

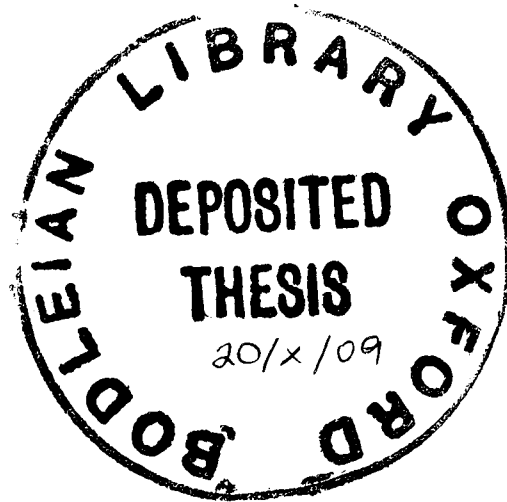
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DPhil Thesis

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From Camera to Code:

Godard, Resnais, and the Problem of Representation in Film Theory



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This thesis presents a theory of film representation as a process of organizing relations in order to connote the image's status as *a type of representation*. It is, thus, a study of film form, the form of its representations. Building from such theoretical sources as Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze, I hope here to use a phenomenological base to build a theory of film semiotics that focuses on the immanent field of film representation, which I will postulate as a structuring of the inter-dependent relationship between the content of representation and the signified source of representation.

This relationship is infused through a film text according to various modes of differentiation: between the viewer and viewed, speaker and spoken—or what, using principles of phenomenology, I call the problem of subject-object relations. In this study I use this framework of subject-object relations in order to re-conceptualize the problem of film representation and to systematize the fundamental debates in film theory. I will argue that even oppositional theories of film representation can be reconciled through their attempt to understand this immanent field as being organized so as to structure a relationship between the representation and an origin of meaning, or subject-function. This relationship is what I call a *system of reference*.

The filmic subject-function is traditionally located within the camera itself or in the diegetic subjectivity of a character; I will call these two systems of reference, respectively, objective and subjective representation. And, through a reconstruction of Deleuze's *Cinéma* project, I will argue that the immanent field of film representation is a constant fluctuation between these two poles, a dialogic circulation of interacting agencies and discourses. This thesis illustrates this fluctuation through a comparative analysis of two French filmmakers, Alain Resnais and Jean-Luc Godard. I will argue that, illustrating similar goals as one finds in the works of Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze, these two filmmakers radically deconstruct film codes in order to destroy the conventional division between interior and exterior that is imposed by classical notions of subjectivity.

Long Abstract

This thesis sets out to reconcile different approaches to film representation. This is my aim both concerning theoretical standpoints and also the oeuvres of two particular filmmakers and, as may be a clear implication of this dual purpose, this work has an overarching goal of etching the circularity between theory and practice, between the conceptualization of cinema and its individual creations, as illustrated through a comparative analysis of the early works of Jean-Luc Godard and Alain Resnais.

This thesis is a study of film form, the form of its representations. Building from such theoretical sources as Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze, this study uses a phenomenological base to build a theory of film semiotics that focuses on the immanent field of film representation, which I will postulate as a structuring of the inter-dependent relationship between the content of representation (the objective pole of representation) and the signified source of the representation (the subjective pole of representation). The display of the structure of this relationship is what I call *film connotation*, and this thesis looks at the use of film connotation in the films of Godard and Resnais.

This relationship is infused through a film text according to various modes of differentiation: between the viewer and viewed, speaker and spoken—or what, using principles of phenomenology, I call the problem of *subject-object relations*. In this study I use this framework of subject-object relations in order to systematize the fundamental debates in film theory. I argue that even oppositional theories of film representation can be reconciled through their mutual concern for the structure of film representation, for

how this immanent field is organized so as to connote a relationship between the representation and an origin of meaning, or subject-function. I call this relationship a *system of reference*.

In most classical cases, meaning is fixed, closed, unambiguous and based on a totality of causality and certainty. This fixity, this closed nature of the message—which some call *denotation*—is guaranteed by its being attributed to a unified subjective perspective, or being structured according to a fixed system of reference. The two primary systems of reference in film representation are the objective (i.e. the subject *outside* the text: the camera, or apparatus as system of reference) and the subjective (i.e. the subject *in* the text: a diegetic character as system of reference), modes of representation that are bolstered by certain similarities between film form and human experience.

Through a reconstruction of Deleuze's *Cinéma* project, I argue here that a film is a constant fluctuation between these different poles of representation. I believe that Godard and Resnais are ideal for illustrating this argument. What is perhaps so provocative about Resnais and Godard is that they shatter the illusion of closed containment in any fixed system of reference; they show that narration and denotative signification cannot happen without a formal or connotative origin, and they instill this immanent field with a certain dialogical interaction of subjects or voices, both behind and before the camera.

Curious about the similarities between film representation and human subjective experience, this study began with an attempt to understand film representation as a type of perception, as has been theorized by the champions of realism such as André Bazin.

Originally believing there to be a link between cinema and *Gestalt* psychology, I began with the phenomenology of perception as a model for understanding the film image. After all, film representation centers a viewing and hearing subject much the same way as does the human *Gestalt* postulated by phenomenology.

I found that I was not alone in this original comparison. Theorists such as Bazin and Eisenstein try to explain their idealistic visions of cinema in terms of analogies of the human subject: the first opts for film as perception, the latter for film as consciousness. While I will argue against such analogies, there is something about their use of these analogies that makes these two systematically similar. As oppositional as these theorists are, their polarity could be reduced to one common argument: they each advocate the structuring of film representation so as to provide for the construction of a subject-position modeled on the human subject. While they may disagree about which aspect of this subject the representation should manifest, both argue for a hierarchy of formal codes geared to imply that the representation *is a type of representation*. They are both ultimately making arguments concerning what I call film connotation.

In attempting to view the film image as an act of perception, according to the tenets of phenomenology, it became clear that: 1) film representation performs an organizing process similar to that performed by the human *Gestalt*; 2) in cinema this is not natural but is a very much artificial, motivated, and codified process; and, 3) to whatever degree there is a subject signified or constructed in classical cinema, it resembles the monistic subject postulated by classical philosophy, a self-unified subjective totality.

How is this subject constructed? First, I look at what could be called the primary division in film representation, or how a subject-position is constructed through the basic film image. The film image is built around the central organization of the frame; this frame delimits what is conveyed visually in the film message, and this delimitation performed by the frame implies the differentiation between the content of the image and a viewing subject. The viewing subject can be considered the first building block of film subjectivity, as it separates the process of representation between objective content and viewing subject. Comparing Godard's *Vivre sa vie* and *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle*, I will look at how this subjectivity is either affirmed or deconstructed through the relationship between shot and sequence, how the immanent field denies or opens itself up to multiple subject-positions.

After all, most films consist of more than one shot. That is, most films consist of a combination of shots, and these combinations are often organized so as to follow a certain logic, or narrative order. This narrative order has been seen by some, such as Christian Metz, to be the fundamental essence of cinema. Whereas for realists such as Bazin or Kracauer the essence of cinema rests in the ontological objectivity of the photographic camera (subject of the frame), for Metz it exists in the logical narration or telling of stories (subject of the sequence). This leads to the second debate in film theory that I analyze, which—as opposed to the idealist standpoints of Bazin and Eisenstein—involves a (supposedly) more rigorous and scientific approach: semiotics.

The semiotics of cinema has long been ruled by the study of film denotation, as in Metz's case. Believing that film is fundamentally narrative, Metz relegates the semiotic approach to what films show and how these representations are combined, one after the

other, as if isolated from the perspective of this enunciation. Later theorists politicized this system of enunciation in what is called *suture theory*, which argues that classical modes of editing secrete the viewer into the image as a viewing subject. This thesis uses suture theory to illustrate a critique of film denotation as being founded upon a formal basis that it effaces in order to guard the stability of its significations. It is this very system of denotation that reflexive works deconstruct, reveal as being founded in convention, cinematic codes. While I try to avoid too much emphasis on theories that are founded specifically on linguistic, Marxist, or psychoanalytic suppositions, suture and apparatus critics are crucial to my approach because they divest film theory and semiotics of a neutral platform. In other words they help me to formulate my argument that no denotation exists in film without connotation.

Film connotation has long been an ignored aspect of film semiotics. However, as this thesis is an analysis of the immanent field of film representation, I must by definition reject Metz's argument and look for another means of formulating the problem of film connotation. While Roland Barthes's understanding of connotation certainly helps to connect aspects of a medium's codes of representation to larger socio-cultural values and systems of thought, what is of central interest to this study is not the transposition of ideological values onto moving pictures and celluloid stories. I am more concerned with the *condition* for this transfer. That is, connotation as a study of *how* we look at things must shift the "how" so that it no longer studies *what values we attribute to the thing we look at*, but instead studies *in what relational capacity we set this thing apart from the implied source of the representation*.

This is where Eco and especially Deleuze come in, and this thesis is unequivocally indebted to their approaches. Eco formulates cinema as using preexistent signifying systems (language, etc.) as its elements, from which it then articulates an entirely new signification. This articulation is similar to my immanent field, the formal structuring of the representation that includes the referential content itself. Deleuze, without explicitly arguing as much, takes this even further and founds an entire model of film semiotics on this very problem. Deleuze's *Cinéma* books are particularly important for this thesis, not only because of their countless insights into the filmmakers I am looking at, but because of the fundamental assumptions that I reconstruct from his work. Through Deleuze I argue that film is fundamentally connotative—at least, that its formal base prefigures any linguistic or narrative function—and that film connotation can be assessed according to an immanent field in constant fluctuation of its subject-object relations.

I argue in this thesis that Deleuze's project ultimately uses cinema to challenge the fundamental system of differentiation necessitated and implemented through classical structures of subjectivity. This is the very destruction heralded by Godard and Resnais, and is the fundamental premise of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological project. Unlike Merleau-Ponty's more spatially oriented argument, though, Deleuze challenges the impervious nature of this subject-function with the Bergsonian concept of intertemporality. This thesis combines and illustrates these two challenges to the closed nature of classical subjectivity, showing how Godard grounds this challenge along the lines of the objective subject of the apparatus, while Resnais does so by challenging the construction of a subject-function within the text, in the form of a diegetic character.

I theorize the latter as a function of the codification of speech and visuality in an analysis of Alain Resnais's *Hiroshima, mon amour* (1959) and *L'Année dernière à Marienbad* (1961), which offer numerous variations on the construction and deconstruction of the speaking subject. This subject-position takes its form in cinema most often through the representation of a character's memory, according to the code of the voiceover flashback. Seeing that such themes as memory, subjectivity, and representation are so common in Resnais's work, I extend this analysis to the general problem of the construction of diegetic subjectivity. The subject, that is, *in* the text.

I therefore use Resnais's films to reveal the codes used to situate a character as the origin of meaning, codes which usher the image into an alignment with a representation of that character's subjective experience. I call the set of these codes the *code of subjectivity*. Resnais's variety of experiments with the diegetic subject and the code of subjectivity, I argue through an analysis of *La guerre est finie* (1966), ultimately divest the image of any closed or singular system of reference, the result of which is a frustration of denotative clarity and a focus on the immanent field of film representation provided by the form itself.

Godard, on the other hand, is very much concerned with performing the same type of deconstruction with objective representation, the apparatus as subject. The transcendental subject, which is constructed through what I call the *code of objectivity*, is a similarly coded function, which I will illustrate through a study of Godard's work and an analysis of *Le Mépris*. This thesis concludes by looking at how this particular system of reference can be dissected to reveal certain basic systems of value and differentiation, modes that can best be revealed through the objectification of women in audio-visual

culture. As such, Godard's divestment of the division between apparatus and the object of its gaze helps not only to reveal things about film representation, but about how this mode of representation is tied to wider socio-cultural and historical aspects of representation, differentiation, order of meaning and its implied origin. In other words, this conclusion will demand that the study of subject-object relations be taken beyond the immanent field of film connotation, to the implications of its external influences and the content of its representations.

Ultimately, I argue here that these two filmmakers reveal the structure of film connotation by challenging the conventional division between subject and object in film representation.

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A Note on Language and Images

This thesis has been written for the Department of Modern Languages at the University of Oxford. Researched and written in conjunction specifically with the French department, this work is concerned primarily with a corpus of texts and films in the French language. Out of respect for the original texts, for the principles of the department, and out of a personal interest in encouraging the reconciliation of French- and English-language scholarship, I have kept all citations in their original language wherever possible, and I apologize in advance for any exceptions to this rule. Nonetheless, I hope that my own attempt to integrate any such citations will make this thesis fully coherent to any reader.

Also, I have interspersed a number of still images, taken from the respective films by Jean-Luc Godard and Alain Resnais, into my film analyses. Wherever two images are directly placed together, with no space between them, indicates that they are from the same continuous shot. Wherever there are arrows between images means that there is a cut between the images in the order indicated by the arrow. Again, I hope that my own text will provide enough clarity that this system should not cause the reader any undue confusion.

Introduction: Theses of the Thesis

Representation marks a key moment in cinematic discourse in its struggle to wrest signification from perception.

—Dudley Andrew¹

I. Introduction to the introduction

Stephen Heath once wrote: “Cinema is an institution of representing, a machine for the fabrication-maintenance of representation.”² And, while there has been much debate concerning the status of film representation as a theoretical problem, this debate, in fact, is itself a sign that the problem of representation is one that may require an entirely new theoretical approach. This thesis is concerned with the problem of film representation.

The goal of my study is to re-conceptualize the problem of film representation in a framework that can house seemingly irreconcilable theories and films. As such, I will embark here on a synthesis of two analyses:

1) the problem of film representation as a fundamental concern of film theory, including formalist theory, theories of cinematic realism, and film semiotics; and,

2) the problem of film representation, in as much as it is an artistic and cultural convention, conceived as a problem by a school of reflexive (what some may call “modern” or “art”) cinema that reached its pinnacle in Europe during the early 1960s.

According to these theoretical and artistic bodies of work, what is film representation? What is it as a theoretical problem, and what is it as a cultural institution? From the realism of André Bazin to the ideological approach of Jean-Louis

¹ Dudley Andrew, *Concepts in Film Theory* (Oxford University Press: Oxford and others, 1984), p. 55.

² *Questions of Cinema* (Indiana University Press: Bloomington, 1981), p. 293.

Baudry, we can trace a mutual fundamental concern for how the form of film representation organizes its content in relation to the perspective of enunciation. What does cinema signify through the forms of its representations? My task here will be to systematize this problem through a framework that renders it possible to situate such opposing poles as phenomenology and semiotics within an overarching set of terms.

At the horizon of this study lies an understanding of film representation that will gradually unfold as we approach closer to the systematization of this problem. This thesis is, in other words, meta-theoretical, reformulating previous arguments in film theory according to what I will call the problem of *subject-object relations*, with hopes that this systematic mode of analysis serve as a useful point of departure for future theorists with a wide range of approaches and applications. I have chosen these terms as organizing features of film representation; while my conception of the subjective and objective poles of film representation is, as I will elaborate, inspired by the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty, I use the terms rather in a semiotic sense to refer to positions of meaning organization that are internal to film representation.

This notion of subject-object relations will serve here to lend a phenomenological structure to what is ultimately a theory of film semiotics. Film representation can be seen as the praxis for the intersection of many voices and gazes, both diegetic and extra-diegetic, and I will look in this thesis at how such voices and gazes are organized according to sets of formal relations. I will call this intersection the *immanent field* of film representation, meaning that I will focus this study on the structuring of film representation according to internal relations of subject and object, as opposed to the referential force or social value of the photographic image. Through this concept of

subject-object relations I will build a theory of this immanent field as being structured through a dynamic inter-dependence between the immediate intentionality of the image (the objective pole) and the point of reference or perspective relative to which this intentionality is signified (the subjective pole).

This point of reference is a position that is signified as the origin of the representation itself. It can be a diegetic subject-function (or character) in the film, or the external or absent subject-function (the apparatus); the structure of representation relative to these points of reference produce what I will call, respectively, *subjective* and *objective* representation, and I will argue that most films consist of a combination of these, a fluctuation between them. In my re-conceptualization of film representation, I will conflate these two—intentionality and enunciation—into an inter-dependent dynamic that I will call a *system of reference*, which is not a concept concerning the semiotic notion of “reference” but is more akin to Deleuze’s epistemological “systèmes de référence”. Deleuze equates the subjective and objective poles of representation, only “rapporté à l’un ou l’autre de deux systèmes de référence.”³ In other words, film representation could be analyzed as a function of *how its system of reference is framed*.

The immanent field is organized in a particular way so as to construct a system of reference, and it is through the stabilization of this sign (field/subject) that an order of meaning, or system of values and beliefs, can be guaranteed, affirmed, reified. Since the actual ideological roots of cultural representation are an abstract given, postulated many times over and yet difficult to analyze, I will look here at the form of the representation itself and how this form’s internal organization of subject-object relations engenders the systems of reference that are the condition for conveying this ideology. I hope to reveal

³ *Cinéma I: l'image-mouvement* (Les Éditions de Minuit: Paris, 1983), p. 93.

that this concept of subject-object relations is as central to the problems of phenomenology at the heart of cinematic realism as it is to the Bergsonian temporal philosophy in Deleuze's *Cinéma* semiotics. That is, I will posit this thesis on the common ground between two disparate models of thought geared toward a similar goal: the destruction of classical divisions between subject and object.

My re-conceptualization of film representation has a strong affinity for the theory of human experience described in phenomenology. In his 1945 presentation to l'Institut des hautes études cinématographiques, Maurice Merleau-Ponty claimed that cinema shows *how* things signify, that it reveals to us *how* structures of representation produce meaning through the spatiotemporal arrangement of elements.⁴ I will reframe this claim in the following way: through its process of organization, film representation refers to itself *as a particular type of representation*, implying a certain order of meaning through its organization of subject-object relations. The sets of relations constructed through formal components, that is, provide an immanent field that is already laden with meaning and significance. This thesis is not in itself phenomenological, but it applies a structure of phenomenological notions to a study of film signification.

My project is therefore not entirely different from the American movement classified as film rhetoric, which considers the conventions of organization provided in film narration.⁵ Yet, while questions of narration—including narrative content (the “story” of a film) and narrative structure (the order of scenes)—are relevant to any film’s overall meaning and specific significations, I will argue that narration is a product of the

⁴ In Merleau-Ponty's words, cinema “montre commentt quelque chose se met à signifier...par l'arangement temporel et spatiel des éléments.” From “Le cinéma et la nouvelle psychologie,” *Sens et non-sens* (Éditions Gallimard: Paris, 1996), pp. 61-74 (p. 73).

⁵ See, most notably, David Bordwell's *Narration in the Fiction Film* (The University of Wisconsin Press: Madison, 1985)

film's representational form and not its origin, thus associating my work more with the theories of Eco and Deleuze than with the tradition of Christian Metz and David Bordwell. It is with this assumption about the formal essence of film that I hope to provide a model that can then be applied to more narrative approaches to film analysis such as postmodern cinema, genre analysis, national cinema, and queer theory. After all, different film movements, national cinemas and genres may provide us with very different manifestations of the subjective and objective poles of expression: however, each uses the same formal elements to do so, and as such I believe it would benefit each to build a basic theory of this organizing process.

Inspired by the forefathers of twentieth-century aesthetics such as Erwin Panofsky and Rudolf Arnheim, who attempt to see artistic products first and foremost as “formulations of material,”⁶ I will attempt in this study to show how these “formulations” structure the differentiation between subject and object. As such, I hope here to return the problem of film subjectivity to Noël Burch's dictum: “Film is made first of all out of images and sounds.”⁷ This thesis's re-conceptualization of film representation will come to involve various individual elements and combinations of these images and sounds, including (in the order in which we will encounter them):

- 1) visual composition (and in particular the frame), which spatially organizes the diegetic world, using the limitation of vision to signify a source of perception as well as to situate diegetic subjects and objects relative to the camera's operations;
- 2) montage, or the conjunction between shots and image-types, which uses combinations of images to order the flow of images in a way that makes this flow attributable to a certain system of reference;

⁶ *Perspective as Symbolic Form* (1927), trans. Christopher S. Wood (Zone Books: New York, 1997), p. 7.

⁷ *Theory of Film Practice*, trans. by Helen R. Lane (Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1981), p. 144.

3) the conjunction between speech and image, which organizes the harmony of sensory elements so as to provide for a totality of subjectivity; and,

4) codifications of these elements (speech/image, shot/sequence) such as the flashback (a codification of sound and image, producing meaning in a particular sequential order, so as to organize the image according to a particular speaking subject or point-of-view), which are used in order to present the film, as a whole, as predominantly objective or subjective.

I will look at how these aspects of form are used to imply that the immanent field is offering *a particular type of dynamic* between the content of the representation and the perspective relative to which it is structured. In order to illustrate this argument, I will complement this theoretical framework with an analysis of particular films, for which I have chosen as a comparative body of texts the early works of Alain Resnais and Jean-Luc Godard. While much critical writing has been generated concerning their respective oeuvres, and while numerous theorists have acknowledged their relationship as “les deux grands pôles de modernité filmique,”⁸ Resnais and Godard have never been placed alongside one another in an extended comparative analysis. I therefore hope that this comparative analysis might also contribute an original framework for understanding the work of these two directors.

Having had their feature-length fiction film debuts within a year of each other (1959-60), these two filmmakers were both engaged in the artistic and intellectual movements of the 1960s. Moreover, each departed from the commercial scene for an extended period in 1968.⁹ This justifies, despite the prolific nature of their careers (both of which are still active at the time of writing this), my isolation of the period between

⁸ Christian Metz, *Essais sur la signification au cinéma I* (1968), (Klincksieck: Paris, 2003), p. 198.

⁹ At this time, Resnais took a five-year hiatus from feature filmmaking, while Godard embarked on a period of highly politicized filmmaking defined by an ongoing collaboration with Maoist activist Jean-Pierre Gorin.

1959 and 1968 for this study. Moreover, I have selected these two filmmakers for particular reasons.

First, their films provide systematically similar attempts to deconstruct classical conventions and to shift the focus of their films to the form of representation itself. Second, these two filmmakers provide an invaluable polarity of film representation. Godard once remarked that he and Resnais were comparable to a journalist and a novelist,¹⁰ and I will argue that their oeuvres are concerned, respectively, with challenging cinematic codes of objective and subjective representation. In this thesis I hope to cultivate an understanding of their work as deconstructing conventional divisions between subject and object in order to open the immanent field as a site of dialogic interaction between discourses and agencies.¹¹

Representatives of a shift in European cinema toward reflexivity and meta-textuality, Godard and Resnais reveal or bring to light conventions of classical film representation by reorganizing the formal basis for these conventions. Their works embody an “alternative” trend in cinema history, alternative “in so far as they transform the relations of representation and representing,”¹² relations that I will frame according to my fundamental framework of subject and object. For this, their texts provided a glimmer of hope for a generation of theorists: their films both articulated and served as

¹⁰ “Resnais c’est un romancier, moi, je suis un journaliste.” In Phillipe Pilard, “Entretien avec Jean-Luc Godard,” *Image et son—le revue de cinéma: Jean-Luc Godard*, No. 211 (December 1967), pp. 51-8 (p. 56).

¹¹ By “dialogic” I am intentionally evoking the theory of M.M. Bakhtin, whose *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and trans. by Caryl Emerson (Manchester University Press: Manchester 1984) constitutes a study of Dostoevsky’s novel as being a circularity or interaction between authorial and diegetic voices, including as well as the anticipated voice of the reader, a theory of the circulation of voices and agencies that Bakhtin extends in *The Dialogical Imagination*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (University of Texas Press: Austin, 1981). As will become apparent, this thesis sets out to perform in many ways the same analysis on Godard and Resnais as Bakhtin does on the works of Dostoevsky.

¹² Stephen Heath, *Questions of Cinema*, p. 242.

inspiration for theories of phenomenology, semiotics, and post-structuralism, and I hope to use their films to forge a common ground between such diverse theories. As such, their presence here serves to illustrate the problems being systematized in this study and not to *prove* any particular claim about cinema *per se*. Like many similar studies, I consciously run the risk here of limiting this study to a particular strain of European art cinema; however, while perhaps more can be understood of our modes of representation by studying codes used by the majority of mainstream culture, such hegemonic practices are often most illustratively revealed through the films that challenge them. Godard and Resnais provide us with the *sick* cases through which we might elucidate certain conditions and symptoms of the *healthy*, normal cinema as it has been naturalized over time and through industrial practices.

These filmmakers attempt to use film form, and the de-codification of conventional uses of film form, to generate meaning and to reveal film representation as an immanent field of signification in and of itself. This may well be what makes them so provocative to spectators, so useful to film theory, and so invaluable to this thesis.

II. Synopsis

These filmmakers, it is hoped, will help bring to light the problems and terms addressed in these pages. As my goal here is to systematize the problem of film representation according to the phenomenological notion of subject-object relations, I will begin by addressing phenomenology and the basic cinematic differentiation between viewing subject and viewed world.

Chapter One will start by comparing the similarities between the viewing subject, as defined by the film frame, and the human subject as postulated by Merleau-Ponty. Juxtaposing the theories of Eisenstein and Bazin, I will look at how this viewing subject has been considered in radically different ways depending on the purpose of its position in the relationship between shot and sequence. A comparison of Godard's *Vivre sa vie* (1962) and *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle* (1966) will help to illustrate how certain arrangements of this formal relationship lead to different *types* of representation, some of which call into question the process of cinematic enunciation.

We will find in this analysis that the differentiation between a viewing subject and viewed world is an inadequate model for film representation, and that an idealist phenomenological approach must be complemented with a more concrete study of film signification. I hope then in Chapter Two to reframe some of the questions raised in Chapter One within the theoretical context of semiotics, that this might provide later theorists with examples of signifying practices in which my own work might be useful. How are subject-positions signified in film?

Christian Metz transforms the notion of visual realism into a theory of film denotation. In order to frame this notion of denotation as a question of subjective enunciation, I will move toward the standpoint of suture theory, which focuses on the signification of an absent or transcendental subject-function through codes of classical editing. However, since the theories of Metz, Dayan, and Heath are all weighted by linguistic, narrative, and psychoanalytic determinations, I will use Deleuze's *Cinéma* project to understand film representation as an immanent field of subject-object compositions infused with an underlying system of connotative signification,

signification concerned with the very structure of the relationship between the objective and subjective poles of representation.

These subject-object relations, I will argue, can be located according to the relationships of certain formal elements. Whereas Chapter One looked at the structure of the image itself, I hope to complement this in Chapter Three with an analysis of the formal interaction between speech and image. Introducing what I call the speech-image code, Chapter Three will look at how diegetic characters are constructed as subjects through the organization of sensory elements. Juxtaposing Alain Resnais's *Hiroshima, mon amour* (1959) and *L'Année dernière à Marienbad* (1961), I will argue that the speech-image code plays an important role in the construction of subject-object relations, using speech to bridge temporal shifts and to provide a source of enunciation.

In this chapter, I will begin to look more at the subjective agency of diegetic characters, to be elaborated further in Chapter Four as what I will call the *code of subjectivity*, which concerns the set of signifying practices used to allocate a particular character as the enunciating subject of representation. In Chapter Four, I will look at diegetic subjectivity—the alignment of the representation with a character within the text—as a particular problem concerning the overlapping of multiple perspectives, and as the means for representing human experience itself as a dialogic site for the interaction of different sources of enunciation. I will illustrate both the conventional use of this code and its deconstruction through a detailed analysis of Alain Resnais's *La guerre est finie* (1966).

And what about the other pole of representation? Whereas Chapter Four is concerned with subjective representation, or the system of reference that implies a direct

connection between the form of representation and a character in the film, Chapter Five looks at objective representation, or the implication of a complete detachment between apparatus and viewed world. Using Godard's *Le Mépris* (1963) as a textual example, I will analyze what I call the *code of objectivity*, thus using the theoretical model built up over the course of the thesis to return to some of its original problems concerning objectivity as a feature of representation. By the code of objectivity I mean the set of formal effects and relations that imply an isolation between the form and the content that it represents, which Godard deconstructs by fragmenting the divisions between subject and object and showing the immanent field to be a site in which numerous discourses intersect and the form of the apparatus is itself implicated.

Overall, I hope to use the examples of these filmmakers to illustrate the reconciliation of phenomenology and semiotics in a notion of film representation as an immanent field of subject-object relations. Before launching into this study, however, let me first begin by introducing the theoretical background upon which this thesis is based, define some key terminology I will be using, and clarify what I hope this thesis will contribute and what may be some criticisms held against it.

III. Theoretical foundation and central terminology

Let us begin with the concept at the center of this endeavour: representation.

Film representation has been theorized as many things: as a rhetorical logic based on a cognitive model; as a window onto the world, or as a mirror for nature; as the historical extension of ideological modes of reproduction; as a simulation of the human psyche. In this thesis, I will bracket film representation off from the psychology of the

spectator and the ideological foundations of culture, positing it as an immanent field of organizations between subjects and objects. I will reformulate these phenomenological terms as a semiotic problem of the structure of film representation and the signification of a subject of enunciation, a dualism relevant to all acts of film signification.

These organizations within the immanent field provide for different divisions between film denotation and connotation, a division that is central to this thesis and that I believe could be useful to theorists approaching film from any theoretical direction. For Roland Barthes, denotation is the level of the message's content, whereas connotation is the form of denotation. In my model, I will take denotation to mean an attempt, as one finds in most classical modes of film representation, to isolate the referential or intentional dimension of the immanent field from the perspective of enunciation on which it is dependent. Connotation, on the other hand, which we will find to be central to the works of Godard and Resnais, concerns the *how*: the *through what process* and *in what manner* this immanent field is organized. While I will not attempt to detach the form of representation altogether from its contents, nor from the construction of narration, I will maintain in this thesis that *there is no denotation without connotation*. Connotation arises from the display of the inter-dependence between the representational content and the point of reference relative to which it is situated, and it is according to the overall suppression or revelation of connotative signification that I will evaluate particular films.

A study of what Barthes calls "idées-en-forme,"¹³ this thesis will therefore look at how we transpose orders of differentiation onto formal media, in this case cinema. The means for this can be found in our conventional modes of transformation, or *codes*. Again, while this thesis is influenced by Barthes's notion of code and especially

¹³ *Mythologies* (1957), reprinted in *Œuvres complètes Vol .I* (Éditions du Seuil: Paris, 2002), p. 826.

Barthes's argument that all codes are formed in the connotative register, I will lean more toward Umberto Eco's formulation of the cinematic code. In Eco's "Articulations of the Cinematic Code," for example, he argues that structure in general exists "through a choice of operative conventions" which "rest on systems of choices and oppositions."¹⁴ In this thesis I hope to give a particular phenomenological structure to this semiotic problem of oppositions, in order to apply this problem to the structure of the immanent field. These structures of opposition, which I call subject-object relations, are a problem of the form of representation: for Eco, as Julia Lesage points out, such codes refer not only to what is conventional as far as behavior or action is concerned, but furthermore to "how to present that action in a representation."¹⁵

According to this understanding I will argue that film connotation is organized by determinate subject-object relations. I will thus use the framework of subject-object relations to shift the focus away from the problem of referential meaning, studied by realist theorists, as well as to move away from apparatus theory's focus on the ideology behind our conventions of representation, and toward a question of how systems of reference are organized within the immanent field itself. The connotation specific to cinema, then, is less one of explicit value concerning the judgment of its viewed objects than it is *the self-referential connotation of the film image itself as a type of representation*.

The problems of film subjectivity and film connotation are important issues that seem to have been dismissed with the recent academic rejection of semiotics in general. I hope that the regeneration of these problems, in the framework of subject-object relations

¹⁴ "Articulations of the Cinematic Code" orig. *Cinemantics*, No. 1, (January 1970), reprinted in *Movies and Methods*, pp. 590-607, (p. 595).

¹⁵ Lesage, "S/Z and Rules of the Game," *Jump Cut*, Nos. 12-13 (1976), pp. 45-51 (p. 50).

and the immanent field, might reveal the kindred natures of phenomenology and structuralism in a way that will permit me to re-conceptualize film representation as an object of their mutual concern. As semiotics falls from favor in film studies and phenomenology comes back into fashion, it would be useful to illuminate some characteristics they share, and perhaps this work might even sketch a way to extrapolate from phenomenology a metaphysical foundation with which to revive film semiotics. In order to do so it will be necessary to dispel Andrew's myth that these two approaches are "arch-rivals,"¹⁶ or that they are methodologically incompatible, which might be achieved by analyzing film representation as a process of organization.

In his oft-neglected yet seminal text, *Essai sur les principes d'une philosophie du cinéma*, Gilbert Cohen-Séat writes: "C'est, en effet, dans et pendant la 'représentation' que se trouvent l'objet et l'acte nouveaux institués par le cinéma."¹⁷ Cohen-Séat suggests here that a clue to the workings of cinema and cinematic meaning lies not in the ostensive, photographic dimension, nor necessarily in the spectator's psyche, but in what happens *in and during representation*. The implication here is that, as I will not cease to rearticulate in different ways, film representation is a *process*.

More precisely, it is a process of organization and redistribution, a system for forming relations; this is a notion that innately links even the most different representatives from a century of film theory. But how can we isolate this transformation? What is its model, and what is its final product? The final product, I

¹⁶ This argument, spelled out point by point in "The Neglected Tradition of Phenomenology in Film Theory," is summed up by Andrew in *Concepts in Film Theory*: "Whereas phenomenology strives to unveil the reason in human activity by attending in a special way to its surface manifestations," Andrew writes, "its arc-rival, structuralism, translate the surface features of a phenomenon into abstract terms which are then shown to bear a hidden logical relation." (p. 133) However, is phenomenology not interested in the internal logical relation of perception and thought, and do not surface features make up the very elements of structure analyzed in structuralist discourse?

¹⁷ *Essai sur les principes d'une philosophie du cinéma*, (Presses universitaires de France: Paris, 1946), p.54.

have established, is film representation. And the model? Film's content being so closely based on what we know as the external world, isn't the model for this representation our own way of knowing this external world, i.e. the human subjective apparatus?

This is where phenomenology becomes implicated in the understanding of film representation. In approaching film representation as an immanent field constructed from a form meant to simulate attributes of the human subject, it might be possible to integrate principles of phenomenology into an understanding of film's signifying practices. My attempt to situate film representation according to the framework of subject-object relations must begin with an introductory review of this formulation's most influential precursor, which is the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty.

Merleau-Ponty rejects the suppositions assumed by conventional intellectualist and psychological approaches, attracted instead by the *Gestaltist* claim that the formal structure of perception is inseparable from personal subjective experience. *Gestalt* theory, which originated with the Berlin School at the turn of the Twentieth Century, focuses on the ability of human sensory perception (and especially vision) to transform external stimuli into a coherent formal structure or whole. Influenced by this approach, Merleau-Ponty builds upon the assumption that there is a process of transformation between external phenomena and subjective signification, based on formal organizations that result from the innate elements of human perception. Merleau-Ponty brackets out this organizational process for his phenomenological model, and I hope to use this principle of bracketing off as a way of applying Merleau-Ponty's methodology to the immanent field of film representation. That is, I hope to bracket off the immanent field

of film representation just as Merleau-Ponty brackets off the organizational process at work in human perception.

Furthermore, for Merleau-Ponty experience and meaning cannot be reduced to an external subject's unilateral understanding of the world, but are instead the offspring of the subject's implication in the world itself. He writes: "Je considère mon corps, qui est mon point de vue sur le monde, comme l'un des objets de ce monde."¹⁸ The human being is both interior and exterior, depending on the point of reference: a subject that is at the same time an object, a body in the world. Could we not describe cinema in the same words?

As a form of representation that takes real objects as its original material, cinema provides us with a viewing subject that is also a viewed object, and therefore: "le cinéma est particulièrement apte à faire paraître l'union de l'esprit et du corps, de l'esprit et du monde et l'expression de l'un dans l'autre."¹⁹ In other words, cinema can show us how the subjective and objective interact, overlap, coexist, oppose each other and are united. The immanent field of film representation, I will argue, is a site for the dialogic coexistence between subjects and objects.

As Andrew points out, Merleau-Ponty had a direct influence on the theorists of *filmologie* such as Cohen-Séat,²⁰ but I will extend his relevance beyond this. Like many writers based in psychology, notably Hugo Münsterberg and Rudolf Arnheim, thinkers such as Merleau-Ponty and the anthropologist Edgar Morin became interested in cinema for the same reasons that film theorists were interested in phenomenology: cinema poses

¹⁸ *Phénoménologie de la perception* (Éditions Gallimard: Paris, 1945), p. 85.

¹⁹ Merleau-Ponty, "Le cinéma et la nouvelle psychologie," p. 74.

²⁰ Andrew, "The Neglected Tradition of Phenomenology in Film Theory," reprinted in *Movies and Methods II*, ed. Bill Nichols (University of California Press: Berkeley, 1985), pp. 625-31 (pp. 627-8).

fundamental questions concerning the relationship between the interior and exterior, subject and object.

IV. Phenomenology and film theory: the problem of objectivity and subjectivity

The similarity between cinematic representation and human subjective experience has led to many idealist notions of the “objectivité essentielle” of the camera.²¹ In this way, champions of cinematic realism such as André Bazin have argued that film has a phenomenological capacity because it holds the possibility for a sort of formal *reduction* in the phenomenological sense, a direct exposure to phenomena.

Though acknowledging its artificiality, theorists such as Bazin view cinema as uniquely capable of—and indeed ontologically responsible for—representing a quality that emanates from sensory appearances. We see here a belief in cinema’s capacity not only to produce a copy of the world of external phenomena, but actually to uncover something in it. In a way, Bazin is speaking of film representation as an immanent field in the way I will approach it, but I will distance myself from Bazin’s defense of visual realism, hoping to show his argument as being an argument *for a particular type of representation*. Also, this notion of the camera apparatus’s inclination toward the observational value of appearances makes it easily comparable, through a simplistic metaphor, to phenomenology, prompting Christian Metz’s suggestion that “l’appareil topique du cinéma ressemble à l’appareil conceptuel de la phénoménologie.”²² But I will argue against such notions of the phenomenological nature of the cinematic apparatus,

²¹ André Bazin, *Qu’est-ce que le cinéma* (Les éditions du CERF: Paris 2002), p. 13.

²² *Le Signifiant imaginaire* (1974), (Christian Bourgois Editeur: 2002), p. 74.

siding with later theorists who view this as an illusion constructed through the positioning of filmic subjectivity.

On the other hand, the similarity between film form and characteristics of the human subject has led many to consider film representation phenomenological in that its form is structured according to characteristics analogous to those used to describe natural perception. Vivian Sobchack points out, for example, that film expression is an organizing activity much like human vision, which is structured and selective.²³ This echoes two of the earliest systematic analyses of film form, each of which were influenced in one way or another by the *Gestalt* group and each of which attempts to define film representation through a comparison with the human subjective apparatus.

Hugo Münsterberg argues that film representation overcomes the objective forms of the world by adjusting them to inner, human processes, such as attention and memory.²⁴ Is the apparatus of cinema then anthropomorphized? Some of the effects Münsterberg discusses are formal, such as depth and focus, whereas some result from combinations of images, attempts to transpose the image onto the subjectivity of a character, such as the representation of memory through a flashback. I will ground the idealism of Münsterberg's insights with the acknowledgment, as Rudolf Arnheim insists in *Film as Art*, that representation is not an imitation or duplication of its source, but is "a translation of observed characteristics into the forms of a given medium."²⁵

These theorists are crucial to my study, as they mark an attempt to understand objective representation as itself subjective, transformative and in some ways based on a

²³ *The Address of the Eye* (Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1992), pp. 131-3.

²⁴ *The Photoplay: a Psychological Study* (1916), in *Hugo Münsterberg on Film: The Photoplay: a Psychological Study and Other Writings*, ed. Allan Langdale (Routledge: New York and London, 2002), p.129.

²⁵ *Film as Art* (1932), (University of California Press: Berkeley, 1957), pp. 2-3.

formal simulation of the human subject. Later theorists such as Jean-Louis Baudry and Stephen Heath frame this duality as the starting place for an ideological critique of classical, or illusionist, cinema. Stemming from various angles of Marxism and psychoanalysis, such approaches are centrally concerned with the production and situating of subjectivity as an ideological problem. Influenced by French theorists such as Kristeva, Althusser, and Lacan, these critics focus on the connotative structures of culture in order to reveal its formulations of subject-object relations as derived from complex socio-cultural institutions.

While I strongly disagree with the psychoanalytic bases for many of these theorists' conclusions, much of this thesis works alongside their assessment of film representation as being predicated on the signification of subject-functions, and as such I would say alongside these theorists that the problem of film representation is therefore concerned with "the relations of subjectivity and ideology."²⁶ I hope, however, to direct this argument away from the problem of ideology and toward a more phenomenological analysis of the immanent field itself and the formal relations through which this subjectivity is constructed.

As Dudley Andrew notes, for these theorists "identification with characters and stories is based on an identification with the process of viewing itself and ultimately with the camera which views."²⁷ In other words, there is a double-identification: one with the viewing apparatus, and one with the people viewed. This is the fundamental observation made by apparatus and suture theory that I hope to expand, that the representation is itself in a state of flux between poles of reference. However, we will find that many such

²⁶ Stephen Heath, *Questions of Cinema*, p. 17.

²⁷ *Concepts in Film Theory*, p. 149.

theorists tend to merge different subject-functions—the diegetic subject-function of a character as point of identification; the camera subject-function such as is provided by camera movement; and the subject-function posited through classical editing techniques—all into one notion of what Baudry calls the “transcendental subject,” a conflation common to much film theory.²⁸

I hope to untangle this by specifying which formal interactions produce each respective subject-function, and how. I will set out in this thesis to illuminate, furthermore, the gradations by which these two identifications can shift, interact, overlap and oppose each other. Instead of focusing on the ideology behind the representation, or the psychology that governs the spectator’s interpretation, I will map out the construction of this duality as an internal organization of such formal elements as the frame, montage, and the juxtaposition of speech and image. This should provide a valuable starting place for studies of film expression that expand beyond formal relations to issues, as we will find in Chapter Five, such as the representation of gender.

This is where Deleuze will serve as such an important model, for his theory of cinema turns away from overt discussions of bourgeois ideological institutions and of any psychoanalytic or linguistic preconceptions, and towards a conceptualization of the immanent field in terms of its cinematic specificity. Though he doesn’t frame it as such, I will argue that Deleuze’s entire cinema project could be interpreted as a theory of cinema as the constant fluctuation of subject-object relations, and that his notion of image-types provides a model for the study of film connotation. For this reason,

²⁸ The construction or signification of this “transcendental subject” is in fact the overriding object of critique in Baudry’s “Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus,” reprinted in *Film Theory and Criticism*, pp. 343-54.

Deleuze's study serves as a horizon for the theoretical developments of Chapters One and Two, and as a guiding light for the rest of this thesis.

V. Theoretical debate and the search for new ground

While I find the conclusions reached by Baudry *et al* to be invaluable to an understanding of film form and film subjectivity, their theories have inherent flaws that must be recognized, especially concerning the psychoanalytic and ideological rhetoric of their methods. Psychoanalytic theorists, Geoffrey Nowell-Smith summarizes, "cannot rest content" with the argument that meaning is produced without any subject of that production.²⁹ This is perhaps psychoanalysis's greatest contribution to my study: as a method it rejects the conventional myth of an internal construction that does not produce some framework of differentiation.

And, while I agree with many conclusions reached by such theorists, and we should appreciate the critical nature of their enterprise, we must also be suspicious of an approach to film representation that appropriates another discipline's method without skepticism, and often even verbatim. In his 1975 response to this trend, "Psychoanalysis and Cinema: the Imaginary Discourse," Charles F. Altman takes psychoanalytic theory to task primarily for its methodological appropriations of a master-theory (psychoanalysis) that is, itself, only a set of working hypotheses.³⁰ Can a theoretical approach so far removed from its object of analysis be methodologically robust?

Projecting familiar problems of film representation into a heightened polemical arena, such theorists' political stance has also been disputed over recent years. Noël

²⁹ "A Note on Story/Discourse" (1976), reprinted in *Movies and Methods II*, pp.551-557 (p. 552).

³⁰ "Psychoanalysis and Cinema: the Imaginary Discourse," *Quarterly Review of Film Studies* 2, no. 3 (August 1977), pp. 257-72.

Carroll, for example, challenges much of this theory for being focused on subject positioning as an ideological issue, when film is not inherently ideological.³¹ This critique marks a reaction, over the past thirty years, *against* the highly stylized cinema and politically polarized criticism of the 1960s, bringing under scrutiny the entire formalist project and the demystification of cinematic illusion.

In this thesis, I hope to construct a middle ground between these. I believe very much that film is, as a socio-cultural phenomenon and economic industry, without question ideological. While this does not mean, as theorists such as Daniel Dayan may argue, that classical cinema can be systematically rejected as a vessel for bourgeois Western ideology, we must nonetheless acknowledge that the formal base of cinema itself, through its modes of organizing representation, disseminates certain values and assumptions that can be found in larger social bodies of thought and belief.

Rather than view it solely as a tool for hegemony, I intend to look at the structure of film representation as a condition either for perpetuating or challenging systems of thought and belief through the construction of different sets of relations. In doing so, I hope to use a phenomenological basis to establish a semiotic analysis of the form of film representation. This argument will bring to the forefront a problem that has been raised specifically concerning the works of Godard and Resnais. Echoing Pauline Kael's infamously disparaging remark about the snobbery and vacuity signaled by the prominence of stylistic technique in Resnais's work,³² David Bordwell writes: "Godard...raises as does no other director the possibility of a sheerly capricious or

³¹ *Theorizing the Moving Image* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1996), pp. 257-60.

³² Kael once wrote that "Alain Resnais's films come out of an intolerable mixture of technique and culture..." (See James Monaco, *Alain Resnais* [Oxford University Press: New York, 1979], p. 5).

arbitrary use of technique.”³³ In many ways this echoes the neglect of film connotation in much of film theory, but it also provokes the question: can we not analyze the significance of how our representations are structured?

Indeed, I will argue in this study that the work of these filmmakers raises the problem of form to a moral and philosophical level. However, in order to promote such an argument, perhaps film form needs to be analyzed according to formats different from those used to study film narration for example. “[W]hat does stylistic patterning offer us?” Bordwell demands rhetorically, responding: “It cannot have causal unity, and...seems to have no clearly designated units.”³⁴ But does it not have causal unity, embedded in its organization of subject-object relations? And can we not designate certain units by which it can be analyzed, for example units concerning the interactions, between particular formal elements, that organize the immanent field in certain ways?

Indeed these questions point toward the need to reformulate the notion of film form in general, not only as a tool for supporting the denotation of a story, nor as a question of mise-en-scène and visual style, but as an essential source of film signification. Godard and Resnais are exemplary for this argument. Raised in the Cinémathèque culture of postwar France, filmmakers like Godard and Resnais grew up surrounded by the clichés of classical cinema. Yet, they were also part of a generation disillusioned with conventional systems of thought. Fed up with the complacent and closed orders of meaning offered by classical forms, the cinema of the 1960s waged a systematic assault on what Leo Braudy calls the “hyperorganization of art,”³⁵ an attempt

³³ Bordwell David, *Narration in the Fiction Film* (The University of Wisconsin Press: Madison, 1985), p. 312.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 283.

³⁵ Braudy, *The World in a Frame*, (University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1976), p. 164.

to challenge conventional structures of differentiation by deconstructing the formal codes from which such structures are built.

At the heart of this is a challenge to the stability of our orders of meaning, the totality of any worldview—and, in challenging this, these filmmakers insist that the form of denotation itself is both significant and in need of our critical attention. As Dudley Andrew writes concerning Resnais's *L'Année dernière à Marienbad* and the genre of modern cinema of which it is emblematic:

By taking our powers and aspirations for explanation, totality, and identification to the limit, such films bring out into the open the value, the labor, and the fragility of representation in the cinema.³⁶

Resnais and Godard achieve this, I will argue, by shifting the semiotic focus of their films onto the connotative level of film signification, and inviting the spectator to consider the immanent field itself as a dialogic source of signification. Their works resist the desire for denotative certainty, revealing the constructed basis of representation and—in the spirit shared by Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze—challenging the classical divisions between subject and object. I have selected Godard and Resnais as my examples and believe that this selection will prove itself justified, though I fully acknowledge that this is nonetheless a limited portrait of film practice. Yet, in constructing a system of comparative analysis within their respective oeuvres, and also between the two filmmakers, I hope to develop a method of formal and textual analysis that might help us to integrate different cinematic approaches into a common conceptualization of the form of film representation.

Similarly, the focus of this study necessitates the marginalization of certain critical methodologies including, most notably, spectator theory, as well as approaches

³⁶ *Concepts in Film Theory* (Oxford University Press: Oxford and others, 1984), p. 47.

such as auteur theory that have often been applied to these directors. While other theories have much to offer by way of elucidating certain problems of film representation, the suppositions on which they are built make them peripheral to the primary concerns enumerated here. I acknowledge that spectatorship is largely diverse and the spectator holds at all times a complex agency for relating to, identifying with, or rejecting the implications of any representation. I do not intend to prove that filmic meaning rests solely or even primarily with either the image or the viewer: it is my purpose, rather, to reveal how the structure of representation itself offers different modes and levels of interaction or entrance for the spectator's agency. Just as this study hopes to reconcile the differences between Bazin and Baudry, it necessitates the bracketing off of film representation—between the content and the spectator—in order hopefully to expand it once again.

After all, the goal of this thesis is to provide a framework for re-conceptualizing the problem of film representation, reconstructing the debate around it in a way that will be valuable to all schools of film theory. This systematized conceptualization of the immanent field of film representation, as a problem of the composition of subject-object relations, could subsequently be expanded, for example, to analyses of the relationship between national traditions in international co-productions, the filmic interaction of diverse sexual identities, or the literary genealogy of popular narration. In other words, the ultimate goal of this thesis is to provide a unique fundamental structure for addressing the formal organizations of a film text, a basic methodology that can be utilized in order to study other types of cinema (such as the contemporary horror film) or other problems

of cinematic representation (such as the representation of homosexual orientation in the films of Wong Kar-Wai) than are directly addressed here.

Also, I hope here to contribute an effort toward clarifying certain problems that permeate film theory today. While film studies has gradually been moving in the direction of a more historically-based discipline, I hold that any analysis of film texts or of the historical development of cinematic expression and the film industry, would benefit immeasurably from a sturdy foundation of theoretical argument. Moreover, while the focus on new media and trans-global cinema seems to have taken center-stage in the field of visual studies, such approaches inherently concern themselves with the problem of film representation, with the relationship between the structure of representation and the construction of subjectivity, and with the implicit attempt to clarify the many different modes of film connotation. These are problems that could perhaps best be grasped if we take a step back for a moment, and restore to film studies a basic attempt to understand film aesthetics according to more fundamental processes of organization, such as I hope in this thesis to perform by providing a phenomenological foundation for a theory of film signification.

The contemporary disillusionment with structural semiotics and the move away from psychoanalysis as a model for film interpretation seems to foreshadow the watershed from which two rivers will burst: the return to phenomenology as a metaphysical model for the aesthetics of sensation, and the broadening expansion of Deleuze's cinema-philosophy legacy. Being inspired and influenced both by the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty and by Deleuze's *Cinéma* project, I believe it worthwhile to attempt a reconciliation between their respective approaches, and in hopes

of encouraging similar enterprises devote this work to helping weave together certain concerns that they share.

As inheritors of a critical tradition, we must pose the following questions: how might we reconcile different and even oppositional theories that have, in many cases, constructed themselves according to this very opposition? More specifically here: what is the fundamental crux in the debate concerning film representation, and to what common referent do these arguments point as their object of inquiry?

Chapter One: Phenomenology and the Viewing Subject

Nous ne nous trouvons plus devant des images subjectives *ou* objectives; nous sommes pris dans une corrélation entre une image-perception et une conscience-caméra qui la transforme...

—Gilles Deleuze³⁷

When we are watching a film, it often seems as though we were looking through a window onto the world, or as if the camera itself were a set of eyes, looking at the world for us. The image shifts, the next shot comes up, and it is as if an idea was created, a train of thought, and yet it wasn't only in our heads. It was on the screen, in the film's process of unfolding, part of the representation before us. Is film representation a type of perception? Is it a type of consciousness? If it is: what is doing the perceiving, the thinking? Who is the "I" of this experience?

Deleuze's quote above exemplifies a tendency in film theory to describe cinema by referring to characteristics of human experience. Such descriptions use terms like Deleuze's "conscience-caméra" and "image-perception" to relate film representation to some aspect of what we consider to be internalized, subjective experience: *thought*, *consciousness*, *perception*. From the early theories of Jean Epstein and Sergei Eisenstein to the recent proliferation of post-Deleuzean notions of the *film-mind*, theories of cinema have been greatly slanted toward metaphors that compare cinema to human subjective processes.

³⁷ *Cinéma I: l'image-mouvement*, p. 108.

We face here what I would say is essentially a problem of terminology, in which such metaphorical models tell us less about cinema than about our own means of describing it. Yet, there clearly *are* similarities between film form and our own ways of experiencing the world. In this chapter, I will look at some preliminary problems concerning the human subject described through phenomenology, and the construction of the first degree of film subjectivity: the viewing subject.

Perhaps the most generic analogy as noted above is that which theorizes a type of camera-perception. As Dudley Andrew writes, many proponents of cinematic realism, such as André Bazin and Siegfried Kracauer, see “little essential difference between perception in the cinema and in the world at large.”³⁸ However, while the subsequent assemblage of its recordings can be presented as an act of perception, a machine does not provide an act of perception, but an act of recording. But the metaphor goes deeper, past our perceptual structure and to our very psychological makeup.

We may all be familiar with cross-references between cinema and human psychology, a connection made by early psychologists-turned-cineastes such as Hugo Münsterberg, whose “Psychology of the Photoplay” would be unknowingly elaborated on in Jean Mitry’s *Esthétique et psychologie du cinéma*. Such approaches usually refer to the *Gestalt* model of psychology, which is the model I mentioned in the Introduction as being the foundation of Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology of perception. The structuring process behind film representation can be compared to the human *Gestalt*: in the writings of Arnheim, Münsterberg, and Mitry, as well as for Merleau-Ponty we will find, there is a similarity between the organizational process of human perception and the manner in

³⁸ *Concepts in Film Theory*, p. 19. Andrew’s comment is supported by a lengthier analysis in Andrew, *The Major Film Theories*.

which the organization of film representation is inter-dependent on its specific formal elements.

Moreover, as Vivian Sobchack writes: “the film experience is a system of communication based on bodily perception as a vehicle of conscious experience.”³⁹ In other words, not only does film form simulate certain qualities of human psychology, but we also experience film *through the senses*, and as such it acts as a relay for phenomenon to our own human apparatus.

On a basic, illusionist plane, I will look here at how the film image offers a mode of representation through which its content can claim to be directly witnessed, or experienced, because its form of presentation mimics the sensory process through which we experience the material world. Christian Metz formulates this as follows: the film image constitutes a source for the spectator to inhabit through the identification with a pure act of perception.⁴⁰ Film representation offers us a position for viewing, from which vantage point the visible content seems less like a cultural text and more like a chunk of some ostensible reality.

At the same time, however, as *Gestaltists* such as Rudolf Arnheim point out, film form includes many effects, such as the projection of a two-dimensional image as three-dimensional, that draw attention to the “unreality of the film picture.”⁴¹ For Arnheim, cinematic realism is not a natural inclination of cinema, but an affectation. As such, as is a fundamental argument of this thesis, one should be wary of the notion of film representation as itself offering an empirical or natural mode of observation. This

³⁹ *The Address of the Eye* (Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1992), p. 9.

⁴⁰ *Le Signifiant imaginaire*, p. 69.

⁴¹ *Film As Art*, p. 15.

“natural” connection is itself a construction, based on certain formal foundations, the connotation of a *type of representation*.

This meets great resistance from realist approaches such as Bazin’s, which stipulate a natural ontological link between human observation, the camera-apparatus, and the inherent meaning of external phenomena. I will look in this chapter at the basis for such an understanding, and in the next chapter at the complications posed to such an approach by structuralist theory. While Dudley Andrew is apt to acknowledge that the idea of cinema being a system of signs seems to remove from it the capacity for “revelation,”⁴² this same medium can still dissolve the division between the viewing spectator and the viewed world.

