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Devouring Holes: Darren Aronofsky's Requiem for a Dream and the Tectonics of Psychoanalysis

Paul Eisenstein, Otterbein College, Westerville, Ohio, United States

You'll use anything to fill that hole. And when you feed the hole, [. . .] it'll grow and grow and grow, until eventually, it'll devour you.
—Darren Aronofsky

Just over fifteen minutes into Darren Aronofsky's *Requiem for a Dream* (2000), we are presented with a close overhead shot of the faces of the film's primary couple, Harry Goldfarb (Jared Leto) and Marion Silver (Jennifer Connelly), as they lie on their sides facing each other in bed. Just prior to this moment, Harry has introduced to Marion one of the film's eponymous dreams—his plan for her to open her own clothing store with apparel designed from her own sketches. For Marion initially, the plan seems incompatible with the libidinal

thrills of risk (thrills telegraphed by the Coney Island roller coaster featured in the scene's background). The daughter of wealthy parents who gave her money in lieu of love (and, presumably, discipline), Marion's entire identity is to this point bound up in the pleasures of defying parental authority. She responds thus to the clothing-store plan by focusing on the opportunities she would lose to "hang" with Harry, and as they make their way down from the high-rise apartment building balcony on which they have been standing, she intentionally sets off a fire alarm. After eluding the building's supers, the two of them have sex on an elevator. In the pillow talk scene, however, there is every suggestion that the illicit pleasures of risk are in the process of giving way to a more normative future. That is to say, in their dialogue, we begin to see how the life of plenitude and meaning Harry imagines to lie in a shared entrepreneurial aspiration is of a piece with the life of plenitude and meaning promised by the achievement of romantic coupling. As Harry, for example, confesses to Marion that from his initial sight of her he believed her to be "the most beautiful girl in the whole world," Marion replies that though she has been told this very same thing many times, it had always before been meaningless and that only this time is she really hearing it. Marion tells Harry that his words make her "feel really good," and in response to Marion's ratification of the meaningfulness of his utterances, Harry says, "You know, somebody like you can really make things alright for me."¹

In most mainstream commercial films, the form of the shot(s) accompanying dialogue of this kind works hand in glove with the ideological promise of finally being loved for who one is. In the decisive pillow talk scene in

Garry Marshall's *Pretty Woman* (1990), for example, Marshall's establishing overhead shot zooms slowly in on a softly lit Vivian Ward (Julia Roberts) and Edward Lewis (Richard Gere) before cutting to point-of-view close ups of each character as Vivian recounts the bathetic story of her becoming a prostitute and Edward whispers sentimental bromides on the order of "You could be so much more" and "I think that you are a bright and very special woman." In the analogous bathtub scene in Zach Braff's more recent *Garden State* (2004), Braff works from the same playbook in his presentation of Andrew Largeman (Braff) and Sam (Natalie Portman), as a slow zoom followed by standard point of view, continuity editing depicts a softly-lit Andrew quietly recounting a tender memory of his just-deceased mother, crying for the first time, and enjoying an embrace with Sam in which he avows that he now feels safe. In scenes like these, Marshall's and Braff's establishing shots, lighting, slow zoom, and editing play deftly to our voyeuristic tendencies as spectators, letting us glimpse, get closer to, and ultimately identify with a vision of romantic love in which each half of a couple finds in the Other complete recognition and the solution to his or her anxieties and vulnerabilities. Neither film, needless to say, confronts us with any actual sex.

While the sound in *Requiem's* pillow talk scene nods towards the secure voyeuristic position in which *Pretty Woman* and *Garden State* let us indulge—Harry's and Marion's hushed voices are matched by the barely audible strings of the nondiegetic musical score—Aronosfky, to his credit, clearly has something far less comfortable in mind. This is apparent in his very presentation of the shot to

