Subjectivity in the New Hollywood Cinema: Fathers, Sons and Other Ghosts

Vojkovic, S.

Citation for published version (APA):

General rights
It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

Disclaimer/Complaints regulations
If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: https://uba.uva.nl/en/contact, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.
Chapter 5

Eat Me, Drink Me, Territorialize me: Woman as the Negative Emblem of Différance
Soon her eye fell on a little glass box that was lying under the table: she opened it, and found in it a very small cake, on which the words “EAT ME” were beautifully marked in currants. “Well I’ll eat it, said Alice,” and if it makes me grow larger, I can reach the key; and if it makes me grow smaller, I can creep under the door: so either way I’ll get into the garden, and I don’t care which happens!”

Lewis Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland*

**Desire and Territorialism**

In the previous chapter the role of the cinematographic apparatus in the structuring of subjectivity was at issue. I argued that the technical basis of the apparatus in connection with the interlocking systems of narrativity, continuity and point of vision underscores cinema’s capacity to engage with the process of the unconscious. This inevitably brings to the fore the relationship between cinema and psychoanalysis. On the basis of the preceding analyses of new Hollywood films I have suggested that one of the characteristics of this type of cinema is that it mobilizes the techniques of the imaginary, simultaneously with the techniques of the symbolic. This means that it does not rely on the suppression of the differences and discontinuities that conditioned the subject-effect crucial for the ideological functioning of the cinematographic apparatus. The decomposition of the initial illusion or misrecognition which provides the basis for the impression of unified subjectivity has become the main theme, so to speak, of these filmic texts, and thus the (re)working of the symbolic order is manifested explicitly and overtly, rather than implicitly.¹

In addition I have demonstrated that the structuring of narrative is co-related to the reversal of the Oedipal structure. The specificity of this process of Oedipalization is that it produces the father, rather than the son. Instead of internalizing the authority of the father, the son has to recreate, that is, repair this authority. If, according to the psychoanalytic scenario, the son’s “destiny” is to take the father’s place, in Hollywood’s reversal of this scenario his destiny is to reinvent the father. I have suggested that the thematizing of the paternal authority can be brought to bear on Lacan’s notion of the Law-of-the-Father which governs the symbolic order. The fact that the father is no longer functioning implies that his
In this chapter I will suggest that the overall preoccupation with the genealogy of the subject and its simultaneous reconstruction is mapped as a form of territorialism. What this means is that even though the father is in a continuous process of reconstruction, the resolution of the crisis is still predicated on the phallocentricity of the symbolic order. I am basing the notion of territorialism as it is related to desire on Kaja Silverman’s discussions in *The Subject of Semiotics* and *The Threshold of the Visible World* (Silverman 1983; 1996). In the former work Silverman offers a critical account of Freud’s and Lacan’s concepts of the subject, and asserts that Freud’s and Lacan’s arguments are themselves congruent with phallocentricity for they “attempt to justify and naturalize the privileged position of the paternal within our culture” (Silverman, 1983: 131). In the latter work she takes the connection between desire and territorialism further and explores the ways colonization of idealization by the screen can be countered through, what she calls the “productive look.” The screen is that “repertoire of ideologically marked representations through which the members of a particular culture are visually defined and differentiated from one another” (Silverman, 1996: 244). Those subjects who dominate the screen are the subjects who are invested with ideality, who appear more desirable.

Territorialization of the subject is thus closely related to the territorialization of desire, and this is dependent on cultural mediation. In *The Subject of Semiotics* Silverman shows that cultural mediation already occurs at the pre-oedipal stage. Here, the infant’s body is prepared for the sexually differentiated scenarios into which it will later be inserted. The second stage occurs with the entry into the symbolic order and the acquisition of language. To put it briefly, the constitution of the subject through language is predicated on division - the subject acquires “meaning,” because it lets go of its “being.” The self-loss conditioned through the entry into the symbolic inspires in the subject a profound sense of lack. As a result, the subject not only learns to desire, but it also learns what to desire. Silverman argues that the structuring of desire as it is related with the desire of the Other, with the symbolic order which produces it, and ultimately with the family (where the Oedipal scenario is played out), is based on male subjectivity. This has profound repercussions on the constitution of the female subject - woman emerges
doubly territorialized, at both the anatomical and cultural levels.

“Phallus,” the term Lacan has introduced to designate all the values which are opposed to lack, sustains two radically different meanings, and as Silverman states, “neither of which at all points maintains its autonomy from the penis” (Silverman 1983: 183). While it signifies the “fullness of being,” it also refers to the cultural privileges and values “which define male subjectivity within patriarchal society, but from which the female subject remains isolated. [...]

She lacks lack and while signifying castration within the symbolic order she nonetheless continues to be the phallus” (186).iv

The desire of the Other, which in Lacan’s scenario leaves the woman in the position of Lack, need not be universal or absolute. According to Silverman, the Other can be conceptualized as historically and culturally specific.v In terms of new Hollywood cinema, as my analyses repeatedly show, the Other produced by the Symbolic Law of the Father exerts pressure on the male subject. Nevertheless, the male subject retains the central role in the structuring of the narrative implying that the structuring of subjectivity is cut to the measure of male desire. The territorializing tendency of the phallocentric symbolic order is still at work in the Hollywood films, but now, I would suggest, it is obscured by the repeated inscription of “trouble,” inadequacy, or lack onto the male subject.vi We are confronted again with a contradiction typical of new Hollywood: to repair the male subject who is incapable of functioning within the symbolic order, Hollywood cinema engages in a play with those discourses which criticize the phallocentric universe and territorialism.vii

**Selfless Colonizers?**

Silverman’s *The Subject of Semiotics* and *The Threshold of the Visible World* can be taken as examples of cultural critique which the new Hollywood films absorb and subvert for their own narrative-ideological purpose. In the latter work, Silverman makes the connection between desire and territorialism even more explicit, and complements the feminist concerns with colonial and postcolonial discourse. She draws on Frantz Fanon’s *Black Skins, White Masks*, and examines the consequences of the screen’s privileging the white male look. According to Silverman, the screen is a mediating agency and it intervenes between the gaze and the subject as spectacle. This
mediating agency most often aligns the gaze with the privileged (white male) look and as a result only certain subjects have access to a flattering image of self. Because our identifications must always be socially ratified, these are the images that inspire identification. There are subjects who do not enjoy such a privilege, and as Silverman asserts, “others have imposed upon them an image so deidealizing that no one would willingly identify with it” (29).

In the opening of the film *Innerspace*, however, we are confronted with deidealized images of the two leading (white) male characters. Tuck Pendleton is a self-conscious pilot and Jack Putter is a hypochondriac assistant manager of a supermarket. Jack’s miserable life spins around frequent medical check-ups and fears of not being able to “measure up.” He has recurring nightmares in which he fails to enter the correct prices into the cash register. Additionally, he is pursuing a relationship with a woman who only humiliates him. In contrast to Jack who is insecure and overly sensitive, Tuck is bursting with self-confidence. In spite of the fact that he behaves in a way completely opposed to Jack, Tuck is equally dysfunctional in his professional and personal life. After an evening in which he takes great pleasure in becoming drunk and insulting his colleagues and superiors, he is thrown out from an important reception. His girlfriend Lydia is the one last person who truly cares about him, but Tuck takes her for granted. She seems to have no other choice but to walk out him. It is clear from the outset that each man possesses exactly that which the other man lacks. Only when their forces are joined together can they produce a perfect man who is able to get the girlfriend back and secure his position within the symbolic universe of the father.

The co-operation between Tuck and Jack appears as a logical and urgent strategy. To reinstitute their place within the symbolic universe the male characters have joined forces. What is thematized here is the constitution of male subjectivity, particularly the division that inspires the sense of lack. The structure of desire according to which the intersubjective exchange between these characters is modeled is captured in the “authorization code “EATME.” Here recourse to *Alice in Wonderland* becomes useful. The little narrative where Alice can get into the garden insofar as she lets herself become bigger or smaller can in itself be perceived as a structure of desire. The terms of exchange are clearly spelled out
by the Other, or rather by that authority who controls the entry into
the garden. To come to terms with the ways a territory is interwoven
into the structure of desire in the films in question, I will to work
within a double framework, psycho-semiotics and the semiotics of
narrative.\textsuperscript{xii} Precisely in those moments where psychoanalysis and
the theory of narrative overlap can we comprehend the interdepend-
cy between narrative and the cultural screen, or in my own
terms, between narrative, territorialism and the symbolic universe of
the new Hollywood. In the film \textit{Innerspace}, the invisible authority
desires that Jack become smaller – only by becoming smaller can he
enter into the “garden.” His inflated ego prevents him from function-
ing well in the society and forming a heterosexual union. He is
“too big,” and this metaphor is taken literally in the film.

