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IDENTITY-IN-MOTION: THE NARRATIVE DURATION OF THE DIS/CONTINUOUS FILM MOMENT

by

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Abstract

Maria Walsh - Identity-in-Motion: The Narrative Duration of the Dis/continuous Film Moment

The trajectory of this thesis is set out like a journey upon which encounters are staged between two films, film theory and philosophers, such as Slavoj Zizek, Gilles Deleuze, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. An encounter with a moment of image suspension, a cut to the blank screen, in Tacita Dean's film, *Disappearance at Sea* (1996), motivates the beginning of this journey's narrative. My reading of this moment counters the way that suspended film moments have been discussed in terms of non-narrative in 1970s film theory and in the contemporary psychoanalytic film theory of Slavoj Zizek. Using Gilles Deleuze's notion of narrativization as a process of serialization, I argue that the supposedly non-narrative moment is coextensive with the spectator's dis/continuity in time as opposed to Slavoj Zizek's static suspension or film theory's distanciation.

A performative text based on *Disappearance at Sea*, which I refer to as a 'montage text' and for which precedence is found in Roland Barthes' writing, acts as an interlude that runs in tandem to the main theoretical trajectory.

The generativity of absence that emerges from these encounters, both theoretical and poetic, is heightened in the second half of the thesis by the appearance of another 'montage text' based on Chantal Akerman's *News From Home* (1976). In this text, I reconfigure the negativity of historical readings of absence in *News From Home* where it was related to the impossible question of a woman's desire. In my reconfiguration, absence, rather than suspending time, generates a temporalized space and a spatialized time in which the spectator performs the dis/continuity of narrative duration.

In the theoretical trajectory of this movement, Gilles Deleuze is hybridized with aspects of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, my argument being that the sublime infinity of Deleuzian serialization requires a relation to embodiment in order for it to be useful in considering the spectator's relation to the two film encounters with absence. I read this hybridization in terms of a feminine mode of the sublime, which suggests the possibility of the real rather than its negation in representation and contributes to current thinking in feminist philosophy, particularly the work of Elizabeth Grosz.
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Illustrations only appear in the 'montage texts'. In the same way that the layout of these texts differs from the main body of the text, the illustrations will not be numbered in the sequence of the texts themselves. That would be to detract from the poetic nature of how the image is supposed to appear on the horizon of the text. This is not problematic, as not only does the text in the 'montage texts' elusively describe the images, but all the images that appear in 'montage text' no. 1 are:

Tacita Dean, *Disappearance at Sea* (Cinemascope), 1996

16mm colour anamorphic, optical sound, 14 minutes

And all the images that appear in 'montage text' no. 2 are:

Chantal Akerman, *News From Home*, 1976

16mm, colour, 85 minutes
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Publications:


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'Inner Movements in Chantal Akerman's \textit{News From Home}', 3\textsuperscript{rd} Critical Interventions Conference, Unprincipled Passions: Emotion and Modernity, University of Southampton, Feb 2002.

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Signed: \\
Dated: 2/9/03
Chapter One

1.1 INTRODUCTION - A MAP OF THE JOURNEY.

The journey is a narrative motif par excellence. The motif of the journey, in comprising of a movement over time, which draws two same-but-different terms into a synthesis, e.g. the place of disembarkation and the place of arrival, fits the category of 'narrative transformation' set out by Tzvetlan Todorov. The model of 'narrative transformation' is useful for thinking of narrative as a totalizing system that plots 'the structure of action in closed and legible wholes' (Brooks, 1984: 91), while at the same time attending to the differential nature of narrative sequence, which can appear to deviate from such 'wholes'. However, the journey of this thesis is a narrative with a difference.

While the trajectory of my narrative does follow the form of narrative transformation, whereby 'an initial point of stasis is activated into a process of movement and change', the return 'to a same yet different stasis at the end' is held in abeyance (Mulvey, 2001: unpaginated). I argue instead for the interminability of movement and change. How can I maintain this position? Are not all narratives fated to end? And, even more fundamentally, do not all narratives begin from the point of the ending, metaphorically giving structure to the ultimate inconceivable end, i.e. death? 

Undoubtedly, narratives do have endings, at least if they are thought of as stories with plots, which is how narrative is thought of in literature. Even Chantal Akerman, whose film News From Home provides one of the staged encounters in my thesis, would say in reference to film that '[w]hen you write something where the end is the same as the beginning it's really boring. That's very cliched, to have no ending' (Akerman, 1976: 217). This is no surprise as the literary model of narrative as story pervades in film analysis. However, I shall propose that the film sequences I encounter engender a different narrational engagement whereby the actual end of the film is not the goal of narrative plotting/editing, but the beginning of a new space of interminable flux. I shall
make a case for this flux as having a structural dynamic to it that does not necessitate being ordered into the overarching whole of a narrative as story. In this, I deliberately go against the sentiments of Frank Kermode that 'tracts of time unpunctuated by meaning derived from the end are not to be borne' (Kermode, 1967: 162). Inspirational in my move away from the conventional notions of endings as narrative frames will be Gilberto Perez's discussion of narrative as 'an additive thing that can go on and on without closure' and of how camera editing can serve in this respect (Perez, 1998: 72).

However, the written narrative of my thesis is a little more conventional than the interminable narrational engagement I shall propose in relation to a film image. The written narrative of my thesis does have a plot. Although, as we shall see, the goal of the end will be redirected there too in the sense that the concept of interminability will leak out and overwhelm the desire for an ending, leaving us instead with a series of repetitions and accumulations. The plot of my thesis will start out from the initial point of stasis in the model of narrative transformation. This point can be deemed the place of disembarkation, often referred to as the home. Embarking on a journey ruptures the secure surety of home, a disturbance necessary for the progressive drive of narrative. To embark on a journey involves a desire for something else, something new, to replace or at least reposition the relation to the home. It therefore involves an urgent search, often instigated by an occurrence or event that unsettles the protagonist's home-based stasis. The movement that ensues is digressive being littered with encounters, which may inhibit narrative's progressive drive for resolution. In classical narrative, digressions and detours, which Peter Brooks refers to as the 'daemonic middle', are ultimately overcome by narrative's desire for the end (Brooks, 1982: 288). The journey's end is a resolution of one kind or another, either a return to the home which will itself be transformed due to the effects of the journey, or the finding of and settling down in another destination, or, as I've already intimated, the most final of resolutions, death. For Brooks it is the 'deathlike ending' and its interrelation to initiatory desire that shapes the narrative's 'daemonic middle' (Brooks, 1984: 96). Brooks' articulation of this interrelation borrows
heavily from Sigmund Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. As we shall encounter that text later, I cite Brooks' model here:

We emerge from reading *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* with a dynamic model that structures ends (death, quiescence, non-narratability) against beginnings (Eros, stimulation into tension, the desire of narrative) in a manner that necessitates the middle as a detour, as struggle toward the end under the compulsion of imposed delay, as an arabesque in the dilatory space of the text' (Brooks, 1984: 107-8).

I shall take issue with the principle that the delays and temporal stretching of the dilatory middle serves the purpose of preventing the collapse of narrative desire (Eros) into its other, i.e. the non-narratable, stillness of death. This model of narrative desire ultimately maintains a conservative notion of subjectivity, whereby the subject's movements, his narrative, are performed in reaction to a stillness that threatens to overwhelm his desire for meaning. Narrative then is a way of controlling a non-narratable space that is itself the motivator of narrative and yet is relegated outside of its borders, its supposed collapse of meaning haunting the subject.

Teresa de Lauretis illuminates the unacknowledged gender stakes involved in this dichotomy. Tracing of the outcome of Propp's work in the 1930s and 1940s to Jurij Lotman's in the 1960s and 1970s, where the thirty-one functions of what Propp calls the *dramatis personae* of narrative are reduced, in the rise of structuralist thinking, to the two functions of hero and obstacle.

*If* the work of mythical structuration is to establish distinctions, the primary distinction on which all others depend is not, say, life and death but rather sexual difference [...] Opposite pairs such as inside/outside, the raw/the cooked, or life/death appear to be merely derivatives of the fundamental opposition between boundary and passage; and as passage may be in either direction, from inside to outside or vice versa, from life to death or vice versa, nonetheless all these terms are predicated on the *single* figure of the hero who crosses the boundary and penetrates the other space. In so doing the hero, the mythical subject, is contracted as human being and as male; he is the active principle of culture, the establisher of distinction, the creator of difference. Female is what is not susceptible to transformation, to life or death; she (it) is an element of plot-space, a topos, a resistance, matrix and matter (de Lauretis, 1984: 119).
While I shall not be couching my thesis in overtly feminist terms, a feminist subtext will reappear constantly throughout the various chapters, as the type of film image that I engage with in this thesis, an image of absence, could be categorized as a 'plot-space, a topos, a resistance, matrix and matter'. It is also of interest at this stage to note that in seeking to engage with the space of non-narrative, I would seem, according to de Lauretis' model, to be siding with the criminal role of Oedipus as the destroyer of differences. Whereas 'the combined work of myth and narrative is the production of Oedipus' (de Lauretis, 1984: 120), which is why, writing in 1984, de Lauretis would say that '[t]he most exciting work in cinema and in feminism today is not anti-narrative or anti-Oedipal, quite the opposite. It is narrative and Oedipal with a vengeance, for it seeks to stress the duplicity of that scenario and the specific contradiction of the female subject in it' (de Lauretis, 1984: 157). However, part of my thesis will be to raise the possibility of another way of engaging with difference, using my chosen film scenarios as a model.

In this thesis, I will explore the prolongation of moments, in film rather than literature, which 'appear to suspend temporal process', arguing that these kinds of moments, which for Brooks would be in excess of the terminus of classical narrative form because of their 'indeterminate shuttling or oscillation', are generative of a form of narration freed from the end that propels Oedipus towards his destiny (Brooks, 1982: 288). In the moments of suspension encountered on this journey via two film scenarios, another narrational dynamic emerges that obviates against narrative closure, engendering new forms of subjectivity for the spectator in the process. I shall argue, contrary to Brooks' narratology, that this indeterminacy is not in excess of narrative but imbricated within its temporal folds. My shift in emphasis is not simply due to the fact I am referring to film, not literature. My shift in emphasis, while related to the fact that the films I encounter on this journey can loosely be termed 'avant-garde' and therefore considered as being disposed to generating alternative forms of narration, is not simply due to that fact either. In fact, as Gilberto Perez states, while different in genre, the
avant-garde and Hollywood may have more in common than is supposed. They both set up self-sufficient realms, the former in terms of the materiality of the medium, the latter in terms of the diegesis, that are 'closed off from the rest of the world' (Perez, 1998: 85). My shift in emphasis has to do with a revelation that the film moment of suspension, its supposedly non-narratable stillness, generates the enlivening movement of being continuously fractured, rather than revealing an ontological void at the heart of the real. I shall qualify what I mean by the real as I move through the protagonists of this journey. But for now, following Stanley Cavell's claim that film's ontological basis in photography means that it transcribes reality rather than represents it, I suggest that the use of this medium in a mechanically reproductive way, a characteristic of the films I use as interludes in my thesis, may allow for a proximity between image and viewer that can be characterized as real.

Early in its history the cinema discovered the possibility of calling attention to persons and parts of persons and objects; but it is equally a possibility of the medium not to call attention to them but, rather, to let the world happen, to let its parts draw attention to themselves according to their natural weight (Cavell, 1979: 25).

This does not mean that film is an innocent record of a pre-existing real, but that because of its intimate relation to reality, it can allow for a performance of the real far removed from the pursuit of the real characteristic of realism. Although a problematic term, to think of the real as a continuously fractured continuity and of film narration as replicating this movement, is productive of engendering the subject of narrative as herself a continuously fractured continuity without the goal (the doomed eventuality) of an Oedipal narrative trajectory. In order to demonstrate the movement of this alternative mode of narration, which I categorize for now as a mode of 'continuous discontinuity', the narrative trajectory of this thesis will be comprised of repetitious movements that accumulate serially and loop back upon one rather than operating teleologically. In this way, the plot of my thesis is redirected towards the movements of interminability that I stage in the pieces of writing, i.e. the 'montage texts', that are generated by an
engagement with the film moments themselves and act as interludes in the propulsion towards my interminable ending.


The two film encounters that inspire this journey are Tacita Dean's *Disappearance at Sea* (1996) and Chantal Akerman's *News From Home* (1976). These films can loosely be categorized as avant-garde. However, *Disappearance at Sea* is generally seen in the context of contemporary artist's film installation, Dean being an artist who also works in other mediums such as drawing and sound, albeit with an oblique filmic dimension. *Disappearance at Sea* is intended for the gallery rather than for the cinema, whereas *News From Home* is an experimental film destined for the cinema theatre, Akerman being an avant-garde film director per se. (Although of late she has taken to making gallery installations using both footage from her previous films as well as specially commissioned film). Current debates around the distinctions between these filmic modalities have tended to contrast the mobility of the gallery installation film viewer and the loop presentation of the gallery film as opposed to the immobile cinema theatre viewer and the set duration of the cinema screening. However, while these different locations for screening film do partake of different modes of distribution and can be said to encourage different modes of reception, my thesis takes issue with the literalness of how mobility/immobility is used to describe the viewer in these spaces. The peripatetic physicality of the gallery film spectator is not to be celebrated as a simple deconstruction of the supposed seduction of the immobile spectator by the cinematic spectacle. In that supposed immobility, I shall argue, other forms of mobility are occurring. As Stephen Heath says in another context, but it is appropriate here, '[w]hat moves in film, finally, is the spectator, immobile in front of the screen' (Heath, 1981: 99). The argument I shall present for a mobility that is sensory yet not purely
physical or simply psychic in relation to *Disappearance at Sea* and *News From Home* undermines distinctions between the gallery and the cinema in claiming the films themselves as screening theatres which generate the performance of a sensibility irreducible to the literal conditions of reception.10

*Disappearance at Sea* is a 14 minute 16mm cinemascope colour film comprised of seven shots that last approximately 2 minutes each. The film was shot on location at St. Abb's head lighthouse and focuses on the revolving lighthouse bulbs and the sunset, as day becomes dusk and then night. The camera is static. The film was obliquely inspired by the journey of the amateur yachtsman Donald Crowhurst who attempted to sail around the globe single-handedly in the Golden Globe race of 1968. Realising within a few weeks of his departure from Teignmouth, Devon, that his boat would not make it, he hid out in the Atlantic and falsified his radio reports back to England so that it seemed as if he was actually winning the race. Eventually he lost all sense of human time and scale, developing 'an obsessive relationship with his faulty chronometer' (Dean, 1997: unpaginated). The wreckage of his boat was found floating on the ocean months later. His body was never recovered. He is believed to have jumped overboard, overwhelmed by the enormity of his deceit and the extraordinary delusions he was subject to, accounts of which were found in one of his logbooks.11

*News From Home* is a 90 minute colour film comprised of primarily static shots of New York City. Its voice-over features Akerman intermittently reading the letters she received from her mother during her first extended stay in the city in 1972. It was on returning to the city after a three month visit back to Belgium that Akerman decided to make a film about the city, related to her mother's letters. Although Akerman refutes the label of feminist, *News From Home*, in combining documentary codes and autobiographical material, shares the critical approach to narrative common in 'feminist' filmmaking in the 1970s, especially Yvonne Rainer's *Lives of Performers* (1972) and Michelle Citron's *Daughter Rite* (1978).12
While neither *News From Home* nor *Disappearance at Sea* is a classical narrative film, the avant-garde procedures they deploy could be said to be structured against the horizon of classical narrative in the sense that both films have definitive beginnings, middles, and ends. *Disappearance at Sea* opens on a scene at dusk, and by means of elliptical cuts, progressively moves towards nightfall intercut with shots of the sunset, and ending with a scene where nightfall is transformed into something more indeterminate. *News From Home* opens on a New York street scene, continuing to cut from one static shot to another for about ten minutes, until the first of the letters occurs on the voiceover. This 'daemonic middle', mostly static camera shots of the city, interspersed with the letters, comprises about an hour of the 90 minute film. Then a progression towards the ending is introduced by a lengthy tracking shot, the subsequent shot sequences eventually leading into the shot of a dark momentarily indefinable space from which the camera pulls away, ending with a transformed view of the city, the letters having stopped.

What interests me though is how within the 'dilatory space' of narrative middles that Brooks refers to, a moment occurs which suspends the minimal narrative schemas of both these films and changes the space of delay from being a mere respite into something full of possibility in its own right (Barthes in Brooks, 1984: 92). These moments generate the prolongation of a temporality other than the desire for the end. The film ends, but the force of these moments continue in another direction. It is the attempt to articulate the sensibility of these moments that motivate the journey of this thesis. In *Disappearance at Sea*, this dis/continuous moment occurs in the final cut when the screen goes blank for a few seconds, followed by the appearance of a beam of light that paces rhythmically across the image of darkness on the screen re-tracing a horizon of sorts. This confrontation with the disappearance of the image, with a moment of absence, had a strangely generative effect for me rather than it being a suspension to the flow of narrative. In *News From Home*, the dis/continuous moment occurs towards the end of the film when the camera cuts to an indeterminate dark space, (under a city
bridge), from which it then pulls slowly away from the city, continuously re-framing the image of the New York skyline. In the process of this re-framing, the horizon becomes absorbed in the blue opacity, yet shifting surface of the image. For me, this moment in News From Home provides another encounter with an absence that is generative rather than statically mute. In order to voice the new movements, the transportations, I encountered in relation to the non-narrative, apparently suspended moments of these two films, I felt it necessary to produce an alternative method of writing referred to in the thesis as the 'montage text'.

1.3 THE 'MONTAGE TEXT' METHOD: PUTTING THE DISJUNCTIVE FILM MOMENT INTO WRITING

Each of the two films engender a separate 'montage text', which acts both as an interlude to and a motivator for the theoretical arguments that follow and precede them. The 'montage text' based on Disappearance at Sea appears in chapter three, the one based on News From Home in chapter four. These texts will montage different voices; descriptive, theoretical, analytical, which will 'inaccurately' replicate the film's static camerawork and the irregularity of the rhythm of cuts from shot to shot (Bersani, 1977). The purpose of this method is to create a network of rigorously woven fragments, between whose juxtapositions, something of the movements generated by these disjunctive film moments emerges. I am calling these movements 'dis/continuous' in the sense that they emerge due to a cut that suspends the film's minimal propulsion forward, but this suspended rupture paradoxically engenders new movements, which are chaotically multi-directional rather than adhering to the notion of narrative as a structure with a beginning, middle, and, end. These multi-directional movements could be called the narrative of experience itself.

The term 'experience' is an inherently slippery one due to its implication of being, on the one hand, something that naturally happens to someone, and, on the other hand,
something that 'I' formulate as being mine, i.e. a construction under the guise of natural and authentic immediacy. In claiming that the multi-directional movements unleashed by the moment of suspension could be called the narrative of experience, what I mean is that this moment reveals the bifurcating movements of temporality in which the spectator is caught up and carried away, the force of these temporalities impacting on the spectator at varying points in the motion. By means of this oscillation between being carried away and being impinged upon, a new form of embodied subjectivity is generated that contrasts with the mastery of owning one's experience in narrative. I shall go on to show, using a selective combination of the ideas of Gilles Deleuze and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, how the film moment of prolonged duration, unleashes the temporal play of experience as a dis/continuity that narrative as story seeks to order as a continuity from the perspective of the end. In other words, the moment of suspension, rather than being a delay or postponement of the end, reveals the simultaneous interplay between the temporal orders of past, present, and future that comprise the dis/continuity of experience. 'Experience' then is happening to someone, but that someone does not own it. She is lived by the force of its temporally disjunctive directions. As Joan Scott puts it:

It is not individuals who have experience, but subjects who are constituted through experience. Experience in this definition then becomes not the origin of our explanation, not the authoritative (because seen or felt) evidence that grounds what is known, but rather that which we seek to explain, that about which knowledge is produced (Scott, 1991: 779-780).

For the spectator-someone then, the sensibility of this force is simultaneously connective and estranging. 'I' become invisible to myself, yet at the same time, these movements of bifurcating registers of time express 'me'.

In emphasizing the discontinuous aspect of this experience, I am not following recent critiques of experience which are suspicious of embodied experience and insist on the constitution of experience via language (Lacan (1977); Derrida (1981); Butler (1993)). While I agree with the notion that words are anonymous, I do not subscribe to
the conclusion that this results in melancholic alienation of the personal in the impersonal.

This not owning of one's words is there from the start, however, since speaking is always in some ways the speaking of a stranger through and as oneself, the melancholic reiteration of a language that one never chose, that one does not find as an instrument to be used, but that one is, as it were, used by, expropriated in, as the unstable and continuing condition of the "one" and the "we", the ambivalent condition of the power that binds (Butler, 1993: 242).

By contrast, a more recent, post-Derridean, analysis of how language and embodiment are imbricated and mutually informing can be found in Vicki Kirby's *Telling Flesh: The Substance of the Corporeal* (1997). Kirby, using Derrida to good effect, posits the body as itself a scriptural force as dynamic as other forms of writing like language. My 'montage text' method seeks to voice the fractured continuity of experience rather than apply an analytical method to it. This notion might sound naive at this point. In Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, 'the real' of experience is forever lost to the subject on entry to the symbolic order. In taking issue with Lacan's absolute divorce of the real of the body from the subject, I repeat that I am not returning to the body as the ground of experience. As will become clear later on, incorporating the body as a variable constant in the process of signification does not exclude the body as an unknown entity (Kirby, 1997: 65-66). Gilles Deleuze's reworking of Henri Bergson's concept of the virtual and the way it is taken up by Elizabeth Grosz in *Architecture From the Outside: Essays on Virtual and Real Space* will allow me to argue for the 'real' effects of the unknown body without it becoming an object of knowledge for a subject or an object that is absolutely lost to the subject.

My rationale for the 'montage text' method is that in order to argue for the moving/transformative, as opposed to the static/alienating, nature of the film moments, the writing has to position itself inside them in a manner that replicates (inaccurately) the way 'I' was seized by the movements generated by these moments. The notion of an 'inaccurate' replication serves to distance my attempt from ascribing the authenticity of
self-possession to the narrational movements generated by the 'montage texts' and from claiming these texts to be accurate copies of the experience of those movements.

Adopting a writing position from where one might apply theory to the encounter with the film moments would be to impose a meta-narrative on the dis/continuous experience they generate. It would be to impose, what Brooks, and others I shall critique in chapter two, might call narrative stability on these moments which, in suspending the forward trajectory of narrative desire, expose narrative's other, the life world, thereby generating a continuity between the fictional world and the world of 'the passive entanglement of subjects in stories that disappear into a foggy horizon' (Ricoeur, 1: 74). Cut from the imposition of narrative order, the dis/continuous film moment opens out onto the cacophony of the 'pre-thematic' aspect of experience, an openness, which obviates against closure (Carr, 1986: 3). 15 Traditionally seen as the chaos that narrative form binds, this cacophony has, I shall claim, its own narrative logic to which we are blind in everyday life. Encountering, in the preordained space of the film installation, either gallery or auditorium, a simulation which unleashes a kind of 'pre-thematic' cacophony allows for a renegotiation of identity that breaks through the parameters of cliché and stereotype.16

PRECEDEENTS

In her introduction to Yves Lomax's Writing the Image: An Adventure with Art and Theory, Irit Rogoff succinctly captures the ethos of what I am trying to do in the 'montage' texts and how I see their relation to the main argument of my thesis. She says there that there are 'shifts taking place in the project of "theory" where it 'can become the space of making' rather than taking a purely critical distance to its object of analysis (Rogoff in Lomax, 2000: xvi). Her sentiments are echoed by Kathy Acker's discussion of writing strategies that mix 'object language' and 'metalanguage', without privileging the latter in any way, there being '... no more need to deconstruct, to take apart
perceptual habits [...] We have to find somewhere to go, a belief, a myth' (Acker, 1997: 11). Acker calls for 'ways of breaking with the essay form' by using 'chance structurally: by viewing subjects through the lens of supposedly unrelated subjects; by reading a text's content only through its structure; by reading a non-literary text, say a painting, by trying to imitate it literally, in words' (Acker, 1997: viii). This last is particularly apropos in regard to the descriptive nature of my approach to putting the films into writing. The films I encounter 'create a condition of hyper-fixity' (Singer, 1990: 58) in their use of static camera and the presentation of shots whose duration lasts for longer than is necessary for a viewer to identify their ostensible information as content. The continuous irregular jump cuts that disrupt and displace each shot creates a context in these films for the emergence of singular moments that generate a transformative displacement for the viewer. These dis/continuous moments are like 'poses' before which I say things, am forced to speak and remember, seized upon by reverie and theory. This practice echoes Gregory Ulmer's assertion in Teletheory: Grammatology in the Age of Video that electronic media, film and video, provide the model for new practices of writing. He names this practice of writing, "euretics" (invention), and, in a way that echoes Acker above, characterizes it in terms of a shift from criticism as metalanguage to hybrid forms of linguistic internixture where the emphasis is on a 'poetic or associational mode of composition' (Ulmer, 1989: 15). The film images present figures of absence. In the 'montage texts', I associate with the material presentation of these absences and conjure, 'other ideas, other images, other significations' (Barthes, 1986b: 31). I fill in these poised absences with an indistinct mix of evocation and analysis to create an "I" that 'is constituted as immediately contemporary with the writing, being effected and affected by it' (Barthes, 1986b: 19).

As well as Roland Barthes' writing, which I shall look at in more detail in chapter two in relation to the narrating the moment of excess, there is further precedence for this method of engagement with objects and texts in contemporary cultural studies. This
precedence is currently institutionalized as 'performative writing' (Butler (1997), Phelan and Lane (1998), Lomax (2000)).

Performative writing evokes worlds that are other-wise intangible, unlocatable: worlds of memory, leisure, sensation, imagination, affect, and in-sight. Whereas a mimetic/realist perspective tends to reify absent referents in language, thus sustaining an illusion of full presence, a performative perspective tends to favor the generative and ludic capacities of language and language encounters – the interplay of reader and writer in the joint production of meaning. It does not describe, in a narrowly reportorial sense, an objectively verifiable event or process but uses language like paint to create what is self-evidently a version of what was, what is, and/or what might be (Pollock, 1998: 80).

'Performative writing' attempts to banish the so-called transcendent beyonds of a representational aesthetics and instead to write "into" disappearance...to move "from a representation of loss...to an-enactment of loss" (Blocher cited in Pollock, 1998: 84).

This writing is characterized by movement, the shifting movements of the voices invoked, evoked, and cited being integral to this mode of argument as enactment (Phelan, 1997: 5). Phelan sees it as forging 'a different formal relation between the critical thinker and reader', which she refers to as a 'phantasmatic staging of "me" and "you" ' (Phelan, 1997: 18). While Phelan's account of the rationale of performative writing corresponds in part to my theoretical impulse to make 'montage texts', there is perhaps one main distinction between my position and hers. In the emphasis on 'enactment' in performative writing, lurks an underground insistence on giving a true account of a past (lost) event, albeit with the consideration of temporal delay taken into account. Performative writing here shows its legacy.

Emerging on the cultural studies scene in the wake of post-structuralist theory, it attempts to combine the play of difference with the return to an emphasis on authentic experience in identity politics. This return to experience has many causes, one of which could be claimed as being a reaction to the occlusion of positive stabilized forms of identity that post-structuralist theory, particularly its Derridean variety, was said to promulgate in the cultural sphere. Contrary to the endless deferral of presence and the continuous positing of absence, metonymy in performative writing, while marking
absence, 'also marks itself an active, material signifying process that is neither a prison
house nor a fun house, not a place even, but a boundary space, inviting laughter and
transformation' (Pollock, 1998: 85-86). Performative writing attempts to combine two
seemingly mutually exclusive positions: authenticity and difference. It uses the later's
continual undermining of authenticity to prevent the full-blown embrace of positive
identity claimed in identity politics, but it is at the same time mindful of witnessing
identity. These positions, identity and the play of difference, are not perhaps as mutually
exclusive as they have been deemed to be. However, their combination under the
rubric of 'performative writing', brings in its train an unacknowledged attachment to the
lost (authentic) event, a trajectory still under the sign of melancholy that the turn to
performativity sought to escape. Pollock refers to 'a kind of melancholy hopefulness'
(Pollock, 1998: 93). Something of this dichotomy can be seen in the following citation
from Phelan:

Contemporary theory's paranoia animates the ash of critical writing, transforms
it into a landscape composed of thousands of horizontal breathropes. These
prose ropes slap the page like jump ropes sweeping concrete. Its nervous
mutating catastrophic reach propels what I call performative writing.
Performative writing is different from personal criticism or autobiographical
essay, although it owes a lot to both genres. Performative writing is an attempt
to find a form for "what philosophy wishes all the same to say." Rather than
describing the performance event in "direct signification," a task I believe to be
impossible and not terrifically interesting, I want this writing to enact the
affective force of the performance event again, as it plays itself out in an
ongoing temporality made vivid by the psychic process of distortion. The
events I discuss here sound differently in the writing of them than in the
"experiencing" of them, and it is the urgent call of that difference that I am
hoping to amplify here (Phelan, 1997:12).

While I myself also turn to 'performative writing' as a way out of the melancholic
reification of absence, the suspended moments, the absences, in my film encounters
generate a writing space where 'phantasmatic staging' itself breaks down, and what
occurs in its stead is a continual displacement of the terms of identity per se. In that
space of displacement or dis/continuity, the positions "me" and "you" will collapse.
However, rather than this collapse resulting in a fused "we", which, as Roland Barthes
shows is the logic of the shifters "I" and "you", i.e. the two positions are reversible, this fusion is displaced in relation to an anonymous "it", which I shall call, for now, the "it" of duration (Barthes, 1986b: 16).

THE "I".

In the 'montage texts', I shall continue to use the term "I", but it is in this sense that I mean it: as a grammatical pronoun that stands for a personal locution in language. It signifies "me", but also signifies anyone who utters it to refer to themselves, therefore it is an empty and shared point of enunciation. When I use it to point to myself in relation to the film scenarios especially but also in the thesis in general, my location in its environs is crossed by an accumulation and exchange of influences and experiential motifs that intersect with any one instance of my uttering it. As filmmaker and writer Trinh T. Minh-ha puts it:

Whether I accept it or not, the natures of I, I, you, s/he, We, we, they, and woman constantly overlap. They all display a necessary ambivalence, for the line dividing I and Not-I, us and them, or him and her is not (cannot) always (be) as clear as we would like it to be. Despite our desperate, eternal attempt to separate, contain, and mend, categories always leak. Of all the layers that form the open (never finite) totality of the "I", which is to be filtered out as superfluous, fake, corrupt, and which is to be called pure, true, real, genuine, original, authentic? Which, indeed, since all interchange, revolving in an endless process? (Minh-ha in Jones, 2002: 160).

To say "I" then is a momentary stabilization of an endless process of moving in time. It is connected to a particular location but not permanently fixed to it. The separability of the deictic "I" from definite location opens it to the permeability of the outside. It is this multi-layered "I" that is put into play by the 'montage texts'. The notion of narrational experience then takes on an aspect of reversibility. No longer totally mine, no longer mine in total, "I" move into and out of it in relation to the other scene generated by the moments of absence in the film encounters. On a superficial level, there is Donald
Crowhurst's disappearance and the absent daughter, the filmmaker. I am not the viewer who seeks to identify with these story absences nor the critic who seeks to define the films in terms of these absences. Performative writing is not 'the site where a previously stored-up person is innocently restored' (Barthes, 1986b: 17).

Performative writing is generated by means of what Barthes calls 'the middle voice', a position which condenses the opposition between active and passive voice, whereby the "I" retains agency and yet is dispersed in the action (Barthes, 1986b: 18). Following Barthes, Ulmer associates the middle voice, as a way of writing whereby the subject is not held apart from the object, with the will to invent (Ulmer: 1989: 86-87). It is for this reason, as well as for the fact that I am taking 'electronic media' as writing models that the layout of the 'montage texts' will differ from the main academic argument. Because of the density and poetic nature of the repetitious accumulations of 'identity' located in relation to the image, I shall leave any necessary theoretical referencing as endnotes, as inserting them into the text would disrupt the continuity of the scene I am trying to evoke. In the 'montage texts', a transformative continuous displacement will be shown to take place across a textual space comprised of the deictic shifters "I", "you", "here", "now". My goal in this is to voice the relational flux in the dis/continuous moment, as opposed to the emphasis on absolute disjunction in psychoanalytic film theory's insistence on symbolic castration and formal film theory's insistence on distanciation. (Critiques of these approaches to disjunction will comprise chapter two of this thesis.)

While the 'montage texts' based on the film encounters act as supplements to the main body of the theoretical argument of the thesis, itself a journey comprised of a series of encounters with various 'film' philosophers, their impact on and importance to that main body far exceeds their brevity. The processual knowledge that issues from them and leaks into the main theoretical argument makes up for the quantifiable imbalance between the two modes of writing. While chronologically the 'montage texts' act as interludes in the academic argument, thematically they work in tandem with the main
argument as parallel modes of analysis articulating the generativity of the film moments of absence. As the thesis progresses, the feminist subtext underlying the notion that these film moments generate something other than mute suspension gains ground. This subtext will evolve into a rationale of why I had, to repeat Kathy Acker, 'to find somewhere to go' (Acker, 1997: 11).

1.4 MOVING ABSENCE FROM PSYCHOANALYSIS TO PHILOSOPHY.

The theoretical 'home' that this journey departs from is the Lacanian position of philosopher Slavoj Zizek. My attraction to his ideas had to do with how they offered a structure for thinking of film moments, albeit from Hollywood film, as constituting a mode of subjectivity liberated from ideological identification. I shall refer to his ideas in more detail in chapter two. Briefly put, the main conceptual notion that I was attached to when I encountered the first film moment in this thesis, i.e. the final cut in *Disappearance at Sea*, was Zizek's notion of 'subjective destitution' (Zizek, 1989: 123). The moment of 'subjective destitution' has to do with a moment when the subject not only confronts the fundamental fantasy that structures his/her identity but renounces the shoring up of lack that the fantasy allows. In this process, referred to by Lacan as 'traversing the phantasy', the subject's imaginary identifications are destroyed (Lacan, 1979: 273). The subject is deprived of his/her fundamental reference points and embodies a desire beyond the pleasure principle. To illustrate Lacan's concept of 'traversing the phantasy', Zizek uses examples from Hollywood film where protagonists are confronted with a suspension of their ideologically positivized identities, which, for Lacan, are the fictions (narratives) we invent to cover the traumatic kernel of emptiness at the heart of subjectivity (Zizek, 1989: 122). This moment of suspension or destruction is considered an occasion of possibility. The bleakness of this confrontation with the ground zero point of identity is offset by the fact that this gap in signification, this suspension of narrative, is the opening whereby the subject might assume a true rather
than an ideologically compromised desire. Although Zizek's analyses end at the point of suspension, the idea is that after this moment the subject might be able to reconstruct a less persecutory more liberating identity, it being the unconscious attachments to our fantasy structures that keep us blindly reproducing the dictates of the symbolic order.

The notion of liberation is echoed somewhat differently in the work of Parveen Adams, another Lacanian theorist who uses film. Her approach to the image is more formal than Zizek's illustrational one, but her analyses of art and film also terminate at the point of suspension which she describes as the point where the subject gains some leeway from the signifier (Adams, 1991: 89). Needless to say, for both Zizek and Adams, this (suspended) encounter with a fundamental absence is of course an encounter with the bedrock of psychoanalysis, i.e. castration. While Zizek characterizes this encounter in terms of 'subjective destitution' and Adams in terms of '[a] moment of blindness' in the image, whereby the absence behind identity discloses itself (Adams, 1991: 96), the problem with this analytical structure is perhaps obvious. It can be used to approach any work of art or film where a moment occurs that suspends narrative, either as a gap in signification or an excess of signification, with the same interpretive outcome. The analytical structure is preserved intact while the specificity of the image disappears, because in Lacanian analysis, attachments to the image have to be broken as they delude us into thinking we see ourselves reflected in them. As Gilberto Perez puts it: 'For the Lacanian we are all fetishists at the movies who fasten on to the image to deny the absence of reality' (Perez, 1998: 17).

At one level, I could see the cut to the blank screen in Disappearance at Sea neatly fitting into this model. In the final cut, which follows the elision of daylight in the close-up of the lighthouse lamp, the screen is blank for a few seconds. Although this literal absence of an image occurs for only a few seconds before the appearance of a light beam that punctuates the screen's darkness, it correlated in my mind with the deconstruction/destruction of the image called for in radical film practice and psychoanalytic film theory. The encounter with this momentary blankness resonates
with the state of 'subjective destitution' that Zizek discusses whereby the subject (here the spectator) is divested of all illusion and narcissistic attachment to images. Indeed I physically felt this detachment, but it did not seem to have that quality of mute suspension that Zizek's analysis implies. There was something else going on in that blank space, which I shall refer to for now as a joyous sense of continuity. As if to confirm my sense of a type of continuity as opposed to suspension, a faint light beam began to punctuate the darkness, enabling me to retrace a hazy horizon line from its highlighting of the fringes of clouds in the night sky. In the psychoanalytic framework that I had adopted prior to the journeying of this thesis, such a tracing of the night sky would be seen as a restoration of illusion that pacifies the ego in the face of its destitution. Needing this sort of restoration would be a sign of moral weakness in terms of the ego. In terms of a materialist practice of filmmaking, it would point to a lack of critical attitude and an embrace of a romantic sensibility frowned upon by the contemporary emphasis on the critique of representation.

However, what I found doubling captivating in Disappearance at Sea was that the sense of restoration did not seem to be on the side of the ego. The film opened up the possibility that destruction of ego illusions does not simply mean an empty subject facing the artifice of its construction of identity as in Zizek's formulation, but that there is always restitution going on in the world outside of the perspective of the subject. The film, in the way it breaks down the usual co-ordinates of perspective, takes on a view, which is not mine to own in any sense of mastering the image. It is a frighteningly autonomous view, the view of a machine looking dispassionately at a scene. It goes on without me. It doesn't need me to function. This view would be robotically alienating if not for the simultaneous presentation of change in the cuts from day to night. This overlay of a planetary/cosmological revolving with a mechanical revolving captures two motions of the world without me. But somehow, I found the combination of these two views, which do not depend on my agency, strangely uplifting. The film presented the continuity of things regardless of my intervention. This doesn't absolve me from
responsibility, but shows that I am not the centre of the world. More than this, the film's detached refraction of these two views, machinic and cosmic, was combined with an intimate refraction of rivulets of light in which "I" was carried away. This intimate refraction, fluid and ever-changing, seemed to provide a shifting continuity rather than a kind of mirroring. The "I" could continue in dispersion, held as a series of moments in relation to, sometimes minute, sometimes catastrophic, shifts in perspectives beyond my control. By contrast, the renunciation of self-identity in the Lacanian psychoanalytic framework is still from the perspective of that self, substituting the form (empty) of the subject for the delusions of self-presence. Therefore the empty image mirrors the emptiness at the heart of the subject. Only the subject as a stronghold, a fortress identity, needs such an extreme critique of its frontiers. Only such a subject desires extreme destitution - to hang off the edge of the world suspended in the black void of the night.

By contrast, what my encounter with Disappearance at Sea opened up for me was the fact that the suspension of an image and the encounter with absence could have a positive signifying force. The force of this intuition created the rupture necessary for me to break with prior theoretical allegiances and conceptual habits and seek other ways of articulating the sense of continuity, of narrational possibility, in the face of extinction that this encounter instilled in me. However, prior allegiances are not easily dispensed with and in chapter two of the journey, I struggle with them.

1.5 CIRCULARITY: LOOPS AND INTERCONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE 'MONTAGE TEXTS' AND THE MAIN THEORETICAL ARGUMENT.

Following this introduction will be three chapters. Chapter two will set a context for looking at narrative and non-narrative. It will set Slavoj Zizek's work in relation to 1970s film theory and look at film moments generally in terms of excess and
distanciation. Chapters three and four will each contain a 'montage text' and an extensive theoretical commentary, the former motivating the expositions of the latter. The 'montage text' in chapter three is inspired by *Disappearance at Sea*. It will elaborate on the encounter with the moment of emptiness, the disappearance of the image, in terms of the movements of a dis/continuous narration based on evocative descriptive passages that materialize the cut and join of the process of external and internal montage.28

Incorporated into these generated descriptions, I will stage a subliminal battle between the ideas of Slavoj Zizek and Gilles Deleuze that refer to film images of emptiness. The conflict of ideas that rage in this subliminal battle will be staged outright in the following theoretical commentary that comprises the rest of chapter three. The direction of the commentary will in part be suggested by 'information' derived from the 'montage text', therefore it will favour Deleuze over Zizek. Although there are in fact links between these two very different philosophers, Deleuze's philosophical approach is more conducive to my attempt to account for the sense of continuity I felt in relation to the film image of absence.29 Not only is his writing itself suggestive of a 'method' for voicing the affective dimension of film encounters, but his concept of time-image cinema allows for conceptualizing an immersive, continuous, relation to an image of disjunction/discontinuity. In this alternative trajectory, a cut to blankness does not simply destroy the fantasy structure that the subject uses to shore up the empty core of its identity as a Lacanian theorist might have it, but is the occasion for encountering the embeddedness of the body in temporality itself. Rather than 'the aporetics of temporality' bringing the subject to a full stop, a mute awe, as in Zizek's 'subjective destitution', what Paul Ricoeur calls 'the poetics of narrativity', 'responds' and, perhaps more importantly for my purposes, 'corresponds' to that aporia (Ricoeur, 1: 84). This encounter. I shall claim, is invested with narrative strands, albeit vague ones, ones that 'aim at obscurity and dissimulation rather than illumination', the purpose being to resonate with 'those aspects of our being-in-the-world that cannot be talked about directly' (Ricoeur, 1984: 74 & 80).30
My shift away from Lacanian psychoanalysis is not idiosyncratic. Aside from the commitment to Lacanian psychoanalysis in the sphere of visual culture by Adams, Zizek and Joan Copjec, there is a general move away from psychoanalytic theory in film studies itself. It is sometimes still invoked in its Freudian formulations, but its employment is anecdotal and illustrative rather than being an attempt to account for the structural relationships between the text and the spectator that dominated what David Bordwell calls 'subject-position theory' (Bordwell, 1996: 8). While identifying the various strands of those theoretical positions from Stephen Heath to Christian Metz to Laura Mulvey, Bordwell usefully summarizes the general commonality of all these positions, a summary, which allows me to gain a perspective on my former allegiances.

He defines 'subject-position theory' in the following terms:

According to this theory, alternative and oppositional filmmaking tries to block Imaginary identifications, to offer alternative identifications (for example, films of "feminine writing"), and to "deconstruct" the ideological underpinnings of dominant cinema (Bordwell, 1996: 8).

In his brief account of the waning of this type of theorizing in the late 1980's, one of the reasons he gives is that it seemed that 'there was...no room for "agency" in a framework in which ideological representations so thoroughly determined subjectivity' (Bordwell, 1996: 8). This lack of agency has been reacted to by the emphasis on reception in 1990's cultural studies. As Bordwell concisely puts it:

The culturalist trend has sought to distinguish itself from subject-position theory by emphasizing that the object of study is not texts (dominant, oppositional, or whatever) but instead the uses made of texts [...]. Rather than locating diverse meanings in texts, the culturalist can locate them amongst audiences. Resisting readers can be read. And the reading of such readers can itself be "historicized" through consideration of advertising campaigns, exhibition circumstances, and the multifarious discourses that circulate through a culture (Bordwell, 1996: 10).

My approach could be said to sit somewhere in-between 'subject-position theory' and the claim in 'reception theory' that a 'text's significance derives from the contextual determination of the reader's interpretation as a process of reception' (Staiger in
Bordwell and Carroll, 1996: 479). 33 I certainly agree with the emphasis in reception theory that the interaction between 'reader' and text is a space of dynamic encounter rather than (negative) critique. However, I will maintain with 'subject-position theory' the notion of the spectator as a somewhat 'abstract' entity as one's cultural/social identity in reception theory relies on sets of presupposed generalizations and locations (Bordwell, 1996: 11). As Bordwell sardonically puts it: 'the self-misrecognizing subject of 1975 Film Theory has become an active, self-conscious social agent' (Bordwell, 1996: 16). As opposed to this self-knowing, which implies a model of transparency, I am interested in exploring the space of the dynamic encounter between the 'text' and the 'reader', rather than either of these entities dominating the meaning making process. Therefore, for me, the spectator is a useful abstraction as it implies the notion that a process of being constituted, as well as pre-constituted effects, comes into play in the dynamic space of being engaged by a film.

In order to explore a dynamic, affective relation to film images of absence, as opposed to the predictable stasis of either Lacanian 'subjective destitution' or identity politics positive substantiation, I shall take 'reception' more literally, and simultaneously more metaphysically, than it is meant in film studies per se. For me reception is closer to Barthes notion of 'the middle voice' in being a composite of active and passive rather than simply active, as in the assertion of agency in cultural studies, or simply passive unwitting consumers of images, a position avant-garde film theory and practice sought to criticise. 34 The notion of 'reception' that I shall deploy is linked to performative writing which, insists on the conveyance of the affective and embodied dimension of a performance/theatrical event, how it is lived through. 35 This affective dimension, as I have said, is largely bound up with absence, loss, trauma, but performance attempts to make these entities palpably felt, spatialized. Performative writing mobilizes absence. It attempts to create 'a spatial architecture [...] beyond the frames of our very best cameras' (Phelan, 1997: 165), but it is, in my thesis, a space engendered by them. Engaging this space reveals absence as an enlivening force rather than an 'event of unliving', which it is
usually conceived as being (Phelan, 1997: 60). The slight but crucial difference between
rendering absence as the unrepresentable and envisioning the possibility of putting it
into discourse as dialogic form is crucial to my project.\footnote{36}

Some of the questions generated by the encounter with absence in
\textit{Disappearance at Sea} that get taken up in the 'montage text' and its academic companion
piece are: where and how was an "I" located in relation to the image which seemed to
displace the "I" as predicate of engagement? How was the experiential relation
dependent on the image? How was it distinct from the image? Where was it happening?
Could the sense of something elusive, something falling between the spaces of
identification and recognition, in relation to this film moment of absence, be akin to
some form of narrative? Referring to film criticism's dependence on theory to guide and
make sense of its practice, Gilberto Perez states that 'theory that applies to experience in
its turn rests on experience; it must not take off into a realm of its own but must instead
construct its schemes in vital give and take with concrete reality' (Perez, 1998: 15). If
not for the performative demonstration of the encounter with the dis/continuous film
moment, my thesis that the latter has narrative duration would only be the setting out of
a critical context for the subjectivity that is constituted in this encounter rather than an
enactment of it. The theoretical commentary in chapter three evolves into a discussion of
displacement as a form of feminine sublime subjectivity, a turn which, will link up with
the rationale for the feminist subtext from chapter two, which pervades the trajectory of
the journey.

Chapter four follows a similar pattern, opening with a 'montage text' whose
outcomes and rationale are elaborated in the following and preceding theoretical
commentary. After weighing up Deleuze's ideas in terms of their use for re-conceiving
how the cut to an image of absence might generate a real (felt) continuity. I searched for
other film moments that might help me to think further about the form of dis/continuous
subjectivity. This proved difficult. While all the films I went to see in either galleries or
cinemas confirmed the redundancy of a Lacanian approach for an engagement with
images, none of them generated anything like the continual displacements of *Disappearance at Sea*. I wasn’t simply looking for a repetition of the scenario generated by *Disappearance at Sea* or for a film that would affirm Deleuze’s ideas on subjectivity, i.e., subjectivity as a kind of impersonal continuity in a disjunctive relation to time. I was looking for an encounter, which would tell me more about the *embodied spatiality* of immersion in the disjunctive image. An emphasis on filmic space might, I hoped, throw further light on why, while I found Deleuze’s ideas compelling, I had some reservations about their embodiment in the techne of the film installation. An apparent dichotomy raises its head here. Why not just jump to phenomenological ideas, as these would seem to automatically deal with questions of *embodied spatiality* rather than attempt the seemingly impossible task of using a theorist, such as Deleuze, whose references to space in the transition from the movement-image to the time-image describe the progressive incapacity of the sensory-motor schemata to organize space in favour of what he calls a pre-hodological space of plural temporalities?[^37]

While I shall want to retain the capacity of the sensory-motor schemata, albeit in a transformed respect, I have good reason not to adopt a phenomenological position immediately. While there has been a return to the phenomenological tradition in recent film theory (a special issue of *Quarterly Review of Film & Video*, (1990); Casebier, (1991); Sobchack, (1992); Marks, (2000)), these returns, as I shall detail in section 4.2, tend to reassert very traditional concepts of the body in space (Marks) or the spectator as a self-consciousness who exerts an ideal form of intentionality in comprehending phenomena (Casebier). As I am concerned with invisible existents generated by film images of absence, I deliberately hold onto Deleuzian principles that are closest to phenomenology in order to re-read aspects of phenomenology that are obliquely pertinent to the film moment in chapter four that eventually satisfied my search.[^38]

At a series of screenings scheduled to coincide with Tacita Dean’s retrospective at Tate Britain in March 2000, I finally encountered Chantal Akerman’s *News From Home* (1976). Armed with the readiness to be entranced by static camera shots whose
juxtapositions and irregular editing create a minimal narrative; armed with the readiness to be cast by a film-cut into a moment of blankness. I was still unprepared for the emotive impact of the reconfigurations of space that ensued from the reframing of the film's final sequence. This spatiality seemed liquid and coagulated at one and the same time. The feeling of a kind of fractured expansion (dis/continuity) induced a similar sense of joy to the final shot sequence of *Disappearance at Sea*. In order to expand on the unhinging containment of space in this film moment, I look to Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, particularly his posthumously published *The Invisible and the Visible*. The later text, I shall maintain, has links to Deleuze's ideas on the constitution/narration of the subject, with the important distinction that, in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, this dynamic is rendered in terms of location as opposed to Deleuze's emphasis on the vertiginous, de-spatializing effects of the empty form of time. The latter tend towards eternal vacuity whereas some notion of embeddedness in the life world is crucial for my account of spectatorship which, while being to do with inner (invisible) movement, does not foreclose on an attachment to location.

Merleau-Ponty's ideas on the virtual spaces of location leak out of the 'montage text' based on *News From Home*. This text sets out more deliberately than the one based on *Disappearance at Sea* to perform the viewing experience of *News From Home*, as I precede my text with a link to Stephen Heath's chapter in *Questions of Cinema*, 'Film Performance', which is historically contemporary with Akerman's film. (Heath specifically mentions *News From Home* in the chapter 'On Suture'). I re-read his call for new film performances in terms of the contemporary notion of performative writing referred to above. In an interesting historical constellation, *News From Home* brings minimalism's spatial and modular questions to resonate in the 21st century with *Disappearance at Sea*, a film itself historically pitched between two moments: Dean's own avowed interest in 1970s art, Robert Smithson in particular, and her insistence on manual editing in a digital era. It would be tempting to read this constellation in terms of Hal Foster's characterization in the *Return of the Real* of how the rupture of an earlier
avant-garde can only be deciphered later in its repetition (Foster, (1993)). Although I will not take this up, it is pertinent that the two films that have affected me and informed the theoretical passage of this thesis span 1976 and 1996, the eras Foster singles out in his narrativization of the moment of trauma in art history. In the narrative of this thesis, if there is a connection to be read between these films in terms of 'tranversality', it has to do with how both filmmakers are concerned with the link between fictional and real time.40

1.6 BETWEEN CIRCULAR DISPLACEMENTS: A NEW SPACE OF SPECTATORSHIP

I have never been so affected by a film as I was by Jeanne Dielman. After my introduction to Akerman's work I sought out her films but they are not easy to find, being rarely screened in this country. I once tried to see her 1991 film Nuit De Jour but got stuck on a bus in London's Walworth Road with a friend for nearly the duration of the film. Now, thinking back, it somehow feels very appropriate and in keeping with Akerman's documentary style and extraordinary relationship to time (Dean, 1999a: 12).

Earlier in this article Dean comments that 'we know we are not spending every minute of the day with her [Jeanne Dielman] in a real time event, yet it feels like we are. It is so finely edited that we can no longer differentiate our real time from her real time. What is fictional time? What is time? (Dean, 1999a: 12). My encounter with News From Home expands on the question left open by the 'montage text' generated by Disappearance at Sea and by the commentary on Deleuze's ideas, i.e. the question of location, the where of the body. My point will be that it is this intersection of our real time with a fictional construction of 'real time' is what brings us to a heightened awareness of our embeddedness in the abstract nature (empty form) of time, the time that continues without us. We overlook our dependence on this temporality by constructing measurements that organize its abstraction for us, removing its affect on us. Paradoxically, these measurements, clocks, deadlines and so forth, which are banal in
themselves, actually remove us from experiencing the banal as the everyday sense of being embedded in time/life. It is my claim that a film that forces us to spend time with the image of reality brings us into an immanent relation with this temporality that we avoid, or maybe have no access to, in functional space. This relation is heightened all the more so when within the filmic rhythm of slow pace, a particular moment occurs that suspends even this attention and exposes the dynamism of a flow of time invisible to us in everyday life. I shall develop this dynamism in relation to Deleuze's account of the differentiating movements of a passivity that is not in simple opposition to active viewing. I will here be countering contemporary 'culturalist' and 'phenomenologist' film theory's insistence on the active spectator. My contention is that the active spectator is to be located on the scale of measurement and mastery which militates against the affectivity of what we cannot control or measure. Reconsidering passivity in relation to receptivity and location in turn reconfigures the negative connotations of passivity that are most often mapped onto the female spectator in traditional feminist film theory. Hence the return of the feminist subtext at this point and in the conclusion. The theoretical allegiances to Lacanian psychoanalysis that I struggle with in chapter two, as well as my ambivalence to Deleuze as posing an alternative to those allegiances, are overthrown in this final chapter in favour of a re-imagined phenomenological approach consisting of a hybridization of Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze. At this final port of call, the dis/continuous embodiment of the film moment of absence, will have become an 'identity-in-motion'. 

Although Mulvey doesn't make her reference to Todorov explicit, it can be inferred due to her extensive use of Peter Brooks' *Reading for the Plot* which does refer to Todorov's essay 'Narrative Transformations'.

Frank Kermode in *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), speculates that fictive ends are probably "figures" for death, p. 7. Walter Benjamin, whom Brooks cites, states that '[d]eath is the sanction of everything that the storyteller can tell' (Benjamin, 1992: 93). Similar sentiments can be found in the writings of Pier Paolo Pasolini.

It is therefore absolutely necessary to die, because, so long as we live, we have no meaning, and the language of our lives (with which we express ourselves, and to which we therefore attribute the greatest importance) is untranslatable; a chaos of possibilities. a search for relations and meanings without resolution. Death effects an instantaneous montage of our lives; that is, it chooses the truly meaningful moments (which are no longer modifiable by other possible contrary or incoherent moments) and puts them in a sequence, transforming an infinite, unstable, and uncertain - and therefore linguistically not describable - present into a clear, stable, certain, and therefore easily describable past...It is only thanks to death that our life serves us to express ourselves (Pasolini, 1988: 236-7).

The study of narrative in film borrows heavily from literary studies and linguistics. As well as looking to literary studies such as Propp's, with the rise of structuralism, film theory borrowed terms from the linguist Emile Benveniste. Benveniste distinguished between story, by which he meant narration where no speaker intervenes, and discourse, by which he meant a kind of utterance (enonce) marked by the act of uttering (enunciation), i.e. 'a speaker's act of saying this in this situation' (Perez, 1998: 54). Imported into the film theory I engage with in my thesis, i.e. the dominant mode of film theory disseminated in Screen magazine, which relies on distinctions between mainstream and radical avant-garde, Hollywood film was seen as story that masks the signs of discourse. The task of the avant-garde film was to unmask the signs of enunciation. thence the attention to the material signifiers of the medium, the camera, the film stock, the projector, and, the screen.


Brooks relates 'the daemonic middle' to Roland Barthes notion of '[t]he "dilatory space" of narrative'. [This] 'space of retard, postponement, error, and partial revelation - is the place of transformation: where the problems posed to and by initiatory desire are worked out and worked through' (Brooks, 1984: 92).

Although Brooks justifiably cites Benjamin, as well as Jean-Paul Sartre, as evidence of how death structures the retrospective action of narrative, it is perhaps useful to note, in relation to my thesis, that Benjamin contrasts the continuity of the story to the finite ending of the novel (Benjamin, 1992: 99).

For a thought-provoking discussion of the difference between film and literature, see Seymour Chatman's 'What Novels Can Do That Films Can't (and Vice Versa)'. Contrasting Maupassant's short story "Une Partie de campagne" and the Jean Renoir film based on it, Chatman looks at how the use of description and point of view greatly differ between these mediums.
See chapter two of Andrew Klevan's Disclosure of the Everyday: Undramatic Achievement in Narrative Film, (Wiltshire: Flick Books, 2000) for a brief but cogent discussion of the difference between realism as a dramatic invocation of a stereotyped real and the real as an indeterminate disclosure of the ordinary in film.

Akerman's installations include Women Sitting After Killing (2001) which was shown in the 2001 Venice Biennale and comprised of seven dispersed monitors showing the same image - the final moments of her film Jeanne Dielman, 23 Quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles (1975). A new commission Border (2002) was shown at Documenta XI, Kassel in 2002. It comprised of two large screens on which live feedback of the Texas border was shown. In fact, my first encounter with screened work by Akerman was her gallery installation Self-Portrait: An Autobiography (1999) at the Frith Street Gallery, London.

The presentational format of Disappearance at Sea, while differing from cinematic screening in that the projector is included in the viewing space, does borrow from the cinema theatre format. The single screen is frontally placed before a viewer who is enticed to sit and watch the film from beginning to end regardless of when he/she enters the space. This is not simply due to the seating provided in the space, but to the fact that the film's cuts ostensibly express a structure of beginnings, middles, and ends, rather than being a repeated loop of a singular event which is characteristic of much film installation. e.g. Douglas Gordon's 10ms, 1994.