which I referred in my opening, a shot in which the frame has been cut precisely in half by what amounts to an invisible vertical line down the screen. While in the film's diegesis, Harry and Marion are clearly gazing at each other, we as spectators see them gazing at something they do not see, at some sort of invisible impediment. At the precise moment of its appearance, the line risks the charge of gratuitous stylization, since it does not enable the presentation of additional, and occluded, perspectives. The provision of such perspectives, of course, is the standard mandate of the split screen in contemporary cinema and television. Rather than privileging a single location or point of view, or having to rely on crosscutting and shot-reverse shot editing, directors divide (or sometimes even quarter) the screen in order to give more simultaneous visibility to the events with which they (and their spectators) are concerned.² Such divisions are tantamount on the one hand to a confession that what we see on screen is not all, and on the other to an attempt to recover points of view or locations that are being neglected. The nondiegetic line in *Requiem* is perhaps interpretable in a straightforwardly symbolic way, since it can be said to symbolize the concrete material barriers that stand in the way of Harry's and Marion's dream (e.g., the capital required for someone of Harry's class position to launch an independent business of the sort he has in mind, or the physiological challenges presented by the Heroin addiction with which both are plagued). Lending support to this reading, Aronofsky himself has said of this scene, "Here are my two characters in love. They're actually trying to connect but there are still so many walls between them and keeping them apart."

While questions of political economy and medicine are no doubt salient in *Requiem*,³ Aronofsky's pluralizing of the obstacles here risks obfuscating the more singular psychoanalytic tectonics that are clearly antecedent to the material barriers faced by Harry and Marion, and by the film's other primary characters—Harry's mother, Sara Goldfarb (Ellen Burstyn), and his friend, Tyrone Love (Marlon Wayans). Indeed, given the way Aronofsky's characters' conduct is so explicitly motivated by the fundamental fantasy of direct access to pre-Oedipal jouissance—what Aronofsky himself has seen as a timeless attempt to fill or feed the hole in one's social reality—we might first see the line as indexing the structural, dividing wall that keeps all human beings apart (and makes possible a form of their coming together). That is to say, the line asks to be regarded as representing what psychoanalysis sees as the wall of language inaugurated by the advent of the (phallic) Signifier, of a word that forecloses, and functions as a barrier to, the Other's enjoyment at the same time that it inaugurates an intense, and many times lifelong, desire to capture, cause or be the source of that enjoyment.

To see the line in this way is to confront a visual inscription of the Signifier in its real and disruptive cinematic dimension, to see Aronofsky giving visual form to a real excess that can never be presented straightforwardly as a meaningful object even as it inscribes itself in a putatively whole, visible field of meaningful signs.⁴ It is, indeed, as if we were being confronted by the real of the sexual act or sexual difference itself in the midst of another filmic iteration of the discourse of love. When we see the line in a pillow talk scene that films such as *Pretty*

Woman or *Garden State* have conditioned us to observe safely and seamlessly, the illusion that we are seeing everything is shattered, and so is our ideological identification with the standard vision of a couple loving each other wholly and selflessly.⁵ As a kind of excess or barrier internal to our looking, the line reminds us that none of our visual or verbal signifying can get free of the founding condition or cut of signification, visual or verbal.⁶ And it is the *erosion* of this line that speaks to the devastating fates met by the characters in Aronofsky's film, who believe they can profit or flourish in and through its dissolution, but who end up instead re-living a version of childhood horrifyingly shorn of the fantasmatic and idealizing ingredients we project back into it.

Pushing Off?

The difficulty of living on the other side of the barrier to pre-Oedipal enjoyment is clear in the affinity conveyed in *Requiem's* presentation of the presumed satisfactions of romantic love and drug use. At first glance, these two sources of satisfaction appear to be opposed in the film. That is to say, we are asked to consider Harry's and Marion's sexual relationship—and the sexual relationship of the film's other couple, Tyrone and Alice (Aliya Campbell)—as perhaps the bulwark against (or substitute for) the lethal and corrosive effects of Heroin. On this view, there is almost something ethical about Harry's and Tyrone's entrepreneurial and romantic aspirations, something we should root for, since they promise to provide positive coordinates for desire in a properly social world. At the very least, these aspirations are explicitly positioned to give an

