문학석사학위논문

Acinema and The Beginning of Discourse

비(非)영화와 담론의 시작

2022 년 8 월

서울대학교 대학원

미 학 과

방 현 주

Acinema and The Beginning of Discourse

지도교수   Peter W. Milne

이 논문을 문학석사 학위논문으로 제출함

2022 년 5 월

서울대학교 대학원

미학과

방 현 주

방현주의 석사학위논문을 인준함

2022 년 6 월

위 원 장 ____박 상 우____ (인)

부위원장 ____민 현 준____ (인)

위   원 ____Peter W. Milne____ (인)

Abstract

Acinema and the Beginning of Discourse

Hyunjoo Bang
Department of Aesthetics
The Graduate School
Seoul National University

This thesis aims to understand Lyotard's early concept of "acinema" in terms of his later understanding of "the avant-garde" and to reexamine Lyotard's remark in the essay 'Acinema' that the discussion of cinema starts from the movements he calls "acinema." Through this, I will argue that it is by understanding acinema as an "occurrence" that it becomes the starting point of this discussion, and further that acinema must be understood as a concept that opens and expands our conceptual framework and our consciousness. Therefore, the reason this study takes 'Acinema' as the central text of the discussion is to investigate that it is not only Lyotard's first film essay but also a significant essay where Lyotard attempts to reflect on cinema from a philosophical and aesthetic point of view. For him, cinema has the possibility to challenge and undo theory when the movements act as the starting point of a film

discourse, despite the movements themselves lacking meaning and signification. This initiation of discussion based on the movements can give the chance to broaden our experience and perception.

'Acinema' is the first film essay by Lyotard in 1973. Acinema that Lyotard conceives in this essay is deviant and experimental movement which escapes from and experiments with the rules, such as those of representation, narrative and theory, which organize movements in a prescribed manner to produce sense of order in cinema. Lyotard conceives acinema in this manner because he sees the possibility of interrupting the order within cinema through this deviant and experimental movement. The order here is the one by which mainstream representational-narrative commercial cinema is organized and which it tried to maintain and reproduce as communication code, which produces the fantasy of realism.

In this essay, Lyotard remarks that the discussion of cinema in general begins with acinema. Acinema is non-cinema in that it is within cinema as an unqualified concept, out of all the rules related to cinema. The fact that the discussion of cinema starts from non-cinema should be interpreted as the fact that film discourse begins its discussion without theory. It means that theory cannot understand and interpret acinema through its principle, and then film discourse describes and comments on acinema, instead of interpreting it through a theory, letting go of the theory and creating new manner of thinking and expressing it. By starting its discussion from

acinema, film discourse ends the authority of theory and opens the possibility of new film discourses, thereby expanding its boundaries.

This interpretation is possible because Lyotard summons acinema as "the work of the cinematic avant-garde" in his last film essay 'The Idea of a Sovereign Film.' Based on this remark, acinema can be seen something like what he calls an "occurrence" and thereby its scope extends to our consciousness. For Lyotard, the avant-garde is a kind of philosophical inquiry in that it is a kind of investigation of the presuppositions implied in modernity, and occurrence as the work of the avant-garde is what happens before being determined by consciousness and thereby such work takes place outside of conceptual framework. Referring to acinema as the work of the cinematic avant-garde and an "occurrence," Lyotard broadens the scope of acinema deep into our consciousness, perception and experience.

Acinema as an occurrence interrupts the meaning as the absence of signification. Its force lies in the fact that it has no meaning. When we try to draw the meaning from acinema through theory which is the method that the consciousness makes to understand the world, its force disappears because the fact that acinema is interpreted by theory means that it becomes "determinate" by the consciousness. Acinema is always the indeterminate to the consciousness and from this it has its meaning. For Lyotard, theory, although being made by the consciousness in order to understand the world, limits our perception and experience by determining what we have to see and

hear in advance. Lyotard argues that theory has to learn to acknowledge its limitation. When Lyotard states that the discussion of cinema begins with acinema, what he means and expects is for such a discussion to undo theory through acinema and create various and diverse film discourses. Acinema as non-cinema implies the possibility of coexistence of various others.

This thesis argues that the essay of 'Acinema' and the concept of acinema should be read again in a philosophical and aesthetic context. This means that acinema should be understood as an occurrence, as Lyotard remarked, challenges and questions the presuppositions that the consciousness has defined and maintained so far. All filmmaking rules and theoretical rules are presuppositions, and when the film discourse starts from acinema, these presuppositions are undone, criticized, and called into question. That means accepting those opinions and perspectives that have been excluded from the discussion and opening the door to broaden our experiential and perceptional horizon.

Keywords: Lyotard, acinema, film theory, film discourse, occurrence, experimental films, the cinematic avant-garde,

Student Number: **2011-20068**

Abbreviation

The following is a list of works used throughout this thesis. All other references appear in the footnotes, and the entire works used are reproduced in the bibliography.

Lyotard's:

A	'Acinema'
As	*Acinemas*
BR	'Beyond Representation'
CF	'Notes on the Critical Function of the Work of Art'
DF	*Discourse, Figure*
DP	'Defining the Postmodern'
ISF	'The Idea of Sovereign Film'
KA	*Karel Appel, A Gesture of Colour*
OT	'On Theory'
SA	'The Sublime and the Avant-Garde'
TM	'Two Metamorphoses of the Seductive in Cinema'
UM	'The Unconscious as Mise-en-Scène'
WIP	'What is the Postmodern'

Others:

FD	'Figure, Discourse,' Geoffrey Benninton
LL	'How Desire Works: A Lyotardian Lynch,' Graham Jones and Ashley Woodward

Table of contents

Introduction

This thesis aims to understand the early concept of "acinema" introduced by Jean-François Lyotard ("Lyotard") based on his later understanding of "*avant-garde*" and to reexamine Lyotard's somewhat peculiar remarks in the essay 'Acinema,' where he opined that discussion on cinema starts from a movement he refers to "acinema." In this way, I will argue that understanding acinema as an "occurrence" is the starting point of this discussion and that acinema must be understood as a concept that opens and expands our conceptual framework and our consciousness.

Therefore, 'Acinema' features in this thesis as the central text of discussion because it is not only Lyotard's very first essay on film but also an important work in itself in that Lyotard insists on reflecting cinema from a philosophical and aesthetic point of view. This discussion had already taken place in 2014 at a two-day conference at the University of Dundee (Scotland), which was titled, *Aesthetics and Film in the Philosophy of Jean-François Lyotard*[1]. Therefore, I will examine acinema in Lyotard's philosophy, not in the context of film history or film theory, while trying to find the possible application of acinema as a concept to the contemporary film

---

[1] This result was published in a book called *Acinemas* in 2017.

theory.

Before proceeding with the actual discussion on acinema, I would like to briefly mention the Korean translation of acinema, because this is an important point that clearly shows the direction of this thesis.

Acinema has so far been translated as 반영화 (anti-cinema) in Korean, and under this translation, it can be understood in a narrow sense as being the opposite to mainstream representational-narrative commercial cinema. However, if were to translate acinema as 비영화 (non-cinema), our understanding of acinema could be expanded — i.e., as an idea not only in relation to the mainstream representational-narrative films and experimental films, but also a concept that can be found in our consciousness and conceptual framework, and even further in our experience and perception. Acinema, although being a movement within a film, always remains indeterminate and thereby exists as a concept that leaves open the possibility of further expanding and pioneering the boundary of cinema. Moreover, as a starting point of discussion on film, acinema undoes film theory and forces the relevant discourse to conjure new ways of thought and description for the making of commentary on acinema. In this sense, though this thesis is written in English, I will understand acinema as something closer to non-cinema (비영화) than anti-cinema (반영화). In this case, unlike anti-cinema which presupposes opposing pairs and either

negates or considers one of them as being negative, the concept of non-cinema, rather than establishing boundaries and posing concepts in confrontational relationship, nullifies boundaries and suggests the coexistence of potentially competing concepts, thereby providing us with new experiences and perceptions.

'Acinema' is the very first essay on film authored by Lyotard in 1973. It consists of seven short sections and presents Lyotard's self-devised concept, acinema, by diverting Sigmund Freud's concept of the death drive. It is neither a detailed analysis nor a specific critique of a film. Rather it seems to focus on describing how different acinema is from the mainstream commercial films. This essay clearly reveals its antipathy to mainstream commercial films. It deals with the characteristics of mainstream commercial films as much as the explanation of acinema, which are all negative and critical. Lyotard's criticism of mainstream commercial films focuses on the fact that they are trying to organize a certain reality in the film, by following certain rules of "good composition," particularly those of representation and narrative, in order to produce a certain order, one which is less about the proper presentation of reality but aimed more to give the public a sense of security.

Lyotard pays special attention to the fact that certain movements must be eliminated according to the rules while a certain reality is organized. For Lyotard, cinema is "the inscription of movement" (A, 33), which means that movement is the fundamental element of a film. In order to produce a certain reality, cinema organizes

3

movements according to the rules and excludes the movements which do not fit them. Acinema is a movement that escapes from these rules and thereby would be eliminated by the rules. The reason Lyotard pays more attention to these deviant movements is that he sees a possible interruption of the rules of representation or narration through these very deviations. Further, he claims, without further explanation, that from these deviant movements the discussion of cinema could begin.

This thesis therefore starts from two sentences in 'Acinema': (i) "The cinematography is the inscription of movement" (*Id*.) and (ii) "The discussion of cinema and representational-narrative art in general begins at this point" (35), and "this point" being where cinema ceases to be an ordering force (*Id*.), which, as we will see, is nothing but acinema. For Lyotard, the fundamental element is the movement, not the image. What is the implication of the cinema being composed of movements? This will be my first question. In addition, how does the discussion of cinema in general begin with acinema? This will be my second question. I will answer these two questions by investigating the concept of acinema in terms of the concept of an avant-garde as understood by Lyotard. This task will involve the reading of acinema in relation to meaning and signification.

Although 'Acinema' is the first essay on film by Lyotard and the most cited of

his essays on the subject, it has not been sufficiently studied to date[2]. This is partly because there are not as many film essays as essays on other art forms, such as painting, which means that there is not enough data to examine this essay with the same depth afforded to other art form. Another reason is that this essay is not an easy read, especially the last two sections, "The Tableau Vivant" and "Abstraction." We cannot find an exact definition of acinema anywhere in this essay and Lyotard's metaphorical descriptions of acinema require heavy additional reading.

Nevertheless, some published researches published are available on 'Acinema.' Most recently published *Acimemas* is a compilation of all film-related essays authored by Lyotard, together with writings which were first presented at the two-day conference held at the University of Dundee in 2014. It emphasizes the fact that Lyotard's film essays and film works are created at a philosophical and aesthetic

---

[2] Nevertheless, we can refer to some books and essays on 'Acinema': As a book, *Acinemas*, ed. Graham Jones & Ashley Woodward, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017. And Durafour, Jean-Michel. *Jean-François Lyotard: question au ciméma*, Paris: PUF, 2009. As an essay, Trahair, Lisa. "Jean-François Lyotard." *Film, Theory and Philosophy: The Key Thinkers*. ed. Felicity Colman. Chesham: Acumen, 2009. and Eizykman, Claudine, and Guy Fihman. "L'œil de Lyotard: De l'acinéma au postmoderne." *À partir de Jean-François Lyotard*, ed. Claude Amey and Jean-Paul Olive, Paris: L'Harmattan, 2000. Graham Jones and Ashley Woodward, 'How Desire Works: A Lyotardian Lynch,' *Acinemas*, ed. Graham Jones & Ashley Woodward, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017. In Korean, 안상원. "리오타르의 반영화: 회귀형상의 비판" [Lyotard's Acinema: criticism of the figure of return], 『미학』 제79집, 2014.

level. To mention a few writings on Acinema, (i) Durafour's *Jean-François Lyotard: questions au cinema* is the first and only book to focus entirely on Lyotard's philosophy of film, (ii) Trahair's 'Jean-François Lyotard' can be read as a brief but fairly friendly commentary on 'Acinema,' emphasizing the greater influence of acinema within the discussion of experimental films, (iii) Eizykman and Fihman's "L'œil de Lyotard: De l'acinéma au postmoderne" thoroughly deals with 'Acinema' and acinema within the discussion of experimental films, argues that acinema is the starting point in Lyotard's flow of thought up to the postmodern concept espoused by Lyotard, and clarifies the meaning of acienam, (iv) Jones and Woodward's 'How Desire Works: A Lyotardian Lynch' addresses acinema as a stoppage of meaning in relation to film theory, especially semiotic reading, psychoanalytic critique and Lacanian interpretation, and (v) An's 'Lyotard's Acinema: Criticism of the figure of return' is the only essay on 'Acinema' published in Korea and argues that, although the concept of acinema is in line with the criticism of the ideology of the 68th generation film theorists, it is on a different level from these theorists given the anti-theoretical attitude assumed by Lyotard.

While *Acinemas* and the work by Durafour, Trahair, and Eizykman and Fihman investigate 'Acinema' within Lyotard's philosophical thought, the work of Jones and Woodward and An examine 'Acinema' in relation to film theory and the history of film theory. Contrary to these researches, however, this thesis will

6

reinterpret acinema through the notion of "occurrence" introduced by Lyotard and consider it in relation to film discourse and film theory. Reinterpreting acinema through the notion of occurrence involves the examination of acinema in the framework of Lyotard's philosophical thought. Based on the above approach, I will investigate Lyotard's claim that the discussion of cinema begins with acinema, which, in turn, is the work of considering acinema in relation to film discourse and film theory. By combining these two approaches, i.e., reinterpreting acinema through the notion of "occurrence" and considering acinema in relation to film discourse and film theory, I will demonstrate that the essay 'Acinema' and the concept of acinema open the possibility of applying the philosophical notion of acinema to contemporary film discourse. Starting the discussion on cinema from the deviant and experimental movements, notably the concept of occurrence, means that the discussion will reveal and acknowledge the various other occurrences that occur beyond the boundaries created by cinema, film discourse and film theories and coexistence among and with them, which is an attempt to undo all boundaries created by cinema, film discourses and film theories. This will be the starting point of this thesis.

In this thesis, I will use the terms, film discourse, film theory and film discussion, separately. While film discourse tries to find the relationship between the cinematic element and the meaning encapsulated in the film itself, and from these relationships, make a coherent interpretation of the film, I will consider film theory

as that part of a film discourse used to execute the above-mentioned tasks. Film theory provides a basis for explaining the correlation between the cinematic element and the meaning in relation to a specific narrative, while film discourse organizes and expresses these correlations based on the various theories. Film discourse is the general practice of giving meaning to a film, while theory does this though the application of a prescribed axioms or principles. Hence, while discourse can proceed in a fairly broad sense, theory proceeds in such a way that it tends to give form to a thought. We will see this in more detail in Chapter 2. However, for Lyotard, a discourse can and should start its discussion without a predetermined theory. According to him, discourse is attentive and responds to what happens in a film and describes and comments upon it without recourse to any theoretical apparatus. Discourse can do so without being subject to any authority, and the authority in this case is the theory. Theory governs the relationship that a given thought or idea has with the intention and purpose behind such thought. The moment at which the discussion on ordinary cinema begins, Lyotard mentions in his work, is this very point where discourse starts its discussion without a prescribed theory, or perhaps in the absence of theory, as we will later see in this thesis. Accordingly, in this context, discussion means commenting on what happens and undoing all the applicable authorities, which includes doing away with theory. I think Lyotard purposefully uses the term 'discussion' and I would like to clarify Lyotard's intention behind such use.