See Nicholas Tomalin and Ron Hall, The Strange Voyage of Donald Crowhurst, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1970). See Annette Kuhn's Women's Pictures: Feminism and Cinema for a concise account that links the different autobiographical approaches of Rainer's and Citron's films to Akerman's Jeanne Dielman, 23 Quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles (1975). Kuhn discusses this era of 'feminist' filmmaking in terms of a feminine cinematic writing - see especially pp. 163-171. News From Home has also been specifically discussed in a feminist context (Penley, and Bergstrom. (1978); Longfellow (1989) cited in Barker (1999)). This film, and Akerman's work in general have also been discussed in the context of Andy Warhol's and Michael Snow's filmmaking (Singer, (1989/90); Kwietniowski (1990); Margulis (1996)). For Akerman's refutation of their influence, see her interview with Gary Indiana, 'Getting Ready for The Golden Eights: A Conversation with Chantal Akerman by Gary Indiana', Artforum, 21. 10. Summer, 1983, pp. 56-61. Sarah Montgomery in 'Women's Films', Feminist Review. no. 18, Winter 1984, states that while 'Akerman would be the first to refuse the label of "feminist filmmaker"...[i]f her films have been taken up by feminism, it's not because they are overtly feminist/militant, but because of the way in which female audiences have been able to relate to them in a very unique way' (Montgomery, 1984: 47).

I am borrowing the term 'inaccurate replication' from Leo Bersani, who suggests that an alternative model of subjectivity can be derived from the narcissistic desire to repeat forms that resonate with the self. By reaching beyond one's own "form" elsewhere in the mode of 'inaccurate replication', the result would be a form of narration that exacts difference, rather than executing the sameness of an accurate repetition, which would contain difference in a static form of unity. See 'A Conversation with Leo Bersani', October, n. 82, Fall. (1997). pp. 3-16.

While Scott is concerned with the writing of history and the historicizing of experience and the identities it produces, I am more interested in what Martin Jay, in an article on Walter Benjamin's notion of experience, calls 'experience without a subject' (Jay, 1993: 145). This would be 'experience with more than one subject inhabiting the same space' (Jay, 1993: 155). Jay is here referring to the concept of the middle voice in literature, which I shall discuss shortly with reference to Roland Barthes.

This view is of course paradigmatically phenomenological. For an account of the interrelation between pre-reflective experience and reflective consciousness in relation to film, see Vivian Sobchack's The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience (1992). Although, I am interested in this interrelation, I shall attempt in this thesis not to fall prey to the shuttling effect between the two that Derrida critiques in chapter five of Writing and Difference, "'Genesis and Structure' and Phenomenology", pp. 154-168, as being the deadlock of phenomenology.

In Cinema 2: The Time-Image, Deleuze discusses the 'real image' that tears through the cliché (Deleuze, 1989: 21). In fact, in that volume, Deleuze goes so far as to claim that we need cinema to show us how to live now that life itself has become subject to cliché'd images.

My allusion to a 'pose' here is taken from Gregory Ulmer's Teletheory: Grammatology in the Age of Video. Ulmer discusses Roland Barthes' model of writing in fragments as stemming from
confrontations with various figures and asking oneself the question "what is happening"? (Ulmer, 1989: 117).

10 Ulmer's thesis that electronic media can provide a model for textual practices of writing is inspirational. But his conflation of film and video in this respect is rather suspect (Ulmer, 1989: 103). He concedes that film is an allegorical medium, while video is associated with immediacy but does not distinguish how these electronic media should generate different inventions of writing if he is to be taken at his word (Ulmer, 1989: 96). For an interesting discussion on video's relation to language in terms of immediacy and presence see artist Gary Hill's writings in Gary Hill, Robert C. Morgan (ed). (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press. 2000). For a concise account of the shifts in video history where 'video's immediacy and its special relationship to real time became obscured by complex collaging and editing which have traditionally belonged to film', see Chrissie Iles essay 'Luminous Structures'. COIL, no.3. 1996, unpaginated. Her analysis might lend some credence to Ulmer's untheorized conflation of the two mediums.

19 In Phelan and Lane's edited volume The Ends of Performance, two essays by other well-known practitioners in this field have been of particular interest and relevance to my project here: Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's 'Teaching "Experimental Critical Writing"', pp. 104-115 and Della Pollock's 'Performative Writing', pp. 73-103.

20 Difference is a term coined by Jacques Derrida in 1968 to account for the implications of Ferdinand de Saussure's insight that 'language in its most general form could be understood as a system of difference, "without positive terms" ' (Lechte, 1994: 107). This unconceptualisable difference, challenges the notion of identity and the notion of the origin (true event). It makes writing wholly permeable to what it attempts to position outside of its boundaries, e.g. nonsense.

21 Indeed Sean Burke in The Death and Return of the Author: Criticism and Subj ectivity in Barthes, Foucault, and Derrida shows that the identity of the author function can be renewed 'without compromising the anti-representational ethos of a writerly writing' (Burke, 1992: 49).

22 As an aside on melancholy tendencies in philosophy, it is no surprise that Gilles Deleuze should be one of my main companions on this journey, as Derrida in his text on Deleuze in The Work of Mourning says that 'Deleuze was the one among all of this "generation" who "was doing" philosophy the most gaily, the most innocently' (Derrida, 2001: 193).

23 To define the films in terms of these story absences would counter the generative modality of transportation that the encounter with the force of these absences engendered for me. While News From Home has been read in terms of the melancholic absence of the mother (Heath, 1981; Barker, 1999) and the loss and failure implicit in the Crowhurst story obliquely inspires Disappearance at Sea and features strongly in Dean's writing around the film, my thesis is based on the reanimation of these filmic absences in the embodied spatiality of viewing.

24 In an insightful essay on Michael Snow's work, Thierry de Duve writes about the inherent mobility of the deictic shifters "I", "now", "here" that linguistically comprise the conditions of experience. De Duve's point is that in Snow's modernism, these deictics, are not only detached from their connections with one another, but reach an autonomous purity that severs them from reference to the observer's body and 'to a there defined as a goal or a faraway horizon' (de Duve, 1995: 34). In chapter four of my thesis, I shall make a case for the paradox of experience as a disconnected synthesis of these deictic terms by contrasting Snow's work with Chantal Akerman's News From Home.


26 David Bordwell, in his essay 'Contemporary Film Studies and the Vicissitudes of Grand Theory' in Post-Theory: Reconstructing Film Studies, says that, by the mid-1980's, Lacanian influenced film theory had become 'sterile through repetition' producing 'discriminable effects' whereby 'this film or that television show always converted the Imaginary into the Symbolic or positioned the individual as a knowing and desiring subject' (Bordwell, 1996: 12).

27 For an illuminating account of how philosophical positions derived from Freud and Kant that posit the ground of the subject in terms of an inherent splitting that exceeds the subject's attempts to know itself. are versions of the very form of romantic self-reflection that they set out to critique, see Andrew Bowie's Aesthetics and Subjectivity: From Kant to Nietzsche, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991). In this they reproduce difference as identity or the (transcendental) stasis of non-identity. Bowie looks at early romantic philosophers such as Fichte, to establish a different ground to the subject whereby the "I" is characterised by a lack of limitation that does not require the subject to transcend this infinity by a mental comprehension.
of it as sublime object (Bowie, 1991: 66). In chapter three, I shall come at this question in relation to the feminine sublime which could be said to be characterized by the lack of a limit, a lack which is only a problem within a discourse of limits such as the discourse of self-reflection.

The notion of internal montage is derived from Sergej Eisenstein's allusion of there being a 'distinctive montage complex within the shot that arises from the collisions and combinations of the individual stimulants inherent within it' (Eisenstein in Taylor, 1998: 113). Although he is referring to the shot's contents, I am expanding the notion to encompass the interface between the internal juxtaposition of details in a shot and the spectator's intercutting between lived time and fragments of viewing time that occur in the shot whose duration exceeds the time frame of recognition. For me it is this particular accumulation of 'stimulants' that produces 'the physiological sum total of the resonance of the shot' (Eisenstein in Taylor, 1998: 113).

My appropriation of the notion of 'internal montage' in this way can be related to Roland Barthes' discussion of Eisenstein's concept in 'The Third Meaning: Research Notes on Several Eisenstein Stills' in The Responsibility of Forms: Critical Essays on Music, Art, and Representation. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell. 1986a), p. 61. This expanded notion of montage can be related to Boris Eikhenbaum's concept of internal speech, a process he attributes to the film spectator. As opposed to the reader, the film spectator moves 'from the subject - visible movement - he progresses to comprehension of it. the construction of internal speech' (Eikhenbaum. 1974: 11).

This reprint of Eikhenbaum's 1927 essay 'Problems of Cine-Stylistics' was discussed in the following issue of Screen, vol. 15. no. 4. Winter 1974/75 by Ronald Levaco, 'Eikhenbaum. Inner Speech and Film Stylistics', pp. 47-58, and Paul Willemen, 'Reflections on Eikhenbaum's Concept of Internal Speech in the Cinema. pp. 59-70. The concept is interesting because it offers a way of thinking about the non-verbal relation between thought and the (film) image, as displaying the use of signs and linguistic operations of substitution and difference (Levaco, 1974/5: 57). It is therefore linked to Deleuze's analysis of cinema as 'a composition of images and of signs... a pre-verbal intelligible content... whilst semiology of a linguistic inspiration abolishes the image and tends to dispense with the sign' (Deleuze. 1992: ix). Hence his use of C.S. Peirce's semiosis as an alternative to the dominant mode of linguistic analysis in film theory derived from (interpretations of) Ferdinand de Saussure's theories of the signifier.


Their difference can be succinctly drawn around the trope of castration. Deleuze criticizes psychoanalysis as '[a] project directed against life, a song of death, law, and castration, a thirsting after transcendence, a priesthood, a psychology (all psychology being priestly)' (Deleuze, 1995: 144). For Deleuze, the emphasis in Lacan on 'a central fixed signifier', i.e. castration, prohibits the 'transformational' dispersion of sense (translator's notes in Deleuze, 1995: 187). Zizek critiques Deleuze's occlusion of the structural trope of castration (Zizek, 1994: 126-133). At a talk at the National Film Theatre, London. on 5 June 1998, Zizek cited Deleuze as being the philosopher implied in Lacan's assertion that he raises himself up against the philosophy of perversion. At a lecture at the Royal Holloway University of London. Egham, on 15 October 2002. entitled 'Lacan Against Deleuze', Zizek convincingly elaborated the similarities between the Lacanian subject as an empty formal structure and Deleuze's early work in The Logic of Sense where he discusses the pure affect of sense. Zizek maintained that his more popular Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia, and the other books co-authored with Felix Guattari, overshadows this aspect of Deleuze. Zizek discussed how the tension between the abstraction of the pure affect of sense and the sensational world of human bodies becomes a site of conflict for Deleuze. I agree with this point as it explains my own dilemma in chapter two of this thesis with contradictions that I find in Deleuze, which I elaborate as the tension between everyday banality and an inhuman eternity.

Paul Ricouer's attention to the relation of 'the life world' to forms of narrative has helped me to think about narrative in terms of dis/continuous continuity. See especially volume 11 of Time and Narrative where he suggests that what is narrated yet not given in the narrative as such is 'essentially the "temporality of life" ' (Ricouer, 1985: 78).

Many recent film theory books make this point - (Shaviro, (1993); (Bordwell & Carroll, (1996); Perez, (1998)). As Perez puts it: 'The time of Lacanian-Althusserian theory is past. But its legacy still lingers' (Perez, 1998: 18).

D.N. Rodowick's The Crisis of Political Modernism: Criticism and Ideology in Contemporary Film Theory ends with a similar 'culturalist' emphasis. This emphasis raises questions about who
is doing the reading and on whose behalf? 'Texts' become representative of particular groups. Readers become representative of homogenous bodies in society. This approach is similar to the stress on authenticity in identity politics in art. 33 The key example given by Bordwell of reception theory is Janet Staiger's *Interpreting Films: Studies In the Historical Reception of American Cinema* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989).

34 See Kaja Silverman's 'The Author as Receiver' in *October*, no. 96, (Spring, 2001), pp. 17-34 for an interesting discussion of Jean-Luc Godard as autuer in terms of passive reception. 35 Performative theory, as I have suggested earlier, also situates itself and can be situated as bridging identity politics' emphasis on agency and the perceived absence of agency in post-structuralism.

The writing/subject puts his/her own status on the line not in the debased-Derridean sense of reveling in absence, in the winking spectacle of nakedness to which the emperor is now invited, but in the name of mobilizing *praxis*, breaking the discursive limits of the emperor's stage. and invigorating the dynamics of democratic contest in which the emperor and his new clothes (or lack thereof) are now continually refigured (Pollock, 1998: 96).

36 The concept of dialogic form is taken from Mikhail Bakhtin's *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* by M.M. Bakhtin, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. (Austin: University of Texas Press. 1981) where he offers an alternative conception of authorship. There he discusses the novel in terms of an arena, which engages different levels of speech to produce an unpredictable heteroglossia, a multiplication of speaking positions that undermine the notion of a singular authoritative voice. 37 Hodological space is the space presupposed by the action-image. It is a space 'in which ends, obstacles, means, subordinations, the principle and the secondary, predominances and loathings are distributed' (Deleuze, 1989: 203). Pre-hodological space is the 'space before action. always haunted by a child, or by a clown, or by both at once. [It] does not, as in the action-image, allow itself to be determined in relation to goals and means which would unify the set, but is dispersed in "a plurality of ways of being present in the world", of belonging to sets. all incompatible and yet coexistent' (Deleuze, 1989: 203). While the sense of space I shall go on to elaborate is also not organised according to narrative goals, I am reluctant to adopt the notion of a pre-hodological space as it seems akin to the notion of pre-Oedipal space, which is problematic because of its association with marginalized femininity, the chaotic pulsions of the drives and the reassertion of binary thinking that I am at pains to avoid. Because of this emphasis on the pre-hodological, Deleuze is generally read as neglecting 'the embodied situation of the spectator and of the film'. which is the scenario I shall develop in chapter 4 (Sobchack, 1992: 31). Laura U. Marks makes a similar point in *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2000), see especially p. 150. 38 Deleuze is sometimes classed as a phenomenologist, although he was very critical of phenomenology (Studlar (1990). Zizek (1994). An issue of the *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, vol. 24. no. 1. January, 1993, was dedicated to him. 39 These sentiments are echoed in Diana Coole's 'Thinking Politically with Merleau-Ponty' in *Radical Philosophy*, vol. 108, July/August. 2001, pp. 17-28. As she puts it:

There is a dialectic rather than a discontinuity between the visible and the invisible, the actual and the virtual. Phenomenology is not. then. a foundationalist philosophy, but it does find a grounding for meaning in (albeit shifting and inexhaustible) bodily experience, rather than propelling meaning into the vertigo of sheer difference (Coole, 2001: 20).

40 Transversality is the term Deleuze uses in *Proust and Signs* to categorize the transmission of essential links between works of art across diverse historical periods.

For if a work of art communicates...with other works of other artists and gives rise to works to come, it is always within this dimension of transversality. in which unity and totality are established for themselves. without unifying or totalizing objects or subjects (Deleuze, 2000: 168-169).
At the Moving Images series of filmmakers talks at Tate Modern, London (2002), these sentiments on the relation between film and access to time were echoed by both Chantal Akerman and Agnes Varda. Referring to her film I'agabond (1985), where the heroine spends a lot of time walking in the landscape, Varda spoke about trying to capture the texture and feeling of time inside the image, which would in turn give the spectator time for him/herself (Varda, 2002: 25 April - my notes).

After a screening of her film D'Est (1993), Akerman discussed her intention to generate for the viewer a sense of being with themselves (Akerman, 2002: 8 March - my notes). Andrei Tarkovsky also discusses the access to time that film can give the viewer. In Sculpting in Time: Reflections on the Cinema, he suggests that people go to the cinema to regain time and that film's prerogative over literature is its ability to allow the viewer 'to take over, as deeply personal and his own, the experience imprinted in time upon the screen, relating his own life to what is being shown' (Tarkovsky, 1989: 183).

I am appropriating this phrase from an essay by Kathleen J. Cassity entitled 'Identity In Motion: Bhowani Junction Reconsidered' in Daniel Jewesbury's artists book Of Lives Between Lines. (London: Bookworks, 2001). In an otherwise unrelated essay to my thesis, which attends to the socio-historical-cultural context for John Masters 1952 novel of the title, Cassity discusses the possibility of an identity whereby fluctuation does not occlude stability. Ciaran Benson in The Psychology of Self: Place, Morality and Art in Human Worlds links current thinking in neurology to aesthetics and discusses how the role the brain plays in 'anchoring the self as a unity over time' does not occlude the notion of identity as a 'dynamic, always changing, forward-moving field of experience' (Benson, 2001: 35 & 187).
Chapter Two

2.1 PREPARING FOR DEPARTURE: UNPACKING THE FALSE BINARY BETWEEN NARRATIVE AND NON-NARRATIVE/RUPTURE

This chapter will be comprised of three main points that constitute the context as to how and why I came to theorize my experience of the final cut in *Disappearance at Sea* in the way that I have. Having said that, it is important to state that this context is oblique rather than causal. As opposed to chapters three and four, which are motivated by a 'montage text', the three main points in this chapter function as narrative digressions that parallel the main argument. The first point will elaborate how film moments of suspension have been considered as anti-narrative in 1970s film theory. I will perform a reading of Slavoj Zizek's work set in the context of 1970s film theory, discovering uncanny linkages between these different bodies of theory. I will then use Roland Barthes' writing to undermine the binary distinction between narrative and non-narrative that pervade 1970s film theory and Zizek's film analyses. My final point will be to show the feminist stakes involved in undermining this binary.

2.2 NARRATIVE SUSPENSION 1: THE RADICAL SPECTATOR IN 1970S FILM THEORY

While neither Slavoj Zizek nor Gilles Deleuze can be said to be film theorists per se, my pitting them against one another replays in another guise, the contrast in 1970s film theory between theorists influenced by the Saussurian account of language as a system of differential relationships that occludes the referent and those whose semiology maintained a more dynamic relation between linguistic signs and imagistic ones. I shall argue that Zizek continues in the tradition of the former, while Deleuze, in his reference to C.S. Peirce's semiosis, resurrects the other. Christian Metz and Pier Paolo Pasolini respectively exemplify these positions in 1970s and 1980s film theory. In
a series of articles on Metz' work in *Screen* magazine, Stephen Heath expresses the
dominant view of 1970s film theory which valorized Metz' study of cinema as a
language made up of a system of codes over the perceived naivety of Pasolini's notion
that 'cinema is a language which expresses reality with reality' (Pasolini in Heath: 1973:
109). Pasolini's realisation that 'the cinema is a system of signs whose semiology
corresponds to a possible semiology of the system of signs of reality itself' was
interpreted by Heath (and others) as a simplistic equation of film with reality (Pasolini in
Heath, 1973: 109). While this interpretation of Pasolini has been taken issue with since,
(de Lauretis (1984); Nichols (1985)), and shown to be more sophisticated and sensitive
to the relation between film images and reality, my purpose here is simply to point out
that the predominance in 1970s film theory of the linguistic interpretation of film has
meant the occlusion of the image as a signifying entity in its own right. This situation
gets aggravated by Metz' turn to psychoanalysis where the image is reduced to a
reflection (imaginary) of an absence (real), a fantastical hallucination that the viewer
must be awakened from altogether.

Reduced to its most fundamental approach, any psychoanalytic
reflection might be defined in Lacanian terms as an attempt to disengage
the cinema-object from the imaginary and to win it for the symbolic, in
the hope of extending the latter by a new province: an enterprise of
displacement, a territorial enterprise, a symbolising advance; that is to
say, in the field of films as in other fields, the psychoanalytic itinerary is
*from the outset a semiological one*, even (above all) if in comparison
with the discourse of a more classical semiology it shifts from attention
to the *enonce* to concern for the *enonciation* (Metz, 1975: 14).

I mention this dichotomy between Pasolini's 'real' and Metz' 'imaginary signifier' for two
reasons, one of which I shall explore in this chapter of the thesis. This dichotomy, albeit
summarily, hints at the connections between Zizek and Deleuze and earlier film theory.
In a sense, Zizek is an unwitting contemporary proponent of the ideas that stem from the
occlusion of the image in psychoanalytic semiological film theory, while Deleuze, in his
emphasis on cinema as a pre-verbal signifying material, is more sympathetic to
Pasolini's position. Indeed, Deleuze refers extensively to Pasolini in his books on
cinema. Also, in making this, at the moment, slightly extravagant claim, I want to briefly allude to the path I will eventually be diverging from, i.e. that an immediate relation to real phenomena is foreclosed on our entry as subjects into the system of language. In fact, not only shall I advance the case that film images can give us real access to things, but that film moments of absence give us access to the real of experiential movements in time. In this chapter I shall concentrate on the links between Zizek and 1970s film theory in terms of how they consider film moments of suspension to be disenchanting, non-narrative moments that awaken the viewer from imaginary hallucinations. However, it is towards the position of considering the image of absence as expressive of the reality of narrative duration that I shall return my turn to Deleuze.

Film theory's ready adoption of both Saussurian semiotics and Lacanian psychoanalytic theory in the 1970s was to protect itself from the supposed Bazinian naivete that cinema reproduces reality without mediation. This reality-effect was declared to be cinema's illusory aspect. Film theory looked to semiotics to understand cinema as a language and to Lacanian psychoanalysis to reinforce the view that as language cinema cannot present an unmediated access to reality. The adoption of Lacanian psychoanalysis also introduced a structure, the mirror phase, which seemed to offer a plausible account of how and why the narcissistic desires inherent in the medium could be analysed and critiqued.¹ Much of this theoretical critique took place in relation to the Hollywood narrative film. And certainly Zizek's current work situates itself in relation to the Hollywood classical narrative film form. Avant-garde film practice and the theoretical texts that contextualized it followed a different trajectory, although it too borrowed from semiotics and Lacanian psychoanalytic theory.² The difference being its eschewal of narrative per se rather than 'reading it against the grain', as in the critical film theory that took on board Hollywood narrative film to produce radical readings out of its seemingly stereotypical, illusory, reproductive, construction of reality.³

However, what I want to show in this chapter, is that while the conditions and stakes of critique are obviously different in avant-garde film theory and in Zizek's
contemporary 'reading against the grain' of Hollywood narrative film, there are formal analogies to be made between them. The main protagonists of avant-garde film theory that I shall stage encounters with in this context are Peter Gidal, Peter Wollen, and Stephen Heath. The primary texts by these protagonists that I shall refer to are Gidal's 'The Anti-Narrative (1978)' (1979), Wollen's "Ontology" and "Materialism" in Film (1976), and Heath's 'Narrative Space' (1974/5). I shall also make extensive use of D.N. Rodowick's Political Modernism: Criticism and Ideology in Contemporary Film Theory, as I am less concerned with doing an original, in-depth, analysis of 1970s film theory than I am in making a selective reading that shows a connection between that period and Slavoj Zizek's work. In making this connection, I aim to expose the pitfalls in Zizek's analyses of film moments of suspension. In connecting Zizek's 'Hollywood' approach and these historical approaches to avant-garde film, I also somewhat justify my situating of Dean's 'avant-garde' Disappearance at Sea in relation to a Zizekian approach, which would ordinarily be unsympathetic to avant-garde film. However, it is also the case that Dean's film, while inheriting the legacy of avant-garde filmmaking, does not have the same antipathy towards narrative that characterized theories of avant-garde film practice in the 1970s. Ultimately, in chapter three, I shall use Disappearance at Sea as a performative critique of the extreme formalism inherent in the legacy of avant-garde film theory and the extreme formalism at the heart of the Lacanian subject. I shall show how Disappearance at Sea, while inheriting an avant-garde emphasis on materiality, affirms, by contrast, a belief in the image without this affirmation being a supposedly ideological seduction that removes the viewer from his/her real time and space.

Zizek's Lacanian analyses of the moment of 'subjective destitution' in the Hollywood film, which produces the subject/spectator as a formal entity divested of imaginary identifications, thematically echoes Peter Gidal's call for the production of 'anti and non-identificatory works' which combat 'the structure of identification' (Gidal, 1979: 83). For Gidal, as for Le Grice in 'Towards Temporal Economy' (1979/80), the production of the spectator in the here and now of relating to the materiality of film
production relied on the exposure of filmic signifiers. i.e. editing processes, an attention to celluoid as material, and the deployment of such effects as 'flicker effect, time lapse, rephotography, loop printing, strategic alterations of focus, focal length, and exposure' (Rodowick, 1994: 129). The idea was that in foregrounding the materiality of filmic signification, a spectator divested of illusory ideological identifications would be produced. As D.N. Rodowick puts it: 'the objective of antinarrative or the goal of a structural/material film practice is to perform the seemingly impossible task of defining, over and against the massive domination of film by narrative style and ideology, a series of negative strategies capable of derailing that history' (Rodowick, 1994: 127 - emphasis mine). Although armed with different goals, stakes, and derivations, the radical spectator desired by both Zizek and avant-garde film theory is empty of content. Rather than finding herself in the substance of narrative projections, she reflects/mirrors the non-substantial effect produced, in the avant-garde instance, by the emphasis on the signifiers of a disjunctive materiality. As Le Grice puts it: 'The spectator...encountered the film experience as phenomena which, from reflection on its materials, mechanisms, processes, transformations and manipulations in production as well as the spectator's own mechanisms of perception and conceptual structuring, became the "content" of the work' (Le Grice, 1979/80: 63-64). In Zizek's instance, the non-substantial effect is produced by the fall out of narrative meaning that ensues as a result of encountering an unsutured moment in the Hollywood film. Let me elaborate these positions more fully.

For Gidal narrative has to be eschewed as it 'is an illusionistic procedure, manipulatory, mystificatory, repressive. The repression is that of space itself, the distance between the viewer and the object, a repression of real space in favour of illusionist space' (Gidal in Rodowick, 1994: 133). The goal of avant-garde filmic procedures, the negative strategies mentioned above, is, ostensibly, to open up real space between the viewer and the film object by creating a tension between represented object and reality. This tension operates by moving the viewer between the desire to recognize the image as an integral whole and the frustration the film places in the way of that
desire by its assertion of the material conditions of representing or presenting that image. For example in *Condition of Illusion* (1975), we not only have a classic example of the camera movement that characterizes Gidal's work - shots of relative stability being followed by frenetic shifts in point-of-view and a kind of disinterested nomadism - but there is also an overt critique of the image of seduction par excellence. The camera keeps on returning to a photograph of a woman, or at least it seems that way because this is the most stable image in the film, but the graininess, rapid camera shifts in point-of-view, and the loop structure of the editing, serve to make any imaginary inhabitation of the image impossible.\(^5\)

However, for Gidal real space is implied rather than actual.

[W]e must get "back" to work on the signifier and process of production, the inscribed oneness of diegesis with process of its production. And that is a social reality, if such a concept must be used to justify the obviously *political* of such work (Gidal, 1979: 82).

The problem with Gidal's notion of tension between real time and space and represented time and space here is that while it potentially points in the direction of the spectator, that spectator is framed by the material conditions presented by the film. In fact D.N. Rodowick insists that Gidal does not consider a spectator as anything other than a structural component in a set of predescribed relations between image and reality (Rodowick, 1994: 136). This isn't quite the case, as Gidal does talk about the distanciation he is interested in creating another film in the viewer's head and he also puts forward a useful distinction between narrative and diegesis which unintentionally points to a space beyond mirror reflection.\(^7\) However, in the main, I agree with Rodowick that it is difficult to see how the spectator has any room to manouevre other than to continually follow the propositions of the image as it performs what Gidal refers to as 'the distance between knowledge and perception' (Gidal, 1979: 78).
The intractable nature of Gidal's emphasis on the present to present moment of filmic diegesis can be seen in his absolute ban on identification and identifying with. In Gidal's extreme formalism:

[...]

the whole concept of identification is problematic, as that force which impels a movement from one's position in a social space of social meanings or a political space to and into a different human residence - another body or another figure - where the phantasms and fantasies, the realities of ones projections, are enacted (Gidal, 1979: 82).

Rodowick mentions how the image of reduced connotation features in Gidal's Silent Partner (1978), in the way that shots of relatively equal length are separated by black leader tape, shots as repetitive units of duration. This approaching of emptiness in the image is productive of the arbitrariness of meaning and works to counter the ideological impetus toward meaning (Rodowick, 1994: 136). I haven't seen Silent Partner, but, on viewing a recent film No Night No Day (1997), I was struck by the appearance of shots that seemed to be black leader and would consequently be revealed as dark corners and close-ups of walls. On viewing this film, I was constantly asking myself the question, "is there an image here?", a question that I was not allowed to dwell on due to the fast jumpcut editing and movements of the hand-held camera. It is to escape, as he sees it, the inherent fascism of fantasy that Gidal proposes:

that emptying of meaning, that making of meaninglessness which is the construction and constructedness of signification presented, is formed from a defensive resistance against the reproduction of meaning; the latter which is the reproduction of dominant ideological meaning, the representation. This is the area where political does not mean aestheticising politics [...] (Gidal, 1979: 89).

2.3 NARRATIVE SUSPENSION 2: 'SUBJECTIVE DESTINATION' - SLAVOJ ZIZEK ENCOUNTERS ROBERTO ROSSELLINI'S STROMBOLI (1949).
For Zizek too the subject must be detached from the fascism of fantasy. The political dimension of Zizek's work is to suspend the subject's relation to the order of signification. The goal of a Lacanian analytic practice is to traverse, to go through, the fantasy support of the subject, which keeps him or her intact but misguidedly attached to all kinds of conservative ideological desires. Traversing the fantasy effects a state of subjective destitution whereby the subject recognizes the structural emptiness that supports him/her and so is momentarily released from the dictates of fantasy.

When we are confronted with the patient's symptoms, we must first interpret them and penetrate through them to the fundamental fantasy as the kernel of enjoyment which is blocking the further movement of interpretation: then we must accomplish the crucial step of going through the fantasy, of obtaining distance from it, of experiencing how the fantasy-formation just masks, fills out a certain void, lack, empty place in the Other (Zizek, 1989: 74).

While Zizek uses narrative cinema to illustrate this, he too maps the suspension of ideological attachments onto formal cinematic features. My first example of this echoes the process of interpretation and penetration in analytic practice - Zizek maps this onto a formal feature, the fade-out, in Krzysztof Kieslowski's *Three Colours: Blue* (1993). He says that in this film, the fade-out, rather than being used to mark the passage from one spatio-temporal continuity to another, is used to pass from one sequence to the next via a direct cut: in the midst of a continuous conversation the shot of the speaker fades out all of a sudden, and the following fade-in brings us back to a continuation of the same shot. Here we are dealing with something that resembles the Lacanian practice of the variable ending of the psychoanalytic session: the analyst's gesture of signalling that the session is over, like Kieslowski's fade-out, does not follow an externally imposed logic (the preordained fifty-minute span), it cuts all of a sudden in the midst of the scene and thus acts as an interpretative gesture sui generis by highlighting an element in the analysand's speech-flow (or, in Kieslowski, in the speech of a person on the screen) as especially significant (Zizek, 1989: 170-71).

This type of suspension in mid flow is the first stage towards traversing the fantasy. Zizek illustrates traversing or going through the fantasy proper by means of a film moment, the final sequence of Roberto Rossellini's *Stromboli* (1949). Zizek uses this
film moment to show that what occurs in the encounter with the empty place of the Other is a relinquishing of symbolic (identificatory) ties, which he phrases in terms of an encounter with the Lacanian Real, the blind point of existence beyond the signifier. It is noteworthy that 1970s film theory did not tend to refer to Lacan's order of the Real, putting their faith in either the mobility of the symbolic to perform new significations or the rupture of the imaginary to give new representations. These positions can be respectively exemplified by, on the one hand, Stephen Heath, on the other, Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen. The change in emphasis that the Real might have brought to 1970s film theory can only be speculation. Emphasis on the Real, as the illustration that follows demonstrates, would show the futility of putting one's faith in the symbolic or the imaginary, not only because these two orders are wholly imbricated and inseparable from one another, a factor not fully recognized in 1970s critique, but because the Real is the point where all attachments amount to nothing. While the hysteria of Zizek's narrative would undoubtedly be foreign to Gidal, Gidal's insistence that all images and meanings are contaminated through and through by ideology, and that the production of non-meaning, rather than alternative ones, is the only feasible strategy, shares a commonality with this aspect of Lacanian theory.

The scene from Stromboli that Zizek uses to illustrate the Lacanian concept of traversing the fantasy occurs towards the end of the film. Stromboli is a story about Karin, an Estonian emigree, played by Ingrid Bergman, who, at the end of World War II, finds herself in a refugee camp in Italy. Failing to get an Argentinian visa, she marries a poor Italian fisherman from Stromboli and goes to live with him on that island. She finds life on the island intolerable, the closed community and their 'primitive patriarchal' attitude towards women (Zizek, 1990: 32). To escape the island, she has to cross over a volcanic mountain to get to the other shore where a boat leaves for the mainland. Ascending the volcano, smoke and fumes from the crater surround and choke her. The force of this raw nature overwhelms her and her identificatory desires fades away in the face of this real threat of extinction. For Zizek, this scene is emblematic of a
terrifying encounter with the Real, evidenced here as the brute force of nature. The Italian version of the film, as opposed to the American studio version, ends with Karin repeating offscreen "My God! Oh merciful God!" over a shot of the billowing smoke of the volcano.\textsuperscript{10} As Zizek puts it:

Karin reaches her lowest point of despair and dejection when, on running from the village (the social link), she finds herself surrounded by the volcano's smoke and fumes. In the face of the primordial power of the volcano, all social ties pale into insignificance, she is reduced to her bare "being there": running away from the oppressive social reality, she encounters something incomparably more horrifying, the Real. Sobbing wildly, she cries out: "I'll finish it, but I haven't the courage; I'm afraid." (Zizek, 1992: 43).

Karin has reached what Zizek refers to as the point of subjective destitution, all her identifications laid bare by this encounter with a force that exceeds symbolic and narrative meaning. (Although Zizek makes his point only in reference to Karin's character, the shots that show the billowing smoke of the volcano could be said to threaten the frame of the image itself.)\textsuperscript{11} However, in the poising of Karin's outcry over the shot empty of everything but the volcanic smoke, a space seems to be held open whereby something new might come into being. Is this where the analogy ends between Gidal's negativity and Zizek's Lacanian-derived negativity? Critics, wanting a desire for narrative closure, asked Rossellini about the ending of the Italian version of this film, whether Karin is leaving or returning to the village. He allegedly replied:

I don't know. That would be the beginning of another film.... There is a turning point in every human experience in life - which isn't the end of the experience or of the man, but a turning point. My finales are turning points. Then it begins again - but as for what it is that begins, I don't know (Rossellini in Zizek, 1992: 42-3).

The irresolution of the ending holds out the possibility that ensues following the aftermath of going through the fantasy, i.e. the possibility of a new life founded upon 'the fact that we have nothing to lose in a loss' (Zizek, 1992: 43). The film doesn't end with the billowing smoke of the volcano, but on a shot of the ridge of the now stilled
volcano. Karin's voice is heard saying "Oh God!" twice. This shot, empty except for some birds that fly over the crater's horizon, is held static for a long time, even considering that this is art cinema. (Zizek doesn't mention this shot duration or the birds.) He reads the encounter with the volcano, this suspended moment, as demonstrating that '[a]fter we pass through the "zero point" of the symbolic suicide, what a moment ago appeared as the whirlpool of rage sweeping away all determinate existence changes miraculously into supreme bliss – as soon as we renounce all symbolic ties' (Zizek, 1992: 43). However, Zizek insists on resisting the trap laid by Stromboli's ending to interpret this bliss as an epiphany.

What lies ahead of Karin is undoubtedly what, in a vulgarly pathetic way, we call "a new life": sooner or later, she will return to the village, make peace with her husband or return to the mainland and assume new symbolic mandates, a new place in the community, in one way or another, she will begin again to be active - but the film ends before Karin finds her place in a new symbolic identity (or reassumes the old one), before the new performative, the new "founding word" (Zizek, 1992: 44).

There is a symbolic withdrawal that clears the space for a new action but does not show it, therein lies the non-prescriptive aspect of Lacanian psychoanalytic theory. Here again there are links with Gidal's anti-narrative stance - Zizek's zero point here might be suggestive of future narrative links, (or not, as the subject may not survive 'subjective destitution'), but the theory does not invest in them as that would be to prescribe an ideological position. The film spectator too is left, like the character, poised on the edge of an abyssal image. But more importantly, this suspension has removed one from the image, its deceptions having been laid bare. My problem with this analysis is that it does not invest in the image of emptiness as itself proffering a line of continuity between symbolic suspension and futurity. An epiphantic image need not necessarily effect resignation or closure, as we shall see when we look at Disappearance at Sea.

While Gidal aligns his critique of representation with a notion of material film practice, which is, in theory, procedural and Zizek aligns his critique with a notion of
psychoanalytic practice, which is, in practice, procedural, they could both be said to fall prey to the stasis of reflection. Although, to be fair to Zizek, there is mileage to be gained from his attribution of the act (traversing the fantasy) as introducing 'a cut separating "afterward" from "before," a discontinuity which cannot be accounted for within a spatial disposition of elements' (Zizek, 1992: 64). However, in chapters three and four, especially the latter, I will take issue with the attribution of formal stasis to the moment of discontinuity which Zizek relates, like Deleuze, to the unhinging effects of the form of time. I shall argue, using Elizabeth Grosz's work, that the lack of consideration of a more dynamic conception of space in both their work, leads to the imposition of an eternal, unchanging structure, which I see the film moments I encounter as militating against.

2.4 MORE NARRATIVE SUSPENSION 1: THE RADICAL SPECTATOR IN 1970S FILM THEORY

Other protagonists of 1970s film theory do not so readily foreclose on the power of the image for a project of new signification, e.g. Peter Wollen's critical writings. (Wollen has direct links with feminist film theory and practice in his collaborative work with Laura Mulvey.) This aspect of 1970s film theory would seem foreign to Zizek's extreme negativity. However, there is an aspect of commonality between Zizek and Wollen too. While Wollen holds out for the coming into being of new representations, they are still supposed to come into play via rupture. While the suspended film moments I encounter via the cut to an image of blankness in the two films in this thesis, could be said to issue from a rupture, I will deliberately set out to undermine that categorisation. The notion of rupture is always in relation to something coherent, (narrative), whereas I shall attempt to situate a continuity of rupture, a dis/continuity, rather than see it as an absolute break or cut in a structure.
Similar to Gidal, narrative is seen by Wollen as acting as an imaginary substitute for reality. However, unlike Gidal, 'film-making can be a project of meaning with horizons beyond itself' (Wollen, 1976: 22). These horizons can be generated by cinematic codes, i.e. the insertion of 'mistaken signifiers', that disturb the natural order of things to generate a new signification which does not act as an imaginary substitute for reality. The literal nature of how these new significations may be produced is seen in Wollen's insistence that they derive from the insertion in film of de-mystificatory breaks by use of scratching, text, and, disjunction. These breaks induce a kind of communication that is 'unintended, unanticipated, unconsciously derived', as opposed to being the intentional act of a subject, a transcendental ego, the generator of thought which finds embodiment in language as an instrumental necessity for the communication and exchange of ideas between equivalent subjects, alternating as source and receiver (Wollen, 1976: 19).

The difficulty with this notion of new signification generated by the insertion of 'mistaken signifiers' is its reliance on a model of signification that opposes narrative coherence to rupture, the former representing orthodox, dominant ideology, the latter, revolutionary potential. For Wollen and Laura Mulvey, this revolutionary potential would be theorized in terms derived from Julia Kristeva's interpretation of Lacan's notion of the Imaginary.\(^\text{13}\) However, the allocation of the Imaginary in their work as the underbelly of signification has superficial, though not structural, links with Zizek's location of the Real. The 'new structural protocols' that Wollen sees these 'mistaken signifiers' introducing into the filmic process are related to Kristeva's 'semiotic chora, the pre-linguistic, or pre-symbolic, means of expression' (Wollen, 1976: 16). Yet these, as in Kristeva's analysis, have to pass from the imaginary into the symbolic in order to be understood and have an effect on the symbolic. They alter, negate, divert, subvert and convert, the flow of signifieds, but into what?
Here lies one of the problems with Kristeva's analysis, a problem that is the inverse of Zizek's capitulation to the stasis of reflection, but is nonetheless a problem of stasis. In Zizek's formalism, signifying activity is suspended, a position I found echoes of in Gidal. For Kristeva, the semiotic chora is a site of (chaotic) signifying activity, which is tamed when it registers on the symbolic, the latter taking on the role of a conservative structure, a dichotomy derived from the Saussurean divisions of la langue and la parole, the former being an abstract system that the users of language cannot ultimately shift. Underlying this split in Kristeva, which seeps into Wollen's analyses, is a problematic split between the body and language. In a Kristevan approach to signification, as Ann Rosalind Jones cogently argues, the radical activity of semiotic practice is defined over against a structure that is assumed to be unchanging and unchangeable: any political group in the ascendant, the Symbolic as law in language. One theoretical source for this opposition must have been Saussure's founding technique for structuralism, by which language is analysed synchronically, as a fixed system of oppositions, rather than diachronically, as a system open to evolution or change. Such a notion of fixed, a-historical structure certainly underpins Kristeva's notion of the semiotic text, which needs the Symbolic order to work against it (Jones, 1984: 68). 14

Wollen relates the effect these material substrates of language might have to Brechtian distanciation - a gap of space opens up within the realm of perception to which the spectator would remain external and which would lead him/her to acquire 'knowledge about (not experience of) the society in which he/she, himself/herself lived (not the life of another/others)' (Wollen, 1976: 18). While the emphasis on knowledge in Wollen, and as we saw earlier in Gidal, is different from Zizek's 'traversing the fantasy' which is not so much an occasion for conscious knowledge as an involuntary passage towards its annihilation, there are still important commonalities between them. While Zizek reads the narrative rupture of Karin's encounter with the excess of the volcano as a dissolution of her symbolic ties, she is simultaneously supposed to able to perceive the fissure opened in reality by this non-ideological kernel of the Real, 'insofar as she
occupies the position of a stranger, i.e. insofar as her gaze is external' (Zizek, 1992: 55). This is by contrast to those who find themselves within the substance of the Real who, Zizek says, are necessarily blinded. While this concept is undoubtedly problematic, particularly the categorisation of this passage to the position of stranger as feminine, the emphasis on knowledge in political modernism is no less problematic. For Wollen, the viewer's symbolic attachments are challenged and dissolved by the textual production of the film-text. Yet, at the same time the viewer is supposed to come to some kind of super-consciousness of reality whereby they remain external/superior to the film as an object of knowledge, which causes the viewer to reflect on his/her social reality and engage in what Wollen calls 'productive deciphering' (Wollen, 1976: 21).

Noel Carroll's criticism of psychoanalytic semiotic film theory is apropos here. As Carroll commonsensically points out, once the spectator becomes disengaged, how are they simultaneously supposed to be able to reflect on the perspective/image and remain disengaged? (Carroll, 1982). How, if the spectator has been so totally removed from the image are they supposed to keep the right connection/distance to it to be able to perceive two positions simultaneously? Suffice to say at this point that the spectator in this thesis will occupy a very different position, a position from inside, rather than one suspended above, the image of absence. And this inside position will not be blinding, but
an arena, a placement, where sensuous activity and real space are not mutually exclusive horizons.

Another commonality between Zizek and 1970s film theory is the advocacy of Bertolt Brecht's distanciation effect as productive of a radical alienation in the spectator. Zizek links this to Lacan's notion of subjective destitution (Zizek, 1992: 177) and there were numerous articles in *Screen* magazine detailing the value of this phenomenon for film theory. However, readings of Brecht subsequent to 1970s film theory's appropriation of him show how that appropriation was selectively based on certain misunderstandings of Brechtian notions of self-reflexivity, as well as promoting Brecht's own confusion between illusion and mimetic representation (Carroll (1982); Harvey (1982); Silverman (1996); Smith (1996)). I shall explore Kaja Silverman's critique of Brecht's distanciation effect here as she sets it in opposition to a model of spectator immersion in the image, which is close to the scene I attempt to create in the first 'montage text'.

Silverman discusses how Brecht, and the film theorists who adapted him, object to character identification because it carries the spectator away from him or her self (Silverman, 1996: 86). While I will not be considering 'character' in any positive sense, this citation is equally valid if one substitutes 'image' for character. In Brecht's theatre, the idea was to create a distanciation effect in the spectator, i.e. to engender a critical detachment from or irony towards the spectacle by isolating textual elements from one another so that each can comment on the others, rather than seeming to be an ostensible harmonious whole. However, Silverman makes the point that Brecht's theatre, rather than making the familiar strange, made the strange familiar as he places the theatrical event on a continuum with the auditorium thereby creating the equalization of spectator and spectacle (Silverman, 1996: 86). Isolating textual elements from one another so that each can comment on the others, rather than seeming to create an ostensible harmonious whole, is not incompatible with Brecht's notion that the spectator should feel he could smoke a cigar during the performance as if at home. Silverman's criticism that this
actually safeguards the position of the ego resonates with the criticism of Kristeva's semiotic rupture that it leaves the dominant system intact. These gaps get closed over, only troubling the dominant system for moments, which in a sense the system depends on for its generation, the model of stability and rupture being the two sides to one story. Murray Smith, in a non-psychoanalytic context, puts it:

There is [...] something intrinsically self-defeating in the idea of "producing" a critical spectator. The project is self-defeating because the means by which the result is arrived at negates the difference between it and its supposed opposite, the naive or incredulous spectator. The estranging text becomes simply a miniature "ideological apparatus," eliciting a different set of ideological answers, but still through a process of interpellation" (Smith, 1996: 139).

While Silverman insists on the necessity of a gap separating the spectator from the spectacle, something she sees cinema as innately possessing, she maintains, contrary to the negativity of distanciation, that it is the subjective qualities of allusion, memory, and desire that need to be engaged in this gap. That it is not simply a question of cutting ideological ties, but a reconfiguring of them via an estrangement of the co-ordinates of the body in space rather than psychic and/or conscious knowledge. In her adherence to Lacanian theory, there are echoes of Zizek's notion of the gaze of a stranger, i.e. the estranged point-of-view removed from the image. However, the crucial difference in her analysis is that this point is simultaneously dependent on the image for establishing the reconfiguration of the sensory ego.

The image does not necessarily, as in Lacan, provide an illusory unity of sensation and the specular. Silverman re-focuses on Henri Wallon's 'Les Origines du Charactere Chez l'Enfant', 1934, one of Lacan's sources for his mirror-stage 'theory', to show how the disjunction between the sensational body and the specular is not pathological, as in Lacan. Rather it forms the necessary 'basis for our ability to identify-at-a-distance, i.e. to extend our feeling of material or bodily existence to objects, whether these be near or far away' (Silverman, 1996: 18). For Wallon, what he calls the proprioceptive/sensational ego is not an essential ground from which we are barred by
entry into language, but is itself subject to continual movement in relation to the exteroceptive/specular ego. The former, as the body's sensation of occupying a point in space, is continuously in the process of being defined by means of the various sense organs in all their different spaces and registers (Silverman, 1996: 16). This non-visual mapping of the body's form can be realigned and repositioned because of its continual dialogue with the separate images of itself formed by the visual register, which in turn is informed by the other registers of sensation that intersect within its environs. In other words, the inside and the outside are not in seamless coexistence, or absolute separation, but in continuous negotiation.

I shall claim that my encounter with Disappearance at Sea engendered such a realignment. If one takes Disappearance at Sea as a kind of metaphor of the mechanism of the cinematic apparatus, which is one of the ways the film initially struck me, the look one would identify with is the blind seeing of a lightbulb. Immersed vision here is blind. This reminds me of Zizek's critique above that those who are immersed in the substance of things are blind, this blindness being what the estranged look is supposed to obviate against. One could see the cut to the blank screen as a rupture that wakes one out of this blind seeing, suspending immersion or absorption in the image. One could also see the light beam that follows this cut as the suspension of disbelief whereby one no longer blindly identifies with the light but sees it for what it is - faked. (The light beam, contrary to suggestion, is not emitted from the lighthouse but was 'faked' by scanning a torch against the surface of a bent sheet of steel.) However, that approach to the film leaves out the sensational ego, only taking account of the visual register and dimension of seeing equated with knowledge or blindness. By contrast, in the experience of being immersed in a kind of blind seeing, other kinds of movements are occurring, internal shards of corporeal pulsations unleashed by and attempting to realign themselves according to the irrational logic of this blind seeing. The point also is that the visual register is not cohered in a static image but is itself changing and moving within the frame, so the movements of the sensational ego fall between recognition and non-
recognition of the image. To be cut from this negotiation, i.e. the blank screen, suspends that movement, but rather this suspension being an absolute cut, it intensifies the force of the processual negotiation of body and image that has been occurring in the state of blind seeing. The impact of this force unleashes the multi-directionality of sensation. Another twist of sensorial movement is instigated by the 'return' of the light beam that rhythmically punctuates the 'darkness' as if in visual answer to what was felt in the emptiness, the beat of time's passage through the body.

The non-visual mapping of the body, proprioception, continues in the face of a lack of image. The image is not simply a support for the body. The visual alignment of bodily fragments by the image in Lacan, bars them from their own differentiating movements. However in the Wallon that Silverman brings to my attention, the important thing is the disjunctive dialogue between the image at a distance, visual estrangement, and the body's sensation of occupying a point in space, sensorial estrangement and negotiation. This point is not fixed but is what allows for imaginary transportation and rewriting of the body's co-ordinates. The result is an internal narration that will transport us elsewhere, this elsewhere not being an 'escapist wrap-up' (Sharits in Wollen, 1976: 17), but a site of difference that redistributes the self-same body that Brechtian distanciation, in ignoring sensory affinities, leaves intact. This site of difference addresses the condition of corporeal alignment not considered in the film theory that deploys distanciation - the question of how not to return to identity after dissolution. (Remember Zizek's allusion to Karin's inevitable return to the village.) The moment of the cut is an irruption of sorts but rather than distanciation per se, it is the occasion for another spectatorial engagement not based on identification, but on a non-reflecting, yet non-alienating, surface that opens the self up to other devolutions of itself. The irruption of the cut as a material signifier creates, rather than distanciation or knowledge, an occasion for a dialogue between a foreign body (for Deleuze this will be Time) and an experiential one, the singularity of the lived body. A narration of the intersection
between these forms of self-devolution unfolds in the cinematic space of static suspension.

Although Silverman's phenomenological psychoanalytic analysis would not be conducive to 1970s film theory, Stephen Heath raises aspects of the relation between spatiality and narrative in interesting ways. Heath shall reappear in chapter four of this thesis as a main protagonist, however, here I want to situate him in the narrative/stability, cut/rupture stakes. Heath is less disdainful of narrative than either Gidal or Wollen. Although he states the necessity of 'destroying the narrative frame in the interests of the action of the film as flow of images' (Heath in Rodowick, 1994: 152), this is bound up with the problematic of narrative itself rather than narrative being bracketed out of the equation. Although Heath's allusion here to 'the film as flow of images' sounds a little like Deleuze's reference to 'image narration', Heath's distinction here is derived from the semiological one of narrative codes as linguistic determinants that underlie and into which film images are shaped. Therefore narrative would have to be 'destroyed' to release the image from its perceived straightjacket. For Deleuze, linguistic determinants do not underlie the construction of image flow. For Deleuze, contrary to this Metzian formulation, 'it seems to us that narration is only a consequences of the visible ... images themselves and their combinations - it is never a given' (Deleuze, 1989: 26). I shall return to Deleuze in the next chapter. For now, let's look at Heath's predicament.

Heath begins his essay 'Narrative Space' with the observation that 'early film space tends simply to be tableauesque' with 'the set of fixed-camera frontal scenes linked as a story' (Heath, 1974/5: 74). For Heath, continuity editing provides the narrative framework that would contain, what he calls, the excessive movement of these early film spaces in a 'homogeneously continuous space' which cuts the spectator in as 'subject precisely to a process of vision, a positioning and positioned movement' (Heath, 1974/5: 74). This is interesting on two counts. One, which I shall just note here as it will return to it in the 'montage texts', is that both Disappearance at Sea and News From Home are
comprised of fixed-camera frontal scenes, the latter including a few pans and a tracking shot near the end. Clearly different from early film per se, Heath's reference to an excessive movement unleashed by the sharp cutting from one tableau to the next is something that I shall claim reappears in another guise in these post-continuity edited films and generates a narration other than that of story linkage. This generative narration, which will appear in the performative texts, overrides the oscillation that Heath proffers between flow and rupture in narrative space.

The second point of interest, i.e. Heath's attribution of narrative with stability and coherence of film form, I shall pursue here. For Heath, as D. N. Rodowick summarizes, 'it is the spatial organisation of a coherent and continuous vision and point of view, according to the demands of narrative meaning and pleasure, that define cinema's appeal to the spectator and its status as a discourse' (Rodowick, 1994: 181). Narrative is deemed to be the psychological modality of the coherence of the images, the abstraction of the technology of continuity editing being reproduced in the perceptual psychological processing of spectator. Again, we see here the notion of the spectator as an effect of the filmic apparatus. 'Film runs across the subject that runs through the film, as the game loses its experience of a central presence in a radical excentering. It is this run that narrative is used to hold, to suspend in image and representation' (Heath in Rodowick, 1994: 202). Breaks, ruptures in continuity editing are deemed to disrupt the pleasures of narrative cognition. If not for narrative, film would simply be a series of discontinuous frames or cuts divided by black splices, needing a story to give them coherence, or if, existing without a story, taking on the random status of a sequence of images much like certain avant-garde films. As well as providing continuity of movement for what would otherwise be a series of potentially disconnected tableaux, narrative also provides the cohering into static points of fictional identity of the mobility of the cinematic apparatus. Narrative turns these mobile, spatial, cuts into definite places, narrative as 'the taking place' of film (Heath, 1974/75: 92). Heath repeats the by
now familiar opposition between linearity and excess, narrative identification and/or dissolution.

Narrative in the classical narrative film, (Heath refers to Hitchcock's *Suspicion* (1941)), operates in two ways - it proceeds in the construction of a linear story, but it is also that force which recovers moments that deviate or are in excess of that story, keeping potentially derailing details in order. In other words, narrative is a suturing process that binds shots to one another, preventing rupture/negativity, and binds the spectator to their continuous flow. Suture was a much-debated concept in 1970s film theory, following the translation by film critic Jean-Pierre Oudart of an article by Jacques-Alain Miller, 'La Suture', based on a paper delivered in 1965 by Lacan at his seminar at the Ecole Normale Superieure. 18 Heath, in *Questions of Cinema*, uses this concept to articulate the division in the subject, which is put into operation in relation to the film text. Paraphrasing Miller, Heath states:

To instance suture, Miller points at once, as though to its immediate index, to the 'I' of an utterance: the utterance states a place of the subject at the same moment that it splits from that place by the very fact of the place of the utterance itself, the place from which the statement is made; the subject of the enounced and the subject of the enunciation never fully come together, are always in the *distances* of the symbolic, the subject not one in its representation in language' (Heath, 1981: 85).

However, the machinations of the classic narrative film work to deny this splitting. Heath gets confusing here in his dual usage of suture to describe both the 'junction of the imaginary and the symbolic' that occurs in the binding processes of narrative as well as the non-coincidence of the "I" with its representations. 19 Heath sees narrative as a suturing process,

discursive ordering pulling the image towards unity for *us*, its activity of meaning transposed into the coherence of a nearness; we enter the structure of address, join the film: the spectator is recast as the subject of the film's relations of the symbolic and the imaginary together, its suturing. Which, moreover, is very much a question of time; there are multiple times between spectator and film [...] but the film, classically, is always brought into time with its significant flow, its balance, its narrativization; producing thereby its essential contemporariness -
Suture is identified with narrative binding, the film as narrative continuity in a linguistic mode of soldering one signifier to another ad finitum. Heath states that '[t]he system of suture, be it noted, breaks as soon as the time of the shot hesitates beyond the time of its narrative specifications' (Heath, 1981: 109). In fact, Heath refers explicitly to *News From Home* as an example of a film that suspends the suturing process. However, what is of interest here is that again we have a clear example of the logic of narrative and rupture, suspension being seen as contrary to narrativization, a freezing of that process. Because this suspension of the logic of the signifier occurs in *News From Home*, according to Heath, around an image of absence, he claims that the film leaves the question of 'filling in' open - the film does fill in but differently, a difference he can only quantify as 'the impossible question of a woman's desire' (Heath, 1981: 99). (The linking of suspension and impossibility with female desire is a link that my attempt to unhinge the binary of narrative/rupture wants to break - see my feminist subtext, 2.7 below.)

For Heath the direction a radical cinema should take would not eschew narrative per se but would complicate it. To this end he celebrates a film that refuses to suture, that poses 'film exactly as montage in its multiple possibility of engaging drive, its critical potential for pleasure' (Heath in Rodowick, 1994: 197). We can see here Kristeva's influence on Heath with this emphasis on the drive as destructive of narrative coherence and the mapping of this psycho-biological entity onto a formal principle. Montage is seen as expressive of disunity/rupture that in turn expresses the subject as he is riddled by contradiction, ambiguity, the unconscious. In this mapping of subjectivity onto a formal principle, a lack of agency is ascribed to the spectator. The spectator can only follow blindly the image production, whether classical narrative's continuity editing or avant-garde montage. So even in Heath's opening up of the question of narrative as a process of oscillation between suspension and flow, there is an underlying assumption
that narrative re-produces the ideological subject. D.N. Rodowick usefully summarizes the binarisms at work in Heath as being between the 'either/or of suture/negativity that repeat at the level of the subject what other political modernisms organized in the opposition between narrative/non-narrative' (Rodowick, 1994: 203). Needless to say, it is this very opposition that I want to find a way out of. It reproduces at the level of the subject a model of identity based on the presence/absence dialectic or, in Lacanian terms, the soldering of identity versus the fading of identity in 'subjective destitution' that Zizek uses Stromboli to illustrate. While the importation of Lacan and Kristeva into film theory was initially for the sake of opening film analysis up to take account of the spectator and unconscious desire beyond a reduction to linguistic codes, this critique ultimately flounders on the binarism of: identity/image/narrative coherence versus non-identity/blindspot/narrative excess.

However, while the contradictions in Heath around this question are rife, aspects of his ideas are relevant to my notion of generative spectatorship as opposed to his call for productive spectatorship, which is, in essence, as we have seen, re-productive. (The difference between a generative spectatorship and a productive one being that the former is unpredictable whereas the latter is a reflection of form.) I would want to maintain with Heath that '[w]hat moves in film, finally, is the spectator, immobile in front of the screen' (Heath, 1974/5: 99), but I go against his attribution that '[f]ilm is the regulation of that movement, the individual as subject held in a shifting and placing of desire, energy, contradiction, in a perpetual retotalisation of the imaginary (the set scene of image and subject). This is the investment of film in narrativisation, and crucially for a coherent space, the unity of place for vision' (Heath, 1974/5: 99). Although, as D.N. Rodowick shows, Heath also paradoxically offers space for 'a multiple and complex articulation of different discursive practices', which suggests the potential for differences between subject and text (Rodowick, 1994: 212).