In order to improve his professional status Tuck agrees to
take part in a miniaturization experiment. He is to be miniaturized
and together with his spaceship injected into the body of a rabbit.
Due to an unfortunate course of events, however, he is injected into
Jack’s body. With Tuck navigating through his body, calling out try-
ing to establish contact, Jack’s hypochondriac nightmares finally
come true. Tuck, on the other hand, has to deal with the fact that
he has become practically invisible to the human eye. In the course
of their interaction Jack literally learns to listen to the voice in his
body, while Tuck learns to look at the world through someone else’s
eyes. By the time they retrieve the stolen chip that can bring Tuck
back to his normal size, the two men have become one: Tuck is the
master of the inner space, Jack of the outer space.

The male subjects complement each other’s functions, and
this is underscored through the transformation of the character-
image. Here, we can observe a case where the self has literally col-
lapsed with the other. This willingness to incorporate the other (as is
the case with Jack), or (in Tuck’s case) readiness to see the world
through the eyes of the other, offers yet additional evidence of the
ways productive strategies, such as investing a deidealized subject
with ideality can be subverted for the purpose of reaffirming patriar-
chal domination. Now, that the invisible authority is changing the
terms of the exchange between the self and the other, it does not
suffice to be a “man.” The constitution of the male subject is
dependent on his capacity to identify heteropathically with the
other.\textsuperscript{xiii} In narratological terms, this implies that his character-
image will be doubled, decomposed or collapsed with the character-image of the other.

Because the other is the other man, the question that inevitably emerges here is: where does this leave the female (and other) subject(s)? At the moment when it becomes clear that the heterosexual relationship in the film will be successfully restored, Lydia appears without a territory, “sandwiched” between the two men. While Jack kisses her, Tuck is transferred into her body. There, in the vast unknown of the female innerspace he will encounter the alien-looking foetus of his unborn child and happily exclaim, “I'm a dad!” But for this successful trajectory into fatherhood to occur, one man has to be outside the woman's body, the other inside. Correspondingly, Tuck's soon to be enjoyed position as husband and father, seems to depend on “coitus” with another man. With respect to this, I will argue that the recuperation of male subjectivity is attained at the expense of the female characters. The woman is posited in the middle of the exchange between the two men. As a result of this type of narrative structuring, the female character emerges as what I will call the “negative emblem” of Alice, or the negative emblem of différance.

Economy of Desire, or Narrative Economy

Desire and territorialism as they are related to the representation of women as the negative emblem of différance raises the issue of the relation between the economy of desire and narrative economy. At this point, it is important to recall that it is the economic principle of desire that enables the tracing of various structures on the basis of signs. Freud has distinguished economic concepts in relation to the psychical energy attached, for example, to an idea, to an object, or to a part of the body (cathexis). In his work Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation Paul Ricoeur extensively theorized the principle of exchange of cathectic energy as elaborated by Freud. What is most relevant in Ricoeur's philosophical interpretation for the present discussion is his insistence that an exchange of cathectic energy can also be theorized as an intersubjective exchange.

Ricoeur's analysis of Freudian psychoanalysis in various ways addresses the possibility of mapping out the intersubjective field of desire:

It is from the analytic situation itself, as a language relation-
ship that all discussion must begin. The discourse on the unconscious becomes meaningful only in the interlocutory discourse of analysis; the transition from desire to language by means of renunciation finds its manifestation in the psychoanalytic talking cure; the constitution of the subject in speech and the constitution of desire in intersubjectivity are one and the same phenomenon; desire enters into a meaningful history of mankind only insofar as that history is constituted by speech addressed to the other. (Ricoeur 1970: 388)

As Ricoeur reminds us, an economics of desire is not just an exchange of psychical energy; the terms of that exchange are constructed historically, and can be interpreted through discourse. With respect to this, I am suggesting that within the narrative economy of new Hollywood, the intersubjective process in the concrete filmic texts works towards the production of male subjectivities, whereas the constitution of female subjectivities is blocked and while the intersubjective process simultaneously works toward their destruction. Moreover, because the structure of intersubjective exchange is modeled on the structure of desire, which governs these narratives, the colonizing tendency of the films is obscured. The fact that the male subjects must learn to desire differently only reconfirms the bond between the economy of desire and the narrative economy.

In the previous chapters I demonstrated that the (re)structuring of male subjectivity is bound up with the structure of différence, and I took its specific features as the basis for theorizing the narrative modality at work in new Hollywood films. The structure of différence presupposes temporal and spatial deferral, and I have particularly placed an emphasis on the ways temporal reversal (of the Oedipal structure) affects the character-image. It is useful here to recall the father from Back to the Future, whose inability to trace his presence in time has a negative impact on his character-image. In the film’s opening he is elaborated as a negative emblem of différence, and therefore, he has to be repaired.

The father, emerging as stuck in time, puts pressure on the traditional division between the temporal and spatial axis based on the difference between men and women. J. T. Mitchell reminds us that the generic distinction between the temporal and spatial arts posited by G. E. Lessing is culturally associated with gender
The relation between the arts based on this opposition has ideological implications, and in that respect, the space-time division in the arts can be conceived "as a dialectical struggle in which the opposed terms take on different ideological roles and relationships at different moments in history" (98). According to the state of affairs in the paternal universe of new Hollywood, male characters are at pains to sustain the validity of William Blake's slogan that "Time is a Man, Space is a Woman." Nevertheless, their mobility across the temporal axis is sustained through a complex set of storytelling strategies. Adapting the narrative economy to cater to male desire seems urgent, for the crisis has also affected the male body.

As my analyses demonstrate, this crisis is resolved through the reinsertion of male characters into the temporal axis, governed by the structure of différencé. In order for an ideal man to emerge on the level of the fabula, specific strategies must be at work on the level of the story. As I have mentioned earlier, the constitution of a male subject who desires differently and who is willing to become the other requires that the character-image of the male subject be decomposed, doubled or collapsed with the character-image of another man. Thanks to these strategies, Blake's slogan still resonates in these films, ensuring that women remain confined to the spatial version of the axis.

In *Alice Doesn't*, Teresa De Lauretis critiques the dominant cultural discourses and argues that while the "transhistorical," narratological view of narrative structures seems to have given way to an attempt to "historicize the notion of narrative by relating it to the subject and to its implication in, or dependence on the social order," these efforts nevertheless "reaffirm an integrative and ultimately traditional view of narrativity" (105). Regarding the problem of female subjectivity, De Lauretis proposes that rather than taking an anti-Oedipal stance it can be more productive to work within a contradiction, that is, both with and against Oedipus. Although, I agree with De Lauretis that narrative is the key for restructuring female subjectivity, I contend that the Oedipal scenario fails to provide the solution. With respect to this, I would argue that the subversion of the Oedipal structure has already been appropriated in the new Hollywood films for the purpose of renegotiating male subjectivity. In other words, working with and against Oedipus puts pressure on the
male subject but, at the same time, the process of Oedipalization makes possible the resolution of this pressure.

The process of storytelling based on this apparent contradiction has a profoundly negative effect on the female subjects. The status of female characters within the symbolic universe of the new Hollywood cinema, in many ways echoes the position of Racine’s Phèdre - she is in a position between the sun and the son. Her function as the subject of narration, vision and action is restricted to this mythical role. In terms of restrictions that affect woman’s function as a narrative agent, we can also recall the image of Andromeda tied to a rock waiting to be rescued by Perseus (Mulvey, 1989: 20), not to mention a series of “lethal women” from biblical narratives (Bal, 1992; 1987). What is of particular relevance to this study is the space linked to the representation of women, that space of monstrous content inhabited by Medusa (Bal, 1996a; 1999). The examination of the structure of desire reveals a profound connection between narrative fictions and theoretical fictions. One such fiction produced ubiquitously by the narratives is the male capacity to transfer to alternate spaces, whereas the woman, as the supposed “object of plenitude,” remains the “force” that secures the interaction between men. That in-between space is at issue here, the space which blocks the production of female subjectivity causing the converse of decomposing or doubling the character-image.

In the following chapter I will demonstrate that an alternative possibility for female existence first has to be fabulated; that is, productive vision has to inform the level of the fabula. I will argue that the alternative possibilities for female existence can only be forged insofar as the “father universe” is replaced with an alternate normative injunction. This means that woman’s mythological role can be subverted insofar as new myths are invented. Only then can the structures of looking, bound up with heteropathic identification, as well as with the structure of différence, have a productive effect on the representation of the female subject. This foregrounds the relation between the structuring of subjectivity and the third mobility of narrative. As I have argued in the previous chapters, third mobility is dependent on the fabulations, or rather, the cultural and ideological determinations which exceed the diegetic world. An example of such a fabulation is the idea that the symbolic universe can be set in order insofar as one man desires to merge with the
other. For the moment I will postpone the theme of the monstrous content which marks the space in which the female character is housed. I will first examine the conflicting strategies of storytelling employed for the purpose of repairing patriarchal myths and sustaining territorial control.

