



Gazing me, gazing you  
Narrativity, visuality and the  
questions of power and desire in  
Marguerite Duras' *Le  
Ravissement de Lol V. Stein*  
and *India Song*

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### Introduction

Voice and gaze in their different forms are two common elements that narrative theory has used to illustrate the alteration of the focalization and the point of *view* in literary fiction. In Marguerite Duras' *oeuvre*, and especially in her India Cycle, they do not remain mere theoretical metaphors, but function as concrete starting points and even the *primus motors* for the whole narration. The India Cycle consists of three novels and three films, in which the same fragments of almost forgotten stories and fragile memories whirl around and mingle with desperate desire to master the whole story by unveiling the elusive essence of mysterious characters like Anne-Marie Stretter or Lol V. Stein. This desire haunts not only characters but also the reader/viewer who faces the same struggle with the crisis of signification that is also manifested widely in other French post-war fiction (e.g. Sarraute, Robbe-Grillet).

In this paper I will concentrate on the novel *Le Ravissement de Lol V. Stein* (1964, from now on *Lol V. Stein* or *RLVS*) and the film *India Song* (1975, from now on also *IS*). In these works, the problems of perception and narration are inseparable from the voyeuristic pleasure of gazing. In *Lol V. Stein*, the male narrator, Jacques Hold, tries to apprehend the traumatic past of an absent-minded heroine, Lola Valérie Stein, whom her fiancé, Michael Richardson, left for a *femme fatale* Anne-Marie Stretter. Lol spies on Jacques Hold and his lover and has in her turn an affair with him. The mystery of Lol remains unresolved while Jacques Hold turns from the

subject of narration into its object. We meet Anne-Marie Stretter and Michael Richardson again in the other parts of the India Cycle that focus more closely on their romance (and also with the vice consul of Lahore who is madly in love with Anne-Marie). In *India Song*, this story is told by different voices that have to put together the fragments of characters' fleeting memories. The voice is radically separated from the image; we can hear character speaking but we cannot see it. In a drama version of *India Song* (1973) the passion of two female voices is like a reflection of melancholic self-destruction, "leper of the heart" of Anne-Marie Stretter, this queen of the white society of Calcutta.

### Lol V. Stein: The bliss of being forgotten

Not only the desire but also the difficulty of telling tie in with gazing; with the motives for observing and with the pleasure it arouses. That desire is erotic by its nature: Lol's voyeuristic "ravishing" increases as she is hiding in the rye field and watching the secret meeting of the lovers of Hôtel de Bois, Jacques Hold and Tatiana Karl. Lol wants to find again that pleasure mingled with pain she felt in the night at the ball when she watched another woman to steal her fiancé. According to Michèle Druon, the triangle Michael Richardson – Anne-Marie Stretter – Lol V. Stein is replaced by a new one, Jacques Hold – Tatiana Karl – Lol V. Stein. Lol's position in both of these triangles is that of a forgotten spectator, who remains outside other people's love stories. But she has herself chosen willingly this position, at least the second time around. (Druon 1985: 385.) However, Lol cannot play her role as a *voeyur* until she has given Jacques Hold a clear signal to join her spectacle. She tells him that she has followed him and Tatiana Karl to the hotel:

- C'est vous, vous Jacques Hold. Je vous ai rencontré il y a sept jours, seul d'abord et ensuite en compagnie d'une femme. Je vous ai suivi jusqu'à l'Hôtel des Bois.  
J'ai eu peur. Je voudrais revenir vers Tatiana, être dans la rue.
- Pourquoi?
- Elle détache ses mains du rideau, se redresse, arrive.
- Je vous ai choisi.

Elle arrive, regarde, nous ne nous sommes jamais approchés. Elle est blanche d'une blancheur nue. Elle embrasse ma bouche. Je ne lui donne rien. J'ai eu trop peur, je ne peux pas encore. Elle trouve cette impossibilité attendue. Je suis dans la nuit de T. Beach. Là, on ne donne rien à Lol V. Stein. Elle prend. [RLVS: 111–112]

- It's you, you Jacques Hold. I met you seven days ago, at first alone, then in the company of

a woman. I followed you to the Hôtel des Bois.  
I was scared. I would like to go back to Tatiana, to be on the street.  
– Why?  
She lets go of the curtains, shapes up, comes closer.  
– I have chosen you.  
She arrives, looking at me, we have never approached each other. She is white of bare whiteness. She kisses my mouth. I don't give her anything. I have been too afraid, I can't yet. She finds this impossibility expected. I am in the night of T. Beach. There, they don't give anything to Lol V. Stein. She takes. [All French citations are translated by the writer]

She has chosen Jacques Hold as her object, which terrifies him for a moment, for this absent-minded woman wandering in the streets like a somnambulist turns out to be an independent actor. Her passiveness is her strength, she does not expect anything from the others, for she has a total control over her play and her puppets.

