



# SUBJECTIVITY

Mutations and Appropriations in  
**European Film Studies**

**THE KEY DEBATES**

**Dominique Chateau (ed.)**

**2**

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Subjectivity

**The Key Debates**

Mutations and Appropriations  
in European Film Studies

*Series Editors*

Ian Christie, Dominique Chateau, Annie van den Oever

# Subjectivity

Filmic Representation and the  
Spectator's Experience

Edited by Dominique Chateau

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# Editorial

Thinking and theorizing about film is almost as old as the medium itself. Within a few years of the earliest film shows in the 1890s, manifestos and reflections began to appear which sought to analyze the seemingly vast potential of film. Writers in France, Russia, and Britain were among the first to enter this field, and their texts have become cornerstones of the literature of cinema. Few nations, however, failed to produce their own statements and dialogues about the nature of cinema, often interacting with proponents of Modernism in the traditional arts and crafts. Film thus found itself embedded in the discourses of modernity, especially in Europe and Soviet Russia.

“Film theory,” as it became known in the 1970s, has always had an historical dimension, acknowledging its debts to the pioneers of analyzing film texts and film experience, even while pressing these into service in the present. But as scholarship in the history of film theory develops, there is an urgent need to revisit many long-standing assumptions and clarify lines of transmission and interpretation. *The Key Debates* is a series of books from Amsterdam University Press which focuses on the central issues that continue to animate thinking about film and audiovisual media as the “century of celluloid” gives way to a field of interrelated digital media.

Initiated by Annie van den Oever (the Netherlands), the direction of the series has been elaborated by an international group of film scholars, including Dominique Chateau (France), Ian Christie (UK), Laurent Creton (France), Laura Mulvey (UK), Roger Odin (France), Eric de Kuyper (Belgium), and Emile Poppe (Belgium). The intention is to draw on the widest possible range of expertise to provide authoritative accounts of how debates around film originated, and to trace how concepts that are commonly used today have been modified in the process of appropriation. The book series may contribute to both the invention as well as the abduction of concepts.

London / Paris / Amsterdam

Ian Christie, Dominique Chateau, Annie van den Oever





# Acknowledgments

This book is the second volume in the book series *The Key Debates*. After *Ostrannenie* (edited by Annie van den Oever), the first in the series, it is once again a testament to the relevance of the project *Mutations and Appropriations in European Film Studies*. For this reason, first of all, I am very grateful to Annie van den Oever, who initiated the project and who remains by and large responsible for its continuing richness and productiveness. It is always a great pleasure to discuss and work with both her and Ian Christie as part of the editorial board. I sincerely thank those who participated in laying the groundwork for *Subjectivity* during meetings in Amsterdam, Groningen, London, and Paris: Laura Marcus, Pere Salabert, and Viola ten Hoorn, as well as my colleagues at the University Paris I, Panthéon-Sorbonne: Jacinto Lageira, José Moure, and Céline Scemama. I wish also to express my gratitude to the other authors of the book, Francesco Casetti, Gregory Currie, Marina Gržinić, Maria Klonaris, Karl Sierek, Vivian Sobchack, Pierre Taminiaux, and Katerina Thomadaki for their insightful contributions. With the rich and valuable contributions of all these distinguished film scholars and artists, I hope that the book will provide an account of the most important recent thinking on the topic of subjectivity in film. As with *Ostrannenie*, this project again proved an inspiring yet challenging undertaking of uniting an international group of scholars from different academic traditions, and stemming from countries as diverse as America, Belgium, England, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Slovenia, and Spain.

With my above-named colleagues at Paris 1, I formed a research team within the Sorbonne's Laboratory of Theoretical and Applied Aesthetics (LETA, *Laboratoire d'esthétique théorique et appliquée*), directed by Marc Jimenez. I would especially like to thank him for giving a warm welcome to the research team and for contributing to the financing of the book. Thanks also to the Doctoral School of Plastic Arts, Aesthetics and Sciences of Arts, its former Director Jean Da Silva, and its present one Bernard Darras. I sincerely thank Jeroen Sondervan, Chantal Nicolaes, and their teams at Amsterdam University Press, who have once again been very patient, supportive, and a pleasure to work with. For their support to this international research project, I am also grateful to the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO), whose funds make the publication of this book possible. Finally, this book would not have been possible without Viola ten Hoorn. I owe a great debt to her. Not only for her assistance in producing the

volume concerning its revision and editing, but also its conception from the whole to the details. Many thanks to her.

Dominique Chateau  
Paris, May 2011

# Introduction: Rethinking Subjectivity in Film

*Dominique Chateau*

André Bazin's objectivist postulate is well-known: cinema is a production of objective moving images because, as a temporal achievement of photography, it is automatic or mechanic. However, from this standpoint, what are we to think of an assertion such as "Godard's comeback to subjectivity occurred only in the mid to late 1970s through his video work with Miéville"?<sup>1</sup> Does it mean that Godard lost touch with cinema when he came back to subjectivity? In other words, can we consider that some films are more cinematographic than others? This reminds me of Eleanor Rosch's brilliant expression about retrievers being "more doggy" than other dogs.<sup>2</sup> As a sociologist, she empirically analyzes American representations of dogs in an anti-essentialist theoretical context (under the protection of Wittgenstein), while Bazin's postulate is deliberately essentialist. Strictly defining cinema by the objective power of the "impassible lens,"<sup>3</sup> Bazin follows the oversimplified definition of objectivity as the lack of subjectivity (which matches the equally oversimplified definition of subjectivity as the lack of objectivity): "All the arts are based on the presence of man, only photography derives an advantage from his absence."<sup>4</sup>

We do not need a retrospective study throughout film history to convince us that it is a procession of productions where man – that is, an identified subject, an author – is sometimes absent, sometimes present, and that the films where man is supposed to be present are no less cinematographic than others. Furthermore, Bazin was in fact a mentor to a lot of young filmmakers, who made films where we recognize the distinctive and somewhat conspicuous stamp of subjectivity; as a matter of fact, these filmmakers have played a larger part in defining cinema as subjective than those who, at the same time, were absent from their films. Nevertheless, the topic of this present book does not amount to a discussion about the Nouvelle Vague and the credit of its members. Some signs of subjectivity occur in films (even in some Nouvelle Vague ones) that do not refer to an identified author, and these signs lead us to the idea that the question, if indeed there is one, involves whether film in general is able to express a wide range of subjective aspects with its own means. Some of these aspects concern the representation of a character's subjective relation to the real (more specifically, to something represented in the film that is taken as real), like in the famous PoV

shot. Others, undoubtedly, pertain to the presence or the expression of a supervising subjectivity, referring more or less explicitly to a distinct author. And then there are those that deal with a quite different perspective: as well as the set of issues calling for narratology, subjectivity concerns such topics as the cinematic apparatus, film spectatorship, and the representation of inner states (memories, thoughts or dreams). In all these cases, we can consider that the key to the problem can be approached from a general view about cinema or from the perspective of film studies.

## Subjectivity from the Standpoint of Film

So to specify what this book intends to explain, it is useful to begin with a comprehensive definition of the notion of subjectivity. It can be considered to have three main meanings:

1. Subjectivity as consciousness: the ability to connect our mind to the environment, to be aware of our feelings or ideas and also to be aware of our own existence.
2. Subjectivity as internal representations of various kinds: sensations, perceptions, feelings, mental images, dreams, ideas.
3. Subjectivity as the position of the subject: the identity of the human being as a unified source of external and internal representations, and also as a source of self-representation (and self-consciousness).

One finds these three meanings, sometimes isolated but mostly mixed, in film studies as well as in the present book. Discussions about the various isolated or mixed aspects of subjectivity in film arise when film as a text is stressed or film as a machine. Film as a text (or as a form) will be our objective in this book, without losing focus by going for the shadow instead of the prey, to quote Jean de la Fontaine's famous phrase: *lâcher la proie pour l'ombre*. Our choice does not mean that the structural conditions of subjectivity in film or the philosophical sense of this concept are of no concern to us, it rather means that we start with the hypothesis that film plays a crucial role insofar as, both from the point of view of its textuality and its interplay with the spectator, the objectivation of subjectivity requires the film's mediation, and a specific one at that.

This mediation means that film substitutes specific signs of subjectivity, and that this substitution depends both on the kind of subjectivity taken as a reference point in each case and on the material and formal choices made to the purpose of subjectivity. By revisiting theories about the issue of subjectivity or proposing new insights, the essays collected here explore the interface between subjective phenomena and film; by exploring different angles and approaches, they show the relevance of subjectivity in film and reveal that subjectivity continues to be an important key debate for film studies.

## Contributions

The book is structured in four parts, each of which deals with a particular aspect of subjectivity. We will come across subjectivity as it is mediated by the texts, just as we will read about the mediation of subjectivity by film. As one will find, there are many possible interrelations between the texts concerning concepts, themes or subjects, all of which creates a dense hypertextual network of related subject matter. The order in which the essays appear in this book is based on this inter-related network that may help facilitate the reader in becoming acquainted with the concept of subjectivity. Thus each part consists of essays that are either associated because they argue respectively two faces of the same issue, they develop similar themes, or because they concentrate on a similar epistemological vector.

Concerning our subject matter, one of the most important challenges that film theory has to face is to ascertain what sort of subjectivity can be ascribed to film. One may be inclined to answer very quickly that “film thinks.” But without arguing, this is no more than a gimmicky idea. There is perhaps no better introduction for discussing this issue than to go back to the first film theorists, especially to Hugo Münsterberg, who is not only recognized as one of the forerunners in the field of film theory, but who also presented a series of subtle arguments in his *The Photoplay: A Psychological Study* (1916), in which subjectivity was the centerpiece.

The book opens with a contribution by José Moure dealing with Münsterberg’s heritage and its importance for film studies. In “The Cinema as Art of the Mind: Hugo Münsterberg, First Theorist of Subjectivity in Film,” Moure elaborates on Münsterberg’s way of drawing an analogy between mind and film which enables him to explore two major lines of inquiry: the possible analogy between the cinematic processes and the mental processes; and the possible connection of the mental cooperation of the spectator to the cinematic processes. Studying the perceptions of depth and movement, Moure shows that the spectator’s mind, aware of the nature of visual percepts, adds something to them. And studying the processes of attention, memory and imagination, he argues that the spectator is determined by what can be found in the film form as such. Moure also examines the internal representations, distinguishing between the spectator’s subjectivity and the character’s, between “objective images which are modeled on the mental processes of the spectator and subjective or mental images.” This theory, “more cognitive than perceptive,” involves meaning. But, for him, producing emotions is the central aim of the film form, therefore aesthetics is also a central aspect of his theory. In his conclusion, José Moure indicates that his conceptions can be compared with ideas discussed among French critics more or less influenced by Bergson’s thesis, such as Emile Vuillermoz and Paul Souday. In addition, Moure uncovers an anticipation of Münsterberg’s treatise in “an important essay entitled

‘Cinematography,’ published in 1912, in the *Ciné-Journal* and signed under the pseudonym of Yhcam.”

The other essays included in part one deal with the exploration of the filmic representation of experience and the spectator’s experience. Experience, defined as a moment of life or as a personal skill, evokes not only the practical side of human behavior, but it is also generally assumed that subjectivity partakes in it. The problem that may be worth raising is whether it is possible to discover some specific aspects of the subjective phenomena in whatever is experienced in a film or as a film. Film (or cinema) as experience means the experience (and subjectivity) represented in a film, as much as the way (more or less subjective) a film is experienced by the spectator. Two authors, Gregory Currie and Francesco Casetti, approach this aspect of subjectivity. A first glance would suggest that Gregory Currie considers only the first issue and Francesco Casetti the second one, but, with regard to Currie’s approach, we see that the two issues are tangentially related to each other. Under the title “The Representation of Experience in Cinema,” Gregory Currie, to begin with, dissociates the representation of subjectivity from the representation of experience. He proposes a reconsideration of what is perhaps one of the best-known formulations in film studies, Vivian Sobchack’s “Watching a film, we can see the seeing, as well as the seen.”<sup>5</sup> For Currie, a film can represent (show, depict) the world, that is, “objects in space and time,” but not an experience of the world. This does not mean that film is a radically objectivist tool, incapable of representing subjectivity, but that the filmic representation of subjective phenomena requires the mediation of “certain mental constructions on the part of the viewer herself.” This approach of the viewer’s role in the construction of representation seems to be questioned by the PoV shot, insofar it is supposed to do the work for the viewer. Facing this kind of objection to his conception, Gregory Currie examines a series of “subjective shots” – not only PoV ones, but also hallucinatory images, dream sequences, depictions of delusions, blurred images, inflected shots and representational prompts – and, in all these cases, he concludes that the film does not directly represent a character’s experience, but that through the spectatorial experience of watching the film: “the mind of the viewer [is] co-opted into the film’s representational system.”

Film can be the object of theory, but not its subject when the focus is not put on the film’s system but on the spectator’s attitude towards a film. In “Beyond Subjectivity: The Film Experience,” Francesco Casetti proposes to identify a range of aspects ascribed to this standpoint of film reception that, however, must be expressed less in terms of reception than of experience. The notion of reception does not correspond with what we are experiencing when we watch a film. We do not receive the film, we live it, in the sense that it has a practical effect on our existence, including a mental effect. This perspective seems very useful if we con-

sider cinema as a specific experience of the world. But it is also a crucial issue because “cinema seems to be putting an end to its century-long history,” or, in a less pessimistic mode, seems “to relocate” within new media and new environments. Francesco Casetti explores some questions about these new conditions of the film experience in the time of post-cinema: what does the irrevocable dissemination of cinema – or, more precisely, its contamination by the dissemination of media – produce? Casetti argues that it not only produces a concrete “relocation” of film, but that it also produces a significant process of mutation of the film experience. Francesco Casetti makes it clear that the metamorphosis of cinema, which creates some doubt as to its identity, has considerably transformed film experience: this “more and more personalized” and “increasingly active” kind of experience has been becoming a performance. What are now the effects of this change? To answer this question we have to consider the spectator’s freedom, the difference between film experience and media experience, and, finally, we have to ask if “film experience will survive”...

Part two of this book deals with the numerous ways of expressing subjectivity. In the context of her suggestive phenomenology of film experience, Vivian Sobchack (see Gregory Currie’s contribution for a questioning of her phenomenology in the previous part) argues that the spectator, while seeing the world represented in the film, experiences the difference between the film’s seeing and its own seeing of the film’s seeing. It is interesting to notice that seeing the world can be understood literally as the optical and mental relation to the world or, in a larger and metaphorical sense, as a *Weltanschauung*. Similarly, there is a literal sense of the “parallax problem,” its technical sense, and a metaphorical one, the “visual and ontological ‘parallax’ of embodied subjectivity.” Vivian Sobchack develops this double interpretation about the “uncanny and inaugural moment early on in Delmer Daves’ *DARK PASSAGE* (1947).” Sobchack’s contribution offers, first, a very precise analysis of this inaugural sequence, with the help of Daves’ technical notes and Žižek’s theoretical propositions. *DARK PASSAGE*’s main character, Vincent, appears to be situated between two antagonistic positions, both inside and outside the image, in a sort of “chiasmic conjunction yet misalignment of subjectivity and material embodiment,” so that it produces an impression of the uncanny in the spectator’s mind. Arguing with Emmanuel Levinas and comparing *DARK PASSAGE* with Robert Montgomery’s *LADY IN THE LAKE* (1947), Vivian Sobchack concludes that Daves’ work is a very convincing exemplification of the filmic production “as necessarily both immanent and transcendent, visible and invisible, divided and self-distanced – and ever engaged in an ongoing process of ‘becoming’ in the face of others.”

From its opening pages, there is, throughout this book, the potential discussion about the relations between the representation of subjectivity in film and the spec-



tator's subjectivity. Are these two levels absolutely separated, or relatively so, or not at all? In "From Aesthetic Experience to the Loss of Identity, in Three Steps," Pere Salabert considers that the spectator's uncanny feeling is based on some depiction of an uncanny situation in the storytelling. By uncanny (*das Unheimliche*), he means some mental state that arises when there is a gap between "the subject's inner world" and the objective world. This gap has to do with Freud's fight of pleasure with reality, the fact that the principle of reality implies the repression of our impulses and that the repressed ones, remaining latent, can reappear in dreams and art, where, by representation, the ways owing to which we suffer "from hypothetical, imaginary threats to the fundamental structure of [our] inner-outer world" become real. From this perspective, Salabert argues, one finds in novels such as Dostoyevsky's *The Double* and Maupassant's *Le Horla*, and in films such as John Huston's *THE NIGHT OF THE IGUANA* (1964), Luis Buñuel's *ÉL* (1952), and Jim Jarmusch's *DEAD MAN* (1995) the depiction of phenomena like "depersonalization" and "derealization" associated with an uncanny experience. But more importantly, Pere Salabert's contribution evokes a stimulating discussion on the cooperation of Peirce and Freud. The examined films, exemplifying three cases of subjectivity, related respectively to "an aesthetic event," "a mental disorder," and "personal subjectivity," can be referred, respectively again, to Peirce's *maybe* (Firstness), *reality* (Secondness) and the interface between these two ontological categories (Thirdness).

How does the transfer from the filmic subjectivity to the spectator work? How does the subjectivity expressed in the film, whatever kind it may be, meet its own spectator's subjectivity? Identification is a possible answer to these questions. Some think, indeed, that there is "an equivalency of subjectivity and identification: the subject is identification; the I is another."<sup>6</sup> The next essay in part two of this book is Céline Scemama's "Robert Bresson and the Voices of an Inner World: 'I' Can Never Be 'You,' or the Impossible Identification." The second part of this title signifies very plainly that she does not agree with this conception, that is, concerning Robert Bresson's work. Analyzing his films – especially the trilogy: *DIARY OF A COUNTRY PRIEST* (1951), *A MAN ESCAPED* (1956), and *PICKPOCKET* (1959) – she argues that Bresson's idea that the films are "made of inner movements *which are seen*"<sup>7</sup> leads to a special treatment of the filmic raw material, of the voices as much as of the images, of the actors as much as of the presence of the author, producing a whole series of disconnections at the various filmic levels: a disconnection between sounds and images, voices and bodies, actors and characters, and, to some extent, the author himself and his works... It follows that the supposed mechanism of spectatorial identification does not work, but also that "this impossible identification paradoxically gives birth to the greatest expression of an inner life." Céline Scemama's analysis sheds light on this specifically Bressonian paradox when it concerns the voice which is neither "off screen," nor

“voice-over,” but literally an “interior voice.” Or, in other instances, when it shows the importance of the textual origin of the film either in the vocal behavior of the actors or in the author’s style qualified as “lyrical asceticism.”

Michelangelo Antonioni’s *BLOW UP* (1966) is amongst the most meaningful films of the 1960s. The radically new form of representation that characterized the film is symptomatic not only of the artist’s need to be fully emancipated from the classical forms of storytelling, but also of a time of crisis that concerned both the means of representation and the political and cultural functions of subjectivity. In “The Silence of the Lenses: *BLOW UP* and the Subject of Photography,” Pierre Taminiaux analyzes *BLOW UP* from this point of view. Its story, taking place in a time in suspension, is not developed for itself, for its proper effects, but insofar as it makes visually present a kind of being in the world which associates strangeness with contingency. For the same reason, the film emphasizes the residing of photography in moving pictures. Like in Freud’s theory of dream interpretation, the details are more significant than the plot: in this case, it is “a slight detail that catches the eye of the photographer and unveils the dark nature of the scenes in the park” – in other words (following Barthes), it is a *punctum*. It appears that there is a strong parallelism between *BLOW UP*’s voyeur *punctum* that reveals a crime and, according to Barthes, “the strong link between photography and death.” On this basis, Antonioni’s movie is structured by the photographic mediation used as a play with subjectivity: the photographer searches for the truth by abstracting the image from reality in order to grasp this reality, which is then proved to be an illusion. By again referring to photography, the silence of the film is associated with this revelation. Pierre Taminiaux thus shows that the attempt to reach the truth throughout a blurred and mute image of a crime can be associated with the analogy between art and crime considered as a transgression, except that the photographer, instead of experiencing the voyeur’s pleasure, remains the prisoner of a truth that escapes as he tries to catch it.

Part three of this book deals not only with the debate over the role of subjectivity in film, but also in film studies. It is not merely about discussing the filmic representation of a subject’s viewpoint or inner world, but also about an epistemological discussion about film studies. Is it possible to introduce a transdisciplinary perspective in the field of film studies that could combine cultural theory with film-analytical research? In “Beyond Subjectivity. Bakhtin’s Dialogism and the Moving Image,” Karl Sierak proposes to achieve this task with the help of the Bakhtin Circle, composed of Mikhail Bakhtin himself, Valentin Vološinov, and Pavel Medvedev, on account of their original and powerful notion of subjectivity. The advantage of this notion is the possibility of guiding the analytical examination through a general theory of culture. The Bakhtin Circle’s subject, unlike the philosophy of identity, is conceived “as a dialogue which makes the inner psychic

dynamic analogous to social speech situations.” The originality of this theory of subjectivity is that the subject, instead of being conceived as unique, permanent and abstract, is defined as multiple and dynamic, according to continuously various processes linked to its active presence in social space and textual representation. This new concept of subjectivity as a “plurality of unmerged consciousnesses” that we find especially in Bakhtin’s essays on Dostoyevsky, offers a large scope for a theory that reaches beyond literature (where it originated), and therefore has, unlike the formalist theories limited to narratology, an aesthetic value which gives a new dimension to the issue of subjectivity. According to Karl Sierck, film theory may benefit from this representation of art (and possibly of media) that draws a “*dialogical image-text of differentiated subjectivities.*”

In the context of discussing the relevance of the concept of subjectivity within the field of film studies, the interpretation of subjectivity as the position of the subject must be isolated and examined from both a philosophical and an aesthetical standpoint. Jacinto Lageira, in “Imaginary Subject,” draws from Locke (self-consciousness) about the first standpoint, and from Kant, about the second (universally shared subjectivity). Then he shows that this classical basis must be enriched by a theory of the imaginary. The principal pressure point regarding this topic is that “the film is an imaginary object that requires a game of make-believe so that its functions and significations can gain sufficient grasp of my subjectivity.” The “imaginary subject,” Lageira suggests, can be examined through phenomenology, especially Husserl and Sartre, and through psychoanalysis, especially Metz’ theory. Applied to film analysis, concerning fictional as much as documentary films, such a perspective leads to the idea of a complex interplay between the more-or-less subjective signs in the film and the spectator’s imaginary subjectivity.

The merging of subjectivity with film studies can be managed in different disciplinary frames, in a single one, or in an interdisciplinary context. In “A Philosophical Approach to Subjectivity in Film Form,” I argue that for subjectivity, being originally a philosophical concept, philosophy provides the best theoretical ground for its incorporation with film studies, on condition that the work should be bound in a theory of film form. Epistemology is the theory of science or the theory of cognitive representations. In the first sense, it deals with fields of study such as film studies, philosophy and their possible interface. In the second sense, as John R. Searle proposes, it can define a first meaning of subjectivity, its cognitive adequacy to reality. Searle proposes to consider another meaning he called “ontological,” that is, its relation to consciousness and inner experience (as he illustrates well with the example of lower back pain). In my essay I argue for this second meaning and for its confrontation with film form. Film is seen as an organized structure of representations where signs of subjectivity are inscribed and

designed to activate human minds. From this perspective, I begin with exploring the relation of the camera to reality, which leads me progressively deeper and deeper into internal representations. Additionally, I refer to Merleau-Ponty's notion of the "internal landscape," and with the help of landscape theory, I argue against the philosopher's idea to limit film as an art of behavior.

Part four of this book contains a conversation in the form of an interview, or what the French call an *Entretien*, between Marina Gržinić, Maria Klonaris, and Katerina Thomadaki. At first sight, this last contribution looks like an exercise of intercultural communication: the Slovenian doctor of philosophy and video artist Marina Gržinić – who wrote *Fiction Reconstructed: Eastern Europe, Post-Socialism and the Retro-Avant-Garde*, published in Vienna and translated in French,<sup>8</sup> – interviews Maria Klonaris, born in Cairo, and Katerina Thomadaki, born in Athens, who have both been working in Paris since 1975! More relevantly, Maria Klonaris and Katerina Thomadaki as a team produce films, videos, multi-media installations, performances, photographic pieces, sounds and texts, exemplifying artistic coupling in a special way: two women forming a partnership, sharing the subjective responsibility of a work where, what is more, the duality is a thematic material and a pragmatic device. Since *DOUBLE LABYRINTH* (1976), when they both began to sign the same work, they have explored, throughout a continually wider choice of media and mixed media, and recurrent themes (body, female, androgynous identity, sexuality, the unconscious), the various statuses of auctorial cooperation: personal work, double author, presence (or absence) in the work of the other, role reversal in the same film. Sometimes, it is clear that the challenge is to partake of the authorial function, sometimes, to develop a more or less complete role reversal, and, even, when the separation seems to be clear, like in *SELVA* (1981-83), signed only by Maria, and *CHUTES. DÉSSERT. SYN* (1983-85), signed only by Katerina, these two works are shown at the same time.

This diversified play with the limits of double subjectivity is based on an ontology of the double (couple, twin, hybridization, image-mirror), and, correlatively, on a phenomenology of the double (body, look and image). Firstly, Maria Klonaris and Katerina Thomadaki begin to work in the presentness of a body relation that associates a filming body to a filmed one. Secondly, the films, together or separate, show the mediation of two reversible viewpoints. They write:

Self-representation is double: one looks at oneself, and at the same time one looks at another, and, one after the other, the 'I' and the Other usurp the space in which we express ourselves, in which we perceive. To pass in front of, and behind, the lens – this eye, open to the world – is to destroy the classic dichotomies of subject/object, acting/transcribing, seeing/being seen.<sup>9</sup>

It is clear that the double is not only embodied through its filmic representation, but is also mentally transformed according to the related themes. Thirdly, we must not neglect the fact that the composition of images and sounds constitute the ultimate level of representation in such a work. QUASAR (2002–03) and the UNHEIMLICH series, among others, accentuate this fact: Klonaris' and Tomadaki's cinema of the body (in French: *cinéma corporel*) is also a way of experiencing the field of media, both the cinematic one and, beyond it, the media one, and, through this experimentation, expressing an always-reviving desire of art.

# **PART I**

## **From Mind to Film, from Film to Mind**



# The Cinema as Art of the Mind: Hugo Münsterberg, First Theorist of Subjectivity in Film

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It is no exaggeration to state that the classic culture of Tlön comprises only one discipline: psychology. All others are subordinated to it. I have said that the men of this planet conceive the universe as a series of mental processes which do not develop in space but successively in time.

– Jorge Luis Borges<sup>†</sup>

The idea that there is an analogy between the human mind and the cinema – i.e., between the mental processes and the cinematic processes – pervades the history of film theory. This idea appears as early as the very first years of cinematography, often expressed metaphorically by philosophers or writers who announce intuitively what would become a persistent and viable theoretical approach to cinema in the following decades. In *Matter and Memory*, published in 1896, the philosopher Henri Bergson already uses a cinematic metaphor to describe the process through which a memory returns to the mind: “Whenever we are trying to recover a recollection, to call up some period of our history, we become conscious of an act sui generis by which we detach ourselves from the present in order to replace ourselves first in the past in general, then in a certain region of the past – a work of adjustment something like the focusing of a camera.”<sup>2</sup> And in an interview in 1914, the French philosopher states even more significantly: “As a witness of its beginnings, I realized [the cinema] could suggest new things to a philosopher. It might be able to assist in the synthesis of memory, or even of the thinking process. If the circumference [of a circle] is composed of a series of points, memory is, like the cinema, composed of a series of images. Immobile, it is in neutral state, in movement, it is life itself.”<sup>3</sup> In 1898, in a note about the novel by René Dujardin, *Les Lauriers sont coupés* (1888), which inspired James Joyce in his use of the stream of consciousness, Rémy de Gourmont speaks of a novel “which seems to be the anticipated transposition of the Cinematograph into literature.”<sup>4</sup> And in 1907, in a short narrative entitled *Cerebral Cinematograph*, published in *L’Italiana Illustrazione*, the Italian writer Edmondo De Amicis uses the technique of the stream of consciousness, and, through this metaphor, suggests the links between



the mechanisms of dreams, of memories, of interior language, and those of the cinematograph, between the thinking machine and the cinema machine.

These intuitions show that the film, as a medium which is apparently meant to reproduce concrete reality both externally and objectively, has, from the start, been considered a privileged vehicle of subjectivity and interiority. This theoretical, albeit not dominant, perspective was already in place in the second decade of the last century and we find its first elaboration as early as 1916 in the book by the philosopher and psychologist Hugo Münsterberg,<sup>5</sup> *The Photoplay: A Psychological Study*<sup>6</sup> which is considered the most sustained and accomplished text devoted to cinema in the 1910s. Although we cannot just reduce Münsterberg's study to an attempt to conceive the new medium – which he called, in the language of his time, the photoplay – as an art of the mind and an attempt to characterize cinematic processes as if they were modeled upon mental processes, this theoretical investigation constitutes Münsterberg's most important and original contribution to film theory. For the first time since the beginning of film as a medium, a study raised the problem of subjectivity in film and provided the foundations for what can be called in modern terms a spectator theory (the effectiveness of moving images is based on a psychological phenomenon that requires the mental cooperation of the spectator in order to achieve their full potential) and a narrative film theory (if there is an analogy between the devices which are specific to the cinematic medium and the mechanisms of the mind, the film will be particularly suited to express what is happening in the consciousness of a fictional character).

The main goal of Hugo Münsterberg, along with other film theorists of the silent period, was to demonstrate that the new medium was not merely a mechanical device and that it could be an art form in its own right. This demonstration meant, as Noël Carroll perfectly explains it, “first, to show that the film medium, despite its photographic provenance, could imaginatively reconstitute whatever it recorded; second, that the cinematic mode of transforming reality was different from the theatrical mode; and third, that this mode of transformation implemented the general purposes of art – which purposes could be identified without reference to cinema.”<sup>7</sup> This extensive project can be summarized in one basic question: what are the aesthetic conditions that would give cinema its autonomy from the theater and its independence from the practical, outer world? The answer to this question is guided by Münsterberg's Kantian conception of art as something which is isolated from real life, as an aesthetic object characterized by a total harmony of its elements and at least a certain degree of detachment – isolation – from reality. I will therefore, in the following, offer close readings of Münsterberg's work to examine the question of subjectivity in film.

To prove that film is an independent art form, Münsterberg raises the question of the aesthetic specificity of cinema not in terms of the relationship between cinema and reality, but in terms of the relationship between film and spectator. His approach does not resort to the analysis of the “differentiating factors,”

namely, of the *technical limitations of representationalism* which, as Rudolf Arnheim explained two decades later in *Film as Art* (1932),<sup>8</sup> guarantees the autonomy of the moving picture from its model and allows the artist a creative use of the medium. In Münsterberg's view, the material with which cinema works does not consist of single elements of articulation of the cinematic language (the picture and its relationship with the objects, facts, reality), but of all the mental processes of the spectator (which are supposed to be in connection with the devices of the cinematic language).

This preliminary methodological choice which determines the specificity of Münsterberg's approach – a psychological study – has to be linked with another important point concerning the movies which Münsterberg takes as references for his analysis: the narrative films. This interest in fiction films can surely be related to Münsterberg's own spectator experience, to his contact with a type of film which was, at that time, becoming institutionalized in the United States, but it is also justified by the fact that, for him, the aesthetic aspect of cinema was linked with fiction and that the very essence of film favored entertaining over teaching, narrating over informing. Thus adopting a psychological point of view in order to approach the art of film cannot be separated from the idea that Münsterberg saw in narrativity a kind of natural goal for the cinema or rather the best way to achieve what he considered to be the aesthetic purpose of art: the construction of objects characterized by their absolute “freedom from the bondage of the material world.”<sup>9</sup>

As an autonomous and aesthetic narrative system, the photoplay required the mental resources and the cooperation of the spectator. That is why in the first section of his work entitled “The Psychology of the Photoplay,” Münsterberg does not explore the characteristics of the film medium itself, but the psychological processes activated in the spectator's mind at the moment of the film viewing, i.e., “the means by which the photoplay influences the mind of the spectators, [...] the elementary excitation of the mind which enters into our experience of the moving picture.”<sup>10</sup> This psychological orientation led him to outline a new theory of the spectator which paved the way for a theory of cinematic narration.

## **The Active Mental Cooperation of the Spectator**

For Münsterberg, as Dudley Andrew explains, film “exists in fact not on celluloid not even on the screen, but only in the mind which actualizes it by conferring movement, attention, memory, imagination and emotion on a dead series of shadows.”<sup>11</sup> Münsterberg begins his psychological study by demonstrating that even the perception of depth and the perception of movement depend on the active mental cooperation of the viewer: depth and movement were not properties which the image would receive as such from the model, but they resulted from the mental activity of the spectator who adds depth and movement to static and

flat pictures. This distinction between what is objectively given to the viewer (flat and static pictures) and what the viewer subjectively experiences when he sees a film (“deep” and moving pictures) allowed Münsterberg to jump, before even raising it, over the problem of the reproductive character of the cinematic picture.

### The Impression of Depth

Münsterberg starts by analyzing the impression of depth in film, or better, the absence of a real three-dimensionality which characterizes the cinematic picture. He notices that we must distinguish between our knowledge about the film and the “immediate impression” its screening gives us: “we know that we see a flat screen,” flat “like a picture and never plastic like a work of sculpture or architecture or like a stage,” but, at the same time, “the scenes which we see on the screen [do not] appear to us as flat pictures.”<sup>12</sup> The cinematic picture, in spite of its bi-dimensionality (of which the spectator is rationally conscious), is able to produce a very intense illusion of depth (which depends on factors such as the movements of the characters towards the foreground or the background, the differences in dimensions of the objects, the shades, etc.):

That flatness is an objective part of the technical physical arrangements, but not a feature of that which we really see in the performance of the photoplay. We are there in the midst of a three-dimensional world, and the movements of the persons or of the animals or even of the lifeless things, like the streaming of the water in the brook or the movements of the leaves in the wind, strongly maintain our immediate impression of depth.<sup>13</sup>

However, such an illusion is, for Münsterberg, never completely achieved, and it is always received by the viewer in a conflicting way: the viewer perceives depth, yet he knows that the screen and the objects in it are flat. The perception of depth is indissolubly accompanied by the knowledge of the flatness of pictures, the knowledge that filmic representations of people or landscapes are not “truly plastic” – these people “can move toward us and away from us,” while “the distance in which the people move is not the distance of our real space, such as the theater shows, and the persons themselves are not flesh and blood.”<sup>14</sup> What kind of experience is this? Münsterberg is clearly concerned about this crucial question:

It is a unique inner experience, which is characteristic of the perception of the photoplays. We have reality with all its true dimensions; and yet it keeps the fleeting, passing surface suggestion without true depth and fullness, as different from a mere picture as from a mere stage performance. It brings our mind into a peculiar complex state; and we shall see that this plays a not unimportant part in the mental make-up of the whole photoplay.<sup>15</sup>

The illusion of depth induced by the cinematic vision is thus for Münsterberg the result, not of a technical process, but of a mental process: a mental activity of the spectator which only the “unique inner experience” of cinema can make possible... An inner experience which Münsterberg does not try to explain.

### The Impression of Movement

Münsterberg’s explanation of the perception of movement in film does not differ much from the explanations given for the perception of depth: “The perception of movement is an independent experience which cannot be reduced to a simple seeing of series of different positions. A characteristic content of consciousness must be added to such a series of visual impressions.”<sup>16</sup> The impression of movement is based on conditions which are different from those of the actual vision of movement. This “unique experience” is not only independent from the perception of “the actual seeing of successive positions,” it is also independent from the phenomenon of afterimages (He describes what is actually now called the phi-phenomenon or phenomenon of the apparent movement). Münsterberg recognizes that the retina retains visual impressions momentarily after a stimulus has been removed, but he goes beyond this passive phenomenon to an active experience, “a higher mental act” in which the mind confers motion. An action of the mind must be added to the “mere perception of successive phases of movement”: “the impression of the continuity of the motion results from a complex mental process by which the various pictures are held together in the unity of a higher act.”<sup>17</sup> “Higher central process,” “complex mental process,” “higher mental act,” “higher act,” “inner activity,” “inner mental activity...” Münsterberg uses different terms in order to emphasize the active powers of the mind, but he never tries to explain this process, act or activity which he analyzes as a “subjective help,” “a mental mechanism,” through which the spectator perceives the world of the screen with depth and animates it with motion:

Depth and movement alike come to us in the moving picture world, not as hard facts but as a mixture of fact and symbol. They are present and yet they are not in the things. We invest the impressions with them. The theater has both depth and motion, without any subjective help; the screen has them and yet lacks them. We see things distant and moving, but we furnish to them more than we receive; we create the depth and the continuity through our mental mechanism.<sup>18</sup>

At this primary, sensory level of the perception of the cinematic image (depth being a production of the viewer and not the property of the things or of the represented action; the movement being a viewer’s mental construction from stimuli coming from fixed pictures), Münsterberg shows that the experience of the photoplay results from a conjunction of “unique, inner experiences.” The specta-

tor, as a perceiving subject, participates in the construction of an autonomous universe regulated by the laws of his mind.

## **The Objectification of Subjective, Mental Processes of the Spectator**

As Münsterberg says, “The mere perception of the men and women and of the background, with all their depth and their motion, furnishes only the material. The scene which keeps our interest alive certainly involves much more than the simple impression of moving and distant objects. We must accompany those sights with a wealth of ideas.”<sup>19</sup> In order to explain how these sights have a meaning for us, how they play on our suggestibility, how they are enriched by our subjectivity, the psychologist sets his demonstration at a higher level, which no longer involves the optical perceptions but the way the spectator perceives the cinematic language, the way film works on the viewer and the way the mental processes enter into the cinematic construction.

For Münsterberg, all the cinematic processes are developed to shape films out of the mind of the spectator. They are an objectification or externalization of inner mental processes, which belong to the ordinary experience of the viewer. They are modeled on psychological acts of the human being, especially on attention, memory and imagination. This notion of the cinematic devices as the objectification or the analog of mental processes forms the core of Münsterberg’s analysis. It enables him to think of the film as an autonomous production whose forms are not organized according to the laws of the physical world, but according to the psychological laws of the mind. Münsterberg thus summarizes this essential point: “[...] the photoplay tells us the human story by overcoming the form 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.”<sup>20</sup>

### **The Attention – the Close-up**

Münsterberg’s method consists in identifying and describing mental processes and in identifying their equivalents in terms of devices of the cinematic language. He starts with examining the problem of attention. He makes a distinction between voluntary attention (“we approach the impressions with an idea in our mind as to what we want to focus our attention on”<sup>21</sup>) and involuntary attention (“the cue for the focusing of our attention lies in the events which we perceive”<sup>22</sup>). For him, an aesthetic system is characterized by the specificity of the means by which the involuntary attention of the spectator is constantly drawn in accordance with the intentions of the artist (“the audience is necessarily following the lead of an attention which receives all its cues from the work of art itself and which therefore acts involuntarily”<sup>23</sup>). If – with the exception of spoken words – the photoplay keeps all the means by which, on the theater stage, the attention of

the audience can be drawn to any important point, it has at its disposal a device which it does not share with any other form of representation, which gives it its artistic specificity – and indirectly its superiority over theatrical art – and which makes it possible for the attention to be drawn in its purest and most perfect form. This device is the close-up:<sup>24</sup>

Here begins the art of the photoplay. That one nervous hand which feverishly grasps the deadly weapon can suddenly for the space of a breath or two become enlarged and be alone visible on the screen, while everything else has really faded into darkness. The act of attention which goes on in our mind has remodeled the surrounding itself. The detail which is being watched has suddenly become the whole content of the performance, and everything which our mind wants to disregard has been suddenly banished from our sight and has disappeared. The events without have become obedient to the demands of our consciousness. In the language of the photoplay producers it is a ‘close-up.’ The close-up has objectified in our world of perception our mental act of attention and by it has furnished art with a means which far transcends the power of any theater stage.<sup>25</sup>

The close-up, as the objectification of the inner act of attention contributes to creating a subjective world that is free from the physical form of space, time and causality. Moreover, it is adjusted to the free play of the mental experiences of the viewer: “It is as if [the] outer world were woven into our mind and were shaped not through its own laws, but by the acts of our attention.”<sup>26</sup>

### The Memory – the Flashback / the Imagination – the Flash-forward

When he tackles the problem of memory and then of imagination, Münsterberg still follows the same goal: to demonstrate that the specificity of the photoplay among the other arts lies in its capacity to make the inner psychological processes of the spectator objective on the screen. In his analysis he moves from a question that puts emphasis on space (the close-up) to questions which involve temporal relationships (the various kinds of editing).

Münsterberg first analyzes the action of the memory whose mental operation is objectified on the screen by the cinematic device of the flashback, which he calls “cut-back”:

We see the jungle, we see the hero at the height of his danger; and suddenly there flashes upon the screen a picture of the past. For not more than two seconds does the idyllic New England scene slip into the exciting African events. When one deep breath is over we are stirred again by the event of the present. That home scene of the past fitted by just a hasty thought of bygone days darts through the mind. [...] We have really an objectivation of our mem-

ory function. The case of the cut-back is there quite parallel to that of the close-up. In the one we recognize the mental act of attending, in the other we must recognize the mental act of remembering. [...] It is as if the outer world itself became molded in accordance with our fleeting turns of attention or with our passing memory ideas.<sup>27</sup>

The same principle occurs “when the course of events is interrupted by forward glances.”<sup>28</sup> This device, called in modern terms flash-forward, objectifies the mental operation of anticipating the future on the screen, which Münsterberg classifies under the mental function of imagination: “the photoplay can overcome the interval of the future as well as the interval of the past and slip the day twenty years hence between this minute and the next. In short, it can act as our imagination acts.”<sup>29</sup> So the scene we see on the screen has “the mobility of our ideas which are not controlled by the physical necessity of outer events but by psychological laws for the association of ideas.”<sup>30</sup>

It should be noted that in the mental processes of attention, memory, or imagination that Münsterberg discusses in relation to respectively the close-up, the flashback and the flash-forward, the spectator, unlike what occurs with depth and motion, does not add something to the visual image. He is entirely modeled by the film, which adjusts its communicative process to his mental experiences. The mental process resides no longer in the spectator, it is replicated in the film by a cinematic device which simulates the subjective action of attention, memory or imagination. When Münsterberg discusses the spectator’s perception of depth and movement, he emphasizes the active role of the mind of the spectator; when he examines attention, memory or imagination, however, the focus is put on the way subjective processes are objectified on the screen by cinematic devices. The mind of the spectator seems here less active, it is the instrument through which an entirely autonomous and narrativized world is built. Even though the images projected on the screen are phenomenally objective, the cinematic devices can be viewed as structurally subjective insofar as they are objectifications of subjective, inner processes.

### **Mental Images: In the Mind of the Characters...**

Even if his principal concern is to describe all cinematic properties as mental and to emphasize the role that the subjectivity of the spectator plays in the perception of film (perception of depth and movement, perception of meaning), Münsterberg also considers how the film can picture the internal representations of characters. He thus makes a distinction between the subjectivity of the spectator and that of the character, between objective images which are modeled on the mental processes of the spectator and subjective or mental images – he never uses this

latter term – which visualize what the characters in the film “see in their own minds”: that is, “the play of memory and imagination can have a still richer significance in the art of the film. The screen may produce not only what we reproduce or imagine but what the persons in the play see in their own minds.”<sup>31</sup>

Münsterberg is certainly the first film theorist who emphasizes this capacity of cinema to enter into the mind of a character and to picture his memory or imagination. For him, what particularly distinguishes a subjective flashback from an objective flashback are the kinds of transitions used, i.e., a fade or dissolve:

If a person in the scene remembers the past, a past which may be entirely unknown to the spectator but which is living in the memory of the hero or heroine, then the former events are not thrown on the screen as an entirely new set of pictures, but they are connected with the present by a slow transition. He sits at the fireplace in his study and receives the letter with the news of her wedding. The close-up picture which shows us the enlargement of the engraved wedding announcement appears as an entirely new picture. The room suddenly disappears and the hand which holds the cards flashes up. Again when we have read the card, it suddenly disappears and we are in the room again. But when he has dreamily stirred the fire and sits down and gazes into the flames, then the room seems to dissolve, the lines blur, the details fade away, and while the walls and the whole room slowly melt, with the same slow transition the flower garden blossoms out, the flower garden where he and she sat together under the lilac bush and he confessed to her his boyish love. And then the garden slowly vanishes and through the flowers we see once more the dim outline of the room and they become sharper and sharper until we are in the midst of the study again and nothing is left of the vision of the past.<sup>32</sup>

In the same terms as those used for the precise description of the appearance and disappearance of a subjective reminiscence, Münsterberg examines the mental images which visualize what a character imagines: “Just as we can follow the reminiscences of the hero, we may share the fancies of his imagination. Once more the case is distinctly different from the one in which we, the spectators, had our imaginative ideas realized on the screen. Here we are passive witnesses to the wonders which are unveiled through the imagination of the persons of the play.”<sup>33</sup>

Not only is the photoplay unique, according to Münsterberg, as it is able to picture the character’s memory and imagination, but it also has a peculiar ability to represent “fantastic dreams”:

The ragged tramp who climbs a tree and falls asleep in the shady branches and then lives through a reversed world in which he and his kind feast and glory



and live in palaces and sail in yachts, and, when the boiler of the yacht explodes, falls from the tree to the ground, becomes a tolerable spectacle because all is merged in the unreal pictures. [...] Even the whole play may find its frame in a setting which offers a five-reel performance as one great imaginative dream.<sup>34</sup>

Münsterberg does not insist on the implications of this ability. He foresees a cinema of fantasy that visualizes dreams, but he prefers to dwell upon the ability of the new medium to create a world which can never be embodied except in the photoplay and in whose objective reality the viewer does not believe because it is modeled by the interests of his mind.

If Münsterberg elaborates on a theory of subjectivity in film, this theory is more cognitive than perceptive. The processes of attention, memory, and imagination which he describes are above all perceptions of meaning, and the corresponding cinematic devices are the objectifications of those processes. And when he discusses the ability of the photoplay to enter into the mind of a person in the film, it is striking that Münsterberg mentions – without using the term – mental images which picture the reminiscences and fancies of characters, and that conversely he does not allude to shots which adopt the subjective point of view of a film character.

### **Emotions: “The Central Aim of the Film”**

When he moves from attention, memory, and imagination to emotion, Münsterberg turns his discussion to what he considers not only the highest level of the mental processes, but also the central aim of the photoplay: “to picture emotions must be the central aim of the photoplay.”<sup>35</sup> Since the film is a medium whose processes of meaning are adjusted to the mechanisms of the mind, its main purpose must be the picturing of the mental life, of mental events, that is, of emotions. The focus of Münsterberg’s demonstration is no longer the way subjective processes are objectified by cinematic devices, but the way emotions are pictured on the screen, the way the photoplay brings the feelings of the characters and of the spectator “to a convincing expression.”<sup>36</sup> The problem becomes less cognitive than aesthetic. It deals with the expressive way in which the photoplay externalizes emotional moods, imitates or projects the emotions of the characters and of the spectators. Münsterberg does not seem to make a distinction between mental processes and emotions: “The fundamental principle which we recognized for all the other mental states is accordingly no less efficient in the case of the spectator’s emotions.”<sup>37</sup> But in the discussion of emotion, the emphasis of his argument changes. He seems to have difficulty analyzing emotions as objectifications of subjective processes, as well as identifying the cinematic devices that correspond to emotions, insofar as emotions concern the story as a whole and depend

on the narrative art of the filmmaker. He then focuses on the expression of emotions. He distinguishes the emotions felt by the characters on the screen from those felt by the spectator in front of the screen.

### The Emotions of the Characters on the Screen

Münsterberg begins his demonstration by studying the characters' emotions. In the silent cinema, they are expressed mainly by the acting of the actor, and notably by his facial mimicry which can be emphasized by the close-up: "Here again the close-up can strongly heighten the impression. [...] The enlargement by the close-up on the screen brings [the] emotional action of the face to sharpest relief. Or it may show us enlarged a play of the hands in which anger and rage or tender love or jealousy speak in unmistakable language."<sup>38</sup> But for Münsterberg, the emotional expression in the photoplay cannot be limited to the bodily movements or the facial play of an actor who imitates the emotions felt by his character, it must be extended to and complemented by what Münsterberg calls "the emotionalizing of nature,"<sup>39</sup> that is, the reflection of the emotions and moods of the characters in the settings around them. Münsterberg illustrates such a subjectivizing of the surrounding world in film with several examples, one concerns the case of a girl who receives a letter from her lover:

There is a girl in her little room, and she opens a letter and reads it. There is no need of showing us in a close-up the letter page with the male handwriting and the words of love and the request for her hand. We see it in her radiant visage, we read it from her fascinated arms and hands; and yet how much more can the photoartist tell us about the storm of emotions in her soul. The walls of her little room fade away. Beautiful hedges of hawthorn blossom around her, rose bushes in wonderful glory arise and the whole ground is alive with exotic flowers.<sup>40</sup>

Only a few years later, such attempts were found: they consisted of the subjectivizing of settings in German expressionist films such as *THE CABINET OF DOCTOR CALIGARI* (Robert Wiene, 1919) and of the emotionalizing of nature in French impressionist films such as *LA DIXIÈME SYMPHONIE* (Abel Gance, 1918) or *CŒUR FIDÈLE* (Jean Epstein, 1923). According to Münsterberg "such imaginative settings can be only the extreme; they would not be fit for the routine play."<sup>41</sup>

### The Emotions of the Spectator Before the Screen

When he analyzes the cinematic emotion from the viewpoint of the spectator, Münsterberg makes an important distinction between two types of emotion which coexist in the experience of the cinema audience: "On the one side, we have those emotions in which the feelings of the persons in the play are transmitted to our own soul. On the other side, we find those feelings with which we

respond to scenes in the play, feelings which may be entirely different, perhaps exactly opposite to those which the figures in the play express.”<sup>42</sup> We find here the first formulation of the famous process of projection and identification which Edgar Morin described in 1956, in *The Cinema or the Imaginary Man*, and which Münsterberg analyzes as a double process of imitation (through empathy) and projection.

According to Münsterberg, the first and most frequent type of emotion felt by the spectator corresponds to emotions which are imitations of the emotions of the characters in the film:

Our imitation of the emotions which we see expressed brings vividness and affective tone into our grasping of the play's action. We sympathize with the sufferer and that means that the pain which he expresses becomes our own pain. [...] The visual perception of the various forms of expression of these emotions fuses in our mind with the conscious awareness of the emotion expressed; we feel as if we were directly seeing and observing the emotion itself. [...] It is obvious that for this leading group of emotions the relation of the pictures to the feelings of the persons in the play and to the feelings of the spectator is exactly the same.<sup>43</sup>

Not only does the spectator imitate the character's emotions through an empathic reaction, he also projects this emotion elicited by the film onto the screen and into the character and the setting: “If we start from the emotions of the audience, we can say that the pain and the joy which the spectator feels are really projected to the screen, projected both into the portraits of the persons and into the pictures of the scenery and background into which the personal emotions radiate.”<sup>44</sup> This is the principle of the objectification of subjective processes which Münsterberg has described for the other mental states (attention, memory, expectation and imagination): in the case of the spectator's emotions, there is both an objectification, through imitation, of the character's feelings and an objectification (or embodiment), through projection, of the spectator's feelings.

Münsterberg also considers the projection of emotional qualities as an objectification of a subjective process when he analyzes what he calls the second group of emotions, “those in which the spectator responds to the scenes of the film from the standpoint of his independent affective life.”<sup>45</sup> The analysis of this subjective process by which the spectator “superadds [emotional qualities] to the events into the show, on the screen”<sup>46</sup> leads Münsterberg to formulate what will be a fundamental concept in film narrative theory and a crucial point in Hitchcock's definition of suspense: the distinction between what the character knows and feels and what the spectator knows and feels: “We see the laughing, rejoicing child who, while he picks the berries from the edge of the precipice, is not aware that he must fall down if the hero does not snatch him back at the last moment.

Of course, we feel the child's joy with him. Otherwise we should not even understand his behavior, but we feel more strongly the fear and the horror of which the child himself does not know anything."<sup>47</sup>

This emotional participation of the viewer in the film, which does not depend on a mimetic reaction to the emotions of the characters pictured on the screen, but on a projective response to a narrative situation, can be objectified – or embodied – on the screen by the lighting, the shades, and the setting. However, because the cinema was still in its infancy, it had not yet used the rich possibilities provided for expressing these secondary emotions. Something Münsterberg himself does not neglect to mention.

### Emotion Produced by Formal Means: "The Subtle Art of the Camera"

Münsterberg ends his discussion of emotion (and the first chapter of his book dedicated to "The Psychology of the Photoplay") by considering what he calls the formal side of the photoplay, which he distinguishes from the material side: "There is a material and a formal side to the pictures which we see in their rapid succession. The material side is controlled by the content of what is shown to us. But the formal side depends upon the outer conditions under which this content is exhibited."<sup>48</sup> Among these outer conditions which can arouse bodily sensations in the spectator and tend to subjectivize his perceptive experience of the film, Münsterberg mentions the out-of-focus shot – which he analyzes as a spatial formal change – and slow and fast motion – which he analyzes as a temporal formal change. He particularly describes how methods of editing or of moving the camera can produce an effect of trembling:

We might use the pictures as the camera has taken them, sixteen in a second. But in reproducing them on the screen we change their order. After giving the first four pictures we go back to picture 3, then give 4, 5, 6, and return to 5, then 6, 7, 8, and go back to 7, and so on. Any other rhythm, of course, is equally possible. The effect is one which never occurs in nature and which could not be produced on the stage. The events for a moment go backward. A certain vibration goes through the world like the tremolo of the orchestra. Or we demand from our camera a still more complex service. We put the camera itself on a slightly rocking support and then every point must move in strange curves and every motion takes an uncanny whirling character.<sup>49</sup>

Even if Münsterberg knows that a sensation is not an emotion, he claims that "the changes in the formal presentation give to the mind of the spectator unusual sensations which produce a new shading of the emotional background,"<sup>50</sup> because "as soon as much abnormal visual impressions stream into our consciousness, our whole background of fusing bodily sensation becomes altered and new emotions seem to take hold of us."<sup>51</sup> Although he does not still directly tackle the

possibilities of what we call subjective camera, he foresees a future time when “the characteristic features of many an attitude and feeling which cannot be expressed without words [...] [are] aroused in the mind of the spectator through the subtle art of the camera.”<sup>52</sup> The example which Münsterberg imagines in order to illustrate the possibility of the camera to confer a subjective form to a movie scene is very significant, insofar as it announces some experiments carried out in the 1920s by the French impressionist cinema:

If we see on the screen a man hypnotized in the doctor’s office, the patient himself may lie there with closed eyes, nothing in his features expressing his emotional setting and nothing radiating to us. But if now only the doctor and the patient remain unchanged and steady, while everything in the whole room begins at first to tremble and then to wave and to change its form more and more rapidly so that a feeling of dizziness comes over us and an uncanny, ghastly unnaturalness overcomes the whole surrounding of the hypnotized person, we ourselves become seized by the strange emotion.<sup>53</sup>

## **Hugo Münsterberg and the French Film Theory of the 1910s**

Münsterberg’s idea that cinema is an art of the mind particularly suited to express subjective processes finds a better echo and illustration in the impressionist films of the first French avant-garde. In her book devoted to the flashback, Maureen Turim observes:

These films are often expressions of the mental states of anguish, ennui, or desire. [...] Images are transmitters of emotional charges, sculpted to convey the fusion of external environment and inner states of mind. Mise-en-scene and camera angles portray the interaction between the subjective states of characters and the atmosphere of the place they inhabit. The objective world is subsumed in a subjective response to it. In this context, flashbacks play a key role. They infuse the present with the weight of the past, allowing an already subjectively rendered site to give way to another that is even more subjective, in that it is constituted as a memory image. If subjectivity is the site of these fictions, memory is the site that offers explanations for the dark subjectivity one experiences in the present.<sup>54</sup>

As Maureen Turim explains, while American silent cinema used the narrative flashback as an artifice, and depicted the subjectivity of characters within a symbolic pictorial mode of representation, some cinematic experimentations carried out at the end of the 1910s and in the 1920s by Abel Gance (*LA DIXIÈME SYMPHONIE*, 1918; *LA ROUE*, 1922-1923), Marcel L’Herbier (*EL DORADO*, 1921), Louis Delluc (*FIÈVRE*, 1921; *LA FEMME DE NULLE PART*, 1922), Jean Epstein (*LA*

GLACE À TROIS FACES, 1927) or Dimitri Kirsanov (MÉNILMONTANT, 1929) can appear to be attempts to transpose mimetically on the screen the subjective mental processes of memory, imagination, or emotion which Münsterberg analyzed in his psychological study of the photoplay.

Louis Delluc's *LE SILENCE* (1920) which has not survived as a film and which can only be studied through Delluc's detailed screenplay, published in *Drames de cinéma*,<sup>55</sup> can be considered a perfect illustration of Münsterberg's discussion on the flashback and mental images, and more generally, on the analogy between cinema and the processes of memory and imagination. *LE SILENCE* is one of the first cinematic attempts to present the stream of consciousness mimetically. Not only does it show the memories of the main character (Pierre) through fragmentary, repetitive and associative subjective flashbacks that burst into the present of Pierre, but it also describes the functioning of his imagination through mental images which do not refer to any actual event, either past or present, but exclusively correspond to what the character imagines. Delluc conceives his whole film as an interior monologue; only the scenes which present Pierre's apartment have an objective and concrete reality, whereas the retrospective or prospective inserts are perceived by the spectator as purely mental images.

Such cinematic experimentations, of course, could not have been directly influenced by Münsterberg's study, which had passed very quickly into oblivion and was not rediscovered until the 1970s in the United States and even later in Europe; however, there does seem to be a connection with Bergson's influence on the French film debate in the 1910s. For instance Emile Vuillermoz, in his 1917 article, "Before the screen,"<sup>56</sup> does mention "Bergsonian cinema," whereas Paul Souday, in his essay "Bergsonism and cinema,"<sup>57</sup> published in the same year, refutes Vuillermoz's thesis. This debate was perfectly summarized and settled a year later by Marcel L'Herbier in "Hermes and Silence":

[...] since Bergson indeed compares conceptual thought to the mechanism of the cinema and, then again, pronounces himself against 'the philosophy of ideas', [Souday] hastens unperturbed to the induction that 'Bergson doesn't like the cinema.'

Amusing logic, don't you agree?...

Let's look further and speak clearly. If it's true that in its fundamental aspiration, Bergsonism can be summarized as a desire to merge with the 'flux,' as a desire to elevate the soul over the mind, as a desire to satisfy the soul 'in its deepest, most genuine, and purely emotional region' (a region that's anti-verbal and anti-fictive), and finally as a tendency to descend toward the zone of deep-seated instinct, is not Bergsonism, I say, in all its propensity if not its essence, precisely analogous to current cinégraphie?