The Self, the Other, and the Hymen

In the film *Innerspace*, the ideal image of the male subject can be procured thanks to the fusion of two male characters - two characters function as one. Their co-operation governs the process of storytelling. Jack is elaborated as the agent of vision, the focalizor through which the higher authority expresses itself. The story is focalized through Jack, and since he functions as Tuck's medium, Tuck's voice literally tells Jack where to look and what to do. Nevertheless, even though Tuck is seemingly the higher authority, Jack proves to be Tuck's medium in a double sense - Tuck sees through Jack, but he will also be perceived through him. Tuck's main function is to guide Jack's vision as well as action. His voice will transform Jack from a timid man into an agent of action. By the same token, Jack's agreeable character and vulnerability will improve Tuck's relations with the outside world. Male subjectivity cannot be recuperated without the joining of these two characters; but even more importantly the restorative effect is achieved through a process of telling where the narrator is literally embodied in the focalizor.

Jack is at first terrified and refuses to co-operate, but Tuck convinces him that "they are in this together" and they "gotta help each other out." The joining of forces is tested in the scene where Jack encounters Tuck's girlfriend Lydia. The scene opens with a shot of Lydia walking down the street. The same image appears on Tuck's monitor, in the cock-pit of his (inner)space-vehicle located in Jack's body. Tuck spots Lydia and draws Jack's attention to her. The relation between narration and focalization noted above is thematized in the scene's opening. Lydia recognizes Tuck's car and starts marching over to Jack who is behind the steering wheel wearing Tuck's jacket. She is attractive and impulsive and as a trained journalist and investigative reporter, Lydia immediately takes charge of the situation demanding to know what Jack is doing in Tuck's car. Jack is intimidated and overpowered by her attitude and doesn't
manage to utter a word. Only when he hears Tuck's voice instructing him what to say can he get a hold of himself. He repeats Tuck's exclamation, "Lydia, shut up and listen," which causes her to snap out of her inquisitive mode (shot 13).

In shots 13 and 15, Lydia is focalized internally by Jack, but the production of his vision is dependent on Tuck, the authority who tells Jack how to position himself in relation to Lydia. Because Tuck figures as the authoritative voice, he not only affects Jack's action, but he also frames his vision. We are reminded here that vision is hierarchically structured: even when it is reported in first person, there is a higher authority orchestrating its production. At the same time though, Tuck cannot enact his authority without his medium - Jack. Nor will he be able to get Lydia back without incorporating Jack's selflessness.

Tuck continues to exert control through Jack by feeding him the rest of the information. Jack tells Lydia that Tuck is in trouble and that he needs her help. The scene continues in the restaurant where Lydia again takes over the conversation. Rather than being able to use this opportunity to ask her help retrieve the stolen chip necessary to amplify Tuck to his normal size, Jack is confronted with a plethora of questions. Lydia insists on knowing where Tuck is, but at this stage Tuck does not want Lydia to know that he is the size of a microbe. The series of shots of Jack and Lydia at the table are interrupted by the shots of Tuck in the cock-pit in front of the monitor giving instructions to Jack. In shots 19 to 22, Jack and Lydia are depicted with an equal distribution of authority. In this shot/reverse shot order both characters are present in the shot, and hence, they are both focalized externally.

In shot 23, Jack is focalized internally, which clearly displays Lydia's advantage as the focalizing agent. At that moment, a shot of Tuck is inserted (shot 24) reprimanding Jack for his meek attitude. This has an instant effect on Jack. In shot 25 he attempts to assume the dominant role by slamming his glass on the table. He does not succeed in reversing the distribution of authority. In shot 27 he is again focalized internally from Lydia's point of vision. Tuck's intervention in shots 30, 33 and 34 does not help, for in shots 35 and 37 Jack is again depicted as the object of Lydia's vision. Jack is so confused and stressed by this situation in which he finds it impossible to execute what the voice in his head is telling him to do, that
he takes a pause from the conversation and visits the bathroom. As he stands by the pissoir he engages in a conversation with Tuck. He wants to know why Tuck is so determined to keep his whereabouts from Lydia, and Tuck finally admits that he does not want her to know that he is so small.

Jack responds with a question, “what’s wrong with being small,” and the man eavesdropping on this conversation with the “invisible other,” gains the impression that Jack is talking to his penis. The man makes a point about how talking to “it” will not improve its size. Since he is oblivious to the fact that Jack is negotiating with Tuck, this man’s “fatherly” advice in the first instance appears to be both useless and out of place. The seemingly inappropriate comment whereby Tuck is displaced to Jack’s penis, reminds us however, that a phallocentric law governs the entry into the symbolic order. Although Tuck is the one who is miniaturized in this narrative, Jack is the character who is actually “too small” and in order to satisfy the appetite of the Other he must learn to become “bigger.” Only then can he enter the space of the “garden.” With respect to this issue, I would argue that the female subject comes to mark that point around which the “big-small” discourse coheres. Due to the strategies of narrative which enable the repairing of male subjectivity, Lydia is turned into a site where the distance between “big” and “small” will be breached.

In spite of Lydia’s attempts to find out what is really going on, Tuck (with Jack’s assistance) manages to keep the crucial information from her until the last part of the film. Lydia is invited to take part in the adventure, but while Jack (with Tuck’s help) is turned into an action-hero, she is elaborated as a “would-be action-heroine.” In the closing of the restaurant scene, when Jack is attacked by one of the criminals, Lydia pulls out a gun charged with electricity. Rather than immobilizing the criminal, however, she renders Jack unconscious. One action Lydia does exceedingly well in this adventure is play her part as link between the men. Her primary function in this narrative is to come between Jack and Tuck. Tuck wants her back, but Jack does not think Tuck deserves her. Jack thinks of himself as a better man for her, but Tuck insists that Jack doesn’t stand a chance and claims that Lydia sees him in Jack.

I would suggest that Lydia is elaborated as the border, the difference that joins the two men. With respect to this point, the
fusion of the male subjects in the film can be understood, to put it in Derrida’s terms, as a “hymeneal unification.” While “hymen” is a concept that binds unification to the feminine, Derrida introduces the concept, in “Double Session,” to describe the marriage between Plato’s sun and Mallarme’s lustre:

“Hymen” (a word, indeed the only word, that reminds us that what is in question is a “supreme spasm”) is first of all a sign of fusion, the consummation of a marriage, the identification of two beings, the confusion between two. Between the two, there is no longer difference but identity. Within this fusion, there is no longer any distance between desire (the awaiting of a full presence designed to fulfill it, to carry it out) and the fulfillment of presence, between distance and non-distance; there is no longer difference between desire and satisfaction. (Derrida 1981: 209)

Lydia marks that territory in-between Tuck and Jack, the point where unification of the men is complete. The scene toward the film’s closing, where Jack is kissing her, while Tuck is being transferred into her body, is indicative of this fusion. The vision of Tuck’s child which confirms his status as a father, is produced by Tuck. But it is enabled through Jack. He is the one who literally brings Tuck close to Lydia. Because she has become attached to Jack and does not mind being kissed by him, Tuck will be able to go inside Lydia to play the special song he shared with her. Although the heterosexual relationship will be restored, the union played out on the level of the story is the one between two men. Woman figures as the invisible veil in the “coitus” between the two. Remarkably, the production of this vision is co-related with the third mobility of the narrative, or the world-view which informs the fabula. As I have mentioned earlier, the male subject has
learned to incorporate the desire of the other, but the other is the other man. We additionally have to recall that Tuck enters Jack’s body through piercing or penetration, in other words, he is injected via a syringe (nota bene, into Jack’s rear end).\textsuperscript{xxix} The male subjects are not only joined through their complementary qualities, their vision and action, they are united through that in-between space that, as Derrida formulates it, “desire dreams of bursting.” In the filmic narrative in question, this space stands between the inside and the outside of a woman. Derrida’s unification of desire and satisfaction through the hymen, just as new Hollywood’s fusion of Tuck and Jack via Lydia, demonstrate how the feminine makes possible the dissemination of the masculine. Therefore, although the male subject is elaborated as willing to be territorialized by the other, and to desire what the other desires, this strategy only reaffirms his domination on the cultural screen.

\textit{(Re)Production of Territorial Control}

In the film \textit{Junior} the man does not travel to a new territory, such as the womb, but he rather creates that territory inside his own body. Alex Hess and his colleague, the gynecologist Larry Arbogast are researching the possibility of improving the expectancy rate in women. They are developing a new drug called “Expectine” but do not manage to convince the investors or the university of the validity of their project. There seems to be no other option to prove that the drug is effective than the most radical one, that is, impregnating a man. The only man who has nothing to lose is the cold, stiff, and unfriendly scientist Alex. Once he starts taking Expectine and a strong dose of female hormones, Alex begins to change drastically; he laughs and cries and is transformed into an emotional human being. Instead of concluding the experiment after five weeks of pregnancy, as planned, he decides to keep the baby.

Interestingly enough, the ovum used for the experiment was stolen from the visiting woman scientist, Diana Reddin, who functions as a peculiar counterpart to her male colleague. Because Diana is preoccupied with her research and does not actually know when she will have time to bear children, she froze her egg, put the label “Junior” on the test tube and stored it in the fridge together with other specimens. Considering that the woman scientist does not have time to be pregnant, the man seems to be doing her a favor by
bringing her child into the world. Moreover, in comparison with the cold space of the fridge where Junior was resting, the male “womb” appears a more hospitable environment.