Lol's pleasure would remain incomplete, if Jacques Hold wasn't aware of her hiding in the field behind the window of the hotel room. As Jacques Lacan states in his famous homage to Marguerite Duras, the gaze is like a talisman for Lol, a talisman that complements her being, rather than offers anything really interesting to look at. The events she witnesses make her real, so she is not just an ordinary *voyeur*. (Lacan 1965/1995: 24.) These events take shape as an act of forgetting, but, paradoxically, this act requires that one has something on his/her conscience to forget about. That is why it is so important that Jacques Hold participates in Lol's scenes himself. According to Maurice Blanchot, the power of absence is its capacity to choose not to exist. When being ceases to exist, there is still something behind it: the absence of being that replaces it and becomes noticeable "hiding" in its turn. (Blanchot 1955/2003: 218.)

Hidden, Lol goes into ecstasies only beyond recall, when she transforms into an immaterial observer for the lovers of Hôtel de Bois. But for them, she can stay absent only as long as they are in the same space having forgotten her. In the ball night of T. Beach Lol does not cry from pain until the dawn, when the ball comes to an end. At the very moment when Michael Richardson and Anne-Marie Stretter leave the hall, Lol is no more absent in relation to them. It is not until then that Lol turns completely deserted, "killed", as the voices of *India Song*, who glance also at this story, judge: "Ce crime derrière eux..." [IS: 37 "This crime behind them..."]

In the movie *India Song*, all the external emotions of characters are very minimalistic; all of them but the vice consul are acting in a quite reserved manner. That is why I am not going to comment on whether Michael Richardson experiences any particular pleasure or ecstasy, but in the movie, he seems often to be a male version of Lol as an observer, who is not supposed to be noticed in the situations, where other men manifest their desire towards his mistress. In the final

scenes of the film, he is just a neutral onlooker, while Anne-Marie Stretter is passive and phlegmatic as a young attaché kisses her. During the long ball scene in the embassy of Calcutta, he stays in the background keeping an eye on the situation (except when he dances with Anne-Marie under the gaze of the white élite of Calcutta). He is present in some corner listening to the dialogue between Anne-Marie and the vice consul of Lahore just before the violent cries of this madman.

The pleasure of Lol, still forgotten in the rye field, culminates in falling asleep satisfied. The show goes on without her observing vigilantly all the time. Blanchot sees a great deal of wisdom and courage in falling asleep. Somnambulists – and those who sleep restlessly – bring their active presence also to the night, they cannot part from daytime, i.e. they do not dare to lose control, to cease to act and react. A person who is sleeping abandons the outside world only seemingly, but it is this act of abandoning that reflects confidence, loyalty and connection: one clings to the universe even with eyes closed and finds the most primitive happiness in this introversion (Blanchot 1955/2003: 229-230.) Lol attains the pleasure of falling asleep during the moments her little play is put into effect or, on the other hand, within the journey she takes to the T. Beach with Jacques Hold to face her memories after years gone by. As they come back to the beach from the casino, Lol infects Jacques Hold with her somnolence, “la mortelle fadeur de la mémoire de Lol V. Stein”; the man falls asleep too. [RLVS: 182.] For Lol, the sleep is a potential escape route from Jacques Hold's desire to narrate. Though this male narrator willingly and uninhibitedly reconstructs Lol's consciousness in any other situations, he abstains from even speculating, what she is dreaming about in the rye field or on the beach. Sleep remains her private ground, where the narrator's surveillance cannot penetrate.