In this way, on the whole, at least in his conclusion that cinégraphie is by and large Bergsonian, M. Vuillermoz sees admirably well.<sup>58</sup>

This Bergsonian idea of what he calls *cinégraphie* led Emile Vuillermoz to emphasize the analogy between cinema and the mind. In a text dedicated to André Antoine's film, *LES FRÈRES CORSES* (1917), he claims:

The thousands of tiny frames in a moving filmstrip act like the cells of the human brain: the same overwhelming rapidity of perception, the same multiplicity of many-faceted mirrors which effortlessly juxtapose the farthest horizons, suppress distances, abolish the bondage of time and space, embrace all the cardinal points [of the compass] simultaneously, and transport us in a fraction of a second from one extreme point of the universe to another!<sup>59</sup>

And speaking more precisely about *LES FRÈRES CORSES*, Vuillermoz praises Antoine's ability to transpose mental images into cinematic language:

Antoine, of course, has done remarkable things with this visual proteanism; he has been able to intensify his drama with quick glimpses, allusions, echoes, interferences, forebodings, memories, hallucinations, and dreams; to illuminate it with fugitive suggestions analogous to the flashes of mental associations which traverse our imagination and multiply its creative power tenfold. As soon as a situation gives birth to some remote thought, a mental impulse toward the past, or a flight of memory across space, the screen picks up its quick spark and offers us its image.<sup>60</sup>

This line of thinking, which was very influential in French film theory and criticism of the 1920s, consists of conceiving of film as an art that is able to represent mental processes; it finds its first formulation – four years before Münsterberg's study – in an important essay entitled "Cinematography" that was published in 1912 in the *Ciné-Journal* and written under the pseudonym of Yhcam. The author of this essay, who is still unknown to this day, discusses the cinematic method of rendering what is going on in a character's mind:

In the composition of scripts for the cinema, first of all, the author finds himself faced with a very tough problem for, if his characters can act, they cannot reason; and it is only through their manner of acting that they can convey what is going on in their minds.

The author does have the resource of projecting explanations [expository inter-titles], but these explanations break up the spectacle and produce a bad effect – they are the anti-artistic. The best thing would be to reach the point of being able to compose a completely intelligible film without any need for expository texts.

We could envision a method which would constitute a theatrical art that is both original and interesting; this would involve projecting the characters and, simultaneously, their states of mind.

This method would be strongly analogous to the ultramodern painting of the Futurists who sought to paint not only a character but also what is happening in his mind. If the initiative attempted by the Futurists only ended in ridicule, an effort of this kind initiated in the cinema, on the contrary, would give results altogether more interesting.

In the cine-theater, this method is currently practiced when there is a dream or hallucination. In order to achieve a moral effect as ‘the final word’ in his film, *L'AUTO GRISE* [1912], [Victorin Jasset] projects the hallucination of one of the bandits who sees his own head fall under the blade of the guillotine. This method could be generalized by applying it to the waking state.

The Wagnerian opera employs the same tendency when the orchestra endeavors to reproduce musically the feelings which are stirring the character on stage.

In sum, theatrical art has always sought to dissect the psychic states of its characters and, in some fashion, make them manifest for the spectators.

For example, ‘La Tempête sous un crâne’, that marvelous chapter in the famous Victor Hugo novel [*Les Misérables*] is perfectly possible to render cinematically, by the following method.

Jean Valjean, in the guise of M. Madeleine, would appear alone on the screen, in the foreground or middle ground, while all the thoughts succeeding one another in his mind would be projected in the background – that is, made material by means of the cinematic image. Naturally, the gestures and facial expressions of the actors would remain in perfect synchronization with the projected image. The author could vary the intensity of the thinking through the focus – the clarity of the image corresponding to the clarity of the thought, and vague thoughts corresponding to soft images produced by a lack of focus. He could vary the intensity of the light and leave the images of dark thoughts in shadow.

This example may raise the possibility of a next theatrical art in the future which can only be achieved through the cinema.<sup>61</sup>

In this very significant and early text which anticipates some of Münsterberg's views, Yhcam envisions the cinema as a new narrative mode of subjective expression whose technological means will serve to represent the inner life of fictional characters. It is interesting to note that, unlike Münsterberg, the technical methods which he advocates (soft-focus images, lighting variations, superimpositions) in order to “materialize” and objectify a character's state of mind do not yet refer to editing techniques (dissolve, fade, cut) or to camera movements. They remain devices, still used in primitive cinema, in which flashbacks, dreams, and halluci-



nations are shown on the screen simultaneously with the real scene. As Maureen Turim remarks:

Such vision scenes were also common in lantern slide shows from the 1860s through the turn of the century. Photomontage techniques were used to connect an image of a character to a remembrance from his or her past. In all probability earliest flashbacks in film used this image-within-the-image technique rather than an edited cut to past. This doubling of images could be achieved by a kind of double stage scenography which located the scene from the past in the background of the profilmic scene, by using slides or filmic rear projections, or by double exposing the image using mattes.<sup>62</sup>

The difference between Yhcam's approach to subjectivity in film and Münsterberg's lies not only in the cinematic means they suggest for objectifying the mental processes of a character on the screen, but also, and most importantly, in the role they confer to the spectator. If Yhcam seems to consider the question exclusively to be an expressive and visual problem of representation, Münsterberg foresees that the effectiveness of the cinematic experience requires a subjective interaction between spectator and film, and that this experience is closely related to the narrative purpose of cinema. Thus, in his psychological study of photoplay, this profound intuition led Münsterberg to provide for the basis of a theory of subjectivity in film which, in his view, was both a spectator theory and a narrative film theory. But by attempting to abstract cinema from reality and to see the film as an objectification of the viewer's mental processes, Hugo Münsterberg overlooked the creative force and the subjectivity of the filmmaker.

# The Representation of Experience in Cinema<sup>1</sup>

*Gregory Currie*

It is notoriously difficult to say what the world we experience is like without saying something about how we experience it. That has encouraged many to think that a representation of the world, especially one which presents the world as it appears in sensory experience, must be the representation of experience, and hence of something subjective. We see this in the discussion of cinema, with formulations such as this: “Watching a film, we can see the seeing, as well as the seen.”<sup>2</sup> But while we may not be able to say what the world as disclosed by experience is like without referring to our experience of it, we can certainly distinguish between a representation of that world and a representation of an experience of it; film images are good for doing the former and no good at all for doing the latter. What is depicted in a film image, if it depicts anything, is always some aspect of the world and never any aspect of experience of the world. We may see what the character sees, and we may see things as they see them, having experiences ourselves which are relevantly like their own. But we do not see their seeing of it. This does not mean that cinema fails as a medium for representing subjectivity; film images, when combined with certain mental constructions on the part of the viewer herself, enable her to represent the experiences of characters, as we shall see. But those experiences are not represented on screen.

## **Many Representations of the World**

Experience, and reflection on experience, tells us that the world is this way or that, that there is an object here, another there (imagine pointing as you say this), while this one is red and round and that one is white and square. As well as perceiving things in the world, we can think about the world in other ways. We can see how things are, but we can imagine how they might have been or might be in the future; the red thing might have been square and the white thing round. For creatures like us who depend on planning, it is essential to be able to do so; we think about how we would like the world to be, and then decide how to bring about appropriate change. We can, in other words, imagine the world being different from the way it is, yet still being a world of objects distributed around us in space and time. And that is what makers of fiction ask us to do. When people tell

stories about Emma Woodhouse or Anna Karenina they are asking us to imagine things taking place in a world somewhat different from the world we live in. But it is a world of objects in space and time all the same. And movies which countenance Martians and monsters ask us to imagine these things having their place in the world. A film may postulate beings that exist outside of space and time, and it will usually be understood as attributing to its characters ordinary kinds of subjective mental states. But what is shown in film – what is depicted on screen – is represented as belonging to the world of things in space and time.

So, there are many ways to represent the world. We represent it in perception, and hope thereby to represent it as it is. But a hallucination will represent it as it is not. In imagination, we may represent it as we would like it to be, or as we fear it will be. In giving testimony to others we represent the world as being a certain way, and if we are lying or mistaken we represent it not as it is. In fiction we represent it according to the dictates of the author or filmmaker. And we can combine these forms of representation in increasingly complex ways. A fiction may represent the world as being a certain way, but also represent one of its characters as representing the world some other way, through illusion or false testimony. And a fiction may represent the world as containing another fiction, something which represents the world in some other way, and that inner fiction may represent one of its characters as seeing or saying that the world is yet another way. And all these kinds of representations, and combinations of them, are capable of being rendered on screen, insofar as they are representations of things in space and time. This idea of multiple, interlocking representations and their presentation on screen will be important to the argument that follows.

## **Point-of-view Shots**

I have said that what is depicted on screen is depicted as belonging to the world, and not to experience of the world. There are kinds of film images which seem to bring this principle into doubt. Consider point-of-view (PoV) shots: those from the perspective of a represented character. In terms of what is represented on screen, I say that such a shot is no different from an ordinary “objective” shot, one which implies nothing about the presence of an observer. The images we count as PoV show us what the character’s visual experience is of, and what a visual experience is of is part of the world that we experience.<sup>3</sup> This does not tell us what is distinctive about PoV shots, but that is because what is distinctive about them is not what they show, but what is communicated by the act of presenting them to an audience. By seeing the shot in a certain relation to other shots, and in the context of the narrative’s development so far, I understand that I am to imagine that what is depicted is what is seen by the character, and seen by the character pretty much as it is depicted.

Because it is implied by the use of a PoV shot that the character sees things pretty much as they are depicted on screen, a further possibility arises. That is for me, the viewer of the film, to think of my own experience of seeing what is visible on the screen as like the experience of the character. More carefully stated: seeing the shot myself, I imagine, of my own visual experience, that it is an experience of directly seeing the fictional characters and events depicted in the shot. Thinking of my experience in this imaginative way, I can then think: that is what the character's experience is like, where "that" refers, not to the shot or anything visible in it, but to my experience of seeing it.<sup>4</sup> For example, at a certain moment in John Ford's *THE SEARCHERS* (1956), Reverend Clayton (Ward Bond) sees Martha (Dorothy Jordan) fondly holding the coat of Ethan (John Wayne), and he draws some conclusions from what he sees. And the viewer at this point is able to think "That is how Martha's holding of the coat appears to Reverend Clayton." And our knowing how it looks to Reverend Clayton is important for understanding the conclusions he draws. The significance of this way of understanding PoV shots will be made clearer when we discuss non-depictive aspects of the film image.

## Lies, Dreams, Delusions

On the account given so far, PoV shots do not challenge the idea that film shots always show us what the character sees. But what, then, of cases where the character sees something only in a loose sense, as when the character is having a hallucination? We say that people hallucinating see pink rats, and I have no objection to our speaking this way. But that kind of seeing is not seeing anything out there in the world. So if a character in a fiction film sees pink rats during a hallucination, what she sees is not part of the world as it is according to the story. According to the story, the character sees pink rats which are not there. The same problem arises for shots which are indicative of what someone claims or thinks, when what they claim or think does not happen according to the story. The first flashback in *CROSSFIRE* (Edward Dmytryk, 1947) has the murderer leaving the victim's apartment before the crime. This, we soon learn or have already guessed, is merely what happened according to the murderer's account, and not what happened according to the film, the relevant content of which we see in the flashback following.<sup>5</sup> Also common are the representations of dreams or sustained delusions. Indeed many films consist almost entirely of the representation of what is so according to a dream or delusion, with just enough material dedicated to what actually happened to alert us to the purely imagined content of the rest, though the clues sometimes arrive very late. *THE WOMAN IN THE WINDOW* (Fritz Lang, 1944) and *THE OTHER* (Robert Mulligan, 1972) are examples of this delayed-revelation genre.<sup>6</sup>

I deny that in these sorts of cases the film image represents anything subjective; what is represented in dream sequences or in depictions of delusions is the

world, but this time the world as it is said, imagined, dreamed, fantasized or hallucinated as being by some character (“imagined” will be my shorthand for this disjunction). What is represented as being the case is not true, nor true according to the film’s story. But it is true according to the imagining of the film’s character. And just as in more orthodox filmic narratives, we are shown what is so according to something (the film), we are in these less common cases shown what is so according to something else – the imagining of a character. Film may show us things which are not part of the story it presents, but which are part of some representation within that story: some dream, hallucination, lying account, or whatever. We have in such a case an example of the layering of representations referred to earlier.

In some films the material which depicts the content of a character’s imagining is segregated from the material which depicts what actually happened according to the film. Most of the shots in *THE WOMAN IN THE WINDOW* depict things that happen only according to Professor Wanley’s dream, and do not happen according to the story the film tells. They contribute to telling that story because they enable us to make inferences – when we know what is going on – about what did happen in the story, namely that Wanley had a dream according to which those things happened.<sup>7</sup> In other cases the imagined material is not segregated from the material which depicts the story’s real events. In *THE OTHER*, a young boy, Niles, seems drawn unwillingly into his twin brother Holland’s evil activities; it eventually becomes clear that Holland has been dead for some time and that Niles is responsible for the mayhem. To the point where this becomes evident, we see Niles and Holland talking and acting together; this is later understood by us as the depiction of how Niles imagines things to be. However, the scenes in which Niles and Holland appear together (they do not appear in the same frame, though they do appear in the same shot) are also scenes which depict events which actually happen, according to the film: other characters appear in those scenes and say and do things which have consequences, sometimes fatal, further on. When we come to know what is really going on, we are able to divide the information we have received from these shots into two channels: one comprises information about what happened according to the story, the other, information about what happened according to Niles’ delusions. And we are also now able to make inferences about the relations between the two. For example, we can now see that Niles’ quarrel with his mother was a cause of him imagining that Holland pushed her down the stairs, something we now realize Niles was responsible for.

Shots associated with dreams or hallucinations are sometimes also shots which tell us about how the character having the dream or hallucination is experiencing these things. They may be PoV shots, showing the content of the imagining from the point of view of the imaginer. But often the images are not of this kind; when the subject is visible within the shot, it shows how things are in the world of the

imagining, including how they are with the subject whose imagining it is. There is some tendency to regard shots of this kind as anomalous, though perhaps understandable from a dramatic point of view. In my view they are not always anomalous; in the world as it is according to a subject's imaginings, the subject may himself be placed in relation to the imagined events.<sup>8</sup> It is then a legitimate choice as to whether the film shows what the subject imagines seeing – in which case the images will be PoV – or shows what is happening according to what the subject imagines; for what the subject imagines, and what the subject imagines seeing are not always the same. I may imagine seeing down into the Grand Canyon from Lipan Point, as part of a wider imaginative project which involves imagining that I am standing at Lipan Point. It would then be a legitimate filmic representation of my imagining, taken as a whole, to depict me standing there.

This is how things are in some scenes from Ingmar Bergman's *WILD STRAWBERRIES* (1957).



*Film still from Ingmar Bergman's WILD STRAWBERRIES (1957).*

In these scenes Isak Borg (Victor Sjöström), finds himself at the house he lived in long ago, and imagines seeing the people he knew there, including a girl he had wanted to marry, Sara (Bibi Andersson). Bergman has said that he conceived these scenes by wondering how it would be to literally revisit one's past, and that is the sense conveyed, since the now-elderly Borg is often visible in the frame,

along with the other characters, still in their youth.<sup>9</sup> But it seems likely also that we are not to take these scenes as ones Borg actually recalls having been present at, since he is now hearing, at close quarters, conversations which the participants would have taken care not to have him hear.<sup>10</sup> Borg's imagining is, in that case, more complex: he imagines visiting a past which he imaginatively constructs on the basis of things he does know – that, for example, the woman he wished to marry married someone else. Thus understood, these shots do not tell us much about exactly how he visually imagines these things; they do not tell us how these things look to him in his visual imagination, for we see him in the frame. Nor do they tell us much about what actually happened. They are simply representations of the world as it is according to his imagining, which involves a good deal more than is included in what he imagines seeing.

### **Non-depiction in the Film Image**

We have not found anything, so far, to contradict the idea that what is depicted on screen is always depicted as belonging to the world, and not to our experience of the world. The screen images in those scenes from *WILD STRAWBERRIES* represent events happening in space and time, not in reality, and not according to the film's account of reality, but according to Borg's imaginings; what we see is the world according to Borg's imagining, not his imagining of it. The same holds for PoV shots, both where what is seen is, according to the film's story, veridical, and where it is not; what is seen is how the world is according to a character's perceptions. But we come now to some cases where not everything visible on the screen represents something in the world. Examples of this occur when the image is out of focus, or has a smeared appearance because the camera is smeared with some substance, or a strange light suffuses the scene. In at least some of these cases, we are not to understand that objects themselves are represented as out of focus, or smeary, or suffused with a strange light. There need be nothing intrinsic to the image itself which makes this so. A shot suffused with a strange light *could* represent a scene suffused with exactly that light; even a blurred image, in the right context, could represent things that are supposed, in some way, to be blurred – imagine a *Horizon* documentary on quantum indeterminacy. Nonetheless, in some cases where the image is blurred or strangely lit we may, taking into account the broader context of the movie's narrative, form the view that these and other aspects of the shot do not contribute to the depiction of the world; the blurriness indicates some deficiency in the perceptual apparatus of the character who, we may suppose, is drunk. And one tempting response to this apparent opening up of a gap in the film's depictive fabric is to believe it filled by the depiction of an experience of the world and not of the world experienced. We are tempted to say that what is here depicted are aspects of the phenomenology of a character's experiential state.

Does the smeariness or blurring of the film image really depict something in the phenomenology of a character's visual experience? I deny that. I say that the blurring does not depict anything at all. But in that case I have to tell a plausible story about the function of the blurring. Our earlier discussion of PoV shots is the clue here. Recall: the PoV shot does not depict the character's experience, but it does convey to us the information that the character's experience is like our experience of seeing the shot. Similarly, in the case where some aspect of a character's phenomenology is being made salient, this is not because the film image is depicting it. Nor is the film image representing it in some other, nondepictive, way. Rather, it is serving as a means by which some aspect of *my* experience of watching the film represents some aspect of the character's experience. When I take off my glasses, the screen before me looks blurred, but my experience is not as of a blurred screen; my experience is of something sharp which I cannot see properly; the blurring I take to be a projection onto the world caused by my defective vision. The movie image, with its deliberate blurring of objects depicted, gives me an opportunity to recreate something like that experience. When I see the blurred image, it is somewhat as if I am seeing things – the things depicted in the image – which are sharp but which, for some reason, look blurred to me. I am able then to imagine, of this experience, that it is an experience of seeing those objects directly – seeing them without the mediation of a camera – but seeing them with blurred vision. And that enables me, finally, to say that this experience, which I imagine to be an experience of seeing things with blurred vision, is like the experience had by the character. I can think “That is how the character is seeing things,” where “that” refers to the experience I am having now.

When a shot contains visible features which do not contribute to what the shot depicts, I shall say that the shot is *inflected*. In the case just imagined, the blurring of the image is an inflection of the image. But the shots which I have considered so far are all shots in which inflections, while not themselves representational, play a part in helping us, the viewers, to represent a character's experience. In Murray Smith's happy phrase, they are *representational prompts*; they prompt us to use our own experiences to represent the experiences of characters.<sup>11</sup> Occasionally, we find inflected elements of shots which are not representational prompts; instead they serve an expressive purpose. In a moment I will consider an example of this kind.

If an inflected shot is a representational prompt, must it be a PoV shot? No. George Wilson recalls a scene in *FAREWELL MY LOVELY* (Edward Dmytryk, 1944) where Philip Marlow (Dick Powell) has been drugged.<sup>12</sup> We see Marlow in a hospital room, and the shots are inflected with cobweb-like strands which seem to hang in the air. We understand that these are not depictive; there are no cobweb-like elements hanging in the air according to the story. We understand that something in our experience of watching the scene, namely the seeing of these cobweb-like strands, corresponds to something in Marlow's own current drug-





*Film still from Edward Dmytryk's FAREWELL MY LOVELY (1944).*

affected visual experience.<sup>13</sup> But the shots that make up this scene are not PoV shots; we see Marlow himself in these shots, and see things from points of view other than his.<sup>14</sup> We may think that his experience is similar, in respect of the appearance of cobweb-like inflections, to our own current experience of seeing the shot, without thinking it similar in respect of point of view.<sup>15</sup>

I turn finally to the category of inflected shots which are not representational prompts. In the final shot from Bergman's *A PASSION* (1969), Andreas Winkelman (Max von Sydow) is seen at a distance, anxiously walking back and forth. The shot slowly closes on Andreas as his path to each turn shortens, the grain of the image becoming more evident, and the detail of the scene correspondingly less visible. He collapses as the picture degrades to the point where he is no longer distinguishable from his surroundings.<sup>16</sup> The increasingly visible graininess of the image eventually takes us beyond the point where anything representational can be seen. But for a section of the shot, as long as we can still see Andreas, there is a mixture of inflected and representational elements in the shot. We are able to pick out elements in the pattern on the screen which are representative of Andreas, at the same time as we can pick out elements which compose this representation – the visible grains – but which do not themselves represent anything. Those visible grains inflect the shot, but they do not do so experientially.

This might be denied. One might think of the shot as similar to the one discussed from *FAREWELL MY LOVELY*, in which we see Marlow, and see him as we

think he sees his surroundings, namely as if the room were filled with cobweb-like strands. Should we then think of Andreas as having a perceptual experience relevantly like the experience we have when we see the shot, a visual experience in which the world about him seems to fragment? I think the answer is no; this shot is best understood as devoid of experiential inflection, for the kind of experiential inflection it would imply is not helpful for understanding Andreas' situation. Andreas' difficulty, as the film has made plain throughout, is not with his visual access to the world, but with his emotional access to it. The shot's increasing graininess, and the consequent degradation of its capacity to represent is expressive of the now acute phase of a mental as well as physical collapse we may assume Andreas to be undergoing; a condition which in earlier and less acute stages helps to explain his destructive behavior.

We have distinguished a number of different kinds of shots, but we have not discovered anything in which something subjective is depicted. What we have learned instead is that sometimes things appear in the shot which do not depict anything at all. And sometimes this happens because it helps us to use our own experience to model the experience of the character.

## **Problem Cases**

There are some kinds of cases which seem to resist the treatment I have proposed.

Paisley Livingston asks whether there might be exceptions to my claim that what is depicted on screen is always a world of objects in space and time. What, he asks, of cases where a surrealist-inspired film purports to depict a strange, solipsistic world. I think there are difficulties in the way of such depictive projects, but I will not argue the case here. I am content to withdraw to the more modest claim that, except in cases where the film asks us to accept a non-standard metaphysics of experience, what is depicted are scenes in the objective world. This withdrawal will not matter for present purposes because the claim I am keen to defend is that such things as point-of-view (PoV) shots, lying flashbacks, dream sequences, and delusional and hallucinatory episodes can be fully accommodated within a theory which limits what is depicted on screen to occurrences within the world of ordinary objects in space and time. Whether there are ever other reasons to accept the possibility of the filmic depiction of a solipsistic world is something I do not try to settle here.

Another objection has it that we do not need extravagant ideas about solipsistic worlds in order to challenge the idea that the screen depicts only objects in space-time. What, for example, of the depiction of rainbows and other visual phenomena which have no spatial location? These are things we can see, and they can be captured on film, but if film depicts these things, surely it depicts things which are not part of the world of objects in space and time.

It is true that rainbows are in some ways puzzling entities. But they need not puzzle us here. We see rainbows, and they are given in experience as having locations; it comes as a surprise to us that they do not, after all, occupy regions of space. A film image may depict a rainbow that no one saw, just as it may depict a dead body that no one found. It may depict a rainbow that really is not there, but which a character is hallucinating; in that case, the image depicts what is happening in the world according to the character's hallucination, and not what is happening in the world according to the film's story. The categories we have available for the treatment of film images of ordinary objects do just as well for rainbows.

Finally, Jenefer Robinson objects as follows.<sup>17</sup> Sometimes what we see on screen looks so stylized or otherwise "unrealistic" that it is difficult to think of it as depicting anything in the world of space-time objects, though it does seem that something is being represented. For example, in *VERTIGO* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1958), during a dream sequence, we see Scotty's face at the center of a vortex. Are we really supposed to see this as a depiction of how the world might be, namely as containing Scotty's face at the center of a vortex? I agree that it is hard to interpret shots like these. One might simply point out that depiction of events is not always realistically done; Hitchcock delights in non-realistic depictions of events that clearly are supposed to be occurring in the extra-mental world, as with his use of painted or modeled scenery, back projection, and so on. This is not the only interpretive option. One might instead take such a shot as a sort of compressed visual metaphor, designed to convey, in summary form, the tone of Scotty's nightmare, and not as a depiction of how things are represented in the nightmare as being. Such a visual metaphor contributes to the broader project of helping us understand what Scotty's nightmare was like, without purporting to depict how things were according to the nightmare.

## Stretching the Medium

I have argued that what is depicted on screen is always something in the world we experience, not some aspect of our experience of it. But this is not the claim that what is represented in film is always objective, because a film represents much more than is depicted on screen. Films generally represent their characters as existing when off screen, but this, obviously, is not depicted. Now the question arises as to what we consider to be the boundaries of the film itself. We might think of the film as a representational system, with functionally organized parts – an image track and a soundtrack being the obvious ones – but also with the capacity to exploit communicative practices which allow inferences to be made about what else is going on in the story from premises about what is directly seen and heard. My suggestion now is that we can also think of the mind of the viewer as co-opted into the film's representational system. Having viewers there watching enables things to be represented in certain ways in film which would otherwise not be

able to be represented in those ways, namely the experiential states of characters. Film allows the experiential states of viewers to represent the experiential states of characters. Because it can do that, it does not need to attempt the impossible: to depict those experiential states on screen.



# Beyond Subjectivity: The Film Experience<sup>1</sup>

Francesco Casetti

## Return to Experience

Anticipation and concentration, sensual excitement, craving for a habit, sudden astonishment: they are all part of watching film. Therefore, I shall attempt to consider the cinema as a locus of *experience* – an experience of a particular kind: the film experience. This is perhaps not a new endeavor,<sup>2</sup> but it now seems a necessary one for at least three reasons.

The first reason regards film studies, and I will therefore treat it only briefly. Over the course of the last two decades a great interest in reception has developed. This interest has been manifested in various fields: in semio-pragmatics, with the description of various ambits in which film may be experienced, from spectacle to didactic;<sup>3</sup> in feminist film studies, with an emphasis on the implication of gendered elements in film viewing;<sup>4</sup> in historical studies, with attempts to reconstruct the ways in which film has been proposed to the public,<sup>5</sup> interpreted over the course of time,<sup>6</sup> and rendered a collective patrimony;<sup>7</sup> and in ethnographic studies with their objective of analyzing in parallel visual and social practices.<sup>8</sup> There have also been a large number of contributions dedicated to linking the type of spectatorial gaze to the types and genres of films made,<sup>9</sup> as well as studies of the cinematographic apparatus, which focus on the machine of vision and its impact both on the perceiver and on that which is being perceived (i.e. both on the spectator as a subject, and on the image as a signifier).<sup>10</sup> Reception, together with representation and production, have been the three pillars of film studies. However, the orientation of this research risks missing its target, at least in part. A spectator does not find herself “receiving” a film: she finds herself “living” it. This requires us to ask not only how she is a spectator and what she is a spectator of, but also on what basis she becomes a spectator, and what effect this has on her existence. In short, when can one say that one is seeing a film and what meanings do we attribute to the fact of seeing it? Returning to the question of *experience* – as opposed to, or beyond, the question of reception – can help us to respond to these questions. In fact, this return allows us to place ourselves at the level of lived life, so to speak, as we recuperate the dynamics of vision in all their complexity and concreteness. Furthermore, it allows us to focus in on the process

through which vision is constituted as such, with its meanings, values and motivations, which enlarges decidedly the field of inquiry. The research, then, not only describes a situation – that of the spectator in front of a film – but it also recuperates its conditions of existence and intelligibility, telling us what vision is, what makes it what it is, and what allows it to be understood as such.<sup>11</sup>

The second reason in favor of experience concerns, from a historical perspective, the role that cinema has played in twentieth-century modernity. On the one hand, film seemed to be an instrument which negated our direct relationship with things. Beginning with Pirandello,<sup>12</sup> many have thought that the mechanical image offered by the cinema kills our relationship with the world: moreover as Benjamin reminds us: “the sight of immediate reality has become an orchid in the land of technology.”<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, cinema seemed to restore to us the full sense of things: it allows us to see again those things that had dropped from view due to habit and indifference, as Balázs emphasized in the early 1920s.<sup>14</sup> It also permits us to observe the world with a precision unattainable by the naked eye, as Epstein suggested in around the same time.<sup>15</sup> Finally, film brings to light formations that only a machine can perceive, as Benjamin reminds us again, speaking of “unconscious optics.”<sup>16</sup> In essence, the cinema removes and hides, but it also shows and reveals. It is not difficult to grasp in this dialectic the entire twentieth-century tension between subtraction of the real and its possible restitution – perhaps through the work of art. On the one hand, the century is pervaded by the idea that the complexity and rapidity of events make it impossible to “gain experience” of what occurs, and altogether useless to “have an experience” on which to lean. The portrait that Benjamin paints of soldiers returning from the front, mute and incapable of expressing (to themselves or others) what had happened to them, is a perfect emblem of this situation.<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, the twentieth century is also riddled with the conviction that there are moments – offered particularly by art – in which it is possible to see reality “again” and “as if for the first time,”<sup>18</sup> and in which therefore it is possible to reestablish our relationship with things.<sup>19</sup> Within this tension, cinema occupies a particular place: it is the living proof of the truth of both the one thing and the other. The analysis of film experience gives us insight into this inextricable – but essential – knot.

Finally, thematizing film experience is helpful in order to understand what is happening: to the cinema, and perhaps also to us. We live in a period during which the cinema seems to be putting an end to its century-long history, as a result of the progressive abandonment of the photographic image in favor of the digital image, and the declining centrality of the movie theater as the primary location for watching film. If, in fact, there is anything that persists between the first birth of cinema – the Lumières’ projection in the “Salon Indien” at the Café des Capucines, on 28 December 1895 – and its innumerable other births – the harnessing of narrative, the honing of the film theater, the introduction of sound, the adoption of Panorama, of Cinemascope, of Circorama, of 3-D – it is precisely

the presence of a film and the presence of an audience. Now these two presences are slowly weakening, and what remains is only the screen. However, this is not only the screen of the movie theater, but also, and above all, the screen of a television set, a DVD player, a computer, a media facade, an iPod, a tablet, and a cell phone. It is the screen installed in a waiting room, an airplane, a bus, a car, an art gallery, a square or a street, and a museum. It is the screen on which I watch the latest Hollywood production, the work of an independent filmmaker, an auteurist documentary, an analysis of current events, a montage of readily available material, a slow-motion projection of a famous film,<sup>20</sup> a theatrical version of a made-for-tv movie, an infomercial, a series of images accompanying a videogame, an opening sequence, and two trailers of a work presented only as a promise. Therefore, we can legitimately ask if cinema still exists, or if it has merged completely – “convergence, honey” – into the indistinct world of media.<sup>21</sup> In essence, the question is whether cinema has broadened its field of action, or has lost its identity; and it is precisely by focusing on the film experience that we will be able to formulate an answer to this question. What kind of spectator was I, and what kind am I now, if I still even am one now? Upon which memory do I rely, and to which expectations do I open myself? Which behaviors or postures have my body conserved? And, more radically: what do I continue to experience in these new situations, if I really experience anything at all? In asking myself these questions – questions of experience – I come to understand if cinema has disappeared, or if it has simply turned a corner. Furthermore, I can discover whether I continue to find sense in cinema, or whether I am now dealing with a phantasm – or, worse yet, with something characterized by an indifference and an indistinctness that permits a true “anesthesia” of the senses and of sense.<sup>22</sup>

## **To Gain Experience and to Have an Experience: Excess and Recognition**

What characterizes the film experience? “Experience,” in general, means at least two things, strictly linked one to the other: on the one hand, the fact of perceiving reality in person and almost for the first time (as in the expression: to “gain experience”); on the other hand, the fact of possessing knowledge and competence which allow one to face reality and understand it (in this case, we speak of “having experience”).<sup>23</sup> Analogously, we can define the film experience as that moment in which the spectator measures herself against the images and sounds which are forcefully summoning her; and in which in the meantime she becomes (reflexively and proactively) aware of the act of seeing and of what is seen. We have an activation of the senses – especially of vision – as a result of something that appears on a screen; and an understanding that something appears, to us, under certain circumstances and that it bears a certain content. In essence, there is a film and the world that it represents, which capture my attention, almost



imposing themselves on me; accompanied by the emergence of a “knowing-that-I-see” and a “knowing-how-to-see,” referring both to the film per se and the reality to which it makes reference.

This definition of the film experience requires some further refinement: the analogy with general experience may seem too limiting; and the circuit formed between exposition and re-elaboration runs the risk of appearing too automatic. Nevertheless, this definition has a certain advantage: it helps us to understand how much lies at the heart of the film experience precisely as experience. On the one hand, it entails something that captures our attention, that makes an impression on us, that obliges us to measure ourselves directly against things. On the other hand, it involves returning to that which is happening, in order to understand it, re-elaborate it and make it our own. In short, it entails both an excess and a recognition.

First of all, excess. There is always something in experience that surprises and captures, on both sensory and cognitive levels, as a result of its particular intensity, or its distinctiveness with respect to what surrounds it, or its problematic nature, which renders it an unsolvable rebus at some level. In the case of cinema, this *something* may be the force of its images or sounds, the particularity of the space in which it is projected, the inevitable ambiguity – between real and unreal – of the spectacle, the dizziness created by the feeling of being immersed in a narrated world, the sudden and problematic freedom of the eye, etc. It is this excess that triggers the encounter with that which one finds in front of oneself – and that simultaneously forces one to emerge from the “taken-for-granted” stance to face directly that which one is confronting.<sup>24</sup>

And then there is recognition. In experience, there is always a moment in which we come back to the encounter in order to frame it and to make it our own. It is an essential moment in which two closely related aspects enter into play. We have an *agnition*, as a result of which something is identified; and a *ratification*, as a result of which something is accepted and included in one’s own world.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, when we recognize something we identify and accept it; that is, we draw attention to its already recognizable aspects, and we acknowledge those aspects which are ready to be recognized. These two actions do not always occur: we often have difficulty identifying that which happens to us, and we often refuse (consciously or unconsciously) to accept it. We often cannot – or would rather not – name that which we encounter in our everyday lives or, we give it another name, which actually distances us from it. In these cases, we pull ourselves out of the experience, as we remove it away from us. However, when we both identify and accept that which is happening around us, then the experience is constituted for what it is: a substantial and meaningful encounter.<sup>26</sup> This is also true for the film experience: to recognize means to open ourselves to that which has surprised us and to the very fact of being surprised. In this way, we coax it out of the background of the unnoticed, we give it a body, we reflect upon it, we

arrive at highlighting its whys and hows. In essence, we reflexively trace back its conditions of existence and its intelligibility. In doing so, we give space to its requirements and reasons, we make it become film experience in the fullest sense.

## **The Film Experience: Lines of a Possible History**

By placing excess and recognition at the center of attention we may understand how cinema may give rise to a real experience, or, if you will, to vision as experience. This is valid for today, just as it was in the past. By projecting these two aspects back onto the history of cinema, we can also shed light upon the forms that the film experience assumed through the years: in particular, they can reveal, respectively, what made filmic vision “alive,” and what allowed it to be recognized and accepted as “filmic” vision. From this exercise there may be born both a history of cinema as well as a history of the cinematic experience. This is precisely what I shall now attempt to do, as concisely as possible, by reflecting upon some of cinema’s historical phases, starting with what would eventually constitute the element of excess and ensure a process of recognition.

Early cinema largely characterized film experience in terms of modernity and popularity. On the one hand, film experience seems to include all of the typical traits of its time: it realized a need for economy, a taste for speed, an investment in the progressive mechanization of life and the growing importance of contingent phenomena; and its flux could be paralleled with other flowing forms, such as the stream of consciousness.<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, film experience was also accessible to everyone: it joined a cross-border and a cross-cultural public to an easily accessible language, it proposed themes of general interest and it expressed common values.<sup>28</sup> In short, cinema reflected its age whilst at the same time turning to a universal audience. Today, it is evident that film “re-transcribed” the modern experience that was actually lived in factories, in the metropolis, even in the trenches of World War I. In this context, cinema “reinvented” the modern just as it “reinvented” the popular. What is interesting about this is that the two “re-inventions” overlapped. On the one hand, cinema joined modernity to the sphere of the show or to the space of the collective game, and film after film popularized this modernity.<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, however, cinema associated popularity with the presence of a communicative device capable of involving multitudes: by transforming this into a “medial” and “mass” popularity, cinema modernized it.

We have, accordingly, the popularization of modernity and the modernization of popularity. I would go on to suggest that if, in the first twenty years of its life, cinema had a strategic function, this consisted in its very ability to recall these two terms and to redefine their reciprocity. The consequence of this move is important. What really qualifies early film experience is not the fact that it engages the gaze, but the fact that it offers a new range of sensations while also building a

new type of collectivity. And, in parallel, what characterizes the nascent cinematographic spectator is not the fact that she/he is constituted as an observer, but the fact that her/his body engages in a richer sensibility and through this becomes more involved and engaged with others. Among the critics of the time, it is perhaps Ricciotto Canudo who best articulates this aspect of film experience. In his writing, constant attention is paid to the ways in which cinema enables new forms of feeling and new social aggregates to be “tried,” and “experimented” with, by the onlookers.<sup>30</sup> This new horizon of experience is not, however, expressed only in theoretical writing. A group of US films, from *UNCLE JOSH AT THE MOVING PICTURE SHOW* (Edwin S. Porter, 1902) to *MABEL’S DRAMATIC CAREER* (Mack Sennett, 1913) or *A MOVIE STAR* (Fred Hibbard, 1916), illustrates this same theme through small, exemplary tales. These films depict an audience that is systematically surprised and engaged by what appears on the screen and by what happens in the cinema.

Throughout the 1910s, and particularly after the end of World War I, we can progressively identify a “regulation” that imposed itself on the forms of representation depicted, on the comportment expected of spectators, and on the very spaces cinema used. Cinema had to offer appropriate contents on the screen, it had to induce proper behavior in the audience, and it had to guarantee environmental conditions that were not harmful to public health and safety. In sum, film had to answer to the canons of a morale, etiquette and hygiene.<sup>31</sup> Such “regulation” conceals, however, a deeper process: cinema is “institutionalized” – that is, it stabilizes its own ways of being and doing – and at the same time it becomes a “social institution,” in that it is now a coordinated complex of objects, behaviors and expectations.<sup>32</sup>

What is apparent here is a new strategic goal. After redesigning the meaning of modernity and popularity, film experience now has to prove that it is a “good experience.” Going to the cinema, seeing a film, has to be a legitimate and legitimating act. The bitter division between “cinephiles” and “cinephobes” that marks the debate of the 1910s and 1920s (a good example is the quarrel between Paul Souday and Emile Vuillermoz in the columns of the French newspaper *Le Temps*)<sup>33</sup> clearly underlines this goal. Notwithstanding their divergent stances, both sides in fact draw an “ideal” cinema. While for the one group film has not yet achieved this ideal and for the other it already offers good examples in this direction, the two sides nevertheless are in accord on an undertaking that can and must be realized.

Two observations may be added here. Firstly, the institutionalization of cinema is aided by an emerging need for narration and artistic expression. The first need is mainly expressed by a popular public, and is the grounds for the progressive rise of the full-length fiction film. The second need is expressed by an intellectual class, and is the grounds for the progressive “sanctification” of cinematic work (this “sanctification” began in the 1920s and culminated in the 1930s in the film

exhibitions curated by Iris Barry at New York's Museum of Modern Art). The satisfaction of these two needs saw a "standardization" of the filmic product, whilst it also credited cinema with the stigmata of "quality." Film experience becomes, accordingly, "safe" and "precious."<sup>34</sup> Secondly, the institutionalization of cinema brings with it a sense of equilibrium between diverging forces. For instance, film viewing can maintain tracts of great intensity, and yet images and sounds do not overwhelm the spectator. In the same way, it drives the onlooker so that she/he is immersed in the representation onscreen, and yet it ensures safety margins, both mental and physical. Moreover, although cinema tends to depict the world in fragments it nevertheless preserves a sense of unity with regard to what is shown. And finally, while film viewing depends on a machine, a device, at the same time it favors a certain "naturalness" in the subject's gaze. Through this series of "compromises," film experience becomes at once more constant and more practicable. Modern and popular, it makes modernity and popularity more livable.

A consequence of this process is that we can delineate a form of experience that might appropriately be called *attendance*.<sup>35</sup> Against the background of widespread regulation (both in terms of the viewing environment,<sup>36</sup> ways of viewing, and the object of vision itself<sup>37</sup>) what comes to light are three key elements.

Firstly, we have *experience of a place*, the theater. It is a delimited place, but not closed. The theater is not a retreat, like the home, nor is it an open world, like the metropolis. It instead forms something of a middle ground, where citizens converge and share the same emotional experiences. Looked at it in this way, it provides a peculiar form of habitat: here one can be a mobile individual, a *flâneur*, and at the same time find a place of belonging. It is therefore a physical place, a little like the arcades or malls of the nineteenth century. And it is also a place permeated with a set of shared symbols which function, in a Heideggerian way, as language does for a community.

Secondly, we have the *experience of a situation* that is both real and unreal. The spectator goes on living in an everyday universe, and at the same time also lives in an extraordinary universe. The first universe revolves around her/his encounter with other spectators, the second around her/his encounter with the film. Thus, what we find in cinema is an interface between two worlds, and it is here (also because of its profound regulation) that film experience manifests the character of a rite.

Thirdly, we have the *experience of a diegetic world* which is made up of images (and sounds), but which can also have a consistence and depth of its own. Indeed, the spectator, viewing a film, sees pictures, but at the same time sees "beyond" the pictures, to the reality that is represented.<sup>38</sup> This means that the spectator interprets filmic reality as something in which she/he might be immersed, thanks to a tight game of projection and identification with what appears onscreen. But the spectator also recognizes in these same images an exemplary portrait which can help her/him interpret the world in which she/he actually lives. Viewing then be-

comes an act that joins pleasure and productivity: the film stimulates and attracts, but also teaches and educates. The spectator consequently becomes a subject participating in a world that seems to offer itself as a gift, but is at the same time a subject that takes hold, on the cognitive level, of a world that can also function as prey.

There is, then, the experience of a place, the experience of a situation and the experience of a world. In *attendance*, the first two aspects converge towards the third: going to the cinema and joining other spectators activates a gaze (and also a capacity to listen) which allows the events recounted to be at once grasped and lived as an experience. What is important is that one exposes oneself to film, that one concentrates upon it and follows its unfolding. Moreover, what matters is filling one's eyes with a world made into a spectacle, which allows us to become privileged observers.<sup>39</sup> Perhaps the most efficient description of this form of experience is given not by a theoretical text, but by a film. This film – Buster Keaton's *SHERLOCK JR* (USA, 1924) – is a work that is no less theoretical than other, written, texts.<sup>40</sup> In it, the main character, a projectionist, leaves the projection booth and penetrates the screen. Initially he finds himself confused by what he encounters: here we follow the trope of the early film spectator, who was surprised by the unpredictability of “modern” experience. Keaton's character then, however, adapts to the world that the film discloses; he takes part in it, he accepts its lessons, and, back in the projection booth, he immediately applies to his own life what is represented on the screen. There is no better description available of the process I am trying to explain: in *attendance*, reality is available to be seen, and at the same time the spectator is ready to appropriate what she/he watches.

Nevertheless, the model of attendance has a sort of blind spot. The acquisition of the world on the screen almost hides two aspects. Firstly, this acquisition is made possible by the fact that the spectator inhabits space (the cinema) and participates in a collective rite (the vision). The risk is that she/he can master reality only by conforming with a residency and a collectivity. Secondly, this acquisition is accompanied by a strong sense of participation in what one observes: it is a matter less of “grabbing hold” of things than of “living” with them. The risk is that in taking hold of the world one cancels this availability and, with this, the possibility of a real “opening.”

After World War II, the so-called “modern cinema” highlights these two limits of attendance. What surfaces is a more ductile, articulated experience – one in which observer and observed no longer confront each other, but rather engage in a more subtle form of complicity. The emerging awareness of film as a political act (revived by Italian neorealism) and the emerging conception of film as an authorial and creative act (initiated by Alexandre Astruc<sup>41</sup> and subsequently taken up by the *nouvelles vagues*), constitute two important steps in this direction. In both instances, the spectator is no longer asked to “attend” a show: she/he must instead “respond” to the film and “correspond” with its author. The viewer is asked

to engage in a tight dialogue with what she/he has seen. Film has to be penetrated in order to be interpreted – what is at stake are both its open meaning and its masks. At the same time, the viewer is also asked to engage in a dialogue – direct or distant – with other spectators involved in the same task. Only an “interpretive community” is capable of accessing filmic meaning as well as authorial thought.

Dialogue with the film and its author, in search of a meaning; dialogue with the other spectators, in search of a community: what comes to light is a situation in which the spectator loses her/his privileges and her/his exclusiveness as observer; she/he has to face – and to expose her/himself to – the world and the others. The effect is a profound restructuring of spectatorial subjectivity (no more “mastery,” but remaining “open” to things). But the effect is also an increasing role for film’s perlocutionary effects, that is, its ability to do and make others do. The diffusion of “cinophile” consumption, wonderfully parodied by Jean-Luc Godard in *MASCULIN, FÉMININ* (1966), made this trend progressively evident.

From the 1980s onwards, change becomes even more apparent. New types of theater are born, with specialized places such as the “X-rated” cinema and the multiplex.<sup>42</sup> At the same time, alternatives to the traditional film theater begin to emerge: television regularly shows films, and in some cases even acts as producer. Finally comes the development of the videotape – first Betamax, launched by Sony in 1975, and then VHS, which was to prove the successful format, launched by JVC the following year. A film could be recorded and rewatched in one’s living room, but also bought in a shop in video format. What consequently emerges are, on the one hand, new forms of access to film experience and, on the other, new surroundings in which this experience might take place. New forms of access: to watch a film, one is no longer bound to a single ticket that allows entrance to a particular venue. One can instead pay by subscription to a public television service (or to a channel, or opt for a particular package); one can be at the same time a spectator of films and advertisements on commercial channels; and lastly, one can buy films on video. New surroundings: the living room, with its changed spatial structure, joins the film theater. Cinema thus begins to disentangle itself from its exclusive medium (film-projector-screen) and from what has long been its privileged place (the film theater).

In other words, film experience begins to *relocate*: it finds new media, new environments. This move is a decisive trait of cinema. It works on a deeper level than the re-mediation process to which cinema is also subjected.<sup>43</sup> In fact, thanks to the new physical supports, there is the emergence of new spatial systems and, along with these, new viewing conditions. These sites are arranged very differently from previous places: for instance, they retain features of the home environment. They are also sites that boast different types of technology: for instance, a small luminous screen rather than a large reflecting one. Furthermore, they are sites that are ready to join, and perhaps even to absorb, film consumption into the flow of daily life (watching a film in the living room alternates with other activ-

ities). Most importantly, film consumption is joined to other “media” activities (watching a film takes place alongside using the phone, listening to the radio, reading the newspaper, and so on). It is this relocation that drives, and will continue to drive, the process of transformation of the experience of film.

But why is this a relocation? And what are its consequences? As I shall note, at the end of the 1990s the relocation of cinema would impetuously “spread” to other media and other spatial situations. It would become possible to watch a film in places other than the domestic space: on computers, iPods, mobile phones; in waiting rooms, art galleries, on airplanes. In sum, films can be viewed on a number of platforms and in a number of situations. This occurs not only because of the pressure of the technological revolution, which facilitates a new diffusion of the cinema, but also because there is a new cultural scenario with which cinema must engage. This scenario is characterized by the emergence of two important needs. On the one hand, there is the need for *expressivity*: the identity of social subjects hinges increasingly upon the way they can put this into play. Cinema certainly presents an opportunity to attend a show, but it can only offer the possibility of becoming, at best, a virtual protagonist. Other media seem to do this better; cinema must update itself.<sup>44</sup> On the other hand, there is a need for *relationality*: social subjects are less and less part of pre-established social networks, and so they must build their own. Cinema traditionally provided a representation of the world and was engaged far less as a space of social exchange (the social encounter before and after the screening, virtual dialogue with the director, conversations in film societies, and so on). Other media responded far better to this need for exchange. If cinema wanted to retain its centrality as a medium it had, therefore, both to recuperate and to depend upon these same media.<sup>45</sup> The urge to face these two needs (for expressivity and for relationality), as well as the competition with other media, pushed cinema towards an exploration of new possibilities. If cinema relocates itself, it does so in response to this situation.

The conquest of new spaces and new platforms – starting with domestic space and the video recorder – progressively opens up new forms of film experience. I have already noted that film experience became increasingly quotidian as it became connected with other media. It may be added here that film experience becomes increasingly elective, born of specific choices, and no longer dependent upon habit. Hence, even though it lends itself to being repeated, film experience does so as a hobby rather than as a custom. Moreover, the experience of film is increasingly individual and inter-individual. The act of seeing brings the construction of small “companies,” both immediate and at a distance. Lastly, film experience becomes increasingly private: something to be had inside “reserved” spaces (such as the home) or in isolation (and this even though the barriers around us have become glass walls). In short, film experience becomes more and more personalized. In turn, it also becomes increasingly active. The spectator has ceased simply to consume a show and begins to intervene in the act of consumption:

she/he is asked not only to see, but also to do.<sup>46</sup> That is why this type of experience may be characterized as a *performance*.<sup>47</sup>

Performances with which the spectator is engaged are multiple, and these increase as the act of viewing a film finds new places and new ways to articulate itself. There is a cognitive “doing” linked to the varying interpretations and different uses of film’s symbolic resources.<sup>48</sup> To see a film is more and more about speaking about it and recounting it.<sup>49</sup> There is an emotional “doing,” precisely because of the increasingly emotive elements connected to the act of viewing film.<sup>50</sup> Watching a film is more and more about putting oneself in the condition of being amazed and moved (perhaps also because of the presence of both “special effects” and “special affects”). There is also an increasingly practical “doing” which is linked to the behaviors triggered by the process of consumption. One negotiates concrete spatiotemporal limits as well as the possible composition of the “menu” of what one wishes to view.<sup>51</sup> Watching a film is more and more about organizing oneself for vision. But there is also a new relational “doing,” connected to the fact that one has to build a social network of sharing and exchange – and that this might also be undertaken virtually. At the same time, there is a new expressive “doing,” linked to the fact that viewing “that” movie, in “that” way is related to the construction of identity. Choosing a film is, increasingly, a declaration of belonging. Finally, there is a textual “doing.” This is determined by the fact that the spectator increasingly possesses the chance to manipulate the text that she/he is consuming, not only by “adjusting” viewing conditions (keeping or transforming the format, choosing high or low definition, and so on), but also by intervening in it (as with the clips, and the re-edited and new soundtracks, on YouTube). Thus, film experience is a performance based on an act, rather than a moment of attendance. It places the individual, not the group, as its focus. It allows selected relationships, rather than generic gatherings. It develops abilities as well as interests. It entails a continuous handling, rather than an adaptation to pre-established situations. And, finally, film experience boasts liberatory values rather than the celebration of a discipline’s glory. This, then, is how film experience adjusts and responds to the appeal of a new historical and cultural situation. It changes form in order to adapt to the times.

## **Post-cinema**

I have mentioned that since the end of the 1990s, cinema has been perfecting its relocation process. Film viewing takes place on single-screen theaters, in multiplexes, on the home television; but also on DVD, on home theater systems, inside rail and underground stations, on buses, on airplanes, in art galleries, through one’s computer, by surfing online, in virtual spaces such as YouTube or Second Life, through personal exchanges via the Internet (peer-to-peer), on mobile phones. Cinema now disperses itself through social space and invades virtual



space. And it multiplies its products: fiction films, documentaries, docudrama, final cuts, clips, re-editings, sound re-editings, narrations rendered from video-games. What emerges from all this is a multiplicity of *windows* which both open and frame our viewing experience. This enormous relocation of cinema,<sup>52</sup> which relaunches and radicalizes a form of film experience based on performance, raises at least three issues.

Firstly, at a time when the spectator seems to become more “active,” what is really her/his degree of freedom? What of the “disciplinary” bounds at stake in attendance: do they dissolve through performance or do they simply become new limitations? It is clear that through new windows, subjects often “invent” ways of building their “own” experience. This invention can be seen as a negative act (when they give up the linear viewing of a film and simply linger on privileged clips), and as a positive spectatorial proactiveness (when they use home theater systems to reintroduce a certain sacredness to the act of viewing). Such creativity is, however, ambiguous. It is often simply an execution of pre-established rules (DVDs allow – and actually anticipate – viewing “in pieces”). Creativity is often also dictated by nostalgia (the “sacred” value of viewing is no longer on the agenda). Further, creativity is more often invested in lateral activities than in film viewing proper (for instance, it manifests itself in blogs rather than in actual modes of consumption). In these cases, the freedom of the neo-spectator reveals its limits. It is more like choosing a game than the actual possibility of playing it. There can, however, be more dialectical moments in less-regulated situations. From this point of view, the most interesting windows are not those linked to non-places (such as airports or buses) where filmic engagement is too contingent; nor are they those linked to artistic environments of particular interest (such as gallery installations), since here the spectator has no choice but to “play by the rules” set by the artist. The most interesting windows are, rather, those which enable and facilitate peer-to-peer exchange, meaning that they introduce a viewing practice that extends into the rewriting of the text; and those linked to domestic space, where the creation of one’s “own” viewings calls for constant negotiation with other household members. In these cases, film experience illustrates how disciplinarity in contemporary society is less an application of previous rules and more a self-construction of contextual and contingent rules.

Secondly, inside these new windows are we still dealing with film experiences, or are we instead dealing with more generic “media” experiences? It is clear that cinema, in widening its definition, risks losing its specificity. At the same time as it relocates, its identity is subject to question. However, film experience remains specific in at least two, very different, cases. The first is where new technological platforms work simply as delivery tools: they create a cinematographic situation in so far as they offer a film. This is what happens when, for instance, we use our computer on a train to watch a DVD or a film we have downloaded: it is not the viewing environment that makes us film spectators, but simply the viewed object.

The second case is where there is a re-adaptation of the environment: here the film's permanence is ensured by the fact that the conditions of film viewing are reinstated. This is what takes place in the living room when we turn off the lights, sit comfortably and watch a broadcast, following the old rituals of the theater (even though we may be looking not at a film but at a television series, or even a football game). The characterization of a window as more or less "cinematographic" occurs between these two poles.

But why, thirdly, should we even seek to preserve film experience? Should it not be consigned to the attic, so to speak, or to a museum? It is clear that cinema is not a contemporary medium: it enjoys esteem, it continues to celebrate its most traditional rituals (after all, old cinemas with projectors and screens still exist); but it is not here that the spirit of the times treads. However, there is perhaps one thing that is still guaranteed in the permanence of the cinematographic within a vast mediascape: this is an aesthetic dimension, in the proper sense of the term, that can pit itself against an otherwise generalized and growing anesthesia. Film experience, in fact, still presents itself as a moment which "enlivens" our senses and nourishes sensibility. This is true, above all, of the cinematographic in its performative variant. Thanks to this, the spectator does not simply consume film but instead seizes control of her given situation. At the same time, she reflexively engages with the object of vision; she produces and articulates meaning. Performance accordingly helps us elude the "channeling" of experience that modern media seem to pursue, introducing the possibility of a new experiential foundation.<sup>53</sup> After the redefinition of the modern and the popular, after the establishment of a legitimate and legitimating experience, after the opening of a more articulate dimension, it is the re-aestheticization of communication that might mark the last strategic duty assigned to film. This is why I would argue that film experience will survive: in order to allow the spectator of media to be involved in a truly exploratory way, in order to force eyes and ears to be opened as they are nowhere else. In short, film experience still advocates not just the simple management of a "bare life" but asks that the spectator gives it meaning and sensibility.

*Translated by Dafne Calgaro, Victoria Duckett and Daniel Leisawitz.*



## **PART II**

# **Ways of Expressing Subjectivity**



# The Man Who Wasn't There: The Production of Subjectivity in Delmer Daves' DARK PASSAGE

Vivian Sobchack

Form – incessantly betraying its own manifestation [...] for it is adequate to the same – alienates the exteriority of the other.

– Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*<sup>1</sup>

There are different ways of being a face.

– Emmanuel Levinas, “On Obliteration”<sup>2</sup>

## First Person Parallax

There is an uncanny and inaugural moment early on in Delmer Daves' *DARK PASSAGE* (1947) that makes visible the paradox – or better, the “parallax” – of embodied subjectivity. Although we have not yet “seen” him, Vincent Parry, a convict falsely accused of murdering his wife, has escaped from San Quentin hidden in one of several large metal drums being hauled from the prison on an opened truck. The only objectively visible cue to his presence has been a pair of hands gripping the edge of the round canister from inside as the truck drives along a deserted road. We then see the container rocked from within until it falls off the truck and bounces down a hill, a movement during which we are quite suddenly – and vertiginously – made privy to Vincent's disorienting view from inside the rolling container. This, the film's inaugural use of “first-person” camera, is brief but kinetically powerful. The rotating view turns fuzzy and occluded and then we are again, and objectively, outside the still-rolling container, which abruptly comes to rest on its side in a stream running under a highway overpass. At this point, the entire screen goes black but for a few glimmers of reflected light and it is now that something quite extraordinary occurs: the blackness is revealed as caused by Vincent's back, for we see more and more daylight as he moves forward and out of the canister into visible figuration. We then watch him move away into the distance from the motionless aperture of the container, its dark circular interior now framing the day-lit world outside. In that uncanny moment, as a subject Vincent seems split and yet doubled, become both, and at once, the seer and the seen. Certainly, as J.P. Telotte writes of the shot, it “suggests a distance that at-

taches [to a form of] visual identification [in] which the character whose point of view we share remains estranged from us.”<sup>3</sup> However, what is truly uncanny about this estrangement is that it is not just ours but also Vincent’s. Indeed, staggering out of that circumscribed black hole into the objective light of day and visibility, Vincent seems also to be escaping the circumscription of his own subjective vision.



