Aesthetic Experience of the Image*

The question of aesthetic experience stands at the center of literary and Cultural Studies. We do not study literary texts and cultural objects primarily for their referential function, that is, as sources of documentation or information. Rather, we are drawn to them because they provide an experience and have an effect on us or others. Even where texts are used for the purpose of cultural criticism, as is often the case in contemporary criticism, these cultural critics often forget that the texts they deal with have assumed their cultural significance only through their impact as aesthetic objects.

It thus remains one of the central challenges for literary and Cultural Studies to clarify in what way we can explain the encounter with cultural material that is called aesthetic experience. One of the striking shortcomings of the current critical revisionism is that, as a rule, there is little interest in taking up the question of aesthetics because the aesthetic dimension is seen as mere evasion of history, politics or the project of a cultural criticism. However, the aesthetic dimension is not the more or less decorative packaging of a "real" meaning to which we ought to penetrate as quickly as possible. The term 'aesthetic' refers to a distinct mode of communication and experience without which we would have no object in literary and Cultural Studies and no good reason for the existence of a separate field of study. In the following essay I therefore want to take up the question of aesthetic experience again and discuss it in two parts. The first part addresses the question what it actually means to have an aesthetic experience – a question that many people in the field today find difficult to answer. In the second part, I apply these considerations to a discussion of the aesthetic experience of the image.

I.

Because of the language-and-text centeredness of philosophy and literary theory in the twentieth century, the issue of aesthetic experience has not been

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a question of central concern in these fields. One notable exception is John Dewey's *Art as Experience* which Peter Hansen, in James Kloppenberg's recently published *Companion to American Thought*, calls "the most complete American aesthetic theory developed in the twentieth century" (18). Indeed, in reading *Art and Experience* today, one is struck to see in how many ways Dewey anticipated positions and developments in literary and Cultural Studies that became influential only in the 1960s and after. The first chapter of Raymond Williams's seminal book *The Long Revolution,* for example, which is one of the founding texts of the Cultural Studies movement, is based largely on arguments first developed in Dewey's *Art and Experience* in which Dewey claims that aesthetic experience is not tied to the encounter with a beautiful object but emerges from an intensified experience of qualities that characterize everyday objects, so that aesthetic experience is something we encounter as ever-present potential in our life-world.

The major achievement of Dewey's aesthetics consists in the revision of traditional aesthetics from an essentialist aesthetics to an experiential one in which the aesthetic is no longer defined as intrinsic quality of an object but as a specific experience with that object.[1] In Dewey's view, the aesthetic is constituted by an attitude which we take toward an object. The argument has become familiar to us through the Czech structuralist Jan Mukařovský who argued in his essay on aesthetic function, norms and aesthetic value that any object of the life-world can, in principle, be approached (and interpreted) from a variety of perspectives which Mukařovský calls referential, pragmatic (by which he means practical uses) and aesthetic. A building or a dress serve primarily practical functions. But, at the same time, we can also look at them as aesthetic objects, and we might even reflect upon the possible relations between these two aspects. This argument can already be found in *Art as Experience* (published in 1934, while Mukařovský's essay came out in 1936) in which Dewey illustrates the point by the example of a group of people approaching the Manhattan skyline on a ferry:

> Some men regard it as simply a journey to get them where they want to be – a means to be endured. So, perhaps, they read a newspaper. One who is idle may glance at this and that building identifying it as the Metropolitan Tower, the Chrysler Building, the Empire State Building, and so on. Another, impatient to arrive, may be on the lookout for landmarks by which to judge progress toward his destination. Still another, who is taking the journey for the first time, looks eagerly but is bewildered by the multiplicity of objects spread out to view. He *sees* neither the whole nor the parts; he is like a layman who goes into an unfamiliar factory where many machines are plying. Another person, interested in real estate, may see, in looking at the skyline, evidence in the height of buildings, of the value of land. Or he may let his thoughts roam to the congestion of a great industrial and commercial centre. He may go on to think of the planlessness of arrangement as evidence of the chaos of a society organized on the

1 For a detailed analysis of the issues discussed in the first part of this essay, see my analysis of Dewey in "John Deweys Ästhetik und die Literaturtheorie der Gegenwart."

> basis of conflict rather than cooperation. Finally the scene formed by the buildings may be looked at as colored and lighted volumes in relation to one another, to the sky and to the river. He is now seeing aesthetically, as a painter might see (140).

All of these different observers see the same object but only a certain attitude taken towards the Manhattan skyline turns it into an aesthetic object and provides the basis for an aesthetic experience.

This argument was more fully developed by Mukařovský who, in turn, was rediscovered in the 1960s by the Constance School of Reception Aesthetics. Reception aesthetics is the only one of the so-called "Continental theories" of the recent theory boom in literary and Cultural Studies in which the name Dewey remains an important point of reference. Hans Robert Jauß, for example, calls *Art as Experience* "a pioneering achievement in analyzing aesthetic experience" in his book *Ästhetische Erfahrung und literarische Hermeneutik (Aesthetic Experience and Literary Hermeneutics).* Similarly, Wolfgang Iser, in his study *The Act of Reading*, uses Dewey's *Art as Experience* as a welcome confirmation of the fact that the meaning and significance of a literary text is realized only in the interplay between the structures of the literary text and their actualization in the act of reading. However, he then parts company with Dewey by emphasizing the discrepancies produced by the reader during the gestalt-forming process, because, for Iser, these experiences of discrepancy are an important source for transcending the reader's previous range of orientation:

> It is at this point that the discrepancies produced by the reader during the gestalt-forming process take on their true significance. They have the effect of enabling the reader actually to become aware of the inadequacy of the gestalten he has produced, so that he may detach himself from his own participation in the text and see himself guided from without (133-4).

Dewey's *Art as Experience* thus serves reception aesthetics as a convenient point of departure for stressing the experiential dimension of our encounter with literature against mimetic theories of literature. On the other hand, Dewey's "pioneering achievement" is considered a crude forerunner for an approach that has described the process of reception in far greater detail by focusing on concepts such as the implied reader or the meaning-generating function of a text's constitutive blanks. In terms of actual usefulness, Dewey thus remains marginal in reception aesthetics as well.