### Jacques Hold as a janus-faced narrator

But is not the “ravishing of Lol V. Stein” at the same time also the “ravishing of Jacques Hold”? As a narrator, Jacques Hold represents that “janus-faced” type narrator that is observing some other character observing the narrator himself. In this embedded structure, he steps outside of his own, primary experience and turns the narrating gaze inward through this female gaze, which is always already narrated, thus: objectified. Especially during the secret meeting in the hotel room, strong transitions from the experiencing mind to a plain object of *voyeurism* take place; as Jacques Hold chooses to be Lol's object, he transforms into some kind

of fetish also to himself. His experience and his memories reduce to a mere visual image of Jacques Hold:

J'ai tourné la tête, à bout de forces, vers la droite du champ de seigle où elle n'était pas. De ce côté-là Tatiana, en tailleur noir, arrivait. Elle a payé le taxi et s'est engagée lentement entre les aulnes.

[...]

Sans lui faire grâce d'aucune approche, Jacques Hold rejoignit Tatiana Karl.

Jacques Hold posséda Tatiana Karl sans merci. Elle n'opposa aucune résistance, ne dit rien, ne refusa rien, s'émerveilla d'une telle possession. [RLVS: 122-123.]

I turned my head uneasily to the right side of the rye field, where she wasn't. Tatiana, in a black suit, arrived from there. She paid the taxi and walked slowly between the alders.

[...]

Without gentle approach, Jacques Hold penetrates Tatiana Karl. Jacques Hold took Tatiana Karl without praise. She didn't resist, didn't say anything, didn't refuse anything, admired such a possessiveness.

This alienation, shifting from the experiencing "I" ("*j'ai tourné la tête...*") to the observed "him" ("*Jacques Hold*"), happens precisely at the moment of a sexual act, as if it emphasized all that brutal disillusionment that lies between Tatiana Karl and Jacques Hold. Tatiana has become a shared fetish, a dark haired thing for both Jacques Hold and Lol. It is true that the man is also objectifying himself, but he does that willingly, whereas Tatiana cannot help feeling the vitality going down the drain, while Lol is wrapped up in her passion. Carefree Tatiana gets contaminated by Lol's melancholic malady and begins to suffer. The two women turn into transparent reproductions of each other, as Julia Kristeva describes their relation. (Kristeva 1987/1993: 285.)

On the other hand, it turns out to be very questionable, whether Lol actually sees anything happening in the hotel room. As Jacques Hold replaces Lol by imagining her consciousness, he also observes for Lol. What is narrated as Lol's vision is in fact his reconstruction of her (potential) vision. The penetrating and omniscience gaze of the spying woman in the field is hardly anything more than illusion, at least if we are to believe in Lol's response as Jacques Hold has described to her his moments with Tatiana: "- Ce qui est passé dans cette chambre entre Tatiana et vous je n'ai pas les moyens de connaître. Jamais je ne saurai. Lorsque vous me racontez il s'agit d'autre chose." [RLVS: 136, "There is no way for me to know what is going on between you and Tatiana in that hotel room. I will never find out. When you are telling me about it, it's something else."]

Jacques Hold's tendency to transmit a complex, embedded perception by one single narrative voice (which is, of course, indeed a polyphonic one) makes him in James Phelan's terminology

some kind of *dual focalizer*. Apart from the story proper with its events, a dual focalization highlights the whole thematic of the literary vagueness by forming a new, meta-level story, "a story about the narrator's struggle to tell the story of what happened in the past." (Phelan 2005, 118–119.) The concept of a focalizing narrator has even raised a heated discussion for and against it. Manfred Jahn has criticized Seymour Chatman for his stubborn urge to keep the narrators strictly separated from the focalizers. In Chatman's view, a narrator can only report the events, not see them concretely while telling about them. The homodiegetic first-person narrator has indisputably been able to see the events earlier, but their verbalization has actualized afterwards, which makes the whole act of narration a question of recalling, not perceiving. (Jahn 1996, 258–259.)

Jahn himself puts forward an idea that the visual aspects of story-telling should become more valid topic of narratological conversation (as they have undoubtedly become by now), because, after all, narrating and focalizing are in many cases mutually dependent activities (ibid., 262–263). Neither does Phelan see any particular reason to make a severe distinction between narration and perception, for both the character and the narrator are observing the outside world unavoidable by their own personal inner vision, at least if the narrating subject is any kind of human creature. The narrator often cannot tell a story without telling simultaneously something about himself in an extremely self-reflexive manner. (Phelan 2005, 110–115.)