upward trajectory to their lives, as breaking the vicious and enthralling cycle of having to find their next score. As Tyrone puts it to Harry at one point, "I don't want to be running the streets my whole life, my sneakers all ripped up, my nose running down to my chin." If drug use is rooted in repetition (captured formally by the hip-hop montage sequences used to present its use), the dream of a more idyllic future at least carries the (seeming) promise of narrative and of progress. But what are we to make of the way Selby's plot repeatedly places the vicissitudes of drug dealing and drug addiction as the obstacle to the peace, happiness or perfection of complementary, romantic love? Should we regard, for example, the killing of Harry's and Tyrone's drug source as the cause for the sidetracking of their dream? This is, after all, the killing that radically alters Harry's relationship with Marion, since it forces him to ask Marion to sleep for money with her therapist, Arnold (Sean Gullette). Whereas Harry imagines that this will enable them to begin saving money again and thus put them back on track—he says, "It'll be perfect"—we are presented instead with a disquieting instance of sexual coupling, in which Arnold more or less mauls Marion without regard for her desire and pleasure. He is, in short, obviously having sex with his *fantasy* of Marion, and his getting off on her, we might say, has nothing to with her, only her body.

The scene, admittedly, is a horrifying one, and the Snorricam Aronofsky attaches to Connelly's body as her character leaves Arnold's (as well as his slowing of the frame rate) captures her character's degradation and heartbreak. When Marion arrives home, we can see in the scene's blocking that something

fundamental has come between she and Harry (each sit on opposite sides of their couch without so much as looking at each other). But as dire as her encounter with Arnold is, there are probably some difficult lessons in it for *Requiem's* other lovers. That lesson would center on psychoanalysis' insistence that love's obstacle resides not in some external impediment that separates the lover from his/her beloved, but in the jouissance that separates both lover and beloved from him or herself—a jouissance whose persistence has nothing essentially to do with the ego or personhood of either. It is the fantasy that this jouissance is (or can be) directly obtained as the meaningful glue for a social or loving relationship that clarifies the extent to which the drug use in the film is not opposed to romantic love but a species of it. This is the case because *both* are shown in the film to be bound by a quest for the Other's jouissance in which the Other's jouissance is rid of its disturbing or unnerving qualities. The problem with this view, however, is that the Other's jouissance never fails to escape or resist its tamed incarnations. On the contrary, it insists and persists, exercising its pull in ways that give the lie to the idea that it is (or can be) the conduit for transcendent, interpersonal communion. When Lacan claims that "[w]hat makes up for the sexual relationship is, quite precisely, love" (Lacan, 1998: 45), what he means is that love can only flourish on the other side of a recognition that we do not commune meaningfully or transcendently with the Other in the act of sex (or on drugs, for that matter). This point is telegraphed initially in Harry's pornographic hallucination of Marion and Arnold as he awaits Marion's return. As Harry watches the display and sale of a diamond ring—the

very symbol of the marriage contract—on a cable television shopping channel, the frame dissolves to Marion very much in the process of enjoying Arnold.

An even more striking display of the disturbing pull exercised by the Other's jouissance, however, comes in what is arguably *Requiem's* most psychoanalytic scene—of Tyrone and Alice (both completely naked) on the verge of a sexual encounter. In this scene, Alice asks Tyrone to come back to bed, but Tyrone says that there will be "plenty of time for that" and that he is "grooving with these new mirrors I got." The form of this shot is salient, as we see Tyrone's face in close up, gazing at a mirror that he slides across the frame, darkening it. When we see Tyrone, then, he is not seeing himself in the mirror; when we do not see him, he is. The dynamic here is patently strange and no doubt reminiscent of the child's sought-after mastery in the game of *fort-da* (introduced, of course, in Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*): interrupting a sexual coupling with a flesh-and-blood (and very desirable) woman lying invitingly in a bed several feet away, Tyrone appears to be making a game out of the appearance and disappearance of his own mirror image. It is as if the jouissance of the Other, as is its wont, has introduced a threatening pressure unbearable to the ego, and as if Tyrone, via play, must strive to bring back into his control his own egoic suspension.

