophisticated viewer who knows a piece of clever filming when she see it.

This psychic 'jolt', a sense of delighted outrage, stems mainly from the daring and impossible transgression of the boundary between film screen and spectator, a boundary which our common sense and fundamental knowledge of the material world tells us can never be crossed: we 'know' that it is impossible to mix the material world with the play of light and shadows on the screen. Yet, on one level, with that part of ourselves which, in a state of suspension of disbelief, accepts the 'reality' of the narrative, we accept everything that happens in it, and participate both in the daring transgression and in the cleverness (which smacks of omnipotence) of the film maker in making the impossible possible. The playing spectator accepts it with that part of herself that operates in potential space, and the reality status of what happens is not questioned. In this film fiction, as illustration of the playing spectator, Cecilia is able to make the move into the film space and to 'summon up' her hero into her potential space because it is where she herself is already psychically placed.

In general, film criticism maintains the boundary between film and spectator, who is conceived as being placed firmly outside the screen-space: for instance, as unified ideal viewer; as voyeur; as controller of the film narrative. We may choose to maintain the unbridgeable line between spectator and screen and keep our psychic distance. This position offers a range of pleasures, although we may be so far outside the film, refusing or unable to believe in it, that we lose interest in watching. However when a film succeeds in maintaining our attention and catching our belief — and films are notorious for doing so even against our better judgement — then our experience is that, psychically, we may well step over that physically impassable line, to take part, in different, shifting ways, in the screen play. Cecilia later does this, to play a part in the film that she has watched but which she has also constructed for her use, in her longing to escape and to find an alternative life.

Cecilia — and the playing spectator, to the extent that she identifies with Cecilia and has been given her point of view — is able to do this because the boundary between the outer world of the film and her inner world has become blurred and has altered. In this sequence the process is depicted concretely: a psychic event has turned into a literal one. Between the screen and Cecilia's psyche has been created a space which is depicted as neither just her fantasy, since the move out of screen has been seen to take place, nor as common-sense reality. It is a space where Cecilia can play out her daydreams (although not omnipotently because Tom and his world also have their independent existence) and where the distinction between 'real' and 'non-real' does not operate. This film presents a psychic space, where the interplay

between Cecilia and her film object takes place as a material one. For the playing spectator this place between film and Cecilia represents her own potential space.

Winnicott does not explore further in his two articles on potential space, discussed above, what happens when the potential space is not 'filled' so that it comes to be experienced as actual rather than as 'potential' — simply stating either 'that in unfavourable circumstances the creative use of objects is missing' or, a quite different problem, that it becomes 'filled with what is injected into it from someone other than the baby' (Winnicott, 1971, p.110); both have adverse consequences for the baby's development.

However in the following analysis of a scene from Dreyer's *Gertrud* (1962) I explore the process whereby the spectator is drawn into a space which is not 'filled with objects and creative playing' (Winnicott, 1971, p.110) but which has become actual: no longer a psychic 'playspace' but a void. Such an experience may be the lot of those who have been unable for whatever reason to play and for whom the creative use of objects is missing. As Susan Deri puts it in 'Transitional Phenomena: vicissitudes of symbolisation and creativity', where the mother has failed 'to hand over the world to the child' there is 'a disruption between the child and the surrounding inanimate world'. Its surroundings feel full of 'useless dead objects' and its inside is experienced as a 'seething cauldron of destructive undefined cravings' (Deri, 1978, p.50). From this perspective Gertrud can be seen as a woman who is unable to reconcile herself to the loss of an absolute, unconditional 'ideal' love; unable to 'mend the gap produced by the

absence of the gratifying mother' (ibid). Of herself, Gertrud says: "I want love without bounds."

As Elizabeth Cowie points out in an essay, 'Stratagems of Desire', which discusses Gertrud's desire and that of the spectator in Freudian/Lacanian terms (and on whose analysis I am drawing on here), this film intriguingly invites a range of spectator identifications in spite of its formally distancing spatial and shooting techniques (Cowie, 1986, p.89). The film's point of view is largely set up as Gertrud's. Its alienating and disorientating spatial operations, where we follow looks of the characters into spaces rather than at each other, set up the possibility of the spectator experiencing for herself the 'disconnectedness' of Gertrud from the outside world and, in particular, from her lovers: an experience of cinematic space where spaces delineate the gaps and distances between characters rather than bridging them by editing and point-of-view reverse shots.

At a critical point in the breakdown of Gertrud's relationship with her lover, Lidman, he lights candles on either side of a blank mirror; and at the end of the sequence, blows them out, decisively marking the breakdown. The camera dwells long enough on the mirror for the spectator to note that it will be significant and to set up an expectation of seeing the image of Gertrud in it, and to the extent that she takes on the character's viewpoint, her own. This moment is extended long enough for the spectator to fear that, in fact, neither she, nor indeed anyone, will be reflected there, with the suggestion that she is looking at her non-reflection, a nightmare fear of the 'negative hallucination' formulated by André Green: 'a mirror without reflection, where the self-contemplative subject sees no image ... this is the absent' (Green,

1978a, p.288). (For Winnicott, the missing reflection is initially that of the mother who fails to reflect back the baby to itself, denying its identity; Winnicott, 1967). When Gertrud's image finally appears, the effect is unexpected and disturbing: it is of Gertrud's whole body, as if of a miniature, like an unreal 'manikin' doll, dressed entirely in black. It disrupts the spectator's expectation because it indicates that Gertrud is not placed within the bounds of the frame where in classical Hollywood she would be for a regular shot-reverse-shot, when only half of her body would be seen.

The delay is also sufficiently extended, and the figure sufficiently strange, for the spectator to have the impression of its having been 'summoned up' by the man's desire, appearing as it does to loom up in the mirror as if in a dream, and from his and the spectator's unconscious — since it is also the spectator who has seemed to summon up the image, by having been given the extended view of the empty mirror in which to 'find' herself.

The next shot further implicates the spectator: Gertrud (whose image we now see in the mirror) is addressed from a point at the extreme left of the screen to a point that should be well behind the camera/audience, far outside the screen-space where we would assume her to be placed given that her whole body is reflected in the mirror, indicating a large distance from it. The spectator, then, seems to be placed between the two speakers, in the middle of the field of action, which at this point has extended well beyond the screen boundary. Because of a continuing discrepancy between the tiny, but whole, image of Gertrud and the habitual expectation of a part-image in the mirror

that would have been shown in conventional cinema, this scene disrupts our sense of knowing 'where' in it we are.

It is as though Gertrud, like the character in *The Purple Rose of Cairo*, has stepped out of the screen, but not to join the spectator, rather to disappear. Furthermore Gertrud's image appears 'wrong'. Although it looks like Gertrud, it also seems doll-like and non-alive, an impression emphasised by her black clothes, reinforcing the impression that the whole scene has been set up as if for a wake. As the space is also opened up behind the spectator by the address off-screen, it creates a sense of a gap, clearly articulated as a space which is not 'filled' by a subsequent shot of Gertrud, only by her disembodied voice. The space is actualised, rather than 'potential', and its unfamiliarity, against the continuity editing norm of narrative cinema, emphasises the lack of connectedness between the characters, including the spectator. This is a space into which the spectator has been drawn not to play but to experience loss. When Gertrud's image does appear, it is only to voice the ending of her love because of her realisation that the man's love for her was insufficient. The voicing of this loss by the unreal image of Gertrud suggests that she too has psychically died. Moreover the space itself is strange and unfamiliar, large and with undefined boundaries, as the speaker looks beyond us. We are left stranded in that space between screen and auditorium, our only play object on screen the mechanical-looking image of Gertrud, strange and unanimated, mouthing its and our loss.

The space in this scene has worked firstly to project the spectator into the mirror, where nothing at first is reflected back so that she finds neither the desired object, Gertrud, nor herself and is threatened with

the deep-seated anxiety of 'getting nothing back' from the mirror/reflection; secondly, to put her into the space in which she is placed by a look off-screen and which she experiences as 'actual' rather than 'potential: as empty, rather than 'filled with the products of (the) creative imagination' (Winnicott, 1971, p.102). [2]

Material and metaphoric space

The spaces of cinema are, of course, of a quite different order from Winnicott's potential space: for all its illusionism, film space is material and literal, and can be perceived by observers in common, whereas Winnicott insists that he uses the term 'space' metaphorically: 'the third world is an inner world ... the locus is not on an inner actual place that can be concretised and measured' (Barkin, 1978, p.524).

At the same time, however, there is also a sense in which Winnicott's use of the term 'potential space' has a material and literal basis. Subjectively, we do not simply experience psychic space metaphorically but conceive it in material terms as a way of constructing boundaries between our internal and external world — as Freud's 'topography' persists as a useful way of describing the make-up of the psyche. André Green notes that the concreteness and specificity of the concept of potential space was clearly important to Winnicott, as his use of the quotation from Tagore indicates: 'On the seashore of endless worlds, children play' (Winnicott, 1971, p.95). Green himself talks of a fascination with the 'interplay between the edge of curtains' (Green,

[2]From a different perspective, but relevantly to my argument, Raymond Carney notes a number of occasions in the film where mirrors show Gertrud's image without her appearing on screen and argues that the effect is of a disorientating 'virtual reality' where image becomes more important than substance (Carney, 1989, p.316).

1978b, p.177). The account of potential space within which 'the transitional process occurs and from which emerge transitional objects and phenomena' (Barkin, p.545) is predicated on a notion of material space delineated by boundaries; and the account of the developing individual is of one 'within its own skin' gradually establishing a sense of itself with an 'inside', with a 'limiting membrane' in relation to an 'outside' (Winnicott, 1971, p.106). As the infant experiences itself as a separate entity, its sense of its own boundary involves a perception of other, separate individuals existing in their own, separate spaces. The space between the subject and his or her objects is necessarily demarcated even though it is not absolute.

In her essay 'The use of space during the separation-individuation phase' Bergman suggests that the toddler's growing sense of separation from others takes place in the actual space around him 'which itself has become a precious and protected possession, not part of himself or of others' (Bergman, 1978, p.148). There is a hypothetical moment at which the child's sense of itself and its mother as separate objects in space is both literal and psychic; the mother 'exists both on the outside and inside as an inner presence' (ibid). Winnicott describes the case of a boy who used string obsessively both to join and separate himself from his mother and other adults (Winnicott, 1971, pp.15-20), making use of material space in this way so as to deal with his sense of his mother as 'out there' and separate from him, both physically and psychically. Deri suggests that, developmentally, 'transitional space is neither contiguous nor continuous with the space of reality' but is 'interwoven seamlessly with it' (Deri, 1978, p.48), and stresses the need for a physical 'good playspace' for the child.

For the adult, who, according to Deri, has internalised transitional space, Winnicott's use of the term 'potential space' is more clearly metaphorical and less dependent on the original notion of physical spatial relations. Yet we continue to seek playspaces, both physical and psychic, in adulthood. A physical playspace, where games with a cultural and emotional significance (the rituals of any ball game for instance) take place, has psychic significance. Similarly, I am proposing, the film screen-space offers a playspace for the spectator, the material space of the film meshing-in with her inner experience.

Winnicott himself points to and gives examples of the range of spatial metaphors that occur in everyday discourse — 'I am at sea, ... in seventh heaven' (Winnicott, 1971, p.104). The subjective experience of an equivalence between physical and psychic space seems to me to be exactly represented by the expression "I need my own space", which expresses both a physical and a psychological need. It is not for nothing that feminists have taken up Virginia Woolf's case for the necessity for *A Room of One's Own* (Woolf, 1929) to claim more autonomy over themselves and their environment, indicating how a material space may operate as the 'interplay' between an individual and the outer world. The general assumption of an underlying correspondence between outer, physical space and an inner experience fills out Winnicott's formulation of potential space as more than a metaphor.

Poetry has particular rhetorical means to represent the correspondence between inner and outer space through its use of imagery. Two well-known examples from Wordsworth, on his childhood, and Yeats, on old age, are:

But huge and mighty Forms that do not live
Like living men mov'd slowly through my mind
By day and were the trouble of my dreams.

(*The Prelude*, William Wordsworth, 1805, Book 1, lines 425-427)

I must lie down where all the ladders start
In the old rag and bone shop of the heart.

(The Circus Animal's Desertion', W. B. Yeats, ' *Complete Works*, 1939)

In a poetry analysis, one would need to examine the means by which elision, metaphor and other rhetorical devices yoke together inner and outer references to make them equivalent to each other: the 'Forms' and the 'shop' have both been transformed into objects that exist in both the inner and outer world, and in the process have partly lost their identity as physical, recognisable, external objects (the 'shop of the heart'; the mysterious 'Forms', that seem to 'live', but not like 'living men' and which 'move' but only through the mind).

While poetry can only refer to space indirectly, the specificity of cinematic space by contrast is precisely that it already has a material existence: within the frame; between the frame and what it appears to 'close off' around it; between the screen and the audience. Yet the ambiguity of our perception of psychic space is paralleled by that of film space. While it exists 'out there' on the screen, the spectator also knows (but usually does not take into account) that it is merely the effect of a play of light on a flat surface and lacks a material physical existence. Being both material and illusory, it also has a wavering psychical existence. The spectator may make use of this ambiguous space in

engaging with a film, when her psychic move into her own potential space is figured by her move into the screen space. What is at stake for the playing spectator is her psychic placing and movement in relation to that space and the correlation of two spaces, one psychic, one material, each inhabited by an agent. I imagine myself inside a space depicted on a screen; I move through a film that has become a film in my head. If film space is a metaphor for potential space, which in its turn represents a psychic experience, then the spectator registers the metaphor, the correspondence between these two orders, concretely, as both an inner, psychic space and as the outer space on screen where she can find a place.

Potential space/film space

The question of how the spectator thinks, perceives or constructs cinematic space is a common concern of film theory; a complementary concern is how she, in turn, is psychically placed or positioned in relation to that space. I shall examine some accounts of cinematic space so as to make a comparison between the placing of their viewer and that of the spectator in potential space.[3]

Formalist analyses of cinematic space usually work on the assumption that the viewer is 'placed' outside the screen space, and aim to account for the formal operations that enable him or her to read that space. For example, analyses of the composition of single frames describe how depth is constructed in relation to the 'rules' of perspective painting, or discuss dramatic relationships between the characters on screen in terms of spatial relationships: Bordwell and Thompson (1986) give an account of how space and depth is constructed and perceived through such features as edges, relative sizes of objects, lighting; Seymour Chatman analyses a still from *Citizen Kane* which he claims 'expresses' compositionally a dramatic moment of conflict between Kane and his friend Leland Stewart, through such features as the lighting and the placing of the two men in relation to each other and to the frame (Chatman, 1978, p.99). Focusing on the film system as a whole, formalist writers discuss the means by which classic Hollywood cinema constructs an apparent spatial/temporal coherence as part of its continuity system: the 180-degree rule, eyeline match, consistency in entrances and exits.

[3]As in the previous section I am taking 'cinematic space' to refer to the viewer's psychic relationship to the action on screen: to the 'narrative space'.

These accounts of how cinematic space is articulated tend to have little to say about the spectator, on the assumption that she is simply the receiver of the body of formal devices the writers delineate. The spectator is written into, or indeed out of, the impersonal critical discourse, which assumes that there is a direct correspondence between what it presents as being in the text under scrutiny and the viewer's perception of it. In a formalist analysis the spectator-of-the-film is assumed to be conterminous with the reader-of-the-critical-text about the film; the spectator is embedded within the analytic discourse about the text and in the process the viewing subject is lost as a separate object of analysis, even, in some cases, in discussion of off-screen space. For example, Noel Burch's description of the off-screen space as consisting of 'six segments' (four faces from the four sides of the screen, a space behind the camera, and a 'space' behind the frame) is a formal approach which discusses cinematic space in terms of the relationship between the visible and non-visible elements and its formal/aesthetic organisation (Burch, 1969, p.17). Also taking a deliberately formal approach, against the grain for representational cinema, Wyborny (1987), as part of an attempt to describe the 'grammar' of classic cinema, discusses ways in which continuity editing apparently serves to weld together on- and off-screen space.

Yet, at the same time, even these formalist writers introduce a notional spectator into their analyses, as if from an assumption that 'off-screen' space is that of reality, and therefore a part of the viewer's world ('the universe itself' (Heath, 1981, p 25): since the very notion of off-screen space is hypothetical — until it becomes on-screen space — it comes to be discussed in terms of a 'someone' who can conceptualise its

hypothetical existence. Burch (1969) discusses off-screen space as having a 'fluctuating' existence for the spectator, and Wyborny (1987) explores the spectator's ability to 'speculate' about and 'construct' off-screen space. Bordwell makes this process more explicit, arguing that, in practice, all traditional, mainstream film theory assumes an 'ideal' spectator: it 'creates a perspective eye for cinema, one we can call the invisible observer' (Bordwell, 1985, p.9). This acknowledges the presence of the viewing subject with a separate existence outside the screen and film-play.

Stephen Heath's argument in 'Narrative Space' (1981), which takes up the question of how film 'places' the spectator, encompasses cinematic space, the narrative system as a whole and psychic space. Like other writers concerned with the subject/spectator constructed by the film-signifying system, Heath assumes that the spatial operations of narrative cinema can have psychic effects; for him these psychic effects are necessarily ideological. First published in *Screen* in 1976, his essay reflects the interest of film studies of that time in the ideological effects of cinema, which drew on a combination of Lacanian psychoanalysis and a Brechtian, subversive approach to dominant theatre. Hence the article offers an analysis and deconstruction of the viewing subject of classical cinema as 'the point of a sure and centrally embracing view' (Heath, 1981, p.32).

In addressing the question of how the spectator is constructed by classical cinema, Heath draws on the rules of Renaissance perspective painting, which were adopted by classical cinema and which always 'centre' the viewer at a stable point, placing him in the position of the one who appears to 'see everything'. Acknowledging the greater

complexity of the cinematic system, but maintaining as his reference point its perspective space, Heath analyses the means by which narrative cinema subordinates formal, compositional 'space' to 'place' and 'action'; and, through the operations of its continuity editing, succeeds in 'binding in' the spectator to its own system of unity and centredness. Klaus Wyborny (1987), both critic and film maker, goes further in this approach to cinematic space and the spectator in offering an exposé both of the 'deceitfulness' of dominant cinema in its 'pretence' of being realistic, and, by the same token, of the gullibility of the viewer in accepting cinema's 'realistic' conventions: 'narrative cinema is a matter of a meagre collection of little artifices to which the spectator reacts with Pavlovian certainty'. His spectator is one who entirely accepts the illusion of a 'connection between units of space and time not naturally connected' (Wyborny, 1987. p.114).

These different approaches to the viewer's relationship to cinematic space concur in the assumption that cinema definitively (and deceptively) places the spectator in a passive, fixed position. Heath is concerned with the spectator as a 'subject in process', constructed by the operations of the film: film is a 'a series of relations with the spectator it imagines, plays and sets as subject to its movement' (Heath, 1981, p.52). Nevertheless, he proposes that the ideological function of dominant cinema is in the end to set up the spectator as fixed and unified: as in classical perspective painting, the subject 'in play' is transformed into the unified subject of dominant cinema. Through the operations of perspective space, cinematic narrative and movement — a movement which sets up desire, but a desire which is regulated and controlled by the continuity editing system — the spectator is placed 'immobile' in front of the screen, fixed finally in the 'retotalisation of

the Imaginary' (ibid, p.57). The Lacanian Mirror stage where the subject miscognises itself as unified is aligned with the 'centred' place of the viewer of perspective painting, which in its turn represents the Renaissance version of a unified subjectivity.

Heath argues in this essay that only avant-garde cinema or moments of disturbance in dominant cinema can challenge this position; he analyses such a moment in Hitchcock's *Suspicion* and takes the discussion further in an analysis of a sequence from Oshima Nagisa's *Death by Hanging* (1976). This, he claims, undermines the spectator's expectation of being presented with the centred space of dominant narrative — the assumption being that, in the process, the film constructs an alternative viewing subject, who is neither centred in spatial terms, nor fixed and unified as a viewing subject: the spatial disorientation in the film is assumed to necessarily involve a psychic one. (Heath, 1981, p.66-9). In this part of Heath's discussion, however, the spectator-as-subject is taken up into the analytic formal discourse in the way that I have suggested happens in formalist accounts, and disappears as an object of analysis. As a result, it is difficult in the end to locate Heath's alternative viewing subject anywhere than as an effect of the film's system which constructs and absorbs the spectator.

The tyranny of dominant cinema that Heath and others posit places the viewer firmly outside the film at the apex of the triangle of spatial perspective, while in the process it binds him in to its narrative and ideological operations. This conception of the spectator relates to that proposed by Metz, in 'The Imaginary signifier'; his proposition is also that cinema 'fixes' the spectator in an Imaginary state analogous to Lacan's mirror stage: the spectator expects to be 'reflected' on screen.

Given the possibility of exploring identification with characters on-screen that this perspective might seem to offer, it is notable that Metz disregards such 'secondary' identification and asserts only the spectator's identification with 'himself as pure act of perception'. Because 'this mirror (the screen) returns us everything but ourselves ... we are wholly outside it' (Metz, 1982, p.49). However caught up in the narrative process she might be, the spectator remains outside the screen.

In contrast to these writers I will now consider three who, from very different perspectives, construct a spectator that can be construed as being 'on screen': André Bazin, Laura Mulvey and André Green, who writes on theatre. Bazin is cited as a prime example of the mimetic/realist approach to cinema, criticised because of its tendency to ignore the constructed and mediating basis of film. His fundamental premise about cinema is that it can re-present or reveal the phenomenal world to the spectator: 'the image is evaluated not according to what it adds to reality but what it reveals of it' (Bazin, 1969, p.28). As Heath points out, for Bazin this is achieved most clearly through the representation of space, hence his apparent assumption that the relation between on-and-off screen space functions — or should appear to do so — as a screening off, or a framing, of part of the real world (Heath, 1981, p.42). Similarly Bazin's preference for the use of deep space and long takes is based on the premise that it can 'reveal', in an apparently unmediated fashion, the pro-filmic world for the contemplation of the viewer: 'they bring the spectator into a relation with an image closer to that which he enjoys with reality' (Bazin, 1969, p.35) and provide an opportunity 'for a more active mental attitude' (ibid). Duration is an important factor in this process: as Henderson

puts it, for Bazin the long take time gives the spectator the opportunity to peruse the screen-scene, which includes both the characters and setting, and which, being in real time, constitutes the 'time's event' (Henderson, 1971, p.315). Such perusal returns the viewer to the phenomenal external world which, for Bazin, it is film's function to reveal.

From the perspective of the playing spectator duration is relevant in other ways: for example, an establishing shot or sequence may serve as an invitation to the spectator to 'enter' the screen place and her own transitional space; a landscape which remains for an unusually long time unpopulated, as in Antonioni's films, (as if 'waiting' for its characters to appear) may represent either the possibility for a playspace or the threat of emptiness for the spectator. For Nowell-Smith (1964) this psychologically distances the spectator from Antonioni's characters; however, for the spectator in potential space, the absence of the film characters may serve rather as an invitation to find her own place on screen.

Bazin's spectator is assumed to be placed outside the screen, 'presented' with a film which reveals aspects of the phenomenal world and reality. However, this view of the spectator is inflected by Bazin's philosophical background, which includes Henri Bergson's non-mechanistic view of the world, a kind of animism (Dudley, 1978). From this perspective reality is not a simple empiricist's encounter with an external, phenomenal world but an inner experience of unity with it. The purpose of cinema then becomes to 'reveal' and even to give the spectator an experience of this unity. Bazin's view of what 'reality' is may reconcile the apparent contradiction between his view of cinema

as a realist medium and his acknowledgement of its constructedness; for example as Henderson (1971), critical of Bazin, points out, Bazin 'explains' the stylisation of Murnau's films as an attempt to bring out the deeper, underlying structure of reality. Although the relation of spectator to the screen image is presented by Bazin in the first place as one of looking — or contemplation — unlike the other theorists on space cited above, this also involves an intimate, psychic interaction with what is presented on screen as a re-presentation of the relationship between the individual and the external world. In Bazin's terms this is not a passive state but one of active concentration and awareness. Accordingly, although the spectator is 'outside' the film space, the experience of 'seeing' implies a seeing 'beyond' the phenomenal world to a reality where she is also a part of what she sees. This begins to move Bazin's position towards a view — although it is a very specific one — of the spectator as participating in and being a part of the film: from this perspective Bazin's spectator may take up a place on screen as a means of re-encountering the phenomenal world.

Laura Mulvey's definition of the 'passive' (feminine) and 'active' (masculine) spectator offers an intriguing possibility of a 'spectator on screen' which, however, she presents negatively, and does not pursue. Her seminal paper, 'Narrative cinema and visual pleasure' (1975), about the nature of the masculine/feminine viewing position, which has become a recurring *motif*, much critiqued, in debates in feminist film criticism, draws on both Freud and Lacan to point up the importance of the look as a means of structuring film narrative in cinema. Mulvey constructs a spectator who 'owns' the look and who is 'masculinised' in being defined as active not passive in relation to the

film's narrative system. In these terms the female spectator is consigned either to identifying herself in the passive position as the object of the look, along with the female character on screen, or to taking on the masculine, active position of looking. Identification with the female protagonist offers only a position which is at best a narcissistic pleasure of looking at herself being looked at — and at worst a masochistic one, as a willing object of the sadistic, voyeuristic and fetishistic masculine gaze. Mulvey's masculinised spectator does the looking from the outside, usually off-screen; the female is 'on screen' and is looked at.

What is elided by Mulvey's account of the look in terms of its male/female power relations is an exploration of the experience of being the object of the look; of being, that is, 'on screen'.[4] This may firstly involve the wish to take on the passive position of the object of the look which, as Ann Kaplan points out, 'may be an inherent component of both male and female eroticism' (Kaplan, 1983, p.31) — although, as a social phenomenon, wishing to please the looker in everyday life is arguably a position to which women are particularly conditioned; in fantasy the wish to be looked at is associated with a regressive narcissistic and masochistic wish which is available to the male as well as to the female spectator (Rodowick, 1991, p.12).

Beyond this, however, the place on screen that Mulvey assigns to the female may be that which, precisely, the Winnicottian, playing spectator wishes to take up. Mulvey's female spectator/protagonist,

[4] The active spectator has for Mulvey a surrogate 'on screen' the (male) character who also owns the look. The focus remains on a subject-object relationship, in which the 'object of the look' remains unmovably on screen.

who seems to have no voice and no position from which to speak except from the point of view of masculine desire, may have something to offer the playing spectator precisely because she is defined only in relation to the 'male gaze' and therefore not yet defined at all in her own terms. Mulvey does not enter her psyche and explore her desires, as she does that of the male voyeuristic spectator; the 'object of desire' remains uncharted, the 'enigma' of femininity of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis. As an 'absence' in the male narrative structure, the image of the female protagonist on screen remains a blank, a tabula rasa on which the spectator may inscribe her own consciousness, history and desire, existing there to be discovered and re-made by the playing spectator who takes up that position to rework and replay her own wishes and scenarios.

Once the spectator has psychically stepped over the boundary onto the screen, to take the place of the 'blank' representation of the female protagonist, then the narrative that she constructs is given substance by an intermeshing of her own desires with those that the film plays out. In these terms, the source of the narrative does not reside solely with the spectator who looks; the playing spectator participates from her place on screen.[5]

Theatre space/film space

The possibility of the spectator 'moving' into the diegetic space is explored in André Green's account of potential space in the theatre. Green is a French analyst and literary critic who, in the 1960s, was influenced by Lacan but increasingly began to see Winnicott's

[5] This is pursued in my account (below) of Browne's essay on *Stagecoach* (1975, ch.3).

particular approach to object relations as relevant to his work during the 1970s, in common with a growing number of French analysts (Clancier 1987, pp.119-25). He retains from Lacan an emphasis, though a diminished one, on language, which, as he says, Winnicott virtually ignores, and on a split subject (Green 1978a, p.290). However, he also uses the concept of the transitional object and potential space in both his clinical and literary work, refashioning it somewhat from his own perspective but clearly seeing it as important in both areas. Green draws particularly productively from both Lacan and Winnicott in essays on drama and fiction to construct his own formulation, for instance on writing/reading, and creativity generally, in his essay relating psychoanalysis and criticism, 'The double and the absent' (1978a).

In an essay on clinical work, following Winnicott, Green posits the purpose of analysis: 'the essential feature is no longer interpreting but enabling the subject to live out creative experiences of a new category of objects' (Green 1978b p.176), and he re-formulates the analytic setting as a potential space where an 'analytic object' can be created, made up of 'the double' of the analyst and of the patient, which the patient can eventually 'reconstitute in the outer world through cultural experience, through sublimation, and more generally through the possibility of pairing' (p.180).

This concept may clearly be applied to the film viewer relationship, the 'double' of film and spectator being reconstructed within the potential space of the film-viewing process, related but not equivalent to the 'film' and the 'subject' outside that relationship. This notion relates to that of a subject in process in those psychoanalytic film studies which are concerned with the subject of film constructed within the film-

viewing set-up, but it places more emphasis on the mutuality of the process. Here there is no question of the spectator being 'fixed' by the film, nor, the other way round, of the film being 'fixed' as a system in the way that the formalist critics propose. Rather, the film and spectator 'double', the amalgam that is constructed, emerges out of the interplay between spectator and film. The spectator now has available this new object to take away with her after the film is over, a notion I take up in the final chapter of this thesis, where I explore the spectator's use of the film object.

Of particular relevance to film studies is Green's combining of notions of the look, the basis for much recent psychoanalytic work on cinema/spectator relations, with potential space in his account of spectator processes in the theatre. This is presented in the Prologue to a collection of his essays on drama, *The Tragic Effect* (Green, 1979). He describes the spectator as being taken into the theatre space — or rather theatre spaces — through mechanisms that involve the spectator's gaze, a notion of potential space and different kinds of boundaries, both psychic and material.

Green suggests that this process takes place in several stages. The spectator first leaves the space of the outside world by entering the theatre, where the walls of the auditorium represent the boundary between the spectator-subject and his external objects. Although Green himself does not posit it in these terms at this point, the theatre may clearly represent a potential space, a location for cultural activity. The spectator can leave the world of objects behind, withdraw from his habitual need to negotiate that world and go into the theatre 'as a resting place' (Winnicott, 1971, p.2): in short for entertainment. Equally

clearly the same can apply to the film theatre. The setting and rituals of both cinema and theatre — such as the illuminated screen or stage and the darkness surrounding the spectator, the clearly marked beginning and ending, the behaviour patterns — all signal theatre/cinema-going as a 'movement' into what may also be experienced as a psychic move into potential space. Both the theatre and cinema are psychically privileged and specific places, serving as a materialisation of the psychic domain.[6]

Green goes on to discuss the next stage of the spectator's psychic processes, as the play begins. The boundary between the world of objects and the subject is now represented by the boundary between the stage and the auditorium, so that, in the clearly marked moment of the curtain rising and lights going out, the spectator's negotiation with the external world is replaced by his negotiation with the stage world: 'the relationship of otherness between the subject and the world is replaced by the otherness of the spectator in respect of the objects of the gaze' (Green, 1979, p.4). If, to go further than Green, this negotiation can now be seen as happening both within the 'potential space where everything is permissible' (Clare Winnicott, 1978, p.29), and yet at the same time operating also as a simple substitute for the subject's encounter with external objects, then it seems to me that the spectator's 'belief' in what is happening on stage has the opportunity of being doubly reinforced: she will take for granted the 'reality' of the stage events, as a replication of what she takes for granted as reality in the

[6] This thesis does not deal with video watching. Whereas the video spectator's encounter with the film/video fiction can move her into and take place within potential space, as any fiction can, the set-up of video watching is less immediately inducive in spatial and setting terms of that psychic shift. Nevertheless, video watchers create their own rituals and since video viewing can more easily involve talk the construction of the film object for playing can become a group process.

external world. In her potential space this replication allows her to suspend disbelief, to abandon her habitual reality-testing and engage instead with the 'reality' of the drama.

However Green suggests that the 'replacement' of stage-for-world is more complex. At the point of the encounter of the spectator's gaze with the scene on stage, as it meets and crosses the boundary between auditorium and stage, the third boundary comes into play: that between on-stage and off-stage. This is the boundary between 'the visible theatrical space' and the 'invisible theatrical space', where the 'illusion' is formed and the 'false is fabricated' (Green, 1979, p.4) — the space which, for the spectator, now represents the unconscious. This 'hidden' space appears to be the source of all that is spoken and shown on stage, where there seems to remain merely the trace of what is unsaid and has been repressed. This boundary between stage and off-stage, between conscious and unconscious, can never be traversed: repression cannot be gainsaid.

The mechanism by which Green suggests that the spectator comes to be psychically placed on stage is to do with what happens to the gaze as it encounters the spectacle there. As it hits the boundary between stage and theatre, the spectator's gaze is 'sent back' to him. Already the 'otherness' of the spectacle has been modified for the spectator by the fact of his interest and engagement (as it has to be, or he would leave the theatre) and by a sensed inherent identity between object and subject, originating from the Lacanian Mirror stage.[7] As a result, now

[7]"Certainly, the tableau is in my eye. But I, I am in the tableau ... in the scopic relation, the subject hangs in an essential vacillation on a fantasy which hinges on a specific object: the look"' (Lacan, quoted in Willemen,1976, p. 42)

'the gaze explores the stage from the point at which the spectator is himself observed' (Green, p.5): the spectator is already there, on the stage, in the guise of the other.

The greatest and most decisive lure to the spectator comes at the next moment — in fact it is simultaneous — as the 'gaze suffers a second reversal' because it is unable to cross the boundary to offstage, the untransgressable barrier of repression. Yet because the stage spectacle seems so decisively to be only a trace of what has been repressed (what is 'unsaid'), and to be hiding the truth, it holds the spectator in thrall: 'it is as if these objects ought not to have been in full view, yet by some incomprehensible paradox, will not allow the perceiver ever to escape them' (Green, p.4). The spectator remains bound-in to an expectation of and desire for the return of what has been repressed and to a search for the solution to the enigma of the source of what is said on stage. Moreover this is also a search for himself, since the secondary elaboration of the play's text of the primary unconscious (off-stage) material 'blocks the view of the original source where the subject would have to recognise his own silhouette' (p. 5). Green likens this experience to the negative hallucination, the subject's experience of looking in the mirror without seeing his own image, only 'all the elements of the setting around him', and to the 'dream space where one sees without seeing, hears without hearing' (p.5). The engaged spectator is bound-in to the search for the missing image of himself.

What Green offers, then, is an account of how the spectator becomes engaged with a drama, by both her failure and success in crossing boundaries in psychic/theatre spaces. Following Winnicott, Green proposes three psychic spaces: the area in which the subject interacts

with the outer world; the domain of the unconscious; and the potential space. (Although Green does not take it this far, moving into the area of potential space could also involve the possibility of opening up access to the 'backstage' unconscious material that underlies and motivates the play in performance.)

I have argued that entering both the theatre and the cinema can give the spectator an experience of potential space. Green examines the psychic mechanisms activated by the spectator's look in respect of the action on-stage; however he suggests that this process cannot be the same for cinema: 'this space is circumscribable, confined within the walls of the great chamber that is the theatre ... [whereas in the cinema] ... the chamber is the camera but the entire world may be swallowed up in it [which makes it] impossible to explore these means as a lure for the cinema spectator' (Green, 1979, p. 5).

There are various possible rationales for this assertion: for instance that in the theatre the spectator is contained in the same space as the actors and the spectacle, and, as Metz points out (addressing the status of cinema very differently from Green), the simultaneous actual presence of actors and spectator makes for 'a promise' of 'real' negotiable object relations that cinema denies (Metz, 1982, p.63). Secondly, and nearer to what Green is suggesting, the boundaries of cinema are less clearly defined than those of theatre. In particular, there is no clearly defined 'off screen' space like the off-stage space in the theatre, hence no area that is positively and fixedly defined as for ever inaccessible, 'where the plotting takes place': no hidden space that may function as a stand-in for the spectator's unconscious, and which may therefore lure her into the stage space/play in the way that Green suggests.

I would argue however that, in a sense, cinema can offer more in these terms than the theatre, for the spectator is repeatedly 'given back', in every change of shot that reveals new space, the off-screen space that the previous shot has denied her. In the cinema, the manifest action, the 'plot', as Green terms it, in distinction to the off-stage 'plotting', seems itself to extend to off-screen space by means of the movement from shot to shot. In this case, there may no sense of a 'forbidden' space that can never be transgressed, since off-screen space repeatedly becomes naturalised and known.

If, on the other hand, off-screen space may, in the moment before it is 'given back', be experienced, as Green suggests of the theatre, after all as forbidden and standing in for the unconscious, then the boundaries to it are transgressed with every cut, and what is hidden is always being revealed. It is as if there no are no limits to what the spectator may 'find out' in the rather covert, guilty pleasures of cinema; as though she is allowed to imagine scenes which, for a moment — for the duration of a shot — are off screen and inaccessible, but which in fact may be given to her each time in the following shot. While, therefore, on the one hand, this process may negate the idea of an encounter with the unconscious — since everything is made conscious — on the other hand, by giving access to the ostensibly forbidden off-screen space, cinematic operations seem to make access to the unconscious more possible. Each single shot sets up the desire for what may be (but is not yet) revealed by the next: cinema functions as tease and seducer.

Central to the view that cinema/spectator relations are determined by the spectator's look is an assertion of the distance of the spectator from

the screen: controlling, and voyeuristic. The spectator's place in relation to the screen space remains the same as criticism has traditionally assumed — outside it. Green's argument introduces an alternative account of the mechanism of the look, which provides a useful model for considering how the workings of cinematic space may implicate the spectator in its action on screen.

This possibility, I argue, is intrinsic to the process of getting 'involved', or 'caught up', in a film narrative. At certain moments, determined by a film operations as well as by a subjective, psychic trigger, we 'cross' the screen barrier and psychically step over into the action of the film, moving into the space of the film, to the place of the screen-playing, as by the same token our psychic operations 'move' us into the potential space where our own playing takes place.

Meet me in St. Louis: the opening — an invitation into potential space

The work of the opening of the *Meet me in St. Louis* for the playing spectator is to make available for the spectator a place on screen and to set up her psychic move into her own potential space. It also establishes the setting of the narrative, introduces the main characters, locates them within both their physical environment (the Smith's house, inside and out) and in their relationship to each other, and introduces the film as a musical.[8]

The film opens with an extra-diegetic chorus singing the title song 'Meet me in St. Louis, meet me at the Fair' as the credits roll on. A background chorus invites the listener to meet an unknown speaker ('me') at the Fair, in a story-like town at a particular moment in history (1904) with a promise of imaginary childhood pleasures and excitement. In its direct first-second person address the film announces itself as discourse, with a place for the spectator. This is a first invitation into potential space, the domain of playing: as Britton (1978) points out, the historical moment of the actual city is transformed into an idealised setting for a family romance (p.4). The city will become the displaced focus for the family's wishes and fears of change, and the fair a metaphor for a young girl's growth into sexuality and assumption of her family's and society's values. The city takes on the qualities of a 'real' (essentially a contradiction in terms) utopia (Dyer, 1977). It is an actual city, holding an actual historical event, but, at the same time, the

[8]In a detailed analysis of this establishing sequence Beth Genne (1983) focuses on 'Minnelli's style': the use of the moving boom camera, for which Minnelli was renowned; his composition, decor, colour and light; and in particular, for this sequence and film, the co-ordination of the music with the movement of camera and characters, to produce 'an integrated musical'.

projection of the film's characters' desires at particular moments in the film; in the address to the spectator, her wishes and fantasies are also evoked.

The singer-speaker is anonymous, consisting simply of the voices of the chorus — the chorus that 'takes over' in the way familiar to musicals, from the narrative character once s/he has established s/he is singing. This moves the spectator outside the film space. The song begins momentarily before the credits, with a muted fanfare which will herald each new episode and the Fair itself, so at this moment there is not yet any place for the spectator except in the singing, no speaker except the singer — except that there is also the suggestion of a dance: the song is in 3/4 time and is in fact taken up as a traditional waltz a few minutes into the film, by the old-style grandfather dancing. If we project ourselves into a place where there is speaking, but no one is there, the speaker becomes ourselves, speaking our wishes. So, the spectator at this moment has the possibility of two positions: both outside the film's diegesis (which is barely yet established) but also already in the screen, narrative space as speaker and receiver of the invitation.

To begin the film with a song/dance, without a competing visual element, may serve as a particularly strong invitation to enter the intermediate domain. As there is nothing, or no-one, concretely 'out there' — the music being disembodied — the music is internalised, and the spectator 'put back' into herself. It is as if the film is already embedding itself in the spectator's own psyche, so that the image that will in a moment emerge onto the screen will seem to be partly projected from herself.

The dance beat also ties in the music and the movement to the verbal signifiers, the down beat accenting the words, Meet, (St) Louis and Fair; the invitation, the place and the magical fair. The difficulty in resisting the dance comes, precisely, from a physical response to the 'catchy' tune and rhythm — the spectator's body moving, even inwardly, to the fast beat inside the emphatic down beat swing which contains and frames it; the rhythm is measured but with an underlying sense of excitement, in the faster pulse which is barely contained and which could break out (as the feet of the waltzers move quickly inside the slower sway of their bodies, each contained by the other). In this way this dance tune can be registered as representative of a delimited zone, yet one where, in terms of playing and fantasy, anything might be possible. The invitation is taken up from the song — which moves on to announce the other theme tunes, both on the sound track and on the credits — by the 'greeting card' device, which introduces each episode of the film. This also suggests an invitation, though less markedly than the sung invitation, to the fair (a greeting card may or may not be an invitation) and again from an anonymous speaker.

At first the card consists only of a wavy, rather ornate border, marking the sense of period, against a dark blue background, the inner part of the card, which so far (although in fact momentarily) remains blank and empty. This recalls the framing of the film screen, defining the space of the film's action, marking it off as a seemingly separated space, a framing-off from the world, within which another world is given form.

This blank greeting card offers the experience of potential space in various ways: firstly in that its central space is materially 'potential', a space to be filled, where the subject 'waits' to discover and make the form that will emerge from or be put into it; secondly as an invitation for the subject to 'move' into it psychically and metaphorically, as she psychically shifts into potential space. The sense of material, perspective space in depth established by the dark blue background is important because it suggests iconically the space of action and movement, rather than that of a flat surface. Thirdly, the blank space has something of the quality of a mandala, a space onto which the looker can project the images that arise in meditation, conceived as the images of an aspiration for unity with an inner self or God. In psychoanalytic terms this is a space for the projection of the looker's desire; the two longings converge in a desire for a lost unity, with God, or with the Mother. The specific offering of this film is the possibility of projecting onto the screen-play wishes that have already been set up around childhood pleasures in the utopian town, prefigured in the title, the credits and the song.

