WOMEN IN IMAGES: SHIFTING STRUCTURES AND DISCOURSES IN FRENCH-LANGUAGE CINEMA AFTER MAY 1968

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in French in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

1995

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in French in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

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This dissertation examines images of women in French-language films (French, Belgian, Swiss) by Chantal Akerman, Marguerite Duras, Jean-Luc Godard, Jacques Rivette, Alain Robbe-Grillet, Alain Tanner, and Agnès Varda. Produced in the wake of the political upheavals of May 1968 and informed by the politics of the women's movement that emerged immediately thereafter, these films confront established patriarchal structures and modes of representation that predominated in traditional cinema. I explore cinematic and literary theories of representation that were developing in the 1970s in such journals as Cahiers du cinéma, Screen, as well as in French feminist thought. These theories enable me to identify how French-language films of the same period challenge authorized paradigms of modernist image-making and how they reformulate central cinematic and narrative codes. 1970s avant-garde and alternative cinema, I argue, shift the codes of filmic production by working through and against dominant modes of discourse.

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to the wisdom and patience of my dissertation adviser, Royal Brown, and to my dissertation committee, Mary Ann Caws and Nancy Miller. I honestly believe my dissertation would not be finished without their generous support. Equally important in arriving at this final product are my colleagues and friends of the Dissertation Workshop in Twentieth-Century Studies: Page Delano, Debbie Nelson, Julia Nevárez, Jay Prosser, Michael Rothberg, and Karen Winkler, who read and commented on chapters 3 and 5. I am also grateful for the assistance of my Film Studies professors over the years at the Graduate Center, Stuart Liebman, William Kornblum, Tony Pipolo, Len Quart, and Ella Shohat. Many thanks go to my friends and colleagues in the French Program, Leslie Abend Callahan, Jarrod Hayes, Binita Mehta, Frances Santiago, and Carole Kulikowski. I especially would like to thank my parents, Eva and Rocco Yervasi, for their creative and encouraging support throughout my years of education; and my brothers and sisters, Nanette, Damien, Adam, and Aimée; my aunt and uncle, Mary and Robert Scordato; and my grandmother, Elizabeth Yervasi, whose care and kindness has helped me through my graduate studies. I am deeply grateful to Mike Hill for his understanding, encouragement, and humor as he listened to me talk about this dissertation every day for the past four months.

Financial support for this dissertation came from The City University of New York Graduate Center Dissertation Fellowship and the Henri Peyre Institute for the Humanities Travel Grant, which enabled me to do research in Paris at the *Centre National d'Art et de Culture Georges Pompidou, Bibliothèque Cinémathèque Française-FEMIS (Institut de Formation et d'Enseignement aux Métiers de l'Image et du Son*, formerly *IDHEC—Institut des Hautes Études Cinématographiques)*, and at the *Vidéothèque de Paris*; and in Brussels at *La Cinémathèque royale de Belgique.*

Studying and writing on film criticism and theory has necessitated a fluid definition of this field and its methods in order to fit into the studies acceptable to a French Program. As with traditional literary studies my research is caught up in choices over story and discourse, over praxis and theory. The changing paradigm, however, is not hidden among my own personal debates. It can be found in the modification of research fields within French Studies that are fundamentally based on the social, cultural, and economic history as well as the geo-politics of France. The history of filmmaking and the history of the aesthetics of cinema are too a part of the material of this changing culture. And it is in this spirit that I have prepared a dissertation in a French Program on post-1968 Euro-French film culture of the 1970s.

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Introduction

> During the years 1945-1965 (I am referring to Europe), there was a certain way of thinking correctly, a certain style of political discourse, a certain ethics of the intellectual... that made the strange occupation of writing and speaking a measure of truth about oneself and one's time acceptable. Then came the five brief, impassioned, jubilant, enigmatic years.
>
> Michel Foucault [1]

Western European culture was jarred in the 1960s. It was rattled at home by the revolutionary 1968 summers in France, Italy, Czechoslovakia, Belgium, and Germany, and abroad by Vietnam.[2] People were massing. Reforms were proposed. Institutions were breaking down. Governments were destabilized. Why were these changes taking place? What effect did they have on people and their habits, on work and industry, on cultural and artistic production? How could it be both "jubilant" and "enigmatic?" Any possible answers to these inquiries would be false. There was no room for answers, only more questions could be posed. In the decade that followed these "enigmatic" years, many people (institutions, governments, individuals) settled into the changed social, economic, and political situation without looking back, without stopping to reflect upon what had

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[1] Michel Foucault, "Préface," to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983) xi-xii. Originally published as L'Anti-Oedipe (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1972).

[2] At nearly the same time as the first student uprisings in France, various student groups in large metropolitan and university centers of Germany, Belgium, and Italy staged protests demanding reforms of the economic and educational system. Some student groups were joined by trade unionists seeking reforms to the economic domestic crisis, but the student violence did not create the same kinds of overarching work stoppages that occurred in France. See Serge Govaert, Mai 68: C'était un temps où Bruxelles contestait (Bruxelles: Edition Politique et Histoire, 1990). In Czechoslovakia, the leader of the Communist Party, Alexander Dubcek, began a process of reforms aimed at liberalization. In May 1968 Czech intellectuals issued their first manifesto, entitled "Two thousand words," calling for a faster process of change. They published a draft of reforms allowing for greater freedom within the Czech Communist Party that would radically change it from the Soviet Communist Party. This enraged the Soviet leadership and, on August 23, troops were sent into Prague establishing a military occupation of the city. Czech novelist, Milan Kundera, was in "official" disfavor, censored by the government, and lost his citizenship due to his writing.

occurred. But there were others who began to interrogate and call into question those systems that bulwarked these societies and their culture. It is from this second group, in the 1970s, that a growing and extremely heterogeneous alternative culture was to take root. They critiqued established paradigms, leading to a confrontation of all ideologically based structures. Building on some of the late 1950s and early 1960s challenges to cultural production—mostly found in a critique or practice of visual media, namely film and television—in such movements as the *Nouveau Roman*, the*Nouvelle Vague*, with such films as L'année dernière à Marienbad, Cléo de 5 à 7 these alternatives to the mainstream practiced a resistance to all cultural forms. The subcultures are the most obvious examples of this: think of the early punk movement in England or radical grassroots feminism in North and South Americas and Europe, or the raid on the ORTF offices for film footage; but consider also the less visibly "radical" acts within dominant culture such as starting a new newspaper (the French daily newspaper La Libération began in 1973), writing in opposition to the tradition of *les grands Philosophes* (Luce Irigaray's Speculum de l'autre femme), making a film about a disruptive and rebellious prostitute (Nelly Kaplan's La fiancée du Pirate) or in the case of Jean -Luc Godard's Le gai savoir, making a film that reviews the past, proposes fluid and shifting structures of a new educational system, and addresses the future of cinema and society, cinema in society, cinema as society. The alternative and at times marginal culture was a venue in which all kinds of artistic production could take place. Yet the dynamic quality of film, its emphasis on the mechanism of visual and aural reproduction, its widespread mass appeal, and its unique and complex relationship to reality functioned as a pivot to this shifting culture.

I approach these "alternative film practices" as a heterogeneous category. These films have been grouped together under various headings, including the "counter-cinema" used by the British film journal Screen; the "militant cinema" as proposed by Cahiers du Cinéma writer Pascal Bonitzer, which includes the documentaries of Chris Marker and the experimental narrative films of Marguerite Duras; and finally, the "alternative cinema" to

which Laura Mulvey refers in her article "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema."[3] I have decided to use the term "alternative cinema" for a few reasons. First of all, as Mulvey points out, it provides "a space for the birth of a cinema which is radical in both a political and an aesthetic sense and challenges the basic assumptions of the mainstream film" (15).[4] This definition functions best for me, because if "radical" film discourse self-consciously controls what it produces while challenging the mainstream, and I believe that it does, then it stands to reason that the mainstream in that radical discourse is still very much at play—in other words, the "radical" uses the power of this known-discourse (the mainstream) to shift within it, to challenge it, as Mulvey suggests, but not necessarily to break from it. In fact, this alternative practice cannot exist without the mainstream, or without the notion of a center or a dominant.[5] The alternative cinema uses the opposite and differences inscribed within the mainstream in order to form a strategy of resistance to it. This meaning of the

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[3] Claire Johnston, "Women's Cinema as Counter-Cinema," in Claire Johnston, ed. Notes on Women's Cinema (London: Society for Education in film and Television [SEFT], 1974); Pascal Bonitzer, "Film / politique," Cahiers du cinéma 220-221 (mai-juin 1970): 33-37. See also Jean-Louis Comolli, "Film / politique (2): L'Aveu: 15 propositions," Cahiers du cinéma 224 (octobre 1970): 48-51; Françoise Audé calls this a "new" cinema of the 1970s "cinéma militant ou à vocation militante" [militant cinema or with a militant vocation] in "1968, Le cinéma au service de la liberation des femmes," Ciné-modèles, cinéma d'elles (Lausanne: L'Age d'homme, 1981) 105.