*Film still from Delmer Daves' DARK PASSAGE (1947).*

It is through this “sleight of eye” that both conflates and constitutes the distance between “first” and “third-person” that Vincent Parry is materially “borne” into the narrative, and into the visual and ontological “parallax” of embodied subjectivity. However, as Slavoj Žižek elaborates, parallax – “the apparent displacement of an object (the shift of its position against a background), caused by a change in observational position” – is not simply “due to the fact that the same object which exists ‘out there’ is seen from two different stances, or points of view.”<sup>4</sup> Rather, the phenomenon of parallax emerges because the materialized and enworlded subjects and objects of vision inherently *mediate* each other. Thus – and philosophically dramatized in Vincent’s complex installation as an embodied subject who can be seen as well as see – Žižek writes:

Materialism is not the direct assertion of my inclusion in objective reality [...]; rather, it resides in the reflective twist by means of which I myself am included in the picture constituted by me – it is this reflexive short circuit, this necessary redoubling of myself as standing both outside and inside my picture, that bears witness to my ‘material existence.’<sup>5</sup>

Vincent emerges into visibility and figuration, then, through a quite literal “short circuit” – a reflexive and reflective “dark passage” that inaugurates and “redoubles” him as both “inside” and “outside” his own (as well as our) picture. Doing so, it confers upon his earlier, and aptly vertiginous, subjective vision a visibly objective form, a “material existence.” As Žižek points out, however, the consequence of this materialization is “that the reality [we] see is never ‘whole’[...], [this] because it contains a stain, a blind spot, which indicates [our] inclusion in it.”<sup>6</sup> Vincent’s embodied subjectivity, however, not only constitutes but also – and uncannily – emerges from his own “blind spot” in the metal canister, its “short circuit” the conduit that reflexively redoubles and splits him into subject and object, seer and seen. And, indeed, quite literally, it is the metal canister that previously contained Vincent’s subjective vision that now “bears witness” to his objective “material existence”: thus, in this moment of his “splitting,” and “doubling,” we see him “watch his back” as he staggers away from himself to, like all of us, disappear from his own sight. Parallax, indeed!

Given this extraordinarily complex on-screen moment, it is not surprising that, like Žižek, the film’s director was also concerned with parallax and its chiasmic conjunction yet misalignment of subjectivity and material embodiment. For Daves, however, parallax presented a technical rather than philosophical problem. In a document he wrote about pre-production camera tests for *DARK PASSAGE*, Daves notes that most motion picture cameras at the time had, indeed, a “parallax problem.”<sup>7</sup> That is, the physical distance between the camera’s lens and viewfinder frequently led to the misaligned or “incorrect” framing of the image, a misalignment that would be especially noticeable in subjective shots, and thus undermine the credibility of what was to appear on screen as Vincent Parry’s intentionally-directed vision. In this regard, testing three lightweight cameras, Daves and his director of photography Sid Hickox and special effects photographer H.F. Koenekamp ultimately chose the “German camera” (in a later interview identified as an Arriflex, supposedly “captured” from the Nazis).<sup>8</sup> The “prime factor” in Daves’ choice was that it was the only camera he knew of to have a “prism” viewfinder that functioned “directly from the shutter,” so that “what is seen through the finder, during shooting, is what registers on the screen.” As he writes, “All other cameras have a parallax problem which particularly applies to close shots such as hands before the camera and inserts [...] [The Arriflex] eliminates guess work on shots of this kind of which there will be many in *DARK PASSAGE*.”



## “Observations on the Camera Acting as a Person”

Daves issued the results of his pre-production experiments in a document for Warner Bros. in October of 1946. The results of testing the three cameras – “Notes on Experimental Camera Work” – filled one page, but the remaining four pages were devoted to “Observations on the Camera Acting as a Person: DARK PASSAGE.” Here, Daves again grappled with practical rather than philosophical problems, these nonetheless grounded in Žižek’s “reflexive short circuit” – that is, the filmmaker’s need to “redouble” his main character as standing both outside and inside his own picture, and to make sure that this picture bore visible “witness” to both his subjective vision and his “material existence.” For Daves, the film’s screenwriter as well as director, this “redoubling” was mandated less by ontology than cinematic fidelity to the eponymous novel from which DARK PASSAGE was adapted<sup>9</sup> – but it was made particularly problematic by the star casting of Humphrey Bogart as Vincent. In the novel, Vincent eventually undergoes plastic surgery so as to appear “other” than himself and Daves thus had to deal with the conundrum of the main character’s pre- and post-operative appearance. Daves could not cast two actors in the role. As he put it in an interview, “You couldn’t have Humphrey Bogart’s voice coming out of a man that wasn’t Humphrey Bogart, because he’s too well known [...]. You had to create a pre-Bogart character and the only way I could think of doing it was with the subjective camera.”<sup>10</sup> Thus, for the first sixty-two minutes of the film – prior to his change of face as well as post-operatively when he is swathed in bandages – Vincent’s “material existence” is only tenuously visible “in the picture” whether he is filmed in “first” or “third person.”<sup>11</sup> That is, for more than half of DARK PASSAGE, the subjective camera “bears witness” only to his hands and feet as they might appear in his “own” picture or, shot objectively, he is obscured, his pre-operative face hidden in shadow and his “new” face bandaged until it is fully revealed as Bogart’s. Further troubling Vincent’s visible embodiment as a “self-similar” subject are the brief insertions of two newspaper photos of the escapee that show his “original” face as a pre-operative “other” that, because of Bogart’s voice, we know he cannot be.

Daves, however, was less concerned with this “misalignment” than with the more practical problems of how to “bear witness” to Vincent’s “material existence” when, for extended sequences, he was wholly or partially displaced by his own vision to dwell in the subjective “blind spot” of his own picture. First, insofar as the “camera acting as a person,” it was critical to solve the vibration problems of the hand-held Arriflex, particularly in close shots that would literally “focus” Vincent’s subjective attention, since the “more restricted the [visual] field, the more noticeable the vibration.” Thus, a special gyroscope and harness were developed that (like today’s Steadicam) transferred vibration from hand through the arm to the shoulder. The harness was also designed to hold the camera at “eye

level” so that it “walked as the man walked.”<sup>12</sup> In this regard, the document notes, the camera also needed “at all times to represent the height of the same man,” established in “first-person” but respected later, “after the camera ceases to be an actor,” since “the audience will have become accustomed to looking down or up at the other characters.”

More difficult, however, was correlating the camera’s coordination of movement and vision to that of a “person.” Subjective “walking shots” were particularly problematic because the human body “sways” as it “steps from one foot to another and [...] rises and falls with each step.” Furthermore, the fact that human eyes “have virtually a 180° angle whereas the lens angle is restricted” also presented a problem, for the widest angle lenses closest to human range magnified vibration and also distorted the visual field “so that the perimeter of the aperture seem[ed] to fold in when the camera [was] in motion.” Daves’ compromise was to use a mid-range 35mm lens. Crouching, crawling, and running presented other problems. Not only did a gyroscopic “cradle” need to be constructed so as to stabilize the “free” (or hand-held) camera in such actions, but Daves discovered that, in “low angle traveling shots as crawling,” it was necessary to have an object in the scene “such as a fence or foreground piece” to establish “some idea of scale” as well as Vincent’s height from the ground. Without such cues, he notes, the camera appeared “higher off the ground than it actually [was].” Reclining or sitting also required special attention. As Daves writes, “When we lie down, the horizon line and all horizontal lines remain horizontal [...]. When the camera turns on its side, the horizontal lines become vertical [...]; [thus] the camera must be kept horizontal and lowered to [...] a bed or sofa to maintain the normal horizontal view of a reclining person.” Furthermore, when the “first-person” action was sitting, Daves found that “the illusion [...] would not be successful” unless cues were added to indicate the action, such as dialogue or the subjective camera looking “ahead of time” at the chair in which Vincent was going to sit.

Daves’ practical rather than philosophical “materialism” also led to experiments with those literal “parts” of Vincent’s “body” that would be visible figurally in his own (as well as our) field of view. The greatest concern was with his hands and feet, but it extended even to his eyelids (this, in all likelihood, for the sequence in which Vincent is pre-operatively anesthetized).<sup>13</sup> Daves found that when “the hands of the actor who is presumed to be the camera are [...] in front of the lens, [...] there is a danger of foreshortening,” and he suggests two solutions: “limiting [...] the amount of arm showing to an elbow to finger-tip length,” or, making sure Vincent’s clothing was “fairly tight-fitted in the region of the upper arm” to mitigate the distortion. Experiments also revealed that simultaneously using the right and left arms of two different actors gave the illusion that “the camera eye-view is midway between the shoulders,” whereas, with a single actor, “the illusion is that the camera is shooting over one shoulder or the

other.”<sup>14</sup> (Daves notes, as well, that, “in most normal acts with our hands,” we see both rather than one of them.) Daves recommends a similar strategy to film Vincent’s feet and further suggests having available “two jointed and separate [dummy] legs clothed to match the actor’s costume” and “a cut-out” representing “the head and shoulders of the camera-character so that we may be able to create our own shadow where we please.”

## Help! I’m Trapped in a Human Body

However fascinating and cinematically necessary, there is a certain oppressiveness in all this attention to body parts, to a focus on material detail that seems to reduce a “person’s” body to nothing but its “immanence”—even as, paradoxically, that body, distributed across several actors or severed into dummy parts and “cut-outs,” is never really “there.” Indeed, there is something, dare I say, philosophically (if not practically) “creepy” about Daves writing: “On shots wherein another actor apparently looks into the eyes and face of the camera representing our leading actor, the lens itself becomes the eyes, the lower rim of the mat box becomes the chin, the upper rim the forehead, and the side rims the ears of the camera-actor.” All this “bearing witness” to Vincent’s “material existence,” his objective immanence, even when it is “out of the picture” tends to overpower the body as it is subjectively “lived” – and thus always also transcendent of a solely (and soullessly) ontic existence.

Daves, however, was quite aware of the need to avoid provoking through figuration the literal sense – whether Vincent’s or ours – of being “trapped” in a human body. That is, when the body is “grounded” in immanence (if not always visibility) by such intense attention to its materiality, the world visibly shrinks, “folding in” rather than extending outward at the perimeter of vision. Correlatively, that body’s subjectivity, too, shrivels to one dimension, its intentional directedness focused only on what is objectively before its eyes. Thus, in the document, Daves reveals his plans to “whip” the camera in rapid “pan” shots, and to use “cut-aways,” “insert” shots, and “flash cuts” – these not only to expand Vincent’s “first-person” vision but also to make visible through variety in scale and rhythm the dynamism and motility of his intentional interest in the world and others. For example, so as to release both Vincent (and the spectator) from “continuous camera techniques” tied to the material insistence on his body’s immanence “in” his vision while also “outside” it, Daves writes: “A few flash cuts would be entirely in keeping [...], as though the camera-character took two or three quick looks at objects before his own movement is continued.” And, perhaps most significantly, he adds: “Further, I am sure that *sound* may be used for cut-aways from the camera’s point of view as though the camera-character on hearing something transports his mind to that object, such as a passing car, visualizes it,[...] making it possible for us to cut from his actual view point to, for

example, a panning shot of what he hears.” Nonetheless, there was the “danger” of “misleading” the spectator into thinking “the camera-character *sees* such cut-aways,” so Daves suggests cues such as dissolves, changes in scale, and, particularly, “whip pans,” to indicate these “cut-aways” are not Vincent’s subjective vision of the objective world but, rather, his subjective imagination or “inner” vision. Daves, however, also uses several of these devices to also effect transitions from “first” to “third-person.” The cinematic result is thus, for brief moments, a certain productive “confusion” – a destabilizing uncertainty – that locates us as spectators, like Vincent, as at once both “inside” and “outside” the picture.<sup>15</sup>

Never mentioned in the Warner Bros. document, perhaps because recording it did not seem particularly problematic at the time, was Vincent’s – and Bogart’s – voice, a major index of Vincent’s subjectivity. Certainly, its particular (and familiar) “grain” provides a continuity of “self” in the film that transcends Vincent’s physical transformation – and Bogart’s seeming “absence” – whether or not he is visible in the frame. Thus, in production if not in Daves’ notes, the close relation – particularly, of timing – between Vincent’s voice and his subjective actions when he isn’t “in the picture” warranted special attention. Indeed, Daves later spoke of how “[Bogart] would do [the dialogue] on a track right there on location and I would time the film to the work track and his voice.”<sup>16</sup> Additionally, when recording a separate “work track” was not practical, Daves would write Vincent’s dialogue after filming so as, he says, “to fit what I got.”<sup>17</sup> In sum, through careful attention to the synchrony of Vincent’s behavior and speech in the subjective sequences, Daves attempts to overcome any sense of “voice-over” in which “narration” in particular – even of the “self” – seems disconnected both in time and place from the action visible on screen. Indeed, one might pun here and suggest that, particularly for Vincent’s subjective “inner speech” (inaudible except to us), Daves was trying, instead, to construct a “voice under.”<sup>18</sup>

As the film’s screenwriter as well as director, Daves’ decision to endow Vincent with this capacity for “inner” speech lends a significantly transcendent dimension to his “material existence,” particularly when he is not visible. The often desperate expression of his thoughts and feelings audibly “testifies” (rather than visually “bearing witness”) to his embodied subjectivity, and thus lends presence to his “first-person” vision, thickening the picture with the sense that Vincent is “there” – even if not “here” before us. Nonetheless, at the same time that Vincent’s “inner speech” strengthens our sense of his subjectivity and his coherence as a subject, his “inner speech” also undoes any simple sense of self-synchrony to emphasize, instead, and again, his distance from “himself.” That is, Vincent’s “inner speech” points to his subjectivity as inherently divided and “redoubled,” and thus always already asynchronous with “itself.” Indeed, what Žižek writes of the “noir subject” in general is apposite in particular not only to the speaking subject that is Vincent Parry but also, and more transparently, to the seeing subject that is the film: “Everything that I positively am, every enunciated content I

can point at and say, 'that's me,' is not 'I' – I am only the void that remains, the empty distance towards every content."<sup>19</sup> This constitution of the "void" that is the seeing subject as well as its "empty distance" from the seen object begins, as I have written elsewhere, with cinematic enunciation itself (whether in "first" or "third-person").<sup>20</sup> However, this originary cinematic "void" and "empty distance" is transferred to, and made explicit by, *DARK PASSAGE*'s narrative "redoubling" and parallaxic "division" of Vincent as a seeing and speaking subject – "voided" by his presence to, but absence from, his "first-person" vision, and by being neither here nor there in the reflexive "inner speech" which locates him in the "empty distance" between "I" and "me." *DARK PASSAGE*, then, installs Vincent, literally an "outcast" and figurally a man estranged from "himself," in a dialectic of "first" and "third-person" that explores the "empty distance" between them as, at once, a negative void and a constitutive positivity – this inaugurated by the fact of material existence but made manifest in the reflexive and transcendent divisions wrought by sight and speech.

## Eyes Without a Face

This "void," or "empty distance," is figured, however, not only in Vincent's "first-person" vision or reflexive speech, but also when he is explicitly present on screen and thus not constitutive of the picture. Throughout the film's first sixty-two minutes of primarily subjective camera (the "Camera-I," as it was called at the time), we increasingly see Vincent in "third-person" – but, as mentioned earlier, at these moments he is almost completely hidden, or turned away from us, or partially obscured by shadow. Thus, but for the strange – and estranging – inserts of the newspaper photos we cannot fully believe, we never see his face. In sum, even figured in the "positive" space on screen, Vincent inhabits "negative space" and thus hides in plain sight. Indeed, in another extraordinary sequence that is more poignant than uncanny, Vincent becomes, as it were, the visible site (and sight) of his own negative space and constitutive "blind spot." The quite lengthy sequence begins immediately after Vincent's face-changing surgery and inaugurates his (and the film's) seeming release from any further expressions of subjective vision. Thus, despite some ambiguous moments, for the rest of the film Vincent is visible on screen not as a "first-person" subject but as an object of the camera's "third-person" gaze. However, even as he is brought out of the shadows and into the light, Vincent remains an "invisible man." His face is completely swathed in bandages but for his beseeching eyes and silenced mouth. Indeed, whatever meager material presence he now gains in visibility, he narratively loses by virtue of being, by doctor's order, told not to speak until his bandages come off. As he recovers in the apartment of Irene Jansen, the woman who has rescued and helped him throughout (and is played by Lauren Bacall), he is not only still withheld from our vision but he is also deprived of his voice – and, most significantly, his "inner

speech.” In objective “third-person,” then, he is reduced to writing brief notes to Irene or blinking his eyes to communicate with her.

And Vincent’s eyes – eyes without a face – overpower this sequence. Not only are they (finally) revealed as Bogart’s eyes, but they are also unexpectedly moving in their helpless dependency and beseeching silence. Indeed, they move us to yet a different order of recognition and a different understanding of the subject and subjectivity, particularly as it is constituted and witnessed not in its material existence but, more significantly, as an ethical relation to others. In this regard, Emmanuel Levinas writes, in an apt description of a film sequence that, in all likelihood, he had never seen: “The eyes break through the mask – the language of the eyes, impossible to dissemble. The eye does not shine; it speaks.”<sup>21</sup> That is, with an expressiveness that would be somehow less revealing were we to see his full face and hear his voice, Vincent’s eyes in this sequence speak most eloquently – and abjectly – not only of his “self-effacement” but also of his “self-subjection” to an “other.” If we follow Levinas, however, this is not a negative diminishment of Vincent’s subjectivity but, rather, its positive constitution. As occurs for Vincent throughout most of the film, for Levinas both subjectivity and ethical responsibility are produced in and through one’s *subjection* to an “other” in a “face-to-face” encounter – in this moving sequence, Vincent, in his helplessness, to Irene and she, in her care, to him. In an asymmetrical and irreducible relation of alterity, it is another person’s absolute elusiveness that not only affirms one’s own but also disallows any reductive presumption of “self-similarity” or “identification.” Indeed, throughout *DARK PASSAGE*, both Vincent and Irene maintain a respectful “distance,” acknowledging each other’s alterity even as they become increasingly more intimate. Subjectivity is born, then, in intersubjectivity, but it emerges not in the reduction of the other’s “difference” to the “sameness” of what the “I” knows and categorizes relative to its own existence. Rather, it is an ethically responsible recognition of the other as always an “Other” – who, like Vincent on the run, escapes and transcends full epistemological capture and containment.

### **“The Other Who Manifests Himself in a Face...”**

In this regard, once his bandages are removed, Vincent emerges into a visibility that is still ambiguous and escapes us even as we see it. His material presence resists being taken “at face value” – even as it appears to deliver to us the familiar “sameness” of Humphrey Bogart. Vincent’s face, then, retains much of its mystery and will not cede itself or fully yield to the “third-person” camera’s mastering gaze – or, for that matter, to Bogart’s star “image.” (We have, after all, looked behind that image into the unexpected abjection of his eyes.) Indeed, given all of Vincent’s off and on-screen guises (perhaps, better, “disguises”), what Levinas writes of the face in general can be said of Vincent’s in particular: “The face is present in its refusal to be contained. In this sense it cannot be comprehended,

that is, encompassed. It is neither seen nor touched.”<sup>22</sup> Thus, when Irene removes Vincent’s bandages and he emerges into full visibility and voice, both she and he quizzically examine and comment upon his “new” face as a wonderment. Having seen his pre-operative face, Irene now recognizes him quite literally as an “other” – but, in doing so, she also acknowledges his subjectivity and presence as transcendent of his manifest form. Indeed, in a passage that speaks beyond the “congealed image” of the face as it is taken for granted and viewed as “known,” Levinas writes: “The Other who manifests himself in a face as it were breaks through his own plastic essence [...]. His presence consists in divesting himself of the form which does already manifest him.”<sup>23</sup> In caring for and coming to love Vincent no matter what he “looks” like, Irene “sees” beyond the material contours – the superficial façade – of his face to the much deeper and ethically constitutive relation of alterity between self and other that Levinas has privileged as “faciality.”

Vincent’s presence, then, transcends his form – which, as Levinas suggests, “incessantly betrays” the subject’s alterity, its “radical exteriority,” by being “adequate to the same.”<sup>24</sup> Throughout the course of this sequence as well as earlier when he is off-screen but “in the picture,” both Irene, who rescues him, and the film, that has refused to represent his face, affirm Vincent’s subjectivity and resist reducing his “radical exteriority” to the merely visible. Certainly Daves’ use of “first-person” camera quite literally “breaks through” not only Vincent’s but also the cinema’s “plastic essence,” “divesting” both of their “congealed” form. However, the entire film engages its main character, both literally and figurally, in the open, uncertain, and unresolved process of “becoming” other than who he was or is. Thus, although Vincent escapes from prison so as to “figure out” who murdered his wife, his primary project throughout the film is to literally “figure out” himself. He does this not only in “first-person” but also in the face of others. Indeed, following Levinas, Vincent’s “self” (however always provisional and “subject” to change) comes into full existence only in “face-to-face” encounters with others. *DARK PASSAGE*, then, is a film of, and about, *faces* – not only Vincent’s but also those seen through his eyes in close-up. These are the faces that visibly threaten or nurture him.

## Facing the Other

Levinas’ own “focus” on “faciality” is, however, metaphorical, and, until late in his work, he rejected vision as a reductive (and often violent) mode of mastery over – rather than “subjection” to – an other’s “radical exteriority.” As Chloé Taylor writes: “Since form betrays the other, for Levinas, the face of ethics is not the face whose form we take in with our eyes.”<sup>25</sup> Thus, while the philosopher’s thought may be apposite to Vincent, whose face, off-screen or on, transcends its form and “is present [only] in its refusal to be contained,” it would seem (at first

glance?) less relevant to the images of visible faces we see through Vincent's eyes in his "face-to-face" encounters. Indeed, understanding the "image" as simple mimetic representation, Levinas rejects it insofar as it fixes and reduces the other's face to a mere aesthetic form rather than as an "opening" and "blind spot" marked expressively by an always elusive and unfigurable subjectivity. The face, he writes, "is not resplendent as a form clothing a content, as an image, but as the nudity of the principle, behind which there is nothing further."<sup>26</sup> Faciality is thus a conceptual principle: a foundational and ethical relation of radical alterity between expressive subjects, whose "nudity" would be covered over by the mere façade of the mimetic image.

As Marty Slaughter points out, however, "the very experience of alterity – necessarily connected with a body (and its drives) – brings forth its figuring."<sup>27</sup> Indeed, Slaughter as well as other scholars such as Chloé Taylor and Philippe Crignon argue that, "ultimately, what Levinas opposes is not the visual or the image per se, but rather the image conceived solely as representation."<sup>28</sup> The "face-to-face" encounter is one of proximity between "two vulnerabilities stripped of form," but these "vulnerabilities" are "neither incorporeal nor invisible, but neither are they representations."<sup>29</sup> Rather, as Slaughter writes, such "contact in proximity is a kind of figuration, like a trace," which, as Crignon argues, does not fix or "represent" but indicates instead "an absence that cannot be presented."<sup>30</sup> In fact, late in his life, Levinas suggested that "distortions and disfigurements" of "realistic images" could "create an uncanny depth and interiority that oscillates with the realistic exterior and suggests the unfigurability of what lies between the two."<sup>31</sup> The philosopher's explicit reference to the "distortion" of "realistic images" thus brings us finally back, if in a roundabout way, to parallax, and also to Žižek's unfigurable "void" and "empty distance" that is the subject who is always elusively (dis)located in the chiasmic space between objectivity (given as the "real") and subjectivity (taken up as the "experienced"). Parallax and the distance and "distortion" it installs is thus itself "redoubled" in the near convergence yet destabilizing distance between Žižek and Levinas – both constituting the subject in alterity, but the one focused on the space that connects but also divides the "I" and "me" and the other on the space that connects and divides the "I" and the "Other." Nonetheless, both of these "empty" yet constitutive spaces are necessary to the production of subjectivity. That is, not only is Vincent produced as a "subject," both literally and figurally, through his reversible "oscillation" between being both "in" and "out" of his own picture and between his reflexive distancing of "I" from "me." He is also produced as a subject, again both literally and figurally, through an "oscillation" that "traces" the reversible distance between the film's "objective" or "realistic images" of others and his own "subjective" and "distorting" "parallax view" of them – the latter thus "dis-figuring" the former in their "close-up" proximity to him.



Indeed, each of Vincent's subjective "face-to-face" encounters are, as Dana Polan notes, "first registered visually as a kind of shock, as an intrusion into the screen's frame of an initially alien force."<sup>32</sup> Given Vincent's situation, particularly early on after his escape from prison, he is aware – and wary of – each encounter with an "other" as potentially life-threatening, and the film's "first-person" camera and close-ups intensify both "the aggressiveness of the camera look and the aggressiveness of the outside world against that look."<sup>33</sup> In sum, Vincent's fugitive status (ontological and narrative) disallows taking anyone for granted: for him all looks, all faces, all others, are enigmatic and grounded in alterity. Nonetheless, an outcast dispossessed of "himself," Vincent is also explicitly aware that his existence depends upon his "putting himself in the hands of others." This occurs literally as Vincent cinematically depends for his "first-person" presence on the hands of others, but it also occurs figuratively and figurally throughout the narrative. Thus, Polan writes of Vincent's "face-to-face" encounters: "Interaction becomes the point of a fundamental interplay of an anxiety and security that pivot around each other."<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, the fundamental – and ethically charged – "faciality" of this interplay co-constitutes and modifies not only who Vincent is but also who he may become. As Levinas writes: "Contact is not an openness upon being, but an exposure to being."<sup>35</sup> And, thus, as Crignon points out, "what gives itself to be seen" in this "face-to-face" contact is not "exhausted in representation"; rather, "as trace [and] figuration, it addresses itself to a sensibility and susceptibility."<sup>36</sup>

Initially, in the film's "first-person" sequences, each of Vincent's encounters are subjectively disfigured by his fear of recognition and capture, by what Polan describes as a "paranoid reversibility" in which the look loses its "confidence of sight."<sup>37</sup> Baker, the man who first stops his car to offer Vincent a ride and later returns (in "third-person") to blackmail him, seems chatty at first. However, in exaggerated close-ups that become too proximate for comfort, he begins to sense Vincent's "susceptibility," fixing – and transfixing – him with an insistent gaze and questions to which the escapee has no answer other than to insist he be let out of the car, after which he knocks the man out and takes some of his clothing. Vincent is then picked up by Irene Jansen, who appears out of nowhere and seems to know who he is. Offering to hide him, Irene in close-up is held by Vincent's gaze at a cautious distance but is nonetheless softened by his need for help and by her "sensibility," this traced in her unthreatened and unthreatening looks back at him. Later in the film, in a sequence primarily in "third-person," Vincent also encounters Sam, a cab driver, whom Vincent, hidden by shadows in the car's back seat, watches and reluctantly talks to, his own "first-person" gaze briefly catching the cabbie's eyes in the rearview mirror which, as Telotte notes, "objectifies the menace that has previously attached to such exchanged glances."<sup>38</sup> Sam, however, like Irene, is sympathetic and asks few questions, siz-

ing up Vincent as in need of help and giving it to him. When asked why, he responds, “From faces I can tell a lot,” and later, “I study people’s faces.”

## Subjection and Subjectivity

Irene and Sam thus both suggest, as Telotte puts it, “at least a possibility for [Vincent’s] proper identification and a level on which the gaze need not be defined by a nexus of fear and menace.”<sup>39</sup> In an ethical relation of “faciality,” that “proper identification” transcends superficial form to contemplate something “unfigurable” – the face of the other in its expressive “nudity” as both an abject cry for help and a demand for respect. It is thus not surprising that Sam has no qualms about leading Vincent to a back-alley plastic surgeon to alter his appearance – nor does Irene have any problem with Vincent’s assumption of a new identity as “Alan Lynell.” In Vincent’s subjection to both Irene and Sam, in giving himself over to their hands, his own subjectivity is, over time, modulated. Indeed, as he comes to care for Irene, she shines in his vision – this, however, not in what Levinas claimed was the “self-sufficiency” of the “beautiful image,” whose perfection ‘imposes silence without caring about anything else.’<sup>40</sup> Rather, the “perfection” of Irene’s objective aesthetic beauty is rendered through Vincent’s eyes in an ethical disfigurement that ruptures its self-sufficiency without denying Irene’s alterity, and thus reveals her own calm call for Vincent’s recognition and care. It is fitting, then, that the last scene of the film is precisely one of recognition. It is unclear how much narrative time has passed, but Vincent, not able to clear his name despite solving his wife’s murder, has fled to live with his other face and different name in what will be “permanent exile” and “alienation” of a geographic kind. We see him sitting alone in a crowded nightclub in Peru, looking at no one. Then familiar music begins to play and, in “third-person,” we see him look up, his eyes changing in medium close-up from quizzical to loving as he sees Irene, looking back at him from a distance. Indeed, in a shot that places her in an ambiguous yet privileged space between Vincent’s “first” and the camera’s “third-person,” she stands smiling and still in the crowd of dancers.

DARK PASSAGE is, of course, a *film noir*, and is thus pervaded by anxiety, its final “dream of totality,” as Polan writes, “a fragile, reversible, unstable one – a vulnerability that is figured especially in *film noir*.”<sup>41</sup> In this regard, it is worth noting that there were a number of Hollywood *noirs* released in 1947 that employed subjective camera to varying degree. Distributed in January, the first, and most notable among them for its sustained use of the “Camera I,” was Robert Montgomery’s *LADY IN THE LAKE*, made at MGM.<sup>42</sup> DARK PASSAGE appeared in theaters eight months after that film, toward the end of a very brief “trend.” As Telotte notes, “Thereafter the extended subjective narrative practically disappeared from *film noir*, “its sustained use seen by most reviewers and the public first as an unconventional cinematic curiosity, but then as a distracting – and

disconcerting – “gimmick.”<sup>43</sup> Forced “identification” with the protagonist’s vision was discomfiting and, paradoxically, alienated spectators. In this regard, *LADY IN THE LAKE* not only overshadowed but also undermined the accomplishments of *DARK PASSAGE* by making its viewers a promise it could not fulfill: “YOU accept an invitation to a blonde’s apartment! YOU get socked in the jaw by a murder suspect.”<sup>44</sup>

Indeed, unlike *DARK PASSAGE*, both cinematically and narratively, *LADY IN THE LAKE* disallows the constitutive alterity that divides the self from others. Thus, it is insistent on collapsing the ontological difference and absolute distance not only between the spectator and private detective Philip Marlow but also between Marlowe and the narrative’s characters, who seem to have no other existential purpose than to affirm Marlowe’s presence, however invisible he is.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, the film disallows the constitutive alterity that would split Marlowe as a subject. Whereas Vincent’s subjectivity is predominantly figured as unstable, threatened, and often abject, Marlowe’s is rigidly “secured” and bounded. Despite his primary existence in the “blind spot” of his own picture, Marlowe and the film refuse to acknowledge his own “effacement” or that his subjective look divides him from “himself.” Thus, however spectral his body, Marlowe’s commanding (and commandeering) gaze and presence impose themselves on everything we see, unlike Vincent who does not command – but is “subjected to” – the gaze of others. Indeed, as Marlowe presumes mastery of the world and others, both shrink in the containment of his sight. The fugitive Vincent, however, shrinks from sight whether in “first” or “third-person,” and thus the world we see – and not only through his eyes – encompasses him rather than the other way round. Unlike Vincent, Marlowe also never reveals his thoughts to us or to the other characters and, instead of “inner speech” that might reflexively split his subjectivity in two, he serves in the film’s few “third-person” sequences as the self-presentational and public “narrator” of a tale to which he already knows the ending.

In sum, Marlowe as a subject seems less human than Vincent – this because of his unquestioning and fixed “self-possession” and narrative agency whether in or out of the picture. Secure in “who” he “is” rather than engaged in the open uncertainty of “becoming” in the face of others, Marlowe seems narratively and cinematically limited and his “subjectivity” one-dimensional: all he does is “figure out” a murder and is never engaged in “figuring out” himself. In this regard, Pascal Bonitzer has written that the use of subjective camera is disjunctive for the film spectator not only because the character whose vision we are asked to assume resides in a “blind spot” that is not our own, but also because “it can only make enigmatic a character who, in the story, is not enigmatic.”<sup>46</sup> Marlowe is definitely “not enigmatic.” What you see is all that you get. Lacking subjective dimension and complexity, lacking any transcendent qualities that might mark his elusiveness as an “other” to himself or might subjectively figure others as elusive to him, Marlowe is produced literally as an “empty void” – disguised by

the façade of human subjectivity rather than revealing the elusive expressivity of its face. Indeed, we cannot “identify” with Marlowe’s “first-person” because it is always, as Levinas might say, a “manifestation of the same” and rigidly refuses the destabilizing self-alienation and alterity that produces human subjectivity from objective and ontic “material existence.”

Vincent, however, is from the first enigmatic, and to the end not only self-alienated but also aware of the alterity of others. His subjectivity always in flux, always uncertain in its relation to others, and thus always in the “third-person” world as well as in and out of his own picture, Vincent traces and figures his own dimension and complexity as well as that of others. Through his – and the film’s – insistence on self-alienation and alterity, we see beyond the façade of self-similarity and a reductive “identification” with the other as an affirmation of subjectivity (whether cinematic or otherwise). Rather, subjectivity as figured in *DARK PASSAGE* is affirmed more expansively – in a dialectic of alterity between “first” and “third” person, between “interiority” and “exteriority,” and between “self” and “other” in an ethical relation that recognizes their convergence but refuses their conflation. Unlike *LADY IN THE LAKE*, the film thus encourages us to feel for Vincent, but not as him.

Cinematically, *DARK PASSAGE* may seem less radically “experimental” than *LADY IN THE LAKE* which, but for its beginning, two intercalated sequences, and its ending, maintains the subjective camera throughout. Nonetheless, *DARK PASSAGE* actually surpasses *LADY IN THE LAKE*’s quite literally “grounded” and thus limited figural project of, to quote Daves’ document, “the camera acting as a person.” Indeed, while Daves’ document focuses on the challenges that arise when the subjective camera pretends to the perception and expression of a human “lived-body,” the film itself “bears witness” to the more philosophical questions posed by attempting to figure subjectivity’s “material existence” as also transcendent. Indeed, its narrative complementing its cinematic dialectic of “first” and “third” person, *DARK PASSAGE* offers an extraordinarily rich and complex text through which to explore the production of (cinematic) subjectivity as necessarily both immanent and transcendent, visible and invisible, divided and self-distanced – and ever engaged in an ongoing process of “becoming” in the face of others.



# From Aesthetic Experience to the Loss of Identity, in Three Steps

Pere Salabert

The central theme of this paper is subjectivity, to the extent that it becomes *étrangement*, associated, in turn, with uncanny experiences (*Unheimlich*), which are close to derealization, and thus to depersonalization in its various degrees. This entails loss of identity, which leads to the “Double” in literature, and especially in the cinema.

## Subjectivity

Because subjectivity is closely related to the subject, which in turn, philosophically speaking, is the individual – an ego, or self, in its relation with an outer world that becomes his world, that is, his object – the term subjectivity designates the subject itself “in everything that constitutes his being in himself and for himself, in his natural disposition, aptitudes, feeling, wanting, thinking, melancholy, love, suffering and faith.”<sup>1</sup> In short, subjectivity is the subject’s inner world. We should not expect it to be a faithful reflection of the outer world, that is a naive viewpoint foreseeing a more objective thought that leads to Kant’s criticism, which paved the way for a study such as the *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* by Ernst Cassirer. According to Cassirer, the way to cross over into the outer world and thereby making it, in the same act, an inner world, can be shared by communicating with others. As this world can be constituted in many ways, the number of its features can be considered infinite. We must recognize, then, how reasonable the Freudian proposal related to pleasure and reality,<sup>2</sup> two basic principles that involve human repression as a corollary, actually is. To be civilized (which means accepting the principle of living under the “reality principle,” in Freudian terms, that is to say, a rule-governed society), means that each individual is required to repress, starting from childhood, a great part of the earliest impulses, inclinations or desires, the satisfaction of which would embody the “pleasure principle.” But far from disappearing, the repressed material does not vanish, it remains latent, still pending as in a reserve, and may be projected at any time by various means: dreams that occur when one is asleep or awake, and creative activities such as art, or literature. According to Freud: “The unconscious, or repressed, does not tend itself to anything but a path into the consciousness or to find an open way

through the real act, overcoming the constraint to which it is subjected.”<sup>3</sup> Sometimes, unable to find a way out, elements of this unconscious realm give rise to unexpected neurosis. In such cases, a wide variety of imbalances work to reveal those elements through attitudes, actions or verbal expressions that seem to come from an unreal world such as dreams.

## Depersonalization: Uncanny Experience

In the present study, I propose that in a number of experiences the affective state of individuals suffers from hypothetical, imaginary threats to the fundamental structure of their inner-outer world. The consequence can be described as a weakening of self-identity, accompanied by a feeling of unreality, let us say a consciousness of “not being here” or depersonalization, a warning sign that according to its features and intensity can last from a few seconds to several years. In such a situation an experience takes place which may be closely related to the aesthetic field of “painful pleasure” which Freud characterized as the *Unheimlich*: uncanny, strange or adverse, a bad omen. Inasmuch as the individual is unable to recognize things around him, or feels that his own words, when he is speaking, come to him from another speaking subject or as a strange voice coming from somewhere else, this experience of anguish may be considered uncanny.<sup>4</sup> In his essay on the uncanny from 1919,<sup>5</sup> Freud quotes Schelling: “We call *Unheimlich* everything that should have been left [...] hidden, secret [...] and [which] has come to light.”<sup>6</sup> But in attempting to understand uncanny things, Freud thoroughly examines the distressing sensations to really get at the heart of them, and finds that the word *Unheimlich* has different meanings. Some of those may coincide with its antonym *Heimlich*, a word that on the one hand denotes a well-known, familiar thing, while on the other it evokes something hidden, secret... So, opposite to the first meaning, *Unheimlich* seems to agree with the second: something unknown, hidden, that lingers and grows to manifest itself.

We should look at the various observations and reports on experiences of this kind, just to be able to realize that depersonalization, which in many cases involves an uncanny experience as well as mental disorders, can coincide with de-realization connecting the two.

The philosopher and writer Jean-Paul (Richter) gives us some literary images of depersonalization, particularly in two of his novels, one of which is *Siebenkäs*, and the other is *Titan*. Otto Rank reminds us in his essay on *Der Doppelgänger* that *Siebenkäs* “has expressed in a very symbolic way, even in the name of his hero prey of the Double – ‘Leib-Geber’, someone who can detach from his body – all this penchant to depersonalize.”<sup>7</sup> Is there a real connection between the inclination to be (or become) a prey of the Double and the depersonalization experience? The answer is affirmative. When we think about this *Leibgeber* character, and his fear of looking at himself in the mirror, the same way that Albano, in *Titan*, is terrified of

seeing the image of his own body, we enter a kind of wide world – real or fictional – a broad domain of psychopathologies on a scale of varying intensities. Many authors have written on this figure of the Double, and in so doing they linked anguish to depersonalization. I refer, for example, to Hoffmann, Dostoyevsky, Miguel de Unamuno (*El Otro*), Oscar Wilde (*The Picture of Dorian Gray*) and Guy de Maupassant (*Le Horla*, *Pierre et Jean*) among others.

What concerns us here is not exactly the figure of the Double (or the Other), but some of those pathologies in which anguish related to unfamiliar things is accompanied by a feeling that the individual is out of place (not being here). In *The Double*, by Dostoyevsky, the central character, Mr. Golyadkin, has experienced a series of emotions and physical reactions: astonishment, fear, deep anxiety, trembling knees, weakness, before becoming lucid enough to acknowledge that “His nocturnal visitor was other than himself – Mr. Golyadkin himself, another Mr. Golyadkin, but absolutely the same as himself – in fact, what is called a double in every respect.”<sup>8</sup> Here, terror goes along with shame at the moment that “reality speaks about itself” opening the way to “something abnormal, senseless, incongruous.” He is not dreaming, but nevertheless something “unheard, unseen” (*jamais vu*) happens, because “anguish suffocates him, tortures him.” A “strange anguish” will not set him free.<sup>9</sup> The more Golyadkin becomes conscious of the physical reality of his Double, the more he feels himself unable to understand. At last:

Mr. Golyadkin junior destroyed the whole triumph and glory of Mr. Golyadkin senior, eclipsed Mr. Golyadkin senior, trampled him in the mud, and, at last, proved clearly that Golyadkin senior – that is, the genuine one – was not the genuine one at all but the sham, and that he, Golyadkin junior, was the real one; that, in fact, Golyadkin senior was not at all what he appeared to be, but something very disgraceful, and that consequently he had no right to mix in the society of honourable and well-bred people.<sup>10</sup>

Depersonalization, to a variable extent, takes place as a result of a decline and perhaps the ruin of identity. In the story by Dostoyevsky, this occurs through a Double that can multiply itself and even become a long series of “young Golyadkins.” In such a case, the uncanny experience is proof that Mr. Golyadkin himself – the previous or “original” one – has become someone who occupies, what we may consider to be, “nobody space.”

We find something similar in the novel *Pierre et Jean* by Maupassant, a story that revolves around two brothers, one of whom appears to be a reflection of the other; more than that, each one feels his “other” rising inside of him. And in the short story *Lui*, like in *Le Horla*, Maupassant confronts a subject with itself, which means a speaking shadow, a ghost that is, in short, a quasi-presence of the Double that causes the subject to lose control over its own identity. Thus, while in *Le*



Horla there is no actual presence, but merely a voice whose sole responsibility is to say “I,” in the short story *Lui* the presence is unavoidable, although it does not exist: “he does not put himself on view [...]. But he is still in my thoughts. He remains invisible, but he is there anyhow.”<sup>11</sup> The paranoid way of thinking in a depersonalization process may bring reason to paradox: “[...] but then I feel him behind me. I turn, though, sure that I shall not see him, that I shall never see him again. But he is nonetheless behind me, again [...]. I can’t do anything about it. But if we were both at home, I feel, yes, I certainly feel that he wouldn’t be here anymore! For he is there because I’m alone, just because I’m alone!”<sup>12</sup>

I would like to consider now some of these degrees of decline before identity reaches its lowest level in the depersonalization process, an event whose expression does not progress equally in all cases. To this end I intend to follow three different approaches, that is, phases or intensities.

### **Catching the World in a Momentary Flash of Light**

The film *THE NIGHT OF THE IGUANA* (1964),<sup>13</sup> directed by John Huston and based on the play by Tennessee Williams, provides us with an aesthetic event on the occasion of a poem recited by its author. I mean aesthetic here in the strongest sense of the word, when it includes an unusual but effective experience for all those who stand there listening to the sound of the words. The effect of this is a kind of mild, and sometimes significant, shock to the consciousness – of course one’s own personality also plays its part. According to my aim in this paper, I consider that scene the most relevant one in the film. The function of the rest of the story is to prepare the audience for this scene. The film is set “in a rather rustic and very Bohemian hotel”<sup>14</sup> on the coast of Mexico. The main characters are the proprietor of the hotel, Maxine Faulk (Ava Gardner), and Reverend Shannon (Richard Burton), a defrocked pastor who is working as a tourist guide. Among the group of women for whom he is responsible – a busload of schoolteachers – there is a young girl, Charlotte (Sue Lyon), who tries to seduce him. To this pair of Mrs. Faulk and her friend Shannon, another couple is added, even more unique, consisting of Hannah (Deborah Kerr), a woman between thirty and forty years old, and her elderly grandfather, Nonno (Cyril Delevanti), who is confined to a wheelchair and needs his granddaughter to look after him. Hannah is a cartoonist and Nonno a poet. They travel around the world and live off people who take pity on them in hotels, where she draws portraits of the hotel guests and he recites his poems.

Now, what is the connection between these main characters? One gets the feeling that it is probably something that is both important and trivial at the same time: none of them seem to have their own place in the world. Except for the women’s group, who are annoyed, even furious at their guide, the Reverend Shannon, because he changed their travel itinerary, each of these individuals is



*Film still from John Huston's THE NIGHT OF THE IGUANA (1964).*

looking for something that they cannot identify. Not even the girl, Charlotte, has any clue as to why she is trying to seduce Shannon, an adult male who is very receptive to female beauty. But at least she obeys her recently acquired sexual instinct. At any rate, an instinct like that of a teenager always leads to something needed, while the adults in this story appear to be looking for something they have lost, something unknown that they try to rescue in vain. This air of hopelessness that fills the room and distinguishes each character as a blurry figure with no place to go, lies at the heart of the film. The widow Mrs. Faulk, the caretaker Hannah, the defrocked priest Shannon; they all show signs of this indecisiveness and hopelessness, Shannon is even described as, “a young man who was cracked up before and is going to crack up again – perhaps repeatedly.” Only one individual knows what he wants, what he is looking for: the 90-year-old poet, Hannah’s grandfather. He wants to finally complete a poem that he began a long time ago, a poem that lingers in his mind but which he cannot seem to remember. His struggle to achieve his final goal becomes increasingly imperative as the action continues. In spite of this fact, there is a moment the old man calls his granddaughter and tells her to get ready to write, because he has now found all the words that he needs to finish his last poem. Here, Mrs. Faulk and Shannon pay, so to speak, absent-minded attention, while the poet starts his recitation and Hannah writes, standing up. The sun has already set and the old man is in his wheelchair, with his back to his audience, looking at the evening sky; he begins – “in a loud, exalted voice” – for the whole of nature in its entirety:

How calmly does the orange branch  
Observe the sky begin to blanch  
Without a cry, without a prayer,  
With no betrayal of despair.

Sometime while night obscures the tree  
The zenith of its life will be  
Gone past forever, and from thence  
A second history will commence.

A chronicle no longer gold,  
A bargaining with mist and mould,  
And finally the broken stem  
The plummeting to earth; and then

An intercourse not well designed  
For beings of a golden kind  
Whose native green must arch above  
The earth's obscene, corrupting love.

And still the ripe fruit and the branch  
Observe the sky begin to blanch  
Without a cry, without a prayer,  
With no betrayal of despair.

O Courage, could you not as well  
Select a second place to dwell,  
Not only in that golden tree  
But in the frightened heart of me?

While the voice resounds powerfully in the air, the poem goes on and Hannah writes, and Mrs. Faulk and Shannon pay increasingly more attention; we might even say that, seduced by the power of the words, their bodies are attracted to each other, autonomously. Huston's work here increases the intensity already contained in Tennessee Williams' lines with a clear result: he multiplies the significance of the scene and its possible consequences.

At the end of the poem, Nonno asks his granddaughter a question: he wants to settle his principal, probably unique, worry: "Have you got it?... – Yes!... Every word of it. – It is finished? – Yes. – Oh! God! Finally finished... After waiting so long... – Yes, we waited so long. – And it is good? – Beautiful, Grandfather!" Making sure that everything is in place, Huston lets Nonno remain where he was,<sup>15</sup> opposite the night, while Maxine Faulk and Shannon, speechless, stay watching

his back, this old man in his wheelchair as if they had just discovered him now, for the first time. In the meantime, the hand of the old man slips from the arm of his chair, and the cane on which it rested drops to the floor.

I have already mentioned that John Huston makes this scene in the film more intense, deeper, than Tennessee Williams does in his play – in spite of his annotation, thus: “it is apparent that the night’s progress has mellowed her spirit: her [Maxine’s] face wears a faint smile which is suggestive of those cool, impersonal, all-comprehending smiles on the carved heads of Egyptian or Oriental deities.”<sup>16</sup> In fact, something has happened, something for which they cannot offer a reasonable explanation. Something has changed that cannot be plainly described. Just one thing is clear: Nonno’s poem is finished, so Nonno is dead.

At this moment, there are still three people without a place in the world. The following day, early in the morning, there will be some suggestions, some plans. But none of them look as if they know what to do next, where they want to go. Now, it seems they are just looking for a way out. It has been an aesthetic experience in the very sense of the expression. As if time had stopped its course for a few seconds, the three prominent characters seem to have lost their self-consciousness in that moment, only to recover it, the day after. In a sense they recovered their lucidity, restored their identity – like catching the world in a momentary flash of light.

Let me say that this experience is close to what Charles S. Peirce describes in his phenomenology under the name of “Firstness,” that is to say, the realm of a monadic quality or a *may-being*. Moreover, as this scene can be seen as a part of the Peircean triadic structure for the sign, it must be considered as a *possibility* sign, so it is a *first Representamen*. For a brief time, during this Firstness stage, there occurs what Peirce calls *Presentness*. This means there are no thoughts, just a sensation of immediacy.<sup>17</sup> This means, too, that the action has produced, because of its nature, a kind of crack in the mental space, or *Thirdness*. At long last, in the Firstness stage, nothing is real yet, everything is in a state of latent possibility. There is something poetic in Peircean possibility, and people will be inspired by it depending on how emotional they allow themselves to feel.<sup>18</sup> According to this film, we may call this the “threshold,” a point between possibility and reality – or presentness and representation.

## **Fetishism or “Partial Love” with Loss of Reality**

ÉL (HIM, 1953), the film by Luis Buñuel, could well be a model for a paranoid depersonalization. If we examine both instances, the aesthetic event in *THE NIGHT OF THE IGUANA*, which is nothing but a brief loss of clear consciousness, and Francisco Galvan’s (Arturo de Córdova) trouble in the film by Buñuel, we should consider what happens here as a real occurrence. I mean that Francisco’s unsteady identity is related to an effective mental disorder, a psychopathology

that, just as it takes root in strong jealousy, ejects him from his usual everyday life.

Thus what is going on, from a phenomenological viewpoint, should be called a real effectiveness, no longer a possibility, or *may-being*, but quite a reality. In Peirce's terms: a dyad is "an act of arbitrary will or a blind force. [...] The dyad is an individual fact, as it existentially is [...]. The being of a monadic quality [i.e. presentness] is mere potentiality, without existence. Existence is purely dyadic."<sup>19</sup> And: "it is to be noted that existence is an affair of blind force."<sup>20</sup> Let us retain this: pure dyadism is an arbitrary will, a blind force – not a thought. Well, in the story that concerns us, the psychopathology of Francisco is a mental disorder related to a megalomania founded on a rough jealousy that guides him far away from the ordinary world. Of course, I speak here about real effectiveness to the extent that his mental illness is not a momentary bother, a disruption of his train of thought, which was the case in *THE NIGHT OF THE IGUANA*, but a kind of effective, or real, circumstance, that retains Francisco in another world.

Let us, for a moment, pay attention to the beginning of the film and we shall see that there is an aesthetic feature there as well. One day, as Francisco is attending a church service on Holy Thursday, he sees a pair of well-shoed feet that belong to a woman; these feet are placed side by side in such a way that they seem to be an astonishing sign of an almost modest wisdom. Then, after a slight gesture of surprise mixed with curiosity, a brief reflection drives him to a resolution: he will marry the unknown woman, he must marry her. So he starts seducing the woman, Gloria Milalta (Delia Garcés), in spite of the fact that she is the bride of his best friend, of which he is fully aware.

So, from the beginning it becomes clear that Francisco is likely to be a fetishist who takes the woman's feet as his partial object, which is to say, as a starting device for a love that is projected, hypothetically, to the whole object: Gloria. For a fetishist, the other person is often nothing but an accidental appendage of a special part of the body that holds an irresistible attraction for him.<sup>21</sup> That is what defines a paranoid personality. This element, I mean the woman's feet, becomes a persistent idea, an obsession that will lead the man to imagine that his woman is being unfaithful, and thus leads to conceive of an infidelity that justifies several episodes of jealousy. For Francisco all this will be the origin of a woman's loss of value, and consequently a contempt that will lead him to attempt an act of madness just to recover peace. However, Francisco Galvan does not necessarily feel himself haunted by his obsession at all times. He is frequently conscious of its power, or knows how far he is coerced in his beliefs, opinions, and even in his actions, throughout his daily existence.

What happens to Francisco in Buñuel's movie can be compared to what happens to Paul Prieur (François Cluzet) in Claude Chabrol's *L'ENFER* (1994),<sup>22</sup> though Paul's affliction should be considered as another version of such a mental disturbance. Even though Francisco Galvan's behavior is often led by his idea that

motivates his encouragement – the obsession is a driving force and an aim in itself – he does not react to reality. While Paul’s behavior in Chabrol’s film takes him progressively away from reality, the force of Francisco’s obsession does not seize him at any particular moment; we could say he is frequently under its influence, but discontinuously. So, his personality, distorted, seems double: one side seems normal enough but the other side is definitely abnormal, which makes him behave unfairly, and violently. As Foucault describes in *Maladie mentale et Psychologie*, when an individual loses control of his “symbolic universe,” words and gestures are no more in a “common domain” of knowledge where intentions of people can be seen and understood.<sup>23</sup> Here, the individual world becomes an environment of possible significances that turns into a composite of self-valid things that he is able to read (or to see) according to his obsession that serves as a background where everything becomes clear. For example, one day as Francisco and Gloria are in a restaurant, she looks carelessly in one direction. He wrongly interprets this as her way of flirting with a man seated at the other table.

In the film the woman’s feet function as a true fetish, a talisman responsible for pacifying her husband, for making him calm, and it works on two particular occasions, before his mental disturbance takes him too far away from reality. The first time is in the church, and the second time is when they are at home quarreling, which stops the moment he catches a glimpse of his “partial object” – Gloria’s feet – and he suddenly becomes gentle and devoted to her. Why do they quarrel? Is it nothing but jealousy? The story of the couple takes place between two opposite points. One has a metonymic nature in the form of a suggestive object (the woman’s feet: a fractional love), the other is a chain of unreasonable metaphors – except if we admit that Francisco has nothing but a mental disease that makes him more and more foolishly suspicious of rivals, and so it is: a progressively weaker personality. So, if the first point was the view of the properly shod feet making him fall in love and marry the woman, a part of the object, the feet, guides the man to the entire object, the woman. Later on, when married, and things go wrong, a casual look at the woman’s feet returns Francisco, for a while at least, to correct behavior.

Francisco’s jealousy becomes extremely violent. Though in psychology it is generally admitted that the best way to attain some mental normality, which means some individual aptitude to objectify the world around you, is being able to recognize that not all our thoughts are valid, and that not all our wishes can be fulfilled. Here, Buñuel displays this lack of normalcy very well, by showing to what extent Francisco suffers from a paranoid disturbance that makes him feel powerful, and makes him believe that his will and all his thoughts, acts (order and beauty, moral purity, truthfulness, highest integrity) are correct. It is almost as if Francisco thinks he is so much better than other people who scarcely deserve any value in his opinion.

We know that a paranoid character projects his thoughts and wishes onto the outside world.<sup>24</sup> But as Francisco Galvan feels that he is the victim of an unfaithful wife, fully aware that his marriage is not as successful and controlled as he needs it to be, his life becomes a real torture. His erroneous beliefs, so much like his wrong thoughts, are projected onto the world with the result that his mental health deteriorates. Or conversely, let us say that his thoughts and wishes do not make the outside world a cozy place; on the contrary, it turns his world into a disturbing, uncanny site that works as a solvent for his integrity. Fear and apprehensions betray him every time people around him laugh, thinking that they laugh at his expense.

As a contradictory presence, just as loved as she is hated, found and lost, well-known and uncanny simultaneously, Gloria soon becomes a depersonalized body in need of protection from being sexually invaded or assaulted. One night, while she is sleeping in her bed, Francisco collects a pair of scissors, a needle, sewing thread and a rope to tie her up. He intends to sew up Gloria's vagina, to prevent her from having any more illegal sexual intercourse. That way order, moral purity, and her highest integrity, will be protected. But the moment Gloria awakes and thus avoids this gruesome fate, the environment starts to become an unfamiliar place to her, a strange world.<sup>25</sup>

In such a situation, reality is effectively lost; the everyday environment becomes, for both, a phantasmagoria. The domestic interior in which the couple had been living changes from a happy architectural decoration to an uncanny scene: this is a nest of shadows in which Francisco feels himself aimless, and his way of moving in zigzag motion reminds us of an animal in a cage.

Divorced, his mental disease makes him enter a religious community – a significant detail, coming from Buñuel – outside this world.

Hopeless, Francisco is unable to think rationally about himself and his unfortunate love; he cannot stop the hallucinations about his unfaithful wife. So, here the Peircean phenomenological triad makes itself known in the form of Secondness, I mean a real effectiveness derived from the Firstness we found at the beginning of the film with an aesthetic event related to the Freudian “scopic compulsion” (“*pulsion de voir*”): an imaginative sight of the beautiful, pure, honest feet of Gloria in a religious ceremony. But, unfortunately, once developed, paranoia remains, this time settled in the Secondness level. From a phenomenological point of view, Francisco's development finally leads him, with his insanity, into a pit of subjectivity, a stranger to the outer world. It appears that a fracture occurred in his way of reasoning towards a stage of completion in the Peircean emotional Thirdness, a stage in which the first experience – the aesthetic vision in the church – should have been consciously assumed through the Secondness stage of reality, in order to attain an effective and shared love. But by failing to reach the higher level of an emotional consciousness, Francisco's love – with his partial

object – remains in a phase of uneven reality, a state of incompleteness, without a human accomplishment.

### **Transfer, from Anywhere to Nowhere. A Man in the Backseat of Reality**

Paranoia is not unavoidably divorced from logical reasoning, merely from a common sense related to daily reality. Now, imagine an individual like Francisco Galvan who retains a regular level of realism – say a common sense – but who is living in an unreal, albeit credible, world in which the way that things go by makes him feel as if he lives in an alien world: no real emotions, nor authentic suffering, a routine life lived by another person that is not him. This is very similar to the circumstance of the main character in the Jim Jarmusch film *DEAD MAN*<sup>26</sup> (1995), a motivating and disturbing story that definitely gives us food for thought. Let us call the main event psychic transfer, or spiritual relocation, the name does not matter much. I am referring to the event that takes William Blake (Johnny Depp) away from the bounds of his own identity, and retains him in a sort of altered state of consciousness, which is the anteroom to his own death. He lives in this mental space, accepting everything that happens around him, apparently adapted to the circumstances, that is to say: keeping his life as a normalized abnormality.



*Film still from Jim Jarmusch's DEAD MAN (1995).*

A cognitive semiotic point of view should identify here, in Peircean terms, a real, factual Thirdness. That is, as Thirdness is a three-interpretant structure, Blake is no longer in its first, or emotional stage, but in the second stage of action and



effectiveness. In other words, if, as Peirce says, “we live in two worlds, a world of fact and a world of fancy,”<sup>27</sup> then Blake lives in the second, the world of fancy, as if it was the first, the world of fact.

So the film has three basic moments: first there is the moment Blake arrives in the surprising and unexpected environment of Machine, a rough and unfamiliar town in western America, where a factory job awaits him; second, there is the moment of the effective, realistic time, that occurs twice in the film: when he realizes that the job is no longer available for him and he is cruelly rejected, and when he kills a man in self-defense trying to protect a woman from getting hurt. The third moment, the longest, most valuable and conclusive one, starts when William Blake is joined by a fancy Native American called Nobody, whom he befriends. This Native American is under the impression that Blake actually is the well-known poet and painter whose name he bears. In *DEAD MAN*, Nobody appears as Blake’s fate that takes him along a journey from fake poet to wanted killer.

Here there is no Peircean “possibility,” or First (emotional-cognitive) stage, as we found in Huston’s scene of *THE NIGHT OF THE IGUANA*, nor is there a rough reality, effective action, or Second stage, as we found in Buñuel’s *ÉL*, but a sort of concluding alliance of these two previous stages in the Thirdness, or three-interpretant stage. I want to suggest that in this case William Blake’s mind is no longer in the emotional first stage (this was on the train to Machine, perhaps even when thwarted in the factory), nor yet in the logical, conclusive third stage, but at an interface between the two. That is to say that William maintains a sort of mental content – say an idea or group of ideas – without any enhancement towards a full-grown phase where self-consciousness should make the so-called train of thought achievable.