What the space actually becomes 'filled' with is a picture of a house (the Smith's family house) set right back, with a coach and horse in the foreground. This will be the home of the film, the major site of its and our wishes.

Here, just before the film is set in motion, I will pause to consider where the spectator is now placed. She may have been inwardly singing along with the theme song and moving with the dance rhythm of its beat as both receiver and speaker of the invitation. The subject/enunciator of the singing, where language is giving way to

bodily movement, is already in a discourse that is different from what we habitually engage in and with which we negotiate our relations with the outer world. At the same time, as receiver of the invitation, without being able to respond to — in part because the song has already moved on to others — we are also receivers of the film, waiting to see what will be presented and for it to take us on its pre-determined route. Our position, that is, is analogous to that of the baby in potential space in relation to a transitional object. It will both 'find' and 'create' what the mother will present: the great paradox of the intermediate area. As with the baby, both our passive, receiving and our active, making positions are in operation at the same time. We will both make and receive the film; we will be 'in' it but not 'fixed' by it.

The camera moves forward, in a movement that takes the spectator towards the house (the perspective is well marked in this picture) and which leaves the image of the coach and horse to the far left, all but the horse's head off frame; a framing which, if continued, could be disconcerting.

At this point however the picture comes to life; the coach and horse begin to move, right, towards centre across the screen; the movie story has begun. The moment is marked but, happening quickly and fluidly, not strongly; the magic of an inanimate object coming to life is also given as 'natural'. In the illusion making of potential space, pictures simply come to life. This too recalls the moment of play and illusion when the baby has the sense of making what is in fact presented to it, with an accompanying sense of excitement and power — a power, which, however far from constricting or forcing its object, brings something to life, makes it happen. In potential space the question of

who makes the coach move and sets the story in motion, is irrelevant, and not asked. Certainly it involves the spectator as she is taking part, and is moved into the picture, in the very moment of its coming alive. The camera tracking right maintains this involvement for the spectator, in a movement which recalls the fundamental exhilaration and surprise of the cinema as moving pictures.

In a typical Minnelli movement a boy on a bicycle goes towards the house, is tracked by the camera, and in a rapid, fluid dissolve we are taken into the kitchen, further into the space of the story and image, to the centre of the Smith's house, the 'heart' of the family, the setting for their and our story. The spectator is in place, and the story-playing is about to begin.

Chapter 3 THE PLAYING SPECTATOR

> And on the basis of playing is built the whole of man's experiential existence. No longer are we either introvert or extrovert. We experience life in the area of transitional phenomena, in the exciting interweave of subjectivity and objective observation, and in an area that is intermediate between the inner reality of the individual and the shared reality of the world that is external to individuals.
>
> (D.W.Winnicott, 1971, p.64) .

In the previous chapter I argued that the interaction of the spectator's move into potential space and the film's operations enables her psychically to find a 'place' on screen. In concrete terms I go on to consider the question: finding herself in the screen-space, how does the spectator now take up a place in the action of the film-play? In this and the following two chapters I pose two possibilities: that she may either take an active part, in which she retains autonomy in relation to the filmic process, the position that I am designating as playing; or she may take a passive position, caught up in an unconscious structure over which she has little control, a point at which her playing breaks down. These two positions, 'active' and 'passive', which I also designate as 'conscious' and 'unconscious', are closely linked and easily merge into each other, since by willingly taking up a playing position the spectator may also open herself to the passive position that catches her unawares. Moreover, as a transitional mode, playing is always informed by both the inner (unconscious) and the external (conscious) domains. At the same time, paradoxically, as a derivative of the transitional object, as a bridge, playing also keeps these domains

separate and the percolation of unconscious into conscious can be mediated — managed and made use of by the subject.

When I go on to discuss the 'breakdown' of playing I will be considering those instances when the subject is 'taken over' by the unconscious, retreats to her inner world and therefore, momentarily at least, can no longer play. At all times the boundaries between inner and outer, unconscious and conscious are tenuous and fluctuating; and I will discuss the shifting relationship and movement between them in varying terms in these three chapters, as I explore playing, fantasy, psychic reality and the unconscious. In this chapter I will propose that the central feature of the playing spectator is a full and active participation in the minute-by-minute process of the film-play, and that this is an experience that gives her a sense of creative control.

Winnicott's account of playing extends and develops his concept of transitional phenomena and of potential space as the location for cultural activity. As a derivative of transitional phenomena playing becomes a vital and pervasive psychic process for the adult as well as the child. Although he was to diverge from them significantly, Winnicott's notion of playing also had its origins in Freud (who theorised about playing) and Klein (who used playing to practise the psychoanalysis of children). While playing is seen as a conscious ego-related activity, all three psychoanalysts emphasise, in different ways and using different terms, a close relationship, even a continuum, between playing and the unconscious.

For Freud, playing begins with children's fantasy and make-believe games, which are both underpinned by unconscious processes. In 'Creative Writers and Daydreaming' (1908), he argues that adults' daydreaming has its origins in children's make-believe play and suggests a continuum between both these activities and popular fictional romance (today the same point may be applied to Hollywood cinema). He emphasises the child's emotional investment in its playing, which is replaced by the writer's attitude to his fiction. In both cases the question of the activities' relation to reality is not an issue that concerns those engaged in them.

Freud's analysis of the relationship between daydreaming, children's playing and fiction throws up the difficulty in practice of drawing clear demarcation lines between different forms of play and fantasy, and suggests a reason for the overlap in the use of the two terms. If, for instance, we take dreaming to be one end of the continuum of a fantasising process which is quite clearly not under the subject's conscious control, and fiction-making as being clearly a conscious process, the lines of demarcation are nevertheless unclear: novelists habitually speak of their characters 'visiting' them or refusing to do what their authors want while, on the other hand, even the course of a dream may be subject to modification by the dreamer.

In everyday life, too, the lines between different modes and levels of playing and fantasising easily merge. If 'no human being is free from the strain of relating inner and outer reality' (Winnicott, 1971, p.13), in that process we continually remake stories about our own histories and those of other people, and invent scenarios for our futures to match

our desires. The levels of 'reality' in such activity are not easy to distinguish.

For example, thinking about the practicalities of such an apparently mundane matter as a committee meeting may seem a realistic, practical matter. Yet while the wish to get one's point of view accepted may be a matter of external convenience it may also be heavily cathected by the peremptory demands of 'His Majesty The Ego', the basis for Freud of every daydream (Freud, 1908, p.138). Planning what one will say may seem to be a rational activity but it also involves story-making, a form of playing, which is unable fully to take into account the need to adapt to another's responses in the actual event; for example, negative attitudes to the chairperson of the committee might be based on unconscious Oedipal fears and desires involving the wish to replace the rival parent. In this kind of everyday situation, positions from reality-based activity, through story-making, daydreaming and deep-rooted fantasy structures are continually shifting and in flux.

Winnicott assumes a continuity between the unconscious and conscious in a different way, introducing a new dimension through his account of playing as a derivative of the transitional phenomenon and in his model of the intermediate area or potential space which gives a 'place' for playing as privileged psychic process. In 'Playing: a theoretical statement' (1971, ch.3), on the one hand he posits playing as an activity of the ego, but, on the other, by tying the notion to the infant's use of the transitional object, he also insists that it remains connected to inner, psychic reality. On the one hand playing remains a process which has a regulating function related to ego-activity — Winnicott stresses its quality of 'quiet satisfaction' and the

'preoccupation' akin to the concentration of older children and adults (p.39). From this perspective 'the instincts are the main threat to playing as to the ego' (ibid). On the other hand, for Winnicott as for Klein (though with much less emphasis), playing has its origins in bodily experiences, being connected with the manipulation of objects and associated with aspects of bodily excitement. At the same time, however, too-strong instinctual 'excitement' can cause playing to cease.

However, for Winnicott the possibility of 'instinctual arousal' is less important than the 'precariousness' of its intermediate position: 'Play is always exciting ... since it always deals with the knife-edge between the subjective and that which is objectively perceived' (Winnicott, 1968, p.332). In this sense, playing is creative, involving the use of illusion which also depends exactly on the interplay between inner and outer: 'without hallucination the child puts out a fragment of dream potential and lives with this sample in a chosen setting of fragments from external reality' (Winnicott, 1971, p.51) — just as, in infancy, it was able to establish an exact contiguity between 'discovering' and 'creating' the mother's breast, and subsequently the transitional object.

A development of this process of making something from what is found is Winnicott's use of the 'squiggle game' which he used in his diagnostic consultations with children (described in 'The Squiggle Game' Winnicott, 1989, pp.299-317). The participants take it in turns to find, create and develop representational objects out of each other's formless, arbitrary 'squiggle'. In its mixture of spontaneity and deliberate form and story making and its need for intra- and inter-personal sensitivity, this game (which was a game before Winnicott used it for his work) encapsulates Winnicott's view of playing. As

André Green puts it of the game: 'meaning does not emerge complete ... it is for us to construct it ... meaning is not discovered, it is created ... an absent meaning ... a potential meaning' (Green, 1978b, p.185). He is discussing the analytic situation but in the cinema too the spectator has to construct her meaning, firstly from 'marks' on the screen into an image, then out of isolated shots into a narrative. The spectator too has to allow the film's meaning to emerge as it unfolds in front of her, and in her interaction with it. An analogous process is proposed by Modell to exist in primitive cave painting, where formations in caves were used as parts of the painting in the way that 'objets trouvés' are used in modern art: 'the created and the actual environment interpenetrated'. What is created is not an entirely new mechanism but a 'transformation of that which already exists' (Modell, 1970, p.244).

The development of the capacity to play has become for Winnicott perhaps the most important aim of therapy, for the adult as well as the child: 'Play is the universal ... playing facilitates growth and therefore health; playing leads to group relationships (Winnicott, 1971, p.41). Winnicott's playing can be a specific activity, the prototype for which is children's make-believe, but the capacity to play can also inform the person's whole approach and orientation to everyday living. In the adult, the capacity to play may be discerned, for instance, in 'choice of words, in the inflections of the voice, and indeed in the sense of humour' (Winnicott, 1971, p.40).

In an important sense playing gives an experience of 'control' over the external world. This may seem surprising, because the wish to control is usually characterised as a rigidity and an inability to allow objects their separate existence. In part the player experiences a sense of

'magical' control because, operating in potential space with the transitional object, a strictly demärcated degree of omnipotence may still pertain, stemming from the baby's relationship with, and use of, the mother's breast when it experienced the breast as being under its own control as a part of itself. The sense of omnipotence is modified, however, in that the transitional object is the first 'not-me' object; this introduces the sense of a relationship, a dynamic interplay with another. In Winnicott's use of the term 'control' there is also a suggestion of the subject being able to 'make her mark' in the minute-by-minute creative interaction with the world: as he puts it:

> Play gives the child control over a limited area. While the child finds limited power to control he or she at the same time discovers the unlimited scope of the imagination ... Through play the child deals with the external reality creatively. In the end this produces creative living and leads to the capacity to feel real and to feel life can be used and enriched ... without play the child is unable to see the world creatively and in consequence, without the experience of playing, the person feels unrelated to the world and is thrown back on compliance and a sense of futility or on the exploitation of direct instinctual satisfactions.
>
> ('Notes on Play', Winnicott, 1989, p.60).

('Compliance' is a word which Winnicott uses quite frequently with rather chilling effect). The result of the failure to play is such a sense of being cut off from the world that it can lead to a sense of psychic deadness. This for Winnicott is the difference between being able, or not, to play; if the person cannot create his or her own world, in this sense the world does not exist.

Although playing is an area of activity where the conflict between reality testing — the demands of the ego — and the pleasure principle of the id does not operate, it can also enable the subject better to adapt to the demands of the external world when she 'returns' to it from her playing. This point is made by James Britton, an educationist who explores children's make-believe and related activities such as listening to stories from Winnicott's perspective, in an article 'The third area where we are more ourselves' (Britton, 1977). Britton describes playing as having an 'assimilative function' for the child, in contrast with what he describes as 'escapism' as an 'attempt to avoid the claims of real life ... lessening the possibility of an adequate response' (ibid p.46). The move from solitary to group play is marked by a greater need to negotiate the external world — other children — to make a scenario work, but Britton points out that solitary play may also involve working over a relationship between inner and outer material. Winnicott contrasts playing with escapist fantasising: playing 'takes up time and space'; in playing one has to 'do things, not simply to think or to wish' (Winnicott, 1971, p.40). The 'characteristic of play is pleasure' (Winnicott, 1989, p.59); it also has a use. Playing comes to be seen not only as both a means of negotiating reality and as a 'relief' from it, but beyond that as a continual reworking — or replaying — of that infantile state where the process of differentiation between inner and outer has not yet been established. The continuation of the capacity to play through adulthood is 'an achievement in human growth' (Winnicott, 1989, p.59), a sign of psychic health and 'aliveness', where the individual experiences him or herself as 'making' his or her world, rather than as being constructed by it.

Making play: ***The Purple Rose of Cairo***

Cecilia, the heroine of *The Purple Rose of Cairo*, takes a part in the screen play and both makes and finds her film/transitional object when Tom, her hero in the film she is watching, abandons the playing he has come from to join her in the auditorium. Her desire for him brings him 'alive', although there remain limits to her 'control' over the process. He is a 'great kisser' but beyond the kissing the lights fade and their love making is controlled by the censor. He can win a 'clean' fight but loses when Cecilia's husband turns dirty.

This playing between two characters, in the space between film and spectator, may be seen in the light of André Green's (1978b) account of the analytic setting as a play space (presented in Ch. 2) where the 'doubles' of the analyst and analysand encounter each other to create the 'analytic object' (a play object), which, drawing on Winnicott, Green explores as the aim of analysis. In these terms the 'double' of Tom, who is no longer simply either character or actor, encounters Cecilia — or rather her 'double', the wishing or playing aspect of her, — in a space that becomes almost a facsimile of the real world, where fact and fiction cannot be distinguished. Eventually the situation gets quite out of their control and reality and fiction become disturbingly confused as the protagonists try to realise their potential world.

An account of the beginning of *The Purple Rose of Cairo* by Mary Ann Doane (1987) uses the opening image of Farrow's 'rapt' face to explore issues of sexual difference in the cinema, particularly the representation of the female spectator. She argues that the sense of 'familiarity' of Farrow's image, caught up in the 'lure' of cinema and her own longings, comes from her being presented as a woman, since it

would be difficult to imagine dominant cinema presenting a man in this 'rapt' state — at the very least, the contents of his fantasy film would be different. Doane focuses on Farrow's rapt face to raise questions about the spectator's psychic closeness to or distance from the screen action (arguing that the woman spectator is always represented as unable to maintain a distance) and judges Tom's move off-screen to be a demonstration of the hallucinatory strength of Cecilia's fantasised wishing (Doane, 1987, pp.1-2).

From the perspective of Winnicott's view of playing, I offer a different reading. At first we may indeed read Farrow as 'rapt' — 'transported', 'wholly engrossed', 'carried out of this world' (Chambers Dictionary) — entirely wrapped up in, lost in the film. At this moment she is inert, inactive, absent as a subject as she repeatedly re-watches the film. However, out of this engrossment in the film comes her different state of playing. When Tom steps out into the auditorium, the film and its spectator interact as Cecilia starts to make her own, different, film out of the one she has been watching. Tom weaves into her life and she later into his, when she steps over into the screen, to the outrage of the other characters. She is a part of the film, 'in it', yet she is also active as she reconstructs it for her playing.

Cecilia enters the film theatre as a relief from her life; she gets 'lost' in the film. However, out of her total immersion in it she becomes able also to play with it: both to 'create' and interact with the scenario. She neither passively accepts it as it is, nor omnipotently hallucinates or appropriates it entirely for her own purposes. Rather the autonomy of her object — Tom, and indeed the whole film — ensures that she interacts and plays along with it, in the intermediate space between

them. Further, the spectator is also invited to play, both through her psychic move into her own potential space, and by being offered several positions in relation to the film, to identify not only with the narrative or with the heroine's wishing — which in any case is ironised by the film — but also by being put in the place of the illusionist, the film-maker, and the knowing viewer, all possibilities at the same time.

The playing is subversive; fiction and reality become intriguingly mixed and their boundaries blurred. The leader of the cinema orchestra announces, 'every man for himself", throws away his baton, and start to tap-dance across the platform/screen. Playing has released new freedoms and energies and by the end it will be stopped by the film producers and distributors, afraid of the implications of everyone making their own film and of the complaints from those who like their film as it is.

At the close of the film Cecilia, like any spectator, has to choose between her film fantasy and external reality, and by this time it is with some relief both for her and the spectator that the inner/outer distinction and boundaries are re-established. Cecilia's playing and that of the spectator have to end and it could be said that it ends in Cecilia's disillusionment. While she has found relief from the strain of coping with her dreary existence, she now has to return to her husband, to the reality principle and acceptance of the status quo. But the spectator has seen her in, and has been encouraged to act out with her, a different kind of experiencing, which is more than a passive escapism. If we wished to draw a Winnicottian moral from the film we could say that Cecilia has moved on from her 'rapt' state to the wry, playful and

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knowing comment she makes on her situation in the middle of her adventure: "I've found this wonderful new guy — he's fictional, but you can't have everything".

The film spectator plays

How can the film spectator be thought of as 'playing'? In this and the following sections, I will explore some of the implications of applying Winnicott's notion of playing to a study of the spectator, and will consider aspects of film theory which, I will argue, also have a relationship to the notion of a playing spectator.

In proposing a model of a playing spectator based on the idea of the transitional phenomenon, I am necessarily drawing on Winnicott's view of a subject which begins very early on to establish 'itself' from what is 'outside', although, since this process continues throughout life, separate subjectivity is never achieved absolutely. For Winnicott there is a clear line of development from transitional phenomena to playing; to shared playing; to cultural experience. Therefore the spectator has a pre-existing capacity to play which she brings to and takes away from the film. Without this capacity the spectator does not engage with the film, move into her own potential space or suspend disbelief. At the same time, however, watching the film is a privileged process and the playing spectator is only *actualised* during the process of the spectator-film interaction. In this way the playing spectator is also a subject-in-process, a construct and contributory part of the film-text system, always in flux in the moment-by-moment movement of the film-spectator relationship.

This playing spectator can be compared and contrasted with both the model of a 'subject of cinema' that is fixed and constructed by the film text and with that which is separate and pre-constructed, responding to

the film as one system to another: the one a 'passive', the other an 'active', position.

The difference between a 'passive' and an 'active' spectator may be seen in comparing the work of Heath and Bordwell, referred to in the last chapter on cinematic space. Heath's account of the spectator, whether of classic narrative or of counter cinema, in his essay 'Narrative Space' presents a viewing subject constructed by the film narrative system which leaves no opening for the spectator outside it (Heath, 1981); the film system itself determines whether its spectator is 'unified' or 'split', self-aware or not. This is quite different from that of the playing spectator that I am proposing in this thesis: Heath's spectator is played and moved by the film but does not himself play; the film makes the subject, the subject does not, as does the playing spectator, make the film.

Bordwell's spectator, on the contrary, is 'active' because he constructs the film's meaning for himself. However, the text is seen as already 'there' in an ideal pre-existing state, waiting to be discovered by the intelligent spectator. In *Narration in the Fiction Film* (1985), Bordwell attempts to account for the spectator's activity that in his previous book, *Film Art* (Bordwell and Thompson, 1986), cited in the last chapter, is largely taken for granted within his description of the film's formal devices. In the later work Bordwell criticises Heath's model of a spectator in 'Narrative space' as being perceived as passive in relation to the film. Bordwell's spectator is active, able to do the work of 'constructing' both the film's narrative and its spatial and other formal relationships; Bordwell here draws on the constructivist approach in cognitive psychology to formulate a spectator who is able to conceive of

and hypothesise about the film, by relating his own set of expectations or constructs to the narrative and formal 'cues' set up by a film. This spectator is one who thinks — Bordwell addresses the question of 'affect' but only in terms of an interplay between expectations met, frustrated or denied. Bordwell's concern, then, is not with a desiring spectator with an unconscious, the subject of psychoanalysis, but with a rational one, the spectator as scientist. His use of constructivism certainly problematises any simple empiricist notion of spectatorship, but does not distinguish between the process of getting meaning from a film and other aesthetic products, or indeed from any other kind of perception. Nor is there any question of the spectator playing a part in, identifying with, or being 'played' on by, a film.

In this sense Bordwell's analysis suggests little of a dynamic relationship between the spectator and the text which is important to the notion of the spectator at play. Bordwell's spectator as constructor of the film's meaning is indeed active, but unlike the playing spectator, is entirely preformed. The playing spectator, like Winnicott's notion of the transitional phenomenon from which it derives, is in 'an in-between' position in relation to the models assumed by Bordwell and Heath: she both is and is not a construct of the film-viewing process.

In the particular relationship between the film and the playing spectator, the 'distance' between them fluctuates. The spectator psychically moves in and out of the screen action, as do the characters in *The Purple Rose of Cairo* literally. The film does not 'consume' the spectator but neither is she able to destroy it by complete appropriation of it to her own purposes. For the spectator for whom a film is a play object, there is a compromise between the film 'out there' and 'inside',

between its being at the same time 'found' and 'created'. The spectator can use the film object in a non-exploitative and creative way, in a process where film and spectator are separate but interactive.

The spectator is already in a state of preparedness for making the film her own scenario by her movement into the domain of potential space, which is made possible by her capacity to play, her wish to accept the film's fictional world and by the very act of going to the setting of the cinema. The spectator cannot play if she sets up defences against engaging with the film — for instance for its 'non- reality', its 'sentimentality' or 'silliness'. That is, she has to be prepared to want, as Freud puts it, 'to withdraw from the pressure of critical reason' (Freud, 1905, p.175).[1] If she is unwilling, for instance if she feels unsafe in doing so, then the spectator will not play but will reject the film; it is often observed by film studies teachers that films which can engage an adult or a child may embarrass a college-aged student. Freud comments: 'the power of criticism has increased so greatly in the later parts of childhood and in the period which extends over puberty that the pleasure in liberated nonsense only seldom dares to show itself directly' (ibid). In Winnicottian terms the movement into the psychic domain of potential space is refused by the spectator.

If she does make this move, however, the spectator may take a greater risk than that of 'engaging in liberated nonsense' (Freud, 1905, p.175). She needs to be able to tolerate, or indeed be excited by, the possibility

[1]In *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious* Freud discusses the use of jokes and 'nonsense' as the adult derivatives of children's play. (Freud, 1905). The crucial difference between his view and that of Winnicott, it seems to me, is that Freud perceives the 'adult' forms as *substitute* for the child's playing whereas Winnicott's approach is in terms of a *continuity* from child to adult playing and his becomes a broader formulation than Freud's.

that taking part in a film play can lead to her 'takeover' by the film and by her own unconscious before she is able to organise her defences. In this sense playing may put her in a vulnerable position.

Like the child at play, the spectator 'manipulates external phenomena in the service of the dream and invests chosen external phenomena with dream meaning and feeling' (Winnicott, 1971, p.51). Events on screen come to be 'used' and invested with aspects of her own inner world. The spectator who psychically moves into the film-space takes up a playing position which will involve her in continually reconstructing the film as it also takes place in front of her; she will be making her film. The process of playing can continue after the film is over, when the spectator may use it to 'play' with other people or alone; for children this might involve make-believe games based around the film characters and narrative; for adults, talk (gossip) and daydreaming.

As a derivative of the transitional phenomenon, the spectator's playing is marked by ambiguity: the film, and whatever play the spectator makes of it, has the attribute of being both 'true' and 'not true' at the same time; since the film is both discovered and created by the spectator she therefore seems both to have and not to have some 'control' in the process. The spectator is also, reciprocally, continually reconstructed by the film and the distinction between herself as subject and her part in the film-play can become unclear. That place in the film for the spectator might be as a fictional character; narrator/enunciator; author; observer; and these positions will fluctuate and may also coincide simultaneously. As a preliminary look at the playing spectator I analyse a segment from *Citizen Kane*.

The spectator plays: two shots from *Citizen Kane*

Two shots from *Citizen Kane* (1941) show the well-known moment, characteristic of the film, where a photograph of the staff of *The Chronicle*, rival newspaper to Kane's *Inquirer*, 'comes alive'.

In the first shot Kane and his newspaper colleagues, Bernstein and Leland, are looking at the photo in the window of the newspaper office. Reflected in the window so that they seem to face the camera, they peer through the glass like acquisitive school children and comment on the quality of the staff and the paper's circulation, noting that it took twenty years to build up that staff. The camera draws back and holds the shot of the staff photo. A dissolve to the next shot reveals Kane standing in front of the 'photo' and the camera draws back to reveal a photographer: the photo has 'come alive'. Kane announces a time ellipse of eight years and that the staff are now working for him. The occasion is a banquet to celebrate Kane's birthday. The transition is so quick (and play on time ellipses are common in the film) that in so far as we are engaged in the narrative process we accept the illusion of the fictional 'reality' of the situation: the staff are indeed alive and working for Kane eight years on. Kane has acquired them as picture objects for his use.

We are further implicated in the action in two different ways, within and outside the diegesis. Firstly we are 'included' in Kane's address to his diegetic audience, since we are placed 'in front' of Kane's audience as he addresses them off-screen 'behind' us. In this way we are invited to share in his triumph which is the more seductive for being a double

one, belonging both to an adult and to a child. Obviously Kane has fulfilled his adult business tycoon ambition of a successful takeover. But the juxtaposition of the two shots and the cinematic 'trick' suggests also an association between the adult's success and an infant's wish-fulfilment. Kane has got exactly and literally what he wanted, what he might have imaged for himself as he peered, with childlike desire, at the photo in the window. He possesses the photo — he owns the men in it — with the absolute power of giving life. His 'ability' to bring the photo alive by magic is like the wish-fulfilment of an infant who can omnipotently hallucinate its desire with no compromise with reality and no awareness of the difference between its fantasy image and the actual material world. Caught up in the operation of these two shots the spectator participates in the playing out of both the adult's success and the child's omnipotence. (And indeed the succeeding episode in the film most markedly demonstrates Kane's 'rise' and at the same time the inevitability of his 'fall' precisely because of his failure to compromise with the reality demands of the external world and his attempts to own and control other people.)

At the same time as being given a part in the screen action we are in the same movement placed outside it. It is the extra-diegetic spectator who is aware of the 'joke' of the photo coming alive (of which she has momentarily been the victim), for the diegetic audience is only included in the narrative's celebration of Kane's birthday in the following shot. As participant in the joke the spectator is addressed by Kane not as diegetic audience but as the film spectator. In this extra-diegetic address (and the cinematic reflexivity is marked also by the obviously false time ellipse) we become aware of a 'director', maker of the cinematic magic of the film, 'Orson Welles'. This is easily achieved

in this heavily authored film since Orson Welles himself plays Kane, and yet signs the film off as 'himself' as master-director, when he names himself and the actors at the end. 'Kane', the character of a businessman who can get everything he wants is, for the spectator, also 'Welles' the film director or 'author' who can wield magic in the cinema. Both address us at the same time. The place where the spectator finds herself, though, is not at this point back in the auditorium watching herself watching the film, for the film has fully implicated her in its workings, both within and outside the action, on and off screen. She is given instead the place of 'Welles' the director, magician, joker, and stand-in now for the spectator.

These two shots then, I suggest, construct a playing spectator who moves at the same moment between being within and outside the narrative fiction, as participant and activator. The lightning transition to an extra-diegetic allusion within the same narrative space allows the spectator to participate in a piece of audacious illusion-making which is both 'true' and 'not true' at the same time (the photo comes alive).

Existing in potential space and presented with this 'bit' of complex cinematic 'illusion' the playing spectator both 'discovers' this cinematic moment of play, magic and illusion (positioned as cinema spectator who accepts what she sees) and at the same time 'creates' it (positioned as 'Kane' the tycoon and 'Welles' the director). The notion of a spectator at play, constructed by these rapid shifts of position in the space of these two shots, seems to me to fit the pleasurable, rather edgy energy (the 'precariousness' of playing) that is a characteristic of the whole film.

Making the film

I have argued that this extract from *Citizen Kane* constructs a playing spectator who is sufficiently engaged to take a part psychically in the narrative action but at the same time sufficiently distanced to retain a sense of autonomy in relation to it. Most relevant is the coexistence of processes that draw attention to the film's operations and place the spectator outside the action but not outside the film's system altogether, and those which bind her into the narrative, particularly to the working out of Kane's wishes. The cinematic reflexivity invites the spectator to take the place of the film-maker at the same time as it reminds her of her own status as viewer, while the narrative situation gives her a stake in taking part and in continuing to watch. Overall it represents the precarious in-between position of playing, where the subject does not quite know 'where' she is. To take an active part in the playing, the subject needs to direct as well as to perform. In film studies terms, I will argue, she is positioned as 'author' and as 'speaker' of the film.

The question of the identity, placing and function of the 'author' of a film was a central debate during the early 1970s that has still not been entirely resolved. John Caughie's collection of essays, *Theories of Authorship* (1981), traces the shifts in concepts of the author in film studies from the 1950s to 1970s: during this period the Romantic-derived notion of an individual consciousness who stamped his or her unique vision on a work became displaced by approaches to the author which at most were concerned with, for example, the figuring of the author in the texts that bore his name or with the notion of the author

'function' for public, institutional or personal use: this was a notion of the 'author' as a construct rather than as an individual.

This change was particularly clearly marked in film studies, since the 'author' of Hollywood cinema had only been 'discovered' (in the person of the director) in the 1950s by the critics of *Cahiers du Cinéma*, in a move which had contributed to endowing some of these films with the status of 'art'. The interest in the director's creative responsibility for a body of films, expressed particularly through his mise en scène, was taken up in the work of the British journal *Movie*, which published articles on Minnelli as author of 'his' films (Cameron, 1962; Shivas, 1962). In 1968, however, the notion of the individual author as the authoritative source of a text's meaning was dramatically undermined by Roland Barthes' 'The death of the author'; in film studies an analysis of John Ford's *Young Mister Lincoln* by the Cahiers' editors (1970) traced the film's unsaid, repressed preoccupations and thereby undermined the notion of an overriding 'whole', conscious vision of Ford. Film studies encapsulated in a decade the history of a century-and-a-half of literary studies, which was marked by the change in terminology from 'individual' to 'subject' and from an idealist to a materialist theory.

However the notion of director as creator has continued to make a mark and, as Caughie notes, continues to provide a source of pleasure for the spectator, particularly through semi-popular criticism which classifies films by their directors (Caughie, 1981, p.15). As I pointed out in Chapter 1, this has been one way in which *Meet Me in St. Louis* has been offered for the viewer's enjoyment.

What is important for the playing spectator is a figure of the director as maker of the film that she can make use of for her own 'making' of the film. Caughie argues that the pleasure of recognition of the film as construct occurs wherever a stylistic feature interposes on the narrative so that we notice the effect; in moments 'of admiration and delight in performance' (Caughie, 1981, p.204), the spectator places or finds the 'author'. In a response to the debates around the author raised by the 'Young Mr Lincoln' essay, Ben Brewster (1973) argues the case for an authorial sub-code in the film's system: in so far as a film consists of an interplay of different codes, then it may be possible to identify marks of the director/auteur in one sub-code among many running through a body of his films. In this way (as considered in Ch.1) 'Minnelli's' films may be characterised by stylistic devices such as 'his' frequent and particular use of the moving camera or, as Elsaesser (1979) puts it, a consistent underlying theme about the struggle between the individual and society, marks which the spectator expects and enjoys. The figure of the director comes to represent for the viewer the source of the film as a created artefact and a location for the playing spectator's illusion of 'making' the film even as she 'finds' it on screen.

For Caughie, the spectator's recognition of the figure of author as maker moves the spectator into another position: he is 'dislodged' from the centred place where classic narrative has put him. However although he is 'put outside the film' he remains 'within the textual space' (Caughie, 1981, p.204), like the spectator in the scene from *Kane*. Caughie discusses the pleasure of such moves in the relation of the viewer to the film in terms of her recognition of its 'performance'; of the playing spectator I would take this a step further and argue that, in the moment of recognition of the film as artefact, as she steps outside

the film's action, she also moves into the place of director, to take her place as the active and deliberate 'maker' of the film.

For the spectator who comes to the film ready to play, the figure of the author within the film's system is not unconnected with her image of the director outside it, who is increasingly figured in popular cinema's attention to itself as cinema through spectacular technique, cross-referencing and generic self-parody. At the same time constructions of the director, who often today achieves considerable secondary circulation as only stars used to do, also invite a stake in the making/constructing of a film. To identify with the director is to take the place of the 'someone' who has control in the Winnicottian sense of being able to 'make a mark' on the external world, in the way that Minnelli did with his given script. The playing spectator imports into her experience of the film her knowledge of the director and his films and is prepared to find, as she reconstructs the film during the course of viewing, the marks of its status as artefact, so that these may come to represent her own ability to play as she takes up that place. Reference to the author both as a figure within the film and as an image outside it involves a celebration of the creative process and of the film-maker as a source of the pleasure to be had from 'his' films.

The reference to the external 'maker' of the film as an 'authority' on what is going on in his films may also, however, work the other way round, as Barthes insists in 'The death of the author' (Barthes, 1968), and restrict the possibility of the spectator making her own reading and therefore of playing. From this point of view the playing spectator does not need to know 'Why does the camera go up now?' as Ian Cameron asks of Minnelli (Cameron, 1962, p.50). On the other hand if such a

question were to occur to the playing spectator during the course of viewing the film it could accompany her sense of the unexpected pleasure of herself making this dramatic movement. How the information is used by the spectator determines whether her knowledge of the 'author' becomes a constraint (for Winnicott the 'compliance' of the person unable to play) or an enjoyment of her own creativity.

This placing of the spectator as 'maker' may be contrasted with an identification with the film's stars, whose image the spectator also 'knows' from outside the film but whose status with regard to the film can be ambiguous; being both 'real life star' (itself a highly constructed image) and fictional character so that the distinction between film and the outside world falters. The merging of character with actor gives the viewer an external stake in the film but blurs the boundaries between life and fiction and is more likely to dissolve the sense of the film as 'artefact', limiting the range of her moves through the film.

Speaking the film

Caughie explores the place of the spectator and the figure of the author within the film as a relation to its *énonciation*, where both spectator and author/director are inscribed within the film's system of articulation. The term énonciation, which is adopted in film studies from the linguist Émile Benveniste, along with its complement, the 'énonçé', refers to the act of speaking; as Nowell-Smith (1976) puts it, 'énonciation , the statement ... means the act whereby an utterance is produced and énonçé ... means what is thereby uttered in itself' (p.27). Together they constitute the 'address' of a film narrative, with an assumed speaker and receiver who may both be marked linguistically,

most obviously in the first and second person. The énonçé is what is said in a text, the énonciation the telling of it that points to the apparent 'speaker' of that text, not to be confused with the fictional narrator who is a part of, and articulated within, the énonçé.

The 'marks' of énonciation may be more or less apparent. Their seeming absence in a text gives it the status of *histoire* compared with *discours* where the marks of énonciation are foregrounded. 'Histoire' is marked linguistically by an apparent neutrality in its telling where there is no apparent speaker or receiver and therefore no énonciation. Histoire operates in the third person and, linguistically, is presented as 'truth', however fantastic in relation to external referents it may in fact be. There seems to be no personalised source for the statement. As Nowell-Smith puts it: 'Histoire is always "there" and "then"' (1976, p.27).

This distinction has been used to characterise dominant narrative cinema which also seems to present itself as the 'truth'. This contrasts with *discours* where a narrative is clearly 'told' and the marks of énonciation are clearly signalled. If the viewer expects a narrative to seem like 'truth', the mark of its worth is judged to be whether it is 'realistic' and builds up its diegetic world consistently enough for the viewer not to question its 'truth' and not to be jolted out of his or her illusion of the unfractured unity of film-narrative and of herself as subject (and, as Metz explores it in 'Story/Discourse: A note on two kinds of voyeurism', as voyeur looking on at a scene produced for and perhaps even from himself, Metz, 1982). In this system the film text and the spectator simply (it seems) 'are'. This was the illusionism that critics of the 1970s, following Brecht, were committed to dismantling;

films were to be perceived not with a claim to 'truth' but as clearly 'produced'.

In terms of the playing spectator, the film which foregrounds its marks of énonciation (which, as Caughie notes, may seem to be those of the apparent director/maker of the film but need not be) clearly makes available a place for the playing spectator as the speaker-maker of the film, as I shall go on to argue of the musical. However the case is also more complex; ways into the 'telling' of the film may also be seized by the playing spectator as she takes her pleasures where she makes them, in the way I have suggested that the spectator may make use of the objectified image of the female on screen that Mulvey (1975) postulates. Conversely the increasing self-reflexivity and inter-textuality of current films may be quickly absorbed as a matter of convention by the spectator without disturbing her acquiescence in the film system and in her part in it.

The visibility of the énonciation becomes more marked in the case of irony where there is a gap between two simultaneous discourses, one of them whose point of reference is outside the text but still within its system of énonciation. A well-known example is the opening of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813): 'It is a fact universally acknowledged that a man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife.' Linguistically, apparently articulated as fact, in the third person and passive voice, this statement seems to be histoire but this is put into question by the exaggeration of 'universally'. Whereas the apparent speaker/narrator, within the énonçé, of this nonsensical but apparently generally held opinion, outrageously presented as fact, is given as believing in the statement, we, the reader, know that we are

invited to agree with a 'speaker' outside and beyond the text (the subject of the énonciation) and accept and collude in the unspoken mocking criticism of both the statement and the 'speaker' of that statement. This sets up the reader in a position of collusion with the superior enunciating voice (which we may well construe to be that of 'Jane Austen') in a position of 'knowing' the real truth about the matter; and, I would argue, in a position of playing since we have to play around with the discourses in order to achieve this 'knowing'; in the process, we orchestrate our attitude along with the enunciator, to the forthcoming narrative. If, however, the reader were to remain in this position throughout the narrative her position would become fixed outside the action and her playing would shift to that of the distanced onlooker. Instead she also aligns herself with the characters of the fiction, within the énonçé, and becomes implicated in the narrative.

Meet Me in St. Louis is marked by frequent ironic moments that down-play the film as a 'romance' but contribute to its status as a 'family comedy' (Wood, 1979). Frequently the spectator is given a point of view which puts her in a superior, knowing position compared with some or all of the film's characters. These can work to deflate the expectations the film might have set up (although the spectator also quickly adapts to a different kind of playful expectation): for instance moments of 'romance' are deflated — usually by the inept responses of John Truett, the boy-next-door to Esther: the spectator is shown the 'reality' of the 'terrifying' figure of Mr. Brokauff when Tootie throws flour in his face at Hallowe'en, in a quick camera move to his smiling face; the spectator comes to 'expect' that the phone call from New York will not bring the proposal that Esther expects for her sister, since the

build-up to it is marked by exaggerated acting and planning on her part and the film has shown her 'knowledge' about her sister's affairs to be consistently incomplete. The combination of such moments with others which, by contrast, fully implicate the spectator in the film's action and emotion, even in spite of herself, (as I explore in the next chapter) maintains the spectator of this film in a state of flux and movement.

A clear and unusual example of an analysis which gives an account of the spectator moving between the énonçé and énonciation is (as the title suggests) Nick Browne's 'The Spectator in the Text' (1975), an analysis of a short sequence from John Ford's *Stagecoach* where the travellers, new to each other, have dinner together. Browne demonstrates that the look of the central character in this sequence is undermined for the spectator by an 'implied narrator' presented through the scene's staging and editing. Through point of view shots the viewer appears to be given the controlling 'point of view' of Lucy, the respectable and intolerant young soldier's wife, whose look is validated according to the conventions of narrative cinema by being part of a shot-reverse-shot structure. That of Dallas, the 'good' whore, who together with the John Wayne character, also an outsider, proves her true worth by the end of the film, is, in contrast to Lucy, denied the reverse shot of her apparent point of view shot: we are given shots of Lucy looking at Dallas but not of Dallas looking at Lucy

Unusually for dominant cinema, therefore, the visual point of view in this sequence is subverted by an implied commentary 'that things are not what they seem'; the spectator is invited into the énonciation (which is never stated) to take up the position of Dallas who never

owns the look but whose embarrassment and humiliation is sympathised with, as Lucy is condemned for her exclusiveness. If, however, the spectator does not take up the diegetic look (Lucy's), neither is she exactly given a position of the traditional psychological 'ideal' spectator, who is simply placed outside the whole scene. Instead, suggests Browne, through a combination of editing and staging she is given a 'figurative' place which does not correspond with a literal place of looking, either within or from outside the diegesis; rather her place is of a 'commentator' able to make moral judgements. However the commentating place is apparently set *within* the fiction.

This 'commentating ' place results from the 'rhetoric' of the sequence, which is most clearly set up by the ambiguous positioning of the spectator both 'with' Dallas, whose distress the spectator 'understands' but does not share, and at the same time with Lucy: the spectator is not so identified with Dallas that she re-enacts her distress, because she is at the same time in the place of Lucy, who is doing the humiliating. This analysis locates the spectator both 'in the text' and 'outside' it — but only there because of her other place inside it, which leads her to make these judgements. The effect Browne suggests, is finally, through 'the control of the point of view', to place the spectator into 'the moral order of the text'. Like the playing spectator, Browne's spectator is in several places at once — with the fictional viewer, with the viewed, and at the same time in a position to evaluate and respond to each. The filmic subject is a plural subject: 'in his readings he is and is not himself' (p.472); the playing spectator is both character and maker, both moved by the film's scenarios and commentating on them.

Fantasy and playing

The possibility of the spectator taking on the énonciation of a film without necessarily assuming its dominant viewpoint is explored in terms of gender in 'The sexual differentiation of the Hitchcock text' by Donald Grieg (1989), who draws on Barthes' analyses of narrative codes in S/Z, Bellour's analyses of Hitchcock and the account of the structure of fantasy by Laplanche and Pontalis (1968), which has been applied in detail to film studies by Elizabeth Cowie (1984). Grieg's major argument is that there is never a single énonciation in a text: firstly, because of the interplay of codes, which turns every text, however apparently 'unified', into a text with multiple 'points of entry' and multiple énonciations; secondly, from the notion of fantasy as a psychic structuring, which enables the spectator to take up a range of identificatory positions in the 'staging' of a fantasy scenario. The apparent overriding source of énonciation of narrative cinema (the masculine and fixed position) can therefore be subverted by the spectator. The use of the model of fantasy in this way provides an alternative to the dominance of the male Oedipal trajectory which Bellour's analysis finds in Hitchcock's films and, further, as the norm in Hollywood cinema.

Grieg's notion of fantasy is similar to the idea of the playing spectator in emphasising the spectator and film in dynamic interrelationship and the spectator's multiple positioning (p.192) but it leaves less room for the spectator to 'make' the films she receives; in fantasy she cannot actively make her mark as she is 'allowed' to in playing.