I will thus argue for a phenomenological notion of cinema based not on the camera as perceptive vehicle, but on the flow of cinematic meaning as a dialogic openness between different subjective positions, an immanent field where the content of the image and the human manipulation behind its production meet, thus returning us to Deleuze’s quote at the head of this chapter. To strip this claim of its metaphors: film representation is neither objective nor subjective, but is a process of transformation that structures itself according to subjective or objective modes of representation. In other words, my concern here is not the outside, or the objective world that exists anterior to any subject’s experience of it; nor the interiorization of this reality, a subjective experience that renders all meaning relative; but, our cinematic representation of the collusion between these two. This is, we will find, where the problem of film representation lies.

⁴² *Concepts in Film Theory*, p. 58.

That is to say, film representation consists not only of the objects it represents, nor of a particular character's vision of this world, but also—and perhaps most fundamentally—of our use of these two conditions of differentiation as the basis for our representations. These two different modes—the objective mode differentiating between detached apparatus and world viewed, and the subjective mode differentiating between diegetic subject and diegetic world—construct two very different systems of reference, yet are both conventionally used to divide the subject from the content represented, and are thus similar in their implication in the production of a closed order of meaning. In other words, while these provide different systems of reference, they rely on the same basic singularity of a subject-function, the variant constructions of which I hope to look at in this thesis.

In other words, I am interested here in *how* film is able to capture the separation between subjective and objective poles of representation. Before getting ahead of ourselves, though, let us return to the bare bones, degree zero of film subjectivity: the viewing subject as it is correlated with an objective mode of representation.

I. Film's primary system of organization: the viewing subject and the frame

It is of course extremely difficult to claim one particular element of film expression as the *primary level* of filmic signification. However, I would agree with most arguments that the visual shot is the most basic unit of film expression (though we will soon find that this does not make it self-sufficient or impervious). The shot, as Raymond Bellour

writes, is “le premier lieu” or starting place for film expression begins, through which the image “entend...sa position de voyeur et d’organisateur du réel.”⁴³

In the terms we will be using, we can say as much because the individual shot offers the primary construction of film subjectivity. In other words, the shot is the primary unit of expression because the frame provides us with the first differentiated subjective position. We must pause here to ask: what is a subject? Subjectivity, we could say, is the unity of a source of representation, the origin of meaning. It is an enforced system of difference. The visible elements refer to the frame as a system of delimitation, and the frame refers to a viewing position as its origin. By enforcing the spatial system of difference in the visual image, the frame provides a system of reference for film representation, the subject of the gaze through which the visible is seen.

This *system of reference* signifies that the representation is the *correlation of a world view with a subjective viewing perspective*. This system’s formal praxis is the structure of the film image, the components of which—including composition, depth, movement—refer ultimately to the limitation of the image: the frame. I see no reason to claim, as theorists such as David Bordwell and Stephen Heath have, that the frame’s organizational process is fundamentally narrative; while it may often be situated in a narrative context, it is first and foremost an organization of spatial relations. However, regardless of whether or not it is used in a story, we could agree that the process of framing—like all rhetorical devices—serves to differentiate between a subject and a content or object of the image.

This structuring process is a motivated simulation—engendered by the medium’s forms of representation, I will argue—of the transcendental condition discussed in

⁴³ *L’analyse du film*, (Callman-Lévy: 1995), p. 48.

phenomenology. That is to say, it *is* a simulation of human experience. As such this permits us an opportunity to introduce aspects of the condition described by the phenomenology of perception so as to integrate such concepts into a semiotics of what I call film connotation. Merleau-Ponty's study includes the fundamental premise that an object's form and size are accidents of our relationship to it.⁴⁴ In cinema, these are not accidents, but are connotative structures with particular ramifications for the representation as a whole. Film representation is a process similar to that of human experience, but transposed onto the elements of film form, and intentional.

Yet, an understanding of the human act of perception could help to reflect on how an analogy of natural perception is derived through the internal structuring process of the film shot. According to Merleau-Ponty, depth-of-field, vertical and horizontal relativity, these are all arbitrary processes carried out to produce a *vis-à-vis* between a perceiving subject and the world of objects.⁴⁵ Spatial perception, we can gather, is a structural phenomenon that is understandable internally to perception only to the extent that it is anchored in a particular subjectivity, and the positing of this anchor via the organization of the objective world according to such spatial designations is what could be postulated as the universal condition of the subject.⁴⁶

This basic spatial positing of the subject is inherent to the film image. Cinematic space, as constructed during a shot and within the frame, implies the existence of a viewing subject that is the source of vision, placing the spectator in this position. As

⁴⁴ *Phénoménologie de la perception* (Éditions Gallimard: Paris, 1945), p. 345.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 309.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 321-5.

Colin MacCabe writes: “The world is centered for us by the camera and we are at the centre of a world always in focus.”⁴⁷

This “centre” is defined by the frame, which functions according to an analogical relationship with real perception, a claim that is further supported by the correspondence between the horizontal-vertical ratio of the cinematic image and that of human vision. The frame itself is more of a structure than a form of articulation. As the defining structure of what is included in or excluded from the filmic message, we could view the frame as the film image’s initial praxis for organization, a permanent system of reference that is part of any film representation. While it seems slightly monolithic, I agree with Mitry’s claim that all visual elements are fundamentally attached to the frame: “Toutes les significations plastiques en dépendent.”⁴⁸ Thus, the meaning that is produced by anything visible is fundamentally contained within the frame; the frame sets the dimensions for the film’s visual message.

Consequently, the frame defines the delimitation of what is transferred as information. Beyond this, however, the manner by which the visual content refers to the frame provides a point of origin or perspective for the representation. This is central to my study. Ronald Bogue, writing on Deleuze and yet conjuring our understanding of Merleau-Ponty, articulates this well: “Every frame implies an ‘angle of framing,’ a position in space from which the framed image is shot.”⁴⁹ This is a common claim, but important to articulate here. As an organizational mechanism, then, the fact that the frame delimits the representation creates a system of reference that, at the most basic level, refers to the frame itself as a relay for the parameters of the perceiving subject.

⁴⁷ *Godard: Sounds, Images, Politics* (The Macmillan Press Ltd: London, 1980), p. 45.

⁴⁸ *La sémiologie en question*, p. 103.

⁴⁹ *Deleuze on Cinema* (Routledge: New York, 2003), p. 43.

Other aspects of film optics whose place is within the frame can also be seen as analogous to operations performed by Merleau-Ponty's human viewing subject, and thus the elements that interact with the frame imply that the basic visual representation is a simulation of human vision. For example, the use of spatiality to mimic the human experience of casting attention to one particular area of vision, as in Münsterberg's understanding of the close-up.⁵⁰ In addition there is camera movement, which grants the frame a certain lifelike mobility.

Furthermore, there is the illusion of depth-of-field, which utilizes the convention of perspective in order to situate the viewer in a familiar position of relating to the world. This effect, which I will consider in more detail in my analysis of film objectivity in Chapter Five, is only part of the film image's inheritance from Renaissance artistic conventions, as Stephen Heath points out: including stability (easel), movement (*camera obscura*), and depth (perspective), these effects are meant to provide a "whole vision" that is delimited within the frame.⁵¹

But Heath uses these attributes, combined with the conventional purpose of framing in fiction cinema, in order to define the frame as "the conversion of seen into scene."⁵² However, the continuity of the content or narrative information exchanged is only the end—and not the predetermination—of the frame's codification of visual perception, and as such I would encourage this conversion to be considered a question of representation before it is integrated into a question of narration. The frame is not, as Heath claims, "narrated"; it is not a result of the content of representation, or the logic of

⁵⁰ *The Photoplay: a Psychological Study*, pp. 86-8.

⁵¹ Heath, *Questions of Cinema*, pp. 33-6.

⁵² *Questions of Cinema*, p. 37.

the story, but is part of the mould for that narration, a channel for that message regardless of whether it is narrative or another type of message.

In summary: as a spatial determinant for the organization of visible relations, the frame selects the fragment of possible reality being transmitted as information. For the visible space within the shot the frame is, as Mitry puts it, “*le référentiel absolu de toute représentation cinématographique.*”⁵³ Mitry, who comes from a phenomenological background, claims that the objects-turned-images are constructed with boundaries constituted by the frame and, as such, are linked to it *phenomenally*. These elements, we could say, are inherent to the image’s structure, and thus form an immanent field in the process of the representation itself. This implies a certain motivation or rhetorical nature of the form itself that is pre-narrative.

Because it serves as the center of gravity for what is in the image, the frame is responsible first and foremost for constructing the relationship between visible subjects and objects, thus determining the relational structure of difference within the visual diegesis. How is this person arranged next to that person? But, also: what is allowed in the frame and what is excluded? After all, the frame not only pulls things into a common space, but also divides them. The elements in a frame, as Deleuze points out, are both distinct parts and components of a single composition, which the frame both separates and unites.⁵⁴ In other words, the frame divides its content: it is essentially selective.

Secondly, though more subtly, the frame determines the relationship between the spectator and the visual objects, thus determining the spatial structure through which the spectator is given the visual content. This does not make such an organization essential

⁵³ *Esthétique et psychologie du cinéma* (Les Éditions du Cerf: Paris, 2001), p. 117.

⁵⁴ Ronald Bogue summarizes Deleuze’s assessment of this in *Deleuze on Cinema*, p. 43.

to the object itself, but it *is* essentially necessary, as delimitation is a necessary aspect of any process of organization. Merleau-Ponty describes this act perfectly with regards to natural vision: “Les limites du champ visuel sont un moment nécessaire de l’organisation du monde et non pas un contour objectif.”⁵⁵

This necessary moment, which must be seen as both motivated (in that it is selective) and arbitrary (in that this selection produces an artificial division that does not stem from the object itself) is, I believe, what is simulated in the film image. On both of these levels, the process of delimitation exercised by the frame must be accepted as a necessary moment, but we should resist the naturalization of it as an objective characteristic. This is of interest here because, through film connotation, such an arbitrary allotment is often given the impression of being naturally essential, objective. As Arnheim puts it: “a virtue is made of necessity.”⁵⁶

All elements of the shot—movement, depth-of-field, etc.—refer back to the frame as the center or source of this necessary act of organization, designations that assume a *vis-à-vis* of subject and world. This *vis-à-vis* is a relational system, an inherent rupture between viewing subject and visible object that implies a condition for the spectator of being part of a division between perceiving subject and perceived world. This implication, a rhetorical effect through which the arbitrary difference implied by perception is granted an essential value, is a problem of film connotation.

The connotative ramifications of this *vis-à-vis*, here analyzed with regards to the primary level of the shot, conventionally constitute what I will call the *myth of natural perception*. Through this phrase I hope to convey the notion that any shot signifies a

⁵⁵ *Phénoménologie de la perception*, p. 321.

⁵⁶ *Film As Art*, p. 39.

point-of-view according to which it is produced, and the myth by which this representation can be accepted as an act of perception is integrally linked to the notion of totality accorded to this view. As Colin MacCabe writes: “that which institutes the object as separate also institutes the subject as self-contained unity instead of divided process.”⁵⁷

And, I would say, *vice versa*.

The myth of cinematic perception functions according to the following convention: the screen acts as a window, and the visual content is what we see as we look out through that window. The shot can deliver to us a nonsensical or unfamiliar message, but it is always one that can be seen and therefore interpreted as an image *of* something. As Christian Metz argues, this principal effect allows the spectator to identify with himself as *the condition of possibility of the perceived*,⁵⁸ an argument common to the psychoanalytic approaches of Metz, Bellour, and Baudry.

While I remain suspicious of the psychoanalytic basis for such an argument, their notion of subject-formation can be reduced back to my notion of the immanent subject-function. The shot gathers all illusions necessary in order to convince the spectator that, while what you are seeing through your normal perceptive process may be something that you could not see outside the cinema, you are seeing it nonetheless through your normal perceptual process, therefore legitimizing the spectacle as possible reality, as what Barthes might call the *vraisemblable*.⁵⁹

In other words, to elaborate on an argument that we will find to be implicit even to realist theories of cinema, *any resemblance between the representation and external*

⁵⁷ Godard: *Sounds, Images, Politics*, p. 40.

⁵⁸ *Le significant imaginaire*, p. 69.

⁵⁹ For Barthes, the *vraisemblable* is “ce qui le public croit possible et qui peut être tout différent du réel historique ou du possible scientifique.” (*Critique et vérité*, in *Œuvres complètes Vol. II* [Éditions du Seuil: Paris, 2002], p. 762)

objective phenomena lies in the process of perceiving whatever is denoted, an organization of relations that is akin to perception, and not in the content perceived. As Baudry puts it: “the spectator identifies less with what is represented, the spectacle itself, than with what stages the spectacle, makes it seen, obliging him to see what it sees: this is exactly the function taken over by the camera as a sort of relay.”⁶⁰

The notion of the camera as relay, we will find, is a fundamental assumption from which one might mistakenly suppose that cinema is a tool of pure denotation. This assumption, which is the condition for Baudry’s identification with the subject of visual perception, is based on the construction of a subject that, according to the principles of phenomenology, is itself a myth.

This myth is impossible to avoid in the individual visual shot, though: the unidirectional nature of the camera guarantees just such a relational structure. But this thesis is concerned with the cinema: no image stands alone, it takes 24 of them to complete a second of screen time, and each image is surrounded by other images, each shot surrounded by other shots and combined to form sequences. The subject-function that I discussed as being constructed via the frame and the visible world endures only as long as the individual shot continues. Each shot inevitably refers to its own unique viewing position; as Bellour writes, “le film est un enchaînement des visées successives.”⁶¹

⁶⁰ “Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematic Apparatus,” originally “Cinéma: les effets idéologiques produit par l’appareil de base” (1970), reprinted in English in *Film Theory and Criticism*, pp. 343-54 (p. 345).

⁶¹ *L’analyse du film*, p. 45.

What changes with a juxtaposition of different shots? Positions taken in response to this question can be viewed as threefold, systematized according to the fundamental epistemological and representational beliefs on which they are founded.

First, there is the notion that cinema has an ontological ability and responsibility to reveal and to capture meanings on the surface of external phenomena, a notion developed by realists such as André Bazin. Bazin suggests that film signification ought to be grounded in the meaning produced by the objects it is recording. The mode of representation should be governed then by its preservation of spatio-temporal unity, “le simple respect photographique de l’unité d’espace.”⁶² The uninterrupted shot is therefore considered to reveal a meaning that is immanent in some pre-signified state, implying film representation to be an objective window on the world.

Conversely, there is the notion that meaning is produced by a juxtaposition of representations that gradually constructs a mental whole, or “image” in the Eisensteinian model.⁶³ Cinema’s specificity would lie, therefore, in its ability to mimic the process of association through which the mind reaches a dialectical understanding of the world. As such, it is aesthetically determined by its ability to organize singular ideas within syntactic relationships, its “imagist transformation of the dialectical principle”: montage.⁶⁴ The sequence should mimic the act of consciousness, guiding the spectator’s reaction, suggesting that film representation is a subjective process that must produce meaning beyond the content of its individual shots.

⁶² André Bazin, *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma*, p. 55.

⁶³ Sergei Eisenstein, *The Film Sense*, trans. and ed. Jay Leyda (Faber and Faber Limited: London, 1943), p. 26.

⁶⁴ *Film Form*, ed. and trans. Jay Leyda (Harcourt: New York, 1949), p. 38.

Lastly, there is what I will call the *phenomenological* notion: that meaning lies in the interaction between the object of representation and the source of that representation. This is my theory of the immanent field. I say “phenomenological” because, in this case, meaning lies neither solely in physical objects, nor solely in the subjective apprehensions of these objects, but in the interactive flux that binds the former to the latter, what Merleau-Ponty sought as “the synthesis of the subjective and objective experience of phenomena.”⁶⁵

This goes beyond the ocular-centric understanding that many have of phenomenology, as something only relating to visual perception and, therefore, to *looking*. We will see how such unilateral understandings are classically or conventionally manifested through the connotative structure of film representations, and how this is infused through a certain type of film subjectivity. Merleau-Ponty, on the contrary, focuses on an attempt to overthrow such classical understandings of unilateral visual perception.

As Martin Jay puts it, phenomenology aims to shed the Cartesian assumptions of a “spectatorial and intellectualist epistemology based on a subjective self reflecting on an objective world exterior to it.”⁶⁶ In other words, and particularly in the works of Merleau-Ponty, phenomenology implies an attempt to understand representation and experience as a destruction of the hierarchy, dualism, and even the difference between subject and object. In his rejection of the transcendental subject, Merleau-Ponty dreamt

⁶⁵ Richard L. Lanigan, *Speaking and Semiology: Maurice Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenological Theory of Existential Communication* (Mouton Press: The Hague, 1972), p. 30.

⁶⁶ Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (University of California Press: Berkeley, 1994), p.263.

of “regaining the experience of the intertwining of subject and object, which was lost in all dualistic philosophies.”⁶⁷

According to such an approach, cinema’s specificity would lie in its ability to dispel such a duality on numerous levels: within the shot itself, in the interaction between shot and sequence, and, in its ability to change between objective to subjective poles of representation. This is the understanding of dialogic film representation I will outline in this thesis.

Cinema can help to remind us that looking is itself an interaction with the world. Moreover, it can shift perspectives in order to alter our very notion of subjectivity. And, in doing so, it can open itself as a praxis for the discursive interaction between characters, spectators, and the apparatus itself. Such a cinema would, we will find with Godard and Resnais, challenge the division, or “clivage” as Merleau-Ponty puts it, between subject and object that is the basis for classical representation. By being able to show how we show, to bring to light how we signify and what our conventional forms connote, film representation offers the potential to achieve the fundamental goal of phenomenology: “contester le principe même de ce clivage, et faire entrer dans la définition du réel le contact entre l’observateur et l’observé.”⁶⁸

II. Montage and the individual shot: the Eisenstein-Bazin debate

This contact between viewer and viewed is a central topic of debate in film theory in general, and it has helped to shape many theorists’ basic understanding of film subjectivity. The frame separates the viewing subject from the viewed world: what does

⁶⁷ Jay, *ibid.*, p.168.

⁶⁸ *Le visible et l’invisible* (Éditions Gallimard: Paris, 1964), p. 33.

this mean in terms of entire projects of cinematic expression and film criticism? As is proposed in the Introduction, this study aims at reconciling opposed approaches to film representation; before introducing semiotic approaches in the next chapter, let us look here at the earlier contrasting theories of Sergei Eisenstein and André Bazin.

These stances are founded on opposed views of how cinema's transformation should mediate between world and spectator, and they offer especially good examples of how such concerns are articulated in terms of film form, in particular the difference between shot and sequence. I believe that a detailed comparison of these theorists will help us to build a general framework that will run throughout this thesis, as their differences reveal a fundamental rift between subjective and objective models of film representation, models that these theorists articulate according to a clear designation of how film's formal base *can* and *should* operate.

Brian Henderson offers us a useful platform for entering into this debate: "The real," he writes, "is the starting point for both Eisenstein and Bazin."⁶⁹ However, as Henderson continues, neither theorist provides a doctrine or definition of the real. Instead, their approaches are based on "cinema's relation to the real," a relation that is embedded for each in the formal interaction between shot and sequence.

Polarized representatives of the duality between shot and montage, Eisenstein's and Bazin's respective theories are constructed around particular beliefs in film representation as the capacity for extending human subjectivity, be it as consciousness (Eisenstein) or perception (Bazin). Breaking down these analogies between formal cinematic practices and human processes of relating to the sensory world, I hope to provide a bridge between Eisenstein's and Bazin's viewpoints, weaning from the

⁶⁹ "Two Types of Film Theory," *Film Quarterly*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (Spring 1971), pp. 33-42 (p. 34).

ideological trappings of each what are very useful insights concerning film representation.

Both theorists extol cinema as an art, but toward different purposes. Eisenstein considers cinema an art only in as much as it manifests conflict as its generative origin of meaning.⁷⁰ Conflict, cinematically realized through montage, creates juxtapositions that transcend the mere fragments of reality that one calls a shot, as if providing a more profound meaning than is offered by the content of representation itself—as if representing a thought, or feeling. Bazin, on the other hand, views such an approach as a stylized manipulation of reality that should be avoided, as it distorts the world's original meaningfulness.

According to Bazin's ontology of the photographic image, cinema is the apotheosis of art's attempt to preserve nature, to provide a replication as defense against our own mortality.⁷¹ He thus focuses his aesthetics on a critique of montage as a manipulation of the ambiguity inherent in the photographic image's reproductive capabilities. The photographic image, on the other hand, is capable of preserving the complex meaning on the surface of external phenomena.

Henderson is perhaps incorrect or at least exaggerating when he criticizes Eisenstein as negligent of the aesthetics of the individual shot and Bazin for having “no

⁷⁰ *Film Form*, p. 38. In many essays that make up the beginning of this book (such as “Through Theater to the Cinema,” “The Unexpected,” and “The Cinematic Principle of the Ideogram”), Eisenstein justifies the centrality of montage through a contrived comparison of film with other arts, based on the notion of conflict. For example, he claims “conflict” to be the essence of all arts, noting the similarities between film and music (however, that three notes, played together in a chord, use the same aesthetic principle as three images set side-by-side, is a comparison that negates the obvious difference between the paradigmatic nature of the chord and the syntagmatic structure of montage) and the poetic form of the haiku (a comparison that ignores the fact that a haiku is a meta-language that works upon a primary linguistic process for which there is no equivalent in cinema).

⁷¹ *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?*, p. 9.

sense...of the overall formal organization of films.”⁷² After all, Eisenstein wrote quite extensive analyses of the composition of individual shots, and Bazin’s greatest talent perhaps lay in his ability to categorize film texts according to their general aesthetic structures. However, Henderson is correct to indicate the dichotomy between shot and montage as being central to what divides the two theorists, a division that is directly connected to their respective views of the ontology of film representation and its correlation to different processes of human experience.

Like many of his Soviet contemporaries, Eisenstein believes that cinema is not meant to portray the world but to exceed it, to transform it: montage is, in his terms, the “means for the really important creative remolding of nature.”⁷³ It is only through juxtaposing individual representations of nature that one can create an “image,” a product (totality of juxtaposition) that qualitatively changes its factors (the individual representations that were juxtaposed).⁷⁴

Eisenstein adapts this central notion of juxtaposition to numerous elemental relations in film form, though it is particularly charged in his theory of montage between shots. The content of the frame is only a building block, the shot itself but a part of a greater whole. What is in the frame is only a stimulus to be combined with other stimuli, and as such the subject posited by the frame itself is subjugated to a transcendental associative subject that builds larger meanings from the juxtaposition of shots. For Eisenstein, the immanent field takes shape on the level of sequential construction.

⁷² “Two Types of Film Theory,” p. 36 and p. 39.

⁷³ *Film Form*, p.16.

⁷⁴ It is important to stress here, as does Mitry, that Eisenstein’s notion of montage is a transformative “product,” similar to that of Vertov, as opposed to Pudovkin’s additive understanding of montage as a “sum”. (See Mitry. *Ésthetique et psychologie du cinéma*, p. 194).

As was mentioned above, the overall effect of this interaction between elements is what Eisenstein considers a “transition from quantity to quality,”⁷⁵ as if two shots placed together suddenly renders each one to be something other than a shot. Each shot affects the meaning of the other, and the consequent alteration of meaning further changes this relationship, thus re-transforming each individual meaning once again. The final whole, or “image,” whose overall meaning is not a picture but a dialectical process, the creation of juxtaposition, is considered by Eisenstein to be analogous to human consciousness:

In the actual method of creating images, a work of art must reproduce the process whereby, in life itself, new images are built up in the human consciousness.... To create an image, a work of art must rely on a precisely analogous method, the construction of a chain of representations.⁷⁶

The construction of this chain is what is known popularly as *montage*, and it provides the spectator with a constructed illusion of the dialectical process through which one gathers perceptions over time and makes sense of them in a composite view of the world. When Eisenstein refers to an “analogous method,” he does not mean the analogue reproduction of material objects, but a structural similarity between the organizing process of film representation and that of human consciousness. Though looking at the interaction between shots as forming a larger immanent field of representation, I consider this both as the construction of an overall system of reference but also as the interaction between multiple subjective positions.

For the sake of propaganda, Eisenstein avoids this interaction. Working in an overtly ideological context, Eisenstein wants to control what resultant judgment the spectator will arrive at. This manipulation consists of rhetorical practices generated

⁷⁵ *Nonindifferent Nature*, trans. Herbert Marshall (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1987), p. 35.

⁷⁶ *The Film Sense*, pp. 24-5.

through the relationship between mise-en-scène and montage. A classic example with which the reader may be familiar is from Eisenstein's film, *Strike* (1925), in which he cuts from the image of a police officer to the image of a butcher hacking at a slab of meat, thus guiding the spectator to an understanding of the police as butchers, hired hooligans of the state that treat citizens like carcasses.

While Eisenstein clarifies for us the expressive potential of montage, I believe this to be a theory of how to use the image to achieve certain results, a notion of film representation embedded in a specific polemical strategy and not to in determinants of form itself. On a broader contextual level, Eisenstein's theories are ideologically attributable to a particular moment in history—the birth of Communism and the promise of industrial utopia embraced by artistic movements such as Futurism—that, in the wake of World War II, generated a lot of skepticism due to the results of such rhetoric in the arena of global destruction. Illustrating a dialectical shift in the history of thought, film theorists after the war abandoned a certain idealism of what film expression could do to surpass the meaning inherent in nature, and returned to an argument that cinema was ideally suited to offer a non-biased depiction of reality. Writing mainly in the 1950s, André Bazin condemns the very style of manipulating reality that is central to Eisenstein's model, shifting his focus onto the camera's ability to reveal the meaning held in the source reality.

In his seminal essay "Ontologie de l'image photographique," Bazin traces the genealogy of art as the evolution of a primordial attempt to preserve humanity through its being reproduced in the form of the image: "sauver l'être par l'apparence."⁷⁷ However, for Bazin this evolution was diverted by painting, which added an aesthetic aspect to this

⁷⁷ "Ontologie de l'image photographique," *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma*, p. 9-17 (p. 9).

psychological desire for reproduction. This drift toward expressive manipulation is for Bazin the great sin of Western artistic tradition, one that photography and, subsequently, cinema, rectify through the essential objectivism innate to the camera's mechanical process.⁷⁸

In conclusion, Bazin claims that this "solution" lies not in the result but in the genesis of this reproduction, from which—in the case of the mechanical camera—man is excluded. For Bazin this gives cinema a particular ontological tendency toward aesthetic realism. Bazin is arguing for film representation as a transfer of the immanent field of reality itself. His writings extol cinema's potential to relinquish signification to its viewed source, to capture the meaning that emanates through the surface appearance of material reality, an argument we will find again with Metz and Pasolini. But this leads to the inevitable question: of what does *representing reality* consist? I will argue that, for Bazin and others, this concept is grounded not in the content but in the form of representation.

Summarizing Bazin's argument for realism, Peter Wollen writes: "Bazin's aesthetics asserted the primacy of the object over the image, the primacy of the natural world over the world of signs."⁷⁹ Bazin argues for a mode of cinema that embraces its ability as a reproductive tool, implying of course that the direct representation of material phenomena is a problem of form. Therefore, despite a general neglect for this facet of Bazin's argument, one could say that he is in fact very much concerned with film signification. Indeed, Bazin is not as naïve as he is often accused of being: after

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁷⁹ *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema* [BFI: London, 1974], p. 87.

discussing cinema's inheritance of photographic objectivity, he ends his "Ontologie..." with the observation: "D'autre part le cinéma est un langage."⁸⁰

As we will constantly be reminded throughout this thesis, the impression of objectivity—like *any* connotative system meant to imply that the image is a *type of representation*—is never detached from the forms through which it is represented. Bazin takes a particular side in his view of what cinema *should* be, an argument that takes the form of a division between the semiotic ambiguity permitted by the shot and the semiotic certainty provided through montage, though Bazin does not himself explicitly refer to it in terms of semiotics. Bazin's most fervent formal argument is *against* the use of montage, claiming that it is an artificial dissection of the continuity of natural space-time and thus violates the precious ambiguity of reality.⁸¹ Whereas this thesis is concerned with ambiguity as being internal to the representation itself, ambiguity for Bazin is a criterion of realism, a property of the objective world when captured in a certain way.

For Bazin the shot preserves the ambiguity of the world as it appears in natural perception, while editing tries to enforce one particular meaning upon a situation. Whereas "la nature abstraite du montage n'est pas absolue, du moins psychologiquement," Bazin views a certain absolute psychological function in the shot.⁸² Bazin holds the subjective position posited by the frame as something sacred, because it allows for the ambiguity of what may pass in front of it. It places us in front of the real whereas montage only alludes to the real.⁸³

⁸⁰ *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma*, p. 17.

⁸¹ This argument is best laid out in "Montage interdit" (*Qu'est-ce que le cinéma*, pp. 48-61) and "L'évolution du langage cinématographique" (*Qu'est-ce que le cinéma*, pp. 63-80), but can also be found to be extrapolated in his reviews of individual films and filmmakers, such as Renoir and Welles.

⁸² *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma*, p. 54.

⁸³ This differentiation between the shot and montage provides the framework for "L'évolution du langage cinématographique".

We can make an important deduction from this evaluation of art and the camera: what is essential to Bazin's argument is not the real object itself but the phenomenological connotations of the mode of representation. Orson Welles's greatness, for example, lies not in his preservation of particular objects' essences, but in his restoration of spatiotemporal continuity to the cinematic image, thus permitting the spectator a certain ambiguity of perception before an unmediated visual depth.⁸⁴ For Bazin, cinematic objectivism, best achieved through Italian Neo-Realism, is ultimately a matter of style (the negation of style is indeed a question of style).

Dudley Andrew frames this paradox for us as such: arguing for a style that reduces signification to a minimum, Bazin sees the reduction of style as a potential stylistic option."⁸⁵ This conflict is apparent in Bazin's constant attempt to uphold the phenomenological traits of Neo-Realism: he claims that its mode of representation knows only immanence, yet he also finds it necessary to explain its individual aesthetic traits in terms of a certain psychological characteristic of the diegetic subject (such as with the drab vision of bourgeois mediocrity in Rossellini's *Voyage to Italy* [1954]).⁸⁶

In other words, this stylistic reduction is still laden with signification, and we could extend this analysis to view representation as an immanent field wherein the characters' and the apparatus's subjectivities interact. Despite many criticisms to the contrary, Bazin's view of Neo-Realism is admittedly a connotative argument. Neo-Realism, he argues, is a humanism ("un humanisme") before it is a style of mise-en-scène, a worldview before it is an artistic school.⁸⁷ As such, his body of theory

⁸⁴ *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma*, pp. 72-76.

⁸⁵ Dudley Andrew, *The Major Film Theories*, p. 143.

⁸⁶ "Défense de Rossellini," *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma*, pp. 347-57.

⁸⁷ *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma*, p. 70.

demonstrates how form itself, and specific formal practices, can provide the framework for a metaphysical understanding of film representation.

We could thus posit the split between Bazin's and Eisenstein's views of cinema as a connotative disagreement over which direction the immanent field should be directed, as if they were approaching the image from opposite sides of the phenomenological spectrum. Whereas Eisenstein champions the subjective result of perception (the mental digestion of the seen), Bazin hopes to salvage the objectivism at the material origin of perception (what is being looked at). Helping divulge the heart of this opposition, Félicie Pastorello writes: "Montage is an act (and not a look), an act of interpreting reality."⁸⁸

This forces us to consider a complication to any study of film representation: is the shot any more or less signifying than montage? Is it more or less honest, direct? How can this be gauged? I would argue that both signify to the extent that they each imply the representation involved to be a certain way of representing the world, a certain type of representation that provides a certain subjective positioning. Each uses the frame to signify a subjective position; they just treat the subject of the frame differently.

This differentiation between *observing* reality and *interpreting* reality is central to the debate concerning film representation, for they embody the two most common structures by which film differentiates between the representation and the source of this representation: the image as act of perception (referring to a mechanical viewing subject) and the image as subjective experience of the viewed world (referring to a human subject). As each of these are constructs of formal organization, we must understand that

⁸⁸ "La catégorie de montage chez Arvatov, Tretiakov, Brecht," *Collage et montage au théâtre et dans les autres arts durant les années vingt*, ed. D. Bablet (Lausanne: L'âge d'homme, 1978), p. 125. Cited in Bordwell, *ibid.*, p. 238.

neither of these is more or less signifying than the other, more or less involved in a process of transformation.

As Henderson notes, Bazin stops with the real, while Eisenstein goes beyond it.⁸⁹ Bazin's notion of cinema is a myth of the autonomy of the objective world, whereas Eisenstein's is a myth of the transcendence of subjective interpretation. Both of these, however, are myths in as much as they are conventionalized through formal arrangements to appear as essential aspects of film representation. They are also myths in their implied exclusion of one another, their attempt to naturalize themselves by being constructed according to a unilateral system of reference. In other words, they each imply a process of denotation without a formal base; they each hide their connotative foundation.

These myths can be reconciled, indeed must be, as most films are a combination of these two, fluctuations between subjective and objective images. As Brian Henderson reveals in his comparison of Bazin and Eisenstein, their respective theories could be greatly enriched by the analysis of the relationship between shot, sequence, and entire film. I hope to contribute exactly this through a comparative analysis of two films by Jean-Luc Godard, in the process of which I hope to reveal a certain dialogic complexity of the immanent field of film representation.

III. Jean-Luc Godard and the viewing subject

We can now begin to discern a certain polarity to film representation, illustrated both through a theoretical construct (the frame as basis for dividing the viewing subject from

⁸⁹ "Two Types of Film Theory," p. 390.

viewed world) and through the opposition of two critical standpoints. In order to make sense of this, though, we should now turn our attention toward actual films. By comparing two of Godard's texts, we will see how a shot's system of reference can either be reinforced or contradicted through its place in a sequence, and what the connotative ramifications of this are. Godard proves especially useful here because, as Mitry notes, his modality of expression falls on the level of the sequence, through which he manages (though not always, we will find) to destroy closed structures of meaning.⁹⁰

In many ways, we could say that during this period Godard focuses on the sequential role of the image, firstly as a replication of natural perception and, later, as a revelation of the illusionary basis of this replication. As such, it should come as no surprise that much criticism of Godard's work revolves around impressions of ethnographic representation, often resorting to the analogy of perception. For example, the critic Marie-Claire Ropars-Wuilleumier writes that Godard's films show "what existence offers to perception in an instant."⁹¹

However poetic this description may be, and however much Godard himself may often attest (in interviews and, we will find, through his use of film form) to such a goal, this is the very type of criticism I am hoping to avoid here, as it conflates film representation and the natural condition on which this representation is modeled. Godard certainly reveals a concern for the relationship between cinema and immediate experience. He explicitly makes reference on numerous occasions to Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, and his oeuvre poses many questions concerning perception and film

⁹⁰ *Ésthetique et psychologie du cinéma.*, p. 486.

⁹¹ "Form and Substance, or the Avatars of the Narrative," *Focus on Godard*, ed. Brown, p. 95. Cited in Bordwell, *Narration in Fiction Film*, p. 321.

representation. Yet, as we will find, an analysis of Godard's films dispels the very myth of cinematic perception.

The reflexive mode of representation developed in Godard's films finds an ebb and flow in *Vivre sa vie* (1962) and *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle* (1966), each of which struggles—with varying degrees of success—with the notion of dialogism: dialogism, that is, as 1) a mode of existence shown to define the relationship between characters and the diegetic world, and as 2) a structure of representation between the cinematic apparatus and the content that it transforms. I will posit this dialogism as a function of the immanent field that binds different voices and discourses within the representation.

These two films have much in common, primarily on their level of content. Each film is about daily life in Paris or its suburbs, a city increasingly indifferent to its human inhabitants and marked by signs of consumer capitalism. More specifically, each film regards a woman's transformation from store clerk to prostitute, the quotidian struggle of an individual that is marginalized in patriarchal society. Not only are these films about prostitution "as a metaphor for the study of a woman,"⁹² as Siew Hwa Beh comments, or as a symbol of *woman* as many others have remarked; they are in Godard's words films about prostitution as a metaphor for life in contemporary society, where "on est forcé de vivre...selon des lois qui rappellent celles de la prostitution."⁹³

In fact, as we will find, prostitution becomes a sort of overarching metaphor in Godard's work, both on the surface and in the depths of films such as *Vivre sa vie*, *Le Mépris* (1963), *Une femme mariée* (1965), and *Deux ou trois choses....* As Wheeler

⁹² Siew Hwa Beh, "Vivre Sa Vie," reprinted in *Movies and Methods*, pp. 180-5 (p. 180).

⁹³ Jean-Luc Godard, "On doit tout mettre dans un film," *Godard par Godard I*, pp. 296-96 (p. 296).

Winston Dixon notes, “prostitution, no matter what form it takes, is an obsession for Godard.”⁹⁴ During this period of Godard’s work, prostitution serves as a load-bearing issue that implicates mainstream cinematic conventions in a critique of capitalist values and especially the place of women therein, while also reflecting on a more existential problem of the individual being both subject and object, having agency and being used.

However, this problem of a thing’s simultaneously being subject and object is not posed only on narrative level; Godard in fact erects it as a fundamental formal problem of the image itself and of cinema as an institution. It is this form of representation that I am concerned with here, and a comparison of films with similar stories should be a fruitful way to forefront the analysis of formal differences. We will see here how two films can construct very different systems of meaning out of generally similar story points: woman, prostitution, the city, the cinema. Like all films, each of these has its own unique aesthetic structure, its own balance between part and whole and, to extend the central problems of this chapter, its own treatment of the subject of the frame.

Godard claims that *Vivre sa vie* was made with nearly no editing, more or less put together in the order that the rushes were returned.⁹⁵ This claim is supported by the film’s reliance on framing and camera movement to guard subjectivity at all times in the eye of the camera. Throughout the film, framing and camera movements provide the spatial alienation of diegetic subjects from each other, also denying the implication that any character is motivating the movements and shifts of the apparatus.

Deux ou trois choses... reverses this system, using montage to contradict the camera’s subject-function and to represent the characters as objects that are also free as

⁹⁴ *The Films of Jean-Luc Godard*, p. 30.

⁹⁵ Jean-Luc Godard, “Entretien” (1962), reprinted in *Godard par Godard I*, (Cahiers du Cinéma: Paris 1998), pp. 227-8.

independent subjects. This destruction of the hierarchy between subject and object is accentuated by the use of off-screen voices and direct address to the camera, each of which challenge the autonomy of the subject posited by the frame. Moreover, material objects—from small to large, faucet to building—are composed in the frame as if to manifest some sort of subjective agency. We find the connections between subjects and objects (and other subjects) to rest in the contextual bonds implied by the relationship between frame, shot, and sequence, an immanent field in which the difference between subject and object is constantly in flux.

III.a. *Vivre sa vie* and the classical viewing subject: empiricism and alienation

One of Godard's first feature films, *Vivre sa vie* was an integral stepping-stone in the evolution of European art cinema in the 1960s. Challenging traditional modes of film expression while also maintaining a certain classical aesthetic, it serves with *Une Femme est une femme* (1961) and *Le Mépris* as Godard's eulogy for classical cinema.

As is the case for most of Godard's films, the actual narrative substance is, in a conventional sense, quite sparse: this is the story of Nana (Anna Karina), a young woman in Paris who works in a record store and then becomes a prostitute.

Much in the vein of his work in general, *Vivre sa vie* has been predominantly viewed as a film that "subverts conservative conventions and experiments with possibilities."⁹⁶ Reviews of this film, almost unanimously laudatory, typically focus on this film's inherent claim as a sort of formal liberation, and how this complements the ethnographic approach to the story: "In order to deal with the complexity of the subject

⁹⁶ Beh, "Vivre Sa Vie," p. 185.

matter, the film's structure and Godard's style are an integral part of our understanding of Nana and prostitution."⁹⁷

Beh is primarily talking about the film's narrative structure here, which is based on a transposition of literary forms (predominantly journalistic and the novelistic) onto fiction film, such as in the use of chapter headings. However, we will find that the style itself does not as much help us to understand the character nor the topic of prostitution as it does convince us of its own neutrality as a form of representation. I will argue that *Vivre sa vie* maintains a certain classicism in general, despite its progressive politics and innovative style. Few people familiar with this work would disagree with the opinion that it is a film of great aesthetic beauty, touchingly humane tenderness, and stylistic innovation. I agree wholeheartedly. This being said, it is necessary in this study to debate certain romanticized readings of the text, and to question certain contradictions inherent in its modes of representation.

A principled defiance of illusionist cinema that is ironically rife with homage, *Vivre sa vie* employs Brechtian devices while retaining a visual structure that is faithful to an absolute camera-subject, an epistemological approach that places the origin of all meaning in the camera's gaze. The film is not, as Jean-Pierre Esquenazi claims (vocalizing a wealth of similar criticism), the vision of a camera "douée d'une conscience autonome,"⁹⁸ but is instead a network of representations meant to isolate the camera as the sole source of meaning, a camera that is, as Kaja Silverman points out, more motivated than Godard lets on.⁹⁹ In other words: it is a romanticized metaphor to claim

⁹⁷ Beh, *Ibid.*, p. 181.

⁹⁸ *Godard et la société française des années 1960* (Armand Colin: Paris, 2004), p. 131.

⁹⁹ *Speaking of Godard* (New York University Press: New York, 1998), p. 7.

that the camera itself has a conscience, though the image *is* constructed to give the impression of its *being a type of representation* that possesses this faculty.

The introductory sequence of this film provides us with a key to this connotative platform. The opening credits are interspersed with three shots of Nana: left profile, frontal, and right profile. Many have argued that this is phenomenological in structure, revealing the object from many sides. Belying his roots in phenomenology, Edgar Morin points out that the succession of multiple shots concerning the same object of interest allows cinema to set in place a process of complementary perception “qui va du fragmentaire à la totalité, de la multiplicité à l’unicité de l’objet.”¹⁰⁰ But is this practice, in the film, natural, or naturalized? I would argue the latter.

This sequence could be seen to simulate an epistemological process based on the following progression: the content in the frame is the object of enquiry; the understanding of this object occurs through perception; perception occurs through the frame. Should the angle of viewing this content change, but the frame’s relationship to the object remains the same, it is as if there was one stable viewing subject, as if the same subject completed a circle around the object. In this series of shots, we can see an attempt to construct a totality from multiple perspectives; though cutting between different positions, each shot is framed the same, refers to the same transcendental viewing subject.

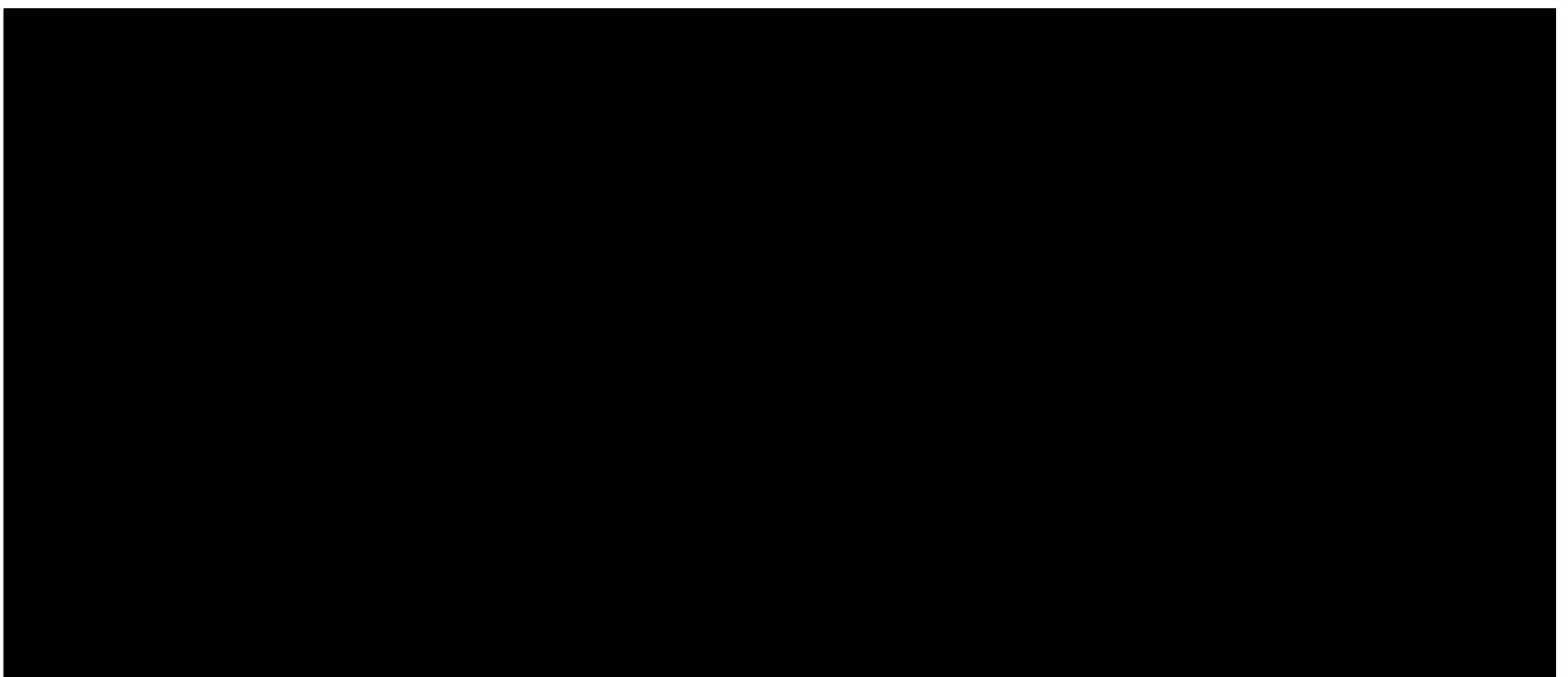
The abundance of close-ups of Nana in the film in general has led many to view the film as a “documentary of a face,”¹⁰¹ implying a truth-claim or documentary authenticity attached to the formal structure. While the camera may for the most part

¹⁰⁰ *Cinéma ou l’homme imaginaire* (Les Éditions de Minuit: Paris, 1956), pp. 126-7. This method of perception as a set of different perspectives seems intimately linked, though without acknowledgment, to a passage in which Merleau-Ponty discusses the object as being an object of viewing not from nowhere but from anywhere, from “toutes les perspectives possibles.” (See *Phénoménologie de la perception*, pp. 83-5)

¹⁰¹ Harun Farucki, *Speaking of Godard*, p. 2.

resist being motivated by narrative factors, it is quite systematically motivated to connote its resultant image as being a certain type of representation. But what of its object? What of the content of this documentary, this human condition that the style is meant to be helping us to get to know?

In this opening sequence, the character is captured in a manner that differentiates her as an object, an Other being enclosed or encircled by a perceiving subject-function (1). The humanistic or ethnographic element of documentation is here a contradiction of method: the form acts as a sympathizing external representation of her psychological state while disposing of her independent subjectivity. Foreshadowing for us how this contradiction will be realized at the end of the film, the circle performed by the camera ends by slipping out of its own enclosed signification: the last shot is of Nana's back, in a café, thus beginning the first scene of the narrative text (2).



The entire first scene cuts between two people seen from behind, never allowing them in the same frame at the same time, binding them only by their separation and by the space reflected in the mirror in front of them. This denial of faces is also in a way the

denial of the identity of its perceived objects. Beh claims that this framing “immediately alienates us” as spectators.¹⁰² However, the frame’s relation to the image actually gives us a privileged position, slightly hidden and voyeuristic, alienating only the characters from each other and even from themselves (that is, alienating their voices from the image of their mouths). The system of reference, one could say, is protected, affirmed, rooted.

As we can see already, *Vivre sa vie* thrives on a connotative limitation of the immanent field, an alienation of its characters both from the camera-subject and from each other, a dual effect of the frame constantly reaffirmed by what I will call the *enclosed shift*. In the enclosed shift the camera moves slightly from side to side, often having the effect of isolating a character in the frame while that character is meant to be interacting with another character.

Every occurrence of this effect takes place during a conversation (3 & 4), notable in a film that V.F. Perkins summarizes as “a string of suggestions as to how one *might* film a conversation.” David Bordwell cites this quote in leading to his own view that “*Vivre sa vie*’s stylistic devices achieve a structural prominence that is more than simply ornamental.” Yet, in keeping with the goal of his project, Bordwell refuses to assign to them “thematic meanings”.¹⁰³ But I would argue that we should assign to these devices the very thematic meanings that Bordwell rejects, as the constant use of this visual pattern has identifiable connotative significance, expressed through the film’s structure of relations between the camera and the people it films.

¹⁰² “*Vivre sa vie*,” p. 182.

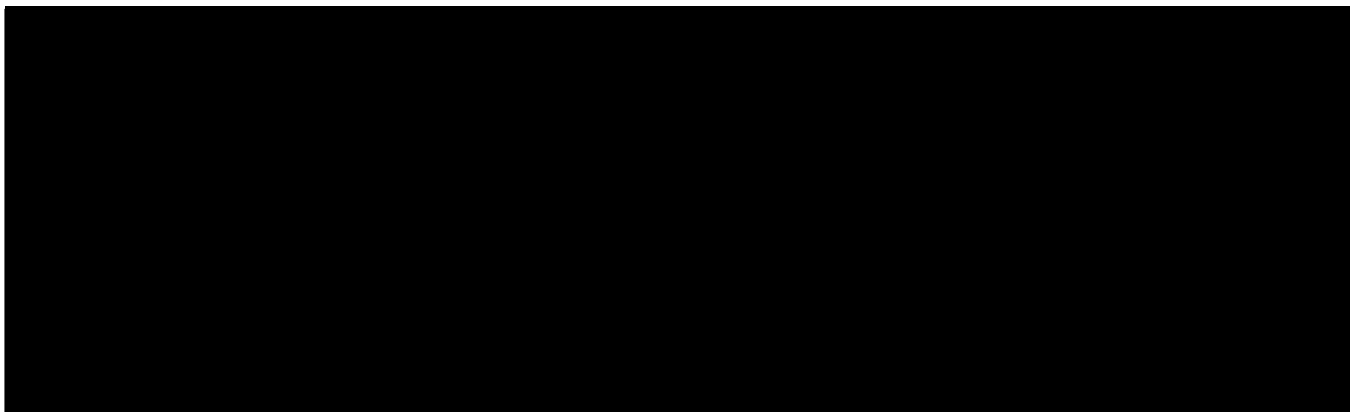
¹⁰³ “*Vivre sa vie*,” *The Films of Jean-Luc Godard*, ed. Ian Cameron (Praeger: New York, 1969), p. 33, cited in Bordwell, *Narration in Fiction Film*, p. 282.



This effect heightens the tension concerning the interaction of what exists inside and outside the frame, revealing both how close two humans can be without sharing anything from their respective interiors, and also how the immanent field of the representation can be closed. This closure, I will argue in the next chapter, is a function of the relationship between denotation and connotation.

The frame seems to imply a sphere around the viewed object, like a Leibnizian monad; but, while it may provide continuity between spheres, it refuses their permeation. Concerning our information model, these two humans are not allowed to be part of the same stream of information, the same visual message. This thematic visual design guarantees the source of the frame as the origin of meaning, the subject according to which the world is organized, and everything in front of it is a series of disconnected objects. However, this monolithic system of reference is challenged a couple of times in the film, when the film grants Nana her due subjectivity, giving us an example of the dialogism we will find to be the defining characteristic of *Deux ou trois choses....*

The best example of just such a sequence is that in which Nana sits in a cinema and watches the Carl-Theodor Dreyer classic, *La passion de Jeanne d'arc* (1928).¹⁰⁴ An inter-textual montage, this sequence does not juxtapose two times or places but crosscuts between two entire sets of representation: as Nana's tears echo those of the heroine in the film she is watching, we are absorbed into a self-reflexive crystal, and the immanent field becomes saturated with a second immanent field. This is Eisensteinian montage *par excellence*, as it conflates the two different visual subjects (the camera watching Nana and the camera watching Joan of Arc [Maria Falconetti]) and transcends them through the subjectivity of a larger relational structure. The spectator is caught in a mode of transferred identification that is all the more powerful because it is circular, because we see ourselves in Nana, in Nana's viewing of a character in whom she sees herself (5). We are propelled by montage to identify not so much with Nana as with her process of viewing, her own act of identification with the tragic character, and as such Nana becomes implicated in the system of reference.



This mixture of self-reflexivity and inter-textuality creates an effect similar to the Brechtian notion of *distanciation*, which can be found elsewhere in this film in devices—such as chapter titles and direct address—used to redirect attention toward the formal or

¹⁰⁴ It should be noted that Godard makes reference to Dreyer many times in his writing, and one finds a clear influence from Dreyer's representation of women in the oeuvre of Godard.

connotative base itself. This particular scene allows a crack in the edifice of the camera-subject on two levels; the spectator is asked here to identify with Nana's process of identification, while at the same time being made self-conscious of how this very process is structured for us cinematically.

One would have trouble arguing with Beh's reading of this as an inter-textual commentary on the plight of women: Nana is prostituted, a martyr to capitalist patriarchy, much as Joan's assumption of a typically male-oriented agency was depicted as witchery and punished with death.¹⁰⁵ While this is the transposition of a formal argument (similarity of representations) onto a comparison of narrative meanings (similarity of situations), it nonetheless manages to capture the complexity of what is perhaps the film's one great lapse in connotative structure: the camera's subject-function is momentarily betrayed by the permission of an image for which it was not the implied source. The presence of Dreyer's film slips the text out of the camera's control, and the image is at this moment defined through Nana's subjective act of spectatorship.

This scene embodies the text's struggle between the nostalgia for cinema's early grandeur and a modernist disillusionment with this grandeur, attracting our identification with a representation of spectatorship that also shocks us into a sense of self-awareness or consciousness of the apparatus. Another such challenge to the monolithic, objective system of reference is offered through the point-of-view tracking shot wherein Nana dances around the billiards table. This exemplifies the immediate dialogical shift, possible in cinema, from a subjective (6) to an objective (7) representation, from the perspective of a diegetic subject to that of a transcendental subject, as if Nana's own subjectivity were being sacrificed so that she might be objectified.

¹⁰⁵ "*Vivre sa vie*," p. 181.



The narrative theme of prostitution establishes this problem for us as a diegetic concern, though this is inseparable from the film's modes of representation: there is a reflexive similarity between the alienating effect that Nana's job has on her and the manner through which Godard relates her to the camera, one that has been analyzed according to a psychoanalytic approach that I will not necessarily adopt.¹⁰⁶ This particular cut makes a phenomenological connection between the character's interior view of the world and her external position as an object viewed in that world. For a moment, we are being looked at *with* Nana, from her perspective, before we go back to looking *at* her.

Unfortunately, this is the extent to which Nana is granted a subjective agency in the film, and the formal pretense of ethnographic representation gives way in the end to narrative motivations. Just as is foreshadowed by the reference to Poe's "The Oval Portrait," Godard ultimately leaves his heroine dead. The film concedes its visual goals and consents to the narrative rule; as Rancière would put it, the rationality of the intrigue ends by dominating the sensible effect of the spectacle.¹⁰⁷ The generic cliché through which the film abruptly wraps itself up has been contested as either disappointingly extra-

¹⁰⁶ Kaja Silverman, for example, argues that prostitution is the end of all personal desire, "and so the demise of subjectivity as such." (*Speaking About Godard*, p. 21).

¹⁰⁷ *La fable cinématographique*, p. 9.

filmic or apt in its inter-textual nature. In an otherwise praiseworthy review Susan Sontag criticizes the end of this film for its sudden abandonment of the enclosed text, through which it is “clearly making a reference outside the film.”¹⁰⁸ Beh criticizes Sontag’s analysis for ignoring the inter-textual thematic of the entire film.¹⁰⁹

We can read in this debate the film’s attempt to balance itself between the closed text (the film as an object of perception from one stable viewing position) and the open text (dialogic enunciation, Brechtian effects, self-conscious moments of reflexivity). Both critics, however, seem to neglect the fact that this reference to the generic closure of classical gangster films offers no indication that it is more than the invasion of a narrative convention, an argument against over-interpretation that I would support and Godard himself asserts.¹¹⁰ This reliance on a generic convention offers the perfect example of a closed cinematic meaning, a circular closure on the film’s origin of meaning. This is a problem, I hope to clarify in Chapter Two, of the form of denotation.

Overall, we can conclude that the textual system of shot and sequence in *Vivre sa vie* performs a certain mode of representation common in filmic expression: it implies an objectivity in the representation through the connotation of a total system of reference, that of the camera. In doing so, it embraces a classical epistemology in the Althusserian sense: it arranges a differentiation between source and representation meant to “oppose a given subject to a given object and to call knowledge the abstraction by the subject of the

¹⁰⁸ “On Godard’s *Vivre sa vie*” (1964), reprinted in *Against Interpretation: And Other Essays* (Picador: New York, 2001) pp. 196-208 (p. 204).

