

Until Death Tears Them Apart: Male Narration and Female Spectacle in Roman Polanski's *Bitter Moon*

Aneta Karagiannidou

Employing Roman Polanski's 1991 *Bitter Moon* as text of reference, I intend to delineate the cinematic relationship between narration and spectacle through the sexual (un)relation between a man and a woman. To do so, I will be using the Lacanian 'Mirror Stage'¹ as the instance which formulates the gaze towards a phantastic and phantasmic spectacle, by means of an impossible narrative: that of the whole self. In the same way that the child standing in front of the mirror misrecognizes his/her reflection for the impossible wholeness which he/she is doomed to search for forever, the cinematic spectator misrecognizes the spectacle he/she watches as the reflection of an impossible whole narrative. And in the same way that narration seeks fulfilment through the spectacle it uses, man seeks completion through his relation to woman. So, narration carefully chooses its images, ordering them tightly, to create illusory completion, while man selects the *right* woman from the categories of womanhood he has created for her,² in order to revive his dreamy recollection of his non-existent whole self. But what happens when images won't stay still in the desired order, and when man's reflection shifts to show him the unreality of his own creation? Then another image is employed and a different woman is selected to fill the gap that her predecessor revealed and thus regenerate the fiction of male narrative coherence.

Roman Polanski's 1991 *Bitter Moon* is an example of male narration expressed and at the same time subverted by the female spectacle it employs as its medium. In this narrative, female spectacle is arranged and appropriated by the male narrating voice, so as to present the story of an absolutely coherent wholeness, an absolute passion, that ends because the woman cannot deliver what she initially 'promises' in terms of her role in the structure of the relation, that is,

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abundant pleasure and the male self's primary image of perfection, as it is cast back at him through their union.³

In the heterosexual frame, according to the Lacanian topography, woman takes up the position of *being the phallus* so as to sustain man's *having the phallus*, by his possession of her as his fetish. If she *is* the phallus and if the man possesses her, then he obviously *has* the phallus (Lacan, *Écrits* 289-90). *Having the phallus*, he becomes the possessor of *The Signifier* of all signifiers, that is, the possessor of logos; as Lacan says, "the phallus is the privileged signifier of that mark in which the role of the logos is joined with the advent of desire" (*Écrits* 287). Now that the man is the master of the signifying game, he is free to choose his own desired signifieds to attach to the signifiers. So he chooses his symbolic self to signify his imaginary whole image, the one lost forever during the mirror stage. However, this is an imaginary construct based on the imaginary identification between his penis and the phallus. As Elizabeth Grosz says:

The penis is removed from its merely anatomical and functional role within ('natural') need, (where its organic role for the little boy lies in urination in the first instance, and insemination, in the second), to the role of object, the *objet a*, in a circuit of demand addressed to the (m)other. It is then capable of taking on the symbolic role of signifier at the level of desire, an object of unconscious phantasy (136).

Therefore, the male illusion of phallic possession needs constant support so that the gaping ground between the imaginary and symbolic reality doesn't emerge to destroy the illusion of wholeness that the symbolic 'rupture' between the signifier and the signified first dispersed.⁴

It is here that woman comes into the picture. Along with a whole range of materialistic signifiers such as a house, a dog, a career and family, she is employed as the main source to sustain the male illusion of coherent union. Being sacrificed by the male phallic economy as the part relinquished for the sake of the signifying power of language, she is pushed to the real as the $\overline{\forall x \Phi x}$ (Lacan's symbol of woman), left outside the symbolic game, unsymbolised, being what man is supposed to get as the symbol of his being. Standing there, unreachable and impossible, she is what she can never have, feeling what she can never put into words. As Lacan points out while writing about the female *jouissance*: "There is a *jouissance* proper to her, to this 'her' which does not exist and which signifies nothing. There is a *jouissance* proper to her and of which she herself may know nothing, except that she experiences it – that much she does know" (*Feminine Sexuality* 145). Woman's only way into the symbolic is through the male imaginary that re-appropriates and re-inserts her into the symbolic, in the form of a string of signifiers which are lent to her but which can never give her a symbolic presence outside her relation to man.