The other contradiction in Heath is that on the one hand he criticizes Noel Burch's 'phenomenological formalism' for simply providing 'an aesthetics of
transgression' and tending towards the impasse of formal device as a stylistic trope, when what is needed is 'an activity of transformation' (Heath, 1974/5: 104 & 108).

However, on the other hand, in Heath's reading of Oshima Nagisa's Death by Hanging, which he proffers as an example of the latter, the contradictions in shot-reverse shot and the strange use of the off-field, i.e. formal devices, are what the argument of difference hangs on. Heath maintains that '[t]he intensity of Oshima's work lies in a "going beyond" of content that constantly breaks available articulations of "form" and "content" and poses the film in the hollow of those breaks' (Heath, 1974/5: 109). This mapping of the 'activity of transformation' onto the formal devices of a film is, as we have seen, common to the protagonists of 1970s film theory and, in a different way, to Zizek also.

Am I not, in part, guilty of the same dependence on formal devices in attributing the cut to the blank screen in Disappearance at Sea with the power to generate a transformational narrative? No, because in my thesis, the cut will not be claimed as being on the side of negativity, rupture, and therefore, as other to narrative, but itself part of its trajectory, its dis/continuity. For Heath

the relations of the subject set by film - its vision, its address - would be radically transformed if the intervals of its production were opened in their negativity, if the fictions of the closure of those intervals were discontinued, found in all the contradictions of their activity' (Heath, 1974/5: 107 - emphasis mine).

I will maintain, by contrast, that 'the relations of the subject engendered' by film - its vision, its address - would be radically transformed if the intervals of its production were opened in their temporality, 'if the fictions of the closure of those intervals were discontinued, found in all the differenciation of their activity'. My recasting of Heath's formulation has a dual aspect to it. As well as establishing my divergence from his emphasis on negativity and pointing in the direction I shall go in, it is worth noting that Heath's formulation is itself a recasting of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's notion of seeing 'the intervals between things' as things (Merleau-Ponty in Heath, 1974/5: 107). Heath takes the opening of the interval to be an opening of contradiction, a movement suggestive of
oscillation, whereas I shall develop a more phenomenological view of the dual sided nature of the interval. The fact that the form of the interval is constituted by the outsides of things creates its 'identity' as a space, which exceeds contradiction and which allows for momentary realignments of identity to take place (See Grosz, 2001: 91-4). These identificatory realignments are in turn exchanged by the motions of intervallic space to engender further transformations. Film as a medium, both in its continuous movement but also in the force of its discontinuities/cuts, is particularly analogous to the dynamism of how intervallic space works to unite and separate, form and reform, differentiating identities between things.

2.5 FILM MOMENTS

While narrative today is not held in the disdain that it was by Structuralist filmmakers and related avant-garde film practices and theories in the 1970s, the assumptions that narrative is synonymous with cohesion and that it serves dominant ideology still circulate. There is an underlying assumption that a break or suspension or cut/disjunction in the narrative creates or designates a site of distanciation for the viewer, a site of critical reflection. What I am taking issue with is situated and summed up in the following quote from a catalogue essay on the Australian artist, Tracey Moffatt, who makes films as well as photographs:

Avant-garde and experimental film has moved closer to the art world in recent years, separating itself from mainstream narrative cinema, which may have incorporated some of its innovations but has rejected its radical vision. Hollywood and the art world are opposed on the question of meaning: where Hollywood likes meaning to be self-evident (but often makes it either inconsequential or a reinforcement of conventional systems of understanding), postmodern art of the nineties is concerned with meaning's absence, or with the suspension of narrative' (Julien & Nash, 1998: 18 - emphasis mine).

What is interesting about this citation is that it unwittingly repeats the very binaries inherent in 1970s film theory, promulgating an unquestioning acceptance into the 1990s
of the opposition between narrative suspension as radical/avant-garde and narrative continuity as ideologically contaminated by Hollywood. The lingering of this distinction is all the more surprising given the collision of film forms that are occurring contemporaneously between artists film and cinema. However, as Kaja Silverman suggests, there is an unexamined continuity between the 1970s and the 1990s in terms of how mainstream narrative cinema is thought of.

It was assumed during the 1970's - and we are far from being liberated of this assumption today - that the pleasure of identifying with a fictional character always turns on the spectator's rediscovery of his or her preordained place within gender, class, and race (Silverman, 1996: 85).

I will attempt to override this distinction by claiming that the supposedly non-narrative moments in the so-called avant-garde films I shall look at have a narrative content as opposed to being purely formal moments of excess or the absence of meaning.

The seepage and maintenance of these distinctions into contemporary art discourse can be linked to the traditional comparison of film narrative with literary models. This is as true of narratalogical approaches as psychoanalytic ones. In *Narration in the Fiction Film*, David Bordwell, referring to Russian Formalist theories of narrative, mainly Viktor Shklovsky, puts forward the thesis that narration in cinema is comprised of the three elements of fabula, syuzhet, and style. The fabula can loosely be termed plot. It is the film's story put into chronological and causal order. The syuzhet is how the plot unfolds, i.e. the way in which the film images are presented. This latter will differ from the summary of the plot, as the way we are presented with the unfolding of the plot will have many detours and digressions. Style will contribute to this, usually remaining subservient to the syuzhet, except in art cinema where stylistic features can dominate. However, these are seen as being equally narrative, even if momentarily seeming to be anti-narrative, because they do not ultimately distract from the plot. The point here is that this theory of narration is as equally applicable to a novel as to a film. In fact this model is derived from literature, although Bordwell uses it less to compare film to
literature than to proffer a general theory of narration applicable to any medium (Bordwell, 1985: 49). While the syuzhet and the stylistic features of different media will be particular, the processing of the fabula will be the same. In Bordwell's theory of narration in the fiction film, 'narration is the process whereby the film's syuzhet and style interact in the course of cueing and channeling the spectator's construction of the fabula' (Bordwell, 1985: 53). However, Bordwell does not deal with avant-garde cinema thereby participating in film history's maintenance of the category 'mainstream narrative film' against which all deviations are measured and radical effects claimed. In answer to his question as to whether there is really anything non-narrational in a narrative film, Bordwell mentions Roland Barthes' concept of the third meaning in film as 'the realm in which casual lines, colors, expressions, and textures become "fellow travelers" of the story' (Bordwell, 1985: 53).

I shall come back to Barthes' 'third meaning' in a moment, as it will be useful in disengaging the argument from the Lacanian psychoanalytic principle that language divides that which can be said from that which is mute. Although Barthes in part buys into Lacan's positing of a mute Real/m beyond language, I shall show that in Barthes' performative writing, the boundary between language and its outside cannot be maintained. This slippage in his writing is useful in undermining the opposition that Barthes makes between the static frame and the moving image, my purpose being to point out the mobilizing effects of the seemingly static shot. However, Bordwell's borders are well maintained. He says that while 'these "excessive" elements are utterly unjustified, even by aesthetic motivation' (Bordwell, 1985: 53) and that excess as a critical concept remains outside his concerns, in some cases it may offer a useful way into a film's overall formal work.

A perception of a film that includes its excess implies an awareness of the structures (including conventions) at work in the film, since excess is precisely those elements that escape unifying impulses. Such an approach to viewing films can allow us to look further into a film, renewing its ability to intrigue us by its strangeness (Bordwell, 1985: 53).
So what can be gleaned here is that the formal work of excess marks a boundary between the unifying principles of story and its suspension in the narrative film. Not only that but excess can take on a structural principle in a film that knowingly uses 'it' to create moments of strangeness. In order for these moments of excess to be recognized, the conventions of narrative have to be in operation. What is interesting about both *Disappearance at Sea* and *News From Home*, is that while the conventions of narrative are minimally operative, the suspended moments in these films are not moments of excess. What occurs in these moments, I shall claim, is that something (the interval) extends into the real time and space of the spectator, but instead of enjoining his/her location, displaces it.

There is a subtle distinction between such moments of temporal displacement in *Disappearance at Sea* and *News From Home* and the reception of moments (of excess) in films where a plot, however haphazard, dominates. What I'm thinking of here is the difference between how particular moments of estrangement in Michelangelo Antonioni's films affected me and how the moments in *Disappearance at Sea* and *News From Home* affected me, although there is some parallel between them. The former were tinged with something beyond comprehension, combined with a physical frisson, reminiscent of that associated with the psychoanalytic concept of the uncanny, or, in keeping with the terminology of this thesis, Zizek's encounter with the Real, the mute realm beyond symbolization. In other words, they had a kind of frozen quality to them, a formal stasis that suspended movement. Whereas in relation to my two film encounters, the suspended moment engendered a temporal liveliness that is both intensely felt and almost unnoticeable, the awareness of it occurring after the fact (of being displaced and transported elsewhere).

The difference between how the moments of displacement in Michelangelo Antonioni's *L'Avventura* (1960) and *L'Eclisse* (1962) affected me from those I encounter in *Disappearance at Sea* and *News From Home* is due in part to a difference in genre. In
the avant-garde film in which the conventions of narrative are barely in operation, the moment of estrangement can become dominant rather than, as in Antonioni, being ultimately suppressed by the film's narrative/story, perhaps as a stylistic feature.

Although what I would say distinguishes 'moments' in Antonioni's films from being purely stylistic, pace Bordwell, is that when they occur they seem to leap out of the temporal constraints of screen time, unhinging the viewer's sense of location in relation to the image. In Antonioni's films, these moments are usually images of emptiness that seem to instil the sense of another time into cinematic space, akin to the kind of temporal dislocation discussed by Walter Benjamin in his concept of the aura where a receding gaze from the past impacts on the present. This concept has been rescued from the dustbins of art theory recently by both Kaja Silverman and Jodi Brooks to discuss the notion of a corporeally disorienting yet deeply affecting film experience. Jodi Brooks characterizes the auratic moment in terms of the opening of a distance, which is also proximate, in which the present is suspended in favour of a sensuous loss of self in an opening that incorporates an indefinite time (Brooks, 1995: 84). However, regardless of the 'feminist' rescuing of Benjamin's aura as something enlivening, its modernist sensibility of radical disjuncture has more in common with the frozen quality of Antonioni's moments than with the kind of generative suspension that I will make a case for in relation to Disappearance at Sea and News From Home.

When I encountered these frozen moments in L'Avventura and L'Eclisse, I had read next to nothing on Antonioni and was therefore happily surprised when I later discovered that others, namely, Sam Rohdie and Gilberto Perez, had singled out the same or almost the same moments in their analyses of this filmmaker. Although neither of them is building a 'theory' of such moments, they both categorize them in terms of an encounter with strangeness/absence, which is exactly the position I start with and move away from when I begin formulating my encounter with Disappearance at Sea in section 3.2. In Rohdie, we again meet with the idea that this suspended moment is a halting of narrative that in itself cannot be spoken and he couches his analysis in the
very terms of oppositional oscillation that I found rampant in 1970s film theory, is, in
effect, its legacy.

Most narratives move forward consequentially, causatively, and within
pre-determined structures. Antonioni’s films are different from this; they
seem to move, or rather to oscillate, not between event and event, but
between narrative and its absence, between the fullness of story and
activity, and the emptiness of an image, as if it were not only hopes and
desires and perspectives within the fiction that were threatened with
being lost, but the very fiction itself. The fragility and interest of the
films are precisely here, in the tenuousness of the narrative and the
feeling that what is being represented is less a thing or a substance, or an
idea, than an intermediate zone, a line between the appearance of things,
and their loss and which *can't precisely be spoken* (Rohdie, 1990: 176 -
emphasis mine).

One of the particular moments that Rohdie picks out in Antonioni’s oeuvre and which
incidentally coincides with the one that hit me on my viewing of the film is when the
camera isolates the church which Sandro and Claudia encounter on their drive towards
Noto in search of the disappeared Anna in *L’Avventura*. The romantic interest in the
characters relationship which is dominating the meandering narrative is completely
suspended by the focus and framing of this building in the landscape. The camera lingers
on the church as if the two characters are of no importance. The church starts to take on
a presence of its own, blankly confronting the viewer’s gaze. When I watched this scene,
I was struck, quite literally, by the impact of being confronted with an image that did not
meet my gaze but threatened to stop it in its tracks, keeping it from wandering through
the film. "I" was suspended by a gaze that hovered on the edge of the narrative. (In the
example I looked at earlier, Zizek's analysis of Rossellini’s *Stromboli*, the film ended at
this moment. Here, this moment is dramatically followed by a cut to a close-up of
Sandro’s and Claudia’s heads as they make love in a nearby meadow.) Rohdie discusses
how in disjoining the image from the action of characters, he has made the image a
'subject' in its own right: its shape, its colour, its movement, its time and the regarding of
it (Rohdie, 1990: 66). He refers to Italian film critic Lorenzo Cuccu's term 'la visione
estraniata' (the estranged vision) to describe Antonioni’s displacement of a one-to-one
sense of correspondence between a viewer and an image by a look, not only 'from outside of events, but...a look upon that look' (Rohdie, 1990: 72). Not psychoanalytic in approach, this can still be linked to Zizek's moment of 'subjective destitution', the look from the position of a stranger whose gaze is external to the scene. Rohdie's analysis stops there, but Gilberto Perez, who also refers to what he calls 'the point of view of a stranger' (Perez, 1998: 367) as the point from which we view Antonioni's films, links this estrangement to a notion of possibility in the world outside the film. Again, the link to Zizek's moment of 'subjective destitution' being a position whereby the subject might gain liberation from the signifier is apropos, although Perez would not intend such a link, mentioning Zizek only in passing in his introduction.

For Perez, one of these moments of 'the point of view of a stranger', which again hit me on viewing the film prior to having read Perez, is the final scene of L'Eclisse. The camera lingers at the street crossing where the lovers, Vittoria and Piero, had parted earlier that day with a view, we think, to meeting again later. The space is now empty, the camera seeming to be hours early for their 'appointment'. The camera's stare at the zebra crossing at this street corner makes the space palpably felt. The editing then performs a series of fast jumpcuts of different aspects of the scene, a cyclist passing by, a bus turning the corner, etc., finally jumping to a close-up of an electric street light that fills the frame with a strange kind of blinding blankness. This image remains for a moment, then the film ends. In my view, this shot unifies all the previous spatially and temporally disjunctive shots of the meandering narrative by cancelling them out. Its bright unseeing glare freezes/destroys the narrative. Of course narrative meaning can be given to it. 'Called by some a paradoxical eclipse by light, taken by others as suggesting an atomic explosion' (Perez, 1998: 394), this light is of course a reference to the film's title. However, for Perez, the 'dialectical give and take' (416) between beauty and disinterest that occurs in Antonioni's absences or 'spaces between' (414) has to do with the real world rather than a self-enclosed film world. '[T]his sudden dazzling halt of the progressing gloom may also be construed as a bright new day that our artifice may yet
bring about' (Perez, 1998: 394). Again, as in Zizek, we have the notion of suspension as offering possibility of liberation, although Zizek would perhaps see Perez' description here as being too much of an epiphany. However, what unites both of their approaches is that the future is postponed - as possibility in Perez and as impossibility in Zizek. What about the possibility of the moment of suspension generating a real future "now" rather than it being the occasion for negative reflection? To open up this possibility, the oscillation and distinction between narrative and non-narrative has to be re-examined, if not undermined.

2.6 THE MOMENT OF SUSPENSION MOVES OUT INTO THE SPECTATOR'S WORLD: ROLAND BARTHES AND THE GENERATIVE CUT

In answer to his question as to whether there is really anything non-narrational in a narrative film, Bordwell points us in the direction of Roland Barthes concept of the 'third meaning'. It is ironic that this takes us to the film still, which is closer to the photograph than to film narration. Although, I insist that a dis/continuous film moment in a film that employs a static camera is only still at the level of the framed image and not at the level of the projected image which is still in constant motion, Barthes' attention to the film still as an excessive moment cut from a film's diegesis will lead me towards the notion of alternative narration. It will lead to reconsidering the moment cut out from a film's diegesis, not in terms of excess, which engenders the mute stasis of the unrepresentable, but as a moment that entails the ongoing negotiation between differentiating locations of the "I". (This is what I shall demonstrate in the 'montage texts'.) While, for Barthes, the film still is different from the photograph because it has a diegetic horizon against which its internal relationships can be read, what Barthes doesn't deal with, and which will become important in what follows, are moving still images, which are not only different from photographs but also from (still) film stills (Barthes, 1986a: 60). For Barthes, the excess that erupts from the Eisenstein stills that he
looks at, which he calls 'a third meaning' outside of commonsense and symbolism, is dependent on the cut-out isolation of a fragment of a moving text, the film itself.

However imbricated their relation, the still, Barthes insists, 'flouts logical time' (Barthes, 1986a: 61). The assumption being made here is that the movement that traditionally characterizes film, condemns it to temporal constraints - it 'cannot move faster or slower without losing its perceptual figure' (Barthes, 1986a: 62). My thesis is that the use of the static camera in both Disappearance at Sea and News From Home also 'flouts logical time' in a manner that is reminiscent of photographs but importantly not the same. In fact Barthes' attempt to still film in attending only to the film still makes the image into a fetish object, and thereby static. However, his analysis is useful because it points to the impossibility of stilling the film, even when one has taken all the necessary fetishistic precautions. Even the film still, this stilted diegesis, opens out onto a world beyond its frame. It is not a suspension but an occasion for another narration not bound by the constraints of the frame. Therefore Barthes' analysis here, aside from its attempt to deal with some kind of meaning outside of the traditional conventions of narrative, is relevant in an ironic way to what I shall go on to perform in the 'montage texts'.

While Bordwell points to Barthes' concept of the obtuse meaning as perhaps being a way of dealing with non-narrative aspects of film narration which are beyond his remit, the interesting thing about Barthes' 'inarticulate meaning' is just how generative of discourse, i.e. performative narrative, it actually is (Barthes, 1986a: 60). Barthes claims that this meaning is not in the language system. Hence Bordwell's emphasis on excess. But it generates narrative, the spectator's narrative, which Barthes alludes to as a mode of description that designates a site.

In this documentary image (XVI) from Ordinary Fascism I readily read an obvious meaning, that of fascism (an aesthetic and symbolics of strength, the theatrical hunt), but I also read an obtuse supplement; the (again) disguised blond stupidity of the youth carrying the arrows, the slackness of his hands and his mouth (I am not describing, I cannot manage that, I am merely designating a site), Goering's coarse nails, his trashy ring (here we are already at the limit of the obvious meaning, like the vapid smile of the man in glasses in the background, obviously an
ass-kisser). In other words, the obtuse meaning is not structurally situated, a semantologist would not acknowledge its objective existence (but what is an objective reading?), and if it is evident to me, this is still perhaps (for the moment) because of the same "aberration" which compelled the unfortunate Saussure alone to hear an enigmatic, obsessive, and unoriginated voice, that of the anagram in ancient poetry (Barthes, 1986a: 54-55 - emphasis mine).

Barthes sees this obtuse meaning as subverting narrative, but it can also be viewed as the pivot, which generates more narrative in that he attempts to give an account of what he feels via description. While for Barthes description is in excess of narrative meaning and signifies 'the real perceived as a resistance to meaning' (Barthes in Perez, 1998: 402), it is also a narrational mode of pointing to that reality that exceeds our comprehension of it. Hence Barthes' emphasis on disguise. 'The obtuse meaning, then, has something to do with disguise' (Barthes, 1986a: 48). It 'carries a certain emotion; caught up in the disguise, this emotion is never viscous; it is an emotion which simply designates what is loved, what is to be defended: it is an emotion-as-value, an evaluation' (Barthes, 1986a: 51). This becomes even more apparent if this essay is related to Barthes' *Camera Lucida*.

In *Camera Lucida* the contrast between two forms of meaning is categorized as studium and punctum, the former having to do with information, the latter with disruption 'an element which rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me' (Barthes, 2000: 26-27). Again, this disruptive element is compared to a cut, a gash. But more importantly, it is also 'an addition: it is what I add to the photograph and what is nonetheless already there' (Barthes, 2000: 55).

There is some parallel between Barthes emphasis on affect and indescribable meaning in relation to the film still and my claim that so-called non-narrative moments within avant-garde films generate another narration, but the main distinction would be the sense of time. In Barthes' example, the film-still allows for a technical mastery over the flow of images. It allows for a vertical as opposed to a horizontal reading. A moving still image is not the same as a static, frozen, moment. In the former, time is added to the image. And this 'vertical' addition is continually intercut by the generation of narrative
on the side of the spectator, as well as being subjected to the horizontal flow of mechanical time - the filmstrip moving through the projector. It is never stopped frozen, until the film is over. While Barthes' mode of description, the 'designation of a site', animates the image, which is a moving relation, that animation returns to the still image, whereas the animation of the moving still image is itself being displaced by time. Therefore the generation of narrative or description as a mode of narration does not pivot around a singular detail in the static shot, as, even in a lengthy duration, the 'still' detail is moving and so continually differentiating itself from itself. Therefore, the frame of reference, the pose, that generates my 'addition' to the image is itself changing. Or it seems to be.

Barthes refers to Eisenstein's notion of internal montage, which cuts the image up within the frame (Barthes, 1986a: 61). According to Barthes, this internal cutting up within the shot makes the still into a kind of superior distribution of features of the film itself and 'demands a vertical reading' as opposed to the syntagmatic, horizontal, flow of film (Barthes, 1986a: 61). However, this internal imaginative audio-visual montage phenomenon can also occur in horizontal terms, the parameters of stillness and movement being undermined in the process. It is my thesis that in a film where the camera maintains the same image for an extended period of time, the internal audio-visual montage of the shot is not only intercut by an internal audio-visual montage process occurring on the side of the spectator, but that process is itself being intercut by the accumulation of further shots. What Barthes calls 'syntagmatic disjunction', which for him occurs within the frame, can also occur across the film as a whole, thereby destroying the control of the frame and allowing the cut to occur and recur in a series of layers as opposed to being an isolated fragment of excess removed from diegesis.

Peter Brunette & David Wills give an interesting account of Barthes' 'third meaning' which brings it closer to what I shall go on to develop, although I shall not be using a Derridean approach as they do. While their approach is extremely useful in further undermining the borders between narrative and non-narrative excess, they
emphasize the signifier in excess of the subject/spectator rather than, as I shall, the mutual imbrication of spectator and image in temporal unfolding. They assert, as I have insisted above, that Barthes' 'so-called still image' is a contradiction in terms, for its multiple lines of force always put it into movement. This collapse of the still/moving distinction removes film from a simple binary, oppositional relation with the other, so-called static visual arts (Brunette & Wills, 1989: 108-109).

Their reading of Barthes' notion of the punctum corresponds with mine in showing how he ultimately 'endows the photograph with the structure of the moving image' via the cut that is the punctum (Brunette & Wills, 1989: 111). As they point out, for a moment in Camera Lucida, Barthes appropriates a cinematic field for the photograph via the punctum, rather than regretting the lack of registration of the past that the movement of images in the cinema instills, as he does later in the book and in 'The Third Meaning'.

Yet the cinema has a power which at first glance the Photograph does not have: the screen (as Bazin has remarked) is not a frame but a hideout; the man or woman who emerges from it continues living: a "blind field" [champ aveugle] constantly doubles our partial vision. Now, confronting millions of photographs... I sense no blind field... Yet once there is punctum, a blind field is created (is divined)... The punctum, then, is a kind of subtle off-screen [hors-champ] - as if the image launched desire beyond what it permits us to see... (Barthes in Brunette & Wills, 1989: 111).

The influence of Lacan's notion of the gaze, desire as the blind spot in the image, on Barthes' thinking is immediately apparent here. But it is coupled with a phenomenological bias that has been criticised as a reversion to a precritical idealism (Brunette & Wills, 1989: 112). However, I find this interesting as it points to the strange mixture in Barthes' approach between investment in the transparency of signifier and investment in the image as a signifying force that predates/exceeds that transparency. While for Barthes this excess has to do with the affect of mourning that the image generates in the subject, in my 'montage texts', I shall attempt to lead this investment in the image away from mourning. However, I find Barthes' movement of loving the image
as signifying a real absence (the loss of his mother) to be generative of a way of
overcoming the affective dimension of the image as a blockage, an unrepresentable
rupture that is in opposition to discursive meaning. The unleashing of the affective
power of the image, which Barthes calls the punctum, is the taking place of a narrative
of the subject that obviates against loss by means of duration. Brunette & Wills,
referring explicitly here to the photograph, but having already undermined the
distinction between static and moving, which allows the cinematic into the picture, put
the scenario well, saying

that the punctum comes to trouble the invisible "frontal" frame
separating image from viewer and so to rend the signifying surface, by
rewriting the relation between the framed rectangle and the viewer by
placing him or her within a kind of three-dimensional rectangle or
cuboid extending outward from the screen (Brunette & Wills, 1989: 113).

However, they ultimately subscribe to the traditional view of film theory that movement
in cinema gives an impression of reality, which works to mask the image's relation to
death, repressing its discontinuities (Brunette & Wills, 1989: 116). It is the writing of
death that is generated by the collapse of boundaries between the inside and the outside
of the image.

The play of the punctum as described by Barthes, once reactivated as a
form of writing, folds reference in upon itself to place reality in a kind
of chiastic symmetry with death, presence with absence, confounding
inside with outside (Brunette & Wills, 1989: 117).

In this sense the cut that generates description away from the image is always held as a
melancholy reminder of the failure of narrative to master the very absence at the heart of
representation, i.e. death.

For my purposes, the play of the punctum as a model for engaging with a
cinematic cut, the 'chiastic symmetry' engendered by the putting into writing of the
sensibility of the suspended film moment, does not serve to acknowledge the mark of
death in reality, but life. I am interested in Barthes' writing that comes to fill in the space of absence generated by the cut of the punctum, but for me that writing does not relate to a photographic stillness, but to an image that is itself changing (living). Thereby performative writing in this thesis, rather than approaching an opaque detail (death) which it pivots around but ultimately fails to unsettle, attempts, in its pivoting, to engage a sense of liveliness outside of the oppositional parameters of life versus death. In my appropriation of Barthes, I've tried to show how, while being considered as an excess of meaning outside the language system, and thereby as non-narrative, the 'third meaning' and the punctum are 'cuts', which generate more narrative.

Where I distinguish my thesis from Barthes' approach is that in Barthes, this generation of narrative pivots around an opaque detail, which remains opaque. While generative, this detail is also an obstacle to the subject's desire, a limit-point beyond which one cannot go, which in effect constitutes the subject's desire. It is a melancholy detail. However, the processual engagement of body and image in Barthes' writing can be read in a way that shifts the melancholy relation to the film image. This is my goal. This is all the more urgent in that in Disappearance at Sea and News From Home, absence could be narrated (in terms of story) as a kind of melancholy death. In Disappearance at Sea, the image of the blank screen refers obliquely to Donald Crowhurst's death at sea, as well as being a moment where the blank screen of the film's foreseeable end is inserted into the film's middle, an intimation of finality that forecloses on the future horizon of film (Brunette & Wills, 1989: 115). News From Home images a separation that could be read as a kind of death in the silencing of the voice that connects the invisible protagonist to the life world of the mother's letters, the blankness of the final sequence, an ending. From the viewpoint of a Zizekian film analysis, separation would be akin to 'subjective destitution', the death of imaginary identifications that opens the void of possibility, but freezes the subject in this confrontation. However, my experience of the abyssal moments of these two films counters this view, transporting
me instead into the movements of the life world. There are political stakes involved in this slight shift in emphasis, which I shall explore in the following subtext.

2.7 A FEMINIST SUBTEXT: THE NARRATIVITY OF RUPTURE RESCUES THE FILM MOMENT OF ABSENCE FROM THE STASIS OF THE FEMININE IN OEDIPAL LOGIC

Asserting that the cut (to the blank screen) is a pure instance of the signifier depends on a binary split between narrative and non-narrative, content and form, meaning and the 'obtuse'. In claiming that this binary is impossible to maintain, I aim to show how in the supposedly non-narrative moment, the spectator is mobilised into another kind of narration, instead of passively reflecting the emptying of content deemed to occur in that kind of film moment. This aim has a feminist subtext to it. I will not frame my argument in terms of sexual difference, as that would be to frame (and limit) an alternative narration as being feminine per se, in a binary opposition to the classical narrative form associated with the Oedipal model of ordering, recounting and, more importantly, thinking about endings. 'It may be significant that it is at the same moment (around the age of three) that the little human "invents" at once sentence, narrative, and the Oedipus' (Barthes in de Lauretis, 1984: 104). In fact, one of my future allies, Gilles Deleuze, himself succumbs to the attraction of couching alternative narration in terms of the feminine when referring to Chantal Akerman's work in relation to the nomadic situations characteristic of time-image narration. He says that

Akerman's novelty lies in showing [...] bodily attitudes as the sign of states of body particular to the female character, whilst the men speak for society, the environment, the part which is their due, the piece of
history which they bring with them [...] But the states of the female body is not closed: descending from the mother or going back to the mother, it serves as a revelation to men, who now talk about themselves, and on a deeper level to the environment, which now makes itself seen or heard only through the window of a room, or a train, a whole art of sound. In the same place or in space, a woman's body achieves a strange nomadism which makes it cross ages, situations and places. (This was Virginia Woolf's secret in literature). The states of the body secrete the slow ceremony which joins together the corresponding attitudes, and develop a female gest which overcomes the history of men and the crisis of the world (Deleuze, 1989: 196).

I cite this in full as it encapsulates what I am up against. Although, in chapter three I shall also make a case for the openness of female subjectivity in terms of a dis/continuous mode of sublime experience, I aim to do this without the essentialism that I think pervades the crevices of Deleuze's attribution here. In fact, his positing of the female gest as that which overcomes history is synonymous with Zizek's positing of 'subjective destitution' as a feminine act, which overcomes the refuge men take in relentless activity in order to avoid confronting the radical negativity which founds the symbolic network of fictions.

In this perspective, the difference masculine/feminine no longer coincides with that of active/passive, spiritual/sensual, culture/nature; rather, masculine activity is an escape for the abyssal dimension of the feminine act. The "break with nature" is on the side of the woman, and man's compulsive activity is ultimately nothing but a desperate attempt to repair the traumatic incision of this rupture (Zizek, 1990: 37).

To avoid attributing subversive power to the female, a notion which stems from the male imaginary and inadvertently confirms the marginality and otherness of the feminine, I pose the question of an alternative form of narration within the context of undermining the frame of the binary narrative/non-narrative, content/form.

This is obliquely feminist in at least two ways. One - it addresses the notion of content, which is important to feminist aesthetics. In her essay 'Film, Feminism and the Avant-Garde', an essay written later and less polemically than 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', Laura Mulvey states that in a feminist aesthetics of film '[t]he language of form should not intrude or overshadow the free flow of the story and must
allow content to come to the fore' (Mulvey in O'Pray, 1996: 115). Teresa De Lauretis, in her cataloguing of then recent, i.e. 1980s, films by female directors such as Yvonne Rainer, Sally Potter, and Chantal Akerman, stated that 'the most exciting work in cinema and in feminism today is not anti-narrative or anti-Oedipal; quite the opposite. It is narrative and Oedipal with a vengeance' (de Lauretis, 1984: 157). In feminist aesthetics, the emphasis on the formal play of the signifier is never embraced simply as formal play. It is always a vehicle, potentially creating other forms of narrative which open the film to its outside, an outside which, for de Lauretis, is the social constitution of real women. These positive assertions of the possibilities and contradictions in cinematic representation counter the radical negativity of Peter Gidal's extreme formalism. For him 'what is not needed is "a different narrative"' (Gidal, 1979: 78). As opposed to what he calls the 'recent valorising of certain representations of women', (he mentions Akerman), 'if anything I would have thought that absence of (the) body/figure(s) in (the) film would demand a re-call outside the film - such a voice, not a representation of, for instance, woman's voice inside' (Gidal, 1979: 77). Gidal's absolute ban on positive images may be seen as untenable today given the emphasis in visual practice on the representation of so-called 'authentic experience' in identity politics, a trend which ignores earlier feminist awareness of the ambiguity and contradictions inherent in the term 'experience'. However, the contrast between Gidal's position on the (formal) absence of content and de Lauretis' on positive content and how these positions relate to the outside of the film is useful for my purposes.

As I have already discussed, in Gidal's formalism, the problem is how change can be effected in the outside given the stringent self-reflexivity of the film-text. De Lauretis' attention to forms of narrative is for a cinema that would 'enact the contradictions of women as social subjects' and 'perform the terms of the specific division of the female subject in language, in imaging, in the social' (de Lauretis, 1984: 69). She is strictly opposed to 'the minimalist strategies of materialist avant-garde cinema - its blanket condemnation of narrative and illusionism, its reductive economy of
repetition, its production of the spectator as the locus of a certain "randomness of energy" to counter the unity of subject vision, which, as I will discuss in more detail in section 4.4, are 'predicated on, even as they work against, the (transcendental) male subject' (de Lauretis, 1984: 68). However, there is an uneasy commonality between these views in their emphasis on the production of a spectator by a text, albeit a different kind of text in de Lauretis' turn to forms of narrative. Again, what is at stake is the boundary between the inside and the outside. While in de Lauretis' position, the inside and the outside would seem to be interspersed, the categories that constitute them as such are predetermined by historical definition. Thus her insistence that '[t]he question then is how to reconstruct or organize vision from the "impossible" place of female desire, the historical place of the female spectator between the look of the camera and the image on the screen' (de Lauretis, 1984: 69). While I am in sympathy with this proposition, I resist the inscription of identity attributed to the 'historical place of the female spectator'. My encounters in the twenty-first century with the 'absence of (the) body/figure(s)' in the film moment of suspension in Disappearance at Sea and News From Home neither produce an empty reflection nor a socially constructed female subject split between her image and invisible being. Instead, something in-between is generated that takes its form from the outsides of these historical discourses, i.e. from the intervallic spaces between them.

For my purposes, i.e. the spectator's relation to the blank screen in a film that is barely narrative, consideration of content as positive representation is beside the point, but perhaps content can be thought differently. I am sympathetic to Gidal's view, which is suspicious of positive content, a position, which echoes Lacan's critique of the seduction of images. On the other hand, I agree with Mulvey that content is important, although I do not subscribe to her politics of the imaginary, which would inscribe new meanings to the pre-Oedipal, mapping this space onto formal operations in film which results in predictable framing and cutting of images. Rather than relegating the feminine to the place it has always occupied, i.e. beyond discourse, my reconfiguring of
the image of absence, will attempt to pose the question of content differently, so that it is not simply positive or alternative. In my reconfiguration, content is not a property of an image/film, but becomes a dynamic in-between space that receives its form from the intersection between the image and an embodied spectator. In claiming and demonstrating that there is a narration occurring in the supposedly non-narrative moment, I want to undermine the usual mapping of the non-narrative moment as a rupture of narrative onto the feminine. I will attempt to incorporate the negative into a continuous trajectory as opposed to maintaining a distinction between narrative and its outside as excess or negativity.

For Mulvey, the image of the female itself signifies excess, the collapse of narrative. In 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' she discusses suspension in relation to the female image, saying that 'her visual presence tends to work against the development of a story line, to freeze the flow of action in moments of erotic contemplation' (Mulvey, 1975: 11).36 Using the psychoanalytic model of the image as a disavowal of lack, Mulvey couches this contemplation in the negative terms of the fetish object. The beautiful, frozen (her term), image has a double-sided nature - it evokes the anxiety it was erected to allay for the male gaze. She is captured in his gaze, thereby reassuring him of his power, but like all fetish objects, she threatens to overwhelm him, reminding him of the illusory pedestal his power is based upon. I see this feminine characterization of narrative excess as underpinning the analysis of film moments of so-called rupture, which do not image the woman at all. The negation of the system, its other, no matter how abstractly analyzed, has inadvertent links with woman as the other to the dominant system of patriarchy. Any celebration of this space of excess has to be met with great ambivalence, as it corresponds with the patriarchal equation of excess with the feminine in the first place. Zizek, pitting himself in opposition to the feminist interest in content, a factor that further exposes his avant-garde credentials, promulgates this view. Neutrally formal when dealing with the structure of the subject, the bias of this structure comes into being when it is taken to its logical conclusion in his claim,
following Lacan, that the Lacanian subject par excellence is Antigone who has broken all ties with the symbolic order and in so doing commits voluntary suicide.

Stephen Heath, in his essay 'Difference', while in part advocating the Lacanian emphasis on the symbolic register where meaning can be contested, criticizes its stereotyping of the woman as the 'locus of dis-order' and the 'downfall of interpretation' (Heath, 1978: 72 & 73). The feminine always acts as a limit to representation. I am not interested in countering this view per se, but in finding a way of thinking about identity other than in terms of the either/or of positive substantiation or negative critique. Thinking differently about identity in terms of the film encounter generating the space for a new kind of identity not premised on the available subject positionalities of identification and lack, but also not in opposition to those positionalities as this is merely reactive, thereby confirming the dominant, albeit negatively. Feminist film literature on this topic is vast. In order to further encapsulate the selective positions of negative 'content' versus positive 'content', I want to take two feminist readings of admittedly mainstream films, one from the 1980s, and one from the 1990s, which, in my view, highlight the pitfalls of relegating an alternative position in terms of the feminine. The first example is Teresa de Lauretis' analysis of Nicholas Roeg's Bad Timing: A Sensual Obsession (1980). The second analysis by Emma Wilson returns to a film I have mentioned previously in relation to Zizek, Krzysztof Kieslowski's Three Colours: Blue (1993). The influence of Kristeva pervades both of these analyses and they both, in different ways, refer to absence in the image. (As we have seen, Kristeva's notion of the signifying power of semiotic rupture in relation to the homogeneity of the symbolic order was widely adopted by 1970s film theory, especially by Wollen and Heath.)

In de Lauretis' insistence on working with and against the Oedipal narrative form to proffer an alternative, the female image on film is considered in terms of resistance. This corresponds with the space of contradiction that the female spectator finds herself in, in relation to the film itself and in relation to patriarchal power. For de Lauretis, Milena, the female character in Roeg's Bad Timing, images a limit of cinematic
discourse. While *Bad Timing* is ostensibly a love story that follows the pattern of investigation familiar in Hitchcock's *Vertigo* and *Marnie*, here 'access to narrative pleasure is blocked rather than enhanced by the film's generic contiguity with familiar patterns of expectations' (de Lauretis, 1984: 89). In the film, the psychoanalyst Dr. Alex Linden, played by Art Garfunkel, is obsessed by Theresa Russell's character, Milena. She telephones him after swallowing pills in a suicide attempt. Finding her unconscious on reaching her apartment, instead of calling ambulance immediately, he rapes her. Harvey Keitel's detective, Inspector Netusil, attempts to piece the enigma of this crime together in his investigation. However, de Lauretis maintains that Milena's refusal to be incorporated into the patriarchal structures of law that pervade the film, a refusal imaged by the temporal discontinuities of the film's montage, opens the film up to the 'impossibilities' of expressing another kind of time.\(^{37}\) For her, Milena's evasion and blockage of the Oedipal investigatory drive of narrative unhinges both the linear time frame of detection and the repetitious time of obsession, creating another temporal possibility, which de Lauretis classifies in terms of Julia Kristeva's notion of 'women's time', a time that 'is not yet' (de Lauretis, 1984: 95).\(^{38}\) Milena's, and by inference the female spectator's, 'now' cannot be represented. The space of resistance is the space that signifies the 'not here yet' of representation.

This position sounds similar to the maintenance of negativity in the avant-garde film theory I have looked at and in Zizek's notion of the feminine act. However, there is one crucial difference, which, I think, has more potential than the way de Lauretis puts it, due to the predominance of negativity in film discourse in the 1980s. She contrasts Kristevan negativity to Michel Foucault's positing of negativity as an absolute difference, which, in being in dialectical opposition to representation, constitutes its 'impossible' other. Negativity in Kristeva, as I have already discussed, operates as a 'radical and irreducible difference' (de Lauretis, 1984: 95). From my perspective, there is not much to chose between these two positions, but de Lauretis makes the startling claim that this 'radical and irreducible difference' is not simply the other half of a dialectic, as I...
have been posing it, but 'is in excess of dialectical opposition' (de Lauretis, 1984: 95).
The notion of a difference in excess of dialectical opposition comes close to Gilles
Deleuze's formulation of ontological difference (Deleuze, 1994: 65).

In Deleuze's formulation, difference is not posed in terms of negativity, but is in itself the differenciator of being and non-being, where 'non-being is not the being of the negative; rather, it is the being of the problematic, the being of problem and question' (Deleuze, 1994: 64). In other words, non-being is not the opposite of being but is what keeps things from being solidified in a static, codified, picture of the real. The interruption of Deleuze here is a bit premature in view of the (sequential) journey I am taking in this thesis, but the hint of a link to and a divergence from de Lauretis' position make it necessary at this point. (My main discussion of Deleuze will occur in chapter three.) The point I am trying to make here is that de Lauretis, writing in the 1980s, opens the question of a film posing 'the possibility of different temporality, another time of desire', but she is constrained by her time's subjugation of difference to representation. Therefore, in terms of the film image as an object of representation, she articulates this difference in terms of "nowhere" + "now" = the place and time of feminine desire that can only be stated as negativity, as borders - this is the most the film can say' (de Lauretis, 1984: 97-99).

As regards the film moments I shall look at, it is this site of negativity that I shall attempt to eradicate, which is why I am attracted to Deleuzian ideas. Does this mean that I am trying to eradicate conflict/tension, which could be thought of as being the necessary components of any identity relation and as being necessary to the promulgation of narrative? The answer is yes and no. Yes, in the sense that for de Lauretis 'radical difference cannot perhaps be represented except as an experiencing of borders' where 'borders stand for the potentially conflictual co-presence of different cultures, desires, contradictions, which they articulate or simply delineate' (de Lauretis, 1984: 99). No, in the sense that the difference I shall go on to discuss in relation to the dis/continuous film moment is not a radical difference, but an ontological one. If, to use
de Lauretis’ words, it is in 'excess of dialectical opposition', this excess is not resistance but an ungrounding of the categories of identity. In other words, a border/cut doesn't stand for a site of contradiction and/or resistance, but creates an opening for a differenciation to occur which both unites and separates things and in the process the border/cut is itself repositioned to generate another series of questions elsewhere.

Writing in the 1990s, Emma Wilson attempts to move past the Kristevan problematic that I have referred to in relation to 1970s film theory of how the rupturing signifying power of the semiotic actually effects change in relation to the dominant system of the symbolic. She begins by situating *Blue* in terms of the same deadlock of Kristeva's semiotic, whereby the fact that the semiotic is deemed to exist 'beneath and before the territory of paternal law' relegates it to a position outside culture (Wilson, 1998: 360). 'This film is caught in contradiction between representation and its refusal' (Wilson, 1998: 351). In one scene where the image subsides into blankness, Wilson writes that '[i]n the blank screen, *Blue* testifies to an absence, a space which will fissure the film as representation. The film will remain split between intense subjectivity and the denial of vision' (Wilson, 1998: 351). It is this notion of oscillation between representation and its other, i.e. rupture, excess, absence, that I want to undermine by positing the blank film image as a dis/continuity. For most of this article, Wilson seems to subscribe to the orthodox and problematic reading of Kristeva that pervaded 1970s film theory:

The moving blueness which fills the screen creates an effect analogous to Kristeva's description of entering the Arena Chapel where blue takes hold of us at the extreme limit of visual perception. For the viewer of *Blue*, these swimming scenes afford moments of near abstraction, interludes of sensory pleasure and clear, intense blue light. These episodes disturb, yet demarcate, the structure of the film and its internal dynamic of denial and recovery. They are central to the film, since both chromatically and psychologically they are prime spaces of the semiotic: they are spaces which allow the viewer to question the imbrication of colour, trauma and denial. They offer a prefiguring of a space which will be re-entered at the close of the film (Wilson, 1998: 355).
However, towards the end of this article, Wilson makes an interesting shift, which although referring to 'positive content', resonates obliquely with my project. Conscious of Judith Butler's critique of Kristeva which echoes the aforementioned one by Rosalind Ann Jones, that '[b]y relegateing the source of subversion to a site outside of culture itself, Kristeva appears to foreclose the possibility of subversion as an effective or realizable cultural practice' (Butler in Wilson, 1998: 360), Wilson attempts to reclaim the semiotic as a 'point of departure... a fluid series of identifications which are moving and interchangeable' (Wilson, 1998: 362). While this reclamation changes the identity of the semiotic so that it loses its specificity, I am in sympathy with Wilson's analysis of the last shots of the film which puts forward the notion of the main protagonist's re-birth in terms of a moving forward. While this 'moving forward' is situated in terms of narrative (positive) content, the way that Wilson maps this onto the film's final sequence of images has a formal movement that relates in part to the kind of movement I shall attribute to the spectator relation in my film encounters.

*Blue* ends with a cut from a close-up of an ultrasound image of a foetus to the iris of the man, Olivier, who aids the main protagonist to leave her past behind. Wilson concludes:

> The spectator is never allowed an entirely unselfconscious, regressive pleasure in the pools of blue, the blue crystals and the blue lights of Kieslowski's film. Nevertheless, in its synthetic ending, in the multiple facets of Julie's psyche, *Blue* achieves, for me at least, a prefiguring of the pleasure beyond the paternal law of which Butler speaks (Wilson, 1998: 362).

The problem with this analysis for me is that it relies on narrative as story. It relies on an opposition between the blockage of trauma and the mobility of recovery and on a notion that images illustrate this, i.e. blank ones image the former, shifting montage the latter. However, the notion that the protagonist's identity is projected for us as the *product of a mobile series of images* borrowed from her external reality' (Wilson, 1998: 362 - emphasis mine) is not dissimilar to the kind of sensibility I shall attribute to the
spectatorial encounter in relation to my two film moments. The main difference being of course that I shall not be using substantial images to fill out the trajectory of movement. The mobile series of images that I shall be motivated to 'perform' will not posit content in terms of positive substance. For me, the reconfiguring of the pleasure beyond paternal law is a utopian idea, thereby becoming another kind of futurity held in abeyance rather than an actuality. The reliance on the positivity of image content tends to close off the actuality of new subjectivities, which is why, while I depart from his static negativity, I am initially sympathetic to Zizek's idea of 'subjective destitution'. In Wilson, recovery is a positive alternative rather than a state that is never achieved. While there are elements of both de Lauretis' and Wilson's analyses that I find conducive to my thesis, I will align myself to the ways in which feminist theorists are currently trying to think about futurity's dynamic relation to the present. Rather than it being either held in negative abeyance, as in de Lauretis, or positively occurring in a utopian narrative, as in Wilson, I shall attempt to think of futurity as a moment of differentiation that separates and unites the units of relation that are occurring in a present moment. The present moment I am referring to being the encounter between the film image and the spectator in the moment of dis/continuity.

In chapter four, I shall refer to Elizabeth Grosz's appropriation of ideas from Henri Bergson and Deleuze that are relevant to the notion of futurity as an enlivening formal opening in the present. My encounter with Disappearance at Sea made me feel the force of absence as a positive generator of sense and as being sense-full in itself. The notion of absence as something generative rather than it being a dead space is something that Vicki Kirby, an ex-student of Grosz', discusses in Telling Flesh: The Substance of the Corporeal. Her point that as long as difference is equated with the lack or absence of identity, which it has been in dominant trends in Western metaphysics, then an absence can only be a dead thing. The task, she claims, is to argue for the differential nature of the supposed gap or lack between or within supposedly pregiven entities, i.e. identities. Rather than difference being what separates pregiven identities, how can it be seen as
instead itself 'a "becoming entity"... not a name for the gap of supposedly dead space and
time between pregiven entities' (Kirby, 1997: 65). The 'montage text' method that I shall
use in the next chapter performatively attempts to present absence as a differential
opening that acts as a site of connection between registers of being.

Kirby, in a somewhat phenomenological move close to the ethos of this thesis,
although she does not mention Merleau-Ponty except in passing, insists on the
interrelation between language and the body as mutually constituting entities. Her
assertion that there is always a connecting current working across the originating
constancy of the body and the creation of its objects (images?), is as valid, if not more
so, for the blank image, as it is for the supposedly substantial/positive one. This is
because rather than beginning from the notion of the body as 'raw and unmediated
nature', or, as in Zizek, the trace of a barred 'raw and unmediated nature', Kirby talks of a
corporeography of the body whereby its substance is continually writing itself (Kirby,
1997: 79). This corporeography is in play even in so-called moments of detachment.

Therefore the move in materialist avant-garde film theory to undermine the mythic
plentitude of narrative, by exposing the material signifiers of film, not only inadvertently
subscribes to the myth it attempts to undermine, but denies the continuous, fluid act of
signifying, of narration in its discontinuous mode of connecting and separating.

Narrative is not a super-connective layer placed on top of an a-signifying brute reality,
but is itself the interpretative current between states of being and the things that interrupt
them. Therefore, I shall claim that in relation to the film moment of absence, an
interpretative current flows between the discontinuity of the screened film and the
invisible continuity of the 'other film' being engaged with by the spectator.41 This 'other
film' is linked to but not dependent on the flow of the image screened or the reification
of filmic signifiers. Unlike as in Gidal, Wollen, and, Heath, the cut in my film
encounters opens onto a series of dis/continuous movements that expend themselves in
the multi-directional temporality of the here and now. It does not hold open a space of
criticality as a guardian of the future. An infinitely transformative sense of being moved
by temporal and spatial discontinuities rather than the stasis of negativity is what the two films I encounter on this journey lead me towards. The abstraction at work in this transformative displacement is always interconnected with the corporeality of the spectating/narrating body as a channel/passage for discursive affects.

1 The notion of the mirror phase was appropriated from Jacques Lacan's 1949 essay 'The Mirror-Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience' in *Ecrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan, (London: Tavistock Publications Ltd., 1977), pp. 1-7. In that essay, Lacan argued that the infant's recognition and identification with his reflection in the mirror is a mis-recognition of an ideal image that the human being forever strives to be like. The notion of the subject being primed to identify with and project its fantasies of perfection onto idealized, fictional, reflections of itself was ripe for a film theory, which compared the screen to a mirror and the film apparatus. See Jean-Louis Baudry, 'Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus' in Philip Rosen (ed), *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986). pp. 286-298. Laura Mulvey's use of the mirror phase in her 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' sums it up:

Important for this article is the fact that it is an image that constitutes the matrix of the imaginary, of recognition /misrecognition and identification, and hence of the first articulation of the "I," of subjectivity. This is a moment when an older fascination with looking (at the mother's face, for an obvious example) collides with the initial inklings of self-awareness. Hence it is the birth of the long love affair/despair between image and self-image that has found such intensity of expression in film and such joyous recognition in the cinema audience. Quite apart from the extraneous similarities between screen and mirror (the framing of the human form in its surroundings, for instance), the cinema has structures of fascination strong enough to allow temporary loss of ego while simultaneously reinforcing the ego. The sense of forgetting the world as the ego has subsequently come to perceive it (I forgot who I am and where I was) is nostalgically reminiscent of that presubjective moment of image recognition (Mulvey, 1975: 10).

2 See Malcolm Le Grice's 'Towards Temporal Economy', *Screen*, vol. 20, no.s 3/4, (1979/80), pp. 58-79, where he makes a case for an avant-garde film in opposition to dominant narrative cinema's construction of a coherent ego position for the spectator, invoking concepts from Metz and Baudry along the way.

3 See Mulvey's reading of Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958) as exposing the stereotypes that keep the look in the place of patriarchal power by means of the disorienting erotic involvement with the look that occurs in that film for an example of her strategy of 'reading against the grain' (Mulvey, 1975: 15). While Mulvey is critical of the dominant form of narrative, she does not equate the eschewal of narrative with an avant-garde cinema. Neither does Teresa de Lauretis (1984). In a feminist avant-garde aesthetics, deconstructive work on narrative form seems more in line with a radical film practice, in this perhaps echoing the avant-garde tradition of Godard and Straub-Huillet. See Peter Wollen's 'The Two Avant-Gardes', *Studio International*, vol. 190, no. 978.
Nov/Dec (1975), pp. 171-175 for a useful distinction between the materialist avant-garde that stemmed from modernist painting, in which he includes Le Grice, Paul Sharits, and Peter Gidal, and the cinematic avant-garde descended from Eisenstein, in which he includes Godard. The latter approach is interested in 'an alternative route between content-ism and formalism, a recognition that it is possible to work within the space opened up by the disjunction and dislocation of signifier and signified' as opposed to dissolving 'signification into objecthood or tautology' (Wollen, 1975: 173).


Also see Phillip Drummond's 'Notions of Avant-Garde Cinema' in Film as Film: Formal Experimentation in Film, 1910-1975, (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1979), pp. 9-16.

In Condition of Illusion (1975), Gidal edited three inter-negatives together to suppress the connecting splices. Two film strips 'A and B' were rolled to create a loop structure that foregrounds the presence in absentia of the connecting splices' (Gidal, 1975: sleeve notes of video copy of Condition of Illusion). This foregrounding of materiality is supposed to engender the understanding of film process that Gidal aims at.

Gidal asserts that non-narrative films, (he refers to Peter Kubelka's Arnulf Rainer (1958/60)), are not necessarily non-diegetic. Gidal is keen to separate narrative defined as story content from diegesis defined as the presentation of specifically cinematic and spatial and temporal codes, a separation I find useful although I shall take the second part of this equation in a totally different direction. In making this distinction, Gidal is referring to Christian Metz's definition of diegesis in Film Language as being derived from the Greek term narration, which means a judiciary recital of facts, and as designating the 'sum of the film's denotation: the narration itself, but also the fictional space and time dimensions implied in and by the narrative, and consequently the characters, the landscapes, the events, and other narrative elements, in so far as they are considered in their denotated aspect' (Gidal in Rodowick, 1994: 144). Defining diegesis as facticity of discourse, Gidal thereby maintains that there can be a rejection of narrative and narrativity, yet diegesis is inevitable. The latter comes to designate the subordination of image-content to image production, a process which devolves around the tension produced between real time and space and represented time and space.

This mysteriousness is set up in the "stones" chapter with blurry shots of the Sphinx accompanied by electronic music: it almost has the aura of a Turkish Delight advertisement, "full of Eastern Promise". This use of the Sphinx can be seen as part of a strategy intended to evoke mystery and an image of inscrutable womanhood, as a preliminary to their "deconstruction" with the later role of the Sphinx as a speaking subject: "she " is given a voice. But this involves a fundamental misconception: you don't dispel a myth by trying to make it speak, or reject an image by giving it a voice with which to deny itself. The film undercut its own strategy, by not recognising that the power of an image of Female Mystery is so strong that it functions in the most traditional way and is too strong to be undercut by anything later in the film - even if this were intended (Williamson in Gidal, 1979: 91-2).


The American studio version, put together by RKO against Rossellini's will, ends with Karin waking up to a bright new morning and descending gaily to the village while a male voiceover tells us: "Out of her terror and her suffering, Karin had found a great need for God. And she knew now that only in her return to the village could she hope for peace" (Zizek, 1990: 32).

Rossellini's Journey to Italy (1954) also features shots where the camera follows the billowing volcanic smoke. Using a different methodological approach to Zizek, Laura Mulvey suggests that in these shots in Journey to Italy 'the image moves away from its fictional frame of reference.
Film turns into something beyond its usual subservience to iconic representation, dissolving into wispy grey tones... The volcanic activity and the smoke from the ionisation process have a flow and a movement which animates an inanimate material, the earth itself. Of course, the "coming to life" of the earth brings death to man... (Mulvey, 2000: 106).

However, Gidal can be further read against himself as offering a possibility for the kind of narrative I shall go on to develop in his insistence on duration. Duration for Gidal is, as is diegesis, completely bound up with the material presentation of the film. 'Duration defines the specificity of cinematic denotation as the point where spatial and temporal articulations converge in the material instance of the filmstrip' (Gidal in Rodowick, 1994: 137). Gidal, theoretically at least, reduces the potential temporal disorder that could, and, in my view, does, ensue from a durational intra-filmic space between viewer and film, to the ideal of a one-to-one correspondence between production time and viewing time. For him, all extraneous details are potentially ideologically contaminated. However, Gidal's deliberation to negate extraneous influences between the viewer and the image by means of his 'procedural interaction between viewer and "viewed"...within a non-associative structure' is paradoxical (Gidal in Rodowick, 1994: 138).

The mental dialectical activation of the viewer is necessary for the procedure of the film's existence. Each film is not only structural, but structuring... The viewer is either forming an equal and more or less opposite film in his or her head or else constantly anticipating, correcting, recorrecting... constantly re-determining the confrontation with the given reality, i.e. the isolated chosen area of each film (Gidal in Rodowick, 1994: 138), (italics mine).

While Gidal's films deliberately set out to minimize the other film being formed in the viewer's head, only an ideal (subjectively empty) viewer could bracket any extraneous associations altogether. By contrast, when duration and the diegetic processual (presentational mode) flow of image production are emphasized even Gidal's unexpressive reduction is subject to 'contamination' by the viewer's place in real time and space, a placement which is intersected by bodily and psychical co-ordinates extraneous to what is on-screen.

Although in cultural studies the imaginary as a site of semiotic activity is associated with image production, Kristeva mainly looks at poetry with only a few excursions into visual production. See her 'Giotto's Joy' and 'Bellini' in Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art, Leon S. Roudiez (ed), (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980). Also, her essay 'Jackson Pollock's Milky Way: 1912-1956', Journal of Philosophy and the Visual Arts, (Academy Group, 1989), pp. 34-38. Her one excursion into cinema, the essay 'Ellipsis on Dread and the Specular Seduction', rehearsed the same suspicion of the image as a seductive lure from which we need to be distanced that I have already discussed in Lacanian psychoanalytic and 1970s semiotic film theory. 'Specular fascination captures terror and restores it to the symbolic order...Calm reigns before the sight of hell captured in the image' (Kristeva, 1986b: 241-2). To her rhetorical question 'No antifilm possible, then?' she answers:

There remains, here as elsewhere, the laugh: but, when it is the image laughing, identity crumbles and the "Great Dictator" is sawed in half. Chaplin, or Specular Mortification: the worm in the successful order of psychosis incarnate, eating away at it and laughing with the full knowledge of what it is doing...The film actor in Chaplin, but also the discrepancy or conflict between sound and image, discourse and representation, or the "impious fracturing of projection" possible in camera movement itself (Godard, Bresson), hold the spectator, still inside a phantasm, but at a distance from his own fascination' (Kristeva, 1986b: 242 - my emphasis).