¹⁰⁹ “*Vivre sa vie*,” p. 184.

¹¹⁰ “Je me suis dit à la fin que, puisqu’après tout mes ambitions avouées étaient de faire un film de gangsters normal, je n’avais pas à contredire systématiquement le genre: le type devait mourir.” (“Entretien,” p. 218)

essence of the object.”¹¹¹ This film, in all its unconventional stylizations, refers to a connotative system that denies the subjectivity of its viewed objects and, ultimately, closes the production of meaning off to the spectator.

But this is of course the cinematic norm, the classical and conventional model for film representation. How might these epistemological assumptions be challenged? How could this differentiation be breached? In this film Godard offers certain clues toward such a cinema, a dialogic cinema of *being in the world* that challenges the hierarchies of conventional representation. Cinema has proven itself curious, perhaps even capable, of reconciling the interior and exterior, the subjective with the objective—a possibility of contextual relations that falls short in *Vivre sa vie* but achieves itself more fully in what remains as perhaps the great moment of clarity in Godard’s oeuvre: *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d’elle*.

III.b. Montage, context, and the interchangeability of subject and object in *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d’elle*

As opposed to the absolute subject of the frame that anchors *Vivre sa vie* as a system of reference, in *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d’elle* the weight of signification falls to the creation, through montage, of a dialogic network spread between the frame, the objects viewed, and even voices external to the diegesis. In doing so, Godard poses an entire reflection on cinema’s division between subject and object, a reflexive mode that demonstrates “how questions about the institution of cinema are immediately posed by a consideration of the object.”¹¹² This film, in other words, formulates the problem of

¹¹¹ *For Marx*, trans. Ben Brewster (London : Penguin, 1969), p. 241, as cited in D. M. Rodowick, *The Crisis in Political Modernism*, p. 74.

¹¹² Colin MacCabe, *Godard: Images, Sounds, Politics*, p. 40.

differentiation and agency as an inherently cinematic problem, a problem of the immanent field of film representation.

Here, as in Godard's oeuvre in general, this "consideration of the object" is extended to the consideration of *woman-as-object*, metaphorized by the social institution of prostitution. This time the story is of Juliette (Marina Vlady), mother of two, living in the tenement suburbs and being forced into prostitution by the economic demands of late capitalism.

Trading the classical black-and-white composition of *Vivre sa vie* for a monochromatic flattened image, this film, as Laura Mulvey and Colin MacCabe point out, "marks a move away from the exotic perception of a woman's selling of her sexuality present in *Vivre sa vie* and *Une femme mariée*."¹¹³ The term "exotic perception" can be attached to the Althusserian notion of epistemology previously described, a kind of colonizing of the Other inherent to the differentiation of the viewing subject and viewed object, a differentiation contested in this film.

The title itself, in all its ambiguity, introduces many of the film's themes. "*Two or Three Things I Know About Her*". First, we have the notion of itemization, presented in the film in three forms: the narrative itemization of the banal rituals that make up daily life (washing dishes, preparing for bed, etc.); an itemization of the ubiquitous signs of consumerism, epitomizing the proto-Pop Art themes contemporaneously prevalent in works such as Roland Barthes's *Mythologies* and George Perec's *Les Choses*¹¹⁴; and,

¹¹³ "Images of Woman, Images of Sexuality," *Godard: Images, Sounds, Politics*, pp. 79-104 (p. 93).

¹¹⁴ *Mythologies* (1957) and *Les Choses* (1965) are good examples of their authors' contribution to the general critique, at this time, of the homogenization of the role of material and popular cultural objects in the conventions of daily life.

most importantly to our concern here, an itemization of subjective experience through the sequential representation of context provided by the film's system of montage.

Furthermore, there resides in the title the nondescript dynamic between speaking subject-function ("I") and the world being described by this subject, a complication to the frame's absolute viewing subject. I will argue that this self-conscious revelation of the film as enunciation, as a message the emission of which implies a speaking or enunciating subject, draws attention to the problem of enunciation and speech in the immanent field of representation, problems that I will address in the next two chapters. This enunciating "I," vocalized by Godard's voiceover commentary, is constantly revealed to lack any totality of perspective. It is the subject of the frame, revealed and therefore displaced as just another part of the dialogic field constructed by the sequencing of shots. The rejection of a single coherent source of representation, I will argue, is constantly "emphasized by the dissociation of sound and image and the increased use of montage."¹¹⁵

Let us begin with visual design and montage, since these are the focus of this chapter. This film utilizes a visual dynamic contrary to that of *Vivre sa vie*. Immobile nearly the entire film, the camera of *Deux ou trois choses...* does not duplicate or mimic human perception through depth-of-field or acts of movement; yet, the frame is also rendered incomplete. The viewing subject is frustrated, but there is also no qualitative idea building through the montage of shots, as if in relation to a transcendental subject.

A visual design belying Godard's affinity for documentary television, the frame creates little blocks of static meaning that interact with one another through the construction of a common context. The juxtaposition of images offers us a mutual space

¹¹⁵ MacCabe, *Godard: Images, Sounds, Politics*, p. 52.

shared by person, material object, and system of representation. This visual structure respects the notion, as Merleau-Ponty observes, that the world is an immanent field of interaction, “non seulement la somme des choses qui tombent ou pourraient tomber sous nos yeux, mais encore le lieu de leur compossibilité.”¹¹⁶

As Godard puts it, the goal of *Deux ou trois choses...* is to arrive at a representation of “l’ensemble,” the relationships between things.¹¹⁷ This ensemble could be seen as a reduction of the film to its immanent field of relations. Keeping good on his word, this film achieves what *Vivre sa vie* could not because it acknowledges other subject-functions than that of the camera. The film combines a variety of systems of reference that Godard enumerates under four categories: “description objective des objets,” “description objective des sujets,” “description subjective des objets,” and “description subjective des sujets.”¹¹⁸

Taking this ensemble further, one could argue that a non-narrative system of montage predominates within the frame (colors, shapes), between individual shots, and also between the frame and what is off-screen. What lies outside the frame, be it an object in narrative space (Juliette’s reference to clothing that the spectator never sees but which is part of the open diegetic space) or an anonymous voiceover (the “I” that knows two or three things, spoken from behind the camera), persistently makes its presence known, creating a dialogic contextual dynamic in which the frame is no longer the delimitation of the film’s message.

Deux ou trois choses... arrives thus at a juxtaposition between presence and absence, seen and unseen, a certain confession to the arbitrariness and partiality of any

¹¹⁶ *Le Visible et l’invisible*, p. 29.

¹¹⁷ “Ma démarche en quatre mouvements,” reprinted in *Godard par Godard I*, pp. 296-8 (p. 296).

¹¹⁸ “Ma démarche en quatre mouvements,” p. 297.

representation. This critique of the shot bears the influence of Dziga Vertov's paradigm of montage, or "montage des idées" as Mitry calls it, which denies any predetermined narrative mode of subject positioning.¹¹⁹ The Vertovian source of viewing is intrinsic to the phenomenon of the visible that it reconstructs for our regard.

Its perception, Phillipe Trias notes, is a "perception atomisée,"¹²⁰ and is therefore not comparable to human perception, refusing the implication of an absolute system of reference. Deleuze and, later, Rancière observe that this notion of the shot's relation to montage, as opposed to that of Bazin or Eisenstein, is an attempt to place subjectivity within the transformative process of the shot, within the immanent field, and not according to one signified position of perception or one overall qualitative meaning.¹²¹ Through this, Godard claims not to want to uncover a universal truth, but to reveal a contextualization that binds people with their objective surroundings, a "sentiment d'ensemble".¹²² For example, we see: a macro-context (8), followed by an interview with a person who functions within that context (9), followed by a brief scene in the micro-context where that person was interviewed (10).

¹¹⁹ Mitry, *Esthétique et psychologie du cinéma*, p. 79.

¹²⁰ "L'œil du cinéma," in *Cinergon*, No.6/7, 1998/9, 87-97 (p. 92-3).

¹²¹ For Deleuze see *Cinéma I: l'image-mouvement*, p. 86. For Rancière, *La fable cinématographique*, p. 148.

¹²² "Ma démarche en quatre mouvements," p. 297.

These shots are audio-visual fragments that foster the representation of people's coexistence with their surroundings, an expression of the "totality of experience" that is, according to David MacDougall, the goal of ethnographic film.¹²³ This "totality of experience" is integrated into an overall textual network of signification that attempts to reveal what Merleau-Ponty calls "l'existence singulière" wherein one hopes to describe a specific person's experience (in this case, that of the heroine, Juliette) not by only watching her, but by letting her speak and by revealing her relationship with everything around her.¹²⁴ This notion of contextualization, however, is of more interest to my argument here as a question not so much of the content, which I believe Godard is referring to, as the immanent field provided by the formal representation of this content.

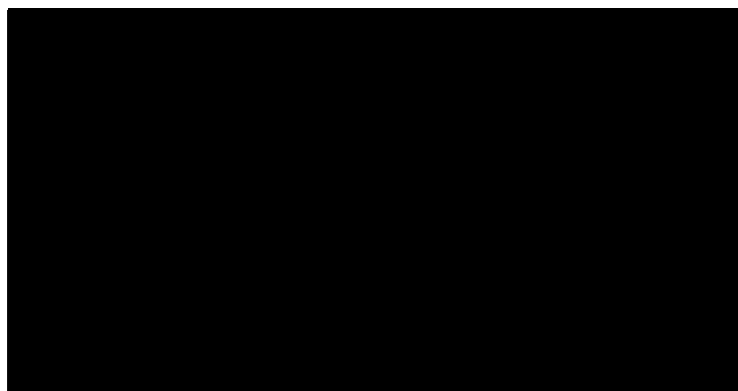
Deux ou trois choses... proposes the direct engagement with—and independent representation of—a location in order to create ideas surrounding the conditions of its inhabitants. This juxtaposition between urbanity and humanity is performed both through alluded presence (the form of montage mentioned above: a shot of a person followed or preceded by a shot of the city) and direct presence (the form of the image: a person being interviewed before an urban backdrop). In the latter, a lack of depth-of-field flattens the relationship, accentuating the proximity of the buildings, the inescapable importance of context (11). This effect denies the representational difference of spatiality, merging the characters with their material context and, also, the spectator with the content of the visible image. The presence of the city becomes part of the immanent field, a limitation of the dimensions already limited by the frame.

¹²³ David MacDougall, "Prospects of Ethnographic Film," reprinted in *Movies and Methods*, pp. 135–49 (p. 138).

¹²⁴ Cited by Godard in "Ma démarche en quatre mouvements," p. 270.



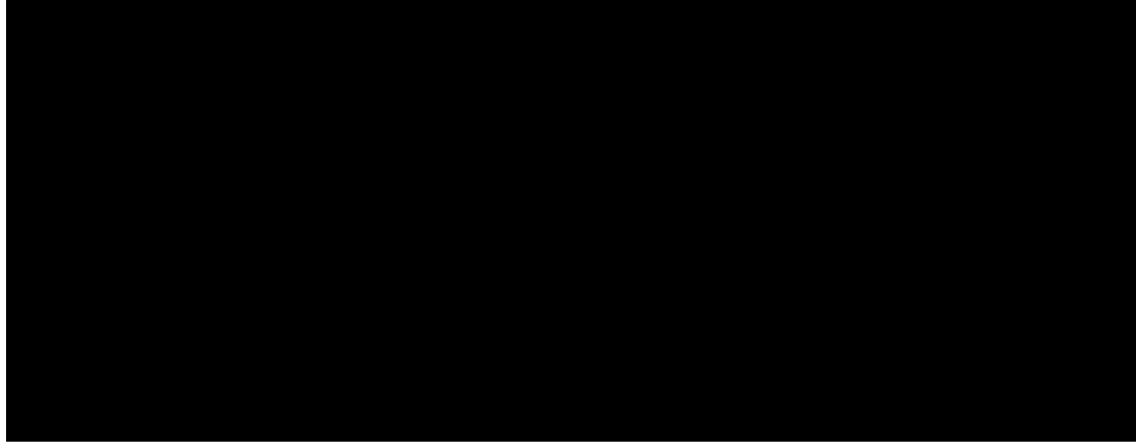
. As Laura Mulvey and Colin MacCabe put it, the Parisian suburb of *Deux ou trois choses...* is “filled with earthmovers and bulldozers which are changing the city’s spatial relations.”¹²⁵ The new space is marked by grey lines and sharp angles that conflict with the soft peachy roundness of the human forms; placing commercial growth before the welfare of its inhabitants, it is a space of destruction and reconstruction generated by inorganic materials and machines, providing a spatial relation that negates the space of individual human agency (12). Moreover, it is a space, I will argue, in direct contradiction of the frame and the frame’s immanent structuring of visual subjectivity.



This combination of architectural framing and of the dehumanization of inhabitants implies the transformation of people into non-people, into what one might call objects, while also permitting the material world a certain agency to act on its inhabitants. The buildings are framed as if they exercise a social agency, altering spatial relations and reconfiguring the world of their inhabitants, thus breaking down the barrier between

¹²⁵ *Godard: Images, Sounds, Politics*, p. 93.

human subject and material object (13). These buildings almost seem to be mimicking the frame, as if they provide their own frames and, consequently, their own subjective vantages.



As we see here, film form itself raises a question of what exactly the difference is between subject and object. After all, depending on how things are organized, depending on what the point of reference is, can't all things be both? As Merleau-Ponty might say, aren't humans themselves both subject, with a unique perspective of experiencing the world, and object *in* the world? And, do objects not have an agency in our interactions with the material world? This is, after all, the very premise for my use of the Deleuzean notion of different systems of reference.

This question of the interchangeability between subject and object, also present on the allegorical level concerning the role of prostitution in the narrative, is further complicated by a recurrent use of the close-up. Typically un-Godardian, the close-up poses a three-tier juxtaposition: one between spatial sizes, another between sound and image, and the last between active subject and material object. The close-up is capable not only of revealing something in microscope but, furthermore, it has the capacity to pull an ordinary object out of relief and to give it agency—to make it the subject, or “actor

object” as Fernand Léger puts it¹²⁶—and to explode it, to make it so absurdly large that an otherwise easily missed feature adopts a heavy significance.

This serves a purpose beyond the epistemological usefulness of the close-up, demarcated numerous times in film theory, as the epitome of cinema’s ability to view the unseen world that is hidden from the limited abilities of the human eye. It shatters the law of containment proposed by the frame. In such a representation, as Hugo Münsterberg points out, a detail becomes the entire visual content on which we can concentrate our senses and emotions.¹²⁷ Inverting many theories of the gaze we may be familiar with, we could argue that looking closely at a non-human object does not necessarily objectify it but in fact gives it its very own agency and allows us to identify with it.

Something else happens as well, something to the immanent field of the representation itself—there is a fundamental shift in the relationship between what is viewed and the system for viewing it. The object overflows the frame, as well as the system of reference to which the frame is connected (14): the image becomes a representation of the object itself, and not the representation of an act of looking at the object. Not only does this suggest the sublimity of an otherwise overlooked object, but it also suggests the ambiguity of what separates an object from a subject, both conceptually and spatially—and, moreover, forces one to consider how the same thing can be both.

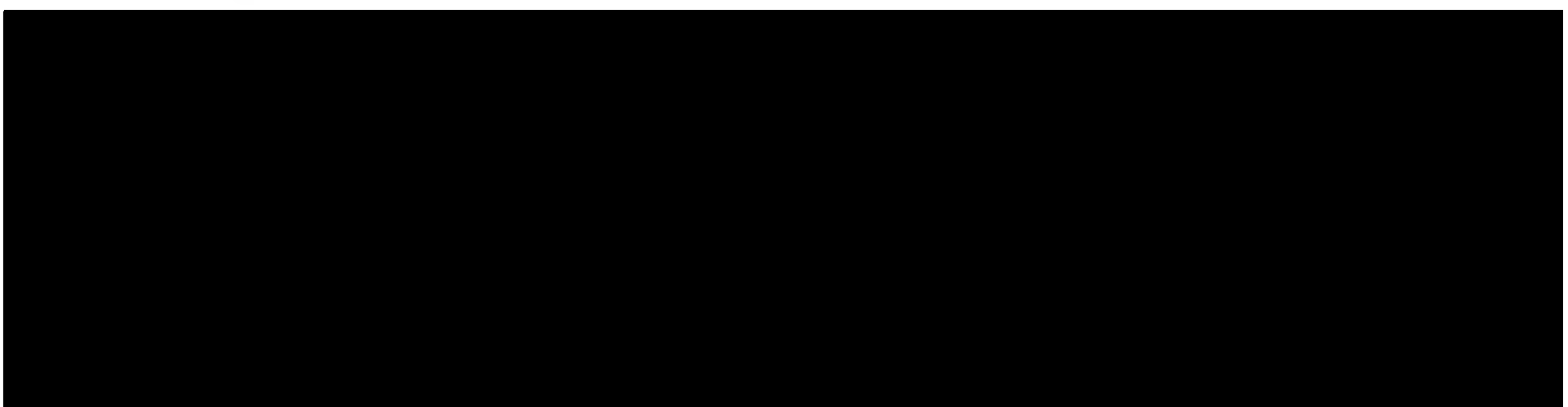
¹²⁶ Fernand Léger, “A Critical Essay on the Plastic Quality of Abel Gance’s *The Wheel*” (in *Functions of Painting*, trans. Alexandra Anderson [Thames and Hudson: London 1973], p.20). Léger’s analysis revolves around Abel Gance’s *La Roue* (1923), which uses close-up images of a wheel to shatter traditional divisions between material object and the agency of motion. For Léger, this shift in subject-object relations was central to the aesthetic philosophy of modern arts in general, and Gance’s use of the close-up in fact set cinema finally among the modern arts.

¹²⁷ Hugo Münsterberg on Film: *The Photoplay: a Psychological Study and Other Writings*, p. 86.



Noel Burch writes that the close-up was originally intended to avoid “any disorientation of the spectator in respect to his or her own ‘reasoned’ analysis of the spatial continuum.”¹²⁸ In this film, however, the close-up exceeds that spatial function. As we see here, a material object has been transposed onto an aesthetically designated subject-function: a building that looms and casts you into the shadows, a faucet that floods the world with water. This is not anthropomorphism, but is the representation of an object’s agency, its ability to act or to affect, be it due to its three-dimensionality or its function. The dialogic field is spread beyond that of human voices, human agents.

A more complex example of this is the famous close-up of a swirling spiral of coffee foam, which includes into this dialogism multiple sensory elements. This scene is complicated, first of all, by the fact that the image is not attached to one source of viewing: it could be the camera’s view but it could also be that of the man whose coffee it is, or of Juliette, each of whom are shown in the act of looking at it (15).



¹²⁸ “De *Mabuse* à *M*: le travail de Fritz Lang,” in *Cinéma Théorie Lectures*, special issue of the *Revue d’Esthétique* (Klincksieck: Paris, 1973), p. 229. Cited in Heath, *Questions of Cinema*, p. 40.

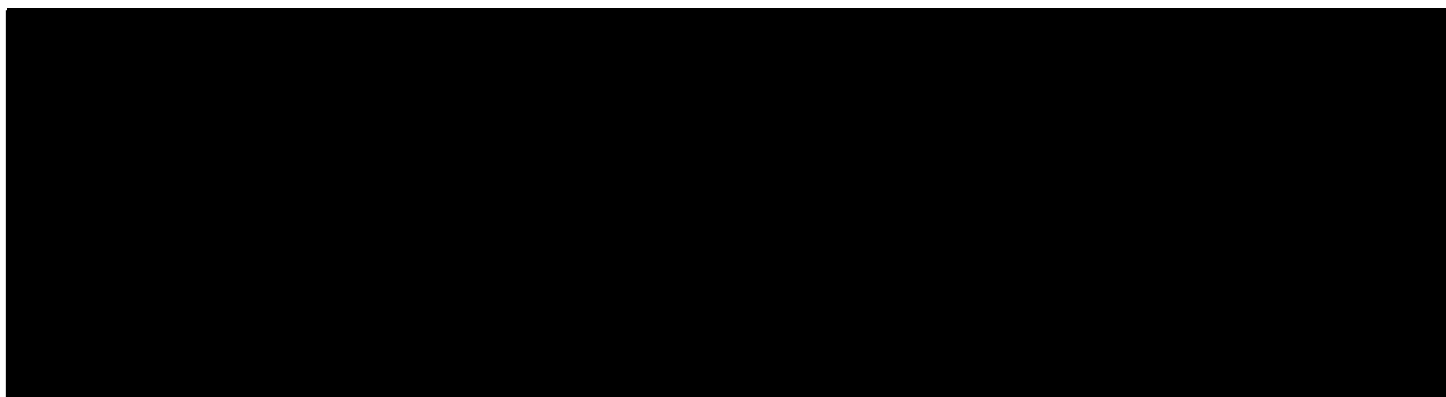
This question of subjectivity is extended further to the codification of speech and image, issues I will deal with in the next two chapters. The juxtaposition of a voiceover soliloquy, concerning the circular nature of the production of meaning in the universe, allows the image of coffee to become a visual metaphor for the entire galaxy. It is transformed once by the camera, and again by the words. The representation is an immanent field not only of different subject-functions, but also of different signifying systems and different sensory elements. The audible words of a non-diegetic speaking subject transfer the origin of meaning onto the shot itself, the representation created through sound and image, which then takes on an agency of its own. This audio-visual representation follows what Rancière calls the “*rhetorical-poetic principle*” of the metaphor, “le chassé-croisé des mots qui se cachent en faisant voir les images qui se rendent invisibles en faisant entendre.”¹²⁹ Words that hide themselves in making the image seen, images that efface themselves by making us hear.

The meaning of the words is enveloped in the purity of the image, while the original referent of the image (i.e. coffee) is effaced by the words, as if each separate signifying mechanism takes on a completely different intention due to its relation to the other. Rancière uses this notion to discuss the juxtaposition between sad words and beautiful images, but the principle is the same here: the combination of spoken words and visual image produces a sort of interference between them. As I will examine on a larger scale in Chapter Three, such a mode of representation introduces subjective multiplicity on the level of the speech-image code.

¹²⁹ *La fable cinématographique*, pp. 189-90.

We find here a destruction of the hierarchy between sources of meaning. Through this contextualization both of sensory agents and of viewing subjects, a whole is constructed from the space that binds the parts. The nexus of this intersection is the space of discourse that is the immanent field of film representation.

Similarly, we often find in this film that the frame centralizes the speaking character as subject, while the voiceover constantly brings to the forefront the fact that this character is part of a fiction. Breaking two rules of the illusion of separation between the viewed world and the subject behind the frame, a voiceover acknowledges that the content is a fabrication, and the viewed character looks directly into the camera, speaking directly to us (16).



“Elle, elle est Marina Vlady, elle est actrice.... Maintenant elle tourne sa tête à droite, mais ça n’a pas d’importance.... Elle, elle est Juliette Jansen...”

By adding voiceover commentary that refuses to demarcate the viewed world as separate from the structure of representation, *Deux ou trois choses...* divests itself of a fundamental division between subject and object. The verbal mixture of voiceover speech and direct address denies the text any singular subject-function, creating a reflexive dialogue not only between the characters and their context, but also between the represented world and the form through which it is being shown.

That these crisscrossing semiotic fields are deconstructed on both visual and aural levels helps to introduce many issues that I will confront in the following chapters. Here, I looked at the primary secretion of an external viewing subject through the construction of the shot, how this system of reference maintains itself and also how it can be challenged through the sequence of shots, the organization of the image (depth, close-ups) and the use of speech. The latter of these elements introduces the problem of enunciation, which over the next two chapters I will analyze as a function of the sequence of shots and the use of speech. These, I will argue, are problems of film connotation.

The classical subject is presented, we can see thus far, as the basis for a particular way of *denoting* the viewed world, and thus cannot be separated from a consideration of narrative coherence. Through a certain reflexivity, *Deux ou trois choses...* reveals the clarity of narrative causality to be artificial, and as such it relieves itself of the necessity of enforcing a closed system of meaning. One could say that it shifts the focus from the denotative level of signification to the connotative level of signification.

But what does this mean? Moreover, what does this division have to do with the viewing subject of the frame, and what I have now introduced as the enunciating subject? This chapter has been inundated with the reiteration of a certain dualism in film signification, as if it were operating on two levels. What is the relationship in cinema between denotation and connotation, and how can we use this difference to systematize the problem of film representation according to the framework of subject-object relations?

Chapter Two: Film Connotation and the Subject of Film Semiotics

[D]ans un film...dans la mesure où ce discours est traité par la collectivité, il comporte des éléments qui ne sont pas directement symboliques, mais déjà interprétés, culturalisés même, conventionnalisés; et ces éléments peuvent constituer des systèmes de signification seconde imposés au discours analogique et qu'on peut appeler 'éléments rhetoriques' ou 'éléments de connotation'. Ils constituent donc un objet dont on pourrait faire la sémiologie.

—Roland Barthes¹³⁰

In Chapter One, I used certain principles of phenomenology in order to lay the foundation for understanding film representation as a problem of subject-object relations. Through the analysis of Eisenstein and Bazin, followed by an assessment of two films by Jean-Luc Godard, we found that, while there are certain similarities between the organizations provided by film representation and direct human experience, it might nonetheless be best to do away with such metaphors as camera-perception or montage as consciousness. For, I concluded, any attempt to understand film representation as a direct experience of the referential content is based on a suppression of the constructive principles through which film structures its representations.

Humans are humans, and film is film. And while the latter may offer insights into the condition of the former, both within its representations and also through the fact that it is a technological extension of the human cultural endeavor, it would be an injustice to both to reduce them to an analogical comparison. Instead, we must direct our analysis to

¹³⁰ "Sémiologie et cinéma" (1964), reprinted in *Œuvres complètes II* (Éditions du Seuil: Paris, 2002), pp. 622-4 (p. 623).

how cinema, as a form, organizes its sets of relations, an immanent field that carries with it a significance that merits our attention.

Especially with *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle* we found that film representation is more complicated than the simple organization of a visual field and a viewing subject, and thus we are confronted with two more problems concerning the organization of film representation: the question of enunciation and the element of speech. Saving the problem of speech for Chapter Three, I will look in this chapter at the question of cinema as enunciation, and in doing so will build toward an understanding of the relationship between what is enunciated and the form of this enunciation, a relationship I call connotation.

But what is *film* connotation, or connotation in film? This has long been a question ignored in film theory, and yet we could say that the most diverse of approaches—Eisenstein, Arnheim, Bazin, Baudry, Deleuze—are all fundamentally concerned with how film form structures its representation according to a relationship between subject and object, subjective and objective poles. Concerned, that is, with the problem of film connotation. I will attempt to clarify in this chapter what I mean by connotation and its place in relation to the structure of a film's system of reference. That is to say, what does connotation have to do with the problem of subjectivity?

In order to approach questions concerning connotation, we must expand our understanding beyond the phenomenological metaphysics of the human *Gestalt*, to a study of the film sign. The entire endeavor of film semiotics, we will find, is inextricably tied to questions of denotation and connotation; and, Stephen Heath points out, the very conceptualization of cinema as a signifying system implicates the problem of

subjectivity, “brings into analysis the question of the positionings of the subject” within the film text.¹³¹

Heath articulates an aspect of film theory common to the 1960s and 1970s, in which idealist notions were re-conceptualized as problems of representation, agency, and identification. In the post-Bazinian landscape of film theory, there is a dramatic shift toward a non-naturalist understanding of cinema, one that abandons the illusion of film representation as being akin to the duality between the isolated human subject and an external objective world. With semiotics in general, the relationship between subject and object becomes embroiled in a complex system of ideological, structural, and psychoanalytic discourse.

The problem of subjectivity was after all the lynchpin for much of Michel Foucault’s sociology, Julia Kristeva’s literary theory, and Lacanian psychoanalysis.¹³² In short: French critical theory during the 1960s and 1970s. Here the problem of subjectivity is not only a question of personal experience, but also an individual’s agency to act in the world. Moreover, in film theory the question of subjectivity is central to apparatus and suture theory, as well as psychoanalytic and other models of spectator theory. It would therefore be useful here to clarify the terminology of “subject” in reference to semiotics.¹³³

Let us look back at Chapter One. What type of subject was that chapter concerned with? The subject of vision, the viewing subject signified by the camera and

¹³¹ *Questions of Cinema*, p. 8.

¹³² In *The Crisis of Political Modernism*, D.M. Rodowick offers a useful analysis of the role of subjectivity in structural and post-structural French thought.

¹³³ This analysis owes a great debt to Kaja Silverman’s *The Subject of Semiotics* (Oxford University Press: New York, 1983), from which I must distance myself through my hesitance to integrate a theory of psychoanalysis into my study of film subjectivity.

implied by the connotation of film representation as natural perception—the subjective position dug out through a simulation of the universal human condition. In other words, we saw how film representation organizes a differentiation between the viewing position and the viewed world. This viewing subject is, we must add, signified.

The subject of semiotics is an elaboration on the notion of *subjectivity as the origin of meaning*, the vehicle or volition for signification. For *Vivre sa vie*, this subject was for the most part absolute, total. It was the viewing position, the camera or apparatus, differentiated from the world being viewed except in the brief moments where this subjectivity was aligned with the position of Nana, which occurred in two ways: by placing the camera in her point-of-view, and by using montage to involve her as the source of identification. At moments she is granted a certain agency, but the final say is always held back in the camera, as if it had some greater reason for granting her this allowance.

So occasionally the subject of semiotics is the subject of vision, or the subject of identification, the visible or diegetic subject. In *Deux ou trois choses...* this subject is fragmented further, spread across numerous levels of discourse. Here the subject of semiotics gets more complicated, for it is also, we mentioned briefly, the speaking subject. This speaking subject can refer to an actual character, as we will find in the next chapter, or to the form itself as a source of enunciation. *Deux ou trois choses...* opens film representation up as the immanent field of different voices, different sources of signification, an interaction I have called, after Bakhtin, dialogism.

In all cases, we can say, the subject of semiotics is the origin of meaning. The film sign has, as we will find with Christian Metz for example, been theorized in order to

relate this notion of subjectivity to the principles of visual realism discussed in the last chapter, principles that in this case assume a functional role in the image but are reformulated under the term *denotation*, a notion of film signification that isolates the content of expression from the point of reference on which it fundamentally depends. The simplicity of the naturalist model has been thrown out the window, but we will find that many theorists still bathe in its bath water.

If cinema is not the perceptive act of a viewing subject, though, what is it? Film semiotics has reframed this as a question of enunciation. Lifted by Metz from the linguist, Emile Benveniste, the notion of enunciation carries with it a linguistic foundation.¹³⁴ Based on the difference between “histoire” (story) and “discours” (discourse), the analysis of enunciation deals with the particular problem of where the representation is coming from, and how this source reveals or hides itself, though Metz ultimately avoids such concerns in his analysis. As with the structures of subject-object relations found in *Vivre sa vie* and *Deux ou trois choses...*, we could easily enfold this dualistic notion under the umbrella of my larger framework: the story is the narrative material produced within the discourse, the sum total of its referential content, while the discourse is the internal organization of this content relative to a particular subject-function, how the narrative is shaped in order to provide an origin and structure of meaning.

But is the problem of enunciation, which implies a single discourse and a single subject of discourse, extendable to cinema, in which the immanent field of representation

¹³⁴ Benveniste’s original division as such concerns pronouns, of which there is no equivalent in cinema accept as a signification of the mode of representation itself. For Benveniste, see “Les relations de temps dans le verbe français,” *Problèmes de linguistique générale* (Gallimard: Paris, 1966), pp. 237-50. A reference to Benveniste’s notion of *discours* can be found in Metz’s attempt to find a more suitable linguistic metaphor for cinema. (*Essais sur la signification au cinéma I*, p. 92)

involves both first- and third-person enunciations, both subjective and objective representations? Enunciation places a subject-function as the source for the structuring of representation—but is cinema always this unilateral? This question will be difficult to answer as long as our understanding of cinema is based on a language model and, through this, bound—as it is with Metz as well as suture theory—to an assumption of narrative as the essence of film representation. In order to get away from these methodological determinations, it will be necessary to seek another path of film semiotics altogether.

We will find that Deleuze, building on the imagistic models of Bergson and Peirce, views the moving image not as a language, but as a type of material manifestation of thought, a field of immanence in which the organization of relations gives birth to particular configurations of signification. Through Deleuze I will attempt to describe film representation not as enunciation but as a condition for enunciation, an immanent field that can be organized according to structured relationships between the content and origin of representation: an organization of formal relations in constant transformation of its subject-object compositions. However, these are not Deleuze's terms, and in order to reformulate his work in this context it will be necessary to revisit the history of film semiotics prior to Deleuze, to look at a theory of film denotation in order to understand Deleuze's connotative model.

Let us continue our meta-theoretical project, then, by systematizing such disparate semiotic models as Christian Metz's *projet filmolinguistique*¹³⁵ and Gilles Deleuze's

¹³⁵ This "*filmolinguistic project*" is the subject of Metz's most celebrated—and contested—essay, "Cinéma: langue ou langage?" (In *Essais sur la signification au cinéma I*, pp. 39-94)

*sémiotique*¹³⁶ according to my general framework regarding the problem of subject-object relations.

I. Christian Metz, film denotation, and the narrative subject-function

The work of Christian Metz offers us a valuable bridge from the phenomenological theories looked at in Chapter One to this chapter's study of film semiotics, as we will find that Metz carries certain assumptions of visual realism over to the study of film signification.

One should always view Metz in relation to the advent and unfolding of structuralism in general, the historical trajectory of which Metz's own methodological affinities follow: from phenomenology, to linguistics, to psychoanalysis.¹³⁷ Anyone who has read Metz's *Essais sur la signification au cinéma* can discern the connection made between structuralism and phenomenology, and he often compares the rigorous nature of phenomenological observation to the scientific claims of structuralism: "l'analyse structurale suppose toujours...quelque chose comme une phénoménologie de son objet."¹³⁸ However, while I agree with the importance of using phenomenology as a

¹³⁶ Deleuze uses this term (*Cinéma II: l'image-temps*, p. 44) to differentiate his model, in the Peircean tradition, as a system of images and signs independent of language. Since he uses this term on numerous occasions, I have decided here to preserve it. I will similarly guard Deleuze's quintessential terms, *image-mouvement* and *image-temps*.

¹³⁷ Metz is of course not alone in this general intellectual and theoretical evolution. While most leading semioticians and critics working with semiotics were more primarily concerned with literature (Barthes, Kristeva, etc.), the general problems offered in semiotics, and the general methodological approach referred to as structuralism grew from the phenomenological movement of the 1940s and 1950s. Building upon a model of structural linguistics, this approach completely inundated film theory (and most other "theories") for the better part of the 1960s, until it was complemented and then surpassed by psychoanalytic and ideology-based approaches. We can view this trajectory in the work of Metz himself, whose *Essais sur la signification au cinéma* (1968-72) and *Langage et cinéma* (1971) differ greatly in scope and method from *Le Signifiant imaginaire* (1977).

¹³⁸ *Essais sur la signification au cinéma I*, pp. 25-6.

structural foundation for film semiotics, that is not the same as claiming to perform a phenomenology of the film sign.

Returning us to an ongoing analogy that I have found to be problematic in numerous ways, Metz attempts what he describes as a *phenomenology* of film narration, which—I will argue—he reduces to a theory of film denotation and the viewing subject. Metz extends this notion of phenomenological observation to the code of analogy, or resemblance, on which he bases his theory of film denotation. That is to say, Metz seems to believe that the observational reduction of the camera creates a particular connection between viewing subject and filmic world, which for Metz signifies a “sujet percevant,” a perceiving subject, with which the spectator identifies.¹³⁹

This “sujet percevant,” a construct of Metz’s psychoanalytic phase, stems from his earlier, quite Bazinian assumptions that film functions on the analog transfer of reality, and thus has no code except “la perception avec ses conditionnements.”¹⁴⁰ This reformulation of the classical viewing subject I described in Chapter One combines a Bazinian sense of visual realism with Metz’s central focus on the iconic type of visual sign, the visual sign based on resemblance. This underlying principle of resemblance guarantees what Metz calls *the impression of reality* and, through this denotative form, results in the perceptive and affective participation of an identifying spectator.¹⁴¹ While I will argue that this is a quite limited analysis of film representation, it is important to specify that Metz asserts this participation as a result of the system of reference established in classical narrative cinema.

¹³⁹ *Le Signifiant imaginaire*, p. 64.

¹⁴⁰ *Essais sur la signification au cinéma I*, p. 209.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 14-20.

He thus links conventional narration to the involvement of a viewing subject, confirming certain aspects of the classical subject I discussed in Chapter One. However, the influence of phenomenology was soon complemented by that of linguistics, the two of which Metz would combine into a notion of narrative subjectivity, linking this isolated perceiving subject to a notion of denotative enunciation. I will argue that the classical, linear narrative model provides Metz with a synchronic logic that he formulates under the terms of Morin's notion of the cinematic "formule de spectacle," according to which film provokes a transversal reading from the viewing subject-function.¹⁴² This, we could say, is how Metz makes the leap from phenomenology to semiotics; I will argue, along with Deleuze, that this leap provides Metz with a conflated understanding of narrative cinema and a linguistic model of subjectivity.

Though originally received warmly and with much acclaim, Christian Metz's writings on film semiotics have been heavily criticized due to what we could summarize as a general animosity towards his original concern with linguistics as a starting place for the scientific study of film. This is despite the fact that much of Metz's early work is in fact based on illustrating how film is *not* like spoken language!¹⁴³ In order to locate Metz's work in this study we must consider the centrality of linguistics not merely as a methodological misstep, but as an integral part of his understanding of the role of narration in cinematic signification. For, Dudley Andrew warns us, the language analogy that Metz worked so hard to dispel, he then regenerates through his theory of classical narrative enunciation:

¹⁴² See Metz, *Essais sur la signification au cinéma I*, p. 53.

¹⁴³ Aside from Deleuze's criticism of Metz, which I will look at later in this chapter, other useful analyses include Paul Sandro's "Signification in the Cinema," Peter Wollen's "Cinema and Semiology: Some Points of Contact," and Gilbert Hartman's "Semiotics and the Cinema: Metz and Wollen".

Metz seemingly spent his first years deconstructing the prevailing notions of film and language so that he could reconstruct them again in his own way, that is, systematically.¹⁴⁴

Indeed, for Metz (as for many others during the 1960s and since) structuralism entails the reduction of any communications system to a type of language. This historical development can be traced primarily to the fact that it was Ferdinand de Saussure's study of the linguistic sign that served as the model for the structural semiotics of Barthes, Lévi-Strauss, Lacan, and many other central figures of the 1950s and 1960s. But to use this as the basis for a theory of film, as Metz purports to do, implies an essential relationship between verbal signification and cinematic representation. This is a postulation for which Metz would be deeply criticized and that he himself would later excuse as "une abstraction méthodologique".¹⁴⁵ Before arguing against this, however, I believe it necessary to understand fully the ramifications of this presupposition.

Though investing much time and effort into this *methodological abstraction*, Metz ultimately justifies the language paradigm through his study of narration, which he isolates as the determinant of film specificity. As Martin Jay points out, for example, it is this effect of *things happening in the present* that suggested to Metz a fundamental difference between film and photography."¹⁴⁶ But is narration the essence of film representation? My ultimate answer to this is no, but I will have to turn to Eco and Deleuze in the coming pages to substantiate this. In the meantime, it is important to consider how Metz arrives here from a phenomenological approach.

As I mentioned above, Metz takes from Morin the view that classical narration carves out a perceptual position for the transcendental subject, the spectator, the subject I

¹⁴⁴ Dudley Andrew, *The Major Film Theories*, p. 223.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 67, a footnote added in a much later edition.

¹⁴⁶ Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes*, p. 466.

delineated in Chapter One. This approach, to be reformulated in the cognitive theory developed by David Bordwell, lays the film text out as a series of objects and events—in other words, as diegesis—asking the spectator to *read* the film, as if our mentally putting together point A and point B were the same as moving from left to right and adding letters together to form words.¹⁴⁷ That is, the linear unfolding of denotation creates an enunciating subject-function for the spectator to identify with, from which the film's significations proceed in a syntagmatic, logical order akin to language, being simultaneously spoken and read, and thus effacing their constructivist origin.

According to Metz's argument, then, film is like a language because it is narratively syntagmatic, because it follows a causal order similar to the trajectory of grammatical structure: "si le récit, structurellement, est analysable en une suite de predications, c'est parce qu'il est, phénoménalement, une suite d'événements."¹⁴⁸ Thus, we can view cinema as a language because it has adopted the tradition of chronological narrative. But is this adoption itself essential to the form?

Metz, along with many others, would answer "yes," and Metz specifies this adoption as an historical condition of cinema, a *fact of civilization*, a fact "qui conditionne à son tour l'évolution ultérieure du film comme réalité sémiologique."¹⁴⁹ In other words, narration prefigures cinema's signifying methods, an argument we will find disputed by Eco and Deleuze. Even more specifically, Metz views the conventionalization of individual signifying practices as being directly related to this characteristic:

¹⁴⁷ See Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, pp. 30-40.

¹⁴⁸ *Essais sur la signification au cinéma I*, p. 34.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

[C]'est *justement dans la mesure où le film a affronté les problèmes du récit* qu'il a été amené, au cours de divers tâtonnements successifs, à se constituer un ensemble de procédés signifiants spécifiques.¹⁵⁰

Metz makes a relevant point here, that the dominant conventions of classical film expression are those that help to provide narrative stability, a particular logic that is part of a greater order of meaning. This is very much what we found with our two films in Chapter One: while one preserved the subject necessary to a coherent narrative and the totality of a closed system of meaning, the other deconstructed this same subject and refused the closed narrative form of denotation.

That narration and the viewing subject of classical cinema are undeniably linked in the notion of denotation, however, does not necessarily mean that cinematic specificity exists in its structuring of narration. Nor does this prove, as Metz claims, a link between cinema's narrative essence and its similarity to language. Speaking not of duration but of the juxtaposition between different images, Metz writes: "Passer d'une image à deux images, c'est passer de l'image au langage."¹⁵¹ Is this true? Does the combination of images create a language? This brings us back to the debate between Eisenstein and Bazin, through which I concluded that signification is not in fact limited to the juxtaposition of shots or images, but occurs within them as well. We will find this position argued perhaps more clearly by Eco, who views a system of *articulation* even more complicated than language to exist already in the individual shot.

Attesting to the affinity he postulates between language and classical narration, Metz bases his model of cinematic grammar (which he calls "la Grande Syntagmatique

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 96-7.

¹⁵¹ *Essais sur la signification au cinéma I*, p. 53. This phrase sets Metz in a long line of theorists, including Eisenstein, Bazin, and Mitry, who view montage as the defining aspect of cinematic signification; one could view this point as a way of illustrating why Eisenstein embraced montage whereas Bazin, who wanted to preserve the immanent meaning of the visual content, rejected it.

de la Bande-Images”) on the taxonomy of combinations provided through classical narrative sequencing.¹⁵² Indicative of Metz’s general exclusion of the aesthetics of the visual sign, we find here the conjunction of two of Metz’s central concerns: classical narration and the attempt to reconcile film expression to a language-based model of conventionalized denotation. As Dudley Andrew points out, Metz’s *Grande Syntagmatique* turns out not to be an abstract grammar of film signification but rather a master code for understanding the cinema of a certain period.¹⁵³

Metz looks at a particular mode of film representation, according to which he designs a semiotic model in which the syntactical logic of narration and the enunciating subject-function are inseparable. Choosing to subordinate film semiotics to “the question of why one unit of narration is preceded or followed by another,”¹⁵⁴ we could say that he paved the way for David Bordwell’s lengthy analysis of fictional narrative. Unlike Bordwell, however, Metz places this narrative essence in the history of film as an industry and not as an interpretive aspect of spectatorship, which Metz reserves for psycholinguistic (as opposed to cognitivist) analysis.

Regardless, this obvious preference for a particular mode of film representation is not in any way lost on my study. After all, we can view Metz’s understanding of narration as fruitful to the extent that Metz considers denotation as a mode of producing narration that posits images as acts of natural perception, natural in that denotation implies the isolation of the representational content from any connotative concern for its

¹⁵² Metz develops la Grande Syntagmatique in “Problèmes de denotation dans le film de fiction,” and puts it into practice in his detailed syntagmatic analysis of Jacques Rozier’s *Adieu Philippine*.

¹⁵³ *Concepts of Film Theory*, p. 68.

¹⁵⁴ Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes*, p. 468.

system of reference. As if sketching a bridge across the last sixty pages of this thesis,

Martin Jay writes about Metz:

[E]ven throughout his most semiologically formalist phase, he never lost sight of the fact that the coded language of the film was based on the simulacrum of lived experience produced by its analogical, denotative foundation...¹⁵⁵

Analogy is, for Metz, the underlying code of film expression, “un moyen de *transférer les codes*.”¹⁵⁶ This is the basic myth of the reproductive apparatus, and it is based on this code that film can present us with a denoted story that we accept as realistic or *vraisemblable*. Yet, resemblance itself is guaranteed in different ways, and this condition of film signification produces the double-nature of film representation as creating meaning on both denotative and connotative levels. In the quote above, Jay’s use of the word *simulacrum* indicates a critique of the purity of denotation that arose with later theorists, but which we can see being to a large degree stifled by Metz’s focus on classical cinema.¹⁵⁷ Yet, despite his acknowledged division of film signification between denotation and connotation, Metz excludes the latter and focuses on the former.

For Metz denotation is provided for the spectator via “certaines modalités de representation,” or signifiers. He points out, echoing Barthes (under whom Metz studied), that the intelligibility of denotation is guaranteed by the total set of forms of denotation (i.e. connotative systems) that constitute an analogy between the film representation and the real world, such as perceptive codes and codes of identification.¹⁵⁸ So Metz clearly is not delusional or deluded concerning film representation’s mythological status (though, it has been pointed out, he may well have been nostalgic for

¹⁵⁵ *Downcast Eyes*, p. 460.

¹⁵⁶ *Essais sur la signification au cinéma II*, pp. 153-4.

¹⁵⁷ See most notably Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacres et Simulation* (Éditions Galilée: Paris, 1985)

¹⁵⁸ *Langage et cinéma*, p. 202.

a time when he was). Yet, connotation does not fall within the interest of Metz's scientific inquiry.

As Mitry and Barthes understand it, connotation is the very form of denotation, it is the way in which the referential content of the representation is structured. Though Metz seems to follow this point to the conclusion that this fact sets denotation aside as a mode of signification privileged for analysis, he does not fail to grasp that it is built from a connotative base:

[S]i le cinéma arrive à connoter sans avoir généralement besoin de connotateurs *spéciaux*, c'est parce qu'il dispose en permanence du plus essentiel des connotateurs, qui est le choix entre plusieurs façons de construire la dénotation.¹⁵⁹

But, whereas in the quote at the heading of this chapter Barthes indicates that this very fact means that a semiotics of cinema must regard its connotations, even *primarily* so, Metz in fact dismisses film connotation as being too general. According to Bill Nichols, Metz pushes connotation to the side, "treating his denotative level as matter, material for analysis."¹⁶⁰ For Metz only the level of denotation is quantifiable, possible of analyzing scientifically. I hope here to go beyond this limitation, turning my attention to the immanent field through which this denotation is realized.

Perhaps the greatest critique merited by Metz is that, like many other theories focusing primarily on classical narrative cinema, he views the denotative as a separate level of signification, indeed as that which is *essential* to the medium. We could say that, for Metz, the chain of signification leads from the diegetic, internal sign (the filmic) to the external sign (the cinematic). I will argue the opposite, however, siding instead with theorists such as Eco, Heath, and Deleuze. As Julia Lesage points out, the narrative story

¹⁵⁹ *Essais sur la signification au cinéma I*, p. 84.

¹⁶⁰ "Style, Grammar, and the Movies," *Film Quarterly*, Vol. 28, no. 3 (Spring 1975), pp. 33-49 (p. 36).

is less an origin of meaning than an anchor for connotative meaning: “it limits the polyvalent image to a certain range of emotional and social interpretation.”¹⁶¹ Moreover, the assumption that denotation is the basis for film meaning works upon the supposition of denotation as a naturalized state of reproduction, a supposition that is itself part of the connotative register. As Judith Mayne remarks:

The very notion, in other words, of a neutral system (denotation) which forms a support for richer, more complex associations, must be challenged. This is because these connotative associations affect our notion of what constitutes a primary system in the first place.¹⁶²

Thus, heeding Barthes’s encouraging words, this thesis argues that a semiotics of film should occupy itself rather with the connotative level of signification, though I intend to develop a notion of film connotation quite different from the Barthesian term. As we will find with suture theory and also with Eco and Deleuze, the problem of connotation becomes central to a film semiotics that investigates *how* denotation is produced, how its significations are closed and guaranteed by the organization of a system of reference.

II. Demystifying the denotative illusion of closed meaning

The guarantee of this closed denotation is the very object of critique in *suture theory*, which analyzes the means by which a transcendental viewing subject-function is signified into the text in ways that efface the constructive origin of that signification.¹⁶³ As many have pointed out, conventional film editing and camera movements imply something absent, something behind the camera; that “something” is the transcendental viewing

¹⁶¹ “S/Z and *Rules of the Game*,” p. 46.

¹⁶² “S/Z and Film Criticism,” p. 45.

¹⁶³ For those unfamiliar with suture theory, the term “suture” is used in order to give the impression of a surgical operation in which the text is cut open, the spectator is placed within it as transcendental subject, and then it is closed shut so as to remove any signs of this very operation.

subject which has been theorized to be signified into film representation much as, according to Lacan, it is sutured into the use of language.

Adherents to the movement known as suture theory, many of whom view Metz as politically negligent, nonetheless make Metz's *sujet percevant* the focal point for analyzing what Stephen Heath enigmatically calls the "historicity of ideological formations and mechanisms in relation to the processes of subject-meanings (meanings for a subject included as the place of their intention)."¹⁶⁴ In other words, suture theory is interested in the production of film signification *as part of an implied system of reference*. Suture theory marks an important step in this thesis, away from Metz and Bazin's interest in denotative meaning and toward an understanding of film representation based on its organization of subject-object relations.

Daniel Dayan, who popularized the French theory of suture to English-reading theorists, considers suture to be the practice by which an invisible subject-position is created through formal conventions of montage. Based primarily on Lacanian theories of the implied subject of language, Dayan looks at how the shot/countershot convention of classical editing secretes subjectivity into the visual production of discourse.¹⁶⁵ Dayan translates this secreted subject into a transcendental subject that we may recognize from Baudry's "Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus," going so far as to claim: "Narrative cinema presents itself as a 'subjective' cinema."¹⁶⁶ This links up well with Metz's claims, and echoes certain implications of our analyses from the

¹⁶⁴ Stephen Heath, *Questions of Cinema*, p. 6.

¹⁶⁵ The intellectual history of "suture" began under the guise of Jacques-Alain Miller's original article on Lacanian linguistics, "La Suture" (*Cahiers pour l'analyse* No. 1, 1966, pp. 39-51). Jean-Pierre Oudart then adapted certain of Miller's ideas to the photographic image and film montage in "La Suture" (*Cahiers du cinéma*, No. 211, April 1969, pp. 36-9, and No. 212, May 1969, pp. 50-5). These articles were translated shortly thereafter by the psychoanalysis-heavy English film journal, *Screen*.

¹⁶⁶ "The Tutor-Code of Classical Cinema," *Film Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No.1 (Fall 1974), pp. 22-31 (p. 28).

previous chapter. But Dayan's notion of "subjective" here is not the same as the one I hope to develop in this thesis.

While Dayan makes a sharp insight into the transparent nature of classical editing, I believe that this formulation can be misleading, as a transcendental subject and diegetic subject can be very different things built from very different formal structures, and films use a range of different systems of reference including both of these. After all, cinema may very well posit itself as the organization of space and events according to relative points of representation, but this only implicates the otherwise widely accepted point that any signifying act is by definition subjective.¹⁶⁷ But, as this thesis argues, film representation is not only the unilateral product of one subjective position, but is a dialogic fluctuation and interaction between many.

My goal here is to untangle the manner in which such approaches conflate different types of subjectivity, just as others have challenged Dayan's generalization of cinematic practices and his postulation of an ideological homogeneity among classical texts.¹⁶⁸ Nonetheless, suture theory helps bring to light many of the problems I have discussed up to now, including many of the critical missteps I hope in this thesis to rectify. One of these is, of course, the confounding of phenomenological and semiotic principles.

The notion of suture has led to great misunderstandings in phenomenological approaches to film, especially with regards to the notion that this practice in fact posits a

¹⁶⁷ As Kaja Silverman points out, signification and subjectivity *are always* interdependent. (*The Subject of Semiotics*, p. 194)

¹⁶⁸ For these two primary arguments, see, most convincingly, William Rothman's "Against 'The System of Suture'," *Film Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (Autumn 1975), pp. 45-50.

perceptual body within the text.¹⁶⁹ This neglects the codifying nature of suture, the fundamental process by which suture provides the spectator with “a falsely harmonious whole by encouraging [the spectator] to identify seriatim with...gazes which seem to come from centered and unified subjects.”¹⁷⁰ Suture theory’s very goal is, after all, to reveal that the “harmonious whole” is false or faked, and mine is to add to this a study of the variety of harmonious wholes, fractured wholes, and partialities.

According to the suture argument, with which I strongly agree, classical modes of representation give the illusion of an alignment between the image’s view and a single coherent visual subject-function, yet it is purely a relational configuration of signified source and represented world. In other words: a composition of subject-object relations. Shot/countershot editing conventionally works to organize the visual space so that the spectator is placed in alignment with an absent one, the position of looking. And yet the spectator is not really looking directly at the content, but is being fed a visual message, is being exposed to the immanent field of the representation itself.

Suture is a question of producing a position for which the spectator is implanted into the text as subject, implied as the origin of meaning in a representation for which they are actually excluded. The denoted world is closed, and we are given the impression that it is our vision, our presence, that encloses it. As Stephen Heath writes: “the suturing function includes the spectator as part of an imaginary production.”¹⁷¹ To build on problems we confronted in Chapter One, we could say that suture enforces a connotative order that opens the image to the spectator while closing the spectator off to the production of meaning, enveloping the spectator into the process of differentiation

¹⁶⁹ See Vivian Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye*, pp. 131-6.

¹⁷⁰ Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes*, p. 474.

¹⁷¹ *Questions of Cinema*, p. 90.

created by the organization of spatial relations. The spectator is given the illusion of being in a position in which to experience the sensory world through his or her own perception, but it is nothing more than a signification of—and identification with—that position. “Suture,” Heath concludes, “names the...conjunction of the spectator as subject with the film.”¹⁷²

This clearly indicates a strong affinity with my own approach. However, the centrality of subject positioning to suture theory comes mainly from the influence of psychoanalysis and the notion of subject-formation that is at the center of Lacanian psycholinguistics. Like Metz’s linguistic project and subsequent turn to psychoanalysis, suture theory is founded on a conceptualization of subjectivity rooted in suppositions that are in no way cinematic *per se*. This methodological appropriation rendered theorists such as Metz and Dayan the target of much criticism. “Without analogies of this sort,” quips Charles F. Altman only a year after Dayan’s essay was published, “the entire structuralist and post-structuralist critical enterprise would not exist.”¹⁷³

Though maintaining ties to psychoanalytic theory, Stephen Heath provides a useful criticism of Dayan’s comparison of suture editing to verbal language. Classical editing may imply a mode of *enunciation* that perhaps resembles language in ways, but a theory of film representation must rise above the connection that such words have to language and linguistics. As Heath puts it: “What is at stake here, the real problem, is exactly the understanding of cinema as discourse, of *enunciation and subject of enunciation* in cinema.”¹⁷⁴ While one single subject of enunciation may be impossible to

¹⁷² Heath, *ibid.*, p. 109.

¹⁷³ “Psychoanalysis and Cinema: the Imaginary Discourse,” p. 258.

¹⁷⁴ *Questions of Cinema*, p. 93.

isolate for what Nowell-Smith calls the “meta-discourse”¹⁷⁵ that is an entire film text, it is important to note that each individual discourse itself consists of an organization of different enunciations, each of which consist of a dynamic, inter-dependent relationship between composition of enunciation and subject of enunciation.