The male characters discussed in the previous chapters are also engaged in the process of engendering, of giving birth (to their father); but in the film *Junior*, the man’s pregnancy is more than metaphorical. The film can therefore be understood as a radicalization of Nietzsche’s contention (which Derrida takes up in *Spurs*) that pregnancy in a man is no less praiseworthy than it is in a woman (Derrida 1979: 65):

> Pregnancy has made women kinder, more patient, more timid, more pleased to submit; and just so does spiritual pregnancy produce the character of the contemplative type, which is closely related to the feminine character: it consists of male mothers. (Nietzsche 1974: 129)

The comparison of the artist, genius or philosopher to a pregnant woman recurs in Nietzsche’s works. In *Beyond Good and Evil* he considers two types of men, those who are able to become mothers, and those who are not exploiting their masculine potential to the limits:

> Compared to a genius – that is to say, to one who either begets or gives birth, taking both terms in their most elevated sense – the scholar, the scientific average man, always rather resembles an old maid: like her he is not conversant with the two most valuable functions of man. (Nietzsche 1968: 315)

In the *Genealogy of Morals*, philosophers’ abstinence from sexual intercourse, or their “chastity,” is discussed in terms of their “maternal instinct.” Nietzsche argues that philosophers, just as athletes or artists, should abstain from sexual intercourse “during their periods of
great pregnancy." In another instance, however, when it comes to women scholars, Nietzsche presents their procreative powers as being equivalent to male sterility:

> When a woman has scholarly inclinations there is usually something wrong with her sexually. Sterility itself disposes one toward a certain masculinity of taste; for man is, if I may say so, "the sterile animal." (Nietzsche 1968: 279)

The woman scientist from Junior is smart enough to take precautions and preserve her egg while she is still ovulating, in case her academic career should postpone motherhood. She had no idea that the egg she was saving for herself would be snatched by her male colleague and partner in order to impregnate himself, and not with ingenious ideas but with her child.

Is not her sexuality then, as well as her sterility, determined precisely by the procreative male mother that Nietzsche presents, who needs either woman's blood, her hormones, her egg, even her masculinity, or all of these elements simultaneously, in order to engender his masterpiece? The character that Emma Thompson plays in the film is made to display a "certain masculinity in taste"; her "problematic sexuality" is represented in her physical and psychic posture. She appears in baggy trousers, a shirt and a vest (a type of costume she wears in the film Carrington where she catches the eye of a middle aged homosexual artist who thinks she is a young boy). Furthermore, Diana Reddin is elaborated as a walking menace. She is so neurotic that she keeps knocking down objects and bumping into other people, which provokes Larry Arborgast's comment, "It's a wonder that woman is still alive."

Therefore, unlike Alex Hess, who is invested with a mobile sexuality, Diana's sexuality is elaborated as deviant. In fact, even though Diana is immediately attracted to Alex, he only becomes interested in her
once he starts taking female hormones. His willingness then to “turn into a woman” will make the heterosexual relationship possible. Alex’s transsexuality, as well as his bonding with Larry, is justified through his scientific project: he moves in with Larry, he is impatient for Larry to come home for dinner, he wants Larry to touch him and feel the baby kicking. And yet, at the same time, he is developing a relationship with Diana. When Diana finds out that Larry stole her egg for the experiment and that Alex is pregnant with her child, she is furious; while Alex can be both the mother and the father, she is left without a function. She nevertheless decides to support Alex’s project and eventually claim the right to be the child’s mother. This is not at all easy, for Diana is forced to deal with the appropriation and perversion of feminist discourse; when the director of the biotechnology research program attempts to take over the project, Alex resists and exclaims, “My body, my choice!” Woman’s historical claim to her own biological space and the right to decide how this “territory” will be treated, is thus appropriated for the purpose of man’s territorial expansion.

Just like Lydia in the film Innerspace, Diana will come between the two men. When she attempts to take Larry’s place by pointing out that it is her baby Alex is carrying, Larry replies, “But I put it in there!” And in fact, Larry did inject the fertilized egg into Alex’s abdomen; what is more, he provided the egg and Alex provided the sperm. That is, Larry stole the egg from Diana, and with the help of Alex’s sperm, the in vitro fertilization could take place. As in the film Innerspace, the interaction of the two men forms a perfect identity: Larry masterminds the project, Alex carries it through; Larry is extremely short, Alex is extremely tall; Larry has the role of the man in their relationship, Alex plays the role of the woman. The presence of the actual women in the film only complicates matters and poses a threat to the relationship between the two
men. Apart from Diana, there is another prominent female character in the film, Larry's ex-wife Angela. As we learn from the film, Larry attempted for years to impregnate Angela without success and now she is pregnant with another man's baby. She needs Larry's help, however, because the baby's father has disappeared from her life. It is clear that she is trying to come back into Larry's life, but each time she visits, she encounters Alex. On one occasion she witnesses a situation where Larry and Alex are involved in physical contact and she is repulsed by the possibility that they are a "twosome." The men tell her that she made the wrong assumption and that there is no reason to worry; all there is to it, is the fact that Alex is pregnant. Larry breaks the news to Angela with considerable pride because after all, even though he could not impregnate her, the baby Alex is carrying is living proof of Larry's fertility.

In the scene just mentioned the two men are elaborated as self-sufficient and the woman interrupts their state of bliss. In shots 1 to 3 depicting Larry and Alex, both men are in 3/4 medium shot, focalized externally. Alex reveals his swollen belly to Larry and wants him to touch it. Larry hesitates for a moment but Alex insists. A shot of Alex in medium close-up follows (shot 4). He is addressing Larry, urging him to show the baby that he cares. In the reverse shot Larry is in medium close-up, and he is focalized internally. Retroactively, this vision could be attributed to Alex. This shot progresses with a movement revealing Alex's belly in the foreground while Larry is tickling it and sweet-talking the baby. In the shot's closing, Angela appears in the background implying that the action in 5.1 is also the product of Angela's vision. In the following shot (shot 6), focalized internally by Angela, the two men are in a medium shot, startled, looking left-right extremely uncomfortable with the fact that Angela has witnessed their interaction.

The scene further evolves with a balanced
exchange of external and internal focalization. We can immediately note that Alex and Larry appear in separate shots only when they are alone. With the arrival of Angela, the two men are framed together, and hence, they are juxtaposed to the shots of Angela. Shots of Larry and Alex are focalized internally by Angela (shots 8, 14 and 16), and conversely Angela is focalized internally by Alex and Larry (shots 9, 11 and 15). There are two ruptures in the scene and they are marked by the camera movement: the previously mentioned shot 5 where Larry is tickling Alex’s belly, and shot 16 where Alex lifts up his shirt to show his belly to Angela. The latter shot begins with a medium close-up of Alex; the camera moves to his belly and tilts to the left to reveal a medium close-up of Larry. The belly underscores the connection between the two men, and on both accounts Angela produces the vision of their “science project”.

In shots 5 and 16, Angela’s focalization provides us with the evidence of Alex’s and Larry’s blissful union. The camera movement in shots 5 and 16 which reveals the bond between the two male characters at the same time underscores a disruption, the implied excess in the series of static shots. On both occasions the camera movement simulates Angela’s focalization. She is the intruder, but the vision she produces - the pregnant belly - reveals the link between the two men. Again, the feminine figures as the unification point or the “hymen” between the self and the other. The woman is in-between, she both confirms and threatens the tender attachment between the two men.

While in Innerspace and Junior, male desire to lend one’s territory to the other man seems to be satisfied thanks to science, I have suggested that this territorial expansion owes its efficiency to a complex network of cultural discourses inherited, appropriated or perverted to the measure of male desire. This in itself would not be problematic if the women were not employed as the excuse for the interaction between the
men. Most problematic of all, however, is the ultimate resolution of the narrative: the “coitus” between men appears as the necessary condition for the preservation of heterosexual relationships and consequently, of the human race.xxxiii

These analyses of Innerspace and Junior also demonstrate that the male subjects are produced through a signifying transaction, or rather as the condition of a relationship between two signifiers. Hence, through différance. The self-alienation or the self-violence which conditions subjectivity, as well as the exchange of subject positions or the engagement in an intersubjective relationship, is a privilege granted to the male characters alone. The analyses demonstrate that the female characters emerge in the middle of the intersubjective relationship between the men, as a materialization of an ideology orchestrated by invisible, ghost-like agencies.

**A Territory Stuck in the Gullet**

According to Lacan, desire can be understood neither as an appetite nor a demand for love that can be satisfied. In that sense, he focuses on the object that causes desire rather than on the object that would seem to satisfy it. As previously mentioned, in Lacanian terms the Other plays a crucial role when the object of desire is concerned. To designate the relationship between the object of desire and the Other, Lacan introduces the notion of the objet petit a. This notion differentiates the object from, while relating it to, the Other.