Disjunction and laughter are held to have inherent destabilizing effects, while the goal is still to effect distanciation from the seduction of the image.

D. N. Rodowick echoes these sentiments in his discussion of the impact of Kristeva's ideas on both Wollen and Heath. See chapters 6 and 7 of Political Modernism: Criticism and Ideology in Contemporary Film Theory.

Carroll is critical of psychoanalytic semiotic film theory in its attribution of the irrationality of psychic processes to film, its analogy of the screen as a mirror, and its attribution of 'illusion' to

16 Two issues of Screen were devoted to Brecht: vol. 15, no. 2, Summer 1975 and vol. 16, no. 4, Winter 1975-6. Stephen Heath's 'Lessons From Brecht' in vol. 15 had a particular psychoanalytic emphasis. reading Brecht's 'fourth wall' via Freud's fetishism.

1 Sylvia Harvey in 'Whose Brecht? Memories for the 80's', raises the crucial point that for Brecht, unlike the theorists of political modernism such as Gidal and Wollen, the subjectivity of the reader/viewer was not a mere effect of textual strategies, but that the viewer was a producer. Murray Smith makes the same point in 'The Logic and Legacy of Brechtianism' in Post-Theory: Reconstructing Film Studies. (eds) David Bordwell and Noel Carroll (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), pp. 130-148. Harvey cites Brecht:

It is also as spectator that the individual loses his epicentral role and disappears: he is no longer a private person "present" at a spectacle organised by theatre people. appreciating a work which he has shown to him; he is no longer a simple consumer, he must produce. Without active participation on his part, the work would be incomplete... (Brecht in Harvey, 1982: 56).

Noel Carroll also makes the point that Godard, in drafting Brecht into service, ignored the latter's commitment to entertainment and accessibility, while 'imitating his politically committed reflexivity' (Carroll, 1982: 103). However, Carroll accuses Brecht himself of confusing illusion with mimetic representation (Carroll, 1982: 104-7).

18 This translation, entitled, 'Suture (elements of the logic of the signifier)', was published in Screen, vol. 18. no. 4. Winter 1977/78, pp. 24-34. The same issue contained Jean-Pierre Oudart's 'Cinema and Suture', pp. 35-47 and Stephen Heath's 'Notes on Suture', pp. 48-76.

19 D.N. Rodowick claims that Heath does not pay attention to the aspect of radical nonidentity that Miller posits as suture. For Miller, suture requires a radical nonidentity - a dispersion of the unity of the subject and its representations through their regulated distribution along the signifying chain' (Rodowick, 1994: 209). 'Indeed, the most radical ambition of Miller's analysis is to describe the logic of the signifier as excluding the subject from the field of truth as the very foundation of signification' (Rodowick, 1994: 210). However, Heath, in his reformulation, interprets suture as a junction of the imaginary and the symbolic. Miller's notion of suture as a radical nonidentity is not unlike Zizek's notion that a hollow or blindspot appears in the image when 'the belong to me aspect' of representation is drained from it (Zizek, 1989; 48; Copjec, 1989: 69).

20 Laura Mulvey's insistence on Riddles of the Sphinx is interesting in this light. She states: 'The film is really "about" the imaginary - it doesn't go beyond that - that's what it's raising questions about. It's opening out a space within the imaginary and not making a leap into the symbolic. It's all about pre-Oedipal issues' (Mulvey in Rodowick, 1994: 267).

21 Another example from Zizek: Hitchcock's use of montage in Psycho, whereby a point of coincidence between the character, Lilah, and the object she approaches, the house, is held in abeyance, thereby creating the point of view of estrangement necessary to suspend (Zizek, 1989a: 46). Hitchcockian montage intervenes in the tracking shot when the latter

is "subjective," when the camera shows us the subjective view of a person approaching the object-spot...Hitchcock usually alternates the "objective" shot of this person in motion, his or her walking toward the uncanny Thing, with the subjective shot of what this person sees, i.e., with the subjective view of the Thing (Zizek, 1989a: 45-6).

Thereby creating suspense and imbuing an ordinary object with the aura of anxiety and uneasiness. For Zizek the point is that we are induced to imagine a gaze outside and observing the field of representation, thereby destabilizing the spectator in the scopic field.

22 Michel Chion proposes that film theory has made a fetish out of the distanciation effects of disjunction, especially that of sound and image. Whereas in his refreshing view, discord between sound and image is an example of dissonant harmony and does not necessarily break the essential unity of the sound-image relation (Chion, 1994: 37).

23 Constance Penley and Janet Bergstrom discuss the disagreements over what counts as avant-garde cinema in their essay 'The Avant-Garde Histories and Theories, Screen, vol. 19. no. 3,
1978. Michael O'Pray. In his introduction to The British Avant-Garde Film 1926-1995: An Anthology of Writings, acknowledges the problematic use of term but also asserts its convenience as it allows us to cover a broad range of film-making.

While there are those who retain a purist attitude to filmmaking, more filmmakers currently inhabit the gallery exhibition format. Either screening films there or making film installations. I've already mentioned Chantal Akerman's film installations. In the 2001 Venice Biennale, she was one of a list of film directors invited to make gallery installations, including Abbas Kiarostami, Atom Egoyan (with Juliao Sarmento), Yervant Gianikian (with Angela Ricci Lucchi), Edward Yang, and David Lynch, who pulled out at the last minute. Egoyan was commissioned by Artangel to make the film installation Steenbeckett, based on Samuel Beckett's Krapp's Last Tape, at the Museum of Mankind, London, 2002. Many artist/filmmakers are using more traditional screening formats. Artist Sharon Lockhart's singular image, static camera film, Teatro Amazonas (1999) was screened at the Lux Cinema, London, March 2001, while gallery-goers to Eija Lliisa-Ahtila's Consolation Service (2000) film installation at the Anthony Reynolds Gallery, London, 2000, could only enter the gallery at the specified screening times during which a rope was hung across the exit. Douglas Gordon's Feature Film (2000) took place as a film installation at Atlantis, London, 2000, but was screened in the Royal Festival Hall's auditorium, London, 2001.

Brunette and Wills make the point that film histories marginalize all non-narrative films in order that a coherent historical narrative be constructed. 'They form the "other" that retrospectively is then used to constitute mainstream narrative film as some kind of distinguishable entity held up as a totality ready for description' (Brunette & Wills, 1989: 38).

In Dean's case this is in contrast to many contemporary artist's film installations. Disappearance at Sea is compelling in that, given the usually shorter duration of artist's films in comparison to mainstream film, Dean's film includes moments that fall out of the films minimal narrative trajectory and yet the film is self-contained rather than being a distillation of something larger. A lot of artist's film installation works seem either like moments cut from a larger narrative film, e.g. Salla Tykka's Lasso (2001), or, are framed as self-contained moments that refer (critically) to an implied narrative trajectory. A good example of the latter is Pierre Husge's The Ellipsis (1998), a three-screen installation where he literally films and inserts the moment of ellipsis implied in a montage sequence in Wim Wenders The American Friend (1977).

It is also ironic that Bordwell's own analysis of narration is dependent on the film still, on breaking the film down into its component frames in order to attend to the film as a whole. See Raymond Bellour's 'The Unattainable Text', Screen, vol. 16, no. 3, Autumn, 1975, for an interesting discussion of this phenomenon.

Sven Lutticken, referring to De Rijke and De Rooij's Bantar Gebang (2000), a single image lasting the 10-minute length of a film reel, shows a shantytown on a vast rubbish dump near Jakarta, notes that there is a resurgence in contemporary film installation of the use of the static camera and the single frame image which he claims results in 'a kind of dull primitivism' (Lutticken, 2002: ICA exhibition pamphlet). One could also think of Sharon Lockhart's Teatro Amazonas (1998), a 40 minute film, in which the stationary camera records the auditorium of the Teatro Amazonas opera house in Manaus, Brazil, from the stage, framing a hand-picked "cast" of locals as they listen to a live performance by the Choral do Amazonas. By contrast to these contemporaries, Dean's use of editing is cinematic, but is not used to tell a story in the conventional sense. Through the editing, Disappearance at Sea, moves out of the Warholian condition of being a moving painting, and addresses the filmic condition of the hors-champ, not as a space that is missing from the image, but as a space brought into play by the screenal interconnectivity of the viewer's internal montage process. Interestingly, Lutticken goes on to distinguish Barthes' use of stills, which generate motion in the mind of Barthes as viewer, from the contemporary use of the static image which he sees as pushing the time-image 'to such a degree that it turns into its opposite - a timeless image' (Luttichen, 2001: 19).

Seymour Chatman in 'What Novels Can Do That Films Can't (and Vice Versa)' observes that description in literature interrupts and freezes story time, whereas in film, while the presentation of descriptive details are in excess of verbal description, the pressure of narrative flow and temporality doesn't allow us time to dwell on these details.

Interestingly, this reference to Barthes in Perez' The Material Ghost: Films and their Medium occurs when Perez is discussing both Rossellini and Antonioni.

Barthes describes film's continuous voracity, which doesn't allow the spectator time to add to the image (Barthes, 2000, 55). See Laura Mulvey's 'Death 24 times a second: the tension between


33 This phrase, ‘the movements of the life world’ is perhaps problematic, although it signifies what I am trying to get at. Initially, I invented the phrase by adapting Paul Ricoeur’s notion that every narrating is narrating something, yet something which itself is not a narrative... what is narrated and is not narrative is not itself given in flesh and blood in the narrative, but simply "rendered and restored"... what is narrated is essentially the "temporality of life" (Ricoeur, 1985: 78).

However, at the end of writing my thesis, I read Jean-Luc Nancy’s The Evidence of Film: Abbas Kiarostami, where he discusses the relation of life and death in the director’s work:

Death is neither the opposite of life nor the passage into another life: it is itself the blind spot that opens up the looking, and it is such a way of looking that films life... a way of looking through which we have to look but that is not to be seen itself, that is not of this order (Nancy, 2001: 18).

The notion of the blind spot here can be related to Barthes' punctum, the difference being that in Nancy, the look that is given in film is the realization of the world in the process/motion of its being made real, sentiments that resonate with my argument.

The evidence of cinema is that of the existence of a look through which a world can give back to itself its own real... a world moving of its own motion, without heaven or a wrapping, without fixed moorings or suspension, a world shaken, trembling, as the winds blow through it (Nancy, 2001: 44).


35 I’ve already cited Judith Williamson’s critique of Mulvey’s Riddles of the Sphinx. Jacqueline Rose also critiques Mulvey’s mapping of alternative content onto the imaginary. “By defining feminine specificity in reference to preoedipality, the imaginary, and as outside the terms of representation..."Film process is then conceived as something archaic, a lost or repressed content...terms to which the feminine can so easily be assimilated"’ (Rose in Rodowick, 1994: 268).

36 In her account of von Sternberg’s cinematic procedures, Mulvey inadvertently hints at a more positive outlook on the suspension of narrative, although for her this is still couched in the negative terms of the fetishistic image of woman. For Mulvey, Sternberg’s assertion that ‘he would welcome his films being projected upside down so that story and character involvement would not interfere with the spectator's undiluted appreciation of the screen image' is ingenious in the sense that ‘his films do demand that the figure of the woman...should be identifiable’ (Mulvey, 1975: 14). However, her account of the flattening of space in his films points to a possible disengagement from the body, female, that bears the image. She says: ‘Sternberg plays down the illusion of screen depth; his screen tends to be one-dimensional, as light and shade, lace, steam, foliage, net, streamers, etc., reduce the visual field’ (Mulvey, 1975: 14). Following Mulvey’s essay, Mary Ann Doane would later develop the notion that the paraphernalia of femininity provide the means of displacement by which the female spectator can positively identify with the image in her theorization of the masquerade (Doane, (1982)). My interest here is in the notion that ‘paraphernalia' can take on the function of screenal protagonists that disengage the spectator from narrative as plot for the purpose of an 'undiluted appreciation of the screen
These other screenal protagonists can be stylistic, e.g. flatness, as well as objects. As Stanley Cavell says, the photographic medium of film does not ontologically favour human beings over the rest of nature (Cavell, 1979: 36). At a post-screening talk at the National Film Theatre, London, 15 March 2001, director Béla Tarr insisted that, while his films do follow human existential dilemmas, the rain and the animals have their own stories, stories that are more important than so-called human stories. He mentioned scenery, the weather, and time as being other protagonists in his films and that locations have their own faces (my lecture notes). These attributions resonate with how objects and sites convey an affectual sensibility in both Disappearance at Sea and News From Home.

It is no coincidence that de Lauretis footnotes Stephen Heath's Questions of Cinema in reference to 'impossibilities', a reference which will impact more emphatically on my thesis in chapter 4 when I deal with his analysis of Akerman's News From Home.

De Lauretis is referring here to Kristeva's essay, 'Women's Time', in A Kristeva Reader, Toril Moi (ed), (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), pp. 187-213. In 'Women's Time', Kristeva categorizes the three temporalities of feminism. One being cyclical time, the other, the logical time of patriarchal law, and, in a third phase, a combination of these temporalities which produces the possibility for women to create a new signifying space. This possibility is the 'not yet' that de Lauretis refers to. It is linked to the future. The problems of this kind of futurity will be addressed later in this thesis.

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In Kristeva, the irruption of poetic excess in the modernist text involves an effect of jouissance that is feminine and a logic that is necessarily opposed to the repression and continuity endemic to patriarchy, splitting its forms of subjectivity - "For feminists this split, the possibility of foregrounding the signifier, has a triple attraction: aesthetic fascination with discontinuities; pleasure from disrupting the traditional unity of the sign, and theoretical advance from investigating language and the production of meaning" (Rodowick, 1984: 228-9 - emphasis mine). (He is citing Laura Mulvey's essay 'Feminism, Film and the Avant-Garde'.)

Wilson is not wrong in her reading of Kristeva. In fact, Kristeva's essay on cinema, 'Ellipsis on Dread and the Specular Seduction', makes this equation of the semiotic with the chromatic in film even more emphatic. However, there is a moment in Kristeva's 'Giotto's Joy', (the essay Wilson cites), where, rather than blueness leading us 'back to the stage before the identification with objects and individuation' (Wilson, 1998: 349), the arrangement of its chromatic hues is symptomatic of a socialized spatial relation far removed from a regression to pre-oedipal fusion. Kristeva's unresolved juggling of the pre-oedipal and the social points to the contradictions in her work that Jones and Rodowick identify.

Pier Paolo Pasolini also refers to the 'other film' in his essay 'The Cinema of Poetry', in Bill Nichols (ed), Movies and Methods, vol. 11, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), pp. 530-558. However, for Pasolini, this other film is related to a kind of subterranean, primordial unconscious, his version of the unconscious of film being a return to its 'original oneric, barbaric, irregular, aggressive, visionary qualities' (Pasolini, 1985: 552).
Chapter Three

3.1 FROM STASIS TO MOVEMENT: FILM ENCOUNTER NO.1

It was a bright September afternoon in 1997. I left the sunlit city streets and wandered into the basement of the Frith Street Gallery, London, where I was taken captive by the film being screened there. It was Tacita Dean's Disappearance at Sea (1996). While watching it, I kept on telling myself that I should have found it boring. After all, there was very little happening, the film being mainly comprised of static camera shots of a lighthouse lamp revolving on its axis, as dusk becomes night. On one level, I did find it boring, but at the same time, its lack of stimuli was paradoxically engrossing, the continuous revolving of the lighthouse lamp, hypnotic. Two things simultaneously struck me. On the one hand, the film seemed to be a comment on the cinematic apparatus itself, its illusory manufacture laid bare by the exposure of the projector and by the exposure of the screen when the image momentarily disappears. Not to mention the fact that the image itself of the lighthouse lamp was a mirror of what cinematic illusions are made of - light and motion. This excited me because, as I've already explained in my introduction, I was always on the look out for artist's film works that appeared to counter the narcissistic pleasures and soldering associated with cinematic illusion. I was primed to look out for moments where that suturing process came undone and the negativity of the subject would be laid bare, this zero point offering the promise of an identity freed of ideological constraints.

On the other hand, an association incompatible with the position of critical spectator loomed up before me. This 'empty' film, (I'm using empty here to mean without obvious characterological identifications), resonated with a narrative fragment of my personal history. Once upon a time, a particular lighthouse set on the end of a headland where I used to walk had fascinated me. This headland was particularly exposed to the elements. Walking on it, you couldn't speak to anyone because of the unmerciful wind, so you ended up listening to its whirring through the electric pylons,
an eerie sound that seemed like an extra-planetary communication. I only ever saw this lighthouse close-up during the day. Driving at night, from a distant vantage on the surrounding roads, I would see its rays of light beam out across the ocean. However, I had some companions who went to the lighthouse at night, as they knew the lighthouse keeper. I was never invited to go there with them. It was too risky they said. They spoke of climbing up onto the lighthouse tower and of the sense they had of hanging suspended on the edge of the world, of losing themselves in limitless vastness. I was envious, yet also I was suspicious of the desire to seek out such earth-defying experiences. There seemed to me to be a denial of the mundane in such excessive desires.

However, as my engagement with *Disappearance at Sea* intensified, these associations began to slip away and were taken on lines of thought far removed from my autobiography. The processual power of the film's images, the final sequence in particular, moved me far from the critical spectator called for in radical film practice and psychoanalytic film theory and from the cliché of Proustian revelation and the correspondence between a present image and a past memory fragment. Although it has to be said that traces of the autobiographical fragment, the questions it raises of distance and proximity in relation to experience, do impinge on the transportation generated by the film. This film moved me, both literally and affectedly. I was moved by its blankness. When the screen goes blank in the final cut, this momentary suspension of film time engendered an unhinging of temporality unprepared for by the endurance of waiting through the two-minute duration of previous shots. However, the disarray engendered by the unhinging of temporality in this momentary suspension of film time was formally re-negotiated by the appearance of the light beam that gently punctuated the surface of the darkness enfolding me in its rhythmical motion. I was transported from the past and from the lighthouse as representative of the boundary between earth and oceanic excess. I was equally transported from the stasis of negativity and distanciation. I found myself in another relation of proximity to an image, one that does
not rely on the binary logic of presence/absence, narrative/suspension, but one in which I was moving in a sequence of intimate displacements. What was happening?

Gilles Deleuze in *Proust and Signs* puts a different gloss on Proustian revelation. Deleuze insists that the Combray, (Proust's childhood home), which appears to the narrator when he tastes a madeleine cake in the present is not simply Combray as it was experienced in the past, but Combray in a form in which it was never experienced that 'breaks with the subjective chain' of association (Deleuze, 2000: 154). What is recovered is not a lost time or an experience of plentitude but rather a kind of self displacement moving in, what Deleuze calls, 'the empty form of time', which is time as open continuity as opposed to abstract chronology. For Deleuze, this memory was a new sign erupting into the present, a synthesis of the past and its virtual future. 'The signs of art...give us a time regained, an original absolute time that includes all the others' (Deleuze, 2000: 24). Signs for Deleuze have two halves. One is their objective side, the side of recognition. In recognizing the sign we miss its significance, the way it signifies something other than the object we identify. We use recognition, memory and association to cover over the violence of the sign, the fact that it might put a force or pressure on us to think something new rather than resuscitate some tired or comfortable old formulation. This is

the natural direction of perception or representation. But it is also the direction of voluntary memory, which recalls things and not signs. It is, further, the direction of pleasure and of practical activity, which count on the possession of things or on the consumption of objects. And in another way, it is the tendency of intelligence. The intelligence tends toward objectivity, as perception toward the object (Deleuze, 2000: 29).

Deleuze is interested in going beyond these subject/object scenarios, where the object is reduced to the level of association rather than being engaged with in its impetus to open onto a subjectless sensuousness.

Deleuze's attempt to think beyond the comforts of recognition, while still retaining a link to the image, inspires my attempt to theorize the encounter with
Disappearance at Sea outside of the mutually exclusive paradigms of distanciation (narrative blockage/rupture) and recognition (narrative continuity as illusion). However, the question remains as to the stakes involved in this liberation beyond recognition. How different is it from Slavoj Zizek's 'subjective destitution', which is also a liberation from the forms of identity? How is this opening, what Deleuze calls the violent side of the sign, different from rupture and the formal stasis it instills on narrative? These are some of the questions that are obliquely posed as I proceed through the following 'montage text' and which will be elaborated on in the following chapters. The disjunctive processuality of the other 'maintenance of time' that occurs in the dynamic of the space of viewing, is what I shall demonstrate in the following 'montage text'. I shall attempt to find a form of narration structured by images and according to a process of additive and subtractive continuity, as opposed to the goal oriented form of literary classical narrative which film is measured against.

1 I borrow the term 'processuality' from Barbara Kennedy who in her PhD thesis, Towards an aesthetics of sensation: A reconsideration of film theory through Deleuzian Philosophy and Post-Feminism, Staffordshire University, Nov 2000, puts forward the triad, processuality, force, and intensity, as being descriptive of what a text does rather than what is might mean (Kennedy, 2000: 2). The notion of narration as a form of maintenance, I borrow from P.A. Sitney's discussion of Maurice Blanchot's fictional writing in his Modernist Montage: The Obscurity of Vision In Cinema and Literature. Commenting on Blanchot's sentence 'Now, the end' in one of his recits, Sitney traces the etymology of the common French word of "now", maintenent. He comes up with the useful notion, for my purposes, that "now" derives from the idea of holding something in hand as well as being enjoined with the notion of a moment-to-moment process of writing (Sitney, 1990: 105-6).
3.2 MONTAGE TEXT NO. 1: NARRATIVE DURATION IN *DISAPPEARANCE AT SEA*

SHOT ONE a close-up of the interior of the revolving lamp of the lighthouse at evening. Land and sky are interchanged in the process, the land rotating at the top of the lens, the sky at the bottom.

The camera is still. Its gaze fixed. The movement of the lighthouse lamp breaking the stillness, its movement doubled by the constant rotation of the two revolving bulbs, Main and Standby. Recorded light in motion, projected as a light in motion image, of light in motion. Expanded reflexivity…

The projector stands exposed facing the screen in the space. Celluloid churns noisily through its spools. Light emitting instrument illumines an image of light, an emanation bounded by the frame of the screen. A space cut out against an expanse of blackness, pierced by the light of the projector, but illuminating an off-screen geography…

Upon the screen's surface, an unseeing view is inscribed. The image de-frames the projection of light in motion, fracturing it into interconnected crescent shaped segments. Neither window, frame, nor mirror, the cut out flatness of the screen's rectangle echoes the flatness of an image whose emanation revolves back upon itself. Yet between the
intervallic delay of these enfolding, refracting, crescents of light, another space is generated...

In this intervallic space, a difference circulates. Is this difference, the difference between a material reality and a fictitious one? An exposure of the discontinuities between the place of the spectator and the technical apparatus that projects and contains the scene? A separation of spectator and image that echoes the material separation between individual film frames that when projected flow as one continuous unit on the screen? Is this shot an exposure of the component parts of film that mainstream cinematic experience usually overrides in favour of the narrative continuity between here and there?

Where am I in relation to this image projection? Do I take a correct critical distance from the vision in this image, a vision without perspective, close-up and unseeing, a blind mechanical recording and transmission, a kino-eye? Or do I deny my inability to see such sights and forget that I am looking at an image brought to me from a place I can never go? Do I go there in cybernetic union with this mechanical eye? Am I disturbed by the gap between the flatness of the screened image, the mechanical rotating light bulbs that do not see me, and the sense I have of the image as being the terminus of my vision and therefore having a modicum of depth?

Do I lose the composure of my spatial coordinates and become unseated by the resistance to fantasy projections that fore-grounding the cinematic apparatus engenders? If so, then what is the appeal of this image that reflects on the conditions of the viewing apparatus?

For I am chained, captured and captivated by this image, just as Jean-Louis Baudry predicted, except that he thought that seeing the mechanics of vision laid bare would cure me of specular attachment. And it is true that my failed attempt to align the disorienting reversals of sky and earth in this image with my (narcissistic) bodily co-ordinates is frustrating. Yes, my tranquility is disturbed, my bodily symmetry
collapsing, but not so that I could or would turn away from the image. Instead, I follow the internal cuttings of the image, the patterns of the prism moving across the screen from right to left, unfolding repetitively, seeming to progress, yet simultaneously, refilling the parameters of this exchange so that the space between one fold and another is almost imperceptible. A repetition without traces. In this horizontal exchange one furrow seems to disappear into the next, creating the appearance of an all-over surface, a flat surface full of activity: supercession, precession, unfolding, swallowing, swelling, contracting, refracting. Strips of luminosity and darkness are vertically exchanged in this prism, falling between the parameters of liquid flow. Between the light cadences that rain down through the image and those that spread porously across it, an intervallic space opens up. Not the abyss of emptiness, but a spacing that links me to the stop/start rhythm of its continuous commotion.

CUT

SHOT TWO a view with the lighthouse prism to the left of the scene overlooking the headland below and the sun setting on the horizon beyond.
At last a view before which I can locate my body in space. To the left, the lighthouse lamp continues to rotate. The camera remains fixed. I still stare captivated, but the sunrays that cut across the image make me blink. Their radiance and the clear view of the horizon, relieve the intensive machinations of the previous scene, breaking the hold of its hypnotic all-over surface. My location is affirmed by the parameters of the view presented for my contemplation. A sublime view in fact. A reddened sky bounded by a darkening horizon line that sets a limit to the vast beyond it intimates. This line gives me a position from which to orient myself in relation to the infinite celestial body of the sunset whose intense colour belies its vaporous transparency. A transparency as immaterial as projected film, but the materiality of the medium is not in question here. Rather there arises a sense of desire and longing in a space carved out for such effects.

I remember a lighthouse from the past. Not that it comes to me as an image. No image, but the one in front of me. The lighthouse from the past is a notion. What this notion brings to me now is a feeling that if I look at this image for long enough I might see something that was hidden from me then. The image as evidence of an intangible quality, as revelatory of some mysteriousness facet of myself, a blind spot that remains unknown to me and around which all images circulate. Sublime indeed. An image that might recover this lost body of the past...

The view lingers. The parameters of its sublime proportions begin to shift. Sunsets are picture-postcards. The sun sets everyday. It happens whether I am there to watch it or not. When I watch a sunset, it seems like a special event, although it's one I encounter by chance, not one that I mark off on my calendar. The film image of a sunset is a special event. It is a singular sunset. It happened like that. The 'it has been' of this sunset
reawakens a longing in me to see a sign appear in the transparency of the sky that would break its the unfathomable space of emptiness, the vacuous air with which it surrounds the earth. This longing stems from a desire to escape the confines of a body pinioned to a gaze that refuses to illuminate its inner core. An inner dark point, which haunts a body that, otherwise, relates to images as if they belong to it in the field of perception.

_Bounded within the frame, the screen acts as a container that sets definite parameters to the boundless. A beautiful image as a barrier to some rupture beyond the frame, an unthinkable off-screen. The beautiful image is tinged with terror. The solace it brings is always marked with the sign of its demise, as if it might dissolve into some unthinkable beyond where darkness would not relate to light, but exists as a pure vacuum. A black hole. An attraction to this blank place of suspension enters into the space mapped by a horizon between here and there. A desire to leave the location of light and day and move towards pure darkness, the boundlessness intimated by the horizon. This is the desire that took them to the lighthouse by night. The lighthouse, a solitary tower jutting up on the headland, marking the boundary between land and sea, between here and there, allowing them to remain attached to the land while they dipped their feet in the unfathomable. As they hung off the edge of the world, they laughed the heady laugh of the mad._

_But machinic workings refuse to provide the ground that allows armoured bodies to taste infinity from within the boundaries of form. Machinic workings have no horizon between here and there. They are relational, repetitious, and take place in the here and now._
CUT

SHOT THREE

another close-up view of the interior of lighthouse lamp.

Nightfall encroaches.

Eyes wide open, somnambulant, I.

Film time has leaped over clock time and night has fallen. Distinctions between earth and sky are less discernible. The lines of communication are shifting from dual vertical/horizontal refraction to an emphasis on the horizontal. Striated reflections of light and dark fall in and out of the circular furrows of the lamp (sur)face. They form, deform, reform, across the screen. Set in the glass prism’s interior, the two glass bulbs rotate around each other, their transparency trapping and unleashing the refracted cadences of light that pass through them. Main and Standby display a translucent faciality minus the settings of features. Fixed to a base, yet completely open to change. Devoid of psychological expression, their interiors expose the array of mechanical fittings and fixtures and nocturnal refractions that pass through them.

Does that mean they are expressionless? Is expression dependent on the articulation of features? What could be expressed in the anemic face? The gaze of a stranger or a Deleuzian cinema where paralysis unleashes the vitality of time?
The riveted circular shards of glass made liquid by motion and projection break up the
frontality of the screen making space deviate into a series of lights and darks that slide,
one to the other, in constant communication. Refractions loosened from and by this
reflective accordion superimpose themselves in a shadow play that conjures rainbow
colours and circular rhythms that exceed the screen's rectangularity. Outside this
regularity but populating it from within its surface density. Intense receptive surface
effects, my bodily co-ordinates are being distributed across this surface density
becoming emptied from inside out.

No longer a body pinioned in front of a view and surrounded by space, is this
emptying a revelation of my internal blindspot, the point at which I am viewed? In being
a body stretched out flat between a light source and an unseeing view that
erodes the space of fantasy projection, am I merely a reflexive emptiness mirroring the
close-up's dissolution of the frame of containment and the mark of a horizon?
The screen is no longer a container, but a refracting device infected by the liquid fluidity
of an off-screen without measure. In this deregulated illumination I cannot
maintain a perspective on the image. I cannot view the skin stretched flat because I am
embedded in the flatness of the image's motion, not outside it viewing it with the
gaze of estrangement. Does this turning of the internal to the surface mean that,

although I am not outside the image, I am still simply a product of the effects of
the image production blindly following another set of dictates? Do I merely repeat what
is performed before me? Does the passivity of receptivity mean that I have no
agency in relation to an image that has no depth, yet continues to entrap me? Am I at the
mercy of its eddy and flow, the stop/start of its continuous commotion? This
immersion in the micro-movements of the image that casts no shadow is more terrifying
than the view that suspends the body's agitation above the unfathomable depths
of sublime proportion.
CUT

SHOT FOUR

Again, the sunset. This time more of the lighthouse lamp is included in the shot on the left side. The sky is redder and darker than the previous sunset scene. Gull cry overrides the noise of the film churning through in the projector.

The horizon is being swallowed by the swift onset of darkness. A dark gap begins to yawn open. I cling to the disappearing streaks of burnished golden light that tinge the top edge of the image. The encroaching darkness exposes the architectural structure of the lighthouse lamp. Bluish streams of light are emitted from its prism, cutting across the screen, emissaries of an artificial lighting that scintillates the blackness. Its bulbous body stolidly retains its lattice like structural identity, impervious to the disruptive effects of these intermittent light rays. This body is vigilant, keeping watch over the unfathomable immensity beyond its location.

It is, after all, a machine, its perpetual motion the result of electrification. Its inner chamber grinds away relentlessly. Its function as a navigation point depends on its automatism. While the electrical folds of its inner prism, gain in intensity, the scene
before me is dying. Not being an automaton, I am losing my way in the image, losing the view, which allows me to intimate the infinite. Immensity is being projected back on me. My body is becoming a host to some foreign invasion.

But the sound of gulls crying, a densely populated community, suggests other means of navigation, the dip and eddy of flight rather than the stasis of the watchtower.

CUT

SHOT FIVE close-up of headland with the light searching the rocks. Gull cry increases.

Light beams are now being thrown out on the surface of the image as if they stem from my residence. They punctuate the scene in pulsating staccato intervals like a heartbeat. They pick up details of the rock face, lose them, moving on to the next detail.

A (sur)face broken into fragments. Groping between flashes, I manage not to crash into the rocks that protrude from the flattened surface of this ill-defined terrain.

Propelled by this foreign light source across the amorphous greyness, I have the sensation of teetering on the brink of an overwhelming proximity to something groundless. Beams of light pierce the interstices of the darkness that engulfs me, casting me in formless shapes whose only outline is the layers of gull-cry that
accompany this free-fall into outer space. Is this what happens when you get lost in the cavernous depths of the imagination?

When you reach the other side of a fortress identity, you become an entity that floats without definition, beating an automatic pulse that carries you on its wavelengths, a body without will, automaton.

CUT

SHOT SIX - back to the lighthouse lamp. This time the camera looks into the bulbs from the lattice structure facing the exterior of the lamp's surface. Nightfall.

Is this grey and indigo and black and brown and yellow and white? Am I here and there and in between, everywhere and nowhere? Where am I? Positioned in unbearable proximity to this non-seeing apparatus, I receive neither an image that reflects me nor a screen that mediates my gaze from the impossible and unbearable abyss of the sublime. Yes, the image is unbearable in the sense that it refuses my narcissistic co-ordinates, but I have given these up. Gladly. This image in which I am caught is almost featureless. It underwrites identity by continually refracting and producing an intangible horizontal space that continuously wraps itself around itself and on to infinity. It reflects nothing but it moves me. It captures me in its shimmering folds, the lamp's rotating axis slicing light into crescent moons that supercede, displace, replace the next one, the former one, a motion in which I am
devolved into a series of wavebands that exceed the field of the screen.

Space is collapsed into movement, a movement that doesn't extend in space but refracts in time. This refraction in time is akin to the serialization of the self that Gilles Deleuze puts forward as a model of subjectivity. It is also akin to the shift from the movement-image to the time-image that he writes about in the cinema books, where film images no longer extend in space, but unfold in time to infinity. Continually performing exchanges between appearances and disappearances rather than engaging in the relative stability of one-to-one correspondences between absence and presence. These exchanges are vertiginous, continually unfolding in an infinite refraction of movement. Have I replaced one sublime infinite for another? Have I replaced the immensity I master by my power to build myself into an impenetrable fortress by the immensity which sends me spinning into never-ending free-fall, the danse macabre of Main and Standby? Is there any end to this undifferentiated space where shades of light and dark flicker and slide from one side to the other in constant oscillation? Is there any choice between these two modes of groundlessness?

CUT

SHOT SEVEN the screen goes blank, the light from the projector exposes an absence of image. After a few seconds, a faint searchlight beams across the screen at regular intervals reforming a horizon of sorts. From left to right, as it passes across screen, it lights up cloud fronds. A seagull flies past the right-hand corner of the image, an almost imperceptible quiver.
Jump cut  
Abrupt disappearance of the image.

Momentary arrest  
Suspension of film time, of reverie.

A pause, an interval, that sends the after effects of light slices scurrying to the sidelines and exposes before me a screen bereft of anything but the faint light of the projector.

Vertiginous extension into infinite refractory space is briefly halted. No longer dizzy or armoured in the face of dissolution. I duly perceive the banality of a surface deposed of interior fantasies. Is this a termination point? The poise of emptiness, inner core exposed? Is my perspective on this scene the point-of-view of the gaze of a stranger? The materiality of the film scene and my mirroring subjectivity lay bare. Bereft of dizzying intensities or sublime terror, I crash.

Into what?

Blankness?

But there is still something going on. Light from the projector still motivates, however dully, the surface of the screen. No images rise up to cover this surface activated by the barely illuminating light of the projector. This factious illumination pulsates regardless of the disappearance of the image. The negative duration of machinic light intersects with my passage through time. This light does not carry me away on the waves of electricity's force field. I am here linked with it moving through time, a diegetic time where distinctions between real and fictional merge into one dis/continuity. Blankness is
content as I move through it beating a pulse that is uniquely my own in relation to its invisible vibration. Absence of content does not mean passive gazing at empty form, but negotiation of the continuous pulsation of a life in relation to the empty form of time. Not only does this film moment tell me this, but it recovers an image with which to think through the sensation of finding myself linked to the dynamism of a blankness with finitude written into it.

The screen darkens. Black becomes a colour after the semi-darkness of the blank screen. A faint beam of light cuts across the top half of the screen, redefining a horizon of sorts. I am both following its motion across the blackness of the screen, falling between the intervals of light, and, remaining still as it punctuates the night sky. A facility for still moving, two positions condensed into one. The body re-finds it’s outline as a thread that loops across shifting boundaries that are themselves reconfigured in the process, rather than being stolid markers between here and there. The connections interwoven between things are no longer set in geometric space or obliterated by temporal flow, but undulate in the intervals that resound like the faint beam of a searchlight invisible to the naked eye. Or like the din of gulls cawing, a sound that articulates an unheard but constant sonority, invisible to the naked ear. A pulsing calm. Strips of light pattern the surface like a fan, one beam disappearing, another appears, re-making the field of vision as a space where remoteness is at a hand’s throw from a face. Running from the danger of horizonlessness, she re-found spatial co-ordinates grounded in a poetics of a light-imaged temporality. It reverberated in a series of staccato-like impulses beating across her sockets. Raising her hand to her (sur)face, she could touch the fronds-like edges of clouds, trail along the wings of a gull, play the keys of the night along her cheekbones. She was elastic yet rooted to the spot. Perched, alert and waiting for nothing, the bifurcating movements of the moment rising and falling in continuous discontinuity.
The structure of the preceding 'montage text' is in part determined by the shot pattern of *Disappearance at Sea*, by the way the film cuts between positing a view, the shots of the sunset and the horizon, and its gradual dissolution in the close-ups of the lighthouse lamp. These two scenarios engender an oscillatory position for the spectator where she moves between a scene of dissolute scattering and a scene in which she confronts a limit to the threat of dissolution, i.e. the horizon-line. In this commentary, these two 'sublime' positionalities shall be evaluated in terms of Gilles Deleuze's and Slavoj Zizek's philosophies, references to whom occurred obliquely in the 'montage text'. Following the procedure in the 'montage text', where Zizek's notion of 'subjective destitution' was displaced by Deleuze's continuous serialization of the self, in the elaboration of their philosophies here, a similar displacement of the one for the other will also be performed. Part of this displacement in turn loops back on the encounter in chapter two with Zizek's notion of a static emptiness, which I am claiming the encounter with absence in *Disappearance at Sea* debunks. However, my attempt to elaborate the encounter with the film engenders a growing disenchantment with Deleuze, which was obliquely voiced in the 'montage text'. I will elaborate here on my problems with Deleuze's, albeit inspiring, ideas in preparation for the necessity in chapter four of a hybridization of Deleuze with aspects of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology.

My aim in this chapter is to develop my claim that the moving sensation that *Disappearance at Sea* unfolds in its ostensibly most disjunctive moment, i.e. the cut to the blank screen, is outside the economy of oscillation between 'narrative' stoppage, stasis, and interminable narration, flow. This moment generated or revealed another kind of motion where stoppage and flow are con/fused rather than clearly defined positions. Rather than disjunction for its own sake and absolutely, this other motility of the (blank) image has, I maintain, another kind of narrational continuity, which displaces the vantage points of either identity or non-identity, narrative/non-narrative. The motility
engendered by this filmic moment tells me that there is another modality of relation available when identity/identification is dissolved or suspended. It presents something other than the non-relation of an infinite scattering or the non-relation of the stilled perspective of 'the gaze of the stranger', the former, the result of an absolute dissolution of limits, (which I shall find in Deleuze), the latter, the result of an encounter with the limit of the subject. So far, most of my critical attention has been on the latter mode of non-relation, as evinced by Zizek's 'subjective destitution'. I shall now turn my attention to the notion of mobile scattering and to Deleuze. However, extending my discussion in chapter one where I critiqued the binary choice of either narrative or non-narrative/rupture. I shall here question whether the sensation of infinite scattering is merely narrative's chaotic underbelly and thereby bound to that binary rather than offering a position outside of it. The final moment in Disappearance at Sea seemed to offer a positionality not bound by this binary. I shall return to the feminist stakes involved in seeking this other position, which, as I have already said, I shall not couch in terms of gender per se. My aim is to divorce the binary of narrative structure versus chaotic rupture, articulations, which are underpinned in (film) narratology by the positions of masculinity and femininity. This divorce might free the feminine from its associations with rupture and non-meaning and offer another mode of relation to an image of blankness.

The first stage in achieving this goal is to look at the possibility for a mode of relation other than the one of self-reflection in 1970s radical film theory and in Zizek's approach. Gilles Deleuze also discusses the notion of being submitted to the image in his books on cinema, Cinema 1: The Movement-Image and Cinema 2: The Time-Image. However, his notion of submission does not place the viewer in a mirror relation to the image, but in a relation of reversibility where the viewer, immersed in the image, is subjected to the revolving axis of what Deleuze, influenced by Henri Bergson's philosophy, calls the actual and the virtual. This axis is sometimes defined by Deleuze in rather commonsensical terms, e.g. '[e]very moment of our life presents two aspects, it is
actual and virtual, perception on one side, recollection on the other' (Bergson in Deleuze, 1989: 79). However, the virtual is not to be equated with memory images, although it is a confusing concept as Deleuze refers to it in at least two ways. On the one hand, he talks about the virtual image in the pure state which has no need of becoming actual, but which corresponds to the actual image by a process of duplication as if in a mirror.

The virtual image in the pure state is defined, not in accordance with a new present in relation to which it would be (relatively) past, but in accordance with the actual present of which it is the past, absolutely and simultaneously: although it is specific it is none the less part of 'the past in general', in the sense that it has not yet received a date. As pure virtuality it does not have to be actualized, since it is strictly correlative with the actual image with which it forms the smallest circuit which serves as base or point for all the others (Deleuze: 1989: 79-80).

On the other hand, he describes the circuit of exchange between the virtual and the actual, which results in the becoming actual of the virtual.

When the virtual image becomes actual, it is then visible and limpid, as in the mirror or the solidity of finished crystal. But the actual image becomes virtual in its turn, referred elsewhere, invisible, opaque and shadowy, like a crystal barely dislodged from the earth (Deleuze, 1989: 70).

What is the merit of this approach in terms of what I have discussed so far?

In chapter two, Peter Gidal referred to 'the other film', determining that this other film needed to be released by means of foregrounding the materiality of the medium. This approach exaggerated a dichotomy between narrative and non-narrative, flow and cut. Taking the first of Deleuze's formulations of the virtual, 'the other film' would always be in a relation to the flow of images rather than requiring their suspension in order to come into being. The materialist avant-garde ur-ground of the medium would instead be a non-ground, with which images form in synchrony without being a translation of it due to the force of its all-encompassing nowhereness. Re-phrasing this in psychoanalytic terminology, what is exposed in the cut is the lack of a ground, rather than the ground as lack. For Deleuze, the world before we exist is full of
virtual differences, some of which move towards actualization - the creation of beings. However, this process is not simply goal-oriented, but is continually in motion. Human identities are not the end result of a process founded on lack, but are nodal points in a web of continuously bifurcating series of differences. Adapting this approach to narrative, rupture, and/or the foregrounding of the medium, could instead be seen as a momentary break that exposes the continual folding of the image in relation to its invisible substrate, i.e. pure virtuality, rather than revealing the empty, traumatic, ground of reflection. Taking the latter of Deleuze's formulations, the becoming actual of the virtual would mean that rupture loses its force as an absolute mark between signification and non-meaning, but is incorporated as part of the process of differentiating sedimentations that the pure virtual, the groundless ground of being, is capable of actualizing in any present moment. Between these two formulations, lies a capacity whereby new configurations of the spectator's relation to the image might come into being.

It is this capacity that interests me and which seemed to unfold in the encounter with *Disappearance at Sea*. The actual-virtual circuit, which Deleuze refers to as a crystal-image, has two aspects to it. It is an 'internal limit of all the relative circuits, but also outer-most variable and reshapable envelope, at the edges of the world, beyond even moments of the world' (Deleuze, 1989: 81). In this taxonomy, a cut to a blank screen can be re-conceived as a literal figuring of the interstitial unfolding of the visible and the invisible that occurs in each moment in time rather than being an index of the invisibility that haunts representation. This threshold, the interstice of the cut, rather than being seen as a moment of discontinuous disjunction, can be viewed as a moment that unleashes the continuity of non-chronological time relationships characteristic of life rather than narrative logic per se. In this pause, space is flattened and so cannot be used to plot out the sequential relationships characteristic of narrative as a structure that is imposed on the flotsam and jetsam of everyday life. The point here is that the cut neither forms the end of one scene and the beginning of another, as in classical montage, nor the
gap characteristic of semiotic theories of non-narrative, which, in equating the image with an utterance, can only conceive of a cut as a break in narrative. In a Deleuzian taxonomy, 'the cut has become the interstice, it is irrational and does not form part of either set, one of which has no more an end than the other has a beginning' (Deleuze, 1989: 181).

This irrational cut is not divorced from continuity though. It reconciles continuity with 'the sequence of irrational points, according to non-chronological time relationships' (Deleuze, 1989: 181). Montage then takes on a new sense. The interstice of the irrational cut presents us with the force of the body's passage through time as immeasurable entity, what Deleuze would call the empty form of time. (I'm thinking here of the body as a general corporeal aggregate of which the amalgamation of the film image and the spectator would be the actual distributions.) The blank screen can be seen as actualizing a limit towards which the other shots are unfolding, i.e. the end of the film, but, in presenting this limit, the image relation is not destroyed or suspended. It is revealed instead as a site of potential exchange between circuits of virtual and actual images, and circuits of the virtual and the pure virtual. Disappearance at Sea could be said to 'actualize' this exchange in the return of the light beam. The way it cuts the screen up into a series of black and white permutations that continuously create shifting distinctions between the here and there, appearance and disappearance, seems to echo the continuity of the virtual revealed by the image of absence. In terms of a metaphorical reading, one could read this return as a sign of continuity, maybe even some kind of transubstantiation of the spirit, that after death, there is light. While I do not adhere to this kind of narrativization of the film, as it fills in a blankness with extraneous meaning, the sense of mobility that the return of the lightbeam engendered had a kind of joy to it.

This joy was not beyond signification, but was bound up with the sensation of being able to acknowledge something outside myself that I am impartially, yet intimately, connected to. I would define this 'feeling' in terms of a relation of 'disjunctive synthesis', a conceptualization that Constantin Boundas uses to describe the Deleuzian
form and process of narrativization. He describes this process as 'a divergence which is no longer a principle of exclusion, and a disjunction, no longer a means of separation' (Boundas, 1994: 109). To think of narrative in this way is to think of it as a structuring that expresses the secret substrate of everyday life from within its borders. It is to no longer think of it as an imposed structure, which in turn creates an unrepresentable remainder. Instead, in the process of disjunctive synthesis, the limit itself changes in relation to what it delimits so that there is a procedural exchange between feeling and telling.

However, I shall also take issue with the direction of Deleuze's formulation of the relation between the image and the spectator. Deleuze discusses the importance in contemporary cinema of the image of absence, the black screen or the white screen. He mentions the director Philippe Garrel as being able, in films such as L'enfant secret (1982),

to give an extraordinary intensity to these irrational cuts so that the series of anterior images has no end, while the series of subsequent images likewise has no beginning. the two series converging towards the white or black screen as their common limit. Moreover in this way, the screen becomes the medium for variations: the black screen and the under-exposed image, the intense blackness which lets us guess at dark volumes in process of being constituted, or the black marked by a fixed or moving luminous point, and all the combinations of black and fire: the white screen and the over-exposed image, the milky image or the snowy image whose dancing seeds are to take shape... (Deleuze, 1989: 200).

While this quotation suggests an abstract and vertiginous interrelation between the poles of light and dark, I shall argue that in terms of Disappearance at Sea, this is not a limitless vision that disregards the bounds of location. In fact, Deleuze's reference to the vertigo of spacing in Cinema 2: The Time-Image will be transformed in my analysis, which will ultimately address questions of boundaries rather than infinity (Deleuze, 1989: 180). In what follows I shall attempt to weigh up the stakes involved in considering the relation engendered by the moment of the blank film image as being
constitutive of a subjectivity outside the parameters of identity/non-identity, narrative/excess.

The stakes involved in this intuition and desire to think about the dissolution of identity as having narrational parameters rather than as a lapse into chaos and disorder relate to the feminist subtext in the introduction. As I mentioned there, the excessive underside of narrative, the scattering of its ordering function, is firmly mapped onto the figure of the woman. When she appears as figure, she acts as an obstacle to narrative flow, a limit it continually revolves around. But her appearance also signifies an absence in psychoanalytic terms, an absence that gives way onto the absence of limits, chaos, or what I want to call here, in preparation for what follows, infinite scattering. To think an absence as being generative of narrative rather than engendering its collapse, is an attempt to ultimately reconfigure the negativity of this groundless ground of the feminine, a ground which calls out for a limit to be imposed on its chaotic overwhelming force, its sublime nature. In making a case for the subjectivity generated by the disjunctive film moment as being of a narrational order other than excess, (the latter deemed as feminine and either celebrated or feared depending on which camp you find yourself in), I want to move away from gendered accounts of spectatorship. However, my attempt to find narrational continuity in the supposedly suspended image, to reconfigure that space as other than excess or stillness, is motivated by an underground desire to unhinge female subjectivity from those values. Underground, because I have no desire to name this other narrational value as feminine as that would merely recapitulate to the other side of a binary which would still supports its opposite term.

For now, I suggest that this other narrational value is to do with the interrelation between form and the real of everyday banality. I want to introduce my encounter with Deleuze with the following quotation:

[I]f everyday banality is so important, it is because, being subject to sensory-motor schemata which, are automatic and pre-established, it is
all the more liable, on the least disturbance of equilibrium between stimulus and response [...] suddenly to free itself from this schema and reveal itself in a visual and sound nakedness, crudeness and brutality which make it unbearable, giving it the pace of a dream or a nightmare (Deleuze, 1989: 3).

3.4 GILLES DELEUZE ENCOUNTERS STROMBOLI (1949)

Unlike semiological or psychoanalytic accounts of spectatorship where the spectator is a component of the cinematic apparatus, in the cinema Deleuze calls 'time-image' cinema, the spectator metamorphoses into a seer immersed in film's flow of images. 'This is a cinema of the seer and no longer of the agent', he says (Deleuze, 1989: 2). His concern is not with the narrative trajectory of a character's passage from one state to another, but in the way a character's hallucinatory visions allow the director to move from one kind of image sequence to another. This proffers a different kind of narrative trajectory for the viewer, an image narration. The viewer becomes submerged in the film image, a dynamic which would seem, on the face of it, to consist of immersion in a smooth non-conflictual image-space rather than the tension of conflictual identification in a psychoanalytic account of spectatorship. How does this smooth immersion relate to the suspended film image? What possibilities for 'the real' are unleashed in this approach to the film image?

Deleuze mentions Stromboli in chapter three of Cinema 2: The Time-Image where he contrasts habitual recognition to attentive recognition referring to Henri Bergson's ideas on memory. Habitual recognition is extensive. Perception extends itself into the usual habituated movements so that 'I recognize my friend Peter' (Deleuze, 1989: 44). By contrast, in attentive recognition, the extension of perception is inhibited. This inhibition of the goal of the sensory-motor apparatus implodes on the figure of the object presented, leading me to return to the object and create multiple 'descriptions' of aspects of its form, a move that Deleuze sees as the opening up of different planes. The image in attentive recognition becomes a pure optical (and sound) image of the thing.
rather than having a functional role to play in a subject/object dichotomy as in habitual recognition (Deleuze, 1989: 44). Where does the encounter beyond habitual recognition lead us? Out of this world or to a more fully embedded relation to it?

The encounter beyond habitual recognition is similar to Karin's encounter with the volcano in Stromboli or my encounter with the blank image and the strange light source in Disappearance at Sea. Deleuze discusses Stromboli:

[A] foreign woman whose revelation of the island will be all the more profound because she cannot react in a way that softens or compensates for the violence of what she sees, the intensity and the enormity of the tunny-fishing ("It was awful..."), the panic-inducing power of the eruption ("I am finished, I am afraid, what mystery, what beauty, my God...") (Deleuze, 1989: 2).

This seems like a description of an epiphany, a term that Zizek was keen to counter in his analysis of the film in chapter two because it gives the suspended moment substantial meaning. Does Deleuze's analysis perpetuate the notion of an awe that suspends the everyday? Or does this revelation lead to the everyday? Taking his stride from Andre Bazin's analysis of neo-realism as a response to a perceived crisis in cinema, Deleuze states the case, which dominates the time-image:

If all the movement-images, perceptions, actions and affects underwent such an upheaval, was this not first of all because a new element burst onto the scene which was to prevent perception being extended into action in order to put it in contact with thought, and, gradually, was to subordinate the image to the demands of new signs which would take it beyond movement? (Deleuze, 1989:1).

This new element is the transformation of action into hallucination, a form of expanded duration in which a character becomes immobilized. By inference the viewer would also become immobilized, prey to a vision that possesses him/her. However, this immobility is contradictory, as, rather than remaining in the suspended paralysis of Zizek's 'subjective destitution', here immobility opens onto the animated banality of the real.

What do I mean by this? Deleuze's opening film example serves to illustrate this phenomenon.
[Il]n Umberto D, De Sica constructs the famous sequence quoted as an example by Bazin: the young maid going into the kitchen in the morning, making a series of mechanical, weary gestures, cleaning a bit, driving the ants away from a water fountain, picking up the coffee grinder, stretching out her foot to close the door with her toe. And her eyes meet her pregnant woman's belly, and it is as though all the misery in the world were going to be born. This is how, in an ordinary or everyday situation, in the course of a series of gestures, which are insignificant but all the more obedient to simple sensory-motor schemata, what has suddenly been brought about is a pure optical *situation* to which the little maid has no response or reaction. The eyes, the belly, that is what an encounter is… (1989: 1-2).

At first glance, this approach does seem similar to Zizek's analysis of Stromboli where a rupture in the narrative trajectory of the film suspends action and leads to a disengagement from identity. For Zizek, this suspension exposes the frozen pose of the empty form of the subject, the gaze of the stranger, which is theoretically the perspective from which a liberation from identity (and images) might ensue. In giving the reason why psychoanalysis is liberatory, Zizek quotes Lacan's essay 'Aggressivity in Psychoanalysis'. The passage is worth citing in full because it illuminates the static nature of the pose in the scenario of subjective destitution:

"As Lacan points out, the paranoiac feelings of persecution that characterize the mirror stage are constituted by a stagnation similar to "the faces of actors when a film is suddenly stopped in mid-action": "Now, this formal stagnation is akin to the most general structure of human knowledge: that which constitutes the ego and its objects with attributes of permanence, identity, and substantiality, in short, with entities or 'things' that are very different from the Gestalten that experience enables us to isolate in the shifting field, stretched in accordance with the lines of animal desire" (Jacques Lacan, "Aggressivity in Psychoanalysis", in Ecrits: A Selection (New York: Norton, 1977), p.17.)

What Lacan renders visible here is "Platonism in its becoming": he does not refute Platonism by directly denouncing the illusory nature of *eidos* but by exposing the genesis of the subject's fixation on the immobile *eidos* (Zizek, 1992: 66).

In this scenario of becoming a subject, there is a definitive bar between chaos and stability. It is pertinent here that Lacan compares the stability of the ego to a freeze-frame. In subjective destitution, itself a kind of freeze-frame, the subject is perched
between its empty formal structure and the chaos that this form mitigates. This perspective momentarily severs the ego's attachment to the content of its form, potentially offering the chance of shifting its attachment to that content. However, interesting as this analysis is on its own terms, using it as a mode of approach for film has one crucial limitation, which for me is the limitation of the Lacanian account of subjectivity.

What characterizes film is mobility not immobility, regardless of the fact that a film is comprised of separate frames. While film is not quotable in any way that does not freeze the image, this freezing is a betrayal of the mobility and dynamism of film, which renders it different from a photograph, although, as we have seen, in Barthes’ analyses the static image generates movement (Bellour, 1975). I am interested in considering the 'stilled' image in Disappearance at Sea as generating a dissolution of the subject, but I question the absolute negativity of Zizek's account as it ultimately leaves the image relation out of count. His emphasis on poised stasis, the gaze of a stranger, poses the possibility of dynamism in terms of the disappearance of the image and does not say very much about how an image can be affecting without necessarily accommodating one's psychological needs and desires. Can Deleuze open up a way of thinking of how an image can be affecting without being either psychologically tied to desire or to be aiming at the point beyond desire?

While the state of immobility Deleuze attributes to the time-image also has to do with a certain freezing of the co-ordinates of movement, his mode of approach seeks to move beyond the either/or of narrative movement versus rupture. A Deleuzian approach follows the film image as it continues to unfold in the stasis of the hallucinated moment. A very different account and assumption of subjectivity is generated here. For Deleuze, as I have intimated, there is not simply a choice between empty form and superficial content, as all forms are simulacra rather than being divided into those that are ideal and their actualized copies as in Plato's formulation. Rather than remaining on the actual side of the mirror/screen fixedly staring at the choice between empty form and
superficial content. Deleuze maintains that all forms emerge from processes of copying, doubling, imaging and simulation (Colebrook, 2002: 98). Deleuze, like Alice in Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass*, passes through to the other side of the image, where distinctions between form and content, stability and chaos are difficult to maintain, where

the observer becomes a part of the simulacrum itself, which is transformed and deformed by his point of view. In short, there is in the simulacrum a becoming-mad, or a becoming-unlimited, as in the *Philebus* where "more and less are always going a point further," a becoming always other, a becoming subversive of the depths, able to evade the equal, the limit, the Same, or the Similar: always more and less at once, but never equal. To impose a limit on this becoming, to order it according to the same, to render it similar - and, for that part which remains rebellious, to repress it as deeply as possible, to shut it up in a cavern at the bottom of the Ocean - such is the aim of Platonism in its will to bring about the triumph of icons over simulacra (Deleuze, 1990: 258-9).

As we shall see shortly, because in Deleuze's formulation of subjectivity, there is no founding moment as such, no definitive bar separating form and chaos, the physio-psychological immobility generated by the 'pure optical situation' opens out onto the mobility of the circuit of exchange between virtual and actual images. While Deleuze does not say much more about Karin in *Stromboli*, his account of how the circuit of exchange between virtual and actual configures change in relation to Yasujiro Ozu's films is pertinent to my initial encounter with *Disappearance at Sea*.

Referring to the camera's attention to still objects like vases in Ozu's films, Deleuze discusses the extended temporality of the 'pure optical situation' that emerges from this concentration in terms of duration. He states that '[t]ime is the full, that is, the unalterable form filled by change' (Deleuze, 1989: 17). In this phrase, we have the hint of a crucial difference between Zizek and Deleuze. Deleuze also maintains that there is an empty form, time itself, but this form is not, as the empty form of the subject is, a bound structure. Thereby the emergence of subjectivity is not irredeemably cut or separated from this empty form, but always in relation to it. As Deleuze says 'it is we
who are internal to time, not the other way round (Deleuze, 1989: 83). In other words, there is a kind of synthetic whole that is open to things that are passing. This synthetic whole does not harmonize the things that erupt within it, but continuously connects and fractures the directions of change or movement.