If this is believable, it appears that the main character becomes, because of his name, a kind of double, or *doppelgänger*, of William Blake, the English poet and painter, a man from whom we might argue that he arose as an artist as one whose life is submerged in a dream, I mean into a sort of unreal world, albeit aesthetically effective because of his art, which represents it. Probably because the film depicts this world (that of the English poet and his namesake) in a two-faced mode, one reality too harsh, and the other idyllic and dumb, Blake feels himself able to conform to it, either because he lives as if he were in a kind of trance or hypnotic state, or because he has come round to accepting things from the first to the second part, where he lives a dream of freedom without any restriction, a dream of nonexistent friendship (Nobody is his friend and guide) with an acquiescence that obeys only the primary impulses for survival.

Finally, these three stages are the whole human life in a triad development that can be examined – and surely understood – in the same terms we would use to consider a classical Greek tragedy. From an origin that could be located anywhere (Cleveland, Ohio, for William Blake) to nowhere (a boat-uterus sliding on the

water-amniotic fluid), life is a circular trip from nothing to nothing. Just as Oedipus, Blake also kills to defend his life, and all that a man needs is an imaginary companionship, Nobody, to reach his destination alone, as he began his journey.

At this point, we find out that the train scene at the beginning of the film, as well as the rough environment of the city of Machine, and the second part towards the end – in short, Blake's journey as a whole – is part of a metaphor of life and may have several meanings depending on how we understand it. The film is a work of art and there are many reasons to believe, even if they cannot be developed in detail, that the counter-poet and painter, I mean this double character, does not feel himself to be in an unfamiliar environment. My viewpoint is that he does not take the world around him as an unreal world. I agree with C.G. Jung<sup>28</sup> that the other side of conscious – or intentional – subjectivism is the objective unconsciousness given that its manifestations are especially uncontainable feelings, emotions, impulses or dreams that finally come together. Once he has admitted that none of this is produced intentionally, the individual receives the objective perception that all this simply occurs and takes hold of him. So, the experience that Blake is not allowed is the uncanny one (*Unheimlich*): the film itself, the story as it unfolds, becomes to a certain extent an uncanny feeling for the spectator, who may really be disorientated. If William himself does not appear to be lost, confused, that is because his relationship to Nobody leads us to believe that things are going the same way as they do between psychologist and patient when the latter fully accepts the company of the former in his walk through life, magnifying subjectivity and discarding any critical reference of responsibility.<sup>29</sup>

William Blake, the unemployed clerk whom Nobody, his friend, mistakes for his admired eighteenth-century poet-painter, neglects everything: he does not care what happens to him nor what happens around him. Moreover, as he learns more about the world as the days pass, the world itself is tumbling down on him, in a devastating way, so he no longer needs to think about anything: it is enough to sit back and let the world go by. No feelings, emotions, no sentiments making him aware, conscious, just reactions (i.e. anxiety when Nobody vanishes for a while), opposing actions to circumstances of possible danger. Could his personal subjectivity then perhaps be considered as a kind of objectivity? I am inclined to say yes.

## Conclusion

In summary, I argue that the films I have examined provide us with three cases of subjectivity with varying degrees of strength. The first relates to an aesthetic event, the second relates to a mental disorder involving obsessive jealousy, and the third, so complicated and ambiguous as a dream, belongs to personal subjectivity. We can consider this an objective state, albeit strange to reality, and thus with such characteristics that its familiarity for the individual in the film is con-

stantly canceled out in the spectator's eyes. The first event, a "maybe" in Peirce's terminology, produces a kind of break, which means an episode of discontinuity in the consciousness of the main characters, which induces a thoughtful modification in their behavior, so that they will be able to make real decisions about their life. Once that decision is made, or the individual becomes aware of (or believes in) what he needs and wants in life, then another phase is attained – Peircean "reality" in its strongest manifestation. In spite of our example of a subjective reality distorted by the severe mental disorder of the main character – Buñuel's Francisco Galvan – the next step takes us onto a difficult but possible path: to a conclusive but unfinished phase in *DEAD MAN*. I say unfinished because there is no conclusion, here nothing reaches an end: death is a continuation of life just as life is an anticipation of death. In the meantime, human life, between these two extremes which are impossible to separate, is an undecipherable fantasy.

*DEAD MAN* in its entirety seems to be an analogous experience to the one that Maxine, the Reverend, and perhaps Hannah, have through the recitation of the old poet in *THE NIGHT OF THE IGUANA*, a performance that adequately fits Peirce's first level for the sign (Firstness). Meanwhile, Buñuel's film, *ÉL*, as a whole should come to the second level (Secondness) of reality from the first (Firstness) with the woman's feet at the beginning in the church: a random sight in which Francisco finds such a large dose of pure beauty and harmony, which transforms him<sup>30</sup> by its powerful attraction...

# Robert Bresson and the Voices of an Inner World: “I” Can Never Be “You,” or the Impossible Identification

*Céline Scemama*

## Introduction

Because the cinema is an art form that succeeds so well in exploring the various aspects of the outside world, it has very quickly found its own ways of expressing the inner world as well. But when it comes to analyzing its resources, it seems that film theory has attached more importance to images than sounds, and even less so to voices. Whereas such filmmakers and early cinema theoreticians as Sergei Eisenstein, Vsevolod Poudovkine and Grigori Alexandrov have, with the advent of talking movies,<sup>1</sup> theorized the relationships between sounds and images, other artists and thinkers such as Walter Ruttmann, Charlie Chaplin, Béla Balázs and Roman Jakobson have been considering sounds – and even dialogues, in Balázs’ case – as raw material per se for making a film. But these contributions, rich though they may be, do not really take into consideration the contents of what is being said along with the moving images, and how it is said – which is quite normal at this early stage of talking pictures. Maybe an ancient state of antagonism with the theater also explains why it was – and to some extent still is – generally considered almost a shame to pay too much attention to such things as dialogues, different tones of voice and kinds of diction, and even actors’ performances. However, a director’s framing choices were considered as really pertaining to the art of filmmaking, along with the kind of directions he gave his actors about the way they moved, stared or talked.

Later on, many authors examined with great acuteness the different kinds of sounds in films, as well as the various effects they produced on the pictures and narrative. The substantial publications of Michel Chion are almost entirely given over to the study of sound in films, and provide an outstanding glossary referring to countless different situations in many different films.

It nevertheless remains true that:

[G]enerally speaking, cinema is above all associated with images. However, the photogrammatic process only represents one of ‘the five materials of cine-

matographic expression', besides voices, noises, text and music. Within the semiotic plurality of the medium, it seems to me that voices are a decisive component,[...] for many different reasons, they constitute an essential factor of the talking film's discursive organization. This function is most obvious with the voice-over, or when the voice is disconnected from the film's universe: it comments, narrates, gives us access to another environment, or helps us penetrate the consciousness of a character.<sup>2</sup>

Because movies offer new configurations, they cannot be used merely as illustrations. Concerning the use of voices in a film, Robert Bresson's work is particularly relevant, which is why this essay will be based upon three of his movies using interior voices: *DIARY OF A COUNTRY PRIEST* (1951), *A MAN ESCAPED* (1956), or: *THE WIND BLOWETH WHERE IT LISTETH* (1956), and *PICKPOCKET* (1959). Throughout this analysis, we will examine the way in which Bresson manages to express the depths of a soul.

What is most surprising, first of all, is the fact that Bresson is able to seize this dimension of existence without ever abandoning a certain cool aloofness and sharpness. He absolutely rules out any kind of psychology in his relationship to a story or character, and neither does he use any obvious point of view shots, but rather shows everything with a cold, glass-like precision. On the other hand, he may be the film artist who most deeply and subtly succeeds in expressing the torments and obsessions of one's conscience, which allows the viewer to witness an interior experience without necessarily identifying with the main character. A special way of using voices greatly contributes to this uniqueness.

The way Bresson's characters talk is so specific that it can be recognized by anyone who has already seen one of his films. Nevertheless, unlike many of his contemporaries, Bresson does not want to crowd his films with too much of his own subjectivity as an author. This makes him the most classical of the moderns.

In fact, Bresson's style permeates his films in a particular way, notably with the "Bressonian voice," which has to do with what Pasolini or Deleuze called "free indirect subjectivity."

This is very different, however, from the way Antonioni proceeds. In *BLOW UP* (1966), for example, certain scenes are shot as if they were lived by the main character, without necessarily involving any subjective camera. Neither is it that Bresson's characters incarnate the author by adopting his voice. It is rather that these voices conjure up something that seems strangely exterior to the character, something which has nothing to do with the character's psychology. Bresson's characters – his "models," as he used to call his actors – are able to express the words they speak precisely because they are not looking for any expression; they merely become the receptacles, the voices of the text, through which Bresson's style appears, along with the text in which the movie originates. What strikes us in this configuration is that even though the spectator may feel very close to a

character, even though he may share the latter's thoughts and innermost feelings while listening to the interior voice, he can never fully identify either with the character or the author. This is precisely why Bresson's films offer a highly singular experience of someone else's inner experience. Our analysis will thus revolve around the strangeness of these intimate – and literally unfathomable – interior voices, which prevent any identification from taking place. The spectator of a film by Bresson goes through the living experience of someone else without ever being put in his place; he may feel very close to him while remaining an absolute stranger all the same. The "I" of the viewer can never become an incarnation of the character's "You," although he may be sharing his thoughts, doubts and anguish. By exploring the inner world of another, the viewer may feel very close to the character despite this irremediable otherness, which itself is responsible for the fact that "I" can never be "You."

### **DIARY OF A COUNTRY PRIEST, A MAN ESCAPED, PICKPOCKET: Voices from Beyond the Film<sup>3</sup>**

The use Bresson makes of voices in these three films is so specific that notions borrowed from the field of literary analysis no longer prove adequate. Minimizing the contributions of literary studies to the understanding of cinema is of course not the point here, especially as the narrative study of films has made certain literary notions its own. However, they sometimes seem insufficient, especially as far as voices are concerned, whether voice-over, interior voices, voice-off, voice-in... These categories may indeed prove efficient on some occasions, yet how often do the definitions they provide lack precision? In many books and articles dealing with Bresson's work, one often comes across expressions such as "voice-over" or "interior voice," which never exactly correspond to the reality of either of the three films. Concerning the voices that the spectator hears, although they are not addressing him, they cannot be "off-screen," as the character whose voice we hear is visible on screen. Neither can they be "voice-overs," as the character who speaks is diegetical, including at the very moment his voice is being heard. Finally, such a voice is not exactly "interior" either, since the character speaks in the past tense, and his commentaries are thus of a retrospective nature. However, these objections may also give way to even more objections, which is why new or redefined notions have to be found. The character is indeed well visible on the screen: hence his voice cannot be termed as "off-screen." But the character moving before us is not exactly the same as the one who is talking, given he is speaking in the past tense. Consequently, this creates a kind of "disconnection" between the image happening here and now and the retrospective speech which comments on everything that is being done in the present. The objection regarding the "voice-over" may be overruled for exactly the same reason, as the character who is telling the story is no longer exactly the same character we see on the

screen: in the case of *DIARY*, the priest of Ambricourt's voice is his own, although disembodied, as he is dead; as to Michel, in *PICKPOCKET*, he speaks from a perspective that reaches beyond the story, a time after the film, after he served his sentence and found Jeanne again; and we suppose that Fontaine, in *A MAN ESCAPED*, goes into every detail of his escape once he is free. "Interior voice" therefore seems to be the most adequate expression to describe such occurrences, but it is once again the use of the past tense that prevents us from interpreting what is being said as a comment in the present tense of what the character is going through at the same moment on the screen. What he says pertains to what is being seen, but from the perspective of his memory: in other words, he speaks with a "voice from beyond the film,"<sup>4</sup> or beyond the grave.

These films show us the present in a raw kind of way, although all three of them tell us about memories. The present which appears on the screen is long gone, the voice we hear speaks from someplace else – some other type of temporality – and it is precisely the contact between these two different temporalities – combining an image in the present and a voice from the past – that creates this strange feeling in Bresson's films, like the expression of an interiority which can only be grasped from a distance. The lapse of time that separates the body from the voice creates a gaping discrepancy between what is actually lived and what is told. In all three films, the voice nevertheless seems to stick closely to what the character is going through – especially in *A MAN ESCAPED*, where every visible detail is described with meticulous care. A kind of distant proximity is therefore created between the voice and the image, which confers a strange feeling of exteriority upon those tales of inner experience.

The voices of these characters present on the screen remind us of what Chion has called "acousmatic voices," to describe the kind of recorded voice, the sound of which is able to conjure up a ghostly presence, as in Fritz Lang's masterpiece, *THE TESTAMENT OF DR. MABUSE*, which adopted this kind of technique as early as 1933. As Tim Anderson remarks:

The acousmètre is Chion's most vital concept [...]. Drawn from the French word 'acousmate', this term signifies 'invisible' sounds. The cinema, Chion argues, continually presents us with a game of present / absent significations [...]. Sound films can show an empty space and give us the voice of someone who is supposedly 'there', in the scene's 'here and now', but outside the frame.<sup>5</sup>

In the case of Bresson's films, however, the space is not emptied of its characters, and we can hear their voices at the same time as we see them:



*Film still from Robert Bresson's A MAN ESCAPED (1956).*

Of course, the journal voice is that of the priest whom we see in the picture [...]. But the subject is constantly split up into an image and a voice, both of which are never presented as synchronous: the priest is writing after the event and, when his voice gets superimposed upon the image, it covers up that of the interlocutor, which is instantly smothered and cancelled.<sup>6</sup>

Insofar as these films are not entirely devoid of dialogues, “never presented as synchronous” might be a rather hasty way of putting it, although dialogues indeed remain scarce in all three films, and often get interrupted or covered up by this voice which does not entirely belong in the picture: “This off-screen voice conjures up a kind of ghost image [...]. The man who is remembering his adventure remains faceless [...]. The disacousmatisation of this voice is only partial.”<sup>7</sup> If these voices do not “entirely belong in the picture,” it is because they do not “exactly belong to a body” either. These voices separated from their bodies have a disembodied quality about them, which probably helps considerably in creating the deeply spiritual dimension in the story of these three characters, who look alike in many regards.



## The Way of Silent Men

First of all, these three characters look alike because they have the same way of haunting the films with their voices. These voices take up a lot of space in the sound universe of the movies, even though these characters are far from being talkative: more often than not, they are even deeply silent. This particularity has led Marcel L'Herbier to write the following about *DIARY*:

Because he was the first person to discover the mysterious point of convergence between thirty years of silent films and twenty years of talking films, he became the conqueror of an unknown territory and offered us the fascinating revelation of a film, which in being both – silent and talkative all at once – is neither one or the other, therefore wholly itself.<sup>8</sup>

L'Herbier's lyricism highlights the singularity and strange sobriety of Bresson's characters. Their voices are omnipresent although they hardly ever talk, and all three of them seem possessed with some transcendental force which confers upon their existence an almost mystical dimension, whether for the priest, the pickpocket or the prisoner sentenced to death: "Bresson's heroes live in another kind of reality, that of mystics, maybe, of madmen or criminals [...] the Infinite of death and nothingness is already within them and has purified and abraded them."<sup>9</sup>

Le Clézio's terms of "purified and abraded" perfectly characterize the Bressonian characters and the filmmaker's method towards his "models," whom he wants abraded and purified so they can receive the text which is dictated to them.<sup>10</sup> This is why these characters whose stories are so different nonetheless look so much alike and speak with the same voice.

Although their voices are omnipresent, these characters are men of few words. The priest of Ambricourt in *DIARY*, an adaptation of the eponymous novel by Georges Bernanos, is a pale young man tormented by bad health – he has stomach cancer – the cause of which may be the huge amounts of alcohol his family consumed before him. He is so discreet and humble that it seems he is about to dissolve in the hazy paleness of the sad village. Nevertheless, this pallid priest with the face of a prematurely old child does not hesitate to speak out in this village eroded by buried animosities and deadly secrets. There is a mission he must accomplish. There is nothing he can gain from it, but it has to be done. Only death can stop what he has undertaken. But every time he speaks, his other voice, timeless and disembodied, snatches him away from the present of the image. Or sometimes a dizzy spell will rob him from his speech capacity and force him into silence, compel him to sit down and withdraw himself. The priest is also capable of listening. He listens to Mademoiselle Chantal as she tells him of her hate for Mademoiselle Louise, her private tutor and father's mistress. He listens

to her as she talks about suicide and “doing evil for evil’s sake,” if she does not get what she wants out of life. He also confronts her mother, the Countess, intent upon bringing back the peace she has lost ever since her little boy died. He speaks, he listens, and stands by his words and actions when he is confronted by the priest of Torcy and his superior who both accuse him of having exceeded his authority which, they believe, led the Countess to suicide. Only his illness can compel him to leave the village and confront death, which he does, but only after parting with some last words – repeated off-screen by the priest of Torcy – a few words which accurately express the strangeness of this priest, at once so weak and so strong: “What does it matter? ... Everything is Grace.” The priest of Torcy also mentions that at one point, “he even smiled.”

It may seem odd to compare a priest and a thief, yet they deeply resemble each other. The priest of Ambricourt, Michel the thief, and Fontaine, the man sentenced to death, are remarkably similar. As Doctor Delbende from *DIARY* has it, these characters are “of the same race,” “the race of those who cope.” The three characters are as relentless as they are uninterested and selfless. They seem to be acted upon by something which transcends their mere personal interests as mortals: actually, the priest of Ambricourt, Michel the thief, and Fontaine the prisoner are all believers. Their belief is not necessarily of a religious or metaphysical kind, but they act out of faith and nothing can stop them from going where they want to go, like the wind bloweth where it listeth: “The transcendence of the Bernanos-Bresson universe is not the transcendence of destiny as the ancients understood it, nor yet the transcendence of Racinian passion, but the transcendence of grace which is something each of us is free to refuse.”<sup>11</sup> Michel, the cold and dry character in *PICKPOCKET*, steals like Raskolnikov kills in *Crime and Punishment*<sup>12</sup> by Dostoyevsky, without even thinking of the haul. For Michel, in the same way as for Raskolnikov, what is at stake is something else. The two heroes, both Bresson’s and Dostoyevsky’s, very clearly explain that it is not the perspective of making a profit that drives them. Furthermore, both of them seem to feel the same kind of excited anxiety when they confront the moral and social authority symbolized by the police inspector. In *PICKPOCKET*, this confrontation happens at a very early stage in the narrative, only five minutes after the beginning of the film. Michel begins his life as a thief with a strong feeling of resolution, he just asks himself if he will be bold enough to live up to it. Just after his first theft, with the same retrospective interior voice, he says: “I could not feel the ground under my feet any more, it felt like I dominated the world, but one minute later, I was caught.” Once at the police station, he eagerly affirms that they have no proof against him. The inspector lets him go, but only so as to better catch him later on. At this point, the same way as in *Crime and Punishment*, a never-ending conflict begins between the law enforcer and the pickpocket, a conflict which by far supersedes the question of the sole offense and engages a moral debate between the two men. Just before the opening credits, a written warning announces the

discrepancy between the film and its title: “This is not a police movie. With images and sounds, the author tries to express the nightmare of a young man driven into an adventure of pickpockets for which he was not made.”

In Bresson’s transposition of Dostoyevsky’s novel, the murderer becomes a thief, but the moral conflict between the two men is quite the same. When Michel meets the inspector in a bar, he shakes his hand before he really recognizes him – the viewer learns this by the same retrospective interior voice, because Michel hardly ever speaks. The spectator only hears him partially explain his theory<sup>13</sup> about theft, based upon George Barrington’s book, *The Prince of Pickpockets*. But at the end of the scene, the inspector exclaims: “a kind of useful thief, all in all. The world is upside-down.” “Well, given the world is already upside-down, it might put it right-side up,” answers Michel.

Michel and Raskolnikov also seem to be rather closed off to everything concerning love. Nevertheless, once their adventures have come to an end, it is almost in spite of themselves that they miraculously find love in the persons of women they have always known and paid little attention to: Sonia for Raskolnikov and Jeanne for Michel. “Only this adventure, through mysterious ways, will join two souls who maybe never would have met,” thus reads the second part of the written warning that appears before the film starts. It foreshadows the film’s last shot showing Michel as he takes Jeanne in his arms across the prison bars and pronounces these words, which remind us of the Priest of Ambricourt finding Grace before dying: “Oh Jeanne what a strange way I had to take to find you.”<sup>14</sup>

Paradoxically, Fontaine acts in a disinterested way too. Bresson’s choice of interrupting the memoirs of Commandant André Devigny<sup>15</sup> before his final spectacular adventures, brings another dimension to the escape. In Bresson’s movie, the breakout is an end in itself. In Devigny’s story, he first escapes from the Fort of Montluc, he then gets caught, but manages to escape a second time, this time for good. This double escape confers on the event an epic dimension which is absent from the film.

The action takes place in 1943. Fontaine – who is a lieutenant and not a commander in the movie – is a German prisoner from the French Resistance. The film begins with a failed escape attempt from a car during a transfer, after which Fontaine is told that he will be sentenced to death. At this point, the film and his character are all focalized on the escape. But behind Bresson’s camera, this escape becomes an almost abstract event. Fontaine is guided by the thought of liberty, but liberty as a principle. From out of his cell window, he tells Blanchet – the totally desperate inmate of the cell next to his – that he must fight. “Fight for what?” answers Blanchet. “Fight against the walls, against myself, my door, you have to fight too.” In his prison cell, with his retrospective interior voice, Fontaine also adds: “I had to open this door, I did not have any plans for later on.” The door is central to the movie; getting it opened is more important than everything it will lead to. The last shot of the film shows Fontaine and Jost, his young cell-

mate, as they disappear into the misty night. The idea of freedom is wholly contained within this shot and does not call for anything else. Moreover, Fontaine does not seem to have anybody to go back to on the outside: no past, no family, no wife, no children. He was just a prisoner in front of a door that had to be opened. The breakout is both the means and the end, which is why the film ends this way. This is how Bresson's film acquires a dimension that leaves no place for either suspense or psychology. Jost, on the contrary, has a past, a psychology, which is why he says at the end: "If my mother could see me now."

Many of Bresson's choices participate in this expression of a being's inner world through a strange kind of exteriority. Among those choices, the splitting up of a character's voice and body plays an active part in rendering any form of psychology and identification utterly impossible. Before we even consider the impossible act of identification between the viewer and the character, we must observe the manner in which the character is himself characterized by this strange separation between his body and his voice. The movie itself falls into two worlds with the pictures in the present and the voices coming from the past. But this disjunction is not total because the sounds from the present are mingled with the voice from the past, and this voice provides very precise comments upon the present image appearing here and now. This voice seems to have traveled through time to get back to the present tense of the image, while it hovers beyond the image, as it were, and in another time. It is via such configurations that Bresson most successfully manages to express the inner soul of a being, while preventing any kind of identification with him.

## **Apprehending the Inner World from a Distance. Bresson's Style and the Impossible Identification**

The distance that lies between the present image and the voice from the past is not a constant one. More often than not, it is of an ambiguous nature, and contributes in creating the expression of a character's self-detachment, as well as rendering any identification on the part of the viewer impossible. Bresson's stories could have something psychological, sociological, pathetic, or melodramatic about them, but that is not the case at all. These disembodied voices never let the viewer become as one with the character's body. He is compelled to stay out even when he feels he has a very deep access to the character's inner experience. In order to understand this phenomenon which characterizes one of the fundamental aspects of Bresson's style, we must base our detailed analysis upon certain subtle and meaningful configurations drawn from films.

A movie is composed of images and sounds, which is why it is irrelevant to analyze voices and sounds separately from images. This holds particularly true of a filmmaker like Bresson who considers "images and sounds like people who make acquaintance on a journey and can no longer grow apart."<sup>16</sup> This distance

between the character's voice and body does not only originate in the discrepancy between past and present, it also comes from the transition between shots and the frequent use of wide shots. Editing can either consist in cuts or dissolves, two very different techniques which nevertheless both contribute in creating a succession of pictures rather than the illusion of a continuous flow. Bresson rarely uses close-ups – especially in *PICKPOCKET* – he prefers keeping his models at a distance, filming them from afar or from behind a windowpane, for instance – which is very frequent in *DIARY*. The interior retrospective voices – even if it is not always the case in *DIARY* – acquire their full dimension through this technique, which we will now illustrate with a few examples.

The case of *DIARY* may be the most convincing because, among all of Bresson's characters, the priest is perhaps one of the most endearing, and his story is truly heartrending. Everything in this character induces empathy and compassion, yet Bresson prevents the spectator from being as one with him, in the same way as he forbids his models from “playing” this character. In fact, Bresson directs the spectators of his films the same way he directs his models: he keeps them at a distance but, paradoxically, he does it to reach the inner soul of a being. *DIARY* “is the first film about inner life,” Mauriac wrote.<sup>17</sup>

The first shot of the film is a diary in which a hand is writing with a pen. This shot announces that the story will be a first-person narrative. But a shift from the present to the past tense soon happens, which causes confusion between the genre of the diary and that of the memoirs. The film's temporality is of a very subtle nature because the present is being revisited by the past, and these two temporalities may thus appear together within the frame.

“I do not think I am doing anyone any harm when I write in here, day after day, with absolute sincerity, the very humble, the insignificant secrets of this life devoid of mystery,” writes the priest. Only the writing hand is visible within the frame. At this point of the film, nothing can let us infer that the voice we hear, as it speaks out loud what is being written at that very moment, is not that of the character, partially hidden off-camera. The diary is indeed written in the present tense but, all throughout the movie, certain passages are told in the present while others are told in the past. The latter passages appear as a retrospective reading, as if the priest commented on his life and his suffering on earth from beyond the grave.

The priest is a voice and a writing hand before being a face. The second shot of the film shows a signboard indicating the number of the road, D71E, and a second one announcing the village of Ambricourt. When the priest arrives on his bicycle, he is filmed through the iron gates of a big house. He looks left and right before a link shot shows a couple embracing – the Count and his mistress, the teacher – who both give him an ominous look. In this dreary and whitish light, which seems the visual equivalent of silence, only a dog can be heard, barking in the distance. The priest moves into the background and the couple shifts on to



*Film still from Robert Bresson's DIARY OF A COUNTRY PRIEST (1951).*

the other side of the frame. In a medium shot, the priest lays his bike against the wall of a house. He climbs the stoop of the house and a low-angle shot shows him repeatedly turning the door handle and pushing the door open with one hand. He takes a few steps and goes back to the stoop. He looks far away into the distance, as if he were looking at nothing in particular or into himself and he says: "My parish. My first parish." At this point, without having seen the rest of the film, the spectator may very well be under the impression of having seen his lips move, as if the priest had been talking to himself out loud. Nevertheless, this voice is interior and, the sentence being verbless, it is timeless as well. Whether he speaks in the present or past tense, this indetermination does not alter one of the most surprising features in this scene: the diegetic sounds remain audible – probably a cart passing by – mingled with the interior voice. The fact of hearing this voice and these noises blended together contributes in expressing an inner world, as if everything were retrospectively perceived in the character's mind. But it is also possible for this interior voice to be actually superimposed to the sounds and images of the present, in which case this voice becomes "over," absolutely exterior to the images. At this point of the story and of the analysis, the way the viewer perceives the character is ambiguous, at once very close and far away from himself. Nevertheless, the first-person singular and possessive "my" submits the interior narrative to certain specific literary codes, associated with the diary and

first-person interior monologue as specific genres. The kind of distance which had already been observed when the priest was filmed from behind the iron gate of the house will appear time and again during the film, including in more accentuated forms. Certain well-chosen examples will explain how the inner and outer worlds are made to combine in Bresson's cinematographic universe.

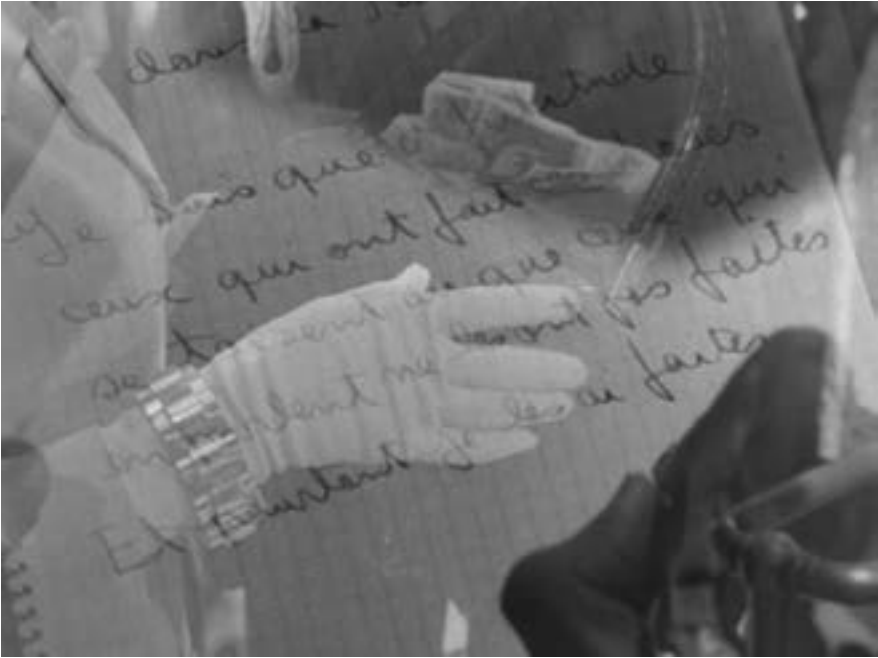
The priest is very often filmed from behind a window, and subjective cameras are very rare throughout the film. This external point of view is particularly striking when the voice confesses its most intimate doubts. Without being weakened by the distant point of view, it seems it no longer belongs to the body it emanates from, which is also why the viewer cannot give in to any identification process. He is thus obliged to explore the interiority of another being while remaining himself all along.

The distance grows even bigger and more enigmatic when the priest starts off on his journey to Lille, where he will confront death. An unusual low-angle shot makes him seem very remote and very high up on the hill he is tediously climbing in the night. This image gives the impression that the death he will meet at the end of this long and winding road is the vantage point from which he speaks all throughout the movie.

This technique based on the feeling of being "outside" and at a distance prevents any kind of identification from taking place between the spectator and the character, and yet it allows the expression of a deeply interior experience.

The pickpocket's interior adventure is communicated through a very similar type of system, as it opens on a hand writing in a notebook, like in *DIARY*: "I know that usually, people who have done these things remain silent, and those who talk about them haven't done them. Well, I have." There is a kind of *legato*, as it were, from the hand that writes to the hand that steals, which, however, does not give way to any feeling of identification with the main character. In this case, identification is even made more difficult because Michel is such a cold and opaque character, a lot more so than the priest. He even is a little unpleasant. He seems to have no feelings at all and yet, the viewer will be made to feel the slightest tremor of his heart. If it were not for the sound of his voice, we could even doubt he has a heart. But no sooner has the movie begun than his retrospective interior voice declares: "My heart was beating so hard I thought it would stop." Later on, upon receiving a letter from Jeanne in his prison cell, he interiorly confesses: "As I read this letter, my heart was racing." His voice from another time is filled with an emotion Michel's body does not show on screen.

Even if the viewer gets to know the slightest details of his life, he can never explain why Michel steals, or why he is so ungrateful towards Jeanne and his friend Jacques, and especially towards his mother whom he refuses to see until she lies dying – and after having stolen from her too. Any psychological explanation is absolutely impossible in a movie where everything – every gesture, every word – is presented in such a cold and austere fashion that it reminds one of a



*Film still from Robert Bresson's PICKPOCKET (1959).*

police report written in telegraphic style. The soundtrack participates in producing this credibility gap, this abstraction in the scene where Michel enters the metro to steal for the second time:

[T]he noises in Bresson's films are immediately recognized and identified, but the dubbing produces a contradictory effect: whereas the noises are very much in keeping with the diegesis, bigger than life in their abstraction and rarefaction, it is precisely this very perfection which produces an artificial effect [...]. The sound is superimposed upon the image and does not really stick to it.<sup>18</sup>

This scene also gives the weird impression of reading a novel where every detail is described with extreme precision. In the same way as sounds do not "stick" to images, the viewer cannot symbolically enter the thief's body, because it remains absolutely exterior and unfathomable. However, Michel gives us every detail of how he feels, tells us about his doubts, his fears and interrogations. And Bresson combines his shots and edits the movie the same way as Michel and his accomplices manipulate wallets during the theft sequences, which attain an amazing degree of abstraction. The virtuosity of the gestures and the succession of shots are so gracious that they transcend mere representation.



Michel explains everything, he does not hide anything from us, he even communicates his method in a documentary way. He also confesses he does not earn much with his thieving, but explains it is not really the question. Even he himself does not seem to know why he acts like this, which is one of the main reasons why it is so difficult for the spectator to identify with him. Michel is not confiding in the viewer, his words are addressed to no one. Furthermore, he is almost mute: "We weren't talkative. All the time we spent together, he didn't know any more about me than I knew about him," he says about his relationship with his first accomplice. Later on, Jeanne tells him: "You don't live in the real world. You are not interested in anything others are interested in." Indeed, Michel does not seem to belong in the real world, he is like an idea, a state of being which will forever remain unexplained. This lack of explanation endows him with a mysterious grace, echoed in the state which he himself described: "I couldn't feel the ground under my feet, it felt like I dominated the world."

The story of *A MAN ESCAPED*, like that of *DIARY*, could inspire great empathy. Nevertheless, Bresson's way of proceeding once again takes his movie someplace else, to a different domain. Fontaine is a member of the Resistance who gets beaten up, mistreated, locked up in miserable conditions and sentenced to death by the Germans. Everything is in place for a pathetic story to begin and a catharsis to happen, with the spectator showing compassion – *suffering with*, that is – for the prisoner. But at no point in the film is such fusion or identification made possible. Fontaine, without being as unpleasant as Michel, is not really more likable: he even becomes almost inhuman when he wonders if he will have to kill Jost, his young cellmate, to make sure he does not jeopardize his plan. His inner doubts show his humanity, but the tone of his voice and his inexpressive face keep us at a cold distance. His voice expresses his fear, his tears and despair but his face never shows anything. Of all Bresson's characters, he may be the least talkative. This has of course something to do with his being a prisoner – for that matter, in every scene where the prisoners have a wash, for instance, the German guards keep saying: "no talking." But this explanation is not enough: Fontaine is like all Bressonian characters: he is heard a lot, but he hardly ever speaks.

The first sequence of the movie, which is so beautiful in itself, is one of the finest examples of Bresson's style. As far as the plot is concerned, it should instantly create suspense and lead to our immediate identification with the character. Fontaine is in a car, being transferred from one jail to another. Sitting next to him are two handcuffed prisoners, whereas his hands are untied. A multiplicity of shots show many different objects but no faces – or only really quick face shots of the other prisoners. Fontaine remains faceless for quite a while, he is just a pair of hands. However, this opening scene is not in the least formalistic; on the contrary it carries on its usual function of announcing what the film will be about: namely, hands and objects. We see Fontaine's hands, the car door handle, the cuffed hands, the driver's hand on the gearstick. These shots are repeated like the every-

day gestures Fontaine repeats with the patience of a saint and the furious determination of a fool to get his door opened or make ropes and hooks: "I planned everything that was feasible and even everything that wasn't," says his retrospective interior voice. Fontaine's hands, like Michel's, are to his exterior adventure what his voice is to his interior adventure, and all throughout the film the same gap prevails between voice and hands, which does not permit us to identify with a character who is only a voice and a pair of hands.

In this opening sequence, Fontaine's face does not appear right away and his voice is not heard yet. The outside world is only perceived through noises. This sequence is neither talking nor silent; it is literally audio-visual. It prefigures the rest of the film as it is only through sounds that Fontaine can picture the space outside his prison cell,<sup>19</sup> in the same way as the report of gun shots explain that Fontaine has been caught, when this first scene ends. Gun shots keep ringing out throughout the whole film, for that matter; they give it a certain rhythm at the same time as they let Fontaine know who is being executed.

In this movie, nothing is perceived in an objective way, all information arrives through Fontaine's consciousness. Nevertheless, Bresson almost never uses any point of view shots, and there is no real subjective hearing either, as André Bazin comments:

Bresson is not in the least interested in verisimilitude but in reality at one end, and a certain kind of spiritual truth at the other, with reality more or less mysteriously paving the way for the latter. Everything that stands in-between, whether it partakes of drama or psychology, not only leaves him indifferent, but is totally foreign to him!<sup>20</sup>

Thus, Bresson takes apart every element of suspense characteristic of an escape movie. And the viewer cannot identify with a character who himself has become the receptacle for an experience that he communicates without living it. He may thus remain a pure experience devoid of any human subject because the character is embodied by a model and not an actor *playing* the role of someone else. Bazin notes:

Such and such protagonist will think and feel this way or that, therefore he will act in this or that manner, and above all, his face, his body and his voice will express his own specific intentions. Bresson's actor, François Leterrier, was well chosen regarding his physical aspect but not as far as theatrical roles are concerned. He is determined by a certain essential conformity which is not psychological but rather ontological, with regard to the character he embodies. Consequently, he has not been asked to mime, represent, or 'act' anything: on the contrary, Bresson is intent upon breaking to pieces the puppet of feel-

ings that is inside his characters, which is why the choice of giving the latter a toneless voice is so important, both in commentaries and dialogues.<sup>21</sup>

## The Voice of a Text, Not of a Man

What Bazin explains holds true for *A MAN ESCAPED* and all of Bresson's characters since *DIARY*. This "toneless voice" does not only characterize interior voices, as all of Bresson's characters talk the same way. Marcel L'Herbier, when discussing *DIARY*, subtly describes the singularity of the specific voice Bresson gives all his models: the priest of Ambricourt "knows how to confer what he keeps to himself unto his voice, and when he keeps silent, he actually speaks. [...] He thus speaks from the depth of his consciousness and his voice does not follow the resonant inflexions of language [...], the erosion of language could cause cinematography – neither silent nor talking but of a second degree – to rise [...] up to what Brice Parain calls the expression of a 'superior silence.'"<sup>22</sup> Bresson reaches a very singular cinematographic mode of expression, because even though his movies are filled with words and sounds, they still seem very silent. These voices and sounds paradoxically seem to reveal the silence and its substance, which is not really surprising, coming from a filmmaker who wrote: "Soundtrack films invented silence."<sup>23</sup>

As far as voices are concerned, whether interior or exterior – on or off screen – they always seem to be "removed" from the present image and from the body they originate in: "To your models: 'Speak as if you were speaking to yourselves.' Monologues instead of dialogues."<sup>24</sup> This is why it is sometimes so difficult to distinguish an on-screen voice from an interior voice in a Bresson film. It is because the elocution is the same. This is also why they may often superimpose, as frequently happens in *DIARY*: "I would have liked to tell him about the cabaret," interjects the priest's interior voice in a dialogue with the deputy mayor who paid him an unexpected visit. Sometimes, in a dialogue, the characters will also seem to be talking to themselves, which not only applies to main characters, as all of them have this very special "Bressonian voice."

It is therefore not really surprising to learn from Bresson himself that he preferred calling his models over the telephone so he could hear their voices before he even saw them:<sup>25</sup> "Telephone. His voice makes him visible."<sup>26</sup> His *Notes on the Cinematographer* correspond exactly to what is being put into practice in his movies. When he asked his models not to try to embody their character, his method was the exact opposite of what was being taught at The Actor's Studio, where actors had to explore the psychology and attitudes of their character so as to express it using their own bodies. On the contrary, according to Bresson: "The actor who learns his part presupposes a 'self' he knows in advance (and which does not exist);"<sup>27</sup> "Your models must not feel dramatic."<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, it is because he refuses the expression of affects, and because he asks his models to remain as

neutral as possible, that Bresson may spontaneously bring to life the depth of a state of mind and of a consciousness, however remote they may remain.

According to Jean-Louis Provoyeur, "Being oneself thus means, for the model, not to be the character, escape the dictatorship of the story in which he is caught, resist the story."<sup>29</sup> The model cannot identify with the character, no more than the viewer can identify with him. For the model as well as for the viewer, it is through exteriority and not identification that the experience of otherness is attained.

These voices that seem to come from beyond the picture and let us hear the sound of a conscience have nothing to do with any kind of familiar language. Provoyeur goes back upon the notion of *acousmètre* to characterize these voices which, even though they are visualized on screen, are not synchronous with the images. He applies this to voices speaking in the past tense on images of the present: "The *acousmètre* is the voice of the power which the subject is deprived of. It is the voice of the Narrator, the voice of the Totality. It is the Narrative."<sup>30</sup> In the first quote, Provoyeur speaks about the posture imposed upon the model and, in the second one, about this voice which seems to come from out of the frame. There is no contradiction here. The status Provoyeur confers upon the voice – "The Totality, The Narrative" – can be brought about via the model, who paradoxically resists the Narrative.

Nevertheless, if the "Bressonian voice" can easily be recognized, the film director never seems to appear in his movies as an omniscient narrator: "It is impossible not to notice Bresson and Dostoyevsky's common predilection for stories seen 'through the prism of a narrator.'"<sup>31</sup> As Mireille Latil le Dantec observes, "Dostoyevsky refuses omniscient narration and chooses to write epistolary novels [...], memories of a dreamer [...], memoirs [...], writings."<sup>32</sup> It just so happens that "eleven out of the thirteen movies directed by Bresson were adapted from written texts."<sup>33</sup> Without drawing a comprehensive list of these adaptations, we will limit ourselves to the movies we have studied: *DIARY* was based upon the eponymous novel by Bernanos, *PICKPOCKET* was a transposition of the *Journal of Raskolnikov*, Dostoyevsky's original idea for *Crime and Punishment*, and *A MAN ESCAPED* was based upon *The Memoirs of Commandant Devigny*.<sup>34</sup> Many filmmakers directed adaptations, but they very seldom let the style of the author – and even the text's fabric – appear as Bresson did through the diction and elocution of his models. The "Bressonian voice" reminds one of what Barthes calls "writing out loud (which has nothing to do with speech)."<sup>35</sup> Even though *The Memoirs of Commandant Devigny* may not be compared to the literature of Dostoyevsky or Bernanos, it nevertheless remains that the written text survives on the screen. This exteriority does not prevent one from following the never-ending paths of the interior adventure, but forbids the psychological adherence to the character – a character who is also a text.

This dimension sheds new light on the impossible identification that prevails in Bresson's films. The priest's voice often sounds like that of a soul escaped

from its body, speaking from out of the frame and even out of the world. This is because this voice is drawn out of a text, it has the inflexions of a text which is “written out loud” and cannot be played. Instead of incarnating itself within a voiceless body, speech becomes the embodiment of the text: “In place of the powerfully concrete evocations of the novelist, the film offers us an increasingly impoverished image which escapes us because it is hidden from us and is never really developed. The novel of Bernanos is rich in picturesque evocation, solid, concrete, strikingly visual. [...] When you compare the two, it is the film that is literary while the novel teems with visual material.”<sup>36</sup>

Hence it is not surprising that Mauriac “saw” Bernanos in Bresson’s film: “When André Gide was dying, I stepped into a movie theater. I could have seen the *DIARY OF A COUNTRY PRIEST* when it was presented to the press, or any time in the following days. Maybe it had to be on this very evening of February the 19th and not any other, Bernanos appeared to me on the screen.”<sup>37</sup>

Bresson writes, “The right intonations when your model exercises no control over them.”<sup>38</sup> And the accuracy of these intonations is that of the text, which the model must find in just being its own voice: “The cast is not being asked to act out a text, not even to live it out, just to speak it. It is because of this that the passages spoken off-screen so perfectly match the passages spoken by the characters on-screen. There is no fundamental difference either in tone or style. This plan of attack not only rules out any dramatic interpretation by the actors but also any psychological touches either. [...] This language which no lips could speak is, of necessity, from the soul.”<sup>39</sup>

## Conclusion

Robert Bresson despises small talk as well as the decorative use of music, and above all, psychology.

His cinema is extremely rigorous, both where sounds and images are concerned. Hence it is not surprising that his movies have been called “ascetic.” But his asceticism is of a lyrical kind, an oxymoron which may very well epitomize Bresson’s profound style: a deep silence which persists underneath the voices and sounds, an impression of redundancy between what is said and what is shown, an obvious manifestation of the author’s style, whereas the author himself literally hides behind the text and seeks its essentiality in the making of his films.

This lyrical asceticism perfectly defines the way in which he tells the stories of his characters.

In his universe, everything is disconnected from everything else. The same way as sounds do not stick to images, the characters’ voices are not rooted in their bodies. The stories Bresson tells are very often of a solemn and dramatic nature. However, it is without either empathy, psychology or compassion that he man-

ages to reach his characters' innermost depths. In the *DIARY OF A COUNTRY PRIEST*, *A MAN ESCAPED* and *PICKPOCKET*, the three main characters resemble one another. One is a priest, the other a thief, and the last one a prisoner sentenced to death, but all three of them have the same voice, the same silence, and especially the same determination in following their own particular paths. Whether their voices come from beyond the film, whether their thoughts appear retrospectively, from outside their bodies, as it were, and even from beyond the screen, or whether they talk to someone else, they have the same tone of voice, the same manner of speech. The disjunction between body and speech does not prevent their face from expressing the contents of their soul, although unwillingly, as Bresson's models do not play, they pronounce a text: "your camera passes through faces, provided no mimicry (intentional or not) gets in-between. Cinematographic films made of inner movements *which are seen*";<sup>40</sup> Bresson concludes, "It is not about acting 'simple' or acting 'inward,' it's about not acting at all."<sup>41</sup>

Bresson asked his models not to interpret anything: "Naturally Bresson, like Dreyer, is only concerned with the countenance as flesh, which, when not involved in playing a role, is a man's true imprint, the most visible mark of his soul. It is then that the countenance takes on the dignity of a sign. He would have us be concerned here not with the psychology but with the physiology of existence. We can truly say that Bresson strips his characters bare."<sup>42</sup>

This method brings about a real detachment between the model and his character, as well as between the latter and the viewer. Bresson's films allow the spectator to perceive all the movements of someone else's inner experience, without ever being able of putting himself in his place. It is possible to be close to him, with him, but never in his place. This impossible identification begins with the work of models who are strictly forbidden to identify with the character they lend their voice and body to on the screen.

This body has to receive a text and every word he says has nothing to do with natural speech; the model voices the text, the same text that Bresson is seeking after in his compositions of sounds and images. This supremacy of the text permits the deepest and subtlest expression of an inner experience to take place without any identification on the spectator's part. When he imposes a text upon his models, Bresson imposes an unusual experience upon his viewer: perceiving the inner experience of another without sharing it. This impossible identification paradoxically gives birth to the greatest expression of an inner life, but it is someone else's.

*Translated by Maxime Shelledy.*



# The Silence of the Lenses: *BLOW UP* and the Subject of Photography

Pierre Taminiaux

The now classical work by Michelangelo Antonioni, *BLOW UP*, adapted from a short story by Julio Cortázar, remains today one of the most important films dedicated to the role of photography in cinematographic storytelling. The cultural and sociological context of its production was that of the 1960s, arguably the most turbulent period of post-World War II European history.<sup>1</sup> This period was not only characterized by political upheavals and moral revolutions: it also and maybe more decisively resulted in the creation of radically new forms of representation.

In the field of the visual arts, in particular, an international avant-garde movement like Fluxus helped to define original aesthetic forms that broke not only with pictorial classicism but also with many of the aesthetic canons of the early twentieth-century avant-garde. Art was then turned into an everyday practice based on collective performances and “happenings.” The so-called immediacy of art that Dada and surrealism had advocated so vehemently was now fully accomplished by artists who situated themselves outside of all traditional institutions and protested the socio-economic conditions of art in capitalist societies.<sup>2</sup> In an original way they expressed the death of art in Western culture by moving beyond any established concept of the artwork and its ongoing sacred identity. In other words, they truly realized the utopian project of Marcel Duchamp, who stated first and foremost that anything could be a work of art, as long as the artist questioned the laws of aesthetic judgment dominated by the artistic supremacy of pictorial representation.<sup>3</sup>

During the same period, cinema itself became the subject of a radical evolution of forms, through the influence of directors such as Godard in France as well as through the underground work done by experimental filmmakers such as Michael Snow and Jonas Mekas. In many ways, these new cinematographic perspectives echoed many of the concerns of the aforementioned artists by stressing the need for alternative modes of production and the deconstruction of well-entrenched narrative norms. Therefore, the 1960s not only put forward deep political problems stemming from the failure of Western democracies to bring real personal freedom to its citizens, they also revealed a crisis of representation that art was destined to explore.



This predicament was evidently linked to a profound crisis of subjectivity, since major educational and cultural institutions, from universities to museums, were seen by many as instances of bourgeois repression and capitalist alienation.<sup>4</sup> This negative situation was clearly at the center of the student movement in May 1968. In this perspective, the strict political discourse, although powerful and almost ubiquitous, could not alone define a new cultural order in which the very notion of an establishment had no place on its own. Subjectivity itself had been associated for too long with the goals and the ambitions of the ruling classes: it had engendered a form of individualism largely driven by material and economic realities and was now fully integrated into the “society of the Spectacle.”<sup>5</sup> Art became thus an essential tool for the expression of an original worldview, beyond the obvious influence of revolutionary ideologies such as Maoism and Trotskyism at the time.

## A New Time of Storytelling

The case of Antonioni is particularly interesting in this regard, to the extent that the Italian director remained largely indifferent in his work of fiction to political issues. His first films, such as *IL GRIDO* (*THE SHOUT*), appeared in the shadow of Italian neo-realism, from a purely aesthetic perspective, but they quickly broke with its spirit by ignoring the fate of the lower classes and focusing instead on the life of the upper-middle class. The filmmaker therefore located his critique of post-World War II European culture inside a bourgeois environment. He considered this microcosm of Italian society to be the mirror of an existential malaise and ennui that was widespread and actually existed regardless of class belonging. The modern subject that he chose to depict, from *IL DESERTO ROSSO* to *L'AVVENTURA*, was doomed to destitution, defined by a deep sense of a vacuum that was largely the result of contemporary industrialization and economic growth. His philosophy of critical representation emphasized the idleness and the social inadequacy of those who seemed to enjoy most of the benefits of this process.

This philosophy implied above all the profound questioning of the time of storytelling in film. From the start, Antonioni's work relied upon the expression of an inner time, a time that was essentially alien to the pace of both social life and narrative realism. This particular time had a sort of Oriental quality: it actually shared many features with that of Japanese filmmaker Ozu, in his numerous chronicles of modern everyday life in his home country. This original approach remained misunderstood and underappreciated by a great number of viewers: for many of them, it entailed the very negation of storytelling.<sup>6</sup> The Italian director did not seem to be preoccupied with the development of a particular plot and its inevitable conclusion, nor did he seem to care for a sort of basic rhythmic intensity that characterized most mainstream feature films of his time, both in Europe and in the United States.

This critique of representation relied therefore upon the definite slowness of its expression, as if the time of cinema existed solely in a state of prolonged suspension. What was at stake in this process was the revelation of a sheer presence within the image, and not the account of events that were unlikely to happen anyway. It is through this radical alteration of perception that the identity of the subject could appear and dwell within images. In many ways, for Antonioni, the classical time-structure of narrative cinema, inspired by the formal logic of the realist novel, had failed to enlighten the ongoing conflict between modern man and the time imposed upon him by society: its pretense to objectivity was largely irrelevant. As opposed to painting, which does not contain by essence a particular definition of time, but rather of space, cinema could then reflect upon the relationship that tied visual representation to the issue of a “time differed.” In his films, the time of narrative is being perpetually delayed in order to underline man’s natural estrangement from it.

## **Punctum, Violence, and Death**

BLOW UP was the first work that the Italian director shot outside of his native country. It is located in London, a city that was at the center of a radical cultural change in the 1960s. Its main character, played by the late David Hemmings, is a fashion photographer who, almost randomly, takes some casual shots of a couple in a park one day. Slowly but surely, he becomes intrigued by the apparently banal situation that he witnessed, and by enlarging several of his own shots, he ends up discovering the reality of a crime behind them. To refer to Roland Barthes’ famous distinction, the image is defined here by a *punctum*, a slight detail that catches the eye of the photographer and unveils the dark nature of the scenes in the park. The main *punctum* is that of a hand hidden in the bushes that holds a gun pointed at the couple. This detail is almost invisible: it needs precisely a series of “blow ups” (the technical jargon in photography for enlargements), in order to display the presence of a crime. In other words, photographs must be fragmented here so that they can assert the existential identity of the visible world. To go back to Barthes’ own explanation of the *punctum*, in contrast with the *studium*:

The second element will break (or punctuate) the *studium*. This time it is not I who seek it out (as I invest the field of the *studium* with my sovereign consciousness). It is this element which rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me. A Latin word exists to designate this wound, this prick, this mark made by a pointed instrument: the word suits me all the better in that it also refers to the notion of punctuation, and because the photographs I am speaking of are in effect punctuated, sometimes even speckled with these sensitive points; precisely, these marks, these wounds are so many points. This second element which will disturb the *studium*, I shall therefore call

punctum; for punctum is also: sting, cut, little hole – and also a cast of the dice. A photograph's punctum is that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me).<sup>7</sup>



*Film still from Michelangelo Antonioni's BLOW UP (1966).*

The author insists here upon the wound that this detail inflicts on the viewer. It is barely noticeable but nonetheless powerful. The metaphor of the point also refers to a strong sense of focus within the image, as if this wound was targeting a very specific space of consciousness. In Barthes' perspective, a sort of inner and quiet violence shakes the receiver of the photograph. In his own words, it "animates" and unsettles him in a subtle way. This form of hidden or even tamed violence is very present in *BLOW UP*: one never sees the actual crime being committed and one can only suspect it or speculate about it. This constitutes one of the most remarkable characteristics of this film: violence is never actually shown but only recomposed and reconstructed through the eye of the photographer. This is evidently very different from most Hollywood-style mysteries where violence, somehow, always ends up becoming the source of a spectacle. This particular violence is therefore internalized through the photographic image: this process stresses in this regard its imaginary nature, as if it first had to be sublimated before becoming an actual part of reality.

But the image of crime in *BLOW UP* inevitably leads to the issue of death and its representation. Someone, indeed, has been murdered: the photographer must therefore take this fact into account and acknowledge the presence of death within photography. It is actually the only presence that he is looking for, in his own personal investigation. In his landmark essay, Barthes has in this regard underlined the strong link between photography and death, as he writes:

Contemporary with the withdrawal of rites, Photography may correspond to the intrusion in our modern society, of an asymbolic Death, outside of religion, outside of ritual, a kind of abrupt dive into literal Death. Life/Death: the paradigm is reduced to a simple click, the one separating the initial pose from the final print.

With the Photograph, we enter into flat Death. One day, leaving one of my classes, someone said to me with disdain: "You talk about death very flatly." – As if the horror of Death were not precisely its platitude! The horror is this: nothing to say about the death of one whom I love most, nothing to say about her photograph, which I contemplate without ever being able to get to the heart of it, to transform it.<sup>8</sup>

Barthes reflects here upon the decline of traditional rituals which, in modern societies, deprives death of its original symbolic power. Photography, in this sense, imposes a literal image of death.<sup>9</sup> In *BLOW UP*, the image of the crime is confused with that of a couple walking in a park, a scene that one could describe as almost trivial. Death is thus fully integrated here within the realm of the everyday: it dissolves itself within this mundane reality and does not possess any true theatrical or dramatic quality. It exists as a mere shadow, as something that is by essence destined to oblivion. It is, in other words, the unnoticeable, a presence that is being absorbed by the surface of things.<sup>10</sup>

But it is precisely this platitude of death that makes it quite disturbing. The photographer in *BLOW UP* cannot leave behind the images that he has enlarged: they come to haunt him and force him to go back to the scene of the crime. The horror of reality is therefore enlightened by this very "banality of evil."<sup>11</sup> It seems to be impossible to distinguish between all the pictures that the photographer has taken in the park: they seem to all look alike and do not apparently reveal a transcending truth.

By unveiling the dark secret of reality, photography signifies here the quiet death of an objective world dominated by the image of its own disappearance. After all, the main character of the film lives in the cultural environment of fashion and advertising. It constitutes a perfect universe of ephemeral illusions, beyond its pretense to eternal youth and physical beauty. The "swinging London" of the period was doomed to vanish after a while: *BLOW UP* represents thus the fragile identity of a world in which people rapidly come and go, agitated by the force of trends and short-lived passions. By insisting upon the fading nature of such a cultural environment, the filmmaker asserts the pivotal role of photography in its ability to express a lasting meaning within a social context that contradicts it. What remains, in all the pictures of the couple in the park, is the perception of deeper layers of reality, beneath all that moves and glitters.

From its origin in the mid-nineteenth century, photography has attempted to conceal death by all means. To this end, the daguerreotype was used by the

emerging middle classes of the time to preserve the physical image of the dead, whose picture would then forever remain among the other members of the family. In *BLOW UP*, this work of concealment is being deciphered and investigated by the photographer himself. He is the one who carefully and methodically seeks to unmask a reality that the world around him does not want to see. There is an almost ethical dimension to this endeavor, although the main character is in no way trying to act as a true representative of justice.

## The Deceptive Strategies of Photography

We want to refer here to the work of René Magritte in his famous *Trahison des images* to better understand the nature of such an endeavor. In the painting, a pipe is being shown while the message that goes with it actually says that this object is not a pipe. The surrealist artist reflected here on the conflict between reality and representation, between material objectivity and imagination. If we were to add the same kind of message at the bottom of the pictures taken by the photographer in *BLOW UP*, we could thus write: “this is not a couple in the park.” By nature, images imply a strategy of deception, as Magritte showed us. In other words, what we think we see (the pipe, the couple in the park) is not actually what we see.<sup>12</sup>

As long as this situation prevails, the subjective identity of photography remains blurry. Any subjectivity, in fact, implies the belief in some form of authenticity, whether it is that of speech or of images. In *BLOW UP*, the photographer must therefore move deliberately beyond the deceiving dimension of photography in order to reach a state of self-expression. He must dig deeper into reality by engrossing particular details that will provide him with definite clues about the crime in the park. The paradox of this process, though, is that the more he explores the unknown part of reality, the more this reality stresses its own enigmatic quality. In other words, beyond the deception of images one can only find their uncanny nature. This sense of the uncanny was evidently at the core of surrealist aesthetics and philosophy, in particular in Magritte’s paintings. But the difference is that, in *BLOW UP*, the enigma of reality is never embodied in a set of dreams and visions. The uncanny, therefore, does not superimpose new images on the visible world: it extracts instead certain fragments from reality (the image of the hand holding the gun in the bush, for instance) in order to demonstrate the power of subjectivity.

The struggle of photography, for the main character, is thus a fight against disappearance: the crime in the park is not supposed to leave any trace. The work of representation entails in this case the thorough erasure of all signs that could lead to its presence. Photography points the finger at what truly happened, as Barthes would have said, at a “*Ça a été*” (“it has been”). One could interpret this fight against disappearance as the mirror of a definite longing for remembrance.

But in the case of *BLOW UP*, it is more the evidence of a subject who seeks to maintain his grip on reality, in spite of his personal distance from it.