[4] Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," Visual and Other Pleasures (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989) 15. All future references to "Visual Pleasure" will be taken from this collection of essays and page numbers will be cited in the text. The essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" was originally published in Screen 16.3 (Autumn 1975): 6-18, and was written in 1973. I have avoided the term avant-garde because it belies modernist aesthetic principles which some of these films do not employ. However the term "avant-garde" is used by the Situationists in 1968 when describing the events as "the realisation of the avant-garde practices of the *dérive*, *détournement* and the wholesale questioning of values and meaning, as well as the culmination of a tradition of working class resistance, sabotage, and forms of organization." Quoted in Sadie Plant, "The Situationist International: A Case of Spectacular Neglect," Radical Philosophy 55 (Summer 1990): 6.

[5] This deconstructive model is derived from Jacques Derrida's De la grammatologie, where he rereads Saussure's insight into language. Here Derrida discusses how any concept must have its "opposite," or in his terms "trace," that is inscribed within it in order for it to function within a system of meaning. There is no such thing as an internally coherent or uncontaminated concept because it depends on what it is not for meaning. Therefore this system of differences and contradiction, simultaneous A and not-A, is put to use by the alternative cinema. See Of Grammatology, trans. Gayatri Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974) 27-73 and for this "trace" in Rousseau's juxtaposition of nature versus civilization and education, see Of Grammatology 144-57.

dominant or mainstream is close to what Teresa de Lauretis, in Alice Doesn't, refers to as "the well-established modes of enunciation and address."[6] In Derridean terms, this mainstream can be considered the site of logocentric structures and discourse. For feminists, these "well-established modes" are fundamentally patriarchal and employ a mode of discourse that reinscribes hierarchical patterns and privileges, for example, certain editing constructions and styles over others in film production. De Lauretis's strategies of resistance call for a turning inside out of the dominant discourses so that "the only way to position oneself outside of that discourse is to displace oneself within it" (7). In this sense then, the alternative cinema cannot function except in a relationship of alterity to the mainstream as it unpacks the operations of logocentrism and phallogocentrism. What made this alternative cinema unique in the 1970s was not at all a reinvention of the filmic medium, but rather this movement's articulation in theory and practice of the way film could reflect the changing social and cultural environment by questioning its place within history. Michel Foucault's work, in L'archéologie du savoir, has helped to modify the notion of "historical" studies by placing emphasis on, among other things, the study of "discontinuities" as opposed to "linear successions" in time. The idea of studying knowledge in history shifts, in fact, into what he calls the study of "the history of ideas".

> The history of ideas is concerned with all that insidious thought, the whole interplay of representations that flow anonymously between men; in the interstices of the great discursive monuments, it reveals the crumbling soil on which they are based.... But on the other hand the history of ideas sets out to cross the boundaries of existing disciplines, to deal with them from the outside, and to reinterpret them. Rather than a marginal domain, then, it constitutes a style of analysis, a putting into perspective. (137)

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[6] Teresa de Lauretis, Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984) 7.

I feel that this definition of contextualized studies within the "history of ideas" is particularly applicable to the interdisciplinary scope of my study. But it is especially Foucault's idea of "discontinuities" that works for the film studies part of this dissertation. A basic component of mainstream film structure is continuity editing. Its discourse form, found, for example, in a match on action sequence, is ultimately the compression of spatial and temporal linearity. The refusal of a continuity-based linear construction in films will be an important part of the alternative cinema's shift in narrative structure. The subversion of the linear film experience means for the alternative cinema a subverting of hierarchical values. It was this uncanny ability to produce subversive films, not directly political against the governmental structures in France (or in Europe in general), but subversively cultural, against an authority of culture, of dominant patriarchal structures, and of ideology that set this cinema apart from other films at the time. This is what Jean-Luc Godard meant when he suggested that it was not enough to make political films but one had to "to make political films politically" ["faire politiquement les films politiques"].[7] But what made this "political" cinema suspicious was its inability to access the "mass appeal" which the 1970s entertainment cinema still controlled. The mainstreamed *Nouvelle Vague* cinema of Eric Rohmer, François Truffaut, and Claude Chabrol, though in many ways unconventional and resistant to the Hollywood models of narrative, did not question the ideological system within which their films circulated as the alternative cinema did, nor did it interrogate its own place within the structures and discourses of that system.

Especially in France, Belgium, and Switzerland, and produced in the wake of the upheavals of 1968, the alternative cinemas of this period formulate into the narrative,

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[7] Quoted in Jill Forbes, The Cinema in France: After The New Wave (London: BFI, 1992) 264-265, in French, also in Colin MacCabe, Godard: Images, Sounds, Politics (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1980) 19. This statement is taken from one of the Dziga-Vertov slogans that was published in the Cahiers du Cinéma. By 1972, the radical filmmaking group, Dziga-Vertov, consisted only of Godard and Gorin. This idea is reiterated by Nick Browne in the "Introduction" to Politics of Representation: Cahiers du cinéma 1969-1972 where he says that "the guarantee of the validity of a serious political writing practice is the account the film gives of its own place and effect within a given historical conjuncture. Indeed the strongest criticism is directed against those films that *seem* to offer a political analysis" (15), for example, Z by Costa-Gavras.

structure, and discourse a critique of society and culture and of cinema itself.[8] This study focuses on filmmakers who use representations of women in order to challenge authorized paradigms of image-production. In Alice Doesn't, Teresa de Lauretis regards this status of woman at the heart of the representation polemic. As she puts it, "woman is then the very ground of representation, both object and support of a desire which, intimately is bound up with power and creativity, is the moving force of culture and history" (13). And it is through this "force of culture and history" that the alternative cinema begins to reorganize central cinematic and narrative codes while at the same time challenges the ideological institutions that uphold these structures and discourses in societies. These filmmakers include Chantal Akerman, Marguerite Duras, Jean-Luc Godard, Jacques Rivette, Alain Robbe-Grillet, Alain Tanner, and Agnès Varda, all of whose films are informed by the politics of the women's movement, the critique of ideology, and the changing fields of film theory and history. I will use the term "alternative cinema" throughout this study to categorize these films that question the primacy of linear narrative, use experimental editing, and propose new ways of presenting images and sounds. Rather than through a simple critique of the representation of women's bodies on screen, these films critique the entire system of representation as it is produced in the cinematic apparatus. The films of the alternative cinema are as diverse as Agnès Varda's L'une chante, l'autre pas (1976, released 1977); Jacques Rivette's Céline et Julie vont en bateau (1974); Alain Robbe-Grillet's Glissements progressifs du plaisir (1974); Chantal Akerman's Je tu il elle (1974, released 1976) and Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles (1975). I argue that this 1970s alternative cinema shifts the codes of filmic production as it works through and against dominant modes of discourse. This shifting of structural and discursive codes

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[8] Because of the limited scope of this dissertation I will not be refering to many other important filmmakers of this era. An arbitrary list would include such feminist filmmakers as Helke Sanders (Germany), Valie Export (Austria), and Yvonne Rainer (U.S.); British filmmakers and film theorists Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollens; British directors Mike Leigh and Nicholas Roeg, both of whose work is inconsistently alternative; Robert Altman; and avant-gardists Michael Snow, Stan Brakhage, and Andy Warhol.

is done in two distinct but often overlapping ways, through the use of (a)*interrogation in praxis* and (b)*subversion by inclusion*. These two practices represent the ways in which the "alternative" always invokes, without denying, that it has a relationship to conventional film structures and discourse, and especially to the mainstream, which in most countries refers to commercial cinema but also to documentary film practices.[9] I am not suggesting here that the alternative cinema should be reduced to a simple filmic correction of the structures in narrative and documentary filmmaking. Rather, I argue, the alternative cinema should be seen as performing an interrogation in praxis, a filmic interrogation (intervention) of those structures, especially those structures that were questioned or deconstructed by previous film practices and film theory.[10] Because the alternative cinema worked through the mainstream, we can understand why, by necessity, it used subversion by inclusion, that is, borrowed the implements of the mainstream to produce a specific decentered or shifted cinema in the 1970s. Yet at the same time subversion by inclusion can also be the way in which the discourse is shifted, for example, in the cinema of Chantal Akerman.

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[9] In some ways the filmmaking of the 1970s is ultimately connected to the general post-'68 sentiment of power in solidarity that simultaneously, and paradoxically, distrusted and/or rejected the structure of power (i.e. authority in general, government, big business, industry, police, university systems, professors, family structures, parents, etc.). The failed "revolution" might itself be linked to the students and workers who distrusted all forms of power, including their own, even if at first they "loved" it. This attitude toward power is reflected in Foucault's Preface to the English language translation of Anti-Oedipus, where he addresses the three "adversaries" of Deleuze and Guattari. The third one is fascism. He writes: "Last but not least, the major enemy, the strategic adversary is fascism.... And not only historical fascism... but also the fascism in us all, in our heads and in our everyday behavior, the fascism that causes us to love power, to desire the very thing that dominates and exploits us" (xii).

