

## The Imaginary: Field of Specular, Lure, Seduction & Alienation

The triad registers of human reality: the imaginary, the symbolic and the real lie at the foundation of Lacan's entire theoretical edifice. Prior to the formation of the discourse of the demand, the Imaginary structures the identification of the self, based on an interaction between the self and an external other. "Between the two, there is the entire space of the imaginary, reduced to the specular capture of the ego by the object that is its inverted double." The exchange and a see-saw between the self and the specular image form the *I*, which is neither the Carthusian I nor the I of Ego-psychology. The alienating effect of the imaginary, makes the formation of the *I* as a byproduct of *méconnaissance* (misunderstanding). Thus, the imaginary exchange of the images remains deceptive because the images reflect the self as something *other* than the self. The specular image functions like a decoy that makes unreal real. The dual relationship between the images and the self is plagued with narcissistic attraction, rivalry and aggressive animosity. The attraction and aggressive impulses are caused by the subject's chaotic relationship with its own body or as Žižek says, "the polymorphous, chaotic sprout of bodily drives". In linguistic terms, the imaginary refers to the deferred signified and signification against the symbolic signifier.

The seminar will focus on Lacanian registers imaginary-symbolic-real with a special attention on the imaginary and the *mirror stage*. The seminar's second part will discuss Barthes' *Camera Lucida*, where the author by drawing on Lacanian theory of the Imaginary, examines the relation between the picture and the photographer—the one who is photographed. The last part of the seminar will interrogate a literary representation of the imaginary trouble and chaos in Artaud's *The Cency*. In Artaud's work, the confusion of the mirror stage is displayed by the unsymbolizable images of flying body part, violence, perversion and a shadowy religion.

**Dr Ehsan Azari Stanizai**

### Readings:

- Seminar XXII: R.S.I: 1974-1975, <http://www.lacanianworks.net>
- Antonin Artaud, (1970), *The Cency*, Grove Press, Evergreen.
- Roland Barthes, (2000), *Camera Lucida: Reflection on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard, Vintage books, London. (2000)

**Date:** Thursday, 16 March

**Time:** 6-8pm

**Location:** Tutorial Room-3, NIDA, 215 Anzac Parade

**All Welcome**