The concept of the subject that informs the application of fantasy to questions of film spectatorship is a Lacanian-derived subject of desire,

whose movement within the narrative is structured at an unconscious level; desire is an unconscious formation, grounded for Freud in the baby's wish for the lost object, originally its unity with its mother, and for Lacan, whose theory of desire is more complex, in the subject's primary 'lack in being' which is perpetuated through the splitting of the subject through castration that marks the origin of the speaking subject (Benvenuto and Kennedy, 1986, pp.129-31). The essence of desire, as Cowie stresses in 'Fantasia' (1984), is that it can never be fulfilled; what the subject wishes is endlessly to replay its scenarios in the *mise en scène* of desire. The subject (spectator) is bound to the unconscious structuring in which she is 'caught up': impelled and overtaken by what she does not understand and cannot determine.[2] Greig quotes from Laplanche and Pontalis: 'the subject's life ... is seen to be shaped and ordered ... by what might be called, in order to stress this structuring action, "a phantasmic"'. The spectator can enjoy the different positions set in play by fantasy but cannot change them.

Unlike this concept of fantasy and desire, that of the transitional object introduces a bit of the external world; the transitional object is valued for itself, as a not-me, external object, not just for what it represents (the disappearing mother). From the beginning of its emergence by means of the transitional object, the subject's relationship to the external world proceeds in tandem with its relation to its inner world, introducing a variety of inner and outer objects and scenarios which continually co-mingle.

[2]The discussion of fantasy in film studies is taken further in the following Chapter

Winnicott's concepts therefore assume that, through the use of the transitional object, a subject is emerging that is not bound to desire; playing begins to appear as an active, conscious activity, where the subject is able make its mark on the world from a very early stage and in this way the playing spectator is able to make use of the film as a derivative of the transitional object. This relationship to the film can indeed maintain the spectator's 'relative autonomy' that has been claimed for fantasy (Greig, p.186).

Depending on the film that she is watching, this autonomy can be maintained even where the spectator is not aware that she is playing. At moments of obvious surprise when the marks of the énonciation are foregrounded and easily discernible (as in the *Citizen Kane* example, above) then the spectator may be self-aware of her position as the child can be on momentarily stepping out of his playing to direct the next 'scene'. However, the child who is absorbed in playing is aware neither of the process nor of its part in it: similarly in Browne's analysis of the sequence in *Stagecoach* the spectator psychically moves place, makes judgements and allegiances, empathises and takes up positions, but without noticing herself doing so. The difference between this position and that of being unconsciously 'caught up in' the fantasy structure of the film is the difference in Winnicottian terms between the preoccupation that is 'akin to concentration in the adult' (Winnicott, 1971, p.51) and her 'take-over' by the film and her own unconscious which will be discussed in the next chapter.

The Hollywood musical: a playspace for the spectator

The Hollywood musical is a genre that offers itself easily to the notion of a playing spectator: both popularly and academically, musicals are perceived as creating a particular kind of pleasure for the spectator — energising, liberating, participative. Accordingly it is in the first place as a musical that I will argue that *Meet Me in St. Louis* makes available a playing position for the spectator, while its melodrama aspects work towards the breakdown of playing, the focus of the following chapters. However, while I will offer the musical as a particularly marked example of a playful genre, yet, as I demonstrated in my analysis of playing in *Citizen Kane,* it is not the only one; the playing spectator is also potentially a construct of any film-viewer encounter.

I will argue that musicals offer a playspace for the spectator in three main ways. Firstly, whatever their plot, musicals are about performance — putting on a show, staging, play-acting, making rituals — and they therefore tend towards self-reflexivity, establishing a playful and knowing stance towards their status as entertainment. They also make available a place for the spectator to participate in their performance, as maker, performer and audience. Secondly, they present a heightening and transformation of everyday life that enables the outer world to be perceived as a transitional object endowed with aspects of the spectator's inner world. Thirdly, the musical numbers mark a move to a different mode of discourse from the narrative, which can represent a shift to potential space.

Rick Altman (1989) divides the musical into three sub-genres: the 'fairy tale', the 'show' and the 'folk' musical. All have relevance to the

notion of the playing spectator; the 'fairy-tale' musical transforms the world of reality into that of fantasy and blends the two; the show (or backstage) musical invites the spectator into a performance; the folk musical stresses community togetherness and the inclusion of the spectator into that community. For Altman *Meet me in St. Louis* is a clear example of the 'folk musical' (Altman, 1989, ch.8); however, it also has elements of the other two sub-genres. As he defines it, the folk musical celebrates, above all, a nostalgic American past — usually in a rural, sometimes a small town, setting. (In the film the city of St. Louis has the attributes of a small town — Mrs Smith says that "it doesn't seem very big where we live"). In *St. Louis,* a multi-generation family serves as symbol for a small cohesive community, the sub-genre's main celebratory focus.

Altman proposes that all musicals are structured around a couple that the film will eventually bring together; in the folk musical the extended family becomes important not least because it 'facilitates the doubling of the youthful romantic couple with an older one whose relationship is regenerated during the course of the film' (Altman, p.274): Esther obtains the boy-next-door and the final shot of the film shows them side-by-side, alone, their own desire and that of the film fulfilled. The continuity of the family becomes more important, however, than the couple itself: the coupling of the young people takes up less of the film's attention and carries less emotional charge than the conflict arising from Mr Smith's proposal to move to New York and his family's objection to it. The conflict is structured in terms of gender, the father's wish to 'escape' opposed to the women's determination to keep the family together, and is uneven, for Mr Smith is pitted against all the rest of the family, including the maid and

the grandfather. As Altman puts it, the male energy must be channelled back into the community to ensure its continuity, since the folk musical essentially represents a confirmation and celebration of the creation of America through its settling pioneers. The place, in this case St. Louis itself, and the Smith family house, the setting or background for the whole film, are both, in the tradition of the folk musical, celebrated as the fulfilment of the family's wishes. The film's valediction shows the women of the family affirming: "it's all here, right here where we live, right here in St Louis", a celebration of the city which the opening number has already set up.

The focus on the traditional community in the folk musical is reflected in its choice of songs and dance which often drew on, directly or by imitation, folk songs and folk dance: in *St. Louis*, the title song, the 'Trolley Song' and 'Skip to my Lou'. Music, dance and ritual are presented as the natural expression of a spontaneous, open-hearted and simple community.

Altman traces changes in critical approaches to the musical in his introduction to a collection of essays on the genre written mainly in the 1970s. He notes early critical dislike of the genre which was 'more concerned to judge than to analyse' (Altman, 1981, p.2), a stance which persists to this day, partly because of the musical's status as popular entertainment. However, with a growing critical interest in popular culture, film studies took the musical more seriously, analysing both its pleasures and its potential as a 'subversive' form': a rather ambivalent celebration of the musical persists even where, as in Altman's collection, critics have sought to de-mystify its appeal — Altman's own, more popular, illustrated book on the Hollywood

musical (Altman, 1989) is a clear example of a dispassionate critic turned advocate.

The critical essays in Altman's collection present the Hollywood musical, whose history goes back to the beginning of sound in the cinema, as a distinctive form of mainstream Hollywood cinema in not adhering to the 'rules' of classic fictional film: the musical numbers disrupt the narrative unity and coherence constructed by the system of continuity editing, breaking the illusionism of an uninterrupted diegesis. Musicals announce themselves as discourse, foregrounding their énonciation, and as 'performance'. They offer a distinctive kind of pleasure dependent not so much on their narrative as on visual spectacle and the incorporation of song and dance numbers, which introduce into the films a non-representational discourse of a quite different order from the narrative system. Music and dance take over the characters, invade, but also seem to arise naturally from, everyday life, to transform and transcend the material world; and the musical film deploys a range of artful cinematic strategies to involve the spectator in that world. Altman also argues, however, that studies of the musical raise fundamental questions about all narrative cinema, for example 'the insistence on Hollywood's transparency (at the expense of intertextuality, reflexivity, and self parody)' (Altman, 1981, p.6). In this sense the musical is conceived as an exemplum, rather than an 'aberrant', form; and it is for this reason that I can take the musical as a particularly marked but not the only example for the notion of a playing spectator.

The spectator of the musical may be viewed in two ways: on the one hand she is construed as distanced and fragmented, aware of herself as

audience, by the breaks in the narrative; on the other hand, in its relationship to live vaudeville, the musical is claimed to implicate the viewer in its system to a greater extent than many other Hollywood films (for example, Feuer, 1982, Collins, 1981). This contradiction forms the basis for Jane Feuer's study of the musical, published in 1982; she explores the 'seeming paradox' that, although musicals are formally like modernist film and other art (for example she cites Godard's direct address, Fellini's presentation of multiple levels of reality and continuity between dream and waking life, and the surrealists), 'yet the Hollywood musical resembles none of these modernist works. Formally bold, it is culturally the most conservative of genres' (Feuer, 1982, p.viii).

Feuer's argument comes from the 1970s film studies' view, following Bertolt Brecht, that practices that subverted the conventions of realist narrative cinema, foregrounding their énonciation, had the ideological potential to disturb the viewer's acquiescence in narrative cinema's presentation of the status quo. Feuer's project, however, is to 'reveal' how, in the musical, such practices work instead to bind the viewer into the film — to give her only the illusion of participating in the performance, through such devices as direct address to the camera and the use of popular songs to 'include' the film audience in the film's action. It is my proposal that this inclusion in the film is of a specific kind, constituting a direct invitation to the spectator to play, and that this is an aspect of its 'celebratory' stance. Even in the 'anti-musical' from the 1960s onwards, the celebratory impulse of the musical continues and the genre remains intact. In this sense there might be no reason to suppose that the musical could be other than self-perpetuating and self-congratulatory, available for the spectator's

pleasure, in ways which Feuer herself persuasively points to; her argument that it is not a subversive form then seems redundant. However a different kind of 'subversive' possibility for the musical stems from its characteristic ambiguities that invite the spectator to play, since playing itself carries its own anarchic tendency. Playing is to be celebrated precisely because it can be liberatingly subversive of given categories and conventions.

Making a performance

That musicals are about making a show (creating play) is literally the case of the backstage, or 'Show' musical, as Rick Altman (1989) terms it. For example the musicals that Busby Berkeley wrote and the Warner Brothers produced in the early 1930s were about the hard work of putting on a show — a musical — in the face of the Depression and against the competition of the movies. Putting on a show is presented as hard work, involving relatively unglamorous actors depicting ordinary people with a high degree of energy, engaged in getting the money and doing the hard physical work necessary for the task. The labour of production is often highlighted in long rehearsals, which leave everyone exhausted, and in the effort of getting the show financed. *The Bandwagon* (Minnelli, 1953) and *The Chorus Line* (Attenborough, 1986) are later examples of the persistence of this sub-genre; all suggest the hard work but also the fulfilment of putting on a show. On the level of content alone, they suggest that playing is both a relief from and also a serious part of life.

The pay-off for the spectator comes in two ways: firstly there is the presentation of the heightening of everyday life through the energy,

excitement, camaraderie and romance of being engaged in the creative process: characters frequently break into dance or composing on the piano or try out their singing, impromptu, and rehearsals form a large part of the films. Built into this is wish-fulfilment: people fall in love, relationships form, unknowns achieve success, often by a lucky chance (after all their hard work). Working-at-play is shown to bring its rewards. This aspect of these films is not unlike conventional narrative cinema: the spectator is invited to take part in a wish-fulfilment scenario with other 'ordinary' people like herself. The difference is that the plot — the activity the spectator is invited to take part in — is about creating a show, the process of playing itself.

Secondly the spectator is given her own part in the show-making: Jane Feuer explores the means by which musicals attempt to replicate the popular vaudeville forms they largely replaced, in particular the ways in which they invite spectator participation: to play specific roles, to dance and sing along, to become part of the diegetic audience: to become performer and director. For instance the film camera/viewer is addressed directly in a song (against the 'rules' of narrative cinema), sometimes by means of a cut from diegetic audience to a shot that excludes the fictional audience and is addressed directly to the film viewer so that she 'becomes' part of the theatre audience; sometimes, though less commonly, by a direct address to camera, marked by the use of close-ups as well as linguistically (the spectator is addressed directly in the second person). At other times the audience is shown from the viewpoint of the performer in a point-of-view shot, so that the cinema spectator is given his or her position on stage.

For Feuer the purpose of this audience involvement is to implicate the spectator in the creative process and the whole apparatus of entertainment; this is furthered by taking the spectator backstage to a shot from the wings to see the 'reality' of the performer in the process of performing. *St. Louis* demonstrates how a musical can present itself as performance even though it is not ostensibly about putting on a show. Esther and Tootie perform the 'Cakewalk' song ('Under the Bamboo Tree')for their guests, and point-of-view shots include the spectator in the guest audience. Feuer (1982) points out that musicals often use such strategies to bring the viewer into the space and viewpoint of the film's internal audience (Feuer, 1982, p.32); the Show is an extension of simple, folk fun for everyone, and participation the musical's promise to the spectator.

Esther frequently 'presents' herself as if to an audience, either within the fiction or for the spectator. In each solo number she is framed as if on a stage, by a mirror, the porch, a window, and she visibly 'prepares' herself to perform. For instance, she deliberately stages 'Over the Banisters' as her seduction song, this time on the stairs — much used in this film, as in melodrama of the time — as the culmination of her attempt to woo the boy-next-door, at the end of a scene where the camera has followed the pair as they turn off the house lamps. This scene has been presented as more of a seduction for the spectator than the characters — instead of their being framed in shot-reverse close-ups, they have both remained in frame, their faces lit as they look up at the lamps, in an example of the film's careful and beautiful mise en scène. As Garland sings, her face in soft focus, she becomes the star and object of desire for the spectator as well as for the young man. However, like a number of scenes in the film, this ends in a deflation

of the expectations that it seemed to set up, signalling an authorial ironic commentary; John Truett gives Esther a hearty handshake and she is denied her kiss in a familiar move for this film of repression of her desire and a distancing from her point of view.[3] The spectator has been moved between being spectator, performer and finally detached commentator of this scene.

Where the narrative does not involve performance, the very existence of the numbers turns the film into a show for the spectator; for instance both the 'Trolley song' and 'Skip to my Lou' in *St. Louis* are 'staged' by the director. The 'Trolley Song' is the least narratively motivated of all the film's numbers. It is entirely a set piece, staged, almost choreographed on a tram. It does, however, signify the film's status as a musical: in making music and in creating a sense of community, energy and heightened drama out of an everyday object and event — catching the tram — and in its narrative component — the man and woman seeking each other, culminating in the forming of a couple. (However their discovery of each other is played down and the couple even look embarrassed; this is an example of an unexpected note in the film and a reminder that it is not only a musical.)

'Skip to my Lou' accompanies a folk dance during the first party at the Smith's house, which marks Esther's first meeting with the boy-next-door. It is sung by an off-screen, non-diegetic chorus, as well as by the young people at the party as they dance: 'It projects a folk quality through and through. Fiddle and ukulele lend a country flavour, bowed and strummed by the party goers in that communal effort

[3] In The boy next door', Chapter 5, I explore how the spectator is also put in the place of Esther's desire .

which defines folk art' (Feuer, p.10). The parents are absent and this is the time for the younger generation group rituals, which set the scene for their coupling; the refrain repeats 'I lost my partner', the theme also of the 'Trolley Song'. Altman cites the dance as an example of the musical's focus on coupling:

> 'the camera begins to sail over the heads of the dancing couples as if it were looking for something, ... as if it were ... trying to comprehend the pattern underlying all this dizzying movement. Without warning as the camera is tracking up and back, it stops stock-still as if it had found an answer to its question, ... the camera's freeze coincides exactly with the separation of the whirling couples into two lines facing each other ... it has isolated sexual symmetry on which all activity in the room depends'
>
> (Altman, 1989, p.73).

Again the use of the tracking camera gives the spectator a commentating, 'director's position.

Performance is evident in more than the numbers. Most of the characters are presented as putting on an act in their daily actions: for instance, Esther and her sister Rose preen themselves when they meet their beaux; Tootie performs throughout, from her first appearance on the ice-cart as she tells the carrier ghoulish stories about her dolls, relishing their effect; the grandfather tells stories on Hallowe'en night. The film is based around seasonal rituals, beginning with the ketchup-making, through making snow-people and holding parties. Only the mother is often presented as a non-performer and as 'genuine' (even when she sings) but she belongs to the family melodrama part of the film and has the different function of providing the maternal safe environment for the spectator to play (as I explore in Chapter 5). The

film as performance can also be seen as an aspect of Minnelli's authorial stance, with the spectator invited not just to perform along with the characters but also to participate in its knowing amusement at the characters' expense.

Transformation

In different ways musicals effect a transformation of everyday life into a space for wish-fulfilment — or for playing — most commonly within the song and dance numbers.

Richard Dyer explores the wish-fulfilment tendency of the musical from a cultural/ideological perspective in 'Entertainment as Utopia' (1977), arguing that it epitomises entertainment in general. If entertainment, as it is usually assumed to do, promises 'escapism' and 'wish-fulfilment', Dyer (1977) asks the question: escapism from and to what? From these two terms he enumerates five 'lacks' in capitalist society from which the spectator wishes to escape: scarcity, exhaustion, dreariness, manipulation and fragmentation. As wish-fulfilment entertainment purports to make good these lacks, in the process creating for the spectator an experience of what 'utopia might feel like' (p.177). In similar terms to Feuer, he suggests that the utopia of popular entertainment is not, however, subversive of the status quo, but rather manages to reassert it by addressing only those lacks in capitalism that capitalism itself can remedy.

According to Dyer, therefore, the utopian sensibility is produced by the musical's offering to counter the lacks it sets up with attributes of abundance, energy, openness, intensity and transparency; where,

mainly through the song and dance numbers, the spectator will not be required to think, but to respond on an emotional and a sensuous level and, in this way, to enter the musical's utopian space. For Jane Feuer, the spectator can expect to be given 'a glimpse of what it would be like to be free' (Feuer, 1982, p.84). Elsaesser writes of Minnelli's musicals that they express the individual's need 'for liberation' against 'the restrictive force of an individualistic morality' (Elsaesser, 1969, p.24). All these attributes suggest for him the specific pleasure of the musical, which can be related to the privileged domain of playing where the player is not bound by rules of negotiable reality.

Dyer draws a distinction between those musicals which present a utopia through the numbers which seem to contradict the film's narrative, and a smaller number, among which he cites *St. Louis,* where the whole film offers a utopian vision, in this case, of a 'remembered past', that Altman calls 'a St. Louis filtered through the transforming palette of an artist' (Altman, 1989, p.277). In *St. Louis* the transformation promised by the musical has been effected before the film begins; the purpose of the plot is to ensure its continuity. In this sense the idyllic setting of the folk musical (which is not Dyer's classification) approaches that of the 'fairy tale musical', which contains an overtly magical or dream place, a sub-genre also favoured by Minnelli (for instance, *Yolande and the Thief* 1945; *Brigadoon,* 1954).

Altman suggests that the musical's numbers' use of transitions to and from the diegetic and non-diegetic sound-track 'blurs the borders between the real and the non-real' (Altman, 1989, p.63). For instance, in the 'Trolley Song', where an ordinary object is transformed into a setting for the lovers' search for each other and a celebration of

community, diegetic sounds from the trolley (such as the 'clanging') are co-ordinated into the non-diegetic singing of the off-screen chorus; in such ways is the spectator's attention moved in and out of the film.

Formally, the song-and-dance numbers are marked as quite separate and distinctive from the surrounding narrative. In the early Berkeley musicals the chorus is transformed into formal patterns; in the later Minnelli musicals, for instance *Brigadoon* (1954) and *The Pirate* (1947), the numbers transport the characters and spectator to a fantasy, dream place. In *St. Louis* the shift from narrative to number is less marked. Where they are not signalled as intended performance, the numbers, like playing itself, are presented more seamlessly as a part of the emotional life of the characters: Esther sings of her desire for 'The boy-next-door'; Mr and Mrs Smith of their courtship in 'You and I'; Esther her seduction song in 'Over the banister'.

Nevertheless, simply by being placed artificially in the course of the narrative, all numbers in a musical are obviously and clearly marked as a special discourse. They represent a different kind of experience, on a different plane from the 'reality' of the narrative. The codes of music and dance are perceived as being able to express emotions both more directly (in their impact on the spectator) and yet at the same time more obliquely than the language-based narrative codes. Dyer refers to Suzanne Langer's work in his discussion of the effect of music and dance: she proposes that 'music is an analogue for emotive life' (Dyer, 1977, p.178) in that there is a material correspondence between the form and rhythm of dance and music and the 'movement' of emotions, such as tension and relaxation, climaxes and resolutions. The reference to Suzanne Langer is not pursued and film studies has not found a

means of accounting for the effects on the viewer of non-linguistic or non-representational codes, but it draws attention to the impression and effect of energy, liberation and other affective features that those who enjoy going to musicals experience, specifically brought about by the 'unreal' presence of the numbers in the narrative and the consequent shift in discourse that for the playing spectator represents a move to potential space.

A similar attempt to account for the effect of energy and liberation in the musical is Martin Sutton's argument in 'Patterns of meaning in the musical' (1981) that the dichotomy between the narrative and the numbers represents the difference between the constraints of the super-ego (the narrative) and the energy of the id (the numbers), 'providing the characters and spectators the opportunity to exercise imagination and personal freedom' (Sutton, 1981, p.191). Sutton suggests that the resolution of the musicals, usually through marriage, which brings together the themes and concerns of the narrative and the numbers, aims to reconcile the demands of the reality with the pleasure principles and the repressive aims of the super-ego with the free-flowing energy of the id. However although Sutton's account draws attention to the effects of liberation and energy of the numbers contrasted with the constraints of the narrative, the id is not, according to Freud, a site for 'the imagination' which is to do with secondary elaboration; nor is the super-ego the source of narrative.

Sutton goes on to suggest that musicals create 'play spaces' for the performing of the numbers; these 'transformations' have in common the element of 'play' [they are not] 'just points for expending pent-up energy but they provide opportunities for imaginative discovery ...

space in the musicals becomes 'activated', giving 'the body room to move and through this the mind room to expand': ... it becomes 'activated' (Sutton, p.193). His description of characters' use of objects as 'props' for their extemporary performances recalls the infant's use of the transitional object and illusion: 'objects and settings from the everyday world of the surrounding plot are given a new meaning by their use within the number' (ibid). In describing the musical as a playspace, Sutton moves away from his distinction between the id and super-ego to introduce an element of the playfulness of the musical, which is more appropriate to the concept of the Winnicottian, playing spectator than the Freudian distinction he proposes.

The notion of the musical as a playspace for the spectator gives a positive gloss to what Dyer terms escapism and wish-fulfilment. While a move into potential space is seen a 'relief' from the negotiation with the real world this need not mean that it is a flight from it, rather the means of assimilation of inner and outer experience.

An example of two opposed notions of escapism is presented in the musical *Pennies from Heaven* (Ross, 1981). Set in the 1930s, about a seedy and unfaithful sheet-song seller with unrealistic ambitions and sexual desires which his wife cannot satisfy, it deconstructs the musical both in its plot ands use of numbers. It has two endings, one where the main character is hung for a murder he did not commit, the other an 'alternative' happy ending, which is narratively unconvincing but emotionally convincing; the couple defy death and are reunited in fantasy. The musical numbers are revealed as embodying fantasies overtly rather than covertly (as is usual in traditional musicals) by substituting for the voice of the film's characters the voices of the

original singers of the thirties' songs, 'revealing' them as 'unreal' and an escape from the 'realities' of the narrative. This film is overtly about sexuality which the traditional musicals express covertly through the musical numbers: the hidden sexual desire of the virginal school teacher heroine is joyfully celebrated in two musical number sequences. The 'escapism' of these numbers therefore represents the hitherto unspoken 'truth' about her and the final effect is to validate sex in the way that older musicals validated 'love'. The two endings of the film therefore reveal both the objective impossibility of the fantasy and yet at the same time its subjective truth. In the paradoxical realm of the transitional area both endings are valid at the same time.

Like all musicals, *Meet me in St. Louis* ends in an assertion: that St. Louis can provide all that the characters can ever want and that their wishes and those of the spectator have been fulfilled. The city of St. Louis becomes the utopia that, for Richard Dyer, the musical represents and plays out for the spectator. This is a large promise that for Jane Feuer fundamentally cheats the spectator. From her viewpoint, the bringing together at the end of the film of the two domains represented by the numbers and the narrative is a deception: the musical's resolution of problems through the dance sequences 'implies by analogy that movies fulfil our wishes in 'real life' (p.76).

For Feuer the pleasure of musicals is that they 'give us a glimpse of what it would be like to be free', but their deception is that they 'foreclose a desire to translate that desire into reality' (p.84). The concept of the transitional area and of playing introduces a quite different argument: that not only does playing, in this case of the spectator with the film, offer a beneficial experience precisely *because* it

lies between reality and fantasy (which Feuer implies is a dangerous confusion), but that also, by providing a means for the assimilation of experience, it enables the spectator better to meet the challenges of the real world when she 'returns' to it. From this perspective playing provides a 'safe' means of re-playing roles and relationships. More powerfully it can be a means of re-forming what is given — if the subject can experience a sense of autonomy and an ability to act on her environment through play she becomes nearer to being able to do the same in everyday life.

This is a reiteration, albeit in specific terms because it comes from a psychoanalytical perspective, of a traditional view that cultural, aesthetic experience is beneficial in and for itself. In these terms the ending and the ostensible message of a film are less significant than the psychic processes that engaging with it sets up in the spectator. The function of entertainment, which takes place in potential space, becomes that of giving the spectator an experience of playing that she can take back with her to her negotiation with the world.

Bertolt Brecht, whose influence lies behind Feuer's criticism of the musical, proposed, unlike her, that the purpose of his kind of theatre can and should be to combine learning and pleasure: he stresses that there is such a thing as 'pleasurable learning, cheerful and militant learning' (Brecht, 1964, p.77) which is eagerly sought by those oppressed by the system in which they live; this is a view of the value of popular culture that was not taken up by the *Screen* critics of the 1970s who drew on Brecht. The notion of the playing spectator is congruent with the idea that 'learning' can take place through taking part in cultural activity and is as much related to feeling as to the intellect. The

spectator's participation in the film-play of the musical can give her an experience of liberation and activity; as I explore further in Chapter 6, the playing subject is able to act upon her environment in a way that neither exploits it nor allows herself to be exploited.

Meet me in St. Louis: the playing begins

The following analysis from St. Louis completes the opening sequence of the film. By now, I argued in the last chapter, the spectator has moved into the space of the film and to her psychic domain of potential space. At this point a tracking shot has followed the cyclist, Lon the Smith's son, and moved the spectator from front to back of the screen, (into the space of the action) into the Smith's kitchen, where she will be given a place in the playing.

Mrs Smith and Katy the maid are making ketchup, both dressed for the part in large aprons, leaning over a large, central pot, with large spoons, evoking a women's ritual. Ritually, playfully, each takes a taste, each pronounces it as lacking, but differently, so that a conflict is immediately introduced, but one that is figured in and contained by the ritual playing. The ketchup is judged: "too sour", "too sweet" and both women perform their part in a slightly exaggerated, certainly playful, although also an absolutely serious way.

The playing at this point is like a story being acted out (recalling for instance, in its repetitive tasting ritual, *The Three Bears*), an impression reinforced by Lon's entry, as if with the intention of having his taste. The sense of playful conflict is heightened as we wait for each member of the family to continue the dispute; the conflict is playful in its ritualisation of a not very serious issue and we know that there is going to be no agreement (until Judy Garland comes in finally at the end of the sequence, and agrees fairly authoritatively with her mother, effectively resolving this moment.) It is significant however that the father, marginal to this woman's world, does not have his taste (as

finally he does not have his way over the departure to New York). There is no reason, however, why the spectator should not have hers, as the child listening to the story of *The Three Bears* also has her part in the story.

A hint of transgression.

The younger daughter, Agnes, enters, in her underwear, with her hair wet, and wearing large, men's shoes. She breaks in on the ritual of the ketchup-tasting and takes up the film's title song, hummed by Lon. Introduced, by being sung by the extra diegetic singer, as belonging to the public domain in the opening, the song has now been taken into the private domain, — with a suggestion that there is no distinction; the family and St. Louis are one, as are the spectator and the actors. Agnes continues her acting with an over-done sneeze, as she performs 'Meet me in St Louis' through the house, the camera tracking her movements, inviting us to explore the family further into the recesses of its home. In spite of the self-consciousness of her singing, her underwear has a 'naturalising' effect among the playing and the dressed-up (as Edwardian) characters; at the same time, however, it provokes a slightly prurient curiosity, as well as an element of surprise as she moves further inside the house, up the stairs, suggesting that this story will move — as every family story and history must do — into areas of much greater import than ketchup tasting.

Again, the spectator is offered two places: the moving camera invites identification with its active, searching movement: as singer of the song, (already established from the credits) she now also sings along with the girl. The hint of transgression of the girl in her underclothes

is reinforced by the camera/child coming up against a closed door. A quick, smooth cut through to the other side of the door shows the grandfather shaving and the song is handed over to him, again as if playfully, like a child's song-game, marking the 'folksiness' of the film and naturalising the singing. Grandfather is also dressed up — and down — in his braces and a striped skull cap and is theatrically placed against a lit-up stained glass window. In this continuing hand-over of the song, (a common ploy in musicals) the spectator, too, is invited to take a part in the well-known song as she was, less obviously, in the tasting ritual. Grandfather, also not quite dressed, in his dressing gown, inspects and admires himself in a mirror; a point of view shot of his reflection implicates the spectator, for a moment confusing who is looking at whom.

A quick cut takes Grandfather to the landing outside his room, still singing; this time the dance part of the theme number is introduced as he waltzes towards the backing camera with a towel and moves into his room to try on a red cap among several, again reflected in a mirror, poising himself theatrically in time to the music. The spectator has already been able to dance inwardly to the tune in the credits; now this dance movement is externalised as if from the spectator herself. (This focus on dress and dance is a forerunner of later scenes with grandfather, when, possessing the tuxedo which Esther's beau lacks, he substitutes for him and takes Esther to the neighbour's ball, as the film hints at an incestuous motif.)

Grandfather looks out of the window as the theme song is taken up again by the chorus, from outside, and we follow his gaze in another point of view shot, to a pony trap drawing up and the sound of

exaggeratedly cheerful young peoples' voices. The song dies out with a camera cut as, looking out of the window with Grandfather, we wait in anticipation, to see the star of the film. From having being moved from the outside to inside the house, the spectator now has a place inside it, looking out, her place in the family setting and scenario established. In a final move the camera moves outside and follow Esther (Judy Garland) into the kitchen to have the last taste of the ketchup.

One way that a place is made available for the spectator in the film is through Minnelli's famous use of camera movement using a boom camera and a range of crane and tracking shots. In her detailed analysis of this opening sequence, Beth Genne constantly personifies the camera: 'the gliding camera now attaches itself to Lon ... the camera remains quietly at the far end of the room ...the camera hesitates for a moment, then decides to follow his glance' (Genne 1983, p.251). The camera is presented as a character, playing a part, although Genne does not go further to implicate the spectator. I argue in this thesis that different kinds of movement, both material and psychic, are important to the notion of the playing spectator and Minnelli's varied use of the moving camera can contribute to the spectator's movement into and through the film. However more than one factor is necessary: the spectator's playing is only activated through the complex interrelationship in both film and spectator of technical, formal, narrative and psychic moves.

By now, introduced so far only to the minor members of the family in terms of the main narrative, the spectator has been given different subject positions as the main themes (the fair, the family relationships

and rituals) are introduced: playing as active observer, as actor and as singer she has been taken up into the world of the musical, the dynamics of the narrative and the possibility of taking part in the scenarios underlying it. By the end of this short opening sequence she has taken up a place in the film's playing and is ready for further engagement in its narrative.

Chapter 4 THE BREAKDOWN OF PLAYING

> I shall say that behind any fiction there is a second fiction: the diegetic events are fictional, that is the first; but everyone pretends to believe that they are true, and that is the second; there is even a third: the general refusal to admit that somewhere in oneself one believes they are genuinely true
>
> ('Disavowal, Fetishism', Christian Metz, in *Psychoanalysis and Cinema*, 1982, p.72)

The unconscious spectator

This chapter deals with the next stage in this narrative of the playing spectator: the moment where her playing breaks down and she is overtaken and taken over by feelings which move her unaccountably and in spite of herself — for example, to tears. To be so moved is one of the lures of cinema for the playing spectator. The sensations as of being 'overcome', of being 'in a dream' and of being 'lost' are all commonly expressed experiences of cinema-going which many seek in engaging with a film but which others carefully avoid. For the playing spectator the breakdown of playing is always temporary and can become a means of re-connecting inner and outer experiences through the bridging function of potential space. She has no need to 'avoid' the incursion of the unconscious.

The playing spectator has opened herself to this takeover by willingly submitting to the film viewing experience and by her psychic shift into the transitional area where she can take up a place in the play on screen. For the playing spectator, the process of watching a film is an

active and participatory experience, where she herself partly creates the scene which apparently only unfolds before her. However, by her move into the transitional area, which she allows but cannot exactly will to happen, the spectator also invites the possibility of her playing breaking down and of a move to another psychic domain, where she ceases to take part as an equal and active participant and instead takes on a passive position. The film acts on her; moves her; positions her; and she becomes caught up in a psychic structure which she has not constructed and which she does not manage for herself. She reacts in a way that may seem quite out of proportion to the fact that she is watching a fiction which cannot materially affect her, and quite at odds with her intellectual assessment of the film (we may cry at 'bad' movies). This moment of the breakdown of playing signals the entry of the unconscious onto the scene of this thesis (having so far operated backstage) and, within film studies, the construction of a passive, unconscious spectator. From a Winnicottian perspective, this returns us initially to the Freudian and Kleinian view of the unconscious.

In this chapter, I explore the breakdown of the playing spectator from two perspectives: through the return of the repressed, where the conscious spectator is 'overcome' by unconscious forces; and through the workings of fantasy, where the subject is caught up and dispersed into a fantasy or a dream scenario and withdraws into inner, psychic reality — her own and that of the film. In the following chapter, 5, 'Replaying Loss', I will examine ways in which the spectator may replay unconscious experiences of 'loss', including, finally, the loss of subjectivity itself incurred in 'merging' with the film; in all these cases the precarious position of playing in potential space between inner and outer reality temporarily breaks down.

My analyses of *Meet me in St. Louis* in these chapters move away from its musical aspects to focus on its status as a family melodrama, introduced in Chapter 1 as the location of the playing-out of unconscious family processes; however the breakdown of the spectator's playing, like playing itself, cannot be confined to any one genre and can be triggered apparently unpredictably in the encounter with a film.

The concept of the dynamic unconscious is at the heart of psychoanalysis and a major source of the twentieth century model of the split subject which undermines idealist assumptions of a unified consciousness: insisting that, alongside and behind our conscious awareness, there exists another psychic agency that is crucial in determining our relationships, behaviour and ability to experience our lives in ways which are satisfactory to us. Accepting the unconscious means accepting that we are not the owners of ourselves or our destiny, even on the individual psychic level. In film studies, it involves accepting that the film may act on us in ways that we cannot understand or control.

Winnicott adopted aspects of both the Freudian and the Kleinian view of the unconscious as a part of his inherited psychoanalytical background. From Freud he took the central notion of repression in the formation of the unconscious, with the trauma of the child's acceptance of castration at the Oedipal stage and the construction of the punishing, authoritarian, unconscious super-ego. The unconscious exists as a repository of strongly cathected 'memories' which, although 'forgotten' by their owner, continue to exert a determining influence in

his or her everyday life and are continually replayed in both relationships and fiction (Freud, 1915). With Klein and her followers the view of the unconscious shifts from such a concentration on a particular and rather late Oedipal stage to pre-verbal experiences around the parent/child triangle; Klein also emphasises the infant's earliest experiences, from birth, of extreme and conflicting feelings towards the mother/breast. By going deeper into the past, the unconscious becomes larger and more inclusive than the Freudian repressed unconscious (Mitchell, 1986, p.25).

With this emphasis on the importance of the infant's earliest physical experiences, bodily sensations and imagery of part objects — often of a terrifying and monstrous kind — find their way into accounts of the unconscious, which now stress its material content (Mitchell, 1986, p.23). Elizabeth Wright notes of Winnicott's and Klein's unconscious: 'Where Klein's narratives partake of the Gothic, Winnicott's might be regarded as having an absurd, Beckett like quality' (Wright, 1987, p. 182). Klein's story of the unconscious, based on primitive, body-derived experiences and images may be more easily accommodated in accounts of the horror movie whereas Freudian-derived models, based on the primacy of the Oedipal drama, fit more obviously with film melodrama's account of emerging sexuality and Oedipal conflicts. In the melodrama, the spectator may be moved to tears as she looks for wish fulfilment; in the horror movie the breakdown of play would manifest itself as terror or disgust, mingled with their opposite, excitement. For Winnicott the repressed unconscious was to become a specific and limited formulation or entity. According to his widow Clare Winnicott, Winnicott de-centred sex as the core factor in the growth of the individual — 'perhaps it hadn't got the *importance* that

it had for Freud' (Winnicott, Clare, 1983, p.178). Nevertheless she insists that, at the same time, it was also a concept he simply took for granted. In *Human Nature* (Winnicott, 1988), which is based on lectures that Winnicott gave to social-work students in the 1950s — a 'lay' audience — he emphasises the necessity for him to present Freud's position on child sexuality as a basis for any understanding of human development from a psychoanalytical perspective. His account of the Oedipal stage is fairly orthodox, particularly on sexual difference and female sexuality where, while allowing for the possibility of an 'earlier' female sexuality, he also re-states the role of penis envy in the girl's development and focuses on the boy in his account of Oedipus (Winnicott, 1988, ch.1). It is, however, also the case that in his work generally Winnicott de-centres the father — and particularly the threat of the father — who emerges mainly as a shadowy figure in his writing and then mainly as a support for and in the background of the mother (Phillips, 1988, Ch.1).

Early in his work Winnicott states that, following Klein, he has replaced the distinction between 'reality' and 'fantasy' with a distinction between 'inner and external reality' (Phillips, 1988, p.58). The notion of 'inner reality' which parallels Klein's 'psychic reality' avoids dispute about the reality status of psychic experiences, which Klein insisted on. In Winnicott's case, it also enables him to avoid making *distinctions* between conscious and unconscious psychic activity, so that he can move about easily in discussing all internal psychic activity whether unconscious or not. This becomes important in his discussions of potential space and play, where 'inner reality' becomes a broader notion than the Freudian or even the Kleinian formulation.

Whatever the model, the unconscious appears, in different ways, as both alien and inaccessible and yet also as a constant and pervasive presence in everyday life: lurking and ready to 'break through' in 'slips', from the trivial to the disastrous, attendant each night in dreaming, current in fiction, impinging on relationships — the subject's history always inescapably present. It acts as a ghost-like presence in the subject's life, in parallel to his or her conscious experience. Cinema's peculiar ability to represent all experiences as having the same phenomenological status has been exploited throughout the history of cinema to negate the difference between the objective and subjective, reality and fantasy.

In his book on Winnicott, Adam Phillips asserts: 'the unconscious is intrinsically unacceptable in classical psychoanalysis' (Phillips, 1988, p.137). This might seem to discount the scientific endeavour of psychoanalysis, which presents the unconscious as an objective discovery, and as neither negative nor positive. Yet such a value judgement may be discerned in the model itself: essentially the Freudian unconscious is a subversive, anarchic force. While for some this may represent a form of liberation, that was not the case for Freud. For him, the ego is the agency by which the pleasure-principle demands of the id are modified by the reality principle, as the subject takes up a place in society. The id/unconscious is 'a chaos, a cauldron full of seething excitations' (Freud, 1933, p.498), seeking nothing but its own satisfaction. Its operation is that of the primary psychic process, working by means of displacement through freely-flowing energy ('mobile cathexis'), 'where one idea may transfer to another its whole quota of cathexis'; and by condensation, where the idea 'may

appropriate the whole cathexis of several other ideas' (Freud, 1915, p.159). Its operations contrast to the controlled flow of the secondary, conscious process which works according to the laws of rational discourse: the unconscious opposes the anarchic pleasure principle and the primary process to the conscious, reality principle and the logic and coherence of the secondary process, a model as of an irresponsible child contrasted with a responsible adult.

For Freud, it is not exactly that the unconscious is 'bad'; that view was left to those who strongly resisted the possibility of any such phenomenon. Nevertheless, his concept is of an unconscious that is essentially in conflict with the conscious system, and his project in therapy, precisely, was to help patients expose unconscious ideas to the light of rational discourse so that, like the Hydra's head, they atrophy and die. Although Freud was still insisting on the primacy of the notion of the unconscious in psychoanalysis at the end of his life — 'consciousness is only a quality or attribute of what is psychical and moreover an inconstant one' (Freud 1940, p.188), he increasingly stresses the superiority of the conscious system: 'none of this implies that the quality of being conscious has lost its importance for us. It remains the one light which illuminates our path and leads us through the darkness of mental life ... our scientific work will consist in translating unconscious processes into conscious ones ... thus filling in the gaps in conscious perception' (ibid, p.189).

It would be too simple to see this model as one of constraint — the repressive force of culture and society internalised as the super-ego, defending and warding off the feared anarchy of the unconscious, bearer of the pleasure principle, striving for a place in the individual's

life but to be resisted for the sake of his place in society. Part of the rationale of psychoanalysis is that the over-rigorous attempt of inhibiting forces to keep down the unconscious only strengthens it or leads to an unsatisfyingly restricted life. 'Distrust' or 'dislike' may therefore seem too emotive a way of describing Freud's measured aim of understanding and transforming what is unconscious into conscious. Yet essentially his therapeutic aim was to cure the patient of the effects of the unconscious by facing the reality of its contents.

This attitude to the unconscious would appear to inform both Wood's (1979) and Britton's (1978) essays on *Meet Me in St. Louis.* Both critics take on the task of analysing the film's unconscious in order to undermine the film's apparent, overt, project of celebrating the family, with its 'myth of togetherness at the end' (Wood, 1979, p.6). Wood's reading, in particular, sees the family as 'the central medium for the transmission of neurosis' (ibid). His position is essentially that the unconscious of the film contains the 'truth' about the family, which the musical, celebratory veneer of *St. Louis* as a Hollywood product papers over. His essay purports to reveal the 'truth' of the film as if to 'cure' the spectator of her illusions: (he also wishes to 'cure' himself, for he reports that he is deeply ambivalent about the family).

For Wood, the film conceals the oppression of the women, the subject of women's melodrama. Britton demonstrates that, although the film seems to present the father as 'victim', it also shows him as a repressive, dominant breadwinner, forcing the family, and particularly the women, to fit in with his wishes. Images show the father as separate, shot alone, with the rest of the family, including the grandfather, in the reverse shot: male against female, individual

against the group. At other times he is shot in a dominant position from below, towering over his family, asserting his authority. His 'defeat' is brought about by Tootie and becomes a matter of life and death.