For Lyotard, film theory restricts how we understand and construe the film, by stating what should be expected from the films and how to understand the films through a formularized logic. This is a "top-down" approach in that it starts with the basic axioms and applies them to the object under discussion, rather than letting the object itself shape the discussion. To challenge or disrupt this approach, Lyotard conceived the concept of acinema, which embodies the deviant and experimental movement, to defy any theoretical apparatus, and argued that the cinematic discussion begins with focusing on what is there in front of us without being tethered to a prescribed set of rationale or reason that dictate how we appreciate the films, that is, a discussion in the absence of theory.

'Acinema' is an essay with many implications that can be studied by expanding into several fields. As an essay written in the early 70's, 'Acinema' can be examined in relation to the notion of the figural in the early Lyotard rather than in relation to his later ideas. It may be possible to highlight the relevance to Freud's psychoanalysis in that 'Acinema' exposes the libidinal economy. Since Lyotard deals with the tableau vivant and abstraction at the end of his essay, it will be possible to compare them with his discussions about paintings. Also 'Acinema' can be studied in relation to the history of film theory or film critique, which is an area that is particularly lacking in research.

The biggest reason for the lack of research on 'Acinema' or the concept of

acinema in relation to the history of film theory or film critique is the fact that Lyotard had no interest in creating a theory. For Lyotard, a theory is meant to shape or frame the world that we see before we observe it, by making what is experienced conform to a certain prescribes norm, which results in determining our world in advance and limiting the possibilities of multiple interpretations and observations. Hence, Lyotard is reluctant to make theories. Film theorists and film critics, in contrast, believe that they can understand and explain the world better because they have a theory that puts everything into a prescribed and understandable perspectives. This conflict with film theorists and critics also occur in connection with how Lyotard understands acinema which he envisioned as being opposed to the mainstream commercial cinema. For Lyotard, although it deviates from all rules, including even the theoretical rules, acinema conceptually exists as a movement in a film and can influence these rules. However, for the film theorists and critics, acinema exists outside the framework of the rules and thus cannot be reflected on as cinematic element or discussed as cinema. This thesis will address this point indirectly and within the flow of Lyotard's philosophical thought.

When Lyotard refers to acinema as the cinematic avant-garde in his last essay on film, it is no longer in a political and economic context, but rather in a philosophical and aesthetical context. When we investigate acinema in a philosophical and aesthetical context, it is related to our experience and perception,

which can also open the possibility to challenge film discourse and film theory. This is the reason we have to reread and reinterpret both 'Acinema' and the concept of acinema. And, it is also the reason why we have to read 'Acinema' as an article that "is concerned with the philosophical interest of film as thinking" (AS, 12). From this point, we can find the possibility to discuss 'Acinema' and acinema in contemporary film theory or film critique: acinema as the type of starting point for film discourse.

Four essays by Lyotard are entirely devoted to film: 'Acinema' (1973), 'The Unconscious as Mise-en-Scène' (1977), 'Two Metamorphoses of the Seductive in Cinema' (1980) and 'The Idea of Sovereign Film' (1995)[3]. In 'Acinema' and 'The Unconscious as Mise-en-Scène,' Lyotard is more interested in experimental films and tries to explain them based on the concept of desire. In 'Two Metamorphoses of the Seductive in Cinema,' he analyzes a mainstream commercial film and pays attention to the relationship between the film and the audience. Finally, in 'The Idea of Sovereign Film,' he introduces a new idea, sovereign film, which he discusses along with Neo-realism as something that has no external authority or that authorizes itself. Although there seems to be several changes in the way Lyotard approaches film over the years, which would be related to the changes in the flow of his overall philosophical thought, these four essays have one thing in common: antipathy

---

[3] These are all available in *Acinemas* mentioned in footnote #1.

towards mainstream commercial, representational-narrative films, which for him are closely related to a certain understanding of realism which is thought as opposed to the work of cinematic avant-garde as a type of philosophical inquiry.

For Lyotard, the avant-garde is not a historical category, but a philosophical inquiry which is "a long, obstinate and highly responsible investigation of the presuppositions implied in modernity" (DP, 10). For him, the purpose of the avant-garde is to guard the occurrence, which takes place outside of conceptual frameworks and thereby prevents various methods the mind uses to organize the world to function properly and appropriately. Lyotard also describes the avant-garde in relation to realism, which, as the above, follows the rules in order to organize its reality. The avant-garde tries to disclose the reality as lacking by questioning (or doubting) these rules and by experimenting with them. The point is that the various methods the mind uses to grasp the world (categories, theories, concepts, etc.) and the rules used by realism to depict the world limit the world or the reality with a predetermined way or a certain economy before we experience them. Lyotard sees avant-garde practice as an active method to expose and undo this limitation or elimination.

To investigate acinema in relation to the avant-garde in Lyotard's sense and reexamine the relationship between acinema and the discussion of cinema, I will organize this thesis as follows:

In Chapter 1, I will investigate the meaning of acinema based on Lyotard's remarks in 'Acinema' and examine how acinema is described in relation to experimental films. Through this, I will summarize the properties of acinema and present a few experimental films as examples. Finally, by examining Lyotard's discussion of Michael Snow's *La Région Centrale*, I will begin to examine the implications of Lyotard's remark that film discourse starts from acinema in more depth. This will be carried out by considering acinema within the discussion of experimental films and in relation to the rules of representation which come from out of the film and operates within a film.

Chapter 2 will try to examine how acinema works in relation to the mainstream representational-narrative films, which will involve examining acinema both within the narrative and in terms of its relation to theory. Here the theory can be understood as the principle used by film discourses that seek to derive a consistent meaning between the cinematic elements and the narrative meaning within a narrative film. Here both the rules of narrative and those of theory come from outside of the film, but the former operates within a film, while the latter operates over a film. My investigating of the meaning of Lyotard's claim that film discussion starts from acinema will continue here, which will become the work of highlighting the relationship between acinema and theory. As a starting point for doing all this, I will first present some representational-narrative films referred to by Lyotard. The points

he pays attention to in these films are the points where the narrative ceases to exist and what happens in these cases, especially vis-à-vis the audience. This work will give some explanations as to what acinema can do in the narrative.

In the last chapter, I will investigate the meaning of Lyotard's remark that acinema is "the work of the cinematic avant-garde" (ISP, 64). Indeed, the works in the previous chapters become preliminary and foundational text for this investigation. I expect that Lyotard's notion of the avant-garde will help us to better understand the significance of the rationale behind acinematic interruptions. First, I will investigate what the avant-garde means for Lyotard and the relationship between avant-garde and acinema. Then I will examine the implications of acinema as the cinematic avant-garde, which will allow me, finally, to reexamine the meaning of the film discourse starting from the cinematic avant-garde.

As we will see, acinema is a deviant and experimental movement in a film. However, existing as the absence of signification, it causes the interruption of meaning and signification and again prevents film theory from functioning as an explanatory device for the correlation between cinematic elements and meaning. In that point, film discourse describes the interruption of meaning and signification which acinema causes, rather than excluding it, and expands the boundary of its economy. In addition, film discourse creates new way of thinking and stating in order to describing what they have never experienced without filmmaking rules and

theoretical rules. It is associated with undoing film theory and rebuilding the conceptual framework which our consciousness uses. Although acinema is a movement in a film, it causes an interruption not only within the rules of filmmaking and theoretical rules, but also in our conceptual framework and consciousness. I will argue that the point where this becomes possible is when acinema becomes the beginning of discussion of cinema. When acinema interrupts the rules of filmmaking and theoretical rules, it can be understood as anti-cinema in so far as it is devoid of the different rules which cinema uses. However, from the moment that acinema becomes the beginning of discussion of cinema, it becomes non-cinema in so far as discussion of cinema works only when film theory is undone, and film discourse uses a new manner of thought and statement in order to comment on acinema by rebuilding our conceptual framework. The point is that acinema can be understood as anti-cinema when it undoes the norms of cinema, but that it is non-cinema when it demands that cinema and film discourses become something different from what they were prior to the application of the concept of non-cinema. When film discourse creates new manners to think about and describe acinema, undoing the existing film theory, that is to say, when the discussion of cinema starts from acinema, acinema becomes non-cinema, not anti-cinema, by engaging in our experience and perception. In other words, it can be non-cinema because it is different from and outside of the cinematic structure and its discourse. When we watch cinema, our experience and

perception are limited by the rules without recognizing it. Acinema allows us to notice this limitation and to discuss (comment on) such limitation. This is no longer the matter of film rules, and it involves the questioning of our consciousness that made them.

1. Acinema interrupting the rules of representation

This thesis will view acinema as the cinematic avant-garde and reexamine Lyotard's remark that the discussion of cinema begins with acinema. Acinema does in film what the event, taken more generally, does in the broader art scene: interrupting the cinematic rules that originate from outside of the film but work within a film in order to organize the film. Furthermore, acinema becomes the starting point for cinematic discussion at the moment the film discourse no longer interprets acinema with its theory, which also comes from outside of the film and which works over a film to give interpretation of the film. In this case, the film discourse simply describes acinema as interrupting the theory and learns of its incapability, thereby granting itself an opportunity to create new manners of thinking and speaking about this situation.

'Acinema' is the first film essay that Lyotard wrote in 1973. It is an essay on film, but it is not an essay on a specific analysis of a single film. Lyotard devotes much of his essay to characterize the mainstream commercial cinema as organizing the cinematic movements following rules to effectively deliver a narrative to the audience. Acinema, an eponymous concept he conceived in this essay, can be understood as something different from and opposed to mainstream commercial

cinema. It does not follow the rules which make up mainstream commercial cinema, especially those of representation and narrative. It is merely an experimental or a deviant movement.

Because of these characteristics, the discussions of acinema among Lyotard scholars have tended to be conducted in relation to experimental films. Above all, the main reason why the discussions of acinema have tended to focus on experimental films is that acinema is described by Lyotard in terms of two extreme movements: "immobility and excessive movement" (A, 35). Hence, many experimental films which consist of two extremes movements are presented and explained as examples of acinema. Unlike mainstream commercial cinema organized by rules, various experimental films incorporate various acinemas. These acinemas produce multiple perspectives captured by various movements of camera, so that they can undermine or escape the rules which mainstream commercial cinema follows.

Lyotard insists that the film discourse starts from these experimental and deviant movements (A, 35). He argues the film discourse in this case does not interpret a film but describes it. Further, these descriptions "reroute the perspective-creating potentialities" (UM, 54), which means they open the possibilities of new perspectives by constantly resetting or undoing the established perspectives. This can be understood as a challenge to the rules of representation because it gives prominence to the movements that do not fit the rules of representation. This

description neither criticizes nor denies them. They just reveal something that is beyond or outside of them, which means that there is something that interrupts the rules of representation.

In this chapter, I will investigate the meaning of acinema based on the remarks made by Lyotard in 'Acinema' and how the discussions of acinema in relation to experimental films depict acinema. This will help to summarize the properties of acinema and present a few experimental films as examples. Finally, through Lyotard's discussion of Michael Snow's experimental film, I will examine the implications of Lyotard's remark that the film discourse starts from acinema.

1.1. Experimental and deviant movements

Lyotard begins 'Acinema' by describing various movements that can exist in a film because, from his prespective, a film is "a writing with movements" and the movement, in this sense, is the most fundamental element of a film[4]:

---

[4] In a painting, for example, the fundamental element is color. A movement in a film and a color in a painting are formal elements that can exclude meaning. Lyotard considers a movement as the most basic and simplest formal element in a film and intends to interrupt meaning and signification with it. He pays more attention to movements that

Cinematography is the inscription of movement, a writing with movement, a writing with movements – all kinds of movements; for example, in the film shot, those of the actors and other moving objects, those of lights, colours, frame and lens; in the film sequence, all of these again plus the cuts and splices of editing; for the film as a whole, those of scene organization [*découpage*]. And over or through all those movements are those of the sound and words coming together with them. (A, 33)

These movements include not only the ones of the actors and the cameras, but also the ones outside of the film itself, including editing, scene organization, the sound and words, which are related to almost all manipulations that make up the film. However, Lyotard takes issue with the fact that the movements engraved in a film are limited by certain orders, which are especially the orders of representation and narrative. What he means is that the film's movements are organized according to a certain economy:

We observe that if [a] mistake is eliminated it is because of its incongruity, and in order to protect the order of the whole (shot and/or sequence and/or

---

break connections in a film to produce meaning and signification, rather than ones that organize and deliver a specific and coherent meaning and signification. This is why Lyotard is interested in and prefers experimental films that constantly experiment with movements.

film) while banning the intensity it carries. And the order of the whole has its sole object in the functioning of the cinema: that there be order in the movements, that the movements be made in order, that they make order. Writing with movement – cinematography – is thus conceived and practiced as an incessant organizing of movements following the rules of representation for spatial localization, those of narration for the instantiation of language, and those of the form 'film music' for the soundtrack. The so-called impression of reality is a real oppression of orders. (A, 34)

Lyotard explains that, in order to protect the order of the whole, which is the functioning of the cinema, any mistake is eliminated from the screen. Here the mistake is caused by movements which do not fit the rules of representation and narrative. In mainstream commercial cinema, the rules of representation work according to the narrative, which means that representation is used to describe and advance the narrative and in turn to represent reality. In order to describe and advance the narrative, movements in a film must be organized in a comprehensive order according to the rules of narrative. [5] However, before presenting a narrative,

---

[5] There are various kinds of orders here: the order in the movements, the one that arranges the movements into a particular order and the one that the movements make. These orders constitute the whole order. However, the last one seems to be somewhat distinct

movements themselves must follow the rules of representation. The movements in a film must have a clear referent and recognizable meaning, and reproduce an easily decodable syntax and vocabulary, which constitute "a communication code" (WIP, 74). This can be understood by the three orders mentioned above: the order in the movements is related to a clear referent and recognizable meaning, the order which puts movements in order is related to the syntax and vocabulary, and the order which movements make is related to the extension of a communication code, that is, the creation of new communication codes. We can see this in 'What Is the Postmodern', where Lyotard describes the objective of what he there calls "industrial cinema" as follows:

> […] to stabilize the referent, to arrange it according to a point of view which endows it with a recognizable meaning, to reproduce the syntax and vocabulary which enable the addressee to decipher images and sequences quickly, […] since such structures of images and sequences

---

from the others. That is because if the first two orders are applied during a film production, the latter order is construed as meaning that the produced film can present new and different orders. I read through the last order that Lyotard would like to point out that while there are orders implemented according to exiting rules, there is also a new order to maintain and strengthen the existing orders, which can be understood as a "propagation" in 'Acinema.'

constitute a communication code among all of them. […] (WIP, 74)

After this description, Lyotard argues that all these works are "the effect of reality," which can be understood by the expression in 'Acinema,' "a real oppression of orders". Here, reality is the one that a film shows. However, the point is that this reality is the result of order which eliminates its incongruity. All movements in a film have a clear referent and recognizable meaning, and decodable syntax and vocabulary. It is at this point that Lyotard intends to raise the question: Why must some movements be considered as a mistake and be eliminated by the order? Why are only movements that conform to the rules of representation inscribed in a film? Why do these rules limit movements?