[10] In the 1970s the Cahiers du cinéma writers were using the term "deconstruction" to analyze "the ideological determinations of the cinematic apparatus" which is "constructed according to an ideology of representation," in Peter Brunette and David Wills, Screen/Play (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1989) 15. Cf: Jean-Louis Comolli and Jean Narboni, "Cinéma/Idéologie/Critique," Cahiers 216 (1969); Comolli, "Technique et Idéologie: Caméra, perspective et profondeur de champ," parts 1-4 Cahiers 223 (1970). Most of the writing in Cahiers du cinéma (from Comolli, Narboni, Oudart, Baudry, Pleynet) was from a Marxist perspective and a Marxist conception of ideology from Althusser and Macherey. Cf. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation) Jan-April 1969, in Althusser, Lenin and Philosophy and other Essays, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971) 127-188. Althusser derived a "symptomatic" reading of ideology and the subjects in it, from Freud and Lacan, which he applied to Marx's later works to challenge the traditional treatment of a homogeneous system of thought and apparatus of ideology. Althusser's concept of ideology is discussed at length in chapter 4 of this dissertation.

Unlike Agnès Varda, who borrows the discursive methods from such conventional film genres as the musical, the adventure or road trip, while shifting filmic structures, Akerman borrows only the raw materials, the camera, film, sound recording equipment, and magnetic tape in order to make Jeanne Dielman, so that her subversion by inclusion is found in her refusal to use continuity editing to compress diegetic time. Thus, for Akerman, subversion by inclusion is a matter of recuperating images and time. Other filmmakers subvert the mainstream by including various references to mainstream film and literary works. Both of these practices use inclusion as a way to point to their own chosen exclusion from the center of dominant culture. The common current that runs through these films is the attempt to conceptualize defiance and resistance by using the images of women as emblematic of a critique of culture and patriarchal structures in it. Overall, this project provides a way to think about cinema in history, about the production of films in a given historical situation, made under certain social conditions in post-1968 Euro-French culture, that is, in the broader European culture of Belgium, France, and Switzerland.

Addressing 1970s Euro-French alternative cinema, therefore, requires an introduction to various elements of history, the women's movement, and film theory and practice that contributed to this film culture, and it is on these elements that I will focus in the rest of this chapter. Throughout this study, I will use the term "Euro-French" because it allows me to approach Western culture in a European context that is intimately connected to France.[11] This refers, in part, to the collaborative projects on film co-productions, the use of multi-national film crews, and to the expanding international film market (with multi-city film débuts and the growing European film "literate" public). "Film culture," on the other hand, is a broad term that incorporates not only the entire international cinematic output from 1895 until now but also the knowledge of its production, content, filmmakers, styles,

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[11] For a discussion of the paradigms of Western culture see Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, "From Eurocentrism to Polycentrism," Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media (London and New York: Routledge, 1994) 13-54.

movements, and debates in film theory and criticism.[12] In the next part of this introduction I will look at some of the events of 1968 that are directly linked to this period in filmmaking and to the larger issue of politics and political filmmaking. In this political sense, then, the alternative cinema is also connected to the 1970s women's movement, which we will look at in the third part. The last section of this chapter will be a discussion of the other influences on the 1970s alternative cinema. Here, I will talk about the film theory that grew out of the 1960s French *Nouvelle Vague* (especially in its more "disruptive" forms) and to French Left Bank documentary film practices. As did the French *Nouvelle Vague*, the alternative cinema of the 1970s stands in opposition to Hollywood or hegemonic film practices of the mainstream that have created and perpetuated conventional film structures as a kind of rigid and fixed narrative paradigm. This film theory itself is also linked to questions of the circulation of images in culture and ideology that goes back to the early film theory of the 1920s.[13] This will be followed by the subsequent development of feminist film theory in the mid-1970s and to the specifically feminist film practice of interrogation of representability and ideology in any cinematic form: narrative, avant-garde, experimental, or documentary.

Taking History to the Streets

> What happened in the 1970s was that, as the gigantic motors of economic growth and expansion stalled, and the traffic came close to a stop, modern societies abruptly lost their

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[12] Sylvia Harvey, in May '68 and Film Culture, was one of the first film critics to emphasize the importance of film culture in terms of the theoretical debates that took place after 1968. These debates were waged in the editorial statements of the Cahiers du Cinéma and Cinéthique in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Harvey critically analyzes the differing Marxist views that dominated the exchanges between the two film journals.

[13] For further discussion of contemporary film theory and ideology see Bill Nichols, Ideology and the Image (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1981); Annette Kuhn, The Power of the Image: Essays on Representation and Sexuality (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985); Philip Rosen, ed. Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986).

> power to blow away their past. All through the 1960s, the question had been whether they should or shouldn't; now, in the 1970s, the answer was that they simply couldn't....
> Marshall Berman [14]

In this short section devoted to a discussion of the political uprisings of 1968, I would like to make a connection between the politics of the events in the streets and those of the alternative cinema. This connection can be made by looking at the various relationships of power in the context of May '68 in Paris. The revolutionary actions of those on strike and demanding reforms were most often brought under control violently by the government riot squad. The power of the Left in solidarity was no match for the armed force of the state. It is this repressive and destructive figure of authority and power seen in these events that will be metaphorically or emblematically addressed in the 1970s alternative cinema's questioning of power and control in its films.[15] One has to see the May 1968 student and worker uprising in Paris as a prelude to a reevaluation of the notions of power and authority within the Western cultural paradigm.[16] What these events questioned was a faith in the actual/real power of the representative government. Beginning in 1962, after Général Charles de Gaulle was reinstated to stabilize and re-structure the government in France, he radically changed the constitution so that through a popular referendum the

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[14] Marshall Berman, "The 1970s: Bringing It All Back Home," All That Is Solid Melts Into Air (1981; New York: Penguin, 1988) 332-333.

[15] The best and only study, to my knowledge, recounting the details of the events of May '68 and the intricate role that cinema played in it is in Harvey, "The events of May and June '68," May '68 and Film Culture 3-33.

[16] Due to the great number of texts describing the many sides of May 1968 I have limited this list to a representative few: Hervé Bourges, The French Student Revolt: The Leaders Speak, trans. B. R. Brewster (New York: Hill and Wang, 1968; orig. Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1968); Bernard E. Brown, Protest in Paris: Anatomy of a Revolt (Morristown, NJ: General Learning Press, 1974); Michel Crozier, La société bloquée (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1970); Claire Duchen, Feminism in France: From May '68 to Mitterand (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986); Richard Gombin, Le Projet révolutionnaire (Paris & La Haye: Mouton et Cie., 1969); Marie-Anonietta Macciocchi, De la France (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1979); Jean-Jacques Sevran-Schreiber, The Spirit of May, trans. Ronald Steel (New York: MacGraw-Hill Book Company, 1969).

President would henceforth be elected by universal suffrage. This created what people implicitly expected to be an essentially representative government, symbolizing a "contract between state and citizenry" in a relationship of "mutual interpellation."[17] Thus, this government would represent the citizenry's ideas, desires, and goals. These political and economic expectations were brought into question after 1965 when de Gaulle was re-elected President, defeating socialist François Mitterand.[18] De Gaulle and his government of the Fifth Republic were consistently more concerned with economic growth than social reforms, even though there was a great fear among economists that if France were to proceed very rapidly in its economic development policies it "might cause violent readaption crises in many sectors that could unleash a serious social and economic crisis in the country as a whole."[19] Before the widespread criticism grew into massive strikes throughout the country in May and June of 1968, students on the Nanterre campus of the *Université de Paris* began demonstrating for changes in campus and education policy on March 22, 1968.[20] The leader of *Le mouvement du 22 mars*, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, was soon joined by two other student union group leaders, Jacques Sauvageot from the *Union*

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17 Susan Hayward, French National Cinema (London: Routledge, 1993) 211.

18 See M. Larkin, France Since the Popular Front: Government and Politics 1936-1986 (London: Oxford University Press, Clarendon Press, 1988).

19 François Caron, An Economic History of Modern France, trans. Barbara Bray (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979) 309. Subsequent references will be given in the body of the text. It is altogether fascinating to note that even as far back as the 1950s the French economy was described by Caron, using a formulation of C. Gruson's, as "held back by structural rigidity" (309). These "rigidities," Caron further specifies, are "derived from a protective network which transformed numerous 'established positions' into privileges" (309). This privileging of "established positions" within the economy can be compared to the privileging of certain forms of discourse in cinema. The 1950s is the same era in which the *Nouvelle Vague* will emerge to questions those positions of privilege in filmmaking. Caron cites C. Gruson from Origine et espoirs de la planification française (Paris: Dunod, 1968).