What Alice clearly wants in this scene is not love (or pillow talk) but jouissance—not the whole Tyrone but a part (or parts) of his body. And this explains the source of the pleasure in Tyrone's mirror manipulations, since what he re-enacts is nothing less than the jubilation-delivering experience of the mirror

stage itself and of the initial sight of one's image as whole.⁷ Behind this image, tellingly, is the Mother—a fact announced in the cut to the flashback of a six or seven year old boy running up a sequence of stairs, down an apartment building hall, and finally, into a room where a woman sits by a open window holding an orange. Jumping onto the lap of the woman, the boy says, "I told you Mama, one day I'd make it." The mother replies, "You don't have to make anything; you just have to love your Mama." The boy, of course, is Tyrone, and as he and his mother embrace, we hear Alice's voice say, "What you doing, baby?" before a slide of the mirror returns us back to a close-up of Tyrone's troubled face. Tyrone has not even heard Alice, and when she repeats her question, he conceals his daydream entirely, telling Alice that he was thinking about her and "about all of the nasty things [he is] about to do to [her]." Wayans' face before uttering these words, however, is utterly forlorn, and we see plainly the predicament that his nostalgic reminiscence is supposed to alleviate. We see, that is, his essential difficulty in "pushing off" (the phrase used to designate the experience of taking Heroin). Indeed, the extent to which he conveys the impression that he is betraying his mother's imperative (that all he need do is love her) in going to bed with Alice only deepens the suggestion of his captivity vis-à-vis his Mother and to the infantile, egoic simplicity she (and many other Mothers) is imagined to have presided over in childhood.⁸ And while Tyrone tries to carry over this simplicity to his relationship with Alice—cradling her in his arms, he gives voice to the ethic of peace and harmony writ large in his surname—Aronofsky undercuts his attempts by confronting us with a graphic sex scene in

which Alice asks for and experiences something that has nothing to do with love or complementarity.

The two do not face each other in this encounter, and Alice's hand, at one point, finds its way to Tyrone's buttocks and back, demanding more force. The scene's formal elements distill the crux of the problem: whereas the volume of the scene's sound—of children playing on a playground—no doubt privileges Tyrone's point of view, the continuous, objective, overhead shot shows us a display of *jouissance* incompatible with that point of view. The only other time Aronofsky returns us to this same location, we see Tyrone, again completely naked, sitting on his bed, gazing almost disconsolately at a picture of his mother and at the window, unable to reconcile an outside world with the closed world in which all *jouissance* rests with the Mother.⁹

Becoming the Other without Lack

The devastation wrought by the fantasy of recovered, pre-Oedipal bliss is perhaps even more apparent in the film's other primary plot line, involving Harry's mother, Sara Goldfarb, and her attempt to win a spot on the Tappy Tibbons infomercial, *Month of Fury*. An ingenious addition by Aronofsky not found in Hubert Selby Jr.'s novel (on which the screenplay, also by Selby, is based), this show's core features are presented in shots intercut with *Requiem's* opening credits. In these shots, we see a crowd of professional men and women shouting in unison, "Juice by Tabby, Juice by Tabby, Go-ooo Tabby." Tibbons (Christopher McDonald) is then shown exchanging high fives with adoring fans

as he emerges, and, ascending a dark stage in which only he is lit, addresses the viewers, saying "Juice by You, Juice by You." A 1-900 number appears at the bottom of the screen, and just above it the words, "Join Us In Creating Excitement!!!" (the slogan for which Juice is an acronym; later, the acronym changes to "Join Us in Creating Excellence"). Tibbons is shown declaring, "We have a winner!," which is then shouted back to him by his audience, and he then brings the winning member into his spotlight on the stage as chanting audience members credit that member with having the Juice (e.g., "Juice by Mike, Juice by Mike"). The word Juice is so frequently uttered unattached to any phrase or sentence that it is difficult not to read it as the nonsensical signifier of *jouissance*.

The overarching goal of Tibbons' show, however, is to tie this signifier to a discourse, to a commercial and programmatic effort designed to make it meaningful and available. The Juice is, for Tibbons, a mysterious, pre-symbolic source of potency that was once ours and that we would like very much to get back. The film's frequent recourse to this infomercial makes clear the show's overarching truth-claims: in and through Tibbons' "month of fury," the show's winners have "revolutionized" their lives and won back "more passion for living than [they] ever imagined." Tibbons, himself, never tires of repeating how great he feels now that he has the Juice, and he constantly enjoins his audience to "be excited." The quintessential Other without lack, Tibbons plays to our deepest wish that the loss of enjoyment is a straightforward historical matter, that the loss is not constitutive for subjectivity but can be explained and overcome.