Moreover, since according to Lacan "it is for that which she is not that she [woman] wishes to be desired as well as loved" (*Écrits* 290), she is doomed to

failure, while the man plunges into a compulsive search for his impossible dream in his “persistent divergence towards ‘another woman’ who may signify this phallus in various ways, either as a virgin or as a prostitute” (Lacan, *Écrits* 290). This schema formulates what Lacan calls the ‘comedy’ of heterosexual union and casts love as impossible (*Écrits* 289; *Feminine Sexuality* 158). As Ragland-Sullivan writes: “Love is a waltz around a non-relation, a sign of hope eternal that the void may be eternally and permanently closed” (74). This obligation to achieve impossible closure is attached to woman, signifying her as always already failed.

But there is nothing for her outside the doom of love. Lacking the means to form dreams of her own, since she is deprived of a place in the symbolic and thus of her relation with the imaginary,⁵ she can only pseudo-participate through her relation to man,⁶ who brings her into his world under the condition that she will dance to the tunes he’s going to play for her. Consequently, each time something goes wrong, the blame is always allotted to the female performer who is readily exchanged for another, rejected for the sake of the male dream of imaginary fulfilment, while the status of the symbols provided are never questioned.

When the film’s hero Oscar (Peter Coyote) first meets Mimi (Emmanuelle Seigner), he believes that “this is it”, that she is *the one* to realise for him the myth of love. He refers to her as his muse and the sentence he uses to describe his feelings, when he first meets her, is “I’d been granted a glimpse of heaven ... The gates of paradise had opened ... ”.⁷ When she proves incapable of incessantly sustaining his desire for the ultimate, absolute passion and pleasure, and thus of giving him back the illusory fullness and completion in which his first sight of himself initially made him believe, she shifts place in Oscar’s “phantasmic frame”⁸ and from *the* sublime lover she turns into *the* abject. As Oscar says: “I came to resent her failure to excite me the way she used to...”. Thus, she is discarded and easily replaced by another, not any particular one, as Oscar himself observes, but *the whole* female kind.

Bitter Moon is a male story, Oscar’s story, narrated by him at the same time that he is the story’s protagonist, whose life we get to watch and hear about. We only see Mimi through Oscar’s eyes and hear about her through his voice. Outside Oscar’s story Mimi doesn’t exist, she is nobody except for, in relation to, him. We never get a glimpse of Mimi’s life as an individual; in the film her life begins from the moment she meets Oscar and moves into his life, and ends with him and by him when he shoots her. As she tells Nigel (Hugh Grant) when he asks for her side of the story: “I let *him* [Oscar] tell the story”.

First person narration (either as voice-on or voice-over in the traditional *film noir*) or subjective narration (through a subjective camera technique) in many erotic thrillers of the late 80s-early 90s, is a common narrative convention signifying the construction of male subjectivity in the genre. Alan J. Pakula’s 1990 *Presumed Innocent* and Adrian Lyne’s 1987 *Fatal Attraction* are two more examples of male narration in which the female images provided are constructed

by the male gaze. Outside this gaze these women do not exist, either literally, as in the case of *Presumed Innocent*, where Carolyn (Greta Scacchi) is already dead at the beginning of the film and we only get access to her through Rusty's (Harrison Ford) memories; or figuratively, as in the case of *Fatal Attraction*, where Alex (Glen Close) is delineated as a character only in her relation to Dan (Michael Douglas). Outside this relation she doesn't exist in the film's reality.

Along these lines in *Bitter Moon* we witness a multiplicity of perspectives in Oscar's vision: he is the cinematic (that is, perceptual) eye, the narrating eye and the experiencing eye all at once. In the perpetual narrative flashbacks of the film's plot, Mimi is merely the beautiful woman onto whose body Oscar's masterpiece of *the Absolute* love and cruelty is projected. So in the end, Mimi becomes nothing more than Oscar's unique literary achievement, his never-published novel that would put him in the Hemingwayesque sphere he always coveted.

This story of absolute passion is narrated by Oscar to Nigel, a British married man, who is travelling with his wife (Christine Scott Thomas) on the same cruise, and who, infatuated with Mimi, silently accepts Oscar's deal to hear his story in exchange for her. In the sessions that follow between the two men, silent Nigel becomes the perfect mirror onto which Oscar may project his phantasy of pure excess in both of its forms: happiness and satisfaction coupled with deprivation and despair, so that he can relive the affair, savour it for the last time. However, the form that these narrative sessions take is that of the instruction of the younger by the older man, who in a paternal way prepares his surrogate son to claim his own dream of completion. Thus, *Bitter Moon* is very much a story of male bonding, while woman is reduced to its justification; men join forces to fulfil their dream of *the absolute* affluence, embodied by the image of the luscious woman.