As we have already seen, the fiction of Duras is a model example of the inseparable simultaneity and entwining of narrating and perceiving. In *Lol V. Stein*, it is especially the position of the narrator that forms this connection, which becomes evident for example in the scene, where Jacques Hold is shadowing Lol who, in turn, is looking to shadow him. In scenes like this, Hold's willingness to play cat and mouse with Lol gives gazing its great importance as a primal element of telling about Lol, thus, trying to resolve her mystery and to cure her trauma by penetrating to her mind. This attempt of the narrative cure is, of course, doomed to be a failure, as Deborah Glassman has pointed in her criticism against the illusionary omnipotency of the trauma theory:

Ravishing Lol has ravished Hold by inserting him into the circuit of looks and desires that replay her displacement. But if Hold has understood Lol's desires, he has neither fully recounted her tale nor played out her passion to its conclusion. His narrative enterprise has been fascinated; it has not brought Lol's drama to an end. There is no narrative cure for Lol. The fantasy, indistinguishably Lol's or Hold's, is replayed with a new set of characters. Repetition, however, brings no mastery; the representation remains incomplete and the fascinating spectacle resists narration. (Glassman 1989: 91–92.)

As gazing is inseparable from telling, the motifs behind the gaze are equally multi-faceted. The Durasian gaze is full of desire, and that desire is not just erotic desire, but also a sophisticated

battlefield of the power of determination.

### Anne-Marie Stretter: in the vortex of desireful gazes

Chatman's rigid distinction between perception and memory becomes questionable also in Duras' India *Song* by the narrating, undefined voices that cannot remember the whole story but are recalling it by asking questions and raising this melancholy tragedy of Anne-Marie Stretter in their field of vision – even if they have to summon it from the hereafter. In this sense, recalling i.e. narrating requires perceiving. Of course one can ask whether "voices" can really have a field of vision, but as we are dealing with somewhat more concrete and personified creatures (with individual motifs and desires) than just an ensemble of abstract narrating techniques, I think it is relevant to consider them as entities capable of seeing. Seeing and remembering are very simultaneous acts, even if there is a certain discrepancy between the sound(track) and the image. Two female voices (which are mixed in the course of the movie with other voices, those of two males and those of the characters from the inner diegetic level: Anne-Marie Stretter, vice consul and the white élite of Calcutta) are recalling things motivated by what is visible on the screen; when we see Anne-Marie Stretter for the first time, the voices tell that her grave is on the English cemetery of Calcutta. Sometimes sound and vision work as the counterpoint in an almost musical sense: we see Anne-Marie dancing with his lover, Michael Richardson, they are smiling and looking blissful, but the voices are telling, how they were found in a cheap hotel room after attempting a suicide together.

Sometimes the sound has even more responsibility in passing visual information than the image. After the ball in the embassy, Anne-Marie is going to her villa on an island in the delta of Ganges with her escorts. The voices are describing the voyage and its visual details while this idle group is staying at place almost motionless and languid in a lounge, the queen of Calcutta lying on the divan. On the drama version, the rest of the voyage is covered by plain darkness, we can only hear the voices:

voix 3  
Cette couleur verte?... elle grandit...  
voix 4  
L'océan.

*Silence.*

Noir  
*Les voix parlent dans le noir.*  
voix 4

Les îles.  
Voix 3  
Laquelle est-ce?  
Voix 4  
La plus grande: l'île centrale. Ils sont arrivés.  
*Silence.*

Voix 3  
Ce grand bâtiment blanc...?  
voix 4  
Le prince of Wales. Palace international.  
La mer est mauvaise. Il y a eu un orage.

Fin du noir  
[IS: 120–121 emphasis original]

voice 3  
This green color?... it is growing...  
voice 4  
The ocean.  
*Silence.*

darkness  
*The voices are speaking in the darkness.*  
voice 4

The islands.  
voice 3  
Which of them is it?  
voice 4  
The biggest one: the central island. They have arrived.  
*Silence.*

voice 3  
This big white building...?  
voice 4  
The Prince of Wales. International palace.  
The sea is rough. There has been a thunderstorm.

End of darkness.

Neither the voices do not get the whole picture at once, they have to form it little by little ("Cette couleur verte?... elle grandit..."). I take this as a proof of that the voices are not necessarily on some "higher" diegetic level than the characters, but in some kind of in-between space, where verbalization, perception and recalling are inseparably tied in together.