The deception of images is not only an important issue for modern art: it is also at the center of contemporary critical discourse, in particular in the work of Jean Baudrillard. In his perspective, modernity rested upon the sovereignty of the Symbolic over the Real, what he called in his later writings the “Simulacrum.”<sup>13</sup> In a world overwhelmed with a constant flow of images, through the media, television, cinema and now the Internet, man is confronted with an excess of signs which, ultimately, provoke an irresistible loss of reality. Baudrillard developed his main philosophical argument in the late 1970s and 1980s, more than ten years after the production of *BLOW UP*. Antonioni’s film, in many ways, anticipated such sensitivity, although it still asserted the belief in the preservation of a form of secrecy within images. In other words, Antonioni was not ready to succumb to the rule of absolute transparency in representation, a rule that Baudrillard would himself celebrate later on. For the Italian director, the possibility of an entirely objective world had to be resisted, since the essence of art, of photography and film, was precisely to disturb the so-called order of things by demanding a radical and original gaze on reality.

It is quite clear that Antonioni foresaw the rise of a new culture in which the power of illusion was becoming paramount. But his own background was still that of a humanist, of a man who was convinced that art and representation possessed an inherent truth-value. In this regard, the philosophy of *BLOW UP* is certainly influenced by Plato and his myth of the Cave: the pictures that the photographer takes in the park are only shadows hiding a more profound reality (the reality of a murder) that one cannot see straight away. Illusion is not to be embraced but rather questioned with an attitude of suspicion. To put it differently, it constitutes a form of alienation from which one has to escape in order to express oneself freely.

The profound existential malaise stemming from a world of illusions becomes visible particularly in the final scene of the movie: the fake tennis match in the park, a true “simulacrum.” Here, the photographer is physically separated from the group of mimes who are performing this staging. He can only see them through a wire fence, as if he was unable to get closer and to make contact with them. He is, so to speak, stuck in the position of a viewer, of someone who only passively relates to his environment. The feeling of an insurmountable distance inhabits these pictures, as if the photographer were estranged from the others and already living in another world. He is truly and literally an outsider, for the very reason that he has strived to solve the enigma of reality by highlighting its falsehood instead of ignoring it or merely taking it for granted.

*BLOW UP* represents therefore the inner conflicts that modern society creates within man by distorting the very notion of truth. Two opposite attitudes are possible in this particular case: either man surrenders completely to the world of

signs that dictate his own social life, or he chooses to decipher them in order to assert his own existential integrity. The main character of the film is somehow caught in the middle: through his profession he belongs to the deceiving universe of instant commercial images while at the same time he adopts a skeptical and detached attitude towards it. In this sense, he is the ultimate figure of the “divided subject”: his cynicism is that of someone who cannot really believe in the modes of representation that mainstream culture constantly imposes and reproduces in everyday life.

This particular subject, who is evidently torn between two opposite worldviews, has to take into account the almighty power of images but, simultaneously, he has to find his own identity within them. The film stresses this search for self-identity within the realm of illusions quite well. The photographer, concretely, builds his own niche in his darkroom: it is there that he enlarges the pictures that will eventually lead him to the discovery of the crime. This closed space isolates him from the social order of the Simulacrum: it enables him to take a closer look at reality and to better grasp its dark and destructive character.

Photography, here, is bound to frame a crime scene. It participates therefore in a criminal investigation although the photographer himself is not part of any judiciary power. This peculiar relationship between photography and crime was already stressed by Walter Benjamin in his seminal essay, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. He linked it to the increasing exhibition value of the artwork in modernity and the parallel decline of its cult value. He notices this special relationship in particular in the pictures of Atget, one of the first great masters of the medium:

To have pinpointed this new stage constitutes the incomparable significance of Atget, who, around 1900, took photographs of deserted Paris streets. It has quite justly been said of him that he photographed them like scenes of crime. The scene of a crime, too, is deserted; it is photographed for the purpose of establishing evidence. With Atget, photographs become standard evidence for historical occurrences, and acquire a hidden political significance. They demand a specific kind of approach; free-floating contemplation is not appropriate to them. They stir the viewer, he feels challenged by them in a new way.<sup>14</sup>

In *BLOW UP*, photographs are actually used as material evidence, although they are not integrated into the judicial process of a trial. To establish evidence, in this case, is not so much to confirm reality as to ask for a new perspective towards it. The scenes in the park are characterized by the strong sense of a vacuum: the couple is shot alone, without anyone walking next to them or even seeing them (except, of course, for the photographer). One can talk therefore of a deserted space, like in Atget's pictures. It is the very structure and purpose of the evidence that requires this void. The subject matter of this evidence must remain detached

from any external influence: it exists by itself within a neutral location and this situation underlines its sheer objectivity.

## The Silence of Photography

The sense of emptiness is also strengthened by the absence of any dialogue or music during the picture-taking session of the couple in the park and later, when the photographer goes back to the crime scene at night to find a dead body or at the end, when he encounters a group of mimes. The only noises that the viewer can distinguish are that of the wind that agitates the branches of the trees. In *BLOW UP*, therefore, the soundtrack plays an essential role in defining an aesthetics of absence. It is primarily the absence of speech, as if silence were the best way to reach the hidden truth behind reality. More precisely, silence in this film constitutes the means through which representation achieves its own subjective identity.

This silence is of course not that of silent movies: it is a deliberate cinematographic strategy that allows for the expression of the uncanny within images. The crime scene, therefore, is a silent one. This silence can be a metaphor for death, but it also stirs a process of suspension within representation, as if images were suddenly frozen in time and separated from the hectic pace of everyday life. The subjective gaze of the photographer asks for this suspension: it is through this process that reality reveals its own secret.

In this film, one can talk thus of an existential nature of silence. *BLOW UP* remains today one of the rare works of modern cinema that has been able to draw attention to this nature. This philosophy of silence, in twentieth-century thought and art, has actually been more thoroughly explored by both philosophers and musicians. One must consider in this regard Heidegger's reflection on silence and its meaning for the definition of a poetic language and also and maybe even more importantly, the musical works of a foremost avant-garde composer such as John Cage.

For Cage, silence constituted an ecstatic experience that enabled man to reach a state of perfect inner peace and harmony with nature and the outside world. His perspective was undoubtedly inspired by Oriental religions, in particular Zen Buddhism. Silence was an essential step on the road to Nirvana. The American composer was engaged in radical musical experiments: they stemmed from the idea that the composer was not truly a creator of musical forms, but rather the ultimate listener of his own environment. This spirit prolonged that of Marcel Duchamp, to the extent that it imposed the image of the modern and avant-garde artist as someone who was more interested in elaborating concepts than in producing a series of actual art works.<sup>15</sup>

In *BLOW UP*, one does not really find the same influence of Far Eastern cultures and religions. Nonetheless, the close attention paid by Antonioni to the role



of silence in the representation of the modern subject's identity enabled him to question through cinema and photography the fundamental belief that, in classical Western thought, the expression of subjectivity necessarily implied the existence of speech.

In other words, silence could then speak as much as words or sounds. In *BLOW UP*, it possesses a remarkable power of fascination. The viewer is perfectly aware of the fact that, because of its presence during the various scenes in the park, something important is happening from a strict narrative point of view. In his own reflection on photography, Baudrillard stressed in this regard the silent quality of photography in contrast with other modern and contemporary media such as cinema, television and advertising. He noticed the lack of motion inherent to photography and underlined therefore the often contemplative nature of such a medium in an era of constant noises and obsession with the speed of images. Photography is speechless, but it is also slow, indeed, and these two dimensions actually enhance the identity of this visual language instead of weakening it. With photography, one can thus go through the world in silence, as if one were traveling in an imaginary fashion.<sup>16</sup>

It is important to notice that Baudrillard's comments are included in a book entitled *The Perfect Crime*, as if photography unveiled the criminal nature of a world ruled by the Symbolic. In his perspective, this silence recreates the "equivalent of a desert," that is, of a wide space that is deprived of any human presence. The park in *BLOW UP*, therefore, could very well be the main metaphor for a modern urban wasteland of which London is only one example. Interestingly enough, this metaphor reappears regularly in the work of Antonioni, from the desolated industrial landscape of Northern Italy in *IL DESERTO ROSSO* to the actual desert of the American West in *ZABRISKIE POINT*.

Silence, in *BLOW UP*, leads therefore to the issue of the void and its possible meaning for the modern subject. This void entails many aspects: it can be understood at a purely existential level, but it can also, from an aesthetic viewpoint, define a radical formal change in the image of both cinema and photography. In other words, it can stress the development of an aesthetics of scarcity, of a minimalist artistic project that was precisely at the core of the Fluxus movement in the 1960s. The photographer's studio, in this regard, is barely furnished and is characterized by white walls with very little decoration, as if his own working and living space reflected the need for such aesthetics.<sup>17</sup>

Moreover, the pictures taken in the park are not so much objective or realist but rather abstract. In fact, the more the photographer manipulates them and enlarges a few details in order to find the key to their enigma, the more they resemble non-figurative artworks in black and white. The technical process of the "blow up," in this sense, makes reality more distant as the subject matter of representation: what is instead at stake here is the appearance of new and intriguing forms that stir the reflection of the photographer and provide him with

essential clues for his investigation. Photography, thus, needs the very abstraction of representation in order to reach its deepest truth-value.<sup>18</sup>

The issue of silence is a difficult one in modern cinema. It is almost completely alien to the tradition of Hollywood filmmaking, with its emphasis on the dramatic identity of the soundtrack, and barely more present in the French New Wave, which still relied heavily upon quality dialogues. More generally, economic, social and cultural modernity stemming from the ever-increasing power of technology and the media is essentially defined by its capacity to disseminate sounds and images at a record speed. By contrast, silence leads to the possibility of both inaction and contemplation. In *BLOW UP*, it does create breaks in the development of storytelling and also turns the main character of the film into a mere spectator of the world. By stressing this contemplative dimension, Antonioni definitely links the aesthetics of photography with that of painting, as opposed to that of the modern mass media. Photography is neither used here as a purely practical tool for reporting news and information nor as a mere means to publicize commercial objects and products, as it is usually the case in modern Western societies, but rather as a sophisticated language that allows us to explore the mystery of the visible world. In order to accomplish this process, the viewer (as well as the photographer) must focus his gaze on a particular detail (a *punctum*) which is charged with great significance.

In other words, he needs to accomplish a freeze-frame (a pause on the image) which stresses the fundamental stillness of things around him. Silence calls for the suspension of motion: it leads the viewer to a world where looking is doing (and being), and not the other way around. Motion, in this perspective, becomes an illusion, as demonstrated by the fake tennis match between the mimes at the end of the film. Here the bodies seem to execute a kind of surreal ballet: the gestures of the players gradually fade in the empty space, since the tennis ball that should be their target only exists in their imagination. The photographer, ultimately, participates in this peculiar performance: he ends up throwing the tennis ball back at the mimes, following their request. His own move becomes therefore the evidence of a generalized make-believe.

It is clear that this perspective defines an original subject for the image. This subjective identity stands in sharp contrast with many of the features usually associated with both cinema and photography. After all, cinema is nothing else, etymologically, than the writing of motion. In *BLOW UP*, the “sound and fury” of modern society (as in the anti-war demonstration, the sex scene with the two young female models in the photographer’s studio and the rock concert of the Yardbirds) calls for an entirely different perception of the external world. The



*Film still from Michelangelo Antonioni's BLOW UP (1966).*

stillness that responds to it is in no way a sign of a lasting harmony, though. It represents and entails the chaos of things, but it also opens to the possibility of a more meaningful relationship between man and his environment. The park, in this perspective, becomes a metaphor for the lost order of nature, an order which emphasizes the meditative character of the elements (the wind blowing in the trees) and the introspective quality of the gaze.

### **The Crime of Modern Art**

Artistic modernity has often been fascinated by the image of crime. One can of course think of the popular tradition of mystery novels and movies, but also of the less commercial field of the avant-garde. In his most recent book, Jean-Michel Rabaté underlines in this regard the aesthetic power of crime as a means of moral transgression.<sup>19</sup> Referring at the beginning of his introduction to a statement by Adorno in *Minima Moralia* (“Every artwork is a crime that is not perpetrated”), he attempts to establish a link between the early twentieth-century modernist avant-garde, in particular, and the work of contemporary popular writers such as James Ellroy or Dan Brown. One can legitimately cast a doubt on the validity of such a link. Nonetheless, Rabaté raises the important issue of the criminal imagination and its role in the construction of modernism, a movement which from the start had to take into account the ongoing presence of violence and evil in the modern world.<sup>20</sup>

As the title of his book suggests, the main source of his argument is the work of Marcel Duchamp, and more precisely his last known work, an installation

called *Etant donnés*, which is part of the Duchamp permanent collection at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Most critics have interpreted this work as an original and rather ironic peep show. For them, the artist conceived of this work as a mere (and last) provocation which was destined to stir the voyeuristic impulses of the general public, since the viewer can actually see a naked woman lying on the back on a bed of leaves through two holes on an old wooden door.

Rabaté, though, takes a different approach: beyond the obvious erotic content of the work, he sees an allegory of crime and death while guessing the presence of a dead body. This reminds us, then, of *BLOW UP*, and of the dead body that the photographer finds in the park after identifying a large spot on his own pictures. In this context, Rabaté stresses the numerous reactions that the original display of Duchamp's work in Philadelphia stirred among the viewers in July of 1969. Several viewers noticed the resemblance between the nude female body at the center of the artwork and that of a corpse similar to those used in anatomy classes for dissection purposes.

This is of course pure speculation.<sup>21</sup> Nonetheless, these comments by Jean-Michel Rabaté allow me to discuss the possible aesthetic and philosophical relationship between *BLOW UP* and the modernism of the early-twentieth century avant-garde, to the extent that a crime scene apparently constitutes the main subject matter of representation both in Duchamp's installation and in Antonioni's film.<sup>22</sup> One could argue that the photographer in this film stands in the position of a voyeur à la Duchamp and goes back in a perverse way to the scene of the crime he has witnessed. But this analogy is quite misleading. A true voyeur finds personal gratification and sexual pleasure in his actions. This is obviously not the case with the main character of the film. To the contrary, his position as an accidental investigator leads him ultimately to a deep sense of unease and discomfort. This is precisely the case because he cannot really solve the mystery of this crime. His own enlargements (as well as his negatives) are in the end stolen from him, which prevent him from completing his investigation. Moreover, the dead body that he discovers at night in the park is later removed from its original location. In other words, the set of evidence that he has been gradually gathering is subject to a thorough process of disappearance: the crime itself ends up vanishing from his own existential horizon, just like the woman who first came to him and asked for his pictures from the park.

Therefore, the photographer only feels the burden of his own powerlessness: he cannot find the keys that would open the doors of truth. He is caught in the position of a mere spectator (as in the fake tennis match) who can only observe things and events without even being able to act upon them. For Antonioni, evidently, such identity is essentially negative. It reflects the crisis of the modern subject who is constantly being deceived by the signs around him. This process of deception is in no way pleasurable: it expresses instead a sense of profound alienation and isolation that today, more than forty years after the production of

BLOW UP, still characterizes the human psyche in Western culture.<sup>23</sup> The silence of the lenses, to quote the title of my own essay, responds thus to the noises of a world where the gaze has lost a large part of its ethical and aesthetic value. The understanding of such a predicament was definitely at the core of artistic modernism: in other words, the crime of the avant-garde could never have existed without a deep awareness of this particular loss.

## **PART III**

# **Subjectivity and the Epistemology of Film Studies**



# Beyond Subjectivity. Bakhtin's Dialogism and the Moving Image<sup>1</sup>

Karl Sierek

## Formalism and the Bakhtin Circle

With the first publication of essays from Russian literary theorists on the Soviet cinema of the 1920s and their translation in the early 1970s in Germany, and a few years later in the United States, the literary and text-theoretical discussions of so-called Formalism were shifted into the center of film theoretical theory development.<sup>2</sup> In the early 1980s, one started talking about a paradigm change in film theory that began with Neo-formalism. This instigated a fruitful discussion of Formalist theories, and thus the impact of the concepts of Eikhenbaum, Shklovsky, Tynjanov and others reached a temporary zenith. Even if the intensity of these debates on the meta-theory of film studies has noticeably diminished in favor of image-political, media-theoretical and film-philosophical lines of inquiry, several crucial theoretical and methodological questions regarding the importance of Formalism in literary theory and its consequences for the analysis of film have remained either unasked or unanswered. Some of these questions revolve around the problems in regard to the perception of film images, the constitution and connecting of chains of meaning and their contextualization that are all involved in the construction of filmic subjectivity.

This blind spot is all the more remarkable, if one considers that even back then, in the 1920s and early 1930s, those fundamental deficits of the Formalist literary theory for an application on moving pictures were much disputed. In particular among members of the so-called Bakhtin Circle: the literary, cultural and text theorists Valentin Vološinov, Pavel Medvedev and Mikhail Bakhtin commented on these questions. Alongside the most well-known critical consolidation of the Formalist literary theory by Medvedev<sup>3</sup> many attempts have been made to further develop the Formalist approaches through the use of a dynamic and multiplied notion of subjectivity. An early critique of psychoanalysis developed by the Bakhtin Circle, essays on novel theory, and a monograph on Dostoyevsky are examples of this. The crucial point here is: How can the problems which have been broached be discussed using a shared basis in the face of the evident medial differences between literature and film? What about the concept of subjectivity regarding the definition of picture which can be used in literary theory and which



also meets the specific requirements of use in film analysis? Summarizing the discussions between Formalists and the Bakhtin Circle could therefore also result in some meta-theoretical insight regarding the current importance of the term of filmic subjectivity as a meaning-generating agency and effect of filmic text, which has been pushed into the background by the Neo-formalist and Cognitivist paradigms of current film theory.

## Differential Subjectivities

The discussion of the subject status in art historical discourse took an interesting turn with the publication of the popular scientific critique of psychoanalysis entitled *Freudianism*,<sup>4</sup> written between 1925 and 1927 by Vološinov, a friend and colleague of Bakhtin. In this work, human subjectivity is understood as a platform for various instances of speech (parole) and seen as a relational mesh of the circulation of meaning between signifying powers. The subject, which stands at the center of the reflections of the Bakhtin Circle, already shows itself in this early work as something which is not in itself identical or consistent. It is understood more as a dialogue which makes the inner psychic dynamic analogous to social speech situations. Inner and outer speech<sup>5</sup> are intimately interwoven and are constantly in motion directed to the other. This conception will – particularly for the analysis of films – have wide-reaching consequences. On the one hand, the substantialization and hypostasizing of the conception of the subject is prevented by this: subjectivity does not see itself as having a fixed position and being a key to the world, but rather as a process which constantly renews itself, and which, like the images in film, produces its effects initially in a progressive movement. On the other hand, this notion of subject eludes the difficulties pointed out by the Saussure affiliated film-linguistics: instead of an a priori cutting off of language as a system in contrast to speech (parole) according to the example set by Saussure, Vološinov, in *Freudianism*, derives the notion of subject from the direct integration of communicative and reflexive social and cultural practices. The difference between the ego and the other, using a hierarchically ordered treatment of subject and object, is therewith not dealt with.

These dynamic subjectivities are also placed in time through yet another characteristic. The synchronic relationship between the “me-self” and “you-other,” me and you, or “own” and “foreign,” which is schematically traced out in speech, experiences an extension in the form of a third instance in *Freudianism*. This instance tears open the relationship of the individual to its environment which is constantly threatened by conclusion, and integrates a diachronic function of the observing third party instance into the synchronic relationship. This function not only guarantees the connection to the social space, but can also be understood as an “historical collective memory.”<sup>6</sup>

In Bakhtin's essays on Dostoyevsky's works, this pluralization and dynamization, both inside and outside of the subject, as well as inside and outside of the arts, is increased. First published in the late 1920s, these essays by Bakhtin derive a new type of artistic thought from the great novels of Dostoyevsky, an author who up till now had been seen for the most part exclusively as a realist: polyphonic writing. This technique not only interprets the novel as an arena of different co-existing voices, but also disassembles the subject-construction of monologuistic positions and perspectives of heroes into a multitude and diversity of "consciousnesses." By putting this term, which usually exists only in the singular, into the plural, Bakhtin creates a concept of subjectivity that interweaves diverse processes of exchange and transformation in a "fundamental plurality of unmerged consciousnesses."<sup>7</sup>

### **Seeing Speech: Subjectivity in Image**

In the course of the 1930s the Bakhtin Circle developed an understanding of subjectivity, based on the dynamic qualities of speech subjects, into a trans-linguistic subject theory which, within the framework of general aesthetics, can claim validity far beyond literature and other forms of art. This theory of subjectivity also has to include non-verbal expressions like gestures, facial expressions and the constructed and natural circumstances found in the environment in which expression takes place. Every expression, understood as an inter-subjective and also aesthetic event – whether acoustic, visual or graphic – is correlated with the social situation in which it occurs. Therewith the specific way in which subjectivity is considered becomes a prerequisite for approaching the principle of Bakhtinian dialogue in applied arts and visual media.

The step from literature to film using Formalist methods is decidedly more difficult to take. In spite of the valuable pioneer work which recognized film as a subject of studies already in the 1920s, the Formalist studies on film style and inner speech, subject and fable, film language and aesthetics remain strangely foreign. That is, they radically ignored the eventfulness of film-produced perception in the cinema as the new image art of the modern era. A number of arguments which were put forward some fifty years later appear to have their starting point in Pavel Medvedev's critique of the Formalist view of poetic construction, which he describes as "the bare converse of a fabricated practical language."<sup>8</sup> One further difference between the Formalist essays on film and the theoretical prerequisites of the Bakhtin Circle to understand film lies first of all in the varying problems revolving around consciousness in relation to the status of moving images in the discourse on aesthetics. While the Formalists tend to limit themselves to the questions of poetical and narratological dimensions, the Bakhtin Circle supports a broader and more open-minded view. They conceptualize the problems, but also the possibility of a theoretical setting of references of both

image and words on a fundamental basis. In his (in some parts rather crude) critique of the Formalists, Medvedev devotes an entire chapter to the “problem of sight,” with references to art theorists such as August Schmarsow, Adolf von Hildebrand, Heinrich Wölfflin, Wilhelm Worringer, Konrad Fiedler and Ernst Casirer. He also does not forget to mention the importance of hearing in music theory, as seen in the works of theorists such as Eduard Hanslick. In Medvedev’s critique, the focus of attention shifts from the construction principles of the works to the *act of producing* and observing subjectivities in the dialogical conflict between the material and the reader: “It was not what was seen that was new, but the forms of seeing themselves.”<sup>9</sup>

Bakhtin tries to equalize the author’s, hero’s, or reader’s own image with that of the respective others in his strategies to expand the concept of dialogue on aesthetics in general. In doing so, he tries to level out one of the most important hindrances; the difference between the “ego” and the “you,” the own and the other, the subject and the object. By suggesting that there is an affinity between thing-representations and word-representations, he, in effect, follows the same line of thought as explored in *Freudianism*. In these relational chains made up of views and speech acts, Bakhtin argues, these thing- and word-representations flow together. Together and yet still conflicting with each other, they make up what one may call the “dialogical image-text of differentiated subjectivities.” Organized according to the model of speech, it creates word and image clouds which, in dialogue with other subject clouds, carry out the task of the animated and active distorting of one’s conception of the other: “In becoming aware of myself, I attempt to look at myself, as it were, through the eyes of another person, another representative of my social group, my class.”<sup>10</sup>

Thus the thinking figure of the one in the other receives a key role. Within the framework of our formative *Identitätsphilosophie* this is not easy to imagine. It is based on a nearly paradoxical line of thought which also marks the deciding difference between dialogic and dialectic: each individual statement is thought of as being in itself differential, as being composed of components of the self as well as of components from the dialogue partner. Without (dialectically understood) the step of sublating the one in the other, both dialogue-units persist in their difference, and yet are still extremely closely connected to one another, intertwined. Bakhtinist trans-linguistics insists upon the differing materiality and mediality of image and words, but it still assumes that a close network of reference and relations exists between artistic works and non-artistic artifacts, and that this pertains to every act of comment. That is, a statement can just as well come from linguistic subjects as from visual subjects. In this case sight is not a linear process which starts with the object that is seen and catches one’s eye simply because it falls within one’s field of vision. The theorists of the Bakhtin Circle see the complex of the sight, conception and recognition of images as a reciprocal and vibrant process of exchange, of dialogue, just like in speech. Visual subjects change, in the

course of constantly changing views, into objects of sight, just as subjects in speech change in the course of dialogue between the one speaker and the other, from one position to the other. This extension of the concept of Jakobson's "shifters" into the field of socio-aesthetic processes does in fact start with the material. That is, with the visually and acoustically perceptible superficial appearance. However, fundamentally it can be understood only as a fleeting, materially unbound and drifting process:

Thus, the aesthetic component (we shall call it for the present an image) is neither a concept, nor a word, nor a visual representation, but a distinctive aesthetic formation which is realized in poetry with the help of the word, and in the visual arts – with the help of visually apprehended material, but which does not coincide anywhere with the material or with any material combination.<sup>11</sup>

The concept of film subjectivity which can be extrapolated from this thesis is therefore released from the brusque counter-agent to the object and transported from an oscillating interaction to other respective subjectivities. On closer reflection they are discoverable as dynamic processes of "image-speech," as dialogical acts of visual-acoustic enunciation.

## **From Shot/Countershot to Multiple Viewings**

Starting with this concept, the scheme of filmic flow set out in film studies in the 1970s, with its successive ordering of shots and coupling of subject-gaze with object-gaze, should be revised. Some of the filmic problems, for example, the understanding of film processes in extremely turbulent and, according to the view/object logic, hardly fathomable constructions, or the "a-logical" view/space arrangements made possible through CGI techniques, should theoretically be made presentable in their consistence and brilliance, which is not easily conceivable using conventional point-of-view (PoV) models.

According to the dialogical understanding of the image-text, each individual shot could be understood as a principally polyphonic arrangement which functions as a platform for numerous and diverse consciousnesses and subjectivities. The shot therefore shows itself not as *one* position,<sup>12</sup> but rather as many, from which the attribution to each of the different subjectivities can be placed in order. It can assume the role of the camera, the position of a deictic gesture, but also, in reciprocal form, the role of the object which the gaze is locked on, or the visual object. Visible and audible components are integrated into polyphonic chains of image-speech elements and develop a dialogue between the subjects at eye level.

The most striking way in which this methodological concept horizon proves itself successful is in complex image and sound sequences, for example those

which are cultivated in the works of Robert Altman. Without the theoretical background and the analytical concept horizon of the Bakhtin Circle, these processes can be only rudimentarily reflected upon. In fact, these processes are the epitome of tonal and visual polyphony and polyglossy. But also simpler, smoother film-aesthetical concepts, like those in the films of Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet, demonstrate their brilliance and singularity best in the light of such instruments of analysis.

The first steps to this approach can be seen in Robert Stam's analysis of Woody Allen's *ZELIG*.<sup>13</sup> This work, however, concentrates mainly on the narrative aspects and leaves the here intimated dimensions of the polyphonic image construction untouched. Martin Flanagan's recently published attempt also goes in this direction.<sup>14</sup> But the most broadly growing method of image-analytical differentiation of various components of subjectivity comes from Edward Branigan.<sup>15</sup> His scheme of six elements constituting a basis for the analysis of PoV structures can be understood as a pragmatically applied attempt to deal with the complexity of components of filmic subjectivity which oppose one another working with operationally usable categories.

However, the problem with Branigan's theory of subjectivity can be found exactly in this pragmatism. That is to say, while Bakhtin situates his pluralization of subjectivity in an aesthetic, cultural-historic, and critical political context, Branigan presents his hypothesis only as an antithesis and further development of the behaviorist process of trial and error. He avoids a crude dichotomy of "right" or "wrong" acts of perception. He persists in using the scheme of an alignment of "successful" assignments of meaning in the sense of an exclusion process: hypotheses are formed only to be subsequently accepted or dismissed, verified or found invalid over the course of narration. Still, the understanding of image sequences in dialogue form is to be interpreted as a cumulative process. One which does not annul the respective other as an error of understanding, but rather allows it to be and to make it productive as one of the possible, but not necessarily subsumable options of narrative logic.

This many-sided discourse on multiple subjectivities therefore opposes a one-dimensional analogue extension through the succession of shots or syntagmas. Instead, this discourse unfolds a multidimensional space of reading and re-reading, seeing and remembrance, which develops from the various sides and adversely proceeding vectors of image and head movements as well as from the visual axis. This caption produces a richness of facets of the image-text and rules out a lack of contradiction. This richness can develop itself even outside the measurable dimensions of film space and narrative stringency.

## From Formalism to Dialogue

At the time of the first publication of his Dostoyevsky book and his subsequent banishment to Siberia in 1929, Bakhtin and his colleagues had already formulated their most distinctive differences into Formalist methods. These can be summarized – in regard to the question of the construction of plural subjectivities – as follows:

- From the linguistic system to the process of enunciation: The sign is understood through its function in the “process of living interaction”<sup>16</sup> of expression.
- From style to polyphony: Bakhtin’s main work “Discourse in the Novel” promotes the understanding of manifold layered linguistic and presentational practices of varying “consciousnesses” and makes the valuation of polyphonically arranged films first understandable in their comprehensiveness. Without this perspective, the analytical work on the image-text remains on the level of close-meshed detail perceptions and stylistic features: “A stylistic analysis of the novel cannot be productive outside a profound understanding of heteroglossia, an understanding of the dialogue of languages as it exists in a given area.”<sup>17</sup>
- From an individual work to diachronic intertextualization: Without laying bare the immanence of the individual work and its embedding in the greater corpora, the principle of being unsecluded and the dialogical openness of the artistic world cannot be portrayed. The genre, as an example of this overlapping unit of analysis, is thus made clear as the historical memory of an artwork: “A genre lives in the present, but still always *remembers* its past, its beginning.”<sup>18</sup>

## Image-Text and Productive Sight: Author/Hero/Figure

What effect does this spatiotemporal dynamization of the research on texts and image-texts have on the relationship between the various levels inside the text, be it in novels or films? How do authors, heroes and figures act in this differential play? And finally: how do the dynamics between the text and the viewer in the cinema, or in front of the screen or monitor form themselves?

For all three subject spheres, that of the author, of the inner diegetic figures, and that of the viewer, one must “affirm someone else’s ‘I’ not as an object but as another subject.”<sup>19</sup> The both parallel running and criss-crossed path of the three-part dialogue of the viewer with the work – the dialogue between the viewer and the inner diegetic characters and other agents or actors in the film, as well as the author’s relationship with “his” heroes throughout the making and presentation of the film – is not tied to mono-causal or hierarchical subject/object relationships, they approach each other eye to eye.

This upward revaluation of the material to a living, contestable and idiosyncratic movement takes over the productive dynamics of the author as well as the viewer with the elements of “his/her” text. Those elements can either be the time-

space elements, or the figures from the story being told. Both relationships are carried by the dialogical principles which unmistakably appear to be shaped by social, or more exactly, by very specific social circumstances. All of the participants in this discourse engage themselves in a relationship, answer each other and resolve their conflicts in this image-textual arena or agora.<sup>20</sup>

Thereby Bakhtin takes the respectively existing circumstances which accompany and frame the dialogue with the work as the starting point. The radical trans-linguistic perspective of this theorem for the understanding of both the creation and the presentation of image-text can also be readily used in film theoretical paradigms. The film viewer manifests him/herself as a productive agent of text creation, as a subject next to other subjects which are part of the process of film production and presentation. The viewer composes his/her accents, creates connections, and reorders the signifying elements of the work respectively according to their own individual perceptive background.<sup>21</sup> This text producer has emancipated him/herself from the empirical subject of the author and the cinema viewer. As a result, every direct set reference between the author and the text is rejected as “faulty biographism.”<sup>22</sup> Instead of looking at traces of the author’s life on an author-theoretical level, or hermeneutically getting to the bottom of his/her intentions, the image-text producing subjectivities create reservations, build hindrances, distance themselves, or bring unwanted direct proximity to the described object or subject as well as to the empirical counterpart. In other words, the viewer changes from a monistic, formalistic subject-constitution in which the potential possibilities for understanding are limited in order to be made operational and measurable, to a dialogical constitution, in which polymorphism, the many-sidedness and the equivocation in a pluridimensional space for expression are stressed and seen as a prerequisite. His subjectivities differentiate themselves.

These acts of social subjectivization still do not remain free floating and without concrete vectorial alignment within the space of enunciation. In trans-linguistics, statements are interpreted as being sent to their addressees instead of being embedded in abstract systems. Utterances take place in concrete situations and can be understood only in these situations. Image-speech is also always “colloquial speech, always addressed to somebody or talking for him or about him.”<sup>23</sup> In his fundamental work on the theory of literary chronotopes, written during his years of exile, Bakhtin emphasized the idea that every work, understood as a rhetorical agency, is principally directed to the hearer or the reader and, to a certain extent, anticipates their possible reactions. Directed, because the acoustic and visual statements are applied to the reader, listener or viewer; at the same time these utterances are, in a rhetorical sense, also directing because the image-text is able to anticipate the audience’s answers. Read, hear, see: No sensory organ is on principle privileged in this process; no location of interaction – reading room, orchestra hall, or cinema – as determining factor is suppressed. The context of the respective utterance is broad.

## Subjectivity and/as Corporeality

In his studies on the culture of laughter in the Renaissance which he carried out in the 1930s and 1940s, Bakhtin was ultimately successful in adding an extremely lasting facet to the understanding of the subject which is important for the current discussion on corporeality. In *Rabelais and His World* he builds on the idea of a subjectivity which is open and which, at the same time, overflows the world of objects, and transfers this idea to the discourse on human corporeality. He was fascinated by the descriptions of the physical nudes, by the radical Volte in Rabelais's *Gargantua*, who drew the attention of the reader away from the physical presence and onto the backside, the missing parts of the body, the flaws, openings, coverings and masks. The subject which was developed out of this therefore initially encloses its corporeality, in order to secondly, determine this corporeality out of these absences. This inversion consequently enables an immense dynamic in the presentation of human subjectivities which undergo a constant suction from presence to absence, a dynamic from here to there, an extension from one's own to the foreign. Like a whirlwind, a textual hunt begins to loom on the horizon, a whirlwind in which the subject extends him/herself, stretching from his/her innermost and most intimate core, crossing the boundaries to the purely material and physical manifestations of the self and one's surroundings.

With this last step in the opening of the understanding of the subject leading to the theories of unbound corporal subjectivities, Bakhtin's contribution to subjectivity research in text and art theory has conclusively distanced itself from the lucid groundwork of the Formalists.<sup>24</sup> It is not surprising that, for some paradigms of film theory, this secession is hard to accept, even today. Especially for those who cultivate a special affinity to Formalistic literary theory of the first years of the Soviet Union.

## Form/Dialogue/Neo-form

A subjectivity which forms and differentiates itself through corporal experience? Perhaps it is exactly this thought which impeded a consideration of decisive points of criticism to be made by the Bakhtin Circle in regard to the Formalistic theorems in the field of modern film theory since the 1970s. One argument which would support this idea is the fact that the School of Wisconsin, which explicitly builds on Formalism, chose, as the second pillar of its meta-theoretical premise, an approach that also distanced itself from corporeal modes of perception: Cognitivism.

The remarkable combination of Formalism and Cognitivism that to this day can be established, albeit only with considerable bending, into a consistent set of film-theoretical premises, was initially assumed to be a thoroughly reasonable extension of text-analytical questions to viewer-theoretical problems. Instead of



explaining the activities of the reader-subjects out of complexly networked, image-based manners of speech within a certain concrete ensemble of social, cultural and corporal environments (as in the further development of Formalistic axioms through the Bakhtin Circle), Kristin Thompson, David Bordwell, and other Neo-formalists chose the approach of applied psychology, which was derived from behaviorism: "Film has attractions too, and these function as stimuli for spectatorial response."<sup>25</sup> This approach limits itself to the processing of cues and accommodation to formerly learned schemes. In its "more modest"<sup>26</sup> concept, the cognitivist approach locates the individual communication process in controlled situations, where the dialogicity theorems postulate a concept-historical and transdisciplinary applied theory of human subjectivity. While the representatives of the Bakhtin Circle critically incorporate the perceptions of the cultural philosophy and art studies of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries<sup>27</sup> into their understanding of the complex exchange processes between differing subjectivities, the reductionist approach of Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell makes do with psychological-learning theories of middle-level range<sup>28</sup> which, even after the cognitive turn of the 1960s, do not fundamentally dissociate themselves from the models of stimulus/response: "Neo-formalism as an approach does offer a series of broad assumptions about how artworks are constructed and how they operate in cuing audience response."<sup>29</sup> So Neo-formalistic strategies of inquiry that take the stimulus of a formal construction of the artwork and the response of the audience into consideration hold on to methodological paradigms of a philosophy of science. In retrospect, one can say that this approach was already counterposed by Konrad Fiedler's concept of image perception, which he developed near the end of the 1920s and which had a considerable impact on the works of the Bakhtin Circle. Fiedler established this model on a differentiated and specific perception theory of art, without any reductions in the analysis of the formal construction characteristics of individual works. It is therefore particularly suitable for figurative works of art, namely narrative: "Realistic art is just as constructivist as constructivist art."<sup>30</sup>

It seems that the cognitivism of the School of Wisconsin still adheres to the premises of positivism found in the discussions which took place in the late 1920s. According to Medvedev, this also replaced the extensively perceivable subject through a recipient model, which "reduced the sensual quality to a physical and physiological element, juxtaposing the eye, like an abstract physiological camera, to the phenomenon as an abstract physical quantity."<sup>31</sup> But what Kristin Thompson was able to distill out of the critical texts of the Formalists in her programmatic study at the end of the 1980s, was to be incorporated as a scheme in Bordwell's contributions barely ten years later. A scheme in which the subject, following Talcott Parsons'<sup>32</sup> social alignment theory of structural-functionalism from the 1930s, is reduced to a role in the social system: the "subject is, most obviously, a role in the social system."<sup>33</sup>

Indeed, the analysis of sign stimuli and schemes provides a suitable reference grid for explaining relatively simple processes for understanding film. However, it does not suffice to explain aesthetically relevant nuances and to find their function in the dynamics of the productive reading; a function which in many films is not to be found in the solving of problems, but rather in the creation of a certain problem-consciousness in the first place. And exactly this problem-oriented, even refractory, reading emanates from a dynamic relationship between the production and presentation of film texts and the equally dynamic subjectivities. We are not talking about an abstract understanding of film “as a specific category of phenomena,”<sup>34</sup> but rather about the “how of the production” of this phenomenon. Just as Bakhtin proposed to formulate a set of requirements for the study of literature, film analysis should also start out with five prerequisites for its research strategies, all of which then can work together in the production of the dialogical image-text. What should such a set of requirements contain? Firstly, the auditory and visual *material values*, which Bakhtin describes as “the phonic side of the word, the musical constituent proper.”<sup>35</sup> Secondly, the denotative *sign function* with all of its connotative varieties and nuances. Thirdly, the *contextual moments* of verbal and visual utterances in their temporal flow. Fourthly, that palette of *intensities* of intonation and coloration during the presentation, also known as “immersion,” that serves the purpose of making cinema imaginable as a “festival of feelings.” And finally, the cumulative feeling of the corporal images on the part of the viewer, the absorbing capacity of the gestures and mimicry of the characters, of the becoming aware of the eventfulness of film processes in the “feeling of verbal activeness”<sup>36</sup> of audio-visual speech, which is often analyzed in current media theory as the effect of the attainment of presence value, and in film-theoretical contributions as the problem area of enunciation. This five-layered set should basically be used as a guideline during every analytical endeavor. It is obvious that the findings of this type of analysis are more comprehensive than the results of an analytical strategy in which “we can think of norm-driven subsystems as supplying ‘cues’ for the spectator.”<sup>37</sup>

Nevertheless, one advantage of the formalist-cognitivist theory-amalgam is obvious, especially in the discussion of the importance of cinematic subjectivities: the skepticism toward an inflationary use of the term subject, as seen in Bordwell’s critique on the “subject-position theory,”<sup>38</sup> could serve to curb the substantialization and hypostasizing of this concept, as well as its vague use in quite a number of film-theoretical concepts of the 1970s and 1980s. However, that the rather striking idea of a subjectivity without a subject is not easy to sustain is indeed proven by Thompson and Bordwell’s own use of it – which is not too seldom found in their own work. Reducing the multi-layered concepts of plural subjectivity to measurable indicators and workable variables, as seen in applied psychology, and to the two measurable factors of “perceptual and mental subjectivity,” Thompson ascribes to the films invariable characteristics, the possession of

which should distinguish them: “The BIG SLEEP has little perceptual subjectivity, while THE BIRTH OF A NATION contains numerous PoV shots.”<sup>39</sup> With this “have” and “contain,” a relational category which describes an interplay between filmic utterances becomes a product of objectification, which is either “in” a film or not. So what Bakhtin already called for in 1924 seems yet to find expression in the texts of Neo-formalism: “What is repeated, what returns, what establishes connections are not constituents of meaning immediately (in their objectiveness, i.e., their complete detachment from the speaking personality of a subjectum), but – constituents of the relational self-activity of the living self-sensation of the activity.”<sup>40</sup>

## Conclusion

With this plea of a not only active, but also productive subjectivity, the prerequisites of the current debate on the importance of cinematic subjectivities can be summed up in three premises: Firstly, psychic processes can be understood as speech events (parole) and as such do not differ fundamentally from verbal utterances in the social and aesthetic sphere. Secondly, these utterances always include not only the spoken words, but also the (situational, imaginary, social, or material) environments in which these words are said: they are to be understood as image-realization within the framework of a creating process, comparable to a text in context. Thirdly, the formulations of the Bakhtin Circle are not limited to the explanation of the relationship between psychic processes and those of a verbal nature, but principally lay claim to validity for all significant movements, therefore also for film. While the Formalists drew on literary studies and linguistic theorems, the theorists of the Bakhtin Circle developed a trans-linguistic conception of subjectivity out of these premises. These ideas reflected similar discourses in the fields of philosophy, psychoanalysis, art studies, and sociology.

Therefore, what already provided occasion for intense disputes back in the mid-1920s appears to stir the meta-theory of film studies to this day. Is it sensible to pursue research with an open horizon in transdisciplinary perspectives? Is it necessary, especially in art and film studies, to incorporate and reflect upon the circumstances and point of view of both the research and researcher, which is fundamentally a question of subjectivity? Is it possible to combine the broad horizon of culture-theoretical reflection with the attention to detail involved in film-analytical research? Or will a self-limited restraint lead to limited results? The answers to these questions can already be found in the Bakhtin Circle’s critique on all forms of Formalism.

# Imaginary Subject

Jacinto Lageira

Experience often shows that the notion of subjectivity presupposes a psychophysical base frequently related to the subject. This experience is not a natural given but a historical construction, evidenced by the fact that Western thought has long been able to refer to “self” and “I” without a foundation in the concept of subject, nonexistent at the time, not to mention other traditions of thought (Chinese, for example) where neither the notion of subject nor subjectivity exist. There were then, paradoxically, one or several subjectivities without a subject. Sometimes, its absence from Ancient Greece to the modern era dates back to the advent of the subject. However, the origin of the modern notion of the subject is still much debated from dating its emergence (Saint Augustine, Montaigne, Descartes, Locke, or Kant?) to figuring its content and signification, all of which are further obscured by integrating other sociocultural and philosophical constructs such as “person” and “individual.” Strange as it may seem, individual subjectivity is not the same as the subjectivity of a person or that of the subject. We therefore have to find out on what base subjectivity is founded, “base” being the translation of Aristotle’s term *hupokeimenon* (from *hupokesthai*, “placed under, serving as base or foundation for”), from which the Latin term *subjectum* (“that which lies beneath,” but also “that which is constant”) was forged, followed by subjectivity, subjectivity, and subjectification.

## Definitions

Subjectivity thus belongs to the rich history of the subject and although it shares several elements with the notions: “I,” “self,” “ego,” “me,” “ipseity,” and “sameness” – their complex overlapping is clearly articulated in the often ironically used English expression, “me, myself, and I” – subjectivity distinguishes itself from the rest ontologically, logically, grammatically, and sociologically. Without retracing here the whole history of the concept,<sup>1</sup> two moments should be noted: the presence of the subject to itself, explored for the first time by John Locke in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*,<sup>2</sup> and the notion of aesthetic subjectivity conceptualized by Immanuel Kant in *Critique of Judgment*.<sup>3</sup>

For me to apprehend my aesthetic subjectivity, I first have to understand what makes me myself through all the vicissitudes of existence that bitterly or happily transform that very subjectivity. The latter inevitably changes through space and

through time, yet I am still me, conscious that I am myself, that I am only myself, that my subjectivity is unique and can belong to none other than myself. According to Locke – who does not use the term subjectivity – “personal identity” can only refer to:

A thinking intelligent being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider it self as it self, the same thinking thing in different times and places; which it does only by that consciousness, which is inseparable from thinking, and as it seems to me essential to it: it being impossible for anyone to perceive, without perceiving, that he does perceive. [...] For since consciousness always accompanies thinking, and it is that, that makes everyone to be, that he calls self; and thereby distinguishes himself from all other thinking things, in this alone consists personal identity, i.e. the sameness of a rational being: and as far as this consciousness can be extended backwards to any past action or thought, so far reaches the identity of that person, it is the same self now it was then; and it is by the same self with this present one that now reflects on it, that that action was done.<sup>4</sup>

Other than the significant reference to memory contributing to a definition of self, Locke introduces the unprecedented notion of self-consciousness (not present in Descartes) which leads him to conclude that “consciousness is what makes personal identity”<sup>5</sup> and “consciousness makes the same person.”<sup>6</sup> Although corporal identity is not valorized, the author nonetheless highlights its determining role, to which one must add considerations of language and signs in language since Locke is the first to introduce the term *semiotics* to philosophy in this same essay. Self-consciousness, the body, language, and memory are thus joined in a radically innovative conception, the repercussions of which will be duly examined.<sup>7</sup>

The interest, richness, and strength of the Kantian conception of the aesthetic subject lies in that it denotes a subjectivity without subjectivism, in other words, a private, solipsistic sensibility or intelligibility closed in on itself, that would thus not be able to be shared or communicated. Since aesthetic judgment is subjective with a pretension to universality, while judging works of art, I claim that my subjectivity is a sensibility that can be understood and felt by all, without the judgment itself being a general one addressed to a select few or specific community. The aesthetic universality of human beings would reside then in a universally shared subjectivity – also true for practical reason – which goes against all particularisms, relativisms and pluralisms that since then, under the pretense of overtures and tolerance for all sorts of differences, are in the end, but a way of keeping the other at a distance as radically different rather than a mutual recognition of subjectivities.

Sociocultural categorizations in the field of aesthetics, in this case the aesthetics of cinema, are peculiar in that they seem to naturalize clearly historical stages of thought in order to transform them into raw data. It is remarkable that in certain Anglo-American trends,<sup>8</sup> the major influences on the recent notion of subject in film theory are attributed to Louis Althusser and Roland Barthes. “The death of man” to which Michel Foucault refers at the end of *Les Mots et les Choses*,<sup>9</sup> should also be mentioned, and a whole pan of structuralist thought that gave primacy to structures over the subject. This is to sideline the quantity of philosophical works on the concept of the subject that continue to be published, still using structuralist approaches that apply a single frame or paradigm to a complex and diversified problematic, constantly shifting at least as frequently as there are practices and actions performed by subjects outside the world of film.

Upon examination, one realizes that only a small number of texts address the question, and those that do, focus on the sociopolitical or ideological dimensions of the subject, notably those with psychoanalytic and gender studies angles. These often deal with formal, sometimes formalist typologies, to which notions of subjectivity are submitted without examination of what is or might be *a* or the subject, in such a way that the frames of reference actually construct the notion that they purport to explain. The term subjectivity itself only appears sporadically throughout these specialized works, or indirectly in other forms that are, in reality, quite different, such as narration, narrator, speaker, enunciator, statement, enunciation, spectator, spectatorial, discourse, diegesis. These are all terms that imply subjects or bases (*hupokeimenon*) for speakers.

Between ideological reductionism and isotopic formalism, that have both professed excellent analyses, a third way seems practicable that would not excessively invest films with a focus on the real life social conflicts that cinema is supposed to be the magnifying or deforming mirror of, nor excessively formalize notions defined solely by functions, modalities, structures and models; codes far removed from our existence as subjects, even faced with the worst or best of films.

## Being Imaginary

This preamble was necessary to understand the processes of projection, identification, distanciation, empathy, or rejection by the spectator before the fictional object of the film. Although the base is still clearly the subject (me, here and now, in flesh and blood, watching), the subjectivity that transports or transposes itself momentarily by its aesthetic attitude toward the film is not completely real. The film is an imaginary object that requires a game of make-believe so that its functions and significations can gain sufficient grasp of my subjectivity. Knowing that none of this is real, one can only presume that my subjectivity is also engaged momentarily in a game of make-believe in which I am no longer quite myself but another, having constructed a different subjectivity capable of sharing the fic-

tional status of what is perceived. For the duration of the viewing, my subjectivity has become imaginary.

The “imaginary subject” is not other to myself such that it would remain inaccessible. On the contrary, it has its source in the subject and subjectivity that make me who I am, while differentiating itself by an engagement with the world during which my consciousness is situated in two distinct ways: either by stipulating the existence of concrete reality, or by distinguishing certain things, states or actions that only exist in the imagination. This fundamental phenomenological conception was extensively developed by Edmund Husserl and later by Jean-Paul Sartre, thus establishing two modes of thought: realizing consciousness and imaging consciousness. Indivisible, the first perceives, thinks and interacts with the tangible world; the second relates to images, beings, imaged and imagined things that are purely fictional – what Husserl calls *fictum*, and *ficta*. What is the state then of our subjectivity whilst relating to the fictional?

From a phenomenological perspective, the “subjective camera” perfectly corroborates the idea that all consciousness is consciousness of something, therefore consciousness for someone or some instance. The spectator is faced with perceived and transmitted *ficta* from this other person or instance of the film; what he sees is not directly what is represented but what is represented through what the representation offers. In Robert Montgomery’s remarkable film *LADY IN THE LAKE* (1947), we are meant to see what detective Philip Marlowe perceives. We are not so much in his place – taking the place of his subjectivity – contrary to what we might hastily assume, as we perceive the representation of what his subjectivity perceives. This game of *mise-en-abyme* is reinforced in Spike Jonze’s film, *BEING JOHN MALKOVICH* (1999) since we are placed in the situation of seeing what other characters in the film see from inside the head of John Malkovich, and because the latter also finds himself at times spectator inside his own head while maintaining his psychophysical presence. Thus we see either what the characters see of what Malkovich sees, or what Malkovich perceives himself of himself as a perceiving subject of perception. It is further complexified by the fact that the actor John Malkovich plays himself. In this case, the subject of perception is himself in the act of perceiving with the philosophically bizarre exception that the Malkovich inside his own head is different from the one having a conversation, and clearly does not realize that he is observing himself from the inside or that he is being observed from the inside by another “himself.” More precisely then, are there two consciousnesses in a single body or two bodies with a single consciousness? An eminently Lockean question since the English philosopher himself had pondered this enigma.<sup>10</sup>

The spectator is the one whose consciousness can both realize the concrete and material reality of the cinematic apparatus (realizing consciousness) and project itself imaginatively into the ongoing film (imaging consciousness) without leaving its psychophysical base, so to speak. My capacity to divide and duplicate (*dé-*

doubler) my imaginary self explains how the base can maintain its state of sameness so that my subjectivity can simultaneously locate itself aesthetically in the film while remaining itself. The spectator creates himself as a subjective double that allows him to perceive, feel and live all sorts of experiences through and by way of the film solely within the ambit of his imagination. During the time of viewing, my subjectivity doubles itself into realizing and imaging without ever being separated from one another in such a way that the effect of the real acts upon me concretely. I cannot pretend to be moved or affected either positively or negatively, the subjectivity caught in the fiction being neither false nor illusory, simply imaginary.

The imaginary is not only grounded in the real, it is itself a kind of reality. Edgar Morin sees in this a fundamental anthropological dimension, taking up elements of Sartre's *Imaginaire*, beyond our dynamic relation to the moving image:

The more powerful the subjective need, the more the image on which it is fixated tends to be projected, alienated, objectified, hallucinated, fetishized [...], the more the image, despite its apparent objectivity and because of its apparent objectivity, is full of this need to the point that it takes on a surreal aspect. In the hallucinatory encounter of the greatest subjectivity and the greatest objectivity, in the geometrical location of the greatest alienation and the greatest need, there is the double, specter-image of man. This image is projected, alienated, objectified to such a degree that it manifests itself as an autonomous, foreign specter with an absolute reality of its own. This absolute reality is also an absolute super-reality: the double is concentrated there, as if all the needs of the individual were realized through it, first and foremost his most crazily subjective need: immortality.<sup>11</sup>

In the make-believe game with the film, my imaginary subjective double's aim is much more existential than it seems, seeking to escape, through the imagination, the finite nature of every subjectivity that characterizes the modern subject since Kant. If my imaginary double allows me to detect what might be the full realization of my subjectivity, as it belongs to the fictional realm of all possible worlds, it still continually refers me back to my real subjectivity: finite base, limited in space and in time, but necessary for the apparition of what is not actually there.

The image is but a double, a reflection, in other words, an absence. Sartre says that "the essential characteristic of a mental image is the way the object is absent within its very presence." To which we must add its reciprocal clause: to be present within its very absence. As Sartre says himself: "the original is incarnated, it descends into the image." The image is a lived presence and a real absence, an absence-presence.<sup>12</sup>



This synchronic double status of the image – effective presence and a just as effective absence – inevitably generates in me a two-folding (*dédoublement*) of my subjectivity, with the fundamental consequence that it is not the totality of my subjectivity – if indeed I could ever be certain of grasping it entirely – that interacts with the fiction, but only the imaginary part.

## Twofoldness

It is thus inaccurate to say that “I” identifies with the film, its characters, the diegesis, or that “I” empathizes with this character, as the other subject in the film, given that my entire subjectivity does not adhere to the whole fiction, thankfully enough. All the more so as the subjectivities presented in various instances of the film are never completely given, being just aspects, versions, or snatches. The incompleteness of subjective instances means that by their nature, they can never be filled by my subjectivity, which does not try to complete their reality but rather their imaginary part. S.T. Coleridge foresaw this in his “suspension of disbelief”<sup>13</sup> as did psychologist Edward Bullough in his definition of the proper aesthetic distance, halfway between psychical over-distance which is excessively disinvested from the fiction and a psychical under-distance which is too invested; both being serious obstacles to the proper aesthetic experience of an object.<sup>14</sup> The game of make-believe, or “as if,” requires a subjectivity that is not engaging itself as strictly subjective but rather developing into an imaginary subjectivity. Because this imaginary subjectivity is dynamic, investing the object as Kant demonstrated, it is productive, participating in the fulfillment of the entire aesthetic experience. The work of film-makers – be it fiction, documentary, or experimental film – is to disassociate, more or less thoroughly, *realizing from imaging* subjectivity, tending either to bring them closer by all kinds of subterfuges and maneuvers, or to distance them to the point of having one triumph over the other.

One example of this powerful distortion device is to make the status of the spectator’s imaginary subjectivity shift during the time frame of the film, thereby demonstrating two things: that this subjectivity is indeed imaginary and that it is quasi infinitely plastic. In John Woo’s *FACE/OFF* (1997), the dovetailing and later disjoining of subjectivities, instead of losing the spectator by too great a de-subjectification – which does however take place for a time – on the contrary, reinforces her capacity to invest simultaneously or successively various subjectivities. To find the location of a chemical bomb hidden in the city by terrorist Castor Troy (Nicolas Cage), FBI agent Sean Archer (John Travolta) undergoes plastic surgery in order to have Troy’s face grafted onto his, allowing him to infiltrate the prison in which Troy’s brother Pollux is an inmate and access information about the bomb’s location. Dispossessed of his identity, Troy then takes on Archer’s face. In this inversion of bodies but not minds, we accept or reject their respective mental states while their bodies have undergone a specifically Lockean change: a

consciousness of self in another body. For the viewer, her imaginary subjectivity is thus redoubled since she is now in the psychophysical imaginary of the character's transformed imaginary. The other's subjectivity is thus emotionally invested thanks to the play of fiction which presents several subjectivities inside the film's *internal permutation of subjects*. The dovetailing of imaginary subjectivities is dizzying in that we penetrate fictionally the image of a subject (character) that has himself integrated another psychophysical image of himself (character in another character), hence experiencing himself as an entirely different subjectivity – not to mention the fact that Castor and Pollux are twins. We have thus eased our way into what Husserl called the power of perception of an image within an image, within an image, each according to his imaginative capacities. This propensity to integrate another subjective image, then another and another, is proof that the primary identification or empathy with the “effect of subjectivity” of the first appearance of this or that character is not more exact, true, valid or even plausible than a third or a fifth.

In an entirely different genre, *CET OBSCUR OBJET DU DÉsir* (1977) by Luis Buñuel, tells the strange story of Matthieu Faber (Fernando Rey), in love with one and the same psychical woman, Conchita, incarnated in two separate bodies (Carole Bouquet, Angela Molina). This seems to be the first instance of the like in cinema. There is a scene where, while Faber is speaking to Conchita 1, she moves toward the window and, transitioning through a foreground shot of Faber, she turns around and we now see Conchita 2, which does not perturb her lover in the least. It makes sense: he is subjectively in love with Conchita's subjectivity, not directly with her body, which is simply a vessel. In such cases, with one subjectivity in two distinct bodies, which subjectivity(ies) are we to identify with? In the end, once the initial surprise is subsided, we have no problem moving from one to the other as Faber does. The problem is precisely that it does not pose our subjectivities any problem to integrate this or that character, to change our own psychophysical feelings during the course of the film, as if it were all perfectly normal. This is due to the plasticity of our imaginary subjectivities, otherwise well anchored and founded in our consciousnesses and concrete, real, tangible selves. Because I have stayed myself and my subjectivity has maintained its state of sameness, I can project an imaginary subjectivity precisely because it is imaginary without endangering my realizing consciousness. This film exacerbates the subjectivity of the desiring imaginary simultaneously and on different levels, of the author, the character and the spectator; the desire for the desire of another imaginary subjectivity, a movement that appears subtly in the title since the film is not about the obscure *subject* of desire but about the object of desire of the subject.

## Fictional Imaginary

By a curious psychoanalytic transgression, a number of authors have constructed Lacanian analyses of the imaginary present in various works, expressly prohibited by Lacan himself, which he justified by the fact that the psychoanalytic relationship can only occur between two speaking subjects, each of us endowed with our own imaginary subjectivity which remains literally speaking. And yet, in the attempts at a psychoanalytic reading of film, it is the receiving imaginary subjectivity that speaks of and for the film. Without delving into this *Verneinung*, both affective and intellectual of the Lacanian proscription, we still have to recognize that regrettable confusions take place when attempts are made to superimpose the Lacanian and the fictional imaginary. Because they come from and return to the subject, to any subject (different instances in the film or present in the spectator), the identification of the *fictive* imaginary – that of the subject’s fantasies – and the *fictional* imaginary – the projections and reception of the spectator – as concrete cases of transference is a bit hasty. In the former, there can be fiction, hence falsehood, denial, lack (*manque*), negation, repression, fantasy, imaginary experiences of the subject; in the latter, what is felt and thought in an imaginary way is postulated from the start as fictional. Hence the subjective and fictive imaginary in psychoanalysis is based on a psychological truth about the subject that can eventually be brought to light whereas the subjective and fictive imaginary in film is neither true nor false, being simply conceived and received as fictional. And assuming there were a fictional truth, as most theory dealing with fiction suggests, it is only true or valid within the fiction that bears it. That the fictive imaginary subject be present and active during the viewing of the film does not automatically make it a fictional imaginary subject by the action of inserting fictive material (his real and personal imaginary) into fictional material (neither true nor false generic imaginary).