In this way the overall discourse of the film resembles my notion of the dialogic immanent field, a field of expression in which various voices are interwoven. A film, a sequence, and even some shots could thus be seen, as we will find with Deleuze, as a combination of such compositions. Indeed, as I argued in Chapter One, a film’s overall treatment of its content could be analyzed according to the connotative system at the base of such a set of combinations. This is the semiotic model I hope here to develop, concerning how a film permits or prohibits interaction between different poles of representation (the interaction between diegetic and transcendental subjectivity, for example, which was denied in *Vivre sa vie* and yet was a central aspect of *Deux ou trois choses...*).

Suture theory, while being grounded in certain psychoanalytic presuppositions that many hold to be problematic, succeeds at reformulating Metz’s essentialist view of narrative denotation as a problem wherein discourse necessitates the signification of enunciating subjects. It is concerned, I would say, with film connotation as a question of subject-object relations. Moreover, Heath in particular opens this analysis to the fabrication of *different types* of subject-function, though he ultimately retains a notion of narrative determination that I hope to do away with.

How might we avoid this determination? The centrality of narration is abandoned in the approaches of Pasolini, Eco, and especially Deleuze, who shift the praxis of film

¹⁷⁵ “A Note on Story/Discourse” (1976), in *Movies and Methods II*, pp.551-557 (p. 552).

semiotics away from the narrative paradigm and toward the question of articulations, the question of combinations of signifying systems in larger systems. It will be through these theorists that my notion of the immanent field of film connotation will come into its full shape.

III. Beyond the narrative model and toward a third articulation

With less linguistically oriented models of film semiotics, we can locate an attempt to move away from a view of narration as being essential to film representation. Some such approaches share with Metz and Bazin a more essentialist view of visual reproduction than that of suture theory, and yet they do place cinema's capacity for basing its representation on visual resemblance—often referred to as the iconic sign—within the context of understanding film representation as a dialogic space of organization between the content and the transformative apparatus.

Pasolini, for example, argues that the denoted level of expression consists of “a whole complex world of significant images” which prefigures cinematic communication.¹⁷⁶ This is undeniable, isn't it? That is to say, the content of a film, even of a shot or image, consists of a selection from the possible range of people and things, actions and words, modes of signification that exist outside of cinema's representation of them. The content of film representation takes place before it can be represented in the form of a film, preexisting cinema as a network of signifying systems and signifying acts. That is to say: cinema's representations are constructed from the building blocks of other significations.

¹⁷⁶ “The Cinema of Poetry,” p. 544.

But for Pasolini this brute visual transformation of the external world of significant images makes cinema an irrational type of signification (much like for Mitry it makes cinematic symbolism an unconventional type of symbolism¹⁷⁷). But Pasolini also discusses this reproduction of the world of signs as a sort of overlapping of different subject positions. Referring to a notion of film's phenomenological potential altogether different from Bazin's, however, Pasolini concludes that cinema's use of the signifying world as the signifier for a greater discourse means that cinema "is at the same time extremely subjective and extremely objective."¹⁷⁸

That is to say, reiterating a phenomenological theme that should be becoming familiar by now: film representation is both something to be looked at, and also a transformation of its content into particular cinematic modes of looking at it. But Pasolini's manner of articulating this is particularly useful to this study. Making reference back to Bakhtin's theory of the novel, Pasolini conceptualizes this dualism according to what he calls "free indirect discourse," which incorporates a subjective view into the objective image. This "free indirect discourse," for which Pasolini uses Godard as his example, resembles my own conclusions concerning *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle*.

Pasolini uses this term to theorize a sort of cinematic dialogism, as Ronald Bogue points out: "Pasolini, following Bakhtin's analysis, argues that this is not a simple mingling of two fully constituted subjective voices, a narrator's and a character's."¹⁷⁹ In

¹⁷⁷ For Mitry, cinematic symbolism is not in and of itself conventional, but draws from the range of the symbolic in everyday life. (*Esthétique et psychologie du cinéma*, p. 71) However, cinema's methods of forming symbolic relations are, one must argue, dependent nonetheless on particular uses of the formal specificities of film.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 548.

¹⁷⁹ Ronald Bogue, *Deleuze on Cinema*, p. 72.

other words, it is not necessarily a harmony of subjects, or a duet, but a dialogue. However, I am not interested here in trying to imply an authorial voice or estimate an artistic intent in the text. While this authorial voice has been debated by many, for example supported by auteur theory and dismissed by genre theory, I am concerned with a model that brackets off the form of representation itself, a model much as is described by Deleuze.

Deleuze, also using Godard as his exemplary case, reformulates Pasolini's notion as a question of "un agencement d'énoncation, opérant à la fois deux actes de subjectivation inséparables,"¹⁸⁰ hence Deleuze's quote at the beginning of Chapter One. The agency of the image, we will see with Deleuze, consists of the organization between the camera-subject (the objective) and the subjects in the viewed world (the subjective). However, one must ask: is this only the case in reflexive (what Pasolini calls "poetic" and Bordwell calls "art") cinema? Is this not the case for all film representation, a system of articulation in which we find both the subjectivity of characters and the subjectivity of the apparatus, which occasionally align and occasionally are set in opposition?

It certainly is. The only difference seems to be that classical cinema tries to refuse this dialogue as much as possible, to preserve the unification of the origin of meaning so that the meanings themselves are grounded, certain. Godard and Resnais, for example, build their films from this dialogic principle, arriving at a polyphony of subject-functions.

Looking through the image to the significant world beneath, the danger of Pasolini's approach lies in its attempt to view film signification as being without a code. Other theorists, such as Metz and Peter Wollen, have formulated similar notions of film

¹⁸⁰ *Cinéma I: l'image-mouvement*, p. 106.

signification, and especially the iconic sign, as “a language without a code,” for which Ronald Abramson critiques them as taking for granted a “natural code” that should be analyzed instead of ignored.¹⁸¹

Writing in many ways in response to Pasolini, Umberto Eco offers us a way out of this by incorporating the codification of real-life signifying acts into the codes of cinematic signifying acts, in what Nichols summarizes as an “account of the visual rhetorical codes found in the image.”¹⁸² As Constance Penley remarks, Eco diverges drastically from Metz’s pseudo-phenomenological model of mimetic representation:

He [Eco] points out that there are so many transformations involved from the *object* to the *representation of the object* that the image has none of the properties of the object represented, but that, at most, the iconic sign reproduces some of the conditions of perception.¹⁸³

Moreover, Eco insists that this resemblance itself carries with it another layer of significance or signification. As such, Eco addresses film representation as a process of transformation in which the representation of the real by definition carries with it another level of meaning. In order to do this, Eco constructs the model of what he calls *articulations* in order to direct his theoretical investigation beyond the denotative, to what I will call the connotative. Bringing us back to the question of Pasolini’s semiotics of action, Eco points out that “we find the universe of action transcribed by the cinema *already existing as a universe of signs*.”¹⁸⁴ This notion of an articulation concerns the formal codification of an already coded source material, regardless of any narrative context. Again rejecting the Metzian model (and contradicting those of Dayan and

¹⁸¹ “Structure and Meaning in the Cinema,” *Movies and Methods I*, pp. 558-568 (p. 561).

¹⁸² *Movies and Methods I*, p. 590.

¹⁸³ “Film Language by Christian Metz: Semiology’s Radical Possibilities” (*Jump Cut*, No. 5, 1975, pp. 18-19), p. 18.

¹⁸⁴ “Articulations of the Cinematic Code,” p. 600.

Heath), Eco “introduces the notion of cinematic articulations at the level of the image rather than at the level of narrative.”¹⁸⁵

Not only does Eco help us to detach film semiotics from narration, but he actually insists that the image is itself an articulation *beyond* language, for it is built from combinations of signs, which are themselves constructed from individual figures. As such, cinema signifies through a form of representation that cannot be reduced in any way to the model of language—after all, language is one of its building blocks, one of the codes of expression that are cinema’s source material. Language is an element in this immanent field. Thus, as Eco says, “the cinematic code *is the only code carrying a triple articulation*.”¹⁸⁶ Through the combination of sign with sign, cinema produces what Eco calls “a sort of ‘hypersignificance’,” an overall cinematic meaning beyond language or iconicity.

In other words, there is that *something else*. That something cinematic. This is what I refer to as the immanent field of film representation, wherein the signifying acts of the source material and the signifying acts of film form interact. This third articulation arises from the fact that cinematic form has no denotation that is not connotative, no way of showing that does not also refer to a way of showing, no representation that does not, in its representing, imply, connote.

Both Pasolini and especially Eco, help to frame film representation as a set of relations in which the source and the form interact to create an immanent field of relations, both bracketed off from, and yet conjoining, the filmic world that it denotes and the ideological foundation from which it has evolved. But we have not yet narrowed in

¹⁸⁵ “Style, Grammar, and the Movies,” pp. P. 36.

¹⁸⁶ “Articulations of the Cinematic Code,” p. 601.

on the notion of this immanent field as an organization of subject-object relations that emanates some underlying meaning. In order to arrive at just such a formulation, I will turn to the works of Gilles Deleuze.

IV. Deleuze and film connotation

Deleuze doesn't use the term *connotation*, he dismisses the premise that film is representation, and he sets out to destroy the notion of subjectivity altogether. And yet, there is something essentially Deleuzean in my thesis, something in the trajectory of this work that points to his *Cinéma* enterprise as a logical theoretical terminus. As such, I will attempt here to reconstruct Deleuze's project as a question of the cinematic organization of subject-object relations, such as is predicated by theoretical models like suture theory. I will sketch out in these pages how Deleuze's approach can help to do away with narration as the essential determinant of film representation, and to reconceptualize cinema as an immanent field in which the compositions of subject-object relations structure underlying, formative orders of meaning.

We could say that, for Deleuze, cinematic form has no agency beyond the volition of image-types and their ontological evolution. As such, Paola Marrati clarifies for us, the film image is not the doubling of an ontological condition, but rather the revelation of various types of image in which "le cinéma donne à voir les perceptions, affections, les relations de pensée que le cinéma a su créer."¹⁸⁷ Cinema, in other words, is fully cinematic. Strangely enough, this is a rare admission in film theory, and one of the underlying assumptions of this thesis.

¹⁸⁷ Gilles Deleuze: *cinéma et philosophie*, pp. 55-6.

That is to say, film is not perception, nor is it linguistic, nor is it ultimately at the mercy of its artists or of its stories. Cinema engenders the specific possibilities of its own representations, and as such the signification produced by this form stems primarily and essentially from the agency of cinematic image-types and their combinations. Deleuze's project is, Marrati concludes decisively, "une sémiologie proprement cinématographique."¹⁸⁸ Instead of reducing the film image to a subject of enunciation or a camera-based subject of perception, Deleuze analyses it according to what I will reconstruct as a theory of fluctuations between subjective and objective poles of representation, reconciling Deleuze to the theoretical corpus discussed thus far and also using him to clarify my own approach.¹⁸⁹

Deleuze derives the foundations of this project from Bergson, who focuses much of his work on the dualism between mind and matter, interior and exterior—a dualism that Bergson attempts to deconstruct as being imposed by a certain idea of subjectivity. The attempt to move away from analyzing subjectivity itself, and toward what Temenuga Trifonova clarifies to be "the conditions under which subjectivity is formed,"¹⁹⁰ draws a connection between Bergson and Merleau-Ponty, whose phenomenology uses perception to deconstruct the very same dualism between person and world. These "conditions" of the formation of subjectivity are the central object of my thesis's investigation.

But in order to understand Deleuze as such, it is necessary to go against one of Deleuze's overriding goals, which is the rejection of subjectivity as a conceptual tool. In

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

¹⁸⁹ The best example of how Deleuze's taxonomy of image-types is constructed in relation to the differentiation between subjective and objective poles of representation is in his analysis of Samuel Beckett's *Film* (*Cinéma I: l'image-mouvement*, pp. 97-101), though this distinction also resurfaces explicitly in his analysis of Fellini and Antonioni.

¹⁹⁰ *The Image in French Philosophy* (Rodopi: Amsterdam, 2007), p.11. This description is marked by Trifonova as being central to the de-aestheticized imagistic philosophy that evolved across the Twentieth Century from Bergson to Deleuze.

reading Deleuze, however, one finds that the concept of subjectivity is not necessarily abandoned as much as it is shifted, reformulated. Temenuga Trifonova makes a very useful insight concerning Deleuze that could apply both to Bergson and Merleau-Ponty as well: instead of destroying the idea of subjectivity, Deleuze in fact redefines it, “eliminating the inside/outside opposition that has always underlined the idea of subjectivity.”¹⁹¹ This elimination reduces film representation to an immanent field in which we can experience the interaction of multiple perspectives.

In an attempt to dispel this dualism, Bergson claims that a thing is inseparable from the perception of that thing; as I pointed out in my Introduction, they are one and the same image, “mais rapporté à l’un ou l’autre des deux systèmes de référence.”¹⁹² These two systems of reference could be called subjective and objective: one is the system of reference of the thing itself, alienated from all others, whereas the perception of that thing is its image in relation to an other singled-out thing or image. As I will draw out further in Chapters Four and Five, subjective representation is the representation of a human diegetic world according to a person in that world, while an objective representation is the representation of that world from an external perspective. However, as we will find, characters and the external apparatus itself can be implicated as both subject and object depending on the formal arrangement of relations, as we found with the buildings, coffee, and voiceover in *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d’elle*.

As Marrati observes, Deleuze’s *Cinéma* tomes are based on a precise assumption: experience is irreducible to natural perception, therefore cinema is irreducible to one

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 226.

¹⁹² *Cinéma I: l’image-mouvement*, p. 93.

subject's perceptive position.¹⁹³ This is particularly evident in Deleuze's division of the image-mouvement among what he calls the image-perception, the image-affection, the image-action, and the image-relation. Built from what is perhaps an excessively complicated attempt to reconcile Bergsonian image-ontology with Peircean imagistic semiology, Deleuze bases this taxonomy of image-types on how the image is constructed through the arrangement of subjective and objective positions, or subject-object relations.¹⁹⁴ The film image is for Deleuze a dialogic immanent field of numerous currents of meaning, the dynamic of which is defined by such relations, and in which such relations are constantly changing.

In Bergson's image-ontology, all people and things are perceivable entities that are, at all times, in a state of transformation coalescing forms of light, matter, and movement. Everything is an image, and images are things. Yet not all images are constructed the same, and their construction belies the infusion of a particular organization of relations. Let us now relate this back to cinema. From this ontology Deleuze founds his critique of classical cinema, which he views as being arranged

¹⁹³ In pages 9-12 of *Gilles Deleuze: cinéma et philosophie*, Marrati provides perhaps a more clear and precise summary of this central thesis than does Deleuze himself.

¹⁹⁴ Should the reader wish for an explanation of this "excessively complicated attempt to reconcile Bergsonian image-ontology with Peircean imagistic semiology," I offer the following: Peirce begins with the visual image, the phenomenon of what appears, dividing this signifying act into three groups according to the sign's mode of reference and relation to the world: firstness (the icon, in which something refers only to itself); secondness (or the indexical sign, in which something only refers to itself through something else); and, thirdness (the symbol, in which something only refers to itself through its relation to something else). (*Cinéma II: l'image-temps*, pp. 45-47) Using these divisions, Deleuze constructs his sémiotique according to according to Bergson's three levels of subjectivity, when it is related to a certain image, a "centre d'indétermination," or subject. (*Cinéma I: l'image-mouvement*, p. 94) Firstness is a sort of classical, absolute subjectivity, adapted by Deleuze as the preliminary act of subjectivity, subtractive perception, in which a subject only perceives that which is important. Secondness is a form of objectivity in which the subject is defined through something around it, henceforth viewed as the incurvation or transformation of the external world, the measurement of things' ability to affect the subject and the subject's ability to affect things around it. And thirdness is inter-subjectivity, in which something is only defined through its relational accord with something else, in which each exist as both subject and object, the transformation of the subject-object relation into a greater transcendental subjectivity.

according to an order of meaning that unfolds through a particular logic, manifesting connotations of this order of meaning through various types of formal relations. This is the image-mouvement, in which representations are usually structured according to a conventional logic of clear-cut and absolute differentiation.

For example: the eye-line match follows a logical trajectory, in which the apparatus itself is attuned to the motorized actions of the diegetic subject. This logic of editing is part of the overall image construction, the preservation of a fixed meaning and central subjectivity that emanates from what Deleuze calls a “logique sensori-motrice” or sensory-motor logic, a logic that extends also to narrative models.¹⁹⁵ A narrative example: the structure of causal narration begins with a situation and then ends with the transformation of that situation as the result of a character’s subjective agency.¹⁹⁶ These are both aspects of the image-mouvement’s causal logic; and, both formal conventions of the transcendental subject and the linear narrative model are parts—one could say they are *formulations*—of the image-mouvement’s order of meaning.

This is useful in that it illustrates how, unlike most understandings of classical narration, Deleuze views the narrative order as originating with a particular image-type, as opposed to the image-type originating with an enunciating narrative agent or syntactical order. Deleuze rejects narration as the fundamental determinant of film signification, and ties this to a general rejection of language as a model for understanding cinema. As this may imply, Deleuze posits his *sémiotique* in opposition to the Metzian tradition as I have outlined it, and assessing this difference will help both to clarify Deleuze’s method and also to define my own stance.

¹⁹⁵ *Cinéma II: l’image-temps*, p.

¹⁹⁶ This is best summarized by Deleuze’s incorporation of the various types of the image-mouvement into the two forms of the image-action. (*Cinéma I: l’image-mouvement*, pp. 196-231)

Between Metz and Deleuze we find a similar polarity as that between Eisenstein and Bazin, except that instead of an argument between shot and sequence we have here an argument between denotation and connotation, between whether narration or form is the origin of film representation. Although Deleuze rarely discusses other film theorists, he does explicitly confront Metz in a passage that is central to the opening of the second book and is arguably Deleuze's most substantial and overt discussion of semiotics.

First, Deleuze refutes Metz on methodological terms. As Gregory Flaxman puts it, Deleuze is fundamentally opposed to Metz's manner of treating the cinema "by analogy (cinema is *like a langue*, the shot is *like* an utterance)."¹⁹⁷ This is not only a specious mode of methodological appropriation regarding which I have already commented at length: Deleuze rejects Metz's linguistic model, secondly and most importantly, because this analogy has certain consequences. The worst of these consequences lies in ignoring cinema's essential uniqueness and formal specificity. As Bogue notes, Deleuze's insisted autonomy from the conceptualization of *film-as-language* is necessary "because the notion of film as language tends to privilege narrative as the fundamental dimension of cinema."¹⁹⁸ Deleuze criticizes this analogy for enabling Metz to make a specious jump from fact to approximation, thus permitting a decisive imprudence: the selection of narration—instead of movement—as being the defining characteristic of cinema, the specificity of its form.¹⁹⁹

Narration is, after all, a characteristic common to many arts, although in each one the method of narration and its relationship with the story recounted is directly governed by the medium's formal specificity. Deleuze views narration as being essentially related

¹⁹⁷ "Introduction," *The Brain is the Screen*, p. 23

¹⁹⁸ *Deleuze on Cinema*, p. 66.

¹⁹⁹ See Deleuze's extended passage on Metz, *Cinéma II: l'image-temps*, pp. 38-41.

to notions of realism, and Deleuze's dismissal of narration as the specific essence of film expression is contracted with a criticism of the Bazinian tradition of film criticism. As Deleuze writes, such interpretations "ne prennent pas en compte la forme de ces films, oubliant ainsi qu'au cinéma comme partout en art, le réalisme est une esthétique choisie et définie par ces critères formelles."²⁰⁰ This is a conclusion I arrived at in Chapter One, and can be extended here to a semiotic framework.

In further building toward an understanding of the division between denotation and connotation, we could say: denotation and its general contents are common to all signifying mediums, whereas connotation (the form of denotation) is specific to each. Considering narration to be the impetus behind representation grants to denotation a founding role in film signification, when it is really—I will argue—a product of the connotative order. Instead of considering narration to be the inherent given of cinematic images, the engendering basis of cinema's underlying structure, this project intuitively sides with Deleuze:

[L]a narration n'est qu'une conséquence des images apparentes elles-mêmes et de leurs combinaisons directes...des images sensibles en elles-mêmes, telles qu'elles se définissent d'abord pour elles-mêmes."²⁰¹

That is to say, narration—and even the readability of film syntax as proposed by Metz and Bordwell—is a secondary consequence of the combinations of image-types and their organization of relations. Transcending most narrative theories' limitation to a certain period of classical cinema, Deleuze holds this as true for any type of image, any type of representation born from any connotative foundation, as we see in Deleuze's continuation of this argument:

²⁰⁰ *Cinéma I: l'image-mouvement*, p. 71.

²⁰¹ *Cinéma II: l'image-temps*, p. 40.

La narration dite classique découle directement de la composition des images-mouvement (montage), ou de leur spécification en images-perception, images-affection, images-action, suivant les lois d'un schème sensori-moteur. Nous verrons que les formes modernes de narration découlent des compositions et des types de l'image-temps: même la 'lisabilité'.²⁰²

Thus, narration should be seen as a consequence of the agency of various types of image, instead of as their catalyst. As Bogue puts it: "The regularities and continuities of narrative have as their condition of possibility the regularities and continuities of...space-time."²⁰³ In other words: the possible dynamics of the immanent field of representation are determined by the elements of what I consider to constitute the form of film representation. The film image, before being part of a narrative or syntagmatic structure, is fundamentally a process of organization, a representation; the image can build itself through a story, but does not originate from it. "La narration," Deleuze writes, "est fondée dans l'image même, mais elle n'est pas donnée."²⁰⁴ Narration is not the given, it is what is founded from the image.

Whereas Metz and others build their model from the logical order of classical narration, Deleuze begins with the specific form of the components: "à partir des images et de leurs combinaisons, non pas en fonction de déterminations déjà langagières."²⁰⁵ Here we can see a decisive break with the semiotic approaches of Metz, Dayan, and Heath, though in the next chapter I will try to add sound and especially spoken language to Deleuze's non-linguistic model.

Though he dismisses narrative structure as the origin of film representation, however, Deleuze is clearly interested in montage, the "combinaison" of images, as an

²⁰² *Ibid.*

²⁰³ *Deleuze on Cinema*, p. 66.

²⁰⁴ *Cinéma II: l'image-temps*, p. 45.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

ontological problem. This focus on “leurs combinaisons” seems reminiscent of Eisenstein’s conceptualization of the image as the qualitative product of the juxtaposition of multiple representations, and it is important to acknowledge that the immanent field is not limited to the organizational principles of the image or shot. As I found to be necessary in my analysis of *Deux ou trois choses...* and will be central to the coming chapters’ analysis of Alain Resnais, Deleuze offers an approach to montage that is connotative as opposed to denotative: a question of the types of images being assembled, through what system of reference they are realized, not according to their narrative function but according to a certain order of meaning that emanates through the organization of formal elements.

In other words, we could say that Deleuze uses the word *combination* in reference to an understanding of montage as a form of relating one image-type to another. These image-types, I would argue, consist of different compositions of subject-object relations. The overall structure of this montage, the fluctuation between subjective and objective poles of representation, precedes and supersedes the organization of what Bogue calls “[n]arrative, motivic, or discursive continuities”.²⁰⁶ For Deleuze, we can conclude, the origins of film representation lie in the form of the representation, its connotative regime, and the only permanent or transcendental element of film representation is the immanent field itself.

In understanding Deleuze as such we can see that he is central to my enterprise, indeed any enterprise that endeavors to understand the problems of film connotation or film subjectivity. But Deleuze’s concept of film subjectivity requires clarification, as it is not the subject of enunciation delineated by most semiotic models. In conjunction with

²⁰⁶ Deleuze on Cinema, p. 49.

refusing the preliminary importance of narration, Deleuze also rejects the notion of cinema being merely describable as enunciation, thus distancing himself from suture theorists such as Dayan. For Deleuze, the singular notion of film subjectivity provided by suture theory's analysis of classical editing is insufficient for cinema, which engenders and is created from the interaction of different organizations of subject-object relations. Film representation is not enunciation, but the condition *for* enunciation: "Ce n'est pas une énonciation, ce ne sont des énonciations. C'est un *énoncable*."²⁰⁷ Cinema, as we will find to be revealed in the films of Godard and Resnais, provides the condition for the construction of subjectivity, but is not fundamentally subjective or relatable to one absolute division of subject and object.

For similar reasons, Deleuze uses these two filmmakers as models for his notion of the image-temps, a *type of representation* that abandons the classical mode of subject-object differentiation for a more dialogic immanent field in which the only guiding subjectivity is that of time itself. As a connotative system, then, we could view Deleuze's image-temps less as a crisis in the stability of thought, and more as a crisis in the stability of the codes (detachment, montage, speech-image harmony, etc.) that guide the conventional organizations of film representation, and thus a deconstruction of the totality or unilateral isolation of any one system of reference. As Deleuze argues, in the films of filmmakers such as Godard and Resnais the relationships between subjective and objective poles of expression, reality and fiction, past and present, lose their duality.

Greatly influential to my own approach, Deleuze views filmmakers like Godard and Resnais as deconstructing the cinematic myth of a unilateral subject of enunciation, and their texts illustrate a resistance to classical formal divisions between subject and

²⁰⁷ *Cinéma II: l'image-temps*, p. 45.

object in every sense (viewer and viewed, agent and receiver, producer of meaning and means of that production). Instead of the isolation of singular subjective perspectives from linear stories governed by spatiotemporal causality, this type of reflexive cinema engenders film texts that are lost to more irrational and interchangeable structures.

Working on the supposition that narration is film's essential characteristic, theorists such as Metz do not take into account what happens when conventional hierarchies break down, when the causal logic both of story and of representation unravel and expose themselves. This crisis, which Deleuze analyzes on filmic, artistic, historic, and philosophical levels, is centered around a certain rupture in the traditional dualism between subject and object. This is the conclusion I hope to have clarified in my reading of Deleuze's project, and which I hope to bring to light through this thesis's analysis of Godard and Resnais. In the following chapters I will look at *how* certain textual practices deconstruct both the diegetic subject and the transcendental subject as illusions of subjective totality codified through formal relations.

The *Cinéma* books lead us to a different understanding of the subject-function's role in film signification, refusing the notion of a singular or monologic subjectivity that guides the imaginary or diegetic discourse. The constructed nature of this division highlights Deleuze's view of narration as being secondary to the process of organizing relations; and, as the duality between subject and world becomes less distinct, less enforced, the unraveling of narrative causality as a denotative illusion is merely a result. As I mentioned above, in place of the subject of narration the image-temps erects what Deleuze explains to be the subjectivity of time itself.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁸ "La seule subjectivité, c'est le temps, le temps non-chronologique saisi dans sa fondation, et c'est nous qui sommes intérieurs au temps, non pas l'inverse." (*Cinéma II: l'image-temps*, p. 110)

Deleuze thus introduces the Bergsonian notion of time into the problem of cinematic narrative tension. Bergson's philosophy of time is central to this thesis in that it aims to deconstruct the notion of precise, impenetrable divisions of temporal subjectivity. I hope to clarify this notion by analyzing the concrete problem of filmic inter-temporality and the diegetic speaking subject. This inter-temporal division of the subject can be viewed as parallel to Merleau-Ponty's dissolution of the barrier between subject and object in the act of perception, and my particular reading of Deleuze's *sémiotique* will permit me to incorporate inter-temporality into my concept of the immanent field.

Deleuze is certainly not a phenomenologist, and yet these different philosophical methods can be reconciled on the grounds of their mutual rejection of the hierarchy born from classical views of the division between subject and object. Moreover, one could draw connections between the two theorists based on Merleau-Ponty's insistence that time is not a chronological line, but is instead a network of intentionalities.²⁰⁹ Such "intentionalities" can be seen as compositions of subject-object relations, systems of reference that I will look at in the next chapter. I hope gradually to illustrate that, together, Merleau-Ponty and Bergson help to illuminate the notion of film representation as an immanent field in which both spatial and temporal divisions can be transcended, thus challenging the notion of a singular and isolated subjectivity.

V. Two conditions of the film sign

This connection between Deleuze and Merleau-Ponty is very important to what this thesis hopes to contribute to both French and film studies. Both theorists can be seen to be

²⁰⁹ *Phénoménologie de la perception*, p. 469.

challenging conventional notions of subjectivity in a way that is directly applicable to an understanding of film representation as an organization of subject-functions both external and internal to the image itself. This organization, we can now see more clearly, is expressible as a function of the division between denotation and connotation.

All theories of film representation tend to agree on one point: there are two aspects of film signification. There is that which is shown in the image, and there is the way of showing it. One that includes what we see, and one that operates so that we might see it in the way that we do. The first of these, denotation, provides in Julia Lesage's words "the visual 'stuff' for film."²¹⁰ Denotation concerns the significations that we encounter directly as the content of aural and visual signs, and its meanings are guaranteed through its isolation of the content of representation from any point of reference or perspective on which this representation is dependent.

While it may be incorporated into narrative structures, film denotation is first and foremost based on a code of resemblance, through which objects are presented in a form analogous to how we perceive them in the real world. As theorists such as Eco and Deleuze insist, and as I will map out further in coming chapters, denotation is motivated and highly coded. This is an important point in the trajectory of this study, and Dudley Andrew helps to place this claim:

"The discovery that resemblance is coded...was a tremendous and hard-won victory for semiotics over those upholding a notion of naïve perception in cinema."²¹¹

As Metz acknowledges, and yet apparently dismisses or avoids, this process of coding is itself part of a second aspect of signification, the connotative, which many have

²¹⁰ "S/Z and *Rules of the Game*," p. 45.

²¹¹ *Concepts in Film Theory*, p. 25.

argued as being in fact the *primary* system of meaning. Much of Roland Barthes's *S/Z* is dedicated to this very argument, to which end Barthes notes: "denotation is not the first meaning, but pretends to be so."²¹² Indeed, this thesis begins with a similar assumption, brought to theoretical fruition through my analysis of Eco and Deleuze, that the form of film representation precedes any narrative context or filmic denotation toward which this form is used.

Much to the chagrin of cinematic realists such as Bazin, who hold cinema in esteem for its ability to capture the truth on the surface of reality, for its capability to produce pure denotation, Barthes and others would argue that denotation is itself a codification, the end result of a particular connotative system. (Indeed I implied this very conclusion by assessing Bazin's theories as being ideologically based, concluding that the rejection of style is itself a formal construct.) "Connotation," Judith Mayne writes by way of explaining Barthes's model, "serves to assure denotation's status as law and absolute order."²¹³ This is the very logic of the image-mouvement that we found critiqued by Deleuze, a logic by which the formal base organizes a fixed system of reference that implies the denotation to be closed, absolute and total—in other words, self-sufficient, as if solely motivated by the realization of narrative elements and independent of any formal origin.

While suture theory critiques this notion of denotation, though I will not take it in similar narrative, psychoanalytic, or ideological directions. Instead, I hope to focus rather on the internal structures of film representation. As we saw in the case of *Vivre sa vie*, cinema forms its closed denotations through the conventionalized structure of a singular

²¹² *S/Z*, trans. Richard Miller (Hill and Wang: New York, 1974), p. 7.

²¹³ "S/Z and Film Criticism," p. 43.

and certain source or subject of representation. We found that this is an impression codified through certain relations between the camera, sequence, and the content of representation. In *Deux ou trois choses...*, on the other hand, we saw that this notion of denotation is greatly compromised when there is not a clear source of enunciation.

In light of such films, I believe it necessary to extend the traditional understanding of connotation. For Barthes, the denoted message is “the *analogon* itself” whereas the connoted message is “the way in which society represents, to a certain extent, what it thinks of the *analogon*.”²¹⁴ We could say then that connotation is the level on which ideology functions by secreting a worldview into the process of denotation. But this implicates more than just the expression of how we view something; it also implicates the forms through which we secrete such opinions or values into the form of denotation. In other words: connotation not only shows us something about how the denoted content is valued, as Barthes claims, but it *also* reveals how we express such values in our subject-object compositions, how we guarantee the judgments implied in denotation through certain structures of differentiation.

This is the understanding of film connotation I hope to clarify in this thesis, and this leads us back to the problem of subjectivity. We could say that the subject is structured through connotation to serve as the implied source of whatever meaning is gathered from denotation. *The subject speaks and shows us denotation, but the subject itself is the gaze and voice of connotation.* This ties together a Barthesian approach, the approach of suture theory, and also Eco’s notion of codes and Deleuze’s fundamental

²¹⁴ “The Photographic Message,” (*The Responsibility of Forms*, trans. Richard Howard [Farrar, Straus and Giroux: Oxford, 1986]), pp. 3-20 (p. 8).

suggestion that there is some immanent meaning in the very form of cinema's image-types (or what I call types of representation).

In the next chapter I will extend the question of enunciation to the second problem posed by *Deux ou trois choses...*: the problem of speech and the speaking subject. Sound is, after all, an integral part of film form. And, especially in the form of spoken language, or speech, sound plays a vital role in organizing film representation in relation to a source of representation, a subject. This subject, the speaking subject, however, is not the detached subject of the apparatus, but is a diegetic subject: a character. As such, in the next chapter we will encounter an entirely new complication in the dialogic organization of subject-object relations, one that is generated through the *representation of representation*, or the interaction between the objective apparatus and the diegetic subject, adding yet another dimension to the immanent field.

Chapter Three: Speech, Image, and the Diegetic Subject

How to make sense in film if not through vision, film
with its founding ideology of vision as truth?
—Stephen Heath²¹⁵

The attempt to understand film representation according to certain principles of phenomenology helped me to build a framework for understanding how the viewing subject-function is constructed through film form, which in the last chapter I complemented with a semiotic analysis of how such a position is affirmed by the process of classical narrative editing. From Merleau-Ponty to Stephen Heath, I have attempted to sketch a certain conceptualization of how film representation is structured as a composition of what I call subject-object relations. Up to now this sketch has been contained to the visual side of film representation.

An analysis of Godard's films led me to conclude that this transcendental subjective position is only one of many possible voices or origins of meaning that interact within the immanent field of film representation, and that the organization of such subjective positions can be considered a result of what I call connotation. This connotative foundation, I argued through an analysis of Deleuze, prefigures narrative and linguistic functions of film, and thus it is with the immanent field of the form itself that we should begin an analysis of film representation, one that can be systematized according to my framework of subject-object relations.

²¹⁵ *Questions of Cinema*, p. 44.

But doesn't film form include more than just visual elements? And doesn't the immanent field include more subjective positions than that of the absent viewing subject? In this chapter, I will focus primarily on codifications of speech and image and how they are built according to connotations of the relationship between the diegetic speaking subject, the passage of time, and personal and collective memory. I will argue here that time, as much as space, is an important factor in the construction of filmic subjectivity.

Introducing the notion of inter-temporality, Deleuze elaborates on Bergson's principles of time: the past coexists with the present that it once was; the past conserves itself in each new present as "the past"; and, lastly, binding these two, time doubles itself up at each instant into the present that passes and the past that preserves itself.²¹⁶ These concepts resonate within certain forms of montage, such as the flashback, that rely on the codification of speech and image. Alain Resnais offers many variations on this code, and I hope to show that, in his films, these variations saturate the immanent field of representation with a dialogic interaction of different subject-functions.

Comparing different compositions of the flashback in light of Bergson's claims about time will help to illustrate how speech and image interact in the representation of memory, by dividing the representation among different audio and visual poles of representation. That is, the sensory elements of the representation are divided between different gradations of objective and subjective discourse. While Deleuze does not necessarily frame Bergson as such, in this chapter I will look at inter-temporality as an insight into the dynamic of film's discursive field, one that is particularly prominent in Resnais's films. This dynamic grows more complicated with the introduction of the diegetic subject.

²¹⁶ *Cinéma II: l'image-temps*, pp. 105-10.

Having spent Chapters One and Two looking at the absent viewing subject of the apparatus, I will now look at the human subject as represented *in* the text, a character that is implied as the source of the representation: the diegetic subject. Whereas we found that Godard deconstructs the detached subject of objective representation, Resnais does so with the diegetic subject and the subjective mode of representation. Resnais's films are particularly interesting to us here because of the great diversity and scope with which they use speech, different codes—dialogue, voiceover, off-screen voices—struggling for domination of the text's production of meaning. This diversity reflects on a range of formal problems concerning the organization of representation and its source of enunciation.

In order to expand this study, it will be necessary once again to add to our arsenal of formal concerns. While I view a slight exaggeration in Martin Schwab's conclusion that Deleuze is "insensitive to the specificities of cinema,"²¹⁷ I do believe that Deleuze's analysis of types of image-combination is indeed incomplete—as we could consider much of film theory—in its ocular-centric focus on the visual aspect of cinema. This thesis's re-conceptualization of film representation requires the inclusion of sound and especially spoken language into the study of film codes.

And what of spoken language in film? Language and film is a problem that has long been dominated by two focuses: the question of meaning created through dialogue, and the question of whether or not film is itself a language.

That is to say, most critical analyses of speech in cinema, especially concerning Godard (*a propos* to whom the use of language has been called a "frequent resort to a

²¹⁷ "Escaping From the Image: Deleuze's Image-Ontology," *The Brain is the Screen*, pp. 109-140, (p. 109).

kind of verbal delirium”²¹⁸), have had less to do with the relationship between speech utterances and the moving image than they have with basic analyses of what people say, the content of dialogue, much as if it were a literary analysis. And, at the other end of the spectrum, as we found in the last chapter, much of film semiotics has been dedicated in one way or another to understanding the relationship between film and language as signifying systems.

I prefer, however, to situate the relationship between cinema and language as a more formal problem, one that is centralized within the question of cinematic codes and, on the level of signification, the attempt to reconcile sensory data to internal thought, or to use spoken words to create, to contradict, to support, or to alter the meaning of visual images. In other words: the organization of speech and image in structuring the relationship between the content of representation and the enunciating subject of that representation.

We can say now that film expression is more than just visual expression and is comprised of more than just a perceiving subject. An analysis of shot and montage must be integrated into an analysis of film representation as a speech-image construct, just as the objective mode of representation (signifying a detached transcendental subject) must be reconciled to the subjective mode of representation (subjectivity signified in the form of a character). For, these systems of reference coexist as modes of discourse within the same representation and as modes of representation within the same meta-discourse, problems I hope to elucidate by looking at two films by Alain Resnais, *Hiroshima, mon amour* (1959) and *L'Année dernière à Marienbad* (1961).

²¹⁸ Marcorelles, Louis, and Callenbach, Ernest, “Jean-Luc Godard’s Half-Truths,” *Film Quarterly*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (Spring 1964) pp. 4-7 (p. 5).

I. The speech-image code and the hierarchy of senses

Before extending these concerns to larger, what we might call referential meta-codes (the code of subjectivity and the code of objectivity), I will in this chapter re-direct my analysis to focus on the codification of speech and image, the conventionalized relations between spoken word and visual image that guarantee the coherence of filmic subject-functions. As such I hope to use the notion of code to extend this work beyond psychoanalytic and ocular-centric studies of the apparatus and toward the problem of when film representation is structured as the implied product of a diegetic character and not just a transcendental subject.

While it may not be fully self-evident, and is not frequently acknowledged, the filmic relationship between speech and image constitutes a code on the most basic level: the transformation of subjectivity and signification between one sensory element and another. This includes any method by which speech and image are aligned in order to permit some form of transformation between the two sensory systems, whether from the aural to the visual or vice-versa, a code we saw at work, for example, in the immanent field of *Deux ou trois choses...*'s galactic coffee cup.

In his *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, Hegel considers hearing and seeing together as rational senses, what Stephen Heath translates as "senses of the distance of subject and object."²¹⁹ There is a ring of the phenomenological here. In other words, these senses help us to orientate ourselves, to organize the subjective pole relative to the objective pole, and in cinema the harmony of this sensory orientation is crucial to the

²¹⁹ *Questions of Cinema*, p. 177. For Hegel, see *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art* vol. 1, trans. T.M. Knox (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1975).

stability of its representations. In nature, perception is contextual, and these senses help us to organize spatial relations; in cinema, this contextualization is an operation based on specific formal techniques (dubbing, focus, etc.), and these senses don't only organize space but also help to signify a source of signification, an origin of meaning.

In real life, sound and image are often synchronized in a multitude of ways. For example, we see a bat hit a ball and we expect to hear a crack. Similarly, to hear a voice and to see a person's mouth opening and closing would be an expected sensory conjunction. In more complex configurations, people use words to point to an object we can see; also, we often hear descriptions and consequently imagine a visual image of what they are describing. Such natural conditions are simulated by cinematic codes that use conventionalized relationships between sound and image to provide a subject of sensory harmony and, to the chagrin of theorists such as Panofsky and Arnheim, to produce a heightened connotation of realism in cinema.²²⁰ Couldn't we say that this harmonious relationship, which Bordwell and Thompson refer to as "fidelity"²²¹ and Chion calls "synchronism"²²², connotes that the subject-function signified by this denotative fidelity is itself a coherent, monistic subject?

That Chapter One began this analysis with the visual side of this problem is indicative of the preferences demonstrated by most film theory. For example, film-music composer and historian Hanns Eisler considers that, whereas the human eye "has become

²²⁰ In "Style and Medium in the Motion Pictures" (reprinted in *Three Essays on Style*, ed. Irving Lavin [MIT Press: Cambridge, 1997]), Panofsky decries speech as a technological advance that will anchor film in the reproduction of the real. Similarly, in *Film as Art* Arnheim devotes an entire chapter to this, viewing the inevitably realist use of speech as a tragic blow to the essential characteristics that make film an art (motion, duration, change in perspective and size). These writers, it must be noted, were writing just at the advent of speech; as we will find, speech and spoken language do not necessarily condemn film signification to a harmonious sensory connotation of realism.

²²¹ *Film Art: an Introduction*, p. 193.

²²² *The Voice in Cinema*, p. 125.

accustomed to conceiving reality as made up of separate things, commodities...the human ear has not kept pace with technological progress.”²²³ The suppositions on which this declaration is founded can be traced to a larger understanding of the history of film as an industry.

The cinematic century has unfolded alongside the historical phenomenon of what many call *the visual paradigm*, according to which both our sciences (empirical as well as philosophical, such as phenomenology for example) and mass media have set vision aside as a privileged sense. This draws not only an historical link between cinema and its photographic roots but also between cinema and natural perception, in which we rely far more on our vision for spatial orientation and complex differentiation of our objective surroundings.

Stephen Heath’s quote at the start of this chapter vocalizes a general theoretical association of vision and the image with cinematic meaning. Film may have started as a visual form, and may often favor visual expression, but is this really an accurate portrayal of film representation? Did not *Deux ou trois choses...* confront us with the very fact that the immanent field of film representation is a dialogic site for the interaction of different sensory elements? If we pay attention to the construction of meaning in a film, we find that sense is often made as much—if not more—through the use of speech, which we could consider as the diegetic form of pure enunciation: a character speaks, and we listen. Not only do we listen, but the apparatus listens, and often the image acclimates itself to the words issued.

This is the case with verbal narration, in which a character’s words denote what is then provided in visual form. We are all familiar with the voiceover flashback, for

²²³ *Composing for the Films* (Dennis Dobson: London, 1947), cited in Heath, *Questions of Cinema*, p. 201.

example, in which a character begins narrating a past event, which then leads the film representation itself to change its setting to the past. My interest lying not in the content of what is said but in the manner in which film representation is structured through subject-object relations, it will help to focus on patterns or conventions of ordering speech and image, such as this voiceover flashback, that construct a subjective position to be passed from the apparatus to the spectator in the form of a diegetic subject, or character within the text.

How are speech and image ordered to construct subject-functions? Psychoanalytic models, such as Michel Chion's, answer this according to the Lacanian argument that words have long made order of things and given them names, and thus are the discursive tool of an enunciating subject-function posed as the origin of meaning.²²⁴ However, this causal linearity from word to image, what we could call cinema's *nominative practice*, is as inadequately monolithic an assessment as was Heath's: after all, sometimes created visually and sometimes aurally, film meaning rarely follows the trajectory of only one specific order of discourse. They are both, we will find, part of the immanent field.

While the psychoanalytic notion of subject-formation can be useful, I am looking at the film sign as more of a communications-based model of information, and as such prefer to put this in terms of denotation and connotation. Roland Barthes argues, in his study of photograph captions and advertisements: "The primary function of speech is to

²²⁴ *The Voice in Cinema* (originally *La voix au cinéma*, 1982) ed. and trans. Claudia Gorbman (Columbia University Press: New York, 1985), pp. 49-50. This argument is particularly inconsistent as its support is derived from the fact that hearing is the first developed sense, and thus the fetal baby becomes familiar with the speech of its mother's voice before her appearance. However, the resonance and tone of a voice is in no way interchangeable with language speech.

immobilize perception at a certain level of intelligibility...fixing its level of reading.”²²⁵ Speech in film is often used in a similar way, and we could thus view it as a sort of life preserver for film denotation. Reviving Lesage’s metaphor from Chapter Two, speech helps to “anchor” the text’s meaning, or as Paul Willemen puts it: “verbal language is there to resist the unlimited polysemy of images,” to stabilize the meaning of the film sign.²²⁶

In following my proposed relationship between denotation and subject-object relations, we could say that speech helps to guarantee coherence to the referential content by adding a sense of subjective totality. Speech and image are conventionally coded to preserve both a stable meaning and to guarantee the coherence of the source of that meaning. Reaffirming my understanding of this codification as a socio-cultural phenomenon, a process of mythologization, Colin MacCabe assesses it as a function of conventional cinema’s estrangement of the spectator from the production of filmic discourse:

[T]his requires a fixed relation of dependence between soundtrack and image whether priority is given to the image, as in fiction films (we see the truth and the soundtrack must come into line with it) or to the soundtrack, as in documentary (we are told the truth and the image merely confirms it).²²⁷

While these patterns are not necessarily fixed to fiction or documentary films *per se*, they *are* codified so as to collaborate in the signification of a particular system of reference that may be used to connote a certain type of representation, for example the omniscient neutral narrator of documentary reliability. Does this imply the cohesion of

²²⁵ *Le système de la mode*, (Seuil: Paris, 1967), p. 23. Translated and cited in Paul Willemen, “Cinematic Discourse: the Problem of Inner Speech,” in *Cinema and Language*, ed. Stephen Heath and Patricia Mellencamp (The American Film Institute: Los Angeles, 1983), pp. 141-67 (p. 161).

²²⁶ Paul Willemen, “Cinematic Discourse: the Problem of Inner Speech,” p. 161.

²²⁷ *Godard: Images, Speeches, Politics*, p. 18.

subject-functions to the voice as an aural element, as Chion argues? Isn't MacCabe suggesting, rather, that there is no specific fixed order, but that an order in either direction is fixed and with certain connotative consequences?

As Maxime Scheinfeigel points out, the visual paradigm has particularly strong roots in cinema, which has been considered "un art visuel" ever since its first, *silent* decades.²²⁸ However, as part of the formalist challenge to cinematic mythology in general, many theorists have tried to resist the *kingdom of images* and the *myth of visual purity*, denying the dominant position of the image in the semiotic hierarchy of filmic expression. This in fact became a central tenet of ideological and apparatus theory, "to call into question what both serves and precedes the camera: a truly blind confidence in the visible."²²⁹

I believe that this study would benefit greatly from rejecting such questions of hierarchy altogether, and looking instead at how these are ordered in the structuring of representation. Film production techniques, as Mary Ann Doane observes, certainly indicate the mythologization of a hierarchy between the senses.²³⁰ However useful such analyses have been for revealing the ideological foundation of mainstream cinematic practices, though, I disagree with drastic conclusions such as Chion's "there is no soundtrack."²³¹ Speech is not *always* swallowed by the image, as we will soon find, but considering it so has led many to limit their analysis of film representation and discourse.

²²⁸ "Quand le son détourne l'image," *Cinergon*, No. 17/18 (2004), pp. 75-84 (p. 82).

²²⁹ Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes*, p. 470.

²³⁰ For an analysis of this hierarchy, see Doane, "Ideology and the Practices of Speech Editing and Mixing," in *The Cinematic Apparatus*, ed. Teresa de Lauretis and Stephen Heath (London : Macmillan, 1980)

²³¹ *The Voice in Cinema*, p. 3.

Hoping to resist such a bias in film criticism's historiography, let us turn our ears toward an analysis of how spoken language is situated in relation to the visual image, and how this relationship contributes to the construction of cinematic subjectivity. Moreover, how can speech permit film representation to transcend the classical binaries of self and Other, interior and exterior? Where does speech fit into the dialogism of the immanent field?

Chion claims that, in cinema, sound does not change dramatically in its own right, but "what changes is the relationship between what we see and what we hear."²³² This "relationship" is the speech-image code. And, as Mitry points out, as holds true like a signet for this thesis and the immanent field of film representation: "les rapports entre les choses sont plus importants que les choses elles-mêmes."²³³

II. Speech in, of, and for the image

In "Is the Film in Decline?" Roman Jakobson suggests that the difference between auditory signs and visual signs rests not in their degree of importance, but in their function.²³⁴ However, in a way they both lead to the same end. That is, in the framework of my thesis we can rectify this difference through their mutual attempt to organize the subject-object relations within film representation.

Yet there is some truth in Jakobson's assumption, voiced by others as well, that vision is spatial while sound is temporal, at least in their means of constructing sets of differentiation, organizing relations. And, following Jakobson's suggestion that sound be understood primarily as an element of montage, let us consider to what extent film

²³² *The Voice in Cinema*, p. 19.

²³³ *Esthétique et psychologie du cinéma*, p. 194.

²³⁴ *In Language in Literature* (Harvard University Press: 1996), p. 469

signification—as a product of montage within the image, between shots, and as an entire order of meaning—is based on the division and unity of speech and visual representation.

In film, the use of speech changes according to how the words and what is said are connected to the visual image. This is particularly relevant to our analysis of film signification because of its demonstration of the link concerning structures of causality and the order of constructing meaning: what came first, the vocal utterance of the word “chicken” or the image of the *chicken*? Cinema answers this quandary in many different ways, each one with its own connotative organization of the relationship between the speaking subject and the imagistic representation. Many feminist critics, with whom I strongly agree, view the codification of sound and especially speech, therefore, as a problem of great socio-cultural and ideological importance.²³⁵ After all, since enunciation is conventionalized in conjunction with the alignment of speech and subjectivity, the notion of film as the condition for enunciation is complicated by any alteration to, or subversion of, this alignment.

We could divide filmic speech into two categories of speech: that which is part of the image, and that which is not. This does not mean diegetic versus non-diegetic, or on-screen versus off-screen; slightly different also from ideas such as “fidelity” or “synchronism,” I hope to suggest a connotative difference between speech that is coded

²³⁵ As such, many feminist theorists have considered the subversive or de-codifying use of speech to be the most potent weapon in the cultural struggle against the myths supported by dominant practices, no doubt explaining why a startling majority of the analyses of speech and subjectivity are attributable to proponents of feminist criticism, perhaps the most systematic being performed in Mary Ann Doane’s “The Voice in the Cinema: the Articulation of Body and Space” and Christine Gledhill’s “Recent Development in Feminist Criticism”. There are numerous reasons for this, including foremost the centrality of speech and speech to the Lacanian framework adopted by many feminist theorists; on a fundamental level, though, speech is a marginalized sense in film practice and theory, an alternate space of signification as opposed to the phallogocentric thrust of the voyeuristic gazing visual image. Through this argument such theorists transpose a socio-cultural struggle onto an attempt to reverse—or even simply to appropriate and to deform—the hierarchy provided between sound and image.

harmoniously with the image and speech that is coded in dissonance with the image. There is the use of speech that implies subjective totality, and the use that, in what Deleuze calls “la disjonction de l’image sonore,”²³⁶ creates a sort of dialogue within the representation itself.

As we will find, speech can play an important connotative role, defining the logic by which subjectivity is constructed and the representations unfold. The voiceover flashback, for example, is a codification of speech and image used for two major effects: to shift the temporal setting of the story, and to shift the discourse itself into the narrative position of the speaking or diegetic subject. The immanent field is derailed by one particular character, one voice, signified as speaking subject by the fact that the constancy of this character’s voice renders the temporal shift perfectly coherent.

As we can see here, the voiceover is particularly intriguing to this study, as it is used to align the visual representation as an expression of the diegetic subject’s verbal agency. This is the construct of a new type of subject, the human subject within the representation: the film representation becomes a simulation of that character’s subjectivity. That is, we have yet another articulation, a fourth articulation, as the film representation is itself a representation of the objective world via a diegetic character’s subjective experience of that world.

After all, the voiceover seems to open the film to us, implying that the representation has a special position relative to the subjectivity of the character: we are allowed entrance to the interior of the character. The voiceover signifies the representation as attributed to a particular source, a spatiotemporal coherence that links the character’s voice to the perspective of the filmic image. This source of differentiation

²³⁶ *Cinéma II: l’image temps*, p. 339.

is what I have been calling the subject, only now we can see it constructed in a different way.

And *how* does the voiceover provide this process of differentiation, of situating? Michel Chion writes quite a lot about the voiceover or the voice without visual body, which he calls the “acousmètre,” in *The Voice in Cinema*. Describing the acousmètre as neither inside nor outside the image,²³⁷ Chion performs a thorough technical analysis of the voiceover, assessing the recording practices and specific audio characteristics that engage the spectator’s identification with the voiceover, or I-voice.²³⁸ Through timbre, acoustics, and other technical elements Chion helps us to understand, on a level of form, how this audible subject is created for us.

Reminiscent of the thoroughness and attention to technical detail of Mitry’s writing, Chion’s study provides a perfect example of how a formal analysis can offer insight into the codification of film subjectivity, how the structuring of the immanent field of film representation determines from what position it will be entered, experienced. In doing so, we could say that Chion is trying to explain *how* this codification constructs a certain *feeling*, or *mood*, a certain entrance into the representation as a type of representation. This is the central object of inquiry in this thesis.

Mary Ann Doane suggests that the voiceover has a certain “presence-to-itself”.²³⁹ This refers to the disembodied voice that, through its signifying process, posits a *phantasmatic body*. I agree partially with Doane, but must point out that such a “body” is

²³⁷ *The Voice in Cinema*, p. 23.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 50-1. Chion’s explicit analysis of the formal basis for a particular type of subject-function includes the absence of reverb, for example, to supply a dry voice; according to Chion, reverb situates speech in a particular space, thus alienating the spectator from the subjective position possibly created by the voice. The lack of reverb means a lack of particular space to which the voice is attached, and thus the I-voice “can resonate in us as our own”.

²³⁹ “The Voice in the Cinema: The Articulation of Body and Space,” *Yale French Studies*, no. 60 (1980), pp. 33-50 (p. 36).

of course a metaphor based on the system of reference, a metaphor especially familiar in semiotic and phenomenological approaches, though we could reword this to say that the voiceover signifies a particular composition of subject-object relations: the aural subject-function. As such, this formal cinematic process offers us a new level on which a cinematic code constructs a filmic subject-function, how the interaction of two elements provides us with a particular differentiation between subjective and objective poles of the representation.

Whether it is structured as inside or outside the image, the voiceover is always within the immanent field, capable of erecting a subject-function while erasing any specific visual identity thereof; instead, the visual representation is signified as being the implied image projected from the position of discourse that is demarcated by the voice. This is connotative—the voiceover, we could say, is a form of denotation.

With the problem of spoken language and visual representation, we find the construction of the immanent field once again linked to the importance of order, both hierarchical and causal, just as it is in suture theory. As with Jacques Rancière's notion of audio-visual metaphor discussed in Chapter One, this process can be seen as directly related to the interaction of speech and image in as much as speech tries to make things seen and images try to make things heard, contradicting both Heath's and Chion's respective hierarchies.

However, as Rancière notices: "le problème est que, quand le mot "fait voir," il ne se laisse plus entendre. Et quand l'image fait entendre elle ne se laisse plus voir....."²⁴⁰ In other words, he concludes that secreting a formal element into a code of signification

²⁴⁰ This is the central thesis of his analysis in "Le rouge de *La Chinoise*: politique de Godard," in *La Fable cinématographique*, pp. 187-97 (p. 189).

seems to erase the element's formal, constructed origin. It erases its own footprints, sews together the seams of its construction, and—sutured into that fabric—we believe that we are part of an organic whole, a totality of experience taking place in the structuring of the representation. We believe ourselves to be set before a denoted representation with no connotation.

This manner of conceptualizing film representation should be becoming quite familiar to us by now. As we found in the cases of framing and suture, film representation is a formally specific illustration of how the notion of subjectivity is contingent upon an attempt or necessity to order things according to one unified source of differentiation (i.e. the subject). Since my purpose here consists of understanding how different formal practices contribute to this principle of differentiation, I can now add to this the codification of speech and image. And what happens when this code breaks down, is revealed as a construction? As Schleinfelgel points out, conflict in the speech-image code disturbs both the image's and the spectator's conventional access to cinematic meaning and narrative logic.²⁴¹ In other words, the system of reference is disturbed, subsequently shattering the stability of denotation.