It is the fundamental insight of psychoanalysis, of course, that the very appearance of this vitality comes only in the wake of its sacrifice, that it was never mine in any meaningful sense because there was no recognizable "me" who enjoyed it. Nonetheless, Tibbons appeals to his rapturous fans with lies that the effects of symbolic castration can be undone and that he exemplifies their undoing: he is the one with the story of how to retrieve a missing and empowering vitality. (Tibbons recalls his pre-Month of Fury days in ways that bespeak emasculation: when he hit "rock bottom," he says, he was "an overweight man living in a one-room apartment" without "the money to feed [himself] any more." Now sixty-five pounds thinner, the lapel pin he hands out as a come-on to prospective acolytes is a pair of pants—a pin he insists can be worn proudly. When we consider the third of the three rules of Tibbons' Month of Fury, however, there appears something very paradoxical in the regained manhood Aronofsky has Tibbons espouse. This paradox explains why his winners are sometimes female. The first two rules are given explicitly: No Red Meat and No Refined Sugar. The third one, however, is never spoken, and can only be glimpsed by freezing the DVD of *Requiem* at the point where Tibbons stands in front of a whiteboard on which he has written the three rules. There, barely discernible, we can make out the third rule: No Orgasms. Rather than excessive displays of virility, which already, in a way, signify the failure of manhood, Tibbons' prohibition on orgasm aims to avoid being a sexed being altogether, since to be sexed is already to lay bare one's lack..)

When Sara first watches the show, she does so with a box of chocolates whose touch and taste she clearly savors. To convey this, Aronosfky shoots Sara's hands in close-up caressing the chocolates, and he magnifies the sound of her chewing and swallowing them. She even closes her eyes to the television when doing so. But when she answers a telephone call from a firm that chooses contestants "for most of America's television shows" and is told that she has "already won," the small satisfactions of chocolate give way to the fantasy of a completely altered life. As Aronosfky takes pains to suggest, this fantasy is staked on a return to youth and to a time when Sara was able to capture the gaze of the Other (the gaze not just of her now deceased husband, Seymour, but that of the larger world as well). The death of her husband and her old age crystallize our all-too-human dilemma regarding the Other's desire. That is to say, it is as we age and/or our loved ones die, that it becomes more and more difficult to continue to master the Other's desire in the act of being its object.

The poignancy of the truth writ large in our finitude is made plain as the afore-mentioned telephone call ends. Here, Aronofsky cuts immediately to an extreme close up of the lower half of a photograph of a woman in a bright red dress. The camera tilts upward to reveal the dress-wearer to be a much younger and presumably sexually desirable Sara (with lipstick as bright as her clothing). The difference between youth and age is accentuated in the subsequent cut to an extreme close-up of Sara's visage, adorned with muted lipstick and lit so as to emphasize the lines and creases of the face. Captured by the idea of wearing the dress again, she returns the photograph (which is in fact a graduation picture

of Harry, flanked by his parents and holding his high school diploma) to its place on her dresser and retrieves the dress from its plastic wrapping in her closet. Unable to fit entirely into it as she tries it on, she commits herself to a weight-loss program. Initially, the program consists of efforts that rest essentially on edicts of prohibition: as Aronofsky shows us Sara reading a book entitled *Ten Pounds in Ten Days*, he cuts with increasing rapidity and with a jarring nondiegetic sound to the phrases that distill what Sara *cannot* consume (e.g., no sugar at breakfast, no dressing at lunch, etc.). In his foregrounding of what she cannot eat (but wishes to), Aronofsky presents the diet initially as perhaps remaining within a calculus of social exchange. That is to say, by acceding to a prohibition on one satisfaction (i.e., restricting her breakfast to one egg, one grapefruit, and one cup of coffee), Sara will get something satisfying in return: herself in the red dress. Or as Sara says to herself at one point early in her diet, "Stop already: you'll feel better in a red dress than eating a cheese Danish."