Since Jean-Louis Baudry’s article, “Le dispositif: approches métapsychologiques de l’impression de réalité,”<sup>15</sup> the analogy between cinematic apparatus and psychological system in its psychoanalytic construction by simple superimposition of the unconscious imaginary and the fictional imaginary, has falsified both the notions of subjectivity and imaginary. Especially by not clearly differentiating the “unreal” (which Sartre did do, after Husserl, at the end of *L’Imaginaire*<sup>16</sup>) of art works, that is, the fiction imagined by a subject with no references to concrete reality, from the more common imaginary that allows one to imagine certain actions, persons, places that exist in the tangible world, which I can make present through the production of my imaginary, even when they are concretely absent in the here and now. This subjective state of my imaginary is an invention that places me in fictive situations, since I do not unrealize contexts, actions or desires like when I paint an artwork, write a novel or make a film. The first are objects

that exist for the subject, the second are literally nonexistent – or phenomenologically “unreal.”

Christian Metz’s approach in *Le Signifiant imaginaire*<sup>17</sup> added pertinent phenomenological insight to the Lacanian theory of the imaginary of the subject, thus integrating much-needed nuances such as the notion of unrealization. A whole new angle was introduced to notions of identification, the mirror-play between receiving subject and the subject(s) of film, holding together reality and imaginary:

In film, the subject’s knowledge takes on a very specific form without which films wouldn’t work. It’s a two-pronged understanding (but held as one): I know that what I see is imaginary (hence I am not disturbed by the sometime extreme strangeness being depicted) and I know that I myself am doing the seeing. This second understanding is itself split: I know that I am really perceiving this, my sensory organs are at work, I am not hallucinating/fantasizing [...] and I also know that I am responsible for this perception, that this imaginary material is deposited in me as if I were a second screen [...] and hence, I am the location in which this really perceived imaginary gains symbolic ground [...].<sup>18</sup>

My subjective consciousness posits both the real and the imaginary. Or, more precisely referring to a game of make-believe, my subjective consciousness posits the work as unreal and my psychophysical reality, which itself subdivides, as Metz underlines, into a projection of my subjective imaginary into the unreal of the work. We thus cut short the process of pure transference between one unconscious and another, between a supposed “grand subject” that would be the film and my subjectivity that submits to it, left to comply with the knowledge of that other “grand subject,” a new avatar for the “grand image-maker” (*grand imagier*).

The second fundamental advantage of Metz’s approach, even though he does not himself draw all the conclusions from it, is that the clear distinction made between unreal and reality, imaginary and fiction, allows me to make subjective aesthetic judgments from elsewhere than my inaccessible unconscious since I am not judging from a fantasized vantage point (by me or through a third person) the imaginaries portrayed in a film but as if they were fictional imaginary. This ostensible tautology is due to the division and duplication (*dédoublement*) of consciousness into realizing and imaging, revealing an imaginary unique to all subjects through the receiving subjectivity, in such a way that “the spectator, in effect, identifies with himself; himself as pure act of perception (rendering awake or alert): as a condition of the possibility of perception, hence as a sort of transcendental subject, preceding all that *there is*.”<sup>19</sup>

Not only is there no need to shy away from establishing the origin of this twofold (*dédoublement*) consciousness in a transcendental conception of the subject – a

Kantian notion attached to the aesthetic subject's "faculty of judgment" – but it helps explain our ability to take on, and subjectively apprehend, other subjectivities, often far removed from our own, despite all kinds of sociocultural, ideological, political, moral, and hence subjective differences. The cases of division and duplication (*dédoublement*) due to some kind of madness of one or several characters are extreme cases of what our subjective imaginaries can perform faced with unhinged, delirious, quasi-de-subjectivized subjectivities, never to the point of losing our own subjectivities. Sometimes, this kind of encounter even helps to reinforce them.

The complex plays of de-subjectification both internal and external to certain films, as they slide insidiously from film to spectator so that they too are momentarily de-subjectified, have brilliantly attempted to detach subjectivity from its base, without managing to entirely sever it, perhaps because we are dealing with a "transcendental subject, preceding all that *there is*." Whether in *PERSONA* (Ingmar Bergman, 1966), *THE TENANT* (Roman Polanski, 1976), *BARTON FINK* (Joel and Ethan Coen, 1991), *FIGHT CLUB* (David Fincher, 1999) or more recently *BLACK SWAN* (Darren Aronofsky, 2010), we see that all sorts of differences – evidently, quite real – from the characters, to situations and aesthetic forms can cause distress, notably through their capacity to destroy the subjectivity both on screen and in the audience. Nevertheless, the de-subjectification remains imaginary, unreal, illusory, in the space of the fictional game where subjectivity can be infinitely transformed. In this respect, Donald W. Winnicott's often forgotten analysis in *Playing and Reality*,<sup>20</sup> nicely completes the notion of imaginary subjectivity by what he calls transitional objects or phenomena where the play and illusion of art develops in a "potential space" located between internal (subjective) reality and external (objective) reality. What he alternatively refers to as "the intermediary realm of experience" is akin if not identical to the various games of "make-believe" and "as if" through which our experiences are "done" and undone; where notably, a subjectivity is formed that is never entirely real or entirely fictional which Winnicott designates as the space of illusion, art being its most accomplished form. Imaginary subjectivity would then be an intermediary, potential, illusory place from which the play of art departs and returns, producing its own reality within the reality of the world.

## Documents of the Self

As long as we know we are dealing with fictional subjectivities perceived through our own imaginary subjectivity, the interaction between play and reality, thanks to the intermediary realm of various experiences, takes place in a fairly simple and straightforward manner. This is less evident with filmed autobiographical forms (cinema, video, blogs; webcams, cell phones, computers...) since the aim here is to show a naked subjectivity by documenting it without adornment, appendage or

fictional transformation – what Michael Renov calls “performing the self.”<sup>21</sup> The subjectivity simultaneously authored and belonging to the author, the subject and object is thus presented as real and true rather than simply plausible. Although it is unlikely that all imaginary or fictional elements can be eradicated from documentary,<sup>22</sup> reality and subjectivity do move toward the realizing consciousness and away from the imaging. I can certainly project a portion of my imaginary subjectivity onto a documentary film, leaving unaltered the fact that the representation now coincides with the represented and that a large part, if not the whole of what I am watching is not imaginary. The difficulty is less to adopt a realizing consciousness before the documentary subjectivity but to note that it is absolutely impossible for me to silence my imaginary subjectivity. In the end, the more powerful, violent, insufferable, or unacceptable the content of a documentary film, the more I resort to my imaginary subjectivity in order to balance its realizing hold on me. The documentary produces a sort of split subjectivity giving more space than we think to the imaginary that saves us from too much reality. This split subjectivity is the reverse and also the complement of what takes place in fictions which continually return us to our lived reality so that our imaginary subjectivity is not solely the consequence of our relation to the fictional.

It has been well established that any fictional film borrows from the field of documentary and vice versa; it is only a question of gradation. Films are made by subjects, themselves caught in a “social subjectivity” of the images.<sup>23</sup> Any subjective consciousness is always simultaneously realizing and imaging. That one adopts this attitude more than another is itself just a question of degree. The only difference being that in a documentary, the subjectivity’s base is endowed with a very different ontological status. Even if it is performed or represented, its “reason for being” is never questioned: it is, it exists, and it is present in the material world. Our imaginary subjectivities are more fully solicited when faced with works in which the status of the base is called into question or tends to disappear, or has all but disappeared, and the subjectivity it is meant to carry or incarnate is thus itself on the verge of annihilation. We are then in the presence of a voluntary destruction of the *hupokeimenon*, consisting in the dislodging or eradication of that subjectivity by a threat to its psychophysical base. These are not de-subjectifications due to personal mental pathologies – whether fictional, as discussed earlier or real, like in Frederik Wiseman’s *TITICUT FOLLIES* (1967) – but de-subjectifications planned and programmed by other subjects in order to nullify the subjectivity of the other. Documentaries on executioners and their victims, torturers and tortured come to mind. How do our subjectivities respond when seeing and hearing the other crushed, ghostly, spectral, like a *hupokeimenon* emptied of its subjectivity?

More precisely, a subjectivity so utterly transformed in body and in spirit that it no longer seems of this world, appearing like a parallel subjectivity. Yet it all depends on the subjectivity expressing itself, for the torturer is not interchange-

able with the tortured, as Rithy Panh's documentary, *S21, LA MACHINE DE MORT KHMER ROUGE* (2002), horrifyingly demonstrates. When we see the torturers and the few surviving victims standing together in the same places, repeating the same gestures of violence or horrified fear (separately), it is clear that the split subjectivity is not only between the protagonists of the documentary but is integrated by the spectator as empathy for the survivors and anger toward the extreme cruelty of the torturers. Yet the torturers are also subjects with subjectivities.

Before such excesses of reality, we have to muster a great effort of the imagination to understand both victim and persecutor. For the question remains: how can a human being do this to a fellow human? Are these men that have tortured, killed, and raped still subjects, do they still have subjectivities, or should we consider this type of subject and subjectivity without pity as part of our nature? In this kind of documentary film, sociopolitical, moral, and ethical questions can be comprehended by what is called in moral psychology – an approach focused on agency, self, and subjectivity – “moral imagination,”<sup>24</sup> allowing us to imagine the kinds of solutions, attitudes, and decisions that might be appropriate to our practical moral conduct. To this end, art works present themselves as experiences of moral thought processes that can provide modes of reflection in relation to our lives, as both Iris Murdoch<sup>25</sup> and Martha Nussbaum<sup>26</sup> developed regarding literary works, and easily transposed to the field of film, itself never morally neutral, be it fiction or documentary.

Contemporary approaches in cinema to empathy, identification, the projection of one's subjectivity with or on the various subjective entities in film must therefore also integrate that share of the imaginary in works dominated by the real, fact and historical event. This can be done by “factitious emotions” (Robert Gordon) stemming from objects or beliefs understood as true or real (contrary to emotions toward fiction).<sup>27</sup> In the case of *S21*, my subjectivity transposed onto the subjectivity of the protagonists can only empathize or de-empathize with them if I imagine the content of their experiences not as my own but as representations of a universal threat to all subjects, all persons, all individuals, hence all humans endowed with subjectivities. Without denying the psychophysical reality of the person testifying on the screen, I can only grasp the other in her suffering through my imagination. It is impossible for me to feel what she feels, to suffer what she has suffered, that my subjectivity be allowed to flow into hers or hers slip into mine and replace it. Because fictional works and even more so documentaries, are never morally, ethically, or sociopolitically neutral, my moral imagination is the fundamental modality of my subjective aesthetic relation to other subjects, to the other subject of or in the film, to its narration or its intrigue, narrative and representations it offers up, in which I perceive myself both as self and other. This complex and subtle dialectic between Self and Other, accurately analyzed by Paul Ricoeur,<sup>28</sup> and building on Metz's intuition concerning the “transcendental

subject preceding all that *there is*”<sup>29</sup> should lead to a complete shift in the ontological status of self and other; a shift through the works and in the works as it opens onto intersubjectivity and trans-subjectivity, the “dialogic principle” conceived by Mikhail Bakhtin in literature and surely transposable to the aesthetic experience of film. The subject is only fully himself in the “other’s alterity” (P. Ricoeur), and my subjectivity being always alterity to the other, it follows that subjectivity is in great part constituted by the image that the other has of me as alterity and not as pure subjectivity.

## Intersubjective Subjectivity

In the case of aesthetic experience then, I am not only dealing with an object but with a subject, the *subject* of the work, since the latter, although imaginary, still has a subject in every sense of the word. We can therefore displace the accent from the traditional conception of the subject toward a “poetic subject of the work” and the “principle of individuation” of the work by the subject. According to Henri Meschonnic, “in writing, in art, a subject has become her work. This is indicated by the common designation: the name of the author does something different than the name of a person that is not an author’s name. It signifies as well as designates. It gathers semantic signification.”<sup>30</sup> Drawing on the elements proposed here regarding self, alterity, and dialogism, the aesthetic experience no longer takes place between subject (producer and receiver) and object (the work) but between different forms of subject(s) and subjectivity(ies). According again to Meschonnic, “If writing produces a perhaps indefinite renewal of reading, its subjectivity is an intersubjectivity, a trans-subjectivity. Not an intra-subjectivity that we pretend to confuse with subjectivism, individualism. Writing is an enunciation that doesn’t simply result in a statement but in a chain of re-enunciations.”<sup>31</sup> As it has been developed here, the imaginary subject is a fundamental component of this intersubjective subjectivity.

Translated by Lisa Damon.





# A Philosophical Approach to Subjectivity in Film Form<sup>1</sup>

Dominique Chateau

“Let us say that grief is to be represented on the screen”: with this sentence, strange as it may seem, Eisenstein introduced one of his most profound texts on the issue of representing feelings from the standpoint of film form.<sup>2</sup> The topic of subjectivity requires such a generalizing: let us say that subjectivity is to be represented on the screen and, following Eisenstein, let us try to consider a theory of subjectivity in relation to film form. By form, we simply mean, as Eisenstein would have it, “determined much more profoundly than by a superficial ‘trick.’”<sup>3</sup> So is subjectivity involved in some profound determination? I am inclined to say yes. Instead of raising a theoretical barrier between film and subjectivity, I proclaim that they are strongly connected from various viewpoints. More precisely, it would be required for our present theory, in order to achieve its aim, that it encompasses both the concept of subjectivity and the concept of film form. Furthermore, I am convinced there is no better way to fulfill this task of fashioning together a theory of subjectivity and a theory of film form than within a philosophical framework. Nevertheless, I am quite aware that the topic of subjectivity is rather extensive and equivocal. Obviously, the relevance of this comprehensive subjectivity theory has yet to be confirmed, but its development embraces a wide range of issues. I will therefore introduce only those elements that concern the question of how film form and subjectivity can theoretically complement and benefit each other within a philosophical framework.

## Subjectivity as an Ontological Category

Subjectivity is a philosophical issue, insofar as philosophy invented it as a possible and somewhat crucial object of thought. It does not follow that this issue belongs to the philosopher like the proud owner of a classic car: not only has it always been, and still is, an object of thought and controversy in philosophical trends, but it also concerns many other disciplines, like psychology, psychoanalysis, and cognitivism. If we assume that philosophy today needs the help of these disciplines, notably in the field of its own development, any controversy over the ownership of the topic is pointless. At the same time, however, if we want the research to aim at some unifying point, I have no difficulty to speak in philoso-

phy's favor, insofar as, to my mind, it provides the most appropriate system for synthesizing various contributions. Philosophizing subjectivity means thinking from the viewpoint of a discipline that has much to tell about what subjectivity is like, but the strongest argument for proposing this union is that philosophy has the capacity to build a general concept of subjectivity. In order to sustain the close co-operation of philosophy with film theory, I will use John R. Searle's philosophy of mind as line of inquiry, without excluding other philosophical trends.

"For scientific purposes," Searle writes, "we might [...] define a pain in the elbow as a sequence of certain sorts of neuron firings occurring in such and such a place in the brain. But we leave something out in this case, something essential to our concept of consciousness. What we leave out is subjectivity."<sup>4</sup> First of all, subjectivity refers to consciousness. It is clear there is no subjectivity without consciousness, but it is equally crucial to consider that there is no consciousness without subjectivity. Subjectivity certainly is a feature of consciousness, but as Searle argues in *The Rediscovery of the Mind*,<sup>5</sup> "consciousness is subjective" as well. He goes on to consider that we also need to distinguish subjectivity from what is called the subjective judgment. His examples speak for themselves: "Van Gogh is a better artist than Matisse" is an example of subjective judgment, while "I now have a pain in my lower back" is an exemplification of how subjectivity works.<sup>6</sup> By subjective judgments, we mean that their "truth or falsity is not a simple matter of facts, but depends on certain attitudes, feelings, and points of view of the makers and the hearers of the judgment."<sup>7</sup> This is "an epistemic mode," while subjectivity refers to "an ontological category."<sup>8</sup> The statement about the lower back pain is, on the one hand, "completely objective in the sense that it is true by the existence of an actual fact and is not dependent on any stance, attitudes or opinions of observers," and, on the other hand, "the phenomenon itself, the actual pain itself, has a subjective mode of existence, and it is in this sense [...] that consciousness is subjective."<sup>9</sup>

To begin with, I will confine myself to this ontological definition of subjectivity. This idea of subjectivity refers essentially to mental states and contents as long as they really take place in someone's mind and are *really* experienced as such by someone. In a sense, really here means objectively. The measuring device of this kind of objectivity is not the criterion of truth that prevails in subjective judgment, but the mere fact of the inner experience as such. If Searle stresses this kind of fact by statements like "I have a pain in my lower back," it is not necessary that this kind of objectivity has to be expressed verbally. Not only can it be expressed in another way, for instance by onomatopoeia or facial expressions, but it can also exist without being expressed at all. However, it is exactly when we begin to express our state of mind linguistically that we come to the subjective judgment. I can really suffer and not say it, or say that I suffer while I am actually pretending. We could also argue that a subjective judgment can be mute or distinguish between mental and linguistic judgments, or latent and manifest content (as Freud

puts it). What matters most is the crucial idea of subjectivity as both an objective and internal experience, insofar as it is strictly linked to someone's consciousness. What we first have to decide then is if there is some film property that looks like this ontological category of subjectivity, so that we can consider film subjectivity as being grounded on a kind of consciousness. If "every conscious state is always someone's conscious state," as Searle emphasizes,<sup>10</sup> can we consider a film as a kind of someone?

## Is Film Subjectivity Literal or Metaphorical?

I find "nothing in this poem or in this film or in this painting, and then someone else comes and says this poem or film or painting is the greatest, it changed my life": this is how filmmaker Jonas Mekas<sup>11</sup> adopts one possible way of considering an artifact as an aesthetic object. This sort of judgment does not refer to the properties of the artifact as such, but to the beholder's point of view by making a judgment of aesthetic value based on his/her taste. It seems quite evident for most of us that subjectivity lies in this notion of some beholder's point of view. A film itself has objective properties, and only from the moment we begin to watch, does it become a subjective experience. Nevertheless, even if this view could seem enhanced by the fact that cinema exists concretely as an object, as, in Susan Sontag's words, "an inanimate thing, every element of which is determinate," while, for example, "theater is a *performance*,"<sup>12</sup> the question arises as to whether or not subjectivity as an ontological category must be radically excluded from the so-called determinations of this inanimate object. The main reason to question such an exclusion would be that, despite it being an inanimate object when not screened, a film is essentially made for screening purposes, so that from that moment on, as a spectacle, it becomes fully animated.

To be honest, animated film is an elusive moving form, like a flow of water trickling through our fingers. Indeed, the film flow is spatially defined, like a river it flows, but in a given space or, more precisely, in a given place, so that the substance of film actually differs from the substance of subjectivity which seems evanescent compared to it: the film flow is made of specific signs, of concrete moving (or successively still) images and sounds. Coincidentally, from the moment motion was recognized as a salient property of film, argumentations in favor of film subjectivity emerged. Such argumentations can, for example, be found in Jean Epstein's theories, who was of course a member of the avant-garde movement in French cinema, and especially well known for his adaptation of Edgar Allan Poe's *Fall of the House of Usher* (1928). As a film critic and theorist, he was the first leading figure to promote a philosophical view of cinema in the strict sense that the medium was supposed to have a philosophical power in itself (it had, however, nothing to do with an analogy with philosophical texts). He was also one of the first theorists to speak of filmic thought, long before Godard, Deleuze,

Frampton, and so on. Film as a medium would be exceptionally apt for thinking. Cinema, Epstein says, is an “intelligent machine” – an idea that Alain Badiou and others tried to revive when they called *THE MATRIX* a “philosophical machine.”<sup>13</sup> Being not simply a spectacle, but “a special knowledge, because it represents the world in its continuous motion,”<sup>14</sup> cinema changes the spatiotemporal dimensions so that it has a new effect on our brain, different from ordinary perception. Therefore, Epstein claims, it has “its own subjectivity insofar as it does not represent things as they are seen by the human eyes, but only as it sees them itself, according to its special structure, that imparts to it a personality.”<sup>15</sup> Invented as a recording machine, it progressively became an “intellectual robot,” a “mechanical brain,” developing a specific thought, its own philosophy, the “philosophy of a brain-robot” partially irrelevant to “the rules of the human intelligence of which it is indirectly born.”<sup>16</sup> Cinema is “superhuman,” he says enthusiastically; he seems to want to personify cinema, to incorporate it in systemic theory: “the complexity of the structure and the internal interactions of a mechanical organism leads to the individualization of the machine [...]”<sup>17</sup> But, syncretically, the scientific references of his discourse are contaminated by another kind of speech: cinema is said to be a spiritualistic or mystical art,<sup>18</sup> a magic art comparable to the philosopher’s stone,<sup>19</sup> or an animist art “that reveals the life of things.”<sup>20</sup>

Beyond this syncretism, Epstein’s description of film structure as spatiotemporal, self-determinate and so on is obviously more serious than his youthful animism. His theory at least has the merit of suggesting that one considers the relevance of the question of subjectivity not only as an aesthetical reaction to a film, which entails the projection of some human internal content onto an object (as long as that object could possess the projected feeling by itself), but also as a possible inherent quality of the filmic structure itself. Jean-Paul Sartre, in a student exercise (to be precise), wrote that cinema is “a Bergsonian art,” so that we can apply to it what Bergson said of music: it is “a consciousness like ours.”<sup>21</sup> Similarly, we find “[t]he shot, that is to say consciousness” in Gilles Deleuze.<sup>22</sup> And Stanley Cavell is no exception when he defends the idea that “objects projected on the screen are inherently reflexive, they occur as self-referential, reflecting upon their physical origins.”<sup>23</sup> This latter statement introduces a very interesting dilemma, depending on whether we emphasize “inherently reflexive” or “upon their physical origins.” For this kind of reflexivity seems rather similar to the reflexive consciousness that characterizes the human mind. That is, the capacity to think to myself – and to think that I have the capacity to think – or the capacity of logical reflexivity, by which the mind can detect relations between elements. In the same way, we can ask if subjectivity in film should be considered as a kind of substance distinct from its physical properties – as if it were a brain on its own, as Epstein puts it – or if it is just produced by the film and its structure, so that it could be only an effect, perhaps a very superficial one – an epiphenomenon that film theoreticians in the field of philosophy tend to overemphasize.

In point of fact, subjectivity is an essential property of human beings. When we speak about subjectivity in relation to human beings we use the word literally, but, when we speak of subjectivity in film, we use it metaphorically. According to Nelson Goodman, a painting is literally gray and metaphorically sad.<sup>24</sup> The same happens in film: when we speak of subjectivity in film we project onto an inanimate object (physical images and sounds), a property normally (and essentially, as we said) belonging to an animate object, the human being insofar as he/she possesses a mind and is capable of feeling. One could say: it is as if the film were provided with subjectivity – or, in other terms, something operates in the film in the same way subjectivity, or even consciousness operates. Epstein wrote that film is, in French, “une sorte de psychisme.”<sup>25</sup> This quasi-psychisme – quasi, from the Italian *quasimente*, which means “a kind of,” “almost,” “more or less” – can be interpreted in two ways: either the idea that cinema has some mental properties is literal, or the idea is metaphorical. It seems more reasonable to consider it as metaphorical insofar as the challenge would be to maintain filmic properties are mental while we experience them as obviously physical. In the same way, animism can also be interpreted literally or metaphorically. Interpreted literally, it leads to certain thoughts we have no way of verifying, like the belief that a machine has a soul. However, the fact that film is a special sort of inanimate object, a complex composition of animate pictures and sounds in interaction, in contrast, can be verified. But hypothesizing about animism in film oversteps the boundaries of scientific wisdom. Moreover, this composition of animated sounds and images is the filmic representation of someone’s thought. Animism in film is a metaphorical way of interpreting this kind of composition proceeding from a human thought.

## Subjectivity and Film Form

“The mind-like working of movies” is Epstein’s way of referring to subjectivity in film. An analogy which, though useful, remains rather sketchy and is after all only an analogy. To be more precise, insofar analogy means both similarity and difference, some aspects being similar but defined within different fields, our concept of the mind-like working of movies can be refined both in terms of film and subjectivity. Film, to begin with, is clearly an objective object in the sense of being absolutely external to any mind; above all, it is observable like any other physical thing. In comparison, as Searle indicates, “there is no way I can observe someone else’s consciousness as such; rather what I observe is him and his behavior and the relations between him, the behavior, the structure, and the environment.”<sup>26</sup> This observation matches the thoughts of phenomenologists, like Husserl and Sartre, who, when considering the relation of consciousness with the world that exists outside a person’s subjectivity, believed that its exteriority was a challenge to consciousness. This applies both to knowledge and affect, to an ob-

ject we observe or to which we react. Consciousness, in order to grasp this pure exteriority, must transcend itself as Sartre would have it.<sup>27</sup> As belonging to the exteriority of the world, film would then propose the same challenge to the viewer as any other object of the world, but, at the same time, before being viewed, it was made as a view of the world and thus, later, watched as such. It is not a simple object, but a medium or, more exactly, a kind of message determined by the structural conditions of the cinematic medium. Thus, film is a very complex object in that both its physical form as well as its objectivity are complex. It is a commonplace we do not need to develop further. But, as we have already seen, one aspect of this complexity weighs heavily in the discussion on the subject: the fact that film is a *form in progress*. Sartre said that cinema is a “Bergsonian art,” because “it introduces motion in aesthetics.”<sup>28</sup> Motion is, from Eisenstein to Deleuze, the common denominator that justifies considering film as thinking. When viewers experience a film, they are not simply sitting in front of an object they can use like a tool or recognize, but they are invited by an audiovisual stream to contemplate and to interpret what the audiovisual stream puts in front of them for the duration of the film. The challenge with this exteriority is also a challenge with this specific form that is a material combination, like painting, but moving and lasting, unlike painting. In view of the topic *subjectivity in film form*, it may be emphasized that form, in this sense, is the intermediate term between subjectivity and film by which we can hope to negate the contradiction that exists between them. Or, in other words, we might rule out the barrier between the outer and the inner world. If film has something to do with subjectivity, it is to the extent that its moving form bears the imprint of a subjectivity.

Considering this, we realize the need to distinguish three degrees of subjectivity, from the first level of the ontological category, via the second level of signs, to the third level of texts:

1. Subjectivity refers to the mental activity of a human being who reacts to the environment, or reflects on the other or the self.
2. Subjectivity refers, by extrapolation, to the result of this activity, both its product and its signs.
3. Subjectivity refers to the text itself: We have to extrapolate further in considering that an organized structure of representations (text, film, etc.) is itself subjective: this subjectivity at a *third degree* is justified, partly because it can involve subjectivity of the first and/or second degrees, partly because it is designed to activate human minds.

One should keep that in mind when using metaphorical expressions like “film thinks” or “film reflexivity.” Marguerite Duras poignantly reminds Jean-Luc Godard of this commonsensical idea in the following dialogue:

Godard – I feel that what makes me less afraid of cinema, with the camera and the editing table, it's that the film thinks. Me, I do not have to think. Whereas if I write, I have to think.

Duras – Don't ramble. The film doesn't think alone. Without you, there is no film.<sup>29</sup>

Hegel's dialectics may provide an additional refinement. W. T. Stace writes that Hegel's synthesis has a "two-fold activity," expressed by the word *aufheben*, which is sometimes translated as "to sublata."<sup>30</sup> The German word has two meanings. It means both to abolish and to preserve. "To sublata" refers to the idea that, throughout the dialectic process, some aspect of a phenomenon or an object involved in this process is negated, eliminated, while another aspect is preserved at the same time. This way of thinking seems particularly relevant since dialectics is defined as a process; moreover, the kind of unity to which this process leads is the process itself: "Being and nothing and the opposition between them are merged in the unity of becoming." Considered from this dialectic viewpoint, Epstein's suggestive theory, in my opinion, becomes reasonable. When Epstein says that the screen is "the place where creative thought meets beholder thought,"<sup>31</sup> he is right, but we need to make it clear that the "creative thought" is converted into filmic signs. The physical properties of the film can partially consist of an encoding of mental properties; the mental substance, through the encoding, through the representation, is abolished as such but preserved insofar as it is mediated by a specific semiotic process. Through this process, the effect of motion abolishes the distance the viewer has in relation to what the picture depicts, while preserving its nature. Tempting us to believe that moving pictures are animated by a kind of vital force; such an *anima* (i.e., the feeling of animation) does not seem to be strictly outside the image, but rather inside the image. Similarly, we may imagine there is something like a soul underneath the artificial medium, because we communicate by way of showing sensations, feelings or affects, assuming that the necessary abstract composition of the film is abolished in the beholder's mind *at the time*. At last, the idea that "the film thinks" may be considered true, but only where it denotes the way filmic form is a materialized mediation of a human thought both abolished as such and preserved as sign. A film does not think because it is supposed to be a pure consciousness by itself; however it does think in instances where it transmits the human thought, that is, where it translates its own physical substance. Therefore, Duras and Godard's opinions are reconcilable.

## The Positional Camera

Reviving the analogy between film and consciousness, Arthur Danto suggests:



Perhaps films are like consciousness is, as described by Sartre, with two distinct, but inseparable, dimensions: consciousness of something as its intentional object, and a kind of nonthetic consciousness of the consciousness itself – and it is with reference to the latter that the intermittent reminders of the cinematic processes as such are to be appreciated.<sup>32</sup>

Although the question of reflexivity, addressed by Danto here is an interesting aspect of subjectivity, it is beyond the scope of this paper. Instead I would like to consider another aspect of subjectivity not addressed by Danto's remark: the representation of internal phenomena. When Searle writes, "Conscious states always have a content. One can never just be conscious, rather when one is conscious, there must be an answer to the question, 'What is one conscious of,'" <sup>33</sup> we immediately understand what he means. We come across a similar statement in Paul Valéry's article on the subject, who notes, "conscience loathes emptiness."<sup>34</sup> Now, Searle adds an argument that could change our mind:

[T]he 'of' of 'conscious of' is not always the 'of' of intentionality. If I am conscious of a knock on the door, my conscious state is intentional, because it makes reference to something beyond itself, the knock on the door. If I am conscious of a pain, the pain is not intentional, because it does not represent anything beyond itself.<sup>35</sup>

Following this track, we can more readily distinguish not only the conscious state enclosed in our inner world from the one that is produced by meeting something in the outer world, but also the simple reaction to the latter from projecting mental states or contents on the object. Perhaps, it is now time to consider the "consciousness of something as its intentional object."

Long before Searle, Husserl said that "the word *intentionality* signifies nothing else than this universal fundamental property of consciousness: to be conscious of something [...]."<sup>36</sup> For example: "The house-perception means a house – more precisely, as this individual house – and means it in the fashion peculiar to perception; a memory-house means a house in the fashion peculiar to memory; a house-fantasy means a house in the fashion peculiar to fantasy."<sup>37</sup> What about the house-shot? We know that the shot of a house can be perceived as a mere representation of it, or as a memory or mental picture, if the house is shown as being in the mind of some film character thinking about the house or imagining it. But what about the shot itself? It is not a perception but a duplicate, regardless of the way of representation (in black and white for example). As duplicate, it results from some "physical connection," in the same vein as what Peirce says about photography, established one day between the camera and a real house.<sup>38</sup> If we assume that the camera is a neutral mechanism that cannot project any internal representation, that is, as long as it is bereft of any state of mind, could

we say that the camera-relation as such is analogous to the pure intentional relationship?

This hypothesis can be linked to Sartre's theory of the positional or unreflexive consciousness, which he defines as the immediate awareness of objects. In which case we could speak of a *positional* camera. Indeed, in the finished movie, after many transformations with regards to editing and other technical devices that have been applied to picture and sound, this neutrality is removed by a cascade of imprinted representations and meanings. This is why the positional camera characterizes less the film in general than the borderline cases, special film forms, starting with comedy, that originate in the real: "[...] before becoming comedy by unsuccessful representations," Clement Rosset says, "everything is first comical [...] merely by the fact that it exists."<sup>39</sup> Let us return to subjectivity as an ontological category. Jacques Tati's character M. Hulot, "l'Ange Hurluberlu" as André Bazin calls him,<sup>40</sup> perfectly exemplifies the idea of the immediate awareness of things caught in their ontological purity when, in *MON ONCLE* (1958), he exchanges his familiar world – the small-town world represented by the street sweeper, the postman, the caretaker, the vegetable merchant and the bicycle – for the modern world represented by the cubic house of the Arpel family (modeled on Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye). At ease in the first world, Hulot, in the second, looks like an angel, that is, in the words of Jean Cocteau, like an angelic poet walking with a



*Film still from Jacques Tati's MON ONCLE (1958).*

limp, “one foot on the ground, the other in the void,” prone to clumsiness now that he cannot fly anymore.<sup>41</sup> Visiting the Arpels, he is confronted with all sorts of unfamiliar things such as hyperfunctional kitchen equipment and a modernist garden. Here, M. Hulot embodies the positional consciousness foreign to the new world, which must feel uncanny, seeing as he is forced to transcend himself, but incapable of doing so.

Putting aside the question of comedy, the same idea of a filmic positional relation seems to apply to Robert Bresson’s films, not so much in the relationship between characters and the real, but more in the way of shooting and organizing shot pieces. If the positional camera is somewhat relevant, it seems so to be the case in *L’ARGENT* (1983), in which, as Clement Rosset notices, “Bresson shows often the presence [of a] place before something happens.”<sup>42</sup> In the same way, we can observe that many sequences in his films start with a simple presentation of the things and places, before the drama unfolds in this material context: “It is necessary that the effect of the things arrives before their cause.”<sup>43</sup> In terms of genres, not many people will see the connection between Tati and Bresson, but let me recall what François Truffaut said:

A work of Bresson or Tati is a priori by mere necessity, brilliant according to the very rare authority with which a unique and absolute will imposes itself from the first picture until the word end, the kind of will that orders in principle, or should order, any work having an artistic pretension.<sup>44</sup>

A new stage in the comparison of film with the conscious relationship with the outer world could be reached if we consider that, most frequently, we are not in relation with the thing as a single entity, but with one or some of its aspects. As Husserl writes:

Constantly seeing this table, and meanwhile walking around it, changing my position in space in whatever way, I have continually the consciousness of this identical table as factually existing ‘in person’ and remaining quite unchanged. The table-perception, however, is a continually changing one; it is a continuity of changing perceptions.<sup>45</sup>

These changing perceptions are, what Husserl calls “adumbrations,” which pertain to color as well as to “every sensuous quality and also [...] every spatial space.”<sup>46</sup> Adumbrations translates as *Abschattungen*; more simply, we could use the words sketch, draft, hint, or shadow, but none of them is quite appropriate; etymologically, the German word means “the action (-ung) of a shade (*Schatten*) that stands out (*ab-*) as an emerging silhouette.”<sup>47</sup> Subjectivity is, on the one hand, this catching of something so splintered and transcendent as consciousness, “a multifarious system of continuous multiplicities of appearances and

adumbrations,” and, on the other hand, the experience of the continuum itself just as it is present within consciousness. We are interested here in the former; the second one traces the limits of the analogy between film and the human mind and will not be discussed here. In movies, an approach by adumbration, means to anticipate and infer meanings or intentions, narrative wise or other, by looking at the successive fragments. For instance, the beginning of Dziga Vertov’s *THE MAN WITH A MOVIE CAMERA* (1929) shows a set of views of a city in the small hours, quiet, even sleepy, except for some scattered movements; the city awakens before our eyes. The awakening moment unwinds a descriptive set of suspended time where the spatial coexistence is the main syntactic operator.

The concept of intentionality has two different meanings: the first one is the simple relation between our mind and the objects, while the second presupposes an implication of some desire or belief about the objects. Beyond the adumbrations, which are limited to a pure perceptual relation, the point of view involves at least the design to consider (locate, feel, think) the thing. Beyond the series of adumbrations, we have to consider the viewpoints strategy. Giving a philosophical account of this classical issue in narratology, that is, an account of the point of view as such, is not so much about knowing if the act of subjectivity is preceded by representations, if it comes with them, if it determines them, and so on, than it is to consider the sort of relation by which this act itself puts us into contact with reality. It is less about considering some mental state that alters the relation to reality, whether absent or present, than about the stance on the present reality we adopt when we watch it. With regard to the movies, such a stance indeed exists and is simulated by the camera’s eye; everything happening on the screen presents itself as if it were observed by someone, but, literally, this “someone” is not necessarily represented as a person with a substantial state of mind. We can either assume that the look on the object belongs to a human being (a character), or to some implied author. Jumping from an approach of subjectivity by a series of adumbrations to a strategy of points of view, means that we jump from an immediate discovery of the world to the invention of its representation as a scene shaped by the film machine.

## **Beyond the Controversy over Auteurism**

Before discussing the subjective aspects of film form, it should be noticed that the subjective effect of the film, if we decide to start from such a restricted hypothesis, can also be considered as a sort of feedback effect, produced by the fact that someone who has the essential ability to think has continually been thinking, making, and organizing the film. Now, we may be inclined to call such a person an author or not, the main point is that he/she is a human being or a group of human beings! If we claim, following another minimal hypothesis, that a film contains a concrete set of visual and auditory *inscriptions*, without considering the

several interpretations it may yield already, it is clear that the presence and relations of these inscriptions rest upon someone's mental work, so that we do not have to make an effort to consider that this mental work is filmically inscribed in some ways. Not surprisingly, terms like "inscription," "inscribed" or "imprinted" can be found in realistic or constructivist philosophy – "the language elements in the concrete world are rather inscriptions or marks, the shaped objects rather than the shapes" as Goodman and Quine write<sup>48</sup> – but in order to make up our minds about these "inscriptions or marks" in the concrete world, we need to consider the possible existence of abstract entities as well. We do not need a world of abstract entities, at least not to begin with, but we need some scheme or device allowing us to conceptualize shapes under shaped objects, form under film, and subjectivity under such and such filmic inscriptions.

There is a very simple case in this respect, the PoV shot that shows, through the camera-eye, what a character is looking at. This kind of shot uses the camera as a subjective device and, in many cases, this does not denote a specific character, but an impersonal eye or the narrator's eye. There are also a lot of other ways a filmic representation can exemplify a most subtle inscription of subjectivity in film. When considering the camera angle, for instance, it seems that low-angle shots, as they appear outstandingly in Orson Welles' *CITIZEN KANE* (1941), fulfill this subjective functioning, while also suggesting an idea of domination: not only does *x* look at *y*, but *x* dominates *y*. Because of this, we know that, with regard to Susan, Kane assumes the position of "master," as in Hegel's master-slave relationship: he needs both to negate (*dominate*) and to preserve (*look at*) her as a human being; he could not reduce her to an object, to a singing-machine, if she would not decide, even with regret, to continue singing, despite the fatal weakness of her voice. As Seymour Chatman puts it, beyond the literal sense of the point of view – "through someone's eye" – we can distinguish other ones that deal respectively with the world's view or some character's interests.<sup>49</sup> Many parts of films share the characteristic of a double or plural subjective function attached to a shot or combination of shots, even when this combination has nothing to do with a literal PoV shot. And Chatman also points out that the filmic point of view has "not one but two, cotemporal channels, visual and auditory (and in the auditory, not only voices but music and noises)" and that "these can occur independently (soundtrack with black screen or full picture with complete silence), or they can be combined in various ways."<sup>50</sup> The filmic subjectivity depends both upon this complexity of the filmic-material basis of representation, and on the fact that this representation does not simply amount to reproducing the profilmic data as such, the difference being the gap between the reality and its artistic use. By profilmic, we mean, following Souriau, something in the world placed in front of the camera and/or imprinted on the film.<sup>51</sup>

This gap can be considered as the objective difference between reality and film, or as an author's expression through its use of reality. Subjectivity can be consid-

ered as the simple difference between the impossible duplication of the world as it is, and what the film represents it is. That is, insofar as we recognize, in this difference (however tenuous it may be), not only some aesthetic properties that are left to our appreciation, but also an intention to impart an aesthetic value to these properties. Clearly, we identify a design in the same way we would detect an arrangement of things that were previously in disorder. In other words, we identify an “interpretant,” as Peirce would have it – a sign, according to his definition, stands for an object through an interpretant. A film is designed to be interpreted in the sense that it makes us think of things, worlds, feelings, concepts, and so on, provided that we have the means to establish (and make an effort to establish) the connection between them; some of these means are in our mind, one is inscribed in the film: the design itself.

Leaving this rather basic idea of filmic subjectivity behind, I would now like to turn to the author’s mind and what proceeds from it. This particular aspect has, since a few years, given rise to the most vigorous criticism in film studies. Auteursm is principally criticized from a sociological standpoint. For it would be considered an ideological illusion from a sociological point of view, especially when it concerns the kind of art work that is the result of teamwork. The issue is so controversial that it is difficult to maintain that one’s argument about the subject-matter could be discussed quite objectively. But, if we proceed from the restricted idea of subjectivity, it seems easier to open up the debate. Sometimes, the design we detect in the film directs our minds towards projects, feelings or concepts that refer explicitly or implicitly to an author. In other words, sometimes we are well aware of the fact that such film has been made by such author, so that we are possibly influenced by this information, by what we know about this author and his/her work; in such a case, we normally infer that the film’s design refers to the author and his/her intention. Other times, we are unaware of a possible authorship, and we are not able to assign a single author to the film. It does not mean that we do not feel that there is any design in the film, that it does not communicate to us any thought, feeling, world view, or way of thinking. The question is not whether what it communicates is a banal idea or a brilliant one, but whether it communicates something that testifies to the existence of a *subjective-like content* – ideas or feelings that could be considered as the intentions of a single subjectivity.

This alone does not lead to the polemic about auteursm. After all, as Béla Balázs puts it: “Of course there are also purely mechanical photographs that are produced with no particular goal in mind. But even this testifies to an inner attitude, even if it is one of dull inertia or inner blindness!”<sup>52</sup> With regards to the imprint of subjectivity, we merely want to suggest that something is impressed on the film that testifies, at least before its completion as an object, to the exercise of a more or less anonymous, more or less idiosyncratic subjectivity. The viewer is not alone in front of inert objects, he/she is facing something that is dynamic and

exhibits numerous traces of a subjective activity. These traces, moreover, not only testify to the deliberate intention of someone inclined to transmit their internal representations (images, feelings, dreams, ideas, etc.), but also to the presence of inner representations, cognitive or emotional, attributed to characters or people.

## Return to the Point of View

“The world itself,” Searle writes, “has no point of view, but my access to the world through my conscious states is always perspectival, always from my point of view”; correlatively, “all my conscious forms of intentionality that give me information about the world independent of myself are always from a special point of view.”<sup>53</sup> I have taken that as an axiom in this paper. So, starting from the idea that subjectivity, as mediated by film form, is concretely present in the film, imprinted in its material and its structure, we can now turn to some specialists that consider the point of view as objectively imprinted in the object of their research. Such are the landscape theoreticians. Malcolm Andrews, for example, says that “land rather than landscape is the raw material,” and that “in the conversion of land into landscape a perceptual process has already begun.”<sup>54</sup> In order to specify “what constitutes landscape as distinct from land,” he underlines that “in judging what is a ‘good view’ we are preferring one aspect of the countryside to another. We are selecting and editing, suppressing or subordinating some visual information in favour of promoting other features. We are constructing a hierarchical arrangement of the components within a single view so that it becomes a complex mix of visual facts and imaginative construction.”<sup>55</sup> There is a striking similarity between this theory – defining a kind of editing – and what I called the jump from the immediate discovery of the world to the invention of its representation as a scene shaped by the film machine. We find the same similarity or analogy when Andrews notices that “a frame establishes the outer boundaries of the view; it gives the landscape definition. The frame literally defines the landscape, both in the sense of determining its outer limits and in the sense that landscape is constituted by its frame; it wouldn’t be a landscape without that frame.”<sup>56</sup>

It seems sensible to follow Andrews and most of the landscape theorists when they consider that landscape is not nature as such, but land shaped by the eye and/or hand. The metamorphosis of land into landscape, as Alain Roger puts it, works in *visu* and/or in *situ*.<sup>57</sup> Likewise, the camera activates specifically in *visu* transformation, and the work on a movie set operates in *situ* transformation. A landscape, according to Yves Lacoste (who draws attention to its military origin, the one also of cartography), is a three-dimensional view (or representation) of a part of land of which the shape is determined both by the shapes of the relief and by a point of observation, in particular at some altitude.<sup>58</sup> Here, we again find an analogy with films. When Poudovkine needs to exemplify the idea that film is not only the “simple record of the events passing before the lens,” but has “special

methods, proper only to itself,” he takes as an example “a demonstration that files by upon the street” and an “observer” that begins to “climb upon the roof of a house, to get a view from above of the procession as a whole and measure its dimensions,” then “come[s] down” to observe from “the first-floor window,” and down again to “mingle with the crowd.”<sup>59</sup> Poudovkine uses this example as a metaphor – the three stages can be directly interpreted in terms of the well-known shot scale – he writes, “three times the observer has altered his viewpoint, gazing now from nearer, now from farther away, with the purpose of acquiring as complete and exhaustive as possible a picture of the phenomenon under review. The Americans were the first to seek to replace an active observer of this kind by means of the camera.”<sup>60</sup> With regard to film form, we find exactly the same interaction, both relational and active, between the objective basis (land/profilmic) and a point of view throughout the film (understood as consisting of raw material and tools), so that this transformational relation is inscribed on, or inside, this objective basis, creating a new form. As Poudovkine emphasized, through the discovery of editing as a means of combining shots that capture the object at various distances, a dynamic interaction was also discovered: “The camera, until now a motionless spectator, at last received, as it were, a charge of life. It acquired the faculty of movement on its own, and transformed itself from a *spectator* to an *active observer*.”<sup>61</sup>

The main point about the issue of subjectivity is that, even if we follow Searle, agreeing that “the world itself has no point of view,” we have some serious reasons to assume that the point of view is objectively inscribed in some aspects of the world around us, such as land and profilmic material. If profilmic is to film what land is to landscape, it is clear now that if we want to fashion together a theory of subjectivity and a theory of film we not only need to know what can be wisely considered as subjective on a literal level (the filmmaker, the viewer) or on a metaphorical level (the film), but we also need to determine very precisely what can be considered as a filmic sign or mark of subjectivity. We need to be very careful of the specific literality of film as it possibly underlies subjectivity, up to and including a metaphorical sense. We consider a shot or a series of shots as a sign of subjectivity (or as containing such a sign), when a possible source of subjectivity (a human being or a being diegetically defined as human-like – for example an animal or a robot) is imprinted, that is, represented or presupposed. For example, a PoV shot can be taken over the shoulder of a character, it can be signified by a combination of two (or more) shots where one shot represents something looked at, more or less objectively, by someone who is represented in the other shot, or by the representation of somebody looking out of frame or listening to a sound coming from that direction. A PoV shot can also be suggested when the viewer is not present in any shot, but only presupposed to exist somewhere or nowhere (God for example). In all these cases, subjectivity is limited to perception, but it can be modulated by any peculiar representation, for



example in order to signify that the viewer suffers from vertigo the shot is modulated in some way (as we will see later on).

Thus, like in many other kinds of subjective representations, shots or series of shots are *modulated*. A sign of subjectivity can be material and/or relational, it can be a plastic modulation of image and sound or an inference about a combination of shots. In any case, the human or human-like source of subjectivity must be represented or presupposed: the modulation of a shot or series of shots can signify that they are the representation of something felt, imagined, dreamed, fantasized, and so on. The modulation can be considered as the interpretation of what is represented from the viewpoint of a subject defined in the diegesis (a character), which is the most straightforward modulation. But what is represented can also be interpreted as the viewpoint of an implied subjectivity (a narrator who oversees, at times even omnisciently, the storytelling), or as what is known as an “implied author” (who oversees the entire film). We can even go a step further and say that what is represented on screen is the viewpoint of the actual author insofar as his/her life or his/her thoughts are explicitly or implicitly inserted into the film. As Seymour Chatman shows, the filmic point of view may be ambiguous, when it is not “clear whether we have seen the object separately from the character, conjointly with him, or through him,” but it may be more clear because “the director of the film can completely identify our vision with the character’s, positioning his camera lens not only alongside the character, but inside.”<sup>62</sup> *THE LADY IN THE LAKE* (Robert Montgomery, 1947) is an example par excellence of this latter type, but the most interesting feature of film subjectivity is its complete opposite: “the camera can make very fluid changes in point of view because of its ability to move abruptly or smoothly in any direction.”<sup>63</sup> The main characteristic, with respect to subjectivity in film form, is this fluidity, the fact that subjectivity and objectivity may interchange without disrupting the continuity, and without disorienting the audience. A sequence of Brian de Palma’s *BODY DOUBLE* (1964), among many others, perfectly illustrates this: As Jack Scully (Craig Wasson) returns home after the exciting opening of a vampire movie, he walks through a series of rooms and corridors, followed by the camera that alternately shoots him and what he sees with great fluidity, until the moment he discovers his wife in the company of the opposite sex.

## Film Form and the Interior Landscape

At the moment a film represents something, it can, as I said, choose to represent it modulated by means of any peculiar representation. Eisenstein, in the seminal text I quoted at the start, said that the problem of representation is “the problem of portraying an attitude toward the things portrayed.”<sup>64</sup> Experiencing a film does not consist only of projecting on it what is inside our brain; quite the opposite, we often have a sense that it is the film that introduces a lot of representations in our

brain. Sometimes we receive these representations as if they were *causa sui*, sometimes we have some reason to assume they originate in an individual subjectivity. Insofar as our concern is the hypothesis of subjectivity in film, not around it, but inside it – and to avoid to have to resort to an expedient that is supposed to save this hypothesis – we need to define the film by certain precise conditions. That is, conditions concerning the means of a filmic representation that can embody subjectivity and, more generally, the structural characteristics that determine the possibility of such a representation, whether it objectifies subjectivity or subjectifies objectivity. I am not trying to cut corners here to avoid the difficulties of our hypothesis of subjectivity. Even with an esteemed philosopher such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty you will find both a good definition of film as form as well as a radical doubt about the relevance of any filmic representation of subjectivity. I only agree with the first half of his theory, but, as we will see, the second half, although somewhat authoritarian, nevertheless provides a good launching pad for my problem.

In a lecture delivered in 1945 at l'IDHEC (Institut des Hautes Études Cinématographiques),<sup>65</sup> Merleau-Ponty said that “a film is not a sum total of images but a temporal *gestalt*.”<sup>66</sup> This translation of the original phrase, “*une forme temporelle*,” is not incorrect insofar as in French there is no better way to translate *gestalt* than by “*forme*.” Furthermore, Merleau-Ponty refers explicitly to the well-known principle of gestaltism that asserts that the whole is different from (or greater than) the sum of its parts. Translators, however, seem to hesitate between using *gestalt* and form, as we see below:

[The film] seems to be an extremely complex form inside of which a very great number of actions and reactions are taking place at every moment. The laws of this form, moreover, are yet to be discovered, having until now only been sensed by the flair or tact of the director, who handles cinematographic language as a man manipulates syntax: without explicitly thinking about it and without always being in a position to formulate the rules which he spontaneously obeys. What we have just said about visual films also applies to sound movies, which are not a sum total of words or noises but are likewise a *gestalt*.<sup>67</sup>

The notion of *gestalt* concerns essentially the perceptual forms, the visual recognition of figures. Kant, for example, distinguishes *die Gestalt* and *das Form* by this a priori criterion: a *gestalt* (or figure) is what is determined as an empirical appearance, and the form is what determines a priori our perception. Although Merleau-Ponty refers to the *gestalt* principle – he is the celebrated author of *Phenomenology of Perception*, after all – he insists that form accords much better with his idea than *gestalt*. It seems he wants to define the film as the structuring of representations on the basis of raw visual and auditory material by means of editing. So he emphasizes that

image and sound “put together makes another new whole, which cannot be reduced to its component parts,” and that “the union of sound and image occurs not only in each character but in the film as a whole,” while also convinced that the same is true of the relations between music and film: “music should be incorporated into it, not juxtaposed to it.”<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, besides the perceptual side of the audiovisual structure, he also looks at its semantic side – he asks for instance: “What [...] does the film signify: what does it mean?” – without forgetting that this semantic side is profoundly linked to the formal status of film. The following answer should convince his skeptics:

Kant’s remark that, in knowledge imagination serves the understanding, whereas in art the understanding serves the imagination, is a profound one. In other words, ideas or prosaic facts are only there to give the creator an opportunity to seek out their palpable symbols and to trace their visible and sonorous monogram. The meaning of a film is incorporated into its rhythm just as the meaning of a gesture may immediately be read in that gesture: the film does not mean anything but itself. The idea is presented in a nascent state and emerges from the temporal structure of the film as it does from the coexistence of the parts of a painting.<sup>69</sup>

However, Merleau-Ponty diminishes the philosophical frame of reference in favor of his personal philosophy, emphasizing with delight that, although “motion pictures are first and foremost a technical invention in which philosophy counts for nothing, [...] philosophy is in harmony with the cinema, [...] thought and technical effort are heading in the same direction,” and he concludes that “the philosopher and the moviemaker share a certain way of being, a certain view of the world which belongs to a generation.”<sup>70</sup> This up-to-date analogy between film and phenomenology leads him, without concession, to the statement that the movies do not give a sense of what is inside a man’s mind by attempting to show the interior, instead “his conduct or behavior,” his “way of being in the world, of dealing with things and other people” is the key to establishing filmic subjectivity. Thinking it important to drive the point home, he adds:

If a movie wants to show us someone who is dizzy, it should not attempt to portray the interior landscape of dizziness, as Daquin in *PREMIER DE CORDÉE* and Malraux in *SIERRA DE TERUEL* wished to do. We will get a much better sense of dizziness if we see it from the outside, if we contemplate that unbalanced body contorted on a rock or that unsteady step trying to adapt itself to who knows what upheaval of space. For the movies as for modern psychology dizziness, pleasure, grief, love, and hate are ways of behaving.<sup>71</sup>

Here Merleau-Ponty seems to be in harmony with Searle's statement that we cannot "observe someone else's consciousness as such," but only "him and his behavior."<sup>72</sup> We have to decide if the problem of representing subjectivity filmically is reducible to the representation of ordinary beings in the world – in other words, whether film theory is reducible to philosophy! Furthermore, is there anything in the nature of film, in film as a medium, that hinders the representation of "the interior landscape" (an attractive turn of phrase for me, considering what I discussed earlier!) as Merleau-Ponty claims it? Between his definition of the film as a form and the outright refusal of attempting to represent subjectivity by the movies, there is a questionable idea about the general purpose of the film. This is a crucial point, because it is here that the theory of medium seems to switch to the theory of aesthetics. Instead of considering that we are faced with a radical rigid choice – nature of medium versus aesthetics – I suggest we combine the theory of medium with the theory of art and place them within a philosophical framework. By doing this, one can call special attention to the filmic signs that testify to the relationships between the film and the viewer. In the same spirit, we then have to consider whether the project reveals filmically any aspect of inwardness. We have to wonder if it is necessary to code subjectivity into specific filmic signs, if film form is naturally designed to express subjectivity or not, and if, in addition to objectifying subjectivity, film is also capable of subjectifying objectivity.

### **Towards the Representation of an "Interior Landscape"**

Before I go on discussing the strategies by which film represents subjectivity, I would like to take a moment to sum up what I have explored so far: starting from the ontological mode of subjectivity, I have firstly considered the direct or positional relation of film with reality (or the profilmic), I then looked into the scattering of this confrontation through adumbrations, and, finally, I discussed the viewpoint strategies. Now, whether Merleau-Ponty would have liked it or not, this gradual process leads me to consider the internal representations and the question if and how they can be filmically represented. The way I am formulating the point is not incorrect, but ambiguous on account of the double meaning of representation: on the one hand, representation can refer to a mental or internal phenomenon like a feeling, on the other, to anything that physically represents something like an image. We have to now consider how internal representations are filmically formed by representing them concretely. In this case, the source is not physical anymore, but mental; in other words, in the process of my study, we are guided less and less by reality, and more and more by the mind. But be that as it may, we also have to take into account the fact that, in every film, the most mentally-related phenomenon becomes a physical inscription exactly like any other physical phenomenon. Merleau-Ponty does not throw a great deal of light upon

this question because he avoids it with the postulate that a movie *can* or *must* exclusively show the behavior: *can* if we relate the problem to the medium properties, *must* if we relate it to aesthetic standards. His attitude towards this duality – medium theory or aesthetics – is ambiguous, but his analysis is rather useful because he raises the question about the relevance of the representation of dizziness with respect to film medium and form. He mentions *PREMIER DE CORDÉE* (1943), Louis Daquin's movie (adapted from a Roger Frison-Roche's novel), where we see a spinning and disorienting landscape as the alpinist in the film is supposed to see it during climbing, and *SIERRA DE TERUEL* or *ESPOIR* (1939-1945), André Malraux's movie on the Spanish Civil War (adapted from his own book), where we see through a haze what the pilot is supposed to see when he lands after a flight. It is not quite correct to consider these two cases as exemplifications of mental landscape representations, but rather as landscape transformations caused by the dizziness of the person looking. This constitutes another step in the process of moving away from the pure positional camera to the representation of interior landscape, but focusing on this penultimate step we come closer to the last one.

This brings us back to Hitchcock's *VERTIGO* (1958) where the effect of dizziness, specified as fear of heights, is represented three times by a high-angle shot animated by a concurrent combination of dolly traveling and forward zoom. The first time we see this vertiginous shot is when Scottie powerlessly witnesses the fall of a policeman from the top of a building, and the two other times when Madeleine and Judy fall from the bell tower. It must be noted that in *VERTIGO*, dizziness is also represented as a way of behaving, as Merleau-Ponty would have it; by way of showing accompanying shots that give away the mental state of mind of the character, the signs of weakness on Scottie's face (the French title is *SUEURS FROIDES*, i.e., cold sweat!) for instance, we have a better understanding of what the representation of someone's interiority actually means to convey. Instead of obeying the philosopher's law as I mentioned above, the movies are composed alternatively of objective and subjective shots in different combinations that succeed when the transition is soft, without attracting attention to it. We are, on the contrary, surprised when the subjectivity is notably accentuated – an extreme case of this is of course *THE LADY IN THE LAKE* where, from the beginning to the end of the film, the camera literally is the detective's look. Such a look of the camera that fully substitutes that of the narrator or the implied author makes it almost impossible for the spectator to identify with the character/look, because he/she will constantly be distracted by the device, and it will not take him/her long to get tired. On the contrary, the shots showing what Scottie sees are very short; they do not fully substitute one subjective look of the movie, but intervene punctually as snapshots that symbolize the dizziness. These shots, however, do look very artificial because, as Hitchcock said to Truffaut, it was necessary to build a miniature model of the bell tower staircase to keep costs down. Just as in

landscape invention where land transformation can use artificial means in order to induce a natural effect, this kind of filmic subterfuge rests upon a device *in situ* that gives a natural sensation *in visu*.