An analysis of character interrelations at this point would reveal the mechanisms of misrecognition I have been talking about, which create the unreality of absolute narrative coherence and sexual completion. Although the cinematic text prioritises the male look, a critical focus on the relations Mimi, the film's main female figure, develops with all the other characters of the film, reveals the female entrapment in the male impossible narration of *the absolute* perfection she can never realize.

Oscar and Mimi

Oscar is an American writer who moves to Paris following in the footsteps of his compatriots Ernest Hemingway and Scott F. Fitzgerald. However, all he manages to do is write some insignificant novels and experience a number of flimsy affairs. When he meets Mimi, she makes such a strong impression on him that she becomes his muse, his inspiration and the theme of the masterpiece he never gets to write, apart from its first few lines. He engages in a passionate affair with her, consumed in incessant, voracious, ardent consummations. Once Oscar's hunger is satiated, it starts turning into nausea towards the absolutely desired body,⁹ which, by becoming totally accessible, closes Oscar's circuit of

male antagonistic desire.¹⁰ When Mimi can no longer support her position as Oscar's *objet a*, incessantly recycling Oscar's desire,¹¹ she becomes a double threat. On the one hand she threatens to expose the impossibility of the absolute union, since she has now become the signifier of its disintegration and of its imaginary state; while on the other hand she becomes the feared object that bears no traces of its previous sublime qualities, but rather threatens the male subject with castration, being herself proved as castrated and yet still claiming to retain her position as her man's double. As Oscar tells Mimi when she asks him what it is that she has done wrong: "You didn't do anything. You exist, that's all".

From this point on she becomes for Oscar the enemy that has to be cast aside or else exterminated. Initially Mimi triggers Oscar's mechanism of fantasy¹² with her physical appearance and then with the perverse sexual games she plays with him, reinforcing Oscar's phantasy of wholeness by offering him an abundance of first-experienced sexual pleasure. When she has nothing more to give, she can no longer nurture Oscar's desire for absolute satisfaction the way she does in the beginning. So, she becomes the obstacle which has to be removed. And Oscar is bound to use any means necessary to protect his frail masculine dream of affluence.

Oscar's unbelievable cruelty towards Mimi is an indicator of his frustration at not having his dream realised, which he projects onto Mimi as her fault and which demands her punishment. When she makes this possible through her love for him, by yielding herself and her desire to his own, accepting whatever he wants,¹³ he exceeds all limits of cruelty and sadism; as he says: "Everyone has a sadistic streak. Nothing brings it out better than the knowledge you've got someone at your mercy".

Mimi and Oscar

At the beginning of the affair Mimi is depicted as a waif, a Lolita-like figure whose sexual potential lurks alluringly behind a childlike naiveté. During her affair with Oscar *she* is shown to provoke all the experimentation that initially feeds the myth of the absolute but which finally leads to bare perversion. Sex between Oscar and Mimi begins as a Biblical incarnation of Primal Sin, turns into an experimentation with bodies and roles, and ends up as a mechanical recreation of edgy situations with no story in the background to support the realised acts. Bringing all the phantasised background into the performed foreground, Mimi removes one by one all her Salomean veils and reveals to Oscar the body, which should have remained covered in at least one of its phallic veils.¹⁴ Thus, Mimi commits the mistake of *overproximity*, going beyond the limits required by the phantasmic frame that supports the affair; as Žižek puts it "the excessive opening up (disclosure of a secret, allegiance, obedience...) of one person to another usually reverts to an excremental repulsive intrusion" (68).

When Mimi, following her desire for Oscar, subdues her desire to his own,

giving her whole self to him, she threatens Oscar's desire to desire her with extinction and therefore becomes a menace to him.

Mimi: But I love you. All I want is you. I want to marry you. I want to give you babies. I want to give you the rest of my life.

Oscar: I don't want the rest of your life. I want my own.

The male and female desire are structurally opposite so that they can coexist, the male one based on wanting to get and the female one based correspondingly on wanting to give. That is why their coupling is dependent on the existence of a distance between the two lovers that will secure the recycling of the erotic game. If that distance is annulled, then the coupling is doomed to disintegration, since the circuit of desire between the two lovers closes down and no energy can be exchanged if the man has nothing more to claim and the woman nothing more to give.