3.5 DELEUZIAN SERIALIZATION OVERTAKES LACANIAN FORMAL STAGNATION.

When Boundas puts forward the notion that narrativization in Deleuze is serialization, it is obvious from the outset that this is not narrative as we are used to thinking about it (Boundas, 1994: 100). While Zizek's analysis depends on the dichotomy between classical narrativity and non-narrative, perhaps thinking about narrative in terms of serialization might break down the binary that that position poses and allow for the continuous affectivity of the image in terms of an attachment that is not severed by rupture. Taking a Lacanian position means seeing the image either as a substantial illusory pacifier of psychic disturbance, or, if the image resists that desire, the subject is propelled towards its inherent split and poised on the precipice of extinction. Disjunction here is negativity, its dynamism informed by the threat of defusion of the death drive, whereas Deleuze offers a theory of an 'originary disjunctive synthesis' as constitutive of subjectivity (Boundas, 1994:101). This notion is useful in order to think 'of narratives that can accommodate, without compromise, fragmentation and multiplicity' (Boundas, 1994: 100). As Boundas puts it:

The usual response to these questions is that the fragmentation of the subject brings about loss of meaning and the collapse of the personality. But even if this were the case for the life of the self-constituting self, why would the frittering of (existential) meaning prevent the narrative biographer from making sense of her data? The standard edition of Freud's works is full of case studies (often in narrative form) of patients with shattered selves (Boundas, 1994: 100).
While for Lacan, as for Freud, there is an order beyond the subject, a transcendent death drive, which poses an internal blindspot at its heart, Deleuze inverts this position. The transcendental is not beyond the subject, but is rather the groundless yet founding moment of subjectivity, which opens it up to the heterogeneous disarray of a chaotic multitude of sense impressions. In order to make sense of this disarray, the subject is the outcome of a process which subjugates difference to identity. However, identity is not erected on an absolute bedrock here, but is the continuous serialization of the relation between the 'chaosmos' (an amalgamation of chaos and cosmos) and the subject as a 'cracked I' (Boundas, 1994: 102). Deleuze maintains the connectivity and reversibility of difference and identity and his critique aims at keeping the former free from its traditional subjugation to identity. As Deleuze states in Negotiations, Lacan's Symbolic Order stabilizes the dispersal of sense in the Real, anchoring it in a central fixed signifier (Deleuze, 1995: 33). To keep this stabilization from occurring, Deleuze develops the destabilizing effects of the death drive rather than the other path Freud offered, i.e. the path of stasis incurred in the regression to zero. Zizek also maintains the disruptive force of the death drive, but as a structure that gives the subject a perspective from which to view the failure of the Symbolic to render it complete. For Zizek the death drive is a point of inconsistency, which tears meaning apart and, in its positive aspect, is the source of the drive to posit meaning in turn.

It is this constant oscillation and negative repetition between narrative and non-narrative (death) that I want to break away. Either I'm faced with the collapse of meaning or I'm constantly positing the question what does this mean? The latter is the impetus for the drive towards narrative, an impetus which, however dallying and circuitous, is, as Peter Brooks insists, always in search of closure, the end. The former, the collapse of meaning as subjective destitution, is the liberation from narrative, the exposure of its seductions, pleasures, and definitions. This liberation though, is the limit of sense, the risk of nonsense and is thereby uninhabitable as a subject position. Structurally, this is the psychotic core of the subject that in turn forces us to come up
with another story to fill in the unbearable emptiness of its empty ground. Negation as
the motivation for narrativization - what is wrong with this? Is it not the case that
depprivation is the point at which something new comes into being? How could
signifying activity be generated if not for sensory/symbolic deprivation? Critical
analysis of art/film using a Lacanian methodology always seems to stop at the point at
which something new might come into being. It does not demonstrate something new as
that would be to affirm an ideological position. Does Deleuze's conception of an
'originary disjunctive synthesis', whereby the death drive is figured in terms of
affirmation rather than negation, open up the possibility of an affective engagement with
the image of suspension on its terms rather than from the perspective of the structure of
the subject?

Deleuze acknowledges an early debt to Lacan borrowing a notion of an
agent he named "object = x" necessary for 'originary disjunctive synthesis' to operate.
This "object = x" sounds very similar to Lacan's 'objet a' in the sense that it is an empty
place within a system. However, this place of emptiness is not a static point within a
structure, but a dynamic shifter within a system of serialization:

the object = x leaps from one series to another, "always absent from its
place" and never totally landing or transferring itself to any one series;
for, if it did, the result would be premature closure and an abrupt end of
the narration (Boundas, 1994: 101).[9]

The point of interest here for the development of this thesis is that 'an abrupt end of
narration' never occurs. Deleuze's concept of the "object = x" forms relations between
the aforementioned couplet of a 'cracked I' and the 'chaosmos', between a modality
capable of translating aspects of identity from one series to another and the becoming-
world in which these serializations take place (Boundas, 1994:102). It does not form a
structural symbiosis in relation to the subject where, regardless of the position the
subject assumes, Lacan's 'objet petit a' maintains its rigidity as an empty place in the
structure. If the moment of becoming that Zizek points out in Lacan's mirror-stage is
like a photograph, static, posed, poised between an absent referent and substantial identity. in Deleuze, the becoming world, as referred to in the citation above from *The Logic of Sense*, is ruled by metamorphosis. Deleuze's notion of subjectivity as a becoming in relation to a dynamic, shifting, absence (the virtual) makes his ideas conducive to the rethinking the spectatorial effects of the moving image of vacuity.

As opposed to the absolute cut of separation (from the image), in a Deleuzian trajectory, the process of cutting is both connective and separating.

Becoming-subject cannot be constituted through a juxtaposition of "immobile segments". Participation in immobile segments has always been responsible for the hieratic and static world of Being (Boundas, 1994: 105).

By contrast, 'disjunctive synthesis ... places series in communication and in resonance with one another the very moment it separates one from the other' (Boundas, 1994: 101). This minute but crucial difference between a cut that separates absolutely and one that connects and separates simultaneously can be exemplified in the distinctions between Lacan's notion of the death drive as negativity and Deleuze's as affirmation. As Keith Ansell Pearson states 'Deleuze's reconfiguration of the death-drive can be illuminated by considering the distinction he makes, drawing on Blanchot, between "personal" and "impersonal" death' (Pearson, 1997: 63).

Blanchot rightly suggests that death has two aspects. One is personal, concerning the I or the ego, something which I can confront in a struggle or meet at a limit, or in any case encounter in a present which causes everything to pass. The other is strangely impersonal, with no relation to 'me', neither present nor past but always coming, the source of an incessant multiple adventure in a persistent question...The first signifies the personal disappearance of the person, the annihilation of this difference represented by the I or the ego. This is a difference which existed only in order to die, and the disappearance of which can be objectively represented by a return to inanimate matter, as though calculated by a kind of entropy (Deleuze, 1994: 112-113).

The desire of the death drive as the return to inanimate matter is, Deleuze claims, the Freudian conception, which leads Freud to posit the death drive in opposition to Eros.
and prevents him from discovering the aspect of the death drive that is indistinguishable from Eros. For Deleuze, Thanatos is completely indistinguishable from the desexualization of Eros and the resultant formation of a neutral and displaceable energy.

The other face or aspect of death, the one Deleuze asserts, refers to the state of free differences when they are no longer subject to the form imposed upon them by an I or an ego, when they assume a shape which excludes my own coherence no less than that of any identity whatsoever (Deleuze, 1994: 113).

For Deleuze, Freud pacifies this other death by the dichotomy between instinctual defusion and the desire to return to stasis, these psychic states corresponding to the narrative categories of the dilatory middle, with its postponement of the end, and the directive desire for the end. Deleuze's turn to the other face of death emphasizes the interminable and the incessant, the formless as the product of the most extreme formality. This is how the story of time ends: by undoing its too well centred natural or psychical circle and forming a straight line which then, led by its own length, reconstitutes an eternally decentred circle (Deleuze, 1994: 115).

Zizek points out that there are two conceptions of death in Lacan also - this is in keeping with Lacan's reformulation of Freud. One is real, biological death; the other, absolute death, the destruction of the signifying network, a destruction that 'liberates nature from its own laws and opens the way for the creation of new forms of life ex nihilo' (Zizek, 1989:134). This sounds like Deleuze's state of free differences, but there is one important distinction. In Deleuze the creation of new forms of life does not occur ex nihilo, but is still linked to the vital universe of becoming. It is not 'a sublime body' exempted from the life cycle (Zizek, 1989b: 134).

Discussing a Dickens character in Our Mutual Friend who lies on his death bed, Deleuze states that in his deepest coma, this wicked man himself senses something soft and sweet penetrating him... Between his life and his death, there is a moment that is only that of a life playing with death. The life of the
individual gives way to an impersonal and yet singular life that releases a pure event freed from the accidents of internal and external life, that is, freed from the subjectivity and objectivity of what happens. The life of such individuality fades away in favour of the singular life immanent to a man who no longer has a name, though he can be mistaken for no other (Deleuze, 2001:28-9).

That this is not a sublime elevation of the individual to a state beyond phenomenal existence is clear from the following citation:

But we shouldn't enclose life in the single moment when individual life confronts universal death. A life is everywhere, in all the moments that a given living subject goes through and that are measured by given lived objects: an immanent life carrying with it the events or singularities that are merely actualized in subjects and objects. This indefinite life does not itself have moments, close as they may be to one another, but only between-times, between-moments; it doesn't just come about or come after but offers the immensity of an empty time where one sees the event yet to come or already happened, in the absolute of an immediate consciousness (Deleuze, 2001: 29).

This vision is what Zizek, from the perspective of the symbolic, would perhaps call 'fanaticism'. '[F]anaticism is an insane visionary delusion that we can immediately see or grasp what lies beyond all bounds of sensibility' (Zizek, 1989: 204). As Zizek points out in The Ticklish Subject, a being able to close this gap and fully comprehend the diversity of phenomena that comprise its origins would be a noumenal archetypeus intellectus no longer constrained by the limitations of temporality (Zizek, 1999: 43). However, for Deleuze immediacy and mediation are not mutually exclusive. It is this interconnectivity that I find useful in thinking about the disappearance of the image in Disappearance at Sea.

The force of the immediacy of the between-moments of a life, the continuous invisible flow of time through our representations, i.e. the moments we can articulate, this force issues from the final image sequence of Disappearance at Sea. The pulse that issues from the momentarily blank screen resonates with the invisible yet sensed spatiality that includes the spectator within its environs. The actuals of subject and object, body and screen are exchanged within the immanent parameters of virtuality,
parameters that are invisible but no less felt. In this scenario, the 'I' is opened out onto an ongoing process of narration as serialization, finding itself situated, obliterated and renewed in the midst of the chaotic force field of unbound differences. Within this boundless field, the 'I' is in a disjunctive dialogue with its other, the non-I, rather than being a locutionary boundary between divorced real/ms.

In making this analogy, I am perhaps guilty of literally mapping the disjunctive dialogue between light and dark that occurs in the final scene of *Disappearance at Sea* onto the movement of differential subjectivity in the space of suspension. However, my point is that the disjunctive dialogue between light and dark in the film's final sequence intimates a movement beyond the representational system of vision where this movement would be seen in terms of an oscillation between absence and presence. Instead, this disjunctive dialogue, (discontinuous continuity), generates or co-substantiates a mode of subjectivity beyond recognition, so that it becomes a question of an immersive blindness, rather than seeing at a distance. Here it is not a question of an image being posited on a subject's horizon. Yes, "I" am in the gallery space confronting a screen, but "I" am being excavated from that location and becoming a seer in Deleuze's sense, absorbed by the surface effects of the image where oppositional categories revolve upon one another. 'I' am no longer confronting a limit or carving out space, but am caught up in a machinic dispersal of infinite movements across poles of overlapping permutations of in/distinction.

3.6 TWO KINDS OF SUBLIME: PAUL SCHRADER'S TRANSCENDENTAL STASIS AND LEO BERSANI'S IMMANENT LIGHTING.

But perhaps I should be wary of this formulation. What I seem to be saying here is that the trajectory of the final scene in Dean's film correlates with a generative narrative process, where narrative is thought of as a connective structure which can be added to infinitely rather than issuing towards a definite ending. It is
useful to think about a process of narrative whereby ruptures/digressions and endings would not be the poles of oscillation/tension that keeps the process in motion. But in breaking away from that trajectory, is there a danger of becoming utterly dislocated from the sense of things that constitutes a life as it is lived? Initially, Deleuze's time-image is strongly related to the everyday, as we saw above in the references to neo-realism and Yasujiro Ozu's films. Through the physically immobilizing effects of repetition and boredom, an encounter with the psychologically mobilizing dynamic of time ensues. However, Deleuze's trajectory seems to dissolve an embodied relation to that mobilizing dynamic, whereas, in relation to Disappearance at Sea, while "I" am displaced from the subject position of positing the image before me, "I" am still in a material, embodied relation to this image of dispersal. Does Deleuze provide any scope for thinking of this durational dispersal in terms of embodiment? To explore the ramifications of this problem, I shall contrast Deleuze's analysis of Paul Schrader's Transcendental Style in Film: Bresson, Ozu, Dreyer with Leo Bersani's use of Deleuze in an as yet unpublished paper based on Jean-Luc Godard's Le Mepris (1963) called 'Forming Couples: Godard's Contempt'.

In Transcendental Style in Film: Bresson, Ozu, Dreyer, Schrader identifies a 'transcendental expression' in art that 'attempts to bring man as close to the ineffable, invisible and unknowable as words, images and ideas can take him' (Schrader, 1972: 8). Interestingly, he states that critical enquiry into this mode of expression ends at the gulf (aporia) of mysticism.

Although, a critic cannot analyze the Transcendent, he can describe the immanent and the manner in which it is transcended. He can discover how the immanent is expressive of the Transcendent (Schrader, 1972: 8).

Schrader's procedure, while not intentionally psychoanalytic, bears an inadvertent resemblance to Zizek's dissembling of the subject. While Zizek would not be in sympathy with Schrader's notion of transcendence, the latter occupies a similar position.
to the empty subject's confrontation with the Real or voiding of identity that we saw in Zizek. Schrader sees immanence as the enemy of transcendence, whether it be external (realism, rationalism) or internal (psychologism, expressionism), in other words, all ideological constraints. Transcendental style in film reduces constructs such as 'plot, acting, characterization, camerawork, music, dialogue, editing' to stasis, making them non-expressive so that an emphasis on a kind of frozen form that transcends content can occur.

Transcendental style stylizes reality by eliminating (or nearly) those elements which are primarily expressive of human experience thereby robbing the conventional interpretations of reality of their relevance and power (Schrader, 1972: 11).

Transcendental style involves a three-step procedure in the procurement of this break with reality in the service of something beyond that reality. Schrader, like Deleuze, refers to Ozu's films as exemplary. In an Ozu film, action occurs in the middle of a scene, with the highpoints of conventional drama, the beginning and the end, being neglected. Firstly, says Schrader, we are given a meticulous representation of the dull, banal, commonplaces of everyday living. Nothing much appears to be happening. Then, a disparity, a rupture, occurs in this seamless world of everyday rituals and objects. In evocative terms that correlate with Deleuze's analysis, which itself in part relies on Schrader's, Schrader characterizes this as 'the growing crack in the dull surface of everyday reality' which 'becomes an open rupture' in the cold context of the everyday.

And finally in a moment of decisive action, there is an outburst of spiritual emotion totally inexplicable within the everyday that results in an unresolved tension between a maximum of human expression and non-expression (Schrader, 1972: 43).

The third step follows – the disparity is not resolved but transcended by means of freezing the decisive action into stasis. 'The decisive action does not resolve disparity but freezes it into stasis' (Schrader, 1972: 49).
The everyday and disparity are experiential. They taunt and tease the spectator's emotions. Stasis is formalistic, it incorporates those emotions into a larger form. Stasis transforms empathy into aesthetic appreciation, experience into expression, emotion into form (Schrader, 1972: 51).

This resonates with Zizek's gaze of a stranger whereby the subject is posed in a static formal relation/confrontation with the constraints of psychological and ideological expression.

Deleuze is interested in Schrader's analysis, as this empty form for Deleuze is Time itself, the manifestation of its formal indeterminacy within the horizon of the everyday banality. However, Deleuze is adamant that there is no need to call on a transcendence to describe this occurrence.

[It seems to us that nature does not, as Schrader believes, intervene in a decisive moment or in a clear break with everyday man. The splendor of nature, of a snow-covered mountain, tells us one thing only: everything is ordinary and regular, everything is everyday! [...] Daily life allows only weak sensory motor connections to survive, and replaces the action-image by pure optical and sound images, opsigns and sonsigns (Deleuze, 1989: 15).

While Deleuze discusses these situations in terms of making us grasp something intolerable and unbearable, e.g. 'Stromboli: a beauty which is too great for us, like too strong a pain' (Deleuze, 1989: 18), he does not consider the suspension of motor connections as a freeze-frame. Rather it reveals another kind of continuity. The notion of a beauty too strong like a pain is reminiscent of the discourse of the sublime, whereby the image pains us because it presents our inadequacy to cross beyond the threshold of representation and commune with the transcendent, i.e. nature, the Real, unmediated immanence. Schrader's analysis brings us to that threshold.

However, Deleuze, as I have said, reverses the traditional metaphysical positions of immanence and transcendence, whereby the latter can only be beyond the immanent on the actual plane of consistency, while, on the plane of the virtual, the transcendental field itself is immanent (Deleuze, 2001: 32). This reversal allows for continuity between the everyday and the cosmic. Deleuze, in positing a new seeing
function which opens us up to the 'whole image without metaphor, in its excess of horror or beauty, unjustifiable' may sound like Zizek. Yet I want to persist in insisting that the minute difference between them in terms of how they conceptualize the ground of this moment of excess is crucial to the reconsideration of an enlivening relation with the image. It is the difference between being poised at the frozen moment of the genesis of the subject or being immersed in the moment of extinction, which reveals the commingling of forces, the circulation of differences. In relation to Disappearance at Sea, I am not saying that the pacing of the light beam across the darkness of the screen, illuminating the edges of clouds, represents such a scenario. What I am saying is that this image generated a spectatorial alignment, which intimated the inner sensation of the commingling of forces, the play of free differences liberated from the co-ordinates of identity, what Boundas, following Deleuze, refers to as 'the virtual in the process of actualization' (Boundas, 1993: 42).

The problem though is that while this dispersal is a desirable state of existence, how does the actual not get repeated? (This is a similar question to critiques of Kristeva on the effectivity of the semiotic that I mentioned in chapter two.) How dynamic is the actual? How is the actual changed by its temporal interaction with the virtual? How can mere oscillation be avoided? While I do not want to return to my feminist subtext in depth as yet, I must admit that my reservation to Deleuze's notion of subjectivity as free liberated differences stems from the insistence in feminist theory on the importance of the located body. While the co-ordinates of a normalized perception may be reconfigured in Deleuze's 'transcendental empiricism', the scene of the body which depends on space is not eradicated. We are not disembodied mental imaginaries existing in a pure temporality, but finite entities that, while being traversed by 'chaomotic' differences, cut specific shapes out of the formal indeterminacy of time.

The limitation of Deleuze for a theory of embodiment can perhaps be made more explicit by looking at Leo Bersani's use of his ideas, which relates to
Deleuze's problematic discussion of the brain and the image that features in chapter eight of *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*. In that chapter, Deleuze claims that

> everything can be used as a screen, the body of a protagonist or even the bodies of the spectators; everything can replace film stock, in a virtual film which now only goes on in the head, behind the pupils, with sound sources taken as required from the auditorium. A disturbed brain-death or a new brain which would be at once the screen, the film stock and the camera, each time membrane of the outside and the inside (Deleuze, 1989: 215).

In this vision, embodiment evaporates in favour of an emphasis on liquid, gaseous, perception without a perceiving subject similar to the drugged vision Deleuze mentions in *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*. In 'Forming Couples: Godard's Contempt', Bersani moves in the direction of a 'liquid, gaseous, perception without a perceiving subject', although, as I've already mentioned - see note x this section - Bersani's reading of Freud's 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle', while sharing Deleuze's linking of Eros and Thanatos, dramatically diverges from Deleuze's emphasis on the desexualization of Eros that ensue as a result of this link. However, Bersani's use of Deleuze is particularly apropos to this discussion because it relates to a film moment, the final scene in Godard's *Le Mepris* where the horizon nearly vanishes. Bersani's complex analysis of the narrative of this film and the relation of the main characters, Paul and Camille, to the mythic couple, Odysseus and Penelope, does not interest me here. What does interest me is his analysis of how Paul and Camille's psychological desires fix them in positions of stasis. According to Bersani, fascination and seduction immobilize Paul and Camille, respectively, in the imprisoning psychic space of Camille's contempt for Paul. (Camille seeks to imprison Paul's fascinated gaze.)

In the film, various scenarios are acted out around this dialectic, the outcome being that neither one is seen by the other and, more importantly, the missing movements between them, reduce nature to a deadened backdrop, reminiscent of Zizek's notion of the mortifying nature of the symbolic order. Bersani, interested in the possibility of escape from this mortification, posits an imaginary realm where the lack in
desire would not create voids in space, would not render space apart, fractured. Space, he says, becomes discontinuous when it is invaded by foreign bodies whose inner habitat has the false extensibility of a purely psychic space. Our psychology darkens the transparency of light and spatial connectedness. Instead of psychological fracture, he suggests that the film itself is aiming at a totality beyond that of the fragmentation of bodies effected by camera cropping and the separation of one subject from another within the narrative. In the final scene of *Le Mepris*, the horizon line is reduced to nearly nothing but a uniform spectacle of sky and water. Bersani claims that this elimination of the distinction between subjects and objects engenders a new spatial relation where everything is now illuminated from a light that comes from the elements towards us as opposed being illuminated by a light projected artificially on the scene (Bersani, Jul 2001: conference paper). In this new spatial relation, Bersani suggested, it is possible to move within nature as an appearance that registers and responds to other appearances. While I am interested in the idea that a film moment can suggest a mode of subjectivity whereby one might move as an appearance that registers and responds to other appearances without reducing them to an objectifying stasis, how are distinctions to be made in such a continuous flow of bodies and light?

I am interested in Bersani’s thesis that the vanishing of the horizon in *Le Mepris* is suggestive of a space where, rather than being imprisoned by one’s psychology, one might become liberated from it. In this, his thesis echoes the liquidation of identity in Zizek’s ‘subjective destitution’ with the crucial difference that for Bersani this liberation is full of movement rather than being a suspension of movement. For Bersani, this liberation consists in the emission of light ordinarily hidden by psychic darkness. Losing our fascinating and crippling expressiveness, he said, might be the precondition for our moving freely within nature (Bersani, Jul 2001: conference paper). Bersani put forward a model of subjectivity whereby the relation to the other is not via recognition and desire. In his analysis, the disappearance of the horizon seduces the characters into the openness of the imaginary, effecting a shift from sexuality to
sensuality whereby subjectivity is a play with the possibility of undoing forms and structures (Bersani, Jul 2001: conference paper). Can this analysis be related to the disappearance of the horizon in Disappearance at Sea, the cut to the emptying of expressive form and the ensuing reappearance of a light without a point of view? I do not think that the encounter with the moment of suspension in Disappearance at Sea engenders an embrace of imaginary pre-symbolic being such as Bersani claims for Le Mepris. While there are similarities between Bersani's claims and mine in terms of how the disappearance of the horizon effects a sense of continuous space, I would not define this continuity as imaginary, but 'real'.

There are two pathways that can be taken from Deleuze's notion of the time-image. The one I've elaborated here via Bersani is the one that relates to Deleuze's appropriation and affirmation of the visionary-romantic interpretation of experimental film where mind and film are viewed in a relation of limitless syncopation. (I deal with this more thoroughly in section 4.4 when I look at Deleuze's analysis of Michael Snow.) Bersani embraces a Deleuzian notion of film as an open totality in which appearances (matter) communicate seamlessly with other appearances as a phenomenon of mind or spirit (Bersani, Jul 2001: conference paper). In Bersani's reading of Le Mepris, this results in the mnemonic contingency of particular bodies like those of Paul and Camille with other bodies, i.e. the precursors, Odysseus and Penelope. The eradication of the limit here creates an infinite machinic assemblage where forms and structures are continuously in contact, their intrinsic identities being continually undone by this contact. If, Bersani said, Camille and Paul had let themselves be seduced into the openness of the imaginary, they might have left their condemned coupledom for the freedom to reappear always as subjects that are too multiple, too unfinished ever to be loved. For Bersani the final scene in Le Mepris is suggestive of an uninjured nature, a nature not broken by the appearance of the subject. In the final scene, there is no trace of land or human presence. The use of artificial (film) lighting is no longer necessary, as it was in an earlier scene of the sky and the water where the water's foam carried traces of
human passage. Now, a light that comes from the elements moves towards us, illuminating everything. We are liberated by the force of this immanent light, a light that our expressive being had blocked. But what do we become? This pathway of Deleuzian thinking leads to a melting of the subject into the cosmological, into the particles of an undifferentiated matter.

However, the pathway less trodden on but also offered by Deleuze is the one hinted at in his citation of Michelangelo Antonioni to explain the difference between the horizon in the metaphysical tradition, where it marks an unsurpassable limit, and in Ozu's philosophy, where it signifies the continuity of the ordinary and cosmic. 22

Antonioni spoke of "the horizon of events", but noted that in the West the word has a double meaning, man's banal horizon and an inaccessible and always receding cosmological horizon. Hence the division of western cinema into European humanism and American science fiction. He suggested that it is not the same for the Japanese, who are hardly interested in science fiction: one and the same horizon links the cosmic to the everyday, the durable to the changing, one single and identical time as the unchanging form of that which changes (Deleuze, 1989: 1

Although this geographic partition has a kind of mythic aspect to it, the cultural distinction between two ways of conceiving the horizon is relevant to this discussion. From the perspective of (Western) man, the unattainable is always receding in relation to an articulated limit. The desire to exceed this limit can lead to madness, as this limit preserves the subject's boundaries between itself and the other. This limit is also the horizon against which self and other locate themselves. It has to do with position and separation and is the obstacle and ground of negotiation. In the version of the horizon attributed to the Japanese, the horizon does not act as a limit. Rather, it connects that which is continuously changing to an unbounded form that is eternally present. The simultaneity of this connection, rather than the oscillation between excess (madness) and banality, allows for another kind of relation between self and other. The ramifications of this difference can be explored by contrasting two versions of madness in relation to the lack of horizon/limit: Zizek's reference to Hegel's 'dark night of the soul' and Deleuze's reading of Michel Tournier's novel Friday.
Zizek describes the psychotic realm of a universe devoid of symbolic work, or the horizon, using Hegel's dark night of the soul.

The human being is this night, this empty nothing, that contains everything in its simplicity - an unending wealth of many presentations, images, of which none happens to occur to him - or which are not present. This night, the inner of nature, that exists here - pure self - in phantasmagorical presentations, is night all around it, and just so disappears. One catches sight of this night when one looks human beings in the eye - into a night that becomes awful... (Hegel in Zizek, 1992: 50).

In Zizek’s formulation, this dark night of the soul is a vision of the world without a subject, the latter being a defensive formation projected onto the world in order to contain this unruly (projectile) madness. This dialectic can be mapped in terms of the figure of narrative/non-narrative. The non-narrative moment being the moment of excess that either freezes the subject in its tracks, allowing insight into the moment of its genesis (creation ex nihilo), or destroys the subject by swallowing it in the chaotic wild visions of the Real. However, is this 'dark night' always and only awful?

Peter Dews points out how Zizek’s interpretation of the Hegelian dictum the negation of the negation, i.e. the loss of a loss, 'condemns the subject to a perpetual alienation' (Dews, 1995: 255). Zizek's scenario of 'subjective destitution' is an example of the 'loss of a loss' whereby the subject, in confronting its constitutive lack, is split into what Dews refers to as a 'nonsubstantial self-relating which maintains its distance from inner worldly objects' (Dews, 1995: 249). Whereas for Hegel, Dews suggests, and for Lacan in his later work, this dictum can be read as

the self-destruction of the negative relation between consciousnesses whose relation to themselves (and thus to each other) is negative or abstract (polarised between empirical plenitude and reflective vacancy, or vice versa), with the result that the other ceases to be a limit of the self (Dews, 1995: 248).

In other words, the other (object) takes on an internal self-sufficient determination, which is not the result of the subject's positing of it in relation to itself. The entities of
subject and object then enter into a much more involved dynamic instigating a series of self-relations/mediations whereby the parameters of distance and immediacy are not mutually exclusive. I am not going to explore whether this is true of later Lacan or evaluate Dews' analysis of Hegel, which is based on Hinrich Fink-Eitel's commentary on Hegel's *Science of Logic*, as this is beyond the scope of this thesis. What is of interest here, aside from the explicit analysis of the lack of intersubjectivity in Zizek's conception of the subject, is the fact that Dews' reading of Hegel echoes Deleuze's concept of 'immanent self-differentiation' (Kerslake, 2002: 13). In other words that there is an immediate self-relation that differentiates self from self rather than the self having to posit the other in order to differentiate itself.

Deleuze's use of this terminology in relation to cinema changes the way I might think about the relation to the cut to the empty screen in *Disappearance at Sea*. Rather than being poised on the brink of genesis, frozen in a static gaze, exposed to the 'dark night of the soul', this empty moment throws me into communication with a self-differentiation more intimate than that posited by a relation to an other outside of myself. The "I" is cast upon a sea of clamoring fragments that echoes the way that time cuts a life up into pieces yet also provides the consistency which allows for seizure of and movement through the unpredictable shapes that form on this sea. The sensible here means the changeable that which is capable of a change in direction like the wind or tidal flow. The moment of disjunction generates an event of connection, a narration that includes the spaces between things, the intervals, rather than omitting these spaces for the imposed clarity of a narrative structure. The "I" becomes a series of nodal points, points of intersection between the currents and light-waves of multiple connections.

Deleuze uses Michel Tournier's retelling of the Robinson Crusoe story, *Vendredi ou les limbes du Pacifique*, to show that in the absence of others the world does not necessarily fritter away into nothingness. In the absence of others, in the absence of a common horizon, a necessary grounding for the mapping of space as we usually conceive of it, Tournier's Robinson is subject to a universe where objects hit him
with the force of projectiles. (This is similar to the phantasmagorias mentioned above in Zizek's 'dark night of the soul') 'A brutal opposition between light and darkness, with no transitions to protect his eyes, mark the spot that the retreating others leave behind' (Boundas, 1993: 38). This is a psychotic universe, Deleuze being attracted in his work to states of psychotic derangement which he terms schizoanalysis. However, according to Boundas,

[i]n Deleuze-Tournier's account, without the others, Robinson's desire is, for the first time, restored to him, separated from its object, desire is spared of an earlier obligatory detour through sexuality, and finds, for the first time, its telos, perfection and completeness within itself (Boundas, 1993: 38).

Is this simply the kind of delusional narcissism that Zizek's analysis is pitted against? By contrast to Lacan's negative account of narcissism, Deleuze puts forward a narcissism of universal unfolding whereby formal resonances between the self and things in the world create and de-create identity (Deleuze (1994), Olkowski (1999)). What this narcissism reveals is the dynamic relation between the living individual embedded in his or her surrounding world and that world embedded in him/her. This magnifying narcissism is the other (repressed) side of the subject who exists in a frontal or reflective critical relation to the world. When the horizon of positing subject and posited object disappears. chaos is not necessarily the result. Rather the splinters (shards of light) that emerge from this disappearance can allow for new or other formations of existence to appear and continue in the face of a so-called symbolic dissolution. The vanquished horizon and its dislocated return in Disappearance at Sea allows for a connection to occur between the impersonal movements of a life and a singular subject who exists against the world as a space populated by others. There is communality between both these forms of being rather than a divorce/bar between them. The supposedly chaotic life world doesn't just come knocking at a stable symbolic order, but the two are involved in a mutual commingling. The site of madness is not simply a ground upon which the symbolic is created as a secondary defense mechanism, creating a transcendental realm.
out of an empirical one. In Deleuze's transcendental empiricism, the subject is never a static void, a structure that separates and protects one from the chaos of the life world.

The difference between Deleuze and Zizek can clearly be seen in the reference Zizek makes to Henri Bergson, Deleuze's main mediator in the cinema books. Zizek says:

In our everyday attitude, we are "spontaneous Bergsonians": we bemoan the fate of immediate life experience, we point out how the fullness of life flow escapes forever the network of language categories, we laugh at those who become so entangled in the fictitious world of symbols that they lose the taste of effective life [...] One of the lessons of Lacanian psychoanalysis - and at the same time the point at which Lacan rejoins Hegel - is the radical discontinuity between the organic immediacy of "life" and the symbolic universe: the "symbolization of reality" implies the passage through the zero point of the "night of the world". What we forget when we pursue our daily life, is that our human universe is nothing but an embodiment of the radically inhuman "abstract negativity" of the abyss we experience when we face the "night of the world" (Zizek, 1992: 51-53).

The choice here is between being immersed in the network of symbolic fictions, which serve as a support for daily life or suspending these in traversing the fantasy, and confronting again the radical negativity upon which they are founded. Transgressing the symbolic order does not enable us to (re)establish immediate contact with the presymbolic life substance. Rather it throws us back into what Zizek calls 'that abyss of the Real out of which our symbolic reality emerged' (Zizek, 1992: 54). This, as I have already said, allows the subject/spectator some leeway from the signifier but this analysis stops at that point of distanciation. Thence the criticism against psychoanalysis that it 'is only capable of decomposing the personality structure and cannot offer a positive alternative to the pathological structure it demolished' (Zizek, 1992: 66). To the question of why psychoanalysis isn't followed by "psychosynthesis", some reconstruction of sorts, Zizek retorts by saying that 'successful psychoanalysis as such already is the required "synthesis" insofar as it explains the genesis of the split, i.e. conceives of it in its becoming' (Zizek, 1992:66). In other words, the subject's confrontation with the originary drama of its positing of reality as the answer to its
inability to accede to full self-knowledge, grants the subject some detachment from its neurotic pursuit of meaning and the belief that it lies out there somewhere. By contrast, in a Deleuzian trajectory, the point of momentary suspension is the entry into the dynamics of the encounter, which forces one to think beyond the frame of recognition.

Deleuze-Tournier's Robinson can be read as a cinematic figure in the sense that Deleuze's analysis of cinema also takes us to a site of madness where cinema 'spreads an "experimental night" or a white space over us' (Deleuze, 1989: 201).

[1] It works with "dancing seeds" and a "luminous dust": it affects the visible with a fundamental disturbance, and the world with a suspension which contradicts all natural perception (Deleuze, 1989: 201).

However, in the 'luminous dust' of that 'experimental night', something new is constituted rather than this night merely exposing the ground zero of representation as in Zizek's 'night of the world'. This new thing, a new constitution of bodies, as Deleuze describes it, is not new in the sense that it wasn't there before, but is new in the sense that it wasn't perceived or felt before. On the other hand, this cinema of 'constituting bodies, and in this way restoring our belief in the world, restoring our reason...giving us back reasons to believe in the world and in vanished bodies' has a price, which is, like Tournier's Robinson, a confrontation with madness (Deleuze, 1989: 201).

[T]he object of cinema is not to reconstitute a presence of bodies, in perception and action, but to carry out a primordial genesis of bodies in terms of a white, or a black or a grey (or even in terms of colours), in terms of a "beginning of visible which is not yet a figure, which is not yet an action" [but] a process of constitution of bodies from the neutral image, white or black, snowy or flashed (Deleuze, 1989: 201).

Deleuze's use of language here is very seductive and his evocation of the luminous particularity of black, grey and white resonate strongly with the sense of continuity in the face of absence that I encountered in the final scene of Disappearance at Sea. I would like to go with it, embrace it as a methodology, but I have a nagging doubt in the back of my mind, fed by what I perceive to be the disintegration of location that emerges in this primordial genesis. On the one hand, this luminous, differentiated, darkness
resonates with my relation to the blank screen in Disappearance at Sea, where the possibility of another kind of relation with absence, one where absence is populated with differentiating movements that traverse the passage between self and subject, emerges. However, on the other hand, I am still concerned with the question of the kind of body we are talking about here. The deformed/reformed horizon patterned by the light beam is still for me bound to a human body as opposed to Deleuze's emphasis on 'inhuman narration' (Deleuze, 1989: 102).

Writing on Dean's work, Michael Newman elaborates on how the utter disorientation and destruction of the world brought about by the loss of the horizon 'can open up the possibility of a relation with another, infinite time and space' (Newman, 2001: 25). Clearly, Deleuze's ideas in the cinema books point in this direction, as do Bersani's use of them. I do not necessarily disagree with this notion, but find myself cautious in appropriating this opening out onto the infinite and the loss of finitude/location it seems to imply. This desire for the infinite bears traces of metaphysical longing and melancholy. While Dean herself is drawn to melancholic sites of abandonment and tragic stories of failure in relation to the infinite, my relation to Disappearance at Sea is the obverse of any melancholy sense of loss or failure. The film moment seemed, on the contrary, to engender a joyous sense of finite infinitude dependent on a sense of being located in time and space.

Dean's discussion of the horizon of time in relation to another of her films, Banewl (1999), is particularly pertinent. This 59-minute film of the solar eclipse focuses on cows in a field, cutting intermittently between long-shots and close-ups of the cows and shots of the changing light in the sky. While for me, this film is less radical than Disappearance at Sea, its imagery being bound by more commonsensical spatial relations, Dean's description of the horizon of time in relation to Banewl bears comparison to Deleuze's aforementioned citation of Antonioni and the dual registration of the inhuman and the human. This is the direction I am going in, as opposed to the eclipse of the human in the suspended film moment of duration.
The eclipse was about waiting for darkness to happen and then equally for the return of a normal sun. The clouds allowed us to experience the coincidence of cosmic time and scale on our terms and in our human time, measuring it against the movements of animals and the fine detailing of the natural world (Dean in Dietrich, 2002: 49).

While in *Disappearance at Sea*, the nightmarish quality of dark nights and disappearing images were more emphatic and not naturalized by overt reference to a humanly habitable ground as in *Banewl*, I would still want to locate the film's engendering of displacement on some kind of human scale. It is still a kind of spectator, some kind of "I", that locates the sense of disparate fragments being traversed in an additive accumulation, rather than as a mere digression that delays narrative closure. What kind of spectator is a displaced spectator? What kind of embodiment is generated here?

3.7 THE FEMINIST SUBTEXT RETURNS: THE MATHEMATICAL SUBLIME RE-READ AS A MODE OF DIS/CONTINUITY THAT IS NOT OTHER TO THE DYNAMIC SUBLIME.

Rosi Braidotti is a feminist who speaking as a Deleuzian, 'believes that desire is the effective motor of political change, as opposed to willful transformation' (Braidotti, 1993: 54). Yet for her, as for me, there are contradictions in Deleuze's thinking that make him both attractive and unconducive for a feminist praxis. As she points out, Deleuze's recourse to the perversity of dissolute multiple identities in his concept of becoming, a verb conjoined with the nouns woman, animal and child, can only be embraced by a male theorist located as a subject in relation to a phallic order. While she finds his emphasis on a ground of desire unattached to specific coded objects useful, the one-sided emphasis of its co-existence of multiple temporalities tends to obviate against the very real and continuing struggle for recognition that is associated with a feminist subjectivity.
Fragmentation being woman's historical condition, we are left with the option of either disagreeing with Deleuze's theory of becoming, or of flatly stating that women have been Deleuzian since the beginnings of time (Braidotti, 1993: 51-2).

Deleuze she says in failing to cross the time variable with the variable of sexual difference creates a 'naively undifferentiated' philosophy of time and becoming (Braidotti, 1993: 52). A feminist praxis is loathe to give up on embodiment as the very real site of struggle and negotiation of identity. This body is not reducible to anatomy or coded identity per se, but is an amalgamation of cultural and fantastical interrelations of signs. For me, a notion of embodiment is still operative in the film moment of suspension regardless of the liberation of the senses that can be instigated by the 'experimental night' that spreads itself across my field of vision. Braidotti gives a useful working definition of the body which, for me, signifies how embodiment impinges on any spectatorial relation, however immersive and infinitely dispersed it may be.

The body in question is best understood as a surface of signification, situated at the intersection of the alleged facticity of anatomy with the symbolic dimension of language (Braidotti, 1993: 49).

Therefore even if and when we are propelled beyond the symbolic dimension of language, we are not beyond the realm of signifying materiality. My insistence on embodiment is not the same as the traditional phenomenological notion of the body as an anchoring site for a perceiving consciousness. Although, I am in sympathy with aspects of that tradition, which I shall look at in chapter four, I want to retain Deleuze's notion of the becoming actual of the virtual as it is suggestive of an infinite process of anchoring and potential. This notion is important to avoid the use of embodiment as a non-discursive materiality.

Rather than asserting embodiment as mitigating against the delusions of an abstract universal attachment to the mental vertigo of infinity, which is common in feminist theory, I am interested in Christine Battersby's emphasis on transforming aesthetic tradition by thinking a 'response to the infinite and overwhelming [that]
involves immanence, rather than transcendence' (Battersby in Jones, 2000: 32).\textsuperscript{31}

Deleuze's 'transcendental empiricism' which locates the transcendental field as immanent and grounding as opposed to being beyond discourse is a positive move in this direction. While there are problems in his tendency towards the vertiginous devolution of the molecular, which for Braidotti has to do with his positioning as a (male) subject, there are glimpses in his thinking that attach this vertigo to the body, a tired and waiting body at that.

The daily attitude is what puts the before and the after into the body, time into the body, the body as revealer of the deadline. The attitude of the body relates thought to time as to that outside which is infinitely further than the outside world (Deleuze, 1989:189).

This suggestion points in the direction of an embodied sublime, whereby the discontinuity that occurs in the encounter with the suspended (film) moment reveals the continuity of how the mark of time's passage through the body is always attached to the time of what Deleuze calls 'an indefinite life' (Deleuze, 2001: 29).

Let me reiterate:

This indefinite life does not itself have moments, close as they may be one to another, but only between-times, between-moments; it doesn't just come about or come after but offers the immensity of an empty time where one sees the event yet to come and already happened, in the absolute of an immediate consciousness (Deleuze, 2001: 29).

This immanence can be related to aspects of the Kantian sublime, the mathematical aspect as opposed to the dynamic, which has to do with power and the preservation of the self in the face of immensity. Why would I want to make this link/leap? What does it have to do with the feminist subtext of this thesis? How does it relate to my encounter with Disappearance at Sea? In seeking to explore the possibilities for a feminist re-appropriation of the sublime, a sublime for female subjects, Jones tends to overlook the somewhat intractable nature of the sublime as a gendered mode of being. For both Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant, the two main theorists of the modern sublime, only
men should attempt the sublime mode of thought that nature's incommensurability gives rise to. Female subjects were relegated to the world of the particular, not having the rational (moral) capacity to encompass the abstract face of the universal. I shall attempt to override this binary in my reworking of the sublime, using Joan Copjec's mapping of the Kantian sublime onto Lacan's diagrams of sexuation (Copjec (1995)). While I do not subscribe to her position, it is worth rehearsing as it reformulates Zizek's moment of 'subjective destitution' in gender terms. In doing this, she allows me to clarify the terrain that needs to be remapped in order to expand on the sublime subjectivity the experience Disappearance at Sea generated for me.

There are two types of sublime in Kant's formulation, the mathematical and the dynamic. The dynamic sublime is experienced as an overwhelming of the forces of nature. The subject appears to be caught up, dissolved in a flux of powerful material forces. However, the 'terrifying sight of nature's power is recuperated as it inspires man to transcend his phenomenal limits and reaffirm his supersensible destination' (Jones, 2000: 39). Although different from the dynamic sublime, the mathematical sublime is also a discourse of power, albeit a conceptual rather than an actual power. Neil Hertz describes its impact in a manner conducive to my eventual reformulation. Rather than being threatened by an overwhelming force, as in the dynamic mode of the sublime, the mind is instead blocked

by the fear of losing count or of being reduced to nothing but counting - this and this and this - with no hope of bringing a long series or a vast scattering under some sort of conceptual unity (Hertz, 1985: 40).

However, in Kant this interminable flux is fearsome, a fear that instigates the compensatory positive movement whereby, following 'a painful pause', (a moment of suspension), the mind returns victorious and exults 'in its own rational faculties, in its ability to think a totality that cannot be taken in through the senses' (Hertz, 1985: 40). Dynamic or mathematical mode, the mind triumphs, in the former, being able to master
infinity, in the latter, being able to conceive of its irresolution. The failure of the imagination is deemed necessary to this latter mode. Hertz cites Kant:

For there is here a feeling of the inadequacy of [the] imagination for presenting the ideas of a whole, wherein the imagination reaches its maximum, and, in striving to surpass it, sinks back into itself, by which, however, a kind of emotional satisfaction is produced (Kant in Hertz, 1985: 50).

This emotional satisfaction is on the side of reason. It is derived from 'the recognition that what the imagination has failed to bring into a unity (the infinite or the indefinite plural) can nevertheless be thought as such, and that the agent of this thinking, the reason, must thus be a guarantor of man's "supersensible destiny"' (Kant in Hertz, 1985: 50). However, as Thomas Weiskel points out, '[i]t is not logically necessary that the reason's capacity for totality or infinity should be invariably construed as power degrading the sensible and rescuing man from "humiliation" at the hands of nature' (Weiskel in Hertz, 1985: 52).

Weiskel maps the sublime onto psychoanalysis, rather predictably seeing the shift from the excess (blockage) of the imagination to the conflict and struggle involved in moral reason as a shift from the maternal to the paternal superegoic identificatory pattern. The problem here is one that has continually arisen in this thesis - the positing of dualities situated in an oppositional, and hierarchical, relation to one another. The semiotic, excess, chaos, are seen as primary forces and are associated with femininity, the maternal, while structure, order, and narrative are seen as secondary forms applied to formlessness of the former, thereby guaranteeing the integrity/identity of the subject. Interestingly, in the light of my analysis of Zizek's moment of 'subjective destitution', Hertz states that although the moment of sublime blockage 'might have been rendered as one of utter self-loss, it was, even before its recuperation as sublime exaltation, a confirmation of the unitary status of the self' (Hertz, 1985: 53). As the typical feminist critique of (male) dissolution goes, you can only afford to ostensibly lose yourself if you have achieved the so-called unitary status of subject-hood in the first
place. And more importantly, this dependence means that any dissolution of the subject will always refer back to the pre-posed unity rather than generating a new position on its own terms. Needless to say, I am arguing for the possibility of the latter.

While Copjec's analysis is also framed in binary terms, she does not adhere to the notion of hierarchy and primary and secondary modes of being, which is a first step in attempting to conceive of another mode of being altogether. In Copjec's Lacanian framework, the female side of sexual difference, is mapped onto the mathematical side of the sublime. This side of Lacan's sexuation diagram is deemed to be a site of impossibility, because it lacks the limit necessary for the creation of a universe, a world out of the simultaneity of phenomena. This is opposed to the male, dynamic side of the sublime, which posits a limit that allows for the carving out of (phallic) identity from the totality of phenomena. On the female mathematical side, there is instead a moment where the failure of the imagination does not resurrect reason's ability to conceive of the (impossible) simultaneity of phenomena. Is there then simply an overwhelming of phenomena on the female side, which correlates to the traditional equation of femininity with excess? Does this moment of the dissolution of all limits (differences), as Braidotti warns, relegate femininity to the outside of culture/language/the social order? Yes, but only in terms of the external perspective found on the male side. There, yes, woman can be placed outside culture, signifying the 'possibility of a realm beyond, unlimited by our phenomenal conditions', a realm which depends precisely 'on the foreclosure of the judgement of existence' (Copjec, 1995: 236). Thence the patriarchal notion that woman is incapable of ethical behaviour. However, between this difference, i.e. a difference between prohibition/lack and impossibility/lack of a lack, two kinds of failure ensue which are not symmetrical.

The failure of representation to do anything other than present, in impoverished images of absence and vacuity, the negative aesthetics of the limit belongs to the male side. It is tinged with loss and melancholy. Failure is located differently on the female side. Absence or vacuity presents the impossibility of a metalanguage, the
impossibility to set a limit, what Copjec calls 'the surplus declarations of existence' (Copjec, 1995: 231). (I am reminded here of my reference in chapter one to Kathy Acker's allusion to the eradication of metalanguage in performative writing.) We seem to be back again to excess as the other side of narrative order, except that I would say that this feminine excess is only an excess from the perspective of the male side, the dynamical side 'where this surplus is subtracted from the phenomenal field' (Copjec, 1995: 230). Copjec ends Read My Desire with the suggestion that '[i]t is now time to devote some thought to developing an ethics of inclusion or of the unlimited' (Copjec, 1995: 236) rather than accepting the (male) perspective that because the female side has a lack of limit, women are incapable of developing the superegoic powers necessary for ethical behaviour.

While this is beyond the scope of my argument, it is worth mentioning that in a chapter of her more recent Imagine There's No Woman: Ethics and Sublimation, Copjec attempts to develop this suggestion in terms of a generative absence. Copjec focuses her argument on Kara Walker's The End of Uncle Tom and the Grand Allegorical Tableau of Eva in Heaven (1995), a wall installation comprised of black life-size silhouetted paper cutouts of scenarios depicting black racial stereotypes. In relation to one of Walker's scenarios in this installation, depicting a group of women sucking one another's breasts, Copjec asks whether it is possible to speak of a sameness that is distinct from the opposition between sameness and difference of positive characteristics. This other sameness, she says, would be 'the return of self-difference rather than the elimination of it' (Copjec, 2002: 103). In relation to the blank (negative) space that exists between the silhouetted figures in Walker's installation, Copjec reads this encircled absence as a transgenerational gift of the object 'nothing'. She says:

The repetition of suckling women registers, I would argue, the woman's reencountering of her difference from herself. Here we have the portrait, in other words, of what Deleuze referred to as an "aesthetic existence," the doubling or relation with oneself that is the rule of freedom (Copjec, 2002: 103).
In proffering an ethics of inclusion or of the unlimited, Copjec's avowed Lacanian position begins to sound extraordinarily close to Deleuze's notion of narrativization as serialization that I dealt with earlier in chapter two. Copjec asserts the possibility of the universe of women, as opposed to its impossibility, putting forward the notion of absence as something circling amongst women as a pure source of satisfaction, rather than the melancholy dissatisfaction it engenders in the male universe of possibility. The lack of a lack, the Lacanian position ascribed to the female side, rather than being relegated outside the differential series of language, takes up a position within it, becoming manifest as an uncanny realm able to mobilize absence for an immediate yet contingent pleasure - my emphasis. In this universe, rather than the absolute cut/limit of (male) subtraction, there is an additive opening out onto a continuous field of pleasurable discontinuity. This dis/continuity bypasses the categories of narrative as content (which attempts to limit/master the ultimate beyond, i.e. death) or non-narrative as an excess towards which is turned the melancholy face of reason.

I would relate this mobilizing absence to the additive interval presented by Disappearance at Sea. Rather than the negative aesthetics of the sublime, the kind of sublimity presented by Disappearance at Sea generates a space of freedom, not as something I contemplate as a dry realm of possibility but as an inter(im)mediate site of inclusion. "I" cannot tell from where the light beam is emanating. In fact, it no longer seems to be coming from an outside source. It is not emanating from me either. Rather it spreads across the surface of the filmic scenario as a continuous intermittent rhythmic pulse, which enfolds the viewer as a series of light and dark wavelengths. If this sensation can be called sublime, it is perhaps in the sense of Adorno's insistence, in his critique of Kant's radical negativity, that 'the sensual moment is itself differentiated' and does not necessitate repression by the abstraction of the 'spiritualized work of art' (Adorno, 1984:137). Adorno criticizes the conservatism of Kant's ascetic attitude. He says that '[b]y situating the sublime in the awesomeness of sheer magnitude, i.e., in a
dimension of power, he betrayed an unmitigated complicity with domination' (Adorno, 1984: 284). Adorno's rephrasing of Kant resonates with the sense of (sublime) dislocation that *Disappearance at Sea* generates in the final scene.

Mountains are sublime not when they crush the human being, but when they evoke images of a space that does not fetter or hem in its occupants and when they invite the viewer to become part of this space (Adorno, 1984: 284).

Is this intermediate space of inclusion, as I interpret it, related to Copjec's desire to think about an ethics of inclusion in relation to a possible universe of women? Does the subjectivity I am exploring in relation to the (dis)continuous film moment, have something of a sublime femininity about it?

The excessive blockage that Hertz' categorizes as instituting the mathematical sublime and which is fearsome in the Kantian model can be interpreted differently by recourse to Deleuze. Hertz' formulation of sublime blockage as a 'this and this and this' bears a striking resemblance to Deleuze's description of the interstice that relates images in a vertiginous spacing rather than a chain of associations with, of course, one distinction - it is not an occasion of blockage but dis/continuous mobility.

Film ceases to be "images in a chain...an uninterrupted chain of images each one the slave of the next", and whose slave we are [...]. It is the method of BETWEEN, "between two images", which does away with all cinema of the One. It is the method of AND, "this and then that", which does away with all the cinema of Being = is (Deleuze, 1989: 180).

It is because of the positivity of this mode of accumulation that I am drawn to Deleuze's concept of image narration in relation to that final scene in *Disappearance at Sea*. My thesis is that this scene repositions the either/or of a goal driven narrative as an interminable flux, a 'this and then that' and this and then that and so on ad finitum, which I would relate to the sublime femininity I outlined with recourse to Copjec. However, as I have already stated, interminable flux, for me, does not rule out location, but reconfigures it as a process of signifying attachments rather than a set of fixed
identifications. I shall further develop the operatics of location in chapter four. Here I just want to repeat that a reconceived notion of location is pertinent to a feminist project, as it differentiates the latter from the pervasive dissolution of identity that circulates in poststructuralist theory generally, and in Deleuze specifically. While Hertz' formulation initially seems to recapitulate the male side of the sublime, his discussion of Wordsworth's *The Prelude* enticingly suggests a way of conceiving of a 'this and then that' as a relation on its own terms rather than being seen as an interminable field that requires the Oedipal imposition of narrative to give it form. His analysis of this poem brings me closer to my agenda to release the impoverished work of art's presentation of immensity from the negative aesthetics of sublime and the sacrifice of dis/continuous sensation, (the imagination), for the (moral) complexity of reason that traditionally goes with it.

In his discussion of the last four lines of a passage from *The Prelude*, Hertz claims that the poem tells of a moment of 'thoroughgoing self-loss - not the recuperable baffled self associated with scenarios of blockage, but a more radical flux and dispersion of the subject' (Hertz, 1985: 58). (Needless to say, it is Hertz' idea rather than Wordsworth's poem that interests me.) It is this version of sublimity that recalls for me the final scene in *Disappearance at Sea* where the confrontation of a one to one relation with the horizon is superceded for the dislocating effects of a continuously moving horizon that follows the cut to the blank screen. In the passage Hertz refers to, Wordsworth describes a state when 'objects become "melted and reduced/ To one identity, by differences/ That have no law, no meaning, and no end"' (Hertz, 1985: 58-9). This is reminiscent of Deleuze's unhinging of difference from the subjugation of identity and the fact that this unhinging does not reduce the world to indifference (Deleuze, 1994: 268). As Hertz says 'it is not that differences disappear, but that the possibility of interpreting them as significant differences vanishes' (Hertz, 1985: 59). In this scenario, he claims, the poet risks tumbling into his text through the loss of distinction. However, in the poem, the poet encounters a Beggar's blank face which acts as an emblem that
'triangulates the poet's self in relation to his double, who is represented for a moment, as an emblem of minimal difference fixed in relation to itself' (Hertz, 1985: 60).

The power of the emblem is that it reestablishes boundaries between representor and represented and, while minimizing the differences between them, keeps the poet-impressario from tumbling into his text (Hertz, 1985: 60).

In the becoming-light of the spectator generated by the final scene in *Disappearance at Sea*, is there something which acts as an emblem, a third term which simultaneously unites and differentiates rather than differentiates by separation?

I would say that there is and that it is the conjunction of the cut and duration, which becomes a temporalized, intervallc, spacing in the return of the light beam.38 In the continuous interstices of light and dark, which enfold the spectator, the inner sensations of becoming-light are exteriorized. Interestingly, Deleuze maintains that sensation 'is only a break within the flow of absolute consciousness' (Deleuze, 2001:25), which again suggests the notion of rupture/disturbance. However, for Deleuze, becoming is beyond sensation conceived of as bodily affect.39 Deleuze's 'transcendental empiricism' involves, 'however close two sensations may be, the passage from one to the other as becoming, as increase or decrease in power (virtual quantity)' (Deleuze, 2000: 25 - my emphasis).40 What I want to emphasize here is the notion of an interstitial opening that is distinct from sensation, yet links the traffic of one sensation to the other in a *disjunctive synthesis*. In other words, I am arguing for a scenario where sensations are liberated from one another, yet a connective tissue links these disjuncts together as overlapping vectors that traverse the biological/cultural bodily entity but are not located within it.

The notion of surface traversal as opposed to interior containment will become important in what follows, as the movement of sensation in this opening is divorced from ownership in the way that bodily sensations are not. This invisible yet felt interval between the sur/faces of the on-screen gaps of light and dark conjoins with my
internal mapping of those sur/faces to produce an exteriority where the co-ordinates of inside and outside are extended in a flattened sequence, are, in effect, serialized. This point of opening is of course where the actual and the virtual are in constant dialogue, the shift from one to the other overlapping in a continuous repetitive motion rather than operating teleologically.\(^{41}\)

Hertz' analysis of Wordsworth tallies with Rachel Jones' explicitly feminist analysis of the mathematical sublime, which can further add to this exploration (and accumulation) of the sublime subjectivity of the (dis)continuous film moment. Her analysis brings infinity and femininity together in a way that adheres to the concept of the spectator as a processual entity, yet does not forego the notion of location, albeit reconfigured. Her analysis is useful in avoiding the problems inherent in feminist film theory's insistence on the female spectator as a unitary entity, an insistence which led to the concept's demise.\(^{42}\) Similar to Hertz, Jones also looks at the collapse of difference in poetry, in her case Expressionist poetry where images are provided in which 'the undoing of the perceptual subject [...] mirrors the collapse of the external world' (Jones, 2000: 36). In one of the poems she looks at, Lichtenstein's *Punkt*, this occurs by means of the permeation of the subject by an intense light whereby 'the object-world becomes a flux of creeping luminosity, the gaze of the subject is extinguished, and objective reality itself collapses' (Jones, 2000: 36). The description of this image resonates with the shot in *Disappearance at Sea* of the close-up of the light bulb at night. The Kantian subject of the sublime, fearing the descent into undifferentiated chaos, would recuperate this failure of the imagination as the power of reason. However, for me, female spectator, the encounter with *Disappearance at Sea* demonstrates that the 'undoing of the perceptual subject' does not necessarily mean that the world is destroyed.