Jauß provides a reason for the surprising neglect of Dewey in literary and Cultural Studies when he claims that for Dewey notions of Aristotelean unity remain the necessary condition for aesthetic experience. We are here, it seems to me, at the heart of the problem contemporary literary and cultural theory has had with Dewey's aesthetics. The problem lies in Dewey's latent organicism. To be sure, Dewey does not conceive of the work of art as a closed structure in the sense of the New Criticism in which the pressures of the literary context transform the ordinary linguistic material into an

autonomous and self-referential object. Instead, Dewey emphasizes the processual character of all experience, including aesthetic experience. Still, he faces the problem that he has to distinguish aesthetic experience from other forms of experience and to mark it as a distinct and unique experiential form. The fact that Dewey draws on organicist vocabulary in order to describe the distinctiveness and uniqueness of aesthetic experience reflects, in my view, not an organicist conviction on Dewey's part but a problem arising from his own insistence on the continuity between everyday experience and aesthetic experience. As a heightened, enhanced sense of ordinary experience, art functions as "development of traits that belong to every normally complete experience" (53).[2] Art gives unity to an experience not yet sufficiently clarified and coherent. Hence, the confirmation of wholeness must be the goal of interpretation: "analysis is disclosure of parts as parts of a whole" (314).

Still, the matter is more complicated than it may look at first sight. Richard Shusterman has reminded us in his book on *Pragmatist Aesthetics* that for Dewey aesthetic experience is not merely constituted by the perception of wholeness but by an experience of tension, a rhythm of conflict and adaptation: "The factor of resistance is worth especial notice at this point. Without internal tension there would be a fluid rush to a straightway mark; there would be nothing that could be called development and fulfillment" (143). It is thus not the gestalt perception of wholeness itself but the experience of development and growth generated by it which stands at the center of aesthetic experience for Dewey.

However, even if one grants that, at a closer look, Dewey's idea of wholeness is really that of a rhythmic processing of tension, resistance, and adaptation, it seems hard to deny the tacit normative dimension in this conceptualization of aesthetic experience: if there is tension, it is crucial that the experience and enactment of this experience follows a certain sequence or rhythm and that the conflicting elements are finally brought together and "consummated:" "There is an element of passion in all esthetic perception. Yet when we are overwhelmed by passion, as in extreme rage, fear, jealousy, the experience is definitely non-esthetic. … The material of the experience lacks elements of balance and proportion" (55). There clearly is an ideal of successful integration at work here that lies at the bottom of Dewey's view of aesthetic experience. In fact, there has to be. If aesthetic experience clarifies ordinary experience, then one has to be able to recognize it as such, and since all experience is characterized by processes of resistance and adaptation, doing and undergoing, there must be a criterion of intensity or successful integration in order to distinguish aesthetic experience from other experiences. The case can be illustrated by going back to the example of the Manhattan skyline where mere multiplicity leads to confusion: "Still another [man], who

2 Dewey adds: "This fact I take to be the only secure basis upon which esthetic theory can be built" (53).

is taking the journey for the first time, looks eagerly but is bewildered by the multiplicity of objects spread out to view. He *sees* neither the whole nor the parts; he is like a layman who goes into an unfamiliar factory where many machines are plying" (140). In contrast, the object becomes an aesthetic object when the observer sees the single aspects in relation to one another, to the sky and to the river: "He is now seeing aesthetically, as a painter might see" (140). For this second observer, the single parts cohere and form an image which provides the basis for an aesthetic experience.[3]

II.

In contrast to Dewey's vision of identity and successful integration, almost all approaches in contemporary literary and Cultural Studies, including critical forms of negative aesthetics, are based on the idea of non-identity. In the current cultural radicalism, this non-identity is attributed to elements such as writing, rhetoric or representation,[4] whereas Iser considers the fictional dimension of the literary text or aesthetic object as the primary source of non-identity. He therefore links the concept of the aesthetic with that of fictionality in order to describe the specific nature of aesthetic experience. In Iser's version, aesthetic experience is no longer attributed to the intensity and unity of experience but to "the doubling structure of fictionality" (*Prospecting* 236). Since fiction is an invention, it brings something into the world that does not yet exist in this particular form. Although fiction makes use of existing forms of the life-world for the purpose of representation, it thus cannot be identical with reality.

When a text or an object is considered as fiction, we cannot regard the object simply in referential terms, because in reading a fictional text, even a realistic novel, reality is created anew. Since we have never met a character named Huck Finn and do in fact know that he never existed, we have to come up with our own mental image of him.[5] Inevitably, this mental construct

3 For Dewey, the successful integration of parts can become a metaphor for the successful integration of the individual into society: "A work of art elicits and accentuates this quality of being a whole and of belonging to the larger, all-inclusive, whole which is the universe in which we live. … This whole is then felt as an expansion of ourselves. For only one frustrated in a particular object of desire upon which he had staked himself, like Macbeth, finds that life is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing. Where egotism is not made the measure of reality and value, we are citizens of this vast world beyond ourselves, and any intense realization of its presence with and in us brings a peculiarly satisfying sense of unity in itself and with ourselves" (199).

4 For an analysis of the dominant themes and arguments of the current cultural radicalism, cf. my analysis in "The Humanities in the Age of Expressive Individualism and Cultural Radicalism."

5 For a more extended version of this argument, see my essay "The Role of the Reader

will draw on our own feelings and associations, or, to use a broader, more comprehensive term, our imaginary. These imaginary elements can only gain a gestalt, however, if they are connected with discourses of the real. Thus, a fictive character like Huck Finn emerges as combination of a bad boy-discourse and our imaginary additions to it.[6] If it weren't for the bad boy-discourse, there would be no reference and hence no object that can be commonly shared and discussed, while, on the other hand, the imaginary elements are the reason for the puzzling and often frustrating phenomenon that we can come up with ever new interpretations of one and the same aesthetic object – interpretations that are, in fact, not only different from those of other critics but also from our own prior readings.

As Iser has argued, literary representation is not a form of mimesis but a performative act. The double reference of fiction creates an object that is never stable and identical with itself. And it is this non-identity that can be seen as an important source of aesthetic experience, because it allows us to do two things at the same time: to articulate imaginary elements and to look at them from the outside with a certain amount of distance. As a result of the doubling structure of fictionality, we are, in Iser's words, "both ourselves and someone else at the same time:"

> In this respect the required activity of the recipient resembles that of an actor, who in order to perform his role must use his thoughts, his feelings, and even his body as an analogue for representing something he is not. In order to produce the determinate form of an unreal character, the actor must allow his own reality to fade out. At the same time, however, he does not know precisely who, say, Hamlet is, for one cannot properly identify a character who has never existed. Thus role-playing endows a figment with a sense of reality in spite of its impenetrability which defies total determination. … Staging oneself as someone else is a source of aesthetic pleasure; it is also the means whereby representation is transferred from text to reader (*Prospecting* 244).