Once Mimi's sexuality is fully exposed before Oscar's eyes, he voraciously emerges into it, identifying Mimi with its practice and expecting her sexual energy to fulfil him forever. So he focuses his gaze on the sexual games they play, identifying them as the arena where his dream of wholeness will come true. However, these games are finite, constructions based on particular scenarios, thus they at some point end and so does the myth of the absolute union for Oscar. Once Mimi has nothing more to give, there is nothing more for Oscar to want from her and that's the end of the affair. In Oscar's words: "I loved her too but our credit was running out. We were headed for sexual bankruptcy".

When Mimi meets Oscar he is introduced to her in the most conventional patriarchal way, as her savior, the man who gives her his bus ticket and takes the blame for not having one when the bus conductor appears. He takes her out to dinner, rubs her feet when she's cold and later on supports her financially, when she leaves her job as a waitress, so that they can be together all the time. In this patriarchal image, Oscar's and Mimi's roles are based on conventional structural positions already existing in the frame of the relation, which predetermine the limitations and expectations between them. Thus, following the lines of a courtly love scenario, Oscar is seen by Mimi as the mature and successful man who will love and protect her, while in his eyes she is the pure maiden who will inspire him with her love and perfect beauty. When Mimi is transformed into a powerful sexual woman who knows how to arouse Oscar and inspire in him a provocative sexual uncanniness, the scenario changes and she becomes for him his great seductress, the all-powerful woman who is there to re-stage for Oscar the scene of his symbolic castration,¹⁵ a deadly female who can restore primary plenitude in exchange for Oscar's life. This is the spirit of the sadomasochistic games they play, in which Oscar is always the victim terrorized and violated by the figure of Mimi as dominatrix. However, when Mimi fails to realise the expectations of mythical perfection she has aroused in Oscar, she can't be tolerated by him as merely human. So when she tries to take up the role of the wife for

him, she doesn't stand a chance. Watching her shift from the position of the sublime lover to that of the ordinary housewife, Oscar has his vision of Mimi shattered before his eyes. What she now makes him see is the pathetic side of life he wishes to avert and so he mercilessly punishes her for all that she is and mostly for what she dares not to be.

But there is nothing else for Mimi outside her relation with Oscar, so she stays in it even when he treats her mercilessly for her incapacity to give him *the* myth. When he rejects her, he fragments her own phantasy of unitary wholeness, which is structurally dependent on his own. Only by *being* the perfect *phallus* for Oscar and by reinforcing his imaginary phallic wholeness can she feel whole herself and worthy as a woman. When Oscar rejects her he breaks this phantasy and projects in front of her eyes its fragments, which she readily introjects as her reflection. The result of this schema is Mimi's disintegration into an ugly, passive, pathetic figure, a dead-while-alive figure in the Lacanian pattern,¹⁶ who feels deservedly punished by Oscar. And she believes so much in this failed image which her beloved shows her, that she herself reproduces it by letting herself become ugly, fat and totally dependent on the crumbs of (in-)attention Oscar inconsiderately throws to her. So she stays with Oscar and tolerates everything in the name of her love for him, giving her whole self to him, her saviour, her man. But nothing can ever be enough; as Lemaire points out:

Every object of desire, every object of alienating identification will reveal itself to be necessarily ephemeral and destined to be supplanted because it is incapable of stopping up the lack inscribed in the subject from the start by the very fact of his being eclipsed in the signifier. (175)

So there is nothing stopping Oscar from wanting more and more and punishing Mimi accordingly in a metathesis of one signifier for another, all pointing to the same signified: plenitude. As Oscar tells Mimi after shooting her and before killing himself, "we were just too greedy baby, that was all!"