*Film still from Alfred Hitchcock's VERTIGO (1958).*

Whether you consider Hitchcock a visionary or not, the point of fact remains that he was able to manipulate cinematic language like no other. Consider the following quote from him: “I always remember one night at the Chelsea Arts Ball at Albert Hall in London when I got terribly drunk and I had the sensation that everything was going far away from me.”<sup>73</sup> Some might find it a bit tasteless or macho to openly discuss one’s drinking habits as Hitchcock did, but that is beside the point here, what is important is that it stresses a fundamental question about subjectivity: can we understand what it feels like to suffer from dizziness if we have never suffered from it ourselves? Thomas Nagel asks this question with the help of a particularly striking example: “[...] bat sonar, though clearly a form of perception, is not similar in its operation to any sense that we possess, and there is no reason to suppose that it is subjectively like anything we can experience or imagine.”<sup>74</sup> What interests us here again is Searle’s ontological mode of subjectivity. What Hitchcock in his anecdote basically proposes is using a trick to circumvent the incommunicability of the ontological subjectivity in the case of dizziness: we need only think about similar situations that *have* occurred to us such as drunkenness or blacking out and think about how that made us feel. By this analogy, while it is difficult to have “the notion of what it is like to be a bat,” as Nagel puts it, we do have a sense of what it is like to be a human being who suffers from vertigo. As Eisenstein suggested, we need to think beyond the trick,

on the formal or structural side of film, but it is also clear that the trick is the means by which subjectivity is imprinted in the film.

To return to Truffaut's remark addressed to Hitchcock about the feeling of "contemplative rhythm" conveyed by *VERTIGO*, Gilles Deleuze says that Scottie lives "in a strange state of contemplation which is communicated to the whole movie," so that we can generalize the occasional representation of dizziness to the whole thematic underlying *VERTIGO*: "what is vertiginous, is, in the heroine's heart, the relation of the Same with the Same that passes through all the variations of its relation with others (the dead woman, the husband, the inspector)."<sup>75</sup> He concludes that "including the spectator in the film, and the film in the mental picture," Hitchcock "accomplishes [...] the whole of the cinema," touching on, in this respect, another one of Truffaut's remarks about the resemblance of *VERTIGO* to "filmed dreams." Hitchcock responded to Truffaut by arguing that the impression of "contemplative rhythm" was due to the fact that the film tells "the story from a viewpoint of a man who's in an emotional crisis."<sup>76</sup> That this design of representing Scottie's quest for truth through his emotional world view would amount to a mental picture or a filmed dream is clearly questionable. Obviously, there are a lot of other movies that more explicitly take aim at a dreamlike film form. *VERTIGO* tells and shows a supposedly real story, so that the feeling of uncanny is due to the way of telling and showing.

To summarize, the representation of dizziness is not a representation of an interior landscape as such, but a representation of the way according to which the inside changes the outside: we see what Scottie sees, but at the same time we see it as he sees it.<sup>77</sup> Incidentally, hallucination is a strange kind of process transforming the outside through the inside. In this case, the percepts produced by the mind are introduced among the percepts of the world itself. In his analysis of Jacques Becker's *FALBALAS* (1945), Merleau-Ponty also condemns the filmic representation of hallucination. *FALBALAS* tells the story of Clarence (Raymond Rouleau), a top fashion designer and incorrigible womanizer, who falls madly in love with Micheline (Micheline Presle) but she rejects him. At the end of the movie, when Clarence confounds a wooden mannequin with Micheline, this delirious hallucination is represented by the picture of Micheline superimposed on the mannequin; at the very end, Clarence, driven mad by his obsessive love for Micheline, throws himself from a window holding the mannequin. Merleau-Ponty thinks that the filmmaker "does not convince us when he shows what Clarence sees" and that the delirious hallucination "would be more moving if it appeared, as by a sort of incarnation, following his looks and his gestures."<sup>78</sup> Here again he asserts his film as an art of behavior postulate.

So, we can argue that hallucination, like dizziness, is more or less successfully represented in film. For example, the first hallucination Myrtle Gordon (Gena Rowlands) experiences in John Cassavetes' *OPENING NIGHT* (1977), allusively produced by light strokes, is all the more successful given the fact we are not



*Film still from Jacques Becker's FALBALAS (1945).*

used to seeing such a device in a John Cassavetes film: his films tend to have a more physical style. Such a judgment can be considered as a second kind of aesthetical judgment, insofar as it does not evaluate the film from a standard (related or not to the medium definition) but as it is. Apart from these two kinds of judgments, Becker's attempt (as much as Cassavetes') calls our attention to the fact that a represented hallucination makes visible something that only the hallucinating character is supposed to see because his mind produces the percept of something that does not exist. However, the requirement, at the same time, that this fantasy objectification needs to cling to something real like FALBALAS' mannequin, that is to a percept that the mind receives instead of creates, refers significantly to the definition of film itself. Following Freud, Christian Metz defines the relation between a hallucination and a film as a "paradoxical hallucination." He sees it as a hallucination because we take fiction for a kind of reality and as "paradoxical because unlike a true hallucination it is not a wholly endogenous psychological production: the subject, in this case, has hallucinated what was really there, what at the same moment he in fact perceived: the images and sounds of the film."<sup>79</sup>



## Subjectivity in Film Form Has a Good Future...

In the words of Edgar Morin, “[W]e experience the cinema in a state of double conscience,” because “the illusion of reality is inseparable from the awareness that it is really an illusion.”<sup>80</sup> Paradoxical hallucination or double conscience shift the attention to the beholder. My view in this paper is that our stance toward film as we experience it on screen is partially determined by certain objective conditions of screening, like those we find in the theories of the cinematic apparatus (based on Jacques Lacan’s psychoanalytic theory of the *mirror stage*), but also by the way film form subjectifies objectivity and objectifies subjectivity, so that, beyond the more or less deterministic conditions of screening, we also need to consider the filmic details of each movie.

A supplementary step in my undertaking of exploring the representation of the mental landscape would be to examine the explicit representation of a dream, and, as last step probably, the dreamlike film form of some kinds of movies. A character’s dream representation is as difficult to visualize as representing dizziness or hallucination is, and for similar reasons. As for the dream, this difficulty relates to the gap between the latent dream and the manifest one: from the one to the other. According to Freud, there are all sorts of transformations and distortions, like the displacement of psychical intensities so that the most significant ones may be more in the details than in the storytelling.<sup>81</sup> From a psychoanalytic viewpoint, this gap separates the dreamed content from the account of the dream – as Paul Valéry said, the “dream is the phenomenon we observe only during its absence.”<sup>82</sup> In a movie the dream is made present on the screen. The filmic dream is not a dream as such, but a dream narration and, moreover, a narration that is not so much told as it is visualized, perhaps with added sound. The visualized dream is supposed to be an analogy of the latent dream, but this analogy is rather ill-conceived. It seems more suitable to consider it as a manifest representation; filmic representation is always too real to externalize the internal without transforming it, too visually explicit to let the mind free to imagine. The positional camera, that keeps the real at a distance without resorting to any additional mental content, seems to represent reality as it is. At the opposite end of the spectrum, we have the dream representation that is supposed to visualize a mental image. In order to accomplish this it requires some aspects of reality as its source material, not to mention a delicate touch to avoid awkwardness: bizarre objects and strange associations turn easily to kitsch. As far as I know, this risk mainly concerns the representations of a character’s dream (see *VERTIGO*, among others), but it does not concern the dreamlike movies or sequences where, beyond a concrete dream telling, the whole structure as such is in places or on the whole supposed to be a mentalist one (see Buñuel, Robbe-Grillet, and others). With this category of films we come close to “quasi-psychisme,” so that, concern-

ing the other categories or genres, and cinema generally, Epstein's theory seems retrospectively to be too generous.



# **PART IV**

## **Conversation**

### **Subjectivity in Artistic Coupling**



# ***Conversation with Maria Klonaris and Katerina Thomadaki***

## **Dissident Subjectivities: The Filmmakers as a Double Subject**

*Marina Gržinić*

Maria Klonaris and Katerina Thomadaki are among the most famous avant-garde artists working in France. Their collaborative work combines experimental film poetics with radical feminist theory, a reflection on intersexuality, and strong theoretical inputs on the formation of political subjectivity and on the role of the arts in today's world. Experimental film remains at the core of their work, however, and since the mid-1980s they have been increasingly crossing film with photography, video, digital images, and multimedia projects. Rethinking women's identities, reworking female agency and reconceptualizing the nomadic body are constant topics for Klonaris and Thomadaki. More particularly, the question of the "dissident body" as a counter-subjectivity of the body that thinks and acts, rebels and disrupts, but also disfigures, is at the basis of their interaction with issues of gender, reproducibility, equality, and difference.

Klonaris' and Thomadaki's "dissident bodies" force us to see defamiliarizing modes of perception, new paradigms of memory and loss. The artists produce eroticized, emphatic, and longing disfigurements of the body, deeply rooted in the social and natural environment. Exile and alterity are the main positions of the politics of the body they develop. Their path is a query about the position of the human within sexual, physical, and spiritual relationships. Their creatures bring to the fore the unstable and tenuous nature of "gender" in itself. In short, most border identity events take place in the perspective of radically performed stereoscopic visions.

Klonaris and Thomadaki create an immersive mental space, where the human body – intersexual or female – meets with the outer space. They tend to provoke both a confrontation and contact between visualized bodies and the spectator's body. Within this confrontation/contact, some "monstrosity" is waiting to be reversed, re-imaged, re-imagined. The work deals overtly with the relation between gaze/screen/image/mirror. Here the gaze as a concept is central to the description of the subject's psychic engagement with the cinematic apparatus. Even when

their work abandons the cinematic apparatus to move towards exhibition space, the relation between gaze/screen/image/mirror remains central.

Klonaris' and Thomadaki's dissident bodies are critical of liberal capitalism and the accumulation of capital, which is the process of pinning down identities of certain bodies in time and space. Their juncture of art, culture, and politics reflects how artists, intellectuals, and activists intervene within culture and politics and how they try to make visible and reverse the logic of capital in a critical way. Reacting to the horror of exile, of brutalized migration, and to the penalization of alterity is equally a fundamental political position for them.

The result is a politics of ideas, and not an ontology of beauty. At work in Klonaris' and Thomadaki's universe is not simply an exhaustion of imagery or a simple cloning of images, their work pays attention to the technology of reproducibility as an important source of new possible future subjectivities.



*Maria Klonaris and Katerina Thomadaki, TRI-X-PAN, DOUBLE EXPOSURE (DOUBLE SELF-PORTRAIT) – Black-and-White photographic series and projection performance, 1977 & 2000.*

**MG:** Where does your artistic practice meet your life?

**MK/KT:** Our artistic practice IS our life. There is a high degree of personal exposure in our films, particularly in our first cycle of works, *THE BODY TETRALOGY* (1975-1979). These are practically autobiographical films and film performances, even if they entirely dismiss pre-existing narrative structures like those of documentary films, *cinéma vérité*, film journals, etc. Each one of these pieces (*DOUBLE LABYRINTH*, 1975-76, *THE CHILD WHO PEED GLITTER*, 1977, *SOMA*, 1978, *ARTERIA MAGNA IN DOLORE LATERALI*, 1979) is a structural invention where personal and collective experiences, memories and desires are transposed in ritualized stagings of our bodies and faces. Sometimes autobiographical materials appear in the form of texts, that we read live during the projection through a microphone among the public (*THE CHILD WHO PEED GLITTER*, 1977). In these four works of *THE BODY TETRALOGY*, where we are the only performers, our bodies become projection screens of our unconscious and our mental structures. From A to Z the process is “non objective.” We are installing ourselves as “viewed women-subjects,” as a double subject, through an overtly subjective film language.

**MG:** You co-sign your films since the mid-1970s and you have underlined the idea of a “double auteur femme.” What is the history of this double signature that you have maintained for more than three decades?

**MK/KT:** We met in high school in Athens. The mutual discovery of our works (Katerina’s theatrical performances and Maria’s drawings and paintings) was an overwhelming emotional experience for both of us. A shock. This was an encounter for life.

Soon after, we started working together. In our university years in Athens, we created a theater group and put on plays like *The Maids* by Jean Genet (1968) and *Salomé* by Oscar Wilde (1969), directed by Katerina who also performed main parts (Claire, Salomé...) and with set designs, lights, costumes and make-up by Maria. Our experimental approach developed into a new formation, the Space for Theater Research, which we founded in Athens in 1972, a laboratory where we explored the limits of theater. In this context we started merging the distinct functions of director and set designer. When we came to Paris in 1975 for post-graduate studies, we oriented our practice towards performance and film.

It is then that we assumed our double signature. *DOUBLE LABYRINTH* (1975-76) is the first film we shot in Paris and that we co-signed. Our double signature meant our equal involvement in the genesis and the making of the film. It also implied a common vision, due to an intense mental kinship, in spite of our quite opposing personalities.



It is true that we share many common points in our personal histories: same age, same maternal language (Greek) and same acquired languages, same initial religion and social solidarity principles, a middle-class background where education was the major commodity, same city (Athens), same Greek-American high school in our adolescence. We have also undergone together the political traumatism of the colonels' dictatorship in the late 1960s and early 1970s. However Maria came from the Greek diaspora and grew up in cosmopolitan Alexandria, with Egypt as her original land and English as the first language she was taught to read and write. In her childhood she suffered the traumatism of the exodus after the Suez Canal crisis, when her family decided to migrate to Athens. Katerina grew up in Athens, a city "under (re)construction" after the German occupation and the civil war, her parents came from the islands – Crete and Naxos. Our migration to Paris was motivated by political, social, and cultural conditions. We also wanted to undertake postgraduate studies in the arts and theater which did not exist in these particular disciplines in Greece in the 1970s. This passage implied a socio-cultural leap, a rupture and a synthesis on which we have been working all our lives.

Our first task in Paris, in order to survive existentially, was to construct ourselves as subjects. Intercultural subjects, women subjects, creative subjects, un-submissive to sexual and artistic norms. The conception of ourselves as a "double auteur" contained all these dynamics.

The double signature came as the result of a long process and elaboration between us. We had to harmonize our personal necessities and temperaments. And it was not easy to let go of power residues implied in any relationship so as to achieve total equality.

We thus became a restraint collective. We already had a culture of collectives from our theatrical experience. The politicized praxis had at that time invaded experimental theater, but we still had to let go of our leadership instincts and all sense of hierarchy in the construction of our own relationship. The fact that we were two women did not necessarily resolve antinomies, because gender roles are complex anyway inside one single individual. But it certainly helped in the process. We had to invent a co-authoring ethics and this was a private creation, a thrilling experience, and a rewarding conquest.

With *DOUBLE LABYRINTH*, we laid down the foundations of our *Cinema of the Body*<sup>1</sup> and all the works to come. Along with our double signature, another "doubling" took place then. We doubled our roles in front of and behind the camera. *DOUBLE LABYRINTH* has a mirror structure: in the first part Katerina performs and is filmed by Maria and the second part is performed by Maria and filmed by Katerina. This meant a rejection of the fixed cinematic roles of "subject" and "object" of the gaze (traditionally the subject being male and the object being female). We introduced the term "actante" (grammatically feminine) to signify our function in front of the camera not as "objectified" actresses but as "looked

at subjects.” Each actante acted out and staged her own unconscious. This is how we initiated our apparatus of reversibility of the gaze and our *intercorporeal* apparatus.

In other words the new cinematic subject that we introduced and underlined – an alternative, “non-neutral” subject, a dissident subject, TWO WOMEN filmmakers as a double subject led to further reversals which, in parallel to our films, we articulated theoretically in the various texts and manifestos we published at that time.<sup>2</sup>

**MG:** In fact, what does the double subject double?

**MK/KT:** The double subject enhances the awareness of the importance of dialogue. It doubles perceptions of the world and of the self, consciousness, sensory aptitudes, visions, mental wavelengths, personal experiences and desires but also relational politics.

Together, we are constantly in dialogue, exchanging and sharing experiences and ideas. Our double signature means that a fundamental *connection* is at the center of the cinematic process. This overthrows the profoundly rooted idea of the One and all powerful male director as only legitimate “auteur.”

Our relational politics, active during the conception and the making of each film, were partly extended to the other women actantes in our films. We also applied some of our principles (the reversibility of the roles filmer/filmed, the actante, the collective processes in editing, etc.) in the various cinema workshops for women that we led during these years.<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, throughout our intensely filmic period, which runs roughly from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s, we were able to thoroughly develop our connection with audiences. During that period, our main productions were feature length Super 8 films and multi-screen expanded film performances.<sup>4</sup> We have conceived them all as live events. The performative dimension is crucial to us. We rarely sent a film to a venue without accompanying it ourselves, presenting it, projecting it, and then extensively discussing and exchanging with the public.

We wanted to create laboratory situations: we projected our *syn-subjectivity* to viewers as an open system into which each of them had the space to project in exchange her/his own subjectivity. As a social process, our practice takes its full meaning through the audience’s experience. The numerous ruptures operated by our film works called for an exchange with the public, even if this were risky for us in terms of personal exposure and vulnerability. In our eyes an audience is never a general or statistic fact, but a mosaic of concrete subjects. In fact we want to know who they are and what they experience while watching our films, how the films interact with their lives and how the viewer’s subjectivity unfolds into our images.

We thus discovered to what extent the films acted as social, mental, and visual agitators. On the one hand, the exchanges we provoked with the public revealed the tenacity of the cinematic norms which we were consciously disrupting, the social norms regarding gender which we were attacking and the cultural clash that we were provoking with film works which came from hybrid cultural origins and histories. On the other hand, these debates carried the extraordinary political energy of that period and the active search for alternatives: our cinema, our lives and our double signature were part of them. The films shattered some certainties, raised personal questionings, unveiled desires and encouraged creation experiences. To strongly committed feminist audiences we tried to communicate the importance of cinematic alternatives and visual inventions. To avant-garde filmmakers we tried to communicate feminist awareness. All this generated battles as well as passionate encounters. We learned a lot from our spectators. Their openness and sensibility helped our work grow and their resistances allowed us to test the tenacity of norms and frontiers in the mind.

We liked to challenge limits and dig deeper to the very point where the perception of the film seemed to meet an obstacle. For example, for a feature length non-narrative film, duration is an obstacle, as experimental films are generally identified as shorts. Silence is another frequent “obstacle.” The audiovisual character of film is a deeply rooted cinematic norm. *DOUBLE LABYRINTH* is a 55-minute-long silent film and spectators often reported this silence as “unbearable,” in relation of course to the content of the film and its interior tension. We wanted to dig deeper into this “unbearable” and went on producing feature-length silent films and performances, until the spectators would let go and accept the immersion into the music of silence. The inner space and time of our films are enhanced by silence, as with the three-hour-long silent film *UNHEIMLICH II: ASTARTI* (1979-80), which is our most far-reaching experiment in duration and silence.

What does a double subject double? Communication risks and adventures, but also determination, endurance, empowerment.

**MG:** Such a double subject allows fighting binaries and forming a practical theory and an artistic practice to resist the violence of heteronormativity. You have put forth a certain program of politics, which is queer and feminist. Where does it come from? Where and when was it developed? On which points does it reside in a certain double history of art and of your lives?

**MK/KT:** Before becoming, as you say, a program, it was a life urgency. A politics in acts. Acted in our own bodies in our everyday life.

When we arrived in Paris and made *DOUBLE LABYRINTH* in 1975-76, we curiously had not heard about the feminist movement although we were pursuing postgraduate studies in the arts (including experimental film) and the theater de-

partments of La Sorbonne. This demonstrates to what extent the feminist movement, in its most vital years, was left outside the academy in France. We met the movement in Italy with *DOUBLE LABYRINTH*, which was considered by Italian activists as a feminist manifesto.

It is then that we started getting acquainted with women’s political groups and theories of that period – Cixous, Irigaray, Kristeva, Wittig. With the text accompanying *DOUBLE LABYRINTH* and with our widely published “Manifesto for a Radical Femininity, for Another Cinema” (1977)<sup>5</sup> we laid down the theoretical foundations of our feminist position, which drew together two necessities: the re-invention of the “feminine” and the re-invention of cinematic alternatives. We proposed a gender-inclusive, empowered “feminine,” opposing, among others, the Lacanian concept of the feminine as “lack.” This proposal went along with a film practice out of/against the cinematographic system and its heavy masculinist infrastructure. We also defended the “political dimension of poetics” a question generally eluded by political movements.



*Katerina Thomadaki in UNHEIMLICH I: SECRET DIALOGUE (1977-79) by Maria Klonaris and Katerina Thomadaki – Super 8, color, silent, 70 minutes, restored in 35mm by the French Film Archives with additional support by the J.F. Costopoulos Foundation, Athens (French Film Archives/CNC Film Collections).*

At that time, psychoanalysis was at the front stage. Our contestations of the naturalized “feminine” and our preoccupation with the unconscious as well as the analytical dialogues we promoted were recognizable territories to audiences and scholars. With our film *UNHEIMLICH I: SECRET DIALOGUE* (1977-79), recently restored in 35mm by the French Film Archives/CNC, we introduced the concept of the Freudian *Unheimlich*, which at that time had not yet fueled the extensive discussions that we know today.<sup>6</sup> In our reading of the Freudian essay we saw a subterranean link between the uncanny and the feminine. This provided the theoretical postulate underlying our feature-length films of the *CYCLE OF THE UNHEIMLICH*, *UNHEIMLICH I: SECRET DIALOGUE* (1977-79), *UNHEIMLICH II: ASTARTI* (1979-80), *KHA. THE EMBALMED* (1979-80), and *UNHEIMLICH III: THE MOTHERS* (1980-81). In these films, we stage the “feminine” as “uncanny.” At the same time “uncanniness” characterizes our “unfamiliar” film poetics.

Our involvement in the early 1980s with a Lacanian research group exceptionally composed by women and led by Eugénie Luccioni-Lemoine brought us closer to the psychoanalytic milieu in Paris. However, our gender politics and our double authorship as women clashed with the naturalized heteronormal foundation of the Freudian heritage.

When at the beginning of the 1980s we introduced the figure of the hermaphrodite with our projection environment *MYSTERY I: SLEEPING HERMAPHRODITE* at the Museum of Modern Art within the 1982 Paris Biennale, we stood apart from the surrounding feminist movement which was still mainly preoccupied by the “feminine.”

In the mid-1980s a crucial “encounter” from the past came to the surface. In her adolescence Maria had discovered an astonishing anonymous photograph of an intersexual in the archives of her father, Dr. G. Klonaris, an obstetrician and gynecological surgeon. The blindfolded figure had made an overwhelming impression on her, an impression shared by Katerina later on. The photograph came with us to Paris but stayed in a latent state until our reflection on gender involved the hermaphrodite. In our Paris Biennale installation, which opened the *CYCLE OF THE HERMAPHRODITES* (1982-1990), the central figure was the mythological hermaphrodite as it is represented by the Sleeping Hermaphrodite Hellenistic statue of the Louvre. Shortly after, the real body of the medical archive intersexual figure emerged powerfully in our vision. We called her/him *Angel*. We started reworking the medical photograph superimposing it with astronomic landscapes. The projection performance *MYSTERY II: THE ANGEL ABLAZE* (1985) introduced *THE ANGEL CYCLE* (1985-...), a vast series of works that is still ongoing today. Both the concept of intersexuality and that of the *angel* were once again alien to our artistic and intellectual milieu. The queer movement had not yet emerged as such at that time. We first heard about it in the early 1990s in London, when we created our *NIGHT SHOW FOR ANGEL* (1992)<sup>7</sup> monumental installation in the Hornsey Road Baths’ abandoned building. Since then we have been re-

elaborating the feminist-queer connection, but as free electrons, within our own poetic, theoretical and aesthetic system.

Where do our feminist and queer politics come from? Certainly from the degree of repression we had absorbed in Greece, due both to dictatorship and to social and family conservative conditions. Such a repression inevitably creates victims or rebels. We were not victims.

**MG:** Feminism is today split from within. The white heterosexual feminists from the past cannot understand the revolutionary positions brought by the black body, immersed in processes of migration, anti-racist politics, decoloniality: bell hooks, Grada Kilomba, Gloria Anzaldúa open a different platform for politics. Where do you stand with your work in relation to this?

**MK/KT:** What is so difficult to understand? That there are degrees of brutality and that black bodies and more particularly black female bodies have received (and receive) a much higher degree of brutality than white Europeans or Americans do? And that this is a fact that no one can elude and which necessarily transforms our views and our theories? We are totally concerned with all these struggles. Besides, migration, racism and coloniality take constantly new forms and really explode at present. See for instance the ferocity of the new forms of intra-European neoliberal colonization unleashed on the populations of “bankrupt” countries. Not to mention the new forms of racism brought up by forced flows of migration from the East and South. Wherever one may live, in any country, in any “degree” (or pedigree) of “world,” “first,” “second,” “third,” etc..., one is necessarily touched by these processes in one’s everyday life. We believe all struggles, past, present, or future should stay connected in one way or another. One single person, artist, theorist, or activist can probably not engage in all, but the essential is to engage at least there where the pressure is most unbearable in one’s own life.

In this sense we have rarely dealt with the black question in our films. However, in *ARTERIA MAGNA IN DOLORE LATERALI* (1979), a multiple projection performance, we overtly raise the question of sexual mutilations on African young girls. Otherwise, we have often worked with mixed origin or métis performers like Parvaneh Navaï or Syn Guérin, as well as Mylène Glykou, a protagonist along with us in *KHA. THE EMBALMED* (*KHA. LES EMBAUMÉES*, 1980) by Maria Klonaris (one of the rare films that we did not co-sign, but to which we had collaborated for the editing, the camera, the performance, etc.) *Kha* means the etheric double in Ancient Egyptian and the word “embalmed” (which in French we apply in the feminine gender) has the double meaning of embalming the dead and of being fragrant.

**MG:** You work with figures, among which two are particularly important and reoccur as a political program: the hermaphrodite and the angel. Sexuality in

them is a key point. Can you explain what these two figures stand for? What kind of sexual alternative do they propose to us? And in which way can we understand their politics?

**MK/KT:** In terms of Greek mythology, the hermaphrodite (a masculine noun in Greek) was the result of the merging of two oppositely sexed bodies into one. The hermaphrodite is a sexual synthesis, a composite sex figure incorporating female and male visible sexual attributes. Now, if we consider real human bodies, hermaphroditism or pseudo-hermaphroditism are variations which occur in different layers of the biological construction of sexual identity and involve inhabitable combinations of the two sexes. The term “intersexuality,” invented by Havelock Ellis in 1897 and which came largely in use in medicine in the 1950s, enlarges the concept of hybrid sexual identities to all kinds of departures from the dichotomic masculine/feminine pattern, presumed “normal.” This covers a large scope of anatomic, hormonal or genetic discontinuities, including chromosomic variations mixing the two sexes, more often referred to as *mosaicism*, another term that we have used in our work, in particular in our Linz site specific installation of 1994 entitled *XYXX MOSAIC IDENTITY*.<sup>8</sup>

The research that we undertook in the mid-1980s when we started working on intersexuality, once more confirmed the methods of the brutal inscription of binary sex “normality” on “outlaw” bodies, to use Foucault’s expression.

However, the intersexual figure that we had discovered did not convey suffering, but a majestic distance, a proud “standing up” and emanated a powerful eroticism. *S/he* was literally *sublime*. As a medical document the photograph was exceptional. This clinically observed body, which combined a feminine external sex and a male anatomic construction, seemed to resist objectification to which usually the medical gaze reduces subjects under the pretext of scientific “objectivity.” On the contrary, a curious reversal was taking place: the photographed subject transgressed the medical context and unveiled the limits of the binary sexual norm. We associated her/him with the *angel*. The sexual ambiguity of this figure subverts standardized sexual difference as a biological and social construct.<sup>9</sup>

For us, this real body inscribes within human histories a private and public dream of the late twentieth century, the dream of a shift from the rigid dichotomic sexual pattern, responsible for so many exclusions and damages, to a complex, inclusive perception of sexual identities. The opening up of physical and social frontiers of sexes means the acceptance of an elementary and major freedom: the freedom to live and experience one’s sex and sexuality as multiple and moving.

**MG:** You talk about alternatives brought about by queer bodies and by the medium of experimental film/video art. How do these alternatives question the biopolitical in general, especially the biopolitical of the institution of art present in

the last decades. The institution of art is a frightening bureaucratic machine without alternatives.

**MK/KT:** We would say with fewer and fewer alternatives, but not without any alternatives at all. This is why we can presently work creatively with some institutions that still allow freedom and respect for artists and art works, like for instance the Archives Françaises du Film/CNC with whom we have a rare collaboration for the restoration of our Super 8 films in 35mm. Besides, all the people employed by an institution do not necessarily identify with the institutional politics. There may be resistance or at least frustration from the inside. Of course, the more an institution is “central” and rich, the more it is pervaded by power conflicts, snobbism, arrogance, and deafness to non-canonic art, whatever the canons of the moment may be. Since the 1990s, art institutions conform more and more to commercial objectives and market policies under the pressure of advanced capitalism’s globalization as you have yourself often underlined. This is clear when we compare to what was happening in the 1970s and 1980s. For instance, we have had various commissions by the Pompidou Center at that time – its golden age – when the institution was still “open” enough to bring center stage emerging critical thought and art works that came from alternative scenes bursting with inventions and political energy (i.e., experimental film, video art, etc.). Therefore the cultural institution could act as a mediator for critical art and ideas. Ah! *The happy days!*

To go back to your question about the alternatives we cherish and how they question the biopolitical. With our work we stage female bodies and subjects through a non-heteronormal consumerist or voyeuristic gaze and ideology. On the other hand we focus on extraordinary bodies, currently considered as abnormal or even “monstrous,” like the hermaphrodite, the “angel” or the nineteenth-century conjoined twins in *SUBLIME DISASTERS. THE TWINS (1995-...)*.<sup>10</sup> We call them *dissident bodies*.<sup>11</sup>

However, within current media language and trendy first-degree sensationalism, this kind of political position is undesirable and “illegible,” to use Judith Butler’s expression about gender complexities. This “illegibility” reoccurs in various theoretical fields, as for example that part of film theory which has not yet revised its profoundly machistic, voyeuristic, and normative consideration of bodies, in particular female bodies and their figuration in cinema.

Now what happens with the spectators is entirely different. This spring, in Athens, we presented an environmental installation commissioned by the Onassis Foundation for their inaugural exhibition.<sup>12</sup> According to our architectural plans, a specific space was constructed, where our digital video *QUASAR (2002-2003)*, one of the “extragalactic” pieces of *THE ANGEL CYCLE*, was projected on the central screen while extending into the space through multiple projections on the walls and ceiling, as well as through mirrors. In *QUASAR* our own faces and eyes



merge with astral worlds and energies. The organization of the projection space is ritual. The sound is diffused in crossed stereo and the exceptional technical projection and sound conditions enhance the images' and sound's presence. While in Athens, we witnessed a strong response of the general public, in spite of the intensely subjective and experimental character of this work. Systematically, the spectators reported an overwhelming emotional experience and often pressed their chest as if something had directly struck their inner being, their heart and breath. Something psycho-physical. Some referred to eroticism, others to an "echographic" experience of a cosmic conception. These reactions came from women and men of various generations. Children spent much time inside the space, which both relaxed and scared them, some of them said they preferred it to the planetarium! The public's response moved us and intrigued us. What exactly did this work activate? A shared unabolished connection with a multi-layered time/space perception? Cell memory? Underskin poetics? Pythagorean reminiscences?

**MG:** I would like to bring up the dimension of time in your work. Your treatment of intervals and repetitions provokes a disorienting experience of time. How do you conceptualize time in your work, what is time for you, and what kind of time do you use to construct the "subjectivity" which characterizes your films and videos?

**MK/KT:** We work with states of modified perception. The time-space in our films, videos, and installations is never "realistic." Causality and chronological time are replaced by a "transfigured time" (Maya Deren's expression) which allows free circulation within inner spaces.

We have always been interested in interior temporalities and time perceptions, in time extracted from the everyday perception norms, in temporal estrangement. This focus does not mean an indifference to historical time, but an attachment to temporalities which are culturally marginalized, although vital. Temporalities of dreams and visions, temporalities of memory, imagination, and desire. We often create immersive hypnotic states which imply non-linear and non-hierarchical time structures. In our films and projection installations we have worked a lot on circularity or reversibility of time. Time is a tissue that can be weaved in many manners within time media. Electronic and digital media enhance its plasticity.

This is why our works are generally constructed outside of historical time, although we may use historically situated documents, i.e., the presence of World War II newsreels in *REQUIEM FOR THE XXTH CENTURY*, a video we made in 1994 during the Bosnia-Herzegovina war. In that particular case we did not want to use found footage that was contemporary to the making of the film, but materials that have already imbued collective memory.

The interval and repetition patterns that you evoke, reflect poetic or musical patterns of recurring strophes and motives. Repetition and variation may also change cerebral wavelengths.

Possibly our conceptualization of time has to do with our life experiences. From our respective childhoods in Greece and Egypt we have been exposed to a multi-layered and diachronic awareness of time and its collapses. The fascinating or haunting ruins and survivals present in our everyday life environment sensitized us to the moving depth of time running from the neolithic to classical ages and from the Hellenistic years to the Byzantium and more recent times. Survivals include ancient rituals still performed today. Ruptured but boundless time is another face of ruptured and boundless cultural mixtures. The moving depth of time runs from past to future, from body to out-of-the-body perceptions.

In our recent digital works, where we extensively use astronomic references – scientific photography but also energy and time patterns – we explore dimensions of the infinite as an intracellular experience and a state of the mind. Repetitions and variations mix with genetic 3-D curves, like the ones of our two faces dynamically merging and mutating in QUASAR.

**MG:** Is doubling a question of repetition? After all, what does repetition mean in relation to your work, and do you expose it as a dimension of agency?

**MK/KT:** The double subject is not repetition but combined difference. Repetition is echo and mirror, it is rhythm and circularity, it is haunting and obsession, it is incantation and ritual, it is hypnosis, it is disruption of evolutive time, it is breath and heartbeat. It is the profound structure of memory and desire, and, possibly in that sense, a dimension of agency.

**MG:** Performativity is a crucial factor in your work. It seems to develop in two directions: the one is you as performers in the early works and the other one is the re-performing of your work, for example your way of going back to your films and your commitment to their restoration. Can we discuss this?

**MK/KT:** Our performance work is conceived for the camera and addressed to the camera. We are not gallery performance artists and our films are not “filmed performances” – apart maybe from *DOUBLE LABYRINTH* where we keep the time-space unity of each “action.” Immediately after, we broke up this unity, by the use of slides or closed circuit video alongside film, as well as multiple screens and complex editing principles.

Stylistically, the performances in our films owe much to our prior theatrical experience and to our interest in rituals or traditional Oriental theaters like, for example, the Noh. We never use acting devices – no role playing and no psychological expressivity. We perform in silence gazing at the camera, and through the

camera (exclusively held by us two), gazing at one another and, in *extenso*, at the spectator. Our DOUBLE LABYRINTH performances have many affinities with the Body Art of the 1970s, with which we established a dialogue through this film. After THE BODY TETRALOGY, with the CYCLE OF THE UNHEIMLICH, we moved away from Body Art into more cinematic structures. And our recent ANGEL CYCLE performances are tightly woven with digital technologies' transformative potential.

Our performances are explorations of the self and iconic translations of inner dimensions and experiences. The fact that no one, apart from us filmmakers and the performers, is present in our shootings, gives us maximum freedom of expression. Once again a laboratory situation, an intimate laboratory of self transmutations and revelations where the camera lens acts as a magnifying glass.

The act which we do perform live among the public is projection. Our theory of *corporalization* of the projection implies our presence, the presence of our own real bodies among the spectators. This is an additional exposure and additional tension and risk, as we always work with precise projection scores which do not tolerate equipment deficiencies. Our expanded film performances grew more and more complex and reached a climax with the ten projectors piece UNHEIMLICH III: THE MOTHERS, commissioned by the Pompidou Center in 1981 and presented in the Museum's cinema for two weeks. Or the much screened HERMAPHRODITE II: ORLANDO (inspired by Virginia Woolf's homonymous novel), a fresco for seven simultaneously projected images which, in its inaugural performance, we orchestrated seated on the stage of the theater auditorium of the Pompidou Center equipped with a 20-meter-long screen (1983).<sup>13</sup> The technical complexity of these projection performances, along with the disappearance of the equipment for which they were conceived (Xenon Super 8 and slide carousel projectors) make them practically impossible to re-perform as such today.

Are they definitely "lost"? Are they destined to survive through fragments, stills, textual testimonies, and spectator's memories? Or can they be technically retrieved one way or another?<sup>14</sup> They certainly cannot be re-performed by anyone else, as they rely on memorized scores and not written descriptions – and on our presence, whatever the word *presence* may encompass. By the way, we think that the recent trend of re-performing body actions from the 1970s is problematic, because these works are inextricably woven with the presence of the artist who conceived and performed them in the *hic et nunc*. Presence means also inscription of personal history and subjectivity as well as historical context on the artist's own body. The density of concentration, the *subject tension* between conception and performance generate a dramatic effect which is unique. No one can shatter a glass leaping through it the way Gina Pane did!<sup>15</sup> In some cases, "replaying" is pointless.



*Maria Klonaris, Katerina Thomadaki, and Syn Guérin in ORLANDO: HERMAPHRODITE II (1983) by Klonaris/Thomadaki – multi-screen performance for seven film and slide projectors, stereo sound, 45 minutes. Theater auditorium of the Pompidou Center, Paris.*

On the contrary, the other “rescue” process, to which you refer, film restoration, may be rewarding. Why this commitment to the restoration of our films? Maybe because the meta-life of our ephemeral works has always preoccupied us, and parallel to our creation we have been keeping and constructing traces, records, and extensive personal archives.



*Parvaneh Navai in SELVA (1981-83) by Maria Klonaris – Super 8 film, color, sound, 70 minutes. Restored in 35mm Dolby Surround by the French Film Archives (French Film Archives/CNC Film Collections).*

Since 2003 we are involved in an innovative initiative of the French Film Archives/CNC which consists in the restoration in 35mm of our non-narrative Super 8 films from the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>16</sup> This implies considerable technical research, as current restoration processes generally cover visually standardized feature films. The first question that was raised concerned the format. Could Super 8 be successfully enlarged into 35mm? After the extraordinary results of the tests, the Film Archives, the technical team and ourselves concluded that it was possible. The next major question then was the aesthetic criteria that should be applied, due to our non-standardized, utterly subjective film language. This question was further complexified by the performative dimension of our single screen films. For example, in our Super 8 films, whenever we used sound, we synchronized image and sound through speed variators during the projection. Once again, no written scores, just memory patterns. It was obvious that this restoration could not be done in our absence. The Film Archives decided to entrust us with the direction of the restoration works. The process that followed was a thrilling emotional and technical adventure which implied to imagine solutions at each step. The challenge consisted of staying faithful to the originals, while amplifying their audiovisual input. This format leap granted a new visibility to our films, a literal *renaissance*.<sup>17</sup>

We would like to underline here our commitment to the cinematic apparatus and its experiential power. As filmmakers and artists we strive to keep it alive. Since long we have been working on the transposition of the cinematic apparatus in visual arts' spaces – museums, art centers, etc., in the form of environmental projection installations aiming to multiply its immersive potential. The considerable work that we presently dedicate to the restoration of our Super 8 films aims to preserve and enhance the auratic potential of cinematic images. The attention brought to the intensification of the visual components of the image, as well as our immersive post-cinematic spaces defy the reduced states of perception promoted by the most dynamic “new” medium, the network. Internet allows an unlimited connectivity, with doubtless political agency, but remains an information medium as opposed to what we could call an *experiential* medium. Live confrontation situations in art provide shared presence communication. Encounters and connections through crossed subjectivities may be a strong antidote to alienation and a fuel for life.

**MG:** I would like to conclude by asking you the question you yourselves ask in your powerful texts entitled “Film, Gender and Anthropology” that you wrote for the book *New Feminism*:<sup>18</sup> To what extent is an artist or intellectual still allowed by contemporary society in which we live to develop independent critical positions? Or, I will say, dissident subjectivities, that you definitely constitute in life and you develop in your film/video works, in order to allow for another perspective of art and politics to form us here and now?

**MK/KT:** We want to believe that in spite of the shrinking of podiums for independent critical positions, whether these are artworks or philosophical, literary and research statements, there is still some room left for dissident subjectivities, and some more room to conquer, as long as we can adjust our weapons, build shields, adapt to harsher life conditions, and have the chance to survive!

We are aware that the worldwide landscape gets darker and darker and our lives more and more ruthlessly dominated by neoliberal capitalism that Achille Mbembe accurately terms “necrocapitalism” – as it increasingly produces the expropriation of life. You have underlined this in your own texts.<sup>19</sup> The problem is who or what can stop necrocapitalism, when and how? Apparently, neither human suffering, nor massive demonstrations and popular upheavals, nor scientific warnings, not even the earth’s terrifying reactions have, up to now, succeeded to do so. Immense global disasters like the one at Fukushima continue to be viewed as “local accidents.” Let’s hope that harsh economic mechanisms of repression and destruction operating in the world will go on awaking collective resistance and will end up triggering drastic changes through, among others, ecological, anti-nuclear movements, etc.

Meanwhile, what we can do is become all the more aware of our personal and collective responsibilities and keep active in our scale defending critical positions, unsubmitive practices, alternative bodies, and re-invented selves – while remaining receptive to the world’s still existing splendors. Ultimately, it is maybe through them that we can invent new horizons.



# Notes

## Introduction: Rethinking Subjectivity in Film

1. Yosefa Loshitzky, *The Radical Faces of Godard and Bertolucci* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995), 51.
2. See: Eleanor Rosch, "Principles of Categorization," in *Cognition and Categorization*, eds. Eleanor Rosch and Barbara B. Lloyd (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1978), 27-48.
3. André Bazin, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," in *What Is Cinema?* trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 15.
4. *Ibid.*, 13.
5. Vivian Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 10.
6. Diana Fuss, *Identification Papers* (London & New York: Routledge, 1995), 3. She refers to Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen (probably before he enters into the "Freud wars"), see: *The Freudian Subject*, trans. Catherine Porter (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988); and *The Emotional Tie: Psychoanalysis, Mimesis, and Affect*, trans. Douglas Brick et al., (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993).
7. Robert Bresson, *Notes on the Cinematographer*, trans. Jonathan Griffin (Copenhagen: Green Integer, 1997), 81.
8. Marina Gržinić, *Fiction Reconstructed: Eastern Europe, Post-Socialism and the Retro-Avant-Garde* (Vienna: Edition Selene in collaboration with Springerin, 2000); *Une fiction reconstruite, Europe de l'est, post-socialisme et rétro avant-garde* (Paris: L'Harmattan, Ouverture philosophique, 2005).
9. Klonaris, and Thomadaki, "Cinema of the Body," available from <http://www.klonaris-thomadaki.net/artsite.htm>.

## The Cinema as Art of the Mind: Hugo Münsterberg, First Theorist of Subjectivity in Film

1. Jorge Luis Borges, "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius," in *Fictions*, published in *Labyrinths: Selected Stories & Other Writings* (New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1964), 9.
2. Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1950), 171.
3. "Henri Bergson nous parle du cinéma," remarks collected by Michel Georges-Michel in *Le Journal* (20 February 1914), 7.
4. Rémy de Gourmont, *Le Deuxième livre des Masques* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1898), 74.



5. Hugo Münsterberg (1863-1916) was a member of the Harvard Philosophy Department, a leader in the field of applied psychology.
6. Münsterberg's *The Photoplay: A Psychological Study* was first published in April 1916, eight months before his unexpected death. The book was soon forgotten and rediscovery had to wait until the 1970s when it was republished otherwise unaltered except for the modernized name *The Film: A Psychological Study* and Richard Griffith's foreword.
7. Noël Carroll, "Film/Mind Analogies: The Case of Hugo Münsterberg," in *Theorizing the Moving Image* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 294.
8. See Rudolf Arnheim, *Film as Art* [1932] (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957).
9. Hugo Münsterberg, *The Film: A Psychological Study* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1970), 79.
10. *Ibid.*, 19.
11. J. Dudley Andrew, *The Major Film Theories: An Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 24-25.
12. Hugo Münsterberg, *The Film: A Psychological Study*, 19.
13. *Ibid.*, 22.
14. *Ibid.*, 24.
15. *Ibid.*
16. *Ibid.*, 26.
17. *Ibid.*, 30.
18. *Ibid.*, 30.
19. *Ibid.*, 31.
20. *Ibid.*, 74.
21. *Ibid.*, 31-32.
22. *Ibid.*, 32.
23. *Ibid.*
24. Other film theorists of the silent era (Béla Balázs, Jean Epstein) emphasized the power of the close-up, but Münsterberg was certainly among the first. And he was the first to analyze the close-up in terms of the psychology of attention.
25. *Ibid.*, 37-38.
26. *Ibid.*, 39.
27. *Ibid.*, 40-41.
28. *Ibid.*, 41.
29. *Ibid.*
30. *Ibid.*
31. *Ibid.*, 42.
32. *Ibid.*
33. *Ibid.*, 43.
34. *Ibid.*, 44.
35. *Ibid.*, 48.
36. *Ibid.*
37. *Ibid.*, 53.
38. *Ibid.*, 48.
39. *Ibid.*, 52.

40. *Ibid.*, 52.
41. *Ibid.*
42. *Ibid.*, 53.
43. *Ibid.*
44. *Ibid.*
45. *Ibid.*, 53.
46. *Ibid.*, 54.
47. *Ibid.*
48. *Ibid.*
49. *Ibid.*, 55.
50. *Ibid.*
51. *Ibid.*, 55-56.
52. *Ibid.*, 56.
53. *Ibid.*
54. Maureen Turim, *Flashbacks in Film* (New York: Routledge, Chapman and Hall, Inc, 1989), 67-68.
55. Louis Delluc, Pierre Lherminier, *Drames de cinéma: scénarios et projets de films* (Paris: Cahiers du cinéma, 1990), 41
56. Emile Vuillermoz, "Devant l'écran," *Le Temps* (10 October 1917).
57. Paul Souday, "Bergsonisme et cinéma," *Paris-Midi* (12 October 1917).
58. Marcel L'Herbier, "Hermès and Silence," in *French Film Theory and Criticism, volume I: 1907-1929*, ed. Richard Abel (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 149. Written in 1917 and originally published as "Hermès et le silence," in *Le Film*, n°110-111 (29 April 1918), 7-12
59. Emile Vuillermoz, "Before the Screen: *Les Frères corses*" in Richard Abel, *French Film Theory and Criticism*, 3.
60. *Ibid.*
61. Yhcam, "Cinematography," in Richard Abel, *French Film Theory and Criticism*, 75-76.
62. Maureen Turim, *Flashbacks in Film*, 24.

## The Representation of Experience in Cinema

1. Some material from my essay "Bergman and the Film Image," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, 34 (2010), appears here in a revised form. Thanks to Paisley Livingston, Jenefer Robinson and Murray Smith for discussion.
2. Vivian Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 10.
3. Thus I agree with George Wilson who says that "what film viewers imagine seeing in a veridical PoV shot are the fictional circumstances that the character perceives." ("Transparency and Twist in Narrative Fiction Film," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 64 (2006): 84).
4. See Gregory Currie and Ian Ravenscroft, *Recreative Minds: Imagination in Philosophy and Psychology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 96. See also Jane Heal, *Mind, Reason and Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) especially part III, and Kendall Walton, "Projectivism, Empathy, and Musical Tension," *Philosophical To-*

- pics 26 (1999): 407–440. I have taken the term “inflection” from Wilson (“Transparency and Twist in Narrative Fiction Film”), though I assign it a different meaning.
5. This “lying flashback” is much less noted than the later one in *STAGE FRIGHT* (Hitchcock, 1950), presumably because we are cued in to the character’s unreliability in *CROSSFIRE* much earlier than we are in *STAGE FRIGHT*.
  6. Cases like this have been perceptively discussed by George Wilson in “Transparency and Twist in Narrative Fiction Film.”
  7. One thing indicated by *THE WOMAN IN THE WINDOW* is that the material which is true according to the film is not always the focus of the viewer’s interest; viewers are likely to find the content of the dream much more engaging than the fact that these events are dreamed. There is a corresponding tendency to subvert the film’s formal structure and take the content of the dream, and not the dreaming itself, as the story told.
  8. A shot of this kind is anomalous if we see in it something contrary to what the character thought was happening. This is sometimes the case.
  9. Interviews with Stig Björkman, Torsten Manns, and Jonas Sima, *Bergman om Bergman*, eds. Stig Björkman, Torsten Manns, and Jonas Sima (Stockholm: Norstedts Förlag, 1970), Bergman subsequently denied this account: see *Images: My Life in Film* (Stockholm: Norstedts Förlag, 1990).
  10. One might insist that Borg did in fact hear them, and that his much later imaginings are based on these recollections. My point is that we are not obliged to think of such scenes in this way.
  11. Smith, personal communication.
  12. Wilson, “Transparency and Twist in Narrative Fiction Film.”
  13. Things may in fact be a little more complicated. I am not sure that we are supposed to think that Marlow is having a visual experience with exactly this property. Perhaps we are to take the web-like threads as a sort of visual metaphor for his befuddled perceptual state. However, an earlier shot in the film tells against this hypothesis. At a certain point, Marlow is struck from behind and falls unconscious. As we see this, the screen image starts to go black at the edges and the blackness quickly fills the whole screen. At this point presumably we are to imagine that Marlow’s experience of falling unconscious is like the experience we are having while watching: similar, that is, in respect of the spreading blackness, but not in another respect, for we see Marlow and he does not see himself. (Confusingly, the image does not correspond to the description in the voice-over, since Marlow talks of a black pool opening at his feet, which suggests that the blackness should start at the center of the screen and work its way out.)
  14. See Wilson, “Transparency and Twist in Narrative Fiction Film,” 87.
  15. Some shots contain elements which are representational prompts, but which do not prompt us to imagine features of the character’s experience. A shot of the Eiffel Tower with “Paris, 1940” superimposed is such a shot. (Alternatively one might make a distinction between the image and something imposed on the image, thereby denying that such an image contains any non-representational but representation-prompting element.)
  16. Bergman apparently did not zoom in to create the effect, but blew up the shot.
  17. Robinson, personal communication.

## Beyond Subjectivity: The Film Experience

1. A shorter version of this essay has been previously published as “Filmic Experience” in *Screen* 50. 1 (spring 2009): 56-66.
2. The concept of film experience was first elaborated within the field of filmology, in which it was linked to particular modalities of the perception of images in movement: see Edward Brian Lowry, *The Filmology Movement and Film Study in France* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1985). Beginning in the 1990s, the term entered into a theoretical debate as an application of phenomenological reflections to cinema; see: Vivian Sobchack, *Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992); and as a continuation of Benjaminian reflection see: Miriam Hansen, “Benjamin, Cinema and Experience: ‘The Blue Flower in the Land of Technology,’” *New German Critique* 40 (winter 1987): 179-224. Even when not directly thematized, the concept of film experience has sustained the reflection of other scholars: e.g. Edgar Morin, especially at the beginning of his career, when his work, not coincidentally, was linked to filmology – see: in particular, *Le Cinéma ou l’Homme imaginaire. Essai d’anthropologie sociologique* (Paris: Minuit, 1956); Sigfried Kracauer, especially in his last large volume, which, in my opinion, should be read precisely in this sense: *Theory of Film* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960); and, finally, Stanley Cavell, in particular, *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film* (New York: Viking Press, 1971); *Pursuits of Happiness: The Hollywood Comedy of Remarriage* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981); and *Contesting Tears: The Hollywood Melodrama of the Unknown Woman* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).
3. See Roger Odin, *Cinéma et Production de sens* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1990); and *De la fiction* (Bruxelles: De Boeck Université, 2000).
4. See especially Laura Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), and Teresa De Lauretiis, *Alice Doesn’t: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).
5. An exhaustive study of film presentation can be found in: Douglas Gormery, *Shared Pleasure: A History of Movie Presentation in the United States* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992).
6. For a historical reconstruction of the forms of interpretation of some films, see: Janet Staiger, *Interpreting Films: Studies in the Historical Reception of American Cinema* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992); and *Perverse Spectators: The Practices of Film Reception* (New York: New York University Press, 2000).
7. For a historical investigation into forms of cinematic consumption, see: R. Maltby, and M. Stokes, eds., *American Movie Audiences: From the Turn of the Century to the Early Sound Era* (London: British Film Institute, 1999); *Hollywood Spectatorship: Changing Perception of Cinema Audiences* (London: British Film Institute, 1999); *Hollywood Spectatorship: Changing Perceptions of Cinema Audiences* (London: British Film Institute, 2001). For a broader history of spectatorship, see: Gian Piero Brunetta, *Buio in sala* (Venice: Marsilio, 1989); and *Il viaggio dell’icononauta. Dalla camera oscura di Leonardo alla luce dei Lumière* (Venice: Marsilio, 1997).
8. See, for example: Annette Kuhn, *Everyday Magic: Cinema and Cultural Memory* (London & New York: Tauris Publishers, 2002).

9. See: Linda Williams, ed., *Viewing Positions: Ways of Seeing Film* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994).
10. Among the most influential essays on the apparatus, see Jean-Louis Baudry, "Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus," *Film Quarterly*, 28:2 (winter 1974-1975): 39-47 – or in *Cinéthique* (7-8, 1970); "The Apparatus: Metapsychological Approaches to the Impression of Reality in Cinema," in *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader*, ed. Philip Rosen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 299-318 – or; "Le dispositif: approches métapsychologiques de l'impression de réalité," *Communications* 23 (1975): 56-72; and Christian Metz, *Le signifiant imaginaire. Psychanalyse et cinéma* (Paris: Union générale d'éditions, 1977).
11. Emmanuel Levinas, among others, reminded us of the need to respond not "only to the question of knowing 'what is it?' but also to the question 'how is it what it is,'" in *Éthique et Infini. Dialogues avec Philippe Nemo* (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1982).
12. Luigi Pirandello, *The Notebooks of Serafino Gubbio* (Cambridge: Dedalus, 1990) – or *Si gira, Nuova Antologia* (June-August 1915); later republished with the title, *Quaderni di Serafino Gubbio operatore* (Florence: Bemporand, 1925).
13. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, (New York: Schocken, 1968), 217-51 – or "L'œuvre d'art à l'époque de sa reproduction mécanisée," *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung I* (1936).
14. "Beginning with the invention of the press, the word became the primary channel of communication between men [...] However, in the culture of words, the soul, after having become so audible, became almost invisible [...] Now the cinema is marking a shift which is just as radical as that of the printing press. Millions of men come to know every evening – through their eyes, sitting in front of a screen – human destinies, characters, sentiments and moods of every sort, without having need of words [...] Man has once again become visible." Béla Balázs, *Der Sichtbare Mensch oder die Kultur des Films* (Vienna & Leipzig: Deutsch-Osterreichisches Verlag, 1924).
15. "The camera lens [...] is an eye endowed with inhuman analytic capabilities. It is an eye free of prejudices and morals, and immune to influence, which sees traits in the faces and movements of men, which we, full of likes and dislikes, habits and reflections, are no longer able to see." Jean Epstein, "Le cinématographe vu de l'Etna" (Paris: Les Écrivains réunies, 1926); now in *Écrits sur le cinéma*, vol. 1 (Paris: Seghers, 1974).
16. For the concept of "unconscious optics," see, at least: Benjamin's "The Work of Art."
17. This image appears in the essay "Experience and Poverty," *Selected Writings*, Vol. II (Cambridge, MA & London: Belknap/Harvard University Press 1999), 731-36 – or "Erfahrung und Armut," in *Gesammelte Schriften*, 2.1 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1972), 219. However, the theme is present throughout Benjamin's works: see, at least: "The Story-Teller: Reflections on the Works of Nicolai Leskov," in *Illuminations*, op. cit. – or "Der Erzähler. Betrachtungen zum Werk Nikolai Lesskows," *Orient und Occident* (Oct. 1936), now in *Gesammelte Schriften*, 2.2 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1977), 438-465. An interesting take on the theme of the crisis of modern experience can be found in Odo Marquard. See, in particular: "Krise der Erwartung – Stunde der Erfahrung. Zur ästhetischen Kompensation des modernen Erfahrungsverlust," in *Skepsis und Zustimmung. Philosophische Studien* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1994), 70-92; and "Zeitalter der Welt-

- fremdheit? Beitrag zur Analyse der Gegenwart,” *Apologie des Zufälligen* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1986), 76-97. Finally, an important reconsideration of the theme can be found in: Giorgio Agamben, *Infancy and History: The Destruction of Experience* (London & New York: Verso, 1993) – or *Infanzia e storia. Distruzione dell’esperienza e origine della storia* (Turin: Einaudi, 1978).
18. I am thinking of the famous essay by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, “Cézanne’s Doubt” in *Sense and Non-Sense* (Chicago: Illinois University Press, 1964) – or “Le doute de Cézanne,” *Sens et Non-sens* (Paris: Nagel, 1948).
  19. The idea that a text (and, more in general, an event) “permits” a rereading of reality is put forth by Michel de Certeau. I will limit myself here to recalling the extraordinary passage in which, in speaking about *Playtime* by Tati, he writes: “Ainsi, au sortir de *Play-Time*, le spectateur se met-il à remarquer l’humour des rues, comme s’il avait le regard de Tati. Le film a rendu possible une observation humoristique qui, sans lui, ne se serait pas produite. Il en va de même pour la lecture d’un poème, la rencontre de quelqu’un, le remuement d’un groupe. Si le registre de la perception ou de la compréhension s’en trouve modifié, c’est que l’événement a rendu possible et, en un sens très réel, a permis cet autre type de rapport au monde.” Michel de Certeau, *La Faiblesse de croire* (Paris: Seuil, 1987), 210. On the ability of a text to “figure” the real, see also: Pietro Montani, *L’immaginazione narrativa. Il racconto del cinema oltre i confini dello spazio letterario* (Milan: Guerini e Associati, 1999).
  20. I am referring here to the work of the video-artist Douglas Gordon, who, with his *24 Hour Psycho*, projected Hitchcock’s masterpiece at a pace which dragged it out for twenty-four hours.
  21. On convergence, see, at least: Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: New York University Press, 2006). The subject of cinema’s contemporary transformations now fills a considerable bibliography. I will limit myself to mentioning three works, which are useful in light of the prospective being developed here: Janet Harbord, *Film Cultures* (London: Sage, 2003); Charles R. Acland, *Screen Traffic: Movies, Multiplexes, and Global Culture* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2003); and Barbara Klinger, *Beyond the Multiplex. Cinema, New Technologies, and the Home* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: California University Press, 2006).
  22. The definition of media as anesthetic instruments is implied in the concept of “numbness” by Marshall McLuhan in his *Understanding Media* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964). The question has been re-raised recently by Pietro Montani, *Bioestetica* (Florence: Carrocci, 2007). The advancement of “inexperience” in a media-saturated world is passionately described by Antonio Scurati, in: *La letteratura dell’inesperienza* (Milan: Bompiani, 2007).
  23. For more on this double definition of experience, which recalls, in a certain sense, Benjamin’s *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*, see, at least: Paolo Jedlowski, *Il sapere dell’esperienza* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1994); and Martin Jay, “Songs of Experience,” in *Cultural Semantics. Keywords of Our Time* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998).
  24. The idea that to gain experience means that something happens to us, meets us, interrupts us, disturbs us and transforms us, is foregrounded by Martin Heidegger, *Unterwegs zur Sprache* (Neske: Pfullingen, 1959). Jacques Derrida focuses on the couple experience-event in Giovanna Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jürgen*

- Habermas and Jacques Derrida (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003). See also the insightful analysis of September 11, 2001, in: Mauro Carbone, *Essere morti insieme* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2007).
25. These two meanings of the term *recognition* are clearly illustrated, respectively, in the following sentences: “Argus recognized his master, Ulysses,” and “The candidate recognizes that he has lost the election.” The convergence of *agnition* and *admission* evidently causes the real and legal dimensions of the experience to overlap: to recognize an experience is to identify it as legitimated, and vice versa.
  26. Having said this, I am not aiming toward a radical constructivism, for which recognition becomes the constructive condition of experience. When I say that recognition is the element that allows an experience to construct itself as such, I mean to say that it leads to the revelation of that which is happening to a subject, and it leads to a sanctioning of it as “experience” and as the subject’s experience.
  27. It is interesting to read, in this light, a series of Italian contributions from the first fifteen years of the twentieth century: for instance, Giovanni Papini, “La filosofia del cinematografo,” *La Stampa*, vol. XLI (18 May 1907); Enrico Thovez, “L’arte di celluloido,” *La Stampa*, vol. XLII, no. 209 (29 July 1908); Lucio D’Ambra, “Il museo dell’attimo fuggente,” *La Tribuna illustrata*, vol. XXII, no. 20 (17–24 May 1914).
  28. On this theme see the pre-eminent contribution by Louis Delluc, *Le Cinéma, art populaire* (1921), now in Delluc, *Écrits cinématographiques, 11/2: Le cinéma au quotidien* (Paris: Cinémathèque Française, 1990), 279–88.
  29. Miriam Hansen has underlined the cinema’s game-like nature in her essay “Room-for-play: Benjamin’s Gamble with Cinema,” *October*, no. 109 (2004): 3–45
  30. Ricciotto Canudo, “Lettere d’arte. Trionfo del cinematografo,” *Nuovo Giornale* (25 November 1908), now in *Filmcritica* 278 (1977): 296–302. Among the recent contributions which retrace this period, a great insight in this direction is provided by Tom Gunning, “An Aesthetic of Astonishment: Early Film and the (In)credulous Spectator,” in ed. Linda Williams, *Viewing Positions*, cit. 114–33.
  31. For a reconstruction of this regulatory process on the levels of morale, etiquette and hygiene in relation to Italy, see Francesco Casetti and Silvio Alovosio, “Lo spettatore disciplinato: Regole di etichetta, di morale e di igiene nella fruizione filmica dei primi tempi,” in *Storia del cinema Italiano, Volume II* (Venice: Marsilio, forthcoming). For an exemplary investigation into censorship, see Annette Kuhn, *Cinema, Censorship and Sexuality, 1909–1925* (London: Routledge, 1988). On the processes of early censorship in cinema, see Lee Grieveson, *Policing Cinema: Movies and Censorship in Early Twentieth-Century America* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004). On Hollywood’s ability to accomplish a process of normalization of consumption, see ed. Melvyn Stokes, *American Movie Audiences: From the Turn of the Century to the Early Sound Era* (London: British Film Institute, 1999); Richard Koszarski, *An Evening’s Entertainment: The Age of the Silent Feature Picture, 1915–1928* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994).
  32. Interestingly, Noël Burch names as an “institutional form of representation” what others class as classic cinema, mainstream cinema or cinema of diegetic absorption.
  33. Cf. P. M. Heu, *Le Temps du cinéma: Emile Vuillermoz père de la critique cinématographique* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2003).