How can we assess this? By isolating and analyzing a particular speech-image code, and looking at what happens when it unravels. Here I will look at the voiceover flashback, which is essentially the cinematic simulation of memory, or a representation of memory as a particular composition of subject-object relations. Luckily for us, Alain Resnais offers a wealth of films in which variant modes of representing memory are central. This permits me to establish a certain dichotomy between the two filmmakers in this study. For, whereas for Godard cinematic reflexivity concerns the transcendental

²⁴¹ "Quand le son détourne l'image," pp. 83-4.

subject primarily as a problem of space or spatialization, for Resnais the deconstruction of subjective unity is forged through temporalization, the inter-temporal fragmentation of the diegetic subject. This also permits me to systematize two thinkers who are otherwise seen as generally quite separate.

Both Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze, I argued at the end of Chapter Two, have the same basic goal of destroying the division of interior and exterior that is founded in the classical notion of subjectivity. As opposed to Merleau-Ponty's notion that an individual's interior is bound to other subjects and objects through its exterior existence as a body in the world, Deleuze elaborates on how the human subject is also in a state of dialogism with his or her own self at other times in the virtual past and future. Deleuze illustrates this condition through a reading of films, such as I will look at here, that rely on the subjective narration of a character—indeed his most frequent reference is to the films of Alain Resnais.

This subjective narration usually takes the form of recounting a memory. Since memory is by definition an individual's impression, and thus classically viewed as divided or isolated from the external world, Jean Mitry points out that it is *always* subjective.²⁴² Yet, in cinema a human's memory is also part of the film representation; that is to say this objective representation of the past is being narrated in the present-time discourse of the objective representation, the film itself. As Bergson claims, memory is not just a moment in the past, but it is also a phenomenon in the present.²⁴³

I will analyze the signifying code of the flashback according to my phenomenological framework of subject-object relations. The fluidity of the flashback,

²⁴² Jean Mitry, *Esthétique et psychologie du cinéma*, p. 291.

²⁴³ This is of course the fundamental thesis of Bergson's *Matière et mémoire*.

which supplies an overlapping of temporal planes due to its having started, and usually returning, to a stable present, is an extension of the organization of subject-object relations that we will find challenged by the representation of an individual's recounting of memory in *Hiroshima, mon amour*, the representation of a collective production of memory in *L'Année dernière à Marienbad*, and in the next chapter with the representation of a person's anticipation of virtual futures in *La guerre est finie* (1966).

III. Alain Resnais and the inter-temporality of diegetic subjectivity

Having begun his career in documentary film, Alain Resnais's films offer great insight into the filmic representation of time and memory, which are often considered the overarching themes of his work.

In *Muriel* (1963), for example, sequential shifts between past and present serve as a method for addressing a collective sense of shame (the war in Algeria) by acknowledging that the cause of this shame is still a part of us. The memory remains, both in the form of our silence and in the form of tangible suffering. This is more formally complicated in *Je t'aime, je t'aime* (1968), for example, wherein the recurring presence of the past splinters the present into a cycle of interpretations contingent on a past that no longer has the anchor of subjective certainty.

But such temporal issues are especially resonant in Resnais's use of the voiceover flashback, which is a particular codification of speech and image used in order to align the film message with a particular character's interior. Jean Mitry notes that the use of subjective commentary as a framework for film narration goes back to early talkies like *How Green Was My Valley* (John Ford, 1941) and *Brief Encounter* (David Lean, 1945).

These classical models contented themselves to using this code to preserve the totality of discourse as referring to one subject-function, a speaking subject who is also the hero of the story being recounted.²⁴⁴

Such a structure of representations gives the impression that the film is a simulation of the character's memory. Remarking on even earlier uses of the flashback, Hugo Münsterberg refers to the flashback as an "objectivation of the memory function" in which film representation is structured according to the laws of the mind over those of the external world.²⁴⁵ But does our memory follow the neat and tidy logic of the conventional flashback?

To the contrary, Noël Carroll for example claims that the flashback's sequential nature is "phenomenologically disanalogous with imagistic memory."²⁴⁶ I will illustrate a systematization of these two positions: Resnais offers a reflexive mode of representation that, while revealing that this "objectivation" is based on the specific codification of film elements, produces a connotative structure meant to refer to a different type of subject than that of the classical flashback. In order to assess Resnais's codification of the speech-image relationship, we must consider the variety offered by his texts.

Built systematically around the recounting of memories, *Hiroshima, mon amour* and *L'Année dernière à Marienbad* set in opposition two modes of speech-image codification: codifications in which the words and images complement each other, refer to each other, lead into each other, or explain each other; and, codifications in which the images and the words are in conflict.

²⁴⁴ *La sémiologie en question*, p. 176.

²⁴⁵ *Hugo Münsterberg on Film: The Photoplay: a Psychological Study and Other Writings*, pp. 90-91.

²⁴⁶ *Theorizing the Moving Image* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1996), p. 302.

In the first case, predominantly in *Hiroshima, mon amour*, speech is used to transfer information from one character to another. The words often complement—and, in many cases, illustrate—the images, or the visual sequence unfolds according to the verbal narration. The speech-image code provides narrative unity and a source of identification in the central character as the subject of discourse and agency. However, we will find that this totality of discourse begins to come undone.

Whereas in *Hiroshima, mon amour* the voiceover is part of a diegetic conversation, in *L'Année dernière à Marienbad* it becomes lost in a dialogic cross-fading of possible pasts and uncertain presents. The immanent field begins to open up, to include multiple subjects and temporalities. The first film produces a logical and linear mode in which the voiceover signifies a speaking subject in the form of causal agency over the visual representation; the other codifies speech and image so that the referential content cannot be traced to a specific, isolated subject-function. Much the same as with the comparative analysis in Chapter One, the first of these films offers the possibility of radical subversion, a challenge to classical connotation that it retracts at the end but which is fully realized in the second film.

III.a. *Hiroshima, mon amour* and the single speaking subject

Hiroshima, mon amour, Alain Resnais's first feature-length fiction film, heralded Resnais's defiance of traditional film representation. The film was instantly seen as radical. Marie-Claire Ropars-Wuilleumier summarizes the majority view: "*Hiroshima* precipitates a rupture of codes, through a forceful cinematographic *écriture* it dismantles

the conventional order of cinema.”²⁴⁷ While I will avoid the metaphor of “écriture,” used here as it often is with regards to what is seen as Resnais’s novelistic tendencies,²⁴⁸ this observation is a useful introduction to how the film, and indeed Resnais’s work in general, has been viewed.

The “dismantling” to which Ropars-Wuilleumier refers, I will argue, revolves around the problem of subjective stability raised through conflicting speech-image codifications of memory. A film about the communication and incommunicability of memory, *Hiroshima* challenges the myth of subjective autonomy, showing the fragility of a unilateral source of signification whose totality is guaranteed by a linear temporal order. What can be said about film’s subject-object relations when such quintessential codifications of diegetic enunciation as the flashback cease to adhere?

As with most of Resnais’s films, the story in this film could be seen as a pretense for experimenting with the representation of subjective time, for which Jean Mitry acclaims *Hiroshima* as the first work to make existential time and memory the basis for the film itself.²⁴⁹ But this is not simply a film that *talks about* memory and time; it *shows* and *speaks* them, which it achieves by focusing on the connotative level of signification. The progressively unconventional obscurity of the film’s forms of denotation directs attention to the immanent field of the representations.

²⁴⁷ “How History Begets Meaning: Alain Resnais’s *Hiroshima, mon amour*,” *French Film: Texts and Contexts*, ed. Susan Hayward and Ginette Vincendeau (Routledge: New York and London, 1990), pp. 173-85 (p. 173).

²⁴⁸ This notion of écriture is particularly prominent in Alain Fleischer’s *L’art d’Alain Resnais*, and while it does evoke certain relevant problems of enunciation and discourse, it seems to diminish Resnais’s specifically cinematic mode of expression.

²⁴⁹ *La sémiologie en question*, p. 176.

Yet, I strongly disagree with Roy Armes's claim that *Hiroshima, mon amour* "has no story to tell in the normal sense."²⁵⁰ The film does tell a clear story even if it is not told in a conventional way. In fact we could say that the unconventionality of the film arises from the formal conjunction of *three* stories to be told: 1) the present-tense story of an affair between a French actress (whom I will call "Nevers" [Emmanuelle Riva] as she is dubbed at the end of the film) and a Japanese man ("Hiroshima" {Eiji Okada}), both of whom are married; 2) Nevers's self-narrated past, which involves her love for a German soldier during World War II, his death, and her long-endured punishment by family and community; and, 3) the story of the nuclear destruction of Hiroshima, to which the film constantly alludes either directly or through its thematic problems concerning memory and expression.²⁵¹

These three stories are interlinked in a complicated form of denotation, a shattered network of representations to mirror a shattered world—a post-genocidal and post-nuclear trauma of representation that Jacques Rivette claims to be Resnais's primary obsession: "la fragmentation de l'unité première."²⁵² This network of representations is not merely a question of narration, as many would argue, but concerns spoken narration as a means for ordering the representation as a type of representation. In other words, it is a problem of connotation.

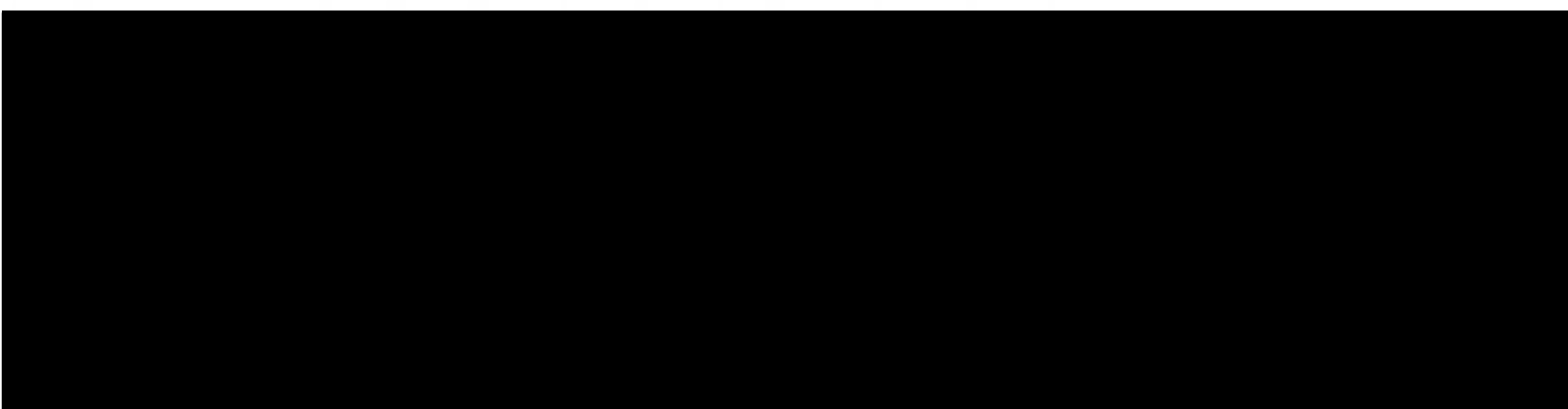
How are these representation types constructed? Present dialogues use present images as triggers for the representation of memories, representations that begin as

²⁵⁰ *The Cinema of Alain Resnais*, p. 86.

²⁵¹ It should be noted here, though it is not of direct relevance, that the entire film was conceived by scriptwriter Marguerite Duras as a representation of the impossibility of discussing or expressing the immensity of what happened in Japan in August 1945.

²⁵² "Table ronde sur *Hiroshima, mon amour*," reprinted in *La Nouvelle vague* (Cahiers du Cinéma: Paris, 1999), pp. 36-62 (p. 40).

spoken words only to transform into image-sequences. Many argue that this is a novelistic convention of cinema, a narrative flow of temporal dimensions that we may recognize quintessentially as the thematic basis for Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*. For example, the position of Hiroshima's arm, lying in bed, reminds our protagonist of the position in which her first lover died, thus thrusting her back into the past (17)—which, gradually, thrusts her into narrating that past.



For Mitry, this evokes the Proustian notion of the present as “un instant privilégié entre la mémoire et l’oubli”.²⁵³ We could translate this to say that in cinema the present is the temporal praxis for the immanent field through which other temporal subjectivities can emanate. The present is privileged as the praxis for enunciation, and this moment is privileged for the speaking subject who can view herself, her own experience, as a product of her own enunciation. Linking the present with the past through a simple visual shock, she transforms this connection between sensation and memory into a formal cinematic code: the voiceover flashback.

The voiceover flashback, I have argued, reduces the film image to a shared mental image—shared between the narrator, her lover, the viewing subject set in the past, and the immanent field that ties these together—at once representing both a memory and the

²⁵³ *Esthétique et psychologie du cinéma*, p. 333.

communication of a memory. In other words, it is at once both objective and subjective. Moreover it is also, Mitry notes, her own act of looking at herself as an object, which for Mitry is central to the representation of memory in both real and cinematic terms.

Echoing Münsterberg as he often does, Mitry refers here to the flashback as an “*objectivation du subjectif*,” an objective rendering of a subjective experience, which Mitry compares with Proust’s writing in order to illustrate a novelistic aspect of this codification between speech and image.²⁵⁴ Wolfgang A. Luchting poses a complex argument to this effect in “*Hiroshima, mon amour*, Time, and Proust,” in which he systematically dissects the film according to a narrative structure of different temporal cases (real time, subjective time, etc.), and thus as a complicated representation of “the order of things.”²⁵⁵

However, this “order of things” avoids the fundamental question of *how* this order is constructed, not as a sequence of temporal unities but as an immanent field of representation, a collection of specifically cinematic formal elements and interwoven processes of organization. While narrative experimentation is part of *Hiroshima*, such an analysis does not fully acknowledge how this narration is unique or unconventional: how is this connoted, and how is it cinematic?

This film’s focus on history and subjectivity inclines one to follow up, respectively, on more allegorical or psychoanalytic interpretations, such as those offered by Luchting, Ropars-Wuilleumier, and Emma Wilson. While Luchting focuses his analysis on the moral ambiguity of adulterous love, Ropars-Wuilleumier argues that the subversion of codes is an allegory for the sublime and inexpressible magnitude of

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 334-335.

²⁵⁵ Wolfgang A. Luchting, “*Hiroshima, mon amour*, Time, and Proust,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 21, No. 3 (Spring, 1963), pp. 299-313 (p.310).

Hiroshima as an historical event.²⁵⁶ Wilson reformulates this allegorical understanding of the flashback, according to a psychoanalytic framework, as “an unwilling returning hallucination or memory that takes possession of the victim of trauma.”²⁵⁷

Wilson goes on to suggest that the film consists of subjective representations from “a traumatized mind,” and that this opening function of the connection between the images of arms is exemplary of the importance of bodies and the visceral representation of the haptic in Renais. Wilson affirms this argument for a visceral reading based on the fact that, in its context in the film, this flashback “serves no explanatory function in the narrative.”²⁵⁸

Wilson is correct in that, at this point, we don’t know who the dead man on the ground is, nor what the context of that representation is. However, one could argue that this sequence acts to introduce the film’s construction of subject-object relations, the form through which its denotation will be presented. This fleeting cut accommodates us to the system of reference upon which the narrative will be founded, easing the film’s immanent field into an alignment with the subjective position of a particular character. In Metzian fashion, Wilson makes the connotative analysis secondary to a denotative argument based on the experiences of the film’s main character.

On the connotative level, *Hiroshima, mon amour* is guided by an order of meaning for the most part making use of conventional cinematic representations of memory. Maintaining aural agency over the unfolding of images, Nevers projects herself as an object in the past while guarding her subjectivity in the present. Typically viewed

²⁵⁶ “How History Begets Meaning: Alain Resnais’s *Hiroshima, mon amour*,” p.179.

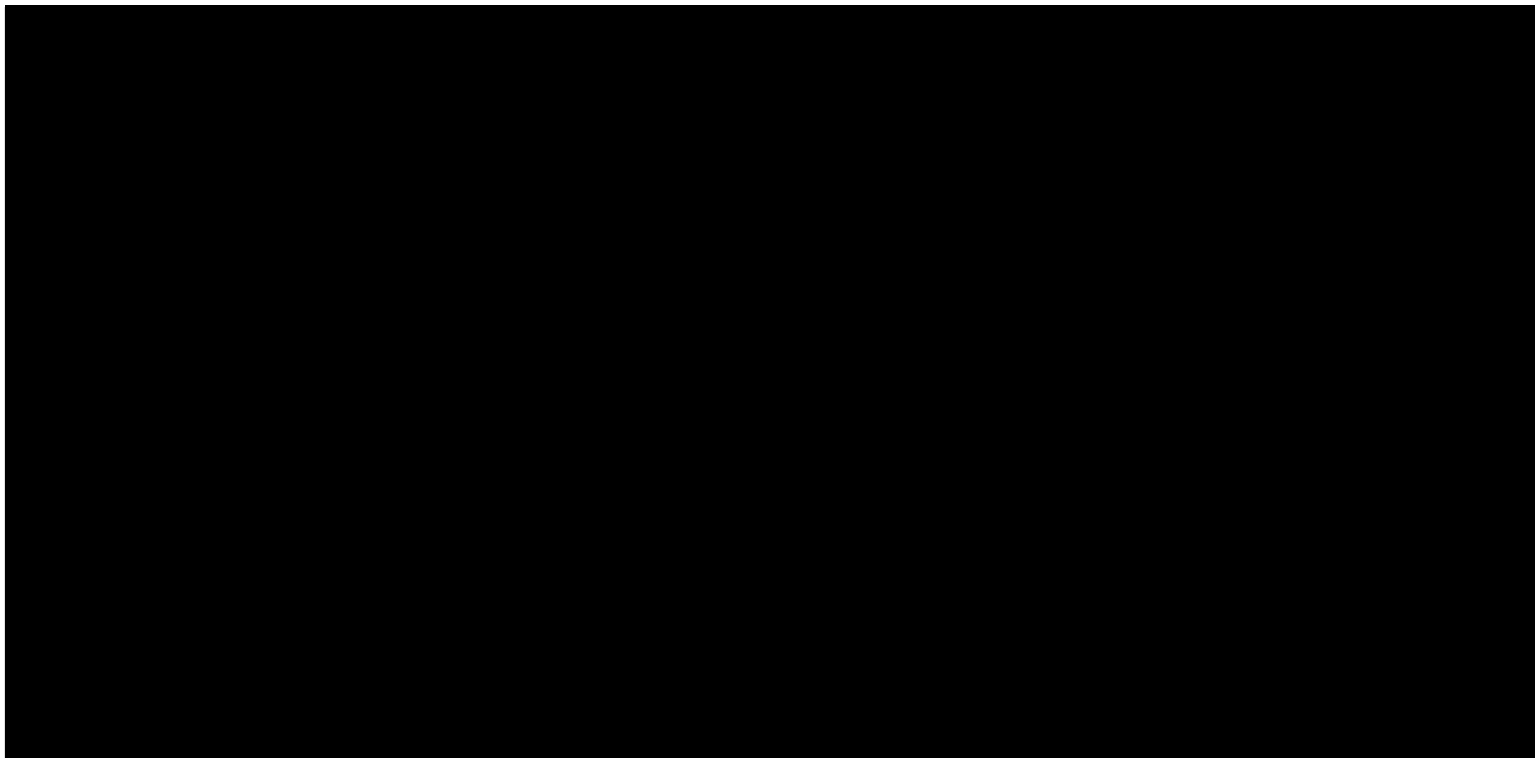
²⁵⁷ *Alain Resnais*, p.52.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p.53.

in film criticism as a text based on fragmentation and struggling discourses,²⁵⁹ I will argue that, as we found with *Vivre sa vie*, *Hiroshima, mon amour* poses challenges to classical representation while, in the end, reverting to conventional codifications of subjectivity. This is the case beginning with the opening scene.

The film opens with abstract images of two intertwined bodies (18), and quickly drifts into a voiceover dialogue. The sequence follows a cycle from speech to image, the images following Nevers's voiceover. She is, quite literally, denoting. Each time she claims to have seen something (first the hospital, then the museum, then the newsreels), we then see what she is describing (19); this image is sometimes even from the perspective of a moving camera that is looked into by people in the frame, implying that the image is constructed according to the individual perspective of a mobile subject. Hiroshima, to whom she is saying all of this, frequently interrupts to say: "Tu n'as rien vu," forcing her "acousmètre" back to the praxis of the diegetic present, back to the visual context of their bodies .

²⁵⁹ The best example of the overwhelmed romanticism with which critics have treated this film is the "Table ronde sur *Hiroshima, mon amour*," dictated by the group at *Cahiers du cinéma* upon the film's release and reprinted in *La Nouvelle vague* (Cahiers du Cinéma: Paris, 1999), pp.36-62.



Roy Armes describes this scene as a counterpoint between subjective recollection and documentary modes of representation.²⁶⁰ We could alter this slightly to argue that here we have a struggle between different systems of reference within the same representation, an overlapping of different modes of representation. We are seeing images similar to those presented in documentary forms, and sometimes even images from a documentary film, but *as* the mental image of a character, her memories. And, the immanent field constantly shifts between documentary-style images of Nevers's past and objective images of the couple in bed.

Nevers introduces images with "J'ai vu...," leading many critics to conclude that the film is about seeing things.²⁶¹ But, I will argue, the film is less about *having seen* than it is about *showing*, about using a particular codification of speech and image in order to create a narrative discourse in the diegetic present. While her ability to "show" is

²⁶⁰ *The Cinema of Alain Resnais*, p. 74.

²⁶¹ See the analyses of Luchting and of Haim Callev (*The Stream of Consciousness in the Films of Alain Resnais* [McGruer Publishing: New York, 1997]), who prefer to see the film as being specifically about "seeing".

manifested in her signaling of subjective representations, Hiroshima's interjections constantly bring us back to the objective pole of representation.

This struggle between audio-visual discourse and the physical body raises questions concerning the relationship between signification and physical existence, between the subjective and objective in cinema. Wilson builds upon Jean-Louis Leutrat's view that the central theme of the film is the theme of skin, hands, impressions of the tactile.²⁶² This tactile aspect constantly interrupts the codification of speech and image. Nevers is a being in the world, as Merleau-Ponty might say; but, our knowledge of this is coded through film form. The structure of her being is part of the immanent field.

Redirecting these theorists' argument, then, we could rather see this as Nevers's co-existence at once as the subject of her own narrated story and as an object in a physical context (which is the diegesis that we are watching). Though this contributes to the dialogic notion of film representation, this speech-image code proposes a certain conventionalized overlapping between perception, memory, and communication (what she has seen, remembers, and tells). Christian Metz's suggestion that a flashback is like a striptease is particularly poignant here: the more that she reveals, the more that she posits herself as an object of her own narration, the more subjective control she has over the text.²⁶³

However, this codification begins to display its own fragility as the protagonist proceeds further into recounting her own personal history. She tells of her German lover, and of her incarceration in the family cellar as punishment for the shame caused by her affair with the enemy. Denotatively, this sequence is particularly moving for its

²⁶² Leutrat, *Hiroshima, mon amour* (Nathan: Paris, 1994), cited in Wilson, *Alain Resnais*, p. 48.

²⁶³ *Le signifiant imaginaire*, p. 105.

allegorical representation of the repression of female sexuality and the dualistic nature of fascism as a function of what Noël Burch, a propos to this film, calls “the stupidity of the provincial bourgeoisie” during wartime.²⁶⁴

Burch observes, furthermore, that her story unfolds a-chronologically: we see the events not in the order that they happen, but in the order that they occur to her, “the stream of her impressions and associations.”²⁶⁵ Burch’s point upholds the common understanding of this enunciation as a conventionalized representation of her own attempt to represent her experience. However, we should view this breakdown of denotative linearity as a question primarily of formal—and not narrative—subversion. For, in order for the sequence to unfold as it does, it must be engendered to do so by the construction of subject-object relations in the form of the speech-image code.

During this scene, *Hiroshima, mon amour* encounters short-circuits in the flashback process, blips in the speech-image code that connote imperfections in conventional systems of reference. This is a contradiction between temporal sources of speech and image: the image of the past is still dominated by her voice in the present. We are in the present with the couple (21). Her voice ushers the visual representation into an image of the past, but an objective relationship with that past is never established. The voiceover flashback does not fulfill its role as a code, it does not transfer the image from her subjectivity to an objective representation set in the past. The objective and subjective poles blend. The images begin slightly to contradict her narration: she tells about hearing “La Marseillaise” overhead, and we see soldiers passing silently (22). The

²⁶⁴ Noël Burch, “Qu'est-ce que la Nouvelle Vague?,” *Film Quarterly*, Vol. XIII, No.2 (Winter, 1959), pp.16-30 (p. 24).

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

speech-image code, whose coherence of enunciation is meant to connote a particular order of meaning, is beginning to splinter.



The division of subjectivity represented by the shift in temporality proves to be too much for the psychological stability of the character. Herein lies the connotative trauma that Wilson's analysis could have continued through with, as the state of narrative limbo is fundamentally a breakdown in the formal codification of speech and image. As if deeply disturbed by the abovementioned fragmentation of speech, sound, and image, Nevers begins to narrate her memory, a recounting of the past, *in the present tense*, fracturing the spatiotemporal coherence of her enunciation. The speech-image codification, which is the cinematic form of her psychological stability, begins to come undone: the image ceases to be linked to her speech.

We should therefore understand this as a connotative rupture. That is to say: a rupture in the form of denotation, in the way the denotative elements of the story are represented, a formal rupture between aural and visual elements. This enunciating subject-function begins to splinter further between the past she narrates and the present in which she is narrated, in a scene that takes place between Nevers and her reflection in the bathroom mirror (23).



Her entire discourse deteriorates here into a polysemy of pronouns. She speaks to herself about herself, addressing herself as the first person *je* and also the second person *vous*. Beyond addressing herself as possible interlocutor, she interchanges her past and present lovers in the mix of discourses, each of whom at numerous points assume the mantle of *vous* in the present-tense discourse. But her schizophrenia—and therefore the representation's—goes beyond the content of her words. This decomposition manifests itself on the formal level of the speech-image code, as this monologue (or conversation with herself) fluctuates between diegetic speech and voiceover speech.

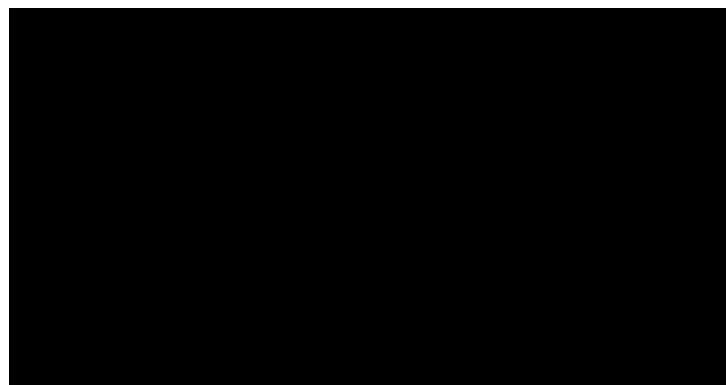
The same thread of speech is continued in these two aural forms, thus presenting the same voice as the source of two different modes of enunciation, a subject split between discourses. The immanent field spreads its wings beyond the division of the interior and exterior of the diegetic subject.

I should at least acknowledge here the obvious psychoanalytic importance of the fact that this is happening in a mirror reflection.²⁶⁶ According to Lacan, the mirror-phase—one of the most frequently recurring psychoanalytic principles used in film theory—attests to the stage in human subject-formation in which the infant succeeds at

²⁶⁶ Charles F. Altman points out that, whereas Barthes's model of the Oedipal myth as the generator of narrative structures was dominant in psychoanalytic theory in the 1960s, it was replaced by Lacan's *stade du miroir* as the preferred theoretical analogy, as is most evident in the edition of *Communications* No. 23 dedicated in 1975 to psychoanalysis and cinema. (See "Psychoanalysis and Cinema: the Imaginary Discourse," pp. 518-9)

identifying itself as a visible object. This is similar to Mitry's assessment of the flashback, in which the character verbally posits herself as a visible object in the imagistic representation of her own verbally narrated recollection. In this particular example, the codification of that recollection becomes apparent, as if cinema itself were acknowledging its own duality between subjective and objective poles of representation. This mode of self-conscious, reflexive cinema, constructed by Resnais and Godard through in very different ways, could well be described as cinema's mirror-stage.

After this scene, Nevers attempts to gather the composure of her conventional subjectivity. She walks down the sidewalk with her lover only steps behind, depth-of-field adding yet another mode of organizing the division between them. She tries to reclaim the authority of her enunciating subject-function by reinforcing the causality between her voiceover and the visual representation. "Il va venir vers moi...me prendre par les épaules. Il m'embrassera," her voiceover says as they walk (24). However, he remains distant.



Her voiceover is not supported by the visual world of action; she is revealed to be powerless in the present, and her control over the narrative is revealed as an illusion, a coded representation. This fully rejects any illusion that the image is essentially or naturally connected to the words being spoken. Her interior is made exterior, and the

representation is caught between aural subjectivity and visual objectivity, a site for the dialogic overlapping of reference points.

In a textually circular fashion, however, this nominative process marks the film's return to its original speech-image code, the reconciliation of speech, image, and body we found in the opening scene. In the final scene, after having passed the entire film anonymous, the two characters name each other: she names him "Hiroshima," and he names her "Nevers". This reconciles the film's speech-image irregularities in a way that supports the conventional subject-function challenged in certain sequences: in the end, the human subjects are defined by a nominal logic of differentiation and returned back to the objective representation of the camera.

III.b. *L'Année dernière à Marienbad* and the subject of collective memory

While *Hiroshima, mon amour* certainly offers a challenge to the conventional subject-function of the voiceover flashback, in *L'Année dernière à Marienbad* the code between speech and image is subverted to the point of a complete rupture in the denotative level of signification. This rupture is caused by yet another voice being added to the dialogic structure of the immanent field. I have until now considered the transcendental subject, as well as the interaction between this subject and a diegetic subject; I will now look at what happens when a second diegetic subject is added.

This second subject produces a conflict between two separate memories, two different experiences. This leads to the representation of an unfixed temporal scheme, in which flashbacks are not the past but are attempts to structure memory, subjective projections of what one person believes to have happened. The present, meanwhile,

becomes a fragile site of struggle over this memory of what may or may not have happened, an experience that may or may not have been shared.

L'Année dernière à Marienbad is quite different from *Hiroshima, mon amour* in that it is not simply divided between the present and the past, then, *but between all possible pasts and their contingent presents*. This terminology owes much to Deleuze's concept of Bergsonian time, which uses Bergson's principles of temporal overlapping to understand the temporal fragmentation of a diegetic subject-function. Indeed, just as *Hiroshima* serves for Jean Mitry as the model for a new type of cinema, *L'Année dernière à Marienbad* holds for Deleuze a special place: "un moment important" in the deconstruction of classical codes and a constant point of reference in *Cinéma II: l'image-temps*.²⁶⁷

A film about the struggle over a memory of what may not have happened, Ronald Bogue points out that, to whatever degree *Marienbad* can be said to represent the past, it is the "malleable, non-personal virtual past" composed from the slightly varied repetitions of "memory suggestions".²⁶⁸ By "non-personal" we can understand Deleuze's concept of nonspecific film subjectivity, what I have reconstructed as a fluctuation between positions, which we will find to be illustrated by this film's combination of representation-types in an overall network of collective memory that includes both the apparatus and multiple characters.

Bogue extends Deleuze's analysis to posit the various representations as "coexisting strata of time," a flux we could describe as the coexistence, in the present, of

²⁶⁷ *Cinéma II: l'image-temps*, p. 135.

²⁶⁸ *Deleuze on Cinema*, p. 143.

multiple possible memories.²⁶⁹ This flux between past and present would be impossible without keeping one foot in the present while stepping the other into the past. In order to do this, a code must be ruptured and divided between the two elements that comprise it.

This rupture is of course accomplished by splicing the speech-image code. In my analysis of *Hiroshima, mon amour* I looked at how the splice in this code can permit a sort of time travel, as long as the subject-function driving this time machine is coherent, stable. Now, I will look at what happens when this time machine runs out of gas, when it loses its direction, and when it gets hijacked by another driver. *Marienbad* is built from a system of montage in which the conventional narrative organization of representations is replaced by an interweaving of temporal moments, using certain formal relations to connote the permeable nature of temporal continuity as well as the *crystalline* or multilateral nature of film enunciation.

This crystal, like that constructed in *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle*, reveals the dialogic capabilities of film's immanent field. Nowhere is this unconventionality more apparent than in the synapses between speech act and mental image, a relationship that we could isolate as the central basis for the film's representations. Robbe-Grillet himself wrote, in the published version of *L'Année dernière à Marienbad*: "Tout le film...s'agit d'une réalité que le héros crée de sa propre vision, par sa propre parole."²⁷⁰ The film is about the attempt to denote a visual reality through the use of spoken words.

However, the film does not unfold as neatly. *L'Année dernière à Marienbad* is composed of a wide variety of speech-image relations, rarely maintaining a conventional

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

²⁷⁰ (Éditions de Minuit: Paris, 1961), p.12. Even this degree of coherence, however, is shattered by the end of the film, when the female character begins to assert her own audio-visual agency into the discourse.

code of present-speech/present-image or even a clearly defined code between present-speech/past-image. But, as I hope to provide a certain consistency and balance to this thesis's textual analyses, let us start out more simply, with an overview of the film and its critical reception.

Though there is admittedly little "story" to go on, there *is* a general theme of seduction, refusal, and persuasion: or, what Jean V. Alter aptly calls "a conflict of wills."²⁷¹ This conflict of wills manifests itself through the representation of opposing memories, an audio-visual phantasmagoria that unsettles most conventions of film storytelling, leaving its viewers to ask: "*What* happened?" Due to its unique stylistic extravagance and its cryptic order of meaning, *L'Année dernière à Marienbad* has inspired no shortage of commentary and interpretation.

Emma Wilson, for example, views the general unreality of the film as being "about the role of fantasy in supporting desire."²⁷² Working from Slavoj Žižek's reading of the film, Wilson interprets the experimental narrative as manifesting the characters' desire and fantasy: the struggle for volition, according to Wilson, could be seen from this angle as a rape-fantasy. While I will not take a similar psychoanalytic approach, Wilson's interpretation could be viewed as an argument for my notion of the immanent field, in which we find an interaction between different types of representation built according to different subject-object relations. While metaphors of fantasy and dream dominate most readings of the film, my model would systematize these alongside more

²⁷¹ "Alain Robbe-Grillet and the "Cinematographic Style," *The Modern Language Journal*, Vol. 48, No. 6 (Oct., 1964), pp. 363-366 (p. 365).

²⁷² *Alain Resnais.*, p. 71.

narrative approaches, such as Neal Oxenhandler analysis of the text as a symbolic representation of emotion.²⁷³

For those familiar with the film, it is without question complex and fecund for interpretation. And, while *Marienbad*'s system of meaning is so vastly open that a multitude of allegorical, psychoanalytic, and symbolic interpretations could be applied to it,²⁷⁴ I will defer to the filmmakers' insistence that the text is, fundamentally, a reflexive experiment in film form.²⁷⁵ Regardless of whether the unfolding scenes are memories or fantasies, dreams or alternate dimensions, critics such as Jacques Brunius and Haim Callev point out that this debate is made possible by the fact that there the film perpetuates no clear system of reference.²⁷⁶ The representation is constantly unsettled by a fluctuation between the subjective and objective poles, and we are never given a fully clear structure of subject-object relations. As we will find, *L'Année dernière à Marienbad* dismantles the coded divisions between subject-functions, constructing a reflexive parallelism that implicates in the immanent field the signifying processes between person and person, between character and text, and between text and spectator. As Merleau-Ponty might say, it shows how we show on numerous levels.

The opening sequence in *Marienbad* introduces the connotative principles that will prevail throughout the film, including audio-visual motifs as well as the thematic instability of the code that binds the audio and the visual. On the visual level, the film opens with long tracking shots that capture the luxurious frescoes and gilded trellises of

²⁷³ Neal Oxenhandler, "Marienbad Revisited," *Film Quarterly*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (Autumn, 1963), pp. 30-35.

²⁷⁴ René Prédal even enumerates at least 16 possible scenarios explaining the text, though he does not pursue a single one. (See *Etudes cinématographiques*, No. 64/68 [Minard: Paris, 1968]), pp. 86-7.

²⁷⁵ See André S. Lebarthe and Jacques Rivette, "Entretien avec Resnais and Robbe-Grillet," *Cahiers du Cinéma* No.123 (September 1961), pp. 4-5.

²⁷⁶ See Jacques Brunius, "Every year at Marienbad or The Discipline of Uncertainty," *Sight and Sound*, No. 31:3 (Summer, 1962), pp. 122-7, and Haim Callev, *The Stream of Consciousness in the Films of Alain Resnais*, p.224.

the chateau, an ornate visual design accentuated by the stark black-and-white photography. The tracking shot, usually attributable to a specific source, is not attached to an identified subject of vision, and as such we turn to the audio for such an anchor. But the images flow by hypnotically, apparently without any motivated connection to a soundtrack that is saturated with conflict, an ebb and flow between two aural elements: an organ and a male voiceover that describes the labyrinthine grandeur of the locale.

Taking turns fading each other in and out, the aural elements constantly exchange places in the forefront of the sound mix. This produces an effect similar to what David Bordwell calls “the cocktail-party effect,”²⁷⁷ referring to the difficulty of following two aural discourses at once. Though Bordwell relegates this to “spoken discourses,” it could be applied here to the disparate sources of enunciation, as these overlapping tracks vie for the production of different systems of reference: one that is narrated by a character and another, accentuated by organ music, projected from the apparatus.

However, at this point neither the voice nor the organ has a diegetic source in the film: we see no organ, we see no body. One could argue that the voiceover in fact belongs to the male protagonist (who, following Robbe-Grillet’s script, I will call “X” [Giorgio Albertazzi]) but this is fully unclear at this stage, as we have not seen him. Continuing her argument of the tactile in Resnais’s work, Emma Wilson argues: “Words precede images here, as if the extraordinarily tactile, sentient world of *Marienbad*...is called up, imagined as a result of the words we hear narrated.”²⁷⁸ However, the scene does not necessarily unfold in this nominative manner: the words follow a cyclical, and not linear—or explicative—trajectory, and are constantly faded in and out by the music.

²⁷⁷ *Narration in Fiction Film*, p. 312.

²⁷⁸ *Alain Resnais*, p. 69

What I termed cinema's nominative practice earlier in this chapter, in which the visual image is labeled or described directly by spoken words, is frustrated further by the constant, interruptive return of the organ. Neither of these aural elements exerts a causal agency over the flow of images. The voiceover speaks of being thrust back through rooms and halls; yet, the visual pictures are not necessarily connected to the words.

For example, the organ softens slightly as the voiceover fades in at a random point in its cycle: "...les longs de ce couloir...". As his voice continues, the shot cuts to a different tracking shot. The new tracking shot moves fluidly as the voice then fades out and the organ fades in: the shift between the two aural tracks has no connection to the cutting between tracking shots. Voiceover narration, non-diegetic music, and the tracking shot are all normally characterized by their fluid formal continuity. But here, one continues as the other breaks, shifts, or restarts, thus accentuating the rift between them, belying their own respective lacks of totality. This introduces what Jean-Louis Leutrat views as the film's central theme of repetition and difference.²⁷⁹

This theme escorts us into the scene that follows. The guests at the villa are paired off into couples or trios, and the camera slowly moves through the rooms while the sound records fragments of often un-attributed conversation. Following the theme of repetition and difference, a collective discourse is interwoven among the different groups, basic themes of conversation that continue unimpeded from one group to the next. Each group engages in a variation on the incertitude that will come to dominate the interactions

²⁷⁹ *L'Année dernière à Marienbad*, trans. Paul Hammond (BFI Publishing: London, 2000). Leutrat goes on to draw connections between this film, which bears witness "to the particular techniques of repetition which cinema employs," to the notions expounded in Deleuze's *Différence et répétition* (Presses Universitaires de France: Paris, 2003).

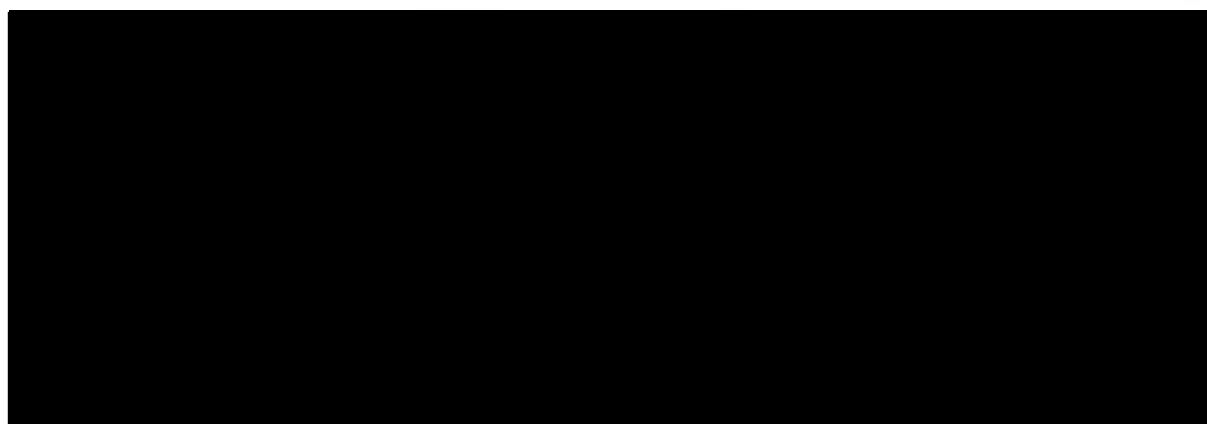
between X and the female protagonist, “A” (Delphine Seyrig). “*We met...*,” “*...when...?*,” “*...where...?*”....

Watching this, we can easily understand Wilson’s observation that the guests “function as part-animate props” in order to provide molds for how the film will use speech-image codifications to represent the phenomenon of collective memory and the role of verbal narration therein. We find a certain process of collective interaction permeating the immanent field: the signifying system from which this film builds its articulations consists of what Wilson refers to as “the social codes which construct identities and social interchange” through repetition and circulation.²⁸⁰ Fleeting claims about “quand on s’est rencontré...où...” are confirmed not by images or even first-hand description, but by the narrative assertion that “C’était raconté...” However, as we will find in this film, being recounted, being narrated, does not make something factual, does not always lend it certainty.

These conversations weave in and out of X’s voiceover, who has now been given a visible body (at least, a body we assume to be his, as he is the only person who we recognize in numerous images). His voiceover, too, extends its own permutations on this collective discourse. This scene introduces A, the female protagonist about whom these hushed voices may or may not be talking, via a conflict between speech and image. Wearing a black dress, A stands in a doorway (25). Presumably speaking of her, and also to her, we hear X’s voiceover utter the words: “Toujours la même” (“*Always the same*”). The image cuts to A, in the same position, only now wearing a white dress (26), thus following the speech-act with the visual contradiction of its meaning (i.e. in the second

²⁸⁰ Alain Resnais, p. 70.

image she is not “*the same*” as in the first). In *Marienbad*’s dance of repetition and difference, we will have to get used to our expectations being dashed.



This signals a certain split that we will find in Chapter Four to be characteristic of Resnais’s oeuvre in general, one that is manifested in different ways in Godard’s *Le Mépris*. This split takes place, according to my model, between the sensory aspects of the representation, guarding them present in the immanent field but detaching them from a solitary system of reference. Deleuze describes this as such:

[C]’est le visuel et le sonore qui deviennent deux composantes autonomes d’une image audio-visuelle, ou, plus encore, deux images héautonomes.²⁸¹

I will argue that this split signifies a struggle for subjective agency, a multiplicity in the representation’s origin of meaning. This sensory split, like the aural discourses of *Deux ou trois choses...*, reveals the representation itself as being a field for the interaction of possible subjective positions. But in *Marienbad* the representation is not only a site for this interaction, but a battleground for the war of speech-image agency. This struggle for a closed audio-visual image, for a singular subjective position, takes the narrative form of a persuasion: X’s attempt to convince A of their mutual experience by conjuring up an imagistic past with his verbal discourse in the present. In this process we will find

²⁸¹ *Cinéma II: l’image-temps*, p. 339.

that the present is not stable in the midst of forking pasts, possible memories, and conflicting temporal discourses.

We could view this instability as resulting from the fact that, while these temporal fluctuations are linked through the transformation of speech codes, these links do not provide a stable subject of discourse. There is never a definite logical order of meaning infused into the relationship between speech and image: the mode of discourse is constantly changing and, thus, never stabilizing a single sensory agent. As Christian Metz writes:

Dans *L'Année dernière à Marienbad*, l'image et le texte joue à cache-cache.... Le partie est égale: le texte fait image, l'image se fait texte; c'est tout ce jeu de contextes qui fait la contexture du film.²⁸²

This “contexture” consists of a constant overlapping between speech functions and visual representation. Contrary to Metz’s assertion, though, I view the film rather as a *failure* of words to make images and *vice versa*. The subject-functions of visuality and speech are kept from conjoining, thus denying each other. For the majority of the film, X struggles to convince A of their previous meeting by garnishing visual support for his words, but this agency constantly finds itself at the crossroads of overlapping subjective and objective modes of representation.

We see her, for example, wondering through an open hallway as X’s voiceover speaks of her clothes and gestures. At this point the image seems to be her mental image, constructed by his verbal description. However, that is soon shifted; the camera zooms in and pans slightly to reveal X himself in the image, his voiceover suddenly becoming an on-screen voice (27). This formal alteration to the immanent field abruptly shifts the

²⁸² *Essais sur la signification au cinéma I*, p. 62.

representation's system of reference from a subjective representation (though it is unclear according to *who's* subjectivity) to an objective representation.

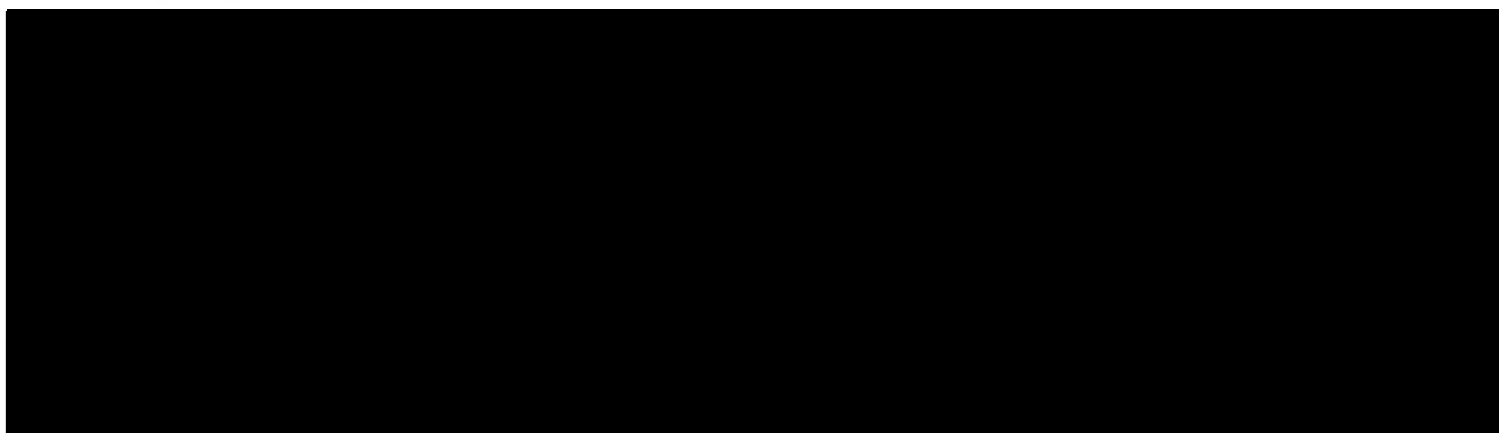


Yet, this is not the code he wants, for it does not assume an alignment between his speech and her imaginary. It does not align the immanent field so as to signify him as its unique system of reference. So, again, X returns to conjuring images according to his voiceover. However, when he gets this wish, it is not without its consequences.

We see A outside, awkwardly trying to position herself according to X's description. His voiceover describes how she was standing, and in the image we can see her attempt to accommodate his description (28). That is: A, in an image that is coded to be set in the past, responds directly to the voiceover that is set in the present, fully breaking the illusion necessary for a stable denotation either between the characters or between the film and spectator.

This provides the first truly self-conscious break in the conventionalization of temporal divisions, self-conscious in that the representation acknowledges that it is supposed to work *a certain way*, that there is a conventional way of structuring this representation through the order between speech and image. The code is revealed, the myth X is attempting to create is revealed as exactly that, a myth, and the frustration of a closed denotation directs attention toward the connotative base. This myth is then

naturalized in the form of an *objective* image of the two of them, the objectivity of which is thrown into question by the fact that their conversation continues in voiceover (29). Again, when one sensory element follows his attempt to organize a system of reference, the other sensory element deconstructs it.



X attempts to keep A at the mercy of his aural agency, the power of his voiceover narration, which exists only through the ability of his words to conjure images. The representation returns to the diegetic “present,” in which X’s description of the statue by which they were standing is interrupted by Frank (presumably A’s husband [Sacha Pitoëff]), who explains the historical basis for the statue and, thus, offers yet another source of discourse in the film, another system of reference intersecting in the immanent field.

The centrality of the statue to the multi-character discourse has led many, including René Prédal²⁸³ and Jean-Louis Leutrat and Suzanne Liandrat-Guigues²⁸⁴, to make the argument that *L’Année dernière à Marienbad* is in fact a film about the statue itself. However, in the context of this analysis, the statue merely plays the role as an object of discourse around which the multiple voices can vie for subjective agency.

²⁸³ See *études cinématographiques*, Nos. 64-68, (1968), p. 48.

²⁸⁴ This argument has been vocalized by both Leutrat and Liandrat-Guigues in personal conversation as well as various seminars and lectures, and can be found in Leutrat’s *L’Année dernière à Marienbad* and also their co-written *Alain Resnais: Liasons secrètes, accords vagabonds* (Cahiers du cinéma: France, 2006).

My own argument could be posed as such: there is a problem of denotation, which can be traced to the instability or lack of specificity of a single system of reference, the interruptions of multiple discourses. The visual representations begin to intersect here, and it becomes unclear according to what perspective the representation is being signified. Does the image belong to A or to X? Even as it seems that she is beginning to remember, her memory is still not the same as his. In this way, *Marienbad* offers us a simulation of collective memory, the representation of two people trying to reconcile their mutual present to a non-mutual past. As Deleuze observes, Resnais “découvre le paradoxe d’une mémoire à deux.”²⁸⁵

This paradox, formally realized through a juxtaposition of aural and visual elements, presents a struggle for authenticity on the level of the speech-image code: subjective agency rests with the character who can determine some sort of sensory causality or harmony, who can establish some affinity with the immanent field, align his or her imaginary with the film image. But in *L’Année dernière à Marienbad*, this codification never succeeds. And, we will find: what began as a singular attempt to persuade becomes a collective challenge to remember.

To follow up on Deleuze’s “mémoire à deux,” we slowly realize that the memory being debated, regardless of whether or not they both experienced it at some point together, is “une mémoire encore commune, puisqu’elle se rapporte aux mêmes données, affirmées par l’un, niées ou déniées par l’autre.”²⁸⁶ This very opposition, manifested in the formal sharing of visual representations, reveals a bond between people. But who is telling the truth? Is there any such thing as absolute certainty?

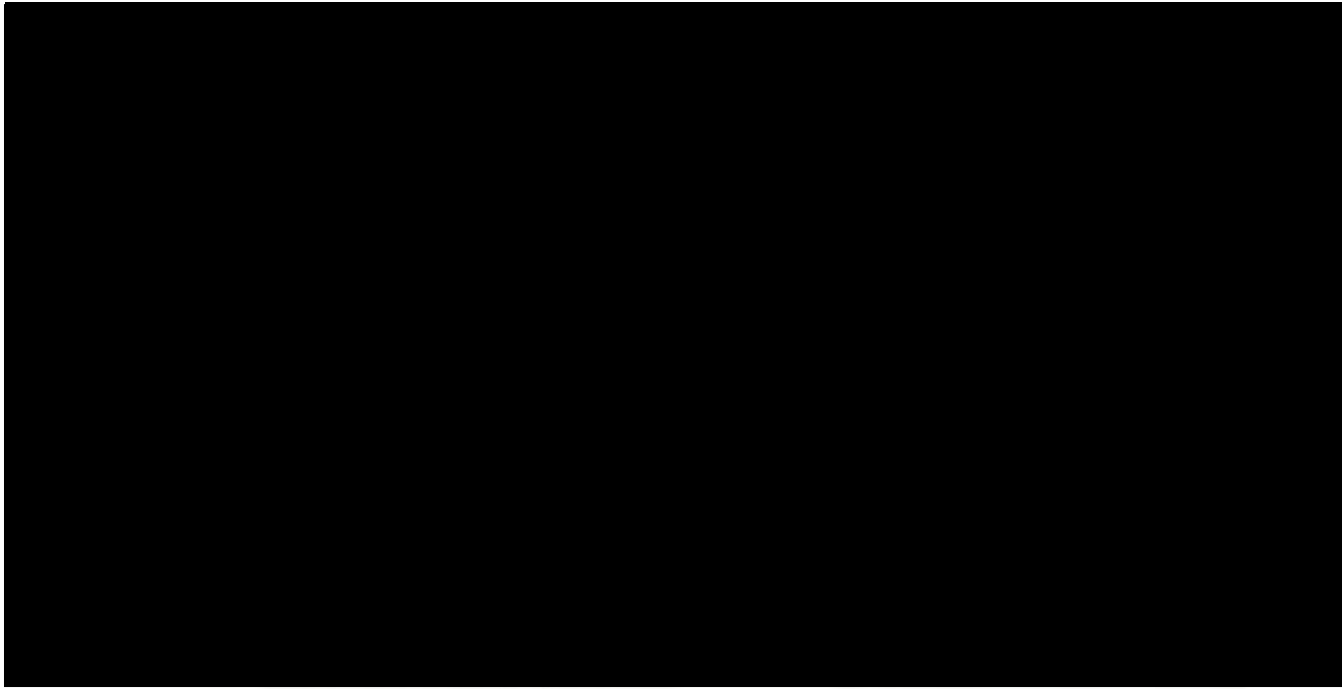
²⁸⁵ *Cinéma II: l’image-temps*, p. 153.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

The suspense concerning their possible shared past builds toward the climactic representation of that pivotal night during which a tryst is claimed to have happened, and a sexual assault is implied as a possible alternative. Standing at the bar, X describes to A his entrance into her room. There is a quick crosscutting between the present moment of description (30), and the past that is being described (31).



A looks at X, finally beginning to adopt his verbal descriptions as her own memory. He speaks of entering her room (32). In the bedroom A looks up, as if at someone entering the room, and laughs (33). The sound of her laughter resonates through the temporal division provided by the code of montage, continuing on the soundtrack as if escorting the image—and therefore her, and us—back into the present, back to the bar, where a female bystander's laughter replaces that of A (34). The two sounds merge, blending the two temporalities into one representation; the immanent field binds the temporalities through its inclusion of formal elements.



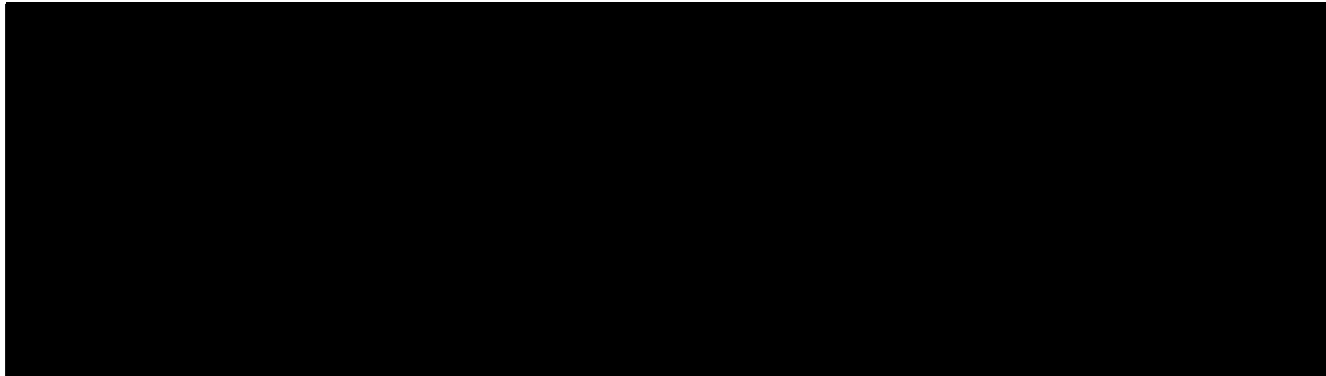
This sequence could be argued, according to the Deleuzean model I outlined in Chapter Two, as the connotative engendering of narrative syntax. The aural element of laughter is continuous, providing an inter-temporal unity or totality that breaks A out of the trance of X's agency, as if from fear of being consumed by his claim to subjective agency. The sound of laughter carries her from the collective imaginary back into the present, where she is terrified at the potential power of his verbal subjectivity.