This a is presented precisely, in the field of the mirage of the narcissistic function of desire, as the object that cannot be swallowed, as it were, which remains stuck in the gullet of the signifier. It is at this point of lack that the subject has to recognize himself. (Lacan 1994:270)

In spite of the fact that desire is not an appetite, Lacan cannot resist relating it to eating. Assuming for the moment that he has a good reason for this choice of metaphor, then within this particular realm of figures of speech and metaphoric productions of meaning an appetite for food can be interpreted as a metaphor of desire.

Here, we must again take recourse to Alice in Wonderland. By satisfying the demand of the Other that she eat or drink, Alice can become bigger or smaller. Through this process of double
exchange she can satisfy the appetite of the Other. If Alice were to refuse to become bigger or smaller, or if she were to refuse to recognize herself at the point of lack, as Lacan puts it, she would end up stuck in the throat, as it were, unable to transcend to the new territory. It is only through this process of exchange, an economy of desire which presupposes substitution, that she temporarily manages to overcome the distance between desire and satisfaction.

In the film *Death Becomes Her*, the two women do not want go anywhere; all they desire is to have an attractive-looking body. The two main characters, Helen Sharp and Madelyne Ashton have been competing with each other since their teenage years. We encounter them as adult women. Helen is a homely type and she leads a quiet life with her boyfriend Earnest Manville, Madelyne is an attractive and outgoing actress. When Madelyne seduces Earnest into marrying her, Helen is so devastated that she can only find comfort in stuffing herself with food and plotting revenge. She ends up in a mental institution looking like a monster.

The two women meet fourteen years later; now Helen is thin, young-looking and attractive whereas Madelyne does not manage to hide the signs of ageing. Furthermore, her marriage with Earnest, as well as her career, are going down the drain. Madelyne’s desire to make her body young and attractive again brings her to a mysterious woman who sells her a magic potion which guarantees an “eternal body.” Madelyne is warned, however, that she must keep the body from becoming damaged because even if the body is physically dead it remains alive forever. Madelyne does not really understand what this means, until she gets killed. In a fight with Earnest she slips and falls down a long flight of stairs. She is physically dead but her body remains alive.

It turns out that Helen, just like Madelyne, has the same problem; the two women realize that they eternally have to cover up the fact that they are both dead and alive. Earnest, as a make-up specialist for the deceased, seems to be the perfect solution to the problem but he resists the temptation to drink the magic potion. Unlike Helen and Madelyne, Earnest is ultimately awarded with the ability to transfer into a new space; he lives a long and full life and dies. The women, on the other hand, obsessed with keeping their body away from death, eventually “become death.”

Just like the men in the two former films, the women in
Death Becomes Her are invested with potentially opposite qualities: Helen is classy, prudish, homely and giving, while Madelyne is cheap, sexy, outgoing and selfish. But unlike the men who act together and are able to create a space where exchange can take place, the two women are made to compete, to work against each other. During their first encounter after Madelyne’s show, they rush into each other’s arms like two old friends, but it is immediately clear that the enthusiasm is fake. Helen yells out “Mad!” and Madelyne returns the courtesy by shouting out “Hell!” Considering that the man in the film is forced to choose between madness and hell, it is not at all strange that he opts for death instead. Earnest is portrayed as manipulated, impotent, drained of any life force, attending either to his dead clients or his dead marriage. The only instance in the film where he takes the initiative and sees the possibility of a heterosexual relationship is when he realizes that Madelyne is both dead and alive. His exclamation, “You are a sign, you are an omen, you are a burning bush, we are being called that we belong together!” points ultimately to that place between life and death where a woman can come to exist simply because she is not there.

In the two films discussed earlier it is male desire that is at issue; in this narrative the desire is female. Unlike the men in these films who can recognize themselves in the lack and resolve the problem of being “too big or too small,” the women from Death Becomes Her are elaborated as “becoming the lack.”

In his paper “On Narcissism: An Introduction,” Freud compares the male and female sexes and argues that there are fundamental differences between them with respect to their type of object-choice. Freud asserts that complete object-love of the attachment type is characteristic of the male. This division, it is necessary to add, is contingent rather than natural. According to Silverman, Freud’s claim that women typically love according to the narcissistic mode makes no sense until it is read with historical and cultural specificity, that is, in relation to “the deidealizing screen or cultural image-repertoire, which makes the female body the very image of lack” (Silverman, 1996: 33). Freud describes the male and female object-choices in the following way:

It (the male object-choice) displays the marked sexual overvaluation which is doubtless derived from the child’s original
narcissism and thus corresponds to a transfer-
ence of that narcissism to the sexual object. This
sexual overvaluation is the origin of the peculiar
state of being in love, a state suggestive of a
neurotic compulsion, which is thus traceable to
an impoverishment of the ego as regards libido
in favor of the love-object. A different course is
followed in the type of female most frequently
met with, which is probably the purest and
truest one. With the onset of puberty the matur-
ing of the female sexual organs, which up till
then have been in a condition of latency, seems
to bring about an intensification of the original
narcissism, and this is unfavorable to the devel-
opment of a true object-choice with its accom-
panying sexual overvaluation. Women, especially
if they grow up with good looks, develop a cer-
tain self-contentment which compensates them
for the social restrictions that are imposed upon
them in their choice of object. Strictly speaking,
it is only themselves that such women love with
an intensity comparable to that of the man’s
love for them. (Freud 1991: 82)

Silverman explores what it means for a culture to val-
orize a particular bodily configuration at the level of
the screen. As I have noted earlier, she points to the
colonization of idealization by the screen which not
only restricts ideality to certain subjects, while render-
ing others unworthy of love, but also naturalizes the
former as essentially ideal. In that context she examines
Freud’s description of female narcissism and asserts
that this vain but nonetheless imperative quest after
absolute beauty has nothing to do with self-love.
According to Silverman this imperative is predicated on
the impossibility for women of loving the self. “Only an
imaginary union with the desired image would make
possible a jubilant self-apprehension, but the image
remains at an irreducible remove” (Silverman 1996: 34).
Freud's remark regarding the social restrictions imposed upon women in their choice of object is an occasion to point out the historical nature of such psychic mechanisms. Evidence of the changing social conditions can be found in the new Hollywood's continuous preoccupation with investing the "deidealized" male subject with ideality. This is a position the female characters still do not enjoy on the cultural screen. Worse yet, as Death Becomes Her demonstrates, women not only appear as victims of narcissistic desire. Paradoxically enough, they are elaborated as guilty of longing for the very self-image which has been imposed upon them socially and historically, xxxvi

The closing scene of the film is actually quite disturbing for, as I will argue, it plays out what Lacan calls "the fantasy of the body in bits and pieces." Madelyne and Helen are leaving the site of Earnest's funeral where two photographs are exhibited; one depicts Earnest as a middle-aged man, on the other he is captured in his old age. In the sermon he is praised for procreating generations of offspring who will secure his immortality. The two women are dressed in black and their faces are veiled, but they seem irritated with the eulogy. They get up and leave the funeral service. When they are outside, Helen pauses and asks Madelyne to check her make up. When the veils are lifted we can see that nothing is left of the youthful beauty that both women were trying to preserve; Helen's face is literally peeling off and she urgently needs a can of spray paint to revivify it. The can is missing, it appears that one of them has dropped it on their way to the funeral, and this is confirmed at the end of shot 9 where Helen's foot, depicted in detail, is about to step on the can.

In shot 11 she slips and begins losing balance; in a long shot (12), her body sways announcing the inevitability of the fall down a long flight of stairs. A brief sequence of shot/reverse shots follows between Helen and Madelyne (shots 13-16) which definitively ascertains the female incapacity to engage in a productive intersubjective exchange. Helen reaches out for Madelyne's help, and at first Madelyne reacts as if she will offer the other woman a hand (shot 14), but in the next instant (the end of shot 14), she changes her mind and decides to take pleasure in Helen's misfortune. Helen is so aggravated with this gesture that she grabs Madelyne and forces her to fall as well. As a result of this interaction both charac-
ters tumble down the stairs (shots 17-24). In shot 25, Helen is filmed from a low angle, in a medium shot facing the camera and screaming in horror, for she is just a moment away from the fatal landing. Her body hits the ground and she breaks into pieces (shot 26).

The same destiny awaits Madelyne. In shot 27 she is screaming as her body is about to hit the ground and disintegrate. In shot 28, she too lies on the ground, broken into pieces. The camera follows her head as it rolls over to where Helen's head has landed. Silverman analyzes the collapse of the imaginary alignment which results in the impossibility of indefinitely sustaining an identification with ideality, and she asserts that Lacan never suggests that there might be situations in which identification fails to provide narcissistic gratification. Perhaps this is so "because Lacan's jubilant infant is simply gendered masculine, and because other "differences' simply do not figure in his theoretical paradigm" (Silverman 1996: 20). Silverman points out that Lacan ties this collapse of imaginary identification to the experience of bodily fragmentation and disintegration, or what in "Some Reflections on the Ego" he calls the fantasy of the "body in bits and pieces."