However, these accounts of the unconscious represent a partial view, in two ways: firstly, they do not contain the whole 'truth' about the family, which in this film is represented as a 'container' for its members' conflicts in a more positive way than Wood acknowledges — conflicts are not necessarily just repressed but are sometimes resolved or at least played out and defused. In this sense playing can become the means of re-connecting unconscious and conscious. Secondly, as I will argue in the next chapter, from the perspective of the Winnicottian spectator there can be a different stake in the fictional pursuit of the unconscious, for example, in seeking a 'return' to the pre-Oedipal maternal 'holding environment'. Wood's and, to a lesser extent, Britton's views of the unconscious in *St. Louis* insist on the deception of the viewer who finds pleasure from the film. However, audiences have continued to watch *St. Louis,* and the playing spectator may seek and happily allow the breakdown of playing through her involvement with the screen play.

The spectator is taken over: the return of the repressed.

Winnicott describes the breakdown of playing for the child as the moment when 'the physical excitement of instinctual involvement becomes evident' (Winnicott, 1971, p.39); the tension of such a moment may be de-fused by the child's crying. In this thesis, the spectator's unexpected tears mark an analogous process: the eruption from the unconscious into consciousness of what has been repressed.

Although the unconscious can only be encountered through its derivatives and traces, it makes its mark, often by stealth but sometimes by force. In English, the psychoanalytic alliterative phrase 'the return of the repressed' has a dramatic ring to it, in keeping with the idea of the *activity* of the unconscious, which is expressed by Freud with an anthropomorphic hint of a 'conscious' intention on the part of the repressed ideas to push through the barriers against them back into consciousness. Laplanche and Pontalis point to Freud's insistence on the indestructibility of the contents of the unconscious so that repressed material, 'the pleasure demanding satisfaction ... always has the tendency to re-emerge into consciousness' (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1988, p.398). The psyche becomes a battleground for the struggle between repressed ideas and the repressing forces of the ego, reinforced by the unconscious, punitive Super-ego; the purpose of analysis is to enable repressed ideas to emerge in a regulated way so that they can be confronted and dealt with by the conscious person. As Freud puts it, 'the ego struggles against our instigation, while the unconscious, which is normally our opponent, comes to our help, since it has a natural 'upward drive and *desires nothing better than to press forward its settled frontiers* into the ego and so to consciousness' (Freud, 1969,

p.36; my italics). The repressed always returns 'by more or less devious routes and through the intermediary of secondary formations' (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1988, p.398). Film, like other forms of fiction, can serve as such a vehicle.

Entering the screen-play and playing along with a film can set up the conditions that Laplanche and Pontalis cite for the return of the repressed: firstly 'a weakening of the Anticathexis, the system of defence working to maintain in repression the unconscious ideas'; secondly, 'a reinforcement of the 'instinctual pressure, the drive associated with the repressed idea'; and thirdly, 'the occurrence in the present of events which call forth the repressed material' (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1988, p.398).

Freud explores the weakening of the Anticathexis in his short but influential piece, unpublished by himself, 'Psychopathic Characters on the Stage' (Freud, 1942). Here he accounts for the pleasure to be gained from the theatre, which allows the expression, albeit disguised, of the conflict between repression and the repressed: he takes as his example Hamlet's Oedipal conflict, 'similarly repressed in all of us'. The play allows it expression but only deviously: 'however clearly it is recognised [by the spectator], it is never given a definite name; so that the process is carried through with his attention averted, and he is in the grip of his emotions instead of taking stock of what is happening' (p.126). The playing spectator's lowered resistance allows repressed material to act upon him without it reaching consciousness.

Applying Freud's formulation to film, we may say that, at first, the film spectator 'knows' she is watching a fiction— the film is clearly not,

although it may resemble it, the life of the world she has temporarily left behind. In a double twist, even as she suspends disbelief while she takes part in the playing so that she believes the film to be 'true', at the same time she is still 'deceived' into believing that it is 'untrue' and has nothing to do with her. She is 'deceived', in order to disguise the deeper truth that it may in fact resonate with the truth that lies in her unconscious and which has been repressed.

Freud also argues that the spectator's defences are weakened by the 'fore pleasures' of the form (Freud, 1942, p.127). The spectator or reader is skilfully induced to greater participation in the forbidden repressed sexual scenarios by the apparently innocent formal and external aesthetic pleasures of fiction. With his defences lowered he is ready to submit to the hidden, 'unconscious' scenario, which, in any case, his own unconscious wishes to play out, so that it acts in 'happy co-operation' with the text. In these terms the famous 'beauty' and 'style' of Minnelli's films would also serve to lure the spectator into engaging with their unconscious substance. In addition, a more acceptable emotional-sexual situation presented for the spectator's obvious participation may overlay and hide another, forbidden one.

Both of these kinds of lure are explored in Elizabeth Cowie's account of *Now Voyager* (Cowie, 1984). For instance, the 'forepleasures' of the repetitive visual 'clues' of parts of her clothes and body build up to the sight of Bette Davis transformed from an 'old maid' to a newly constructed object of desire for the spectator. Cowie also suggests that our identificatory tears at the famous ending, which is apparently about the Bette Davis character's renunciation of the man she loves in order to care for his daughter, serve to disguise the other identificatory (and

forbidden) wish-fulfilment ending: the delight of the child in having expelled the father and now in sole possession of the phallic pre-Oedipal mother 'with everything'. Our tears therefore serve as disguise, relief, the ending of tension, and the moment of fulfilment when our defences are down and our deepest fantasy wishes are realised.

A similar unexpectedly emotional moment occurs in *Meet Me in St. Louis* in the scene when, after their quarrel about the move to New York, which has driven the rest of the family away, Mr and Mrs Smith are reunited at the piano and reconciled in the song 'You and I'. The moment represents a lull and resting point between the tension of the quarrel and the re-establishment of the family unit when the family returns to the room as the song is ending. On the surface, and in terms of the film as a musical, the duet represents the reassertion of the couple in recalling the Smith's courtship (Casper, 1977). But in this scene Mr Smith is also represented as the little boy, rejected by his mother for his act of aggression but now reinstated in her affection. The playing spectator, who takes up different subject identificatory positions, may experience a complex mixture of the lover/son's feelings: as part of an adult couple, who recall the time when they had no children and whose romance was just beginning, but also in the disguised scenario, as the son who has got rid of the rest of the family, including the grandfather (father) and who has been forgiven by the mother. At this moment the son-lover has everything in the mother-lover who sings with him of romance and comfort. The spectator is moved not by the reconciliation of this ordinary couple but, taking the

part of the son/lover, by the hidden wish for the return of the pre-Oedipal mother.[1]

Freud's thesis is that art has the ability to 'manage' for the reader a successful compromise between the return and the warding-off of the repressed through the deployment of its formal elements. Norman Holland, who introduces reader response theory from a psychoanalytic perspective in *The Dynamics of Literary Response*, explores the pleasure for the reader of having his or her fantasies both covertly expressed and at the same time overtly organised; he offers as an example the exquisite combination of the deep-seated fantasy and the highly complex form of, for instance, the 'Tomorrow' speech from Macbeth, which disguises but at the same time manages to express, in a way that the manifest *content* cannot, its primal fantasy (Holland, 1968, p.107-10).

The playing spectator allows the weakening of the Anticathexis by taking part in the interplay between herself and the film. By her move into potential space she invites the possibility of the return of the repressed and allows the film to work on her unconscious in the way that Freud describes in this essay. Her resistances are lowered and she is in a vulnerable— and perhaps also an excited— condition.

At the same time, the very act of engaging with the film and the viewing situation itself may substitute for the second condition, for the return of the repressed, a 'reinforcement of instinctual pressure'. The example cited by Laplanche and Pontalis (1988, p.398) is the onset of

[1]This scene is explored further in the following chapter.

puberty, when the subject, in a state brought about by physiological changes, may experience feelings and fantasies unacceptable to his or her present self-image. Winnicott defines the masturbatory element that may be involved in a child's playing and which, as 'the instinctual element', can lead to the interruption of play.

That film-viewing may inexplicably and unexpectedly generate in the spectator excitement, shock, pleasure and disgust, marks of the return of the repressed unconscious, is evident both in public reaction to pornography and violence on screen and, of cinema more generally, in some academic psychoanalytic film-analyses of film's unconscious appeal. A good deal of this work involves an attempt either to rationalise away the unconscious appeal of cinema or, at least, to analyse it in order to come to terms with it. Part of the 'refusal' of the pleasures of Hollywood cinema in feminist critics, for instance, is the attempt to expunge the effects of what they see as Hollywood cinema's appeal to the male viewer's unconscious, perverse pleasures of looking: scopophilia, voyeurism and fetishism; Laura Mulvey's (Freudian) aim, expressed in her well-known statement, in 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' is: 'to free ... the look of the audience into dialectics, passionate detachment' (Mulvey, 1975, p.315), through the creation of new cinematic practices. From a psychoanalytic point of view, however, the unconscious cannot be so easily dispensed with: Rodowick argues that Mulvey's thesis is a denial, by omission, of the possible unconscious pleasures of both the female and the male masochistic position (Rodowick, 1991, Ch.1).

The third condition given by Laplanche and Pontalis for easing the return of the repressed, 'the occurrence in the present of events which

call forth the repressed material' (Laplanche and Pontalis, p.398) points clearly to the film encounter itself which constitutes an event that, like a 'crisis' in the subject's life, triggers in the viewer an unconscious reaction out of proportion to the event itself.

In many cases however, the elements on screen that move the spectator may seem to be much nearer the surface. Scenes that remind us of our own situation give an illusion of familiarity and verisimilitude, suggesting the possibility that here we may find a playing out of our own scenarios. In this case the 'events in the present' need to address forcefully our conscious selves in order to trigger our unconscious response and the return of the repressed. Within the film viewing process, the conjunction of the film and the spectator events may then express, if not overtly expose, further reaches of our psyche, hidden scenarios. However what the film 'reminds' us of, as Cowie explores in her essay on *Now Voyager* (1984)), may be most powerfully disturbing when it disguises a deeper and forbidden wish. From this psychoanalytic point of view, the familiar family quarrels and desires in *Meet me in St. Louis* overlay, express and at the same time disguise the film's repressed Oedipal scenarios.

For some writers the spectator film relationship is essentially and fundamentally a relation to the unconscious. Metz's essays in *Psychoanalysis and the Cinema* (1982) are an extended analysis of film's transgressive and mysterious pleasures and an exploration of the spectators' ambivalent attitude to their own reactions. For Baudry, a fundamental attribute of the 'basic cinematographic apparatus' is that it invokes in the spectator a relation to the moving image analogous to

that of the subject in the Lacanian Imaginary at the Mirror stage (Baudry, 1986).

In a dialogue, Raymond Bellour and Guy Rosolato explore the impact of the single image in a film: at this level, too, that of the image abstracted from the diegesis (on the editing table), they argue that there is a close relation of film to the unconscious: 'alone with this face, I was frightened. It suddenly became an extraordinary force'. Bellour calls this 'an experience which is fantasmatic and associative in an extremely direct fashion'; Rosolato relates the experience to the primal scene and to 'the importance of the visual in paranoia, that fixation on something which leads you into another "realm"' (Bellour and Rosolato, 1990, p.206-7).

Because of the conflict involved in the struggle of the repressed to break down the ego's equally determined (and also unconscious) defences, its return may be marked by its unexpectedness and force. Rational, coherent discourse falters and can no longer be sustained: the analysand falls silent— the seamless narrative flow of dominant cinema jars. This 'breakout' of the (imprisoned) unconscious is similar to that described by Freud as 'acting out', when the person behaves in pre-patterned ways, and is seemingly out of his own control. At this point 'action' or 'behaviour' may replace language: 'the subject, in the grip of his unconscious wishes and fantasies, relives these in the present with a sensation of immediacy which is heightened by his refusal to recognise their source and repetitive character' (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1973, p.4).

In a film, the tight, highly structured narrative, where each event is motivated by another and the ending seems to serve as the resolution of all the narrative strands, falters under the weight of the unconscious discourse pushing its way through the surface. Like the analyst on the watch for the breakdown of the analysand's discourse, the analyst-critic of a film can find out and expose this hidden, unsaid and unacknowledged scenario in a way that is analogous to the analyst's look-out for slips, elisions or sudden halts in the analysand's narrative. The repressed has returned— or is about to do so— but is not yet assimilable into consciousness or speech.

The idea of the form of a work 'breaking down', becoming incoherent or 'ruptured', has become familiar in film as in literary studies. This involves two related assumptions: firstly that the text itself has an unconscious which 'wishes' or needs' to express itself and which may both underlie and contradict its overt message; secondly that this unconscious of the text can somehow communicate with the reader either as conscious analyst-critic,— a detective— who 'unearths' it, or as unconscious subject, who responds as one unconscious to another.

In the case of the unconscious spectator, the unconscious of the film 'works' on her without her being aware of what is happening to her or why, as in the examples above (*Now Voyager* and *Meet me in St. Louis).* As Freud puts it: 'it is a remarkable thing that the unconscious of one human being can react upon that of another without passing through the conscious system' (Freud, 1915, p.198). The spectator is therefore 'unconscious' of both her own unconscious and of that of the film, which are working in alliance to weaken her Anticathexis and allow the repressed to return. Unlike the analyst-critic, the unconscious

spectator can only silently react and be moved. The detective analyst-viewer can 'understand' but is not moved and therefore, in her own way, misses some of the film's potential meaning.[2]

Both Britton and Wood act as detective-critics in their analyses of *Meet me in St. Louis.* In their terms it is the film's *unconscious* that reveals 'the sexual energy which is repressed in a society based on family values' (Wood, 1979, p.5), which the manifest film represses but cannot help but also allow to return.

As I argued in Chapter 1, the focus on family unconscious conflicts leads them to treat the film as a melodrama. Britton (1978) focuses on the Oedipal preoccupations of the film: 'castration' of the father in giving in to his family; 'incest' within the Smith family, notably between Esther and Grandfather, represented in his taking her to the dance instead of John Truett, as 'his property' (an event which Britton treats as a case of the female Oedipus complex); sado-masochism in the relationship between Esther and John Truett (the only time he shows any animated interest in her sexuality is when she hits him because she mistakenly believes he has hurt her sister— he asks for more and it is this scene that seems to be the confirmer of their relationship); parricide in Tootie's momentous (to her) 'killing' of Mr Brokauff, when she throws flour at him on Hallowe'en.[3] In all these examples, what Britton claims to be Oedipal unconscious themes are 'disguised'

[2] An outstanding example of the analyst critic approach is the Cahiers' rigorous analysis of 'Young Mr Lincoln', 1970', referred to in the last chapter on authorship.
[3] Britton's analysis has a more Lacanian slant than Wood's; he argues, for instance, that the family's opposition to Mr. Smith's projected move is an effort to uphold 'the law of the father' against that of the actual father.

under 'innocent' manifestations; acting as analyst-critic he has 'unearthed' and 'exposed' them.

Nowell Smith explores the return of the repressed Oedipal themes in Minnelli's melodrama in an article published in 1977. Like the other psychoanalytic film writers of the time, he attempts to conflate issues of ideology and psychoanalysis through an exploration of the Hollywood depiction of the family within bourgeois society both of which repress their members. The Hollywood melodrama acts to repress, through its resolved ending (its 'closure'), the contradictions and 'excesses' generated by the films' exploration of its protagonists' sexual growth and progress through the Oedipus complex. In this way, the Hollywood melodrama enacts the subject's Oedipal journey which entails the necessity:

> to grow into a sexual identity within a family unit under the aegis of a symbolic law which the father incarnates: ... what is at stake is the survival of the family unit and the possibility for individuals of acquiring an identity which is also a place within the system, a place in which they can 'be themselves' and be 'at home', in which they can simultaneously enter, without contradiction, the symbolic order and bourgeois society.
>
> (Nowell Smith 1977, p.193)

As Britton demonstrates, this represents exactly the trajectory of the young members of the Smith family to marriage within the family setting. Read as a family melodrama, the film reveals ways in which the demands of the family, representing society, may oppress its members. The film charts the emergence and containment of Esther's sexuality: at the beginning of the film, what Esther describes as her 'bloom' — of which she says she has 'too much' — is marked in her

general energy, her breathless, glowing appearances, her preoccupation with her sister's beau and her attempt to manage her own and her sister's affair, as well as in particular images: her self-conscious staging of herself to sing of her desire for 'the boy-next-door'; her breathless encounters with him, while he remains po-faced and embarrassed; the sculptured bust of a naked woman set behind the two sisters as they sing in flowing clothes the title song at the piano. At the same time the containment and partial suppression of her desire is represented in specific moments and images, for instance in her painfully extended struggle, with her sister's help, to get into her corset; her longing for John Truett's first kiss, which he denies. The film hints at the suppression of sexuality and individual desire on the part of both the men and women within the family.

Nowell Smith argues that melodrama's 'happy ending' involves the acceptance of castration and is achieved at the inevitable cost of repression. The 'sacrifice', that which is repressed, remains as 'excess', an energy that cannot be contained within the film narrative but, as in Freud's patients' conversion hysteria, becomes 'displaced' onto the 'body' of the film, 'siphoned off' into the music and mise en scène. In this way, Nowell Smith accounts for those disconcerting moments in a melodrama where the apparent 'realism' of the story of a bourgeois family breaks down in scenes which commonly strike the viewer as excessive, overdone, and therefore lacking in conviction. Such moments, 'explosions of material that is repressed rather than expressed' seem, as Nowell Smith puts it, to be 'in the wrong place' (p.193). This approach is similar to that taken by Britton in his analysis of *St. Louis* — that the ending of the film is an attempt to paper over

the unconscious conflicts and processes that the film does not fully succeed in repressing.

Nowell Smith's article does not focus on the spectator because its analyst-critic's aim is to show how the melodrama films themselves cannot help but expose their own 'shameless contradictions' (Nowell Smith, 1977, p.74), contradictions which are also those of the family in bourgeois society. But the 'hysteric' moments of excess also have an effect on the playing spectator. These can work in two opposite ways to cause the spectator's breakdown of playing: they either draw her further into the film's — and her own — unconscious; or they might work in a quite different direction, jerking her out of her acquiescent state away from the film, with the kind of embarrassed response that frequently occurs among melodrama audiences (those who are not weeping and, indeed, who may laugh defensively). In this case the spectator moves out of the transitional area to engage solely with external reality, where she insists on dealing with the film's status in terms of its 'realism'.

The possibility of Hollywood melodrama invoking either of these responses— either a withdrawal from or a 'giving in' to the wished-for (and feared) impulse— is raised by two articles by Paul Willemen on the films of Douglas Sirk published in 1970/71, which reflect the strong influence of Brecht on film studies. Willemen's is not a psychoanalytic reading, rather he explores the possibility of the films subverting the audience's 'belief' in bourgeois society through Brechtian, distancing devices. The question that is crucial to Willemen's thesis, and which is addressed in a subsequent article on Sirk by Steve Neale (1976), is whether, as he suggests, the over-heightened moments have a

distancing effect on the spectator, or in practice do the opposite and draw her in further, to be moved and perhaps to weep.

This question is relevant to a famous sequence in *Written on the Wind (1956).* The main, 'bad' protagonist (who would be the villainness in traditional melodrama), played by Dorothy Malone as a woman desperate for sex, dances, wearing a red, swirling dress, wildly and provocatively to the accompaniment of diegetic loud music from a record she has put on. She dances alone but her dance has a quality of a sexual orgy as she embraces a photograph of the man she loves (played by Rock Hudson), who, however, is in love with the film's 'good' woman character played by Lauren Bacall. From one perspective, Malone's acting and dancing and the mise en scène are all 'excessive'; however they match the melodramatic action — the dancing is intercut by shots of Malone's father who, coming onto the mansion stairs to investigate the noise, falls down them with a fatal heart attack. This juxtaposition makes clear the fight between repression and the repressed, between the two generations and between the law of patriarchy and female sexuality. The conflict is marked by the characteristic Sirkian heightened colour, the abandonment of Malone's movement, the very loud music and the pace of the cutting. For the spectator, the mise en scène indicates clearly that the daughter has 'killed' the father, with whom she has just had a quarrel and who is a repressive force, particularly of her sexuality; although, according to the overt narrative, her father has died from a heart attack and the daughter is not even aware of him on the stairs. The editing and the mise en scène suggest that she is acting out her fantasy wishes and, in killing the father who is the instrument of her repression, enacts them for the spectator's unconscious.

This scene can produce contradictory effects; the spectator playing along with the daughter's excited and desiring dance may either be taken over by the deeper fantasy of killing (castrating) the father who attempts to repress the woman's sexuality and deny her power — or its obvious 'excess' may produce the distancing effect that Willemen seeks so that the spectator is jolted out of playing. The analyst-critic would then take over, repressing again the unconscious spectator, and ending the playing. Such scenes may jolt the spectator out of an unthinking acceptance of the rest of the narrative, as Willemen proposes; on the other hand, their 'excess' may speak to the spectator of the *psychic* reality of the ostensible 'ordinariness' of family lives as high drama dealing with life and death matters. As Laura Mulvey points out, Hollywood melodrama can expose family and societal conflict *explicitly* and overtly, 'touching on sensitive areas of sexual repression and frustration' (Mulvey, 1977/8, p.75).

The melodrama part of *Meet me in St. Louis* deals overtly with the conflict about the family's move to New York and with its young members' growth into sexuality, courtship and mating. However the unconscious processes that underlie and underpin these conflicts are disguised by a variety of ploys. The melodrama is hidden within the musical, and its drama and danger is frequently offset by comic, deflationary and ironic moves. The Oedipal themes are disguised for the critic to dig out; however their *effect* on the spectator works through and in spite of the disguise. As with Sirk's films, Minnelli's heightened mise en scène can function as the location for displaced tensions and wishes, his colour, lighting and sound and visual images working as metaphors for the unconscious state of mind of his

characters, as the House of Horror and the snow people sequences (both analysed below) demonstrate.

In particular, throughout the film the unconscious family conflicts and wishes are acted out in the character of Tootie. As a child, she can talk apparent nonsense that actually reveals the truth — she is constantly preoccupied with horrific death and dying — and can expose others' deceits and motivation. In her playing, particularly with her dolls, she charts the family's progress through its life and death conflict over the proposed move: her dolls are killed, brought to life, buried alive. On Hallowe'en night, in her play-act 'killing' of Mr Brokauff, she acts out the family's wish to castrate (kill) the father. In her performing and singing, she acts out the individual's attempts to break out of societal and family conventions and restrictions in, for instance, 'I was drunk last night Dear Mother' and 'The jungle mating song: under the bamboo tree'. Tootie's role as representative of the family's unconscious becomes particularly clear in the sequence where she kills the snow people.

Meet me in St. Louis: Tootie kills the Snow People

The sequence in *Meet me in St. Louis* where Tootie 'kills' the snow people, the final scene of the Winter episode, marks the climactic point of the family conflict about the move to New York and leads to a resolution of the problem set up by Mr Smith's decision to leave St Louis in the previous episode. I examine it here in terms of the return of the repressed and the breakdown of the spectator's playing.

This section is preceded by two scenes which have confirmed Esther's relationship with John Truett the Christmas Eve ball, which has ended with the hand-over of Esther to John by Grandfather, who has just called her 'his property' and confirmed his relationship with her by taking her to the ball to the enjoyment of both. The hand-over is crystallised into a bit of cinematic 'magic': a tracking shot sees Esther disappear behind a large Christmas tree in a waltz with her grandfather, and emerge from it with John. The gliding movement of the tracking camera, accompanied by a slow waltz, helps to include the spectator in the movement of the representation of the effortless, unfractured continuity from generation to generation. The wordless shot communicates a feeling of the 'fitness' of the magically achieved transition — which (for the playing spectator) is also marked as an amusing cinematic joke.

However, this family continuity is threatened by the Smiths' impending departure for New York in the following scene, when John Truett proposes to Esther outside her home in the snow. The scene, as Esther says ('I never thought it would be like this ...'), is not quite the consummation she and the spectator might have wished. The couple

speak of events not being able to take their preordained course (going to college and 'coming of age' before getting married and leaving home), which is shaken as they have to try to 'grow up' before they are ready. Their uncertainty is exposed in John's wavering assertion that "we are of age ... well almost" and Esther's sudden doubts about leaving her family ("even if we did go to New York we could work something out couldn't we?") followed by her suddenly running off into her house leaving John Truett looking on, from front of screen. He makes as if to follow her, and calls her back, but is left standing, puzzled. Esther's words and action, and indeed the whole scene, have also confused the spectator; it looks as though it should have been a conventional film proposal scene but both characters look awkward and embarrassed. As Esther runs off, the spectator does not know what she wants — does she actually prefer to go to New York with her family rather than marry John? Clearly the only way of resolving the situation is for the move to be cancelled; and, in the film's status as musical romance, the generic expectation is that this will happen. As in most traditional narrative the ending is assured, the route to it, only, in question.

A camera track, and a cut, following Esther's move back into the house, reveals Tootie sitting at a lattice window, "waiting for Santa Claus", who won't be able to find the family in New York. Esther joins Tootie, her role to comfort her, as older sister/surrogate mother. The scene is shot with a dramatic and pleasing chiaroscuro effect, heightened by Tootie's white nightdress and Esther's red ball gown. In this film the continuity of visual pleasure for the spectator offsets a lack of continuity in its narrative drive.

Two reverse shots from the window to the outside remind us of what is now at stake; one is to John Truett at his window as he raises a hand and turns off his light, increasing the shadows in the girls' room; the other to the family of 'snow people', standing in a horseshoe shape in the garden.

We were introduced to the snow people, which the Smith family and friends were just finishing building, at the beginning of this episode, when the familiar greeting-card seasonal scene was, in comparison with the previous Hallowe'en opening, lit up, and the picture came 'alive' for the first time outdoors, to a cheerful, populated snow scene. The Smith family, having been well established as a unit, both in its conscious manifestation in the first episode and its unconscious in the Hallowe'en opening, has now moved out of its house to include its associates, neighbours and potential extension, the young people's likely partners. The camera's by now familiar movement forward to the group has again moved the viewer into the scene, where everyone seems to be included in the playing, throwing snowballs and giggling about dressing up the snow people. The question of dressing up leads to the question of who will take whom to the ball. The other children have their problems too: Kate, the maid, who has acted before as mediator, arranges that (presumably until the 'right' people are teamed up, which is achieved at the ball) Rose and her brother will go together, as later Esther will go with Grandfather. The family stays together until the new pairings are established.

Arranged in a horseshoe, the snow people, seen through the window from Tootie's viewpoint, have a strong presence, very white and very solid, of different sizes, some dressed up in hats, scarves, walking

sticks.[4] They are clearly emblematic representations of the family, but, like a transitional object, also firmly exist in their own right. Seen in this shot from a distance, all together, in dramatic half-light, with an oddly surreal effect, their phenomenological status rather unclear, they appear like projections from our own psychic space. From this perspective, through Tootie's look, they now seem to belong to her — and so partly to us, the spectator looking at them with Tootie, through the window. They are Tootie's/our imagos,[5] cathected with family fantasies: dream images connected with memories of a abundant Christmases (as a playing of the tune *The First Noel* accompanies our look). Representing people, they may seem, to our fantasy, cold and lonely out in the snow. As artefacts, creative products of the family, which is in conflict and which does not give her what she wants, they provoke Tootie's destructiveness.

Tootie turns to Esther and affirms (as she has done before) that she will take all her dolls to New York, even the 'dead ones'. Esther reminds her jokingly that she cannot take the snow people — it would "look pretty silly" to try.

Before Tootie reacts to this trigger, we have a showpiece by Garland: the number 'Have yourself a merry little Christmas', with the camera on Garland's lit-up, face, first in profile, with Tootie also in shot, and then, at the climax of the song, alone, looking off-screen (we might think

[4]J James Naremore comments that the snow figures look 'disappointingly fake' and that this 'diminishes' the emotional force of Tootie's actions (Naremore, 1993, p.87); which from the point of view of my argument is not of course the point. As fantasy objects from they look very (sur)'real'

[5] Laplanche and Pontalis (1988) define an imago as 'unconscious prototypical figure which orientates the subject's way of apprehending others; it is built up on the basis of the first real and phantasised relationships within the family environment' (p.211).

towards John, last seen in that direction), in close up. The words of the song speak of a hope that does not seem to fit the actual situation but whose function is apparently to comfort Tootie: "Next year all our troubles will be miles away ... as in the olden days, faithful friends will be near to us once more ... some day soon we will be together." They are as relevant to Esther's problem as to Tootie's. The strength of the wish that these words express, the invocation of the mythical 'olden days'; altogether the assertion that everything will become all right and be restored, although "until then we'll have to muddle through somehow", combined with the star image of Judy Garland and the sense of being comforted by her, add up to the impression that the song cannot mean nothing: overall, the film's final promise, which the film's closure will reiterate, is of family togetherness.

Tootie gives a cry (the song has not comforted her although it might have reassured and lulled the spectator), and runs off. Esther is tracked rushing out of the room after her, to downstairs, where Father appears to have been standing waiting, the wall behind him lit dramatically half in shadow, half in light. He expresses concern, as Esther passes him. No one else comes into this scene, which becomes a matter mainly between Tootie, the snow people, and finally her father.

A cut shows Tootie outside, with the snow people, nightdress above her knees, as she seizes the walking stick from the largest of them, presumably the father, decapitates it (him) and two others, then violently strikes repeatedly at a small one (herself?). As Esther comes out to her, Tootie keeps on striking, then cries: 'Nobody can have them if we're going to New York, I'm going to kill them'. With her dolls, which she has brought to life to take to New York, Tootie can deny her

loss, her omnipotent magical powers affirmed; lacking this compensation, 'killing' of what she loves is her only resort.

This image of the young child in a nightdress in the cold, in the pale moonlight-like light, hitting out uncontrollably and very violently at an object/person, is one of the most likely-to-be-remembered of the film. It can serve, as Victor Burgin puts it, both as a private 'punctum', an image with connotative accretions of the individual's unconscious associations, which the spectator can use to go back into her own memories, and also as a public 'image fragment' which refers to the film/narrative, and can be used as a way of exploring the film's fantasies (Burgin, 1986, p.86).[6] The image signifies the breakdown of playing for both Tootie and the spectator, and the turning-point in the narrative through Tootie's acting out, in physical action, of the family's feelings about the move.

The snow people are also players in this scene, the object of Tootie's violence and beating — and as in Freud's 'A child is beaten',[7] the spectator may well adopt the passive-object position as well as that of the active subject in this violent fantasy scenario.[8] For the spectator, it is oddly surprising and disturbing that the snow people stand there solidly and inert, without reacting at all: the omnipotence of the child who kills its parents is overweening and absolute, and does not invite retaliation.

6 Burgin's essay is discussed in greater detail at the end of this chapter.
7 The idea of a fantasy scenario offering different subject positions was referred to in 'The spectator plays' Ch.4 and will be taken up in 'Psychic reality' in this chapter.
8 I am using the notion of a passive/active opposition in two ways here: my central thesis is that the unconscious spectator is in a passive position in relation to the film/narrative when her playing has broken down. Yet within that scenario, as in a fantasy structure, the unconscious spectator, impelled by her unconscious wishes, may take up different positions, including the active and passive, male/female ones.

The violence of the scene is modified by the image of Esther kneeling in the snow, clasping Tootie as she weeps. Esther goes through the 'adult' comforting gestures about the move — the family's ability to adapt to change and that "we'll all be together". This calms Tootie and introduces another unconscious wish of the child: to have its anger contained by the mother. We know, however, that Esther has her own reasons for not believing in what she is saying so that her comfort is spurious and Tootie's act therefore somewhat justified. Tootie is still sobbing as the sisters are tracked walking back to the house.

In this scene Tootie takes on the role of acting out her family's feelings about the move, which have so far been only expressed in words and disregarded — now that the move is imminent, more extreme protests are called for. In killing the snow family, Tootie may be killing her own family — because it won't do what she wants — but she is also simply recording that it is the move that will kill it.

Tootie has emerged as the central exponent of the film's covert narrative, representative of the family's and the film's unconscious and stand-in for the unconscious spectator. With Tootie in the film, 'excused' because she is a child, the film has little need for diversionary ploys to hide its unconscious. From the beginning of the film, the spectator has been included in Tootie's playing, as Tootie is included in the family narrative. By now we are familiar with her dolls, which she has buried and dug up, we have performed with her, told lies, and commanded the caring attention of the whole family. In playing along with Tootie, the spectator opens herself to the return of the repressed: Tootie both 'acts' and is deadly serious at the same time. The playing

spectator has been encouraged to take the part of the family against the father, and to identify with Tootie in different ways: with her subversiveness in allowing the anarchic pleasure principle to emerge, and, in this scene, with the eruption of her fury, despair and violent impulses: the physical violence functions as a cathartic release from the tension of the family conflict, which the spectator too wishes to see resolved. Throughout the film, Tootie, sometimes standing in for the spectator, operates on the edge between playing and its breakdown, managing unconscious eruptions and transgressions, toying with sexuality, intoxication, murder, death.

In the attack on the snow people, however, the breakdown of playing is decisive, overcome by Tootie's violence as the last ditch protest of her fury at her helplessness and impotence and the concomitant expression of her fantasised omnipotence. At this moment of the return of the repressed, the spectator may also move to the passive position figured through the immobile snow people whose place we also take — in this scene there is an equally strong movement between force and inertia, activity and passivity, and the spectator participates in both.

There is enough open snowy ground in the long shot of Tootie slaying the snow people to imagine the bare space that would be left if they were all destroyed. If the infant destroys the mother, a waste land is created in place of the potential space between mother and child. The absent mother leaves the infant surrounded by the emptiness it has itself created. Tootie's despair as she breaks down in Esther's clasp is at the momentousness of what she has achieved. However, she is saved in this narrative: her wishes are shared both by the rest of the family, minus the outsider father, and by the spectator; her rage is contained by

the film as a means of wish-fulfilment. Her outburst becomes a relief, the means of resolving the family conflict and the narrative.

During this scene there has been a cut to a window in the house with father's face at it. This recalls the adult's reaction to the scene and has gives the spectator a point of identification as observer as well as participant — distancing her momentarily from Tootie's action, to identify with Mr. Smith's concern. It also recalls that he is the object of Tootie's anger and that his will be expected to be the next narrative move. The next shot shows Mr Smith inside the house in the children's bedroom, as he closes the window, sharply picks up a fallen doll, replies to Agnes that "everything's fine" and walks slowly downstairs, the camera tracking his thinking as he goes. Esther and Tootie pass behind him, now at a distance in the background; in their absence we focus on Father as he sits in his armchair and leans forward while the opening phrase of the theme music, 'Meet me in St. Louis', plays three times, each more slowly than the last, as if pausing for his decision. Father leans back, strikes a match, burns himself — then jumps up, decision made (surely by this time the spectator knows that this will happen). He summons all the family from upstairs, seats them along a bench for his performance, parades in front of them and announces that 'we are not going to go to New York ... we'll stay here until we rot'.[9] This discordant note insists on giving the father's point of view, usually neglected in the film. Father takes the centre place, taking on the female family's values as he recites (their) reasons for not going: "... you don't appreciate what's under your nose ... the grass is always greener on the other side."

[9] For Britton this statement is an example of a revelation of the family's unconscious knowledge of the truth about itself (Britton, 1978, p. 20).

Tootie's achievement at getting her father to go back on his decision is a triumph of her fantasy of omnipotence. The fact that the spectator is 'glad' and can experience Tootie's act as empowerment, and that such a change of mind is inevitable in the film's scheme of things, may indicate how far she has taken on Tootie's, the child's, position in contrast to the adult one she might adopt outside the film. In our unconscious we have power that, as adults negotiating the reality principle, we may think it judicious to renounce.

The resolution is clinched by the stagy entry of Warren, Rose's suitor, to 'announce', in a dominant fashion, that they will get married. The whole family greet each other with 'Happy Christmas' and hugs, and begin opening their presents. In the foreground Father and Mother touch hands, mother smiling to reassure father that he has done the right thing. The children and parents are happily reconciled, the parents' relationship confirmed. The family unit is re-asserted, a benign repression reinstated, and the film can proceed towards its resolution in the next, final episode.

The spectator is confused: psychic reality

I will now propose a different way of conceiving the breakdown of playing: rather than being overcome by the return of the repressed, the spectator moves from the transitional area of playing to that of her inner, or psychic, reality. In his description of the transitional area of potential space Winnicott glosses inner reality as 'personal psychic reality' (Winnicott, 1971, p.102) as opposed to outer, shared, reality. In the previous chapter on playing I referred to the use of the notion of fantasy in film studies as a model for the spectator's fluid movement in relation to the film narrative and structure. Here I will consider it in rather different terms in relation to the notion of psychic reality; from this perspective fantasy provides a content, structure and language for the unconscious.[10]

Laplanche and Pontalis define psychic reality as 'everything in the psyche ... (the unconscious wish and its associated phantasy) ... that takes on the force of reality for the subject' (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1988, p.363). They point out that while Freud makes a fundamental distinction between psychic and material 'realities', at the same time he insists that, in their effect on the subject, it may not be useful to claim a greater reality status for one over the other: indeed, psychic reality is 'whatever in the subject's psyche that presents a consistency and resistance comparable to those displayed by material reality' (ibid). Yet on another level a mark of psychic health is the ability to perceive that

[10]The word is variously spelled f/phantasy. Whereas 'phantasy' was originally used to delineate the specific psychoanalytic use of the term in contrast to the much more generalised 'fantasy', there has recently been a greater tendency to adopt 'fantasy' for all uses of the word to indicate the fluidity of its boundaries. In line with this practice, I am therefore using 'fantasy' except when quoting.

psychic reality is not, in the end, the same as external reality: the mature ego who has resolved the Oedipus conflict and has taken up a place in society does not wish to kill its father and is able to find a 'realistic' substitute for its mother. For psychoanalysis, the difficulty of attempting to relate inner and outer reality is precisely a question of having to come to terms with the opposing and often conflicting claims of both forces, both of which have their own validity and claim on the subject.

For Winnicott, playing aids the process; the strain of relating the two domains slackens, and the subject can accept the paradox which she usually has to grapple with, that inner and outer, psychic and material reality are both true at the same time. The person for whom playing has become a generalised orientation to life can maintain the sense of this paradox in everyday living. The pleasure and danger of playing for the film spectator is precisely that it hovers between and partakes of both psychic and material reality. In general the playing spectator makes use of the film as a transitional object to move adroitly and happily between her inner and outer world. She may also wish — and at times she may be unable to avoid it — to move completely into the realm of psychic reality where her unconscious wish and the associated fantasy is played out — at which point her playing ceases. The ease with which these moves can take place is suggested in the emphasis, in accounts of fantasy, on its pervasiveness in the subject's personal and cultural life.

Laplanche and Pontalis define fantasy as 'an imaginary scene ... representing the fulfilment of a wish (in the last analysis an unconscious wish) in a manner that is distorted to a greater or lesser

extent by defensive processes' (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1988, p.314). This encapsulates fantasy's hybrid nature: the 'imaginary scene' may be conscious or unconscious; the unconscious wish is already modified by its associated prohibition in being formulated into a scenario. This formulation of the notion of fantasy makes it possible to represent the unconscious in a meta-language which can be applied as validly to the examination of cultural products as to dreams, in both of which fantasy is seen as providing a content and scenario for the playing out of unconscious wishes.

Freud's main ideas on fantasy are taken up and elaborated in two seminal papers, one by a Kleinian, Susan Isaacs, 'The nature and function of phantasy' (1948), the other, in part a critique of Isaacs' paper, by Laplanche and Pontalis (1968), 'Fantasy and the origins of sexuality', which has been drawn on directly in recent film and literature criticism and theory (for example, Donald, 1989; Fletcher, 1986; Cowie, 1984). In general, Isaacs' approach is much nearer that of Winnicott in the way that she defines psychic and material reality. Both Isaacs and Laplanche and Pontalis emphasise the pervasiveness of fantasy in fictional products as well as in the person's psychic activity and relationships, but do so from different perspectives. They differ firstly and obviously in their conception of what fantasy is and how it functions in the psyche, but underlying this, less explicitly but crucially, is the difference of Klein's assumption that there is a subject in place from birth to fantasise. The difference in approach between Isaacs and Laplanche and Pontalis may however be less important than it seems, in that both papers emphasise, although in different ways, a continuity between conscious and unconscious and both seek to account for the origins and the original content of fantasy.

Isaacs' main focus is on 'unconscious fantasy' which she distinguishes, for instance, from daydreaming, characterised as a conscious activity: 'Phantasies are the primary content of unconscious mental processes' (Isaacs, 1948, p.96). Fantasy is, in her well-known phrase, derived from Freud: 'the psychic representative of libidinal and destructive instincts' (p.78), intimately related to bodily states. Fantasies 'have their origin in instinctual impulses and 'are active along with the impulses from which they arise' (ibid). Following Klein, Isaacs insists on the pervasive influence of fantasy on all aspects of the person's conscious life: fantasy is in place from the beginning of life and continues as 'the operative link between instinct and ego mechanism ... adaptation to reality and reality thinking require the support of concurrent unconscious phantasies' (p.77). The notion of 'psychic reality' and of the material effects of fantasy on psychic life, relationships and behaviour is emphasised throughout the paper: primary and secondary processes coexist from the beginning of life and 'fantasy plays a fundamental and continuous part, not only in neurotic symptoms but also in normal character and personality' (p.91). The baby's primitive relationship to the mother/breast forms the blueprint for all subsequent relationships (including, I would add, that between reader and text).

For Isaacs fantasies are experienced in the earliest stages of life as sensations, then as plastic images, and only subsequently, and not always then, in words. Like Klein and Winnicott she takes the relation and connection between representation and experience as unproblematic and taken for granted. This is signalled for instance in her account of the much quoted Fort-da game (described originally by Freud) of the baby who repeatedly threw away and retrieved a toy on a

string during the absence of his mother. For Lacan what is important about the game is its ability to *represent* for the child its mother's absence — the game functions as a play on absence and presence and is essentially about language and representation (Benvenuto & Kennedy, 1986, p.80). For Isaacs the game marks the ability of the child to come to terms with its mother's absence through make-believe — she appears to take its symbolic function for granted and to focus rather on the function of the game for the child's psychic comfort and development. In this she draws on Freud's own interpretation that the boy is compensating for his mother's absence by fantasying that, in controlling objects that are still within reach, he can also control his mother's movements (Isaacs, p.77). The child's omnipotence, a feature of fantasy, comes into play, the strength of fantasy being the absoluteness of its hallucinatory wish fulfilment ('I want this therefore I have it').

By filling the unconscious with fantasy, Isaacs gives it a content and so makes of it a more concrete entity than the formulation of an unconscious which is decisively cut off from the conscious system. Juliet Mitchell, whose account of Freud is inflected by a Lacanian reading, compares Klein's and Freud's formulations: 'what we are witnessing in Klein's description is not the unconscious as another scene, that gap which has its own laws, but an unconscious that is filled, replete with a chaos of phantasmagoria, an unconscious as full as the external world seems to be' (Mitchell, 1984, p.396) — a Kleinian inner world of horror, a Freudian world of unredeemable loss.