From this, we notice that Lyotard is looking at film in a very different manner of thought than we otherwise normally do. When we think of a certain film, we usually think what story it tells and how it tells the story. However, Lyotard instead points out that this story and method of representation limit the movements of the film and that its composition is achieved through a process of elimination and exclusion. Starting 'Acinema' like this, i.e., presenting movements and the order in a film and questioning the elimination of movements by the order, Lyotard implies that he is writing an essay on film in a different way. 'Acinema' is not a film critique about a specific analysis of a single film. Rather, it should be read as an essay on the film

in general (and perhaps the film discourse in general). Based on this perception, let us delve into acinema as Lyotard presents it in 'Acinema.'

According to Lyotard, there is the order of the whole in a film, whether it is in relation to the shot, sequence or the entire film, and writing with movement is to organize movements following this order. Acinema can be understood as something that causes "incongruity" within the orders and that would be "eliminated" by the orders. Indeed, he pays more attention to incongruity than to order in 'Acinema.' This is because Lyotard sees from this incongruity the possibility to interrupt the effect of reality or its "real oppression of orders"[6]. Lyotard's intention is not to criticize or deny this order and these rules, but to reveal and show the fact that there is some concealment or exclusion affected by them.

Then, is acinema the film or just a movement within a film? If we consider the fact that Lyotard finds the examples of acinema in two extreme movements, extremely fast movements and extremely slow movements, in experimental films, acinema appears to be a movement within a film.

Two directions are open to the conception (and production) of an object,

---

[6] When Lyotard conceived acinema in the 70's, this was a political issue, which is the issue of "foreclosure" (A, 39). However, I will interpret this issue as one of philosophy, by understanding acinema as the cinematic avant-garde.

and in particular, a cinematographic object, conforming to the pyrotechnical imperative. (…) It is possible that they are also at work in the truly active forms of experimental and underground cinema. These two poles are immobility and excessive movements. (A, 35)

Here, pyrotechnics is the term Lyotard uses in order to illustrate the sterile consumption of energies, citing Adorno who said that fireworks are the only truly great art, which is one of several metaphors to depict acinema. Like pyrotechnics, acinema is just one release of energy: it burns in vain and does not repeat this burning. Lyotard describes that when a film is drawn to these two extremes, it gradually loses its order (*Id.*).

However, acinema can be seen to take over a film in its entirety in that Lyotard refers to movements that can exist within a film as nearly all manipulations that make up the film. Many experimental films can be said to belong to this case because the entire experimental film is fraught with various experiments that use two extreme movements, especially the ones in the 60's and the 70's, such as work by Andy Warhol or Stan Brakhage, as we will see below.

Importance lies in what acinema does result in. Whether acinema is a movement or a film, Lyotard's answer is clear for both: "intensity" (A, 34) and "a simple sterile difference" (*Id.*), which are two expressions he gives in 'Acinema.' In

order to understand them, we must consider the above-mentioned orders together because they arise through deviation from the order.

The intensity Lyotard mentions is not a pleasant thrill. Rather it comes from moving away from our expectations and ways of thinking before or while watching a film. These expectations and ways of thinking are associated with the existing rules of cinema; that is, the generally accepted rules of composition or representation of films, which have been implicitly learned by us. This is something we unknowingly become entrenched in our way of thinking. Because we are very familiar with these rules, we cannot understand, are embarrassed or lost in the development of a film when we encounter this deviation. However, when Lyotard refers to intensity, he hopes it can create a rift in our fixed mindset, beyond such embarrassment or confusion.

A simple sterile difference is also not significantly different from intensity in its results. It is a difference that literally produces nothing. The fact that a film or a movement is productive means that it creates value that can be reduced to something else, which is here signification in relation to the narrative. A sterile difference cannot be reduced to signification, which means that it cannot be interpreted by any rules of representation. As a viewer of the film, he or she hopes to see, learn, and experience something meaningful from the film. In other words, the viewer will not go to the cinema in order to watch a series of meaningless movements. Nevertheless, the reason

Lyotard pays attention to movements that cannot be reduced to signification is to argue that movements should not be deleted simply because they cannot be reduced to signification and that they can instead communicate in a different way and could be more important and meaningful.

Acinema, understood in this way, has therefore naturally been referred to as an idea to explain experimental films. Many experimental films embarrass viewers by displaying strange movements; however, the actual intent is to show various experiments that mainstream commercial cinema cannot do and through this to expand the scope of film. Their works can break the expectations and stereotypes that the public holds about movies, and through this, they show that various communication methods can exist and are possible through them. Acinema becomes a concept that can explain their working methods and their effects.

This is why, in *Film, Theory and Philosophy: The Key Thinkers*, Lisa Trahair describes that Lyotard's work has had more impact on the study of experimental films than it had on mainstream cinema (227). According to her, the acinematic poles break with a representational depiction of the movement and explore the impact of the artifice of movement (226). Acinematic poles, i.e., extremely fast movement and extremely slow movement, undo the coherence of the other movements that are controlled by the necessity to produce a certain order. They explore the impact which can be caused only through movements themselves. Trahair describes this

characteristic as "aesthetic experimentation with the ontology of movement" (227), which means that experimentations with the existence of movements cause aesthetic efffects.

She argues that the reason why Lyotard is not interested in mainstream representational-narrative films is that they are not concerned with theses aesthetic effects through experimentations with the existence of movements itself. Mainstream representational-narrative films follow the existing rules of representation in order to satisfy the public's taste and expectation. That is because they have to make a profit and, to do this, the films should be easy and interesting enough for the public to access and understand the storyline. For this reason, they have to follow the existing rules of representation that are familiar to the public. If movements do not have clear referents and recognizable meaning or produce decodable syntax and vocabulary, the relevant film will not be able to seduce the general public, which means it will not be able to make a profit. Hence, it is impossible for them to experiment with movements themselves in order to inspire aesthetic effects and the movements in mainstream commercial films cannot influence through movement itself because they are generally reduced to mean something else, which becomes the reason why Lyotard is not interested in such films and even reject them entirely in his discussion. For Lyotard, a film should not strive to make a profit by meeting the public's taste and expectation, that is, their desire and want, but should disrupt this process of

identification of desire on the screen.

Lyotard presents two extreme movements as examples of acinema in 'Acinema' because he sees in these extreme movements the possibility to interrupt order and rules. However, I would like to expand the scope of acinema, where acinema becomes all kinds of movements that escape and experiment with order and rules. What Lyotard sees in two extreme movements is deviation from the rules and interruption of order. Accordingly, here, I want to stress deviation and experimentation as the characteristic of acinema. As a result, I will define acinema more generally as experimental and deviant movement.

1.2. An idea to explain experimental films

We cannot deny the relationship between acinema and experimental films because the examples of acinema Lyotard mentions in 'Acinema' are two extreme movements in experimental films. In fact, Lyotard was very interested in experimental films when he wrote 'Acinema' and even made an experimental film himself[7]. It seems clear that Lyotard's interest in experimental films stemmed from

---

[7] Lyotard made *L'Autre Scène* (silent version, 6 Mins) with Dominique Avron, Claudine

his antipathy toward mainstream commercial films. In the 70's, there were many directors who were experimenting with films and their works were intended to show their antipathy towards mainstream commercial cinema. Like these directors, Lyotard also participated in the production of experimental films. In accordance with his call to oppose mainstream films, researchers working on acinema tend to explain acinema in relation to experimental films.

Indeed, the term 'acinema' itself would seem to be directly related to this anti-mainstream stance. In his book *Jean-François Lyotard: questions au cinéma*, Jean-Michel Durafour introduces acinema as "a neologism created by Lyotard in 1973" and explains that "we can also find this term in Peter Kubelka who is experimental filmmaker" (23). He emphasizes that Lyotard's work proceeds in parallel with many experimental film discussions and productions. According to Durafour, experimental film discussion starts with Jean Mitry in 1971 and culminates in Dominique Noguez in the late 70's. It was in the special issue of *Revue d'esthetique* by the latter that Lyotard's article was first published (25).

Durafour discusses two examples of acinema with immobility and excessive movements: Andy Warhol's *Sleep* (1963) as an example of extreme immobility and Stan Brakhage's *Mothlight* (1963) as that of excessive movements.

Eizykman and Guy Fihman in 1969 and its sound filmz in 1972.

Andy Warhol's *Sleep* is a movie with a five and a half hours runtime where Andy Warhol films parts of the body of a sleeping person. Like most of Warhol's films, this film was also filmed with a fixed camera, while the subject of the film remains immobile. Through this film, the audience see only this extreme immobility and because this extreme immobility does not participate in any narrative structure, the audience who are familiar with mainstream representational-narrative films are distracted and disoriented while watching the film. This film shows the way our eyes see things around us, which means the way not to be cut by the rules, so it often bores the audience.

Stan Brakhage's *Mothlight* is, according to Durafour, a film that consists of "purely sensuous things which have nothing to do with dramaturgy and storytelling, that is to say, mimesis."[8] What we can see in this film is only the moth's wings, flower petals and blades of grass passing quickly over the light. Compared to other representational-narrative films, this film shows only the excessive movements transmitting purely sensuous feelings. Those objects and movements zoomed in to focus on the bright light force the audience to feel a strange sensation by allowing them to experience themselves in a different way than what the audience sees with a naked eye. Unlike Warhol's, this film shows a different perspective from how our

---

[8] "*STAN BRAKHAGE voulait un cinema des donnés sensibles pures n'ayant plus rien à voir avec la dramaturgie et le récit, c'est-à-dire la mimesis; [...]*" (Durafour (2009), p.38.)

eyes see things. Therefore, the audience often has difficulty in identifying the things they are seeing.

While Durafour focuses on the relationship between a film and the audience in order to explain experimental films through acinema, Eizykman and Fihman pay attention to the various filmmaking practices of experimental films. In their article, 'L'œil de Lyotard: De l'acinéma au postmoderne' [Lyotard's Eye: From Acinema to the Postmodern], Claudine Eizykman and Guy Fihman show as the examples of acinema with immobility Andy Warhol's *Eat, Sleep* and *Couch*, and Guy Fihman's *Ultrarouge-Infraviolet* (1974), and as those with excessive movement they refer to Len Lye and Robert Breer and present Claude Eizykman's *V.W. vitesse Women* (1974). Guy Fihman's *Ultrarouge-Infraviolet* shows chromatic variations as all movements in the film and within extensive immobility, taking the painting of Pissarro as a motif. According to Eizykman and Fihman, this film is characterized by its expression of extreme immobility in the change of color (130). Claude Eizykman's *V.W. Vitesse Women* shows, within extreme mobilization, the overlap of sequences with the rhythm like heartbeat, where we can see some women sitting in the café, people walking on the street in front of the café and a close-up of a woman's face. Through this film, they present the example of acinema where several stories coexist, and more than two series are composed as a unique series without interference (131).

In addition, Eizykman and Fihman present various experimental films to

explain multiple techniques that acinema shows through the movement of immobility: Peter Kubelka's *Arnulf Rainer* (1958-1960), Hans Richter's *Rythme 21* (1921), Michael Snow's *Presents* (1980), *Wavelength* (1967), ↔ (1969), *La Région Centrale* (1970-71), Claude Eizykman's *V.W. vitesse Women* (1974), Paul Sharits's *Axiomatic Granularity* (1972-73), Ernie Gehr's *History* (1970), Dominique Willoughby's *Masses turbulentes* (1976) and Guy Fihman's *Ultrarouge-Infraviolet* (1974). According to them, these films show not only the movement but also "the moving, the touching, the mobilizing, the pulsating and the chromatisant."[9] I think these films try to create "aesthetic effects" through the experimentation with movements that Trahair mentions. This is not the issue associated with the meaning or signification, but the one associated with sense or feeling. Eizykman and Fihman extend the effect of acinema to various emotion, not limiting simply to embarrassment and bemusement.

Experimental films aim to experiment with two extreme movements in various ways which mainstream commercial films cannot. They show various movements that deviate from the existing rules and the audience's desire and constantly experiment aesthetic effects with these deviant movements. Acinema is in these

---

[9] *"[...] la série d'amobiles ne donne pas seulement le movement, mais aussi le mouvant, l'émouvant, le mobilisant, le pulsant, le chromatisant."* (Eizykman and Fihman (2000), p.132.)

33

experimentations and becomes the idea to explain multiple practices of experimental filmmaking. Acinema becomes real and is not edited by the rules. It also causes various aesthetic effects with movement itself, which is not related to meaning or signification, but to various sense and feeling. These characteristics of acinema can be used to explain various experimental films and their filmmaking practices.

1.3. The beginning of film discourse: describing acinema

Lyotard himself does not mention specific experimental films as examples of acinema in 'Acinema.' However, he mentions Michael Snow's experimental film *La Région centrale* in 'The Unconscious as Mise-en-scène' a few years later. Though he did not present this film as an example of acinema, we can understand how he views experimental films.

This film was shot in Sept-Îles, Quebec in Canada between 1970 and 1971. It is 180 minutes' long and shot over a period of 24 hours, and is composed of seventeen shots of an uninhabited mountainous landscape[10]. From the mountaintop view, this cinematic landscape features vast prospects and a rocky terrain recorded by a camera

---

[10] Wikipedia/ *La Région Centrale*

fixed to movements from any and all directions, including turning, rolling, and spinning[11]. "The soundtrack, composed by Snow for a quasi-synthesizer, refers to the sine waves and electronic pulses that had set the camera in motion"[12]. This film was shot with special equipment, which was designed by the filmmaker. Lyotard describes it as follows:

> *La Région centrale* is a 'film' by Michael Snow, shot in Canada in 1970-1. A special device designed by the filmmaker allows the axis of the camera to be positioned in all possible directions around the point where the camera is connected to the device. This device is itself attached to a mobile shaft which can also turn in every direction around a swivel joint attached to the body of the apparatus. Finally, this apparatus is fixed to the ground. The lens can thus scan every plane passing through all the points of the sphere of the shaft's movements. Because camera and shaft rotate independently of each other, the final speed resulting from their velocities can vary. The setting of the focal distance is synchronized with the motion of the lens so that the images are always legible. The apparatus velocity of transition from one image to another varies with the distance of the

---

[11] https://www.aci-iac.ca/art-books/michael-snow/key-works/la-region-centrale/ (2022. 4. 6.)
[12] *Id.*

objects. (UM, 51)

This apparatus has a swivel joint to which a mobile shaft is attached, which can turn in every direction and is attached to the device to which the camera is connected. It means that the camera, a mobile shaft and a swivel joint move independently and randomly while the camera captures an uninhabited mountainous landscape including the sky. Although the apparatus is fixed to the ground, thanks to the independent and random movements of these three devices, the resulting scenes are unpredictable, do not have signification produced by the connections of each scene, and have different perspective from what the human eye normally perceives.