Consciousness of her role in the patriarchal sphere is imposed on Mimi when she agrees to go through with an undesired abortion, which maims her, for the sake of Oscar who only uses the occasion to get rid of her. Now that her phantasy of happiness through union is destroyed forever, she is left with the reality of the symbolic non-existence to which Oscar has condemned her. Being reduced to "a safe fuck", she projects her expendability back onto Oscar, and forces him to face the disintegration of the phallic phantasy she had once supported. Taking up her role as the impossible *jouissance* coming from the real, she subverts the symbolic by destroying its great supporter, the imaginary. If according to Lacan it is only through fantasy that man can unite with woman (*Feminine Sexuality* 151), then by destroying fantasy she renders the union impossible and maximises the symbolic lack created by the primary rupture between the signifier and the signified. With the same absorption with which Oscar pursued his imaginary wholeness, Mimi imposes on him his symbolic

fragmentation, primarily focusing on Oscar's genital incapacity. Since, as Lacan points out, there is a "centrifugal tendency of the genital drive in love life, which makes impotence much more difficult to bear for him [the male subject]" (*Écrits* 290), sexual inability is enough to create the greatest possible hole in a man's phallic image of himself.

Shown by the film as responsible for Oscar's paralysis, she breaks his body as well as his dream for completion by revengefully imposing on him an impossible fragmentation in the same familiar schema of the perfectly happy union. She moves back in with him, becomes his nurse and finally marries him, exposing the illusory nature of all forms of union. Thus she exchanges Oscar's dream of the perfect union of the two-in-one for the complete fragmentation of the two in infinite pieces which can never again come together and cohere. Therefore Oscar and Mimi enter a game of fragmentation which is analogous in reverse to the game of wholeness that couples are symbolically supposed to play, adding more and more to each other's image of disintegration and solitude by invalidating the structure of symbolic union and imaginary oneness.

Although Mimi and Oscar both become free from the trap of heterosexual union when they lack the prerequisites to participate in it, they are trapped in their compulsion to repeat the same repertory of heterosexuality, demanding from each other their dream back. Repeating the same cycle that hurt them over and over again, only with greater force each time, they are finally led to extinction, which is in fact the only way their initial dream of completion could ever be realised. As Ragland-Sullivan comments, employing the schema of Lacan's third period of teaching, "people settle for any known set of identifications, however painful, lest they fall out of the familiar symbolic order into the real of anxiety which opens onto a void of actual emptiness at the centre of being" (94). And the only arena Oscar and Mimi know for their dream fulfilment is the erotic game. So even when the dream turns into a nightmare, they are left with the same tools to inhabit the same sphere, a parody of union which is so strong that it incessantly produces fragmentation up to its final form, physical extinction.

Mimi and Nigel

Consciously masquerading her broken self as the perfect phallic closure that men desire from her, Mimi becomes the perfect woman, every man's fantasy, but this time she knows that the preservation of her mask depends on the veils that cover her and make her inaccessible. Keeping this distance, she preserves her sublime quality intact; her answer to Nigel's declaration of love proves that point:

Nigel: But I'm truly, sincerely in love with you

Mimi: That's why you will never have me.

After Martinique, when Mimi is shown to become consciously aware of her position in the patriarchal sphere, she exploits her symbolic non-existence and

her use by men as a medium to feed their imaginary identifications. Thus she subverts Nigel's dream-world:

Nigel: I think ... I think I've fallen in love with you

Mimi: Come on, I'm just a fantasy, an amusement on a boring voyage.

Mimi uses the space allotted to her by patriarchy and masquerades as the perfect phallus. Following the rules of the game but at the same time keeping a psychological distance and over-emphasising her phallic function, she manages to expose the artificiality of her role and reflect the other side of the imaginary perfection, which ought to have remained invisible.¹⁷ Thus she becomes the surface image to mirror what Nigel wishes to forget: his wife Fiona who is clearly marked in the film as the obstacle to his quest for *the* fantasy.

Nigel: You're hurting me terribly

Mimi: The way you're hurting your wife?

Nigel: She doesn't know about us

Mimi: She's looking right at us

Mimi's experimentation with the possibilities of her symbolic role, brings to the surface the 'unheimlich' real surplus that should have remained buried and out of sight (Freud, *Art and Literature* 345). This unsymbolised power she carries disrupts the phallic closure that her emphasised physical beauty creates,¹⁸ marking her as unhomey. The more she transgresses the symbolic limitations that demand her support of the patriarchal myth of perfection, and discloses its imaginary state, the more dangerous she becomes. And she seems to be self-consciously moving towards that direction and her consequent extinction, stretching the symbolic world as much as she can until the end comes: evidently her end. When Fiona tells her that the destination of her trip is India, Mimi comments with a blank look that she goes further, much further...