Staging oneself as somebody else, so that we are ourselves and yet also another person at the same time: the theoretical challenge that arises from this description of aesthetic experience is how we can talk about that part which we bring to the transfer between aesthetic object and recipient. Iser solves the problem by the assumption of an anthropological lack, a search for origins, which allows him to talk about the recipient in terms of universal human needs and to remain on the level of such abstract concepts as the indeterminacy of human existence or the insurmountable finiteness of man.[7]

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and the Changing Functions of Literature," reprinted in this volume under the title "Why We Need Fiction."

6 In his entry on "representation" in the handbook *Critical Terms for Literary Study,* W.J.T. Mitchell speaks of "the complex interaction between playful fantasy and serious reality in all forms of representation" (12).

7 For a closer analysis of Iser's work, see my essay "The Search for Distance: Negation and Negativity in the Literary Theory of Wolfgang Iser."

But are all our aesthetic experiences reenacting the same search for knowledge of an inaccessible origin or end? Even if this were the case, this diffuse longing for self-awareness is obviously articulated in historically, culturally, and psychologically different and diverse ways – as the reception history of any art object or fictional text demonstrates. In order to grasp this subjective dimension, Gabriele Schwab has tried to address the question of emotional and psychological subject-structures more concretely in her book *The Mirror and the Killer-Queen. Otherness in Literary Language*. Schwab, too, takes her point of departure from a "double movement" of the reader:

> If we understand readings as a negotiation across cultural and historical boundaries and a form of making contact with otherness, then we perceive a double movement toward the culture of the text/play and back to the culture of the reader. As readers of Shakespeare, for example, we usually do not try to become an Elizabethan …, but rather to encounter in the otherness of Elizabethan culture something to which we respond and may import into our own culture or our own selves (*Mirror* 4-5).[8]

Why and how do we respond to Shakespeare's plays? Schwab tries to provide an answer by replacing the Iserian model of a transfer between text and reader with the psychoanalytical notion of transference. By doing so, her theory of reading as a form of cultural contact can point to psychic and emotional dimensions that are certainly part of any aesthetic experience. Iser describes our encounter with an aesthetic object as a cognitive and ideational activity. In contrast, Schwab wants to take into account our – often strong – emotional involvement by describing reading as an act of transference of the internal otherness of the unconscious. Whatever is repressed from consciousness will be perceived as other and will thus determine our relation to the otherness of the aesthetic object. How can we talk about this dimension, however, since it appears to be a highly individual, idiosyncratic dimension of the interiority of a person that is hidden from view even to the person itself?

Schwab's answer consists in a generalization that characterizes much of the current cultural radicalism: the projection of "internal otherness" into whole cultures, nations, or groups.[9] Since we are part of the same culture

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8 See also Schwab's description of the tension between otherness and familiarity in the reading process: "In general, changes are often provoked by encounters with otherness that challenge familiar assumptions or open up new perspectives. Literature, however, requires a specific dynamic between familiarity and otherness, or closeness and distance, in order to affect readers. The old cliché that we 'find ourselves' in literature refers to the fact that unless literature resonates with us we remain cold to it. On the other hand, complete familiarity would never engage our interest but leave us equally indifferent" (*Mirror* 10).

9 This attempt to account for a subjective dimension in aesthetic experience in terms of a collective psychic structure is even more obvious in Schwab's essay "Literary Transcendence and the Vicissitudes of Culture," where she first speaks of a "structural unconscious" (124) and then of a "cultural unconscious" (125) which is used, as she finally points out in a footnote, "as a cultural equivalent of Jameson's notion of the political unconscious" (138n).

or subculture, we are linked to the writer or to other readers by the same configuration and phantasms of internal otherness. But, again, this raises the question of the individual dimension of the reception process. Although we may be formed, or rather: deformed, by similar configurations of a socially or culturally produced internal otherness, we nevertheless come up with surprisingly different and varied experiences and interpretations of one and the same text or object.[10] No matter how effective the configuration of a subject-position may be in a fictive text: because of the non-identity of the fictional world and the ensuing need to bring it to life through a mental construct of our own, there always exists an individual difference in realization and, hence, in aesthetic experience.[11]

What is the source of this difference and how can it be described? So far, my argument has been that, as a result of the doubling structure of fictionality, literary representation – here taken as model for other aesthetic objects as well – can be seen as a performative act. By representing reality in a fictional mode, the literary text restructures reality so that certain elements are bracketed and others foregrounded. This act is repeated by the recipient in the act of reception. In this reception, the recipient produces a second narrative that constitutes, in fact, a second text. Mark Twain faced the problem of racial relations and one of his responses was to redefine the issue in terms of the moral struggle in chapter 31 of his novel *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Lionel Trilling in turn experienced this scene as especially meaningful, because he saw it in (and transformed it into) categories that reflected his own struggle for independence against a Stalinist Left.[12] Such a redescription should not be seen as solipsism, however. On the contrary, it is the beginning of an act of articulation that makes Trilling's experiences intersubjectively accessible. The prospect that other texts can enable us to articulate and authorize our own need for articulation drives us back, again and again, to fictional material. It also makes us interpret and redescribe these texts again and again in order to assess how plausible the analogue is and whether it can be shared.

10 In response to recent theories in which the reader or spectator is conceptualized as an effect of discursive regimes, Appleyard thus maintains: "Against this objection I would argue that although the culture and its system of meaning are certainly prior to the reader in a historical and epistemological sense, nonetheless the construction of any particular meaning (and hence the incremental restructuring of the culture) requires an interaction between an individual reader and the culture" (15-6).

11 This is not to reject analyses of aesthetic objects in terms of internal otherness but to point to their limits. Clearly, in constructing imaginary worlds, we draw on an existent cultural imaginary but this cannot fully explain the meaning such images or stereotypes hold for the indvidual reader and the function they have for him or her.

12 For a convincing analysis of Trilling's reading of *Huck Finn,* see Jonathan Arac's study *'Huckleberry Finn' as Idol and Target. The Functions of Criticism in Our Time.*

III.