Lyotard describes this work as "attempts to state perspective of reality" (UM, 53). Each image (here, it is merely a camera movement itself) is there in order to "manifest its potentiality" (*Id*.). These images are legible, but we cannot identify what they are and cannot know what they signify. Reality here is understood differently from reality in 'the effect of reality,' which is the result of a real oppression of orders. It is all possible due to the camera movements. There is no order, no rules. There are only perspectives of the camera, and they are there only as a potentiality, which means they can be anything. Because their references and their meaning are not fixed, they are purely sensuous, like the images in Stan Brakhage's *Mothlight*, which are visual and vocal, neither visible nor audible (ISP, 69). They are simply something before

being visible and audible. Because they have no syntax and vocabulary, their arrangement has no meaning. Each image creates its reference and itself has its own meaning, regardless of the context that comes before and after. For this reason, they can potentially be anything and exist independently on their own. Lyotard describes the content of his film as follows:

> […] there is nothing but perspectives; one can invent new ones. The statement that there are only perspectives includes itself among them, just as Snow's camera aims itself at its own base. With such a logic, the function of language is no longer to signify a given object, and the functions of the image is no longer to deceive by means of false recognition. Language is not made for telling the truth and film is not made to disguise truth on a fantasmatic stage. Both are inexhaustible means for experimenting with new effects, never seen, never heard before. They create their own reference, therefore their object is not identifiable. […] (UM, 52)

There are only perspectives in this film, and we can always create new ones. In this film, language no longer functions — nay, they cannot function. There is no meaning and no object, and therefore no deceit and no disguise. The reason there is no deceit is that it is impossible to determine what the misconception is because there

is no conception. There is no disguise because there is no truth to pretend. There is no intentional manipulation. Literally there are only perspectives in this film, which means that there are merely experimentations with new effects. Therefore, they are never seen and never heard before.

The movements in experimental films which Durafour, Eizykman and Fihman display can be understood as these various perspectives of reality, which means the movements that are constantly being newly created without manipulation by any principles or standards. New perspectives are opened through a film precisely because the film does not follow the standard rules of representation. Therefore, there is also no deceit and no disguise here, and they are always new because they have never been experienced. I think it is what Lyotard sees from many movements in experimental films, and acinema would share these properties. Acinema does not have a meaning and a focused object, and thus creates its own reference and constantly becomes a new perception of reality, without repetition and establishing new rules. Not having a meaning and its object, and instead creating its own reference, acinema deviates from the rules of representation and further interrupts them.

After explaining the perspectives of reality, Lyotard mentions how to deal with them: they should be described, not interpreted (UM, 53). In this remark, I find a clue that could help better understand Lyotard's claim that "the discussion of cinema and representational-narrative art in general begins at this point" (A, 35). Here "at this

point" is where the cinema ceases to be an ordering force, which ultimately means acinema. Acinema "must not be taken as symptoms symbolically expressing a concealed discourse" (UM, 53). It does not have a concealed discourse and thus there is nothing to be interpreted. It has no symptoms per se. It must be merely described as a device where various perspectives of reality work. Here the discussion of cinema in general begins. In this case, these movements are not repeated or become rules and are not used as a principle for interpreting different perspectives. Here I notice that Lyotard uses the term "discussion" rather than "discourse." Acinematic perspectives do not contain any concealed discourses, do not repeat and do not make a rule for them, so that the only way to deal with them is to start to discuss them by describing them each time they appear. In this case, film discourse cannot give the full account of their meaning with the rules of representation because they are just camera movement and the points of view the camera shows. If film discourse starts from the rules of representation, these perspectives are merely useless movements. However, starting its discussion from these perspectives, film discourse has to put aside the rules of representation because the rules keep film discourse from noticing them or accepting them as the subject of reflection. Here, discussion can be understood as an open and informal conversation or debate without any logic or principle. From this, I interpret the discussion that Lyotard mentions as an act itself where film discourse starts its conversation without any authority in order to describe acinematic

perspectives.

They are simply new starting points each time and perspectives that are constantly rearranged. The gist that movement itself always precedes the rules. In this case, movement is real by itself, which is visual and vocal and thereby not manipulated by rules. They should not be interpreted through the rules of representation, which already exists, but should be simply described as what they are. I argue that these descriptions should become the beginning of a film discourse, which means the film discourse starts its discussion from what it cannot interpret through the rules of representation. Through this discussion, film discourse opens the possibility to create new film discourses because they have never experienced the acinematic perspectives. Film discourse starts its discussion by describing these perspectives which deviate from the rules of representation, putting these rules aside, which provide film discourses with a chance to state something that they have never seen or heard before because of the limitation which the rules of representation impose on them. Consequently, film discourse gives up logical and coherent discourses through the rules and starts its discussion by commenting on these perspectives as being the occurrences.

Also, Lyotard mentions that these descriptions "reroute the perspective-creating potentialities" (UM, 54). It means they open the possibilities of new perspectives by resetting and undoing the established perspectives. This can be

understood as a challenge to the rules of representation because it means that, by giving prominence to the movements that do not fit in those rules, these descriptions reset and undo the existing rules. This description neither criticizes nor denies them. Such descriptions just reveal something that is beyond or outside of them.

This can be a complete overturn of how we think about cinema and film discourse because a film begins with movements, not the narrative, and should show various perspectives of reality, not the effect of reality, and a film discourse begins with the descriptions of such perspective, not the interpretation according to the predetermined order or rules. Through this argument, Lyotard is challenging the mainstream commercial, representational-narrative films. This challenge aims at the reality in the film which is organized by the established rules and therefore is the result of a real oppression of orders, which make the public feel comfortable and identify their desire by meeting the public's taste and expectation. Acinema escapes from the rules and discloses what has been excluded by the rules. The fact that the discussion of cinema in general begins with it means not that acinema should be interpreted by the rules, but that the discussion of cinema begins with this deviation from the rules. This means constantly resetting the starting point of the discussion and in turn undoing the established rules. We discuss what we do not know and acinema that does not follow the rules forces us to think about the rules and to invent language(s) for acinema. Acinema opens the possibility of the new film discourses.

In this chapter, I have tried to understand acinema in relation to the rule of representation and Lyotard's claim that the discussion of cinema begins with acinema. Acinema is movement that escapes the rule of representation and experiments on it with aesthetic effect. The proposition that film discussion starts from deviant and experimental movement means constantly resetting the beginning of the film discussion and thereby undoing the established rules. And here new film discourses can start as well.

In the next chapter, I will expand the coverage of acinema to mainstream commercial, representational-narrative films and film discourse. By this expansion, I intend to extend the scope of application of acinema to the discussion of mainstream representational-narrative films. Also, Lyotard himself expressed his intention to reflect the interruption within mainstream cinema in his later essay on film. However, the most important reason for expanding the coverage of acinema to mainstream films is because, when we superimpose acinema on a representational-narrative film, the characteristics of acinema as a deviant and experimental movement will be highlighted even more, and through this we will be able to better understand how it works within a film, not as a whole film. This will involve the task of making clearer the characteristics of acinema in relation to the rules of narrative and film theory interpreting narrative films.

2. Acinema interrupting the rules of narrative and the theory

In Chapter 1, I defined acinema as deviant and experimental movement since it deviates from the rule of representation and reveals the characteristics and the filmmaking practices of movement in experimental films. It shows us just the perspectives of reality which are movements themselves that are always new and create aesthetic effects. And, I also argued that the discussion of cinema starts from these deviant and experiment movements, which is construed to mean that film discourse does not interpret those movements through a set of prescribed rules, but attempt to describe and discuss them anew without any rules to guide them. That is because these movements always precede the formation of rules and are always new, film discourse has to create its mode of thinking and expression in order to describe them each time they appear, which causes regressive representational structure to be undone and allow the film discourse to open its boundary and expand its limit. As a result, acinemas open the possibility to produce new discourses constantly, thereby upsetting and reconstructing the rules of representation.

In this chapter, I will try to examine how acinema can work within the frame of mainstream representational-narrative films — i.e., examining acinema within the narrative and its relation to theory. Here, the theory can be understood as a principle

used by film discourses that seek to derive a consistent meaning between the cinematic elements and the narrative meaning within a narrative film. By examining acinema in relation to the narrative and the theory, I will demonstrate that acinema interrupts not only the rules of representation but also rules of narrative and theory.

Acinemas work as a moment where the development of the narrative is interrupted and from which theory cannot generate a coherent discourse. This is possible because they are beyond or outside of the coherent meaning prescribed by the narrative or theory. Acinemas exist in a film simply as something to interrupt the narrative and resist to be interpreted by theory. They can be neither conceptualized nor theorized. So, they should not be interpreted by the order of the narrative or the logic of the theory. I will deal with this in this chapter.

In this context, I will also investigate what is meant by the statement that film discussion starts from acinematic moments. I will try to show that acinematic moments cannot be conceptualized and theorized, which means that they should be understood merely as an interruption and therefore the theory should not attempt to impose the coherent meaning on acinematic moments through its pre-established logic. According to Lyotard, in this case, theory can learn from acinematic moments. Instead of trying to derive a coherent meaning from these acinematic moments, theory can learn that all movements in a film do not have the meaning to be interpreted and therefore it cannot explain all correlations between meaning and movements. From

this point, as we saw in the previous chapter, the film discussion starts. Film discourse lets go of the theory which it took as a principle and starts its discussion by describing and commenting that the moment occurs in a film where the theory cannot explain the correlation between cinematic elements and narrative meaning. This discussion means undoing the logic of the theory, by revealing the injustice that the theory imposes its logic everywhere.

As a starting point, I will first present some representational-narrative films mentioned by Lyotard. In these films, Lyotard pays attention to the points where the narrative ceases to exist and what happens in these points, especially to the audience. With this presentation, I will present explanations as to why Lyotard highlights these points, which could help us understand acinematic moments that will be described later.

2.1. An interruption to narrative

In this section, I will address acinema as it appears within mainstream representational-narrative films. Acinema in mainstream representational-narrative films interrupts the narrative. In the previous chapter, I argue that acinema as an experimental and deviant movement, deviating and departing from rules of

representation, interrupts those rules. Due to these characteristics, this experimental and deviant movement becomes a moment where there is neither meaning nor representation associated with the narrative in its development. I will call this moment, following Jones and Woodward, an acinematic moment.

Before introducing Jones and Woodard's discussion on the acinematic moment, I would like to present Lyotard's discussion on some mainstream representational-narrative films. Lyotard does not completely deny the interest of such films in spite of his evident preference for experimental film in 'Acinema.' Yet, his interest does not lie in the narrative, but in the point of deviation from the order of the narrative which occurs in mainstream representational-narrative films. This deviation can be understood as an interruption to the narrative. I present his remarks because it will be helpful to understand the implication of the acinematic moment in mainstream representational-narrative films. Though he does not expressly refer to these moments as an acinematic moment, I think that they can at least show how Lyotard understand them and how we could understand them to be.

First, in 'Notes on the Critical Function of the Work of Art,' Lyotard describes a widely distributed film from 1968, *Je t'aime, je t'aime* by Alain Resnais. This film is a 1968 French science fiction film directed by Alain Resnais. The main character Claude Ridder is asked to participate in a mysterious experiment where he travels the past. However, instead of returning to the present after one minute of traveling to the

past, he experiences his past in a disjointed manner[13]. The special feature of this film is the temporal arrangement of the scenes, which is jumbled up in he context of a very connoted science fiction. It is this deconstruction of normal editing that Lyotard pays special attention to.

> (…) What is truly astonishing is the articulation of the flash-backs. A real deconstruction of normal editing, which respects the spatio-temporal frameworks that are those of the second process, of reality-testing [de l'épreuve de réalité], is operated. What one is dealing with here is a total deconstruction of sequence [la succession]. (…) (CF, 75)

This film has a clear narrative, but the arrangement of the scenes does not follow the general temporal sequence of the narrative. Even if we understand that this movie is a science fiction film and we assume that each scene is a scene of reminiscence, many of the connections in each scene do not make sense. To follow the narrative, the audience is forced to think constantly while watching this film because they cannot anticipate what comes next and connect all different scenes in what they perceive as a normal way. Lyotard describes this situation as follows: "I believe that Resnais obliges the public to stop fantasizing" (*Id.*). For Lyotard,

---

[13] Wikipedia/ *Je t'aime, je t'aime*

mainstream representational-narrative films produce or elicit the public's fantasies, which means they "put people in a situation of day-dreaming" (CF, 76), by providing the public with what they want and expect to see. With this deconstruction of normal editing, this film keeps people from falling into daydreaming, by escaping from the public's expectation. Although it is a mainstream representational-narrative film, Resnais's work has deviant movements in the editing, which cause interruptions of the narrative and further, interrupt the public's fantasies.

In another essay on film 'Two Metamorphoses of the Seductive in Cinema,' Lyotard describes a certain sequence in *Apocalypse Now* by Francis Ford Coppola: the sequence of an attack on the village in Vietnam by the American dragoon helicopters. Lyotard depicts this sequence as follows:

> (…) But here [in this sequence], it [the movement of images and of sounds] becomes a moment in which the scene is saturated by sonorous and visual elements all in ultra-rapid displacement, where the eye and the ear are exceeded by what is given and where the addressee is made to suffer from an excess of reality. There is a panic on the scene. All the previously sketched little stories [*petites histoires*] concerning the principal and secondary characters are wiped out or blurred, rendered ungraspable in an instant. The scene empties itself of meaning. (…) (TM, 59) (The first two

interpolation is by the author and the third one is by Peter W. Milne and Ashley Woodward)

This film is set in the Vietnam War and tells the story of the protagonist receiving an order to assassinate a US Special Forces colonel hiding deep in the jungle and eventually fulfilling that mission. The sequence Lyotard mentions is where US troops bomb a small village in Vietnam with Wagner's *Ride of the Valkyries*, playing in the background. Like Lyotard's description, this sequence consists of excessive acoustic and visual elements and thereby the story about the characters becomes vague. Here Lyotard notices an emptying out of meaning. The narrative stops narrating and loses its ability to refer to and transmit a meaning in an effective way. The audience encountering this sequence "no longer receives from the scene the implicitly given prescriptions to act" (TM, 59). In this situation, panic occurs and "is not seduced" (*Id*.), which means that the pragmatic relation is suspended and the pragmatic efficacy of discourse loses its power.

In the last essay on film 'The Idea of a Sovereign Film,' Lyotard talks about neo-realism. Neo-realism is a national film movement after World War II in Italy. It features stories set about the poor and the working class. These stories are shot on location and non-professional actors act. It shows everyday life of the poor and the

working class after World War II[14]. In these films, Lyotard notes a moment where reality belonging to the narrated story no longer contributes to actually telling the story. It has the narrative and a moment in it that keeps a kind of autonomy in relation to the narrative simutaneously. In this moment, the depicted reality does not play the role assigned to it by the narrative. The pot of water depicted in a scene, for example, is the element which belongs to the narrated story, but it also tells another story, with the calcium struck to the bottom from the boiling water, with the wear and tear of its handle, and with the traces of knocks that it carries on its rim. As a result, by also telling another story, the pot of water makes an interruption to the narrative.