The exchange alas, as I have already suggested, is aimed not just at the stupid pleasures of wearing a certain article of clothing. When we begin to see all that Sara has invested in the red dress, we can see how off-kilter this exchange is. Rather than acceding to the prohibition on pre-Oedipal enjoyment and getting a smaller, substitute satisfaction in return, Sara gives up on the latter satisfaction in the hope of directly obtaining the former. Indeed, her encounters with prohibitive injunctions are so toxic to the fantasy to which she has begun to pledge fealty that, soon, we understand that what she needs, paradoxically, is *not really even to want to eat*. When she learns from one of the Yentas who sit

in front of her apartment building that there are diet pills (amphetamines) that can take from you the very desire to consume human food, she sees a doctor in order to procure some and grows increasingly addicted to them. In this plot move, *Requiem* brilliantly diagnoses as pathological the desire for recognition that gives away the ground of that desire. Such moves tinker with the very consistency of a social world as they trade away all of the partial or substitute forms of nourishment that belong to a social world for another world imagined to deliver total and timeless satisfaction.

Aronofsky calls our attention to this asocial world in the remarkable array of formal means by which he presents Sara's post-pill life. The mise-en-scene in Sara's apartment, for example, suggests an increasingly closed-off world: her apartment grows darker and darker and is frequently only lit by the television; her contact with the outside world comes in brief peeks through Venetian blinds; and the telephone is almost always off the hook. The editing and camerawork only buttress what the mise-en-scene conveys: Sara's taking of pills and making and sipping of coffee are presented in the same hip-hop montage sequences Aronofsky uses to depict Harry's and Marion's drug use, and he slows down and speeds up the frame rate and sound track to capture the extent to which her capture by the fantasy has profoundly altered her sense of time. In the remarkable fish-eye shot of Sara at the doctor's, Sara and the doctor's movements and speech come to us at different rates. And in the scene during which Harry realizes that his mother has become addicted to the pills,

Aronofsky's violation of the 180° rule presages the film's incipient catapulting into an increasingly hallucinatory and psychotic world.¹⁰

At the outset of her diet, Sara's hallucinations are more or less benign: glancing away from the television, for example, she sees a cheeseburger on a bookcase shelf; as she tries to sleep one night, we see her with visions of cupcakes and donuts falling from the ceiling of her bedroom. And even as her investment in the fantasy of Tibbons' show grows, her hallucinations remain precariously perched on this side of a social world. Indeed, at one point, her turning on the television becomes a defensive strategy vis-à-vis the refrigerator that wrenches itself menacingly from the wall. If the aggression of the refrigerator already points to the collapse of a world of objects with names and social functions, the Tibbons show keeps alive the necessary distance afforded to us by signification. Here, Aronofsky lets the Tibbons show claim the entirety of the screen, but his editing alternates it with reverse shots of Sara admiring herself on the television. For example, she imagines herself appearing *on* the television, where, brought to the stage by Tibbons, she is able to bask in chants that "Sara has juice" and is able to indulge in the fantasy that her husband remains alive, that Harry is her "successful son," and that he is "in love" with Marion. The editing and distance of the reverse shots of Sara is important here, since they do maintain a minimum of space between Sara and her fantasy. But in the climactic scene for Sara's fantasy, the two distinct spaces are conflated altogether, disappear altogether: Sara's younger self, that is to say, moves from the television screen *into* Sara's apartment, and shortly thereafter, so does Tappy

Tibbons and the various people who appear in and produce his show.

In staging this full blown psychotic break, we are given a glimpse of Sara's fundamental fantasy without the gloss of her imaginings—the imaginary realm not as it is seen from a discrete socio-symbolic vantage point but the imaginary *as it really is*. Whereas Sara imagines herself as essentially continuous with her earlier self, as desirous of recognition, we see that earlier self in its cruel and judgmental capacity, mocking and laughing at the knick-knacks in her apartment. Soon, the crowd on Tibbons' show, too, is laughing and pointing their fingers at Sara. As her apartment becomes the sound stage for a carnivalesque version of Tibbons' show—with strobe lights, a salsa band, and dancing—a horrified Sara is made to confront the self she has become. This self does not so much desire satisfaction; she demands it. And so does the world of Tibbons' show, which now appears an obscene world of enjoyment. In a series of dizzyingly edited cuts, the younger Sara and the crowd begin and continue their chant: Feed Me, Sara. By having Sara confront not the idealized version of her earlier self, but rather that self's aggressive and over-proximate version, Aronofsky displays beautifully that the self imagined to have enjoyed the recognition of the Other is, in fact, the child who demands to be fed.