In his concept of cinema, Gilles Deleuze acknowledges a durasian gap between the sound and the image with pleasure as he sees in it a whole new potentiality of cinematic means of expression. Though it is true that the voice-off loses its omnipotency as the highest infallible commentator, it gains a different kind of autonomy by giving up a function where its only role is to be a reaction and an explanation for the visual events. This new kind of cinema requires more reading, "the perception of perception", than just seeing. (Deleuze 1985/1989: 243–250.) After this transgression, neither of the two elements is subordinate to other:

[T]alking and sound cease to be components of the visual image: the visual and the sound become two autonomous components of an audio-visual image, or, better, two heautonomous images. In this case we can say with Blanchot: "Talking is not seeing." It seems here that talking ceases to see, to make visible and also to be seen. [...] Henceforth, *neither of the two faculties is raised to higher exercise without reaching the limit which separates it from the other, but connects it to the other through separating it.* (ibid., 259–261, emphasis original)

The visuality is at any rate brought apart from the direct perception. The main element of the long dancing scene is a huge mirror, from which we can often see the reflections of the characters before they really enter our field of vision, on this side of the mirror glass. As the reflection comes visible before its source, it becomes almost more real than the phantom-like, already deceased characters. Perhaps the vice consul has also realized this, and has for that very reason shot his mirror image apart from the leprous beggars and dogs in the park of Shalimar. After all, he is nothing but a reflection for the other people: something one can observe but behind which one cannot see anything real to grab.

### Visual pleasure: active or passive?

As Deleuze points out, the primus motor in durasian speech-act is a passionate desire (ibid., 258). Especially the female voices are going through their own ardent but painful intimacy by reflecting it to the melancholy wallowing of Anne-Marie Stretter. According to Laura Mulvey, image and gaze form the first expressions of imagination, identification and subjectivity. The pleasure of gazing (*scopophilia*) can be based on either using the other as a sexually stimulating object of *voyeurism*, or by identifying, recognizing oneself in the object of the gaze. The cinematic delighted gaze is always that of an active man, cast at a passive woman. Mulvey takes notice, how, in conventional movies, a man is responsible for action and carrying the storytelling forward, while a woman is a static element, who transfixes all activity, because everyone stops to admire her. (Mulvey 1975/1989, 16–21.)

Mulvey's concept of cinematic gaze is undoubtedly the most relevant if we are reviewing the tradition build on the star cult of the young Hollywood, but it is nevertheless absorbing to see how *India Song* commenting on it. There are spectators from three different levels: **1**) the characters, **1a**) those like the vice consul or Michael Richardson, who we can see watching passively Anne-Marie, or sometimes also each other, and **1b**) who we cannot see at all, but whose gaze is built-in implicitly in different scenes, i.e. the white élite of Calcutta, the presence of which we can observe only by its gossipy discussions. The most interesting level in the case of

this paper is that of **2**) the narrating voices, who settle themselves between the first and the third level, that of **3**) us, the spectators of the whole film *India Song*, are trying desperately to form a complete reading based on audio-visual fragments.

What comes to the female voices, the both types of scopophilia concretize and overlap: they lust after Anne-Marie Stretter, who is always unattainable, so close, but yet so far. They cannot touch, just look at her:

Dans l'entrebâillement du peignoir, le blanc du corps nu.  
S'immobilise. Tête en arrière. Cherche l'air. Étouffe. Cherche à s'extraire de la chaleur.  
Grâce poignante du corps maigre, fragile.  
Ainsi droite, reste, offerte. Offerte aux "voix".  
(Les voix sont lentes, sourdes, en proie au désir – à travers – ce corps immobile.)

voix 2 (*élan sourd*)

Comme vous êtes belle *habillée de blanc*...

*Temps.*

voix 1

*Une visite que je voudrais rendre à la femme du Gange...*

[*IS: 131*, emphasis original]

The whiteness of the naked body under an open bathrobe.  
Immobile. Head leaned back. Seeking air. Choking. Trying to get out of the heat.  
A touching charm of the skinny, fragile body.  
So straight, motionless, offered. Offered to the "voices".  
(The voices are slow, muffled, like victims of this desire – through this immobile body.)

voice 2 (*with slight ardor*)

You are so beautiful *wearing white*...