> The reality glimpsed by means of the depiction is no more than the magnification of an element of the narrated [*racontée*] reality. Neo-realism changes this relation. Through the window, the descriptive vacuoles, it discovers that reality, that is, that element which belongs to the narrated story, enjoys a kind of autonomy in relation to that story. In that instant, reality eludes the role that the narration makes it play. The pot of water that the woman prepares to put on the gas in order to make coffee suddenly takes on a special intensity. As if this simple pot, which has served every morning for years to heat the water for the coffee, with the

---

[14] Wikipedia/ *Italian neorealism*

calcium struck to the bottom from the boiling water, with the wear and tear of its handle, with the traces of knocks that it carries on its rim, tells another story. (ISF, 65-66)

It is natural for the reality depicted in the scenes in mainstream representational-narrative films to show the reality constructed by the narrative. However, Lyotard notes that neo-realism changes this relation. Neo-realism shows a single object or landscape for an extended time, like the pot of water above. At this moment, the audience escapes from the narrative time and space for a moment and concentrates on the object or the landscape itself. Narrative time stops and "the visual or the vocal" emerges "on the surface of the visible and the audible" (ISF, 69). This object or landscape is no longer visible nor audible in the meaning of the narrative. As the visual or the vocal, it shows another "filmic fact" (*Id*.). Lyotard refers to this fact as "the real in reality" (ISF, 68). According to Lyotard, "it is not subordinated to a project of narration, of illustration, of making comprehensible" (ISF, 69). Though Lyotard names it another story, this moment cannot be understood based on a verbal representation. The audience can see, hear and think, but this story can also be experienced differently by each audience member and there is no right or wrong.

Although the causes and the aspects of these interruptions are different, the reason why Lyotard notes these stops seems to be similar: a stop of the development

of the narrative. They have no value for the narrative and cannot produce the meaning of the narrative. Nevertheless, these moments communicate something: by being there as an interruption, they prevent the audience from falling into day-dreaming and make them panic and confused by not giving intelligible meaning, yet they also let them escape from the narrative and allow then to think freely.

However, these moments which Lyotard mentions seems to differ from acinematic moments in the strict sense. As I argued in Chapter 1, acinema is an experimental and deviant movement in that it does not follow the rules of representation or of narrative. However, in these moments which Lyotard mentions, we can at least identify what is going on, which means that representation of something still exists in these moments. Although the impact these moments can have on the audience could help understand such moment of acinema, it is hard to say that these moments and acinema are identical. For this reason, I will present Jones and Woodward's discussion on acinematic moments. Jones and Woodward define some non-representational images in Lynch's films as acinematic moments and analyze how they operate in representational-narrative films, thereby revealing the impact of these moments on any theoretical apparatus.

In 'How desire Works: A Lyotardian Lynch,' Jones and Woodward, noting repeated images in David Lynch's films, open the possibility of acinema in mainstream representational-narrative films. The reason why they pay attention to

these repeated images is that it is difficult to understand them through the manner in which Hollywood cinema is understood and construed. These images are "illogical in form and content" and "appear highly resistant to sense" (164). Hence, they are usually read and interpreted as dream-like aspects and the predominant approach to Lynch's work, such as semiotic reading, psychoanalytic critics and Lacanian interpretation, is to attempt to explain the meaning these repeated images can have and to provide them with a unity and coherence, through extensive textual commentary and interpretative correlations (*Id*.). However, Jones and Woodward propose another possibility to understand them by describing them as "acinematic moments" (*Id*). These images, resisting the coherent meaning of the narrative, make a stop of the narrative. They have no meaning to be interpreted. They have their force only in that they escape from the narrative or have no value in the narrative. In this sense, Jones and Woodward argue the relationship between acinematic moments and the meaning in Lynch's films as follows: "Lynch's acinematic moments […] are the more powerful the less they mean with respect to the narrative" (175-6).

Repeated images in Lynch's films to which Jones and Woodward pay attention are as follows: the staccato effect of strobing lights, the speeding up and the slowing down to create slowly moving streaked images, over-lit sequence or blowing out into a blank screen, light effects created with blurring of focus and other techniques, unusual camera angles and close-up shots of things associated with the narrative but

treated in excessive detail and industrial sounds etc. (176). They have no meaning in the narrative and, though they represent something associated with the narrative, thus have no value for the narrative. However, they will share the same characteristics as the moments which Lyotard mentioned: they oblige the public to stop fantasizing, but instead make them get lost by emptying out the meaning of the moments and leave the public to finally feel free to think.

2. 2. Rejection of conceptualization and theorization

Acinematic moments in mainstream representational-narrative films cause an interruption, which means they have no meaning to be interpreted in relation to the narrative and interrupt the development of the narrative. Nevertheless, some theories try to draw coherent meaning from them. They try to find the relationships between image and meaning and from these relationships make a coherent discourse. By examining this relationship between acinematic moments and the attempt at creating theories, I will try to investigate not only the fact that acinematic moments interrupts the development of the narrative, but also the fact that they prevent these theories from being applicable — that is, acinematic moments interrupts these theories as well. Acinematic moments are just an interruption of narrative, and they have their

meaning only in this fact itself that they are just an interruption. In sum, these theories try to give meaning to things that have no meaning in order to remain applicable.

According to Jones and Woodward, semiotic reading and psychoanalytic critique commonly share their "aspiration to establish one-to-one correspondences between 'symbols' and 'meaning'" (LL, 166). These one-to-one correspondences are, for them, "improbable correlations" (*Id*.). Semiotic reading and psychoanalytic critics try to find some cues from signs or symbols in Lynch's films, connect them with meaning and signify their correlations. However, some images in Lynch's films, i.e., acinematic moments, do not have any correlations, because they are there as an interruption.

As for the Lacanian interpretation, Jones and Woodward refer to the work of Žižek and McGowan. Their work is different from the semiotic reading in that the semiotic tries to establish "correlations between filmic elements and particular meanings", while the work of Žižek and McGowan seek correlation "between filmic meanings and operative structures, and the related pedagogical function of establishing such correlations" (*Id*.). This means that Lacanian interpretation is not satisfied with establishing correlations between filmic elements and particular meanings and uses these correlations in order to compel the audience to confront a fundamental Lacanian logic. Before addressing the Lacanian reading strategy, Jones and Woodward describe the Lacanian interpretation as follows:

55

It is a distinctive feature of Lacanian engagements with both the works of popular culture and the more experimental arts that they do not treat such works as interesting or valuable in their own right but, instead, as opportunities for exemplifying fundamental theoretical concepts or insights. In short, artworks are merely instructive illustrations of Lacanian 'truths.' (167)

Even in this case, like semiotic reading and psychoanalytic critics, Jones and Woodward's point is negative, because the Lacanian interpretation uses the correlations between these images and operative structures in order to exemplify and clarify its own theoretical logic, even when it treats some images in Lynch's films. This means that the Lacanian interpretation "does not treat film itself" but rather it interprets Lynch's films "in terms of meaning, where that meaning turns out to be Lacanian theoretical discourse" (177).

What I want to say through the discussion of these theories is that acinematic moments as an interruption in the narrative is just a stopping point, which does not have the meaning to be interpreted and thereby cannot provide the opportunity to make such correlations between filmic elements and particular meaning. Nevertheless, some theories try to connect them to particular meanings and signify them through or for their theory with a coherent discourse, which seems to be not

just limited to Lynch's films. In this sense, acinematic moments keep these theories from implementing their work: they cause the interruption of conceptualizing or theorizing.

Then, what can theory do in this case? When acinematic moments prevent theory from making the coherent discourse, what should theory do? Lyotard says in 'On Theory' as follows:

"[…] I imagine there will always be a difference between artists and theorists, but that is rather a good thing, for theorists have everything to learn from the artists, even of the latter won't do what the former expect…; so much the better in fact, for theorists need to be practically criticized by works that disturb them". (OT, 30)

Lyotard seems to have a clear answer to the question above. The theory should learn from works and be criticized by works. Confronting acinematic moments which interrupt it, a theory learns from them the fact that it has a wrong assumption that all movements in a film have a meaning to be interpreted and they can explain all correlations between the meaning and movements. And it is further criticized by them for imposing its assumption on acinematic movements, which I think is unfair for Lyotard. The theory just describes them and, through this description, should "call in question" itself, while questioning what it is doing.

"[…] it seems to me that the function of theory is not only to understand, but also to criticize, i.e., to call in question and *overturn* a reality" (OT, 19)

"A reality" here means "mystified or alienated reality" (*Id.*). In other word, it is the reality described by and within a theory. For Lyotard, the function of a theory should rather be to overturn this reality by criticizing itself and calling itself in question. However, a theory cannot do it because of its pre-set structure. Therefore, Lyotard argues that acinematic moments should become the starting point of a discussion of cinema in general, which I interpret to mean that a film discourse starts its discussion with acinema. Acinematic moments can give a film discourse the chance to see and respond to what exists outside of this mystified or alienated reality composed of a theory, and to state the fact that, imposing its logic on interpreting what exists outside of this mystified or alienated reality, a theory lets us understand the world in a limited way that fits its logic. In other words, a theory forces us to see the world only in one way that it allows, while limiting our possibilities of seeing and understanding the world in different ways. However, the film discourse can find and respond to acinematic moments, and state what is happening in these moments, letting go of theories. By starting its discussion from acinematic moments, film discourse opens the inherent limitation of theory and opens the possibility of seeing and experiencing a film and the world in a different way. Here, I think Lyotard's statement

that a film discussion should start from acinema becomes even clearer. It is from acinema that the discussion on cinema starts, not from a theory, which means the starting point of a film discourse would be deviant and experimental movements. Film discourse does not begin with what the theory can interpret, but what it cannot know and explain. I will deal with the implications of this in the next section.

2.3. The beginning of film discourse: learning from acinema

I argued that the acinematic perspectives, which was addressed in Chapter 1 and the acinematic moments, discussed in this chapter, become a starting point of a film discourse. What these two have in common is that they are outisde of what is already prescribed, whether they be rules or a theory. For this reason, they cannot be understood and interpreted by rules or a theory or through their logic. It means that acinematic perspectives and acinematic moments can be alienated and not be perceived as meaningful according to those rules or theories. Nevertheless, they are there. What's more, the film discussion starts from there. This means that the film discussion starts from what rules and theories cannot understand and interpret. Acinematic perspectives and acinematic moments exist in front of rules and a theory only as an interruption.

The rules of representation and those of narrative are used by mainstream representational-narrative cinema in order to transmit a story effectively and in an intelligible way. Theories are used by film discourse in order to clarify the coherent correlations between filmic elements and particular meanings. Although both rules and theories treat fundamental elements of the film, which are movements, what they ultimately want to describe is a story and coherent correlations, not movement itself. Rules organize movements in order to narrate a story and theories interpret movements in order to understand coherent correlations. What Lyotard questions is that the rules of representation and narrative exclude certain movements in order to make a reality and that theories try to interpret and define a reality only in a certain way that has been set up in advance. Acinematic perspectives and acinematic moments are something excluded by rules and theories for being useless because they are just an interruption for them. However, they speak in non-verbal manner and they cannot be identified by rules nor decoded by theories. This unfamiliarity is what spurs a film discourse, and thus should be deemed the beginning of that very discourse.

These acinemas should be a starting point of film discourse because they can announce the fact that there is something that is out of the rule and theory and it gives a film discourse a chance to perceive and state what the rules and the theories are and what they do in films and in film discourses. The rules of representation and narrative restrict movements that can be inscribed in the film while theories limit ways by

60

which the audience understands and interprets a film. Both rules and theory have their own economies and operate according to them, limiting filmmaking and film analysis. Acinemas, being outside of these economies, let the film discourse recognize these limitations. This recognition should be the beginning of the discussion of cinema in general, which can open the possibilities of new perspectives and new ways of watching films. These new perspective and new ways of watching films are definitely something that are narrated, illustrated and made comprehensible by a film discourse. In this case, the theory must learn from and be criticized by acinemas.

The rules which filmmakers use in order to make a film with unity and coherence produce merely the restricted world by themselves. The theories which theorists use in order to make a coherent discourse say just what they can find and understand in and from their logic. Movements which are not limited by and rather deviated from rules should be tried in order to make a film and, from these movements, theories should learn, and film discourses start their discussions without these theories. It can give a chance to break the boundaries laid down by rules and theories broaden the capability for films and film discourses to show the world.

In the next chapter, based on this understanding of the relationship between acinema and a theory, I will examine the relationship between acinema and the cinematic avant-garde which Lyotard used to describe acinema in his last film essay. It will be our task there to understand the concept of acinema based on Lyotard's later

thoughts.

3. Acinema as the cinematic avant-garde

I have so far argued that acinema is merely an experimental or deviant movement and that acinematic perspectives in experimental films and acinematic moments in mainstream representational-narrative films represent a starting point of a film discourse. This is based on Lyotard's remark in 'Acinema' that "the discussion of cinema and representational-narrative art in general begins at this point." Here, "this point" refers to the instant where the movements do not follow the rules of representation and narrative, and where theory cannot draw the coherent meaning from the movements. That is, the discussion of cinema starts from something the rules cannot identify and theories cannot decode in a way other than verbal, which is invariably refers to acinema. The discussion of cinema from acinemas just describes the fact that acinema is an interruption to the rules. Through acinema, these rules draw their limits, which in turn restrict our experience. Acinema reveals that the reality is eliminated by the rules of representation and narrative and that the film discourse restricts the possibilities of viewing a film from multiple aspects. Starting the discussion of cinema from acinemas is to open the possibilities of new perspectives in the level of filmmaking and new ways of seeing films in the level of interpreting or understanding film, because acinema discloses the moments where the established rules cannot function. It seems that Lyotard intentionally uses the term "discussion"

of cinema rather than film "discourse". This is because, for him, a theory has its predetermined axioms and frame of perspective, so it reads films only in an established and limited manner. In other words, the theory limits our experience by shaping our understanding before we make it. However, by "discussing" acinema without the rules from inside or outside of films, the film discourse can have the chance to comment something that it has never dealt with because of the boundary that the theory gives to it and to create the new way of thinking and expressing. Consequently, the reason why Lyotard uses the term "discussion" instead of "discourse" is to stress that film discourse has to start its discussion without recourse to theory by describing what happens in a film, which again reveals Lyotard's intention to undo theory. From this intention of Lyotard, I interpret the sentence "the discussion of cinema starts from acinema" as meaning that "the discourse starts its discussion from acinema without a theory."

Acinematic perspectives in experimental films deviate from the order, which exists in mainstream representational-narrative films as a device that enables these films to directly communicate with the audience. This means that their referents are not clear and that it is impossible to give them a recognizable meaning — that is, the audience generally cannot decode those movements encapsulating the acinematic perspectives. As a result, acinematic perspectives challenge the rules of representation applied to mainstream representational-narrative films, especially

Hollywood cinema, by arguing that not all movements have clear referents and clearly recognizable meaning for the audience to understand. Although acinematic perspectives do not have clear referents and recognizable meaning, they can communicate with the audience by causing the aesthetic effects through the movements and by encountering the "real," which is not cut out or shaped by the rules.