20 Students at the *Université de Strasbourg* published an important pamphlet entitled, De la misère en milieu étudiant, in 1968, in the Internationale Situationniste no. 11 (1968). It is available in English as On the Poverty of Student Life, considered in its economic, psychological, sexual, and particularly intellectual aspects, and a modest proposal for its remedy (Detroit, Michigan: Black and Red, 1973). For a reappraisal of the work of the Situationist International in its journal and in Situationist art see Sadie Plant, "The Situationist International: A Case of Spectacular Neglect," Radical Philosophy 55 (Summer 1990): 3-10.

Nationale des Étudiants de France (UNEF) and Alain Greismar from the *Syndicat National de l'Enseignement Supérieur* (SNE Sup). The student meetings at the Sorbonne in the Latin Quarter quickly became solidarity meetings for the student groups strategizing against the government, police, and the National Security Guards, the *Compagnies Républicaines de Sécurité* (CRS).[21] These meetings in turn became the locus for the larger project of combining the forces of both workers and students. By June, the student revolts in Paris had turned into a powerful general strike throughout the country with 9-10 million people on strike. This in itself revealed a profound malaise within the whole of French society. It has most often been called a "social crisis" that shook the government. De Gaulle tried to install certain institutional reform projects in the government and economic sectors. But in April 1969 de Gaulle received a no-confidence vote in a public referendum and then immediately resigned. But, as Susan Hayward notes, before de Gaulle left office he had installed one of the most important French inventions: The Ministry of Culture and the creation of *Les Maisons de la culture* (literally, Houses of Culture) throughout France and abroad (214). The *Maison de la culture* distinctly makes the ever growing connection between family and culture, that they both reside in a house (home or country), and conveys the idea that home is where culture is. Of course, the opposite then can also be suggested, that without culture you have no home. The institutionalization of French culture was brought to both Belgium and Switzerland via the development of the *Maison de Culture de la communauté française* and created closer ties to France and the French language.[22] In addition to the cultural funding through the *Maison de la culture*, Caron points to the growth of *Fonds de développement culturel* [cultural subsidies] which nearly

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[21] Eyewitness accounts of the uprisings were published by Solidarity in 1968 and reissued by Dark Star Press and Rebel Press in 1980.

[22] See also Larkin 302-305 and M. McMillan, Dreyfus to de Gaulle: Politics and Society in France 1898-1969 (London: Edward Arnold, 1985) 161-165.

doubled from the early 1960s to the early 1970s and includes subsidies for filmmaking (348).

Even after de Gaulles's resignation in 1969, the newly installed government, run by Georges Pompidou, was still fundamentally a Gaullist regime. It was conservative and right-wing. But what this meant on another level was the end of a political hegemony of the conquest regime: an end to the glorification of war heroes and the politically misguided colonialist period. This type of regime is always based on positions of inequality and the continuity of its ideological support by those who are inferior to those in the positions of power. In other words, the hierarchy/hierarchical system depends on subordination, and this system of inequality ultimately is what was questioned in May 1968. Yet the system as a whole did not reject the hierarchical system. Instead it just disguised it under a "closer to Left" politics of understanding and lateral movement in the early 1970s. For example, it is under George Pompidou's government in 1972 that the parties of the Left signed the *Programme commun de gouvernement* [A Common Program for Government]. This gave the Socialist and Communist parties a combined strength, though they did not win either the general or the presidential elections until 1981. But after the defeat of the Gaullist party and the political right in 1974, Valéry Giscard D'Estaing (more centrist) became the third President of the 5th Republic. In that same year the 1920 laws banning abortion and birth control were lifted and the law allowing mutual consent in divorce was enacted. This was a political coup for the women's movement that had far-reaching social repercussions. Politically, changes did occur and are acknowledged. These gains could not however alter the ideological structures still at work upholding society.

Indeed, the political climate in post-1968 Europe, which had generated notions of anarchy and refusal of power and authority, found its way into the structure of many of the compilation and documentary films capturing the events of May 1968. After a visit to Paris in the Spring 1968, Sieglinde Stieda writes to the Editor of Film Library Quarterly that

> only the film footage taken during the past revolutionary weeks in Paris will ever be able *to tell what really happened* on those streets with the barricades and in the factories. I have seen some fantastic documentary footage of the manifestations inter-cut and superimposed on imaginary scenes. When the activity was at its height there were free film showings in various parts of the city daily—mostly in those faculties of the Sorbonne which were not invaded by the police, e.g., faculties of science, medicine and philosophy. And films, of course, played a role *in forming the opinions* of the students, young workers or non-workers, like myself.[23]

As Stieda points out, film is already playing an important role in the events of '68. Its use as a record of the memory for the movement is important in the critique of media culture of the 1970s. This presupposes an acceptance of the validity and "vérité" of cinematic images. Earlier that Spring in mid-May the *États Généraux du cinéma* [States General of Cinema] were called to discuss the intervention by the government in Henri Langlois' organizing of the *Cinémathèque Française*.[24] Sylvia Harvey considers this activism for the reinstatement of Langlois to the *Cinémathèque* on the part of the Cahiers editorial board a decisive element in cinema's quick reaction to the May events (14-16). Filmmakers themselves attempted to answer the challenges posed from within the film community. The first challenge came at the States General of Cinema in mid-May 1968, where working groups of filmmakers were organized in order to give recommendations on various agenda items calling for reforms of the film industry, including government funding and distribution. The other main issue, the one that concerns us most, was about film itself regarding "the

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[23] Sieglinde Stieda, "Letter to the Editor," Film Library Quarterly 1.4 (Fall 1968): 5 (emphasis mine). Alain Resnais had already fictionalized another kind of memory in Hiroshima, mon amour (1959), but these documentary images of May '68 were supposed to be "real," capturing real events, real memory.

[24] May '68 and Film Culture 14-27. See also "Editorial," Cahiers du cinéma 202 (juin-juillet 1968): 5; "Le retour de Langlois," and "Le Comité de défense de la Cinémathèque Française," 202 (juin-juillet 1968): 68-69; "Editorial," Cahiers du cinéma 203 (août 1968): 5; "Les États généraux du cinéma," Cahiers du cinéma 203 (août 1968): 23-46.

nature of realism, authenticity, the truth of what films showed, and the truthfulness/veracity of the single point of view."[25] Yet at the same time all of these filmed and recorded events fascinated a growing European television public who viewed them as *les actualités* [literally, actualities or actual, current events] which further created confusion for the questions of "authenticity" and "veracity" in media. Television and cinema became even more immediately accessible during the "revolutionary weeks" as short documentaries, called *cinétracts,* were produced daily using 8mm film, hand-held cameras and edited stills. These short films were screened in alternative venues to contradict the "official" point of view shown on French television.[26] What is interesting in Stieda's statement is the acknowledgement that film could be the only medium capable of telling "what really happened" at that time. And yet throughout the 1970s that feature of film, that "truth" factor of film, and especially, the kind of truth that works in the process of "forming opinions," is what will be brought into question consistently by the alternative cinema. This will be done by some directors, such as Agnès Varda, who challenged other filmmakers directly to be active and self-conscious in their work, or Jean-Luc Godard, who was one of the first filmmakers to pose a challenge filmically. In his film Le gai savoir (1968), he advocated the use of film as social and political intervention.

Many historians and sociologists still contest the political importance of May 1968. But its influence is inherent in the culture of the 1970s. As feminist sociologist Marie Antonietta Macciocchi wrote in De la France, "malgré tout, Mai '68 a changé beaucoup plus qu'on ne le croit les rapports entre hommes et femmes, et la France aujourd'hui est en pleine crise domestique" (21). Also commenting on the events was Professor of Sociology at Nanterre, Michel Crozier, who wrote in La société bloqué [Stalemate Society] that

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[25] Forbes, After the New Wave 16, 18.

[26] "Some of the filmmakers sacked from the *Office de la Radiodiffusion-Télévision Française* (ORTF) later turned to documentary filmmaking, often based on historical documents for which they ransacked the archives in an attempt to discover an 'alternative' truth" (After the New Wave 17).

> the May Revolt will mark a departure from the model of the stalemate society, not because of any direct results obtained, but rather in signaling a change in French behavior... to resolve the real problems of the modern world rather than cherish the illusions derived from a preindustrial era... to replace the present rigid, overly centralized structures with an open, simple, responsive system, based on permanent dialogue and negotiation between state and citizenry.[27]

Though the series of uprisings in Paris does not represent a new historical phenomenon, especially not in France, it did however contribute to the profound change in the cultural production of Europe. This cultural production, as extended to the political or alternative cinema after May 1968, borrowed from the uprisings the specific objectives of resistance and opposition. It should be no surprise then that the legacy of interruption and disruption is an important feature in the cinema of the era that followed.

Feminist Reaction

> There is no way in which we can produce an alternative out of the blue, but we can begin to make a break by examining patriarchy with the tools it provides....
>
> Laura Mulvey [28]

Demands for reformation and change were felt throughout most public and private sectors, and yet few problems were solved for feminists in this "new culture" of revolution and change. For the workers and students May '68 was mostly a "revolution" dealing with the question of access to knowledge, information, and equality. Many women however, felt that the '68 movement did not represent these collective concerns in solidarity with

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[27] Quoted in Bernard E. Brown Protest in Paris: Anatomy of a Revolt (Morristown, N.J.: General Learning Press, 1974) 52-53.