At this point it becomes wholly apparent that these temporal shards, or what Deleuze calls "nappes," are not independent of each other: in their Bergsonian co-existence, these temporally different representations create what Deleuze refers to as a sort of "feed-back" not unlike that produced by electricity interfering with itself.²⁸⁷ It is through this feed-back of multiple representations, each of which is composed of its own subject-object configurations, that the system of montage deconstructs the conventions of the classical subject and signifies what Resnais refers to poignantly as "a universal present" in which all temporalities collide.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁷ *Cinéma II: l'image-temps*, p. 348

²⁸⁸ Cited by James Monaco, *Alain Resnais*, p. 130.

Terrified, A recoils, bumping into the bystander and knocking a glass to the floor (35). Her fear in the present is then transferred to her representation of the memory, in which she now expresses fear. In the bedroom A, recoiling in fear, knocks over a glass (36).



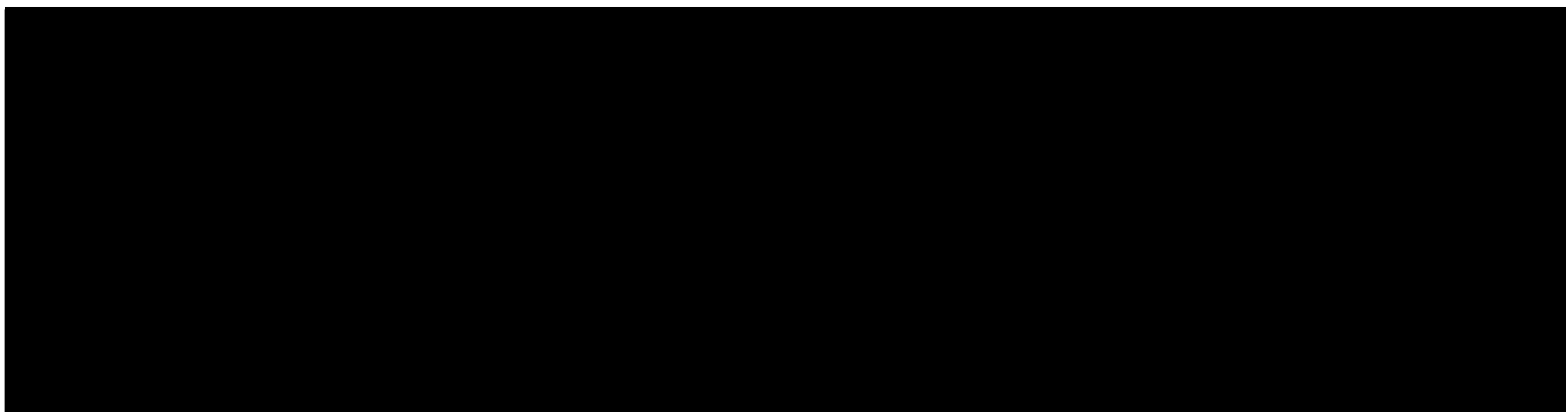
Shaking with the reverberations of this feed-back, the speech-image code struggles with a transition created by the sentiment of terror being directed from the present backwards. In this case, as Deleuze observes: “Les personnages sont du présent, mais les sentiments plongent dans le passé.”²⁸⁹ In fact, both the characters and sentiments alternate between past and present, present and past, but one is never exclusive of the other. Both emanate through the immanent field. The past affects the present, and the present affects the past—it is all a matter of what is the point of reference according to which the representation is structured.

This moment marks a turning point in the film, as it is here that A begins—as if in self-defense—to challenge X’s dominance of the speech-image code. Whereas we saw before that she would attempt to accommodate his voiceover by shaping her mental image accordingly (such as the placement of her arm on the balustrade), she begins now to struggle against his agency. At one point, from within the mental image that is being constructed by his verbal description, she pleads with him to leave her alone. The

²⁸⁹ *Cinéma II: l’image-temps*, p. 163.

speech-image code reveals its own constructed nature—and, as a construction, it reveals itself as a site of the struggle for agency, an agency that she can assume as well.

Resisting his description of her room, A briefly takes control of the voiceover description, going so far as to contradict aspects of the image that were not even a part of his verbal discourse. “Je ne connais pas cette chambre,” she argues, “cet lit ridicule, cette cheminée avec son miroir.” But he had mentioned no chimney, no mirror. She is now implicated in the unfolding of images, is now fully complicit in the discourse. She claims that there was a painting above the chimney as opposed to a mirror, and the images follow suit (37).



A has momentarily appropriated the agency forged in the speech-image code of voiceover flashback. She begins to correct X, which sends him into a spiral of self-doubt. Emma Wilson observes that X is not satisfied by A's remembrance, but is instead threatened by her speech-image agency: “the relation between them begins to become more disturbing to the man and his fantasy less protective.”²⁹⁰

We could certainly consider this from a feminist point of view as the empowerment of her character, not only as a narrative agent but also on a more sweeping connotative level. Manifesting a systematic subversion like that evoked by Gledhill and

²⁹⁰ *Alain Resnais*, p. 72.

Doane earlier in this chapter, A uses speech in order to subvert the patriarchal order of the visual. She has usurped the formal code from which his agency was formed, much as the montage of close-ups of material objects permits *Deux ou trois choses...* to subvert the code of frame and composition in order to destroy conventional divisions between subject and object.

Wilson notably views this connotative effect as undermining conventions of male subjectivity and female objectification and exploring, instead, “the play of desire between two individuals.”²⁹¹ Unlike *Hiroshima, mon amour*, which transposes a subjective position conventionally given to men onto a female character, *L'Année dernière à Marienbad* presents an inter-subjective representation of communication between two subjects each afraid of being objectified by the discourse of the Other.

I will stop here, though *Marienbad* certainly provokes many chapters and even books worth of formal analysis and possible interpretation. This particular moment brings us to a breaking point, though, a pinnacle of illustrating how formal codifications provide first and foremost for the production of a representation as a type of representation, structuring the immanent field according to an organization of subject-object relations. Moreover, we can see how the immanent field extends itself, how these subject-object compositions interact, as Deleuze might argue, on a level of montage. Emma Wilson again manages eloquently to articulate my own conclusion:

(T)he effect of *L'Année dernière à Marienbad* as it continues is to make us increasingly uncertain about the limits of the subjectivity and desire of these lovers. This effect is in part created by our uncertainty over the status of the images viewed.²⁹²

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 75.

The de-conventionalization of speech and image makes us question whether the images are meant to be memory or fantasy, the mental image of one character or another, or an objective representation external to both. Any quest for denotative clarity is rendered impossible by the fragmentation of the representations' systems of reference through the de-codifications of speech and image. We therefore can also see, through this analysis, a specific way to articulate the underlying relationship between speech and diegetic subjectivity that I have been looking at in this chapter.

Regardless of how one might interpret its sexual politics, *Marienbad* prohibits the illusion of an autonomous diegetic subject or transcendental subject as anchor for a totality of vision or an absolute order of meaning. This restores to the representation an inherent polysemy that not only acknowledges a dialogic collectivity between the characters within the text, but also between the referential content and the implied source of the representation. This dialogic space is the immanent field. We are closing in on an understanding of Resnais's and Godard's reflexive cinema as a reconciliation of subject-functions, a general rejection of the division between subjective and objective poles, that is central to my concept of the immanent field as a common principle of Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze.

Throughout this work so far, I have looked at how formal codes provide for certain modes of representation that produce different organizational structures of subject-object relations. Having begun this study with the myth of perception and the construction of the viewing subject, I then turned to the use of montage to signify the transcendental

subject. I have now added another network of film signification: the speech-image code and the diegetic subject.

This diegetic subject is not only a focal point for visual identification or an agent of narrative action, but, more fundamentally, like the camera or objective pole of representation, it is a particular connotative structure of representation. As it is the interest of this thesis to understand film representation as an organization of subject-object relations that defines its own referentiality (or representational “type”), let us now take this one step further. Having looked here at how the speech-image code helps to construct diegetic subjectivity, I will now extend my study of Resnais to look at the overarching structure, or meta-code, that I will call the code of subjectivity.

Chapter Four: Alain Resnais and the Code of Subjectivity

[T]he photoplay tells us the human story by overcoming the forms of the outer world, namely, space, time, and causality, and by adjusting the events to the forms of the inner world, namely, attention, memory, imagination, and emotion.

—Hugo Münsterberg²⁹³

As we have found thus far, producing a subject of film representation is something that, just as in the universal human condition, is impossible to avoid. In an attempt to reformulate Deleuze's rejection of the concept of subjectivity, Martin Schwab points out: "the subject is not an anomaly—it is cosmic normality, no matter how unlikely its emergence."²⁹⁴ As became apparent in my own reading of Deleuze, this thesis is not an indictment of subjectivity or film subjectivity *per se*, as we must simply acknowledge it as an inevitability of representation, whether that subject-position is located in the camera or a character within the text.

But between the theories of Bazin and Eco, Metz and Deleuze, and between the cinemas of classical Hollywood and those of Godard and Resnais, we have discovered a striking difference among arguments of *how* film subjectivity should be constructed, how it should be organized, and how it should be situated relative to the immanent field of film representation. In the last chapter I extended this study of film connotation and subject-object relations to the construction of a diegetic subject-function, which I hope to expound upon here through an analysis of what I call the code of subjectivity, to be

²⁹³ Hugo Münsterberg *on Film: The Photoplay: a Psychological Study and Other Writings*, p. 129.

²⁹⁴ "Escaping From the Image: Deleuze's Image-Ontology," *The Brain is the Screen*, pp. 109-140 (p. 131).

complemented in the next chapter with a study of Godard and what I will call the code of objectivity.

As Schwab writes: “the subject is the place where a certain differentiatedness achieves the status of self-feeling and projects a world picture.”²⁹⁵ The process of organization through which the individual subject-position is differentiated from the objective pole of representation has been considered a basic premise of film representation, as we found with Arnheim, Mitry, and Morin. This is firmly indicated by Münsterberg’s quote at the head of this chapter, which implies a certain similarity between the forms of film representation and the human *Gestalt*. However, arguing alongside suture theorists, yet not going so far as to place my inquiry in an ideological context, I am interested here in the connotative structure through which human subjectivity is simulated and represented, and how the interaction between different subject-functions permits us to understand the immanent field at the center of this study.

One way to analyze this, as I have done thus far, is to look at examples where it is de-codified. In the opening chapters of this thesis I looked at the transcendental subject, or subjectivity in the position of the apparatus itself, which I will get back to in Chapter Five. And, in the previous chapter, I attempted to extend this to the diegetic subject, or a character with the agency to enunciate and to act as the source for representation. This led me to assess modes of film narration in which characters themselves are responsible for the diegesis; these modes, such as the flashback, are what I would call subjective modes of representation.

And, while the transcendental subject, or objective pole of representation, may have its totality challenged by the subjectivity of characters, what we could call voices

²⁹⁵ Martin Schwab, “Escaping From the Image: Deleuze’s Image-Ontology,” p. 131.

from other places, the diegetic subject's enunciating unity was seen to be challenged by the inter-temporal, agencies from other *times*. This brings time, temporality, and narrative chronology—all of which, I hope to argue more fully here, being problems of the form of denotation—into the framework of subject-object relations. Stephen Heath asks rhetorically:

What is a film, in fact, but an elaborate time-machine, a tangle of memories and times successfully rewound in the narrative as the order of the continuous time of the film?²⁹⁶

Heath's question provokes us once again to wonder what film representation is, essentially, other than temporal organization of events, narration. In response to Heath's question, I would say: everything. This ordering, or re-ordering, of time is only a problem of narrative sequence, and does not consider the fluctuations between different modes of representation from which such a juxtaposition of moments (or "tangle") might be built.

Heath's rhetorical question is particularly interesting at this point in my study because it not only seems to be evoking the analysis common to a certain narrative approach to cinema, but he also could be summarizing the general consensus concerning the work of Alain Resnais. Indeed, we can locate here the root of a problem that has led most critics to view Resnais's work primarily as a reflection, through montage, on the nature of time. But aren't Resnais's systematic experiment with montage, and his unconventional representation of temporality and the temporal relation of images, only parts of a larger connotative project?

Let me clarify, rekindling my reading of Deleuze from Chapter Two: montage is not essentially narrative. It is, first and foremost, formal, a means for organizing the

²⁹⁶ *Questions of Cinema*, p. 127.

immanent field of film representation, a juxtaposition of different compositions of subject-object relations. In certain types of representation, this juxtaposition produces a harmonious alignment of subject-functions; in others, as we found with *Marienbad*, it produces a constant circulation of agencies, a contradiction of points-of-view.

Because of the centrality of montage to his works, critics from Raymond Bellour to Emma Wilson have drawn comparisons between Resnais and Eisenstein.²⁹⁷ However, no two filmmakers could have more dissimilar purposes behind their uses of editing. Whereas Eisenstein uses montage as a means for guaranteeing the spectator's interpretation of a film, for producing propaganda through the signification of a monolithic transcendental subject, Resnais's use of montage connotes a different system of reference. Resnais's films aim for uncertainty, a polyvalent signified produced through a dialogic system of reference, leaving the image in a state of ambiguity and the spectator in a position of critical awareness.

Resnais's films are clearly concerned with problems of temporal organization and the representation of memory. But we could view these as secondary functions, much like the problem of time is secondary for Bergson's *Matière et mémoire*—secondary, that is, to reformulating the problem of the division between interior and exterior and the notion of subjectivity on which this division is based. This is a problem that, for Resnais as for Bergson, is deeply entangled in questions of subject-object relations for which memory and representation provide the tools of inquiry, questions that will aid us here to consider how film representation delineates its own structure of representation.

Many theorists, as we will find, have reduced these interweaving interests of Resnais's to a representation of thought itself. However, I would argue against the

²⁹⁷ See Bellour, *L'Analyse du film*, p. 46, and Wilson, *Alain Resnais*, p. 9.

reduction of Resnais's work to a metaphor that in most cases does not include much explanation, such as we found in Chapter One with allegories of perception and the works of Godard. Instead, I will reformulate this metaphor as a question of subject-object relations, and of the codification of subjectivity in cinematic representation. To this end, Emma Wilson writes:

Resnais is fascinated by mental or subjective images, the virtual reality which makes up individual consciousness and is itself composed of both what we have known and what we have imagined. This interest in the finest workings of the mind...calls for an extraordinary reshaping of cinema and rethinking of the capacity of film to show us reality as it is imagined, as well as lived.²⁹⁸

“As it is imagined, as well as lived.” In other words: the connection between our subjective experience and our coexistence as an object, our being in the world. While Wilson uses this aspect of Resnais's work in order to address the visceral in his films, I will focus more on how this problem may permit us to investigate the cinematic construction of subject positions. In the previous chapters of this thesis, we have found that image-types are conventionally combined in order not only to provide a sense of narrative logic or temporal cohesion, but more fundamentally to construct a cohesive system of reference for the overall text itself. Be it in the relationship between depth and the frame, between a shot and montage, or in the speech-image codification known as the flashback, the representation's structure of organization varies according to the alignment of its significations with the source of enunciation.

The previous chapter introduced Alain Resnais's work as a deconstruction of the division between these objective and subjective poles, showing that in the immanent field the human subject is never fully isolated from its objective and inter-subjective context.

²⁹⁸ *Alain Resnais*, p. 2.

Keeping these problems in the forefront of this study, and drawing on a broader analysis of Resnais's work during this period, I will now extend the previous chapter's conclusions to what I will call the code of subjectivity, part of a study of the deconstruction of meta-codes in which this and the next chapter function as a complementary pair.

The code of subjectivity is a network of formal codes and signifying practices that merges processes of identification with those of subjective representation to create a bond between the apparatus and a character. The character and form are linked both externally (we watch the diegesis as a function of the character's actions) and internally (we watch the diegesis through the character's eyes), bridging the gap, as Alex Neill might put it, between sympathy and empathy.²⁹⁹ However, this code has also been deformed in certain modernist cinemas as a means for subverting its connotations of certainty, such as one finds in Akira Kurosawa's *Rashomon* (1950).

This subversive tendency is particularly resonant in the work of Resnais, who was influenced by—and collaborated with—writers from the Nouveau Roman movement, who were engaged with codifying a new type of *psychological realism* in literature.³⁰⁰ In reference to this very relationship between Resnais's cinematic innovations and the problem of realism, René Prédal describes Resnais's work as presenting a “réalisme total qui se situe au-delà de la tradition du réalisme cinématographique,”³⁰¹ a realism that refuses to pose hierarchies between the subjective and objective poles, a deconstruction of the differentiations between subject and object in general. To the extent that I will

²⁹⁹ “Empathy in (Film) Fiction,” reprinted in *Philosophy of Film and Motion Pictures*, pp. 247-60.

³⁰⁰ The details of this literary style are most systematically formulated in Alain Robbe-Grillet's *Pour un nouveau roman* (Gallimard: Paris, 1963).

³⁰¹ “Etudes Cinématographiques,” Nos. 64-68 (Minard: Paris, 1968), p. 168.

engage with the problem of realism as it is used here, suffice it to say that Resnais's forms of representation subvert the connotative foundations of conventional cinematic realism.

Resnais deconstructs the code of subjectivity to represent a mental world in which there is no dominant subject-function and, consequently, no clear causal narrative logic. Resnais's code of subjectivity produces a subject that does not necessitate the division between interior and exterior. This deconstruction is based heavily on the recurrence of certain formal interactions, including alterations to the speech-image code, camera movement, and the constant interruption of denotation caused by varying types of insert sequence.

Revealing the code of subjectivity to be based on forms of representation, it could be argued that Resnais liberates the image from the anchor of denotation. He draws our attention to the immanent field of connotation, wherein a multiplicity of subject-functions meet. His films therefore permit the spectator to assess the text critically, "à valider ou éventuellement à modifier sa conscience du réel, et par ricochet à valider ou invalider le film en tant de représentation du réel."³⁰² Through this reflexivity, Resnais provokes the spectator into a position of critical activity. Resnais himself once stated that he wants to address the spectator in a critical state: "for that," Roy Armes translates, "I must make films that are not natural."³⁰³

As I have pointed out, this formal challenge to cinematic convention can be seen quite clearly to reverberate on the level of denotation. Resnais (and Godard, we will explore in the next chapter) produces a two-tier frustration of what David Bordwell

³⁰² Jean-Albert Bron, "Un cinéma au service de l'énergie narrative du spectateur," in *Contre Bande: Alain Resnais*, no.9, 2003, Université de Paris I-Panthéon-Sorbonne, pp. 51-75 (p. 73).

³⁰³ *The Cinema of Alain Resnais*, p. 27.

describes as classical cinema, wherein “cause-effect logic and narrative parallelism generate a narrative which projects its action through psychologically-defined, goal oriented characters.”³⁰⁴ Beyond the mere breakdown of narrative function, however, we find with Resnais a systematic rejection of the myth of the absolute subject and its foundation in the sensory monism provided by formal relations. Whereas I will look in Chapter Five at how Godard subverts this myth in the form of the camera-subject of objective representation, Resnais does so in the form of the diegetic subject of subjective representation.

As we found in the last chapter, Resnais’s films are particularly telling in this regard because they focus on the problem of representation: representation as communication between two people and, also, representation as a discourse on history. Resnais’s texts thus pose a diegetic problem for his characters at the same time as an extra-textual problem for cinematic representation, and the two are frequently merged as the use of mental images casts the characters’ internal projection onto the screen. The immanent field could, in such cases, be viewed as a fluctuation between different compositions of subject-object relations.

By resituating the mental image according to a de-conventionalized subject, I hope to show that Resnais’s films subvert the classical division between interior and exterior, providing—as we will also find with Godard—a destruction of the conventional hierarchies and biases of conventional modes of representation.³⁰⁵ We are left instead with an immanent field in which both the subjective and objective poles exist in a shared

³⁰⁴ “The Art Cinema as a Mode of Film Practice” (1979), *Film Theory and Criticism*, pp. 716-24 (p. 717).

³⁰⁵ It is useful here to acknowledge the summary offered by René Prédal: “Par son essai de description mentale, la suppression de l’ancienne description fond/forme et la volonté de présenter tous les faits sur un plan d’égalité, Resnais atteint un réalisme total qui se situe au-delà de la tradition cinématographique.....” (*Etudes cinématographiques: Alain Resnais*, p. 168).

space-time that stretches as far as to include the diegetic character and the extra-filmic spectator. However, I will first take a step back and, before considering its deconstruction, elaborate on this notion of the code of subjectivity.

I. The code of subjectivity

The code of subjectivity, as I mentioned briefly, is a set of signifying practices that provides for the structuring of subjective representation that can be transposed from a character to the image itself. I will outline this meta-code as playing two roles: 1) using formal tools specific to film signification, it molds its objective representations to imply a certain identification between the apparatus and a character; and 2) it provides for the transfer of this character's experience to the spectator by aligning the representation itself with that subject. In short: the code of subjectivity binds the spectator to the diegetic character, by implying an affinity between the immanent field and that particular person. Furthermore, the code of subjectivity acts to transfer the character's signifying processes onto that of the formal apparatus itself.

This code operates in numerous ways. For example, most conventional cinema has embraced this code on the purely quantitative level of narrative focus, considering a story through its influence on—and reaction to—a particular character. Through the temporal concentration placed on this character, and the character's centrality in the causal logic of the events, he or she becomes the primary source for spectatorial identification.³⁰⁶

³⁰⁶ This notion of following a single character, or experiencing the narrative process through one character's perspective, is described in Gerard Genette as "internal focalisation," which can take place on a fixed, varying, or multiple levels. Concerning the identification with filmic characters, I am particularly fond of the system developed by Murray Smith in his *Engaging Characters: Fiction, Emotion, and the*

This mode of identification is founded in formal links organized between the diegetic subject and the objective representation. For example, the camera will follow a character as he or she walks, thus implying a direct link between the movement of the image and that characters' trajectory. Kaja Silverman explains this as being an indexical signifier, in which the form itself seems to be attached by extension to its object.³⁰⁷ The apparatus seems to be focused on that character, connected to that character's motion and also implying that character to be a site of special importance. The character carries a privileged position in the immanent field.

Mitry refers to this as a semi-subjective image (or image "associée"), which is an image in which the visual elements are constructed in order to give one character a certain bias in the representation.³⁰⁸ The objective pole of representation is affected, we might say, by the subjective. In addition to the moving camera, this also includes conventions of framing, in which one character is spatially dominant, bigger, or given a position of prominence in the composition, as if the character is given a place in the spatial organization that indicates their uniqueness from the rest of the space, that indicates their differentiatedness.

Sometimes the subjective interior of a character spills over into the objective representation, such as when the plastic attributes are altered to represent the psychological state of the character or diegetic world. This is the case, we found, with bourgeois mediocrity in *Voyage to Italy*, and is also the governing principle of Neo-

Cinema (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995). Smith assesses the various modes through which film expression creates a link between spectator and character; in this chapter I will be looking at what happens in a different type of fiction, one in which identification is turned inside out and the subject to be identified with is revealed as part of an inter-subjective existence.

³⁰⁷ *The Subject of Semiotics*, pp. 23-4.

³⁰⁸ *Ésthetique et psychologie du cinéma*, p. 300

Realism's stylistic opposite, German Expressionism. In such cases, the entire visual world helps to denote an overall mood that, in turn, connotes a motivated relationship between the immanent formal field and the characters within it.

Taking this one step further, formal functions such as the frame and movement often act to ease the transition from the objective image into a subjective image, in which the representation aligns the apparatus with the character's subject-position. An exemplary case would be the point-of-view tracking shot, in which the camera assumes the position of a moving character. As we saw in *Vivre sa vie* and *Hiroshima, mon amour*, the diegetic subjectivity of the representation is enhanced by using a moving camera that is looked directly into by people it passes. The camera is signified to *be* the character.

Other elements of the code of subjectivity are montage based, such as examples of suture wherein codes of montage create a subject-function that binds the representation to a filmic position. This can include a *speaking* subject, as I analyzed in the last chapter, or a *looking* subject. The eye-line match, for example, cuts from a character in the act of looking. This cut sutures the representation's point of reference into the perceptive act of the person looking, and signifies the next image as the subjective gaze of the subject-function. This is what François Jost calls "internal ocularization": the camera has made the character's gaze its own and, consequently, *our* own.³⁰⁹ Another term for this is the point-of-view shot.

The point-of-view shot is an example of what Mitry calls the "subjective" image (or image "analytique"), in which the camera views things from the diegetic character's

³⁰⁹ "Narration(s): en deçà et au-delà," *Communications* 38, 1983, pp. 192-212. This translation comes from Stam et al, *New Vocabularies in Film Semiotics*, p. 93.

place, “s’identifie à son regard.”³¹⁰ The immanent field’s organization is justified, in this case, as the visual operation of the character. This transfer from the camera to the diegetic character produces an alignment in what is happening and how it is being shown, as is explained in Stephen Heath’s slightly more complex description:

The look, that is, joins form of expression—the composition of the images and their disposition in relation to one another—and form of content—the definition of the action of the film in the movement of looks, exchanges, objects seen, and so on. Point of view develops on the basis of this joining operation of the look, the camera taking the position of a character in order to show the spectator what he or she sees.³¹¹

Because of this dualistic nature or purpose of its operational function, the point-of-view shot has been analyzed in many ways. For Dayan and Baudry, whose approach is more concerned with the ideological role of connotation, it is the extension of a bourgeois ideology. William Rothman and other Anglo-American writers, as I mentioned in Chapter Two, see this convention rather as a rhetorical filmic device, narrative in its nature but incapable of being fully classified as ideological.³¹² Supporting Rothman’s position with a detailed filmic investigation, Edward Branigan’s “The Point-of-View Shot” offers a thorough analysis of this practice as a strictly functional narrative device.³¹³

Similarly, Stephen Heath points out that the point-of-view shot is only subjective to the point that it assumes the spatial position of a character. For Heath, there is no great difference between subjective point-of-view shots and objective non-point-of-view-shots, but merely an “overlaying of first and third person modes.”³¹⁴ Such a mode of representation does not for Heath necessarily assume anything beyond that, such as the

³¹⁰ Mitry, *Esthétique et psychologie du cinéma*, p. 300.

³¹¹ *Questions of Cinema*, p. 46.

³¹² See Rothman’s argument in “Against ‘The System of Suture’”.

³¹³ (1975), reprinted in *Movies and Methods II*, pp. 672-90.

³¹⁴ *Questions of Cinema*, p. 48.

character's psychological experience. This provides us with a crucial fact of the code of subjectivity as it is used classically, for it does not necessarily change the representation qualitatively. Jean Mitry reiterates this when he writes:

Un cinéma totalement subjectif (au niveau bien entendu du regard) n'est autre que celui qui rapporte 'objectivement' la vision de celui qui s'efface derrière ce qu'il donne à voir.³¹⁵

Mitry points out, in terms that conjure the analyses of Baudry and Dayan, that this implication of the subjective representation's objective characteristics efface the character at its source. This effacement, frustrated on numerous levels in the works of Resnais and Godard, is itself an effect of the organization of the immanent field. While there may be no noticeable difference between the two types of representation, there is the subtle difference in their systems of reference, which is of utmost interest to this thesis. Though Heath may have a point, the representation is still being systematically altered, as Deleuze might say, according to the image's origin. Moreover, we have found that the qualitative similarity is not maintained, for example, when the shot is taken out of a linear context or conventional codifications of sound and image.

In other words, I would argue that, though Heath is accurate that the point-of-view shot does not always indicate an aspect of the character's subjective transformation of what is being viewed, this effect does however play a role in affirming or challenging a text's connotations concerning the source or sources of its representations. While the form of content may not be altered, the system of differentiation upon which the denotation is based assumes a particular dynamic.

Nick Browne attempts, in "The Spectator-In-the-Text: the Rhetoric of *Stagecoach*," to understand another possible effect of this alignment, which is the

³¹⁵ *La sémiologie en question*, p. 108.

identification with a character through the eyes of another character. That is, the mode in which our process of identification differs from the position in which we view, or how the point-of-view shot can provide contradictory systems of reference.³¹⁶ This helps me to iterate a duality with which the code of subjectivity is infused: within the subjective representation, there always remains the objective pole as well.

While the structuralist mode of analysis employed by Dayan and others may differ from rhetorical narrative analyses proposed by Branigan and Browne, we can locate a fundamental similarity in their attempt to understand the point-of-view shot as an organization of images via a fluctuation in the representation's implied source. That is, the self-imposed polarity of their approaches can be reconciled through the framework of film representation as an organization of subject-object relations, much as we found to be the case with other arguments concerning film representation.

But can this be the only type of subjective image, the only level of diegetic subjectivity in cinema? Of course not: there are many degrees of the subjective image, as Mitry elaborates.³¹⁷ In addition to what we have discussed so far, there are also internalized subjective shots in which the image assumes the imaginary realm of the character. This includes the dream sequence, for example. We see a character sleeping, followed by a sequence of events; the transition between an objective representation of the sleeping character and a subjective representation of that character's imaginary is usually indicated by some sort of audio-visual bridge, such as a wavering image. This effect *signifies* that what follows is a dream sequence. These formal tools serve a

³¹⁶ See Nick Browne, "The Spectator-In-the-Text: the Rhetoric of *Stagecoach*," *Film Quarterly*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (Winter 1975-1976), pp. 26-38.

³¹⁷ For a detailed catalog of incremental differences, see *Esthétique et psychologie du cinéma*, p. 300

connotative role: the representation shifts its origin of meaning onto the subject-position of the diegetic character.

Such montage-based conventions of the code of subjectivity become more complicated when another sensory plane of expression is added, as we saw in the previous chapter. The voiceover flashback merges the narrated and the narrating: the subjective mode and the objective mode are merged by the bridge of a codification of speech. In most classical forms, this subjective representation of the past slides seamlessly into the objective representation of the past, by shifting the plane of verbal signification from the voiceover to that of diegetic conversation.

This aligns the subjective with the objective by granting both the enunciating character and the transcendental subject a certain relationship with the representation. They are interchangeable, linked through their inextricability from the immanent field, their relationship with the formal base. However, as we found in the films of Resnais, such constructs are wafer thin. Resnais's work is particularly useful here because it incorporates a variety of devices that make up the code of subjectivity. For, whereas Godard attempts to describe a subject's interior by contextualizing its objective exterior, Resnais tries to turn a character inside-out: "il part de l'intérieur du personnage et va vers l'extérieur."³¹⁸

II. Alain Resnais and the code of subjectivity

It is through the use and deconstruction of the code of subjectivity that Resnais explores his most regular themes: the relationship between the past, present, and future, and the

³¹⁸ Pierre Maillot, "Un face-à-face transatlantique: Resnais/Welles," in *ContreBande: Alain Resnais*, pp. 31-49 (p. 45).

inherent struggle between the real and the possible, between personal imagination and collective reality. In sum total: themes concerning the individual's relationship with the world.

Evoking an opinion common to all writing on Resnais, James Monaco describes these films as attempting to deal "with the way we comprehend the world."³¹⁹ But what does this mean, and how might we understand this in more concrete terms? Resnais's work, this thesis has and will continue to argue, should be framed not according to the representation of *consciousness* or some such metaphor, but according to its organization of subject-object relations in a deconstruction of the most basic cinematic divisions between the interior and exterior, individual and context.

I agree with skeptics of formalism that Resnais's stylistic endeavors would be of limited interest if they were not used to engage with historical problems and social and moral issues that complement them. But they do, and that is why so many people find his work so moving, so important, much as I will argue to be the case with Godard and the question of sexual difference and the objectification of women, Resnais doubles the immanent field on itself, using a type of representation in order to draw attention to the way film representation is structured. And, while this study is concerned primarily with the immanent field of film representation, the organizational structure of its formal base, it is also a study of particular filmmakers, and it would prove enlightening to both studies to give a broader outlook on the general themes of Resnais's work.

Resnais's films of between 1959 and 1968 are uniquely engaged with history as a process of representation, combining international events with the problem of recording, representing, and preserving history between individuals (such as Nevers and Hiroshima,

³¹⁹ *Alain Resnais: the Role of the Imagination* (Oxford University Press: New York, 1978) p. 13.

X and A). I say “uniquely engaged” because Resnais’s vigilant consideration of contemporary historical events (the Holocaust, nuclear warfare, the colonial war in Algeria, the Spanish Civil War) is unique to this period of his work, after which his cinema becomes more theatrical, less topical.

In Resnais’s films from this period, one finds the recurring conception of history and memory as being interrelated in some form of linguistically paralyzed sublime, in which the ability to name or to conjure images through words is constantly frustrated. As such there is a constant uncertainty in his signifying systems, an ambiguity and a polyvalence that refuses the straightforward production of denotation.

But, again, let us demand: *how* is this achieved? It may help to begin with Resnais’s arrangements of speech and image, as introduced in the previous chapter. In most cases we find that Resnais uses the voiceover flashback to construct a subject-function through the representation of memory, in which the coexistence between past and present provides a coherence of representation that is posited as an enunciation from a position of subjective unity. This ranges from the unilateral narrating subject to the Bakhtinian communication process in which a subject constructs itself in constant reference to an implied Other, a range of possibilities illustrated in my analysis of *Hiroshima, mon amour* and that I will extend in this chapter’s analysis of *La guerre est finie*.

Resnais’s work does not always focus on the voiceover, however; it does nonetheless rely to a large degree on montage. Other examples I touched on in Chapter Three include the coexistence of two parallel stories, such as one finds in *Muriel ou le temps d’un retour*. This film uses the juxtaposition of images to show the remnants of

the past in the present of a particular character, not in terms of an allegory but in terms of the juxtaposition of image-types. A similar premise is constructed via the narrative foil of a time machine in *Je t'aime, je t'aime* (1968), about a man's attempt to come to terms with his wife's untimely death. The last film Resnais made before his five-year absence from commercial filmmaking, *Je t'aime, je t'aime* is considered Resnais's text *par excellence* due to its frenetic experiments in montage and temporal order, which could be analyzed as a constant deformation of the conventional organization of subject-object relations.³²⁰

Robert Benayoun calls *Je t'aime, je t'aime*, “une sinécure de monteur; un film où le montage devient outil philosophique, manipulation dialectique du tout premier degré.”³²¹ The focus herein on the importance of montage belies the influence, discussed by Resnais himself, of Marcel Carné's innovations with narrative editing. In films such as *Le Jour se lève* (1939), Carné alters the conventional temporalization of the story in order to produce what Resnais calls “moments d'incertitude,”³²² a rejection of any type of denotative certainty that would be infused through Resnais's organization of subject-object relations.

Carné's model of what is better known as “poetic realism” offered one of the first systematic attempts to re-order classical narration according to a particular character's point-of-view. Resnais takes this tradition of narrative montage one step further. Beyond merely frustrating the narrative, Resnais uses such editing techniques in order to

³²⁰ As Monaco writes: “it is the quintessential distillation of his obsession with time, memory, and the imagination.” (*Alain Resnais*, p. 121)

³²¹ *Alain Resnais: arpenteur de l'imaginaire*, p. 131.

³²² Lébarthe and Rivette, “Entretien...,” p. 6.

challenge the unilateral and absolute vision of any one individual, a tendency that aligns Resnais with other modernist filmmakers such as Welles, Kurosawa, and Buñuel.³²³

However, Resnais must first encode a subject in order to deconstruct it, which he does through traditional means of the code of subjectivity. Aside from such experiments in temporal narration, which I will get back to, Resnais's thematic visual style is perhaps best known for the epic use of the tracking shot, so prominently placed in Resnais's connotative order that it once inspired Godard to comment: "les travellings sont affaire de morale."³²⁴

This formal tool is central to Resnais's earlier documentary work, such as *Nuit et brouillard* (1955) and *Toute la mémoire du monde* (1956), and continues into his early fiction films. Resnais's tracking shots, almost always moving forward, provide a physical sensation of moving through the world. The tracking shot, as we found in *Hiroshima*, is a marker for the subjective nature of memory; only, Resnais uses it to construct a subject-function that he can subsequently divide, much as we will find that Godard uses the tracking shot in a different way to subvert the code of objectivity.

As we found in *Marienbad*, the tracking shot does not imply an unlimited movement or transcendental omnipresence as Baudry argues,³²⁵ but quite the opposite: through its relation to framing, montage, and sound, the tracking shot in fact reveals the limiting aspect of the frame, it insists on the partiality of the representation, the lack of a specific subject-position to associate with the visual representation. Moreover, Resnais's

³²³ Deleuze makes a brief comparison between Resnais and Buñuel, concerning the narration and use of multiple actresses for one part in *Cet objet obscur du désir* (1977). However, it seems even more fitting to compare Resnais to the Buñuel of *Tristana* (1970), which concludes with an implosion of past and present images.

³²⁴ 'Table rond sur *Hiroshima, mon amour*', in *La Nouvelle Vague*, pp. 36-62 (p. 43).

³²⁵ "Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus," p. 345.

tracking shot usually follows no narrative motivation: as Alain Fleischer puts it, “La caméra semble se déplacer pour rien, à blanc, dépossédée du drame.”³²⁶ Somewhat similar to the Vertovian system of montage that I argued for in the analysis of *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle*, Resnais’s tracking shot transfers subjectivity into a public space, removes it from a fixed spot: it is a “travelling subjectif sans sujet regardant.”³²⁷

However, it is not fully objective either. Roy Armes tends toward familiar rhetoric when he describes Resnais’s tracking shot as “an attempt, still very crude and primitive, to approach the complexity of thought, its mechanism.”³²⁸ Again, as in Chapter One, I believe it would help to convert such metaphors to a formulation regarding the immanent field as a space for the organization of subject-object relations. One could argue that, at the very least, the tracking shot attempts to represent thought as a function of the subject’s differentiation from the representation: “une prise de possession de l’espace par l’organe de vue.”³²⁹

In a way, then, it is an extension of the transcendental subject, implicating the camera as a mobile viewing subject, passing through a world of objects. René Prédal takes this further to suggest that the forward tracking shot of *L’Année dernière à Marienbad* is in fact a type of violation of the object, or what he calls “le viol cinématographique par travelling-avant.”³³⁰ And, yet, there is never any specific clarity in Resnais’s films to whom the image belongs, for whom is it an extension. The tracking

³²⁶ Alain Fleischer, *L’Art de Alain Resnais*, p. 33.

³²⁷ Fleischer, *ibid.*, p. 34.

³²⁸ *The Cinema of Alain Resnais*, p. 152.

³²⁹ Marcel Oms, *Alain Resnais* (Editions Rivages: Paris, 1988), p. 38.

³³⁰ *Etudes cinématographiques*, p. 66. While this seems to continue with Wilson’s analysis of the film as one of rape fantasy, it poses an interesting take on the differentiation between subject and object provided by this formal device.

shot adds an element of ambiguity to the position of enunciation: the frame is stable, yet fluid; consistently proportionate, yet always moving.

Moreover, the moving camera posits the impression of omniscience, but this is nullified by a system of montage that de-centers any single point of reference connected to the representation. Though this system of montage has often been categorized as primarily concerned with memory, Resnais has argued against this. Resnais makes a decisive division between the notion of memory and one that he finds more fitting: the notion of the *imaginary*.³³¹ While “l’imaginaire” has served as the grounds for many psychoanalytic studies of film, I prefer to consider it more as a mechanism that permits us to consider not the process of *human subject-formation*, but the *construction of filmic subject-functions*.

As we saw with Mitry’s categories of subjectivity, there is no representation more fully subjective than the mental image. The mental image is no longer, like the point-of-view shot, an objective image seen from the standpoint of a character. The mental image is an entirely different regime of representation.

An experiment at the center of Resnais’s films during this period, the mental image sequence is frequently either a flashback or flashforward—an imaginary representation in which the referential structure of a diegetic subject-position allows for a shift in diegetic time. “Is this not the foundation of a unified subject?” one might ask. But—as with the tracking shot—what would otherwise be a conventionally coded adjustment of temporal context becomes, for Resnais, a realm of incertitude, doubt, and

³³¹ In their typically omniscient manner, Jean-Louis Leutrat and Suzanne Liandrat-Guigues catalogue Resnais’s stance on this difference over a series of quotes from interviews and films over the span of three decades. (*Alain Resnais: Liasons secrètes, accords vagabonds* [Cahiers du cinéma: France, 2006], pp. 265-6)

ambiguity.³³² The sequences do not isolate a subject-function from the surrounding world, as with traditional forms of the code of subjectivity, but instead illustrate how the individual attempts to build a bridge between the inside and the outside.

What is shown in these sequences cannot necessarily be considered “memory” or “foreshadowing,” since its denotative certainty is often nullified, as we found with *Marienbad*. The classical construction of the mental image—that is, implying that what we are seeing is in fact the character’s representation of an experience—necessitates, as we found in the last chapter, certain configurations of speech and image, certain organization of subject-object relations. In cases such as the voiceover flashback, such as in the opening sequences of *Hiroshima*, speech often rests at least momentarily as objective, in the present, thus permitting the visual image to deviate. As we found in Chapter Three, the representation of memory as a structure of the immanent field therefore rests on a division between elements that can become highly problematic.

In such subversive forms of representation, James Monaco argues, “Resnais is doing nothing less than asking us to give up preconceptions of causality and the flow of time.”³³³ Causality and time, I would argue, as forms of denotation the structure of which is justified by a specific system of reference: causality and time, ultimately, as constructs of the organization of subject-object relations. Deconstructing the monistic unity of the subject of memory, Resnais connotes that history and memory are not purely internalized phenomena, are not phenomena impervious for example to inter-temporal influences.

³³² Deleuze uses this very phenomenon as a basis for his notion of the subjectivity of time in the image-temps. As David Rodowick notes, referring to the underlying theme of uncertainty in Resnais: where the true is replaced by the conditional, time becomes a semiotic force. (*Gilles Deleuze’s Time Machine* [Duke University Press: Durham and London, 1997], p. 104)

³³³ James Monaco, *Alain Resnais*, p. 140.

In a particularly unique twist, Resnais extends the inter-temporality of the diegetic subject through the use of the flashforward, which seems to have gone neglected in the majority of analysis concerning Resnais's oeuvre.³³⁴ Whereas the flashback offers a character's representation of what has happened, the flashforward presents us with a character's projection of future possibilities, a person's anticipation of the exterior realization of feelings or judgments that are, as of yet, only interior, thus further de-centering the present as a stable praxis for denotation.

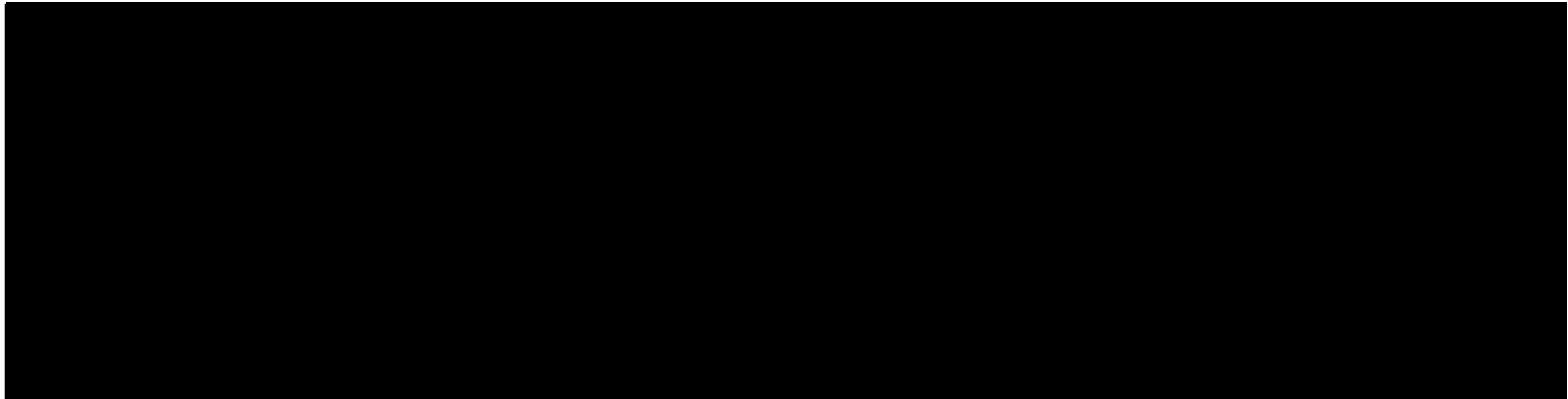
This second-take effect—be it in flashback or in flashforward—provides a sort of repetition and transfiguration on repetition that is central to Resnais's deconstruction of the code of subjectivity, as we saw in my analysis of *L'Année dernière à Marienbad*. I would be inclined to disagree here with Emma Wilson's suggestion that Resnais's films “move in repeating circles”³³⁵—after all, even the constant return to the past in *Muriel*, the familiar hypnotic wanderings of *Marienbad*, and the multiple recurrences of the same memory in *Je t'aime, je t'aime* spiral out of their own bases of repetition. There is always a slight difference, a slight alteration added to the organization of subject-object relations.

Other permutations of this experiment with repetition and difference include the representation of a character's imagination. In *La guerre est finie*, for example, Resnais presents us with a representation of Diego's (the hero, played by Yves Montand) mental image concerning a young woman he does not know, but will likely soon meet. This unfolds in the form of a visual sequence that begins with a young woman, walking down

³³⁴ One need only look at a historiography of criticism on Resnais's work to discern the focus on memory in particular. An insightful exception to this is Robert Benayoun's *Alain Resnais: arpenteur de l'imaginaire* (Editions Stock: Paris, 1980).

³³⁵ *Alain Resnais*, p. 15.

the sidewalk in front of the moving camera (38); this cuts to another shot, constructed from the same frame and camera movement, in the same setting and motion, but of another woman (39); in following shots she is replaced by another young woman, multiple times, the collective group of which follow through the motion of walking down the sidewalk and turning into a bar (40).



These different women are what Wilson calls “variations on Nadine,”³³⁶ manifestations of Diego’s imagination concerning Nadine Sallanches (Geneviève Bujold), a character he has not at this point yet. In this case the rapid succession of images represents how the unknown object, in its multiplicity of possibilities, can nonetheless be conjectured in the imaginary, even mastered to a degree by the coherence provided through continuities within the images’ organization of subject-object relations. As David Bordwell points out: “Similarity balances difference: graphically matched compositions and figure/camera movements play against the fact that each young woman is unique.”³³⁷ The formal continuity manages to contain the shifts in content, a continuity that extends further than just the visual design.

But I am more interested in the immanent field itself. Bordwell also points out that we understand this to be Diego’s subjective imaginary and not some objective

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

³³⁷ *Narration in the Fiction Film*, p. 220.

representation because of the continuity of the soundtrack. The soundtrack continues with sounds of the conversation that led into this insert sequence. Much as in *Hiroshima, mon amour*, the fracture between two formal elements provides for an overlapping between the objective (Diego's ongoing conversation, Nevers's verbal recollection) and the subjective (Diego's mental images of women, Nevers's mental images of France).

And so we are lured into the illusion of a codified subject-function, prompting Youssef Ishaghpour to write: "Resnais conçoit le cinéma non comme un instrument de représentation de la réalité, mais comme le meilleur moyen pour approcher le fonctionnement psychique."³³⁸ But are such constructions of subject-object relations connoting the "thought" process of an enclosed and unified subject, or the open collectivity of memory as a cinematic convention? After all, in Resnais's films the codified unity of the diegetic subject-function usually does not last long.

Another example of an operation based on repetition and difference given above is the repetition of verbal descriptions, but accompanied by different images, such as we found in *Marienbad*. A struggle for enunciation, a struggle for control over the organization of the immanent field. This represents the exchange of a thought or mental image from one mind to another, or perhaps more precisely the mutual construction of representation, much like Bakhtin's notion of the dialogic, but extended further than in Pasolini's example of free indirect discourse. With Resnais we have something akin to Kurosawa's *Rashomon* or Orson Welles's *Citizen Kane*, which offer constant variations on the same referential content, in which the subjective and objective lose their conventional boundaries.

³³⁸ Youssef Ishaghpour, *D'une image à l'autre* (Paris: Denoël/Gonthier, 1982), p. 182.

By fracturing the system of representation beyond the alignment of the objective and subjective, such films pull into the spotlight the very mode by which the artificial unity of an enunciating subject-function is required for coherent narration. Like these other films, Resnais's work unravels the coded unity of a single subject-function in order to represent memory as something shared, collective, built from multiple perspectives. To expand a citation from Deleuze noted in the previous chapter's analysis of *L'année dernière à Marienbad*:

[I]l découvre le paradoxe d'une mémoire à deux, d'une mémoire à plusieurs...des personnages tout à fait différents comme à des lieux non-communicants qui composent une mémoire mondiale.³³⁹

This “*global memory*”—which we will find articulated in a different way in Godard's *Le Mépris*—does not belong to a character only, but binds characters through an immanent field constructed to include multiple subject-functions within one representation. This is the very premise of the mental image. Jean-Marie Schaeffer writes:

[L]a manière dont les êtres se rapportent à la réalité: nous prenons connaissance de la réalité à travers des “représentations mentales” [...] induites par des expériences perceptives mais aussi par l'intériorisation [...] d'innombrables savoirs sociaux déjà élaborés sous la forme de représentations symboliques publiquement accessibles.³⁴⁰

Schaeffer makes an interesting link here between perception, the mental image, and how each of these is conditioned by socio-cultural codes of representation, a problem I will look at more in Chapter Five. The code of subjectivity is itself a “*publicly accessible form of representation*,” and in the mental image there rests a certain condition for the structuring of representation constructed either from the connotative system of a closed system of reference, or a dialogic interaction of subjective voices.

³³⁹ Deleuze, *Cinéma II: l'image-temps*, p. 153

³⁴⁰ *Pourquoi la fiction?* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1999), p. 104.

The subject, as Schwab points out, may very well be cosmic normality. It is, after all, a natural condition of organizing the world, and it is inevitably signified through any process of representation. But the cinematic production of this differentiation, this thesis holds, is a codification based upon certain organizations of the immanent field of formal relations. Resnais's films illustrate this argument through a constant subversion of the conventional forms of subjective representation, caused by slight alterations to the alignment of elements that make up these codes.

I hope now to illustrate this further through an analysis of an often under-appreciated jewel of Resnais's early period, *La guerre est finie*.

III. *La guerre est finie* and the (de)construction of the diegetic subject

Made in 1966, *La guerre est finie* looks at a topic particularly fecund concerning a person's being in the world: political action. As such, Resnais's dominant themes—uncertainty, temporal instability, history and the individual—resurface in a specific context: Communist activism in Europe in the 1960s. Manifested in a formal dynamic that includes multiple voiceovers and flashforwards, these larger socio-political themes find themselves formally intertwined with the filmic problem of subject-object relations and the structuring of film representation in relation to the construction of filmic subject-functions.

As such, Resnais can be positioned directly within a larger trend in French socio-political thought during this period. Many thinkers during the 1960s, such as Foucault, Althusser, and Kristeva, hoped, as D.M. Rodowick puts it, to return the problem of

subjectivity “to the discourse on formal procedures.”³⁴¹ This is very much the goal of this thesis, and I hope to illustrate in these pages that it is central to the formalist practices of filmmakers such as Resnais and Godard.

Of all of Resnais’s films during this period, *La guerre est finie* contains the most expansive variety of formal experimentations with filmic subjectivity, and as such it provides a perfect juxtaposition against Godard’s subversion of forms of objective representation in *Le Mépris*, which I will look at in the next chapter. Much as we will find with *Le Mépris* and the objectification of women, *La guerre est finie* anchors these experiments to a specific socio-political problem. As such, the film was seen as a major step for Resnais, integrating his experimental formalism into a concrete and topical story that, for all intents and purposes, actually has a legible plot—prompting *Cahiers du Cinéma* reviewer Michel Caen to write “il y a quelque chose de changé chez Alain Resnais.”³⁴²

Considered upon its release to be Resnais’s most well rounded film,³⁴³ *La guerre est finie* has perhaps for this very reason escaped the type of in-depth analysis afforded to many of his films from this era. Despite a number of inter-temporal fluctuations in representation, Ronald Bogue points out that with this film “one might suppose (as many critics do) that Resnais creates a present tense narrative.”³⁴⁴ However, like *Marienbad*, this film takes place in the present only in so much as the present is a meeting point for past and future trajectories of representation, a universal present. In this analysis, I will

³⁴¹ David Rodowick, *The Crisis of Political Modernism*, p. 190.

³⁴² “Les temps changent,” *Cahiers du Cinéma*, No.179 (June 1966), pp. 75-6 (p. 75).

³⁴³ For a systematic summary of the film’s reception, see Marcel Matthey, “*La guerre est finie*,” *Image et son*, No. 244 (novembre 1970), pp. 49-72.

³⁴⁴ *Deleuze on Cinema*, pp. 144-145.

focus on the unfolding of these temporal trajectories in conjunction with the construction and deconstruction of cinematic subject-functions.

In *Narration in the Fiction Film* David Bordwell offers a thorough analysis of the film's narrative devices, in a section he calls "The Game of Form".³⁴⁵ Bordwell points out continuously that this film, a prototype for what he calls "Art-Cinema Narration," produces ambiguous representations while, at the same time, "defining the range of permissible constructions."³⁴⁶ While Bordwell claims in the same passage that this film "appeals to conventional structures and cues while at the same time introducing significant innovations," he goes on to situate these innovations as a function of denotative encoding.

Bordwell's analysis is, as the reader may guess, definitively concerned with spectatorial comprehension of the text as a narrative, and thus applies a certain Metzian linearity to the ways of "reading" the film. For Bordwell, that the narrative devices and formal experiments are justified through an alternate code of subjectivity makes the film explicable along classical narrative lines. However, I will argue that this ignores the connotative significance of how the narration is built in relation to the organization of subject-object relations.

Concerning the story itself, *La guerre est finie* revolves around the character of Diego, a Spanish exile orchestrating the Spanish Communist movement from Paris. Having fought in the Civil War during the 1930s, he fled and continued the fight in France, where he is now reaching a moment of existential crisis. He has dedicated his

³⁴⁵ *Narration in the Fiction Film*, p. 213.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 222.

life to a cause that seems to be stagnantly wallowed in the past and, at the same time, to have outgrown him.

As Deleuze points out, Diego's "present" is but one "âge de l'Espagne," an era between that of the Civil War and that of the generation that did not have to live through it.³⁴⁷ After decades of devotion to the cause, he finds that his comrades no longer view him as ideologically sound, while the new generation of activists is too radical for him. The setting is one of political party operations, but this is not a film about politics; it is about one individual's attempt to reconcile his internal perspective with his external context. In the words of Emma Wilson: "Rather than offer lessons on militancy, Resnais offers insight into the doubts, hesitation and commitment of an individual."³⁴⁸ I hope to show how these insights are produced through the particular form of the film's representations.

As a combination of representation-types, *La guerre est finie* revolves around Diego's internal attempt to process the world around him, and to transform his own beliefs into an external reality. It is thus apt that René Prédal titles his review of *La guerre est finie* "De la reflexion à l'action,"³⁴⁹ for the film is just that: a ninety-minute process from reflection to action. As such, this film is about much more than one man's struggle within the Communist movement: it is about every person's quotidian struggle to exist in society, hovering between thoughts and beliefs on the inside and actions and events on the outside. In many ways we could be quite tempted to call this film *Deux ou trois choses que je sais de Diego!*

³⁴⁷ *Cinéma II: l'image temps*, p. 154.

³⁴⁸ *Alain Resnais*, p. 111.

³⁴⁹ *Alain Resnais (études cinématographiques no. 64/68, Minard: Paris, 1968)*, p. 160.