The fact that the discussion of cinema begins at this point where the filmmaking rules and the theoretical rules are interrupted indicates that this interruption raises a question about the rules and also causes disruption in the meaning and signification. Furthermore, from this interruption, the discussion of cinema starts as it spurs the search of meaning and signification, thereby opening the possibilities of an entirely new film discourse. These rules are "subordinated to a project of narration, of illustration, of making comprehensible" as Lyotard says in 'The Idea of a Sovereign Film' (69). They compel films and the film discourse to narrate, illustrate and communicate a certain reality in comprehensible manner. However, acinematic perspectives and moments interrupt these projects and reveal that these projects have their limits in that they cannot narrate, illustrate and allow comprehension of everything. And it is from theses limits where there are the things that have never been verbalized or have been always excluded from verbalization that a new film discourse begins.

In this chapter, I will investigate the meaning of Lyotard's remark in 'The Idea

of a Sovereign Film' that acinema is "the work of the cinematic avant-garde" (64). I expect that Lyotard's notion of the avant-garde will help us better understand the fact that acinema as an occurrence in a film causes the interruption of meaning and signification, thereby giving the film discourse the chance to create new ways of thinking and expressing the interruption, and finally, extending its scope of application from cinema to the conceptual framework and consciousness. First, I will investigate what the avant-garde means for Lyotard and identify the relationship between avant-garde and acinema. Then I will examine the implications of acinema as the cinematic avant-garde and finally reexamine the meaning of the film discourse starting from the cinematic avant-garde.

3.1. An occurrence that calls the rules into question

How is acinema as both an interruption of rules and a starting point of the film discourse related to the cinematic avant-garde? In order to investigate this relationship, it is necessary to know what avant-garde is for Lyotard, which will be dealt first. The cinematic avant-garde Lyotard speaks of here is different from the film of the avant-garde which appeared in the 1920's within the history of cinema. Lyotard criticizes the films of these earlier avant-garde period by describing them as "didactic,

and therefore subordinated to a programme" (ISF, 69). For him, the problem is that these films are motivated by political theories and therefore not avant-garde in the Lyotardian sense, since they impose an order on the works from the outside and not, as the avant-garde ought to do, from within the practice of art itself. It is thus necessary to examine Lyotard's remarks on the avant-garde in 'What Is the Postmodern' and 'The Sublime and the Avant-Garde' in order to identify the relationship between acinema and the avant-garde.

In 'What Is the Postmodern?', Lyotard opposes realism and the avant-garde by claiming that realism obeys the established rules of art, while the avant-garde questions (or doubts) these rules and experiments with them. For Lyotard, realism fulfills "a call for order", which means it tries to satisfy "a desire for unity, for identity, for security, or popularity (in the sense of "finding a public")" (WIP, 73). Realism, whether it is narrative realism or pictorial realism (that is, representation as we have been using this term), works in order to give the public a sense of security. It means that realism publicly demonstrates what the public expects and the public confirms what it wanted to see through realism. There is a communicative agreement here, which is defined by the rules of art. The rules of art which realism follows in turn are not for the art itself, but for unity, identity, or popularity. The unity and identity are not only related to the public, but also to artists. There is also a communicative agreement among artists so that, when an artist does not follow the rules of art, he or

she is judged accordingly, often as an incompetent artist. What realism focuses on is whether the rules of art have been obeyed, not what the reality is in art. For this reason, Lyotard describes realism as follows:

> Realism, whose only definition is that it intends to avoid the question of reality implicated in that of art, always stands somewhere between academicism and kitsch. (WIP, 75)

According to Lyotard, realism stands somewhere between the rules of art for the public and those of artists, where the question of what is the reality in art is excluded or hidden. Between the expectation of the public and the disciplines from their predecessors, realism produces its work and, in this process, the rules of art which can be understood as a kind of communicational consensus become an essential framework. That is because only when realism follows these rules can it give unity and identity not only to the public but also among the artists and, in this process, these rules become "a means to reassure" (74). This means that the task of realism is "to preserve various consciousness from doubt" and to do this, the rules become "a means to deceive and seduce" (*Id*.). However, for Lyotard this situation "makes it impossible for them [these rules] to be true" (75). In other word, these rules can become "correct rules" (75) for "therapeutic uses" (74), but are not true for "the real in the reality" (ISF, 68). In this sense, the "reality" which realism shows through

these rules can even be thought of as "fantasies" (WIP, 74).

It is these rules that the avant-garde question in their experiments. What the avant-garde wants to do is not to criticize that these rules are not true or to deny them, but to "assert what is in fact the case" (BR, 155). In other words, by questioning and experimenting with the rules of "good" or "proper" art, the avant-garde tries to show that there is something that the rules cannot present or that they do not know and conclude that the reality which the rules organize and construct is incomplete. Given that these rules "preserve consciousness from doubt", this "reality" is also deceptive. The rules make the public believe that the reality which realism produces is true, while the avant-garde reveals that this reality is lacking. Lyotard describes the manner of the avant-garde as follows:

> It is not my intention to analyze here in detail the manner in which the various avant-garde have, so to speak, humbled and disqualified reality by examining the pictorial techniques which are so many devices to make us believe in it. Local tone, drawing, the mixing of colors, linear perspective, the nature of the support and that of the instrument, the treatment, the display, the museum: the avant-gardes are perpetually flushing out artifices of presentation which make it possible to subordinate thought to the gaze and to turn it away from the unpresentable. (WIP, 79)

With examples of pictorial techniques, Lyotard explains the manner of the avant-garde. Unlike realism, which makes us believe in a certain reality with various pictorial techniques, the avant-garde artists and theorists, examining these pictorial techniques, make us ask what reality is. By ruling out artifices of presentation one by one, such as local tone, drawing, the mixing of colors, linear perspective, the display and even the museum, the avant-garde artists and theorists reveal that these artifices not only make us believe in the reality but also conceal that the reality is unqualified as the real. By examining and questioning the pictorial techniques which realism uses, the avant-garde artists and theorists expose that these pictorial techniques are merely a means to reassure, deceive and seduce, and that the reality organized by them is unworthy of the real, since there is a certain "lack of reality" in this reality (WIP, 77).

Through the above discussion, we can confirm that acinema shares a similar purpose and method with avant-garde works. As seen in the previous two chapters, acinema challenges the rules of representation and narrative by interrupting their application, and reveals that the rules of representation and narrative limit reality by eliminating movements, which gives the audience a sense of security by showing only what the audience wants and expects to see.

However, when Lyotard refers to acinema as the work of the cinematic avant-garde, he is not limiting his reference to just filmmaking rules, but expand beyond it. When he mentions "occurrence" in relation to the avant-garde, it extends to the

problem of human consciousness. Then, acinema as the work of the cinematic avant-garde is not limited to the subject of film and will be able to extend its scope of application to human consciousness. And, again, this will provide a clue to solve the issue between acinema and film discourse or film theory, which means that acinema as an occurrence interrupts the conceptual framework that film discourse and film theory depends on.

In 'The Sublime and the Avant-Garde', Lyotard mentions that the rigor of the avant-garde is to guard the occurrence (93). An occurrence here means that something happens (*il arrive*). However, the point is that one does not know what 'something' or 'it' is. Although we cannot clarify these concepts, "it" is happening now and here. Lyotard explains the rigor of the avant-garde as follows:

(…) guarding the occurrence 'before' any defence, any illustration, and any commentary, guarding before being on one's guard, before 'looking' [*regarder*] under the aegis of *now*, this is the rigour of the avant-garde. (…) (SA, 93)

This term occurrence is the one that Lyotard used to explain Newman's *now* which was used as the titles of some of his works and essays. Lyotard explains it as "a stranger to consciousness," one that "cannot be constituted by it" (90). In this sense, an occurrence can be understood as "the indeterminate" (93). It means an occurrence

is 'something that happens,' before being grasped and prescribed by consciousness. In other words, the occurrence occurs before being determined by consciousness. The occurrence takes place outside of the conceptual frameworks. The "rigor" of the avant-garde is to guard this occurrence, under the aegis of *now*, before being illustrated and commented upon by consciousness. For this reason, an occurrence is out of or beyond the comprehension of consciousness.

When the avant-garde guards an occurrence under the aegis of now, what will happen? Thought strives to prescribe and determine this something "by setting up a system, a theory, a programme or a project" (91). However, an occurrence is so simple that it can be approached only when thought is disarmed, which is according to Lyotard "a state of privation" (90). We think we can know an occurrence if we rely on the rules by setting up a system, a theory, a program or a project, but rather we have to disarm our thought in order to perceive an occurrence, setting aside these rules or doing without them, in a state of privation.

That thought is disarmed means to let go of the preset rules and methods by which it knows the world, and which are familiar and natural to consciousness. Consciousness is what seeks meaning, so what is needed here is to hold back mentally and allow the occurrence to come forward or to occur. As soon as thought lets go of the rules, it will feel the terror that it can know nothing. However, it can see and perceive something that it previously could not see and perceive because of the rules.

The occurrence is what escapes the ordering capacities of the various methods the mind uses to organize the world: theories, traditions, conceptual frameworks, etc., as Lyotard lists them above. Encountering an occurrence, thought tries to understand and interpret it through these methods, and then realizes it is impossible to grasp it and feels frustrated with such impossibility. At this point, thought must think not of its own incompetence, but of the incompetence of the rules that they cannot recognize what does not fit them, and call the rules into question. We can see and perceive something now only when we let go of what makes us feel secure. Like a double-edged sword, the rules give us security, order and unity, but simultaneously make invisible what the rules cannot descrbe.

Consciousness comes to the world armed with various methods for processing data: theories, rules, norms, traditions, categories, etc. The occurrence is what happens in such a way that these cannot perform their function. The avant-garde explores what happens when the rules of "good" art are not followed, that is, when the rules of good composition are set aside and the occurrence is allowed to arrive.

The avant-garde in Lyotard's sense guards the occurrence which is out of or beyond consciousness, or rather is "before" consciousness. It could be said that the occurrence (or the unpresentable) is a kind of "unconscious" aspect of what is taken to be real. This occurrence is what escapes the ordering capacities of the various methods the mind uses to organize the world and what happens in such a way that

these methods cannot perform their function. Among these methods, we can find the rules which realism uses to organize reality visually or narratively. Rules that are thus subject to the experiments of the avant-garde, where the avant-garde exposes the lack of reality in reality. In turn, what the avant-garde wants to do is to resist the pre-determined methods or rules from the outside, by experimenting with these rules and exploring the occurrence in various ways.

In his last essay on film, Lyotard summons acinema, linking it to what he calls the cinematic avant-garde, and speaks about how acinema becomes an occurrence. As an occurrence out of or before the consciousness, acinema exists out of or before rules and theory. As an occurrence reveals the incompetence of the consciousness, acinema also reveals that about rules and theory. As the avant-garde practice discloses the lack of the reality in reality, acinema discloses the same void in a film as well. When we understand acinema as an occurrence, acinema can affect not only the rules of representation and the narrative but also the theory and the consciousness, which is through the same way as acinema causes an interruption in the rules. Acinema generates an interruption in the operation of theory and, simultaneously the consciousness, more specifically, the conceptual framework. This interruption in turn undoes not only the work of film theory, but also consciousness and conceptual framework.

"Avant-garde" means something very specific to Lyotard, and acinema can be

74

understood in terms of this very specific understanding of avant-garde practice. The avant-garde is not a historical category for Lyotard, but a kind of "philosophical" inquiry, "a long, obstinate and highly responsible investigation of the presuppositions implied in modernity" (DP, 10). We can thus see why the cinematic avant-garde here is different from the didactic practices of the film makers from the 20's because it is just experimentation which is opposite a program.

As the work of the cinematic avant-garde, acinema, being outside of the filmmaking rules and theoretical rules, challenges them and discloses the lack of reality in a film. In this sense, acinema can be read as "the investigation of the presuppositions implied in modernity" and thereby should be understood as a "philosophical inquiry". Acinema as the work of the cinematic avant-garde deviates from the existing rules, especially the theoretical rules, and experiments with them, which means undoing all kinds of programs in relation to cinema and interrupting their function.

Having investigated the implication of acinema in terms of cinematic avant-garde practice, I will examine another implication of acinema in the next section by comparing it with what Lyotard calls a "sovereign film."

3.2. Sovereign indifference to authority

In the second chapter, I mentioned the neo-realism that Lyotard discusses in 'The Idea of a Sovereign Film', which has both a narrative and a moment in it that keeps autonomy in relation to the narrative at the same time. In this essay where he defines and explains neo-realism as a sovereign film, Lyotard summons acinema. Why did Lyotard refer to cinema in this essay? What are the differences and similarities among acinema, neo-realism and a "sovereign" film? By examining these relationships, I will investigate another implication of acinema related to sovereign film — i.e., its indifference to all laws and rules.

First, Lyotard explains the term sovereign, citing Georges Bataille, as follows:

(…) Georges Bataille, in *Literature and Evil* (1997) and *Inner Experience* (2014), calls sovereign an experience which is not authorized and which does not appeal to any authority; an experience or an existence which appears, happens, without relation to any law by which it could claim or demand to be 'what it is'. (ISF, 62)

Sovereign is indifferent to all authority so that it is not authorized and does not appeal to any external justification. It is free from the law by which it could claim or

demand to be 'what it is' and just appears or happens without relation to any law. This explanation reminds us of the work of the avant-garde as an occurrence or an event which is out of or beyond the comprehension of consciousness. This occurrence goes beyond the grasp and the prescription of consciousness, and always remains and appears as the indeterminate. In this sense, the cinematic avant-garde which is the term Lyotard uses to indicate acinema can be understood as producing "sovereign" films.

In this essay, Lyotard opposes neo-realism to representative-narrative forms and the former is described as a kind of a sovereign film, because as I mentioned in Chapter 2 it has a moment in the narrative that retains a kind of autonomy. Neo-realism has a narrative and the reality in the film show that story. However, there is also a moment where the depicted reality does not play the role which the narrative assigns to it, with the camera lingering over an object or a landscape. This moment interrupts the narrative and at the same time makes a moment which keeps a kind of autonomy from the narrative. Then both the cinematic avant-garde and neo-realism can create sovereign films.

However, they also seem to be different, because Lyotard distinguishes the cinematic avant-garde from neo-realism. In this later essay, he says that when he wrote 'Acinema', his intention was "to oppose the work of the cinematic avant-garde

to the great narrative-representative form of commercial cinema" [15] , not "to understand neo-realism". These two can be understood as almost identical, but if we can find the difference, it is that the former is "a totally sovereign film"[16], while the latter has the "blocks of time in the realist-narrative progression". Hence, we can understand neo-realism as a narrower category than the cinematic avant-garde.