[28] "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" 15.

them. French feminists saw their cause for equality and choice as a part of the larger question of access to information and services which was basically ignored by the May '68 leadership. In other countries, however, the women's movement had already experienced a certain amount of momentum before 1968. In Belgium, for example, the beginning of the women's movement was very closely linked with the demands of *les travailleuses* [women workers] and their struggle for equal pay.[29] In 1966, the first of a series of strikes by the *travailleuses* was called. They formed a group known as *"A travail égal, salaire égal"* [For equal work, equal pay], which remained the organization's slogan throughout the 1970s. But effective changes were slow in coming even with the country-wide *Etats généraux de la femme* held in Brussels in 1968. In most cases, when women tried to express their demands within the context of the 1968 uprisings they were shrugged off as frivolous or, worse, considered divisive. What then accumulated was a frustrated feminist voice marginalized by all the prevailing power structures including the students, the government, the unions, the political parties, and even the socialists. In the years following the '68 events in Germany, Belgium, and France widespread women's groups began to form and develop into politicized organizations. In these three countries, feminists took up the struggle for women's rights where the new institutions of authority (the students and the unions) had stopped. The French Press called these women "radicals" or "militants" and gave the name *Mouvement de Libération des femmes* or MLF for all groups that were a part

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[29] In Belgium, in 1957, the Treaty of Rome was adopted (creating the Common Market) of which Article 119 guarantees equality in remuneration for men and women. Only in 1967 did a royal decree permit women to sue for the application of the 1957 law of equal salary. This law is cited in Marie Denis and Suzanne Van Rokeghem, Le féminisme est dans la rue: Belgique 1970-75 (Bruxelles: Edition Pol-His, 1992) 28.

of a women's liberation movement[30] Many feminists consider 1968 as the marker for the beginning of the 1970s feminist projects.[31] In a 1973 interview Marguerite Duras said:

> Men must learn to be silent.... Yes, these prating men were up to their old tricks during May '68.... They activated the old language, enlisted the aid of the old way of theorizing, in order to relate, to recount, to explain this new situation.... There was no silence after May '68. And this collective silence was necessary.... No, men had to disrupt everything and stop the flow of silence.... It is not by chance that the women's liberation movement followed immediately.[32]

Duras, it seems, would have preferred a collective moment for both men and women; yet her view of that moment is a silent one, maybe even a grieving one. But by and large the reaction for the need to change was far from silent or grieving. In the arts and in politics women began to challenge and change the status quo. In the years following '68, feminists became more conscious of the necessity to subvert this hierarchical order, be it the system of government, the system of thought, or in general the symbolic order.

From the obscure to the most sensational event, women were disrupting and redefining the political and artistic world in which they lived and worked. In the representational arts, for example, Chantal Akerman made her first film, entitled Saute ma

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[30] See Introductions II and III in Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron, New French Feminisms (1980; New York: Schocken Books, 1981), for a brief historical treatment of French feminism and post-'68 feminist thought.

[31] In Germany, filmmaker and feminist, Helke Sanders, spoke at the Socialist Students' Association in 1968, which marked the beginning of the new women's movement in Germany. In Brussels, 1968, women from the "A travail égal" group and from the two family planning organizations in both Flemish and French Belgium came together for the States General of the Woman (Le féminisme est dans la rue 34-35). See Claire Duchen, Feminism in France: From May '68 to Mitterand; Claire Duchen, ed. French Connections: Voices from the Women's Movement in France (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1987); Alice Jardine and Anne Menke, eds. Shifting Scenes: Interviews on Women, Writing, and Politics in Post-68 France (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).

[32] Marguerite Duras in New French Feminisms 111-112, originally published as an interview in La création étouffée, 1973.

ville (1968), which literally means "blow up my city" or, in slang, "fuck my city."[33] The film shows the restlessness and anxiety of youth in 1968. It culminates in the final sounds of the chain-reaction explosions metaphorically "showing" the far reaching effects of the young woman's suicide. It can also be read as a comment on the inability of youth to be heard in any other way than by resorting to radical acts, often violent, as was the case in the Latin Quarter in May 1968. In the fields of philosophy and theory other feminists such as Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray, and Julia Kristéva wrote about the need to revolutionize language. For example, Irigaray, in Speculum de l'autre femme, works through and against the writing of the major philosophers of Western culture. In one of her most well-known essays, "La tache aveugle d'un vieux rêve de symétrie," she recasts Freud's "Femininity" with her own critical engagements with the subject, producing disruptions of the Freudian text and resistance to it. These feminist practices of discontinuities were necessary in order to get out of the constraints of a symbolic order made for and by patriarchy. Politically radical acts were performed to bring attention to issues that concerned feminists. Monique Wittig, feminist activist, writer, and theorist, was one of a group of women who placed on the tomb of the unknown soldier a wreath dedicated to "the unknown wife of the soldier" in August 1970. This was considered as politically radical an act as when the students spit on the tomb during a demonstration in 1968. Her political and fictional writing was militantly feminist in opposition to the institutions of patriarchy. She interrogated the grammatical gender constructions found in language as one of the instances of patriarchal formations. In her novel/manifesto, Les guérillères (1969), she wrote:

> "Elles disent, malheureuse, ils t'ont chassée du monde des signes.... Ils écrivent de ce droit de donner des noms qu'il va si loin que l'on peut

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[33] Jutta Brückner's Hungerjahre [The Hungry Years] (1980) resembles in many ways Saute ma ville (1968). Brückner's main character, an adolescent girl, who has bulimic eating habits which coincide with having an insatiable hunger for knowledge in post-World War II Germany. With autobiographical overtones in both films, Saute ma ville and Hungerjahre end with the staging of a suicide attempt by the young female character, though the actual suicide is left more ambiguous in Hungerjahre, the increasing sense of doom and nihilism is evident in both films.

> considérer l'origine du langage comme un acte d'autorité émanant de ceux qui dominent.... Elles disent, le langage que tu parles t'empoisonne la glotte la langue le palais les lèvres. Elles disent le langage que tu parles est fait de mots qui te tuent." (146-147)[34]

The opposition of subject pronouns "ils" and "elles," indicative of the gender construction in French grammar, is used consciously by Wittig to further her contestation of power and authority even at the level of language.[35] "Ils" refers back to "les oppresseurs dominateurs" (146) and to those who historically have controlled signifying systems. According to Wittig, dominant discourse needed to be brought into question and women had to invent ways to communicate outside of the existing symbols/signs that give meaning to words. This is also echoed in Hélène Cixous's "Le rire de la méduse" when she writes: "Un texte féminin ne peut pas ne pas être plus que subversif: s'il s'écrit, c'est en soulevant, volcanique, la vieille croûte immobilière, porteuse des investissements masculins, et pas autrement...."[36] Through the subversion of language the symbolic order had to be challenged.

This interest in subverting language with its own tools then became a structural necessity for feminists working not only in literature but also in the representational arts. Any use of the pre-existing structures of representation of the female body could only be seen as perpetuating a particular position in the patriarchal order. But for feminist

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[34] "The women say, unhappy one, men have expelled you from the world of symbols.... They write, of their authority to accord names, that it goes back so far that the origin of language itself may be considered an act of authority emanating from those who dominate.... The women say, the language you speak poisons your glottis tongue palate lips. They say, the language you speak is made up of words that are killing you." Les Guérillères, trans. David Le Vay (New York: Viking Press, 1971) 112, 114.

[35] Chantal Akerman's film, Je tu il elle (1974), uses the subject pronouns to question identity and subjectivity in filmmaking and narrative. On the subject of proper names in narrative see Roland Barthes, S/Z (Paris: Seuil, 1970).

[36] Hélène Cixous, "Le rire de la méduse," L'arc 61 (1975): 49. "A feminine text cannot fail to be more than subversive. It is volcanic; as it is written it brings about an upheaval of the old property crust, carrier of masculine investments; there's no other way" (New French Feminisms 258).

filmmaking practice to begin to question authority, it was necessary to name and identify the power structure. And this entailed a political move, especially when the question of access was raised. Access to funds, to equipment, to film crews who were interested in resisting the lure of the mainstream.[37] Simply posing a challenge to mainstream cinema was old news, so to speak, since it was already accomplished with the *Nouvelle Vague*, as I have suggested. There were larger issues at stake: how to make film using an existing discourse that for the greater part of its history had associated itself with what feminist art historian Griselda Pollock called "an active mastering gaze" (Vision and Difference 159) and what Mulvey has defined as the "male gaze" ("Visual Pleasure" 19). Though they use different terms, what both definitions point to is the "patriarchal gaze," the gaze of those "in ideology." The feminist alternative cinema investigates representation as a function of dominant ideological structures of Western culture and its own relationship in it. In the 1970s many film critics began to examine the role that cinema played in representing images of society and especially images of women. In addition, this examination of "representation" in cinema was brought to light in the aftermath of May 1968 by a group of film critics and journalists of the Cahiers du cinéma and in the British film journal, Screen. These two groups reestablished in the late 1960s and early 1970s the fundamental notion that cinema transmits ideology, that cinema has the power to represent a certain kind of socially and politically generated image/idea. By the mid-1970s the first European feminist film journal, Frauen und Film, started in 1974 by filmmaker Helke Sander, opened up the forum to discuss these film images within and of culture from a feminist point of view. The Frauen und Film project was two-fold: to explore theory and the works of contemporary feminist cinema and to relate the past and continuing history of women filmmakers.