As I have argued so far, aesthetic experience is generated by two steps: 1) An aesthetic object is created by taking a certain attitude toward the object in which its non-identity is foregrounded; 2) This non-identity, in turn, creates the necessity of a transfer that becomes the basis for articulating otherwise inexpressible dimensions of the self and permits us to stage ourselves as somebody else, so that we can be ourselves and another person at the same time. In this way, hitherto inarticulated imaginary elements can gain a gestalt and open themselves up for inspection. However, can this explanation also be applied to our perception and experience of an image, since the model is based on the necessity to mentally construct an object which pictorial representation does not seem to require? It is at this point that we have to distinguish between two forms of images: mental constructs, for example of the literary character Huck Finn, and pictures. The image as mental construct plays an important part in aesthetic experience because it is crucial for making the letters on the page come to life. A picture appears to displace such a mental activity by mere optical perception, as Iser points out in *The Act of Reading:*

> The image, then, is basic to ideation. It relates to the nongiven or to the absent, endowing it with presence. … "It is not a piece of mental equipment in consciousness but a way in which consciousness opens itself to the object, prefiguring it from deep within itself as a function of its implicit knowledge." This strange quality of the image becomes apparent when, for instance, one sees the film version of a novel one has read. Here we have an optical perception which takes place against the background of our own remembered images. As often as not, the spontaneous reaction is one of disappointment, because the characters somehow fail to live up to the image we had created of them while reading. However much this image may vary from individual to individual, the reaction: "That's not how I imagined him" is a general one and reflects the special nature of the image. The difference between the two types of picture is that the film is optical and presents a given object, whereas the imagination remains unfettered. Objects, unlike imaginings, are highly determinate, and it is this determinacy which makes us feel disappointed (137-8).

Iser's contrast of the indeterminacy of literary representation with the determinacy of film appears plausible as soon as we distinguish between the image as mental construct and the image as pictorial representation. On the basis of this distinction, Iser's claim that determinacy undermines aesthetic experience seems to make sense insofar as the picture precedes mental construction: before we can even begin to form a mental construction we have already seen the image we are supposed to construct. But what do we actually see when we look at pictures? Gestalt theory and, more recently, constructivism have refuted naive empiricist notions of perception as the mere transfer of sense impressions. In order to make any sense of what we see, in fact, in order to register an object as object, our perception has to have a

focus that gives structure to the object. Landscape painting provides an obvious example. Not every piece of nature is a landscape. Rather, in order to qualify as landscape, certain iconographic and cultural object criteria have to be fulfilled. In other words, we do not first register and then interpret what we see. Quite on the contrary, we already interpret what we see in the act of registering it.

Where does the model come from that is at work in this registering-as-interpretation? In cognition theory, schemata help us to order a bewildering array of sense impressions, so that what we are transferring to the image is a set of cognitive structures that successfully affirm their functionality as classifying schemata: "To recognize an object or event is to possess a schema for it and to have a procedure for judging it a member of some class" (Bordwell 146). In his book *Making Meaning*, Bordwell refines this model by claiming that meaning is created by the projection of semantic structures onto an object. However, theories of cognition and picture comprehension can only explain why pictures are intelligible, not why they might provide an aesthetic experience. To be sure, picture comprehension depends on the recognition of the iconic dimension of the sign, but recognition is not yet the same as meaning making and certainly not identical with aesthetic experience. Hence, Vivian Sobchack claims, vision is meaningless, "if we regard it only in its objective modality as visibility" (290). We must acknowledge subjective experience and the invisible as part of our vision – that part which does not "appear" to us, "but which grounds vision and gives the visible within it a substantial thickness and dimension" (290).

In comparison with literary representation, pictorial representation may appear determinate, but this apparent determinacy is deceptive. As Sobchack argues in her phenomenological study of film experience, we make sense of a picture by mentally linking the visible and invisible:

> The back of the lamp is not absent. Rather, it is invisible. It exists in vision as that which cannot be presently seen but is yet available for seeing presently. It exists in vision as an *excess* of visibility. … The most forcefully felt "presence" of such invisibility in vision is, at one pole, the unseen world, the *off-screen space*, from which embodied vision prospects its sights and, at the other pole, the very enworlded eye/I, the *off-screen subject*, who enacts sight, revises vision, and perspectivally frames its work as a visible image (292).

Vision thus emerges in an interplay between the visible and the invisible:

> This is not presence and absence set in opposition one to the other, but a pervasion of each in the other. The visible extends itself into the visibly "absent" but existentially and experientially "present." And the invisible gives dimension to the visibly "present," thickening the seen with the world and the body-subject's *exorbitance*. The visible, then, does not reveal everything to perception (294-5).

This doubleness of perception is intensified in the perception of objects that we regard as aesthetic objects, because these objects invite us to emphasize

their non-identity and to reconstruct them anew as objects by means of our imagination. As long as we regard a picture as documentation or as representation of an object, we may assume that the object represented in the picture exists. When we see it as aesthetic object, on the other hand, the picture assumes the status of a fictional text. We may still assume that objects of this kind exist but we do not insist that there must be an object in the real world exactly like the one represented and that the representation must correspond truthfully to it. However, if we do not base our perception of the picture on the assumption of a real object that is merely to be recognized, then, even in looking at a picture, we have to construct the represented object mentally, just as we have to construct literary characters like Hamlet or Huck Finn in order to constitute them as objects of experience. This description of the act of seeing may appear counterintuitive at first sight (in contrast to similar descriptions of the act of reading or the attendance of a play). How is it possible to say that we have to construct an object in order to give it reality, although we see the object represented right before our eyes? Iser's example of the actor may be of help here, for the picture can be seen as equivalent of the actor in his argument. Like the picture, we also see the actor before our eyes and comprehend him, in many instances, as a familiar character whom we can easily identify as type. And yet, we do not really know him, because the character never existed in the real world, so that the typical or familiar aspects which help us to recognize and classify him, only become props for triggering our mental and imaginary activities.

IV.

The argument I have presented so far in order to extend my description of aesthetic experience to the perception/reception of pictorial images, may appear acceptable as a description of encounters with forms of pictorial representation that leave the viewer a certain degree of freedom in interpretation, such as paintings, art photography or the art film. But what about popular forms of pictorial representation such as the classical Hollywood film that have been described as ideologically especially effective forms of subject formation, based on the illusion of a referential transparency that makes ideology "invisible?" For the current cultural radicalism this description of subject positioning has become a welcome explanation of how the political system creates (interpellates) subjects that are not aware of what is happening to them, because the cinematic apparatus, which places the spectator in the illusory position of an all-seeing, transcendental subject, reenacts a crucial aspect of subject formation, the misrecognition of the mirror phase described by Lacan.[13] The powerful effect of the classical Hollywood film thus results

13 Classical accounts of apparatus-theory can be found in Jean-Louis Baudry, "Ideological

from the fact that it constantly assures the spectator that "the imaginary unity of the mirror stage remains intact in face of the division and lack inscribed in the symbolic order" (Mayne 44).