34. For interesting observations on this subject, see Janet Harbord, *Film Cultures* (London: Sage, 2002).
35. The characteristics of “attendance” have been the subject of much discussion. The debate has been reconstructed in Janet Staiger, *Perverse Spectatorship: The Practices of Film Reception* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 11–27.
36. In particular, viewing environments are built to contain the crowd and at the same time to focus attention upon the screen. They also create echoes of the world represented in the film. On this theme, see Giuliana Bruno, *Atlas of Emotion: Journeys in Art, Architecture and Film* (New York: Verso, 2002).
37. I am referring, in particular, to the intervention of a “film grammar” that smooths over any distance between observer and observed. The writings of such theorists as Pudovkin, Arnheim or Spottiswoode contribute to this grammar. Vsevolod I. Pudovkin, *Film Technique: Five Essays and Two Addresses* (London: G. Newnes, 1933); Rudolf Arnheim, *Film* (London: Faber and Faber, 1933); Raymond Spottiswoode, *Grammar of the Film: An Analysis of Film Technique* (London: Faber and Faber, 1935).
38. On the concept of “looking at” and “looking through” in media, see David Bolter and Victor Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999).
39. At the center of attendance there is that “to-be-looked-at-ness” which is examined by Laura Mulvey in *Visual and Other Pleasures*. Under this aspect, the theory of “subject position” of the 1970s and 1980s becomes a theory of attendance.
40. On the film, see Andrew Norton, ed. *Buster Keaton’s Sherlock Jr* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); in particular the essay by Henry Jenkins, “‘This Yellow Keaton Seems to Be the Whole Show:’ Buster Keaton, Interrupted Performance, and the Vaudeville Aesthetic,” 29–66.
41. Alexandre Astruc, “Naissance d’une nouvelle avant-garde: la caméra-stylo,” *Écran Français*, no. 144 (1948).
42. On the advent of multiplexes and new forms of viewing, see Charles R. Acland, *Screen Traffic: Movies, Multiplexes and Global Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003). The relationship between digital technologies (particularly the Internet) and spectatorial attitudes is examined in Michele White, *The Body and the Screen* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006).
43. On remediation, see Bolter and Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media*.
44. The quickest medium to answer to this need of expressivity is, perhaps, fashion: cinema can only provide symbolic identification; that is, purely abstract or psychological “clothing.”
45. Television is better able to adapt to this growing need: in the 1980s, it went from being a dispenser of programs to being a medium of contact with viewers, thanks to the opportunity that audience members had to phone in during shows and to have their calls broadcast live.
46. Régis Debray, examining the passage to the “videosphere,” talks about the “end of the show,” also linking it to a general weakening of the role of sight. See Debray, *Vie et Mort de l’image: une histoire du regard en Occident* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992), 228.



47. The word “performance” is first used in Timothy Corrigan, *A Cinema Without Walls: Movies and Culture after Vietnam* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1991). In the present essay, the term has a more specific meaning.
48. In relation to this, see Maria Grazia Fanchi, *Spettatori* (Milan: Il Castoro, 2006).
49. From this point of view the consumption practices of fans are exemplary. On fandom, see Henry Jenkins, *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1992).
50. On the emotional dimension, see Carl Plantinga and Greg M. Smith, eds. *Passionate Views* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999); and from a different perspective, M. Brütsch et al., eds. *Kinogefühle: Emotionalität und Film* (Marburg: Schüren, 2005).
51. On this type of doing, see Francesco Casetti and Maria Grazia Fanchi, eds. *Terre incognite* (Florence: Carrocci, 2006).
52. On the expansion of cinema outside its traditional borders, see Anne Friedberg, “The End of Cinema: Multimedia and Technological Change,” in *Reinventing Film Studies*, eds. Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams (London: Arnold, 2000), 438-52; Malte Hagener, “Where is Cinema (Today)? The Cinema in the Age of Media Immanence,” *Cinema&Cie* 11 (fall 2008): 15-22. For the concept of “relocation of cinema,” see Francesco Casetti, “Filmic Experience,” *Screen*, 1. 50 (spring 2009): 56-66; Francesco Casetti, “Back to the Motherland: The Film Theatre in the Postmedia Age,” *Screen* 1. 52 (2011): 1-12.
53. On this theme, see Montani, *Bioestetica*.

## **The Man Who Wasn't There: The Production of Subjectivity in Delmer Daves' *DARK PASSAGE***

1. Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 61.
2. Emmanuel Levinas, “On Obliteration: Discussing Sacha Sosno,” trans. R. Cohen, *Art & Text* 33 (winter 1989): 38.
3. J.P. Telotte, *Voices in the Dark: The Narrative Patterns of Film Noir* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 122.
4. Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 17.
5. Žižek, *The Parallax View*, 17.
6. *Ibid.*
7. Delmer Daves, “Notes on Experimental Camera Work on *Dark Passage*,” received 23 October 1946 by unknown recipients from Warner Bros. Pictures, Inc. Story Department (Delmer Daves, “Notes on Experimental Camera Work on *Dark Passage* / Observations on the Camera Acting as a Person: *Dark Passage*” (Los Angeles, CA: USC Warner Bros. Archive: Box or File: D-61), n.p.).
8. The other two cameras tested were the extremely mobile “Cunningham [Combat] Camera” developed during World War II and the “American camera” (its make unspecified). As to the make and origin of the “German camera,” in a later interview, Daves claims he “was the first one to use the Ariflex [sic] in the United States. We got it through the United States’ government. It was a captured Nazi camera.” Christopher

- Wickering, "Interview with Delmer Daves," *Screen* 10, 4-5 (1969): 61. Film historian Barry Salt offers some confirmation: "Captured Arriflexes were in occasional use in Hollywood soon after the war," although actual "application of the camera remained very limited" for some time, despite its use in *DARK PASSAGE*. He also notes that the Arriflex "had continuous through-the-lens viewing, could hold 400 ft. of film, and weighed 13 lbs. unloaded." Barry Salt, "Film Style and Technology in the Forties," *Film Quarterly*, 31, 1 (autumn 1977): 46.
9. David Goodis, *Dark Passage* (New York: Messner, 1946).
  10. Wickering, "Interview with Delmer Daves," 61.
  11. In this regard, studio head Jack Warner was none too happy that the film's star would not be fully visible for more than half the film's length.
  12. Wickering, "Interview with Delmer Daves," 62.
  13. Daves called for more experiments with simulating a "dropping eyelid," in all likelihood for when Vincent is anesthetized prior to his surgery. "Oiled paper" was apparently too translucent for the "proper effect" and he suggests "that a fringed arch, a fuzzy outline to represent the lashes should be tried and that a red semi-opaque paper or glass be used so that while somewhat translucent, the effect of an actual eyelid closing can be achieved.
  14. Daves also indicated in a later interview that, in using "two men being the two arms," both men had to be "right up next to the camera," so he "even had to use three operators on one shot to keep the flow of continuity" (Wickering, "Interview with Delmer Daves," 62).
  15. Daves says in interview: "Every shot was a problem, and instead of cutting, I did whips. I whipped the camera, if we turn quickly, we whip, and I did the next shot to cut in on that whip. I developed that technique early because I discovered I had to pan and I had to get to another set-up and another location figured. So I did it all in whips" (Wickering, "Interview with Delmer Daves," 62).
  16. Wickering, "Interview with Delmer Daves," 63.
  17. *Ibid.*
  18. For elaboration of the concept of "inner speech" in cinema as differentiated from externalized signification although based as the latter in the realm of the linguistic and verbal, see Boris Eichenbaum, "Problems of Film Stylistics," trans. Thomas Aman, *Screen* 15 (autumn 1974): 7-32.
  19. Slavoj Žižek, "'The Thing that Thinks': The Kantian Background of the Noir Subject," in *Shades of Noir*, ed. Joan Copjec (London: Verso, 1993), 211.
  20. Vivian Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).
  21. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 66.
  22. *Ibid.*, 194.
  23. Emmanuel Levinas, "Meaning and Sense," in *Emmanuel Levinas: Basic Philosophical Writings*, eds. A.T. Peperzak, S. Critchley, and R. Bernasconi (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 53.
  24. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 61.
  25. Chloé Taylor, "Hard, Dry Eyes and Eyes That Weep: Vision and Ethics in Levinas and Derrida," *Postmodern Culture*, 16. 2 (2006): 1.

26. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 262.
27. Marty Slaughter, "Levinas, Mercy and the Middle Ages," 12. This unpublished version of a chapter in *Levinas, Law, Politics*, ed. M. Diamantides (London: Routledge-Cavendish, 2007) can be found online at <http://kar.kent.ac.uk>; (accessed 11/26/2010).
28. Slaughter, "Levinas, Mercy and the Middle Ages," 11.
29. *Ibid.*, 12. Slaughter here is glossing Philippe Crignon's argument in "Figuration: Emmanuel Levinas and the Image," trans. Nicole Simek and Zahi Zalloua, *Yale French Studies* 104 (2004): 100-125.
30. Crignon, "Figuration: Emmanuel Levinas and the Image," 124.
31. Slaughter, "Levinas, Mercy and the Middle Ages," 12. Slaughter notes Levinas wrote "two little-known essays" in which "he discussed the work of the painter Jean Atlan and the artist-sculptor Sacha Sosno," calling the latter an "artist of 'obliteration.'" See "On Obliteration," *op. cit.*, and Emmanuel Levinas, "Jean Atlan et la tension de l'art," in *Cahier Lévinas*, eds. C. Chalier and M. Absensour (Paris: L'Herne, 1991).
32. Dana Polan, *Power & Paranoia: History, Narrative, and the American Cinema 1940-1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 196.
33. Polan, *Power & Paranoia*, 195.
34. *Ibid.*, 196.
35. Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being, or Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1998), 101.
36. Crignon, "Figuration: Emmanuel Levinas and the Image," 124.
37. Polan, *Power & Paranoia*, 193.
38. Telotte, *Voices in the Dark*, 125.
39. *Ibid.*
40. Slaughter, "Levinas, Mercy and the Middle Ages," 12. The interior quote comes from Levinas, "On Obliteration," *op. cit.*, p. 30.
41. Polan, *Power & Paranoia*, 194.
42. The other 1947 noirs that experimented with subjective camera were *POSSESSED* and *HIGH WALL*, both directed by Curtis Bernhardt (not surprisingly an émigré German filmmaker schooled in expressionist techniques, who had fled to Hollywood when the Nazis came to power). See Telotte, *Voices in the Dark*, 19.
43. Telotte, *Voices in the Dark*, 19.
44. Quoted in David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979), 148.
45. I discuss these issues at length and somewhat differently than in the present essay in *The Address of the Eye*, *op. cit.*, 230-246.
46. Pascal Bonitzer, "Partial Vision: Film and the Labyrinth," trans. Fabrice Ziolkowski, *Wide Angle* 4, 4 (1981): 58.

## From Aesthetic Experience to the Loss of Identity, in Three Steps

1. Joachim Ritter, *Subjectividad. Seis ensayos*, trans. R. de la Vega (Barcelona-Caracas: Alfa, 1986), 10. [My translation].
2. Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle, The Standard Edition*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 1961), 2058 ss.

3. *Ibid.*, 2514.
4. Jacques Lacan, “Du Cosmos à l’Umheimlichkeit,” in *Le Séminaire, Livre X, L’Angoisse* (Paris: Seuil, Champ freudien, 2004). Jacques Lacan definitely connects anguish to the uncanny.
5. See Sigmund Freud, “The Uncanny,” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. XIV, ed. James Strachey (London, 1953-74). Uncanny, inquiétante étrangeté, unfamiliar(ity), siniestro are some of the terms used to describe Das Unheimliche.
6. Sigmund Freud, “Lo siniestro,” in *Obras completas*, VII, trans. L. López-Ballesteros (Madrid: Edit. Biblioteca Nueva, 1974), 2484-2505.
7. Otto Rank, *Don Juan et Le Double*, trans. S. Lautman (Paris: Payot, 1973), 26.
8. Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Double*, trans. Constance Garnett (New York: Dover Publications, 1997), 38.
9. *Ibid.*, 97-98, 108, 171.
10. Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Double*, 86.
11. Guy de Maupassant, *Le Horla et autres récits fantastiques* (Paris: Pocket, 1989), 67-68 [my translation].
12. *Ibid.*
13. From the homonymous play by Tennessee Williams. Screenplay by Anthony Veiller and John Huston. Principal characters: Richard Burton, Ava Gardner, Deborah Kerr, Sue Lyon. The film’s story revolves around a defrocked priest working as tourist guide and two women, one who runs a hostel by the sea and the other is a painter who takes care of her elderly grandfather in a wheelchair. Both take pity on him, each in their own way.
14. Words and phrases in this part are quoted from the Tennessee Williams’ play (1976).
15. In Williams’ play, on the contrary, he goes “faintly, drifting off.” Tennessee Williams, *Three by Tennessee* (*Sweet Bird of Youth, The Rose Tatum, The Night of the Iguana*), with a foreword by the author (New York: Penguin, Signet Classics, 1976).
16. Tennessee Williams, “The Night of the Iguana,” in *Three by Tennessee* (New York: Penguin, Signet Classics, 1976), 125.
17. Charles S. Peirce, *Pragmatism and Pragmaticism. Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, eds. Ch. Hartshorne and P. Weiss (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965), 5: 5.44. Peirce also calls it an “emotional interpretant” (5.475). As the Peircean interpretant is an idea, or mental content, we may say that it is an embryonic thought or a thought still un-thought, a latent thought.
18. Cf. Pere Salabert, “Aesthetic Experience in Charles Sanders Peirce: The Threshold,” in *Peirce and Value Theory: On Peircean Ethics and Aesthetics*, ed. Herman Parret (Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Co., 1994).
19. Charles S. Peirce, *Principles of Philosophy. Collected Papers*, 1:328-9.
20. *Ibid.*
21. See Karl Abraham, *Contribuciones a la teoría de la libido*, trans. D. R. Wagner (Buenos Aires: Eds. Hormé, 1973), 210-211. From *Selected Papers of Karl Abraham*, with an introductory memoir by Ernest Jones, trans. Douglas Bryan and Alix Strachey (London: Maresfield Library, 1988), XXVI.

22. Screenplay by Henri-Georges Clouzot. It is the story of Paul and Nelly, a young couple who run a hotel in the country. As Nelly is the most beautiful woman in the region, all the men are jealous of Paul. But after their first child, when things seem to be going well enough, Paul becomes jealous: Nelly, he thinks, is unfaithful. Some problems, and his doubt about his wife's faithfulness lead him to an excessive anxiety or obsessive behavior. He drinks in an attempt to silence the voices that he begins to hear in his head. Paul's madness goes to extremes as he spies upon Nelly when she goes into town, or when she is having fun with her friends. Gradually, the couple's life, which was meant to be idyllic, becomes a living hell.
23. Michel Foucault, *Maladie mentale et Psychologie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2010), 28-29 [my translation].
24. See Sandor Ferenczi, *L'Enfant dans l'adulte*, trans. J. Dupont and M. Viliker (Paris: Payot-Rivages, 2006), 63.
25. Cf. Foucault, *Maladie mentale et Psychologie*, 64 s.
26. Director and writer: Jim Jarmusch. Production: Demetra J. Macbride. Main characters: Johnny Depp, Gary Farmer, Crispin Glover. William Blake receives a letter with an offer of work in the city of Machine. So, he leaves his work as a bookkeeper in Cleveland, Ohio, and travels to Machine in the western US. After a train journey that makes us think about an initiation process, he reaches a strange industrial city. When he gets there, the owner of the factory, Dickinson, has already employed somebody else. Now that he had missed his chance, everything changes. He kills Charlie Dickinson, after Charlie has killed his own wife who he finds in bed with Blake. As a result, William Blake has to flee the place, turning into an outlaw pursued, day after day, by bounty hunters. During this long getaway (his life, in fact), which will finish with a last trip, that of death, William has a unique companion: Nobody, a Native American who takes care of him, convinced that he is another person, his English homonym from the eighteenth century, a painter and poet.
27. Charles S. Peirce, *Principles of Philosophy. Collected Papers*, 1.321.
28. Carl G. Jung, *Présent et Avenir*, [1957] trans. Roland Cahen (Paris: Buchet/Chastel, 2008), 81. See: "The Undiscovered Self (Present and Future)," in *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung*, vol. 10, eds. Gerhard Adler, Michael Fordham, and Sir Herbert Read, trans. R. F. C. Hull (London: Routledge, 2009).
29. *Ibid.*, 51 s.
30. Or makes him what he already is... The story may be compared to another one that Binet quotes from M. Ball. See: Alfred Binet, *Le fétichisme dans l'amour* (Paris: Payot, 2001), 38, 40 s.

## Robert Bresson and the Voices of an Inner World: "I" Can Never be "You," or the Impossible Identification

1. Sergei M. Eisenstein, Vsevolod Poudovkine, and Grigori Alexandrov, "Statement on Sound," [1928] in *The Eisenstein Reader*, ed. Richard Taylor, trans. Richard Taylor and William Powell (London: British Film Institute/Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 80-81. See also: "L'Avenir du film sonore," [1928] in Poudovkine, eds. Luda and Jean Schnitzer (Paris: Seghers, Cinéma d'aujourd'hui, 1966), 108-11. Robert Robertson's book is, in

- this regard, very interesting: Eisenstein on the Audiovisual: *The Montage of Music. Image and Sound in Cinema* (New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 2009).
2. Alain Boillat, *Du bonimenteur à la voix-over* (Lausanne: éditions Antipodes, 2007), 17.
  3. “La voix-d’outre-film,” an expression used by Philippe Arnaud in Robert Bresson, (Paris: Cahiers du Cinéma, Auteurs, 1986), 78.
  4. Philippe Arnaud, “La voix-d’outre-film,” 78.
  5. Review of Michel Chion’s *The Voice in Cinema*, trans. and ed. Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999) by Tim Anderson, *Echo*, 2.1, 2000. Available from <http://www.echo.ucla.edu/volume2-Issue1/book-reviews/cinematic-voice.html>.
  6. Jean-Louis Provoyeur, *Le Cinéma de Robert Bresson: de l’effet de réel à l’effet de sublime* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2003), 192.
  7. Evelyne Jardonnet and Marguerite Chabrol, *Pickpocket* by Robert Bresson (Neuilly: Atlante, Clés concours-cinéma, 2005), 7.
  8. Marcel L’Herbier in “Journal d’un curé de campagne,” *Robert Bresson. Éloge*, ed. Philippe Arnaud (Milan, Edizioni Gabriele Mazzotta; Paris: Cinémathèque française, 1997), 26.
  9. Jean-Marie G. Le Clézio, “Le Voyage initiatique,” [1983] in *Robert Bresson. Éloge*, 63.
  10. Literally speaking, as Bresson sometimes used to dictate the text to his models progressively.
  11. André Bazin, “Le Journal d’un curé de campagne and the Stylistics of Robert Bresson,” in *What Is Cinema?* vol. 1, trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 134. See: “Le Journal d’un curé de campagne et la stylistique de Robert Bresson,” in *Qu’est-ce que le cinéma?* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1985), 116.
  12. Bresson’s film is a transposition of *Diary of Raskolnikov*, Dostoyevsky’s initial idea before he wrote *Crime and Punishment*.
  13. The theory outlined by Raskolnikov in his article is very close to Michel’s. In both cases, the superior man – whom Dostoyevsky calls extraordinary – can allow himself to commit a crime if he deems it legitimate.
  14. “Something illuminated her face,” says Michel, in Bresson’s film, a few minutes before embracing Jeanne; “a light of infinite happiness came into her eyes” says Raskolnikov about Sonia at the end of *Crime and Punishment*, trans. Constance Garnett, first published in 1866, republished by Forgotten Books, 2008, 560. Available from <http://www.forgottenbooks.org>.
  15. Published in the “Figaro Littéraire” 20 January, 1954.
  16. Robert Bresson, *Notes on the Cinematographer*, trans. Jonathan Griffin (Copenhagen: Green Integer, 1997), 47. Translated from the French edition: *Notes sur le cinématographe* (Paris: Gallimard, Collection Folio, 1975).
  17. Claude Mauriac, as quoted by Marcel L’Herbier, in *Robert Bresson. Éloge*, 29.
  18. Jean-Louis Provoyeur, *Le Cinéma de Robert Bresson*, 264-265.
  19. Regarding this issue, see also Michel Chion’s fine analysis in *The Voice in Cinema*.
  20. André Bazin, “Un condamné à mort s’est échappé,” in *Robert Bresson. Éloge*, 31.
  21. *Ibid.*
  22. Marcel L’Herbier, in *Robert Bresson. Éloge*, 28.
  23. Robert Bresson, *Notes on the Cinematographer*, 48.
  24. *Ibid.*, 84.

25. In *Ni vu, ni connu*, a documentary film about Bresson, directed by François Weyergans in 1994.
26. Robert Bresson, *Notes on the Cinematographer*, 120.
27. *Ibid.*, 92.
28. *Ibid.*, 90.
29. Jean-Louis Provoyeur, *Le Cinéma de Robert Bresson*, 202.
30. *Ibid.*, 192.
31. Jacques Catteau, *La Création littéraire chez Dostoïevski* (Paris: Bibliothèque russe de l'Institut d'études slaves, 1978), 125.
32. Mireille Latil le Dantec, "Bresson et Dostoïevski," *Cinématographe*, 73, *Spécial Dostoïevski* (December 1981), 16.
33. Jean-Louis Provoyeur, *Le Cinéma de Robert Bresson*, 9. The author mentions each and every adaptation, which will not be done in this article.
34. First published in the *Figaro Littéraire*, it was made into a novel after the film was released.
35. Roland Barthes, *Le Plaisir du texte* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, Essais, 1973), 104. *The Pleasure of the Text*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975).
36. André Bazin, "Le Journal d'un curé de campagne and the Stylistics of Robert Bresson," 127-128.
37. François Mauriac, "Un condamné à mort s'est échappé," [1951] in *Robert Bresson. Éloge*, 22.
38. Robert Bresson, *Notes on the Cinematographer*, 83.
39. André Bazin, "Le Journal d'un curé de campagne and the Stylistics of Robert Bresson," 133, 137.
40. Robert Bresson, *Notes on the Cinematographer*, 81.
41. *Ibid.*, 98.
42. André Bazin, "Le Journal d'un curé de campagne and the Stylistics of Robert Bresson," 133-134.

## The Silence of the Lenses: Blow Up and the Subject of Photography

1. The film actually came out in 1966.
2. This international artistic movement actually included the active participation of numerous pre-eminent artists of the period, from Joseph Beuys in Germany to Robert Filliou in France. Its interdisciplinary nature (visual arts, music, theater) was one of its most striking characteristics.
3. For a study of Duchamp's post-Kantian perspective, see in particular Thierry de Duve, *Au Nom de l'Art. Pour une Archéologie de la Modernité* (Paris: Minuit, 1989).
4. For a critique of the institutional power of the museum by the artists of the 1960s, see in particular Rosalind Krauss, *Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2000), and her analysis of conceptual artist Marcel Broodthaers' *Musée des Aigles*.
5. I refer here to Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Ken Knabb (London: Rebel Press, 1983). *La Société du Spectacle* (Paris: Buchet-Chastel) first came out in 1967.

6. I want to stress in this regard the very cool reception that *L'AVVENTURA* received during its premiere at the Cannes international film festival.
7. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 26-27.
8. Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 92-93.
9. For a study of both the aesthetic meaning of the *punctum* and the relationship between photography and death in *Camera Lucida*, see my book, *The Paradox of Photography* (Amsterdam & New York: Rodopi, 2009) and in particular the chapter "The image. One image. Image," 97-142.
10. This relationship between Barthes and Antonioni has an important biographical dimension, in the case of the French literary critic, since his last public appearance before his accidental death in 1980 was actually his participation in a tribute to Antonioni that took place in the city of Bologna.
11. I refer here to the concept developed by philosopher Hannah Arendt in regard to Nazi totalitarianism in her book *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Viking Press, 1963).
12. This work stresses in many ways the conceptual dimension of Magritte's work, beyond its historical belonging to the surrealist movement in his native Belgium. I refer here in particular to Michel Foucault, *This is not a Pipe*, trans. and ed. James Harkness (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).
13. Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994).
14. In Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, ed. and introduction by Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1968), 228.
15. For a poetic perspective on the role of silence in John Cage's music and its philosophical relationship to Zen, see the poem "Reading John Cage," in Octavio Paz, *East Slope (Lado Este, 1962-1968)*, in *The Collected Poems of Octavio Paz, 1957-1987*, ed. and trans. Eliot Weinberger et al. (New York: New Directions Books, 1990) 235-240.
16. Jean Baudrillard, *The Perfect Crime*, trans. Chris Turner (London & New York: Verso, 2002).
17. For a study of the important aesthetic role of the void in contemporary art (particularly in Fluxus), see *Voids*, eds. John Armleder, Mathieu Copeland, Gustav Metzger, Maitu Perret and Clive Phillpot. (Dijon: Les Presses du Réel, 2009).
18. One must notice in this regard that the roommate (and ultimately lover) of the photographer's girlfriend is himself an abstract painter. One of the paintings that are displayed in his studio is actually a work by Antonioni himself, who had a background in architecture and fine arts.
19. Jean-Michel Rabaté, *Given: 1° Art 2° Crime: Modernity, Murder and Mass Culture* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2007).
20. For a contemporary perspective on this issue, see in particular Jonathan Eburne, *Surrealism and the Art of Crime* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009).
21. Rabaté also refers here to the work of fellow modernist Man Ray and to his sadistic inspiration, particularly though a portrait that he painted of the *Divin Marquis*. The so-called sadism that characterizes Man Ray's art can be questioned here. It is far from obvious if one considers his *Rayographs*, which are essentially optical and technical



experiments of a formalist nature in the field of photography. A sadistic nature does not appear clearly in his numerous portraits of women either, which can be defined as both sensual and post-romantic in nature.

22. It is interesting to notice in this regard that the year of the completion of *Etant donné*s (1966) by Duchamp is the same as that of Antonioni's film.
23. Antonioni's critique of this modern alienation would later be developed in *ZABRISKIE POINT*, a film which expresses a profoundly critical discourse on the "American dream" and its consumerist obsession. In this case, the deception of signs stems largely from the ongoing presence of advertising and commercials in the American everyday life of the late 1960s.

## Beyond Subjectivity. Bakhtin's Dialogism and the Moving Image

1. Supported by a Senior Fellowship of the State Innovative Institute for the Studies of Journalism & Communication and Media Society at Fudan University, Shanghai.
2. See Wolfgang Beilenhoff ed., *Poetik des Films* (Munich: Fink, 1974); Herbert Eagle ed., *Russian Formalist Film Theory* (Michigan: University Press, 1981).
3. Pavel Medvedev, *The Formal Method in Literary Studies*, trans. A. J. Wehrle (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978).
4. It is still a matter of debate as to whether or not Bakhtin himself worked with Vološinov on this book or other articles, or if he even, as some people claim, wrote them completely himself. For unknown reasons, these works were published under another name. See Tzvetan Todorov, *Mikhail Bakhtin: The Dialogical Principle*, trans. Wlad Godzich (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 8: "The works signed Medvedev and Voloshinov, but supposedly written by Bakhtin [...]"; Neal Bruss, I.R. Titunik (translator), in: V.N. Vološinov, *Freudianism: A Marxist Critique* (New York, San Francisco & London: Academic Press, 1976), xiii: "Then, in 1973, the enigma of Vološinov was given an extraordinary twist by the published declaration of the eminent Soviet philologist V.V. Ivanov that all the key writings of V.N. Vološinov (as well as a book by P.N. Medvedev) are actually the work of Bakhtin himself, with Vološinov and Medvedev merely having served as editors and proofreaders – but with their names on the title pages."
5. "From the objective point of view, both sets of motives, those of the unofficial as well as the official conscious, are given completely alike in inner and in outward speech and both alike are not a cause of behavior but a component, an integral part of it": Vološinov, *Freudianism*, 85f.
6. See: Herta Schmid, "Bakhtin's Dialogizitätstheorie im Spiegel der dramatisch-theatralischen Gattungen," in *Dramatische und theatralische Kommunikation: Beiträge zur Geschichte und Theorie des Dramas und Theaters im 20. Jahrhundert*, eds. Herta Schmid and Jurij Strieder (Tübingen: Gunter Narr, 1992), 86 [my translation].
7. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1973), 9.
8. Medvedev, *The Formal Method in Literary Studies*, 98. See Deleuze's suggestion that "narrations are not a given of visible images": Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time Image* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1986), 28; or Martin Jay's accusation of "anti-

- ocularcentrism” against the early writings of Metz: Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Los Angeles, Berkeley & London: California University Press, 1993), 437.
9. Medvedev, *The Formal Method in Literary Studies*, 43.
  10. Vološinov, *Freudianism*, 87.
  11. Mikhail M. Bakhtin, “The Problem of Content, Material and Form in Verbal Art” in *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*, eds. Michael Holquist and Vadim Liapunov, trans. Kenneth Brostrom (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1990), 300.
  12. Here the rather martialistic expression of the film “shot” used in English is not as suitable as the word “Einstellung” which is the German expression used in this context. This word can be translated not only as film shot, but also as positioning.
  13. Robert Stam, *Subversive Pleasures: Bakhtin, Cultural Criticism, and Film* (Baltimore & London: John Hopkins University Press, 1989), 103ff.
  14. Martin Flanagan, *Bakhtin and the Movies: New Ways of Understanding Hollywood Film* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).
  15. Edward R. Branigan, *Point of View in the Cinema. A Theory of Narration and Subjectivity in Classical Film* (Berlin, New York & Amsterdam: Mouton Publishers, 1984).
  16. Mikhail M. Bakhtin, “Discourse in the Novel,” in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M.M. Bakhtin*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1981), 276.
  17. Bakhtin, “Discourse in the Novel,” 417.
  18. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, 106.
  19. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, 10. To what extent this premise, which in this case refers to Dostoyevsky, was influenced by the dialogue-based principles of Martin Buber has not, as far as I know, been sufficiently examined. In any case, the temporal coincidence of the development of both of these great dialogicity philosophies in the first half of the twentieth century is striking. In 1923 Buber finished *Ich und Du* (I and Thou), in 1930 *Zweigsprache* (Dialogue) appeared. See Martin Buber, *Das Dialogische Prinzip* (Gerlingen: Verlag Lambert Schneider, 1992).
  20. See Karl Sierck, *Ophüls/Bakhtin. Versuch mit Film zu reden. Nexus* (Frankfurt: Stroemfeld, 1993), 170-176.
  21. With the use of the term perceptive background we are reminded of Medvedev’s knowledge of Gestalt theory and the importance which this had for the development of his conceptualization of the image, he also used the term “Gestaltqualität” (Gestalt quality), cited in German in the Russian original, in his critique on Formalism: “The perception of form, the perception of the quality of form (Gestaltqualität), became one of the most important problems of not only art scholarship, but of theoretical esthetics and psychology,” Medvedev, *The Formal Method in Literary Studies*, 49.
  22. M.M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 438.
  23. *Ibid.*, 420.
  24. Traces of the theory of this textual embodiment are still to be found today in the most divergent aesthetical discourses from phenomenology to the theory of film. See Vivian Carol Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* (Berkeley: Univer-

- sity of California Press, 2004); Raymond Bellour, *Le Corps du cinéma: hypnoses, émotions, animalités* (Paris: P.O.L., 2009).
25. David Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 14. [my italics].
  26. David Bordwell, "Contemporary Film Studies and the Vicissitudes of Grand Theory," in *Post Theory: Reconstructing Film Studies*, eds. David Bordwell and Noël Carroll (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), 3.
  27. Medvedev, *The Formal Method in Literary Studies*, 3.
  28. "Middle-level research": See David Bordwell, *Post Theory: Reconstructing Film Studies*, 3.
  29. Kristin Thompson, *Breaking the Glass Armor: A Neoformalist Approach to Film Analysis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 6.
  30. Medvedev, *The Formal Method in Literary Studies*, 48.
  31. *Ibid.*, 49f.
  32. See Talcott Parsons, *The Structure of Social Action: A Study in Social Theory with Special Reference to a Group of Recent European Writers*, McGraw-Hill Publications in Sociology (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1937).
  33. David Bordwell, "Grand Theory," 14.
  34. Kristin Thompson, *Breaking the Glass Armor*, 7.
  35. Bakhtin, *Problem of Content, Material and Form in Verbal Art*, 308ff.
  36. *Ibid.*, 309.
  37. David Bordwell, "Cognition and Comprehension. Viewing and Forgetting in Mildred Pierce," *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism* 6.2. (spring 1992): 185.
  38. David Bordwell, "Grand Theory," 6-9. Without repeating the chauvinistic blanket suspicions of Bordwell regarding the "French theory" (19) and the unqualified diatribes against the "esoteric merger of anti-rationalist philosophy, unorthodox psychoanalysis, and the frequently changing views of an official philosopher of the French Communist Party" (14).
  39. See Kristin Thompson, and David Bordwell, *Observations on Film Art*, 2008, available from <http://www.davidbordwell.net/blog/?p=2927>.
  40. Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *The Problem of Content, Material and Form in Verbal Art*, 310.

## Imaginary Subject

1. On the history of this problematic, see the article "Sujet," in *Vocabulaire européen des philosophies*, ed. Barbara Cassin (Paris: Seuil/ Le Robert, 2004), 1233-1253; Michel Foucault, *Herméneutique du sujet [1981-1982]* (Paris: Gallimard/Seuil, 2001); Alain de Libéra, *Archéologie du sujet*, vol 2. (Paris: Vrin, 2007-2008).
2. John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding [1694]* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), "Of Identity and Diversity," book II, chapter xxvii. 328-348.
3. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, [1790] trans. James Creed Meredith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). Original publication date: 1952, Oxford World's Classics.
4. John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 335.
5. *Ibid.*, paragraph 10, 335.
6. *Ibid.*, paragraph 16, 340-341.

7. For an analysis of film from a Lockean perspective, see Christian Dours, *Personne, Personnage. Les Fictions de l'identité personnelle* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2003).
8. See: Judith Mayne, *Cinema and Spectatorship* (London & New York: Routledge: 1993).
9. Michel Foucault, *Les Mots et les choses. Une archéologie des sciences humaines*, [1966] chapters X, VI (Paris: Gallimard, 2010), 398.
10. John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 336-340.
11. Edgar Morin, "L'homme et le double," in *Le Cinéma ou l'Homme imaginaire* (Paris: Minuit, 1956), 33.
12. *Ibid.*, 31 [my translation].
13. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, [1817] chapter xiv. Available from <http://www.english.upenn.edu/~mgamer/Etexts/biographia.html>.
14. Edward Bullough, "'Psychical Distance' as a Factor in Art and an Aesthetic Principle," *British Journal of Psychology*, vol. v (June 2, 1912): 87-118.
15. Jean-Louis Baudry, "Le dispositif: approches métapsychologiques de l'impression de réalité," *Communications. Psychoanalyse et cinéma*, no. 23 (February 1975): 56-72.
16. Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'Imaginaire*, [1940] "Conclusion" II, "L'œuvre d'art," (Paris: Gallimard, folio essais, 2005), 361-373.
17. Christian Metz, *Le Signifiant imaginaire* [1977] (Paris: Christian Bourgois editions, 2002).
18. *Ibid.*, 3 [my translation], "Identification, mirror," 69.
19. *Ibid.*, 69 [my translation].
20. Donald W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (London & New York: Routledge, 1971); *Jeu et Réalité*, trans. Cl. Mondo and J.-B. Pontalis (Paris: Gallimard, 1975).
21. Michael Renov, *The Subject of Documentary* (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 176-181.
22. See: Bill Nichols, *Representing Reality* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991); *Blurred Boundaries* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).
23. Michael Renov, *The Subject of Documentary*, Part I, "Social Subjectivity," 3-89.
24. See: Marlene Jouan, ed. *Psychologie morale* (Paris: Vrin, 2008).
25. Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good* [1970] (London & New York: Routledge Classics; 2001).
26. Martha Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge. Essays on Philosophy and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).
27. Jean-Pierre Cometti et al., eds. *Revue Francophone d'Esthétique. Emotion, Fiction, Cinéma*, no. 2 (Paris, 2004): especially Emmanuelle Glon's article "Le paradoxe de l'horreur au cinéma," 49-77, quoting Robert Gordon, *The Structure of Emotions*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
28. See Paul Ricoeur, *Soi-même comme un autre* (Paris: Seuil, Points essais, 1990).
29. *Ibid.*, 69 [my translation].
30. Henri Meschonnic, *Poétique du rythme. Anthropologie historique du langage* (Lagrasse: Verdier, 1982), III, 69 (see also, 85-98).
31. *Ibid.*, 86-87.

## A Philosophical Approach to Subjectivity in Film Form

1. This chapter is a shorter version of my book *La Subjectivité dans le film*, forthcoming; some discussions here refer to more extended ones in the book, which is to be expected, I suppose, because of the length. However, sometimes the reverse is also true; to be more precise, in this chapter I do not consider some kinds of subjective representations studied in the book, such as dreams.
2. S.M. Eisenstein, *Film Form, Essays in Film Theory*, ed. and trans. Jay Leyda (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1949), 150.
3. S.M. Eisenstein, "The Problem of the Materialist Approach to Form," [1925] in *The Eisenstein Reader*, ed. Richard Taylor, trans. Richard Taylor and William Powell (London: British Film Institute/Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 55.
4. John R. Searle, *Mind, Language and Society: Philosophy in the Real World* (New York: Basic Books, 1998), 57.
5. John R. Searle, *The Rediscovery of the Mind* (Cambridge, MA & London: MIT Press, 1992), 94.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*, 95.
11. Jonas Mekas, "The Other Direction," in *The Movies as Medium*, ed. Lewis Jacobs (New York: Garrar, Straus & Giroux, 1970), 317.
12. Susan Sontag, "Film and Theater," [1966] in *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, eds. Gerald Mast and Marshall Cohen (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 368-369.
13. Alain Badiou et al., *Matrix: machine philosophique* (Paris: Ellipses, 2003).
14. Jean Epstein, "Le cinéma continue...", in *Écrits sur le cinéma*, vol. 1 (Paris: Seghers, Cinemaclub, 1974), 224.
15. Epstein, *L'Intelligence d'une machine*, [1946] in *Écrits sur le cinéma* (Paris: Seghers, Cinemaclub, 1974), 263.
16. *Ibid.*, 331.
17. *Ibid.*, 307.
18. Epstein, "Ciné mystique," [1921] in *Écrits sur le cinéma* (Paris: Seghers, Cinemaclub, 1974), 100.
19. Epstein, *L'Intelligence d'une machine*, 322.
20. Epstein, "Photogène de l'impondérable," [1935] in *Écrits sur le cinéma* (Paris: Seghers, Cinemaclub, 1974), 244.
21. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Écrits de jeunesse*, eds. Michel Contat and Michel Rybalka (Paris: Gallimard, 1990), 389-390.
22. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* (London: Athlone Press, 1986), 20.
23. Stanley Cavell, *The Word Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, Harvard Film Studies, 1979), foreword to the enlarged edition, xvi.

24. Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art* (Indianapolis/New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1968), 50-51.
25. Epstein, *L'Intelligence d'une machine*, 282. As far as I know, in English, "psychism" refers to a notion in theosophical doctrines (a connotation we find in Epstein's animism!).
26. John Searle, *The Rediscovery of the Mind*, 97.
27. Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'Être et le Néant* (Paris: Gallimard, 1943), 17-18.
28. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Écrits de jeunesse*, 389.
29. Taken from a broadcasted interview, *Texto, Océaniques*, 28 December 1987 [my translation].
30. W.T. Stace, *The Philosophy of Hegel: A Systematic Exposition* (New York: Dover Publications, 1955), 106.
31. Jean Epstein, "Quelques notes sur Edgar A. Poe et les images douées de vie," [1928] in *Écrits sur le cinéma*, 187.
32. Arthur Danto, "Moving Pictures," [1979] in *Philosophizing Art: Selected Essays* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 231.
33. John Searle, *The Rediscovery of the Mind*, 84.
34. Paul Valéry, "La conscience a horreur du vide," in *Tel quel II* (Paris: Gallimard, Idées, 1943), 224.
35. John Searle, *The Rediscovery of the Mind*, 84.
36. Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*, trans. Dorion Cairns (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999), 33.
37. *Ibid.*
38. Charles Peirce, *Collected Papers*, vol. I-VI, ed. Ch. Hartshorne and P. Weiss (Cambridge, MA & London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1960), 2.281, 159.
39. Clement Rosset, *L'Objet singulier* (Paris: Minuit, Critique, 1979), 36 [my translation].
40. André Bazin, "M. Hulot et le temps," in *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma? Ontologie et Langage vol.1.* (Paris: Cerf, 7e art, 1958), 112. Ange Hurluberlu seems to be possibly translated by "Crank Angel"; but I do not know if this respects the positive connotations of the French word retained by Bazin: more eccentric or clownish than crazy. There is a translation of Bazin's text on Internet (by Bert Cardullo) evading the difficulty: "a kind of angel..." available from <http://www.brightlightsfilm.com/64/64bazintati.php>.
41. Jean Cocteau, "Les anges," *Plaisir de France* (December 1949), quoted by Clément Borgal, in *Jean Cocteau ou De la claudication considérée comme l'un des beaux-arts* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, Écrivains, 1989), 5.
42. Clement Rosset, *Propos sur le cinéma* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, Perspectives critiques, 2001), 122.
43. Interview with Robert Bresson by Bernard Stéphane, 1969, on *Au hasard Balthazar de Robert Bresson*, 2005, Paris, DVD Argos Films, Arte France Développement.
44. "Une œuvre de Bresson ou de Tati est forcément géniale a priori simplement par l'autorité rarissime avec laquelle s'impose de la première image jusqu'au mot fin une volonté unique et absolue, celle qui en principe ordonne, ou devrait ordonner, n'importe quelle œuvre à prétention artistique." François Truffaut, "Arts," [14 May 1958] available at <http://www.cinematheque.fr/fr/expositions-cinema/precedentes-expositions/tati/index/projections/revue-presse-monocle.html> [my translation].

45. Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to Phenomenological Philosophy*, First Book, *General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology*, trans. F. Kersten, *Edmond Husserl Collected Works*, vol. II (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1983), § 41, 86. See Allan Casebier, *Film and Phenomenology: Toward a Realist Theory of Cinematic Representation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 30-31; Véronique Campan, *L'Écoute filmique, Écho du son en image* (Saint-Denis: Presses universitaires de Vincennes, Collection Esthétique hors cadre, 1999); and "Phénoménologie en écho à la sémiologie: approche de l'écoute filmique," in *Après Deleuze, Philosophie et Esthétique du cinéma*, eds. Dominique Chateau and Jacinto Lageira (Paris: Dis Voir, 1996).
46. Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to Phenomenological Philosophy*, 87.
47. Jacques English, *Le Vocabulaire de Husserl* (Paris: Ellipses, 2002), 54.
48. Nelson Goodman, and Willard Van Orman Quine, "Steps Toward a Constructive Nominalism," *The Journal of Symbolic Logic*, Vol. 12, no. 4 (December 1947), 106.
49. Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction Film* (London: Cornell University Press, 1978), 151-152. About the narratological approach to filmic phenomena involving subjectivity more or less explicitly, see also François Jost, *L'Œil caméra, Entre film et roman* (Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, Linguistique et sémiologie, 1987); Christian Metz, *L'Énonciation impersonnelle ou Le Site du film* (Paris: Méridiens Klincksieck, 1991).
50. Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 158.
51. Etienne Souriau, *L'Univers Filmique* (Paris: Flammarion, 1953), 7.
52. Béla Balázs, *The Spirit of Film*, [1930] in *Béla Balázs' Early Film Theory: Visible Man and the Spirit of Film*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (New York: Oxford, Berghahn Books, 2010), 115.
53. John R. Searle, *The Rediscovery of the Mind*, 95.
54. Malcolm Andrews, *Landscape and Western Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Oxford History of Art, 1999), 3.
55. *Ibid.*
56. *Ibid.*, 4.
57. Alain Roger, "Histoire d'une passion théorique ou comment on devient un Raboliot du paysage," in *La Théorie du paysage en France, 1974-1994*, ed. Alain Roger (Seysel: Champ Vallon, Pays / paysages, 1995), 444.
58. Yves Lacoste, "À quoi sert le paysage? Qu'est-ce qu'un beau paysage?" [1977] in *La Théorie du paysage en France, 1974-1994*, ed. Alain Roger (Seysel: Champ Vallon, Pays / paysages, 1995), 53.
59. Vsevolod Poudovkine, *Film Technique and Film Acting (1926-1934)*, trans. Yvor Montagu (New York: Grove Press, 1970), 81-82.
60. *Ibid.*, 82.
61. *Ibid.*
62. Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 159.
63. *Ibid.*, 160.
64. S. M. Eisenstein, *Film Form*, 150.
65. This famous French film school, established in 1944, became la FEMIS (Fondation Européenne pour les Métiers de l'Image et du Son) in 1985.

66. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "The Film and the New Psychology," in *Sense and Non-Sense*, trans. L. Dreyfus and P. Dreyfus Allen (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 54.
67. *Ibid.*, 55.
68. *Ibid.*, 56.
69. *Ibid.*
70. *Ibid.*, 59.
71. *Ibid.*, 58.
72. John Searle, *The Rediscovery of the Mind*, 97.
73. Alfred Hitchcock, François Truffaut, *Hitchcock-Truffaut* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 1983), 246.
74. Thomas Nagel, "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?," reprint from *The Philosophical Review*, 83 (1974), available from <http://www.clarku.edu/students/philosophyclub/docs/nagel.pdf>.
75. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, 204-205.
76. *Ibid.*
77. Cf. David Sterritt, *The Films of Alfred Hitchcock* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). Jean-Pierre Esquenazi, *Hitchcock et l'aventure de Vertigo: l'Invention d'Hollywood* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2001).
78. This part of Merleau-Ponty's commentary is not in *Sense and Nonsense*, but in Jean Mitty's version of the lecture "The Film and the New Psychology" at the IDHEC, in *Esthétique et Psychologie du cinéma, II, Les Formes* (Paris: Éditions universitaires, 1965), 65.
79. Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977), 104.
80. Edgar Morin, *The Cinema or the Imaginary Man*, trans. Lorraine Mortimer (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 225; author's preface to the 1978 edition.
81. Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, [*Die Traumdeutung* 1899] trans. A.A. Brill (New York: Bartleby.com, 2010).
82. Paul Valéry, "Le rêve est le phénomène que nous n'observons que pendant son absence," *Tel Quel II*, 205.

## **Conversation with Maria Klonaris and Katerina Thomadaki**

1. Cécile Chich, ed., Klonaris/Thomadaki. *Le Cinéma corporel. Corps sublimes/ Intersexe et intermédia*, preface by Marie-José Mondzain (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2006).
2. Klonaris and Thomadaki, *Manifestes 1976-2002, Cahier no 9* (Paris: Éditions Paris expérimental, 2003).
3. On this topic see Michèle Brandini, "Vers une socialisation du Cinéma Corporel. Une pratique d'enseignement artistique singulière: les ateliers Super 8" in Klonaris/Thomadaki, *Le Cinéma corporel*, op. cit.
4. In the period that followed, multi-media projection installations and photography were central in our practice. It is at the beginning of the 1990s that analogue video became our main time-based medium, replaced by digital video since 2000. For a general overview of our work see our essay "Traversée du corps, traversée des médias" in the catalog of the retrospective *Jeune, dure et pure! Une histoire du cinéma d'avant-garde* et



- expérimental en France*, eds. Nicole Brenez, Christian Lebrat (Paris: Cinémathèque Française/Mazzotta, 2001).
5. Klonaris/Thomadaki, *Manifestes 1976-2002*, and available from <http://www.klonaris-thomadaki.net>.
  6. See: "Conversation with Laura Mulvey," in *Ostrannenie. On "Strangeness" and the Moving Image: The History, Reception, and Relevance of a Concept*, ed. Annie van den Oever (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010).
  7. See: Cécile Chich, "Night Show for Angel," available from <http://www.klonaris-thomadaki.net>.
  8. Exhibition curated by Sigrid Schade at the Offenes Kulturhaus Linz. Catalog *Andere Körper* (Linz: Passagen Verlag, 1994).
  9. Klonaris and Thomadaki, "Dem Geschlecht nicht unterworfen. Ein Manifest (Auszug)," in exhibition catalog, *Engel: Engel*, ed. Catherin Pichler (Vienna & New York: Kunsthalle Wien-Springer, 1997).
  10. Klonaris and Thomadaki, *Désastres sublimes* (Paris: A.S.T.A.R.T.I./Galerie Donguy, 2000).
  11. See *Stranger than Angel. Dissident Bodies* retrospective personal exhibition catalog, eds. Nina Pirnat Spahic and Marina Gržinić, in collaboration with the artists (Ljubljana: Cankarjev Dom, 2002).
  12. *Polyglossia*, catalog and exhibition, (Athens: Center for Arts and Culture, Onassis Foundation, 14 March-30 June 2011).
  13. The last time we performed ORLANDO: HERMAPHRODITE II was at the London Filmmakers' Coop within the London Film Festival in 1992.
  14. Some years ago, curator Mark Weber invited a number of international filmmakers to re-perform expanded films from the 1970s. These public projection performances were recorded on video and photography at the Hartware MedienKunstVerein Dortmund in September 2004 and at the Württembergischer Kunstverein Stuttgart in December 2006. This was a very special podium, as the works were replayed with their original equipment. This Expanded Cinema Archive, kept in Dortmund and Stuttgart, was exhibited in London at the Tate Modern, during the Expanded Cinema Symposium, in 2009. Our performance archived in that context is SOMA (1978), a double-screen projection with slides and Super 8 film from THE BODY TETRALOGY.
  15. Performance *Laure* by Gina Pane, Isy Brachot Gallery, Brussels, 1977.
  16. On the process of the restoration of our films see Eric Le Roy, "A propos de la restauration des films Selva de Maria Klonaris et Chutes. Désert. Syn de Katerina Thomadaki par les Archives Françaises du Film" and Maria Klonaris/Katerina Thomadaki, "Du Super 8 au 35mm," *Journal of Film Preservation*, no. 72 (November 2006), FIAF-International Federation of Film Archives.
  17. Our restored films SELVA (1981-83, 70 min., 35mm, sound Dolby Surround), CHUTES. DÉSERT.SYN (1983-85, 18 min., 35mm, silent), and UNHEIMLICH I: SECRET DIALOGUE (1977-79, 70 min., 35mm, silent), have been showcased in venues like the Cinémathèque Française, BFI/National Film Theater, London, MoMA, New York, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Swiss Cinémathèque, Lausanne, Lux-Scène Nationale, Valence, and various international film festivals (Thessaloniki, Créteil, Taipei, etc.).

18. Marina Gržinić, and Rosa Reitsamer, eds., *New Feminism. Worlds of Feminism, Queer and Networking Conditions* (Vienna: Löcker Verlag, 2008).
19. Marina Gržinić, Guest editor, 2010. *Pavilion #14: Biopolitics, Necropolitics and De-Coloniality*, available from [http://www.pavilionmagazine.org/pavilion\\_14.pdf](http://www.pavilionmagazine.org/pavilion_14.pdf).



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**Gregory Currie** was educated at the London School of Economics and the University of California, Berkeley. He is professor of philosophy at the University of Nottingham, where he was dean of the Faculty of Arts (2004-2007). He is the author of *The Nature of Fiction* (1990), *Image and Mind: Film, Philosophy and Cognitive Science* (1995), *Recreative Minds* (with Ian Ravenscroft, 2002), *Arts and Minds* (2005), *Narratives and Narrators* (2010) and other books. He has written recently on the films of Hitchcock and Bergman. His current research is into the idea that literature is a source of insight into the nature of mind – an idea about which he is skeptical. He is an editor of *Mind and Language* and a fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities.

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**Maria Klonaris** and **Katerina Thomadaki** are internationally acknowledged filmmakers, interdisciplinary artists and theorists. They have produced over 130 works organized in cycles (films, performances, installations, analog and digital videos, photographic series, artists' books, sound pieces, and experimental radio broadcasts). Retrospectives of their works have been showcased in different countries. They have published numerous catalogs and essays. Their publications include *Incendie de l'Ange* (1988), *Désastres sublimes. Les Jumeaux* (2000), *Stranger than Angel. Dissident Bodies* (2002), *Manifestes 1976-2002* (2003). As founders and artistic directors of A.S.T.A.R.T.I. for Audiovisual Art they have curated three editions of the quadriennale *Rencontres Internationales Art Cinéma/vidéo/ordinateur* and edited *Technologies et Imaginaires* (1990), *Mutations de l'image* (1994), *Pour une écologie des médias* (1998). A monographic study on their work, *Klonaris/Thomadaki: Le Cinéma corporel*, was published by Cécile Chich (2006). In 2008 a symposium was dedicated to their work at the National Institute of Art History (INHA), Paris. Katerina Thomadaki is associate professor at the University Paris I, Panthéon-Sorbonne.

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**Karl Sierek** is a film theorist. He works as professor and Chair of History and Aesthetics of Media at the Friedrich Schiller University of Jena/Germany. He has been a visiting professor at the University of Salzburg, the Free University in Berlin, the University Paris III, Nouvelle Sorbonne, the University Paris I, Panthéon Sorbonne, and at Meiji University, Tokyo. Senior fellowships include the International Research Center for Cultural Studies in Vienna (IFK), and the State Innovative Institute for the Studies of Journalism & Communication and Media Society at Fudan University Shanghai. His books include *Ophüls: Bachtin. Versuch mit Film zu reden* (1994), *Aus der Bildhaft. Filmanalyse als Kinoästhetik* (1993), *Images, Oiseaux. Aby Warburg et la théorie des médias* (2009), and *Das chinesische Kino nach der Kulturrevolution. Theorien und Analysen* (edited with Guido Kirsten, 2011).

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**Pierre Taminiux** received his PhD in French literature at the University of California, Berkeley. He is currently professor of French and francophone literatures at Georgetown University, Washington, D.C. He has also been a visiting professor at the University of Strasbourg and Paris I-Sorbonne. His most recent scholarly research focuses on the relationship between literature and art in the twentieth century, particularly in surrealism. He is the author of several critical works both in French and English, including *Robert Pinget* (1994), *Poétique de La Négation* (1997), *Surmodernités: Entre Rêve et Technique* (essays on Jarry, Beckett, Debord, Duchamp, Magritte, 2003) and *The Paradox of Photography: Baudelaire, Breton, Barthes, Valéry* (2009). He is also the co-editor of various volumes and special issues of journals, including *Cinéma/Art(s) Plastiques(s)* (2004), *Surrealism and its Others* (2006), and *Poésie et Politique au XXe siècle* (2011). He has published numerous articles of literary criticism, art criticism, and cultural theory. Besides his research activities, Pierre Taminiux is pursuing creative activities in the fields of literature and the visual arts. He is the author of a novel and three plays, as well as the artist of numerous photographs and paintings on paper that he has exhibited in his native Belgium and in the United States.

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