> I did not then [when he wrote 'Acinema'] aim to understand neo-realism, but rather to oppose the work of the cinematic avant-garde to the great narrative-representative form of commercial cinema. Now, in the best 'experimental' films a kind of ingenuousness prevails, the good ingenuousness of the explorer: they believe that they can eliminate the realism that is linked to the narrative-representative form and make a totally sovereign film. But sovereignty is absolutely allergic to totality. It occupies vacuoles, or blocks of time, in the realist-narrative progression

---

[15] If we consider only Lyotard's remarks similar to this, acinema will be understood as anti-cinema. However, I have tried to define acinema as non-cinema, because acinema exists outside all the rules related to cinema, free from all qualifications.

[16] Here, Lyotard is focusing on the experimental films. While a sovereign film is a moment or a block in a film in neo-realism, a sovereign film becomes an entire film in the case of an experimental film. However, I defined acinema as a movement, so I will understand a sovereign film is a moment or a block in a film.

[*déroulement*]. (ISF, 64)

Let's think of images in the films of Michael Snow and David Lynch. These images are camera movements or light effects themselves. However, the images in neo-realist films, such as Rossellini's, Antonioni's, Welles' or Ozu's images, show a specific object or landscape which we can recognize and whose appearance is not completely detached from the narrative. Nevertheless, such an image "continue [s] to exercise its authority over the filmic narration in all its components" (63). Hence, Lyotard conceived a perfect deviation or interruption of the narrative and representation through acinema, whether it is in experimental films or in representational-narrative films. Acinema has nothing to do with any rules of representation and narrative and does not represent any object or landscape. It is just a movement. Therefore, acinema can be understood as a more primitive and radical moment of sovereignty in film.

Then what is the implication of acinema as a sovereign film? As I mentioned above, the implication is sovereignty's indifference to all authority, which can also be understood as another implication of the cinematic avant-garde.

These moment-blocks that occur in 'neo-realist' film can be recuperated in the general movement of the narrative form, but they cannot be it: this indifference to their fate manifests their sovereignty. (64)

79

Here, the general movement of the narrative form can be an authority because these moment-blocks could claim or demand to be what they are based on such authority. However, these moment-blocks do not give themselves to being recuperated in it, and from this indifference their sovereignty is revealed. Although exemplified only by the general movement of the narrative form here, all kinds of authority can be expressed by various forms, such as filmmaking rules, theoretical rules, all kinds of methods which consciousness uses, which can be pre-determined or what comes before the occurrence itself. Acinema as an occurrence is what is before those very authorities and can or cannot be recovered from them. Being independent there among authorities, acinema opens a world "neither permitted nor defended, neither good nor bad" (69), which means a world where all judgements are nullified, and one "which is in the world but which only the camera can allow us to catch a glimpse of" (*Id*.).

In 'Beyond Representation', Lyotard already mentioned what makes us remind the avant-garde, which is what he refers to as "first editions," "initiative," or also "events." We can already see the term "event" and I can get some ideas related to an occurrence and realism when Lyotard uses the term "first edition" or "the safe harbour." I would like to cite it here:

The thesis of first editions, […], compels the reader, […] to abandon the

safe harbour offered to the mind by the category of 'work of art' or of signs in general, and to recognize as truly artistic nothing but *initiative* or *events*, in whatever domain they may occur. (BR, 165)

This essay was first published in 1974 as a preface to *L'Order Caché de l'Art* by Anton Ehrenzweig. Here, "first edition" or "initiative" means "a concept that cannot be thought out or thought through," i.e., one that "should provoke some hesitation in theoreticians when they encounter it" (*Id.*). This is exactly avant-garde. Here, we can describe what art is for Lyotard, but it is not the aim of this thesis. What I want to stress here is that when he wrote 'Acinema', Lyotard already had some ideas of avant-garde which is in turn the basic idea of acinema.

3.3. The beginning of the film discourse: undoing programs

I have so far investigated that acinema is linked to the cinematic avant-garde insofar as it is an occurrence in a film which disqualifies the reality that is composed by the rules of filmmaking by interrupting the functions of those rules, thereby being outside of or before the consciousness and undoing programs. Then I argued that acinema as the cinematic avant-garde is indifferent to any authority and, being so

independent or sovereign, opens a world where all judgements are undone and which only the camera can allow us to catch a glimpse of.

Now, I would like to reexamine the implication of the film discourse starting from acinema as the cinematic avant-garde. In order to start from acinema, film discourse should let go of its theory and, without the theory, it should start its discussion. Acinema, being an occurrence in a film organized by the rules of representation and narrative, reveals "the lack of reality" in the reality (WIP, 77). Although acinema appears as a movement in a film, it does not have any meaning in relation to the narrative, which means that it shows nothing about this "supposed "reality"". It also means "the incommensurability of reality to concept" (79). In this case, though acinema is in a film as a filmic element, it cannot be recuperated in a concept. Acinema, in turn, existing out of the conceptual framework, interrupts and undoes it. Like this, acinema opens another economy in the existing one, undoing the latter. In this case, the existing economy can be the rules related to the filmmaking rules or the conceptual framework, or consciousness.

For this reason, it cannot be interpreted by any rules or theories because it cannot be signified through them. However, when it is interpreted by these rules or theories, acinema loses "what it signifies" (FD, 5) because it is "the other of signification" (*Id*.). In 'Figure, Discourse', Geoffrey Bennington explains this by citing a quotation from *Discourse, Figure*:

Sens [sense, meaning] is present as absence of signification; and yet signification grasps hold of it (and it can, one can say everything), it [i.e. *sens*] exiles itself to the edge of the new speech act. (…) Constructing *sens* is only ever deconstructing signification. There is no model available for this evasive configuration. (DF, 19) (Requoted from FD, 5: the first interpolation is by the author and the second one is by Bennington)

Sens here means 'meaning' and 'sense' at the same time in French, which Lyotard uses with intentional ambivalence. Acinema exists in a film as an experimental and deviant movement, so it exists as an interruption, which means that it "is present as absence of signification" harboring different kind of meaning of acinema. Yet the theory "grasps hold of it" and describe it in a manner most suitable for the theoretical purpose. However, what the theory says is not what acinema is, but actually what the theory wants to say regardless of what acinema is. Acinema is present as an absence of signification, so there is nothing to be interpreted by the theory. Acinema loses its power as an occurrence, which is the indeterminate, the moment it becomes signified, because it means acinema becomes the determinate. Here, we can see why film discourse should simply describe acinema as acinema. Rather than being defined or construed, acinema as an absence of signification interrupts in the process of creating meaning. In turn, constructing acinemas means "only ever deconstructing signification." Acinema undoes signification in its process

83

of producing a coherent meaning.

What does it mean that the film discussion starts at the moment that signification is destructed? It means that film discourse starts its discussion from what it has never thought of and never talked about, creating new ways to depict them. To achieve this, film discourse has to let go of theory as its principle, as thought has to let go of all methods that consciousness constructs in order to understand the world when it encounters an occurrence. It is the challenge not only to film discourse in that it has to find new descriptive methods, but also to theory in that film discourse has to undo theory as its principle in order to do this. The beginning of the film discourse does not consist of interpreting and understanding the meaning of movements following the theory, but in paying attention to the movements undoing or letting go of theory, which requires new ways of thinking and expressing. Acinema is not an object of which the film discourse makes the coherent meaning, but an object which makes us recognize that there is something upsetting signification because of its meaninglessness and forcing the film discourse to find new methods of description while undoing the existing theory. Here, I refer to 'meaninglessness' to indicate that acinema does not have something that is linguistically reducible. It has meaning because it has no meaning. The strength of acinema lies in this meaninglessness and in deviating from and violating meaning.

Like the "perspectives of reality" in Michael Snow's film *La Région Centrale*,

acinematic interruptions make the film discourse "reroute the perspective-creating potentialities." In other words, acinematic interruptions undo signification in a film and, in order to start its discussion, the film discourse must reset its way of depicting such interruptions. Because acinematic interruptions continue to work in various manners and without repetition, the film discourse must also find the adequate way of depicting such interruptions constantly. That means that the film discourse also has to continue changing and experimenting its way of working. Hence, the film discourse also must find the appropriate language to describe or account for what has never been said, which can open the possibilities for the film discourse to say anything new and enable the film discourse to rejuvenate itself.

Another point I want to stress is that the film discussion should start from movements, not rules or theories. When Lyotard mentions that the discussion of cinema in general begins at the point where the order stops, what he wants to say is that the starting point should be a movement itself in a film, not something out of it. Here, the point that the order stops is the moment where there are only movements, more specifically deviant movements, and the order can be understood as "something coming from out of a film." In this case, the moment where the order stops functioning, that is to say, where there are only movements which are not given the meaning or signification by rules or theories, the discussion of cinema starts.

This is why Lyotard starts 'Acinema' by describing movements and not images.

The movements in cinema are organized by the rules of representation and narrative, but they can deviate from the rules in order to resist them. That is because they have no meaning by themselves. It is when a certain order is given to the movements that the movements in cinema become meaningful. These orders can be those of representation, the narrative or the theoretical orders of the film discourse. In this case, movements are just means to maintain and deliver those orders, which Lyotard refer to as an oppression of orders in 'Acinema'. Lyotard pays more attention to the movements which disrupt order and cause interruptions within orders, not to the movements as means to maintain and deliver those orders. These movements become the starting point of the film discourse, which keeps the film discourse from drawing the meaning through the existing idioms and theories and thereby restricting our experience in advance.

Now we can see why 'Acinema' has a different texture from other general film critiques. For Lyotard, experimental and deviant movements take precedence over the narrative or the theory. For him, the movements are given meaning by the narrative or the theory and the movements that are imprisoned by orders are not important. Rather, the movements suspending meaning and free from a predetermined order are important and from these movements the film discourse should begin. Lyotard's film discussion through acinema goes beyond the realm of filmmaking rules and film discourse, and extend to issues of our perception and experience. The movements

given meaning by the narrative or theory and the movements imprisoned by orders can provide us with a sense of security, but they cannot show anything new to expand our perceptional and experiential horizon. When Lyotard refers to acinema as the cinematic avant-garde, acinema becomes a philosophical argument. By becoming the starting point of the film discourse, acinema opens up the possibility of reorganizing the methods that our consciousness has created to perceive, organize, and understand the world.

We can see that the problem of deviant occurrence that Lyotard raises in 'Acinema' is not limited to discussing films, but also extends to issues of our perception and experience. When the rules and the theories are interrupted by acinema, we can see how the rules and the theories restrict our experience and, though we become embarrassed to encounter what we have never seen and heard, that experience opens up the possibility to create new ways to say something new, which can expand our perception and experience.

Like the "first edition," or "initiative" that Lyotard refers to in 'Beyond Representation,' acinema is always new and first of its kind, so it "cannot be thought out or thought through." However, thanks to this characteristic, it can open the possibility of encountering new things, create new ways of thinking and expressing them, and expand our perception and experience by undoing the old things in order to embrace new things.

Conclusion

I began this thesis by asking two questions: (i) what is the implication of the fact that cinema is composed of movements, and (ii) how does the discussion of cinema in general begin with acinema? Now, I think I have to answer these two questions. The reason Lyotard argues that cinema is composed of movements is to stress the fact that the power of cinema lies in the movements, not the narrative or the meaning. For him, what cinema "communicates" with the audience is neither the narrative nor the meaning, but rather the interruption of the narrative and conveyance of meaning through movements. Movements are used to deliver the narrative, but can also be used to interrupt the delivery of the narrative through a deviant and experimental movement. This interruption is the moment where new perspectives can be presented, while the narrative and the meaning are stopped and the audience gets lost and distracted. These new perspectives always precede rules, become a new starting point of discussion and give the possibility of constantly rearranging existing perspectives. The most important thing with this interruption is that the discussion of cinema in general starts from this interruption, which is related to the second question.

Acinema causes this interruption. How does a discussion on cinema in general begin with acinema? As seen in Chapters 1 and 2, acinema is a deviant and experimental movement that cause an interruption in the narrative and the meaning.

The moment where an interruption occurs is the one where all judgements stop, and the consciousness cannot work because there are only movements as the absence of signification in that moment. If the discussion of cinema should start from this moment, film discourse has to undo their way of expressing and their logic because through the existing film theory it cannot understand and interpret this moment, acinema. For this reason, film theory conceals or eliminates it from their discussion and hinder our chances of experiencing this interruption. Although film theory must do this because of its structure, film discourse can start its discussion on acinema by putting the theory aside. If we follow Lyotard, we will need to see that discourse begins with what is not discourse, not language – for example, movement in film. So, discourse, according to Lyotard, should be attentive to this and try to respond to this non-discursive element in itself. Theory, on the other hand, forces the non-discursive into discourse, always defines the non-discursive in terms of discourse. So, discourse is neither positive nor negative in itself, but responds more or less well to what is other to it. Theory, though, always forces the other into discourse.

Therefore, for acinema to be a starting point of discussion on cinema, the influence of the existing film theory must disappear or be weakened, which is what Lyotard ultimately expects from acinema. However, there is only this sentence that the discussion of cinema in general begins with acinema in 'Acinema,' without any elaboration or explanation. Hence, I investigated this sentence by understanding

acinema as an occurrence, which can be explained in terms of the work of the avant-garde that Lyotard understood as acinema in his later years.

As for the theory which Lyotard wants to challenge through acinema, he argues that "we have no theory" (OT, 19). I understand this sentence to mean that "we must have no theory." Lyotard argues that a theory which we make in order to help ourselves to understand the world actually limits our perception and experience, as I mentioned in the last section of Chapter 2. Nevertheless, if we have something to say about theory, he says, it is that "important segments of a theory could take their inspiration from what is happening in the art" (*Id*.). This remark reminds us that the theorists have everything to learn from the artists, as mentioned in Chapter 2. What we have to pay attention to here is that the starting point is the art, not a theory. It means that it is not from theory to understand art, it is from art that theory should be formulated. It is not interpreting art and making it intelligible through theory, but theory starting their discussion form art from scratch. However, following the later Lyotardian thought, it is impossible for theory to do this because of its structure as mentioned above, but discourse could if it begins with art. As a result, the challenge of acinema to theory can be possible only if film discourse starts its discussion from acinema.

In Lyotard's aesthetical thought, 'Acinema' is between the figural and the libidinal economy and in turn is built based on Freud's psychoanalysis. As we can

confirm in 'Acinema', at the center of the essay lies the death drive, whose main characteristic is to undo the connections which Eros tries to make and maintain, which means another economy to disrupt the existing economy. Here this disruption is the main function of another economy. This relationship between two economies seems to be present throughout Lyotard's philosophical and aesthetical thought and Lyotard always pays more attention to the disruptive one. In this sense, 'Acinema' can be deemed an early version of this thought. And we can also understand the relationship between acinema and cinema, or acinema and theory in this way.

In early 70's when he wrote 'Acinema,' Lyotard was reflecting something that is not linguistically communicable. That is because for Lyotard something communicable, signifiable and verbalizable becomes an ideology in the Marxist sense of the term. In this sense, cinema became the object of his attention in as far as the image in cinema "does not function as an image," but "function as a scene in which my desire is caught and comes to fulfillment" (CF, 71). This become another reason Lyotard argues that movement is a basic element of the film. Lyotard selects as a basic element of the film movement, not image, and pays more attention to two poles of movement which are deviant and experimental ones, which just express excess and have nothing to signify.