Just as in this Godard film from the same year, Diego's plight, being a constant and inevitable struggle, is removed from the epic grandiosity of history books and modes of heroism and is grounded in the banality of everyday life. And, with it, so is the mental image grounded in a less fantastical context. "L'imagination n'est pas toujours fantastique," said Resnais in an interview just after the film's release: "le plus souvent les représentations mentales sont rigoureusement banales, quotidiennes."³⁵⁰

It is thus emblematic of Resnais's films of this period, which set the banal attempt to reconcile an individual's imaginary to the exterior world of signification against a backdrop of larger civil questions, as one finds to be the case with nuclear war in *Hiroshima, mon amour*. These films tend to bypass narrative action and historical explication, setting these mainstays of conventional cinema in the background of ordinary existence. This filmmaker's most "radical" deviation from classical mainstream fiction cinema, which aligns him with such avatars of cinematic modernism as Antonioni, may very well be his desire to treat what he called "le côté imaginaire dans le quotidien, le côté banal de l'imagination."³⁵¹

This banality of the content of representation permits Resnais to redirect the focus away from denotation and toward connotation itself, as is demonstrated in this film in a number of different organizations of subject-object relations, including multiple voiceovers and an abundance of mental images, temporal shifts, and other insert sequences. The interaction between subjective and objective representations offers a spatiotemporal organization of internal points-of-view and external events that return us

³⁵⁰ Michel Caen, "Les Temps changent". Cahiers du Cinéma, No.179, June 1966, p. 75.

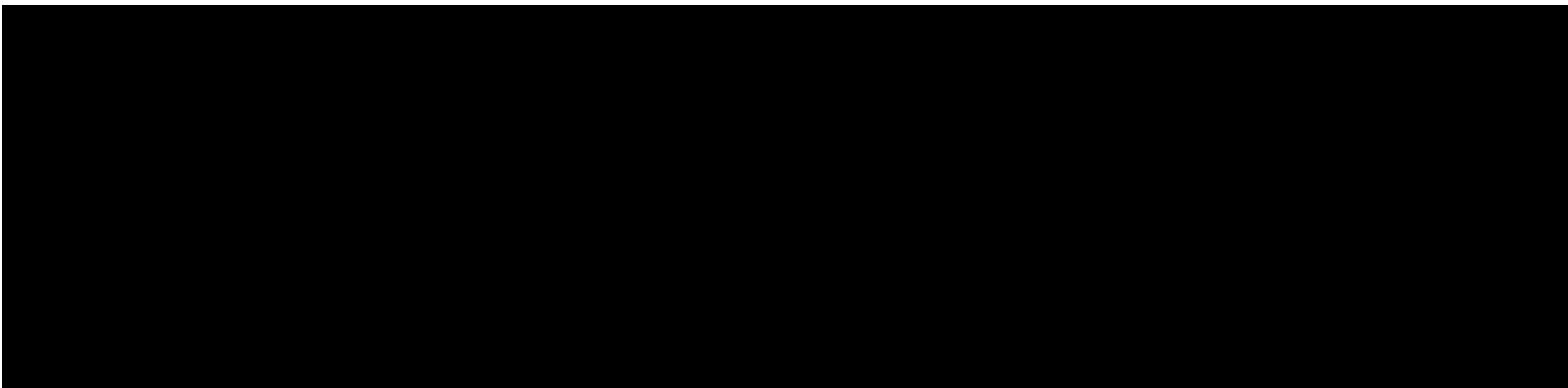
³⁵¹ Robert Benayoun et al, "'Ne pas faire un film sur l'Espagne (Entretien avec Alain Resnais)," originally in *Positif*, No. 79 (novembre 1966), reprinted in *Alain Resnais*, pp. 170-82 (p. 180).

to central problems posed by Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze, problems that are addressed by Resnais in very different ways from how they are addressed by Godard.

The code of subjectivity comes into play in this film on numerous levels. First, identification with Diego is signified by the film's narrative logic. The film's action revolves around him, the film's production of meaning is governed by his relationship to—and reflection on—the world. More importantly, though, the film's formal devices are composed according to his motion and perspective, thus positing his agency not only on a narrative level, but also through the suturing of formal codes. There is a link between the apparatus, the form, and his character. So, to begin with, let us ask: how does this film construct its representations around the subject-position of one particular character?

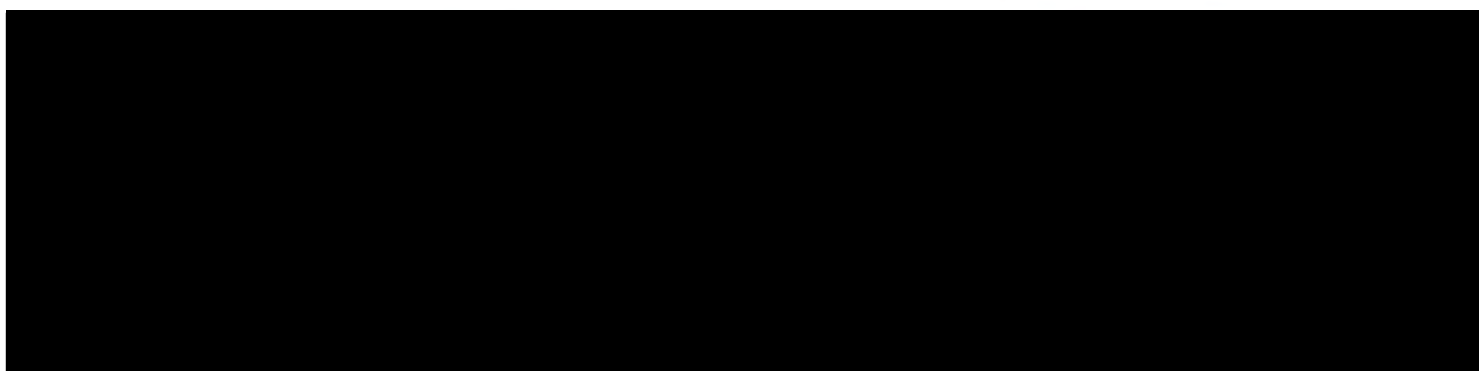
To begin with, the use of framing is conventional, more or less respectful of the code of subjectivity. Diego is always placed either in the prominence of the frame or filmed from behind. This latter detail constantly places the camera both facing in Diego's spatial direction and, also, "behind him," as if in a position of support, encoding the image both with identification and also empathy (41).³⁵² Furthermore, in conversations, the use of crosscutting juxtaposes close-up images of him (42), the source of identification, with mid-range images of the people he talks to (43), implying them as objects of his gaze, implying the immanent field of the image as an extension of his own vision.

³⁵² While I will not expound on the difference between the two, it is useful at least to acknowledge; an illustration of this difference is offered in the dialogue presented between Alex Neill's "Empathy and (Film) Fiction" and Berys Gaut's "Identification and Emotion in Narrative Fiction," both reprinted in *Philosophy of Film and Motion Pictures*.



The dynamic between shot and montage is integral to this as well. Camera movement in this film is relatively moderate for Resnais's oeuvre and, as Roy Armes aptly notes, the moving camera is nearly always shot from Diego's perspective.³⁵³ Even when it is not from his perspective, the camera's movement is guided by Diego's motion: the objective representation is biased toward his spatial position.

This tracking shot, I have mentioned, is a traditional part of the code of subjectivity, a sign indexically (to use Silverman's term) signifying the apparatus's alignment with Diego's character, often going so far as to then assume his point-of-view. This occurs numerous times when Diego is walking, for example: the camera will move with him, as if the apparatus itself were linked to his physical agency (44). This is then extended through an eye-line match: he looks in a certain direction, and the camera will cut to the object of his gaze (45).



³⁵³ *The Cinema of Alain Resnais*, p. 145.

This is similarly achieved through the direct address of a character's eyes into the camera, as if the camera, and through it the representation itself, were organized from Diego's perspective (46). Unlike what we saw in *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle*, direct address to the camera is meant in this film to align the camera with a diegetic character, with Diego, not to reveal the transcendental subject as a construction.

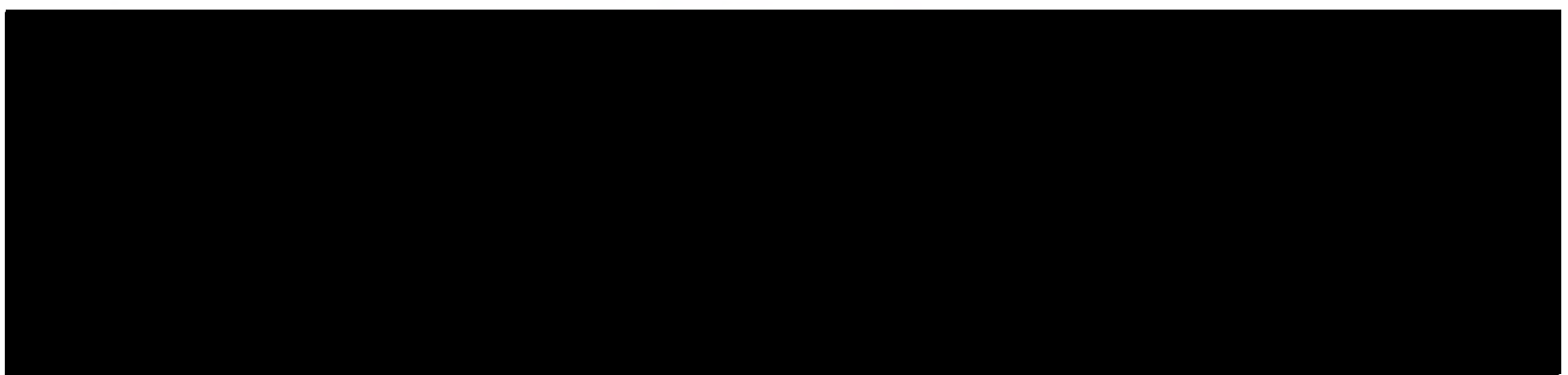


In general, there is nothing particularly radical about the mise-en-scène of this film; it lacks the ornate luster and mocking mirrors of most of Resnais's visual extravaganzas, and remains more or less conventional according to the code of subjectivity. This is what is so disarming about this film, and about Godard's *Le Mépris*: they implicate conventional codes into their own undoing. The conventional illusion of narrative totality and the unilateral production of meaning are central to this film's reflection on the code of subjectivity. Breaking the totality of this subject-function with a diversity of insert sequences subverts the connotative roots of these illusions, revealing the immanent field from which it is constructed.

Diego's is the subjective position signified by the text, yet his agency does not exist unilaterally. Quite the contrary, most of the film follows Diego's reactions when being acted upon by his colleagues, his girlfriend, her friends, or the young militants. More central to this study, Resnais subverts the isolation and self-autonomous totality of

the classical subject-function through the contextualization of Diego's mental images, which capture particular moments and project possible others. They are *his* subjective representations, but his interior does not exist in a vacuum. The immanent field opens his subjectivity up to a range of other voices, other subjects and possibilities. As Prédal notes concerning this film: "l'imagination n'est pas vagabonde mais s'attache à des problèmes concrets."³⁵⁴ Even when his brain triggers fantasies, his skull resides in the physical world.

This tension between interior and exterior manifests itself in different ways. The opening scene of the film, for example, unfolds according to a dialectic flow between two voiceovers: one in what we will find out is Diego's voice, and another belonging to an anonymous narrator who turns out to be the man sitting next to Diego during this scene. The images show the world from Diego's perspective, introduced to us through what Bordwell calls visual "cues of subjectivity," which include the juxtaposition of a viewing subject-function with the object of his vision (46) and the direct address of an interlocutor (47).³⁵⁵



The visual point-of-view established in (46) is connected through framing and editing to the visual perspective of Diego. This implies, through the basic assumption of

³⁵⁴ *Etudes cinématographiques, Alain Resnais*, p. 160.

³⁵⁵ *Narration in the Fiction Film*, p. 213.

sensory harmonization, that the voiceover is his as well; however, the voiceover addresses a particular *tu* as it ruminates on Diego's story. As Diego watches the scenery pass by, for example, the voiceover says: "You watch the scenery pass by". This is a marked contrast to the more conventional, sensory-total subjective enunciation of "I watch the scenery pass by". The representation is composed of two subject-functions, coexistent within the immanent field: Diego as visual and viewing subject, and someone else as aural subject.

Subjective twice over, it can still immediately become objective: the voiceover is revealed to be part of a dialogue between Diego and his driver, a shift in speech-image code we are familiar with from *Marienbad*. The voiceover becomes a diegetic conversation, which then leads into Diego's own voiceover. But he continues the discourse in the second person, a problem we may recognize from *Hiroshima, mon amour*, thus blending multiple variations on the speech-image code that I looked at in Chapter Three.

For Emma Wilson, this use of *tu* suggests a certain distance between Diego and his experience, a "self-consciousness" or "objectivity" as she calls it.³⁵⁶ In a way, this speech-image composition renders him once removed from his own experience. Narration becomes dialogue and dialogue becomes a sort of inner dialogue that connects the character to his past and future selves, thus entangling the representation's system of reference in an inter-temporalized "I". As we found in Chapter Three, a Bergsonian world is also a Bakhtinian one. Roman Jakobson refers to this as the "intrapersonal" aspect of inner speech:

³⁵⁶ *Alain Resnais*, p. 112.

[I]nner speech, astutely conceived by Peirce as an ‘internal dialogue’ and until rather recently disregarded in linguistic literature, is a cardinal factor in the network of language and serves as one’s connection with the self’s past and future.³⁵⁷

However, even this is not fully the case, as this voiceover itself is never stable. That is to say, as each representation consists of a struggle between objective and subjective poles, no one element can be considered to be fully “internal”. David Bordwell rewords this as “the ‘subjectively objective’ voice in Diego’s own mind, a kind of internalized Other that ponders his actions in an impersonal way.”³⁵⁸ Indeed this adds an aspect of reflexivity, in which Diego—or the viewing subject-function—is set apart from the aural source of signification. With this simple pronoun, the code of subjectivity is reformulated.

From the opening, we can see that these subjective representations provide an immanent field of formal relations in which the various subject-functions circulate. The connotations of this example resonate throughout the text, in which Diego’s voiceover wages an ongoing discourse between his past, present, and future selves, as well as with other voices. While dividing Diego’s narrative or speech-based agency, this voiceover is also placing the *spectator* in Diego’s position. The voiceover addresses a *tu*; Diego is that *tu* and, relative to the immanent field, we are that *tu*, breaking the conventional illusion of a division between representation and spectator that we will find to be central to *Le Mépris*’s deconstruction of the code of objectivity.

Moreover, as Bordwell points out, the voiceover is not wholly subjective, for it is often not even in Diego’s voice. “Is it then the voice of some ‘authorial’ narrator?”

³⁵⁷ *Main Trends in the Science of Language* Allen & Unwin: London, 1973), p. 33, cited in Paul Willemsen, “Cinematic Discourse: the Problem of Inner Speech,” p. 154.

³⁵⁸ *Narration in the Fiction Film*, p. 226.

Bordwell demands. Or, in words that conjure both Münsterberg and Bakhtin, “is it a ‘subjective other,’ an impersonal objectification of his thoughts?”³⁵⁹ Bordwell remarks on the ambiguity of the spoken discourse, which constantly wavers between the narration of events and the uncertainty of whether those events took place, an ambiguity produced by an inconsistency in the subject-object structure of the representation and an open organization of the immanent field. As Bordwell concludes: “Self-conscious narrator, or unselfconscious character? The uncertainty is never dispelled.”³⁶⁰

This complicates the “Diego-as-subject” construct on numerous levels. Not only is there an external world for him, full of people and causes and actions, but there is also a lack of unity to his interior process, which includes both an inter-temporal fragmentation as well as this polyphony of voiceovers. Moreover, there is still another level on which Diego functions cinematically, as the point of reference for the structuring of representation.

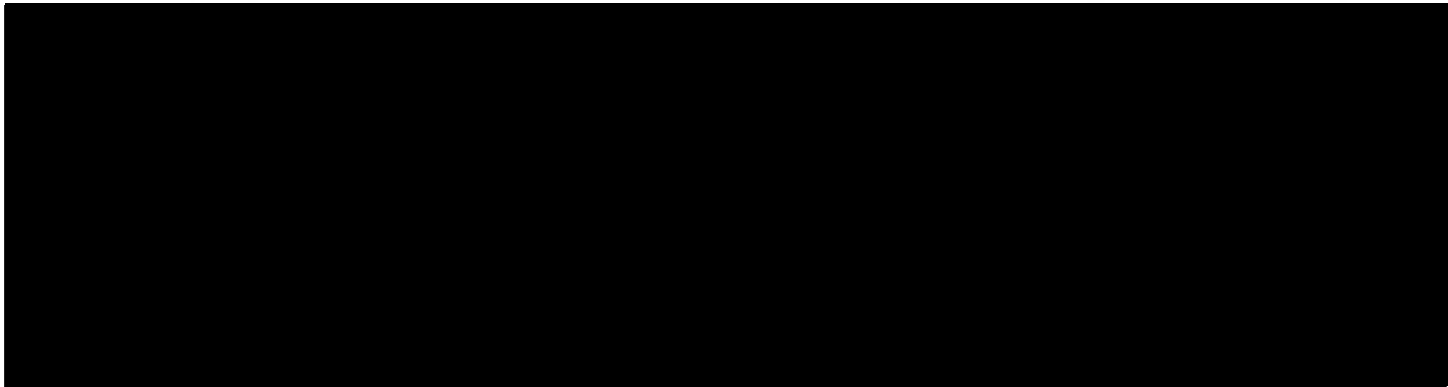
This deconstruction of the division between subject and object, the overlapping between subjective and objective modes of representation, is not limited to experiments in speech-image codification, but is part of the greater network by which this film uses, reveals, and transforms the code of subjectivity. This deconstructive project otherwise consists of different types of insert sequences that constantly provide a fluctuation in the representation’s organization of subject-object relations. These insert sequences vary from the psychologically expressionist (an objective image altered to connote the psychology of the character) to the inter-temporally subjective (a future image projected by the character).

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 219.

³⁶⁰ Bordwell, *ibid.*, p. 226.

An example of the former is provided in duplicate: two scenes of lovemaking, one between Diego and Nadine (the daughter of one of his collaborators, and herself a member of the radical student group) and the other between Diego and his long-term girlfriend, Marianne (Ingrid Thulin). These two scenes are stylistically coded to connote the effect of each respective experience on Diego—these are subjective in the way that Expressionism and Neo-Realism can be seen as subjective, extensions of the characters' psyche to the totality of plastic representation.

The first scene is a surreal, ethereal fantasy: Nadine's body parts are filmed in close-up against a white backdrop, like a naked angel floating in a beam of light (47).

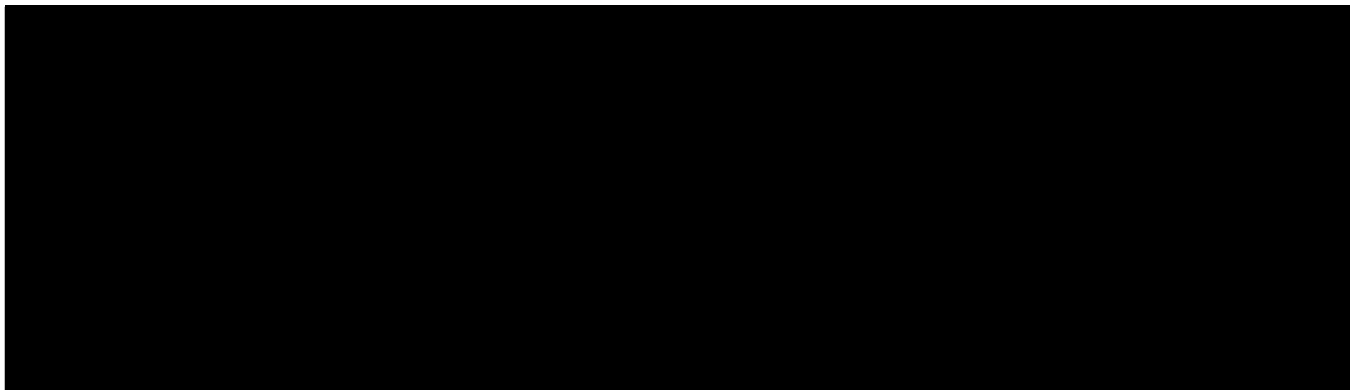


Much like the images of detached body parts found in numerous of Godard's films (notably *Une femme mariée*), though not in a self-conscious manner such as we will find with Godard. Though his films often grant agency to female narrators, Resnais is not concerned with sexual politics. We do, however, see in these images a differentiation between the subject-function touching (Diego) and the object-function being touched (Nadine), a system of organization that is somewhat obscured by the otherwise abstract quality of the shots. Michel Caen evokes the stylistic sensuality of this scene, implicitly glorifying this classical objectification of the woman's body through the praise he expresses for the aesthetic force of the shots:

Nadine s'offre à lui. Nue, la lumière claque sur ses flancs, nous faissant redécouvrir le cinéma en blanc et noir...ses cuisses s'ouvrent et l'écran nous renvoie très simplement l'image de l'amour physique.³⁶¹

While the structuring of sexual difference in this sequence merits criticism, it is nonetheless of interest to this study for what Bordwell describes as a dichotomy of code, in which the representation "is both 'reality' (the couple did make love) and 'fantasy' (connotations of impossibly pure pleasure)," what I could argue as overlapping objective and subjective modes of representation.³⁶² Despite Nadine's dominance of the screen, there is a clear differentiation between subject and object in this representation. This structure of representation provides a specific relationship between these two people: while they may share pleasure, their experience is not inter-subjective, there is a specific differentiation constructed between them.

This scene is followed by a shot that is at first incomprehensible, a banister in an unidentified apartment building (48). We find soon thereafter, upon Diego's arrival there, that this is the railing leading to Marianne's apartment. (49)

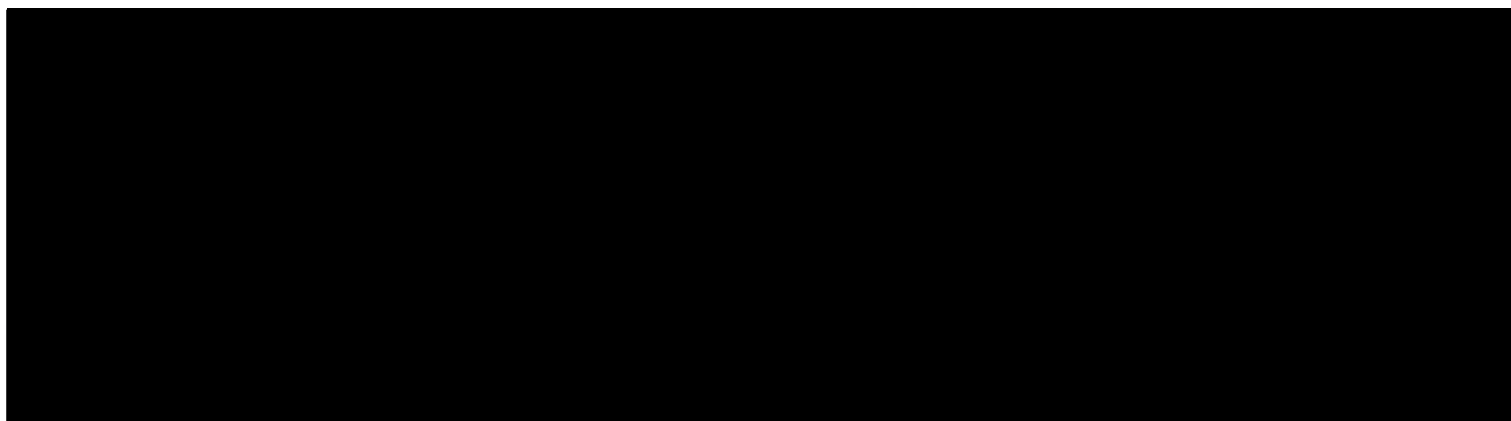


But before discussing this mode of montage, let us compare the scene with Nadine with the second such scene, with Marianne. The latter scene is different, the immanent field of formal relations manifests a different organization: carnal, mundane,

³⁶¹ Michel Caen, "Les temps changent," p. 75.

³⁶² *Narration in the Fiction Film*, p. 225.

framed in ways so that there is no sense of differentiation between them, so that they share the image (50). This no longer seems fully like Diego's subjective expression, but something more mutual, inter-subjective. Whereas the scene with Nadine is an "essentially loveless, cerebral affair," the one with Marianne is infused with "warmth and passion" of two "sensual bodies seeking each other."³⁶³ Following the scene with Marianne is also a flashforward, this one to the political meeting that Diego will attend the next day. (51)



Each of these insert sequences, as we see here, ends with a flashforward of events to come. The flashforward is a new addition to Resnais's formal arsenal, and it is only really understood in retrospect. As David Bordwell points out, *La guerre est finie* "creates a unique intrinsic norm" for the representation of diegetic subjectivity: instead of memory or fantasy, we are "to share the character's *anticipation* of events."³⁶⁴ The inter-temporal instability of the mental image grows more extreme as the film goes on, as the forms of representation enfold more possible times, more possible agencies, more possible subject-object compositions into the dialogic structure of the immanent field.

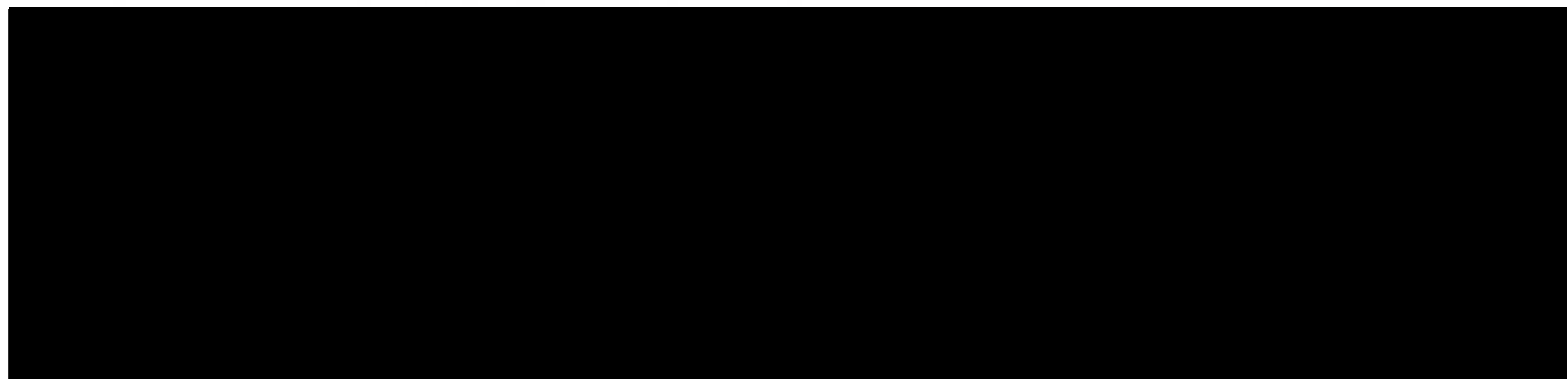
As the film progresses, Diego finds himself stuck between his duty and his conscience: he must alert his colleague, Juan, of an ambush waiting in Madrid, in hope of

³⁶³ Roy Armes, *The Cinema of Alain Resnais*, p. 146.

³⁶⁴ *Narration in the Fiction Film*, pp. 218-9.

successfully delivering important plans. This becomes all the more complicated of a mission as other colleagues are arrested and even, possibly, killed; as his veteran peers denounce him for not having enough perspective on the greater cause of the movement; and, as the younger radicals rebuke him for the inefficiency of the traditional, strike-oriented and systematic—as opposed to violent—left.

Let us consider the multiple inserts involving Juan, who is allegedly being detained and tortured by the Spanish police. These inserts recur numerous times: once before the torture theoretically could have been going to happen (52), once as it is being considered a possibility because of the realization of a breach of confidence (53), and once when it has been determined as actual fact (54). It was once premonition, then speculation, and then what Bordwell calls “speculative flashback.”³⁶⁵



Another recurring insert-sequence is of the meeting of Diego's peers at the Communist Party, at which Diego is suspended from activity for having a “*subjective view of the situation*”. This scene is represented multiple times as well—once while the anonymous voiceover prepares Diego for the near future, once after he has made love to Marianne, once as it actually happens in real time, and once while Diego is trying to decide what to do afterward. In both recurring insert-sequences, the same scene is

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 225.

viewed as numerous types of mental image, each one accompanying a different mode of Diego's internalization of events and each one possible to situate in a temporal plane. There is the hypothetical past, the certain virtual past, the hypothetical present, and the hypothetical future. The same basic sequence is interchangeable as fear, regret, concern, and anticipation.

Each one of these could be understood essentially as a structure of subject-object relations. As Deleuze notes, "la fonction chez Resnais n'est pas le simple usage de l'objet, c'est la fonction mentale ou le niveau de pensée qui lui correspondent."³⁶⁶ Deleuze offers here a variation on the typical analysis of Resnais's films as a type of thought: instead, as I have argued, we could see the representations as referring to different mental functions, modes of relating the self to the world, organizations between subject and object. Resnais's image-type is not necessarily an expression of thought, which would be impossible to corroborate; it is, however, a particular construction of subject-object relations, and thus *the condition for the representation of thought*.

And, as these representations are laid out before the spectator, we are made privy to Diego's attempt to digest the world external to him and to transform this digestion into a decision and, then, action. Bordwell claims that the result of such a "highly restricted and deeply subjective narration" is that, "as we learn the narration's devices, we are inclined to trust Diego's judgment."³⁶⁷ However, it seems quite the opposite: as the forms of representation dissolve what we know as conventional narration, subjectivity as a concept is itself deconstructed, revealed as incomplete, fragmented, and prone to error.

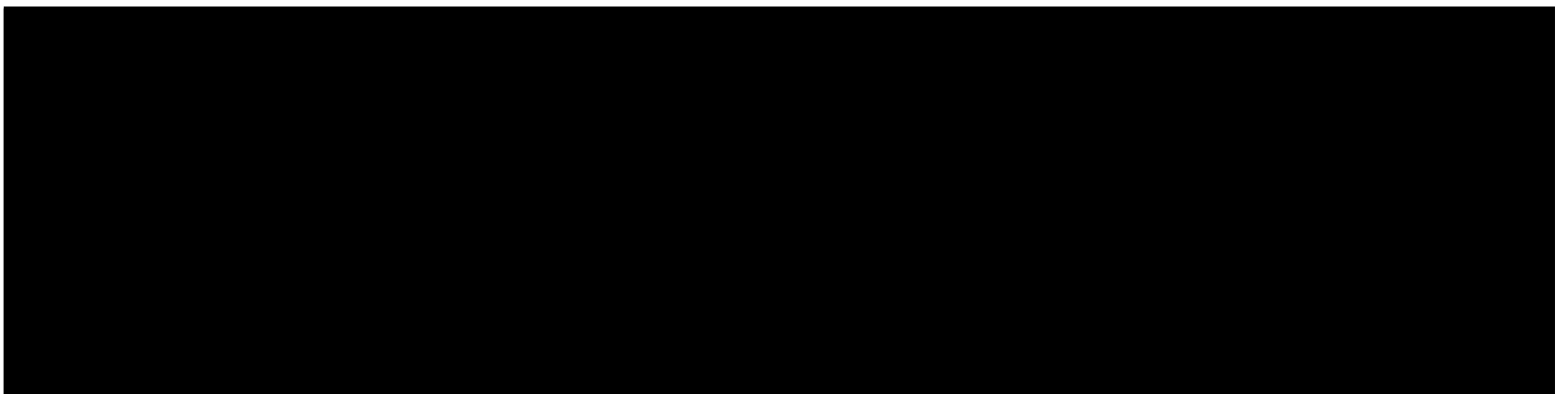
³⁶⁶ *Cinéma II: l'image-temps*, p. 159.

³⁶⁷ *Narration in the Fiction Film*, p. 225.

Our focus is directed, instead, toward the immanent field through which this subject is constructed, through which this “judgment” is manifested.

We could thus posit a causality between the structure of representation, as an organization of subject-object relations, and the denotative stability of narration. This becomes all the more clear in the final scene of the film: the lack of closure with which the film concludes offers a finale to this rejection of conventional divisions between subject and object.

Instead of proposing an image as an illusory act of natural perception, the film’s representations are structured to illustrate the non-linear and a-chronological process by which the character posits himself as a subject in relation to the external world. It is not a unilateral act of perception, but is instead the dialogical interaction with the world around him, offered to us as a function of the relations organized within the immanent field. Such a dialogic interaction is often highlighted through the use of dissolves between images of Diego and other characters, what could be viewed as a merging of two separate subject-functions. This is perhaps best illustrated by the final images of the film, which consist of a dissolve from an image of Diego, who has left for Spain, to one of Marianne, who rushes through the airport on a mission to save him (55).



This formal overlapping of images accentuates the permeability of the individuals and reveals the illusionary premise on which the purely isolated subject-function is constructed. As Bordwell points out:

The very last shots identify Marianne and Diego, making her our new (and limited) protagonist; she now obtains, perhaps, a depth of subjectivity commensurate with that earlier assigned to Diego.³⁶⁸

We see here a perfect example of how Resnais refuses to use the code of subjectivity to alienate a particular character. What is both unique and radical about Resnais is that the code of subjectivity is always used, instead, to subvert the notion of a fully independent subject, to show the subject as only one of many overlapping and interacting agents that meet within the immanent field. This highlights the fact that the subject-function is in fact a construction, a tool meant to organize the denotative representation around a particular point of reference that is implicitly isolated, divided from the referential content of representation.

We could now venture to say, along with Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze, that the isolated, self-unified, diegetic subject is a myth. Resnais helps us to look at how this myth is constructed, what its cinematic formal units are, how it is signified through film connotation. Just as in Godard's *Deux ou trois choses...*, we find here a connotative system that can help us to clarify the reconcilability between phenomenology and a semiotics of cinema, for it illuminates the fundamental organizing process used in the secretion of film codes, and deconstructs them in order to reveal a subject-position's implication *in* the world.

³⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p. 220.

Such challenges to conventional film expression, as we find with Resnais and Godard, reveal to us the formal structure of film representation, providing us with a reflection on the filmic construction of the dualism between subject and object. This reflexivity has a particular aim, which many have used to link filmmakers such as Resnais and Godard to the theatre of Brecht. Discussing the rather unconventional montage of this film, Resnais himself stated:

[N]ous sommes au cinéma. Nous vous présentons des éléments réels, c'est d'accord, mais nous ne tentons pas de vous faire croire que c'est autre chose que le cinéma. C'est une espèce d'honnêteté."³⁶⁹

This *honesty*, I hope to argue in this thesis, is the definitive value of formalist cinema and a formalist approach to film representation, for it permits us to understand how our larger systems of belief are formulated through the composition of subject-object relations. In the past two chapters I have progressively attempted to show this as a function of the diegetic subject-function. But what if we take away this position? What of objective representation in cinema? To answer this question I will turn to the works of Jean-Luc Godard, whose deconstruction of the code of objectivity, we will find, functions upon a reflexive principle similar to that issued by Resnais: *nous sommes au cinéma*.

³⁶⁹ "Ne pas faire un film sur l'Espagne (Entretien avec Alain Resnais)," p. 172.

Chapter Five: Jean-Luc Godard and the Code of Objectivity

Rien n'est plus subjectif qu'un objectif...

—Béla Balázs³⁷⁰

In the previous two chapters, I looked at the construction of subject-functions *within* the text, in relation to what one might call subjective representation. We found that Alain Resnais commonly employs this mode of representation in order to challenge conventional assumptions concerning the division between subject and object, both as a function of the human characters of his films and also as a function of the structure of film representation. By altering and subverting the code of subjectivity, I argued that Resnais focuses the film's signification on the immanent field, in which the form itself engenders a dialogic interaction between subject-functions.

But what of the other pole of representation, the one that I postulated as a function of the frame in Chapter One, and according to the classical editing critiqued by suture theory? What about the perspective outside of the subject, or what one might call the objective pole of representation? In posing this question, I return here to some of the primary problems posed when this study began. Having devoted the previous two chapters to the ways in which film codifies different subject-functions, let us now place that study alongside one of the attempt to remove subjectivity from the discourse, to present its representations as non-subjective—or, to put it simply, as *objective*.

³⁷⁰ *L'Esprit du film* (1930), cited in Jean Mitry, *La Sémiologie en question*, p.23.

The films of Jean-Luc Godard engage explicitly with the very problem of objectivity in film representation, offering reflexive organizations of subject-object relations that reveal the formal base through which objective representation is connoted. If the code of subjectivity places the immanent field within the filmic space, within a diegetic character's interior experience, the code of objectivity composes the immanent field as a detached space without affinity for any of its objects.

The notion of cinematic objectivity has a long tradition, a tradition that involves the scientific and journalistic roots of cinema as a form. Edgar Morin argues that cinema was born "pour étudier les phénomènes de la nature."³⁷¹ Siegfried Kracauer makes a similar argument about the scientific basis for cinema. In *Theory of Film* Kracauer details the camera's historical connection to the development of "scientific potentialities," tying the evolution of scientific technology and, specifically, of the camera, to the industrial pursuit of a mechanized reproduction of the objective world.³⁷² Bazin, however, argues quite vehemently against this historiography³⁷³ and I would agree with his conclusion that, regardless of its historical roots in the sciences, cinema quickly went askew from this purpose, becoming a commercial industry primarily used for the production of fiction films.

In other words: the quest to study natural phenomena was at the same time rooted in a desire for knowledge, technological development, and commercial interest. It is thus that Jean-Louis Comolli finds it necessary to challenge the distinction between cinema's

³⁷¹ *Le Cinéma ou l'homme imaginaire*, p.14. Morin is quoting Demney's *Les Origines du cinématographe* (1909), and no doubt making reference to the numerous texts written during the natal years of cinema on the scientific purpose of the apparatus, including perhaps foremost Etienne-Jules Marey's "Chronophotographie sur pellicule mobile," originally printed in *La Photo du Mouvement* (Paris, 1892).

³⁷² *Theory of Film* (Oxford University Press: New York, 1960), p. 4

³⁷³ See "Le Mythe du cinéma total," *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma*, pp. 19-24.

scientific inheritance and its ideological inheritance, concluding nonetheless that this scientific origin can be seen as a definitive factor in the mythology of a neutral cinematic representation.³⁷⁴ I situate this thesis largely to the side of theorists such as Comolli, though as before I will avoid going so far as to advocate any necessary connection between film form and a particular ideological position or political regime. Nonetheless, we will find in this final chapter that a study of film codes and connotation, of the immanent field of film representation, logically must lead toward an implication of wider socio-cultural values.

Critics such as Comolli and many of his contemporaries (Baudry, MacCabe, etc.) worked to dispel the myth of cinematic objectivity, a project in film theory that I have argued to be concurrent with more widespread intellectual attempts to deconstruct any epistemological model in which the viewer and viewed are irrevocably divided—in other words, the myth of the detached subject, the subject that is not itself in the world. Godard's oeuvre, like that of Resnais, chronicles the disillusionment of this very myth of the detached subject.

Godard's films, we have already seen, raise questions about how the camera *sees*, and how its forms of representation are structured to a high degree on the differentiation signified in the act of *looking*. In keeping with the focus of this thesis, we have found and will discover further that this reflexivity is not limited to the level of content or denotation; as Deleuze writes, with Godard, "la réflexion n'est pas seulement le contenu mais aussi la forme de l'image."³⁷⁵ Indeed, my thesis argues, it is *primarily*—or, at least, in a Deleuzean sense, *essentially*—in the form.

³⁷⁴ See "—Technique et idéologie," *Cahiers du cinéma*, No. 229 (mai-juin 1971), pp. 4-21).

³⁷⁵ *Cinéma II: l'image-temps*, p. 18.

However, much as with Resnais and the notions of consciousness and psychological realism, many theorists and critics claim that Godard's formal enterprise offers a *new type of objectivity*. Godard's constant anti-narrative engagement with real people, in unscripted situations and through anti-illusionist forms of representation, has led many to champion Godard for an ethnographic mode of representation that claims to describe rather than to explain, to witness rather than to judge, returning us to certain methodological premises fundamental to phenomenology.

But doesn't this raise a familiar paradox? Discussing Godard's connection to other aspects of 1960s culture such as the Nouveau Roman, Guido Aristanico describes modern literature and cinema as being definable according to the paradigm of "voir" rather than "expliquer," *to see* rather than *to explain*.³⁷⁶ But is this not replacing one myth with another? Did we not find a similar problem inherent in the debate between Bazin and Eisenstein, as if one type of representation were more or less signifying than another? As I have argued, there is no denotation without connotation.

While I align this thesis with the view that these two filmmakers challenge the closed structure of classical discourse, I will argue here that Godard does so by rejecting altogether the camera's potential to bear witness. In Chapter One I demonstrated with *Vivre sa vie* that Godard inherited a firm belief in the objective capacity of film, its ability to reproduce the sensory world *as it is*. Yet he demonstrates an equal awareness of film representation's being built from certain codes, an awareness especially of the connotative basis for purporting to represent the world *tel quel*. Indeed his work during this period could be described as a constant struggle between a desire to use the camera to

³⁷⁶ "Langage et idéologie dans quelques films de Godard," *études cinématographiques: Jean-Luc Godard: au-de' du récit*, 57/61, p. 5.

reveal some truth in appearances and, on the other hand, a certain duty to reveal the constructed base of cinema, to turn our attention toward the operations of the immanent field itself. In his oeuvre, I hope to reveal the complexities of an ongoing reflection on the code of objectivity.

I. Photography and documentary cinema: roots of the code of objectivity

The objective essence of film's reproductive act is, as we found in Chapter One, implied through the illusion of natural perception created primarily by the camera mechanism. This has of course led to many of the theories of film that take phenomenology for their basis, such as those of Bazin and Metz, which assume the camera to be a type of reduction of observation. In similar manner, Edgar Morin claims that the history of photography imposes objectivity on the cinema. In other words, the camera itself is objective. From this principle, Morin postulates an equivalence between "l'impression de réalité" and "la vérité objective".³⁷⁷

But is this objective characteristic of film representation built into the apparatus, or a denial of its presence? The preservation of cinematic objectivity is, after all, reliant on the ability to hide this apparatus, to guard the impression of reality through codes of denotation that are meant, in complete circularity, to demonstrate the medium's essential objectivity. This returns us to the myth, perpetuated by Bazin and Kracauer, of the photographic camera—the cold, precise machine, expertly constructed and performing its function without the sentimentality of human expression.

Grounded in the notion of its being a mechanical capture of the visible world, this ontological characteristic of photographic representation led to the reification of the

³⁷⁷ *Cinéma ou l'homme imaginaire*, pp. 134-139.

machine as a form of representation that could bring humanity closer to the objective world. There is an unmistakable relevance to my thesis in Stanley Cavell's claim that photography "satisfied a wish...to escape subjectivity and metaphysical isolation."³⁷⁸ This machine supposedly provides us with a special, direct connection to nature itself: the immanent field of film representation replaces the subjective human intermediary with the non-subjective camera. As Bazin writes: "Pour la première fois, entre l'objet initial et sa représentation, rien ne s'interpose qu'un autre objet."³⁷⁹

But this notion of representation carries with it a fundamental belief in how the immanent field should be organized, and such a reification of the camera-subject makes use of a connotative system built according to a specific differentiation between the looking subject and the object being looked at. This fundamental division between viewing machine and viewed object has intertwined the connotation of objective representation with stylistic aspects of cinematic realism. Indeed, we will find that Bazin's very notion of cinematic realism is deeply intertwined with what I call the code of objectivity.³⁸⁰

³⁷⁸ *The World Viewed*, p. 21.

³⁷⁹ "Ontologie de l'image photographique," p. 13. This is in fact the overall thesis of Bazin's quintessential essay on the evolution of visual arts and the characteristics of realism. Bazin, as Godard would later do, goes as far as to posit a somewhat specious claim that the fact that the camera lens is called an "objectif" in French actually bestows upon the machine some higher level of truth-recording. This logic is, philologically, clearly backwards.

³⁸⁰ I must here make a certain distinction between cinematic realism and the code of objectivity. Realism, in the Barthesian model, is the compilation of a network of codes in order to offer a narrative according to a structure with which the reader or spectator would be familiarized through socio-cultural conventions. This aspect of narration and content is the central focus of Kracauer's theory of camera objectivity, and could be argued to be equally as central to Bazin's arguments for Neo-Realism. Nonetheless, as we saw in Chapter One, these same arguments make recourse to the formal connotation of this realism, which make up what I call the code of objectivity. The code of objectivity is, more specifically, a network of formal compositions placing the spectator in a position meant to mimic the detached perception attributed to mechanical empiricism. Realism is an aesthetic school and mode of representation; the code of objectivity is a particular dynamic of semiotic generation. Nonetheless, I agree with Noël Carroll's argument against the logical link between the two. Placing himself against Kracauer, Bazin, and Cavell, Carroll challenges the idea that the objective nature of the apparatus is a logical argument for the realism of the representation. (See *Theorizing the Moving Image*, pp. 42-3).

Bazin, great supporter of cinematic realism, was perhaps the greatest champion of film objectivity in the history of film theory. While acknowledging that cinema is entirely staged, Bazin holds that, because of film form's essential roots in the photographic camera, cinema is both obligated and destined to serve an objective function, to reveal something pure in appearances due to its own detached structure of subject-object relations. As Andrew writes about Bazin:

He was the most important and intelligent voice to have pleaded for a film theory and a film tradition based on a belief in the naked power of the mechanically recorded image.³⁸¹

I outlined in Chapter One how, in “Ontologie de l’image cinématographique,” Bazin traces the history of the film image as being genealogically related to cultural-anthropological tools of reproduction. However, the pure mechanistic nature of the camera separates photography and cinema from other methods of representation. In the mechanical apparatus of the camera, Bazin ventures, we have finally found a truly objective means of reproduction. As such, we found that he incorporates into this objectivist argument praise for certain formal dynamics—such as depth-of-field and the absence of montage—that would codify film aesthetics according to the ontological debt that, Bazin claims, the photographic image owes to reality. A major factor in the claim to film’s objectivity is the camera’s preservation of depth-of-field in the form of perspective, a perfect example of how the structure of representation becomes the legitimization of some ontological relation to reality.

An integral part of my analysis of the phenomenological subject and the frame in Chapter One, depth-of-field preserves what is arguably the fundamental connotative purpose of perspective: the centering of the frame as a viewing subject-position to which

³⁸¹ *The major Film Theories*, p. 134.

the image refers and, yet, which it also effaces. As such, theorists from Bazin to Baudry trace the codification of visual depth back to the introduction of perspective in Renaissance painting. Bazin accords depth-of-field a special place in his arguments for cinematic realism, claiming that it allows for a spatial complexity and thus provides the representation with a certain ambiguity inherent in natural perception.

More ideologically skeptical theorists, such as Baudry or Comolli, argue that perspective essentially frames representation as being reducible back to one central locus of meaning, the camera-subject as ocular reproduction of the world.³⁸² Baudry's analysis, like that of Heath and many other critics, owes much to the seminal conclusions of Erwin Panofsky's *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, in which Panofsky describes perspective as the connotation that a picture or image is like a window on the world, and "we are meant to believe we are looking through that window."³⁸³

As mentioned in my Introduction, my work harbors an ancestral affinity for the works of Panofsky, and this critique of the "window" is similar to this thesis's critique of the construction of a total and totally differentiated subject-position. In other words, this formal construction effaces the fact that it is a formal construction, suggesting that the reproduced image is a pure re-presentation built with scientific precision: "perspective," Panofsky writes, "transforms psychophysical space into mathematical space."³⁸⁴ This could be seen as a transformation from the analog to digital, which Panofsky helps us to postulate as an organization of the immanent field according to a certain composition of subject-object relations.

³⁸² "Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus," p. 345.

³⁸³ *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, trans. Christopher S. Wood (Zone Books: New York, 1997), p. 27.

³⁸⁴ Panofsky, *ibid.*, p. 31.

While Panofsky writes this about painting, we can draw distinct connections between his approach and that proposed by Rudolf Arnheim. Foreshadowing Merleau-Ponty's application of similar methods to human perception, Arnheim bases his study of the form of film representation not as an imitation or duplication of its source, but as "a translation of observed characteristics into the forms of a given medium."³⁸⁵ Perspective is one of the elements of this translation.

Taking this in more of an overt ideological direction that echoes Barthes's theory of mythologies, Baudry claims that the construction of this "window" is based on the effacement of the technical base that produces the images being seen.³⁸⁶ This effacement is necessary to place the spectator in the position of the camera: to offer the image as something that has not yet been exposed to connotative judgment and thus to render the illusion that any critical capacity for what is being seen is held by the spectator. We may recognize this illusion, which I call denotation, as the target of Resnais's deconstruction of the code of subjectivity, and we will find it similarly revealed and deconstructed in Godard's oeuvre.

This effacement of the connotative structuring of film representation has been definitively central to the tradition of documentary cinema. For the modes of film representation both extolled and, subsequently, deconstructed by Godard, one need only look at the films of Robert Flaherty, Jean Vigo, and John Grierson, in which the documentary forms of ethnography and social realism forged particular modes of representing the world *objectively*. In this tradition, representation is divided strictly

³⁸⁵ *Film as Art*, pp. 2-3.

³⁸⁶ "Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus," pp. 345-8. This can be differentiated from the aspects of the code of subjectivity by placing the spectator in the position of the camera-subject, as opposed to the character-subject.

between the apparatus-subject (including the filmmaker) and the viewed object, a division meant to imply a certain authenticity to the representation and an innocence or neutrality in the rhetoric of the message. It is indeed this claim to objective detachment—detachment both from the referential content and from any rhetorical stance—that has, from Dziga Vertov to Michael Moore, rendered the documentary genre the most fertile ground for propaganda.

The early documentary was part travel guide, part newsreel. “Le cinématographe s’élance dans le monde et devient touriste,” Morin writes in summarizing the early theories of cineastes such as Delluc and Epstein.³⁸⁷ Cinema was to be a way of coming to know the world, of bringing the foreign closer: accumulating knowledge of the representational content structured as visual object. The first development of this code, for both stylistic and economical reasons, championed the fixed camera, long take and, later, depth-of-field, formal elements for which Bazin would later praise the realism of Renoir’s fiction films.³⁸⁸

Is there a link, then, between documentary codes and forms of representation in the fiction film? Surely. Formal characteristics of the documentary genre often cross over into the attempt in fiction film to give the impression of authenticity, the claim to truth. Thus, a code of denotation is developed for “documenting” the real, and is then adopted for giving the illusion of reality. Remarkable cinematographic similarities can be found, for example, between English social realist documentary and the connotative

³⁸⁷ Morin, *Le Cinéma ou l’homme imaginaire*, p. 23.

³⁸⁸ In “Technological and Aesthetic Influences of Deep-Focus Cinematography in the United States” (1972, reprinted in *Methods and Movies II*, pp. 58-83), Patrick Ogle performs a historical analysis of deep focus. As he notes, deep focus came about primarily as a result of technological developments in film stock; in a strange twist of the realist notion of photographic ontology, one of Renoir’s assistants during this period was Henri Cartier-Bresson, who during this period gained international notoriety through photographs taken using a similar depth of field. (p. 61)

codes of Italian Neo-Realism, an affinity confirmed by Bazin's observation that "[o]n assiste depuis la guerre à un évident retour à l'authenticité documentaire."³⁸⁹

With the evolution of cheaper and more portable equipment, documentary practices later reversed their technical attributes, adopting a more flattened image produced in naturally lit situations by a handheld camera. Heavily influenced by such documentary filmmakers as Jean Rouch and the movement known as *cinéma vérité*, the directors of the Nouvelle Vague co-opted many of these technologies and techniques, including high-speed film stock, the handheld camera, and the discursive mode of the interview. Indeed, still today these devices remain stylistic connotations of objectivity in such contemporary movements as reality television and the Dogme 95 manifesto.³⁹⁰

But, much like the problem of film connotation in general, cinematic objectivity is not easy to define: it is a certain implication that emanates through the immanent field. As Stanley Cavell notes, cinematic objectivity is a "mood in which reality becomes reified for you, a mood of nothing but eyes, dissociated from feeling."³⁹¹ This idea of a "mood" is not far from what I have discussed more specifically as connotation, in which the structure of representation connotes the image as being a certain *type of representation*. This structure is the result of a particular organization of subject-object relations, in this case a differentiation between the viewing subject-function ("nothing but eyes") and the reified object of the representation.

Once again we are returned to one of our preliminary debates: this aspect of the apparatus's being "dissociated" generates, in Bazin for example, a hostility toward

³⁸⁹ *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma*, p. 27.

³⁹⁰ Such stylistic characteristics are fully visible today in the social realism of directors such as Lars van Trier, les frères Dardennes, and Lukas Moodysson.

³⁹¹ *The World Viewed*, p. 129.

montage. Eisenstein's entire notion of montage, we may remember, involves quite the contrary, a process of *association* that stirs a feeling in the spectator. However, it would be erroneous to think that the evocation of an objective gaze is not rhetorical in practice. This question of the connotative foundation of cinematic objectivity forces me here overtly to confront a larger cinematic and extra-cinematic question that has loomed like a shadow across this entire study; and, in doing so, I confess that this chapter will gradually begin to point this study toward the horizon, outlined in my Conclusion, of a larger application of my re-conceptualization of film representation, one that *does* implicate more widespread systems of thought.

This notion of objectivity in cinema—being tied to ontological assumptions about the photographic camera, the early scientific pretense of cinema's birth, and various documentary traditions—belies problems in film theory that have been most clearly raised concerning colonial modes of representation.³⁹² Post-colonial theories of representation, for example, enact a connotative analysis of the appropriation of the exotic or foreign as a visual Other, signified as an object in relation to the viewing subject. This returns us to the Althusserian critique of epistemology mentioned in Chapter One, a critique that will resurface in this chapter's analysis of Jean-Luc Godard and the objectification of women in film representation.

Colin MacCabe ties the objectification of women to cinema through the "problem of sexual difference and of the alienation endemic to capitalist society,"³⁹³ a problem that is central to Godard's investigations during this period. Looking at Godard's structures

³⁹² This argument has probably been best catalogued, on a uniform socio-cultural level, by the works of Edward Said. In the realm of film studies, see the works of Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, especially *Unthinking Eurocentrism* (Routledge: New York and London, 1994).

³⁹³ *Godard: Images, Sounds, Politics*, p. 40.

of representation, I will argue that this “difference” and “alienation” are inseparable from the “mood” of objective representation, and that post-colonial, feminist, and other such approaches can be articulated according to the theory of film connotation and subject-object relations thus far established in these pages. This alienation is the separation between viewing subject and viewed object, between origin of meaning and article of information, which we found as the basis for *Vivre sa vie*, in various ways overturned via the dialogism of the immanent field in *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle*.

Based on the notions of epistemology and the scientific and documentary roots of cinema sketched out so far in this chapter, one could say that the goals of cinematic objectivity, as we found articulated in *Vivre sa vie*, can be traced to a desire to understand the essence of something by perceiving it. Conjuring certain notions of Bazin’s ocular-centric interpretation of phenomenology, Godard expresses this goal when talking about *Vivre sa vie*: “Comment rendre le dedans? Eh bien, justement, en restant sagement dehors.”³⁹⁴

However, this isn’t just the natural world, but a person. And not just a person, but a type of person with certain socially, culturally, and economically defined traits. A woman. And in this chapter, as part of my critique of the code of objectivity, I will pose the question of how the identity of the object is inseparably linked to certain organizations within the immanent field. In *Vivre sa vie*, Godard applies a somewhat classical notion of cinematic objectivity to the fictional inquiry into a woman’s existence, permitting her a certain narrative agency but not a full interaction with the camera, turning her a sympathetic ear and yet a somewhat cold gaze. In a historical sense, one could deduce from this an alignment between Godard and other filmmakers who have

³⁹⁴ “Entretien,” in *Godard par Godard*, p. 229.

applied a similarly detached form of representation to the filming of female protagonists, including Dreyer, Bergman, and Bresson.³⁹⁵

This positioning of the visual Other as the gaze's object, this structure of differentiation between the perspective of representation and what is represented, is fundamental to the code of objectivity, a code whose formal elements connote an empirical relationship between the apparatus and the world it represents. A distance. This distance is something that Godard eventually abandons, as we found with *Deux ou trois choses...*. In fact, we can see a major shift as early as in his next film after *Vivre sa vie: Le Mépris*. Though he is deeply implicated at times in its preservation, Godard arrives at a reformulation of the code of objectivity. Just as we found with Resnais and the code of subjectivity, Godard manages to embrace and to expose the code of objectivity as a myth, to reveal the formal conventions beneath it and—as does Resnais—then to reconstruct it around the recognized implications of the form's presence.