Whereas Isaacs focuses on the therapeutic and developmental function of fantasy-as-play, in the service of the developing ego, Laplanche and

Pontalis focus rather on its place in the structuring of the psyche.[11] However they too, through a different route, insist on the pervasiveness of fantasy in conscious life, as a continual replaying and recirculation of desire for the subject. They replace Isaacs' distinction between 'conscious and unconscious phantasy', with that between 'original' and 'secondary' fantasies (p.28); this, they claim, is in line with Freud's consistent employment of the same term, whether he is discussing 'conscious' fantasy (for instance in day-dreaming or popular fiction) or 'unconscious' fantasy: the same structuring and mechanisms are at play from the deepest unconscious modes to the most public. They argue that the defining distinction is between the *primary* fantasy structuring which has its roots in the genesis of the infant's desire and sexuality, and the *secondary* elaborations of this primary fantasy which may be found in the dream and daydream as well as in public forms such as fiction or jokes. The 'purpose' of the secondary elaboration is both to disguise and at the same time to give access to the primary fantasy: to serve both as agent of repression and in the same movement to allow for the return of the repressed. For Laplanche and Pontalis, Freud's formulation of 'phantasy' (and the reason for his consistent use of the term) is as 'a privileged' point, 'where one may catch in the raw the process of transition from one system to another' — the unconscious and conscious (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1968, p.20).

Although these authors point to different forms of fantasying it is day-dreaming, or reverie, (for Isaacs a conscious formation) that hovers most precariously on the margins of the conscious and unconscious,

[11] My account of this paper draws on Elizabeth Cowie's comprehensive explication in 'Fantasia' (1984).

since it moves most easily and unpredictably between being and not being under the conscious control of the subject; the subject is conscious of the daydream, and to an extent can manipulate it, but is unaware of the determining, unconscious fantasy of which it is largely an effect.

From the beginning, for these authors fantasy is a matter of representation: instead of the Kleinian monstrous 'psychic representatives of instincts' as the fantasy 'contents' of the unconscious, fantasy becomes a symbolic structure: in the authors' much-quoted phrase, the 'stage-setting' or mise en scène of desire (1968, p. 28). Instead of the loss of the object (the breast), the loss is that which is inherent in representation itself. The breast for itself, feeding and fullness, is no longer the issue; instead, the desiring subject can only seek satisfaction in endlessly replaying the drama of desire; the wishing and the staging itself are the purpose of the fantasy. As Elizabeth Cowie points out, it is not therefore the attainment of desire (from the Lacanian perspective, there is no such thing) but its enactment that the subject seeks (Cowie, 1984, p.80). This marks a shift from a view of reader/spectator who seeks satisfaction and fulfilment to the one for whom any ending of the narrative is a disappointment; and for whom, strangely, the 'sad' ending may be more of a fulfilment — in allowing tears, for example, as an acknowledgement that satisfaction is never the point — than the happy endings that try to mislead.

In the end, however, perhaps rather unexpectedly, Laplanche and Pontalis do, after all introduce a 'content': the 'original fantasies' of the subject's 'origins', which they invoke by reference to Freud's

phylogenic hypothesis of the origins of the Oedipal conflict and his passing references to the 'primary repressed unconscious' to which the conscious individual has no access — and which may never 'return' because the repression predates the formation of the subject. Freud's invocation of a hypothetical past and a phylogenic inheritance is quite out of tune with the generally assumed materialist Freud and is generally now discounted (as Laplanche and Pontalis themselves point out). Neither was the notion pursued by Freud, nor taken up later, following Klein's focus on the infant's own body relationship with its mother as the basis for all subsequent intra- and inter-psychic relations. Yet a variation on this theme has been put back in place by this much-used contemporary account of fantasy by Laplanche and Pontalis, which sets out the fantasies which are 'originary' of the subject, which pre-exist all others, are the basis of all subsequent, secondary fantasies and are conceived as being at the very core of psychic reality: the origins of the subject, in the scene of parental coitus; of sexuality, in the father's seduction; and of sexual identity through castration in the Oedipal scene. The authors contend that it is only the phantasy *structure* that persists and is 'transmitted' — yet the structure cannot quite be divorced from its originating content; if the mise en scène of desire is the model for fantasy, it is founded in and enacted through a story of three bodies, the parent-child triangle, caught up in a constantly shifting and dynamic interplay. If fantasy is a structure, it requires a content of events and characters to effect its staging: the continuing human drama of the emergence of the subject.

It has often been noted that the further back a fantasy is taken, the greater the loss of subject identification: for instance, Freud's much drawn-on exploration of the many-layered fantasy 'A child is being

beaten' demonstrates a progressive loss of sexual and individual identity and finally a loss of subjectivity altogether As Laplanche and Pontalis put it, not only may the subject be represented in the fantasy as one of its characters, he may be (beyond and beneath that) 'caught up in the sequence of images ... in a de-subjectivised form ... in the very syntax of the sequence in question' (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1968, p.27). For these authors, the 'deepest fantasy ... is no longer addressed to anyone' (ibid), all distinction between subject and object having been lost.

This rather elusive account of the subject's place in the fantasy scenario can be related to the spectator in different ways. In particular, as was explored in the previous chapter on the playing spectator, the possibility of the spectator taking up (by means of the possibility of 'multiple points of entry') different identificatory positions in a narrative counters the thesis that the spectator must be 'fixed', particularly into gender identity, by classic Hollywood film. The notion however of the spectator as 'desubjectivised' altogether is different and takes us beyond playing to a point where the spectator is indeed 'no longer himself'; beyond a subject fixed in sexual difference; beyond the bisexual pre-Oedipal stage, to the point where there is nothing but the 'wishing', a hypothetical point that represents the origin and movement of desire.

As I explore in rather different terms in the following chapter, the loss of subjectivity can become one of the lures of cinema for the spectator. The fantasying spectator desires to be caught up in the wishing — she longs, repetitively, to play out her fantasying by taking part in a scenario where the players of the original fantasies remain the same,

the stories vary only slightly and which, unlike classic narrative, never end and never pause, endlessly re-looping. Here the spectator is indeed taken up by the pre-subjective state of wishing. A model for the representation of this psychic participation in film might be *movement:* within the frame, the movement of both the camera and of objects/characters; from shot to shot in the linear transitions of the narrative and images. From this point of view, our composite memory of the film may be made up of an impression of how it moves us through its scenario or its settings to take up different subject positions and to find different places and modes of feeling, always in flux as its fantasy structure does its work in alliance with ours.

From the perspective of Isaacs' view of fantasy, on the other hand, which posits that there is from the beginning a subject to fantasise and objects with which to fantasise, and for whom fantasy is 'replete with a chaos of phantasmagoria' (Mitchell, 1984, p. 396), there is the possibility of participating in a regressive pre-linguistic 'psychic reality' of *content.* In this model the spectator's participation may characteristically be effected not so much through the narrative movement and scenario as through the imprint on our psyche of the cinematic image itself.

An article by Michael O'Pray (1989), 'Surrealism, Fantasy, and the Grotesque; The Cinema of Jan Svankmajer' offers an example. O'Pray draws on Klein's approach to fantasy in his account of the Czech film-maker, to emphasise the materiality of Svanmager's work in its relation to the 'grotesque', a cinematic tradition which 'spills over forcibly into forms of representation — Gothic horror, Hollywood fantasy, sci-fi ... which rupture or exceed the dominant cinematic

traditions' (ibid p.254). On this use of the cinematic image, O'Pray writes:

> ... these film-makers are alchemists in the sense that they blend disparate materials in the service of fantasy; they endow the real, the very materiality of the world — its objects, surfaces and textures — with an aura of strangeness and the fantastic (p.254).

What may be most shocking, O'Pray claims, are images or symptoms of fragmentation — a reminder of the Kleinian infant's fantasy construction of part objects, prototypically the breast, as a defence in the face of its own aggression, which is similarly, and horrifically, represented in part object images. O'Pray offers the example of the objectivisation and fragmentation of the female image in advertising; but fragmentation is a more general characteristic of the cinematic image, in as mundane an effect as the close-up, for example.

In my analysis of the snow scene in *Meet me in St. Louis,* I discussed the memorable impact on the spectator of the image of Tootie attacking the snow people. In its child-violence and the surreal quality of the snow family, it can produce in the spectator a shock similar to that ascribed to the films O'Pray discusses here. This image, not from an avant-garde but a mainstream Hollywood 'family' movie, may too be registered as a vivid 'materialisation' of the subject's unconscious fantasy, the wish to kill — to beat to fragments, with her stick — the objects she most loves.[12]

[12] It is however also the case that Minnelli admired the work of the surrealists (Naremore, 1993)

Winnicott and fantasying

I have argued here that in playing the spectator may at times move (and wish to be moved) into her inner world of psychic reality, to be caught up in its content and structure. Winnicott does not himself, however, take this view of fantasying ; or rather he distingushes between 'fantasy' and 'imagination' (explored in Ch.6) and gives a particular meaning to the term 'fantasy'. In a late paper, 'Dreaming, fantasying , and living: a case history describing a primary dissociation' (Winnicott, 1971, Ch.2), he places 'fantasying ' along with daydreaming and contrasts it with the 'imagination', which he relates to *both* 'dream' *and* to 'reality': 'Creative playing is allied to dreaming and to living but essentially does not belong to fantasying' (p.31).

For the patient described in this paper fantasying is distinct from dreaming because it is associated not with 'repression' but with 'dissociation', a mechanism of splitting of early infancy. In these terms repression is a relatively healthy mechanism — aspects of what has been repressed appear in both 'dreaming' and 'feelings belonging to life', with an enriching effect. Fantasying from the dissociation of a part of the ego from itself, on the other hand, is damaging because it has prevented the emergence of 'a whole person' (Winnicott, 1971, p.29). The fantasying cannot be 'used' by the subject because there is never 'a whole person to be aware of the two or more dissociated states that are present at any one time' (ibid). This fantasying is different from both playing and 'imaginative planning' (where I see myself engaged in an activity which as a result I can actually carry out) because so much energy is located in the split-off state that there is none left for actual

activity. Dreams belong to the past, planning to the future, but fantasying happens in the here and now — except that from the observer's point of view 'nothing whatever has happened'; nor will it, precisely because 'in the dissociated state so much is happening' (ibid p.27).

The way in which Winnicott describes this state could be applied to passive film-viewing-as-pathology: 'she could see that this could very easily have led to her lying in a mental hospital ... immobile ... yet in her mind keeping up a continuity of fantasying in which omnipotence was retained and wonderful things could be achieved in a dissociated state' — whereas anything actually carried out was 'subject to imperfection and therefore no good' (Winnicott 1971, p.28).

In this sense 'fantasying instead of living', described as escapism by James Britton (1977), becomes a substitute gratification sought by film and video watchers. Winnicott points out that this form of fantasying activity may be very difficult, both for the observer and even for the participant, to distinguish from 'creative flights of the imagination' (p.31). In watching a film we may not know where or who we are, or whether we are 'being creative' or 'escaping' (fantasying); whether we are playing or whether playing has broken down. Winnicott gives an indication of the risk of 'meeting' the unconscious through fantasying: that it is possible to believe in it too thoroughly: 'in fantasy things work by magic: there are no brakes on fantasy, and love and hate cause alarming effects ... fantasy is only tolerable at full blast when objective reality is appreciated well ... the subjective cannot be enjoyed except as a parallel to the objective' (quoted in Phillips, p.85). From this perspective, in watching a film it is important that we only suspend

disbelief in it intermittently and to a certain extent and that we are able to step out of the film-watching state as the credits roll up; on the other hand, on its own level (that of psychic reality), the film world *is*, and remains, 'real' for the spectator. For the playing spectator, the transitional area ensures that the boundaries between external and internal reality can be maintained as well as bridged; but in any case while play is taking place they need not be considered.

For this patient of Winnicott's there was no third area of playing or transitional object, so that she was unable to link up inner and outer reality.[13] The essence of playing is activity; in her case there was none. In watching a film the playing spectator also operates on the margins of psychic and external reality and it is easy for the precarious link between the two to be broken, whether momentarily or sustainedly. In this case the subject is moved by fantasy scenarios which position her in pre-set ways and she becomes a passive, unconscious spectator. In the fantasy structuring these scenarios are programmed and, like film narrative, endlessly repetitive. To change them and to make them her own the spectator has to unlock them in the service of playing.

[13]Winnicott does not himself discuss this patient in terms of the transitional area.

Meet me in St. Louis: 'The House of Horror'

The following analysis of the 'House of Horror' sequence in *Meet me in St. Louis* takes up the issue of the relationship and movement between the transitional area; shared, objective reality; and 'inner', psychic reality, that Tootie acts out and the film enacts for the spectator. I will argue that the playing spectator hovers in this sequence on the margins, drawn back and forth between reality and the fantasy scenarios into which she is sometimes drawn, and that this movement becomes a part of her playing in the transitional area.

I have presented Tootie as representative of the film's repressed unconscious, that underlies and sometimes forces its way into the apparently light-hearted surface that belongs to the film's status as a musical and a family comedy and romance and intrudes into the spectator's playing. Tootie herself, indeed, 'plays', from her first entrance on the ice cart, when she juggles her arch banter with the carrier with her talk of her dolls' lurid deaths. By the end of the next episode ('Tootie kills the snow people'), however, her character will have to carry the return of the repressed that will take control of the narrative, take on and defeat the power of the father, and break down the spectator's playing.

Some of Tootie's world, then, is that of psychic reality, the child's, which has no reference to the external world and operates by its own rules, where fantasy scenarios are as psychically binding as any other 'reality'. However, within certain limits (defined by the film's status as a genre Hollywood narrative), a good deal *St. Louis* operates as if in the external world of the shared reality of daily living in the small

community that comprises its world: the world of the adults or of those accepting the adults' perception of things. The musical numbers and scenes have introduced a playing, 'other' discourse, where the usual reality boundaries do not apply, and which takes the viewer into her own potential space and the playspace of the film, and which has just been represented in the most energetic, 'staged' and unmotivated number of the film, 'The Trolley Song'.

Now the work of this 'Horror' sequence for the film's narrative drive and for the spectator will be to begin to validate Tootie's point of view within psychic reality, where the family conflict, not yet introduced, is a life and death matter, belonging to the family melodrama aspect of the film. This 'House of Horror' sequence foreshadows and dimly parallels the snow people sequence. If the film is to ally the spectator with Tootie's point of view in the snow scene, the process must be begun in this less serious scene where Tootie's 'killing' is carried out by her simply throwing flour into the face of an elderly neighbour, Mr. Brokauff. For Tootie, however, this action has an import out of all proportion to its apparent reality.

Minnelli relates how MGM considered cutting the Hallowe'en 'House of Horror' sequence; it was Minnelli's favourite, both in his original conception of the film and in its execution, for its interesting cinematography and its offsetting of the film's sentimentality, and to his relief it was liked and saved (Minnelli, 1977, p.140). This is an indication of how the scene is both on one level important to and at the same time an oddity in the film. In a film which is anyway episodic this sequence serves no apparent plot function at all. It is crucial, however, to the film's unconscious project.

The sequence opens the film's Autumn episode, with the seasonal greeting card device that introduces each episode showing a pale-tint Gothic-looking version of the Smith's house with a skeletal tree in front of it. Its appearance is a surprise, since it has followed on immediately, in a surprisingly quick cut, from the cheerful and energetic musical number the 'Trolley' song, the ending of the Summer episode. As the camera moves forward and the still card 'comes alive' as it did for the first episode, the light fades and the house is shown in the dark, with a number of its windows brightly lit. The tree's shadows have become thicker and more shadowy. For a moment, as the card surround disappears, the house is unrecognisable as the Smith's house, so quick has been the transition from the Trolley song to the greeting card, to the actual house, and so different is this image from the previous 'Summer' image of the house. There is a further jolt for the spectator as the genre seems to shift from the musical, set in bright light, to an apparent 'horror' image which Wood (1979) compares with the *Psycho* house.[14] The camera tracks forward to a lit-up window, accompanied by a slow version of the film's theme tune.

In the first episode of the film the move forward into the house heralded the film's presentation of the happy, bustling Smith family making ketchup in their kitchen. The disorientating difference of this opening shot continues into the next, a superimposition of two masks over the lighted window, which, as the window fades, become clearly

[14]The expressionistic look of the shot and the difficulty in reading it also recalls the more complex opening of Citizen Kane (1941), where the camera also tracks forward towards the house, and the music is interrupted as it stops. Minnelli particularly admired Welles as a film-maker.

defined, one as a skull, the other with blood coming from its mouth, both highly lit by a candle in chiaroscuro effect and with nothing but a red cloth behind them: images of death, blood, fear. These masks are used to strong effect throughout the sequence.

Masks are traditionally a disguise, and used throughout the history of theatre. But from the point of view of the repressed unconscious, they also reveal. In acting exercises, actors who put on masks can get 'taken over' by them and find themselves mouthing sounds and making movements and actions which they seem not to direct or intend, the mask acting as another entity or representative of the players' unconscious. During this sequence in *St. Louis* they foreground the contrast (but also suggest the connection) between their 'nastiness' and the innocent-looking faces of their child-wearers in a reversal of the norm which expects a civilised veneer to *hide* the primitive depths. At this point the masks are presented to the spectator directly, without mediation, without a body wearing them and apparently without a narrative motivation, like part-object images speaking to the primitive unconscious.

The image is immediately 'normalised', however, as the camera moves back to reveal Rose in shot with the two young Smith sisters, Agnes and Tootie, and the spectator is reoriented and put back in place. Rose is dressing the girls for Hallowe'en: Tootie is having a false nose and a bowler hat tried on, Agnes is in a large black hat with a spiky decoration used to spiky visual effect in the following scenes. This transition from the unmediated image of the mask to dressing up sets up the sequence's movement between psychic reality and playing.

The two children are talking about a neighbour, Mr Brokauff, building him up into what they claim is a 'true' villain. As they talk about his poisoning a cat, and as a punch line, his whisky bottles, they are quickly making themselves believe their own story-telling. Rose manifestly pretends to play along with it, her exaggerated pretence inviting the spectator to collude with her playing: the spectator is in position of the adult Rose humouring her little sister — the dialogue is shot from Rose's point of view, camera from behind her shoulder. However as the children's expressions show increasing signs of their believing their own story, the spectator is also caught between Rose's acting and their more serious playing.

A rapid dissolve to the kitchen recalls the film's image of comfort and abundant nourishment. Kate is icing a large cake in the foreground and, behind her, Mrs Smith helps. Kate continues the Hallowe'en playing by pretending to be deceived by the appearance of the two children in their masks as 'boys'; they announce themselves as two ghosts, one 'horrible', the other 'drunken'. One of them has 'never even been buried'. The issue of burying, digging up, burying alive, is one of Tootie's major preoccupations, a reminder from the character who represents most the family's and the film's unconscious, of repression and its return. Rose comes in, reaffirming the make-believe and the adult humouring of the children, as she tells them to remember to replace the item a neighbour has put out for them to steal. Grandpa, as often, takes on an intermediate role between the adult and the child; from off-screen, he makes a 'ghost' sound, and on entry makes a joke for the adult spectator as he pretends to Agnes not to have heard it. But a moment later he says seriously, "You wouldn't catch me out on a night like this ...", without elaborating; given no

other information or reaction the spectator is only offered that of Agnes who looks genuinely frightened. Grandpa goes on to give apparently serious advice about how to 'wet the flour' the girls are going to throw at those they visit to make it harder for the 'victim' to get it off: Grandpa and the children are in collusion in their playing, which for the moment they all take seriously; the spectator wavers, both inside and outside it.

The camera tracks the girls out of the house and there is a further striking momentary unmediated view of a mask (which actually hangs loose round Agnes' neck) through a window pane, apparently disembodied, moving alone, of its own volition. The girls are accompanied by slow staccato music which is slightly playful and slightly ominous at the same time — it both supports and counters the spectator's 'adult' reading which tolerates but does not believe in the girls.

The film's other tendency to place the spectator along with the girls' subjective experience continues outside the house, in the dark, as the girls go to join the Hallowe'en fire. They walk towards camera, alone, Agnes's mask glowing, with the spiky shadows of the tree behind, and children's shouting in the background, off screen (as yet unidentified). As they come into close-up, only the masks, no longer their faces, are in view. At several points in this sequence such a slightly extended walk, or later a run in the dark, adds to a sense of danger, foreboding and isolation.

A cut to a huge bonfire shows a crowd of children, shouting and screaming, throwing parts of a house, doors and window frames onto

it. Two girls dressed up in men's long coats rush towards camera, (cross-dressing is marked in this scene where roles are uncertain) then stop abruptly as they, and the crowd behind them, back off at Tootie and Agnes's approach; a cut to Tootie on her own shows her scared face, lit up very white, in the dark.

As Agnes comes into view, she is wearing her mask for the first time and for a moment is not recognisable. Even the much older children are frightened at the sight of the girls who have to reassure them by announcing their identity. Throughout the sequence the music registers the ambiguity of the spectator's position: at important moments of drama where the girls' reality is presented seriously on the image track, cheerful, mocking dance music refutes it. In this section, however, glissando violin music reinforces the image of the children's fear.

The older children are also dressed up in masks and lit up by the fire. Shot from Tootie's point of view, they talk loudly and pass objects over her head, refusing to allow her to throw the large objects onto the fire: 'You're too little'. The scene appears uncontrolled and wild.

Hearing the repetition of the need to 'take the Brokauffs ' which everyone appears to be afraid to take up, Tootie suddenly offers. Refusing advice 'to go home', her white, intense and convinced face in close-up, she says again: 'I'll take the Brokauffs '; her conviction encourages belief and is taken seriously. She is challenged to 'throw flour in their face' ('or else'), asserts her independence by using her own flour — and sets off, viewed from behind, moving away from camera until she becomes a small figure in the dark: a distancing view

which in this case encourages not irony but concern. (The bag of flour disguises the true seriousness of her undertaking.)

In this noisy, riotous, firelit scene where all children are disguised as adults, the Brokauffs are taken seriously as frightening and Tootie's mission is to 'kill' them. Throughout the following scene Tootie seems to be totally and intently serious about her mission, not playing a role as she often does in the film. The game is real for her although it may not be for the film.

A cut shows Tootie walking towards camera, away from the crowd, alone, her body half lit up, half in shadow, the fire in a stylised cone of flame behind her. She jumps exaggeratedly as she comes to a shape which turns out to be a horse. Her walking is extended a little longer, long enough for the spectator to register it as significant; and the Gothic feel of the image is emphasised by leaves flying around her. As she walks, the music mocks her, for instance by halting momentarily as Tootie (and the music) 'jumps' at the sight of the horse. As she walks towards camera however the spectator is also invited to fear for and with the small bizarre figure in a Gothic setting.

Her walk is interrupted in a cut to a view of a house, less ornate than the Smiths, but similarly dark with several windows highly lit. From a distance, just visible, there is a face at the window (as there will be in the snow people scene).

Tootie gets nearer, hides by what looks to be a tombstone and creeps up to the front door. A quick cut shows a stylised image, framed like a tableau through the window, of Mr Brokauff reading a paper, his wife

in the background and a large white dog to one side all as though frozen in an American primitive painting. Tootie nearly runs away, then takes her flour and rings the bell, at this point shot from behind in a low angle shot that makes her look very small in front of the door which opens to reveal Mr Brokauff's legs.

Suddenly the mood shifts, as the camera position changes and Tootie is shot from inside the house and behind Mr Brokauff, somewhat from his point of view (the spectator probably does not adjust to it so quickly), as she says 'I hate you Mr Brokauff' and throws the flour. For this instant, the climax of the sequence, the spectator is held between Tootie and the adult point of view — which in the next instant takes over as he makes a (pretend) roar, wipes his face, looks down at the dog — and the camera follows his look to see the dog eagerly eating the flour and back to Mr Brokauff smiling benignly.

The child's view is reasserted as Tootie runs fast back to the fire, again taking longer in the tracking shot than if the scene were made in a series of cuts, giving the spectator time to register the force and duration of her running. This is her triumphant moment, her initiation. She has 'killed' Mr Brokauff, is acclaimed by the other children as 'the horriblest of them all', and allowed now to feed the fire.

The spectator has both been taken into her world and has been kept outside it (Tootie did not stay to witness Mr Brokauff's reaction). The spectator 'of course' knows that this whole sequence is make-believe, put in mainly for adult enjoyment of spectacle and of observing children's make-believe. At the same time another space is given her

where such a common-sense adult reality is undermined and Tootie's outlook taken on: Tootie's inner psychic world is also real and is demonstrated to have material effects when, in the next episode, her killing of the snow people prevents the family's move to New York and changes the course of the narrative.

This sequence disturbs the playing spectator in a number of ways: in the opening shot of the 'house of horror' it upsets expectations of narrative and generic continuity so that the spectator does not quite know where she is, or how she is to react — the secure playspace is shaken and with it the spectator's ability to play. Her playing is however re-established and continues in a number of moves: firstly, the whole sequence involves acting, role play and humour. Secondly, the spectator is offered different positions within the fiction — moving between the adults and the two young girls in the first section, between Tootie and the children round the fire (whose view of Tootie changes) and Mr Brokauff. The main shift in spectator position, however, is between the film's narrating ironic and deflating enunciation and Tootie's point of view. Changes in the camera's point of view and the contrast between music and image mark the contrast between Tootie's inner and external reality and move the spectator out to the onlooker's humorous and ironic viewpoint. At the same time, Tootie's encounter with Mr Brokauff, the House of Horror, the masks and the transformed landscape offer the spectator a disturbing if fleeting encounter with psychic inner reality cut off from playing.

This sequence moves the spectator in a series of repeated moves to and from playing and the possibility of its breakdown, veering edgily from one state to the other. The chief effect for the spectator is of a certain

unease; we are not consistently sure of where we are or what is happening, and, in particular, we are no longer quite confident about the playing and comedy that the film has previously established. In this sequence our belief, along with Tootie, that she has killed Mr Brokauff is undermined by 'reality', but it pre-figures her later killing of the snow family which we are invited to believe in without such qualification.

The spectator dreams a film

The spectator's move into psychic reality is at its most sustained when the viewing process induces a psychic state that is similar to that of dreaming: the playing spectator is transformed into the dreamer and she seems to 'dream' the film. For Freud, dreams are the most sure and routine path for the return of the repressed, the clearest evidence of the existence of the unconscious and the means by which he studied its operations (Freud, 1901). In film studies, the notion that watching a film is like dreaming suggests that, by inducing in the spectator a dreamlike state, film also provides a route to the unconscious, not so much through its content but through its psychic operations and effect on the viewing subject. In becoming the dreamer the playing spectator undergoes a psychic shift into a different viewing mode.

In film studies the comparison between film and dreaming has recurred, rather as though it were a matter of general experience, throughout film history, as if on the assumption that it is a common and strong impression that watching a film can feel like, or at least recall, dreaming. Altman, (1977, p.524) cites Muerhofer (1916) onwards; Donald (1989, p.3) recalls the now familiar notion of film as the 'dream factory' and wish-fulfilment in the work of Hortense Powdermaker in the nineteen forties. In attempting to account for this connection, Altman refers to the philosopher Suzanne Langer's tantalisingly brief but suggestive attempt to compare the operation of film with dream in the appendix to *Feeling and Form*. Here, in two pages, at the end of an ambitious exploration of the relation between art forms and emotional experience, she characterises film as creating 'a virtual present — an order of direct apparition', (in contrast to the 'past' of narrative fiction)

... 'The spectator of film takes the place of a dreamer' (quoted in Altman, 1977, p. 525), the images of the film-track unfolding in front him as a dream seems to do for the dreamer.

Metz explores the relationship of film with dreaming, day-dreaming and fantasy in a series of five short, connected essays, 'The fiction film and its spectator', published (though not in English) a year before his much more influential 'The Imaginary signifier', which appeared in *Screen* in 1975. Whereas the main thesis of the latter essay concerns Lacan's distinction between the Imaginary and the Symbolic order, these earlier essays explore the 'spectator in the Imaginary' (Metz, 1982, p.6).

Having set up the fundamental and obvious difference that the spectator is awake and 'knows he is at the cinema', whereas the dreamer is asleep and 'does not know that he is dreaming' (Metz, 1982, p.99), Metz goes on to explore the *similarities* between the two states, and a good deal of the essay is therefore concerned to demonstrate that this 'obvious' difference must be modified. Firstly, he cites the conditions of film viewing in the cinema: the dark, isolated and passive situation 'induces a state of narcissistic withdrawal'; the subject turns in on himself, away from external objects and 'puts himself in the position of a certain tolerance for the conscious manifestation of the primary process' (p.107). This is the position that the spectator invites by going to the cinema. Secondly, Metz assesses the state of the spectator: he claims that, after all, the spectator is not always 'quite awake'. At certain moments of 'fleeting intensity ... the subject's consciousness of the filmic situation as such starts to become a bit murky' (Metz, 1982, p.101) and at these moments there arises 'a

dreamlike confusion of dream and reality' where the spectator gets nearer to 'true illusion', a 'brief psychical giddiness from which he has the impression of waking up' (p.103), because he has 'dreamed' a bit of the film. In a passage that recalls Winnicott's account of the baby who has the illusion that it 'creates' the mother's breast at the moment it is presented, Metz speaks of a 'paradoxical hallucination ... a slight unsteadiness in the play of reality-testing' and concludes that 'the subject has hallucinated what was really there, what at the same moment he in fact perceived, the images and sounds of the film' (p.104).

Metz suggests that the greatest similarity between film viewing and the dreaming state occurs at the moment when the regime of each begins to break down — when the spectator *stops* being aware that he is watching and when the dreamer *knows* that he is dreaming or is even able to redirect the dream's narrative. (Films too sometimes offer us the opportunity to 'redirect' the narrative: the double ending of *Pennies from Heaven* (1981), for instance, claims to offer the spectator a choice between the 'realistic' (pessimistic) ending of the protagonist's death or the alternative lovers happy-ever-after ending.)

At these moments the opposition between sleep and wakefulness is modified: the dreamer's illusion of the 'reality' of his situation (which Metz points out is usually total) wavers, while the spectator's ordinary awareness of himself in the cinema disappears, to be temporarily replaced by an illusion that the events on screen are indeed taking place; at this point he 'dreams or hallucinates' the film.

Metz's statement that dream is the only non-neurotic place for the primary process slowly evolves into his suggestion that film also has that function. Overall the economy of film viewing, which constructs a spectator veering between external and internal, psychic, reality, has a tendency to take the spectator into the domain of the primary process, which can 'establish, outside the divisions imposed by reality, the short and magical circuits that the impatient wish requires' (Metz, 1982, p.126). This is an elaboration of the well-worn notion of film as wish fulfilment.

If the fundamental similarity between film and dream is in their deployment of moving images, it is in our *memory* of them that, with the major defining internal-external difference between them abolished, they are most alike. Firstly, in remembering, all images, whether they were originally internal or external, become subjective phenomena. Secondly, the relative degree of secondarisation and narrative coherence of film compared with dream counts for less than the fact that we recall images from both film and a dream in a highly selective way. We use these images and fragments for our own varied and changing purposes and they slot into our memory along with our other experiences. If we choose to pursue them, we can use them as a way of discovering, by free association, more about our unconscious reactions to a film and its significance for us.

In his essay 'Diderot, Barthes, Vertigo', Victor Burgin, who is committed to an understanding of psychoanalysis as a 'theory of the internalisation of the social' pursues the cultural meanings to which his memory of a film image may lead him. After watching a film, all that he retains is an 'image or short sequences of images', which he

compares to a film still: 'The film still a material entity; the mnemic image, a psychic entity' (Burgin, 1986, p. 86).

This exploration leads him into an exploration of theories of representation in Renaissance painting, but he returns to where he began, to a look at an analysis of some film stills by Barthes, who contrasts a shared, culturally mediated response with an image with the 'private, unpredictable', and involuntary response that Barthes terms a 'punctum' (Burgin, 1986, p.95). Here Burgin moves from what he distinguishes as a 'collective, preconscious' association to an evocation of individual fantasy: 'the sources of the emotion in memories circulating round the themes of death and sexuality, played out within the space of the family, which are the substance of psychoanalysis' (p.86); the 'highly cathected image-fragment is the '*representative* of a narrative' (always, apparently, of the subject's personal history) and a point, marked by the unpredictable force of the response, of the return of the repressed. In an analogous process, Burgin goes on to trace his associations of a composite image which he found he had formed out of a 'superimposition' of images from Hitchcock's *Vertigo*; Burgin's shifting associations take him in and out of the film by different routes; as though with each entry he finds (or makes) a different film. The spectator can continue to work on the film — and the film work on her — in the same way as she might with a dream. The image of Tootie killing the snow people is an example from *Meet me in St. Louis* that has a similar reverberative power.

As we extend the process of remaking and re-elaborating it, a film becomes, like a dream, 'our' film: (both our dreams and the film we dream are always unique). In the process of re-secondarisation the

unconscious source for the original eruption of the image into our minds disperses or gets absorbed into our psychic life as we make new objects and artefacts out of the fragments. Even in our reception of it we never experience the film as a whole, complete object but receive it in fragments, and receive it differently with every repetition. The 'wholeness' of a film, like a dream, is a theory, a reconstructed afterthought.

For psychoanalysis, the phenomenon of dreaming is an insistent sign of the permeation of the unconscious into our everyday lives: when I wake up, the images that 'come' to me may have come from my dream; but in this half-awake state, they may also have come from a film, perhaps the film I watched last night. We may also re-view (hallucinate, recall) images of what has actually taken place, particularly 'traumatic' images that we might wish we could forget; or we may visualise, and even hallucinate, fantasies, whether wished for or not. Whatever their origins, eventually all internal images come to have the same status. In his dialogue with Bellour, Rosolato describes a patient's intense and frightening experience of his memory of a cinema poster which, however, 'may have been entirely fabricated' (Bellour and Rosolato, 1990, p.212). Bellour notes the ambiguity of the relationship between dream and film remembered recounting:

> ... the wild and unmasterable experience provoked by the encounter with a particular face or with a particular relationship between two shots which suddenly disturb you. It's like a materialisation of one's relationship to the recollection of one's dreams, even if here one is actually dealing with a construction of real images whereas the dream is an attempt to grasp once again things which are in the process of being lost' (ibid).

For Susan Isaacs the peculiar sense of the directness and immediacy of mental images may be attributed to the psychic continuity between the image that we know, as adults, to be a mental representation of external reality and our primitive 'imago', the unconscious image of the earliest object or part object which includes its associated body and emotional fantasies. Whereas the adult's image has largely repressed its somatic emotional elements it nevertheless, by unconscious association, remains emotionally charged with the original bodily associations of the imago: (Isaacs 1944, p.93). Impressions from both dream and film, either as a memory or as a trace of what we cannot remember, continue to live in our psyche and to permeate our conscious awareness, as a mark of the insistence of the unconscious.

Metz's distinction is between the spectator who is fully aware of 'the filmic situation' and the dreamer, who will 'wake up' from the dream. The notion of potential space and the transitional area, however, introduces an alternative active engagement with the film: playing is an active process and the playing spectator makes her own film in the potential space where film and spectator meet. While the spectator dreams a film the playing spectator is in abeyance; in dreaming the film, its images seem to be projected from inside herself. When she 'wakes' from her film, still dreaming, the experience is of coming to herself again after being absent, and playing can start again.

For the dreaming spectator, the status of the film object itself has also undergone a change: from being a transitional object it has become an object that belongs entirely to inner, psychic reality (Winnicott, 1962): the film-dream is an internal object, the dream space an internal space.

Asleep, the spectator can do nothing with the dream-film but when the dreamer/spectator awakes, whether during or after the film, she may use the new construct formed from the images and 'impressions' of the dream-film for her playing in the same way as any other transitional object. Indeed the dream-film used in this way may function as a particularly potent transitional object, as it comes strongly cathected from its status as an internal dreamt object. As the spectator reconstructs the film she has dreamt, it becomes her transitional object, reconnecting her with the external world and allowing her to play again. From belonging to psychic reality the dream becomes available for playing and Winnicott's claim that 'dreaming and living are of the same order' is realised.

CHAPTER 5 REPLAYING LOSS

The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there.

(The *Go-Between*, L.P. Hartley, 1953, p.1.)

A loss is a loss is a loss.

(Masud Khan on *Psychic Pain*, J. B. Pontalis, 1981)

The infant ... [is] ... able to deal with loss without quite losing what is (in one sense only) lost.

(*Human Nature*, D.W.Winnicott, 1988.)

The spectator suffers loss

Although it is not always named, loss is a pervasive presence in the psychoanalytic story and as much a part of the unconscious as desire. As subjects we are caught in the impossible paradox that if we try to regain what we have lost we risk the loss of that subjectivity which has been achieved only through successive losses. In gaining his mother, Oedipus loses himself; the loss of the object of desire and the acceptance of castration is the price that has to be paid for our place as subjects. Yet we continue to seek an end to loss and at the same time to re-enact it. In this chapter I will argue that the promise of film both to compensate for and to replay her loss is a further lure for the playing spectator as she is taken over by unconscious processes. Through re-playing loss she may assimilate and re-work it for her playing. Through the loss of her subjectivity, I will argue in the next chapter, she may also 'find' her Self.

I will explore the notion of the spectator's loss from different perspectives: as her desire for her lost object; as her wish to replay her loss; as her longing for her 'past' through nostalgia; and finally as the loss of her subjectivity in 'merging' with the film.

The basic psychoanalytic loss takes place in fantasy but in relation to external referents. In 'Inhibitions, symptoms and anxiety' Freud enumerates its stages: loss comes to be experienced as variations of the fear of separation in losing the desired object: at birth, through castration, in exclusion — 'separation from the horde' — and death (Freud, 1926, pp.295-6). For Freud, Oedipus and castration is always the fulcrum and defining instance. Here the losses multiply: the boy has to renounce his desire for the mother — and along with it, the femininity he may have imbibed from her — a loss accompanied by the consequent guilt and terror of reprisal (of the greater loss of castration) from the internalised father of the child's super-ego. For the girl it is a double renunciation, not only of her own mother but also of her own sex as object of desire, and the masochistic acceptance in turn of her own castration — the renunciation of bisexuality and the possession of the penis/phallus.

For Klein the inconsolable anguish and anxiety associated with the loss of the object comes from the knowledge that the subject itself has destroyed the object. At the primitive, body-based stage when the baby's experience is only of part objects (the good and bad breast, wholly giving and wholly refusing), it destroys the bad object in fury, but comes to realise that it has also killed the good object, experiencing at the depressive position that the two opposites are a part of one whole, the 'real' but still internal mother. Guilt and anguish at loss enters the

Kleinian scene much earlier than for Freud and it is a more pervasive issue for the subject. The attempt at reparation, the restoration of loss, as well as the tendency to continue to retain in fantasy good and bad part objects, lasts a lifetime and there is no transitional object to defuse the process (Klein, 1940).

A more pervasive loss for the adult comes from the need to sacrifice the pleasure principle for the reality principle, inner for outer reality and from then on the necessity for compromise and choice, signs of 'maturity' that the psychoanalytic subject achieves only at a cost and never completely. As Winnicott puts it (to a lay reader), 'the reality principle is an insult' for the baby (Winnicott, 1986, p.40) — and in the unconscious remains so throughout life. Winnicott's trajectory of loss is the baby's progressive, uncertain journey of separation from the mother before the Oedipal stage, and the decisive loss in that process is the failure of the 'holding' mother in infancy.

Metz relates the loss of the object to cinema when he begins his long essay 'The Imaginary signifier' with an introductory note on the propensity of cinema (cinema as an institutional and psychic apparatus) to become established, in order to perpetuate itself, as a Kleinian good object, the idealised internal part object of desire which is split off from the bad object. This is part of Metz's attempt to grapple with the continually intriguing question of the spectator's fascination with cinema, which can as easily shift to, or be expressed as, hatred for the bad object (Metz, 1982, pp.9-12). Metz returns to the theme at the end of the essay in a brief 'Provisional Conclusion'; here he claims that in 'studying' cinema the critic has turned it into the bad object to be persecuted and destroyed: 'the good object has moved to the side of

knowledge' (p.80). The greatest threat to the psyche comes not from the loss of a real person but of an internal object, a part of our fantasy; since, as Metz puts it, 'lost objects are the only ones one is afraid to lose' (Metz, 1982, p.80), the critic, like the child in the depressive position who realises that he has destroyed the whole object, not only the bad part, always attempts reparation, by the 'restoration to the theoretical body of what has been taken from the institution, from the code which is being studied' (ibid): the critic transfers his love for cinema to a love of theory.

This is an apt and wry commentary on the activities of film buffs and critics but film itself does its own work of seeming to restore the lost object to the spectator.

Reclaiming the lost object

One of the most remarked-on phenomena of cinema is its 'reality effect', firstly, from its motivated, iconic signifying system: the moving photographic images resemble their referents in a way that verbal language systems deny (Metz, 1974). Then, more than any other kind of fiction, cinema manifests itself as fully present and absent at the same time. John Ellis explores the 'present absence' of 'the photo effect' (Ellis, 1982, p.97) in terms of stars but it is true of all representational cinema. Penley emphasises that the 'dream effect' of cinema's impression of reality that Metz describes 'has less to do with the successful rendering of the real than the reproduction and repetition of a particular condition: a fantasmisation of the subject' (Penley, 1977, p.588) — the spectator dreams or hallucinates the film, or is caught up in the Lacanian Imaginary, and in this state the images on screen form

a part of her psychic state. The spectator's sense of loss comes from her simultaneous experiencing, which is almost her hallucinated longing, of the presence of the film events combined with the knowledge of the actual absence and negation of what appears to be there (brought together by the subject's perpetual desire for what has been lost). Like Winnicott's tantalising mother (Winnicott, 1960, p.147) the cinematic image offers and withholds satisfaction in the same movement: apparently fully present, it is in fact totally unobtainable.

In his essay 'Film and Dream', Metz holds that the viewing situation encourages in 'a double reinforcement' the impression for the spectator of receiving images that seem to come from inside her at the same time as they come from the outside (Metz, 1982, p.118). To take this further, if the images on screen seem to originate from the spectator's inner world, the film system continually both validates those inner objects as 'real' — because they exist out there on screen — and at the same time makes them available for the spectator's inner world from which they originated and where they rightly belong. While in the external world the spectator can have nothing of what the film seems to promise, in fantasy she can have it all, since the fictional objects have never claimed to belong anywhere but in her internal psychic reality to which (being part of 'her' psychically produced film) they are now returned. The film gives back to the spectator an internal object that she can retain for herself to offset the inevitable loss of the film-on-screen.