Feminist critics such as Laura Mulvey have extended this theory in order to understand the construction of the subject in patriarchy.[14] In both cases, apparatus theory and its feminist appropriation, the classical Hollywood film is seen as an especially effective form of interpellation, that is, of creating an (illusory) subject effect in the spectator by making the spectator reenact the experience of mirror misrecognition and dispelling the psychic traumas of the formation of the male subject through voyeurism and fetishism. Seen this way, the cinematic image is ideological by definition. The ideological effect no longer resides in the content of the film, but in its cinematic mode of representation – its implied spectator position, its "transparent" images and its characteristic forms of narration and editing. Because this mode of representation has proven especially effective, the classical Hollywood cinema is seen not only as a model of how ideology works in Western political systems, but it also illustrates the centrality of vision in the subjection of the self in Western societies, so that certain, culturally dominant perceptions and forms of signification become equated with ideology.[15]

Is there room in such an account of the act of seeing for the second narrative? If we look at an actress like Rita Hayworth in a movie like *Gilda*, our point of view as omniscient, "transcendental" spectator and the powerful image of femininity evoked by Hayworth appear to be designed to reaffirm a certain (male) identity and hence to predetermine our reception. However, even in this case the female appearance we see on film is presented by an actress who incorporates somebody whom we do not know and whom we therefore have to mentally construct and reconstruct as a character in the course of watching the film. In order to do this, we have to draw on our own imaginary, our own associations, emotions, and desires. Consequently, in the various interpretations of a film like *Gilda*, we encounter a number of different versions of Gilda, although these different Gildas always refer to the physically unmistakable appearance of the same woman, played by Rita

Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus," and Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema.*

14 See her seminal essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," reprinted in her essay collection *Visual and Other Pleasures*, in which Mulvey uses "Freud's theories of the instincts and ego identification to understand how the classical cinema encourages a re-enactment of psychic trauma with the subsequent reassurance that the threat – usually women and/or castration in one form or another – has been dispelled" (Mayne 23).

15 Cf. Richard Allen's summary of the argument: "Cinema is a form of signification that creates the appearance of a knowable reality and hence confirms the self-definition of the human subject as someone capable of knowing that reality; but in fact both reality and the human subject who appears capable of knowing that reality are 'effects' of a process of signification" (2).

Hayworth. We do not only encounter this phenomenon in interpretations of film critics, however. It is part of any viewing experience. There is always, in viewing the film, a *Gilda*-narrative and there is a second narrative, a Winfried Fluck-meets-the-film-*Gilda* narrative, or a Richard Dyer-meets-*Gilda* narrative, or a Laura Mulvey-meets-*Gilda* narrative that provides the basis for the transformation of the pictorial representation into an aesthetic experience.

For apparatus-theory and its feminist appropriation there exists no second narrative in any relevant sense. The whole point of the theory is to argue that what the spectator considers as his encounter with the film is, in effect, determined by apparatus-specific psychic mechanisms and hence scripted for him. The Winfried Fluck I am referring to is a heterosexual male and his imaginary encounter with the figure of Gilda will thus be written along certain gender lines: his identification with the camera perspective will give him a sense of power over the represented object, it will reconfirm his shaky masculinity by putting him in a position of visual control over the woman. It is possible that her appearance may signal to him the lack of the phallus and may thus create an anxiety of castration, but at the same time, he can fight this fear of castration by submitting the representation of the woman to voyeuristic or fetishistic visual pleasure and by seeing her punished in the end. However, whatever his voyeuristic pleasures may be, the second narrative is not his. It is the effect of a form of subject constitution along gender lines that, on the other hand, also puts Laura Mulvey's encounter with the figure of Gilda into all kinds of problems because she basically only has two options, "masochism in her identification with her place as object in the patriarchal order" (Stacey 133-4) or narcissist identification with the woman as lack, as an object of the male gaze. In both cases, the second narrative is scripted for her. A gay viewer, in fact, might have the best deal in this case. He can indulge in the significatory excess of the representation of Gilda by Rita Hayworth and can see it as a sign of resistance, as Richard Dyer has done.[16] However, this is already a reception that goes beyond the spectator positions described by apparatus theory.

I have introduced apparatus theory here as the most influential manifestation of the current cultural radicalism's description of the cinematic image as fundamental illusion upon which subjectivity (and, by implication: the aesthetic experience of the image) is based. Apparatus theory agrees that aesthetic pleasure and aesthetic experience are not merely effects of the image itself but of the reception of the image; however, this act of reception is reconceptualized as being determined by a spectator/subject position inscribed into the text. Hence, instead of opening up a space for resistance, negotiation, or, possibly, even transformation, reception becomes the site where the ideological effect takes hold almost imperceptively and, therefore, most effectively. We are here, in effect, at the other end of Dewey's description of

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16 See Dyer's essay "Resistance Through Charisma: Rita Hayworth and *Gilda*."

aesthetic experience. Aesthetic pleasure does not emerge from the successful transfer of a particular attitude onto an object but as effect of a male unconscious that is constituted by sexual difference. In methodological terms, this is the equivalent of the psychoanalytic theory of transference on which we touched earlier, the transference of internal otherness onto aesthetic objects, so that the object of visual pleasure becomes an imaginary signifier for the male other.

However, one should add that a growing number of revisions of apparatus-theory, both from within and from outside the theory, have emerged in the last twenty years.[17] There are new empirical studies on cognition and image comprehension,[18] there is a lot of Cultural Studies work on audience research that distinguishes between textually inscribed spectatorial positions and the actual conditions of reception, between the theoretically constructed spectator and the historically and socially situated viewer, and emphasizes the complex, often ambivalent negotiations taking place between the two.[19] There is also by now a long list of feminist studies (such as discussions of

17 In her survey of theories of cinematic spectatorship, Judith Mayne discusses three approaches that have emerged from criticism of the apparatus model, "empirical approaches, which focus on the need to displace the 'subject' of apparatus theory and to study real people instead; historical approaches, which focus on specific forms spectatorship has taken rather than global definitions of the cinema as institution; and feminist approaches, which in foregrounding the female spectator examine the difference that gender makes" (7).