*Time.*

voice 1

*I would like to visit the woman of Ganges*

Even if Anne-Marie Stretter cannot be aware of the voices, it seems as if she was there only for them ("*Offerte aux 'voix'*"). At the same time they recognize themselves in her, especially the younger of the voices, who is giving her soul too intensively into the decadent anguish of this *femme fatale* of Calcutta, which disquiets her elder pair. Though it is true that we receive this information from the literary parentheses in the drama version, these parentheses contain too much narrative elements to be nothing but notes for the director. They still convey the two-way, passionate gaze of the voices. The body of Anne-Marie Stretter becomes a culmination point for the passion of the two voices. I see also auto-erotism in their scopophilic identification: the voices don't only desire Anne-Marie Stretter and each other but also themselves in this state of unfulfilled desire. Just like Jacques Hold sees himself outside – objectified of course but at the same time as if he was looking at somebody else, a masculine hero in this case.

During the film, Anne-Marie, surrounded by her lovers, with her "leper of the heart", remains the passive object of gaze, also of the male gaze. Being looked at is in her veins, just like the *voyeurism* is the most natural state for Lol V. Stein. By contrast with Mulvey's concept, men do not seem to be much more active than women. They do dance, kiss, and push Anne-Marie away like she was a puppet, but it is difficult to distinguish them from each other, for they often follow their queen slowly in a coherent front of identical lovers, most of whom replaceable. Stately and stony-faced, they surround Anne-Marie or lay down beside her in a sleepless, stifling night of Calcutta. In the episode, in which Anne-Marie cannot sleep, the vice consul appears to gaze both her and the lovers around her. By shaking up the *élite* with his cries, he turns out to be the only active doer. Could he be the masculine hero, of which Mulvey is speaking, the one whom a male spectator can identify and look up to, for an active male hero always has a better control over the events than the audience (Mulvey 1975/1989: 20)? I do not suppose so, for his masculinity is called into question in the speculations of the *élite*, because there are rumors about his virginity. In *India Song*, woman is not emancipated from being the object of gazing, but man is also reduced to that object. No one can escape it.

After her 1975 article, Mulvey has reconsidered the role of the female spectator in her concept of visual pleasure ("Afterthoughts on 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema'..." in Mulvey 1989). She still emphasises, how Hollywood genre films are based on the masculine pleasure, which equals in Freud's theory with the 'phallic phase', the active point of view. But as Freud sees masculinity as a norm, from which femininity has developed after a 'phallic' period common for both boys and girls, there is still room for shifting between active masculinity and passive femininity in a female experience (Freud cited in Mulvey 1981/1989: 30–31). For Mulvey, Western melodrama seems to offer a chance to question the conventional feminine ideal by letting the heroines express their masculine, active side. Nevertheless, this attempt is doomed to remain incomplete:

Rather than dramatising the success of masculine identification, Pearl [heroine of the Western melodrama *Duel in the Sun* (1946)] brings out its sadness. Her 'tomboy' pleasures, her sexuality, are not fully accepted by Lewt, except in death. So, too, is the female spectator's fantasy of masculinisation at cross-purposes with itself, restless in its transvestite clothes. (Mulvey 1981/1989, 37.)

From the durasian point of view, this "restless" anxiety raises from the heteronormativity of Hollywood genre movies. How come could the only way for the female spectator to take part in the pleasures of gazing be wearing some "transvestite clothes" ie to replace femininity with masculinity? *India Song* challenges – of course outside the Hollywood convention – this

composition by creating an androgyne, bisexual universe of visual pleasures.

### A brief conclusion

To sum up briefly, the visual problems of Duras' India Cycle can function as a meeting point for both post-structuralistic continental philosophy (Blanchot, Deleuze) and postclassical (cognitive) narratology (Phelan, Jahn). These two works, *Le Ravissement de Lol V. Stein* and *India Song* discuss especially the question of the object and the objectifying gaze. As we saw with Mulvey, the character of Anne-Marie Stretter makes an interesting commentary on the melodramatic convention of admired, desired women. A negative feature of passivity is not a flaw at all, quite the opposite. Anne-Marie Stretter even infects all the people around her with this "leper of heart".

The self-reflexive perception of perception, "a struggle to tell a story" becomes more essential than the actual story, a doomed attempt to form a coherent unity from different, conflicting fragments. Invisibility and negativity of durasian poetics offers a possibility for examining the questions of deconstruction, resistance, and redefinition. The sheer (bisexual) desire and pleasure of the gaze are all that remain always accessible. In the hermetic universum of Duras' fiction, gazing you is gazing me simultaneously. Reflections are all one can get, for it is impossible to break on trough to the other side of the mirror glass.

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