I explore this process in the following extract from *Meet me in St. Louis* where the work of the film will be twofold: to validate for the spectator the image of John Truett, as Esther's object of desire, and then return

that idealised object to her inner world. The effect in this playful film, I will argue, is to create 'two' John Truetts, the internal object of desire and the mundane but narratively necessary 'boy-next-door'.

Meet me in St. Louis: **'The-boy-next-door'**

We catch a glimpse of the boy-next-door (John Truett) as the object of Esther's desire when both sisters, Esther and Rose, present and display themselves for him, surrounded, in a framing device frequently deployed in the film, particularly for Esther/Garland, by the roses around the porch of their house. The girls' display of themselves is self-conscious — here, as often in the film, they put on a show as if for the benefit not only of the boy, but also for the spectator and themselves. Typical of many instances in the film, the situation is ironised and the spectator distanced by Minnelli's authorial voice. The point here is that the boy is indeed the 'boy-next-door', undeserving of the attention the girls give him — a very ordinary young man who lights a pipe as he is observed and seems (the spectator, like the girls, though, is not sure) to be unaware of their presence. He does not seem suitable as a romanticised, idealised object of desire, although he is admirably suited, in terms of the family, small-town drama, to be Esther's 'real life' suitor once he is persuaded to take on the role. He appears to be unaffected by the sisters' presence, and, to their disappointment, simply goes off into his house.

After a brief comment on the situation, the girls enter their own house, with a reference to Esther's age by her sister: 'when you are as old as me you will know that boys are not the most important thing in the world'. The spectator is given to know that this is nonsense, since Rose protests too much and has done nothing except present herself for

sexual approval so far. Esther remains alone. She is about to transform for the spectator the boy-next-door into the internal object of desire that she is seeking.

She moves to the window, front of screen, and looks out towards, but slightly to one side of, camera — although she is framed again, this time by the window, and this time as if for the spectator's view, she does not once in this scene look directly at the camera (in line with common practice in classic Hollywood fiction film, a 'rule', however, that is sometimes conventionally broken by the musical).

A close-up, in soft focus, foregrounds her look. Who or what she is looking at becomes an issue — since the spectator is denied her glance, it is to be assumed that she is thinking about the boy-next-door, although we know that he has disappeared and is not in her line of vision. Soft focus adds to the impression that in looking out to middle distance, to a point that is not determinable by the spectator, she is in fact looking inwards to an internal object, the idealised object of her desire.[1] This vague idealisation of the boy-next-door is expressed in the words of her song which is about her desire rather than a real person:

> My only regret is that we've never met,
> Though I dream of him all the while ...
> He doesn't try to please me ...
> ... doesn't even know that I exist ...
> I just adore him.

[1]Britton stresses the force of her narcissistic desire in this scene, for which he claims the boy is just a foil: Esther's 'object' is herself (Britton, 1978, p. 16). From an object relations perspective Esther's narcissism is transferred onto her fantasy, internal object, which, by the end of the scene has become a part of her psychic reality, of herself.

The actual boy-next-door by means of Esther's look inwards and by her desire (her sexual awakening, which is a major theme of the film) is becoming equated with this fantasy, unobtainable figure which belongs to her own psyche. He has become associated with a part of her dream and a focus for her wishes: 'I just adore him'.

In this first solo of the film Esther/Judy Garland takes on the attributes of a star for the spectator, framed, with her face in soft focus. The spectator is offered the place of Esther's desiring: denied a reverse shot to locate her object (the actual boy-next-door having been dismissed) and frustratingly denied being ourselves the object looked at, there is no other place to take. We are invited at the same time to desire Garland as object and — more strongly, given the structuring of the look within the narrative which has encouraged the spectator to take up Esther's point of view — to take on her desire. The spectator's desire is therefore caught between that of Esther and her own for the star in a double movement where subject and object are reversed.

The spectator is further caught up in this scenario of desire by the next move, as, with a rapid but unobtrusive tracking shot, we follow Esther round the room to look in a large mirror. Mirrors and reflections in narrative film easily and often create the impression of the possibility, usually promptly withheld, that the spectator will see herself reflected. In this case the image is immediately of Esther (although, in so far as the spectator has been invited to take her place, it also reflects the spectator), practically full-length. She looks at and self-consciously modifies the image (here we are shown both the girl and her image) by flicking her hair, posing herself to continue and formalise the waltz she has just begun.

At this moment, briefly, the spectator is being invited to take up a more distanced position as she notices and looks on at the self-conscious narcissistic display. On the one hand Esther has become the object of her own look, as has the spectator in so far as she is taking her own part in this narcissistic performance. On the other hand, at the same time, the spectator is invited to adopt an onlooker position, invited to smile tolerantly at the girl displaying herself; the film's ironic moments encourage a patronising view of Esther. The movement of Garland's dancing and the swinging rhythm of the waltz; the non-diegetic orchestral accompaniment that brings in the outside world and makes public the private wishing; the camera's tracking movement — all work to include the spectator in the scene's activation of desire, which ends with its acknowledgement, as Garland returns to the window framed again by the curtain as at the beginning of the song: "How can I ignore the boy next door?". 'He' is no longer out there but has become transformed by her wishing and self-love into an internal object.

The 'boy-next-door' is a familiar icon of American cinema, part of the manifest promise of this film that home is best and will provide for all the subject's wishes. The point of his mundaneness is precisely that he can be universalised — he can belong to any girl (Britton calls him a tabula rasa); the more undefined the more able to be transformed by the power of desire into the ideal internal object, which the spectator can now securely possess. With this internal idealised object securely in place for the unconscious spectator, the film can move on to working out its family melodrama Oedipal themes, and focus on the need for the young people to take up a place in the family and society. The boy-next-door — his material disappearance is fortunate at this point — has

become invested with Esther's desire and, by extension, with the spectator's. There are now therefore two John Truetts. As the boy-next-door of the film he has no need to live up to the ideal because his figure has become invested with the desire of the players — of Esther and also of the spectator who identifies and plays in the place of the character on screen. The fantasy object is secure and the real boy-next-door can continue to play his roles of maintaining the family continuity when he will replace the grand(father) as Esther's beau, and as a butt for the film's teasing. The spectator now has a double view of him: the onlooker's playful, ironic and superior view of the boy-next-door and the other, where, equating him with an internal, psychic object, she takes on Esther's generalised wishing and accepts him as an object of desire.

The coexistence of the two positions is characteristic of the film's shifting and fluid movement for the playing spectator. In being endowed with aspects of both inner and outer reality, the John Truett character takes on the attributes of a transitional object, both 'Me and not Me', able to be used and transformed variously by the spectator's wishing in the service of different kinds of playing.

Reclaiming the past: nostalgia

The promise of cinema to summon up images of what the spectator has lost and to replay scenarios from her closed-off past is frequently represented as 'nostalgia', in an idealisation of a setting in the past. In psychoanalytic terms, one way of conceiving nostalgia is as a wishing and regret for the original lost object, the mother/breast, or, for Winnicott, the time of being merged in with her. In their account of Lacan, Benvenuto and Kennedy point to Freud's emphasis on 'the nostalgia binding the subject to the lost object' and 'the impossibility of his (the subject's) repetitive attempts to find the lost object' (Benvenuto and Kennedy, 1986, p.128); at the heart of the experience of nostalgia is the knowledge of its inevitable disappointment. These authors point out that Klein, however, offered the possibility of restoring loss through restoration of the object; for Winnicott, even without restoration, loss can be redeemed and healed through the maternal holding environment which allows the subject to play. The memory and return of this provision, I will argue, is replayed in *Meet me in St. Louis.*

The etymology of nostalgia refers to the wish to return home — homesickness. However nostalgia is marked off from homesickness (which assumes a real home to return to) by its peculiar quality of combining the wish to go back to the past with the knowledge, no less strongly registered, of the impossibility of that wish. The material past (another time or place) that nostalgia evokes is irrecoverable and the original psychic 'home' irremediably lost. What is lost clouds the present — we say of persistent nostalgics that they cannot live in the present: destined always to attempt to recreate what has been lost, they

engage in a continual replaying of regret for the past, always trying to find its trace in the present. Certainly this quality of nostalgia, a yearning for something that can never be recaptured or a longing for a past that might, we imagine, have existed elsewhere, suggests the subject's myth of the original object. However it is notable that nostalgia is usually represented in terms of a physical place rather than in terms of an individual relationship, which is where the lost object is often pursued.

A 'nostalgic' evocation of the past seems to have been a part of the original conception of *Meet me in St. Louis.* In his autobiography, Minnelli writes:

> The film he [Arthur Freed, the producer at MGM] had in mind was based on series of nostalgic pieces Sally Benson has written for the *New Yorker,* which were later published in book form as *Meet me in St. Louis.* Her childhood reminiscences were praised as a wonderful evocation of a past era, and Arthur felt a sentimental mood could be created.
>
> (Minnelli, 1974, p.129)

Minnelli adds that what convinced him to want to do the film were the children's fantasies about Hallowe'en: he continues:

> ... the burning of feet and slashing of throats, almost a wistful longing for horror, wasn't the sweet and treacly approach so characteristic of Hollywood. This was the type of fantasy that real children, raised on the grimmest of Grimm's fairy tales, would have.

His recollection, then, is of a wish to create 'lyrical evocations of an era' combined with a certain psychological realism. Of the script writing, he says:

> They took the very human values of the Benson work — the simple goodness of the time, the earnestness and purity of its people, the gentle humour and the laughs of recognition at their universality — and constructed a story out of an episode in the book. (p.130)

The effect of his brief account is a cavalier reconstruction of the period that makes nonsense of history and satisfactorily incorporates 'the horror' of the children's far-from-innocent fantasies into the 'simple goodness of the time'. The film's nostalgic project is an idealised transformation of history and Minnelli continues his account by describing how he wished the sets to 'have the look of Thomas Eakin's paintings, though not to the point of imitation' (ibid, p.131). Making due allowance for the fact that this was Minnelli writing — or rather being ghosted — nearly thirty years after the event, this nevertheless sums up the general response to a film that is still frequently shown on television as a popular family movie at Christmas. Altogether this retrospective gloss, which does no justice to the complexity of the film, protests too much in eliding contradictions which the film itself hesitantly insists on.

Andrew Britton and Richard Dyer explore some of the means by which *Meet Me in St. Louis* is made available for nostalgia. Richard Dyer, in 'Entertainment and Utopia', argues that the film is one of a

comparatively small number of musicals which 'suggest that Utopia is implicit in the world of the narrative as well as of the numbers' (Dyer, 1977, p.188): whereas in many musicals the numbers represent escapism from the 'real' world of the narrative, 'Utopia' is everywhere in this film, embedded in the diegetic world of the city and the family. For the nostalgic experience, the film's utopian qualities represent what has been lost by history and the film offers to replay.

For Britton the film presents St. Louis as a 'mythical place' where the Smith family, and the city itself, 'are separated off from the realm of production, in contrast with New York': the year of the St. Louis fair, 1903-4, 'becomes the point at which 'city' can still mean community' (Britton, 1978, p.10). In an analysis of the opening sequence he suggests that the invitation to the viewer is to an 'at-homeness which becomes inseparable from family' inviting regression 'not to childhood as it was then but to a cultural myth of childhood in the family as it ought to have been and might possibly have been' (ibid).

Nostalgia in a film is usually represented as a place or a community, often presented (as in *St. Louis*) along with an extended family. This provides a structure and a setting for the spectator where she can find a safe place. For the individual, the wished-for setting may be perceived as his childhood home; collectively, the wish is often put onto a period in history when 'everything was much better'.

The mechanism seems simple: *if only* I could recreate the home of my childhood, *if only* we could return to past values, if only the past could be restored, our incomplete present could be transformed. One nostalgic may be satisfied by the reassurance that everything could

have been all right ... if only ... and that it might be again. Others will sense the impossibility of their search, and for them, the true nostalgics, all evocation of the past will be coloured not only by the knowledge that nothing can be the same again but that all subsequent evocations of an apparently wished-for return to the past are marked by that first loss. The melancholy of true nostalgia comes from the knowledge of its impossibility. However apparently happy a state that nostalgia presents (essential to demonstrating how good the past was), its representation is overlaid with regret and with marks of its illusory quality. Even a representation of the material past can never compensate for the subject's original psychic, fantasy losses.

There can be still more to the melancholy sense of the impossibility of nostalgia than an irrecoverable past. Representations of nostalgic scenes tend to reveal that what is presented is 'too good to be true', causing the nostalgic to suspect that not only is the past irrecoverable but that in truth it was never as good as it purports to be. We try to conceal this knowledge: hence our censoring of our memories of our childhood and the tendency of Hollywood cinema, which has a particular propensity for nostalgia, to insist on the 'real life' quality of its nostalgic offerings. The glamour of nostalgia attempts to conceal that what we long for in the past is something that we have never actually had: something has been withheld — a knowledge that in Metz's terms may turn the good film object into the bad for the spectator.

A degree of maternal failure is inevitable and necessary in enabling the infant to become a separate person. All the same, in fantasy the subject continues to seek the mythical place and time where everything was

sufficient. One way of filling up the emptiness of insufficiency is with nostalgic substitutes for a mythical past; Jessica Benjamin relates the subject's determined insistence on the sufficiency of the past to the fantasy of omnipotence: 'a fantasy constructed in the face of disappointment of loss ... the attempt to get back what we never had but imagine we did'. The infant's refusal to accept that its importunate needs and demands are denied him persists in the adult's fantasy: 'Omnipotence describes a defensive wish, buried in every psyche, that one will have a perfect world, will prevail over time, death and the other — and that coercion will succeed' (Benjamin, 1988, p.256).

The subject (and the entertainment industry) tries to convince himself and others that his memory or reconstruction is the truth — yet sometimes he cannot avoid suspecting the nostalgic object which in turn cannot always avoid revealing its inadequacies. Given the insufficiency which he is desperately trying to evade, the more desirable the presentation of the nostalgic scene the more the subject suspects that it cannot be for him. In this suspicion lies not only the regret for what is past but, with another twist, more poignantly, the half-acknowledged awareness that what is evoked can never be as good as the subject wishes or tries to believe. Nothing, the nostalgic feels, can make up for a past that has not taken place.

Film may attempt to persuade the spectator otherwise. *The Railway Children* (Lionel Jeffries, 1970), set in Edwardian England with a child narrator, is about a family which maintains itself in spite of difficulty and recreates its home in a new 'poor', though delightfully idealised

rural, setting.[2] The mother is an idealised figure (though a 'modern' one who keeps her family by writing) who succeeds, with the help of the narrator daughter, in holding the family together during the father's absence, which motivates the course of the narrative. The father is a shadowy figure, outside the maternal environment, and his return at the end of the film signals its ending and marks the narrator's and the spectator's acknowledgement of the Oedipal triangle and her own exclusion from the parental scene: 'I think we are not wanted here'. The nostalgic object is reasserted and left behind, insulated and packaged in the past (of the film) as the spectator is returned to her place as subject in the Oedipal scenario, when the cast lines up to wave to the camera at the end. Nostalgia is put back in place — at the expense of history.

The inadequacy of the past that nostalgia tries to hide may however force itself to the surface. For instance, *The Go Between* (Joseph Losely, 1970) whose screen play is by Harold Pinter, throws up starkly the failure of the nostalgic object. The main character, played by Michael Redgrave, has opened up his past and introduced the narrative by unlocking the correspondence between his mother and himself when, as a small boy, he stayed with his school friend in a large country manor and became the 'go between' for the illicit lovers (his friend's sister and a neighbouring farmer) who transgressed the barriers of class and sexual convention. The mise en scène of the film offers a nostalgic evocation of Edwardian England, the beautiful young men and women

[2] I am indebted to David Lustead's *Kidstuff: Childhood and Cinema*, Notes to accompany the season of films programmed under the title "Seen but not heard" at the ICA Cinema, November 1-14, 1979, for its reference to *The Go Between* as a flight to nostalgia and the suggestion (in different terms) of a comparison of that film with *The Railway Children*.

blending with the English countryside. However the action is shown almost entirely from the viewpoint of the boy, overlaid by that of the Redgrave adult character whose presence is only registered through his opening words (in voice-over) and as he is glimpsed in fleeting flash-forwards during the course of the film. The failure of the nostalgic object stalks the story as it moves with increasing suspense towards its climax, the boy's traumatic loss of innocence and subsequent rejection by his substitute family, when, in a violent representation of the primal scene, he is forced to witness the discovery of the lovers: the suspense of the film is in the viewer knowing more than the young boy and even, we are given to understand, the narrator who is rediscovering his repressed past.

What is specific about this film's representation of the past is that the boy's viewpoint reveals its strangeness and *foreignness* — 'the past is another country'. Although the film has the look of the representation of nostalgia, it turns out to be the opposite: it denies the protagonist, and by extension the spectator, the crucial element of serving as a return to a real or even a psychic home. On the contrary, the narrative hinges on the fact of the boy's social difference and his consequent exploitation by the family which is not his. His own impecunious and anxious widowed mother appears only in letters, and rejects his wish to return home. The nostalgic space is not given to us, we do not belong to it; we observe it at a distance through the eyes of the boy/outsider, often in long shots, and with blurred, distant voices. It exists out there, sufficiently strongly and beautifully for the boy/spectator to wish for it — and for a while, before his hubris, even to have the illusion of belonging to it (or rather, in fact, to the in-between terrain between the farmer's and the manor's land). At the

end of the film the hostility of the setting is represented by a violent thunderstorm, leading up to the discovery of the lovers and the boy's expulsion. By the same token, the setting itself is shown to be a deceit; the 'beauty' of rural Edwardian England is in fact the site of family and societal deadly divisions, with a strongly Oedipal current.

Each of the two mothers of *The Go Between* in different ways fails in her maternal function, the one through her jealousy of her daughters, the other by abrograting her responsibility and sending her son away. For Winnicott, however, firstly the 'good enough' mother, then the transitional area, can mend nostalgia's gap; if the potential space of the maternal setting has been 'filled in with creative playing' (Winnicott, 1971, p.107), with the mother known to be present but not otherwise needed, then the past might be given up as the infant gives up the transitional object, which is un-mourned because its function has been played out and there is no need to return to it. Once the capacity to be alone is achieved, the present can be enough.

The linking of nostalgia with a physical setting recalls the stage when, in Winnicott's model, the infant is just beginning to emerge into subjectivity through the use of potential space. Not yet fully separate, it remains within the maternal 'holding environment'. Winnicott's essay 'The capacity to be alone' (1958) presents an image of a baby who can play safely because it knows its mother is within its domain: it has the experience of being alone 'in the presence of someone' (p.33). Although the baby is already separating itself out through the use of transitional objects, it is still playing and exploring within the potential space between itself and the mother: a delightful pre-Oedipal mix of bodily satisfactions, freedom and security. This emphasises not so

much the mother as an object as the environment or setting she provides, a potential space where the child can play but is not yet required to be fully separate.

For the adult, nostalgia offers to fill the gap left by the abandoning mother (who must always fail the child in this way) by providing a setting as a substitute for a holding environment for the fragile subject, and replaying the earliest process of separation.

Meet me in St. Louis: the mother at the piano

As Minnelli's account of the film hints (and Britton, 1978, insists on), the nostalgia in *Meet me in St. Louis* does not offer a 'simple' escape from the present. Throughout, the family unconscious counterpoints the conscious narrative; the Smith family and, to a lesser extent St. Louis, is the site of a gamut of family, intrapsychic and societal conflicts. The 'wonderful evocation' (Minnelli, 1974, op cit.) of life in Edwardian St. Louis, frequently demonstrates its darker aspects, particularly the constraints and oppression as the other side of the security and togetherness of the family.

What redeems the film for nostalgia is its representation of a maternal holding space which provides for the spectator's enjoyment of nostalgia and allows for the exploration in safety of an element of psychic danger, as the playing spectator willingly opens herself to the unconscious. The security experienced in the maternal space comes from the promise that, whatever the dangers and conflicts, 'everything will be all right in the end': its pleasure from its provision of a playspace for the subject. In Winnicott's framework, this is not an illusion, a way of persuading the subject to accept an unacceptable situation, but a subjective truth about the achieved ability to accept what has been previously totally unacceptable, the mother's absence. From this perspective the film re-presents and reworks the return to the past as a nostalgic setting (the pastoral, the utopian) for the spectator by its invitation into this safe maternal space. This is marked strongly in a sequence that I have considered before, 'the mother at the piano'.

The major threat to the family comes at the end of the Hallowe'en episode when Mr Smith announces his offer of promotion to move to New York. After the eventful evening of Hallowe'en, the family, represented by the women and the grandfather, appears to be settling down to cake and ice cream in its centre, the dining room. (The son is absent and this turns out to be a quarrel between the father and the women, including grandfather who is in the female position, at home and economically dependent.)

Mr Smith's return from work has already had an unsettling effect in the previous episode, where he voiced his exclusion from the real family at home which is also the viewer's circumscribable space: "Since when was I voted out of this family?" He had not been told of his daughter Rose's phone call from her hoped-for suitor in New York, and therefore interfered with her plans to take the call privately. The sequence, which began with family antagonisms, ended with the family regrouping at table, enjoying the meal and reasserting its togetherness in the face of the boy's apparent rejection of Rose. This second sequence has a similar structure: disturbance to the stable family, in both cases through the actions of the father-as-outsider disrupting the maternal, home setting, followed by its restoration. The threat this second time is much more serious and is only temporarily resolved by the end of the sequence; the next episode will take up the matter again and resolve it definitively with Tootie's killing of the snow people.

His previous return saw Mr Smith asserting himself and his rights to be looked after by his wife and indeed the whole family. His power was signalled not just by the situation and the dialogue — he claimed his

right to override the wishes of the family for his own habits and comfort, the children call him Sir — but also by shots taken from below him towering above the women on the stairs. In both episodes he voices his position as wage-earner for the family. The film treats him humorously and with some sympathy, however; the family is ungrateful and he is shown as the outsider; he has not even, for example, had the chance to take part in the tasting ritual of the film's opening sequence. There is a hint of an undermining of his position in the family's mocking asides, a little slapstick as he is heard to fall over Tootie's skates, and, rather more substantially, in the way the family try to conspire against him over a phone call which ends in some bathos: far from proposing, the young man simply talks about the distance, the weather and the cost of the call. Here as elsewhere in the film, potentially serious matters are curtailed in a deflationary note. However, the much more serious matter, from the film's point of view, of the family's disagreements, has been resolved with appropriate though cheerful seriousness.

. . .

This time, Mr Smith returns home in a conciliatory mood to present his bombshell to his family. Esther has just come in reeling from her first kiss from John Truett. Her exaggerated, dreamlike and dazed expression is emphasised by the 'Boy-next-door' music, played slowly, dragged out to match her somnambulist look; it is a humorous entrance which the two youngest girls take up in sniggers and whispers. The spectator is included in both Esther's state — having previously shared in her desire for the boy-next-door — and also in the two sisters' slightly prurient mocking of it. Encouraged by the tracking camera and the comic and ironic devices, at this point and during the quarrel that follows, the spectator takes up a hovering position, settling

on one character after another and out again to the director/onlooker's position.

The father gives flowers to his wife, who asks him if it means that something is wrong. He is, she tells him, 'shaking like a leaf'. He is becoming increasingly like a child. He announces that 'the firm is sending me to New York'. He is misunderstood; his wife quickly assures him that they can live very well without him for a few weeks — an obvious truth. But he explains that it is a promotion and for good.

Throughout this scene the father is shot alone, the rest of the family, including Kate and Grandpa, in (changing) groupings, indicating their solidarity with each other, against the father. The father's announcement quickly disperses the family. First the two youngest leave, Agnes to 'pack' and Tootie to 'dig up my dolls from the cemetery' which will take 'at least a week'. Tootie's dolls and their death are a recurring motif in the film, introduced at her first appearance on the ice-cart. Whatever her words here might represent (a regression to babyhood, a determination to bring what has been repressed to the surface, a reactivation of her concern with being buried alive), all possibilities contribute to the sense of the enormity of the prospect, as well as, in our observer position, to the sense of her lack of proportion. The spectator is not inclined to laugh; Tootie is acted with considerable intensity and the concrete image of her taking a week to dig up her dolls signals the seriousness of the father's threat to the family. In the end it will be a similar desperate action, Tootie's killing of the snow family, that makes her father retract his decision.

The argument that ensues is absurdly irrational, full of misunderstandings, and the spectator is invited to react with a mixture of amusement and empathy. New York gets perceived as increasingly alien — no room for pigeons, tenements to live in, possibly no room for grandfather. The projected dislocation is rapidly shown to be disruptive of everything important in each of the family members' lives, particularly the projected pairings of the older children, the most important of the film's projects. The spectator is moved about, along with the tracking camera, in this quarrel, not invited to take up one side or another. The disruption of the family is indicated by the father's vain attempt to take on the mother's role in offering cake — which no-one, not even grandfather, accepts — and one after another the girls and grandfather go out of the room and up the stairs, leaving the parents alone.

There is a sudden switch of attention and change of mood for the spectator to something more serious in the following scene. From a noisy exchange where the spectator has rapidly switched places from one character to another, we are left in a much more intimate and intense position with only two people, who are here presented not so much as husband and wife as mother and son, the one who is left, misunderstood, unwanted, like an abandoned child. The father's isolation is emphasised by a shot of him in the foreground, fitting rather awkwardly into the left of the frame, and his remark to his wife: "Aren't you afraid to stay here at home with the criminal?" His appeal seems to be directed both at her and out at us, the spectator. The mother is placed well behind the father to the right, seated, and appearing much smaller, but lit up brightly in white, while the father and the rest of the room are lit in dark ochre. She looks rather

inaccessible, still and composed, he rather clumsy. He is at this moment like a child appealing to the mother for sympathy and understanding. Probably for the first time the spectator is drawn to taking up the position of the father — no longer the powerful outsider, but the child, lost outside the maternal space, pleading to be reinstated in the mother's affection and to be included again. The spectator's adult, hovering, playing position is turning into the child's need to be held, above all to be included. We/he are not disappointed — as he sits in an armchair, she moves over to it and verbally accepts his decision, both as an acquiescent, giving wife, and as a mother assuring the child that not only he will get what he wants but that she will make everyone else also accept the situation.

Father eats his cake, as mother moves off-screen, right. He is left in his chair beside a table on which stands a statuette of a woman draped, but with her breasts bare, and next to it a bowl of fruit: between the husband and wife, mother and son, images of nurturing and sexual, oral temptation. From off-screen, the mother begins to play the piano; as he moves over to her he points out that he likes to hear her play and has not done so for a long time; an invitation and reminder of a past when they were together and alone. She plays 'his' song — 'You and I together'. He begins to sing, his voice cracks, she adjusts the pitch for him and the camera tracks him as he moves over to the piano, still holding his cake. He reaches the piano and starts to sing in earnest — 'You and I together ... for ever'. The extra-diegetic orchestra takes up the accompaniment drawing the song beyond the couple.

One by one, behind the parents who are still placed in the foreground, the rest of the family come downstairs, and the camera follows them

round in smooth curving movements to take up chairs which have been shown empty, waiting for them around the room. The spectator is included — an empty chair might be for her — and the orchestra accompaniment claims participation from outside the screen-scene. Everyone starts eating again. Esther feeds Tootie. The children listen with respect to their parents singing their sentimental song and everyone is quiet (unlike the previous reconciliation scene which was marked by the family's noisy chatter, everyone talking at once). In a final cut to the parents singing of 'time goes on but we'll be together', their intimacy hints at a primal scene in which the whole family is included; the father's position as a child turns it into a maternal space in which everyone else is also the child. The mother has orchestrated the reconciliation, in a space which includes images of food and sex, movement, colour, music and enough space and fluidity to include the playing spectator.

Minnelli is noted for his camera movement: as Thomas Elsaesser writes, impressionistically of a similar, later moment in the film, when the father finally relents: 'in a very complicated camera-movement, Minnelli conveys the precise feeling of a rhythm recommencing, and the characters circulate once more through the house with gestures and movements that approximate to a graceful dance' (Elsaesser, 1969, p.20). This scene is an example of Minnelli's ability to transform what he called 'the sweet and sickly approach of Hollywood' (Minnelli, 1974, p.129) into an enactment of something more complex and serious through his mise-en-scène. This is achieved particularly by the camera movement which moves us gently and rhythmically through the screen-setting, and by the singing, that brings the couple together and includes the spectator within the maternal setting.

Final loss

The spectator's unconscious involvement in the film is at its most extreme when she 'loses' her sense of a separate subjectivity altogether and has the experience of being lost in, absorbed into, taken up completely by its world and its scenarios. This represents the spectator's most regressive relationship with the film, which becomes associated with the notion of 'merging' in Winnicott's thinking, and which I will take up further in the next chapter. Merging may represent the height of pleasure and comfort; it may also be associated with what Winnicott describes as 'unthinkable anxieties' and may be another reason for the spectator's refusal of the film.

The final loss is that of losing one's own subjectivity: psychic death. Freud's attempt to come to terms with the final loss of death, whether physical or psychic, is seen in his measured invocation of the death instinct (the despair inherent in the concept itself arguably belies the reasonable tone) of 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle', as finally the only way of explaining his patients' resistance to cure (Freud, 1920): the organism's urge to 'return' to the original state of inertia and fusion (dust to dust).

Pontalis speaks of the centrality of death, the ultimate loss, in Freud — both in his preoccupations, even obsession, with it in his personal life and as something that haunts his work but is also denied both before and after he 'invented' the death instinct. For Pontalis, Freud's disturbing insight is the pervasiveness of death-in-life 'a process that *mimics death* in the being's very nucleus [both in the individual and in society]: every psychoanalyst talks about death insinuated into life';

the death impulse is both final inertia and destructive aggression (Pontalis, 1981, p.191). He points also, however, to Freud's attempts to 'mask' his death anxiety, to reduce it to 'no more than a form among others (weaning, separation) of castration anxiety which he turned into a pivot for all losses of the object', as a denial of earlier work on other intense, loss-related, anxieties to do with, for instance, 'ego/non ego, outside/inside, unity/fragmentation, ... oceanic feeling/annihilation' (p.192).

Winnicott's forceful rejection of the idea of a death instinct was a nodal point of disagreement with Klein, who gave it a more central place than Freud had done. As Clare Winnicott puts it, 'he thinks death is a disaster, which you have to put up with because you're human' (Winnicott C., 1983, p.177). Winnicott's work may be seen as the attempt so to build up the life process that the subject can defeat a psychic death and meet his final wish: 'May I be alive when I die' (Winnicott C., 1978, p.19). While the possibility of the psychic experience of death remained a crucial issue for him, it is the 'lost' mother, who is absent too long to be remembered or recalled, or who fails in her 'holding' function, that can cause the infant's psychic death, not an innate instinct.

In an essay published after his death, 'The fear of breakdown', Winnicott discusses patients who fear the ultimate breakdown of psychic annihilation: as he puts it, this breakdown is feared for the future, because it has already happened in the past, at a time even

before the subject had a place to 'put' the trauma (Winnicott, 1974).[3] This is a time before the possibility of the potential space between child and mother which enables the baby to become a subject and to connect itself to the world of objects; there is no space, no subject or object, just a void, a 'falling', a vacancy. The further back in the person's history the analyst goes, the more primitive the feelings found there; the Oedipal conflict experiences are both deeply terrifying and exciting at the same time (hence their allure in fiction) but, as Winnicott expresses it in this essay, they are experienced by a relatively formed ego which can to an extent contain and handle them. For Klein, primitive body-states find expression in primitive images; for Winnicott (writing in another paper, 'The mother-infant experience of mutuality' 1969), the deepest layers of the unconscious are associated with one of his major concerns, that of the mother's holding or failing to hold the infant as it moves from merging with her to separateness: 'these babies carry with them the experience of unthinkable or archaic anxiety. They know what it is to be in a state of acute confusion or the agony of disintegration' (Winnicott, 1969, p.260). Such experiences produce in the baby an 'unthinkable anxiety', which involves:

1. A return to an unintegrated state
2. Falling for ever
3. Loss of psychosomatic collusion, failure of indwelling
4. Loss of sense of real
5. Loss of capacity to relate to objects

(Winnicott, 1974, p.89-90)

[3]The editors of *Psycho-analytic Explorations* (Winnicott 1989) believe that this paper, published in the *International Review of Psycho-analysis* in 1974, was probably written in 1963.

Winnicott is discussing extreme cases but as usual in his accounts of 'borderline' cases the implication is that traces of psychoses can lurk in anyone's psyche. At a later stage, the experience of loneliness that Clare Winnicott describes as 'being without a good object and feeling incomplete' signals the incapacity to be alone (Winnicott C., 1983, p.176).

Pontalis refers to Winnicott's patient facing 'her emptiness' who memorably but cryptically exclaimed: "All I have got is what I have not" (Pontalis, 1981, p.152). Winnicott relates this insight to the absent mother of the pre-Oedipal dyad. Others, following Freud and Lacan, invoke as great a terror at the splitting of the subject — the original act of repression around castration that set up the unconscious: for instance, Juliet Mitchell writes: 'in splitting, the subjectivity of the subject disappears. The horror is about the loss of oneself into one's own unconscious — into the gap' (Mitchell, 1984, p.393).

However, as Freud's assertion of the death instinct reveals, the paradox of this fear of the loss of subjectivity is that, with only a slight shift in its terms, it can become its opposite: what the subject most desires. Lacan's much drawn-on, untranslatable and pliable term 'jouissance' (orgasm, bliss, enjoyment) exactly links sex with death, with mysticism, as all to do with the desire for as well as the fear of the subject's annihilation; in *The Pleasure of the Text* Barthes attempts in a series of fleeting, tangential explorations to create what his translator called 'an erotics' of reading (Barthes 1973, p.viii), to render in language the extremes of readers' unaccountable jouissance in their encounters with the text: 'Text of bliss: the text that imposes a state of loss, the text that

discomforts ... he enjoys the consistency of his selfhood (that is his pleasure) and seeks its loss (that is his bliss)' (p.14).

From Winnicott's optimistic perspective, the subject's wish is to go back to the state of earliest infancy when the infant is merged in with the mother: a state from which it is the person's developmental destiny to emerge, through the transitional phenomenon, to the realisation of a 'Me' and a 'not Me', subject and object. Merging is a state before separation and before subjectivity, the breakdown of all internal and external boundaries.

For the film spectator, merging with the film represents the final point of her engagement with it, beyond playing and even beyond the breakdown of playing. The loss of subjectivity that involvement in film-watching might entail — I didn't know where I was — may veer from extremes of pleasure of fusion and merging with the film object to complete self-absence.

The screen is blank and the spectator quiescent, waiting to come to life as the film begins. The possibilities of the significance of the empty screen are explored by Peter Benson following the psychoanalyst B.D.Lewin's account of the appearance of dreams-on-screen in his patients, and particularly of the dream appearance of an empty screen. Lewin's interpretation is that the screen is a reminder of the look of the mother's breast as the baby rests against, satisfied it after feeding; in these terms, the empty screen represents 'the furthest limits of our regressive fantasy, dissolving in original unity with our mother' (Benson, 1990, p. 377).

At this viewing moment, there are various possibilities for the willing spectator. She may play. On the other hand the playing spectator may remain dormant and allow the film to play on and through herself as the unconscious spectator. She may begin by playing, as *Meet me in St. Louis* invites her to do, and then 'lose herself' in the film — from which she will in due course awake and 'find herself' again. At this moment of take-over the spectator does not know where or who or even if she is. She returns to the place where she began, representative of the point of merging with the mother, her original resting place, before separation. The conscious spectator continues the work of reading the film, and is not asleep or given over to a state of non-subjectivity. But it is different for the coexisting unconscious spectator, who has been taken over by the film, beyond playing, to the point of merging with it. There is only the film, I as subject have disappeared into it. I, who can no longer speak 'I', am moved by and through the film: it is myself.

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In this and the previous chapter I have traced the emergence and construction of the unconscious spectator, who is moved without knowing why or how and may be taken up by the film so completely that she stops playing and even loses her separate subjectivity. I have considered ways in which the film viewing process addresses the unconscious spectator and ways in which it continually shifts the terms of her loss, creating a dynamic between loss and recovery, between conscious and unconscious and between playing and its breakdown. I have explored the breakdown of playing and the experience of loss as one of the lures of cinema for the spectator. However the defining

characteristic of this position is that the spectator is not 'herself'; she is 'lost'. In the next chapter I look at how, from this position of take-over and loss, the spectator may also 'find' herself.

CHAPTER 6 THE SPECTATOR FINDS HER SELF

SLEEP
Let down your tap root
to the centre of your soul
Suck up the sap
from the infinite source
of your unconscious
And
Be evergreen

(D.W. Winnicott, date unknown)[1]

The breakdown of the spectator's playing has been posited so far mainly in terms of the Freudian view of the subject and the unconscious. From this point of view the spectator is lured into an engagement with the film by her wish both to play and to be 'taken over' by her unconscious and by the film. Winnicott, however, without abandoning the Freudian system, also evolved an alternative model of subjectivity which included a notion of a *True Self* or *Self*, and a related model of the unconscious which I will term the 'creative unconscious': an unconscious that serves as a resource rather than as a hindrance to the person's conscious life. He expresses this explicitly in a talk on 'The fate of the transitional object' given in 1959, where, he states, 'transitional phenomena do not pass, at least in health', but are continued in 'cultural pursuits' (Winnicott, 1989, p. 57). In this talk he refers to the three areas of the psyche, the inner, the outer and the transitional. In a rare statement on his view of the unconscious he says:

[1]This poem is quoted in Clare Winnicott's 'D. W. Winnicott: A reflection', (Winnicott, 1989, p. 17)

> What are the three areas? One, the fundamental one, is the individual or inner reality, the unconscious if you like, (not the repressed unconscious which comes very soon but definitely later). The personal psychic reality is that from which the individual "hallucinates' or "creates" or thinks up or "conceives of". From it dreams are made though they are clothed in the materials gathered in from external reality
>
> (Winnicott, 1989, p.57).

Increasingly Winnicott's concern was not so much to deal with his patients' repressed unconscious conflict as to help them to experience this 'individual reality' through the adult's forms of playing.

In this chapter I will extend my examination of the spectator to encompass this different view of the nature of the subject. From this perspective I will propose that the importance of playing for the spectator can be understood through the ways in which she is able make use of her film object to obtain an experience of her (True) Self. This offers a way of reconciling rather than opposing the playing and the unconscious spectator and introduces a different element into the spectator's engagement with a film: through playing, and through the apparent loss of her subjectivity into the film, the spectator may in fact 'find' her Self.

Tracing this process of the spectator's experience of the (True) Self in this chapter will involve an exploration of the creative unconscious, an elaboration of the spectator's experience of 'formlessness' in her engagement with the film and a consideration of her use of the (film) object. Winnicott did not produce a systematic account of a theory of the subject and his statements on his view of the nature, origin and location of the Self and on how he distinguishes between what he

called the Self and the True Self are inconsistent. This chapter will therefore include consideration of the work of two other psychoanalysts of the British School, Marion Milner and Christopher Bollas, who extend his ideas in different ways: Milner, who was Winnicott's contemporary and colleague, makes explicit her view of the unconscious as the source of creativity; Bollas, a psychoanalyst working in England today, influenced by Winnicott, pursues the issue of the origin and manifestation of the True Self, and elaborates Winnicott's work on 'the use of an object'. Both writers include the notion of fusion, or merging of subject and object, in their thinking.

The appearance of the notion of the Self in Winnicott's work differentiates it sharply from classical psychoanalysis and brings his view of subjectivity closer to the Jungian and Humanist psychologies. It is particularly removed from the Lacanian-derived, materialist view of subjectivity usually deployed in film studies, which posits, in the words of Kaja Silverman, that if it were possible 'to probe to the deepest levels of the human psyche, we would find not an identity but a void' (Silverman, 1992, p.4). The suggestion that we get from Winnicott's changing view of the nature of the subject is that in that void we might, instead, discover the Self.[2]

The question of the relation of the psychoanalytic meaning of the Self to its traditional usage is taken up by Pontalis (1981) in two essays on Winnicott, one an introduction to his French translation of *Playing and Reality* (Winnicott, 1971). Pontalis explores the English

[2]A different way of representing this is to propose that it is, precisely, the experience of the 'void' that is valued; in a discussion of 'Psychoanalysis and Buddhism 'Nina Coltart speaks of the liberation of the realisation that all things ultimately are 'without self (Coltart, 1992, p.170). This is partly a matter of terminology.

psychoanalysts' use of the term 'Self' as having no exact equivalent in French. (In English the two terms, the Subject and the Self, distinguish exactly the difference between the older view of the transcendental, unified and apparently unproblematic Self and that of the Subject as a material part of discourse.) As Pontalis puts it, rather sharply, in a piece which is in fact sympathetic to Winnicott's work:

> (The Self) is like a concept which has been dismantled by psychoanalysis; three quarters of a century of analytical experience undermines the illusion of a totally monadic subject, of a person totally sure of belonging to himself ... one should rather talk of a return of the 'repressing' rather than that of the repressed: a return masked by nostalgia, a nostalgia for the good old Self, which would have been lost through too much analysis
>
> (Pontalis, 1981, p.127)

This returns the reader to the fundamental tenet of psychoanalysis of a subject inevitably and irrevocably split through the existence of the unconscious. Pontalis therefore firmly rejects an essentialist position, for example, Harry Guntrip's 'person oriented' therapy,[3] whose focus, Pontalis claims, 'by a series of shifts' becomes 'a retreat to the whole person' (Pontalis, 1977, p.134). Pontalis refers rather to the Freudian notion of the Ego encompassing the Self as a 'set or even a gestalt with the function of inhibiting the primary processes' (p.136). In this case the sense of Self related to a satisfactorily functioning ego would be that of a person in charge of his or her life, operating successfully in the world, and able satisfactorily to regulate and mediate conflicts between the reality and pleasure principle — someone, for instance, who has

[3]Put forward for example in *Psychoanalytic Theory and the Self, 1 (Guntrip, 1971).*

reached the end of a successful psychoanalysis. On this basis, repression is after all a necessity and the end of therapy may indeed be to 'return' to the repressing; just as, in an analogy between analysis and film viewing, the end of a classic narrative film closes itself off from the world of fantasy it has temporarily opened up for a clearly structured, rule-governed purpose.

However the difficulty with a tendency to conflate the concept of the ego and the Self is twofold: firstly that, since the Self is a term that classical psychoanalysts do not use while many others do (as Winnicott points out, in his review on Jung, see below), its meaning cannot be restricted to another term which is specific to psychoanalytic discourse. Secondly, the concept of the ego as a relatively rational and a mediatory agent as Freud formulated it, does not, as Freud himself said, allow for a range of experiences — for instance, aesthetic or creative — which seem to belong in a different psychic realm, and which, in the end, his psychoanalysis cannot account for; Winnicott may be seen to be trying to fill that gap. As Pontalis puts it: 'he who uses the word "Self" does not situate himself on the same plane as he who uses "ego". The first plane directly concerns life, the fact of living' (Pontalis, 1981, p.144). However, the solution that Pontalis proposes to the question of the meaning of the concept, which is, after all, a philosophical issue, is, essentially, to by-pass it, with the comment that the Self is 'a subjective phenomenon which either emerges or is lacking, rather than a structure of the person or the person himself' (p.136).