The Powerlessness of Childhood

The horror of Sara's reversion to a state of demand is deepened in the fates given to all of the film's characters from this point forward. What Aronofsky reminds us of is the way the world of demand cuts two ways, the way it is a world

both of power and powerlessness (and thus is incapable of being responsibly idealized). That is to say, in the world of demand, sometimes the child's mouth is given nourishment and satisfaction; sometimes, it is just closed. Sometimes the demand for enjoyment is met; at other times, the child cannot get free of the Other's jouissance. These features of childhood are captured in a myriad of bleak and unremitting, but nonetheless suggestive, ways in the film's finale. At the level of the plot, all of the characters find themselves in situations in which their mouths are made the object of intrusive, almost violent, scrutiny or stuffing: Sara has first a feeding tube and finally a mouth guard shoved into her mouth after being apprehended on Madison Avenue and then hospitalized by authorities; for Heroin, Marion first performs oral sex on Big Tim and then has money stuffed into her mouth while performing an "ass-to-ass" sex act (via a Dildo) in front of a paying crowd; Tyrone has a flashlight placed into his mouth, as a doctor prescribes him fit for prison work detail; and finally, Harry, in the process of having his arm amputated, has an oxygen mask placed over his mouth. Other openings are also foregrounded—the hole in Harry's arm that leads to its amputation, the anuses of the Marion and her partner in the sex performance, and Tyrone as he vomits.

But more than just these shots is the way Aronofsky links them formally with an unleashed jouissance. What I mean here is that we see not just Power exercising its presumed entitlement to jouissance; we see a world in which the victims of that jouissance cannot get free of it, indeed, are made *to find their own enjoyment* in their subjugation to the Other's demand. What is crucial to the

making of this point is Aronofsky's sound bridge that links the rapidly crosscut shots of Marion's performance, Sara's submission to electroshock treatment, Tyrone's work under the racist prison guard, and Harry's submission to the amputation of his arm. Here, Aronofsky begins with the sex performance where the diegetic sound is dominated by the crowd's chant: Come, Come. And this chant *continues* in the crosscutting to the other characters' and their fates. In the end, Aronofsky—in what is perhaps a heavy handed move—leaves us with each character curled up in a fetal position: Sara remains with her Tabby Tibbons' fantasy; Marion cradles the Heroin for which she has worked; Tyrone has an image of himself nestling with his Mother flash next to him on the screen; and Harry, missing half of his left arm, rejects a hospital nurse's affirmation that Marion will be sent for and will show up. In the case of the first three, we can see the tenacity with which people can hold onto the dream of jouissance in the face of its requiem. Perhaps only on the missing arm of Harry, who has undergone a traumatic cut, can we pin our hopes for a dream with a different basis—a dream that does not seek to bring back what is missing and that might, as a result, be the occasion for an altogether different kind of song.