Silverman critiques Lacan's distinction between the fantasy of bodily disintegration as opposed to the successful imaginary alignment which evokes values such as "wholeness" and "unity." She proposes that the fantasy of the body in bits and pieces is only one way of apprehending the heterogeneity of the corporeal ego, the one that is dependent on the aspiration toward "wholeness and unity" (20). She adds that it is in fact the cultural value invested in the notion of a coherent bodily ego that creates such a dystopic apprehension of corporeal multiplicity (21). I would suggest that the fragmentation of female bodies in Death Becomes Her is predicated on this division between the experience of "wholeness" accessible to male subjects and the impossibility of sustaining identification with
ideality in the case of women. The film, thus, draws on the cultural value placed on the notion of "wholeness," whereby "fragmentation" becomes negatively charged, even though it is the only option open to the women in the film.

Because these women are elaborated as dependent on their negative presence as the origin and cause of desire, a life force, pure and indivisible, they are not constituted through an intersubjective exchange. What marks them as women is the fact that they can break into separate pieces; these body pieces are alive, wiggling and jumping, as a Lacanian lamella, destroyed yet indestructible. The possibility of theorizing this notion of the experience of bodily disintegration in positive terms, however, requires different stories which can open up and encourage alternative ways of radiating ideality.

**Longing for the Feminine Ideal**

Within the narrative economy of the films in question, however, only the male subjects survive the "death of being." In fact, the division of the subject enables the male subjects to merge with the other and to complete the exchange, while the women are forced to break into pieces and literally embrace death as their only possibility of presence. The women in these films are not marked by the exchange between the different and the same, just as they are not marked by the Lacanian division of the subject between meaning and being. Instead, they emerge as monsters, stuck in the in-between space which marks the representational paradox, the state between life and death (Bal, 1997).

In each of the films mentioned, the structure of desire is bound up with narrative economy. In *Innerspace* and *Junior*, the structuring of the narrative as well as male subjectivity implies sharing the space with the other, and learning to desire differently. In *Death Becomes Her*, the women's incapacity to engage in a "big-small" exchange works towards their entrapment in a state between life and death. In conclusion I recall the two paths Freud saw as the possible resolutions of the crisis of femininity:

Even for narcissistic women, whose attitude towards men remains cool, there is a road which leads to complete object love. In the child which they bear, a part of their own body
confronts them like an extraneous object, to which, starting out from their narcissism, they can give complete object-love. There are other women, again, who do not have to wait for a child in order to take a step in development from narcissism to object love. Before puberty they feel masculine and develop some way along masculine lines; after this trend has been cut short on their reaching female maturity, they still retain the capacity of longing for masculine ideal - an ideal which is in fact a survival of the boyish nature that they themselves once possessed. (Freud 1982: 82-84)

As Silverman contends, putting a man in the place of her ego-ideal would be the active solution to the crisis of femininity. In other words, unlike the women who position themselves as love objects and seek access to self-love through another person’s love for them, these women seek to embody the man who represents their narcissistic ideal. Nevertheless, both the passive and the active solutions to the crisis of femininity only confirm that the female subject does not have easy cultural access to an idealizing image of self and thus she identifies heteropathically with alternative images. When we take into consideration that the womb as a woman’s territory has already been appropriated for the purpose of disseminating the masculine, it seems that women can maintain their territorial tendencies only if they have the capacity to long for a masculine ideal, that is, if they are to become men who want to bear children.

This is not so strange, for in the economics of desire of the new Hollywood where men are made to act as Alice, the women are constructed as negative emblems of Alice. In Death Becomes Her, the women do not choose the passive or the active solution to the crisis of femininity offered by the cultural screen, they remain mired in the middle. The women are elaborated as guilty of a narcissistic desire that blocks the intersubjective exchange and, consequently, causes them to break into bits and pieces. What makes the issue of the representation of women so disturbing is the new Hollywood’s capacity to absorb cultural discourses from heterogeneous domains. On the one hand these films seem to be working through the concerns of contemporary epistemology, influenced by feminism and postmodernism. On the other hand however, these narratives perpetuate the myth of a woman as the “object of plenitude,” or “lack.”
This contradiction forces women into the position of the object of a nondiscursive regime, into a state of bodily incoherence, as is the case in Death Becomes Her. In Innerspace and Junior, thanks to the vision expressed on the level of the fabula, the woman is turned into a site where the distance between the self and the other (man) will be overcome.

If the long-term concern of the feminist film theory with the representation of women in Hollywood cinema is taken into consideration, as well as the ways this cinema has managed to feed the feminist discourse back into its texts, then this cinema appears to be playing a game with feminist theorists (among others). The criticism put forward by Claire Johnston and Laura Mulvey in the seventies, aimed at classical Hollywood’s division of identification between active, male characters and passive, female heroines is evidently being renegotiated in the new Hollywood (Johnston, 1971; Mulvey 1976). Access to the gaze is not regulated through the specification of generic boundaries (Doane 1987) and hence the vital male is not inscribed through his all-empowering gaze. It takes two (or more) men nowadays for a successful heterosexual relationship. Moreover, the male characters are granted the capacity to “dismember” or to merge with each other and actively participate in the re-institution of paternity, or in the resolution of the crisis of masculinity. Earlier representations of women as phallic mothers of a child’s pre-Oedipal imaginary or the unempowered castrated mothers of its post-Oedipal symbolic (Williams 1984) have been complemented with the new Hollywood’s men who can literally become mothers and bear children.

These strategies notwithstanding, which generally work to sustain the order of a phallocentric universe, this is an occasion to point out that the woman elaborated as the negative emblem of Alice is not the only type of female character in the new Hollywood cinema. There are two other possibilities offered to female subjects. One option has to do with the active solution to the crisis of femininity, and it involves action-heroines in the service of patriarchy. These are the action-heroines who can perform “masculine” tasks: they are physically strong and display high combat skills, they can act as leaders, and maintain or restore the law and order of patriarchy. Most importantly, they are inserted into the Oedipal trajectory, implying that they are initiated into the father’s universe.
I would also extract a second option - the female characters whose archetypal status as a “monster,” as the negative emblem of *différence* is deployed as a productive point of departure. This would imply that the in-between space, a non-territory on which these women are forced to exist can be taken as a possibility from which we, and not only we the women, can view ourselves within our cultural present. The most important attribute of the last type of female character is that she can transcend the options and goals traditionally offered to women. Her capacity to engage in an intersubjective exchange, as well as partnership with another woman, emerges as one of her major goal-achieving strategies. While the first possibility appears more frequently in recent years, the second possibility is still an exception in blockbuster films. Still an exception to the rule, and the specificity of the latter female character is that she operates outside the patriarchal universe. As I will explain in the following chapter, this female character is predicated on mythical discourse and a symbolic universe that draws its inspiration from the past that is yet to come.

footnotes

i In my study the reworking of the symbolic order is related with what I have called “the father suffering eclipse.” In the films analyzed in the previous chapters, *ET–The Extraterrestrial, Back to the Future,* the *Indiana Jones* trilogy and the *Star Wars* trilogy, I have demonstrated that the intervention of the fabula into the story effectuates both order and impairment of the father universe. The dark-ened father is also traceable in films such as *Encounters of the Third Kind, Gremlins, Hook, Mrs. Doubtfire,* as well as *The Shining.* Interestingly, this tendency is traceable in the more recent examples of “art films” such as *Happiness* and *American Beauty.* Speaking of art films it is useful to recall Wim Wenders’ *Paris, Texas,* where the main character is trying to dress up in such a way as to appear a convincing father figure to his young estranged son. The prime example of a precursor of this tendency is *Rebel without a Cause.* In this film, teenager Jim Stark is suffering because in his family the father is literally wearing the apron.

ii A version of this chapter was published in the Territorialism and Desire issue of the *European Journal for Semiotic Studies.*

iii I have discussed this concept in the concluding section of the previous chapter.

iv See also Silverman’s discussion in “Lacanian Phallus”.

v I will explore the possibility of reconceptualizing the symbolic order in the following chapter.

vi We can draw a connection but also a distinction between the “inadequate”
male subjects of the new Hollywood and the male subjectivity in crisis in the new German cinema, for example. The process whereby masculinity needs to be repaired or renegotiated is traceable in the work of the new German directors, particularly Fassbinder, Wenders and Herzog. In *New German Cinema*, Elsaesser discusses the specific features of this process and relates it to the historical “wound” of Germany, which effectuated a “fatherless” society. History had to return through cinema and for this to occur the possibility of identification needed to be restored. These directors were invested in creating a new symbolic universe, implying that even though their films were narrative, they rarely used the models identified with Hollywood narrative. Patterns of identification were established along themes which differ from those of classical Hollywood (but coincide with those of new Hollywood), the most important one concerning the relationship of interaction between male characters. Silverman also addresses the crisis of male subjectivity in *Male Subjectivity at the Margins*. Both accounts make a connection between the crisis of masculinity and history. In “Historical Trauma and Male Subjectivity,” Silverman draws on Jameson’s concepts in her discussion of the effects of WWII on male subjectivity as this is worked through in Hollywood films such as *Men*, and *The Best Years of Our Lives*.