In fact, very interestingly for my purposes, Jones suggests the continuance of a life world in the face of the destruction of recognition by recourse to Deleuze's ideas. The Expressionist vision of subject-object dissolution she says 'does not merely dissolve but reconfigures both poles of the subject-object relation' (Jones, 2000: 40).
Rather than opening out onto undifferentiated chaos, what she calls 'this posthuman sublime', which involves 'the reciprocal meltdown of subject and object serves as a point of release for a dynamic life of transindividual intensive forces, unlimited by the organic boundaries of phenomenal nature of psychological unity' (Jones, 2000: 40). And more importantly for my purposes, she reconfigures this Deleuzian scenario in terms of female subjects. She says that

[w]hilst this dissolution ruptures the history of the modern subject, its significance is transformed if viewed from the sideways perspective of those who have not been historically positioned as fully constituted subjects. For those who have been aligned with, rather than constitutively opposed to, both materiality and the object, the sublime dynamisation of the external world and the breakdown of stable boundaries between subject and object holds open the possibility that identity itself might be differently configured. [...] On the contrary, the activities of animate matter might become that through which identity is formed without needing to oppose subjects to objects (Jones, 2000: 41).

Rather than dissolution, Jones puts forward the idea of displacement, a term I have already used in my analysis of Disappearance at Sea. It is not a question of the collapse of all differentiation between self and other, but rather the generation of 'transformative becomings' (Jones, 2000:48). These transformative becomings map out differential relations in a series on the surface of a mirror that glistens but does not reflect the oppositional relation between a subject that posits and an object posited.

The 'narrative as story' progression of Disappearance at Sea stages and displaces all the sublime modes that Jones too displaces in favour of her re-reading and which I passed through in the 'montage text' on the film. The lighthouse on the horizon sets up the co-ordinates of the desire to transcend limits. The close-up of the lighthouse bulb supplants that desire by dissolving the categories of space and time - initially you know it is going from evening to night, but when night falls, the scene becomes grey and indistinct. The pacing of the lightbeam across the dark screen displaces locatable co-ordinates, reconfiguring them in a luminous spatiality, which reaches past me rather than being posited by me. The cut to the blank screen exposes the (back)ground of what has
been occurring in the film, i.e. the dispersal of the traditional narrative tropes of the
either/or of progression/rupture or dissolution. This overtly non-narrative moment calls
attention to the integrity of the opening that is closed off by narrative ordering. This
opening moves me into the immanence of a life lit by an animate materiality, released
from being a frozen sea of surfaces, the mirror reflection being one such surface.

[B]y relocating play in the infinite reaches of the Milky Way more
usually associated with the sublime [...] such stellar spaces no longer
constitute an abyss in which the imagination fears to lose itself [...] but
are instead the site of unbounded relations which orient those who are
both active subjects and material objects via a ceaseless play of (self-)
transformation (Jones, 2000: 49).

To claim the final scene of Disappearance at Sea as generating a series of 'unbounded
relations which orient those who are both active subjects and material objects via a
ceaseless play of (self-) transformation', is to reclaim absence as a site of interstitial
unfolding different from the negation of substance.

My point is that Disappearance at Sea, in presenting a dynamic absence,
makes continuity palpable, emphasizing the interconnections between different orders of
time, machinic, human, and, eternal. The fact that time continues to pass in the
suspended moment, the fact that the "I" continues to form as a locus for the on-going
displacements effected in the face of dissolution, counters the idealism of Zizek's empty
gaze of the stranger. To say this is not to fall prey to the egoic delusions of mastery that
proponents of 1970s film theory claimed were engendered by film's 'illusory' continuity
(see chapter two). The "I" here is not the stable unified subject premised and posited by
film theory, but simply a grammatical locus for sensations that traverse and fracture a
body in space and time. In this discontinuous continuity, difference is a 'mere nothing in
terms of metric time, the slightest disparity, which consists in being aware of an internal,
intervallic vacuum, outside-in, future-past just arriving, just departing' (Canning,
1994:79). In this interstitial dis/continuity, the immanence of a life is felt in that moment
before the impetus towards constructing secondary narrative structures hides its glow
and integrity. What is produced in this space is a distribution of moments of reflection, a
series of constructions where identities form and disappear, not as oscillation but a series of continuous discontinuities. This immanence is in the world, not beyond it as possibility or outside it as impossible. This is what I would want to put on the female side of the sublime, a move that will have even more pertinence in relation to the 'montage text' in section 4.2. based on News From Home, a film whose critical reception hinged around the image of woman as absent rather than absence per se.

1 See Teresa de Lauretis's essay 'Snow on the Oedipal Stage' in Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema, (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan Press, 1984) for a concise account of sexual difference in narrative and avant-garde cinema. In relation to Michael Snow's PRESENTS (1981), she says that "women spectators find themselves placed once again in a negative semantic space" (de Lauretis, 1984: 76). It is this space that I seek to reanimate, the space between the so-called "active" look of the camera and the "passive" image on the screen, a space where, though invested by the cone of light from the projector, they [women spectators] cast no shadow (de Lauretis, 1984: 76).

2 Deleuze discusses the relation of continuity and 'non-chronological time relationships' in relation to Orson Welles, Alain Resnais, and Jean-Luc Godard in Cinema 2: The Time-Image, p. 181.


4 The translators introduction to Cinema 2: The Time-Image situates Deleuze's transition between the two cinema books in historical terms, referring to 'the crisis of the "action-image" after the Second World War. Theunities of situation and action can no longer be maintained in the disjointed post-war world. This gives rise to the pure optical and sound situations from which the "direct time-image" emerges' (translators, 1989: xv-xvi).

5 Deleuze defines the encounter as '[s]omething in the world forces us to think. This something is an object not of recognition but of a fundamental encounter' (Deleuze, 1994: 139).

6 For Deleuze, '[d]esire is not form, but a procedure, a process' (Deleuze, Kafka, 8).

7 Although coming from the phenomenological position that Boundas is critiquing, David Carr in Time, Narrative, and History (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986) makes a similar point. While Carr insists on the collapse that ensues from fragmentation, saying that 'if bodily coherence and coordination themselves fail us we are edging toward the nightmarish or towards unconsciousness', he also maintains that at any present we have the sense that experience will continue in the future because we expect our bodily equilibrium and co-ordination 'to maintain themselves in future protention' (Carr, 1986: 28-9).

8 The notion of an interrelation between a 'cracked P and the 'chaosmos' is akin to Deleuze's claim in Difference and Repetition to elaborate 'a Cogito for a dissolved self' which would incorporate
elements of 'the originary "nowhere" and the displaced, modified and always recreated "here-and-now"' (Deleuze, 1994: xxi). Boundas, however, is here referring to Deleuze's *The Logic of Sense*, p. 176.

9 In sticking to Boundas' figuration of Deleuze's 'object = x' and narration. I am guilty of overlooking the phallic dimension of Deleuze's formulation of the 'object = x' and his proximity to Lacan, which is apparent in *The Logic of Sense*, pp. 227-229. Feminist scholars have critiqued Deleuze for his phallocentrism - see chapter 2 of Dorothea Olkowski's *Gilles Deleuze and the Ruin of Representation*, (Berkeley. Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1999), especially p. 39. However, Boundas' figuration lends itself to the evolving constellation of my thesis in a way that, for me, makes it worth suspending such concerns.

10 In connection with Deleuze's formulation of the interrelation between Eros and Thanatos, it is worth mentioning Leo Bersani's reading of Freud's 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle'. In a similar vein to Deleuze, Bersani maintains that Freud reduces pleasure to a death like stasis which represses 'the masochistic, nonnarrative, timelessly replicative grounds of sexuality' (Bersani, 1984: 39) (italics mine). However, by contrast to Deleuze, Bersani takes the deformation of narrative enacted by the force of the death drive in the direction of eroticization, of a masochistic self-shattering of the subject that desires to repeat a pleasurable intensity indistinguishable from pain. Deleuze also sees this deformation in terms of a masochistic theatre but he emphasizes the desexualization of Eros, a move which eradicates the subject of self-shattering that Bersani maintains, in favour of a kind of intense abstraction - the pure form of time (Deleuze, 1994: 114).

11 Interestingly enough, in *The Ticklish Subject*, Zizek seems to return to the mobility of desire in Lacan as opposed to the death throes of the drives. He critiques the circularity of the drives, the fact that they have no goal and get caught up in process. So there is a mobile world in Lacan, but it is on the side of inventing narratives by which the subject seeks to fill in the void at the heart of subjectivity. There is never a correct fit between the invention and the desire for meaning. The inconsistency between these registers, which inevitably keeps the subject's identity from absolute confirmation/closure, generates the creative practice of narration. This sounds logical. My problem with this approach to narration is that its creative motion seems to be pitted against an absolute void, which always threatens to undo the work of narrative rather than being its co-constituent. The subject is forever oscillating between narrative attachments and detachments, whereas I am trying to articulate a mode of narration outside these co-ordinates. Zizek's return to desire is consistent with his thinking in *The Sublime Object of Ideology* where he seems less attached to the sublime act of annihilation. There he says that traversing the fantasy is bound up with the recognition of the terrifying dimension of this 'blind automatism of repetition' and then, 'on the basis of this fundamental recognition, to try to articulate a modus vivendi with it' (Zizek, 1989b: 4-5).

12 Deleuze's most precise account of the repression of difference in a system of representation can be found in the final chapter of *Difference and Repetition*. There he argues that '[r]epresentation is a site of transcendental illusion' which subjugates difference to 'the identity of the concept and the thinking subject' rather than allowing the free circulation of difference (Deleuze, 1994: 265 & 266). He argues for the openness of 'that profound fracture of the I which leads it to think only in thinking its own passion, and even its own death, in the pure and empty form of time' (Deleuze, 1994: 266). I am associating this fracture with the film moment of suspension. However, unlike 'subjective destitution', the 'I' continues to exist and be affected in the moment of suspension.

13 One of the most useful accounts of this notion of the image beyond representation that correlates with a Deleuzian approach as well as incorporating phenomenology is Jean-Luc Nancy's notion of the image as a form of presentation which allows the invisible to be seen in a kind of blind proximity. My main reference for this is a paper by Alena Alexandrova called 'Touching Inside-Out' which was given at the IAPL Conference, Rotterdam, 8 Jun 2002. See http://www.english.ccsu.edu/barnett/alexandra.htm, accessed 13 Jun 2002. See also Jean-Luc Nancy's *The Sense of the World*, (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), particularly the chapter 'Art. A Fragment', pp. 128-9.

14 While Deleuze's notion of serialization lends an abstract air to this process of infinite addition, Gilberto Perez in *The Material Ghost: Films and Their Mediums* discusses narrative in film as an open-ended structure that is not synonymous with story which has a practical correlation with Deleuze. Perez makes a crucial distinction between dramatization and narrativization. Narrative constructed on dramatic principles has one action with a beginning, middle and end for its structure. Narrative outside of dramatic principles, on the other hand, is the presentation of an incomplete view of the world. It is the undoing of drama's negation of the world we inhabit.
Closure here is always provisional, narrative as open-ended arrangement admitting of indefinite addition. To illustrate the point of narrative as an aggregate structure, he gives the example of Robert Flaherty's *Moana* (1926) where the camera is held on a boy climbing a coconut tree. The camera doesn't simply follow the boy but waits until he leaves the frame before moving higher to take in another view of him climbing the tree. The point here Perez says is that Flaherty makes a sequence of something that is not. We are given partial views of the scene in a piecemeal fashion. The scene is invested with the sense of a telling, one thing after another. Here, as opposed to the usual opposition between telling and showing, narration and description, telling in this sequence is a way of showing.

15 I heard this paper at the conference 'Conducting Bodies: Affect. Sensation. &, Memory' at The University of New South Wales, Sydney on July 19, 2001 and, although as yet unpublished, I justify my use of it here because of its relevance to my thesis and on the basis of my extensive previous knowledge of Bersani's work. See notes x and xx this chapter, note xii chapter 1, and notes xxvii and xxviii chapter 4 for my other references to Bersani's published work.

16 Andrew Klevan, in *Disclosure of the Everyday: Undramatic Achievement in Narrative Film* discusses Ozu's *Late Spring* (1949) in terms of the revelation of the everyday in the 'careful patterning of mundane locations' that is contrary to Schrader's notion of rupture and disparity (Klevan, 2000: 145). Earlier in the book, Klevan, while in sympathy with Deleuze's insistence of a new encounter being revealed in the everyday scenario, is critical of what he calls Deleuze's tendency 'to speak the extreme language of limit situations' (Klevan, 2000: 47). My trajectory will also lead me towards a similar critique of Deleuze.

17 Insisting on the perspective of 'the female feminist subject', Rosi Braidotti critiques the naive undifferentiation of Deleuze's theory of becoming and philosophy of time. She posits that, rather than the Deleuzian dissolution of identities based on the Phallus which bypass gender, it is necessary to insist on the 'politics of location' (Braidotti, 1993: 54).

18 See for example John Johnston's 'Machinic Vision', *Critical Inquiry*, 26 (Autumn 1999) which embraces the infinity of Deleuzian gaseous perception as a way of describing the decoded field of electronic informational impulses. Johnson appropriates chapter eight in *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* where the contact between 'cerebral processes and membranes...replace screen, film stock, and camera', as a way of evaluating cinema (Johnston, 1999: 45). This is the very chapter with which I shall part company later on as I remain attached, like Dean and Akerman, to the materiality of film process and its relation to a material rather than an android body. For Deleuze, the term imaginary, if it is to be used at all, has to do with the indiscernibility of the real and the unreal rather than relating to a pre-symbolic realm of being (Deleuze, 1995: 66). 22 This other pathway, in which an emphasis on the potentiality of everyday banality is found, is also picked up on by Jon Beasley-Murray in his essay 'Whatever Happened to Neorealism? Bazin, Deleuze, and Tarkovsky's Long Take'. He states that as opposed to semiological readings of cinema, 'which remain content to avow the impossibility of the real' (Beasley-Murray, 1997: 8 web version), Bazinian or Deleuzian realism 'promote the possibility of inhabiting a real defined as radically ambiguous and open' (Beasley-Murray, 1997: 1 web version). Related to this context, Marie-Claire Ropars-Wuilleumier refers to Deleuze's 'second voice', which comes through in *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, a voice in which 'there can be heard the echo of a demand for love that does not come from love of film alone'. (Ropars-Wuilleumier, 1994: 259). She frames this
second voice in terms of rupture, but it is a rupture in which negotiation (continuity) takes place rather than avant-garde suspension.

A rupture between man and the world has been carried out, but the cinema offers a mirror where this rupture can be read, and in being read, is sutured. Not a reconciliation, but a conciliation, is offered by film, which negotiates an exchange between the image and the real (Ropars-Wuilleumier, 1994: 259).

However, in a manner that does relate to this thesis, Dews' reading tallies with Christian Kerslake's analysis of the Hegelian notion of sense as a connective means of expression between the universal and the particular rather than being the prerogative of either of these realms. See 'The Vertigo of Philosophy: Deleuze and the Problem of Immanence', Radical Philosophy, 113 (May/June 2002). In other words, the view of language that Zizek ascribes to Hegel, i.e. that the word murders the thing, does not take into account that for Hegel negation is not absolute but a movement that links thought and experience.

Schizoanalysis is of course a pun on psychoanalysis and is proffered to counter the organising forces of the latter, what Deleuze, with Felix Guattari, calls 'arborescent structures' based on the hierarchical structure of a tree as opposed to rhizomatic, a-centred structures.

'Schizoanalysis...treats the unconscious as an acentred system, in other words, as a machinic network of finite automata (a rhizome), and thus arrives at an entirely different state of the unconscious' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1988: 18).

Is it any wonder that Zizek claims that when Lacan says "I raise myself up against the philosopher of perversity", the philosopher he has in mind is Deleuze? (Zizek, 2000: National Film Theatre. London - my lecture notes). In The Metastases of Enjoyment: Six Essays on Women and Causality, Zizek calls Deleuze a perverse philosopher because he omits the redress of the symbolic order. Deleuze deals with the Real and the Imaginary, omitting the third term of castration, which instigates the constitutional lack upon which the subject is founded (Zizek, 1994: 136n26). The stabilization of the dispersal of sense in the Real by means of the Lacanian notion of the transcendental signifier is what Deleuze, influenced in part by Lacan's notion of the Real, would object to in the latter's philosophy (Deleuze, 1995: p. Negotiations).

Deleuze's discussion of a contemplation prior to perception/sensation in Difference and Repetition, p. 74. Otkowski's account of narcissism inspired by Deleuze in Gilles Deleuze and the Ruin of Representation echoes Leo Bersani's discussion of narcissism as a mode of inaccurately repeating the forms in the world as one gravitates towards them. See 'A Conversation with Leo Bersani', October, no. 82, (Fall, 1997).

The notion of the constitution of a new body via a cinema of liberated sense organs has precedence in Sergei Eisenstein's notion of the fourth dimension in cinema, a dimension perceptible only to a liberated sensory field itself dependent on the interrelation between rhythmic and overtonal montage. While the use of rhythmic montage is minimal and irregular in Disappearance at Sea, the use of sharp splicing combined with lengthy, static shot duration, creates a pulse that generates an invisible (overtonal?) plane which could be said to resonate with the spectator's physio-psychological (inner) bodily rhythms. See Eisenstein's 'The Fourth Dimension in Cinema' in The Eisenstein Reader, (ed) Richard Taylor, (London: BFI, 1998). While Deleuze's political agenda is less definable than Eisenstein's, for Deleuze too 'the birth of the visible which is still hidden from view' has revolutionary potential, having to do with the collective utterances of 'the people who are missing' (Deleuze, 1989: 201 & 221). 28

Dean's attraction to Bas Jan Ader's fatal performance piece In Search of the Miraculous 11 (1975) is a case in point. Ader, a 1970s conceptual/performance artist interested in exploring boundaries between art and life, was lost at sea in making this work, which involved crossing the Atlantic from Falmouth, Cornwall, to Falmouth, Massachusetts in a 13ft sailboat. In Search of the Miraculous 11 consists of a series of 16 black & white photographs, the last in the series showing Ader standing at the ocean's edge by night, illuminating the water with a flashlight. As I have already mentioned, Dean's lightbeam in the final scene of Disappearance at Sea was made by shining a flashlight on a piece of steel. It may be happy coincidence, but its worth remembering that her film Disappearance at Sea II (Voyage de Guerison) (1997), which takes the Tristan and Isolde story as an oblique reference, is a journey about healing. That 4 minute film, which records the horizon line where sea meets sky from a lighthouse by day, ends with the blinding force of sunlight almost eradicating the horizon. Then the film plunges into darkness, a series of rumbling noises erupting as the projector continues to motor for a few minutes longer.
This is also the basis of Lisa Jardine's critique of Deleuze. See Olkowski's useful summary of feminist critiques of Deleuze in chapter 2 of her *Gilles Deleuze and the Ruin of Representation*. In 'A Thousand Tiny Sexes: Feminism and Rhizomatics', Elizabeth Grosz takes a pragmatic view of how Deleuze can be of benefit to feminism - see *Gilles Deleuze and the Theater of Philosophy*, Constantin Boundas and Dorothea Olkowski (eds), (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 187-212.

The notion of the body as itself a surface of signifying materiality co-extensive with language rather than divorced from it will be developed via phenomenology in chapter 4 of this thesis. However, here I think it is pertinent to mention how feminist theorists such as Teresa de Lauretis in the 1980's would find the semiosis of Charles Sandor Peirce more conducive to thinking of the field of meaning in terms of social change. While the orthodox abstraction of Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistic theories influenced Lacan and Zizek. It is also worth noting that Vicki Kirby in *Telling Flesh: The Substance of the Corporeal*, exposes the dynamic fluidity of signification that de Saussure discovered and attempted to control by abstraction. Her purpose is to undermine the false dichotomy between nature and culture, body and language, a project which has a particular investment for feminism. In *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, Deleuze refers constantly to Peirce in order to explore the signifying substance of the imaginary but he leaves him behind in *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* where the Nietzschean universe of becoming and eternal return is embraced. However, there are moments within Deleuze's shift in emphasis from materiality to chaosmotic melting, where he maintains a connection to the real. This is why I insist, as does Braidotti and Grosz, that aspects of Deleuze's philosophy are profitable to the feminist project of new subjectivities. For a useful introduction to Peirce's semiosis, see James Hoopes introduction to *Peirce on Signs: Writings on Semiotic*, (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991) where he discusses thought as a process of interpretation possessing a material quality and thence as bodily feeling.

For Jones the purpose of this is to philosophically reinstate 'a sublime for female subjects' (Jones, 2000: 33). who, in Western modernity, have instead been 'culturally aligned with matter, embodiment, affect, and "nature"' (Jones, 2000: 32). I am less keen on naming this immanent sublimity female, as I think that the male model of the sublime doesn't account for a male subject *per se* but reduces the latter to an abstraction. Instead of the engendering of a (sublime) space for subjectivity to engage with itself, the male subject of the sublime does not engage with himself but with the higher invisible force of Reason.

See Christine Battersby's *Genius and Gender: Towards a Feminist Aesthetics*. (London: Women's Press, 1986), for an account of the sublime in terms of gender. In Edmund Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757) he contrasts the terror of the sublime to the delicacy and gracefulfulness of the beautiful. While Kant in *The Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) insists that 'only males should attempt the sublime' (Battersby, 1986: 77). 'The fair sex has just as much understanding as the male, but it is a beautiful understanding, whereas ours should be a deep understanding, an expression that signifies identity with the sublime' (Kant in Battersby, 1986: 77 - emphasis hers).

Also of interest in Hertz' analysis is his use of this mode of the sublime to describe the scenario of the scholar who in this day and age is subjected to more than s/he could ever hope to know or read, the flood of publication threatening 'the very knowledge that publication purports to serve' (McFarland in Hertz, 1985: 41). Rather than culture aiming at an integration of awareness which should mean that one reads less, the proliferation of secondary literature provides more to consume so that one's own thinking becomes blocked by other people's ideas beyond a certain point. I have acutely felt the repercussions of this scenario throughout the writing of my thesis. In this chapter, I am deliberately referring to secondary literature on Kant, not to simply give an account of what he says, but because this literature is more pertinent to the ultimate trajectory of my thesis. (I am referring to Jones, Hertz, and Copjec here.) McFarland, somewhat farcically takes this to its logical conclusion that there will be more and more remembered by the computer and forgotten by man, and that 'the test of meaningful publication will be to think and write in a way a computer could not' (McFarland in Hertz, 1985: 42). Somewhat farcically as he nevertheless goes on to add to this literature, calling up the figure of Schopenhauer in which to voice his dismay at the current state of things. Hertz sees this position of the scholar in sublime terms - he reaches a limit and falls back on the proper scholarly name to recuperate the immensity of the flood of publication. Ropars and Polan also put forward the same point in relation to the use of the names of film directors in the cinema books, that they are the only points of location in
a project that designs to take on board the immensity of time as the outside that cinema puts one into communication with.

The chapter I refer to is called 'Moses the Egyptian and the Big Black Mammy of the Antebellum South: Freud (with Kara Walker) on Race and History', pp. 82-107. I first heard Copjec present this chapter at the conference Way Beyond the Pleasure Principle, ICA, London, November, 2000.

To the list of Freudian objects: the breast, the facces, the phallus, Lacan adds three more: the gaze, the voice, and the object 'nothing' (Lacan, 1979: 103).


Although Jean-Francois Lyotard is critical of Burke's sensational sublime and Kant's emphasis on mastery, his contemporary reworking of the sublime echoes these sentiments. For Lyotard, the sublime moment is similar to the radical film theory's avant-garde moment of distanciation in that it counters contemporary tendencies towards the so-called democratization of (aesthetic, cognitive, political) experience, which emphasize unity, security, identity, popularity (Lyotard, (1984b)). The sublime is a critical moment of self-reflection whereby works of art investigate whether they will be able to find an audience. Worthy works are thereby perceived by Lyotard as being directed towards the future as a possible horizon and they generate a dismantling of consciousness in the viewer. coupled with the suspension of the question (moral) Is it happening? (Lyotard, 1984a: 43).

What is sublime is the feeling that something will happen, despite everything, within this threatening void, that something will take "place" and announce that everything is not over. That place is mere "here", the most minimal occurrence (Lytard, 1991: 93).

Joanna Zy1inska, who argues for a feminine mode of the sublime as a form of displacement in an argument that partly resonates with mine, insists on the applicability of Lyotard's aesthetics and she unabashedly alters his emphasis on the future tense to the immediacy of the here and now. Although, I am arguing for the immediacy of displacement also, I find her appropriation of Lyotard problematic.

Indeed, Lyotard has drawn our attention to the possibility of the sublime occurring in the most minuscule perspective: it is the fact that something (rather than nothing) is actually taking place that for him is the source of sublime feeling (Zylinska, 2001: 7).

I would argue that for Lyotard, while the questioning is taking place, it is a proposition directed towards the future, which inflects the present moment with negativity. The sublime is aesthetic resistance to the illusions of totality rather than a generative mode of self-mediation/affection in the present.


It is worth noting that feminists who use Deleuzian ideas such as Rosi Braidotti and, more importantly for this thesis, Barbara Kennedy on film, pursue the line that Deleuze is a philosopher of bodily affect. I shall refer to this in more detail in chapter 4.

He emphasizes even more in What is Philosophy?, co-authored with Felix Guattari, that he is not talking about bodily sensation but sensation liberated from bodily co-ordinates. 'Sensations, percepts, and affects are beings whose validity lies in themselves and exceeds any lived' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994: 164).

In Toward the Unknown Body, Theatre Topics, vol. 10, no. 2, 2000, Petra Kuppers's puts forward a not unrelated notion of a third term that circulates between the actual and the virtual. For her this is the term 'change', see p.137. She also uses the virtual in relation to corporeal feeling.

See Annette Kuhn's, Women's Pictures: Feminism and Cinema, (London and New York: Verso, 1994), p. 214 for an account of this problematic in female spectatorship. Also see Janet...
Bergstrom's and Mary Ann Doane's 'The Female Spectator: Contexts and Directions', *Camera Obscura*, nos 20/21, May-September, pp. 5-27.
4.1 PERFORMING THE DIS/CONTINUOUS FILM MOMENT FROM THE FUTURE: STEPHEN HEATH AND THE IMPOSSIBLE QUESTION OF A WOMAN'S DESIRE.

Having articulated the film moment of suspension as mobilizing a series of continuously displacing movements that generate a spectatorial field of undulation, a 'this and then that' and so forth, I felt that I needed to find a way of expanding on embodiment and location that would go beyond the limits of a Deleuzian model without backtracking into essentialism. While Deleuze provides an account of a liberated subjectivity that resonates with the encounter with Disappearance at Sea, that encounter was still an occasion for the embodiment of liberated sensations rather than an occasion of an absolute dissolution of the body. This latter tendency in Deleuze seems to repeat traditional notions of the sublime, merely substituting the celebration of the shattering of the ego into cosmic particles for the fear that institutes mastery over such shattering. The integrity of the subject is still maintained. Using a feminist approach to the sublime and ideas of dissolution, the term displacement is more appropriate to my project as it not only retains some reference to location, but also implies the undermining of the maintenance of the subject. In other words, the spectator, while continually being displaced in relation to itself, still serves as a channel for the differentiated movements of space and time that occur in the film moment that suspends recognition. These differentiated spatial and temporal movements, their dynamic extensions and infinite serializations interface with a body that has a dimension particular to it.

In my insistence that this interfacing is a form of location, a link with phenomenology suggests itself. However, such a link would have to be strategically made
rather than overtly embraced due to the emphasis in classical phenomenological approaches on a sovereign consciousness able to observe and deduct the essence of its location. The form of embodiment I am exploring is divested of a gaze that would soar above the phenomena in which it is immersed. In his *Phenomenology of Perception*, Maurice Merleau-Ponty says something similar: 'The perceiving body does not successfully occupy different points of view beneath the gaze of some unlocated consciousness which is thinking of them. For it is reflection which objectifies points of view or perspectives, whereas when I perceive I belong, through my points of view, to the world as a whole, nor am I even aware of the limits of my visual field' (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: 329). However, even in Maurice Merleau-Ponty's critique of Husserlian transcendence, the subject is still performing on an object, as becomes explicitly clear in the chapter in *Phenomenology of Perception* on the sexual object. That said, it is to Merleau-Ponty's unfinished, posthumously published, *The Invisible and Visible* that I turn to develop a theory of the displaced form of embodiment that I find in the suspended film moment. The evolution of Merleau-Ponty's ideas in this book have inadvertent links with Deleuze's, but importantly differ from them in avoiding cosmic dissolution without inevitably positing a body as a container, a definition which implies the kind of depth model I have been undermining with recourse to Deleuze. So, what I set out to look for at this stage of my journey was a way of uniting the notion of displacement with location in the film encounter.

At this point it seemed necessary to the development of the argument that the notion of embodied displacement, while suggested by the encounter with suspension in *Disappearance at Sea*, should be thought in relation to another film encounter. This had less to do with a desire to compile a comparative study, which would relate a number of film examples together, and more to do with the logic of the encounter. The singularity of the encounter should be repeatable; otherwise it might seem like an otherworldly experience, whereas I am claiming that what the encounter reveals is the pulsating movements of a life.
These movements are singular, but are nonetheless on-going like a humming noise that occurs in tandem with the dramatic forms of narrative that structure a day, a humming noise that is constant, yet nonetheless breaks off every so often for a breath to be taken. Needless to say, this gap between breaths is barely perceptible.

One of the features of Disappearance at Sea that was key to this revelation, in conjunction with and inclusive of the cut to the blank screen, was the fact that the film was empty of all dramatic action, engendering a feeling of boredom in the spectator. One was keenly aware of the passing of time. But this boredom in the face of nothing happening was simultaneously engrossing, due to the proximity to an image whose light effects hypnotically revolved around and around and the use of static camera. The image was safeguarding the spectator's boredom, keeping it from falling into stupor or distraction. It was this paradox of a boredom that is simultaneously fascinating that created the context for the enlivening subsistence in emptiness that occurs with particular force in the final cut.

One’s habitual identity displaced by the forgetting of self engendered by the moment of blank suspension, its energy turns towards the movement of the body through time. While this movement is continuous, a formal encounter seems to be required to reveal it. I wanted to find such a space again to confirm, paradoxically, that is always happening and that it can happen again.

At one of the screenings scheduled to coincide with Tacita Dean’s exhibition at Tate Britain, 2001, I encountered another moment of displacement which located me in a moving relation to the surface of the film image and subjected me to the liberating movements of difference within the self and that displace the self in relation to itself. The film was Chantal Akerman’s News From Home (1976). The film is 90 minutes long and for most of that time, the camera presents statically held shots of what seem like the back streets of New York. I would have found the duration of these shots boring in the extreme initially if it were not for the fact that, similarly to Disappearance at Sea, this film also resonated with a fragment of
my autobiography. About ten minutes into the film, Akerman reads the first of the letters that are scattered throughout the soundtrack. I too had received almost the same letters on moving from one country to a city in another. Ordinarily, this detail would occasion an identification between filmmaker and spectator, an identification that film theory considers an over-identification, collapsing the female spectator's difference from the female protagonist and replicating the relegation of the mother/daughter lack of distinction in Mulvey's 'half-light of the imaginary' (Mulvey, 1975: 7). However, like a third term that prevented the poet from collapsing into his text in Hertz' analysis of The Prelude, and yet was not the infamous third term of Oepidal logic, in News From Home, the disinterested duration of the shots, the sense of giving oneself over to their time, acted like a third term making the collapse of positions between mother/daughter, filmmaker/spectator beside the point. Instead, the spectator is opened up to the sense of the non-goal oriented witnessing of a life. Speaking of a performance video installation, yet relevant here, Petra Kuppers states that 'the witnessing of life affords a bridge between spectator and object, via the "third term", change, without collapsing the object into the same (that is, without making the spectator and the object the same)' (Kuppers, 2000: 137).

This sense of a free-floating witnessing of a life, the subsistence in a non-goal oriented activity characteristic of certain states of boredom, is different from the strategic inducement of boredom that was the effect of the distanciating filmic strategies in 1970s avant-garde film such as Peter Gidal's. Gidal wanted to return the viewer to his or her own situation in real time and space - the film not offering the comforts of second order narrative escape. However, the difference between one kind of boredom and another is the degree of fascination that accompanies it. Watching News From Home or Disappearance at Sea or, for that matter, one of Warhol's static camera films, the sense of boredom one finds oneself in does not distance one from the screen image. It is not a case of avant-garde boredom as resistance, but a concentrated boredom that fixes attention in relation to the image.
In one of his more poetic essays, Peter Gidal discussing boredom in Warhol's early films says that 'concentration on nuances of movement (in time) not only makes the slightest change of position (even breathing) important, but also is involved with silence in visual terms. It is not stasis, but a silence filled' (Gidal, 1971: 90). Gidal, in going on to assert that in this extended durational confrontation with another on-screen, 'one learns, hypnotically, about change (one's own and that of an 'other')' (Gidal, 1971: 90), clearly attributes this awareness of inner movement to the spectator, which is where I would want to situate it. This form of boredom is not distraction or ennui but a sense of subsisting in the absence of goal directed activity and being opened to the inner vibrations of this space. Rather than being empty, this boredom is full of the pulse of the body, the inner perception of a 'this and then that', the accumulation and passage of time in the body, the body as a deadline that moves and is moved by linkages that form between the folds of each serialization to which it is subject(ed). The sense of these inner movements were constant throughout News From Home, but again, near the end of the film, inaugurating the end of the film, a particular encounter with a fleeting suspended moment engendered a particular configuration of the pulse beat of emptiness. Again, the encounter with another dis/continuous film moment motivates me to attempt to mobilize its dynamic in a textual performance, hence the second 'montage text' in section 4.2. In this encounter, the "I" finds itself moving in relation to other exteriorizations of movement in a mode of a temporalized spacing, a series of gatherings and dispersals that are continually travelling towards other aggregations of the self. It is this performance that I am offering as a form of narration, a voicing of that substrate of existence which, in an economy of second order narrative, would be called the hidden secret of things (Ricoeur, 1984: 76).

News From Home is doubly interesting in terms of how its historical context adds to the structure of the argument of this thesis. It brings me back to 1970s film theory and, moved forward by my Deleuzian-inspired reading of Disappearance at Sea, it allows me to
reconfigure phenomenology as an answer from the future to the historical question of absence in *News From Home*. While Akerman is documented in terms of feminist film history, *News From Home* occupies a place in the history of film theory that is not reducible to the categorization of Akerman in terms of feminist film history per se (Kuhn (1982); de Lauretis (1987); Fowler (1995); Barker (1999)). This other place, which is more pertinent to my exploration here, is Stephen Heath's discussion of *News From Home* as an example of a film that 'did not suture in the way of the system' (Heath, 1981: 100). However, for him in 1981, the displacements that thereby ensue as a result of the film's refusal to solder 'the junction of symbolic and imaginary' are read in terms of the negativity of resistance (Heath, 1981: 101). They have to do with 'the construction of a central absence - the absence of the daughter, differently posited on image and sound tracks', what Heath refers to as 'the impossible question of a woman's desire' (Heath, 1981: 99). The negativity of this question, the refusal to positivize feminine desire, as to do so would still fall prey to the dominant logic of patriarchy, bears a tangential relation to Zizek's reference to the feminine act that suspends ideological ties in relation to Karin in *Stromboli*. Heath's analysis of *News From Home*:

Following the Oudart-Dayan scenario, there is then no suture: the look is not appropriated into the imaginary field of the film, the Absent One is not resolved; the film has no shot/reverse shot sequence, no figuration of the images, nothing but their continual replacement. Yet, the spectator is included and moved in the film, in a structure and a rhythm of lack and absence (which are not the same thing). What is the direction of these images for this voice and its story, of this voice and its story for these images? The final shot can retrospectively produce the images as those of the daughter but the film remains in its time in the lack of each image [...]. We are placed in the film but that place is not secured, is shifted, and turns, in the meanings the film makes in that insecurity, in those dislocations, on the construction of a central absence – the absence of the daughter, differently posited on image and sound tracks. From that absence, the film refuses to suture, to convert Other to Absent One (such a conversion near to the position of the mother in her letters), hence to resolve as the sign of something for someone, to fix a unity - "sign represents something for someone". Or rather, it refinds suture effectively as a term of the logic of the signifier, poses the problem of the relations of the subject on the
symbolic and the holding of those relations in the imaginary; in which problem lies the real of the film, that of feminism, and of film, that of image, voice, noise, duration, rhythm, the impossible question of a woman's desire in all that (Heath, 1981: 98-99).

Can the question of impossibility, absence, and negativity, be thought differently from the perspective of my viewing of the film in 2001, given the theoretical trajectory of my journey in this thesis?

In the feminist subtext in section 3.7, I ended with the notion that a mobilizing absence, which engenders continuous discontinuity, 'disjunctive synthesis' is on the female side of the sublime (mode of being). The displacements that occur on this continuum do not relate to absence as a rigid structural principle, or as an unrepresentable gap, which the figure of woman signifies in discourses of patriarchy. Instead, I am arguing they generate a ceaseless play of self-transformations, performances of temporalized spacing. Watching News From Home in 2001, I am far removed in time from Heath's preoccupations, although at the beginning of this research, I was still close to the theoretical context that informs his work. However, following the encounter with Disappearance at Sea and subsequent reading, I became attuned to the durational dimensions of suspended film moments rather than they being representative of a frozen or digressive distanciation. Therefore, when I encountered the moment of suspension that Heath refers to in News From Home, "I" was placed differently in relation to it. Instead of posing a question around an absence, the film moved me beyond any meta-analysis of impossibility, and threw me instead into the sensational flux of a 'this and then that' rather than a 'this is not that yet'. This other kind of movement gets one out of the impasse of the parameters of oscillation that Heath operates within in the chapter in Questions of Cinema, 'Film Performance'.

I am interested in reconfiguring Heath's notion of film performance, as I think it has something to add to Peggy Phelan's contemporary ontology of performance as a suspended, but animated, unmarked present (Phelan, 1993: 156). While I am in sympathy with Phelan's
emphasis on the 'generative possibilities of disappearance' effectuated in the performative moment, her ontology risks reifying that disappearance and its resistance to the marked order of representation (Phelan, 1993: 27). Her categorization of the present (moment) as existing in 'the suspended animation between the Past and the Future' tends to keep the invisibility she is interested in as a space other to the order of the visible and repeats the aesthetics of negativity that I am seeking a way out of (Phelan, 1993: 156). For me, following a Deleuzian trajectory, the present moment is itself open to bifurcations of past and future that (de)mark it and keep it continually on the move. While Heath does not escape dialectics in his essay, his use of repetition can be read as a productive marker of invisibility that avoids positing this realm as the hole or gap within the field of the visible.

Heath struggles with a dialectical model of film experience, a model wherein the side of the dialectic favoured by Heath, i.e. the heterogeneous aspect of film experience, always has to foreclose on its chaotic nature in order to create (narrative) sense. (This in not unlike Phelan's marked/unmarked orders of being.) Given that the oscillation between these two orders are what comprise the film experience for Heath, it is difficult to see how the 'new relations of film performances' he calls for can be effectuated (Heath, 1981: 129). Yet, in the light of a Deleuzian approach, the area between these points of oscillation can be reconsidered on its own terms, thereby bypassing the seemingly inevitable oscillation and ensuing hierarchies of chaos/sense, excess/order, non-narrative/narrative. The process of engaging with or being engaged by the film moment becomes instead a simultaneously heterogeneous homogeneity. What do I mean by this?

Initially, Heath's notion of film performance relates to the narrative film, which he says is always performing the subject as a coherent stable identity in time. His call for 'new relations of film performance' would stem from 'a film without any subject performance, or rather a performance only in the difficulty, the difference, outside of a time, a vision', characteristics he attributes to Michael Snow's *Wavelength* (1967) (Heath, 1981: 129).
However, in a related essay in the same volume, 'Repetition Time', Heath cautions against the eviction of narrative in Structural/materialist film. If the passage/performance of a film is held over and above 'the historical problem of meaning and subject position', this stress on the self-sufficiency of the experience of the process of the film creates 'an existence outside contradiction, the concern with "materiality" becoming a defined and limited project with its confirmed audience' (Heath, 1981: 174). In other words, it is not 'simply a question of opposing "non-narrative" to "narrative" but of finding other ways of organising the triadic temporal phases of film which he details as 'preconstruction, construction (or reconstruction) and passage' (Heath, 1981: 173-174). Heath means, of course, ways other than the way he perceives the classic narrative film's deployment of narrative as a means of holding the dispersal of the subject in check.

However, Heath's own description of the narrative function in 'Repetition Time' is paradoxically useful, being closer to my notion of the displacing movements of narration than to the cliched notion of classical narrative that pervades 1970s radical film theory. In that essay, Heath describes the narrative cinema as bringing 'into play a whole number of figures, rhymes, movements that cut across the film in differing rhythms, shifting the spectator in their relations' (Heath, 1981: 167). This motion, other than the ultimate sense of purpose and direction, which motivate these figures, is not unlike the process of narration that I am making a case for in this thesis. In 'Film Performance', Heath describes this narrative motion in terms of a 'phasing between two constant moments that... are layered together: the subject-reflection and the subject-process' (Heath, 1981:116). Subject-reflection stems from Lacan's mirror-stage, it being a narrative effect or series of effects that 'produces the coherence of view and viewer... the film thereby proposed for the subject it includes and creates in a scenario of desire fulfilled, a subject bound up in the consistency of the imaginary' (Heath, 1981:116). Subject-process, although Heath does not explicitly state this here, echoes Julia Kristeva's subject-in-process, in that this movement is a 'multiple
circulation, the perpetual movement of difference' that always exceeds the closure that
subject-reflection instills. '[T]he subject-process is the "more"' (Heath, 1981:116). (Again,
this is not unsimilar to Phelan's position, derived from Lacan, that 'the subject exceeds […]
and fails to appear in the image of it' (Phelan, 1993: 20) and, in fact, his argument
progresses likewise).

While Heath may favour the disruption of 'subject-process' over 'subject-reflection',
his emphasis on 'the operation of the two together (the layering, the phasing)' is suggestive
of film performance as a mode of spacing between differences that are continually in
operation (Heath, 1981: 119). Rather than necessitating a particular kind of object such as
the avant-garde film in order to 'disturb the performance, to break the whole coherence of
vision' (Heath, 1981: 121), Heath's very discussion of phasing already, albeit unwittingly,
suggests performance as a disturbing phenomenon that is never achieved, regardless of
genre. Although, he continues as if it were achieved (narrative coherence), deeming film
performance a somewhat predictable process which repeats the same phasing for an empty
spectator who mirrors the oscillation of the stasis of reflection and the movements of excess.
'To see a film again you need to forget it, but you always need the film again…the process,
exactly the time of its performance of you - subject - in time' (1981:122). Unlike the
'narrative join of a film' that recasts

repetition - difference, the interminable flux of desire, the horizon of death -
into the balance of a fiction…certain developments of repetition away from
the classic narrative order in avant-garde film entail a threat to that function;
a threat translated in the common reactions of "boredom", the irritation of
"nothing happens" (Heath, 1981: 124).

Heath does not consider the heterogeneity of the spectator apart from the materiality of the
film text. Heath's notion of film performance which, viz-a-viz the avant-garde film is a
performance without a subject, still consigns the spectator to mirroring the film/text, here as
a dispersed body-subject. However, his formulation of the motion of phasing is suggestive
of a mode of film performance that goes beyond this mirroring, incorporating another kind of agency into its unfolding.

Recasting Heath's terminology of subject-reflection and subject-process in the light of Deleuze's interplay between the virtual and the actual opens out a mode of film performance as a phasing motion which resonates with my encounter with the final scene in *News From Home*. I shall demonstrate this in the following 'montage text'. Taking a Deleuzian approach, phasing, rather than being between two constant moments, can be seen as a process whereby spectator and film are put into a series of temporalities which coincide and diverge, generating a series of unpredictable, bifurcating, movements rather than an oscillation bounded by the parameters of narrative dispersal. What is produced is neither the film as text nor spectator as text, but a distribution of moments of interconnection, which rebound off one another, thereby becoming altered in the process.

This model of film spectatorship, if it can be called a model, would be generative of a scenario whereby identities form and disappear not as oscillation but a series of continuous discontinuities. In other words, it is not a case of a return to form or form simply losing momentary coherence. The aspect of Deleuze that I am particularly referring to here is his emphasis on the sensible as 'the non-repeatable basis for the difference between actualizations' (Baugh, 1993: 15). Co-extensive with this emphasis is the notion that the sensible is not merely an area of being that requires explanation/formulization by conceptual knowledge, but is in-itself an intelligent producer of sense. In Heath's Kristevan formulation, the dispersal of sense characteristic of the drives forms a kind of chaotic ground zero, which is continually being bound up into the (necessary) fictions of identity. However, in a Deleuzian formulation, the dispersal of sense is the groundless ground of identity. Therefore, the destiny of each performance of identity is not subject-reflection, but constitutes a here and now actuality that self-differentiates itself - film performance then as
the enactment of this self-differentiating motion put in play by the film image but not a mirror reflection of it.

This minute distinction relates to the previous discussion on the sublime. There I attempted to recast the negativity traditionally attached to sublime indeterminacy in terms of a series of joyous displacements that are nonetheless embodied. A similar pattern emerges here. The negativity of the sublime has its basis in Hegelian thought where 'the "this" given in sensory actuality is an empty, negative universal' (Baugh, 1993: 17). It cannot be positive and full of content. As Baugh puts it: 'With respect to its utter indeterminacy and lack of content, being, the here and now existence of something, is identical to nothing' (Baugh, 1993: 17). From this standpoint, the sensible cannot be perceived unless it is subjected to the retrospective conditions of knowledge, thereby the here and now is no longer here and now (cannot exist in itself) but becomes a perspective, (remember Zizek's gaze of the stranger), on the conditions of existence. The sensible is here relegated to the condition of possibility only.

From this standpoint, which is not simply particular to academic philosophy but filters into the cultural sphere in general, it is not hard to see how representations of the image of woman hold a particularly uncanny place within film theory. Her image is used as a positive signifier to cover over the fundamental emptiness at the core of being, yet the very same image threatens to expose that very lack/nothing at the heart of being. In Heath's discussion of News From Home, the refusal to give a positive image of woman is read, given this basis, as an assertion of negativity - thence 'impossible desire'. However, my encounter with the film brought something of the sensory immediacy of a here and now in the process of self-differentiating itself into play. Rather than emptiness preserved or raised as a question, absence became an actualization of real existence rather than the engendering of retrospective or prospective fantasy. This is not a contradiction from a Deleuzian perspective, where the sensible is the 'real condition of experience' that explains 'the
conceptual and the abstract conditions of all possible experience’ (Baugh, 1993: 17).

Absence in an image, in a gap between the image and my perception of it, the absence of myself to myself, is not determined from the perspective of rationality, as a still point, static. Absence in a vitalist universe is always changing in relation to itself.

It is this approach to absence that I encounter in conjunction with both films in this thesis, but News From Home brings in a historical dimension that relates absence specifically to the question of femininity. It also belongs to an era in which phenomenology was more in vogue as a methodology for film analysis. In my encounter with News From Home, these histories are altered. Heath’s ’impossible desire’, recast in terms of a reconfiguration of his notion of ‘phasing’, becomes sensibly actual rather than either oscillating between the poles of identity/chaos or simply refusing a position (the gaze of the stranger). The film’s generativity recasts phenomenology’s positing of space from the standpoint of sovereign consciousness in terms of the spatial extension and dimension of separable interrelated units which open up a plurality of viewpoints that do not make a whole. The spectator therefore is engaging in the film performance of continuous discontinuity, the particularity of each performance, its here and nowness, deriving from the distribution of bifurcating time lines that produce the internally differentiated moment of the present.

From here out, the shape of the thesis as a loop becomes more apparent. The following ’montage text’ and its accompanying theoretical commentary repeat, albeit differently, the self-differenciating movements of absence that comprised the previous chapters motivated by the cut to the blank screen in Disappearance at Sea. A bifurcating link across absences forms between News From Home and Disappearance at Sea. These two films overlap at certain points on this loop and spiral away from one another at other points. Between the folds of the loop, a female spectator is becoming discontinuously continuous.


3 Also see (Doane, 1982).

4 While Stephen Heath refers to the avant-garde strategy of boredom as distanciation (Heath, 1981: 167), what I'm referring to as a fascinating boredom can be related to the pleasure director Jacques Rivette refers to as stemming from a kind of "floating attention" that multiplies the possible forms of the spectator's attentiveness to the text:

   This pleasure... can tend more in the direction of... let's not say work - which is a large word that has been much abused... but, this pleasure in fact passes through certain stages, certain periods, which can equally well be attentiveness, perplexity, irritation, or even boredom (Rivette in Rodowick, 1991: 105).

This seems relevant as D. N. Rodowick refers to Rivette's use of extended duration to cut loose the spectator's synchronization with the linear and ineluctable forward movement of the plot and the determination of time by the filmstrip.


7 I would say that Phelan accepts the post-structuralist strain of thought even as she attempts to undermine it. When she claims 'performance uses the body to frame the lack of Being promised by and through the body - that which cannot appear without a supplement' (Phelan, 1993: 151), isn't this a nice condensation of Lacan and Derrida? The position I am trying to evolve is that the body is neither in full possession of itself nor is it lacking because it is always moving.

Red bricks. Concrete. Grey sidewalks. A road, enclosed by sidewalks, lined with reddish brown brick buildings, this image alights in front of me. I wait and a car pulls out from a side street on the left and drives across the screen exiting to the right. Space recedes from the foreground of the image into the distance. A space to be inhabited by the imagination, a street to be walked down or driven through, I situate myself here at the apex of the triangular arc of depth-of-field.

*It may be significant that it is at the same moment (around the age of three) that the little human 'invents' at once sentence, narrative, and the Oedipus.*

A car pulls out from the kerb and drives into the foreground, moving towards me, yet not coming closer. Another car appears in the foreground and drives off into the distance without losing its definition as a locus of interest in the static frame of the moving image. A strange space this, appearing deep and tangible, yet flattening all that traverses
it into blocks of colour and light. A space divided into geometrical sections, buildings, sky, pavement, and road. Traffic, both human and mechanical, stratify the surface of these blocks, creating passages in which I move, retracing my steps, building up density, intensity in the image. Clusters of spatial effects built like a wall, whose stones lie in separate contact with one another, uncemented. I fall into their crevices, abandoning the lookout point at the apex of the triangle.

*I see myself at the labyrinth’s gate, ready to get lost in the city and in this story. Submissive.*

Cut to another image of the city, more road, more traffic, a scene similar to but not the same as the previous shot. Does this shot follow the previous one in real time or did it precede it? It appears to follow it, but does not perform the linear continuity of narrative. That linear flow is unhinged by the untimely cut from one shot to another as if the film were a series of stacked images rather than a continuous thread forwards in time. A series of shots of the city, 59 in all, stacked in continuous separability, one and then the other.
59 in all, with an average length of 89 seconds, but the range in duration is drastic: from 20 seconds to 11 minutes. And both extremes are subject to the same principle: each new shot in a sense returns us to a beginning, to a new space which contains no mode of articulation grafted from shots preceding it. 

There is a montage principle at work, though not the ones of narrative progression, parallel action or conflicting information. The connections between these isolated frames comes from a place outside of the on-screen image. As I wait for a scene to change, I purview its details because there is nothing else to do. I forget what I am looking at. I forget that I am looking and become a vision without focus. I become a tired and waiting body, yawning, sighing, with the lack of stimulation. Although my gaze remains fixed to the screen, I no longer identify the mise-en-scene in front of me. I am diffused in the time of waiting, a dispersed and withdrawn body-subject. The image changes. I become aware of this change after the fact, the cut from one image to the next jolting me into awareness, motivating my gaze to begin again scanning the surface details of this new scene. Until...

[In my view montage is not an idea composed of successive shots stuck together but an idea that DERIVES from the collision between two shots that are independent of one another.4]
My scanning ability satiated, I fall into a waking slumber. The noise of passing traffic punctures the scene like the rasping sounds of a breath being released after holding it in for irregular, short spells. I am swayed into an uncomfortable semi-awareness by the sound of tire tracks on tar, prompted into an attention that wanes as the sound fades in the distance. Or is it the case that I have become so attuned to the din that its drone surrounds me like the waves of the ocean? I begin to slip into the between time of dreaming, a drift that is brought up fast by signs that say No Parking Here. Don’t Walk. Walk. One Way Only. Park Fast. I grasp them for clues as to how I should locate myself in the image. A block of light shimmers in the middle distance, framed by the angles of sidewalk, barred by horizontal beams that jut across the image. Is it an exit? Above the din of traffic's breathing, a woman’s voice erupts off-screen.

"Dear Chantal" it says, "When are you coming home? We miss you very much".

The eruption of this voice introduces another scene into cinematic space, a letter from a mother to a
daughter, the filmmaker. As the voice recites them, the words mark the invisible screen of my mental landscape from left to right. I stare blindly at the image in front of me, split between following items of traffic that zoom past and listening out for a message from the other place the voice is locating. Characters and events, entanglements and trials of everyday living populate this place. It seems to be more clearly defined than the place on-screen.

I went to the city and

*what I saw every day was Soho, the subway, loneliness*

everywhere. I needed to be there

*[to see people as blurred as I felt myself, that did me a lot of good. They seemed to be going nowhere, and I didn't know where I was going either [... ] I was always drifting.*

A frame within a frame, a subway window is centralized in the image. It gives the appearance of remaining still while streams of subway stations and tunnels seem to jet past its surface opacity. A faint reflection of a woman dressed in white appears on this window, but the density of the image pulls what lies beyond it and in front of it onto the same level of indistinct greyness. The train stops, the doors
swish open framing the station wall. A network of
discoloured white tiles fill the surface blankness of
the image without a gap, except for a sign that reads
Christopher St. A gap does exist though between the
visible parameters of the frame and the invisible
parameters of my location, a gap that cuts the image
out from an expanse of darkness that surrounds me.
The graffiti on the subway window forms the pattern
of a question mark, a date.

"Where am I? What time is it?".

The words in the letter are recited as if by a speaker of a
foreign language, syntax understood without the emotional
resonance acquired over a lifetime. The voice is pat,
speaking quickly, breathlessly. Just as there are no spaces
between the blocks of detail on the surface of the image,
there are no spaces between the words in the letter, no
punctuation or expressive tones. Another sound erupts
into this cinematic scenario, the sound of weeping. It
spreads itself between the invisible flow of words across
the screen and the attention that hovers over the densely
stacked images on screen. I am moved by the words in
the letter. I supply their deadpan delivery with a
resonance all my own, contaminating the purity of the
frame with this upheaval of affect. But was this frame
ever pure in the first place? Her passion for roaming
took her underground in search of a
Some shots are held for a long time, some for a short time, each one internally divided into flattened, geometrical, blocks. External space is cut into durations that seem as arbitrary as the things that pass in and out of the shots. A rhythm of pace and interruption. Except for the shot of the black woman who sits arms folded plonked on a chair at the kerb. A clamour of window frames, lampposts, billboards, and traffic, to which she seems oblivious, surround her. She stands out from the flow, a human presence that remains perfectly still for the duration of the shot. Cars move past her, one after another. She passively sits. Her body a refusal of motion, her gesture deposited there at that street corner as if sedimented in time. Deposited there and absorbed into the tapestry of noisy detail. However, we have seen this street corner, this woman, earlier in the film, from a side and distant angle where her now impervious presence blended seamlessly into the lamppost on her left, any traces of character drowned by the film's main protagonists, traffic and its seeming vagaries. Now, this time, she seems to have stagnated into a gaper, a badaud, mute and waiting.
But the chain of states of female body is not closed: descending from the mother or going back to the mother, it serves as a revelation to the environment, which now makes itself seen or heard only through the window of a room, or a train, a whole art of sound. The states of the body secrete the slow ceremony which joins together the corresponding attitudes, and develop a female gest which overcomes the history of men and the crisis of the world.8

Steps to the underground fill the centre of the image. People move up and down this thoroughfare and off-screen. They pass each other by without a glance. The camera pans to the right, slowly, jaggedly, performing a 360-degree pan, as if looking for something, or, nothing? A train pulls up on the platform. An image of its interior, a concave perspective of a carriage corridor, creates an effect of stillness against the shrieking sound of steel on track. A man in a yellow shirt enters the carriage and stares in the direction of the camera. A sense of the filmmaker's vulnerability becomes palpable. After what seems like an age, he backs down and moves off into another carriage. Out on the platform, space is fractured into a series of horizontals and verticals, the horizontal lines of three platforms receding from foreground into the distance, the vertical lines of pillars that hold the structure in place. As people enter the frame, they walk behind these pillars, disappearing from view as they wait for the next train to arrive. A man dressed in white reappears in the frame, after
disappearing behind a pillar and exiting the frame, not wanting to remain still while waiting. White on white. Two trains arrive simultaneously, fracturing the space even more, one of them pulling into view on the surface of the image most proximate to my gaze. They move off, leaving the space bare yet as flat as before. Suddenly, I notice a couple embracing on the distant platform. I say suddenly because, although this is the first instance of visible human intimacy in the film, the gesture is quickly submerged in the devouring flatness of the image. I very nearly didn't notice it, my roving gaze forgetfully engaged by the dully luminous swarms of random detail that accumulate in various directions within the frame. Unable to rest on a singular detail, my roving gaze is held, all the same, by the implacable stare of the camera fixe. This gesture of contact between human bodies momentarily halts nomadic passage through the image. But this interlude of intimacy, its lightness of touch quickly disappears as yet another subway pulls across the screen, blocking the couple from view. Through the window, I see one of them get on the train. Above the din, I hear snatches of a letter from a mother.
"Your film sounds very political, but a little sad and boring and full of the sadness of people". "When are you coming home?"