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[37] Jan Rosenberg notes that in 1978 the cost of obtaining a professional quality 16mm camera is above $4,000, synchronized tape recorders $2,000 to $3,000. The editing equipment for 16mm can cost more than $20,000. These are prices for the United States at the dollar value of 1978 (Women's Reflections 128).

Theory in Practice; Practicing Theory

> C'est Brecht qui disait que la théorie doit être globale mais que la pratique n'avance qu'à petits pas.
>
> Alain Tanner[38]

As I have stated above, the alternative film functions and exists in a relationship of intermediation with the currents of filmmaking at that time. That is, between itself, and the narrative mainstream film and the documentary. This, I believe, comes close to what Pascal Bonitzer argued for in his notion of a militant cinema where he saw the possibility "to realize a subversion...of that which secretly operates there: the discourse of power, *the discourse-form of power*."[39] It is important, though, to remember that producing complete subversion by the "alternative cinema" would deny its identity, and this is a problem. It is the sticky paradox of alternative film production.[40] It must accept that there is a dominant cinematic practice—a mainstream, a something at the center that manipulates the "basic assumptions" of cinema—while at the same time resisting co-option by it. This can be seen in the way the alternative cinema's own self-conscious production works through a film practice of the narrative and documentary. Yet the alternative cinema also has a special

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[38] Alain Tanner, "Le «pourquoi dire» et le «comment dire»," Le milieu du monde ou le cinéma selon Tanner, ed. Michel Boujut (Lausanne: L'Age d'homme, 1974) 14.

[39] Pascal Bonitzer, "A propos de *Mai 68* par Gudie Lawaetz" Cahiers du cinéma 256 (fév-mars) 1975, in translation in Philip Rosen, Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986): 330. As I mentionned above Bonitzer's definition of "militant cinema" includes documentarist, Chris Marker, Godard and Gorin's film group, Dziga-Vertov, and novelist/filmmaker Marguerite Duras. From Bonitzer: "Indeed, militant cinema cannot be something like classical documentary plus rage and great, fine--sounding words. It has to be something else completely, something which organizes otherwise the relation to the real, the look, and the voice." He goes on to advocate the "hazardous, discovery, more open to chance..." of "militant cinema" (331). The alternative cinema further actively engages the documentary technique with its use of silence and voice-over commentary.

[40] The idea of sticky and stickiness comes a reading of Michael Hill's idea of "the proximity of power" in "Abandoned to Difference: Identity, Opposition and Trinh T. Min-ha's *Reassemblage* (1982)," Surfaces 3.2 (May 25, 1993): 5-29 (also @harfung.cc.umontreal.ca). "I will describe how the proximity of power—its *stickiness*—forces us to seek more politically informed notions about otherness and identity than could previously be thought" (5). (Emphasis mine).

relationship to the explosion of film theory and writing on cinema that occurred between the early 1950s through the mid-1970s. This relationship is important because much of this cinema produced in the 70s takes into consideration—and works to apply and question—the various contemporaneous theories pertaining to the cinematic medium. The first of these major theoretical influences comes from the Cahiers du cinéma (co-founded in 1951 by André Bazin and Jacques Doniol-Valcroze) in the theoretical work of André Bazin, from the mid-1940s and 1950s, whose major articles have been republished in one volume as Qu'est-ce que le cinéma? (1981). In his essay, "L'évolution du langage cinématographique," he argues against *montage* [editing] and for the more "natural" use of *mise en scène*—the arrangement of elements in a scene and the camera's relationship to them so as to preserve their physical reality—and from this will later develop his ideas regarding "la profondeur de champ" [depth of field] cinematography, which was to become a major influence for the filmmaking practices of François Truffaut and the *Nouvelle Vague*. He also takes the Hollywood studio-system to task while praising it for its underlying structural foundations and dominant market of genre films: comedy, musical, Western, etc... and its "découpage 'invisible'" [continuity editing]. This simultaneous critique and praise of American cinema will be one of the elements that the *Nouvelle Vague* later takes up in its filmmaking practices.[41] As an editor of the Cahiers Bazin gave young film critics the chance to write in the journal, even though his work on the *mise en scène* and "néo-réalisme" was later contested by those critics whom he had brought in to the journal. But his work, especially in "Le mythe du cinéma totale" (1946), where he shows the particular relationship that cinema had to reproduction technologies, had a major impact on the theories of representation. Of course, Bazin was criticized for his unfaltering faith in

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[41] This critique of American cinema grows out of the post-war years when the French film industry was concerned that Hollywood would release all of the films of its wartime production on the French market. The French Fourth Republic negotiated the Blum-Byrnes accord in which rigid restrictions were made on the importation of American films and on the domestic film production, distribution, and screenings. These restrictions ended in 1961, but since the signing of the GATT agreements in 1993 other restrictions have been placed on multi-national production companies to maintain a "purely" French cinema.

the mechanical and uninterpreted representation of reality in the filmic image. A few years later, in 1954, François Truffaut, one of the young film critics at the Cahiers du cinéma, wrote "Une certaine tendance du cinéma français" to mark the beginning of the *Nouvelle Vague*.[42] In this article he criticizes the French "cinéma de papa," which refers to the traditional style of the typical 1940s and 50s French film. He also refers to this as "cinéma de qualité," which was usually a literary adaptation and which used a very controlled and planned approach in its production and editing very much in line with the studio system of Hollywood. These adaptations were very successful. But it was the scenarists—the most well-known were Aurench and Bost for La Symphonie pastorale and Le Rouge et le noir—who received all the praise for the films' popularity as "authors" of the film. Truffaut calls into question this meaning of authorship and contends that the true author of the film was the director. This, he argued, could even be seen in the output of directors working under the Hollywood studio system. Truffaut's polemics of authorship became known as the "politique des auteurs." Unlike the previous generation of filmmakers and critics, the filmmakers of this new generation, of the *Nouvelle Vague*, saw the particular *auteur*-driven Hollywood cinema as an inspiration. Transforming and borrowing parts of films and film genres and combining these with a new style of editing which was not at all like the continuity editing of Hollywood, they established this new cinema.[43] The borrowing and

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[42] Cahiers du cinéma (janvier 1954): 15-29. Gaston Haustrate, in "Regards sur le cinéma français" Cinéma 74 188 (juin 1974): 98-113, attacks the rampant bourgeois ideology of the *Nouvelle Vague* that he felt was still present in 1964, ten years after this article by Truffaut. He notes that "*la nouvelle vague* est aujourd'hui dispersée" (107) and calls Truffaut's cinema "le cinéma passéiste" (106).

[43] A major contribution to this cinema was the availability of state support. As Jill Forbes points out, there was a *Fonds de développement* [development fund] that had two kinds of subsidies. One was the *aide automatique* [automatic subsidy] set up in 1948 to which was added in 1953 *aide sélective* [selective subsidies]. "Finally, in 1959 a *Fonds de soutien* was created which provided for *avances sur recettes*, or interest-free loans, granted on the basis of an outline or an idea and repayable if or when the film earned a profit. This, for the first time, allowed new film makers to benefit from support.... The impact of the *aide sélective* is clear: in the mid-1950s it helped to support a group of makers of short films which included [Chris] Marker, [Alain] Resnais and [Agnès] Varda, all of whom went on to make feature films and, from 1959 onwards, it also assisted the production of low-budget independent feature films" (After the New Wave 6). Ironically, an underdeveloped production and distribution system helped independent filmmakers because they could start their own companies and make, produce, and distribute their films by themselves.

the collage style of filmmaking are two of the most important notions that the *Nouvelle Vague* provided to the alternative cinema, along with Godard's use of the theories of Dziga Vertov and the "compilation documentary." From the late 1950s through the mid-1960s other theories outside of cinema found their way into film culture via the Cahiers du cinéma. Some of these influences were derived from the theory and practice of the *Nouveau Roman*, others came from linguistic and literary theory, and psychology or psychoanalysis. These later would affect the theory in practice of the alternative cinema of the 1970s.