18 See, e.g., the summaries of Stephen Prince, "The Discourse of Pictures. Iconicity and Film Studies," and "Psychoanalytic Film Theory and the Problem of the Missing Spectator."

19 Jackie Stacey describes the starting assumption of this approach: "In addition to the general interest in how people make sense of popular culture, Cultural Studies work has emphazised the significance of the context of consumption. The focus on the viewing context has been important in so far as audiences, rather than being ahistorical fixed positions in texts, have been considered as people with social lives and domestic habits, whose readings of particular programmes would be shaped and influenced by social identities and cultural differences, such as gender, race and class" (36). Within this context, two different emphases can be distinguished. One, exemplified by Tom Gunning and Miriam Hansen, is to differentiate between various periods characterized by different modes of cinematic address and modes of exhibition, the other, represented, among others, by Janet Staiger, is to emphasize the enormous variety of reception in any given period: "Let me make the proposition that every period of history (and likely every place) witnesses several modes of cinematic address, several modes of exhibition, and several modes of reception" (Staiger 21). Staiger bases her case against psychoanalytic theories of spectatorship on the argument that they fail to grasp actual modes of reception which are dominated by contextual factors: "I believe that contextual factors more than textual ones, account for the experiences that spectators have watching films and television and for the uses to which those experiences are put in navigating our everyday lives" (1). Staiger's focus on the unpredictable willfulness of the spectator creates the obvious problem, however, of explaining the different degrees of appeal different movies have. Obviously, context alone cannot determine aesthetic experience.

the "woman's film" as a genre within the Hollywoood system that constructs spectator positions for women), which take their point of departure from the irritating fact that apparatus theory does not leave any space for the female spectator and then go beyond "the passive specularity of the woman, her objectification as spectacle by and for the masculine gaze" (Penley 50). Altogether, there is a growing dissatisfaction with the assumption of one general psychic structure and with the explanatory range of the term sexual difference so that Linda Williams can sum up the recent discussion by saying: "The monolithic subject positioned and conditioned by the text has proven much more socially and historically diverse than Metz, Baudry, Mulvey, or Wollen even allowed" (57).[20]

What these different revisions of apparatus theory and its reappropriation by feminist film theory have in common is the insistence that the cinematically inscribed spectator position cannot determine the second narrative. The point is not that the various versions of apparatus theory cannot grasp important aspects of the voyeuristic and fetishist dimension of watching movies; the point is that they cannot explain the range of experiences and interpretations that take place within and beyond this dimension. Even where spectators may share unconscious dispositions as members of the same culture, class or social group, they may show entirely different responses to what they have seen, just as, on the other side, critics may share basic theoretical assumptions and concepts and may nevertheless arrive at entirely different interpretations of an aesthetic object, as Bordwell notes: "Two psychoanalytic critics might agree on every tenet of abstract doctrine and still produce disparate interpretations" (5). The reason for this divergence is that, inevitably, these critics use the aesthetic object to inscribe their own second

20 There is also a growing tendency to salvage the psychoanalytic approach "from within" by dissociating Lacan from Althusser. James Donald, for example, in his essay "On the Threshold: Psychoanalysis and Cultural Studies," claims that the Althusserian/Lacanians "underestimated the structural resistance to identity …, the splitting of the ego and the inevitable mismatch of subject and culture that were the Lacanian contribution to Althusser's theory – not to mention those aspects of subjectivity 'beyond interpellation' that Althusser himself left out of account" (6). In her essay "*Underworld USA*: Psychoanalysis and Film Theory in the 1980s," Elizabeth Cowie argues that Lacanian psychoanalysis continues to be useful as a theory of human subjectivity and as a description of the construction of subject positions in relation to film, but no longer as a theory of ideology, because of, as Donald puts it in the same volume, ideology's failure "ever to get the full measure of subjectivity" (5). Thus, in contrast to Althusser, the starting premise is not the complete success of ideology, but its continuous and inevitable failure: "Now, in contrast to that claim that ideology can get the measure of subjectivity, the key question for any cultural theory (including psychoanalysis and/or Cultural Studies) is the *failure* of ideology" (7). The interesting question raised by these and similar arguments is whether and to what extent Lacan's work can survive without Althusser, or, to put it differently, whether it can teach us more than "to accept the impossibility of the perfection or completion of either subjectivity or of culture" (8).

narrative into the interpretation of the object, so that, in fact, psychoanalytic theory must be seen as another narrative itself and provides only one narrative among others for interpretation. This is not really so surprising in view of the fact that psychoanalytic theory, for example in the form of a Lacanian theory of subject formation, does not present a final, authoritative insight into the nature of subject formation but a cultural narrative that bears the imprint of its time and particular situational contexts. In her book on *The Self and Its Pleasure. Bataille, Lacan, and the History of the Decentered Subject*, Carolyn Dean has presented an exemplary analysis of how the self is constantly replotted and "why one story was told about the self" at certain times and not another (8). In focusing on how French medicine, psychoanalysis, and surrealism tried to rehabilitate the deviant in the interwar years with the goal of revitalizing society, Dean demonstrates in detail how these deviant others came to symbolize the structure of the unconscious, that is, our "real" self.[21] More recent descriptions have continued this replotting according to changing cultural, political, and also personal needs.[22]

For example, Laura Mulvey's highly influential essay on "Visual Pleasure and Narrative" was written, as she herself points out, as a justification of the political avantgarde filmmaker Mulvey who looked for a theory that might be able to challenge the commercial cinema of the past (14). In order to achieve this, her essay aims at the destruction of aesthetic pleasure: "It is said that analysing pleasure, or beauty, destroys it. That is the intention of this article. The satisfaction and reinforcement of the ego that represents the high point of film history must be attacked" (16). Mulvey's follow-up essay "Afterthoughts," on the other hand, qualifies her prior version of, as she calls it, "the undifferentiated spectator of 'Visual Pleasure'," (30) by addressing

21 Cf. Dean: "The psychotic is thus a metaphor for what is impossible, unknowable, and yet most true about the self: what Lacan calls the other par excellence – the real" (118).