1. In the scene subsequent to their pillow talk, Harry makes a concrete presentation of his store plan to Marion: he says he has "put together some of the numbers" and that they "could do it together." Marion's rapturous look signifies her approval, and as she kisses Harry, the frame fades to white—a move that Aronofsky has said is meant to suggest a moment of transcendence.
2. A list of films with scenes that split the screen in order to provide greater simultaneous visibility (thus obviating the need for crosscutting or shot-reverse shot editing) include Norman Jewison's *The Thomas Crown Affair* (1968) and Rob Reiner's *When Harry Met Salley* (1989). The multiple narratives of Mike Figgis' *Timecode* (2000) rely, in their entirety, on split screen. One obvious example from television, of course, is Robert Cochran's and Joel Surnow's *24* (2001-present). I should point out here as well that Aronofsky resorts to the split screen for simultaneous visibility as well—for example, in the film's opening scene, when Harry attempts to take his mother Sara's television (which she has chained to the wall) in order to pawn it for money to purchase Heroin.
3. In terms of political economy, the film emphasizes the class distinctions that exist in and between Brighton Beach (where Harry is from), Manhattan Beach (where Marion is from), and Manhattan itself (where so much Television and Commerce originates). As for medicine, the portrait of the doctor who prescribes Sara's diet pills—per Aronofsky's explicit instructions—does not even look at his patient.
4. In its paradoxically visible invisibility, the dividing line on the screen exemplifies the unique status of the *objet petit a*. As Slavoj Žižek points out, "The paradox of this object—of *objet petit a*—is that, although imaginary, it occupies the place of the Real—that is, it is a non-specularizable object, an object that has no specular image and which, as such, precludes any relationship of empathy, of sympathetic recognition That is to say, *a* stands precisely for an 'impossible' object that gives body to what can never become a positive object" (1994: 50). In his recent *The Real Gaze*, Todd McGowan explores more fully the disruptive potential that rests in film's capacity to present the *objet petit a* in the realm of the visible. For McGowan, such presentations confront spectators with nothing less than the gaze itself, a confrontation that, by disturbing the safe distance of the spectator, constitutes the most radical and unique aspects of cinematic experience (2007).
5. It is not just the line that interrupts our fantasmatic investment in Harry's and Marion's pillow talk. Both the lighting and the editing also work to disrupt the satisfactions spectators typically find in such a scene. Over the course of the dialogue, Aronofsky cuts to extreme close ups of the lovers' body parts that are lit so as to highlight features (e.g., the hair surrounding Harry's nipple, the skin creases of Marion's kneecap) that interrupt our nostalgic and narcissistic belief in an available love imagined to consist of a pre-Oedipal enjoyment and recognition.
6. To put this in terms of the film's couple, the very desire they espouse for each other cannot get free of the conditions of desire, conditions that mean that such desire cannot be perfectly satisfied. We are here in the domain of the drive dimension of desire, of that part of human desire that does not want satisfaction but repetition. As Freud points out in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, the ego's belief in its desire for the full completion of desire is a belief made in bad faith, since such completion is tantamount to the ego's dissolution (Freud, 1975). Indeed, the ego is founded on a fundamental and traumatic separation from the object or Other believed to complete desire, and it is the unconscious that returns us again and again to this separation. This point is illustrated beautifully in *Requiem* in Harry's "vision" of Marion standing on the end of a pier, clothed in the red dress that, given his mother's quest in the film, announces the Oedipal stakes of his desire for Marion. The

scene is without sound as it shows us Harry running toward the end of the pier, getting closer and closer to Marion, who is facing the ocean. When Harry gets close and mouths her name, she turns around—only to gaze a spot over Harry's shoulder, whereupon Harry is returned to the spot of his daydream and to the sound of Tyrone's return through their apartment door. The absence of sound in this scene highlights Marion's gaze in its traumatic dimension—as directed elsewhere.

7. For the jubilation of the mirror stage, see Van Haute, 2002: 81-89.

8. Her maxim is delivered in the spirit of maternal love (the soft lighting of the scene and the mother's warm demeanor suggest as much), but such love can have a confining effect, since they have the effect of closing off alternate avenues of satisfaction—avenues won only by way resisting the mother's hold (via her words, her image, and her gaze) on the coordinates for one's being. Lacan suggests as much he claims that "[t]he means of *jouissance* are open on the principle that [one] has renounced this closed, foreign *jouissance*, renounced the mother" (Lacan, 2007: 78).

9. In a deleted scene on the DVD, Tyrone speaks of the superior size of his mother's breasts, and the comfort he got nestled in them. He likens the experience explicitly to the feeling delivered by "dope." In the flashback scene, his mother holds an orange; so, too, is the drug supplier from which Harry and Tyrone attempt to buy Heroin (with the money from Marion's encounter with Arnold).

10. Many of Sara's delusive utterances in this scene give away the existential crisis her fantasy aims to resolve. In her very confessions of loneliness and her avowal that she is old, she sees her being on television as enabling her to say, "I'm somebody now." She says that "millions of people will see me" and that she has regained "a reason to get up in the morning."

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