The first of the literary and linguistic influences is the semiotic approach to cinema.[44] The height of semiotics in film theory was in 1966 with the publication of the journal Communications 8. Semiotics placed emphasis on the structural analysis of narrative in the work of such theorists as Umberto Eco, Christian Metz, and Roland Barthes.[45] And yet there was, before the publication of Communications, Roland Barthes's structuralist essays in Mythologies, and especially "Le mythe aujourd'hui" of 1957, where his expansion of Saussure's sign system and the creation of meaning are linked to a critique of bourgeois ideology. Further developments of semiotics in film theory continue through the 1970s with the combination of semiotics and Marxism in the work of the feminist film theorist, Claire Johnston, and the combination of semiotics and psychoanalysis by Julia Kristéva and Kaja Silverman.[46] At the same time in 1966, in psychoanalysis, Jacques

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[44] The semiotic approach to cinema is derived from the theoretical work of Ferdinand de Saussure (linguistics), Claude Lévi-Strauss (anthropology), Tzvetan Todorov (typology), Vladimir Propp (folklore), Roman Jakobson (linguistics), and A. J. Greimas (linguistics).

[45] Christian Metz,"La grande syntagme du film narratif," Communications 8 (1966); Umberto Eco, A Theory of Semiotics (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985) and The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1979); Roland Barthes, "Introduction to the Strucutral analysis of Narratives," Image-Music-Text, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977) and Roland Barthes' study of Balzac's short story "Sarrasine" in S/Z (Paris: Seuil, 1970) should also be considered a major influence in the practice of combining semiotics and a critique of ideology.

[46] Claire Johnston, "Women's Cinema as Counter-Cinema," in ed. Claire Johnston Notes on Women's Cinema (London: Society for Education in film and Television (SEFT), 1974); Kaja Silverman, The

Lacan publishes his Écrits I and Écrits II. This is perhaps one of the major reasons film theory is said to have started in France. It is Lacan's rereading of Freud and his use of the philosophical ideas of Heidegger and Hegel in his essay, entitled "Le stade du miroir comme fomateur de la fonction du Je telle qu'elle nous est révélée dans l'expérience psychanalytique," on the mirror phase which linked language acquisition to subject formation.[47] Film theorists used his work on the specular function of the mirror to draw an analogy to the identification practices of spectators in the cinema, identification with the camera and with characters. They began to use the term "le regard" [gaze] and "le sujet" [subject] as they are refered to by Lacan to discuss the implications that this had for film. The problem of the use of the term "le regard" in translation as "the gaze" is that this cannot completely capture the same notion in English as it does in French. "Le regard" evokes both the feminist "to-be-looked-at-ness" and at the same time the "who is doing the looking" while commenting on the interpellating process of the cinematic apparatus. Adrienne Rich's "re-vision" comes closest to capturing the reflexive nature of the expression whereas the "relay of looks," suggested by Linda Williams, infers the multiple and displacing characteristics of "le regard."[48] All of these terms will later be brought together in the process known as "suture," which refers to the "stitching" of spectators into

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Subject of Semiotics (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983); Julia Kristéva, Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art, trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine, and Leon S. Roudiez, ed. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980).

47 "Le stade du miroir comme formateur de la fonction du Je telle qu'elle nous est révélée dans l'expérience psychanalytique" (Communication faite au XVIe congrès international de psychanalyse, à Zürich, le 17 juillet 1949) Ecrits I (Paris: Seuil, 1966) 89-97. This is followed by a short essay entitled "Du sujet enfin en question" (101-109) that was written in 1966. Early work in psychoanalysis and narrative cinema was attacked in Screen for its "unproblematic acceptance of psychoanalysis" by Edward Buscombe, Christopher Gledhill, Alan Lovell, Christopher Williams, in "Statement: Psychoanalysis and Film," Screen 16.4 (Winter 1975-76): 119-130. They conclude by saying: "We believe that no socialist educationalist could be happy with Lacan's authoritarian account of the learning process" (130).

48 Adrienne Rich, "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-vision," On Lies, Secrets and Silence (New York: W. W. Norton, 1979); Linda Williams, "When the Woman Looks," Re-vision: Essays in Feminist Film Criticism, ed. Mary Ann Doane, Patricia Mellencamp, and Linda Williams (Frederick, MD: University Publications of America, Inc., 1984) 83-99; for an overview of film theory and feminist film criticism in the 1970s see Christine Gledhill, "Developments in Feminist Film Criticism," in Re-vision 18-48.

film narratives using various film devices within cinematic discourse, such as the shot/reverse shot formation. Jean-Pierre Oudart, in "Cinema and Suture," refers to the process of suture as one of a combination of exclusions and of control and containment.[49] The cinematic process excludes both the enunciatory agency (director, scriptwriter, producer) and the site of production (set, stage, proscenium), which Oudart calls the "Absent One" (36), and controls these "lost" fields with the frame, an artifice, an illusion. Classical cinema, with its emphasis on continuity editing, works because it is able to substitute other fields for the "lost" ones by constructing more than adequate substitutes in their place. As Kaja Silverman points out in The Acoustic Mirror, theoriticians of the suture use the paradigm of castration and disavowal, as do the semioticans, because the exclusionary process and control of only a limited field of vision functions for the spectator as the trauma of castration, and the disavowal of this lack works as a subordination of the subject back into the pre-existing power relations (12). It functions therefore as an ideological process of interpellation. This process of interpellation comes from the work of Louis Althusser, a French philosopher, Marxist theorist, and radical Communist (Leninist) thinker who often criticized the *Parti communiste français* (PCF) but remained a member until 1978. In 1965, Althusser writes Pour Marx, which positions itself as Marxist but against the tradition of Marxist humanism of the 1950s of Jean-Paul Sartre and Roger Garaudy.[50] Althusser argues for a rereading of Marx's later "mature" writings, especially Capital, which are set apart from his earlier work. Derived from Gaston Bachelard's "coupure épistemologique," Althusser posits that this break in Marx's writings established

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[49] Jean-Pierre Oudart, "Cinema and Suture," Screen 18.4 (1977-78): 30-47. For additional readings on suture see Stephen Heath, "Notes on Suture," Screen 18.7 (1977-78): 48-76; Claire Johnston, "Towards a Feminist Film Practice: Some Theses," Edinburgh Magazine 1 (1976): 50-59; Kaja Silverman, "Suture," The Subject of Semiotics (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983) 194-246.

[50] Louis Althusser, Pour Marx (Paris, 1965), For Marx (London: Allen Lane; New York: Pantheon, 1969) and "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus (Notes towards an Investigation)," Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays trans. Ben Brewster (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1971) 127-186, originally published in French in La Pensée in 1970.

Marxism as a science, the science of "historical materialism." Many critics compare Althusser's "return" to Marx's text with Lacan's return to and rereading of Freud as belonging to the structuralist tradition, but this seems to be hardly the case given their importance in post-structuralist thought. It was not until the mid-1970s that the importance of a radically political way of analyzing and making films became linked to Althusser's revised form of Marxism and his critique of ideology as apparatuses ("*dispositifs*") of institutions, in "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus (Notes towards an Investigation)." It is this critique of society and cultural productions that is combined with the work in psychoanalysis (Freud and Lacan—especially the concept of the "imaginary") and historical materialism that create the theoretical background for the formation of the "subject." In Althusser's "subject," identity is produced as a result of processes formed by societal ideologies, while at the same time the subject, by being processed through ideology, supports the very workings of society's restrictive and repressive structure. Ideology, for Althusser, is part of any society. It is the fabric or network of representational systems from which individuals understand their existence. Yet this network is simultaneously a mechanism which functions specularly (like a mirror) in order that the subjects recognize themselves in it and by the same token are themselves recognized by it ("Ideology" 174). The mechanism which appeals to and calls forth the subject in an unending and inextricable attachment to ideology is called interpellation (174). Therefore individuals are constantly and "always already" being interpellated as social subjects "in discourse" and "in ideology." Althusser's work on ideology and "interpellation" as a permanently fixed part of any social subject is later applied to literature by Fredric Jameson in The Political Unconscious and to the discursive practices of repression by Michel Foucault in L'histoire de la sexualité. Also important for feminist and materialist theory but rarely mentioned in feminist film theory until Teresa de Lauretis's Technologies of Gender (Meighan Morris's book La Fiancée du Pirate was published in 1988) is the work of Michel Foucault on ideology and power. His work is not directly

about cinema but by virtue of cinema's circulation in and of ideology it is also scrutinized and interrogated through the "history of ideas" in L'archéologie du savoir (1969), through "discourse" in L'histoire de la sexualité (1976, 1984); and by his reflexions on the interconnections of "discipline," power, and knowledge in Power and Knowledge (1972-1977). The combinations and associations with semiotics (Saussure, Barthes, Kristéva, Eco); ideology (Althusser, Foucault); and subject (Freud and Lacan) are what make the alternative films of the 1970s a very diverse form of cinema. It is for this reason that we need also to look at the various filmmaking movements leading up to this time period which inform much of the experimentation with filmic structures and discourses in the alternatives.