22 The "rediscovery" of Lacan by Althusser is inseparable from the usefulness which Lacan's theory of subject formation as misrecognition had for the revision of a Marxist concept of ideology as false consciousness and its redescription as a form of subject positioning. This revision provided the ideal answer to the vexing question why the working-class, the "revolutionary subject," ignored the New Left's analysis and refused to revolt against capitalism. By drawing on Lacan and locating the ideological effect already in the formation of subjectivity, cultural radicalism can provide an explanation why the subject freely accepts his subjection and can, in fact, argue, that it is exactly the illusion of autonomy which explains the efficacy of the ideological effect. There is no need of manipulation on the side of the system, because the subject, acting in the illusion that he is a self-conscious being and hence a free, autonomous agent, voluntarily accepts his own subjection. Thus, the "class struggle against bourgeois ideology could never take hold because there would be no possibility of the subject recognizing and resisting the hold of ideology over him" (Allen 13). Obviously, this theory is tailor-made for the needs of a critical intelligentsia on the Left, for the only revolutionary practice that remains is that of "critical theory," which is to lead the fight against what Althusser calls the empiricist conception of knowledge.

two questions which she shelved (or should one say, repressed?) as an issue in the "Visual Pleasure"-essay: the "persistent question 'what about the women in the audience?'" (29) and, even more interestingly, her own love of Hollywood melodrama.[23] Consequently, in her interpretation of King Vidor's film *Duel in the Sun,* Mulvey now looks for possibilities of trans-sex identification and describes a female spectator who "is much more than a simply alienated one" (Penley 384n.) – recovering, somewhat belatedly, an awareness that, precisely of the non-identity of the fictional text, it is one of the possibilities opened up by aesthetic experience that one does not *have* to identify along gender, class, or racial lines. Thus, Mulvey's redescription of the aesthetic object allows her to describe the classical Hollywood film in a new, more differentiated way and to grant a space for aesthetic pleasure.

But the story goes on. In a later essay, "Changes: Thoughts on Myth, Narrative and Historical Experience," also reprinted in the volume *Visual and Other Pleasures*, Mulvey looks back at her earlier work from the perspective of the political disappointments of the 1980s and attempts a reorientation that might help her to preserve her status as an avantgarde critic. From this point of view, the binary modes of thought of her earlier analysis are now reevaluated: "There is a sense in which this argument, important as it is for analysing the existing state of things, hinders the possibility of change and remains caught ultimately within its own dualistic terms. The polarisation only allows an 'either/or'. As the two terms (masculine/feminine, voyeuristic/exhibitionist, active/passive) remain dependent on each other for meaning, their only possible movement is into inversion. They cannot be shifted easily into a new phase or new significance. There can be no space in between or space outside such a pairing" (162). In search of such a space, Mulvey begins to theorize about "a possible dialectical relationship" between oppositions and arrives at a new kind of exemplary aesthetic object, collective cultural events that represents a

> shared, social dimension of the unconscious of the kind that Freud referred to in *Jokes and the Unconscious,* which erupts symptomatically in popular culture, whether folktales, carnival or the movies. … If narrative, with the help of avant-garde principle, can be conceived around ending that is not closure, and the state of liminality as politically significant, it can question the symbolic, and enable myths and symbols to be constantly revalued (175).[24]

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23 The essay's full title is "Afterthoughts on 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' inspired by King Vidor's *Duel in the Sun* (1946)."

24 In her essay "The Oedipus Myth: Beyond the Riddles of the Sphinx," Mulvey points out, predictably, "how marginal the feminine is to the story" but then continues: "However, the story's narrative structure and the importance of investigation and telling in the story itself offers a Utopian promise, a pointer towards the transformative power of telling one's own story and the social function of popular culture as the narrativisation of collective fantasy" (*Visual* 199). See also Mulvey's essay "Americanitis: European Intellectuals and Hollywood Melodrama," in which she writes: "As a

Whatever one may think of these arguments: the reason why I refer to them here is that they are exemplary, not necessarily in their theoretical plausibility, but in the continuous redescription of the object of analysis (and, by implication, of the aesthetic experience the image provides). This continuous redescription grows out of the necessity to readapt the object to changing needs that do not only reflect historical contexts but also individual responses to them.[25] Or, to put it differently: there is always a second narrative, and this second narrative constitutes a new aesthetic object.

V.

No less so than in the case of literature, although with different modalities, the aesthetic experience of the image, including pictures and motion pictures, is one in which non-identity and doubleness are constitutive. The visual text may contain an inscribed spectator position, but that does not mean that the spectator is not also active in ways which reflect the appropriation of the picture for the articulation of a second narrative. One should be quite clear about the source of this activity. It does not lie primarily in the oppositional resourcefulness of certain groups or reception practices, although these may certainly intensify the activity. It emerges as logical consequence from the

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tentative working concept, the term 'collective fantasy' gathers together these strands of story telling and spectacle in popular cinema. These cultural symptoms can neither be contained within the concept of ideology nor understood as a reflective theory of historical representation" (*Fetishism* 26). The movement, it seems, leads from Lacan back to Freud: "Some aspects of a society's cultural production can be deciphered as symptomatic. These mythologies, images, scenarios, iconographies and so on bear witness to those aspects of social formations that are subject to censorship and repression, near to the taboos and phobias or erotic subcultures that necessarily comprise the underworld of human life. And it is these aspects of popular culture that psychoanalytic criticism focuses on, identifying and attempting to decipher and trace their symptomatic status" (27). The move from Lacan back to Freud is also noticeable in Cowie's essay on *Underworld USA*: "In one sense, however, psychoanalysis *is* thus a metapsychology for cinema, in so far as it is a theory of human subjectivity and hence can describe the construction of subject positions in relation to film. But the role of psychoanalysis as a metapsychology has undergone important changes. Its theory of the subject is of a subject which is divided – the division of conscious and unconscious which was Freud's first discovery in psychoanalysis, the division of ego/super-ego/id, and the divisions involved in the very emergence of the super-ego – those various identifications internalised by the ego. Lacan's work has only clarified and extended Freud's theories in this respect" (135).

25 Judith Mayne grasps an important aspect of this individual response when she writes: "The danger in theories of female spectatorship is the potential romanticization of the female viewer: feminist critics may well be projecting their own desires to define their prefeminist investment in the movies as something 'positive,' or at least as not completely under the sway of dominant ideology" (92).

need to construe the object as an aesthetic object. Even where we try to remain true to the text's intentionality, we have to construct it mentally and thereby invest it with our own associations, emotions, and desires. Inevitably, the realization of the fictive world of the aesthetic object has its source in me. The result is a double state of mind: "we both identify ourselves with the characters, incidents, and themes of the work, but also keep them at a safe distance …." (Appleyard 39). We indulge in a temporary abandonment to the image and yet also take up the evaluative attitude of the onlooker. We become participant and observer at the same time. Or, to put it differently, we can be both object and subject of the act of seeing.