I have discussed this conflicting position in chapter 2 in relation to the second person discourse.

Colonization of the screen needs to be considered in terms of colonial and postcolonial discourse; in the first instance I am referring to colonization as the taking over of territory, of that imaginary geography onto which signification (of the dominant ideology) will be mapped. Apart from *Black Skins, White Masks*, additionally pertinent is Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth*. Fanon emphasizes the ways territorialism implicates not only the land, but also the psyche and the subjectivity of the colonized people.

Relevant here is Homi Bhabha’s “Of Mimicry and Man.” Bhabha argues that the colonizer performs certain strategies in order to maintain power. One such strategy is mimicry which produces the loss of agency while it enables power. New Hollywood cinema has devised strategies which at once create a selfless male subject even as the aim of this strategy is to preserve the territorial control of the cultural screen.

The crisis of masculinity is not new in Hollywood; see for example “Introduction” to Cohan and Hark’s *Screening the Male: Exploring Masculinities in Hollywood Cinema*. By the same token, male bonding has a strong tradition in this cinema; see Verstraaten’s *Screening Cowboys, Reading Masculinities*. The specificity of the examples of new Hollywood cinema is that here the investment in the resolution of the crisis, particularly through male bonding and intersubjective exchange, has acquired spectacular dimensions. Apart from *Innerspace*, and *Junior*, the films I analyze in this chapter, the crisis of masculinity (but also patriarchy and a dysfunctional symbolic order) are addressed in films such as *Point Break, Face Off, Pulp Fiction, or Fight Club*. In the films *Face Off* and *Fight Club* we can also note an overlapping, clashing and doubling of character-images. The doubling of the character-image is taken to extremes in the film *Multiplicity* where the male character clones himself in order to fulfill his role as a provider and a husband.

This form is also traceable in the classical Hollywood era with films such
as the *Incredible Shrinking Man* which served as the inspiration for the film *Honey, I Shrunk the Kids*. The main inspiration for *Innerspace* is of course the film *Fantastic Voyage* from 1966, based on Isaac Asimov story in which a group of scientists are miniaturized and travel inside a human body. The reference to *Alice in Wonderland* (also as a possibility of entering an alternative world) can be seen in the films *Game*, *Matrix*, and *Alien Resurrection*. In the later section of this chapter, I will demonstrate that in the case of female characters, this structure has a negative effect.

---

*dii* I am alluding here to Bal’s discussion in *On Meaning-Making*, specifically chapter 4, “Psychopoetics.”

*diii* I have addressed the issue of heteropathic identification, and the ways it is appropriated in the new Hollywood cinema, in the previous chapter. In *Francis Bacon and the Loss of Self* Ernst van Alphen extensively theorizes the loss of self as a precondition to “become the other,” and the ways this loss is mapped out on the body.

*diiii* For a discussion of female characters being torn between two men, see Mulvey’s analysis of *Duel in the Sun* in *Visual and Other Pleasures*. Interestingly, in the film *Contact* for example, the woman scientist is not directly torn between two men, but she nevertheless ends up in the middle of a game operated by the men in the film.

*dv* Freud explores the working of cathetic energy in “Instincts and Their Vicissitudes” and especially in “Beyond the Pleasure Principle.” Freud writes: “In the theory of psychoanalysis we have no hesitation in assuming that the course taken by mental events is automatically regulated by the pleasure principle. We believe, that is to say, that the course of those events is invariably set in motion by an unpleasurable tension, and that it takes a direction such that its final outcome coincides with a lowering of the tension – that is, with an avoidance of unpleasure or a production of pleasure. In taking that course into account in our consideration of the mental processes which are the subject of our study, we are introducing an “economic” point of view into our work” (Freud 1982:275).

*dvi* See also Peter Brook’s discussion “Narrative Desire” in his *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative*.

*dvii* I have introduced this concept in chapter 2 of this study.

*dviii* Mitchell states the following, “[. . .] Lessing has disclosed what is probably the most fundamental ideological basis for his laws of genre, namely the laws of gender. The decorum of the arts at bottom has to do with proper sex roles. [. . .] Paintings, like women, are ideally silent, beautiful creatures designated for the gratification of the eye, in contrast to the sublime eloquence proper to the manly art of poetry. Paintings are confined to the narrow sphere of external display of their bodies and of the space which they ornament, while poems are free to range over an infinite realm of potential action and expression, the domain of time, discourse and history” (109-10).


*x* The connection between the crisis of masculinity and the male body is discussed by Susan Jeffords in *The Remasculinization of America, Gender and the Vietnam War*, and *Hard Bodies: Hollywood Masculinity in the Reagan Era*. See also Cohan and Hark’s (eds.) *Screening the Male*. In *Spectacular
Bodies, Yvonne Tasker also addresses this issue. Films such as *First Blood*, *First Blood Part II*, *Rambo III*, *Die Hard*, *Die Hard 2*, *Rocky*, *Rocky II*, *Rocky III*, *Rocky IV*, *Conan the Barbarian*, *RoboCop*, create the sense of male vulnerability rather than strength. Tasker asserts that in terms of the muscular hero it is possible to argue “that these male figures offer a parodic performance of 'masculinity,' which both enacts and calls into question the qualities they embody” (111). In “Don't Look Now,” Richard Dyer suggests that while muscles allude to the male domination, they are also the evidence of the labour that has gone into the production of that effect. See also Pam Cook’s “Masculinity in Crisis?” Linda Hutcheon describes the postmodern age as an age of “recessionary erotic economy brought about by fear of disease and a fetishization of fitness” (1989:141) As a result, the erotic has become a part of the body and its sexuality; in her view, the body is that site where the politicizing of desire can be observed, and accordingly, where it must be challenged.

De Lauretis argues that these texts and discourses fail to “envisage a materially, historically, and experientially constituted subject engendered, we might say, precisely by the process of its engagement in the narrative genres” (106). She points to the ways mythical positioning of the discursive agents works through the narrative form and stresses the effectiveness of symbols in the process, that is, the work of the symbolic function in the unconscious. I will return to Bal’s discussion on Caravaggio’s *Medusa’s Head* in the following chapter. For an elaborate account of the role of ideology in the construction of female characters in biblical narratives, see Bal’s *Murder and Difference, Death and Disymmetry* and *Lethal Love*. See particularly Bal’s chapter 5 titled “Sexuality, Sin and Sorrow: The Emergence of the Female Character,” from *Lethal Love*.

Catherine Lord explores this connection in her book *The Intimacy of Influence: Narrative and Theoretical Fictions in the works of George Eliot, Virginia Woolf and Jeanette Winterson*.

Bal addresses the relationship between woman as the object of plenitude, where wholeness can be observed as the absence of consciousness, which respectively indicates an unknowing subject. In “Narcissus’s Vision and Semiotic Space,” *European Journal for Semiotic Studies*. More extensively in *Quoting Caravaggio*, chapters 7 and 8.

I address this issue in relation to Judith Butler’s concepts in the following chapter.

A similar type of relation between internal and external focalization is thematized in the film *The Truman Show*. The creator of the show is monitoring the action; he often intervenes and tells the actors what to say and what to do.

In this scene the evidence that man is in crisis is also manifested in his loss of power to act as the bearer of the look. What this new Hollywood text appears to be thematizing and overtly working through is the central male anxiety noted by feminist film theory in classical Hollywood cinema, which, as Laura Mulvey has argued in her seminal article “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” is castration anxiety (Mulvey, 1989). While the films of the classical Hollywood cinema were structured in terms of the opposition between the sexes, albeit not always without difficulty - active male versus
passive female, man as the bearer of the look woman as the object of the look - in the New Hollywood cinema this type of division is even more difficult to sustain. In Mulvey's account, the codification of pre-existing patterns in narrative cinema structure the look in a split between male as bearer of the look and female as object of the look. Making the woman into the object of the look was one way, according to Mulvey, of escaping castration anxiety, that is, of disavowing castration; representing the woman as to-be-looked-at-ness was a strategic means of classical Hollywood narratives for turning her into a fetish.

The classical Hollywood's production of visual meaning in such a way as to account for “woman's lack” corresponds to Freud's story about the origin of fetishism. Bal points out that the Freudian story where the boy sees-not what the mother does not possess, implies a negative definition of vision: “‘Lack’ is not the object seen but the supplement provided by the seeing subject. If this negative vision is as crucial in the formation of subjectivity as it appears to be in Freudian theory, I wish to emphasize the crucial negativity of vision it implies. Vision then, is both bound up with gender formation and with semiotic behavior; it is an act of interpretation, a construction out of nothingness” (1996a: 79). Important here is vision which exceeds the fictional world. Even though the man is not the bearer of the look in the film *Innerspace*, the woman will nevertheless emerge as “lack.”