This move allows for an acceptance of the concept of the Self in the therapist's work with patients without taking on the baggage of an essentialism which Pontalis clearly wishes to avoid. (Of Winnicott's

use of the term 'True Self' he says, it 'is not well chosen ... [because] ... it invokes the quest for the soul': 1981 p.139). Pontalis writes as a psychoanalyst whose field of enquiry is the psyche, whose data is subjective and whose role is therapeutic: 'to be a living person is ... a task ... which is always in need of invention for humans; a contradictory task if one thinks about it but one which gives humans individual tension and mobility': it comes from 'repeated encounters with others ... for what ... defines life is that it is "transmitted"' (p.145). Pontalis however takes the issue further and concludes that the problem of the Self should be envisaged from a wider perspective, in which he includes Winnicott's account of the True and False Self.

> Under what conditions does what happens to an individual become meaningful and alive for him? ... I do not think it is a return to the ineffable subject. True and false are not to be understood as inherent qualities of the individual. They are not subject and predicate. They designate movement in a relationship. After all could we not say that the paradox of the analytical relationship is that I need another, not another ego but a neuter I cannot see, to find myself.
>
> (Pontalis, 1981, p.147)

The experience of a sense of Self here becomes conceived as the experience of a mysterious and amorphous interlocutor for the subject, an extension of the analytic — and by extension, of the film-viewing — process and discourse: Pontalis's formulation of the sense of Self is of a psychic 'transaction' and 'movement'.

Nevertheless, the notion of at least a potential for an essential Self continues to make a mark, if a wavering one, in the work of

Winnicott, and is taken further by Milner and Bollas. The focus on the psychic life of early infancy, in which Winnicott followed Klein, already entails an assumption of an earlier subjectivity than that posited in the Freudian or Lacanian model — possibly from before birth.[4] For example, although Winnicott describes the state of 'merging' as a state 'when ... there is at least a theoretical stage prior to separation of the not-me from the me' (Winnicott, 1971, p.130), this primary state is difficult to imagine. While it suggests an apparent negation of conscious subjectivity — since there is no separate subject and object — yet it is difficult to imagine a state of consciousness, which is what Winnicott seems to be arguing, without a subject to be conscious. Similarly, the very terms in which he expresses the baby's merging with the mother, as subject and object, as well as the way he conceptualises earliest infancy in general, imply some kind of subjectivity at that stage. The phase of non-differentiation is consistently expressed in terms of merging with another (the mother) and the infant's development in terms of forging a separation between subject and object. From a developmental point of view therefore — a perspective which was always central for Winnicott — the subject seems to be there-in-waiting, its trace there from the beginning, with some kind of consciousness, although it is not yet self-conscious in the sense of possessing an 'I'.

This becomes evident in the account of the transitional object whose function is to ease the difficulty of establishing and negotiating the distinction between subject and object. The distinguishing mark of the transitional area is precisely that there is already an object in play even

[4]This is clear in Isaac's work on phantasy:,see Ch.4 of this thesis

though it is an object endowed with elements of both 'Me' and 'not-Me'. The object is meaningful and valued for itself as well as for the mother it can represent. It resonates with the subject and at the same time connects the child to and provides continuity with the mother and the world of objects. Through its malleability, the transitional object provides the infant with a way of making a mark on the external world. All this suggests also a subject in place ready to use the object — although it is also true that the process of its use involves a further differentiating-out of the subject from object. [5]

As Phillips puts it, Winnicott 'proposed an essentialist theory but with an essence that by definition could not be formulated except in the most rudimentary terms' (Phillips, 1988, p.127). He sums up Winnicott's position: 'minimal definition allowed for maximal variety'. This lack of precision in his formulation allowed Winnicott to operate with at least two models of the subject, his own and the Freudian one he had inherited. It also enabled him to retain in his view of the Self the sense of a 'movement in a relationship' to which Pontalis refers. The main focus in psychoanalysis, which has steered clear of an essentialist position, remains that of the Self as a process or a transaction: the sense of Self, which for the film viewer can be experienced through her relationship with a film.

[5] This difficulty is the basis of criticism of Winnicott from a materialist perspective: 'There is no such thing as pure subjectivity' (Lorenzer and Orban, 1978, p. 472). I have argued however that the notion of the transitional object makes Winnicott's view of the subject much more complex than this comment would suggest.

Winnicott and the search for the Self

Winnicott's view of subjectivity underwent a series of shifts which led to his position that 'gratification in regression is the result not of libidinal satisfaction but of the fact that "the Self" is reached' (Greenburg and Mitchell, 1983, p.201). These changes in his view of the nature of the subject and the unconscious may be charted in the difference between his formulation of the 'True Self' as one term in the duality the 'False and the True Self', and his use of 'Self' as an independent term. In the three late papers from the 1960s that I will consider, Winnicott defines and elaborates his notion of the True Self and the Self, discusses different meanings of the unconscious and introduces the notion of 'formlessness' and the 'merged state' as a means of experiencing the Self. As always in his work he is concerned with the state and activity he designates as playing, the basis for the individual's experience of feeling 'real', which he increasingly comes to formulate as an experience of the Self.

At different points in his work Winnicott refers to the Self either in terms of the well-being of psychosomatic integration, or, rather, as an experience that derives from the earliest state of merging or formlessness.[6] By the time of *Playing and Reality*, his last book, in 1971, the term 'True Self' has virtually been replaced by the 'Self' as a formulation that stands alone, not as a part of a dual term grounded in a pathological reference.

[6]This represents two opposing tendencies in Winnicott: a focus on the body as the basis for the subject's development, relating to his medical and psychoanalytical background, and a tendency towards a mystical or even religious approach, as argued by Lambert (1987).

Winnicott considers the True and False Self (particularly the latter) in a paper entitled 'Ego distortion in terms of True and False Self', written in 1960. Here he emphasises that these terms are each related to the other, and that 'False Self' can have a different meaning and function according to its manifestation as pathology or in health. By contrast, in a slightly earlier paper, 'The capacity to be alone' (Winnicott, 1958) the False Self is seen only as a pathological, defensive condition.

In 'Ego distortion', Winnicott offers a deceptively simple and characteristically impressionistic definition of the True Self which is here described (although on this Winnicott was not consistent) as a very early formation: the True Self 'does no more than collect together the details of the experiences of aliveness' (Winnicott, 1960, p.148); it is the source of and linked with the infant's first 'spontaneous gestures' or impulses which are allowed for and accepted by the mother: 'the spontaneous gesture is the True Self in action' (p.145). Such are the bases for the individual's experience of 'feeling real', genuinely himself, authentic. Initially these experiences are linked to omnipotence, which gives the baby the 'illusion of creating and controlling the world', but through the mother's handling and the use of the transitional object, the omnipotence is given up as the baby becomes able to accept 'the illusory element, the fact of playing and imagining' (p.146).

The True Self experience depends on the infant's experience of the mother's holding: if the mother does not accept its initial 'spontaneous gesture', the baby's True Self may 'die' or be relegated to a terrible isolation and the False Self constructed 'in compliance'; Winnicott describes this as though the infant were being refused its own psychic

existence. The False Self constitutes the deep-rooted defence structure constructed when the baby is forced to recognise the mother as a separate object before it has been able to experience her as a part of itself. It has to adapt itself to her as an objective object, rather than being able to go through the process of gradual separation via the transitional phenomenon. The construction of the False Self means that the infant is denied the discovery of its own creativity.

Thereafter different routes are possible, depending on the degree or fixity of the False Self, but Winnicott continued to stress the life and death need for his patients to 'find' their True Self. Winnicott also, however, posits a False Self at the other end of a continuum, that is not pathological but 'is represented by the whole organisation of the polite and mannered social attitude, ... a not wearing the heart on the sleeve.' The infant has given up 'omnipotence and the primary process in general, the gain being the place in society which can never be attained or maintained by the True Self alone' (Winnicott 1960, p.143). This very different formulation of a non-pathological False Self also has a bearing on Winnicott's account of the True Self: the False Self is beginning to be designated as the subject's engagement with outer reality, and the True Self, therefore, as representative of the inner world, a notion that is developed in Winnicott's review on Jung, considered below.

On the question of the relation of this psychic model to others Winnicott is inconsistent. At the beginning of the paper he tentatively links his division between the True and False Self to 'Freud's division of the Self into a part which is central and powered by the instincts and a part that is turned outwards and is related to the world' (Winnicott,

1960, p.140), that is, to the id and the ego. However the False/True Self division is not a Freudian one and at other times, for instance in his review Winnicott relates the True Self, or at least the Self, to the ego. More generally, in his focus on the infant's development and on the mother-child relationship, he ignores this Freudian division. It is increasingly clear that Winnicott is now working with a different model of the psyche from the classical psychoanalytical concepts he inherited, particularly that of the Freudian unconscious. However the model of the unconscious he was developing is an addition to rather than a replacement of the Freudian unconscious.

Winnicott takes up the issue of the unconscious and the question of the Self explicitly in a wide-ranging and complex review, published in the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* in 1964, of Jung's autobiography, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*. The exploratory and sympathetic tone of the review, particularly in its account of Jung's thinking on the Self, expresses Winnicott's interest; he uses the occasion to state his then controversial view that psychoanalysis should 'come to terms with Jung' (Winnicott, 1964, p. 452), as if taking on the task of attempting to heal the split between the two men that had divided the psychoanalytical community. To this end Winnicott explores differences in Freud's and Jung's personalities and in their approach to the psyche, marked by differences in terminology, and, in the process, his article shifts from an account of the Self as the True/False Self duality to a consideration of the Self as an autonomous entity.

It is in this essay that Winnicott makes his famous remarks about Freud's 'flight to sanity': Jung's 'madness' is relatively non-

pathological, even something to be desired; he was 'mad' (with a psychotic, split personality) but 'recovered'; Winnicott has 'achieved a measure of insanity' through analysis, and Freud had made a 'flight to sanity' which 'we psychoanalysts are trying to recover from' (Winnicott, 1964, p.450). Winnicott took seriously the need to accept a degree of what he called 'madness'; he stresses that one of the functions of artistic experience is to enable us to 'keep in touch with our primitive selves ... and we are poor indeed if we are only sane' (quoted in Clancier and Kalmanovitch, 1986, p.30).[7] A 'flight to sanity' is a condition that Winnicott countered in his insistence on the value of playing, illusion and spontaneity.

What in the end distinguishes the two men for Winnicott is that Jung 'started off knowing' from the start of his life, but 'was handicapped by his need to search for a Self with which to know' whereas Freud was always 'groping' (for knowledge) in his attempt to establish a 'science', a search he was able to carry out because he began with a 'unit self with which to search' (p.454). It is not necessarily, however, that Winnicott is valorising Jung over Freud: 'we might prefer Freud's groping and his gradual failure to finalise anything'; and Jung's 'search for a central self turned out to be a blind alley' (p.454). The Jung/Freud complementarity that Winnicott is attempting to establish could also be described as that between art and science; intuition and empiricism; emotions and intellect; or, getting closer to Winnicott's own formulation, play and work (always remembering that play can be most serious).

[7]This argument of a refusal of total 'sanity' recalls Winnicott's dislike of Klein's notion of the manic defence of the depressive stage, which he considered was itself somewhat of a defence against enjoyment (Phillips, 1988, pp.55-61; 'D.W.Winnicott', ch.1 of this thesis).

Winnicott's comparison of Freud and Jung ties in with his exploration of the True and False Self in this paper. He begins by presenting his familiar pathological account: in childhood, in reaction to his mother's depression, Jung split off his True Self and constructed the 'massive defence system' of his False Self; out of which came, however, the 'forging of a life's work' (p.452). Through his Autobiography he re-discovered his True Self which he 'always preferred' and which 'he could call his own' (p.453). Winnicott makes clear that he does not here see the False Self purely as 'a defence system' and by the end of the article he equates the Jungian term — 'his extravert self" — with the False Self (p.453): this shift is quite consistent with the way Winnicott has been describing Jung's False Self as that which enabled him to live so effectively in the world. At this point the difference between Freud and Jung that Winnicott is establishing might be described in purely Jungian terms as 'extravert' and 'introvert', although Winnicott only uses the term extrovert: Jung 'prefers' his True (introvert) Self and his life's work has been an effort to find — or re-find — it.

Winnicott makes a further shift from the True/False duality when he turns to a discussion of Jung's own account of the Self: 'it is possible that Jung contributed more than Freud to an understanding of what the word means or can mean' (Winnicott, 1964, p.454). He distinguishes between the use of the term ego and Self (while acknowledging, in contradiction to the 1960 paper discussed above, that he himself might have seemed to use them synonymously). He points out that ego is a '"term", to be used with an agreed meaning' while the Self is a '"word" in daily/general currency, with a range of meanings'. Here, interestingly, Winnicott makes a distinction between the Self and

the True Self: 'by dropping his ... False Self and living according to his True Self, ... he found a Self he could call his own' (ibid). Winnicott here defines another difference between Freud and Jung, which he generalises as a way of distinguishing two categories of individuals: 'the search for the Self and a way of feeling real belongs to a large portion of the human race', while for those who have already achieved 'unit status' the search is about 'the full and satisfying use of a Self that is a unit and is well grounded' (ibid). For Jung, Winnicott suggests, the point at which he 'found' his Self was marked by the moment at which he could tell a lie to Freud — he had a 'place to have secrets'.[8]

Winnicott also stresses the fundamental difference between Freud's and Jung's concept of the unconscious. However he does not adopt Jung's concept of the 'collective unconscious', which he views as an attempt to disown and de-personalise the Freudian, repressed unconscious, the search for which for Freud was the point of psychoanalysis. For Jung — for a split personality — it was not possible to encounter the Oedipal conflict, let alone resolve it: 'it is not possible for a split personality to have an unconscious' (Winnicott, 1964, p. 453). In this paper, then, Winnicott refers to the 'Freudian, repressed unconscious' as: a fact; as crucial in psychoanalytical therapy; as a developmental achievement. But in this account, as increasingly in his work as a whole, it is de-centred and its 'absence' is a symptom of the absence of a 'unit self'.

[8] Masud Khan gives an account of a patient's 'secret' use of his waiting room which functions, he believes, as her potential space. In the same paper he also refers to Jung's autobiography which, he believes, gives an 'interesting corroboration' of his own notion of the relation of the secret to potential space (Khan, 1978).

However, in the end Winnicott also finds an aridity in Jung's search for 'the centre of his self' because, as he sees it, of its failure to come to terms with 'destructiveness and with chaos, disintegration and the other madnesses'. Jung's search is therefore viewed as 'an obsessional flight from disintegration' (Winnicott, 1964, p.454): the centre of the self' is a 'relatively useless concept, closing off of a life of splendid endeavour'; [what is important] 'is to reach the basic forces of individual living' (ibid), which, he believes, in being creative, are also inherently destructive. Winnicott re-emphasises, as he does repeatedly in different ways throughout his work, that the 'searching', rather than any end to that search is the point.

This process of searching is explored in a description of a session with a female patient, 'Playing: the search for the Self' (1971, Ch.4), in which Winnicott explicitly formulates the search for the Self as a central concern for his patient, and brings out what he sees as the essential connection between playing, creativity and the Self. Winnicott describes the session in some detail as an example of what for him are the origins of creativity. The patient is able to use the session to reach a state that he calls:

> ... a desultory formless functioning, or perhaps a rudimentary playing, as if from a neutral zone. It is only here, in this unintegrated state of the personality, that which we describe as creative can appear. This if reflected back, *but only if reflected back,* becomes part of the organised individual personality, and eventually this in summation makes the individual to be, to be found; and eventually enables himself or herself to postulate the existence of the self
>
> (Winnicott, 1971, p.64).

As his patient put it, 'looking-for is evidence that there is a self"; but for this woman who had always tried to meet others' expectations, the analytic 'holding' environment, the substitute for the original material 'holding' of the baby, was essential to enable her to reach the state of 'formlessness' without intense anxiety. The paradox of the 'looking' that Winnicott describes is that it can only take place when conscious and willed 'searching' is in abeyance.

Winnicott's notion of 'formlessness' or 'unintegration' is associated with the state of merging of mother and baby. In contrast to 'disintegration', which is the terror of breakdown for the adult (Winnicott, 1974), unintegration is 'unpatterned and unplanned' (Winnicott, 1988, p.131), a state of relaxation where there is no control, defence or even structure, and where the person 'can safely and easily be in bits and pieces without the feeling of falling apart' (Phillips, 1988, p.80). Whereas for Freud the primary state of non-separation comes to represent the death instinct, the organism's urge to 'return' to the original state of non-organic inertia, for Winnicott it can be a repeated opportunity for reaching to one's roots and for a new beginning: 'emptiness is a prerequisite for eagerness to gather in. Primary emptiness simply means: before starting to fill up' (Winnicott, 1974, p.181). The ability to tolerate 'emptiness' is a pre-requisite for the manifestation of the Self, which is actualised through playing, in the Winnicottian sense of creative living, carrying over the experience of potential space into everyday life:

> it is in playing and only in playing that the child or adult is able to be creative and to use the whole personality and it is only in being creative that the individual discovers the self
>
> (Winnicott, 1971, p. 54)

In 'Playing: the search for the Self', Winnicott also stresses the importance of the sense of 'I AM, I am alive, I am myself. From this position everything is creative'(p.56). He describes the process towards this as a sequence:

> a) relaxation in conditions of trust based on experience
>
> b) creative, physical, and mental activity manifested in play
>
> c) the summation of these experiences forming the basis for a sense of self (ibid, p. 56)

This, I will propose, is the basis for the sequence of the playing spectator's engagement with the film.

In spite of Winnicott's usual focus on the Self as a process or a by-product of creative activities, a model of a 'central' self, repudiated in his review of Jung, every now and again reasserts itself in his work. This is particularly the case in his paper 'Communicating and not communicating leading to a study of certain opposites' (Winnicott, 1963), which seems to contradict, or at least to side-step, Winnicott's view of Jung's 'search for the self', written slightly later. This is a complex essay which has engaged the attention of commentators (Phillips, 1986; Davis and Wallbridge, 1981) and it is characteristic of the later Winnicott in its exploratory yet assured personal tone and its break with classical psychoanalysis. It brings together his concepts of merging, the transitional area and the Self.

Here Winnicott definitely posits a Self which is in place from earliest infancy and maybe even before birth. He draws explicitly on Jung's idea of the Self (via an account by Michael Fordham) as a part of the individual, already present in the merged state, which may seem to be 'something that (in health) corresponds to the state of the split person in whom one part of the split communicates silently with subjective objects' (Winnicott, 1963, p.184). This brings together the notion of the 'True Self', part of the True-False Self duality, and the 'unit' or 'central' Self that he discusses in the Jung review; he has found a place for the True Self in health as he had previously done for the False Self. This paper presents Winnicott's most explicit, and at the same time his most mysterious, account of the Self. Its central premise is that there is an aspect to every individual which needs to be kept as an area of inviolate separateness; there is a personal core of the Self that is in '*permanent isolation*' (p.189).

Winnicott's way in to this account of the Self is through thinking about communication. For an analyst, language is relatively decentred in Winnicott's practice and he wrote a good deal about the analyst's 'silence' and the uses of silence compared with interpretation (for instance, Winnicott, 1963a). In 'Communicating and not communicating' he distinguishes between 'direct' communication and 'indirect', explicit communication between two clearly separate subjects (the usual sense of the term). 'Direct' communication is non-verbal and 'silent' (yet there is no suggestion of telepathy, which is simply language-as-thought and involves an object-receiver). It pre-exists language and, in fact, belongs to the merged state where communication takes place with the 'subjective object', an object that belongs to the 'merged', pre-subjective state, which precedes separation

and the existence of 'the object objectively perceived', and even the transitional object. The subjective object, which in the merged state is the mother, is also a part of the subject and comes to represent the Self.

It is not clear whether communication with the 'silent self [which] carries all the sense of the real' (Winnicott, 1963 p.184), derives from the mother's 'presence' in the merged state or from a pre-existing 'identity' or 'potential' that belongs to the infant itself. The continuing difficulty with thinking of the state of merging is in its lack of an 'I', since it is only in the separated state, and in retrospect, that the merged position can be articulated. Winnicott passingly relates what he is exploring and trying to formulate to the experience of the mystic who can communicate secretly with subjective objects and phenomena, 'the loss of the world of shared reality being counterbalanced by a gain in terms of being real' (ibid p.185-6). He indicates the paradoxical nature of the experience by noting how, in talking of the secret, inviolate Self, he is referring to a stage that is earlier than and different from Klein's 'internal object', which the infant, with its ego-boundaries already established, in a sense *possesses*. In the merged state, where there is no distinction between subject and object — so that the two terms cannot yet be said to exist — 'inner only means personal and personal in so far as the individual is a person with a self in process of becoming evolved'. The paradox of Winnicott's argument is that the 'subjective object', with which the person 'silently communicates', is also a part of the Self, which is why it cannot be possessed. The essence of the mystical experience is that I, the Self, am also everything, that is, indistinguishable and non-separate from the object.

Without this contact with the 'silent' Self, the person is unable to feel 'real' or that life has 'meaning'. For Jung, Winnicott believes, the failure of the maternal environment led to the split between his true and false Self and to his life-time search to re-find his true Self (Winnicott, 1964). For those who are not split, who, like Freud, operate with a unit self, there is no need for the 'search' and they are able to get on with the business of living, their inner space inviolate. They have acquired the 'capacity to be alone' (Winnicott, 1958). Winnicott summarises this paper with this mysterious statement:

> I have tried to state the need that we have to recognise this aspect of health: the non-communicating central self, for ever immune from the reality principle, and for ever silent. Here communication is not non-verbal; it is like the music of the spheres, absolutely personal. It belongs to being alive. And in health it is out of this that communication naturally arises
>
> (Winnicott, 1963/4, p.192).

The un-glossed reference to 'the music of the spheres' indicates Winnicott's insistence on his individual way of expressing himself as well as suggesting the combination of the purely 'personal' — the music of the spheres is only 'heard' inwardly — and the universal: the music also represents universal harmony. The compromise between direct communication with the Self and 'indirect, explicit' communication between actual people in the world is achieved within and by means of the transitional area.

For the film spectator, Winnicott's account of the experience of formlessness and the merged state represents a quite different view of

'merging' with the film from that discussed in the last chapter as a 'loss' of subjectivity. For Winnicott's patient in search of the Self (1971, Ch.2, op. cit.), formlessness is the state of the child safe in the holding environment that analysis is able to restore; for the film spectator it may be represented by the state of suspended animation in front of the empty screen, the moment of waiting for the film to begin, when it will become 'her' film, available for her playing. Being merged-in with the film is not a loss, to be resisted by the conscious and critical spectator, but a way of finding herself and the base from which playing can re-start: a passive state which leads not to compliance with the film's world view, nor to being caught up in its scenario, but to an active and participative interaction with it. The sequence for the spectator becomes circular: from her entry into potential and cinematic space; to playing; to its breakdown, to merging with the film; then back again, refreshed, to playing, and finally, at the end of the film, back to the external world of indirect, explicit communication. Since the film continually makes available a range of positions, and the spectator relates to it on different levels, all of these moves can take place together, simultaneously. Both spectator and film are multifarious, and, in the potential space between them, they can interact at any moment in different and unpredictable ways.

The unconscious and creativity: Marion Milner

Winnicott explores the search for the Self through the experience of a 'safe' formlessness in the unintegrated and merged state. Marion Milner's work is very similar in theme and approach but is more consistently explicit in positing a notion of a 'creative' unconscious that is a resource for the subject and that she connects with an experience of the Self. Throughout her work Milner is concerned with the experience of the artist and aesthetic experience, and her thinking applies as much to the receiver of an experience as to the maker: in her terms the fundamental experience is the same for both. Her incorporation of aesthetic and cultural activity into her psychoanalytic thinking can be read as an elaboration of Winnicott's theories on the adult's forms of playing.

Milner's work as a psychoanalyst parallels Winnicott's in many ways; they were colleagues and they each make reference to the other in their writing about play and creativity, to an extent that their thinking sometimes seems to develop in tandem. In two papers on an appreciation of his work, 'Winnicott and the two way journey' (1972) and 'Winnicott and overlapping circles' (1977), she reflects on ways in which her work and Winnicott's overlap or differ and in the process clarifies and extends some of Winnicott's thinking on merging, creativity and the Self.[9] The major difference between their ideas on merging and creativity was that whereas Winnicott focused on and indeed 'discovered' the transitional area, Milner wrote in terms of

[9]Winnicott refers to her several times in his collected letters as someone with whom he has an affinity. For instance he writes: 'She is the one who has reverie in her presentation of her ideas in our Society, and remember, although she is modest, she is one of the ones we have who have brains' (Rodman, 1987, p.144).

either total fusion or separateness of subject and object: 'Milner was referring to a pre logical fusion of subject and object. I am trying to distinguish between this fusion and the fusion or defusion of the subjective object and the object objectively perceived' (Winnicott, 1971, p.38). Milner's writing was not aimed exclusively at psychoanalysts (she worked as a psychologist on educational research before becoming a psychoanalyst) and it shows a continual interest in the arts and the role of aesthetic experience in the development of the person. This flavours her approach which diverges more overtly than Winnicott's from classical psychoanalysis.[10]

Milner's early view of the unconscious is expressed in her first book, *A Life of One's Own* (Milner, 1934), written well before she became a psychoanalyst in the early 1940s. Here she records an attempt to discover, by close observation of her reactions to the minutiae of daily life, what gives her the experience of 'moments' of unexpected happiness in activity or encounters, in an extended account of what can be read, in retrospect, as an example of the experience of playing and potential space. As she put it many years later, these moments seemed to be the result of practising different forms of attention, including 'a whole body awareness' and a 'deliberate use of a wide rather than a narrow focus' (Milner, 1934, p.236), which she relates to a notion of the unconscious. The 'Afterword' to the 1986 edition of *A Life of ones Own*, where she discusses reviews of the book, shows clearly that her view of the unconscious was a broader one than the Freudian

[10]Like Winnicott she was a member of the Middle Group in the British Society of Psychoanalysis, allied to neither Anna Freud nor Melanie Klein at the time of their split in the 1940s. As Kohon's collection (1986) demonstrates, the work of this grouping of psychoanalysts makes that of Winnicott and Milner seem less divergent than when seen in isolation.

repressed unconscious and, in fact, she says that at the time of writing she had not found Freud's thinking particularly helpful. More than Winnicott, Milner expresses an affinity with Jung and finds his notion of the collective unconscious relevant to her thinking. Of a review by W. H. Auden she writes: 'I had discovered that the unconscious is not only the refuge of childish fantasies and fears but also a source of creative wisdom' [which] 'showed better than I did where I had to go' (p.220). Earlier in the book she speaks of the unconscious 'not as a dark and gloomy place into which only psychoanalysts had passports but as kind of mental activity which was different from rational thought but none the less an existent reality, definitely something more than a storehouse for the confusions and shames I dare not face' (p. 207). In the light of such an unconscious, she could be 'passive, content to watch and wait' (ibid). This description, which relates to her later account of fusion of subject and object, recalls Winnicott's state of 'unintegration'.

In her last book, a collection of essays and papers covering her years as a psychoanalyst, *The Suppressed Madness of Sane Men: forty-four years of exploring psychoanalysis* (1988), Milner makes it clear that while her early view of the unconscious had enlarged to include the Freudian concept it had not substantially altered; indeed she is inclined at times to appropriate Freud to fit her own framework and language. For example, in an essay on Blake she writes: 'and Freud also is concerned with the growth of the spirit; he is concerned fundamentally with the growth of the power to love' (p.186). Her concern with a creative unconscious and with what she herself defines as a mystical approach to the subject's relationship to the external world is a persistent and

overt theme in her work, much more than is the case with Winnicott.[11]

In *On Not Being Able to Paint* (1950), she relates the images she produced through free drawing to the Jungian concept of the collective unconscious. The book was written for educators as a plea for more attention to be given to creativity in teaching, where she saw an over-emphasis on rational and scientific development. As in the earlier *A Life of One's Own* (1934) Milner's approach here recalls the transitional area, although *On Not Being Able to Paint* was actually published three years before Winnicott's famous article on transitional phenomena appeared in 1953, and, according to its Introduction, was conceived at the beginning of the war. Milner herself makes this connection explicit in a reference to Winnicott's concept and its relationship to her book in her introduction to the 1989 edition.

The fact that Milner is writing for an audience of educators rather than psychoanalysts is evident in the book's approach and language: she uses such terms as 'creativity', 'spiritual' and the 'Self' and the concept of the unconscious as a 'storehouse of images' as a matter of course, and although she draws on her analytical orientation constantly, and sometimes explicitly, her approach is not clinical; she writes from and about her own experiences, which she does not necessarily contextualise, and about the importance in human development of the artistic impulse.

[11]*The Suppressed Madness of Sane Men* includes a paper written in 1973: 'Some notes on psychoanalytic ideas about mysticism.' She says a good deal about her own experiences and thinking, but can find few references to mysticism in other psychoanalysts - she finds two in Winnicott - except in Bion.

Milner's major preoccupation in *On Not Being Able to Paint* is with what she sees as a dynamic movement between the 'fusion' of subject and object and the habitual and 'rationally' perceived separation between them. She writes about the difficulty for her of painting and drawing (as an amateur) without its seeming rather mechanical, and recounts her exploration of her sense of her own creativity through a study of 'free', almost automatic, drawings which she produced every now and then, rather to her discomfiture, and through which she was eventually able to 'learn to paint' in a way that was satisfying to her.[12] She discovered that the images she produced had an unconscious significance for her, which she was able to grasp through free association.

Like Winnicott, Milner is concerned with the relationship of the subject to her outer and inner world. To a greater extent than Winnicott, she writes from the point of view of the adult (herself) for whom the distinction between subject and object has been firmly established. However, as Winnicott frequently pointed out, certainty about this distinction is precarious and it is the necessity to face and deal with this uncertainty and what happens when she does so that forms the basis for Milner's thinking about creativity. Above all she discovers the need to allow the breaking down of the boundary between inner and outer in order to enable her inner world to have expression. For example, in looking at 'edges' — a painter's concern — she begins to perceive the indeterminacy of boundaries between objects, which gives rise to the thought that 'there could be a fear of

[12]This account recalls Winnicott's 'Squiggle game'. Milner herself draws attention to Winnicott's use of the game between analyst and child-patient as a way of providing a holding environment to allow the emergence of 'direct body awareness' (Milner, 1987, p.282).

losing all sense of separate boundaries; particularly those between the tangible realities of the external world and the imaginative realities of the inner world of feeling and ideas; in fact a fear of being mad' (Milner, 1950, p.17). At the same time, it was precisely the breakdown of these boundaries that enabled her to reach the sense of creativity and of feeling 'real' in her painting that she was seeking: the experience of 'fusion', both with the real world of external objects and her own inner objects.

At several points in this book Milner relates 'that moment of the primary state of unity, undifferentiation, between subject and object' to what Freud terms the 'oceanic' experience (Milner, 1967). This term was not Freud's own, and his treatment of the experience differs sharply from Milner's. In *Civilisation and its Discontents* he discusses with apparent perplexity the 'oceanic' feeling of 'oneness', which he recounts as described by Romain Rolland (named in a footnote added only in 1931), who regarded the experience as 'the source of religious energy and as a basic "religious" experience without the need for doctrinal beliefs' (Freud, 1930, p.252). Although he describes the 'feeling' sympathetically, as one of 'an indissoluble bond, of being one with the external world as a whole' (p.252), Freud is perplexed because 'I cannot discover this feeling in myself' (ibid). He proceeds to explain it in psychoanalytic terms as the adult reconstruction of a residual trace of the original experiences of the infant ego unable to distinguish external and internal sensations. This is expressed in terms similar to Winnicott's account of the child being merged with the mother, except that Freud does not introduce the mother/object as the essential factor in the situation.

Freud pursues the subject's development from this experience of 'unity' in terms of the pleasure and reality principles. He does not incorporate the experience of the oceanic feeling into his subsequent discussion about man's 'search for happiness' — or rather for the absence of unhappiness — as life's 'purpose'; which, in its broader sense, is an enquiry that Freud does not take on. For him the search for happiness is tied up with the attempt — doomed to necessary failure for the adult living in society — to live by the pleasure principle. Here Freud is reasserting the instincts as the basis of the human constitution. His only real move away from this, which is not developed in his work, is through the notion of sublimation of the instincts in 'psychic' work. In a passage which can be seen as a pre-cursor of Winnicott's theories on playing, and creativity, Freud says: 'A satisfaction of this kind, such as the artist's joy in creating, in giving his phantasies body, or a scientist's in solving problems or discovering truths, has a special quality which we shall certainly one day be able to characterise in metapsychological terms' (Freud, 1930, p.254).

This section of 'Civilisation and its Discontents' marks a fundamental difference between Freud's and Milner's approach. She not only 'understands' the oceanic experience but relates it firmly to an infantile body experience and, further, incorporates it into her psychoanalytic framework and practice. For her, as for Winnicott, a 'purpose' of her work with patients is to help them rediscover their own creativity:

> by finding a bit of the outside world, whether in chalk or paper, or in one's analyst, that was willing to fit in with one's dreams, a moment of illusion was made possible, a moment in which inner and outer seem to coincide ... the ordinary sense of self had

> temporarily disappeared; there had been a kind of blanking out of ordinary consciousness, a complete lack of self consciousness (Milner, 1950, p.154).

Gradually, painting has become a means for not having to decide 'which was the other and which was oneself' (ibid).

She explores the fears and the satisfactions of this experience. Coming to terms with the separateness of subject and object is essential for human development into maturity, involving a renunciation of security and omnipotence — everything is me so I can make it do as I want — and accepting aloneness and loss. At the same time, however, awareness of separateness may induce a sense of isolation and alienation. For Winnicott the transitional object is a way out; for Milner it is the experience of fusion, through cultural activity or a generalised, creative approach to 'everyday living, that is the 'way out of the human predicament ... that gave due recognition both for the need for separation and non-separation' (Milner, 1950, p.68). Absolute separation suggests isolation, while fusion may suggest 'madness' through the loss of external reality. Painting offsets the impossibility of 'on the one hand trying to live as a separate person ... and on the other, seeking for total merging and loss of all separate identity ... complete at-oneness with nature' (p.79). In the 'Afterthoughts' to the *Suppressed Madness of Sane Men,* Milner discusses a refinement of her formulation of fusion in a comment by Michael Eigen of her use of the term 'undifferentiation' (the merging of subject and object): 'You are not talking about a merger between self and other but about a state in which both are there, and the same and not the same at once'. He prefers the term 'I-yet-not-I [which] maintains the ambiguity and

tension of our basic position' (Milner, 1987, p. 291). This phrase brings out, and helps to resolve (by maintaining the paradox), the fundamental difficulty of considering the merged state without conceiving of a subject to be aware of it.

For Milner the gap, the split between inner and outer and between dream and reality can never permanently 'coincide'; but they can, through her art, 'interact' (p.89). By the end of *On Not Being Able to Paint*, then, the process has moved beyond mere fusion with the object to something that is also an 'interaction'. Her painting enables her to create 'through the conscious manipulation of a malleable material ... the experience of outer and inner coinciding, which we blindly undergo when we fall in love'. She has reached the stage of being able psychically to move around the 'boundaries of one's spiritual identity, ... which do not have to remain within one's skin' (p.143) because she is now trying to paint both what she has put into the external world and what is already there: the external object is both separate from and a part of herself.

Milner's acceptance of the paradoxical nature of the experience is expressed in the way in which she modifies Winnicott's view that the Self can only be found if 'it is reflected back' in the merged state. (expressed in 'Playing and the search for the Self, Ch.4, 1971, explored above). Winnicott's transitional object represents for her a 'two way journey; both to the finding of the objective reality of the object and to the finding of the objective reality of the subject — the I AM (Milner, 1986, p.251). She suggests that the Self can be 'recognised' without the need for an external reflection from an other ... it can be 'related to by the conscious ego discovering that it can turn in upon itself, make

contact with the core of its own being and find there a renewal, a rebirth' (p.250); For Milner, the Self, which Pontalis glosses as the sense of an 'other', a 'neuter' for the subject to address (Pontalis, 1981, p.147), becomes the 'inner core' of the ego's own being', which can be experienced both through cultural activity, whether as maker or as perceiver, and through 'emptiness' and 'merging'.

Milner's paradoxical conclusion in *On Not Being Able to Paint*, is that although separate ego-identity is an illusion (I am everything, the subject is the object), at the same time, 'creativeness is something which comes from the free reciprocal interplay of differences that are confronting each other with equal rights to be different' (p.115). The notion of fusion goes beyond passivity and emerges as an active and interactive process. To relate this to the film viewing relationship, it can be said that out of the spectator's apparently passive position, where playing has broken down and the spectator has lost her subjectivity into the film, emerges the possibility of a 'free interplay' between the spectator and the film, where the spectator both finds and puts into it a part of herself.

In the Appendix to *On Not Being Able to Paint* Milner presents some of the strictly psychoanalytical theoretical thinking that relates to this work on herself. She adds to her account of 'fusion' the pre-anal stage where the infant feels ecstatically at one with all its bodily products in contrast with its later disappointment at the gap between what it produces and its feeling in doing so; for the artist, nothing will match up to his ideal conception. For Milner the way out of this disillusionment is in re-experiencing that early stage of 'fusion' where even the 'faculty of consciousness itself was to be creative because

nothing is distinguishable between inner and outer' ... a stage at which 'to open one's eyes was felt to be a fiat of creation, a saying let there be light which resulted in there being light' (Milner 1950, p.153). This expresses precisely her notion of the creativity of everyday living, in the subject's ability repeatedly to 're-make' her world.

In Melanie Klein's work, which Winnicott was to dispute, artistic activity has its origins in the infant's urge to restore the good object which it has itself destroyed: art is a ceaseless act of reparation, from guilt, from fear of retribution, from love (Klein, 1929). Milner's thinking has moved to an earlier state, before the depressive position, where, rather than restoring the whole object, the subject *creates* it for the first time. For the adult there always the possibility of reliving this moment: if we can move to the primitive, formless state, without anxiety, and tolerate the shifting of our habitual boundaries and even its intimations of madness, there is the possibility of continually recreating our objects, both 'made' and 'found'. This possibility of a moment-by-moment creativity exists no less for the film spectator than for the artist.

The True Self in action: Christopher Bollas

Christopher Bollas takes up the theme of the search for the (true) Self as the expression of what is unique and what makes the individual 'feel alive' which, he claims, is an important feature of the analytic relationship that had not been theorised before Winnicott. Like Winnicott, Bollas moves away from the Freudian primacy of interpretation and understanding in analytic work; he distinguishes 'the need to know' from the 'need to become which has received less attention in analysis' (Bollas, 1989, p.24). In his books The *Shadow of the Object* (1987) and *Forces of Destiny* (1989), he explores these issues through an examination of the relationship between the analyst and analysand: the analysand 'uses' the analyst as a play object, and as what Bollas terms a 'transformational' object in order to obtain an experience of the True Self. I will argue that this account of the analytical transaction can be used as a model of the film-spectator relationship, when the spectator too makes use of the film for her playing to obtain an experience of her True Self. This will bring me to the end of this exploration of the film-spectator encounter, as, at the end of the film, the spectator moves out of her potential space back to the world of shared reality.

Bollas attempts what Pontalis side-steps — an exploration of the source and location of the True Self in the psyche. It is difficult to do this without approaching the essentialist approach that Pontalis rejects: Bollas writes in terms of 'the unique presence of being that each of us is; the idiom of our personality' (Bollas, 1989, p.9). He is more explicit than Winnicott in his definition of an 'inherited potential' (p.8) with which each person starts out in life and which 'exists in experience

upon which it is fundamentally dependent for its articulation ... a set of unique person possibilities specific to this individual' (p.9). He goes further than Winnicott by attempting to link the True Self into the Freudian notion of the primary repressed unconscious posited as a set of 'inherited mental formations ... analogous to instincts in animals,' with the suggestion that what he terms the 'idiom of the personality' might be substituted for the 'instincts' as its nucleus, and that this 'core of unconscious life' becomes a 'dynamic form that seeks its being through experience' (p.12). There exists 'an unknown thought' even in the neonate which 'brings this knowledge with him as he perceives, organises, remembers and uses his object world' (p.10), which it can be the task of analysis to enable the patient to articulate.

This attempt to incorporate a theory of the Self into traditional psychoanalysis throws up the difficulty of its definition within that framework (which is usually not attempted), and, to judge by the liberal use of 'perhaps' in this section, Bollas is not entirely convinced by his own argument, which is indeed presented only as a suggestion. It is an attempt to specify what Milner is content to leave as a vague notion of 'the inner core' of the person, and that Winnicott side-stepped by enlarging (more or less tacitly) his theoretical framework to include his two different, co-existing models of the unconscious: the source of creativity and the Freudian repressed unconscious.[13]

Like Winnicott, however, Bollas also insists that the True Self is not an essence which can in any meaningful way be 'found' as the end of a journey. Rather the 'joy' to be found in the expression of the

[13]In 'Fear of Breakdown', Winnicott also however refers to Freud's 'other' unconscious, 'that is very close to neuro-physiological functioning' (1974, p.177).

individual's True Self, or personal idiom, comes from the moment-to-moment articulation and making of a life through 'the spontaneous gesture' — Bollas here adopts Winnicott's phrase: 'no human being is only true self ' (Bollas, 1989, p.9). This 'articulation' may emerge within psychoanalysis through the 'uses the analysand makes of the analyst as an object', which Bollas examines from the point of view of Winnicott's late paper, 'The use of an object and relating through identifications' (Winnicott 1971, Ch.6; Bollas, 1989, Ch.3).

In this important paper Winnicott discusses both the infant and the analysand's use of the mother/analyst in its development of subject-object differentiation. Distinguishing between the 'internal' mother and the 'environmental', actual, mother, Winnicott describes two paradoxical stages. Firstly, the baby must be able to destroy its internal object as an expression of its omnipotence and control over its inner life. At the same time it is also crucial that the mother 'survives' by bearing the brunt of the child's destructiveness without retaliation. It is the environmental mother who literally survives and through her survival the child is able to relinquish the internal object over which it has omnipotent control, and substitute for it a knowledge of the object that is separate and no longer a part of itself. The crucial point for the infant is the move from omnipotence to separateness, for 'killing' the object-which-survives becomes a way of establishing that it is indeed outside the child and, in the end (a point, finally, of considerable relief), *not* within its control. The object is itself, indestructible, outside and separate. By the same token, neither can the subject/child be destroyed by the other: no reparation is necessary, no retaliation is threatened. The child becomes a subject and an object among other subjects and

objects. This is the process which I will argue can be played out in the film-viewer relationship.