Nigel and Fiona

Nigel and Fiona are there in the film's reality to signify so-called normality. They are a typical British couple celebrating their seventh wedding anniversary by taking a trip to India. On the surface they appear to be a harmonious couple, but as the film progresses and through their contact with Mimi and Oscar, who reflect all of the couple's suppressed needs and desires, a huge gap comes to shatter the couple's seemingly unified image. Suddenly the romantic trip to India turns out to be a desperate attempt at diversion, one more signifier employed to fill the signifying silence, one more veil to cover the void that can never be completely filled by their union, since both are entrapped in their role of attempting to be what they can never be for each other.

Celebrating the anniversary of their symbolic union in an environment that brings them face to face with the disintegration of their imaginary unity, they both let their suppressed needs and desires come to the surface and seek fulfilment outside wedlock. Fiona seems to be conscious of the problem between herself and Nigel, insinuating that she's lost all of her mystery for him and disclosing that he likes to keep her under control by delimiting her reproductive capacity. So their sexual encounters become rarer and rarer, as Fiona confesses, and other symbolic signifiers, such as the trip to India, come to supplant the gap that the sexual un-relation creates in order to preserve the couple's imaginary unification. Mimi's appearance reveals the gap between Fiona and Nigel, and makes her Nigel's new *objet a*. From this point onwards, Nigel seems to be ready to discard Fiona, happily handing her over to another man.

When Fiona refuses to stay still any more in the heterosexual symbolic game that uses her as a medium for its male players, she pushes its limits by over-emphasising the role assigned to her. Thus she poses as the perfect phallus, invitingly playing with Mimi the game of seduction in front of bewildered Nigel. Having both been used and betrayed by the men and the myth of completion they have learnt to believe in, they now turn to each other in a burst of lesbian *jouissance*.

The film's male symbolic world is threatened by this unsymbolisable union. So filmic reality names Mimi's act as perverse and Fiona's as vindictive and restores order by having Oscar shoot Mimi. Having killed his means of exposition, Oscar's voice can now be silenced, while the patriarchal role is clearly assigned to Nigel who comforts frightened Fiona. Terrified by her indescribable role and the *jouissance* she has experienced but knows nothing about, she once more buries it and returns to Nigel's embrace. In this way symbolic closure is shown to prevail, illustrated in the film's last scene in the image of the child, the symbol of the union of the two in one. However as Lacan puts it, what has been two can never be one again: "when one is made into two there is no going back on it. It can never revert to making one again, not even a new one. The *Aufhebung* [sublation] is one of those sweet dreams of philosophy" (*Feminine Sexuality* 156). Thus the illusion can once again hold, but only until a new signifier enters the tightly-organised image of the happily-married couple to signify the phallus in one more of its forms and once more re-start the search for an always already lost dream, the perfect whole self.

In the same way that no woman can ever actualise for any man the dream of wholeness, no spectacle can ever project *the* absolute narrative coherence. There is always something missing from the illusory spectre and the slightest shift in the carefully ordered set of signifiers is enough to reveal the gap that can never go away. No matter how many signifiers are used, there is always place for more in a structure that depends on the incessant gathering of more and more elements to create the illusion of impossible completion. However, the residue present both in the image and in the erotic union betrays the

mythical dimension of male narrative reality. Thus, in *Bitter Moon*, when order is supposedly restored and narrative closure provided with Nigel and Fiona making a fresh start in the doomed game of love, we are left with the same image of the tormented sea that the film first opened with, indicating the circular regeneration of the illusory linearity of filmic reality.