This double state of mind has significant consequences for the spectator, including that of the classical Hollywood movie. To start with, there is no stable, monofocal identification. We can take up multiple identificatory positions. There is the possibility of "identification based on difference and identification based on similarity" (Stacey 171). While there are masculine and feminine spectator positions, viewers do not have to assume these positions according to their assigned genders.[26] There are multiple and shifting points of entry for the spectator and there are unexpected crossover identifications. Moreover, we may identify with characters at one point but distance ourselves in the next when they act against our expectations. In its attempt to explain the powerful effect of the cinematic image, apparatus theory stresses the passivity of the spectator, whereas the actual experience of watching movies is one of moving in and out of characters, switching sides and sympathies, getting angry or disappointed with characters or plots (which we usually express by calling a film "unrealistic").[27] There is, altogether, a constant readjustment in response to the film and the way it affects us. The pleasure of fantasy, and also of the movies, is, as Judith Mayne has pointed out, that

26 Cf. Mayne's critique of Mulvey: "Laura Mulvey's theory of 'visual pleasure,' for instance, is based on the assumption that the male protagonist of a film provides a vehicle for identification on the part of the male spectator. Two further assumptions are implicit here – one, that identification in the cinema does proceed primarily in terms of individuals in the audience and characters projected on screen; two, that identification is literal, at least according to dominant cultural conventions, so that men identify with male characters, women with female characters, and so on" (26). Already in 1984, Teresa de Lauretis wrote: "The analogy that links identification-with-the-look to masculinity and identification-with-the-image to femininity breaks down precisely when we think of a spectator alternating between the two" (142-3).

27 Vivian Sobchack emphasizes these moments of "divergence:" "Although Baudry and Metz describe those moments of the film experience in which we 'forget ourselves' in our interest in another's vision of the world, they neglect those moments in which we grasp ourselves in the recognition that our vision differs from that of the other" (276). "With every film we engage, we experience moments of divergence and rupture and moments of convergence and rapture" (286). In fact, it is in "moments of disjuncture and divergence that the film reveals itself most obviously to the spectator as an 'other's' intentional consciousness at work" (285).

we do not "necessarily identify in any fixed way with a character, a gaze, or a particular position, but rather with a series of oscillating positions" so that the pleasures of watching a movie are also the pleasures of mobility, of moving around among a range of different desiring positions" (Williams 57).[28]

Vivian Sobchack has described this activity in phenomenological terms in her attempt to understand filmic experience as an "embodied experience I live as 'mine'" (xvi). In objection to a description of the spectator as motionless and passive, she points out:

> … as we all know from our own experience of being viewers as well as of being visible, spectators are always in motion. Embodied beings are always active, no matter how "passive" they may be perceived from without. My vision is as active as the film's. What the film is doing visibly, I am doing visually. In the specificity of its prereflective spatial situation and reflective temporal consciousness, my lived-body experience informs how and what I see, and I do not merely "receive" the film's vision *as* my own, but I "take" it up *in* my own, and as an *addition* to my own (271).

The power of images to guide and sometimes overwhelm our perception misleads us into a conceptualization of the act of seeing as passive reception: "Thus, although generally I appear to be a polite visual 'listener' who seldom visibly and audibly interrupts or argues with my invited guest's narrative unless I am encouraged to do so by the form of her discourse; I am nonetheless actively engaged in an invisible and inaudible comparison of the guest's experience and performance with my own" (272). The equivalent of what I have called second narrative in interpretation is an ongoing inner speech in reception.

For Sobchack, the filmic experience is dialectical and dialogic: "As my interest in my guest's narrative or argument increases, the intentional direction and terminus of my consciousness locates itself there, in *what* the guest sees. I am, however, not really *where* my guest sees. I still and always am embodied Here" (272). Consequently, film is used in a parasitic way, inscribing one's own second narrative into the aesthetic object:

> The spectator lives through a vision that is uniquely her own even if it is invisible from without, and the film has a material and situated body even if it is invisible from within. In a full description of vision in the film experience, as elsewhere, the introceptive and

28 See also Jackie Stacey's summary: "Having outlined the different forms of identification in spectator/star relations, it is now important to reconsider some of the earlier models of identification and spectatorship in the light of this research. First, the *diversity* of the processes of identification and desire evident in these examples is striking. Within psychoanalytic film theory, the multiplicity of its formations in relation to the cinema have been ignored. The idea of a singular process of identification, so often assumed in psychoanalytic film theory, is unsatisfactory, and indeed reductive in the light of the range of processes discussed above" (170-1). The problem is not really solved by the acknowledgment of "multiple differences" along the lines of race, class, and gender studies, because such an acknowledgement only shifts the assumption of a common subject position to another level.

> invisible aspects of subjective embodiment cannot be overlooked – even if they cannot objectively be seen. … The cinema, then, is an astonishing phenomenon. Enabled by its mechanical and technological body, each film projects and makes uniquely visible not only the objective world but the very structure and process of subjective, embodied vision – hitherto only directly available to human beings as the invisible and private structure we each experience as "my own" (298).

VI.

My analysis of the aesthetic experience of the image has touched upon three major points: 1) An object is constituted as aesthetic object by taking a certain attitude toward it which foregrounds the object's referential non-identity. 2) The constitution of the object as aesthetic object depends on a transfer which is a crucial element of aesthetic experience. 3) This, in turn, raises the question of the nature of the transfer that constitutes the aesthetic object, a question that is of special theoretical interest with regards to pictorial representation, because the determinacy of pictorial representation seems to work against active mental constructions on the side of the recipient. However, Sobchack's argument opens up the possibility of characterizing the experience of watching a film as an interplay between visible and invisible elements by emphasizing "the invisible part of our vision – that part which does not 'appear' to us" (290) but forms an important part of the transfer through which we constitute the aesthetic object. Paradoxically enough, film may be especially effective in articulating imaginary elements, including different states of emotion, because its illusion of transparency invites us to attach such elements to images, which thereby come to represent something that is not "visible," but nevertheless "present." In watching a movie like *Gone With the Wind* after unification, for example, an East German viewer with her own personal history may draw on her own experiences of trauma and loss in order to make a fictive character like Scarlett O'Hara come to life and thus be strongly attracted by a movie which, on the surface, represents an entirely different world. This, in fact, provides an explanation for the special impact that pictorial representation – and especially film – have on us: they are wonderfully effective in mobilizing and articulating imaginary elements, from individual affect to trauma, and in hiding them, at the same time, behind the immediate experience of the image.

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