I will discuss this in this chapter's analysis of *Le Mépris*, which Wheeler Winston Dixon describes as “a turning point in Godard's career,” demonstrating “a new depth and tragic maturity not present in the director's earlier efforts.”³⁹⁶ What we will find with *Le Mépris*, though, can be seen as generally indicative of Godard's ongoing struggle with the code of objectivity.

II. Jean-Luc Godard and the code of objectivity

The code of objectivity is, then, the systematic connotation of a detached subject-position, an organization of the immanent field in a way so as to imply that the

³⁹⁵ All of these filmmakers were extremely influential on Godard, as can be gleaned from his writings for *Cahiers du cinéma* and elsewhere.

³⁹⁶ *The Films of Jean-Luc Godard*, p. 52.

representation is the product of an apparatus that rests outside the immanent field itself, giving the impression that what is being seen is not even a representation but is a window on the ostensive photographic referent. Just as we found in the last chapter's analysis of Resnais, Godard challenges every aspect of this code, from its individual formal characteristics, to its formulation of a linear narrative structure, to its process of removing all signs of its own production.

In *À Bout de souffle* (1960), *Une femme est une femme* (1961), and *Alphaville* (1965) we can see Godard's direct confrontation of cinematic cliché and genre, exposing the underlying determinations of the cinematic illusion. Then, with films such as *Pierrot le fou* (1965) and *Week-end* (1967), Godard wages an all-out war on illusionary film representation and narrative artificiality. Lastly, in films such as *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle* and *Masculin féminin* (1966) we find the complete transition from a deconstructive, anti-narrative mode to a fully reflexive form of representation that both reveals the structure of representation and grants a subjective voice to its object.

During this period, Godard increasingly conflates the separation between subject and object and opens up the immanent field to a dialogic interaction between elements and agencies. The visual depth of the image is minimized, and characters look directly into the eye of the camera. In films such as *Deux ou trois choses...* and, we will find, *Le Mépris*, the differentiation between diegetic subjects is diminished just as is that between subject of representation and object of the image. Such effects blur the division between viewer and viewed, speaking and spoken.

As Peter Wollen puts it, Godard's films "can no longer be seen as a discourse with a single subject,"³⁹⁷ can no longer be traced to one unilateral source of representation. Despite previous maxims to the contrary, Godard ultimately rejects the myth of camera objectivity, viewing this objectivity rather as a characteristic produced by certain subject-object relations. Godard sets about to reveal this connotative foundation of cinematic objectivity through a number of formal practices.

One of these formal practices is the flattened image, or the denial of depth-of-field, such as we found in *Deux ou trois choses....* Depth-of-field, as Mitry points out, functions according to the illusion of total or full spatial perception, connoting a type of representation self-referentially connoted as "perception *observante*".³⁹⁸ In the flattened image, however, the distance between viewing subject and viewed object is spatially reduced, drawn closer. This conflation of visual space shocks the viewer out of the comfort provided by the conventional differentiated relationship between viewing and viewed. I need not resume here my entire discourse on depth-of-field; suffice it to remind the reader that the flattened image issues a rejection of the connotations that emanate from depth-of-field's organization of subject-object relations.

Brian Henderson suggests that the subversion of this structure of filmic representation is typical of Godardian politics: an attack on, and demystification of, bourgeois modes of representation.³⁹⁹ Regardless of whether it is anti-bourgeois or not (Godard himself could hardly be labeled proletarian or aristocratic), it is certainly a subversion of mainstream conventions. Indeed, the flatness of the image reveals and, in

³⁹⁷ "Godard and Counter-Cinema: *Vent d'Est*, (1972), reprinted in *Movies and Methods*, pp. 500-514 (p. 503).

³⁹⁸ *Esthétique et psychologie du cinéma*, p. 270.

³⁹⁹ See Brian Henderson, "Toward a Non-Bourgeois Camera Style," in *Film Quarterly*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (Winter 1970-1971), pp. 2-14.

revealing, destroys the very illusion of natural perception offered in classical cinema, while at the same time secreting a new code for objectivity: the flattened image as ethnographic truth, in which the immanent field brings the source of representation and its content together in one shared dialogic space.

Indeed, we will find that many of the ways in which Godard deconstructs the code of objectivity are, themselves, new connotations of cinematic objectivity, much the same as Resnais deconstructs the enclosed diegetic subject-function in order to construct a new mode of psychological or subjective realism. For Godard this invalidation comes about in numerous other ways, including camera movements such as the enclosed shift I introduced in Chapter One's analysis of *Vivre sa vie*, involving just a slight movement (either a pan or tracking) of the camera from side to side. This manages to exclude one person from the image, always implying an incompleteness to the dimensions offered by the camera mechanism, while connoting a sense of detachment from narrative meaning. It is an objectivity that acknowledges that the limitations of its representations are defined by its formal base.

The connotations of this effect are further exaggerated by the lateral tracking shot. Taking on absurdly epic proportions in *Week-end*, Godard's tracking shot opposes itself to the tracking shot used by Resnais. Whereas Resnais's tracking shot nullifies the X-axis of movement, opting for the vertical thrust of a forward moving point-of-view, Godard's tracking shot refuses the Z-axis of space instead, further flattening the arena of visual representation to two dimensions. However, like Resnais's tracking shot, and as we will find with what I will call the spiral tracking shot of *Le Mépris*, Godard's tracking shot does not move according to any one character, nor as if linked to any particular

narrative action. This refusal to align the camera with a particular diegetic subject leads Henderson to remark that Godard's lateral tracking shot "serves no individual and prefers none to another."⁴⁰⁰

This effect provides a certain openness or liberty to the image's movement, denying any narrative catalyst for the displacement of the camera. Henderson claims that the tracking shot and flattened image provide a mode of representation that "cannot be elaborated but only surveyed,"⁴⁰¹ though I will argue that Godard subverts this very claim to observational sterility. However, I will also argue, in agreement with Henderson, that Godard *does* deny the connection between these forms of representation and any single subject-function.

We can begin to trace a theme to these formal tendencies: Godard refuses the totality or continuity of representation that would signify as its source one particular subject-function, foregrounding what Jean-Louis Comolli calls Godard's "refus de privilégier un signe aux dépens des autres."⁴⁰² Like Resnais, Godard organizes the immanent field to produce a certain semiotic ambiguity resisting conventional hierarchies or structures of subject-object differentiation. This is extended to the relationship between formal elements, such as camera movement and depth, as we will see, between speech and image, or between the moving camera and the cut.

David Bordwell points out that another effect of the tracking shot, or long take in general, is to emphasize "the interruptive function of the cut."⁴⁰³ This brings to light Godard's focus on the relationship between image and montage as a way of

⁴⁰⁰ Henderson, *ibid.*, p. 2.

⁴⁰¹ Henderson, *ibid.*, p. 11.

⁴⁰² "A rebours?," *Cahiers du Cinéma*, No.168 (juillet 1965), p.86.

⁴⁰³ *Narration in the Fiction Film*, p. 328.

foregrounding the arbitrariness of the form of representation in relation to the actual object being represented. That is to say, Godard uses montage to dispel the implication that what the spectator is given is anything more essential than the arbitrary selection of the filmmakers, based on the limitations of the form. This can be seen in Godard's signature editing technique: the jump cut.

The jump cut is probably Godard's most well known formal experiment. A jump cut is a cut within a continuous shot, from one moment in a shot to another. It is like a shot, for example of five seconds, with the middle second taken out. The result is a shocking break in the continuity of the moving image: the image seems literally to jump, like a skipping record, revealing the constructed nature of film representation and implying that even the camera itself cannot offer a transcendental, unified subject-position. The jump cut fractures the unity of the representation, subverting the very essence of totality that is affirmed and protected by classical conventions. This formal practice reveals film representation to be based on an organization of subject-object relations, and replaces a unified source of meaning with a set of elements in conflict. As Stephen Heath puts it, with Godard there is "no longer the single and central vision but a certain freedom of contradictions."⁴⁰⁴

Whereas the jump cut provides a disturbance in the montage between two images, a second example would be a disturbance caused primarily through the internal montage of speech and image. As we discovered with *Deux ou trois choses...*, Godard experiments with various forms of speech-image codification, especially the use of off-screen voices and direct address. In each of these cases, the harmony between the image and a speech act is broken in a way that the overall representation is divided between two

⁴⁰⁴ *Questions of Cinema*, p. 38.

sources of expression, two subject-functions. Much as I argued to be the case with Resnais, the multiplicity of speech-image codes turns the immanent field into a dialogic space of interacting voices, overlapping different poles of representation.

One such sequence, to be analyzed in depth later in this chapter, consists of a visual montage that includes images of a woman lying naked on a white-feather carpet. The woman is visually objectified while at the same time being given an alternate, voiceover subject-function. Her voiceover is, however, counteracted by that of her husband, and both voices are stripped of any agency due to the fact that they are repeated with no effect on the flow of visual representation, which is itself also looped with no necessary relation to the soundtrack (much as with the voiceover and organ in the opening sequence of *L'Année dernière à Marienbad*).

The other kind of insert sequence used frequently by Godard involves direct address to the camera, in what is usually an overt political message. Films such as *Pierrot le fou*, *Masculin féminin*, and *Week-end* use these inserts to freeze the narrative and to overturn the conventions of transparency maintained by fictional cinema. This leads David Bordwell to write: "The central aspect of Godard's narrational process is self-conscious address to the audience."⁴⁰⁵ But this self-consciousness is not only between the representation and spectator, but it implies all dimensions of the immanent field, including the content of representation and the larger, outlying structure of socio-cultural values, beliefs, and conventions.

But this self-consciousness does not only come through the effect of direct address, or through references to film genre and history. Like Resnais, Godard makes the structure of film representation the very referent of his films, by altering the level of

⁴⁰⁵ *Narration in the Fiction Film*, p. 332.

signification set in the foreground. In both types of insert sequence mentioned here, for example, Godard subverts the formulation of a coherent denotation in order to produce a reflection on the connotations of film representation. This is why he and Resnais complement each other so well, why they are such apt choices to illustrate the arguments of this thesis, and why they are so central to Deleuze's analysis, which I argued is fundamentally an analysis of film connotation. I hope here, as I have done throughout this thesis, to resituate Deleuze's argument more as a function of how the subject-object relations of the immanent field are organized through reflexive composition of formal elements.

This reflexivity is the driving force in the string of films Godard made between 1960 and 1968, beginning with *À Bout de souffle* and ending with *Le Week-end*. And, as should be familiar in this study by now, Godard often systematically directs this reflexive project of deconstruction toward the coded objectification of women in cinematic representation. As Dixon points out: "The commodification of the human body (particularly the female body) becomes...the center of many of his key films."⁴⁰⁶ I have argued in passing that this type of "commodification" is attached to the cinematic code of objectivity, and I will soon make it the centerpiece of a more specific example of film connotation, just as Godard makes it the centerpiece of his critique of conventional film representation.

This critique requires a revelation of the connotative base of such representations, a revelation that we will find to be particularly well suited to *Le Mépris*, a film more explicitly about cinema than any of Godard's films from this period. Arguing on Godard's behalf during a later period when his films were more explicitly avant-garde,

⁴⁰⁶ Wheeler Winston Dixon, *The Films of Jean-Luc Godard*, p. 30.

Peter Wollen notes: "In his earlier films Godard introduced the cinema as a topic of his narrative"; yet, Wollen argues, not until his post-1968 Maoist period does Godard "show the camera on screen."⁴⁰⁷ However, I will argue that this is not true, not in a metaphorical sense and not in a literal sense: Godard turns the camera on itself as early as 1963.

Indeed, we will see, no film better illustrates the complexities enumerated thus far concerning Godard's work than *Le Mépris*, which takes place (both as a story and a production) amidst two major cultural currents: the fall of the Hollywood studio system and the rise of mass-media pop culture, two institutions that are marked by the sexualized representation of women as objects. The cinematic dream, Godard shows us, is based on skin, flesh, desire—in a word, voyeurism, and I will argue here that voyeurism is based on a similar duality between viewing subject and viewed object as that which is used to connote cinematic objectivity.

As Cavell notes, the formal themes of this film provide "a deep statement of the camera's presence." But, he continues, this carries with it "a statement from the camera about its subjects, about their simultaneous distance and connection, about the sweeping desert of weary familiarity."⁴⁰⁸ In other words, much as in *La guerre est finie* and the formalization of political action, there is certain harmony in the immanent field between the representation's process of organization and the diegetic world it is organizing. As such, this film offers the perfect opportunity to bring together the many strands of this thesis and to incorporate them into a specifically cinematic investigation of cinema, in the conclusion of which I hope to sketch out certain horizons of how the study of film

⁴⁰⁷ "Godard and Counter-Cinema: *Vent d'Est*, p. 503.

⁴⁰⁸ *The World Viewed*, p. 129

connotation might illuminate for us the relationship between cinema and the world around it.

III. Kino-eye in the mirror: *Le Mépris* and objective subject

Due to its complicated production history and almost instant status as an important event in the history of cinema, *Le Mépris* has inspired a unique critical history. Most analyses have chosen to focus somewhat reiteratively on the film's detailed process of production, including its relation to the Alberto Moravia novel on which it is based, as well as enumerating its numerous inter-textual references.

The bulk of this work has come from what could be called the *Censier* group of film critics (due to the common name given to Université Paris III, where they have all taught), including Jacques Aumont, Michel Marie, and Alain Bergala.⁴⁰⁹ Such critics focus on detailed analyses of the text and have produced somewhat similar discourses on the importance of Moravia's text, of the deterioration of Godard's marriage to Anna Karina during this time, and of the significance of cast member Brigitte Bardot's extra-textual persona. However, this film is surprisingly absent from the wealth of formal or ideological analysis of Godard's oeuvre, including Colin MacCabe's early criticism and the many essays Brian Henderson devotes to Godard's deconstructive tendencies or Peter Wollen to his counter-cinematic practices. I hope therefore to contribute something original here to the study of Godard's work.

Made in 1963, *Le Mépris* arrives at the very moment when the Hollywood studio system—"the vertically integrated monolith that Godard celebrated (after a fashion) in

⁴⁰⁹ These professors of Université Paris III were dubbed by Jean Mitry as "les disciples de Christian Metz" (*La question de sémiologie*, p. 187), a reference that perhaps sheds light on the focus of denotation and psychoanalysis in their respective studies, both of this film and of Godard in general.

his earlier writings”⁴¹⁰—was collapsing, and new means of production and representation were beginning to emerge. Summarizing the extreme juxtapositions at the heart of *Le Mépris*, Godard writes: “La vérité s’opposera ainsi au mensonge, la sagesse à l’esprit brouillon, un certain sourire grec, fait d’intelligence et d’ironie, à un sourire modern incertain, fait d’illusion et de mépris.”⁴¹¹ With Godard this juxtaposition has a double meaning: not only does he situate this film between Greek classicism and Occidental modernity, but also between classical Hollywood and modern cinema.

Having long been fascinated with Hollywood as an object of both admiration and critique, Godard provides in *Le Mépris* his final tribute to—and condemnation of—the classical film industry. Godard achieves this by turning the camera on itself, producing a generative circle of signification that makes film representation both signifier and signified of the film and, thus, provides cinema with a type of mirror-phase in which it identifies with itself as both producer of meaning and, also, socio-cultural object that reflects popular ideology. This duplicity, I will argue, is central to the film’s organizations, which can be formulated as a certain doubling of the immanent field, an essential feature that I hope to draw out over these pages.

As we will find, *Le Mépris* sets up a reflexive mode of representation in which the codes being used are themselves put under the scrutiny of the camera even while they are being used. The *mise-en-abyme* presented in the narrative is crucial to this, less so for its content—as it may be, for example, in Fellini’s *8 1/2* (1963) or Truffaut’s *La Nuit américain* (1973)—than for the semiotic structure used to reflect on its own forms or representation. The film conjures a signifying chain wherein wider social desires and

⁴¹⁰ Wheeler Winston Dixon, *Le Mépris*, p. 46.

⁴¹¹ “Scenario du Mépris,” reprinted in *Godard par Godard I*, pp.242-3.

modes of perception are both factors in, and products of, the structures of the film's representations.

The basic premise of the film takes Godard's fascination with prostitution as a social metaphor and transposes it onto the world of filmmaking. Paul (Michel Piccoli) is a screenwriter, working on a film version of Homer's *The Odyssey* to be directed by Fritz Lang (who plays himself). Paul's wife, Camille (played by Bardot, icon of the pop-culture world that Godard refers to as "la civilization du cul"⁴¹²), becomes the sacrifice on Paul's altar of commercial success. In order to contract Paul to write film, the producer, a quintessentially brutish American named Jeremy Prokosch (Jack Palance), demands that Paul offer him Camille in exchange.

As Wheeler Winston Dixon writes, it is Paul's willingness to prostitute himself, and consequently her as well, that leads to Camille's eponymous *contempt*.⁴¹³ This association between cinema and prostitution is the premise for the self-reflexive nature of the text, which brings to the surface a constant battle with the subtle nuance of cliché, implying its own inability to escape the very forms of representation that it hopes to dismantle—the most striking example, we will find, being the objectification of women. The contrast between the centripetal force and centrifugal force of this system of signification, between the attempt to pull away from classical codes and the limitations of the form itself, is echoed by the film's reliance on the pattern of the spiral. Much as we found with *La guerre est finie*, *Le Mépris* allows the fulfillment of codes up to a last moment, and then denies them by revealing them as constructed organizations of subject-object relations.

⁴¹² In voiceover, *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle* (1966).

⁴¹³ *The Films of Jean-Luc Godard*, p. 47.

While this spiral pattern could be seen as the model for the constantly receding intimacy between Paul and Camille, I am of course more concerned in this study with the film's formal themes, though the unraveling of this couple will be a product of the formal organization of relations. Much of the film unfolds in a series of what I will call spiral tracking shots. Also, there is a sort of vertigo established through the juxtaposition of long shots with the flattened image, bringing two paradigms of cinematic objectivity—the duration of the shot and the depth of the image—into direct conflict. Finally, Godard uses insert sequences to experiment with sound and image in order to fracture the positioning of single subject-function, sensory elements moving separately and each one revealing the fabricated nature of the other. All of these, I will argue, contribute to the doubled or self-contradicting structure of the immanent field, which permits the overlapping of subjective and objective poles of representation and is grounded at all times in a reflexive revelation of its own connotative foundations.

Le Mépris opens with an unconventional, and equally famous, credit sequence: a woman walks toward the camera while reading what looks to be a script. Beside her, we watch Raoul Coutard (Godard's cinematographer) follow her with a camera, tracking alongside as Godard's voice reads the credits on the voiceover. Coutard follows her with the camera until he arrives in the forefront of the image. Coutard begins turning toward the spectator as Godard says, citing Bazin: "le cinéma substitue à nos regards un monde qui s'accorde à nos désirs."⁴¹⁴ Then, as the camera faces the spectator (56), he concludes: "*Le Mépris* est l'histoire de cet monde."

⁴¹⁴ It is of course fascinating that Godard not only chooses here to quote Bazin (godfather of the *Cahiers* group and champion of cinematic realism), but, furthermore, in fact does not quote him accurately. This reference has been the object of much analysis that I will not catalogue here.



This shot has been thoroughly dissected by the *Censier* group, and I will only touch on it here as an introduction to the film's connotative self-reflexivity, initiated here through the image of the lens itself. The image of Coutard, being filmed while filming someone else, reveals the text as a fabrication. The apparatus is revealed: from the very beginning of the film, any claim to objectivity, neutrality, or detachment is destroyed. Moreover, it provides us with a paradigm for the film's doubled connotative structure: the differentiation provided between Coutard and the woman is doubled in the differentiation between the image and Coutard. He is being posited as the object through the same process of differentiation in which he himself is engaged.

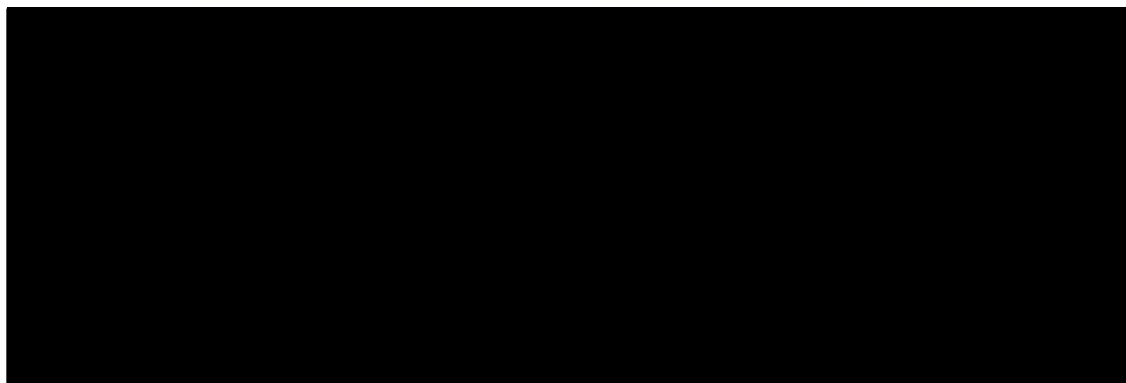
Moreover, this shot breaks the closed state of cinematic signification by turning the camera on the spectator, subverting conventional codes of suture and reversing the organization of subject-object relations that made him the object of the representation. We find the immanent field to be contorted, doubled over on itself, in the process of which the world outside the film is implicated into the text's process, as if the film to follow were a representation of the spectator's gaze.

A testament to how we look at and through the cinematic image, this organization of the immanent field aligns the desires of the public with the values to be connoted through the structure of representation. It offers, as Ceriscuelo puts it, "un véritable

commentaire à la fois sur ‘l’état des choses’ et l’histoire du cinéma.”⁴¹⁵ In other words, *Le Mépris* is a study of the signifying practices of the cinematic age, while also being a signification itself of a certain symbiosis between such codes and socio-cultural modes of perception and representation, implicating a certain bilateral notion of code discussed by Eco and that I hope to come back to in my Conclusion.

When Godard says that *Le Mépris* is “l’histoire de ce monde,” I would therefore argue that he is referring to the story of cinema’s attempt to accommodate and to codify—to represent and to affirm—the connotative roots of objectivity, the cinematic desire to learn the inside by showing the outside. The organization of subject-object relations that formulates this desire is a voyeuristic one, secreted into the illusion of empirical observation that is manifested in the immanent field according to the signification of a unilateral viewing subject. Moreover, the forward-thrusting extension of the empirical eye is a most phallic tool: the camera. As such, it is entirely fitting that the following scene consists of one long shot of Brigitte Bardot, naked and gleaming sensuously beneath the glare of multi-colored lights.

Lying in bed with her husband, she does a verbal inventory of her body, asking his approval as the camera slowly moves across her outstretched form. “Vous aimez mes seins?” “Oui....” (57)



⁴¹⁵ *Le Mépris*, p. 10.

This scene, which Kaja Silverman tellingly refers to as a “territorializing” process,⁴¹⁶ again doubles the immanent field on itself: the form of representation presents the contradiction of two inclusive signifying systems, incorporating codes of popular culture but also anti-codes of experimental cinema. This conflict of signifying systems produces an unsettling effect of alienation, what Ceriscuelo refers to as “une grande violence...un ‘dévoilement’ de la règle cinématographique.”⁴¹⁷

This *dévoilement* consists of a contradiction between different structures of representation. While the representation of her body conjures an erotic impression, the effect of the lighting and the conversation contort this eroticism. Moreover, the coexistence within the immanent field of two discourses—the verbal taxonomy and the near-pornographic image—render the erotic representation totally banal and cold, due to the quotidian nature of this taxonomic verbal procedure, a verbal de-eroticization used in other of Godard’s films during this period.⁴¹⁸ Moreover, as she names her body parts there is no specific collaboration between the parts named and what fills the frame; this frustration of what I have called the cinematic nominative process produces a sort of lackadaisical effect, a “weary familiarity” as Cavell puts it, a boredom with clichéd eroticism that is implied by the denial of a singular subject-function.

This scene introduces the premise for the entire film (and, one might go so far to say, Godard’s oeuvre in general): a reflexive, highly stylistic investigation of “the

⁴¹⁶ *Speaking About Godard*, p. 34.

⁴¹⁷ *Le Mépris*, p. 31.

⁴¹⁸ For example, in *Pierrot le fou*. Marianne lists parts of Ferdinand’s body and claiming to touch them; he responds: “Moi aussi, Marianne.” A similar example would be the recounting, without the support of images, of an orgiastic tale of sodomy in *Le Week-end*.

mechanics of feminine/masculine power relationships”⁴¹⁹ as they are manifested through cinematic codes of representation. In other words: the structure of representation as an extension of sexual difference. The mechanical eye of cinema is revealed as the extension of the viewing desire of a particular type of human: the *objectif* has a very subjective, gender-based foundation.

It has been argued by many feminist theorists (with whom I agree fully, though whose primarily psychoanalytic models I will not use), that the desire signified through classical film conventions connotes a male, heterosexual desire to possess. Laura Mulvey and others observe that the means of production in cinema have always been in male hands; as such, the eye of cinema has always been attached to a male libido. And as we found to be the case with *Vivre sa vie* and also to an extent in *La guerre est finie*, women have been reduced to the object of this male-oriented cinematic gaze.⁴²⁰

This places the history of film form in a position of particular relevance to the phenomenological notion that “all knowledge involves objectification and in a certain sense the violation of the object,”⁴²¹ returning us to the Althusserian notion of empiricism noted in Chapter One. I hope to frame this as a problem of subject-object relations, in which the acquisition of knowledge through unilateral possession is a connotative foundation of the code of objectivity. In *Le Système des objets*, Jean Baudrillard assesses this very scene in *Le Mépris* as being illustrative of his thesis that objectification is

⁴¹⁹ Wheeler Winston Dixon, *The Films of Jean-Luc Godard*, p. 45.

⁴²⁰ See Mulvey’s seminal work, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” *Screen*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (Autumn 1975), pp. 6-18. This is of course a very complicated historical and economic proposition, and has been convincingly argued by feminist theorists.

⁴²¹ Dermot Moran, summarizing the theories of Levinas, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, (Routledge: Oxon, 2000), p. 341. Levinas’s theory of the face as phenomenon would be a curious complement to feminist theory in general. Many critics of this film have defined it as a film about the gaze, which I agree with; however, this gaze must be specified as a cultural vessel and also as a diegetic problem of organizing representation, as I intend here to do.

generally central to the passion for, and possession of, both things and sexual beings. This description of what Baudrillard calls fetishism concludes: “ne pouvoir saisir l’autre comme objet de désir dans sa totalité singulière de personne, mais seulement dans le discontinu.”⁴²² A woman is not a woman, Baudrillard continues, but is—as has been codified through media conventions—a sum of fragmented parts, just as Camille describes herself. She has no subjectivity, having been reduced to an assemblage of objects.

At its foundation, I believe that this voyeuristic tendency can be extended to the connotative conventions of the code of objectivity. Leo Bersani and Ulysse Dutoit clarify Baudrillard’s argument by pointing out that the act of looking turns the object of desire (sexual interest) into an object of fetish (erotic fascination).⁴²³ Thus, the differentiation provided by the unilateral structure of the image itself exonerates the impulses of the viewing subject, mythologizing sexual objectification as objective representation. Godard, we see here, manages to deconstruct this formal determination by fracturing the immanent field among numerous formal elements, numerous subject-functions.

In the film as a whole, Godard draws the connotative structure or organization of subject-object relations into the spotlight by juxtaposing two very different modes of representation, the classical and the modern, as we can see in the conflict posed between Fritz Lang’s *The Odyssey* and *Le Mépris* itself. This duality, we will find, is integrated into the juxtaposition between two forms of representation, which define their significations through their relative organization of subject-object relations. By way of

⁴²² *Le système des objets* (Editions Gallimard: Paris, 1968), p. 141.

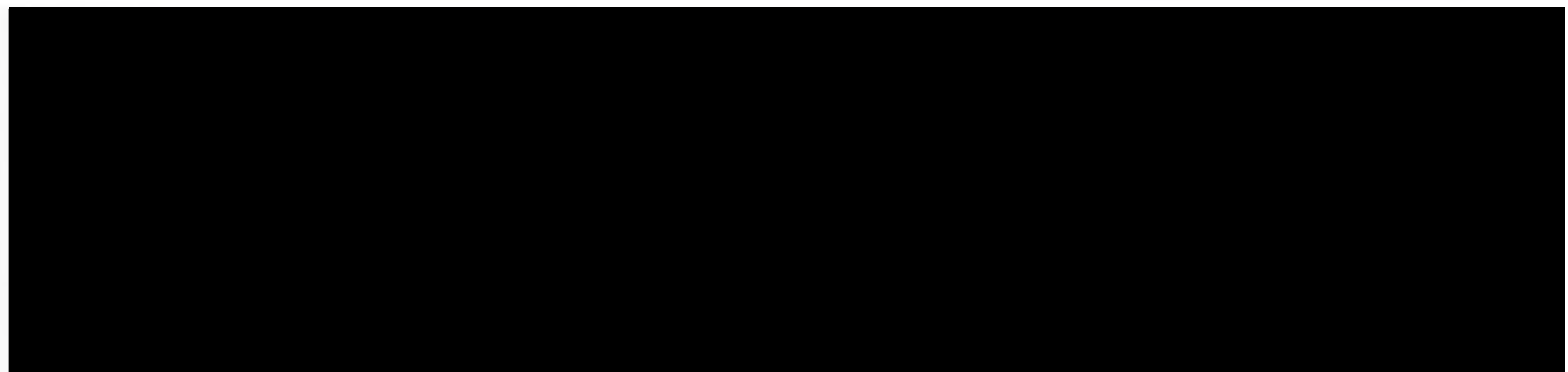
⁴²³ *Forming Couples: Godard’s Contempt*, p. 10.

introduction, Marc Ceriscuelo helps to demarcate a certain aspect of modern cinema in the film's aesthetic combination of sequences:

[L]e film affiche sa modernité à la fois radicale et maîtrisée dans sa combinaison de plans séquences (ou de plans longs), de travellings latéraux (ou des travellings avant) et de raccords dans le mouvement.⁴²⁴

In other words, we can look for the film's underlying significance in the inter-relationships of its formal elements, in the structure of its immanent field. Let us begin with the diegetic "real world," in which there is an extended duration of long takes, conventionally a connotation of objectivity. But Godard, in this film, constantly undermines the fly-on-the-wall implications of the long take, directing our attention toward the fact that the immanent field is in fact a construction of relations.

This acknowledgment of the limitations of the formal base is part of a larger network through which Godard appropriates technical aspects of the code of objectivity, only to reveal the apparatus as non-objective, as selective, as motivated through connotative structures. This network includes the spiral tracking shot, the flattened image, and the insert sequence. The first of these, the spiral tracking shot, which composes nearly every outdoor scene in the film, begins in front of moving characters, moves slowly with the characters, allows them to pass, and follows momentarily (58). Then, it cuts to re-establish itself once again in front (59).



⁴²⁴ *Le Mépris*, p. 61.

Through its motion and organization of space, this shot connotes a particular relationship between the camera, as source of visual representation, and the objects it films. Giving the impression that it is curling around, thus containing the objects, in the end it always jumps to slightly outside of this curve, breaking the impression of containment. It follows no particular character, allowing them each to ebb and flow in and out of the image. However, the shot then cuts to a different spot, following the action: through such cuts, we are made aware of the form's determinations of the immanent field.

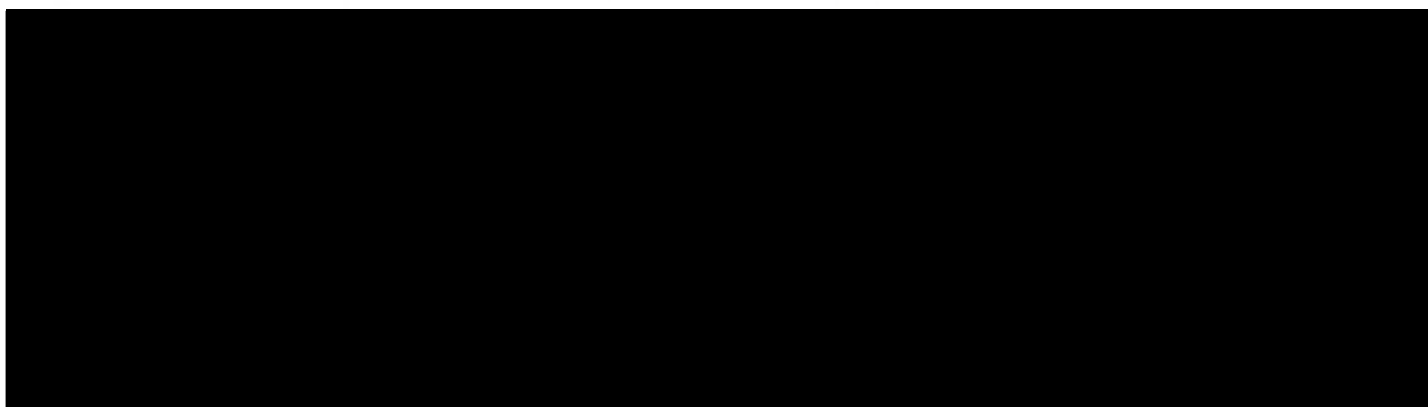
This thematic shot is the quintessence of the notion of the *bal(l)ade* that Deleuze uses to describe Godard's films, a certain rambling lack of narrative focus as well as a resistance to conventional film aesthetics.⁴²⁵ This lack of narrative focus is founded upon a refusal of conventional subject-object relations. Much like the shifts in the speech-image code analyzed in Chapter Three, the tracking shot—with Godard as with Resnais—refuses to grant a dominant agency to either the camera or the characters. They move together, then disperse. The camera watches, then participates, then watches again. The image is neutral, then engaged, and then neutral: the immanent field, as a structure of subject-object relations, is constantly in a state of fluctuation between subjective and objective poles of representation.

The spiral tracking shot has a less mobile, miniature version in the enclosed shift. This device, in which the camera moves only slightly from one character to another, separates people who are otherwise positioned closely to each other, producing an alienation between visible objects such as we found in *Vivre sa vie*. This visual device is

⁴²⁵ See *Cinéma II: l'image-temps*, p.18.

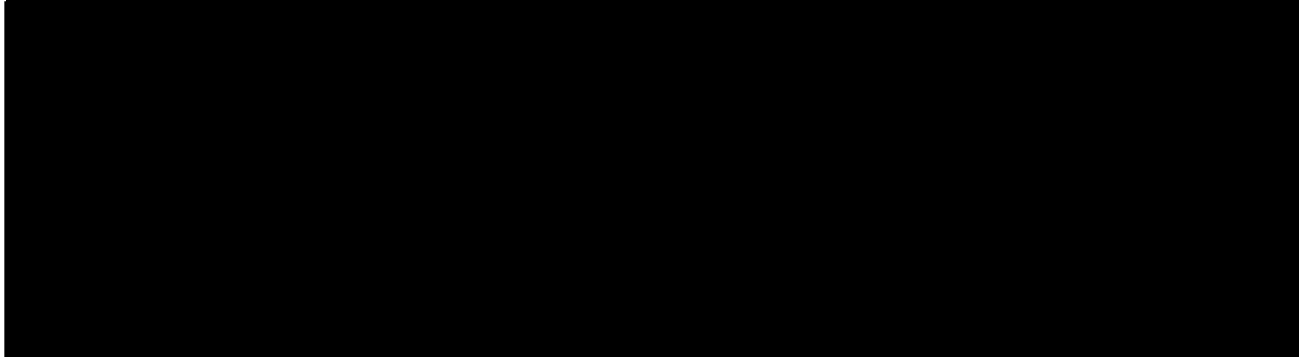
perhaps most prevalent in a scene that takes place between Paul and Camille in their apartment, a twenty-minute conversation comprised mainly of two long takes, and in the course of which the camera is constantly revealed as an inefficient witness.

At one particular moment, Paul and Camille speak to each other from across a table. The camera slowly rolls from one to the other, in no way following the dialogue or any other causal logic, in no way provoked or provoking. It is a mood, as Cavell puts it, a dissociation of feeling. In this scene Camille finally tells Paul that she no longer loves him, a sentiment symbolized by the cold space that exists between the two characters. As opposed to Bazin's objective camera, this is one that cannot restore the unity of the reality in front of it. Moreover, the structure of representation is infused with a formal detachment from its objects, a detachment that prefigures—as opposed to being determined by—what is actually happening in the story. And, yet, this detachment is itself aligned with the subjective pole of representation, as it is expressing the psychological or emotional alienation of the characters.



As mentioned above, these connotative significations are all the more accentuated by being juxtaposed against the form of Lang's *The Odyssey*. Lang's film is composed primarily of rapid semi-circle shots, in which the camera performs a quick 180-degree turn around immobile granite characters. Whereas the characters of *Le Mépris* seem to

move constantly, the characters of *The Odyssey* are sedentary. Instead, the *camera* moves quickly around *them*, giving the impression that the statues are moving: objects brought to life by the mobility of the camera subject (61).

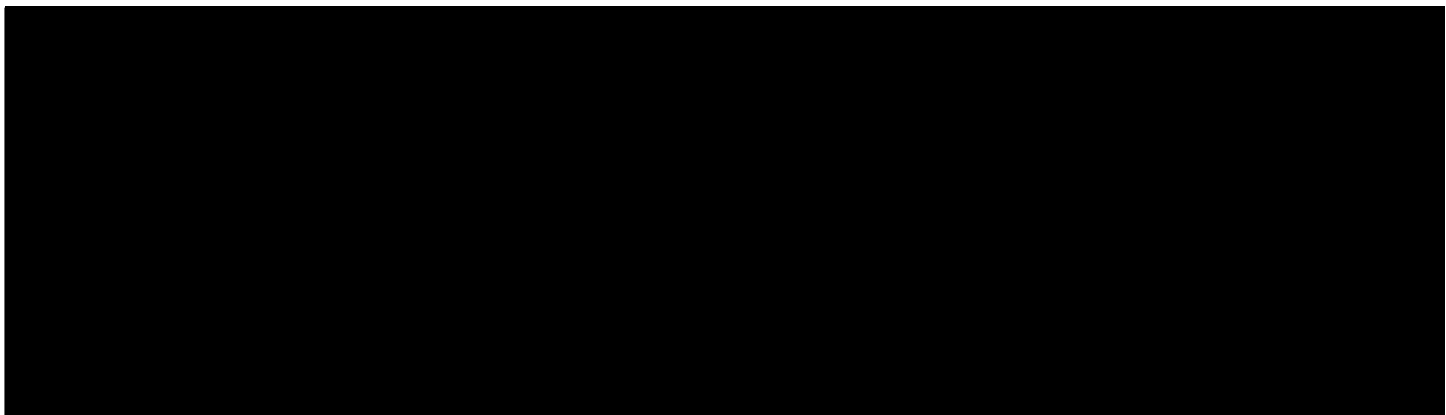


The classical camera of mythical gods is distinctly rhetorical, functions upon the clear-cut division between viewing subject and viewed object. The difference between this and the camera of *Le Mépris* becomes particularly relevant in the doubling of the immanent field, such as occurs in brief cuts to Lang's images at crucial stages of Paul's neglect for—and loss of—Camille. This montage of image-types helps to organize the immanent field as the meeting place, as Godard might put it, between the classical and the modern, a fluctuation between structures of representation. Godard uses these two styles of filming to construct two different worlds, one that is stable and coherently based on a precise differentiation between subject and object, and another that is unstable and dialogic.

In doing so, this film presents the juxtaposition between two different connotative systems. This thematic doubling of the immanent field is affirmed by the rejection of depth-of-field in the long take. The best example of this is when Paul, having seen Camille kiss Prokosch and having realized he has lost her, follows Camille down the steps to the sea in Capri. They are constantly moving toward the camera, but the

flattened image means that they hardly displace themselves—they literally *go nowhere*—as they descend. (62)

In this mutation of aesthetic codes, the flattened image corrupts the objective realism of the long take for which Bazin praises the works of Renoir. The denoted space between them is condensed, as if to draw attention to it as a product of connotation. The “mood” of this shot is further accentuated moments later: Camille, swimming in the background, appears very close to Paul, as the background and foreground are not divided through depth (63). This juxtaposition of formal elements produces an immanent field both shared and empty, as Paul and Camille in fact share an ambiguous space, which—much like we found with the enclosed pan—all the more accentuates the tragic divide between them.



The flattened image will, in Godard’s films after *Le Mépris*, become a main fixture in his formal repertoire. This effect subverts the connotative structure that depth-of-field offers, and as such resists the formation of a visual configuration that would offer the viewer the illusion of natural perception. Rudolf Arnheim discusses the difference between the two-dimensional form and the three-dimensional illusion of the image as being one that accentuates the “unreality of the film picture.”⁴²⁶ This unreality is

⁴²⁶ *Film as Art*, p. 15.

anathema to the code of objectivity. Moreover, Arnheim argues that the flattened image makes it so that the “purely formal qualities of the picture come into prominence,” thus producing an “anti-functional effect”.⁴²⁷ In other words, the connotative foundation is brought into focus, and the immanent field is liberated from any pretense toward denotation. The form of representation draws attention to its own constructed nature, and thus draws our attention to the very fact that it is awkward, that our perception is somewhat skewed, somewhat unlike we are used to being offered in cinema.

The flattened image ironically makes us aware of the space that separates us from the object of vision, as opposed to this space being naturalized and, thus, going unnoticed. As we have noticed in many ways up to now, *Le Mépris* is a constant meditation on ways of looking, how the space traversed between subject and object is organized to articulate larger problems of relations. As such, conjuring principles of Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology discussed in Chapter One, Sylvie Ayme argues that this film “donne à voir...le monde comme lieu même de la vision.”⁴²⁸

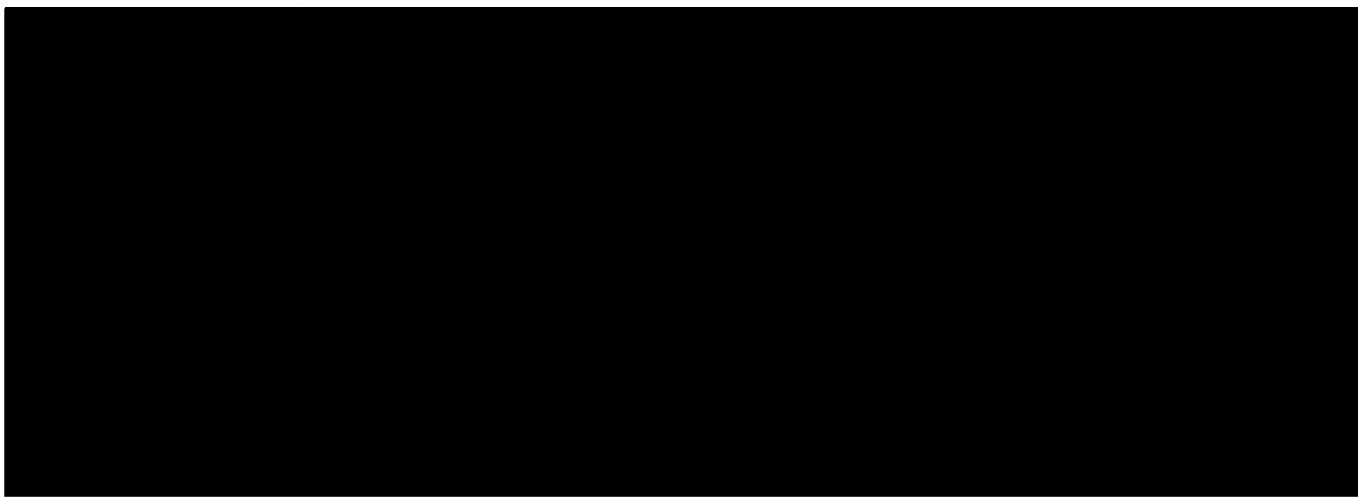
This space of vision is one that is dominated, according to Godard and many others, by the gaze as an extension of certain structures of power. *Le Mépris* could thus be analyzed as a film about the spectator—and the spectatorial position—during the age of cinema, embodied in the film by the character of Jeremy Prokosch. Prokosch is Hollywood, an industry geared to suit the desires of customers like him. Moreover, he embodies the unilateral notion of subjectivity used to construct classical forms of narrative linearity. “Although he is repellent,” Dixon asserts, “Prokosch is in control of

⁴²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 58-9. Arnheim strikingly makes reference in this argument to Dreyer’s *La Passion de Jeanne d’arc*, a filmmaker and particular text that we have found to be extremely important in Godard’s formation as a critic and director.

⁴²⁸ Sylvie Ayme, “ ‘Réspécte un peu pour voir’: Jean-Luc Godard et la catégorie de la répétition,” *Études cinématographiques: Jean-Luc Godard: au-delà du récit*, No. 57/61, pp. 63-134 (p. 81).

his life,”⁴²⁹ and thus his gaze is different from that of Paul, a castrated modern anti-hero whose subjective agency is bereft of the apparatus’s support. These two gazes, two different structures of representation, are constantly at odds, evidence once again of a certain doubling of the immanent field.

There is only one occasion on which *Le Mépris* implies a fully subjective representation: when Paul and Camille go to Prokosh’s villa for the first time, and Prokosh makes clear his intentions. In this scene, there is a moment when Bardot turns and looks at the camera; this is followed by an image of Prokosh, staring at her (64).

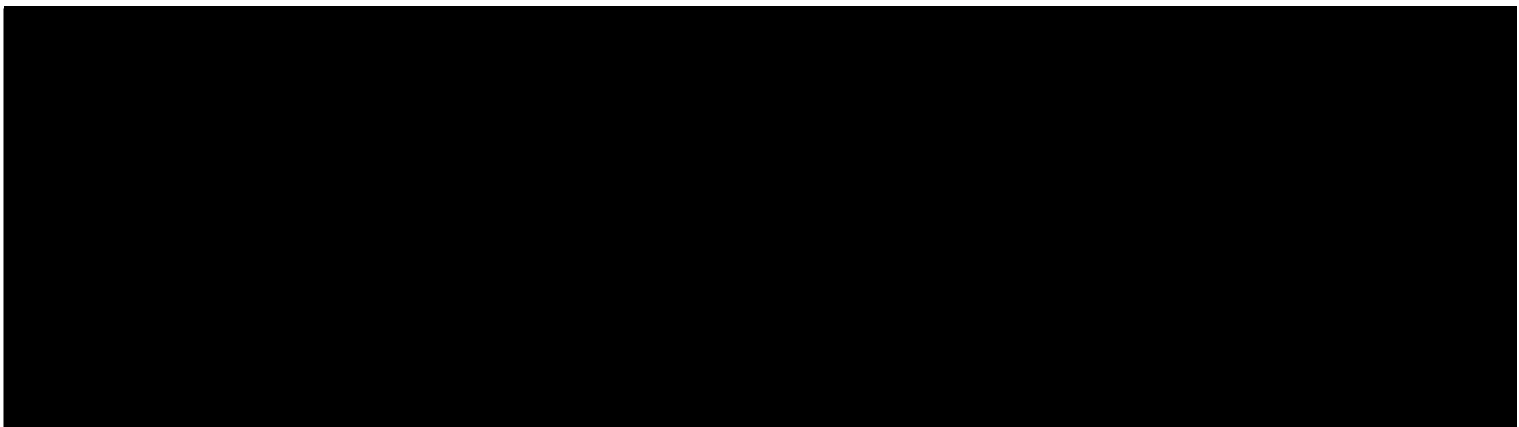


For this moment, we are looking through his gaze; he is the implied source of the representation, and Camille is the object of that gaze. As in the rest of the film, there is a certain doubling between the classical and the subversive: there is an eye-line match to suture us into Prokosh’s subject-position, but this is demystified by Camille’s staring directly into the camera. This cut presents a clash of image-types or structures of representation, one which is based on the denotation of a looking subject and the other which is based on revealing the connotation of this suture. Charged thus with opposing agencies, the immanent field becomes the site of struggle for dominance of this film’s

⁴²⁹ *The Films of Jean-Luc Godard*, p. 45.

representations: a struggle with the clichés of classical cinema, with the image of woman is at stake.

This struggle also underpins an insert sequence in which Paul and Camille separately express their remorse in voiceover tracks. In each case the images shift between the erotic (Bardot naked and outstretched) and the sentimental (a lakeside path) (65). The voiceovers alternate without clear logical connection to the images, as if transposing the connotative structure of the enclosed shift onto the speech-image code. Kaja Silverman analyzes this scene as an indication of what both Paul and Camille have lost: Camille's body.⁴³⁰ However, I will view it rather as a non-denotative reference. It is, instead, the decomposition of formal structures of differentiation and the crisscrossing of subject-functions: a revelation of film representation as an arena for the construction of subjectivity, an immanent field that is opened up all the wider as Bardot lifts her head and stares into the camera.



Concerning this sequence, David Bordwell writes: "we cannot be sure whether the voiceover phrases directly express the characters or are simply the narrator's mimicry."⁴³¹ Following the thread of his general analysis of art cinema, Bordwell insists that the guiding effect of Godard's work is the self-conscious articulation of the artist's

⁴³⁰ *Speaking About Godard*, p. 45.

⁴³¹ *Narration in Fiction Film*, p. 323.

narratorial voice. However, while the collation of spoken discourse and visual image remains ambiguous, there is no reason to conjecture any voice other than the voices of the characters, who struggle—as throughout the film, as in *L'Année dernière à Marienbad*—over the production of meaning both within the diegesis and also on in the organization of subject-object relations.

That is to say, the sources of the voices are identifiable, familiar. However, Bordwell does help to point out a certain interaction here, within the immanent field, between the signifying agents of different sources, different sensory elements and formal sets of relations. This question of enunciation returns us to the earlier problem of language and meaning in cinema, or the problem of the aural subject-function, a problem that functions in this film not only as a question of the unfolding of images but also as a diegetic question concerning the production of representation.

The problem of struggling speech acts and the origin of meaning is central to *Le Mépris* as a production, a story, and a set of representations—in other words, as an immanent field, a form of representation. Shot and recorded in four languages, the film alternates primarily between English and French, though both Italian and German are used regularly. The only character who speaks all of these languages is Francesca (Giorgia Moll), Prokosch's secretary. As such, she is solely responsible for the possibility of communication among the different characters. Thus, in a way she is the ultimate bearer of meaning, but this subject-function is denied by her *natural* socio-cultural status as a woman, which relegates her to a particular function in the world of cinema. This is similar for Camille: even when her voiceover controls the aural track, her body is visually laid out before us as an erotic object. And, yet, she looks into the

camera, making us realize that this objectification is self-conscious, intentionally connotative.

This image of Bardot, naked, looking into the lens, goes further than any other film discussed in this thesis to implicating the spectator and the external socio-cultural world in the dynamic organization of the immanent field. Reiterating a problem I pointed to earlier in this chapter, this brings us back to Godard's struggle to find a form of representation that at once defies and also reflects critically on the conventional objectification of women. Geneviève Sellier describes this struggle as such:

[U]ne oscillation entre une volonté de rupture avec le schéma dominant qui construit le personnage féminin comme un objet de désir pour le regard masculin, et une exhibition de ce schéma, tant au niveau des dialogues et des situations que dans la mise-en-scène et les procédures d'énonciation.⁴³²

The doubling of the immanent field in *Le Mépris* is exemplary of Godard's films during this period, which draw attention to film representation as a type of representation, revealing each representation's "*marque de cinématographicité*" as Christian Metz puts it.⁴³³ Yet this cannot be accomplished without in some way appropriating the cliché that one is trying to destroy. That is to say, the immanent fields of conventional and subversive cinemas are constructed from the same formal base. As in this film in general, we can see in this image of Bardot where the denotation seems to imply a conventional use of cinematic objectivity; yet, on the connotative level, the detached and neutral subject of this objective gaze has already been revealed as a fabrication, thus doubling the immanent field as a self-deconstructive site for the interaction of different

⁴³² "Représentations des rapports de sexe dans les premiers films de Jean-Luc Godard," in *Godard et le métier d'artiste* (ed. Gilles Delavaud, Jean-Pierre Esquenazi, Marie Françoise Grange), p. 286.

⁴³³ *Langage et cinéma*, p. 202.

codes and discourses. Godard's oeuvre, as MacCabe and Mulvey put it, "reproduces the equation between woman and sexuality which, at another level, it displaces."⁴³⁴

However, Godard's work, fundamentally connotative like that of Resnais, goes beyond this displacement, reducing this mark of sexual difference—as a socio-cultural convention—to a particular organization of subject-object relations within the immanent field. I would argue then that we consider Godard's mode of ethnography less as a means for describing what is being looked at than a means for revealing our society's ways of looking at things and, more fundamental to my problem here, the organizing process through which film representation structures this gaze as a composition of subject-object relations.

This is what I can conclude to be the underlying similarity between Godard and Resnais: their deconstruction of conventional forms of film representation takes place at its root, according to its organization of subject-object relations. And, from camera to code, I would argue that this organization is the crux of film representation.

⁴³⁴ MacCabe and Mulvey, *Godard: Sounds, Images, Politics*, p. 94.

Conclusion

This analysis of Godard's *Le Mépris* brings my thesis full circle and has permitted us to revisit some of the original questions posed in this study's opening pages, but in the light of all that has been discussed in the pages in between. As such, the question of cinematic objectivity helps to place this study in a larger meta-theoretical context, which is of course central to any attempt to re-conceptualize a theoretical problem. With this last chapter it hopefully became clearer how the systematic methodology developed in this thesis could subsequently be utilized by more specific approaches, such as feminist theory or any theory addressing the representation of gender and sexuality.

Moreover, I hoped here to address a certain duality in film theory between the extreme positions situated to defend the reproductive capacity of the cinematic apparatus and those situated to condemn this illusion of reproduction as being tied to ideological institutions. Ultimately, while it may seem an overly diplomatic stance, I have attempted in this thesis to theorize the problem of film representation as a site of intersection between these two positions: an immanent field in which the ostensive referent of the image and the ideological basis for the representation are both implicated. Inspired by, and structured upon, principles of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, I have laid out this immanent field as a dynamic of relations in a state of constant fluctuation: the overlapping, exclusion, opposition, and coexistence between different compositions of the relationship between subject and object.

As such, I have tried here to redirect the extra-cinematic problem of ideology toward one of the internal structuring of the representation itself. And, while I consider Münsterberg and Mitry to be slightly idealistic in their analogies between film form and human psychology, they offer us a model starting place for a formal understanding that could be expanded, as such theories often are, to conform to more specific rhetorical or ideological arguments. But, where Baudry and Dayan might say “bourgeois,” I prefer to consider the structuring of film representation as a condition for the emanation of an order of meaning, any order. After all, while film is admittedly ideological, it is not more inherently embrative of one particular ideology, as one discovers when one compares the works of Eisenstein to those of Griffith.

This is, of course, the critique of suture theory fundamental to many American approaches from the late 1970s onward. However, much in the tradition of Metz, the proponents of film rhetoric and cognitive theory make what I consider to be a fundamental mistake in viewing narration as the essential impetus of film representation. For this reason I have aligned my study with Barthes, Eco, and especially Deleuze, in making film connotation—the form by which the representation’s content is related to its source of enunciation—the central object of my semiotic enquiry.

But while Eco and Barthes both write very little about cinema, and Deleuze attempts to reframe these problems in a rejection altogether of concepts of subjectivity and representation, I aimed in these pages to illustrate how the form of film representation—including the frame of the image, the juxtaposition of image-types, and the combination of speech and visuality—could be understood as the essential source of its significations. As such, I have tried here to build a model of film semiotics from a

more metaphysical structure, the basis of which is the phenomenological concept of subject-object relations. In order to illustrate this concept's relevance to film representation, I have looked at how the deconstruction of cinematic codes reveals to us a basic insight into film representation as a dialogic site of interaction between various sets of relations and structures of discourse.

By analyzing the works of Jean-Luc Godard and Alain Resnais, I have looked at how the organization of subject-object relations provides for a fundamental structuring of film representation, arguing—through the example of these filmmakers—on behalf of a cinema that, in the tradition of Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze, challenges the classical division between interior and exterior, subject and object. By using specific examples of film signification to illustrate my theory of subject-object relations, I hope to have made clear how phenomenology and semiotics can find mutual ground in the study of film representation. It seems possible that the reconciliation of these two critical positions holds much promise for the future of film theory—this thesis is meant as a step in that direction.

Oxford, February 2008

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