Notes

1. See Jacques Lacan's *Écrits* (1-7).
2. See Helen Haste's *The Sexual Metaphor* where she distinguishes between four categories of women: the wife, the whore, the waif and the witch.
3. This is the main idea of my MA thesis, "When a Man Loves a Woman or When Man the Signifier Meets His Double: Man the Signified Through Woman", where I argue that in a heterosexual relationship woman is employed as the man's double, the medium through which the male subject can reach imaginary wholeness (in the Lacanian sense) and experience the illusion of his always-already-lost whole self, the one he elusively glanced at during the time of his mirror stage.
4. See Jacques Lacan's *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (203-215).
5. The concurrent relation that the human subject develops both with the symbolic and with the imaginary realm is stressed by Jane Gallop in her reading of Lacan's 'Mirror Stage' in her *Reading Lacan* (81).
6. See Lacan's *Feminine Sexuality* (143-152).
7. Very characteristic of Oscar's mythological eye is the way he views his first sexual encounter with Mimi: "Nothing ever surpassed the rapture of that first awakening. I might have been Adam with the taste of apple fresh in my mouth. I was looking at all the beauty in the world embodied in a single female form. And I knew with sudden blinding certainty, this was it."
8. The term is taken from Slavoj Žižek's *The Plague of Fantasies* (64-69).
9. Kristeva discussing the structural relation between *jouissance* and abjection, defines abject as "a *jouissance* in which the subject is swallowed up but in which the Other, in return, keeps the subject from foundering by making it repugnant" (9).
10. In his *The Plague of Fantasies* Slavoj Žižek, discussing the male version of Lacanian desire being the desire of the Other (*Four Fundamental Concepts* 235), says that "what confers the value of desirability on an object is that it is already desired by another" (118).
11. Notice Žižek's comment on the *objet a*: "The *objet petit a* is not what we desire, what we are after, but, rather, that which sets our desire in motion" (39).
12. As Žižek says: "The automatism of love is set in motion when some contingent, ultimately indifferent, (libidinal) object finds itself occupying a pre-given fantasy-place" (39).
13. As Slavoj Žižek observes talking about female desire: "The feminine version [of desire] is that of 'I desire through the Other', in both senses of 'let the Other do it (possess and enjoy the object, etc.) for me' ... as well as 'I desire only what he desires, I want only to fulfil his desire'" (118).
14. Elizabeth Grosz observes that: "Salome's dance, like strip-tease can only seduce when at least one veil remains, alluring yet hiding the *nothing* of woman's sex." (141).
15. According to Freud "Usually it is from women that the threat [of castration] emanates" (*On Sexuality* 316).

16. See Žižek (89).
 17. See Irigaray (76).
 18. See Baudrillard's *Symbolic Exchange and Death* (103).

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«Έως Ότου Τους Χωρίσει ο Θάνατος»: (ανδρική) αφήγηση και (γυναικείο) θέμα στα Μαύρα Φεγγάρια του Έρωτα του Roman Polanski
 Ανέτα Καραγιαννίδου

Χρησιμοποιώντας ως σημείο αναφοράς μου την ταινία του Roman Polanski *Τα Μαύρα Φεγγάρια του Έρωτα (Bitter Moon)*, σκοπεύω να σκιαγραφήσω την κινηματογραφική

σχέση ανάμεσα στην αφήγηση (στόρι) και το θέαμα (εικόνες) μέσα από το πατριαρχικό μοτίβο της ερωτικής σχέσης ανάμεσα σ' έναν άντρα και μια γυναίκα. Χρησιμοποιώντας λακανική θεωρία και το «στάδιο του καθρέφτη» ως την πρωταρχική στιγμή κατά την οποία γεννιέται η αφηγηματική φωνή μιας τέλειας, ολοκληρωμένης οντότητας, θα προσπαθήσω μέσα από τη σκιαγράφηση των ετεροφυλόφιλων σχέσεων της ταινίας να παρουσιάσω την ανδρική επιθυμία για έναν ολοκληρωμένο αφηγηματικό κόσμο μέσα στον οποίο η γυναίκα αποτελεί την εικόνα που στηρίζει την φαντασιακή έννοια της ολοκλήρωσης και την κάνει μέρος της συμβολικής πραγματικότητας.

Μέσα σ' έναν συμβολικό κόσμο όπου ο άνδρας είναι ο αυθαίρετος κάτοχος του φαλλικού συμβόλου εξουσίας, το οποίο εξίσου αυθαίρετα ορίστηκε να μετουσιώνει η γυναίκα, το σενάριο της απόλυτης, ολοκληρωμένης ύπαρξης αποκτά συμβολική διάσταση μόνο μέσα από την ετεροφυλόφιλη συνένωση. Και μια ολοκληρωμένη ανδρική ύπαρξη δεν μπορεί παρά ν' αφηγείται ολοκληρωμένες ιστορίες. Τι γίνεται όμως όταν η γυναίκα και η εικόνα αναπόφευκτα προδώσουν τον αδύνατο ρόλο που τους επιβλήθηκε και αποκαλυφθεί το κενό που μεταστρέφει την πραγματικότητα της ολοκλήρωσης σ' ένα φαντασιακό σενάριο αδύνατο να υλοποιηθεί στη σφαίρα της συμβολικής πραγματικότητας;