At one moment Jack even becomes hostile toward Tuck. To express this, he punches his own body. Since Jack is introduced as a hypochondriac who asks Tuck to promise him that “no physical pain will be involved,” it means that he has undergone a considerable transformation.

Derrida writes, “The hymen, the consummation of differends, the continuity and the confusion of the coitus, merges with what it seems to be derived from: the hymen as protective screen, the jewel box of virginity, the vaginal partition, the fine, invisible veil which, in front of the hystera, stands between the inside and the outside of a woman, and consequently between desire and fulfillment. It is the hymen that desire dreams of piercing, of bursting, in an act of violence that is (at the same time or somewhere between) love and murder” (213).

Extratextual information plays a role in determining the extent to which this male character has been transformed. Arnold Schwarzenegger was Mr. Universe five times, but even more importantly, he is best known for his roles as the man of action. For example, in * Terminator *, he is introduced as a killing machine, but in * Terminator 2 *, he is “reprogrammed” and although an android, he is capable of functioning as the ideal father-figure.

In “Desire in Narrative,” De Lauretis relates the emergence of the good and nurturing father in films such as * Kramer vs. Kramer* and * Ordinary People* to “the need to reaffirm a patriarchal order that has been badly shaken by feminism and the lesbian and gay movements” (116). In terms of social agency, especially as it is related to the theme of “fathering” it is useful to add that two of the most prominent new Hollywood authors have become associated with the image of a “good father.” George Lucas' public image is very much related to the role he plays in his private life as a single father to his two adopted children. Similarly, Steven Spielberg often refers to his seven children; one from his first marriage with Amy Goldberg, one from the previ-
ous marriage of Kate Capshaw, his present wife, three children from his marriage with Capshaw, and two African-American children, he and Capshaw adopted. He is thus not just a father, he has become a father of a multiracial family.

It is important to note that the “buddy-buddy” structure, which coheres around the interaction between two men, can be traced back to classical Hollywood cinema across a variety of genres. De Vito and Schwarzenegger also appeared together in *Twins*, another film Reitman has both directed and produced. The “buddy structure” has recurred in the film *Thelma and Louise*, featuring female protagonists. While coupling of two female characters is very rare, there are examples where a female character is paired with a male protagonist as in *The Long Kiss Goodnight, True Lies, Twister* or *Strange Days*.

In her book *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick points to the paradox that the bonding of men involves; it is through male-dominated kinship systems that both “obligatory heterosexuality” and homophobia are built into patriarchal structures. For a discussion of male bonding across the axis of race see Fred Pfeil’s “From Pillar to Postmodern: Race, Class, and Gender in the Male Rampage Film.” Sharon Willis discusses *Pulp Fiction* as a productive case of male bonding. As I have mentioned earlier (note 19, chapter 2) by inserting the symbolic image of a black father or brother, this film in her view, interrupts white paternal authority. “Borrowed “Style”: Quentin Tarantino’s Figures of Masculinity” in *High Contrast*. While the “buddy-principle” generally works toward reinstating patriarchal norms such as heterosexual marriage, Jillian Sandel takes John Woo’s Hong Kong films such as *Killer* and *Hard boiled* as examples of male intimacy without the usual homophobic frame. In “Reinventing Masculinity: The Spectacle of Intimacy in the Films of John Woo.”

Drinking a magic potion was mainly related to male characters starting with the adaptations of Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Dr.Jackyll, Mr. Hyde*. The potion-drinking in *The Nutty Professor* (1963) and its 1996 and 2000 remakes, indicate, however, that unlike female characters from *Death Becomes Her*, the male characters acquire greater mobility.

Before she drinks the potion Madelyn has exploited all the possibilities of cosmetic surgery. The discourse on cosmetic surgery, as Anne Balsamo suggests, “offers provocative material for a discussion of the cultural construction of the gendered body because, on the one hand, women are often the intended and preferred subjects of such discourse, and on the other, men are often the bodies doing the surgery. Cosmetic surgery is not then simply a discursive site for the ‘construction of images of women,’ but in actuality, a material site at which the physical female body is surgically dissected, stretched, carved, and reconstructed according to cultural and eminently ideological standards of physical appearance.” In “On the Cutting Edge: Cosmetic Surgery and the Technological Production of the Gendered Body” (225). This implies that current historical conditions of advanced technology for “improving the self-image” have managed to put new pressure on
women.

I will address the notion of woman as the subject of excellence in the following chapter. At this point, it will suffice to recall the discussion on the connection between the Lacanian Phallus - as a term which designates all the values which are opposed to lack, hence “fullness of being” - and woman. Here, it is useful to make a comparison between the female subjects, the supposed subjects par excellence stuck in the gullet of the signifier as in *Death Becomes Her*, and the woman from Jane Campion’s film *The Piano*. The comparison is important because *The Piano* offers a different kind of fantasy. It is a narrative where the woman is elaborated as capable of surviving the loss that the Other demands. Throughout the film the main character Ada feels complete to the extent that the piano is a part of her life. She is practically choking on her desire to keep it, not to let go of it, as if it were one of those privileged Lacanian objects such as the placenta, for example. Ada is mute and wild, and like the nature in the new world of New Zealand, needs to be “civilized.” In the film’s closing when her voice is finally heard, she decides to dispose of the piano, and insists that it be thrown overboard. But as the piano is sinking into the sea, she lets herself be caught by the ropes attached to it and pulled below the surface. Just as she is about to drown, Ada disattaches herself from the piano by letting the shoe entangled in ropes slip off her foot. Once she is safe in her new life with Baines, she reflects on her piano - floating attached to the piano is her dead oceanic self, a grotesque figure of a corpse blown up like a balloon, a referent at the bottom of the sea, a living reminder, as it were, that a woman just like a man can enter the realm of meaning because she can survive the death of being. I will address this possibility of surviving the death of being in a Hollywood blockbuster film *Alien Resurrection*.

With the distinction between different and the same I am referring to the discussions based on the analysis of the films in chapters 1 through 4. In all the films the conceptual process reflected in the structure of subjectivity is that of spacing, temporization, *différance*.

In addition feminist concerns are necessarily fragmented; the sign “woman” representing white, middle class women defined by passivity and hysteria could not be sustained.

Another example is foregrounded in the film *Batman and Robin*. The villain in the film, Dr. Fries, is preserving his ill wife in an aquarium-like container until he finds the cure for her illness. She floats there, suspended between life and death. There is another woman in the film, Poison Ivy, who echoes the mythological role imputed to women as deadly monsters. This type of character can also be traced in a film produced recently by film students. In this project conceived outside of the constraints of the Hollywood industry - *The Blair Witch Project* - the gaze of the notorious and murderous Blair Witch collapses into the gaze of the female character in the film. She is the author of the supposed documentary, and the filming of her project causes the film crew to tragically disappear. Taking into account the working of ideology in blockbuster films and the so-called art films, it is possible to conclude that the ideology of the independent production quite often echoes the ideology of high-budget productions. I have mentioned earlier the films such as *Happiness* where the father is elaborated as a sick pervert, and *Amer-
ican Beauty, where the father is tired of conforming to the laws of patriarchy. The connection between woman and monster will be explored further in the next chapter.

In Spectacular Bodies: Gender, Genre and the Action Cinema, Yvonne Tasker offers an account of the recent history of the action heroine. Tasker describes the action cinema of the 1980s as a “muscular cinema.” Taking into consideration films such as Red Sonja, Long Kiss Goodnight, Strange Days, Speed, Twister, Terminator 2 and Blue Steel, for example, Tasker adds that “masculinity” is not limited to the male body. She addresses the emergence of a muscular female heroine and the problems these figures pose for binary conceptions of gendered identity. For further implications of Linda Hamilton’s muscular body in Terminator 2, see also Hilary Radner’s “New Hollywood’s New Women: Murder in Mind – Sarah and Margie,” in Neale and Smith, and Sharon Willis’ “Combative Femininity: Thelma and Louise and Terminator 2,” in her High Contrast: Race and Gender in Contemporary Hollywood Film. In Working Girls: Gender and Sexuality in Popular Cinema, Tasker looks at female roles in other genres, and she establishes an important connection between the representation of women and their status as social agents. This issue is particularly relevant for the Alien series which I will discuss in the next chapter. Sigourney Weaver who also plays the leading role in the films produced the last two films of the series.

While the film Thelma and Louise demonstrates the impossibility of escaping the laws of patriarchy, films such as Blue Steel, Silence of the Lambs and GI Jane radicalize the extent to which women are constrained to appropriate both masculinity and masculinity. In GI Jane, the female character is trying to prove that women belong in the military. Frustrated by her seargent’s derogatory treatment, she exclaims, “Suck my dick!” In The Long Kiss Goodnight, faced with a complete crisis, the main female character utters the same line.

While examples of female friendship in films such as Desperately Seeking Susan, Color Purple, Steel Magnolias, Waiting to Exhale, League of Their Own, She-Devil, The First Wives Club, and Boys on the Side display a preoccupation with women’s issues, more generally the female characters in these films are concerned with forging a space for themselves within the patriarchal universe.