Translated and performed by the daughter, the mother's words are erased by the rumbling drone of city noise. It drowns out her pleas and supplications. Transportation and noise remove the daughter from the temporal measures of rural life, the events of marriages, births, and illnesses, parties, feuds, and arguments that mark out weekends and evenings and days. Time in the city flows in an endless cycle of morning, noon and night, a flow whose difference is dissolved by underground travel, by the gaudy brightness of neon which lights up the night. The seasonal passage of time disappears in the city. In the film, there are two, maybe three, night sequences, definitive breaks in the daylight sequences, but these are neither in 'real' time nor serve narrative progression. By contrast the letters recount a chronological, albeit elliptical, progression of time which the images give no clues to. You must have received the letter I sent you two days ago. I received your letter yesterday. It is summer now. A chronology without dates, out of sync with the content
and rhythm of the shots. A letter begins at an arbitrary point during a shot's duration. Sometimes, the shot changes in the middle of its recitation. Often it remains the same. Although, the sequence of shots is random and seemingly disinterested, although they accumulate in a dense stacking motion, change is occurring in relation to this presentation. Change is occurring in my relation to them. I spend time with them. I lend them my time. They leave me alone with myself, making me feel the weight of oppressive connections and disconnections. Is there any escape from the mournful nostalgia of home or the rootless vagaries of nomadism?

Neither the exilic dream of return to organic connection nor the nomadic celebration of rootless liberty, I believe, quite offers the best option for living in a world of differences.  

A smooth long tracking shot takes me to the edges of the city. The camera is propped on a car, control given over to the predetermined network of traffic lights: stop, start and go. This passivity liberates me from the burden of choice as I am carried down 10th avenue, my gaze bouncing off the surfaces of bricks and broken store windows, the close-up view at kerb level blocking access to the city's labyrinthine thoroughfares. At gable ends, the city's tall buildings crawl up sidewalks, becoming a bluish grey washed out mass that disappears off into the horizon. Myriad details preoccupy the forefront of the image. Directions from an invisible source,
the off-screen traffic lights, tell the camera to stop. It pulls up beside a parked truck, the name on the side, Fiebiger Inc.. Choice relinquished, the camera moves off again, coming to a stop at the shop sign, Grumbacher. Being stationed at these proper names is arbitrary, but they form a provisional solidity in the wavy flow of camera movement. This tracking shot is taking a long time. Where are we going? Anywhere? Back to a shot of the interior of a subway car. People pass in front of the camera, barely acknowledging it, somnambulant. Suddenly, the claustrophobic constriction of this enclosure is broken as the subway track stretches out of the tunnels and the train rattles over the swarming city. Hulking masses of dilapidated buildings pass off-screen from right to left. Is this the beginning of freedom? The noise is deafening, yet imbued with the promise of escape. On and on and on and then back again to a view of the city's thoroughfare framed this time from the back of an off-screen car which moves slowly ahead of the on-screen traffic. Yellow taxis frame the traffic flow, a flow that is strangely gentle now, rolling forwards. Another letter interrupts the image, but "I" can barely hear it, calmed as I am by the sense of
something coming to an end.

*When you write something where the end is the same as the beginning it's really boring. That's very cliched, to have no ending.*

Cut to an indefinable dark image. Is it night? A dull light reveals the close-up of a cavernous space. Dislocated, I am removed from the peculiar, hypnotic flatness of the image. Is this a hole in its dense fabric? No, something else is happening still. In the absence of a façade, I am not falling into a vertiginous void. "I" am imbricated in the nervure of a darkness that bears me from within, in its texture,

*first mute, then uttered.*

The sound of water gushes in the silence as the camera slowly moves out from this murky environs. The river slivers and laps the shore. Off-screen, a boat pulls away from the city's edge leaving traces of its motoric passage in the frame. Seagulls follow its traffic, choreographing the skyline in arabesques that dip and dive, loop and separate. The off-screen
boat moves out yet further, the vertical and horizontal lines of city architecture lose distinction. Buildings blur into the horizon, blue and fuzzy at the edges, becoming almost sky. Another kind of vacancy opens up in the silence, a desert populated by overlapping grains of light and bird sound. The letters have stopped. The voice is silent. No more reciting, recounting, imitating.

No character, no fictioning look to be seen; the shots succeed with no other tie than the fact of that succession, until the last shot from a boat drawing away from New York, the city gradually lost in the image to the expanse of the sea, the film ending as it vanishes on the horizon [...] the impossible question of a woman's desire in all that. 12

But is it a question of desire here, desire, forever circling around a lost immediacy? At the end of Mona Hatoum's video Measures of Distance (1989), the screen goes black, a moment which is followed by the appearance centre-screen of a photograph of the artist's mother in the shower, an image we have seen diffuse fragments of throughout the video. This moving image work is also interspersed with the voiceover of a daughter translating and reading her mother's letters from Beirut sent to her while she is in exile in London. However, here the Arabic letters actually appear on-screen, the density of the
calligraphic text both forbidding access to images
of the mother's body, the point of exile, and also
protecting that body from other's gaze. A narrative
of intimacy and distance, the space that opens up
here is the space of desire between two human
subjects, a space mediated by text and image. I can
identify with them. In News From Home, by contrast,
absence becomes unhinged from being a space
around which desire circulates. Absence is regenerated
by the passing of time through phenomena, the sense
of which reveals the minute differences hidden by
identity. Not the impossible question of a woman's
desire, but the fluid dynamism a present that discloses
the movement of how I subsist in time, a movement
that is only impossible between the poles of alienation
and desire. Instead of measures of distance,

*a sort of dehiscence opens my body in two
creating

the double reference, the identity of the retiring into oneself with the leaving of oneself, of the lived through with the distance.*

The water laps at my edges. I swim into the vanishing
horizon moving between the current of the waves. "I"
dip and dive, swirl and curve, on seagull's wings.
forming arabesques in the sky. I am moving across

the water, away from the mirage of the city but I am
not returning home. Home no longer exists to return to.

It does not lie awaiting return except in an eternal mythic
past. But the past does not exist preserved. It moves with
me. Have I become a nomadic traveler then? The news
in the letters possessed me. I internalized their words.

I swallowed them whole and repeated them. I
performed their residency, allowing her voice, her
pleas, her demands, and sorrows to invade the space
of the drift. I was oppressed in the city, the constant
drone of traffic and erratic flow of people. I stood
still, heavy and silent, as a war was staged between
noise and voice. I received her inscriptions but I
parroted them outwards into the flatness of a space
whose blank gaze held me while I played with trance-
like states and echoes. At the end of this process, I
became free. There is a never-ending in the space that
opens up in the final film moment of dislocation. After
having subjected myself to the stacked weight and time
of the film's images, in that final scene, I am rewarded
with lightness, a kind of gaiety. If I identify with anything,
it is with the flight of the seagulls as I am carried away on
the surface skin of a duration in which I participate.

Opened up to liquid motion, I became a tracery of

something gathering and falling between the current,

between the swoop of gulls in the blueness. I move with

the motor and animal calls that populate this new space,

the curve of a wing, the ruffle of a wave. Not the impossible

question of a woman's desire, but the fluid dynamism of the

discontinuity of the real that discloses the movement of how

I subsist in time, contained and flowing like a river at the edge

of a city. In the semi-silence I hear my own voice and it says

"Now, here".


4.3 SPECTATORSHIP, PHENOMENOLOGY AND FILM THEORY: RECUPERATING PHENOMENOLOGY FOR FILM PERFORMANCE.

As I stated at the end of section 4.1, this final chapter of the thesis can be seen as forming the shape of a loop in relation to the chapters motivated by *Disappearance at Sea*. This is the case in two senses. Firstly, the film moment of absence in *News From Home* traverses chronological time to resonate with the film moment of absence in *Disappearance at Sea*. Aside from introducing historical issues into the argument, this resonance is emotive, in the sense that these films suspended moments moved me into the openness of 'a silence filled' with resonating and diverging rhythms, generating a performance of embodied displacement. Secondly, in tracing the patterns of the resonance between these two films, chronologically spanning twenty years, I began to realise that the theoretical allegiances I was making in doing this were also beginning to move towards one another. What I mean by this is that repetitious alliances and reservations about these alliances were leaping across the linear arrangement of the different chapters of the thesis and creating a pattern of their own. Therefore, in the same way that I oscillated between readings of Deleuze's ideas in chapters two and three, in this final chapter, I still oscillate between these readings of Deleuze but here they are mediated by recourse to the ideas of Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

The reason why Merleau-Ponty comes in here is twofold. My reservations with Deleuze had to do with whether or how one could locate the movements of virtuality in the actual world of action, how these movements effect real bodies in space and time, rather than effecting a bodily vaporization. Although many of his ideas are conducive to expanding on the sensibility of the film encounters, the disappearances in the film moments and the movements they generate, while dislocating, still incorporate an embodied spectator not a disembodied brain. I needed some analysis of space and embodiment and Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology seemed appropriate not least because of its surprising resonance with Deleuze, which I shall demonstrate later. This move to
phenomenology is also historically appropriate because of the link between film and
phenomenology in the 1970s. In fact, Akerman herself makes a connection between her
filmmaking and phenomenological sentiments:

"For my cinema...the most suitable word is *phenomenological*: it is
always a succession of events, of little actions which are described in a
precise manner. And what interests me is just this relation to the
immediate look, with the how you look at these little actions going on.
And it is also a relation to strangeness" (Akerman in Heath, 1978: 101).

However, my resurrection of phenomenology has less to do with historical allegiance,
than with how a select reading of it might expand on the positionality of the spectator in
relation to the film moment of absence that unhinges one from symbolic identification,
yet does not, I insist, destroy narrative sense.

The structure of the following commentary will be repetitious. Deleuze will
reappear and be grappled with in a way that folds back on the discussion in chapter
three. The purpose of this is not to create a mirror echo of my reservations with his ideas
there, but to create a ripple effect that, in spreading backwards rather than outwards, can
take his ideas spiraling towards another destination. This destination is not the one of
narrative goals and endings, but the place where the accumulation of wanderings meet
and bounce off one another, accreting marks of difference between repetitions, in turn,
echoing the form of subjectivity mediated by the displacements effectuated by the image
of absence. In this trajectory, the non-narrative moment is transformed into a scene of
narrational intensity. In excavating the aspects of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology that
are of use of me, I aim to expand my notion of spectatorship as a performance of
dis/continuous narration. I shall hybridize those aspects with the elements in Deleuze
that have been conducive thus far, and further mitigate against those that have not, i.e.
the dissolution of the spectator. The following analysis will form a new constellation of
the bodies of phenomenology, film moments of absence, along with that of the spectator.

The emphasis on the processual interrelation between the spectator and the
image in the preceding 'montage text' based on *News From Home* can be related to
phenomenological approaches to film, at least to Vivian Sobchack's definition of how such an approach differs from the psychoanalytic models that have dominated film theory. As opposed to a psychoanalytic model, she claims, a phenomenological one does not posit a single and totalizing structure of identification with the cinematic image, but rather differentiates among a variety of subjective spectatorial modes that co-constitute the cinematic object as the kind of cinematic object it is. This model ultimately offers a more dynamic, fluid, and concrete description of film viewing than does its psychoanalytic counterpart (Sobchack in Gaines and Renov, 1999: 241).

This turn to a phenomenological approach at this late stage in the thesis, although hinted at throughout, might seem regressive, as phenomenology, given its Husserlian emphasis on pure consciousness, has generally fallen out of favour as a methodology for art appreciation, regardless of subsequent attempts by Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and, more recently, Ricoeur, to overcome Husserl's idealism by emphasizing the life world. Indeed, as Dudley Andrew, writing in the 1970s, puts it 'no sophisticated theorist working today would consider' returning to the postwar phenomenological model (Andrew in Nicholls, 1985: 627). However, writing almost thirty years ago, Andrew identifies a return to what he calls the neglected tradition of phenomenology in film in the light of 'signs of the collapse of rigid structuralism' (Andrew in Nicholls, 1985: 626).

Andrew makes the claim that a phenomenological analytic approach is descriptive and immersed in what it is describing as opposed to the explanatory, endistanced perspective assumed in structuralism (Andrew in Nicholls, 1985: 627). The aim of phenomenological approaches, according to Andrew is

the description of one or another sort of consciousness the spectator assumes in apprehending movies: a global response to the movie complex, a "perceptual" stance in relation to the "animation and definition" of images, and a narrative stance implicating the spectator's consciousness through the processes of identification and individuation in relation to a sequence of images all directed toward some goal or experience (Andrew, 1985: 629).
If a phenomenological approach opens up the question of film as a dynamic, processual, experience, can it also contribute to thinking about this experience in a non-intentional way, as not simply being constituted by a spectator's consciousness?

This might seem a strange question to put to a philosophical approach which, as Derrida critiques in his essay 'Speech and Phenomena', puts such a central emphasis on the capacity of the subject to be present to itself in the moment of the now. 'The present of self-presence would be as indivisible as the blink of an eye' (Derrida, 1991: 18). However, the merit of turning to Merleau-Ponty to explore the notion of an immersive experience which is not being constituted by oneself is to offset the abstraction of Deleuze's question in Cinema 1: The Movement-Image: How is it possible to speak of an Apparaitre without a Seer? As I shall go on to show, there are very productive tensions in Merleau-Ponty's thought between early and late work, i.e. between Phenomenology of Perception and later The Visible and the Invisible, which suggest a much more radical account of the subject/object relation generated by an image of absence, one that does not foreclose on embodiment, yet does not equate the latter with self-presence.

I am not alone in looking to phenomenology to account for film spectatorship. The fact that phenomenological approaches 'have so far drawn minor attention', due to the dominance in film studies in the seventies and much of the eighties of 'an intermixture of Lacanian psychoanalysis, Althusserian Marxism, and Barthesian semiotics', is changing (Plantinga, 1993:511). There is a recurrence of interest in phenomenological approaches to film. Recent publications include: Allan Casebier's Film and Phenomenology: Toward a Realist Theory of Cinematic Representation (Cambridge University Press, 1991), and Vivian Sobchack's The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience (Princeton University Press, 1992). Also, other recent publications on film, such as Laura Marks' The Skin of the Film (2000) and Rachel O. Moore's Savage Theory (2000), while not using an overtly phenomenological method, emphasize the role of sensory experience in relation to film, the former citing Merleau-Ponty in particular. While Casebier's study reinstates the intentionality of
phenomenological deduction from a Husserlian perspective, it is to Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology that most of this revival is addressed. I also turn to Merleau-Ponty, to develop my question of how absence (in the suspended film moment) generates something positive and dynamic in itself rather than being the negative component of the presence/absence binary. While Merleau-Ponty's philosophical method is usually thought of in terms of perceiving figures in a gestalt against a ground/background that contains them, there is evidence to the contrary in *The Visible and the Invisible* that this ground is not merely a background (spatial) container against which the flux of things are defined and perceived. By contrast, in that later book, while Merleau-Ponty retains the notion of Gestalten, the nature of the back/ground is rendered, not simply as an indeterminate, yet static, field against which things are defined, but as itself being formed by the elements that are formed in relation to it.³

In this, there are echoes of Deleuze's notion of the groundless ground of subjectivity and the notion of narrativization as serialization that I looked at in chapter three, rather than the stable originary, and thereby inert, ground to which the trajectory of narrative is always returning, as might be said of Zizek's position. The crucial difference between Deleuze and Merleau-Ponty though is that for the latter this shifting ground is more implicitly related to a body which, while being displaced in relation to itself, is still communicating with itself and other bodies via what he calls 'the flesh of the world'. Merleau-Ponty's concept of 'flesh' resonates with Deleuze's notion of pre-individual singularities, in the sense that it is an anonymous field of in/visibility, what Deleuze might call virtuality. However, in Merleau-Ponty, 'this anonymity innate to Myself that we have previously called flesh' and into which I emigrate and am captivated, so that *the seer and the visible reciprocate one another and we no longer know who sees and which is seen* is not without agency (Merleau-Ponty in Sobchack, 1992: 118). It is still the 'place' from where I am always oriented to the world from the "here and now" that is the unified field of a body - not "any" body, but "some" body, a body that matters
like no other because it is lived as "mine". It is my body that synopsizes
the various modalities of perception so that the perceived world makes
its sense someplace (Sobchack, 1992: 82-3).

To hold this position, does not necessarily mean that this body and what it perceives is
fully present to itself. In fact, what makes Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of interest to
my thesis at this stage is the dialectic it maintains between (so-called) pre-reflective
experience and the retrospective exercise of narrative structure.

This might sound as if I am merely advocating the bind of forever oscillating
between chaos and structure that I have been at pains to break away from in this thesis.
the kind of oscillation that I claim the particular film moments took me away from.
However, I am not, which is why I qualify the term 'pre-reflective experience'. Pre-
reflective experience is not unsimilar to Henri Bergson's notion of habit in the sense of
being what one is immersed in in everyday life. And as Bergson makes a case for
attention to the processes of intuition that form the lining of every conscious perception
we make of the world, Merleau-Ponty calls for an openness towards this flux also. As
Sobchack puts it:

As a research method, phenomenology calls us to a series of systematic
reflections within which we question and clarify that which we
intimately live, but which has been lost to our reflective knowledge
through habituation and/or institutionalization (Sobchack, 1992: 28).

Instead of analysing meaning as an abstract system of language, attention is given to
what Andrew calls 'the "other-side" of signification, those realms of preformulation
where sensory data congeal into "something that matters" and those realms of post-
formulation where that "something" is experienced as mattering' (Andrew in Nichols,
1985: 627).

However, the subtle distinction between oscillation, which suggests to-ing and
fro-ing between structure and chaos and what I want to claim as the narrational quality
of so-called pre-reflective experience, is that in the latter mode, it is not a case of
moving between one realm and another but of moving in two directions simultaneously.
In other words, that the identity being constituted out of and by means of the array of sensations on offer is simultaneously able to translate those sensations into an image and able to co-exist alongside the movement of that translation. In other words, that the ongoing process, the ontological vibrations of what Merleau-Ponty might call 'the flesh of the world' are continually felt rather than simply and only put to rest as an object or symbol to be contemplated or interpreted. This is analogous to the type of engagement the film moments drew me into, *Disappearance at Sea*, as a vectoral movement across a surface, *News From Home*, as an accretion within a space.

To recap slightly: while Deleuze has been inspirational in leading a pathway out of the psychoanalytic approach to moments of emptiness as being devoid of content and thereby suspending the imaginary illusions of the subject, I part company with him when he moves in the direction of a temporality without limits, an empty form of time that pays no heed to human time. Aside from it being theoretically problematic, it is not what I encounter in the film moments, which, while they seem to extend infinitely, are not without limits. Initially locating time in the body, Deleuze goes on to divorce the two, or rather, to locate the body in the empty form of time. As Deleuze, appropriating Bergson, puts it:

Bergsonism has often been reduced to the following idea: duration is subjective, and constitutes our internal life. And it is true that Bergson had to express himself in this way, at least at the outset. But, increasingly, he came to say something quite different: the only subjectivity is time, non-chronological time grasped in its foundation, and it is we who are internal to time, not the other way round (Deleuze, 1989: 82-83).

While Deleuze does say that '[t]ime is...the interiority in which we are, in which we move, live and change', the occlusion of space from this picture makes it difficult to see where and in relation to what movement and change could occur, other than being the infinite unfolding of pure virtuality (Deleuze, 1989: 82). There is a sense in which to be subject to this unfolding is to be paralyzed in actuality.
When Deleuze, in relation to the films of Louis Malle, says that 'bodily states themselves link up with movements of the world', (Deleuze, 1989: 60), he is referring to characters in the film, the murderer's movements who are blocked by the halting of the lift in Lift to the Scaffold. But what about bodily states other than those on celluloid but are no less included in the space of the film? What about the space between the viewer and the image on-screen? This space might itself be an image but what interests me is how it is in the process of constituting itself rather than melting into the undifferentiated matter of a cosmic vision, which seems to occur in Deleuze's notion of infinite serialization.

The before and after are no longer themselves a matter of external empirical succession, but of the intrinsic quality of that which becomes in time. Becoming can in fact be defined as that which transforms an empirical sequence into a series: a burst of series. A series is a sequence of images, which tend in themselves in the direction of a limit, which orients and inspires the first sequence (the before), and gives way to another sequence organized as series which tends in turn towards another limit (the after). The before and the after are then no longer successive determinations of the course of time, but the two sides of the power, or the passage of the power to a higher power. The direct time-image here does not appear in an order of coexistences or simultaneities, but in a becoming as potentialization, as series of powers (Deleuze, 1989: 275).

The before and after, the passage of time through the body, becomes liberated from any particular body. The problems this liberation poses for thinking the relation of the body to the serialized image sequence can be seen in Barbara Kennedy's work, which unabashedly embraces Deleuze's language of flows and intensities to discuss the unleashing of affect in film experience.7 As a Deleuzian advocate, Kennedy says that this approach situates the spectator's body beyond phenomenology's emphasis on the 'lived body', instead proffering 'the complex understanding of "body" as processes of congealment, imbrication, consilience, assemblage, aesthetics and the molecular' (Kennedy, 2000a: 50).

There is much in Kennedy's thesis that I empathize with, her desire to 'counter the negativity of cinepsychoanalyis' for one thing, but her absolute incorporation of
Deleuze results in an unfortunate contradiction between the celebration of a 'subjectless subjectivity' on the one hand, and, an emphasis on the visceral nature of affect, on the other (Kennedy, 2000a: 2 & 45). This move to my mind resubstantializes the 'visceral' body as mute ground of anonymous being, a position which Deleuze is actually at pains to avoid and which I also want to avoid, as it falls back into the trap of positing a mute material affective dimension beneath symbolic meaning. As she puts it:

'mind/body/brain meld with the image an assemblage of filmic sensation where affect affords the ultimate "material emotion" which is beyond any subjective vision' (Kennedy, 2000a: 53). Shortly, I shall import Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology to show how this material substrate is itself imbricated in a signifying dynamic which enfolds both the particularity of subjective vision and the anonymity of a-subjective vision. I agree with Kennedy's general claim that 'camera-movements and set-ups effectuate the rhythms, vibrations, resonances and forced movements which are illustrative of Deleuze's idea of sensation' (Kennedy, 2000a: 134). However, to claim, as she does, that in the viewing scenario, 'brain/body/image are coagulated into a malleable set of images, into a materiality of emotion...[t]he body in motion, in locomotion, in the film's diegesis, connects with the bodies/minds/brains of those who view the film', reduces the viewing space to an undifferentiated mass (Kennedy, 2000a: 144. Instead of lack, Kennedy's use of Deleuzian flows and intensities inserts the positive difference of undifferentiation which, in Deleuze's terms would actually deny difference resulting instead in 'undifferenciated being, without difference' (Deleuze, 1994: 268). This move repeats the separation between narrative order on the side of the symbolic and life experience on the side of chaos, rupture, a separation that I am claiming becomes undone in relation to the final scene in News From Home.

By contrast to the emphasis on an inhuman abstraction in Deleuze's trajectory, in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, communication or 'interimplication' between flow and structure is always the issue. The questions I repeatedly ask myself in relation to the two films in the 'montage texts', i.e. what time is it? and, where am I?, are questions that
Merleau-Ponty poses as being continuous motivators of the process of moving across the gaps between time and space (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 105). I argue that both film moments, in different ways, set one free from the coordinates of the space and time of definition. The viewing experiences that both film moments generate relate to the notion of becoming as a process in itself, which does not have a predetermined ending or a definitive starting point. Therefore elements of Deleuze's trajectory through the time-image and its generation of states of becoming are relevant. However, the process of becoming is for me still attached to something specific. It is not vertiginous and does not send me spinning off in all directions. It does not propel me into 'a sidereal time, a system of relativity, where the characters would be not so much human as planetary, and the accents not so much subjective as astronomical, in a plurality of worlds constituting the universe' (Deleuze, 1989: 102).

While Merleau-Ponty mainly discusses 'natural objects', attached as Deleuze would say, to the phenomenological life-world, he also discusses an identity of division that is very similar in many respects to Deleuze's. The main difference is that Merleau-Ponty locates the body in the intersection between the points of crossover between one part of the divide and another. For me it is crucial to take this understanding of another kind of becoming into spectatorial space. Merleau-Ponty puts it thus:

[I] the seer am also visible. What makes the weight, the thickness, the flesh of each colour, of each sound, of each tactile texture, of the present, and of the world is the fact that he who grasps them feels himself emerge from them by a sort of coiling up or redoubling, fundamentally homogenous...a whole virtual center (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 114-115 - my emphasis).

In this description of the interrelation between particularity and anonymity, Merleau-Ponty maintains a tension between these two aspects or faces of subjectivity. He says we are experiences, that is, thoughts that feel behind themselves the weight of the space, the time, and the very Being they think, and which therefore do not hold under their gaze a serial space and time, not the pure idea of series, but have about themselves a time and a space that
exist by piling up, by proliferation, by encroachment, by promiscuity...ontological vibration (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 115).

It is this interrelation between the virtual and the actual, suggested by Merleau-Ponty in *The Visible and the Invisible*, that I would want to maintain in opposition to recent feminist returns to phenomenology where the emphasis has been on situating the sensory body in terms of individual ownership. It is against the lack of this interrelation in recent returns to phenomenology, that I would still want to hold onto aspects of Deleuze's thinking that inadvertently extend Merleau-Ponty's unfinished work. A hybridization of these two thinker's ideas can help me to articulate the sensation of the viewing experiences of the film moments.

However, I cannot rush headlong into this hybridization, as the problems with phenomenology also need to be addressed in the way I have addressed the problems with Deleuze. The conservative nature of phenomenology exposes itself in one of the recent returns to phenomenology, Laura Marks' *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses*. It drives Marks' reading of Deleuze's assertion that cinema 'can give us "the genesis of an 'unknown body,' which we have in the back of our heads, like the unthought in thought"... ' as a commonsense assertion 'that cinema may indeed be capable of bringing us to our senses' (Marks, 2000: 148). However, as I shall go on to demonstrate shortly, the senses as Deleuze conceives them, are certainly not the senses we assume as being rooted in the body and are far removed from the traditional phenomenological framework that Marks discusses as follows.

Given the nature of memory, the audiovisual image necessarily evokes other sense memories, perhaps even memories that belong to that "unknown body." For example, when I am watching a scene shot in a garden in Shani Mootoo's *Her Sweetness Lingers* (1994), close-ups of magnolia flowers remind me of how they feel and how they smell, and the buzzing of insects reminds me of the heat of summer. For me the tape calls up associations with gardens I have known in my ancestral Alabama, associations that are probably somewhat different from the artist's and other viewers' associations with them (Marks, 2000:148).
I cite this lengthy quotation as an example of the personal, autobiographical level of association that Marks' analysis remains with. Whereas for me, in relation to the lighthouse and the city in the films I have encountered, personal associations are only initiatory points behind which is unleashed an unknown, enigmatic body that is somewhat removed from autobiographical knowledge and definition. The problem with Marks' analysis from my perspective is that she never examines the constitution of the body that she claims is a container of this sensuous knowledge. Also, in emphasizing how postcolonial cinema and experimental film use senses beyond the visual, such as smell and touch, to engage and recover bodily memories, she unwittingly reasserts the very hierarchy that she wants to readdress between mind and body, dominant and marginal. In terms of visuality, she celebrates films that 'blur' and 'muffle' the experience of the visual and point thereby 'to the possibility of less ocularcentric ways of seeing' (Marks, 2000: 135-6).

While there is a case to be made for this opposition between the ocular and the haptic in Deleuze's own work, his allocation of touch with haptic vision is not to assert a specific bodily sensation of tactility, but to overrule such distinctions between eye and hand. This is exemplified in *Logique de la Sensation*, his book on painter Francis Bacon.11

To characterize the connection between eye and hand, it is certainly not enough to say that the eye is infinitely richer, and passes through dynamic tensions, logical reversals, organic exchanges and vicariances... We will speak of the haptic each time there is no longer strict subordination in one direction or the other... but when sight discovers in itself a function of touching that belongs to it and to it alone and which is independent of its optical function (Deleuze in Polan, 1994: 252).12

I adhere to the dominant theory that film is a visual medium and that the sensations it cultivates stem from or lean on the visual order. However, this does not necessarily mean that the visual sense operates as an isolated facet in the space of viewing. Nor does it mean that soft-focus or blurry imagery are necessarily tactile and bodily and in
opposition to the harsh contour of clear definition. Taking a Deleuzian approach, the
visual becoming haptic does not necessarily mean that one is propelled out of the
optical. What this means is that the visual is broken down as a component sense. In fact,
the capacity of the component senses is broken down by the impact of the image of
sensation and what is unleashed is a kind of sensory chaos. No one sense is available for
any recognized channel. This is more interesting in terms of how something new and not
recognized can come into play. Rather than the return of a familiar memory or the
rupture of a buried one, for Deleuze, the image of sensation generates the return of
something new. In Proust and Signs, Deleuze refers to the famous scene from Proust's
Remembrance of Things Past, where the taste of a madeleine cake sends a shudder
through him and he begins to 'hear the echo of great spaces traversed. Undoubtedly what
is thus palpitating in the depths of my being must be the image, the visual memory
which, being linked to that taste, is trying to follow it into my conscious mind' (Proust in
Brooks, 1995: 86). Deleuze says that the visual memory that occurs here is not the return
of the Combray Proust knew as a child, what returns in the image is Combray 'not as it
was experienced in contiguity with the past sensation, but in a splendor...that never has
an equivalent in reality' (Deleuze, 2000: 56). In other words, the process of translation,
or mediation, which could also be called time itself, has transformed the image into a
scene of familiar estrangement.

Rather than the senses being interrelated as in traditional phenomenology,
Deleuzian derangement of the senses causes each one to attain its own singularity, which
is not individualized as belonging to an individual. This notion of the derangement of the
senses is crucial to avoid the redefinition of the self-same body, a body re-found or a
body returned to its owner. For me, the problem in Marks' analysis is that bodies are
assumed to have definite owners and are culturally bounded by custom and personal
memory. I do not want to make a claim for the meltdown of cultural specificity per se,
but for me the sensations unleashed by the discontinuous film moment exceed
personalized frames of reference although they intercede with them in their passage
through the body. In Marks' trajectory, these moments would be the return or recovery of something lost. In my film encounter scenarios, the image of absence evokes something, which is not substantiated in an identity.

To keep the question of what is evoked and made present open, Deleuze's notion of the 'liberated sense organs' is a useful notion, at least in part.

[It is no longer a motor extension which is established, but rather a dreamlike connection through the intermediary of the liberated sense organs. It is as if the action floats in the situation, rather than bringing it to a conclusion or strengthening it (Deleuze, 1989: 4).

However, as I repeatedly reiterate throughout this journey, Deleuze's evacuation of agency from this sensational disordering is so absolute that it ends up reifying the work of art as a form of abstraction, albeit a deformed one, but one which does not seem to have a link to anybody.

Perceptions are no longer perceptions; they are independent of a state of those who experience them. [...] Sensations, percepts, and affects are beings whose validity lies in themselves and exceeds any lived. [...] The work of art is a being of sensation and nothing else: it exists in itself (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994: 164).

This position ends up uniting romanticism and formalism in the work of art.

The artist creates blocs of percepts and affects, but the only law of creation is that the compound must stand up on its own [...] Sometimes this requires what is, from the viewpoint of an implicit model, from the viewpoint of lived perceptions and affections, great geometrical improbability, physical imperfection, and organic abnormality (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994: 164).

The problem becomes one of how these independent compounds of sensations are located by and for anyone. When Deleuze, with Guattari, says that 'sensory becoming is otherness caught in a matter of expression' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994: 177), I find myself saying yes but to what end? Who or what kind of agency is the outcome of this transformation?
In *The Deleuze Connections*, John Rajchman suggests that habitation and abstract derangement are not mutually exclusive in a Deleuzian framework, as they would not be in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology where anonymity and particularity are always interrelated. The following rather lengthy citations from Rajchman are suggestive, perhaps unwittingly, of some connection between Deleuzian anonymity and the notion of somebody inhabiting these moments of derangement. Rajchman refers to Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*.

When in *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze says that "art is sensation and nothing else," he is trying to capture an idea that runs through his work [...] Affects and percepts are the two basic types of sensation, of which the artwork may be said to be a composite. [...] affects go beyond the subjects that pass through them, and they are impersonal, even inhuman; and percepts are not ways of presenting nature to the eye, but are rather like landscapes, urban as well as natural, in which one must lose oneself so as to see with new eyes, as, for example, with *Mrs. Dalloway*. [...] conversely, the aim of art is, through expressive materials, to extract sensations from habitual sensibilia - from habits of perception, memory, recognition, agreement - and cause us to see and feel in new or unforeseen ways (Rajchman, 2000: 134-5).

This and:

An hour of a day, a river, a climate, a strange moment during a concert can be like this - not one of a kind, but the individuation of something that belongs to no kind, but which, though perfectly individuated, yet retains an indefiniteness, as though pointing to something "ineffable" (Rajchman, 2000: 125).

Then that:

A life is in fact composed of many such moments - that is part of what makes it singular. They are the sorts of occurrences that come to us rather like the "waves" of which Virginia Woolf spoke - bits of experience that can't be fit into a nice narrative unity, and so must be combined or put together in another way... They precede us as subjects or persons, and yet they are always "expressed" in our lives. Even a death should be thought of as singular in this way, as involving an "impersonality" that no "generality" can cover - a sort of "it is dying" (Rajchman, 2000: 85).

However, the point for me is that these impersonal intuitions can only be felt by the bodies they are expressed through. When I encounter the abstract movements of
temporalized spacing that pulsate across the flattened image-screen in a reconfiguration of a static absence, I am moved by this current. I am addressed and incorporated by it rather than swallowed whole and dissolved in its trajectory.

4.4 FROM A PHENOMENOLOGY OF PURIFIED VISION TO ONE OF EMBODIMENT - A SOJOURN WITH MICHAEL SNOW

The stakes involved in the distinctions I am trying to make between a subjectless subjectivity that incorporates agency and one which dissolves it, can be exemplified by looking at how Michael Snow's films have been written of by Deleuze and, historically, in terms of a phenomenological methodology. The choice of Snow here is threefold: one, Akerman’s early films have been compared to Snow’s work (Margulies (1996));
two, Deleuze's writing on his films provides one of the clearest examples in the cinema books of the kind of destruction of the human world Deleuze associates with cinematic vision; three, Snow's films were written about in the 1970s using a phenomenological approach (Sitney (1974), Michelson (1979)) and an analysis of this writing inadvertently shows how close the raw vision Deleuze attributes to Snow's Wavelength is to the phenomenological subject of intentionality that Deleuze himself critiques. This last point is key in highlighting the pitfalls of Deleuze's ultimate trajectory and in signaling why Merleau-Ponty can be useful in avoiding the idealism inherent in Deleuzian 'pure vision'.

For Deleuze, Snow's films generate a seeing purified vision devoid of human agency. In fact, La Region Centrale (1971), a film of a remote Canadian landscape, recorded by the pre-programmed choreography of a machine that endlessly turns and swivels like an automaton, seems to correspond to Deleuze's rhetorical question:

But how is it possible to speak of images in themselves which are not for anyone and are not addressed to anyone? How is it possible to speak of an Appearing [Apparaitre], since there is not even an eye? (Deleuze, 1992: 59).
In Deleuze's reference to 'The Central Region', we find a succinct example of how cinema is viewed as an Appearing without a seer, external or otherwise.

Michael Snow's *The Central Region* does not raise perception to the universal variation of a raw and savage matter without also extracting from it a space without reference points where the ground and the sky, the horizontal and the vertical, interchange. Nothingness itself is diverted towards that which comes out of it or falls back on it, the genetic element, the fresh or vanishing perception, which potentialises a space by retaining only the shadow or the account of human events (Deleuze, 1992: 122).

This is admittedly only one aspect of Deleuze's work on cinema, and not the one I am retaining, but for the moment I want to emphasize it as it sheds light on how I am distinguishing my approach from Deleuze and why I am returning to aspects of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology.

There is precedence in Deleuze's philosophical intercessor, Henri Bergson, for this kind of purified vision.

Pure perceptions, therefore, or images are what we should posit at the outset. And sensations, far from being the materials from which the image is wrought, will then appear as the impurity which is introduced into it, being that part of our own body which we project into all others (Bergson, 1988: 234-235).

This is an idea that Bergson repeats in the first chapters of *Matter and Memory* and one that initially made me balk, suggesting as it did that the sensational, affective, body is a contaminant. Linking affection with sensation, he says that '[a]ffection is, then, that part or aspect of the inside of our body which we mix with the image of external bodies; it is what we must first of all subtract from perception to get to the image in its purity' (Bergson, 1988:58). I found it hard to relate this desire for a pure perception with Bergson's equal insistence on the necessity of the body as a special kind of image within the field of images, one which constitutes at every moment, as we have said, a section of the universal becoming. It is then the *place of passage* of the movements received and thrown back, a hyphen, a connecting link between the things which act
upon me and the things upon which I act - the seat, in a word, of the sensori-motor phenomena (Bergson, 1988: 151-152).

The notion of the body as an image within the field of images does indeed destabilize the situatedness of phenomenology's 'perceiving subject' (Deleuze, 1992: 57), but Bergson's qualification of this destabilization maintains a dynamic relationship between a screened image and the spectator as an embodied image which can be linked to the Merleau-Ponty of *The Visible and the Invisible*. Bergson's notion of the body (spectator) as a place of passage creates an interval between movements received and movements thrown back. Although body and image are essentially of the same matter, if the body did not act as a differenciating passage, the 'universal variation' of movement-images would have the quality of an eternal force or a dreamerless dreamscape, a drugged vision. Deleuze is fond of this motif, whereas Bergson still maintains a balance between dream and action.

Although taking the opposite direction of traditional phenomenology, Deleuze'sacentred universe has a strangely similar outcome. In both positions, the embeddedness of a particular body in the scene is eradicated, the formal emptiness of phenomenology's transcendental subject being partner in crime to Deleuze's formal chaos of sense perceptions as discussed above. Annette Michelson, an influential proponent of the phenomenological method of film analysis in the 1970s, succinctly sums up this similarity, referring to Snow's work as the example par excellence. By contrast to Deleuze, she sees Snow as reintroducing, albeit in a questioning way, a sovereignty of the spectator which had been threatened by the 'spatial disorientations' of Stan Brakhage's experimental filmmaking (Michelson, 1979: 118).

*Wavelength*, then, appeared as a celebration of the "apparatus" and a confirmation of the status of the subject, and it is in those terms that we may begin to comprehend the profound effect it had on the broadest spectrum of viewers - especially upon those for whom previous assaults on the spatiotemporality of dominant cinema had obscured that subject's role and place. The spectator for whom that place was obscured - and threatened - by the spatial disorientations of *Dog Star Man* (a space purely optical and a temporality of the perpetual present) could
respond, as if in gratitude, to Snow's apparently gratifying confirmation of a threatened sovereignty (Michelson, 1979: 118).

In fact her analysis of Brakhage, which refers to his book, *Metaphors of Vision*, is strikingly close to Deleuze's analysis of Snow in the sense of determining a purified, unlocatable, luminous, vision, what Michelson calls 'a hallucinated gaze' (Michelson, 1979: 116). This emphasis on a vision uncorrupted by language, prior to the fall, 'the gaze of fascination' develops, she says, in the late '60s into the use of filmic signifiers to create spaces of 'analytic inspection' (Michelson, 1979: 116). In this move, which Michelson sees in terms of continuity rather than as a different strain of American avant-garde filmmaking, '[t]he hallucinated viewer was, so to speak, replaced by the cognitive viewer, but common to them both was the status of *transcendental subject*' (Michelson, 1979: 116). She defines the latter in terms of being a liberated eye, an eye unfettered by a body.

This seems to me to be strikingly similar to Bergson's notion of purified vision mentioned above, which is echoed in Deleuze's analysis of *Wavelength* (see note xvi this section). As Michelson discusses, while Snow in *La Region Centrale* does subject spatio-temporal certainties to questioning, the film's infinitely mobile framing, its mimesis of and gloss upon spatial exploration offer, most importantly, a fusion of primary scopophilic and epistemophilic impulses in the cinematic rendering of the grand metaphor of the transcendental subject (Michelson, 1979: 123).

For her, and I agree, *La Region Centrale* hyperbolizes the 'disembodied mobility of the eye-subject' (Michelson, 1979: 121). This corresponds with Snow's assertion that:

I wanted the spectator to be the lone center of all these circles. It had to be the place where you can see a long way and you can't see anything man-made. That has something to do with a certain kind of singleness or remoteness that each spectator can have by seeing the film (Snow in Michelson, 1979: 120).
That this occurs from a central position is exemplified in *La Region Centrale* by the figure X that appears at regular intervals throughout the film stretching from corner to corner of the frame. Snow discusses this figure X as re-centring the viewer, 'a reminder of the central region - the whole thing is about being in the middle of this - the camera and the spectator... from the ecstatic centre of a complete sphere' (Snow in Wees, 1992: 170).  

Needless to say the idea of centering the viewer in a position that gives him a definite (mental) perspective over the displacements that this sublime machinic vision subjects him to is typical of the masculine side of the sublime that I looked at in chapter three. It ends in the formalism of what Merleau-Ponty would call a 'bad dialectic' which can assemble discontinuity into an overall thetic schema and in so doing 'ends up at...formalism' (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 138). 19 It is averse to the movements of the female sublime, which proceeds by means of openness to ambiguity and displacement. It is in order to avoid the stasis of formalism that I want to hybridize Deleuze with Merleau-Ponty.

My deliberation over readings of Snow's work here has another purpose. Akerman's early work has been compared to his (Margulies, 1996: 80-83). Margulies comparison of their work in terms of how they approach narrative is apropos to my thesis. She says that they both create an equivalence between two kinds of narrative, 'one made up of the episodic or discrete event, the other based on accumulation or structural intensification' (Margulies, 1996: 82). However, the crucial difference for me is that, unlike Snow's deployment of these narrative figures, the intensity that builds up by means of accumulation in Akerman's *News From Home*, does not derive from 'a structural insistence in a single direction' as Margulies claims for Snow's work (Margulies, 1996: 82). 20 While the viewer as disembodied eye is continually being recentred in relation to the transcendence of space and time in *La Region Centrale*, Akerman talks about wanting the viewer to be confronting the space in her films. 'I want
people to lose themselves in the frame, and at the same time to be truly confronting the space' (Akerman in Indiana, 1983: 58).

While I would not frame the difference between them in terms of sexual difference per se, Catherine Fowler claims that 'a distinction must be made between Snow's and Akerman's disruption of the cinematic gaze' (Fowler, 1995: 145). She unambiguously states that Snow undertakes this in the name of 'structuralist experimentation' while Akerman's stance is inflected with a sense of 'her sexual difference' (Fowler, 1995: 146). Undoubtedly, the protagonists in Akerman's Jeanne Dielman: 23 Quai duCommerce, 1080 Bruxelles (1975) and Je tu il elle (1974) can be viewed as radical representations of femininity, (Akerman resists the label feminist), but it is a bit of a stretch to imbue the more abstract aspects of her filmmaking to 'her sexual difference'. That would be to take Akerman's assertion of how her camera positioning relates to her physicality in a rather literal way. Fowler does not intend this perhaps but her claim leads her to posit the final scene in News From Home as a zoom back, the reverse of Snow's zoom forth in Wavelength (Fowler, 1995: 146). Aside from the equation of sexual difference with film technique, as if the later was simply an anatomical prosthesis, Snow's zoom forth is not actually a continuous zoom forwards but gives the illusion of being one. And, more importantly, Akerman's framing in the final scene of News From Home is not a zoom at all. As opposed to Fowler's assertion that in Wavelength Snow closes down space to concentrate on one specific area, i.e. the photograph, I concur with William C. Wees that the final zoom into the photograph opens out onto infinity, a kind of absolute openness rather than closure or compression (see note xvii, this section).

However, I do agree with Fowler's assertion that Akerman replaces closure with 'aperture' which gives way onto an alternative conception of the spectator as the locus for the processual nature of the film (Fowler, 1995: 147-149). While Akerman's images in News From Home are centrally framed, space is continually being asserted in temporal terms, is being given time, rather than containing it.21 Even, or especially, in
the final scene, the unhinging of sensation that I was subjected to and the sense of being transported elsewhere was not beyond the body or in relation to a static body outside the frame. The body as a passage for the liberation of sensations was itself passing through the time frame of the image, its temporalized spacing, its duration. Merleau-Ponty describes this sensibility:

As the nervure bears the leaf from within, from the depths of its flesh, the ideas are the texture of experience, its style, first mute, then uttered. Like every style, they are elaborated within the thickness of being and, not only in fact but also by right, could not be detached from it, to be spread out on display under the gaze (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 119).

The sensations unleashed in the filmic texture of the final moment of *News From Home* change the pacing of the scene. They do not return to a sovereignty which is affordably lost because it is so firmly entrenched in the first place, as in Michelson's analysis of Snow's assertion of the transcendental subject in *La Region Centrale*.

This is one of the main points of the feminist critique of philosophers of dissolution as I demonstrated in chapter three using Rosi Braidotti's critique of Deleuze - you can only lose a self if you begin from the position of stable subject. In *News From Home* the position of the self is to do with finding a position or positions that are not pre-given. In fact, the strange thing about the visual perspective of say the subway or road shots, which seem to be framed according to the logic of the vanishing point, is that when you try to place yourself at some supposed geometric central axis, it doesn't work. The gap created by the image between its intimate compression and your removal from it engenders a double displacement, which sets a process in motion whereby engagement with the image can only be rendered by means of to-ing and fro-ing in a type of space outside it, an intervallic space. The opaque stillness of the image generates movement. But not the mirror movements of Snow's *La Region Centrale* where you find yourself following the trajectory of the camera performing those 'circling, spiraling, rising, sweeping movements, crossing the distances between peaks, creating, in imperceptible loops through empty skies, reversals of direction' which seem to question 'through
kinetic counter-example and disorientation, the "ground" of the Kantian "view" which founds the modern sense of "place" (Michelson, 1979: 122).

It is against this grand vision and disembodied mobility that Akerman's News From Home performs. The movements incited are traceable not in or by the image per se but as a kind of invisible drawing between spectator and image, a drawing which captures them both in a space that exceeds their boundaries. The spectator then becomes a point in the vectoral crossing of the two movements of the spatialization of duration and the temporalization of space. The spectator as body is perhaps a kind of passive join, an interval, in this intersecting loop, the traversal through the spatio-temporal discontinuities of News From Home being bound up with a kind of subjection to the image. One could say that the viewer is subjected to the construction of space in Wavelength, even more so in La Region Centrale where the viewer becomes a kind of involuntary camera, but passivity in Snow is still bound up with the centralized viewpoint from which the viewer follows the camera's movements. In viewing News From Home, passive reception is a state where control is given over to the image, but at the same time, the image refuses that power, instead creating, a lack of centre as opposed to Snow's 'restoring and remapping the space of perspective construction' (Michelson, 1979: 118).

Furthermore, my point is that the lack of centre in News From Home is not a static inert unrepresentable absence - '[t]he unspoken, that which cannot be figured, the ruptures in the coherence of male, patriarchal discourse' (Flitterman-Lewis in Fowler, 1995: 40). It is rather full of the crossing of the movements of durational rhythms between film and viewer. It is, following Merleau-Ponty, a virtual centre, which is fundamentally empty, but is in a dynamic relation to the things that coil around its mobility.

Phenomenology is an attempt to film, in slow motion, that which has been, owing to the manner in which it is seen in natural speed, not absolutely unseen, but missed, subject to oversight. It attempts, slowly and calmly, to draw closer to that original intensity which is not given in
appearance, but from which things and processes do, nevertheless, in turn proceed (Michelson in Peterson, 1994: 78/9).

This more positive description of the phenomenological method is apropos to my thesis and echoes Merleau-Ponty in *The Visible and the Invisible* when he discusses a kind of dynamic passivity, where intentional attention to the pre-reflective is somewhat dispossessed, while at the same time, the pre-reflective dynamic is not inoperative.

Vivian Sobchack's return to Merleau-Ponty, while mentioning this dynamic passivity, foregoes its ramifications which are more suggestive of a subjected than an intentional subject evolving in the film encounter, the agency of the former being what interests me and what I shall go on to develop. Meanwhile, Sobchack discusses the film encounter in terms of intersubjectivity, as one between two subjects, two consciousnesses, which live one another's vision introceptively. Sobchack attributes the other consciousness to the film's body rather than to the filmmaker. I agree with her claim that '[t]he direct engagement, then, between spectator and film in the film experience cannot be considered a monologic one between a viewing subject and a viewed object. Rather, it is a dialogical and dialectical engagement' (Sobchack, 1992: 23). For her, the film is a view-viewed, (its objectal status), and a viewing-view, (its status as a subject), not, she says, a human subject but a viewing subject. The film's subjectivity is 'one that manifests a competence of perceptive and expressive performance equivalent in structure and function to that same competence performed by filmmaker and spectator' (Sobchack, 1992: 22).

I find Sobchack's attribution of subjectivity to the film itself problematic. It is necessary for her notion that the film experience is between *two* viewing subjects who also exist as visible objects' (Sobchack, 1992: 23) and it allows her to revert to the traditional account of intersubjectivity in phenomenology, as a space where two subjects, who have the capacity to be objects for one another, meet. However, while I agree with her assertion that '[i]n the film experience, all signification and all communication start from the "affinity" that is the act of viewing, coterminously but
uniquely performed by both film and spectator' (Sobchack, 1992: 23). I would claim that what is performed occurs in an intermediate arena between both film and spectator rather than by them each in their own spaces. Part of the problem with Sobchack for me, in her use of Merleau-Ponty's ideas as a model for cinematic intersubjectivity, lies in her reliance on *Phenomenology of Perception* as opposed to the later, unfinished, *The Visible and the Invisible*. (She cites the latter on a few occasions but does not distinguish between it and ideas from the earlier tome.)

In *Phenomenology of Perception*, while Merleau-Ponty attempts to determine the positions of the subject and the object as being mutually constitutive and mutually transformative, his tendency to posit their encounter as allowing the being of the (normal) subject to be altered but leaving the object relatively unchanged has been questioned by feminist philosophers (Butler (1989), Grosz (1994b)). Undoubtedly, there is much in *Phenomenology of Perception* that hints at the transformation of both subject and object in the intersubjective encounter. Indeed Merleau-Ponty does state there a desire 'to leave behind us, for once and for all, the traditional subject-object dichotomy' (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: 174).

The task for us is to conceive, between the linguistic, perceptual, and motor contents and the form given to them or the symbolic function which breathes life into them, a relationship which shall be neither the reduction of form to content, nor the subsuming of content under an autonomous form (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: 126).

However, the underlying premises of this overlapping of boundaries between subject and object tend to show themselves for what they still are in the chapter 'The Body in its Sexual Being'. There his allocation of the female body as 'a fixed essence as opposed to an open existence', undermines his challenge to the dominant theories of the object as inert matter and thereby incapable of change (Butler, 1989: 94). In fact, as Butler shows in her reading of this chapter, Merleau-Ponty's potentially expansive notion that sexuality expresses existence gets figured as a voyeuristic relation where an alienated subject, as a purely disembodied gaze, defines its object as mere body (Butler, 1989: 229).
I agree with Butler's critique. Mapping this chapter on gender onto other passages in the book highlights the difficulty Merleau-Ponty has in avoiding giving a privileged position to a knowing consciousness that gazes over 'the expressive significance' that he theoretically attributes to all modalities of existence (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: 291).

However, I think Butler is mistaken to attribute absolute disembodiment to the gaze that Merleau-Ponty discusses as a type of natural perception not bound up with empiricism. It is true that when Merleau-Ponty discusses this gaze that does not objectify the human world, as does the human eye, it sounds like a cosmological transcendent seeing not unlike in fact what I have been taking issue with in Deleuze. In fact, he describes how, by contrast to the 'natural' gaze which is directed towards all possible views of the object without positing one of them as being distinct and separate from my experience, the (human) eyes become prosthetic entities in the move towards positing an object in its autonomy (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: 70-71). We move from 'an open and indefinite multiplicity of relationships which are of reciprocal implication' towards 'the absolute positing of a single object' which 'is the death of consciousness since it congeals the whole of existence as a crystal placed in a solution suddenly crystallizes it' (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: 71). On the other hand however, Merleau-Ponty does retain the simultaneous occurrence and interconnectivity of both the ontological gaze of the world, which we do not see as such and the bits of the world we carve out of it by means of sight.

Each time I experience a sensation, I feel that it concerns not my own being, the one for which I am responsible and for which I make decisions, but another self which has already sided with the world, which is already open to certain of its aspects and are synchronised with them. Between my sensation and myself there stands always the thickness of some primal acquisition which prevents my experience from being clear of itself. I experience the sensation as a modality of a general existence, one already destined for a physical world and which runs through me without my being the cause of it (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: 126).
The notion of interconnectivity between an image seen and something felt beyond its frame, a loop between these arenas is conducive to my project here. The slight problem that Merleau-Ponty poses, and that Deleuze criticizes him for, is that he contrasts the gaze, this natural perception, to the cinema screen which he says lacks the openness of the visual field of the gaze (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: 5 & 68). (In this sense, the cinema screen would not be unlike the closed off nature of the female body object in the chapter in *Phenomenology of Perception*, 'The Body in its Sexual Being').

What phenomenology sets up as a norm is "natural perception" and its conditions. Now, these conditions are existential co-ordinates which define an "anchoring" of the perceiving subject in the world, a being in the world, an opening to the world which will be expressed in the famous "all consciousness is consciousness of something..." [...]. The cinema can, with impunity, bring us close to things or take us away from them and revolve around them, it suppresses both the anchoring of the subject and the horizon of the world. Hence it substitutes an implicit knowledge and a second intentionality for the conditions of natural perception (Deleuze, 1992: 57).

In Deleuze's revision and return to Henri Bergson as a theorist of cinema 'the model cannot be natural perception, which does not possess any privilege. The model would be rather a state of things which would constantly change, a flowing-matter in which no point of anchorage nor centre of reference would be assignable' (Deleuze, 1992: 57).

As opposed to the absoluteness of Deleuzian decentring, Merleau-Ponty, in the way he privileges the masculine subject over the female object in the aforementioned chapter, seems to privilege the 'indeterminate field of natural perception' (the gaze) over and above the selective and thereby limited field of (mechanical/prosthetic) vision. While it is the case that a film is comprised of mechanically selected bits of the world, presented as a delimited field surrounded by a zone of blackness (Sobchack, 1992), I have been arguing for the notion of the dynamic of film as an intersection or looping of two movements, one continuous, the other discontinuous, which generates a dis/continuous performative field between screen and spectator. These two movements are actualized by the irregularity of the cut and its relation to the continuous duration of
the static camera image. In reference to the image of duration, where the image lasts longer than we need it to last for informational purposes, the continuous fluidity of a gaze without purpose begins to make itself felt in the viewing situation. This sense of continuity is not incompatible with the discontinuous delimitations, the internal and external montage or cuts that are performed by both viewer and film. The viewer not only internalizes the actual cuts of the film, but also incorporates them into the constellation of internal montage that is occurring continuously in relation to the static duration of the image. Thereby the spectator is linked and open to the constant variation that temporality performs on a body, the body as a bounded contour being turned inside out as it were, ex-corporated, in relation to a film skin emptied of interior depth.

Up to now in this chapter I have been critical of Merleau-Ponty, while at the same time, developing aspects of his ideas that I want to hybridize with the Deleuzian notions that I have found companionable on this journey. I now want to take Merleau-Ponty on board less critically. By contrast to the justified criticisms of Merleau-Ponty that Deleuze makes above, Merleau-Ponty, in his essay 'The Film and the New Psychology', puts movies on a par with natural objects. In that essay they are both seen as exhibiting surface behaviours and gestures that 'make us see the bond between subject and world, between subject and others' (Merleau-Ponty, 1964: 58). Although his emphasis is still on conscious perception and the behavioural aspect of films is considered in terms of characters rather than the more abstract aspects of images, Merleau-Ponty's linkage of the texture of a film's surface and the outside world is conducive to the modality of discontinuous linkage that I am developing. The modality of 'interimplication' between the continuous and the discontinuous, that I claim occurs in the encounter with the suspended film moment of blankness can be developed further by recourse to The Visible and the Invisible. There, the positions of subject and object are superceded by an emphasis on the chiasmic 'coiling up of experience over experience' (Merleau-Ponty, 1968:113). Elizabeth Grosz summarizes:
In his last text he [Merleau-Ponty] explores the interrelations of the inside and the outside, the subject and the object, one sense and another in a common flesh - which he describes as the "crisscrossing" of the seer and the visible, of the toucher and the touched, the indeterminacy of the "boundaries" of each of the senses, their inherent transpossibility, their refusal to submit to the exigencies of clear-cut separation or logical identity (Grosz, 1994: 94).

It is this movement of "crisscrossing" that resonates with the performativity generated by the still moving image of blankness in the film encounters. My relation to this image is not one of pure negativity, disengagement, distanciation, but a sense of being between the crossing of two movements that intersperse and displace one another continually.

What we seek is a dialectical definition of being...that must rediscover the being that lies before the cleavage operated by reflection, about it, on its horizon, not outside of us and not in us, but there where the two movements cross, there where "there is" something (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 95).

For Deleuze, cinema's great advantage is that because it lacks a centre of anchorage and of horizon, the sections which it makes would not prevent it from going back up the path that natural perception goes down. Instead of going from the acentred state of things to centred perception, it could go back up to the acentred state of things, and get closer to it (Deleuze, 1992: 58).

Whereas in a phenomenological approach, even one as close to Deleuze as I am arguing Merleau-Ponty is in The Visible and the Invisible, what Sobchack calls 'the latent visibility' of the indeterminate field of the gaze can never be isolated in such a manner (Sobchack, 1992: 90). For Merleau-Ponty there is always a 'strange adhesion of the seer and the visible' (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 139), rather than the disappearance of the spectator into the seer, immersed and fractured in the 'acentred state of things'.
4.5 HYBRIDIZING DELEUZE AND MERLEAU-PONTY: GROUNDING THE INFINITE TEMPORALIZATION OF THE INTERVAL IN THE PASSIVE DYNAMISM OF 'REVERSIBILITY'.

As opposed to the criticisms of phenomenology that it relies on centred subject and that it relies on the transparency of 'objective' description, Merleau-Ponty insists on the imbrication of the subject in the things he/she tries to describe, thereby not being able to soar above or bracket them off. The way he does this can be used as a corrective and complement to Deleuze's notions of dissolution of the spectator into the seer and so expand on the spectatorial sensibility I am trying to give an account here. In chapter three, I discussed the path of Deleuze's thinking that interested me most as being the one where he refers to 'the horizon of events' where one and the same horizon links the cosmic and the everyday. Merleau-Ponty has a similar notion, the difference being that he emphasizes the seer's own place and time within the transcendent space of the flesh, or anonymity.