The difference in this approach to artistic/creative activity and Klein's insistence on art as the restoration of the object (Klein, 1929) is crucial: freely breaking and building objects, changing and moving them around, in sum, playing with them, becomes an activity for its own sake, not haunted by the guilt inherent in the need to restore to its original wholeness the loved but also hated object that the subject has destroyed. Winnicott's insistence on what he termed 'ruthlessness' as simply a vital element in primary creativity reflects his essentially optimistic approach to human beings and his emphasis on the importance of spontaneity and creativity. It is impossible to be spontaneous, to take the risk of making something new, if the subject is afraid of destroying both what he makes and those he encounters — spontaneous play in these circumstances becomes impossible, and 'work' (the incessant work of restoration) an imperative. The use of an object as Winnicott explores it is the ability both to use it and then, when necessary, simply to give it up.

Following Winnicott, Bollas traces how analysands use the analyst for playing. The focus shifts away from the patient/infant's need to destroy the object in order to prove its ability to survive, to the knowledge that the object is indeed outside and strong enough in its own right to be 'used' — and similarly that the subject can be used as an object, reciprocally, by the other. This relationship is the opposite of the Winnicottian negative, the 'compliance' of the False Self through the infant's fear of the destruction either of the True Self or of the object/mother. The opposite of compliance in this case is neither

aggression nor manipulation: the use of an object is non-exploitative because it also includes the respect for the other as separate and not-me (although this realisation, as Winnicott insisted, is always partial). As Winnicott puts it, the subject is able to say, '"Hello Object!" "I destroyed you." "I love you."' (Winnicott, 1969, p.86). In any intimate relationship the subject/object relationship persists and moves around, as each continually and reciprocally makes an object of the other. As an example outside the analytic setting, Bollas contrasts the use, in a sexual relationship, the couple makes of each other in mutual orgasm with the relating and caring of the rest of their relationship (Bollas, 1989, p. 27). Without the caring the use is exploitative, but without the 'ruthlessness', the erotic is diminished. [14]

Winnicott's account of the object in this late paper can be related to his earlier model of the transitional object — he himself refers to but does not develop the link in this paper. At the moment of the subject's use of the object in the way that Winnicott describes it (whether the object is mother, analyst or the film) it takes on the properties of a malleable transitional object, endowed with aspects of both the subject's inner and outer worlds, and the subject can make use of it for his own inner purposes.

[14]Later in the book Bollas discusses the notion of 'subject relations', as an interplay between two equal subjects (p.89). Jessica Benjamin (1990) also proposes a concept of two equal subjects in her discussion of the mother child relationship, which draws partly on Winnicott and partly on child observation studies. Her model stresses the 'mutuality' of relationships but it leaves out of account the psychoanalytic force of the concept of internal objects and does not allow for the loving/destructive creativity that the concept of the use of the object involves.

The film object

In a chapter entitled 'The psychoanalyst's multiple function', Bollas brings together Winnicott's view that the Self can be found through creative playing and his ideas on the use of the object. Employing Bion's term the 'analytic object' as 'the formulations generated by the psychoanalyst that give birth to an idea that may be of use to the patient and analyst' (Bollas, 1989, Ch.5, p.93), he reconstructs the analytic process by which the analytic object is created and the patient achieves the sense that 'his true self has been released into further establishment and articulation' (p.95).

Within a structure that is bounded by a particular set of rules and practices (the analytic holding environment), the purpose of analysis is to enable the patient progressively to develop and articulate his or her 'personal idiom'; to enable the emergence of 'a sometimes observable universe of objects through which the patient moves', through which he or she 'may live the true self' (p.109). Bollas follows Winnicott in stressing the importance of primary 'ruthlessness', as a part of creativity, in enabling the patient to use the analyst in this way. The usefulness of the analytic relationship for the patient is that the analysand need not be 'careful of' the analyst; as, usually, the baby need not be of the mother. In the same way, the spectator does not have to be 'careful' of the film and may safely deploy her ruthless creativity in 'using' it for her own conscious and unconscious purposes, knowing that, in fact, there is nothing to be harmed; the film will still exist after this showing.

Bollas describes Winnicott's 'spatula game' as a parallel for the way the analysand uses the analyst's comments; in consultations with a mother Winnicott would place a spatula on the table in front of her baby and note its reactions. Bollas takes up the fact that after a first glance at the spatula the baby usually *turned away* from it, only returning to it after an interval to handle and mouth it. He describes what he sees as the psychic process taking place in this way:

> Perception of actual object
>
> Creation of internal mental space by looking away
>
> Psychic representation of the object
>
> Instincts now arrive through the internal object
>
> Holding of the internal object allows the external object to be used without anxiety
>
> The spatula is now a subjective object
>
> (Bollas, 1989, p.95)

Bollas elaborates this process further as he relates it to the patient's response to the analyst's 'comment'. If the comment is to be made use of by the patient, it, too, is received, and taken in to the 'pre-conscious holding area' where it 'evokes instinctual representations, unconscious affects and memories, and then returns to consciousness after such inner work has occurred'; the comment now 'bears the patient's instinctual, affective and memorial print' (p.96) and can be used both within the analytic relationship and for the patient's own conscious, and unconscious, life purposes. In this way, Bollas suggests, the process 'enhances and maturates the psyche which 'grows and establishes a route for the patient's true self' (ibid).

The film-spectator encounter can be traced as an analogous process, relating to both the spatula and to the analyst's comments.

Perception of actual object *(the film, or film fragment)*

Creation of internal mental space by looking away (*What Bollas describes as a 'pre-conscious' space will become for the playing spectator the potential psychic space that is activated as she begins to watch the film)*

Psychic representation of the object *(The spectator makes a psychic representation of the film-fragment in order to create it as an internal object)*

Instincts now arrive through the internal object *(The internal fragment/object becomes linked with and cathected with unconscious memories and fantasies as psychic representatives)*

Holding of the internal object allows the external object to be used without anxiety *(The film-on screen, separate from the internalised film-fragment, can continue to be used for the spectator's further playing. There are now two 'films', one on screen and one inside her)*

The spatula is now a subjective object *(The film image has now become a subjective object, a part of the spectator in the merged state)*

If the analyst's comments were about a cognitive idea, the receiver would be said to have 'processed' it, weighing it up, mulling it over, relating it to his or her world-view, so that it contributed to an expanded, new construction. Received within the specific setting of analysis, however, the comment gathers unconscious accretions; the same is true of the film experienced in the cinematic context. As with the spatula, the patient's use transforms the analyst's comment — or the film — into a 'subjective object' — an object, that is, which is now contained in his or her inner world and has even become a part of

himself, as, in the merged state, the mother is a part of the baby. An example of this in *Meet me in St. Louis* is the spectator's relationship to the 'Boy next door', (explored in Ch.5 of this thesis in terms the return of the lost object) who, by the end of Esther's song, through her desire for him, has become a subjective object, that is, a part of herself.

How this analytic exchange can carry such import for the patient is explained both in terms of the transference, where the patient transfers onto the analyst his or her unconscious representation of his own past, and in terms of the analytic setting as a play-space, where 'patient and analyst are continuously engaged in a mutual processing of one another' (Bollas, 1989, p.106). Within this space the patient may evoke from the analyst, and make use of, 'elements' that the analyst is able to make available, from both the psychoanalytic theories and models he draws on, and aspects of his own personality. As in any communication, the setting and context determine what is possible to be said and heard; the point about the privileged psychoanalytic setting, which that of cinema recalls, is that its content is about the patient/spectator's inner world and is therefore peculiarly susceptible to unconscious processing.

Bollas lists a range of concepts drawn from different psychoanalytic models as examples of what the patient might evoke and make use of in the analyst. These include the Oedipus complex, the Law of the Father, the ego ideal, potential space (Bollas, 1989, p.104). In addition, Bollas believes that the analyst should make available such elements of his personality or 'mood' as are evoked in him by the patient through the counter-transference at any one moment in the analytic encounter; coming from the counter transference, these in any case already

'belong' to the analysand. In this way the patient may unconsciously play on the parts of the analyst's experience, personality or reaction he needs in order to construct his own scenario and script. It is crucial, as Winnicott insists in his account of the spatula game, that the analyst allow the process to take place in its own time and at its own pace.

To make an analogy with the film-spectator relationship, the 'analytical' elements to which Bollas refers become elements which 'belong' to the film and the film viewing process. Only some would be of relevance — evoked — in the spectator at any one time. The 'personal' elements become those which are specific to unique moments in the film spectator encounter.

If, then, the 'elements' that the analyst is able to make available to the analysand are related to those that a film may make available to the spectator, then those that *Meet Me in St. Louis*, as an example of a Hollywood fictional film, might provide include (to draw on what has been discussed in this thesis):

Publicity, narrative structure and content, and genre: These elements make the film available to the spectator on the basis of creating and meeting expectations as she comes to the cinema to obtain a particular kind of experience, ready to use it for her own purposes. *St. Louis* is now established and publicised as a 'classic', re-shown to celebrate Judy Garland as star; Minnelli as director; Christmas; the Hollywood Musical; and nostalgia, which by now includes not only the film's subject matter but also a sense of the history of cinema.

The fundamental importance of narrative in Hollywood cinema is taken for granted as a basic premise in film studies. Narrative mirrors ways in which we construct our lives — through chronology, cause and effect, a sense of motivation, and of beginnings and endings, climaxes and resolutions. As Bordwell and Thompson put it, in a text which is used as a film studies 'primer', in contacting a film 'the spectator picks up clues, recalls information, anticipates what will follow, and generally participates in the creating of the film's form' (Bordwell and Thompson, 1986, p. 83). These authors however write from a formalist point of view and do not enter debates about the unconscious spectator, for whom the film narrative's unconscious structuring may also parallel her unconscious scenarios.

The narrative *content* of a film is often the viewer's first point of contact with it and that to which popular writing on film attaches major importance. What a particular film is 'about' is important for 'seizing' the spectator, for whom, on the level of verisimilitude, the stake is to find in the film characters or situations which have parallels in her own life. On the unconscious level such points of comparison are not at all obvious and the point at which a naturalistic mimetic approach is limited: the overt, manifest story disguises the hidden unconscious content. This may bind the spectator even more strongly to the film.

The perception of the film in terms of genre offers particular pleasures of familiarity. As a musical *St. Louis* offers, as Richard Dyer cogently puts it, the experience of what 'utopia might *feel* like' (Dyer, 1977, p.177, my italics). In its guise as family melodrama, on the other hand, it offers a replaying of family relationships and processes, both conscious

and unconscious, and of the spectator's wishes, both those which are allowed and those which may be forbidden (the first mainly though the two elder sisters, the second through Tootie). The coexistence of the two genres in *St. Louis* enables the spectator to 'use' the film in two different ways: to 'play' in potential space and to move into the domain of the unconscious. In playing, the spectator is fully engaged in the activity but is not 'caught up' in the film's and her own unconscious structures. She moves securely within the boundaries of transitional space which maintains boundaries between the inner and the outer world. However these boundaries are not fixed and the playing is influenced by unconscious manifestations that add to the repertoire of the uses that the spectator may make of the film, in the same way that the analysand makes use of his own and the analyst's unconscious in the analytic encounter.

The characters, the actors as stars: these (notably in *St. Louis*, Tootie and Judy Garland) may be so cathected by the spectator, that, in the case of the star, the spectator is engaged before the film begins, and in the case of the character cumulatively as it proceeds and persistently in its after-effect. Both individual characters and the film as a whole can serve as transference figures on whom the spectator can transpose her own history.

The cinematic image and movement: the film image can be vividly remembered, heavily cathected and internalised. The fundamental cinematic characteristic of the moving image can work on the spectator to encourage fluidity in her positioning in the narrative and to set up the formal movement as a psychic one.

The spectator, too, brings her own 'elements' to the encounter. To take examples that have been drawn on in this thesis to consider the spectator's experience of *St. Louis,* these might include:

Memories and wishes, personal and cinematic
Familiarity with the codes of cinema
Expectations and perhaps a knowledge of a particular film
A willingness to 'enter' the potential space
The wish and capacity to play
The wish to be moved and to 'lose herself' in this or any film

There need to be points of congruence — a 'fit' — between the film and what the spectator brings to it for the cinematic encounter to take place and for the spectator's usage of it to be set up and develop. When this takes place it opens up the possibility of moments of 'surprise' for the spectator (for Winnicott an important element in analysis), as if of a new discovery.

As an example of such a moment both of congruence and 'surprise' developed through the film-spectator relationship, I return to the violent image of Tootie 'killing' the snow family, which marks the culmination of the narrative protest against the father's arbitrary decision to go to New York. The film moment does not stand alone but works on the spectator within the context of the film's formal, structural and narrative systems and with what the spectator also brings with her.

The impact of this image on the spectator is prepared for by such 'elements' as the spectator's emotional investment in Tootie and the

identification with her point of view that the film has constructed up to this point, as well as the immediately preceding pathos of Esther's/Garland's singing of 'Have yourself a merry little Christmas'. Underlying this immediate memory is the fear of the destruction of the family that Tootie is acting out on behalf of the spectator in the face of the film's investment in it; this works on a deeper level in representing the subject's destruction of the good object. Underlying and contradicting the fear of destroying is the opposite unconscious wish to kill the father who has deprived the child of its desire, combined with the awareness of the enormity of that wish, expressed in the violence of Tootie's act: the wish and fear of Oedipus. Accompanying this is the opposite child's exultation at her own power. These different levels of involvement in Tootie's act on the part of the spectator augment the impact of the image on her.

Elsaesser states that 'Minnelli constantly reduces his stories to their moments of visual intensity where he can project the dramatic conflicts into the decor' (Elsaesser, 1969, p.22). The image of Tootie killing the snow people is strongly and visually memorable, through the effects of lighting and the uncanny, surreal quality of the snow-people which are neither human, nor very snow-like, yet strangely 'alive' in appearance. Tootie's action is also extended, as if to insist on the spectator registering it; there is a mad quality to her beheading, one after the other, of the snow-people, until she collapses crying with the emotional and physical effort into Judy Garland's arms. Overall, the image is disturbing in a way that is quite out of proportion to what the film as a musical or family comedy would seem to promise.

Such moments cumulatively give the film a 'use potential' which binds the spectator into it and enables her to make use of it as an object. Like the spatula and the analyst's comments, it can be taken in and become a subjective object. By this process of usage, in the end, any film I engage with in potential space may become 'my' film — my subjective object, a part of myself. As in the spatula game, I may take it in, in parts or as a whole, to my inner space, where it 'joins up with' my other internal objects and becomes cathected with elements from my own unconscious, so that the images I may evoke for myself, that have come from or are associated with the film, now belong to my own psyche.

Used in this way, the film-spectator interaction has the potential in it for the spectator's 'self articulation' and 'transformation'. At such moments of the cinematic encounter something 'moves' both in the spectator and as if between the spectator and film. Bollas's notion of an 'aesthetic embrace', suggests a sensuality in this psychic experience as well as its discreteness from the flow of the linear, narrative form; Milner's description of the unexpectedness of her joy in mundane and usually fleeting events in *A Life of One's Own* (Milner, 1934) suggests its intensity. In analysis, there are such moments of insight as Winnicott describes, for instance when the patient suddenly, and with surprise, arrives at an interpretation for herself which encompasses the work of a whole session, and which may be expressed in rather cryptic, even poetic terms. For the playing spectator there is no mystery about the existence of such moments for they may well be part of what she seeks in watching a film. The accumulation of such moments gives the spectator a particular kind of pleasure: an experience of the sense of Self.

The experience of the Self

Bollas explores the notion of 'transformation' for the subject in *The Shadow of the Object*, where (similarly to Milner) he hypothesises that the subject's experience of the Self has its origins in the merged state before the baby is subjectively separated out from its mother (for the film viewer the state of merging with the film). He employs the term the 'transformational object' to describe an experience of the baby which he likens to both the analytic and the aesthetic set-up. As the baby's 'other self' the mother represents a process of 'internal and external transformations' (Bollas, 1987, p.14). In such an experience the wish of the subject is not for an other but for the non-verbal, pre-subjective experience of 'self transformation'. Such moments have an 'uncanny' quality in that they seem to re-evoke a memory that was 'never cognitively apprehended', but which was 'existentially known' (p.29).

This attempt to describe the events in the pre-subjective state that pre-figure the aesthetic — or indeed any other — significant adult encounter suggests an elaboration of both Milner's and Winnicott's accounts of formlessness and merging as the basis for creativity and an experience of the Self. In Winnicott what is important is the psychic resting point of unintegration as a prelude to an experience of the Self experience; for Milner, the merging of the artist into her material is a necessary de-subjectivisation to allow the artistic product to take form. Bollas suggests that the creative experience through which the Self is experienced has already taken place within the merged state itself.

The transformational object is formulated as a Winnicottian 'subjective object', a part of the subject, in the state where subject and object do not yet exist. Bollas posits that the transformational object-mother is therefore experienced by the baby as itself: not as an other, but only as 'a process of alteration', a stirring of change: 'infants do not internalise the mother as a person or imago. They do internalise the maternal process ... ' (Bollas, 1987, p.6). Bollas's description of the mother-as-transformational object as the 'most primitive archaic object relation', that precedes object relations in the usual sense of the term, and of the subject's longing to return to the state of merging as that which 'alters' the state of the self, is a way of articulating an experience of consciousness that might exist in the merged state. This carries a movement of 'transformation', that will eventually lead to the establishing of what Winnicott calls a 'unit self' that Freud was able to take for granted and which Jung, like many others, had to seek.

In all the three writers I have been considering, the notion of an experience of the Self within the merged state counters the idea of a loss of subjectivity as something to be feared and dreaded: the experience of a void, an endless falling, the loss of the sense of 'I' and, finally the return to a state of non-life. What seems to be the same phenomenon of loss of the subject becomes a gain: expressed in Freud's oceanic feeling; Winnicott's unintegration; Milner's fusion of the artist with her material, Bollas's aesthetic embrace and, for the mystic, to which these all refer, the state of 'at-one-ment': instead of emptiness, fullness; instead of nothing, everything. Even in the passive, unintegrated state of waiting something is happening: the stirring of the movement of the Self, which is 'for ever immune from the reality principle, and for ever silent' (Winnicott, 1963, p.192,). In this case the

wish of the film viewer becomes not to replay desire, nor to experience a hallucinatory, compensatory wish-fulfilment, but to replay an experience of the Self in moments of transformational congruence between herself and the film.

The paradox of this process that offers a route to the Self through artistic and aesthetic activity is that it is an experience that has both the quality of uniqueness, and, at the same time, what appears to be the opposite quality of an identity with everything, a non-separation: the artist becomes (merged in with) the piece of clay, yet also *makes* a unique object. The film spectator loses herself in the film and finds her Self. One way of conceiving this paradox is to accept it: that in being 'everything' I am most myself (this would express the mystical experience). Another way, more applicable to this thesis, is to conceive of two different 'selves' as the difference between the subject-in-process and the Self. The exhilaration of re-defining 'myself' in every encounter and transaction that may be associated with the notion of the 'subject in process' (the spectator-subject constructed within the film-viewing process) is made possible because of a continuity from the merged state, where the Self may be found, to subject-object differentiation. Playing within the transitional area of potential space is the means of maintaining contact between the merged and the separated state and of ensuring that the (separate) subject-in-process continues to have reference to and be connected with the Self (as-everything). Without this reference, connection and continuity there remains either the fear of breakdown, the loss of subjectivity into madness, or a life lived by the False self, constructed in the face of the failure of the True self. With the connection maintained, not only does the loss of subjectivity leads to the finding of the Self, but an experience

of the Self also underlies and can be articulated through every encounter. To return to the terms with which this thesis began, the spectator's encounter with a film in potential space is a means of maintaining the connection between outer, shared reality and her inner reality which now includes the experience of the Self.

Let us then assume that somewhere in the baby's experience of merging is a blueprint for the adult's heightened sense of Self in moments of creativity (making, playing, meaningful experience) which marks the connection between the inner and the outer world. Each moment of the making and remaking of the subject in process, the speaking subject that exists in the world and is specific to each encounter, is informed by the 'memory' or trace of the original state of merging. It is the experience of a connection with the Self as a part of everything that enables an encounter in daily life to feel meaningful and real to the person; what may from the outside seem to be the same event may be experienced in terms of 'aliveness' or 'deadness', depending on the state of the Self as true or false.

The experience of fusion and unintegration recalls the earliest mother-baby fusion which is the base for all subsequent experiences of connectedness through the subjective object. Another way of conceiving this is that the mother's role is to maintain for the infant its experience of a pre-existing Self. At first the mother 'is' the baby, then she 'becomes' a transformational object, the baby's 'other self', and, progressively, an object in a world of objects, the 'environmental' mother. The baby who is learning to play alone needs an other to represent the Self and provide physical continuity with the original state of fusion. But the state of fusion is not with the mother, for there

is no other, no object, in the merged state; rather she represents and activates the Self-as-everything. The umbilical cord connects the baby not to the mother but to life.

The Self is not, then, the mother, not even the subjective mother in the merged state. Her importance is in her holding presence that enables the developing infant not only to 'emerge' into being a separate subject, but at the same time to maintain a connection with the original Self-as-everything. The worst loss is not that of the object/mother, which could be mourned and replaced, but the loss of the Self-as-everything, which the mother of the merged state (the baby's 'other self') has represented.

In a meaningful encounter with an other the experience of the Self is returned to the subject, through playing, fusion and the use of a transformational object. For the playing spectator, too, the encounter with a film and her engagement with its world and its stories becomes a way of replaying the drama of that elusive movement between her two selves when she both re-discovers herself as a subject and re-experiences her Self.

Meet me in St. Louis: the ending

In the following analysis of the final episode of *Meet me in St. Louis* I will explore how the ending of the film consolidates and brings together for the spectator the two main aspects of Winnicott's work that I have been considering in this chapter: the use of an object and the experience of the Self.

Both Wood and Britton argue that the final, Spring, episode of *St. Louis*, the opening of the St. Louis Fair, marks the failure of the film's project to sustain the myth of the family and St. Louis as its idealised setting. In a passage that aptly (and amusingly) sums up Wood's attitude to the film, he points to how the film is 'considered puzzling, because it is such a let down'; assuming that 'we expect a big lavish production number, clinching the sense of celebration' he continues: 'whereas all we get is the family and its guaranteed perpetuation in the young lovers gazing at some bright lights and concluding that life has nothing more to offer. They are right of course ... '(Wood, 1979, p.11). For Britton (1978), the episode, which does indeed treat the opening of the exposition cursorily, confirms the film's covert view of the family's 'dark' and repressive side, in the dreariness of its setting, in John Truett's references to the previous 'swamp' and Tootie's talk of 'dead bodies'. For him the ending is not so much a 'let down' as a confirmation of his thesis about the film.

From the point of view of this thesis, however, the ending has a different function and is read differently. Unlike Britton, I will argue that the episode is very successful in reaffirming and celebrating the family of which the spectator has become a part; and that the ending

brings to a conclusion those psychic processes which the film-spectator interaction has activated in spite of, and partly because of, its cursory, even formulaic, treatment.

Firstly, I will review changes that have taken place in the position of the playing spectator by this stage in the film. At the film's opening she moves into the transitional area of her potential space, represented by the film space, which enables her to begin playing a part in the film. Playing is activated in a range of complex moves through the interaction of different 'elements' in the spectator and the film, including the musical comedy and the song-and-dance numbers; the family patterns and structures; and the characters, most sustainedly Tootie. The spectator psychically sings along, takes part in the community activity and ritual, moves with the characters, and in general participates in their narrative.

At certain moments the spectator's playing breaks down through the force of the repressed unconscious in, for example, her participation in scenarios of forbidden wishes; the replication of her dreaming; the re-playing of both the repetition and the repeal of loss, so that at times she merges with, and loses herself in, the film. Moments of 'alliance' between the spectator's and the film's unconscious bind her to the film without her realising it or understanding what is happening.

From the perspective of the creative unconscious, engaging with the film also gives the spectator moments of an experience of the Self, in three ways. Firstly the satisfaction of preoccupied active playing with the film in potential space is a process that brings together what Winnicott defines as the 'personal psychic reality ... from which the

individual "hallucinates" or "creates" or thinks up or conceives of' (Winnicott, 1989, p.57, op. cit.) and shared reality. Secondly, merging with and losing herself in the film enables her to contact the creative unconscious. There are particularly marked instances of such an encounter, when elements in the spectator meet with congruent elements in the film, and bring about moments of unexpected pleasure, a feeling of 'oneness' with the film, equivalent in force, though not in apparent content, to the moments of unexpected 'breakdown' through the return of the repressed. Throughout, the spectator has 'used' the film on screen to construct her own 'film', which has become both her play object and, in part, her subjective object.

The work that this final episode must do for and with the spectator is to enable her to consolidate the film for her use, and at the same time to move away from it and give it up. This process will involve two 'films': the spectator's subjective film object and the actual film that exists outside the spectator in the world of shared reality. The spectator must be able to 'destroy' the film that has existed inside her in order to retain those aspects of it that have become a part of herself, and, at the same time, to place it (the 'real' film) outside her in order and acknowledge its separate, and continuing, existence. By the end she too will be re-established as a separate subject, not a part of the film (except for the 'other' film that she has made her own and which she will retain as a subjective object, a part of the merged state.)

To be satisfactory in these terms, the ending therefore has to 'return' to the spectator 'her' film, and, at the same time, re-establish the external film as a separate object that the spectator no longer needs or is bound

to. For the playing spectator the function of narrative closure generally may be to register the ending of the playing, in order to acknowledge the final separation and difference of film and spectator, and even of the fictional and the non-fictional world as she 'moves' out of her potential space. Whatever she has gained from the encounter, she retains; yet in the end she moves on while the film is returned from the screen back to its place on celluloid. At another viewing it will become a different object for this or another spectator's use.

Spring: the final episode

The family melodrama part of the film has apparently been completed by the end of the previous Winter episode, after the film's most emotionally laden sequence, when Tootie killed the snow people. The family crisis set up by Mr Smith's decision to leave St. Louis is resolved and the family has been reunited and confirmed as a unit by his renunciation of his move to New York. The final shot of that sequence was of the parents' embrace, Mrs Smith tearful with emotion, with their family behind them, excitedly opening presents. The spectator may be aware and remember that it is Tootie who has saved the family by her violent and iconoclastic act of killing the snow family, but the film has 'forgotten' this in this concluding shot foregrounding the parents. For the spectator, this image marks a move away from the force of the unconscious, represented so insistently in Tootie's act, to the 'adult' view of the parents who look on, rather than participating in their children's excitement and playing. It is an image of a satisfactory calm such as may be sought through a family row; the spectator can feel relief at seeing that the family is no longer at odds and that there has been a return to the given order where parents, not

the youngest child, take the family decisions. Collective satisfactions have replaced the individual infant's importunate demands, whether of Tootie or Mr Smith. The family has been confirmed as an on-going unit, with the coupling relationships of all three older children quickly and easily (indeed peremptorily) established within this episode. The main remaining narrative strand is the St. Louis Fair, with which theme the film opened, and which has been absent in the Winter episode. Even now, however, the celebration will have more to do with the consolidation and continuation of the family than with the Fair.

This final episode is extremely short, lasting just four minutes, and, except that it completes the cycle of the four seasons, might not seem substantial enough to stand on its own alongside the other three episodes. A final 'big' musical number, 'Boys and girls like you and Me', was cut from it, leaving the only number in it a final repetition of the title song (Shipman, 1992, p. 157).

In various ways this episode recalls the film's opening in a circular structure which is important to the film's work. It opens with the now familiar greeting card device of the Smith house with trees in blossom, a picture which includes a tableau of the girls of the family dressed in pink and white in full conventional Edwardian dress, an image which strongly marks the film's evocation of Edwardian nostalgia. Strings play in the background. As in the opening scene, there is a cab in the foreground, which starts to move as the freeze frame 'comes to life'. As in the opening, too, the camera moves us towards the house, but this time the two older girls run towards the cab, to the spectator. For a moment we seem to be welcomed by the girls coming towards the

camera; the spectator's familiarity with the film's characters is an important aspect of her relationship to the ending. At the opening of the film the camera moved the spectator to the inside of the house where she could insert herself into the playing (the ketchup tasting ritual). In this scene, by contrast, the spectator is kept outside. There is now no need for the spectator to enter the house to find the family; it is assembled already waiting for her, available in the public space outside. Along with the family of whom she has become a part, the spectator is now moving from her inner world (of childhood and family drama) to the outer world (away from the film world). This is the first time that the parents have been seen out of the home, which has represented the family's internal life; the city has so far been presented as a rather unreal backdrop, lacking material substance.

The parents and grandfather appear from the house. The generation divide is particularly marked now that the family is being extended: the new young couples leave in one cab, the parents, grandfather and children in another. At the beginning of the film we saw Tootie in a much less smart, water-carrier cart, casually, even provocatively dressed, exchanging confidences with the driver. This time, still sitting by the driver, she acts much more formally, play-acting her 'adult' instruction to the driver to take them to the 'Louisiana State Exposition'. Tootie is growing up (as the spectator has to at the end of the film) and is dressed as a girl not as a child, her tomboyishness gone. The enjoyably subversive route to playing and particularly to the unconscious that she has represented for the spectator has not however quite disappeared from the film but resurfaces passingly in this episode. In Tootie's self-conscious direction to the driver, where she is enjoying playing a part (with herself as audience) and in her quite apparently

unmotivated words a few moments later once they are at the fair, about "a great tidal wave that drowned the city and washed up all the dead bodies", the spectator is reassured that her subversiveness still remains — and that, with a sense of the film's collusion, she can hold it to herself like a secret.

Trumpets reintroduce the music of the title number and add to the note of celebration, as the cab leaves the scene (and the viewer) and moves off, and the camera pans round to track it briefly from behind. This begins to suggest the viewer's exclusion from the family, a distancing that is carried through into the next scene; for an instant the spectator is left behind. The title music, 'Meet me in St Louis', recalls the beginning of the film and its promise of the event which is now about to take place. For this film, and for the spectator, St. Louis has partly represented the family setting, the spectator's psychic home.

The scene of the Fair is introduced in a quick dissolve. The setting is dark and palely lit, muted and unspectacular. A long shot shows crowds around a large fountain. The people's milling movement is shown as if choreographed, weaving in and out in patterns. The spectator is not there, taking a part, but distanced by the long shot, in the place of the director or the onlooker, choreographing or admiring the movement. A moving image can set up a psychic movement — so that the spectator may be given a part in the movement but not in the actions of the characters, nor in the narrative.

The camera moves in to a medium shot of the younger Smith girls, with their grandfather, eating candy floss. The camera has located 'our' family in this crowd. The camera follows them in a quick tracking shot,

to join the rest of the family. Throughout this episode the point of view is that of the camera, watching the characters watching. Rarely given the point of view of any of the characters, unplaced within a reverse shot structure, the spectator is distanced from them. The family is arranged as if for a picture along a balustrade, in a happy family portrait. They are looking past the camera at something (The Fair) in the distance. The spectator is ignored in their look which seems to be directed beyond us, over our heads. Tootie makes her seemingly out-of-key remark about the place being full of 'dead bodies' in close-up; at which the camera pulls away. The remark is however neutralised by her father's rather indulgent 'oh Tootie': bad thoughts are now contained within the family (and in the spectator's knowledge of them); they will not erupt and take over the film or the spectator.

In this unspectacular setting the family/spectator have to make their own celebration; the celebration will be an internal affair not the exterior spectacle that might be expected of a musical.

A cut brings into shot two nuns wearing very large head-dresses. The unexpected oddness of the sight briefly jerks us out of the family scene and even out of the film in a moment of Brechtian distancing. The film seems to have no place for nuns; they exist outside a family structure, and are entirely unmotivated narratively. They are a reminder that there are institutions, restraints and perhaps even pleasures outside the family (the nuns look very self-contained with their huge head-dresses and their hands tucked in their sleeves). They

may even provoke authorial speculation about the film's Italian director or about other extra-diegetic reasons for their inclusion.[15] Esther and John, in shot alone, lean over the railing, also looking towards and beyond camera. Esther's face is rapt, but John's response to her 'I never saw anything look so beautiful' strikes another bizarre note: 'I preferred it when it was a swamp and we were alone'. Whatever is being idealised, in this case the fair, the film continues to deflate it; each time the spectator is put back in her place as onlooker and commentator, outside the unconscious themes. The scene seems to be insisting on the external world to which the spectator will return; the nuns' world is outside the narrative; the setting does not live up to what seemed to have been promised in fantasy. At the same time the spectator is allowed to have it both ways; she remains 'with' the film's affirmation of the family.

The whole family is now gathered, jostling together, still lined up by the balustrade facing the camera. There is a quick humorous assertion of the father's authority — as he leads the way to the restaurant, to which only he claims to knows the way — the others have got it wrong. This reiteration of the father's place/no-place in the family is a reminder that the spectator knows this family well by now. The young people have disagreements, the father claims authority (but the spectator retains the knowledge of Tootie's power in the previous episode). The spectator remains outside, watching the family, here presented as a unit, affectionately and amusedly. Their look goes out to the camera (to the Fair) over the head of the spectator. The cursory

[15]For Britton (1978), the nuns represent the repressiveness of the church as one of the institutions which maintains the entrapment of the family.

nature of this episode encourages the withdrawal of the spectator's cathexis, as if accepting that endings may be best achieved quickly when interest is diminishing.

Again a trumpet announces the title theme, the distant buildings light up and the family turns back. The repetition again of the theme tune suddenly reaffirms the spectator's place back into the film, recalling that in the opening sequence she was invited to take part in the singing as it was passed on and taken up by different members of the family: that the number contained a promise of community and togetherness in the family and included the spectator in the film/action. In contrast, in this episode the spectator is kept at a distance, in the city away from the family house, not included in their scenarios. The repetition of the opening theme tune serves as a reminder and instant review for the spectator of what has taken place in the intervening period: a reminder of the spectator's affective experience of it.

A long shot shows the distant buildings lighting up, reflected in the water. The crowd mills around, again shot from a distance as a non-individualised pattern. Again in long shot, we see the backs of the family as they look. What they are looking at is still unclear; again the spectator is apart from the scene and momentarily puzzled.

In a quick series of cuts, different members of the family are shown in turn in close-up as they register for us their reactions to what they see, looking again out over the balustrade to behind camera. This returns the spectator to their point of view and invites her to share in their reactions and emotions. What the family registers is the fulfilment of a fantasy, expressed first by the mother: "I've never seen anything like it

in my whole life", then by Rose: "We don't have to come here on a train and stay in a hotel. It's right here in our home town".

This affirmation of 'home's best', which has been variously asserted throughout the film, is not only a social message. It represents the maternal setting which the film has constructed for the spectator through the representation of both the Smith family and the city of St. Louis, the apparent site of the family's desires; it is the family that has been actualised through the course of the film whereas the city has served just as a background symbol for the family's desire to keep together. The physical space of the Smith home, the structural space of the family dynamics, the psychic space of the maternal setting and the transitional space between spectator and film are by this point in the film a part of the spectator's psyche. No actual 'display' however 'big' could live up to the characters' fantasies. This 'family', on screen and by now also an internal one, can indeed create its own spectacle.

The next cut shows Tootie and grandfather, the most aberrant members of the family. Tootie momentarily dispels the idealism of Mrs Smith and Rose by a reminder of doubts about possible fragilities (of the family structure, her fantasies, the family as represented by St. Louis) and voices anxiety (the spectator must in a moment leave the film): "They won't tear it down will they?" Grandfather reassures her.

Another quick cut gives the final shot in the film to Esther and John (the film's 'romantic' couple of the musical), both, like the others, looking into the distance: Esther has the last, affirmatory word which is clearly written as the film's final line: "I can't believe it. Right here where we live. Right here in St Louis". In spite of its brevity and the

clichéd affirmation, this fleeting end moment is oddly convincing: for the playing spectator of this film, it expresses no less than the truth. The final image of the film is of Garland's rapt face looking out to camera, a look which, as before in the film (for example in 'The Boy-next-door') is ambiguous about its object — the spectator is not quite included in her look. Esther looks out, reminding the spectator of her place out of screen, somewhere beyond, 'out there' in her viewing space. She is also, however, in close up, close to and inside the spectator. This moment recalls previous occasions when Esther/Garland has appeared in close-up, expressing her desire, which is here fulfilled; (her real desire has been revealed to be for her material and psychic 'home', here symbolised by St. Louis, rather than the boy-next-door). Now, as then, her look also draws the spectator into it — Garland looks inside as well as beyond herself, activating the spectator's own desire and already nostalgic memories. The spectator too has wished to find her psychic home and her wish, along with its fulfilment, are now returned to her. St. Louis as an emblem of 'where we live', as a psychic home, is also inside the spectator's psychic space, metamorphosed as a part of her Self.

Immediately (this series of cuts has been very fast), the music, and now its singing, are taken up by the extra-diegetic chorus in a final cut to the greeting card message: 'The End'. This card has previously taken the spectator into the film space and the Smith house; now the same device, but containing a different message, marks the film's ending and closes off its world that the card images represented and which is no longer there. The song also effects and eases the transition from the film to the external world; the chorus continues its singing as the image on screen shifts from the diegetic space and the St. Louis couple

to the card that signals the film's completion. As the spectator is moved outside the narrative action, away from the couple to the greeting card device, the off-screen chorus takes her out of the film as it brought her into it at its opening; and the tune is remembered after it and the film have stopped playing.

I have argued that in watching a film the playing spectator may make creative use of it as a transitional object for her own psychic purposes. Afterwards, she may remember and inwardly replay bits of it. She may continue to visualise cathected images from it; and transformed elements from it may have become integrated into her psyche in ways she may not be aware of. The film ending confirms this process for the spectator but also closes itself off from it. The film itself, on reel, is dispensed with. The spectator is no longer the film. She is herself; the film, again, just a film.

CONCLUSION

When Winnicott presented his concept of potential space in 'The location of cultural experience' in 1966, he was attempting to fill a gap in Freud's topography of the mind, in order to find a psychic place for cultural experience (Winnicott, 1971, pp.95-6). Potential space was an elaboration of his concept of the transitional object that fills another gap, the separation that it also paradoxically creates between the baby and mother: 'the use of an object symbolises the union of two separate things *at the point in time and space of the initiation of their state of separateness'* p.96-7).

The continuing importance of the transitional phenomenon and of its derivative, potential space, in adulthood is that it bridges the gap between the person's inner, psychic reality, in which Winnicott included the mysterious, isolated Self, and the objective, external world of shared reality. Located 'between the individual and the environment' (originally the object) potential space is 'the place ... that is not a separation but a form of union (Winnicott, 1971, p.98): the psychic place of the infinite variability of playing. These concepts about playing enabled Winnicott to tackle the question that had not seemed to belong to psychoanalysis of *'what life is about* ' (ibid). However, in this exploration of cultural experience Winnicott himself created a gap by not specifying the process of the continuity from the baby's playing to adult cultural experience, although he refers to the 'inherited tradition', from which we may draw 'if we have somewhere to put what we find' (p.99).

In proposing a model of a playing spectator in film studies I have sought to address this gap of Winnicott's. I have argued that watching a film is an adult form of playing, which can refer to both a specific activity and a more generalised orientation to living. The playing spectator's desire for cinema is to participate dynamically in its stories and to have the possibility of being taken up by unconscious processes. The playing spectator comes into a relationship with a film through her psychic move into her potential space and into the screen space, where she suspends disbelief and can use the film as a transitional object for her playing. Her relationship with the film functions both as a relief from and as an aid to her negotiation with the world: as 'entertainment' and for 'use'. Further, the spectator plays to obtain an experience of a sense of creativity and of the Self.

At the same time I have argued that the notion of a playing spectator finds a space in theories about the viewer's relationship to film. It is situated between the desiring, unconscious and the 'thinking', conscious spectator positions of film studies, and between the notion of the spectator constructed by cinema and the viewer that is pre-constituted as a separate system. The notion of playing is located with those theories and analyses that emphasise process and movement in the film viewer relationship and which argue for the spectator's ability to take up multiple subject positions and scenarios in her engagement with the film.

Although her playing undergoes vicissitudes, particularly interruptions by the incursion of the repressed unconscious, the playing spectator is not caught up in her own, or in the film's, unconscious operations, nor is she placed in a distanced, critical

position. She moves in a realm of cinematic illusion that does not deceive. Playing fully absorbs the spectator into the film but does not make of her a passive subject; in playing the spectator actively and creatively participates in the film-play as both actor and maker, reconstructing its scenarios for her own use.

In introducing Winnicott's theories of playing to an exploration of film spectatorship I am arguing for a reconsideration of the value and psychic significance of watching a film as an example of cultural and aesthetic activity. The major defining conceptual difference between the notion of the playing spectator and the spectator of contemporary film studies is encapsulated in the Winnicottian concept of the creative unconscious and the (True) Self, which, I have argued, the spectator can experience through her playing, dreaming and merging with a film. For Winnicott, the capacity for creative playing is the crucial mark of psychic well-being, and opportunities for playing are as important for the adult as for the baby. Playing in potential space enables the subject to maintain a dynamic connection between outer, shared reality and inner, psychic reality, so that her inner world becomes validated and the external world becomes a part of herself. For the playing spectator this process takes place within her relationship with the film, where, in the same movement, she reasserts the film and herself as both autonomous and yet interconnected. The spectator makes use of her continually fascinating film-play object to remake herself in relation to her inner and outer realities, and she emerges from that experience better able to make her mark on her world.

Appendix: *MEET ME IN ST. LOUIS* USA, 1944

Producer	Arthur Freed
Director	Vincente Minnelli
Screenplay	Fred Finklehoffe, Irving Brecher
From the book by	Sally Benson
Photography (Technicolor)	George Folsey
Editor	Albert Akst
Art Direction	Cedric Gibbons, Lemuel Ayers, Jack Martin Smith
Costumes	Irene Sharaff
Music	George Stoll
Musical Adaptations	Roger Edens
Choreography	Charles Walters

CAST

Esther Smith	Judy Garland
Tootie Smith	Margaret O'Brien
Mrs Smith	Mary Astor
Rose Smith	Lucille Bremer
Mr Smith	Leon Ames
John Truett	Tom Drake
Katie	Marjorie Main
Grandpa	Harry Davenport
Lucille Ballard	June Lockhart
Lon Smith Jr	Henry Daniels Jr
Agnes Smith	Joan Carroll
Colonel Darly	Hugh Marlow

THE NUMBERS

1.Meet me in St Louis (Chorus)

2.The boy next door (Judy Garland).

3.The Trolley Song: Clang, clang, clang goes the trolley (Chorus)

4.Skip to my Lou (Chorus)

5.The Cake Walk: Under the Bamboo Tree (Judy Garland and Magaret O'Brien),

6.Over the Bannisters (Judy Garland)

7. You and I (Mary Astor, Leon Ames)

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