Like this, acinema and 'Acinema' was conceived within political and economic contexts. However, by summoning acinema and referring to it as the cinematic avant-

garde in his last essay on film, Lyotard gives another context for understanding acinema: a philosophical and aesthetical context related to our consciousness, perception and experience, which is what I tried to investigate and argue in this thesis.

Acinematic interruption working in the filmmaking rules and theoretical rules becomes an "occurrence" as the work of the cinematic avant-garde in that it experiments with the rules, shows their incompetence, and discloses the lack of reality and the world created by such rules. Acinematic interruption as an occurrence is in a film as the absence of signification and thus being out of consciousness. As the absence of signification, acinema interrupts the meaning of the narrative. As being out of consciousness, acinema interrupts the economy of theory because theoretical rules and principles cannot grasp it. By understanding acinema as an occurrence and a sovereign film both of which are free from or indifferent to all authorities which define and determine them, we can have the chance to expand the scope of acinema to the consciousness and the meaning and signification, which means acinema can be or should be interpreted as a movement in a film which nevertheless can undo the conceptual framework which the consciousness makes and maintains and communicates in a different way.

At the moment of acinematic "interruption," acinema exists as a subject the theory cannot interpret but learn from. From this, film discourse must create new ways of talking about cinema and be open to what does not fit in the picture. Film

discourse should not exclude or understand them according to only the pre-given axioms of the theory, but present acinemas as something that challenges and calls theory itself into question. It has to accept them as they are and depict them as something that opens the possibilities of various film discourses. Film discourse starts its discussion from what it has never thought of and never talked about, creating new ways to depict them.

In this case, film discourse can address acinema "by welcoming it as a good occasion to terminate the authority of arguments and to disturb the calm assurance of philosophical aesthetics" (KA, 27). By addressing acinema, film discourse can terminate the authority of arguments of the theory, because it cannot but let go of their principle which is a theory in order to deal with acinema. By addressing acinema, film discourse can disturb the calm assurance of philosophical aesthetics, because it cannot give a sense of security, constantly challenging and calling into questioning philosophical aesthetics which try to stipulate aesthetic effects logically. From acinema, film discourse starts its discussion without theory, which can be understood as the reason Lyotard uses the discussion of cinema instead of film discourse in "Acinema". This discussion is not a coherent discourse dependent on a theory, but a commentary about film which is just a description of what is happening in a film. Lyotard deliberately uses the word 'discussion' rather than discourse. The discussion from acinema cannot and should not be theoretical in structure, yet film discourse can

be attentive and respond to acinema, from which it can start its discussion. It is possible only when film discourse lets go of theories, which means only when film discourse can start its discussion without being subject to any authority. Therefore, I insist that by using the word 'discussion', Lyotard expects film discourse to begin the discussion of cinema, not a theory, which is the reason I used as the title of each section "the beginning of film discourse" instead of the discussion of cinema. And I also argue that when acinema becomes the starting point of film discourse, only then it can also interrupt our conceptual framework and consciousness, and thereby open the possibility of a new film discourse.

Understood in terms of the avant-garde, acinema goes beyond the category of anti-cinema which means the opposite to mainstream representational-narrative commercial cinema. Rather acinema should be defined non-cinema in as far as acinema exists in a film, as the unqualified, outside all the rules related to cinema, including the theoretical rules, and again outside the existing conceptual framework which is closely related to our consciousness, perception and experience. In a political and economic context in the early 70's, acinema could be described as anti-cinema. However, in a philosophical and aesthetical context, it should be redefined as non-cinema. I argue that this is the reason we have to re-read "Acinema." Acinema is the concept associated not only with mainstream commercial cinema and experimental films, but also our consciousness, perception and experience. However, in Lyotard, it

is always better to think of acinema as non-cinema, rather than anti-cinema. The prefix anti- means against something, presupposing its opposite and in turn one of two has a negative meaning or is denied, which is what Lyotard wants to challenge in 'Acinema'. On the other hand, the prefix non- means not having a particular quality or feature, presupposing the possibility of other things whose quality or feature can be multiple. This is not a matter of alternation or negation, but the coexistence of others, which reminds us of acinematic perspectives.

In Lyotard's philosophy, acinema is understood as the cinematic avant-garde, which means an occurrence, and according to this remark, I have tried to reread and redefine acinema. Through my argument that acinema becomes the starting point of film discourse, it is possible to suggest a way of applying acinema to contemporary film theory: acinema as a movement which questions and undoes a theory, not a movement which cannot be interpreted and will be eliminated by a theory. Whatever the theory it is, it cannot interpret acinema. At the same time, for that reason, it cannot exclude it from its discourse. Film discourse has to find and reveal acinema, through which it has to take it as an opportunity to open and broaden its scope. I expect that, starting with my research, discussion between acinema and film theory, especially contemporary film theory, will proceed more actively. And I hope that the concept of acinema can be applied broadly within film criticism as well. I investigated acinema in relation to Lyotard's later philosophical thought, but I also look forward to further

progressing in relation to the figural which is the concept prior to acinema, which I hope will extend to sovereign film again, and it will become the beginning, in turn, of various discussions on Lyotard's film philosophy itself.

Bibliography

Lyotard's

Lyotard, Jean-François. "L'acinema." *Des dispositifs pulsionnels*, Paris: Union Générale, 1973. In English: "Acinema." Peter W. Milne and Ashley Woodward, *Acinemas*, ed. Graham Jones & Ashley Woodward, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017.

_____. "Notes sur la function critique de l'œuvre." *Dérive à partir de Marx et Freud*, Paris: Union Générale, 1973. In English: "Notes on the Critical Function of the Work of Art." Trans. Susan Hanson, Driftworks, ed. Roger McKeon, New York: Semiotext(e), 1984.

_____. "Sur la Theory." *Dérive à partir de Marx et Freud*, Paris: Union Générale, 1973. In English: "On Theory." Trans. Susan Hanson, Driftworks, ed. Roger McKeon, New York: Semiotext(e), 1984.

_____. "Deux metamorphoses du séduisant au cinema." *La seduction*, ed. Maurice Olender and Jacques Sojcher, Paris: Aubier, 1980. In English: "Two Metamorphoses of the Seduction in Cineam." Peter W. Milne and Ashley Woodward, *Acinemas*, ed. Graham Jones & Ashley Woodward, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017.

_____. "Idée d'un film souverain." *Misère de la philosophie*, Paris: Galilée, 2000. In English: "The Idea of a Sovereign Film." Peter W. Milne and Ashley Woodward, *Acinemas*, ed. Graham Jones & Ashley Woodward, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017.

_____. "The Unconscious as Mise-en-scène." Trans. Peter W. Milne and Ashley Woodward, *Acinemas*, ed. Graham Jones & Ashley Woodward, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017.

_____. "Answering the Question: What Is Postmodernism?" Trans. Régis Durand, *Theory and History of Literature, Volume 10*, ed. Wlad Godzich and Jochen Schulte-Sasse, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984.

_____. "Beyond Representation." *The Lyotard Reader*, ed. Andrew Benjamin, USA: Basil-Blackwell, 1989.

_____. "Defining The Postmodern." *Postmodernism*, ed. Lisa Appignanesi, London: Free Association Books, 1989

_____. *Karel Appel, A Gesture of Colour*. Trans. Vlad Ionescu & Peter W. Milne, Bruxelles: Leuven Unviversity Press, 2009.

Others'

Bennington, Geoffrey, "Figure Discourse." USA: Emory University Press, 2016.

Durafour, Jean-Michel. *Jean-François Lyotard: questions au cinema*. Paris: PUF, 2009.

Eizykman, Claude, and GuyGuy Fihman. "L'œil de Lyotard: De l'acinéma au postmoderne," *À Partir de Jean-François Lyotard*, ed. Claude Amey and Jean-Paul Olive, Paris: L'Harmattan. 2000.

Graham Jones & Ashley Woodward, "How Desire Works: A Lyotardian Lynch." Acinemas, ed. Graham Jones & Ashley Woodward, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017.

Trahair, Lisa. "Jean-François Lyotard." *Film, Theory and Philosophy: The Key Thinker*, ed. Felicity Colman, Montreal & Kingston: McGill-

Queen's University Press, 2009.

안상원 (An, Sanhwon), 「리오타르의 비영화: 회귀형상의 비판」 (Lyotard's Acinema:
  Criticism of the Figure of Return), 『미학』 제79집, 2014.

유정완 (Yoo, Jungwan), 이삼출 (Lee, Samchoo) 편역, 『포스트모던의 조건』
  (Postmodern Condition), 서울: 민음사, 1979.

이윤영 (Lee, Yunyoung), 『사유 속의 영화』 (Movie in Thought), 서울: 문학과지성
  사, 2011.

이현복 (Lee, Hyunbok) 편역, 『지식인의 종언』 (Tomb of Intellectuals), 서울: 문예
  출판사, 2004

국문초록

　　본 논문은 리오타르의 초기 개념인 "비영화"(acinema)를, 그가 후기 논의 내에서 언급한 "아방가르드"로 이해하고, 「비영화」에서 영화 논의의 시작이 리오타르가 "비영화"라고 부르는 움직임으로부터 시작된다는 그의 언급을 재해석하는 것을 목표로 한다. 이러한 작업을 통해, 본고는 비영화가 영화논의의 시작점이 되는 것은 바로 비영화를 "발생"(occurrence)으로 이해함으로써 가능하며, 여기서 더 나아가 비영화는 최종적으로 우리가 사용하는 개념적 틀과 우리의 의식을 확장시키는 개념으로 이해되어야 한다는 것을 주장한다. 본고가 「비영화」를 논의의 중심 텍스트로 정한 이유는 이 에세이가 리오타르의 첫 영화 에세이일 뿐만 아니라 리오타르가 영화를 철학적이고 미학적인 관점에서 숙고하려고 시도한 의미 있는 에세이임을 고찰하고자 함이다. 리오타르에게 영화는, 의미와 의미작용에서 중단을 발생시키는 움직임, 다시 말하면 비영화로부터 영화담론이 시작될 때, 이론에 도전하고 이론을 무화 하는 가능성을 갖는다. 영화논의가 이러한 움직임에 기초해 시작되는 것은 우리의 경험과 지각을 넓히는 기회를 제공한다.

　　「비영화」는 리오타르가 1973년에 쓴 첫 영화에세이이다. 이 에세이에서 리오타르가 구상한 비영화는 일탈적이고 실험적인 움직임으로, 영화를 구성하는데 사용되는 모든 규칙, 예를 들면 재현의 규칙, 내러티브의 규칙 혹은 영화이론 규칙으로 설명되고 이해될 수 없는 움직임이다. 리오타르가 비영화를 이런 움직임으로 구상한 이유는, 그가 이 일탈적이고 실험적인 움직임으로부터 영화가 영화 내에서 유지하고자 하는 질서를 방해하고 중단시킬 가능성을 보기 때문이다. 여기서 질서란 주류 재현적-내러티브적 상업영화를 조직하는 힘이고, 주류 재현적-내러티브적 상업영화가 의사소통 코드로써 유지하고 재생산하고자 하는 것이며, 이것은 결국 사실주의의 환영을 만드는 것이다.

　　「비영화」에서 리오타르는 영화 일반에 대한 논의가 비영화에서 시작된다고 언급한다. 비영화는 영화 내에 있으면서 영화와 관련된 모든 규칙들을 벗어나는, 다시 말하면 영화 내에 존재할 자격을 갖추지 못한 움직임이라는 의미에서 비영화이다. 영화논의가 이러한 비영화로부터 시작된다는 사실은, 영화담론이 이론에 의존함 없이 자신의 논의를 시작하는 것으로 이해되어야 한다. 영화이론은 그들이 설정하고 있는 논리를 통해 비영화를 이해하거나

해석할 수 없다. 이 때 영화담론은 비영화를 이론을 통해 해석하는 대신, 이론을 내려놓고, 비영화를 생각하고 표현할 새로운 방식을 고안하면서, 비영화를 기술하고 논의한다. 비영화로부터 논의를 시작함으로써 영화담론은 이론으로부터 그의 권위를 박탈하고, 새로운 담론들의 가능성을 열고, 그렇게 함으로써 담론의 경계 혹은 이론의 경계를 확장할 기회를 가진다.

이러한 해석은 리오타르가 그의 마지막 영화 에세이인 「주권적 영화라는 생각」에서 비영화를 "영화적 아방가르드의 작업"으로 소환한 것을 통해 가능해진다. 리오타르의 이 언급에 기초해, 비영화는 그가 "발생"이라고 부르는 것으로 이해될 수 있고, 그로 인해 비영화는 인간의 의식으로 그 영역을 확장한다. 리오타르에게 아방가르드는 모더니티 내에 함축된 전제들에 대한 일종의 탐구라는 의미에서 철학적 탐구이며, 이 아방가르드의 작업으로서 발생은 인간의 의식에 의해 결정되기 전의 "일어남" 혹은 "일어나는 것"(what happens)이며, 이 작업은 개념적 틀 밖에서 발생한다. 비영화를 영화적 아방가드르의 작업, 발생으로 언급하면서, 리오타르는 비영화의 영역을 인간의 의식, 지각, 경험으로 확장한다.

발생으로서 비영화는 의미의 부재로서 의미를 중단한다. 비영화의 힘은 그것이 의미를 가지지 않는다는 사실에 있다. 우리가 이론을 통해 비영화로부터 의미를 끌어내고자 할 때, 비영화의 힘을 사라진다. 왜냐하면 비영화가 이론에 의해 해석된다는 것은 우리의 의식에 의해 의미가 정해지고 규정된다는 것을 의미하기 때문이다. 비영화는 항상 의식에 의해 규정되지 않는 것이고, 그로부터 그의 의미를 갖는다. 리오타르에게 이론은, 그것이 비록 세계를 이해하기 위해 의식에 의해 만들어진 것이지만, 우리가 세계를 보고 듣고 이해하기 전에 세계를 미리 결정함으로써 오히려 우리의 지각과 경험을 제한한다. 리오타르는 이론이 그의 한계를 인정하는 것을 배워야 한다고 주장한다. 리오타르가 영화논의가 비영화에서 시작된다고 말할 때, 그가 기대하는 것은 영화논의가 비영화를 통해 이론을 무화하고, 다양한 영화담론을 창안하는 것이다. 비영화는 다양한 타자가 공존할 수 있음을 함축한다.

본 논문은 영화 에세이 「비영화」와 비영화 개념을 철학적이고 미학적인 맥락에서 다시 읽어야 함을 주장한다. 비영화는 발생으로서 이해되어야 하고, 따라서 의식이 지금까지 정의하고 유지해온 전제들에 도전하고 의문을 제기하는 것으로 이해되어야 한다. 모든 영화제작 규칙과 이론적 규칙은 이러한 전제들이며, 영화담론이 비영화로부터 시작될 때, 이러한 전제들은 무화되고, 비판되고, 의문시된다. 이것은 그동안 논의에서 제외되었던 견해와 관점

들을 받아들이는 것이고, 이를 통해 우리의 경험적이고 지각적인 지평을 넓히는 가능성을 제시하는 것이다.