The superficial pellicle of the visible is only for my vision and for my body. But the depth beneath this surface contains my body and hence contains my vision. My body as a visible thing is contained within the full spectacle. But my seeing body subtends this visible body, and all the visibles with it. There is reciprocal insertion and intertwining of one in the other. Or rather, if, as once again we must, we eschew the thinking by planes and perspectives, there are two circles, or two vortexes, or two spheres, concentric when I live naively, and as soon as I question myself, the one slightly decentred with respect to the other… (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 138).

In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze discusses the subjectivity that plays across the interstices of difference as being one where '[t]he identity of the player has disappeared, as has the resemblance of the one who pays the price or profits from the consequences' (Deleuze, 1994: 284). Instead we have a situation where '[o]n one side, nothing but an I fractured by that empty form [of time]. On the other, nothing but a passive self always dissolved in that empty form' (Deleuze, 1994: 284). The combination of a passive self
dissolved in the empty form of time, and the "I" fractured by that form, is not dissimilar, I think, to Merleau-Ponty's ontological vibrations as variation that preexist the reflective ego that resolves differences into coherent form, establishing a coherent identity.

Deleuze's passive self, not to be mistaken for a state in opposition to active, is echoed by Merleau-Ponty's body that is itself in the midst of things and thereby cannot get a perspective on them as essences in themselves. In making this comparison, I want to inject into Deleuze's cinematic world, a body, the spectator, which, while not outside the events on the screen, is different from them. And inject into Merleau-Ponty's embodiment situation, a technology which allows for a cinematic image to be an openness onto the various vibrations in which I participate before "I" begin the egoic attempts to separate out its components under the spread of my gaze. I want to develop the notion that the serialization of displacements that the self undergoes in relation to the mobilizing blankness of the final image sequence of New From Home infers a model of subjectivity akin to the narcissism of what Deleuze calls 'passive contraction' and Merleau-Ponty calls 'emigration into the outside'.

Thus the seer is caught up in what he sees, it is still himself he sees: there is a fundamental narcissism of all vision. And thus, for the same reason, the vision he exercises, he undergoes form the things, such that, as many painters have said, I feel myself looked at by the things, my activity is equally passivity - which is the second and more profound sense of narcissism: not to see in the outside, as others see it, the contour of a body one inhabits, but especially to be seen by the outside, to exist within it, to emigrate into it, to be seduced, captivated, alienated by the phantom so that the seer and the visible reciprocate one another and we no longer know which sees and which is seen (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 139).

I want to begin this exploration by way of the feminist subtext thread of this thesis.

Passivity is usually denigrated in feminist film theory. It has negative connotations. As Kaja Silverman puts it:

The notion of passive reception is rendered problematic within political theory and practice because of its apparent association with resignation as well as inactivity. To be in a receptive relation to external stimuli is
assumed to imply a passive acceptance in the face of the "given" (Silverman, 2001: 27).

For feminist film theory, passivity relates to the negativity of the woman's look, a position of powerlessness, 'the passive, feminine identification with the image (body, landscape)' (de Lauretis, 1984: 144). In order to counter this negative view, de Lauretis puts forward the notion of what she calls a double narrative figural identification, whereby the female spectator moves between the narrative image (body, landscape) and the figure of narrative movement (thought of as a person). She is of course considering classical narrative film. However, in a film such as News From Home, the figure of movement is synonymous with the narrative image. The character, or subject of movement, is absent, buildings, roads, and passers-by becoming equal protagonists on a surface, by turns, becoming depersonalized as individual entities, becoming lines, shapes and colours, and taking on abstract qualities of movement within the space, as well as retaining their nomenclature. By means of the fixe nature of Akerman's camera, the viewer is deliberately placed in a state of moving between information and abstraction and is thereby made aware of the minute movements occurring within the stillness of the image.

De Lauretis, relying on a psychoanalytic model, would see the collapse of the narrative image and the figure of narrative movement as a condensation of the two positionalities of figural identification into 'the masochist position, the (impossible) place of a purely passive desire' (de Lauretis, 1984: 151). However, attending to the image of figural abstraction in News From Home in terms of a double narrative motion opens up de Lauretis' position which, in the emphasis on impossibility, echoes Heath's analysis of the film. One might ask instead, is passive properly in opposition to active, is the fixed image passive in relation to narrative action? Doesn't the internal image differences that this film generates suggest another mode of relation? What would it mean to think of passivity, of passive reception as a kind of liberation from the oppositional, the contradictory, the movement of oscillation between narrative and
stasis'? In the above citation, Merleau-Ponty suggests another form of movement which can be occurring when one is captivated by the outside (image), a movement of continuous discontinuity, a movement of disruptive passivity.

Stephen Koch discusses passivity in relation to Andy Warhol. Koch's analysis usefully allows us to see the stakes involved between different forms of passivity. Koch discusses Warhol's early films, *Empire* (1964) and *Sleep* (1963), as generating a kind of 'passive meditation' where 'the darting vivacity of the gaze becomes a stare' (Koch, 1991: 31). 'Perception is introjected and internalized; visuality itself loses its vivacity and is touched by an autistic, unresonating stillness', which, Koch maintains, ultimately denies the senses (Koch, 1991: 72). I want to claim that the passive meditation generated by *News From Home* is simultaneously full of the 'darting, impulsive visual flashes by which the space of action is defined' (Koch, 1991: 31). That while Akerman's fixed camera and extended duration is technically not unlike Warhol's, the sensibility generated in the viewer is very different. Earlier I mentioned Peter Gidal's analysis of the silence of Warhol's early static camera films engendering an 'extended durational confrontation with another on-screen' whereby the viewer learns about change, one's own and that of an other (Gidal, 1971: 90). This analysis somewhat contrasts with Koch's as it suggests an active engagement with the imaged 'other'. I agree with both of them in the sense that there is an active engagement but, this engagement, because it takes place within the scenario of confrontation, eventually becomes numbing.

I saw Warhol's *Henry Geldzahler* (1964) at Tate Modern, London in February 2002. When the image, Geldzahler, appeared, I wondered how I was going to be able to sit through 45 minutes of looking at this man, as I found him repulsive, arrogant, and dominating the space. However, after some time went by I found myself forgetting about this on-screen creature's personality, and caught up in the indefinite time of a kind of witnessing, so that when the film ended, I was surprised by how quickly what I knew to be 45 minutes had passed. In a sense, I seemed to have disappeared for a time, completely submitting to the image. The dynamic of confrontation entails the parameters
of recognition and alienation. I bestow recognition to the other and vice versa. When that recognition is refused, I become alienated by the image and react in either of two ways, outward aggression to force the other (image) to recognize me or submission to my own disappearance that the other's refusal of recognition commits me to. In relation to Warhol's *Henry Geldzahler* I would say that I occupied the latter scene.

The scenario set up by Akerman's camera is different. Disappearance is there from the start. It is not a confrontation, a relation between one subject and another, but a space of free-floating, endistanced, looking from a place that is not needed by the image, at a place, the image, which is not dependent on my gaze for its being. I am placed in the midst of two gazes, neither of which is performed for my deliquescence, as Warhol's gaze seems to be, albeit a numbed deliquescence. In *News From Home*, one gaze extends in front of me, an extension that cumulatively builds up a layered surface rather than receding in depth. The other gaze extends behind me, its vaporousness illuminated by the screen cut out of this vast blackness, creating a place, which allows the gaze of accumulation to rest. These two gazes, one layered, the other, vaporous, intersect and crisscross like two vectors on a Moebius strip.

Deleuze's model of subjectivity, if it can be called a model, in *Difference and Repetition*, can be used to expand on the kind of mobile passivity generated by the vectoral intersecting of these two gazes. In that book, Deleuze discusses passivity in terms of a self-affection, whereby, in becoming the object of a passion (an image) the self disperses itself into a series of differenciated movements, as opposed to becoming a static object in relation to the desire of another. Deleuze's model of passive synthesis is comprised of three inter-linked components which seem to me to relate to the processual unfolding of *News From Home*, the interconnection between the extended duration of the shots and the level of diffusion they generate that is exaggerated in the final sequence. To stress the aspect of linkage is particularly important to my goal of avoiding the absolute dissolute diffusion that Deleuzian trajectories can sometimes take.
The first linkage of subjectivity is a passive synthesis, which initially binds the scattered and diffuse excitations the self is subjected to, reproducing them on a privileged surface of its body (Deleuze, 1994: 96). The self is the result of contracting the chaotic energetic field in which it is immersed. As Deleuze puts it, rather than this being a once and for all occurrence, '[a]t the level of each binding, an ego is formed in the Id; a passive, partial, larval, contemplative and contracting ego. The Id is populated by local egos...' (Deleuze, 1994: 97), not as in Freud one entity. As Deleuze explains: 'It (the eye or seeing ego) produces itself or "draws itself" from what it contemplates (and from what it contracts and invests by contemplation)' (Deleuze, 1994: 97). The passive synthesis produces passive selves. However, unlike as in psychoanalysis where this kind of self-affection would be a turning back of libido on itself, and therefore destructive (masochistist), for Deleuze this self-affection produces a play of differences which move in two directions simultaneously. This is the second passive synthesis. One direction moves towards identity, the other direction moves towards a deepening of the initial passive synthesis and organises itself in relation to virtual objects.

Whereas active synthesis points beyond passive synthesis towards global integrations and the supposition of identical totalisable objects, passive synthesis, as it develops, points beyond itself towards the contemplation of partial objects which remain non-totalisable (Deleuze, 1994: 101).

For Deleuze, these partial (virtual) objects, are absent in terms of representation, but they are not absolutely absent. They are always folding over and exchanging places with totalisable objects, forming a pattern like a Moebius strip. They form one side of the interval, the side of disguise and play. On the other side of the interval are the totalisable objects of need and desire. In this re-conception of Freud's Beyond the Pleasure Principle, the emphasis is on the recasting of difference as a space of play between things, sensations and images. As the interval between things is continually moving and shifting within the parameters of the game, the substitution of one object or sensation for another is not haunted by a fundamental absence. As opposed to the psychoanalytic
approach where absence is registered as a limit of representation, for Deleuze, absence
or the virtual is an unstable category which is continually being displaced and generating
the new - totalisable object. As opposed to the unrepresentable, in Deleuze, absence
becomes the element that, in being missing from the picture in one place, continually
returns to it in another place, creating new variations and relations to the virtual, itself a
moving entity.

Akerman’s films have been written of as always being addressed to the mother
(Barker, 1999). No one can refute that the mother is figured as a prominent absence in
News From Home, but, for me, the force of that final scene has to do with how it
exceeds containment in a definite form of address and how that excess is not the
maternal excess that heralds the collapse of distinctions between self and other, but one
where difference is reconfigured as self-affection. Rather than remaining within the
terms of an immobile passive address where the self is absorbed by the other, which was
my reaction to Warhol’s Henry Geldzahler, my claim is that the processual
reconfiguration of absence in News From Home is generative, in the final sequence, of a
new formation of passive subjectivity rather than a regression to the archaic space of an
originary passivity. (In psychoanalytic theory, this would be deemed a pre-symbolic
symbiosis or merging with the mother.) In that final image sequence, the "I" is released
into a scattering that doesn't have a definite goal in mind, but contracts and extends its
reach in relation to this image where the horizon is continually shifting the frame. The
"I" forms other series of contemplations of itself - of water, sky and air, the space of
breathing that the openness of the image releases. Contemplations that in turn produce
sensations of movement that are localised by the body/spectator but are not reducible to
that body as an object in space. The joy triggered by these mobile possessions is that,
while they require the individual, they are also groundless. In this final sequence, a force
or forces outside of myself towards which I gravitate touch me.29

Floating along the motion of the water, dipping and curving along the flight
lines of the seagulls, a vacant "I" follows the undulations of movement that form one
over the other, disappearing like tones of wave swill on a river. As Deleuze puts it: 'It is
firstly because water is the most perfect environment in which movement can be
extracted from the thing moved, or mobility from movement itself' (Deleuze, 1992: 77).

And on land, movement always takes place from one point to another,
always between two points, while on water the point is always between
two movements: it thus marks the conversion or inversion of movement,
as in the hydraulic relationship of a dive and a counter-dive, which is
found in the movement of the camera itself (the final fall of the
entwined bodies of the two lovers has no end, but is converted into an
ascending movement) (Deleuze, 1992: 79).

There are no human bodies visible, no lovers or any others, simply a movement away
from the shore, a moving away which is also a moving towards, two directions that
overlap in a loop, cracking the air like a whip, fabricating a space where I am fractured
yet connected, spread out, yet contracted. In this miniscule gap, the "I" is different from,
displaced from itself as a bounded entity, the different forms of its displacing (self-
affecting) movements relating to one another in a continuum. Geometric space becomes
unsedimented, the "I" being carried away by/on those continuous inner movements that
lie behind its character as a marker of identity, a shifter.

The motor forces of these film moments - torchlight bouncing off a bent sheet of
steel, an engine slicing through water - propel me into a field of repetitious formations
that are continually per/forming infinitesimal differences upon the surface of my body.
Differences between one gradation of light and another, one ripple of water against the
monotone spreading of the horizon across the screen, between these differences, the "I"
simultaneously coils in upon itself and opens out onto a vacancy with which it conjoins
to produce an(other) form(s) of itself.

A single and same voice for the whole thousand-voiced multiple, a
single and same Ocean for all the drops, a single clamour of Being for
all beings: on condition that each being, each drop and each voice has
reached the state of excess - in other words, the difference which
displaces and disguises them and, in turning upon its mobile cusp,
causes them to return (Deleuze, 1994: 304).
This shifting interrelation between anonymity and particularity is key if one is to avoid falling back onto a notion of primordial materiality that preexists identity, the outcome of which is an identity that forms in retrospect to the moving dynamic of the suspended excess of the (film) moment. This Deleuzian view is not incommensurate with Merleau-Ponty, contra Sobchack, when he makes statements such as: 'In reality there is neither me nor the other as positive, positive subjectivities. There are two caverns, two openesses, two stages where something will take place' (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 263).

This something that takes place is the crossing of the two movements of what Merleau-Ponty calls 'reversibility'. The example from Merleau-Ponty that is always taken up to illustrate this notion of reversibility is that of the left hand touching the right hand. Both Luce Irigaray and Elizabeth Grosz take it up, Irigaray to critique Merleau-Ponty's reassertion of mastery, i.e. that the hands are in an asymmetrical relation, one having dominance over the other ((Irigaray (1993); Grosz (1994b)). However, it must be pointed out that the example of the hands comes from Phenomenology of Perception and that, although Merleau-Ponty discusses tactility in The Visible and the Invisible, 'reversibility' is not necessarily reducible to a commonsense notion of tactility. It is a much more interesting concept, which can profitably be related to the immanently transcendent space of the film experience.

In fact, what Merleau-Ponty develops out of this concept of reversibility is a preobjective, anonymous visibility which includes my particular carvings out of vision and those of others, but 'extends further than the things I touch and see at present' (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 143). He does discuss the hands, the handshake in terms of a reversibility of touching and being touched, however he dislocates this mutual touch from a perceiving consciousness. It is rather a general field in which I revolve, displaying an inside and an outside. The only gap between inside and outside is the folding of the body as it coils around the field of visibility.

The body unites us directly with the things through its own ontogenesis, by welding to one another the two outlines of which it is made, its two
laps: the sensible mass it is and the mass of the sensible wherein it is born by segregation and upon which, as seer, it remains open (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 136).

The body as seer is propped on the visible.

What we call a visible is, we said, a quality pregnant with a texture, the surface of a depth, a cross section upon a massive being, a grain or corpuscle borne by a wave of Being. Since the total visible is always behind, or after, or between the aspects we see of it, there is access to it only through an experience which, like it, is wholly outside of itself (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 136).

The dehiscence of the body, its two parts, being seen and seeing, is a way of locating what is rather 'sometimes wandering and sometimes reassembled', i.e. visibility itself (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 138). The abstract nature of the invisible ground of visibility can be linked to Deleuze's concept of virtuality. Both terms are used to replace the notion of an ontological or absolute void or absence that constitutes the subject in metaphysics and which finds its way into film theory via Lacan.

For Merleau-Ponty 'our openness upon "something"' (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 162) is beyond the parameters of identity and non-identity, as it is for Deleuze, but the merit of Merleau-Ponty's approach for my thesis is that invisibility or virtuality is co-dependent on the actual experiencing body. It does not have a life of its own. A rather lengthy citation from *The Visible and the Invisible* makes apparent Merleau-Ponty's interconnection and interdependence between the idea and the sensible.

But this hiatus between my right hand touched and my right hand touching, between my voice heard and my voice uttered, between one moment of my tactile life and the following one, is not an ontological void, a non-being: it is spanned by the total being of my body, and by that of the world; it is the zero of pressure between two solids that makes them adhere to one another. My flesh and that of the world therefore involve clear zones, clearings, about which pivot their opaque zones, and the primary visibility, that of the *quale* and of the things, does not come without a second visibility, that of the lines of force and dimensions, the massive flesh without a rarefied body, the momentary body without a glorified body. When Husserl spoke of the horizon of the things - of their exterior horizon, which everybody knows, and of their "interior horizon," that darkness stuffed with visibility of which their surface is but the limit - it is necessary to take the term seriously.
No more than are the sky or the earth is the horizon a collection of things held together... it is a new type of being, a being by porosity, pregnancy, or generality, and he before whom the horizon opens is caught up, included within it. His body and the distances participate in one same corporeity or visibility in general. Which reigns between them and it, and even beyond the horizon, beneath his skin, unto the depths of being (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 148-9).

It is not at all necessary, to see this emphasis on 'depth' as an opposition to surface. In fact, Merleau-Ponty, like Deleuze, equally insists that the way things appear is how they mean. The invisible idea, he says, 'cannot be detached from the sensible of appearances and be erected into a second positivity' or abstraction (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 149). Ideas appear in sensible disguises but not so as to reveal a hidden depth. Rather to voice an invisible yet transparent depth - a surface depth, the double lining of the sensible to which we are ourselves attached.

When "I" am carried away on the surface of the image and moved between its folds what is revealed is not an empty night, Zizek's reading of Hegel's dark night of the soul, but a double-sided void, one side of which is always extending beyond itself, the other side of which coils in upon itself, this double movement producing the 'interimplication' of states of difference.

As the secret blackness of milk, of which Valéry spoke, is accessible only through its whiteness, the idea of light or the musical idea doubles up the lights and sounds from beneath, is their other side or their depth (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 150).

The feminist implications of this discussion should be apparent, in the sense that I am offering a theoretical case for the image of absence, which is associated with femininity and the negation of representation, as having two sides, its surface appearance and the affective interval that lines this surface. This latter is the double-sided extensive void (object x) that animates my relation to the surface dimensions of the image, turning bodily depth inside out and dispersing it in time as a form of spacing. I claimed that something of this dynamic was operative in my discussion of Barthes' narration of the moment of the punctum in chapter two and in my discussion of the sublime as a form of
displacement in chapter three. The feminist implications of this temporalized spacing can be elucidated further with reference to Elizabeth Grosz’s recent turn to the work of Henri Bergson and her use of Deleuze’s ideas. 31

In a recent discussion of the value of Bergson’s philosophy for thinking the future, Grosz accuses vitalist philosophers, of which Bergson would be one, of not seeing that space is as dynamic as time. Vitalism, she says,

refuses to see spatiality as just as susceptible to the movement of difference as duration... Just as time is amenable to both flow and discontinuity... so too is space. Space is no more inherently material than duration and is no more the privileged domain of objects than memory is subjective and to be denied to spatial events: each is as amenable as the other to being disconcerted by difference, which in any case refuses such a clear-cut distinction between them (Grosz, 1999: 22).

Grosz’s point here is that the vitalist tendency of exempting the dynamism attributed to temporal flow from space risks losing the connection between actual and virtual inter/action. This danger thereby keeps the actual, i.e. the place where real bodies exist, in a static unchanging relation to a separate dynamic transcendent sphere.

While Bergson does seem to favour time’s discontinuities over the traditional view of space as a pre-existing container into which things are put, there are moments in Matter and Memory where he seems to allow for another conception of space, one which is equally subject to the conjunction of flow and discontinuity of time. 32 This is when he discusses the concept of extensity, a concept which overrides the time/space dualism and is pertinent to thinking of the body of the spectator as confronting space in as dynamic a way as it is subjected to the unhinging, de-psychologizing effects of a nonhuman time. His contrasting of extensity to homogenous space is useful here, the latter being the concept of space we use when we consider space as a container or arena in which to plot things. Homogenous space is a geometrical, diagrammatic conception of space that actually overlies the indivisibility of things in motion. We forget that
Homogenous space and time are then neither properties of things nor essential conditions of our faculty of knowing them: they express, in an abstract form, the double work of solidification and of division which we effect on the moving continuity of the real in order to obtain there a fulcrum for our action, in order to fix within it starting points for our operation, in short, to introduce into it real changes. They are the diagrammatic design of our eventual action upon matter (Bergson, 1988: 211 - emphasis mine).

Rather than starting from the constructed arrangement in space of a superimposed unity of experience, Bergson suggests seeking 'experience at its source, or rather above that decisive turn where, taking a bias in the direction of our utility, it becomes properly human experience' (Bergson, 1988: 184). In so placing 'ourselves at what we have called the turn of experience, when we have profited by the faint light which, illuminating the passage from the immediate to the useful, marks the dawn of out human experience', we would be able to perceive the continuous diversification that occurs between duration and extensity (Bergson, 1988: 185). In other words rather than seeing space as an inert and amorphous entity, as the material substance that awaits the dynamism of time, it too would be seen as having its own dynamic.33

What I referred to earlier in terms of the serial displacements of the subject in the female sublime is perhaps apropos here. Bergson's notion of the turn of experience above inserts a minute fleeting delay into the interlocked yet splitting of experience into the useful and the immediate. It is not so much that one aspect exists by itself but that the two exist together by means of this interconnecting interval. Experience is never immediate in the sense of being immediately present to a perceiving consciousness. Neither is it purely retrospective, i.e. only becoming apparent through the secondary imposition of narrative. Combining Irigaray and Bergson, Grosz discusses how the interval 'insinuates a temporal delay in all spatial presence, and a spatial extension of all temporal intensity' (Grosz, 2001: 157). The emphasis on delay and interconnection in intervallic spacing in Grosz' work makes all the difference in terms of locating some/body in relation to the discontinuous film moment.34
In terms of the two film moments I have been addressing, this notion doubling up, the two sides of the image, can be related to a stretched out notion of duration. When the rhythm of movement is slowed down, we may begin to perceive movement as quality, as 'repeated and successive vibrations, bound together by an inner continuity' which are akin to our inner vibrations (Bergson, 1988: 203). Henri Bergson's notion of duration as a kind of ontological vibration finds a strange alliance with Merleau-Ponty's ideas, contra Deleuze's deployment of Bergson. Bergson describes the interconnection between our own duration which condenses the multifarious moments of time and a generalized form of duration in which the 'numberless vibrations, all linked together in uninterrupted continuity, all bound up with each other, and travelling in every direction like shivers through an immense body' (Bergson, 1988: 208).

It is pertinent to my concerns to think of these vibrations as having a sensori-motor capacity rather than, as in Deleuze, losing this capacity for action and becoming purely contemplative/affective. For Bergson, 'that particular rhythm of duration which was the condition of my action upon things' (Bergson, 1988: 208) cannot actually be removed from the universe save as an act of the imagination which is in turn derived from a particular action of mine upon things. Bergson, like Merleau-Ponty sees real movements as

indivisibles which occupy duration, involve a before and an after, and link together the successive moments of time by a thread of variable quality which cannot be without some likeness to the continuity of our own consciousness (Bergson, 1988: 202-203).

While Bergson's notion of duration is what extends itself to fill up the cerebral interval interposed by the brain between stimulus and response, between sensation and action, duration has spatial as well as temporal aspects. Otherwise there would be no possibility of sharing experience. If it were only temporal, sensation itself would be as inert as the diagrammatic space of geometry we impose upon internal continuity. Bergson's emphasis on the temporal flow of duration is not necessarily at the expense of space,
which suggests location, but also the making of a place for potential action. By means of extensity, the refracting of duration, 'which permits us to separate our psychical states, to reduce them to a more and more impersonal form, and to impose names on them - in short, to make them enter the current of social life' (Bergson, 1988: 185), does not mean the construction of a static space.

This intervallic relation between duration and extensity echoes the way that Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology is also concerned with how continuity in space can co-exist with rupture. Merleau-Ponty's concept of 'openness' has similar ramifications to Deleuze's notion of becoming - becoming is not the opposite of being, as openness is not the opposite of closure but a state which allows both being and nothingness to circulate intertwined.36

It has seemed to us that the task was to describe strictly our relation to the world not as an openness of nothingness upon being, but simply as openness: it is through openness that we will be able to understand being and nothingness, not through being and nothingness that we will be able to understand openness (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 99).

Merleau-Ponty insists that if one takes the latter route, (he is thinking of Sartre here but it relates to my earlier discussion of Zizek), openness becomes a 'flat projection' constituted by the voiding of my identity. The form I constitute would be a static pose.37 By contrast, it is the notion of an openness that is able to incorporate the two aspects of being and nothingness that I find useful in rethinking the relation of the viewer to the suspended film image. In this scenario, the space that opens is not simply intersubjective, i.e. between two subjects as in Sobchack's use of Merleau-Ponty, but is a-subjective.
4.6 DERANGEMENT OF THE SENSES AND ANONYMOUS COMMONALITY: A NEW SPACE OF SPECTATORSHIP.

Finding myself dispersed in this a-subjective space, "I" am placed in a transitive mode in relation to the film moment of suspension. In other words, I encounter the non-personal substrate that co-exists and intercedes with the reversible positions of "I" and "you". Rather than this substrate being impossible, an unrepresentable negativity or, that other face of negativity, mute, raw, unmediated sensation, it is the condition of a mediation that allows for the reversible interchangeability of "I" and "you", but prevents these positions from collapsing into an equivalent sameness. An a-personal intervallic enfolding of binaries of self and other, space and time, body and mind. In relation to News From Home the supposed collapse of the "I" and "you" that Margulies and Barker mention, the positions of mother and daughter, daughter and filmmaker, are instead interceded by the non-personal interval of suspension. The force of blankness in the image acts like a third term that is not separation, but creates an asymmetrical relay between positions of "I" and "you". This intervallic blankness generates, not my identification with the filmmaker, the daughter, the mother, but forces me to adopt what Roland Barthes refers to as 'the middle voice' (Barthes, 1986: 18). The middle voice relates to the scenario of passive transitivity that I am trying to claim as a feminine space of displacement triggered or engendered by an absence as mobile as the "I"'s that form in tandem with "it".

In the case of the active voice, the action is performed outside the subject [whereas] in the case of the middle voice, on the contrary, by acting, the subject affects himself, he always remains inside the action, even if that action involves an object [...] the middle voice corresponds exactly to the modern state of the verb to write: to write is today to make oneself the center of the action of speech, it is to effect writing by affecting oneself, to make action and affection coincide, to leave the scriptor inside the writing - not as a psychological subject [...] but as agent of the action (Barthes, 1989: 18).
The place where action and affection find themselves coinciding can perhaps be related to Merleau-Ponty's notion of 'flesh' and the concept of an anonymous commonality that both links and separates the agents that occupy this space.

If we can show that the flesh is an ultimate notion, that it is not the union or compound of two substances, but thinkable by itself, if there is a relation of the visible with itself that traverses me and constitutes me as a seer, this circle which I do not form, which forms me, this coiling over of the visible upon the visible, can traverse, animate other bodies as well as my own. And if I was able to understand how this wave arises within me, how the visible which is yonder is simultaneously my landscape, I can understand a fortiori that elsewhere it also closes over upon itself and that there are other landscapes besides my own (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 140-41).

What is shared, but in an equally divisible way, as a common share would reduce identity to the same, is the visibility beyond vision, which Merleau-Ponty elaborates as the inter-linking of the invisible (gaze) and the visible (human perception). Invisibility pervades all bodies, whether human or nonhuman, in the world.

Needless to say this view is very different from the psychoanalytic view that I started out with in dissatisfaction. There the in/visible was attached to the ego, but as a static place of emptiness, which generates the movements of desire. An absence to which I am attached, the dark inert core of subjectivity, an invisible opaque hollow, an absence which gets filled up with objects, with narratives that cover its intractable opacity. By contrast to the pessimism of this view, Deleuze, as I discussed in chapter three, introduced the notion of an absence, an 'object x' that shifts in its place, moving the formation of series' along in unpredictable directions rather than creating narratives that hinge around an intractable core. In this chapter, I have tried to expand on this notion, focusing on the spatial as well as the temporal effects of the interval. My emphasis on space counters Deleuze's emphasis on the infinite unfolding of the interval in terms of the empty form of time, what he calls the outside, a concept heavily influenced by Maurice Blanchot's *The Infinite Conversation*. Blanchot, discussing
Simone Weil highlights the eternal quality of absence that I have been attempting to counter. For Blanchot

affliction holds in it the limit from which we should assume a perspective on the human condition - a movement that hinders precisely all perspective - we are not above but beneath time: this is eternity (Blanchot, 1993: 120).

For me, this sentiment encapsulates the distinction between Deleuze's Blanchot-inspired 'outside' and a sense of embodied time. While I find myself seduced by Blanchot's account of suspension, as I was by Slavoj Zizek's 'subjective destitution', I am also repelled by its eternal nature.

[At]tention is waiting...leaving empty what is empty and keeping our haste, our impatient desire, and, even more, our horror of emptiness from prematurely filling it in. Attention is the emptiness of thought oriented by a gentle force and maintained in an accord with the empty intimacy of time (Blanchot, 1993: 121).

It is to avoid the static suspension of this form of attention that I retreat to Merleau-Ponty's notion of reversibility where that empty intimacy of time is always being dissected by the intervallic spacing of the body that moves in time as well as being moved by time. Reversibility is a process of 'hyperdialectics' whereby two terms, rather than being synthesized into a whole, each continue to struggle for co-existence in a continuous field of discontinuities. 40

Contrary then to Irigaray's claim that there is 'no cut in reversibility' (Irigaray, 1993: 173), I suggest that what Merleau-Ponty's notion of chiasmic reversibility offers is a cut that has two sides, each in excess of the other. The paradoxical incompossibility of these two sides does not mean that they co-exist in an energetic field of a 'closed circuit', where one is continually falling into the other, a scenario Irigaray compares to 'the osmotic exchanges with the maternal world and its substitutes' (Irigaray, 1993: 180). Rather, they co-exist in a state of interimplication, which opens the viewer 'to the differential pulse of otherness within itself [where] the
fold of temporality differentiates itself by touching itself" (Kirby, 1997: 94). This movement has a narrative quality to it in the sense I have been arguing here for narrative movement as a type of arrangement that accumulates in the bifurcating moments of its constitution, or coming into being. Narration is perhaps a better term than narrative. The dis/continuous film moment opens onto an emptiness that endures in time, exposing the bifurcating movements of duration, the fact that so-called empty time is not wasting away, vanishing into the chaos of life, but is always composing itself into other moments, other durations. As Grosz puts it following Bergson:

> Each duration forms a continuity, a single, indivisible movement; and yet, there are many simultaneous durations, implying that all durations participate in a generalized or cosmological duration, which allows them to be described as simultaneous (Grosz, 2001: 141).

While film has been accused of dividing up duration into spatial segments, which it in turn unites as one homogeneous unit, the film moments I have encountered and selected here, generate the performance of continuous discontinuity, the movement of discontinuity extending beyond the moment as a present moment in time. "I" am not in time then, but of time, being continuously fractured, continuity extending beyond fracture, as the latter extends beyond the present. Movement slips through the interval. As Irigaray, echoing Deleuze, puts it: 'Sensation would have neither an object not a moment but it would take place only in the interval between, through difference, succession' (Irigaray, 1993: 158).

The film moments I have encountered and been performed by analogously express the flow of life in the mode of continuous discontinuity rather than negating its living substance by imposing the retrospective frame of narrative on it. The discontinuity of the cut expresses the force of time in terms of it being a force that causes the present to become past and simultaneously be affected, open, to the future. The static film image 'immobilizes me in front of the various manifestations of reality (a face, a landscape, a gesture, an object), almost as if they were motionless and isolated in the flow of time'
but this immobility is simultaneously mobilizing. The cut out of fluidity expresses rather than reproduces fluidity, thereby placing me in a contiguous relation to the invisible continuity of a life (my emphases). Rather than the image of suspension functioning as a critical comment on the illusory nature of film experience and/or identity, (which cuts off the future) or as a moment of pure negativity creating a space for something (female desire) to appear in the future, (which cuts off the past), this suspension from the minimal narrative trajectory of the film, is an opening onto the double face of time. There is something happening in the present moment of suspension.

In the non-narrative moment, the present is still passing, as the future is intimating itself.

Today there are many authors who do all they can so that in cinema, too, "nothing happens": they align themselves, in other words, with the "nouveau roman" and with certain avant-garde movements that speak of the "antinovel," etc., or of a "narrative without narrative," etc. (I don't believe in it: because every form of art and of artistic language does nothing more than evoke reality, and in reality something always happens because time passes, or at least seems to pass: and this is the illusion of our life.) (Pasolini, 1988: 230).

In everyday life, we are not perhaps aware of the passing of a time other than the one of measurement, deadlines and clocks. In everyday life, the sense of the other time that is passing would stop us from living, whereas art, in this case, the suspended film moment, allows us to access and intimate this other inhuman time, to feel it on a human scale. It is my thesis that the use of static camera heightens this awareness of invisible duration.

The suspended moments of the film encounters I have discussed allow access to the dynamism of this invisibility, the way it enfolds the visible surface of the body and how this surface, enfolded within the two regimes of visibility/invisibility, is spread as a series of disjunctive links.

In chapter three, I used the term 'disjunctive synthesis' to allude to this phenomenon. To cite Constantin Boundas again: 'disjunctive synthesis... places series in communication and in resonance with one another the very moment it separates one from the other' (Boundas, 1994: 101). It is this minute but crucial difference between a
cut that separates absolutely and one that connects and separates simultaneously that I claim for the movements of the suspended film moments I have encountered on this journey. Rather than being confronted with Blanchot's 'empty intimacy of time', the agent in the mode of dynamic passivity is affected by the intimacy of time's passing which, in a Deleuzian framework, is not necessarily one-dimensional, i.e. wasting away into organic destruction, but bifurcating into the tertiary components of time itself. As Deleuze puts it: 'at each moment time splits itself into present and past, present that passes and past which is preserved' (Deleuze, 1989: 82), and a future that is coming into being because of this splitting. It is this looped movement that affects the viewer, causing the "I" to discover itself in its facility for multiple displacements. It is not that "I" take on multiple identities, but that "I" am immersed in 'inner movements' that would otherwise be invisible to me.

In the introduction to her novel Tropisms, Nathalie Sarraute, a novelist associated with the Nouveau Roman, describes how these 'inner movements' are connected to but not contained by the body. It is worth noting that Deleuze incorporates another proponent of the Nouveau Roman, Alain Robbe-Grillet, into his discussion of crystalline narrative whereby an infinitely unfolding series of descriptions replaces the object as locus of meaning. By contrast, Sarraute maintains a connection to the referent, the human being. In Tropisms, which is comprised of a series of moments, Sarraute describes objects and people that intersect one another's spaces without having fixed identities or situations. What she tries to show in her writing are 'certain inner "movements"' (Sarraute, 1963: 7) which

slip through us on the frontiers of consciousness in the form of undefinable extremely rapid sensations. They hide behind our gestures, beneath the words we speak and the feelings we manifest, all of which we are aware of experiencing, and are able to define. They seemed, and still seem to me to constitute the secret source of our existence, in what might be called its nascent state. While we are performing them, no words express them, not even those of the interior monologue - for they develop and pass through us very rapidly in the form of frequently very sharp, brief sensations, without our perceiving clearly what they are - it was not possible to communicate them to the reader otherwise than by
means of equivalent images that would make him experience analogous sensations. It was also necessary to make them break up and spread out in the consciousness of the reader the way a slow-motion film does. Time was no longer the time of real life, but of a hugely amplified present (Sarraute, 1963: 8 - emphasis mine).

This notion of a hugely amplified present full of minute flickering sensations so transient that they run through us resonates for me with the affective movements generated by the final scene in News From Home. (This is also the case for the final cut in Disappearance at Sea). It also resonates with Grosz' call for attention to be paid to the 'rich profusion of vibrations that underlie the solidity of things [...] the untapped fluidity of the world, the movements, vibrations, transformations that occur below the threshold of perception and calculation' (Grosz, 2001: 175). It is my thesis that the encounter with the film image of suspension/absence generates an openness to the movements of these vibrations. There is still absence in the sense of not being able to define an object but the difference is that absence is not felt as a loss but as an intensity filled by spatio-temporal dynamisms that move and flow in its train. The image of emptiness, rather than presenting the unrepresentable, becomes the occasion for an engagement with a deep interiority that is not purely visceral, but is performed as a series of surface dis/continuities between shot and spectator.

My notion of the (female) spectator position as a performance of discontinuous continuity is different from the negative critiques in the 1970s and 1980s, e.g. Teresa de Lauretis whom I mentioned earlier, where the impetus was to maintain an empty space, an absence, where a feminist subject might appear in the future. This would apply to Heath's analysis of News From Home also. While there are links between then and now, the main difference is that, in the 1970s and 1980s, questions about difference were posed in terms of possibility and desire. The space of negativity is inevitable here. De Lauretis, referring to Nicolas Roeg's Bad Timing, concludes that 'the place and time of feminine desire that can only be stated as negativity, as borders - this is the most the film can say' (de Lauretis, 1984: 99). It is that conception of the future as postponement and
possibility that haunts Heath's reading of *News From Home*, where hope is poised as 
resistance (to narrative closure). But immersing oneself in the process of narrativization 
as serialization not only entails that there is no closure but equally that transformation is 
not postponed or deferred. What both film encounters make me feel is that the future is 
"now, here", in all its divisibility. As Kirby puts it:

> Time is not so much a thing - divisible into moments, that is, moments 
in time. Rather we might think of a moment *of* time, a moment *as* the 
body of time, the marking of an anterior future, what will have been in 
the already not yet of the present (Kirby, 1997: 94).

To repeat: There is an ending. It is the space of transformation, which opens up at the 
end of *News From Home* after that moment of dislocation, after having given myself up 
to the concentrated weight of its images, their durations. In that final scene, I am 
rewarded with lightness, a kind of gaiety. If I identify with anything, it is with the flight 
of the seagulls as their sway carries me away on the surface skin of a duration in which I 
am included. Opened up to liquid motion, I became a tracery of something gathering and 
falling between the current, between the swoop of gulls in the blueness. I move with the 
motor and animal calls that populate this new space, the curve of a wing, the ruffle of a 
wave. Not the impossible question of a woman's desire, but the fluid dynamism of the 
charge of the real that discloses the movement of how I subsist in time, contained and 
flowing like a river at the edge of a city.
As Dermot Moran puts it in his introduction to The Phenomenology Reader, 'the first fifty years of phenomenology can be seen correctly, as Paul Ricoeur has put it, as a series of heresies devolving from Husserl (Moran in Moran and Mooney, 2002: 4). In order to allude to the various strands of phenomenology, Moran refers to the categories of American phenomenologist, Lester Embree, who 'identified four "successively dominant and sometimes overlapping tendencies": realistic phenomenology (early Husserl, Adolf Reinach, Scheler); constitutive phenomenology (the mature Husserl, Gruwitsch, Becker); existential phenomenology (Heidegger, Arendt, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Michel Henry); and hermeneutic phenomenology (Gadamer, Ricoeur, et al) (Moran in Moran and Mooney, 2002: 4).

However, for the purposes of my thesis, I shall only engage in a select reading of Merleau-Ponty, although it is important to note that he deliberately attempted to avoid Husserl's idealism by returning to 'our pre-predicative experiences' (Moran in Moran and Mooney, 2002: 21). In the history of film theory, Jean-Louis Baudry refers to Husserl's notion of intentionality, itself derived from Brentano, to discuss how the subject constitutes the film object as a synthetic unity, i.e. narrative continuity. See Baudry in Rosen, 1986: pp. 291-293 especially. Baudry's essay was originally published in 1970 in Cinéthique, nos. 7-8. In American 1970s film theory, Annette Michelson would refer to both Merleau-Ponty and Husserl, critiquing the emphasis on transcendental subjectivity in the latter. In recent returns to phenomenology in film theory, while Casebier returns to Husserl with an emphasis on cognition, Marks and Sobchack return to Merleau-Ponty's emphasis on embodiment and sensory experience.

1 Derrida is mainly interrogating Husserl in this essay, not Merleau-Ponty. Interestingly enough, although I shall not refer to Derrida in this thesis except as a footnote, his position in this essay on questions of interiority and exteriority relate to very much to the positionality that I develop in this chapter. In 'Speech and Phenomena', he discusses 'the temporization of sense' as being 'from the outset. a "spacings", which prevents space from being considered as an empty container into which things are put and prevents time from being considered as a self-present empty (absolute) moment of being (Derrida, 1991:27). "The exteriority of space, exteriority as space, does not overtake time; rather, it opens as pure "outside" "within" the movement of temporization' (ibid). I will refer to Elizabeth Grosz's use of similar concepts in relation to the interval towards the end of this chapter. (See Grosz, 2001: 157).

2 A good definition of Gestalten is found in Diana Coole's Thinking Politically With Merleau-Ponty, Radical Philosophy, 108, (Jul/Aug) 2001. She defines them as 'those dialectical unities of structural and expressive moments that were intended not to eliminate subjectivity but to bind it to the non-subjective' (Coole, 2001:24).

3 I've already mentioned feminist misgivings about Deleuze in chapter three where I referred to Elizabeth Grosz and Rosi Braidotti. Such misgivings are also to be found in film theory in both Marks' and Sobchack's recent returns to phenomenology. In Sobchack's case this is just a brief aside. She acknowledges Deleuze's contribution to ways of conceiving spectatorial engagement in terms other than the psychoanalytic structure of identification, however, for her, Deleuze 'misses the dialectical and dialogic character of Merleau-Ponty's later semiotic phenomenology' and 'neglects the embodied situation of the spectator and of the film' (Sobchack, 1992: 30-31). Marks criticizes Deleuze's retreat 'into an atomistic notion of perception in which the individual can perceive without the assistance of collective memory' (Marks, 1994: 256). Much in the same way that I am supplementing Deleuze with Merleau-Ponty, she goes on to supplement Deleuze with Walter Benjamin's notion of collective memory. However, it has to be remarked that Marks herself falls into the trap of equating the virtual with virtual images of recording (Marks, 1994: 251).

4 The virtual image (pure recollection) is not a psychological state or a consciousness: it exists outside of consciousness, in time, and we should have no more difficulty in admitting the virtual insistence of pure recollections in time than we do for the actual existence of non-perceived objects in space... ‘(Deleuze, 1989: 80). In taking this track, Deleuze allies Bergson with Immanuel Kant although the former was at pains to distinguish himself from the abstraction of the latter. Deleuze goes so far as to say with Kant that subjectivity is time, the empty form of...
time, a bit of time in the pure state, 'pure virtuality which divides itself in two as affector and affected' (Deleuze, 1989: 83).

6 A literary case of the first type of scenario is explored in Jorge Luis Borges' short story in Labyrinths, 'Funes the Memorious'. Funes, left paralyzed after being thrown by a horse, finds that his memory has become infallible. He remembers everything, becoming 'the solitary and lucid spectator of a multiform, instantaneous and almost intolerably precise world' (Borges, 1970: 94).

7 In fact, Funes remembered not only every leaf on every tree of every wood, but also every one of the times he had perceived or imagined it' (Borges, 1970: 93). This infinite memorization is dependent on Funes' physical immobility.

8 Although it is only a brief reference, Patricia Mellancamp is also guilty of an appropriation of Deleuze's language, which she uses in a similarly rhetorical manner.

Steven Shaviro in The Cinematic Body, (University of Minnesota Press, 1993), does something similar in his appropriation of Deleuze.

9 This can perhaps be seen in her relegation of the same descriptive terms to different films. Discussing the landscapes in Orlando, The English Patient, and The Sheltering Sky she says: 'Something grand, intangible and molecular is emitted across the gestural movements of the screenic event. The emptiness and solitude of the landscape enable a connection of intensities which are about process. continuums, becoming, and, ironically, are far removed from transcendent notions of inorganic origins, death, and fixity' (Kennedy, 2000b: 139).

10 Elizabeth Grosz in Architecture From the Outside: Essays on Virtual and Real Space uses the term interimplication to describe how the virtual and the real are intertwined and how relations of embeddedness needs rethinking (Grosz, 2001: 89).


12 Deleuze borrows the term 'haptic' from the art historian Alois Reigl who defined Egyptian art as a haptic aesthetic based on the flattening of space in the bas-relief. For a discussion of the relation of Reigl's aesthetic to the early cinema of George Melies see Antonia Lant's 'Haptic Cinema', October, vol. 74, Fall 1995, pp. 45-73.

13 Rajchman here repeats the point I made earlier in chapter three on the two forms of death in Deleuze which reformulate Freud's Beyond the Pleasure Principle.

14 It is this aspect of Deleuze that would lead Raymond Bellour to say that 'Deleuze is opposed to anything that tends to immobilize the film' and to associate Deleuze's 'flawless meshing of movement and time, where discontinuities and ruptures are integrated into a continuous expansion' to Snow's La Region Centrale (1971) (Bellour, 1990: 102).

15 In Dreams of Chaos, Visions of Order: Understanding the American Avant-garde, James Peterson matter-of-factly describes the interpretative schemata', which were incorporated into film analysis in the 1970s. What he calls 'the phenomenological schema', was developed in relation to 'structuralist' avant-garde films mainly in the influential criticism of Annette Michelson, who was strongly influenced by the phenomenology of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty (Peterson, 1994: 77). The phenomenological schema, according to Peterson, proffers the notion that the film presents itself to the direct perception of the viewer. This is evident in both the
romantic tendencies in Sitney's phenomenology and the Modernist strand of Michelson's phenomenological interpretation of Snow's work (Peterson, 1994, 75). The most influential articulation of Michelson's approach is her essay "Toward Snow" (1971). For Sitney, Snow's work is a metaphor for human consciousness:

If, as I have claimed, the often unacknowledged aspiration of the American avant-garde film has been the cinematic reproduction of the human mind, then structural film approaches the condition of meditation and evokes states of consciousness without mediation; that is, with the sole mediation of the camera' (Sitney in Peterson. 1994: 74).

Deleuze on *Wavelength*:

If the experimental cinema tends towards a perception as it was before men (or after), it also tends towards the correlate of this, that is, towards an any-space-whatever released from its human coordinates... In *Wavelength* Snow uses a forty-five minute zoom in order to explore a room lengthwise from one end to the other. as far as the wall on which a photograph of the sea is stuck: from this room he extracts a potential space, whose power and quality he progressively exhausts... The space re-enters the empty sea. All the preceding elements of the any-space-whatever, the shadows, the whites, the colours, the inexorable progression, the inexorable reduction, elevation plane [épure], the disconnected parts, the empty set: all come into play here in what, according to Sitney, defines the 'structural film' (Deleuze: 1992:122).

As William C. Wees' reading of *Wavelength* astutely shows, features of Michelson's 'transcendental subject' are also in place here. Discussing the zoom into the final image of the sea, he says that '[t]he mind carries on when the materiality of the film medium and the optics of the zoom lens can go no further. This is the beginning of the "ripples" that extend "past the end"' (Wees, 1992: 161). '[T]he flattening of the zoom (analysis) leads to the viewer's perception of infinite depth (ecstasy). Where the film ends, the imagination carries on, free of material constraints' (Wees, 1992: 160). What is this but an invocation of the dynamic sublime where the mind can observe the imagination as it plumbs the depths or soars the heights.

Snow discusses the function of the X in *La Region Centrale* in an interview with John Du Cane in *Studio International*, vol. 186, no. 960, 1973. What he says illustrates Michelson's notion of the position of the transcendental subject and also greatly contrasts with the dynamic of *News From Home*.

The film's in constant motion. The X frees the screen. It transfers the movement in a lot of different ways each time it comes up. It's another kind of motion that's a kind of referral back to yourself. Obviously it's also a functional way to get from sequence to sequence because I couldn't make it totally continuous any way...And it's a title, a reminder of the central region - the whole thing is about being in the middle of this - the camera and the spectator. But first of all it was just getting something that would hold the screen. Diagonals seemed to be the best way to fix it - so there's no feeling of anything passing through or whatever (Snow in Du Cane, 1973: 179).

Michelson asserts that the disparities within the pairs of terms such as identity/contradiction, reduction/extension/ punning/disjunction that Snow works with are resolved in his 'obsessively systematic investigations' (Michelson, 1979: 123). Also see Thierry de Duve's, 'Michael Snow: The Deictics of Experience, and Beyond', *Parachute*, (no.78, Apr/May/June, 1995), pp. 28-41, for an account of the resolution of fragmentation in Snow's oeuvre.

Akerman did see Snow's work in New York but maintains that its influence had more to do with the permission to make films in another way. She says:

When I saw some of the films of Michael Snow, for example. I understood that you can build a tension in your film without narrative - that was the kind of revelation. Again. I think I am much more emotional that Michael Snow. His
work was more purely experimental and not so emotional, but with Jonas Mekas it's something else. So it was liberating. I understood that in a way with true abstraction you can build a tension as strong, as emotional, as some Hitchcock movies, and that was liberating (Akerman in Addison, 2001: 24).

21 Elizabeth Grosz, referring to Luce Irigaray's philosophical work, discusses the necessity of temporality in reconsidering feminine identity, which has been relegated to being a spatial container for the temporal projects of masculinity. See *Architecture From the Outside: Essays on Virtual and Real Space*, pp. 158-159.

22 Constance Penley would criticize Michelson's phenomenological film analyses for being reductive. For Penley, the phenomenological emphasis on description, where 'the discourse about the object becomes (is the same thing as) the discourse of the object' (Penley, 1978: 118), is ultimately limiting as it reduces the object of analysis to our consciousness, an approach she claims needs to be developed and expanded by consideration of the unconscious workings of spectatorship. Penley's critique relies on the Merleau-Ponty of *Phenomenology of Perception* and she also refers to Metz' critique of the transcendental bracketing of the subject of consciousness who uses the phenomenological method to reach an essence, a procedure that is undermined in Merleau-Ponty's *The Visible and the Invisible*.

The "there is" of phenomenology proper (philosophical phenomenology) as an ontic revelation to a perceiving-subject (= "perceptual cogito"), to a subject for which alone there can be anything, has close and precise affinities with the inauguration of the cinematic signifier in the ego as I have tried to define it, with the spectator falling back on himself as a pure instance of perception, the whole of the perceived being "over the way" (Metz in Penley, 1978: 118).

23 In fact, Sobchack later criticizes Jean Mitry for his insistence on the separation of spaces of film and spectator, and while for her, these spaces do intersect, they do so from their respective material existences.

24 While, in this chapter, Merleau-Ponty also discusses sexuality as 'an atmosphere' and as 'ambiguity', his juxtaposition of these allusive suggestions with a detailed positing of sexuality in terms of the master/slave dialectic gives Butler plenty ammunition (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: 168 & 169). This dialectic situates the object (other subject) in a space separate from the subject (as master) and, although these positions are reversible, they set up a predetermined intractable oscillation between domination and rivalry. Merleau-Ponty elaborates it thus:

Usually man does not show his body, and, when he does, it is either nervously or with an intention to fascinate. He has the impression that the alien gaze which runs over his body is stealing it from him, or else, on the other hand, that the display of his body will deliver the other person up to him, defenseless, and that in this case the other will be reduced to servitude. Shame and modesty, then, take their place in a dialectic of the self and the other which is that of master and slave: in so far as I have a body, I may be reduced to the status of an object beneath the gaze of another person, and no longer count as a person for him, or else I may become his master, and in my turn, look at him... Saying that I have a body is thus a way of saying that I can be seen as an object and that I try to be seen as a subject, that another can be my master or my slave, so that shame and shamelessness express the dialectic of the plurality of consciousnesses, and have a metaphysical significance (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: 166-167).

25 This is in contrast to Lacan's notion of the gaze. Lacan was influenced by Merleau-Ponty's gaze but reconfigured what he felt to be its overly benign aspect. For Lacan, primordial connection to the gaze is lost therefore its force can only be felt as horrific, as a threat to the stability of the speaking subject. See Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought*, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1993), pp. 357-360.

26 Margulies compares and contrasts Akerman to Warhol and Godard as well as to Michael Snow whom I've already mentioned (Margulies, 1996: 47).
This would be like the motion of cohesion in Lacan's mirror-stage, except for the fact that this is not a singular drama of individual coherence, but a process of differentiating between one level of chaos and another.

Deleuze's rather abstract notion of the contraction of multiple passive selves can perhaps be usefully fleshed out by Leo Bersani's current work on what he calls 'the communication of forms' (Bersani in Bersani et al., 1997: 6). In this mode of interaction between things, the self is extended in 'a kind of spatial, anonymous narcissism', which leads away from notions of the body as a container of a hidden interiority to what Bersani calls 'a kind of cartography of the subject, a tracing of spatial connectedness' (Ibid: 8). For Bersani, '[t]his self-dissolution is also self-accretion: it is self-incremental' but not in the sense of becoming a sovereign masterful self (Ibid: 15). For me, this displacing 'self-accretion' is reminiscent of the feminine dynamic of the mathematical sublime that I discussed in chapter three, in contrast to the masculinist mode of thought which hinged around the pivot of mastery and dissolution.

I am referring to Kaja Silverman's summary of Bersani's notion of the 'communication of forms' which she contrast to Lacan's position. She says:

... boundaries being displaced and opened up 'as an effect of reaching toward mobility is a central concern of the work you have done with Ulysse Dutoit. Because the two of you are concerned with the conditions under which we can gravitate toward rather than contain the forms which attract us, under which we can allow them their exteriority, your notion of the communication of forms can be seen as a way out of what Lacan calls "formal stagnation." Formal stagnation is what happens when we manage to achieve egoic consistency, when we succeed in sustaining for a long time an incorporative identification with a single form. You and Ulysse invite us to let go of the forms which we have imprisoned within our ego, in order to open ourselves up to the possibility of a whole new series of relationships, relationships which are in the first instance aesthetic (Silverman in Bersani et al., 1997: 15).

In fact, Merleau-Ponty refers to the virtual dimension of invisibility in The Visible and the Invisible, p.112.

Interest in these philosophers for similar purposes, i.e. to revitalize feminist conceptions of subjectivity, can also be found in Dorothy Olkowski's Gilles Deleuze and the Ruin of Representation, (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1999). However, Olkowski's analysis is more at the level of exegesis than creative usage as in Grosz.

Bergson states that 'perceptions range themselves in strict continuity in space', while memories are 'illumined discontinuously in time' (Bergson, 1988: 146) and that 'the series of objects are simultaneously set out in space', while states are 'successively developed in time' (Bergson, 1988: 145).

Grosz' citation of Irigaray's analysis of space highlights the gender stakes involved in thinking of space as a container rather than as a fluid dynamic as in extensity.

Irigaray argues that the very constitution of the field of space-time - with space as the field of external and extended positions and connections, and time as the field of internal and subjective positions and connections - is already set up in such a way that space is defined as smooth, continuous, homogenous, passive, and neutral, as that which has no folds, no complexity, no interior or intensity of its own. It is already set up such that it morphologically reproduces the passive attributes of femininity. Irigaray maintains that woman has represented place for man, and more than that, the kind of place she has provided is a specific one: she functions as container, as envelope, as that which surrounds and marks the limit of man's identity...which means that she represents a place that has no place, that has no place of its own but functions only as place for another (Grosz, 2001: 158-9).

Dorothy Olkowski's formulation of the interval's dynamic is similar to Grosz's.
Such a dynamic force carries its own formulization along with it, a dynamic potential that would replace the separation between negatively charged matter with no place of its own and positively charged form that acts by refuting the positing of space as the container within which one acts (Olkowski, 1999: 86).

While Olkowski is at pains to distance herself from Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, clearly this notion of the interval is similar to his notion of the chiasm to which I have already referred. While there is much to criticize in Merleau-Ponty, particularly his early work, Olkowski's Deleuzian discussion of subjectivity as an intermixture of bodily states and incorporeal events is not as far removed from Merleau-Ponty's notion of the coiling of subjectivity into two sides of appearance and expression as she might like.

35 Grosz also uses Bergson to suggest the notion of shared duration, not as something that is divided up, but as something in which 'we' all participate unequally and which therefore exceeds and ruptures the complacent boundaries of the subject. See pp. 141 & 151-152 in Architecture From the Outside: Essays on Virtual and Real Space.


37 In fact, Deleuze, for all his (justifiable) criticisms of phenomenology and Merleau-Ponty, actually credits the latter with following 'a more thoroughly Heideggerian inspiration in speaking of "folds" and "pleating" (by contrast with Sartrean "holes" and "lakes of non-being") from The Phenomenology of Perception onwards, and in returning to an ontology of difference and questioning in his posthumous book The Visible and the Invisible (Deleuze, 1994: 64).

38 Grosz compares Merleau-Ponty with Lacan, the latter having adopted Merleau-Ponty's notion of visibility but having added the notion of a screen which acts as an interface between perception and the gaze itself. Lacan, because he deals with the site of representation, is taken up by film and art theory, where the image acts as an empty reflection of the pupil behind which the gaze lies (Grosz, 1994b: 221). The image as lack or hole mirrors the vanishing of the spectator in the field of the gaze. But my project has been to explore the image as part of the continuity of the fabric of the gaze, my seeing a dehiscent splitting that opens onto this fabric rather than barring it.

39 What I am alluding to here is Lacan's inflection on Freud's story of the fort/da. For Lacan, the thread attached to the cotton reel signifies the masochistic attachment of my desire to some arbitrary object in the world (Lacan, 1979: 21). The image as lack or hole mirrors the vanishing of the spectator in the field of the gaze. But my project has been to explore the image as part of the continuity of the fabric of the gaze, my seeing a dehiscent splitting that opens onto this fabric rather than barring it.

40 See Diana Coole's 'Thinking Politically with Merleau-Ponty', Radical Philosophy, no. 108, July/August. 2001. pp. 17-28 for a useful account of this dynamic.
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