La Nouvelle Vague

In 1959 Truffaut and then Jean-Luc Godard made the first films of the *Nouvelle Vague*. The humanistic quasi-autobiography of Truffaut's Les 400 coups stands in sharp contrast to the *film noir* quality of Godard's A bout de souffle, though both were shot on location, and were made with very few takes and on small budgets. Controlling factors of film studio designs were given up for moving or hand-held camera work, low lighting which was captured by using a new, fast film stock that need little light for exposure, and, especially for Godard, use of experimental editing techniques such as the jump cut seen in A bout de souffle or displaced sound and image correspondance in Le petit soldat (1960, banned in France until 1963 because it dealt with the Algerian War), even though Truffaut's Les 400 coups is frequently cited for its use of experimental editing, specifically the dissolves, in the scene with Antoine Doinel and the "psychiatrist" whose presence is realized only through the use of her voice. The spectators never see her. Other critics at the Cahiers also turn to filmmaking and become associated with the *Nouvelle Vague*: Claude

Chabrol, Eric Rohmer, Jacques Rivette.[51] In addition, one woman, Agnès Varda, though not among the writers of the Cahiers, made one of the first, or rather pre-, *Nouvelle Vague* films in 1954, La pointe courte. She later made Cléo de 5 à 7 (1961) and it is considered to be an early example of contemporary feminist filmmaking. The filmmaking of Alain Resnais, Alain Robbe-Grillet, Marguerite Duras was considered the second wave to be loosely grouped under the title *Nouvelle Vague*, even though these were directors who came from literary or documentary film backgrounds. Alain Resnais was already established as a documentarist for his film Nuit et brouillard (1955) as was Chris Marker (who will later be associated with the Left Bank documentarists before beginning his own company SLON in the 1970s), whereas both Robbe-Grillet and Duras were writers of the *Nouveau Roman*. In 1959, Resnais received funds to make his first feature film, Hiroshima, mon amour, for which Duras wrote the scenario. Resnais experimented with a new editing style in order to capture the distance and formation of memory. He later made a more experimental film, L'année dernière à Marienbad, with Robbe-Grillet as scenarist. The scenario was published separately as a *ciné-roman*, a practice that Robbe-Grillet frequently adhered to. For example, Glissements progressifs du plaisir (1974), was concurrently published as a *ciné-roman* when the film was released. This should not be confused with what Agnès Varda calls "cinécriture," which refers to the scripting and directing of a film. After these first two collaborative projects both Robbe-Grillet and Duras alternate between writing and filmmaking in the 1970s.

All of these factors are important in our look at the alternative cinema's interrogations and inclusions of previous film theories and practices. On the one hand, the alternative cinema tries to displace narrative's insistence on a basis of realism or "the reality effect," most often produced in the alternatives by a refusal to use continuity editing.[52]

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[51] James Monaco, The New Wave (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976).

[52] One source of "l'effet de réel" comes from Jean-Pierre Oudart in "The Reality Effect," Cahiers (mars-avril 1971) in Browne 189-202.

And on the other hand, it tries in a number of ways to interrogate the documentary's variant of the cinematic "real" as a record of an event or act. The documentary film is one of the origins of filmmaking. In 1895, when Louis and Auguste Lumière showed their first films in public, these were documents of everyday life. They depicted a family together feeding the baby, the arrival of a train in a country station, and the end of a work day at a factory.[53] But this documenting of everyday life is not the cinema that we know best. In fact, it is the narrative film developed in the early 1900s that has come to represent mainstream cinema. The storytelling process in narrative film is achieved through editing, through the cutting and splicing of scenes to create a continuous flow of action based on cause and effect, hence its technical name: "continuity editing." This editing style produces the "classical narrative cinema."

The relationship that the alternative cinema must have to the mainstream can be argued by looking more closely at the rules of continuity editing. In the remaining section, I will look at how continuity is defined in relation to filmmaking. Then, I turn to a discussion of how the authority of continuity editing in narrative cinema is contested by the 1920s film theory of Sergei Eisenstein (dialectical editing) and Germain Dulac (avant-garde) and in the French *Nouvelle Vague*. In addition, I will touch on a handful of film critics working for influential film journals in Europe who saw theory as an important element in film culture and in understanding the related cultural production of film and the changing political and social environment. Many of these critics in England, in Screen, began to publish articles regarding film's relationship to Bertolt Brecht's theory of distantiation, *Verfremdungseffekt*, and in France, the editorial board of the Cahiers du cinéma began publishing a retrospective of the film theories of Dziga Vertov and Eisenstein in order to open up a forum on ideology, representation, and politics. These theories engage in looking at dominant cultural forms in the Western tradition that shape artistic production

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[53] L'arrivée à Ciotat, Le déjeuner de bébé, La sortie de l'usine (Lumière Brothers, France, 1895).

and its reception. By specifically addressing the theories that concentrate on a critique of ideology, I wish to show that certain filmmakers/theorists questioned the production of images in culture and continued to turn filmmaking into cultural production. In the last part of this section we will look at feminist film theory as it developed concurrently with the alternative cinema of the 1970s.

Hollywood's Contribution

David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, in their book on film aesthetics entitled Film Art, describe the coded meanings and structures that occur in any classical narrative as the "building blocks" of continuity editing.[54] In The Classical Hollywood Cinema by Bordwell, Thompson, and Janet Staiger, they define continuity as that which "stood for the smoothly flowing narrative, with its technique constantly in the service of the causal chain, yet always effacing itself" (194-195). The main focus of their discussion of the "continuity system" is to expose the specific rules and theories that explain the creation of invisible editing with shot/image continuity. Continuity editing is a system in which all of the filmic elements are subordinated to the narrative notion of a cause-effect relationship "spatially and temporally, from shot to shot" (196). This is the kind of logical relationship that most mainstream narrative cinema has espoused in its film editing in order for the spectators to "sit back and relax" and be "swept away" by the story (Film Art 55). Within their discussions of editing in Film Art, Bordwell and Thompson develop two essential ideas inherent in this style of editing. The first is that "the space of the scene, clearly and unambiguously unfolded, does not jar or disorient, because such disorientation, it is felt, will distract the viewer from the center of attention: the narrative chain of causes and effects" (264). And secondly,

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[54] David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, Film Art, 4th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993). Much more detail is given to the continuity editing system in David Bordwell, Kristin Thompson, and Janet Staiger, The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985). See especially Chapter 16, "The continuity system," 194-213.

> the classical Hollywood mode of narrative subordinates time, motivation, and other factors to the cause-effect sequence, including mise-en-scène and camera position and movement and now continuity editing as it works to subordinate space to causality. On the basis of the 180° principle, filmmakers have developed the continuity system as a way to build up a smoothly flowing space which remains subordinate to narrative action. (Film Art 264-5)

The "180° principle," also called the "axis of action," is an important device for containing and controlling filmic space to orient the spectator to the action on screen (Classical Hollywood 202). Based on filming in a circle, all action takes place on one side of an imaginary line with the camera on the other so that the circle is cut in two half-circles on a 180° axis. This prevents any unmatched action from being filmed. For example, if character A looks left and is waiting for the arrival of character B, character B must walk into the screen from the left also. If character B walks in from right to left this would disrupt the established spatial relationship for the spectator. As I mentioned above, in my description of the theory of suture, this is one of the ways to reinforce the spectators' identification with the screen space. It can also be done by using the shot/reverse shot sequence. This kind of sequence is set up with a medium or a long shot of two characters, for example, A and B, in a conversation. This first shot establishes their presence and their proximity in the scene. The next shot will either show just one character, say, character A, or use an over-the-shoulder shot of character B to show both characters, but will focus on the face of character A. The following shot will be the reverse of the previous one, showing character B's face and his/her reaction or comment to the first part of the dialogue. When the shot/reverse shot paradigm is not filled by the second part of the sequence it disrupts or jars the causal relationship because this would mean that character A is addressing an unknown field. The "subordination to cause and effect"—the basic principle to ensure "narrative continuity"—has become the "dominant editing style throughout

Western film history" (Film Art 261). Continuity editing, therefore, is an editing style applicable to film cultures outside Hollywood. And these rules, often called "Hollywood rules," are distinctly the sort that create both the malaise and the illusion of reality. The continuity rules established a clearly defined and compressed time-space continuum that allowed for a narrative concentration of the audience's attention on the most important elements of the plot. This kind of editing cuts up and rearranges linear sequences, actually destroying the original profilmic progression of production, and yet paradoxically brings spectators closer to what they perceive of as "reality." Continuity editing was developed in early American filmmaking by D. W. Griffith who experimented with film editing for continuity and who often used crosscutting, "editing which moves between simultaneous events" to enhance the building of tension in the plot by condensing or expanding time, usually the time of a rescue (Classical Hollywood 210). It is this style that Russian Formalist filmmaker and theorist, Sergei Eisenstein, will most strongly critique in "Dickens, Griffth, and Film Today" (1925).

Challenging classical cinema means not only to change the continuity of image and sound correspondence, the cause and effect relationship between these images and sounds, but ultimately modifying the whole structure in order not to reproduce those same formations at work in the dominant order, here the patriarchal order, of filmmaking. To do this, then, it was necessary for filmmakers to create a "new" language using the basic units of film: image, sound, and visible editing. What this entails is a tampering with established film language. Some of these alternative filmmakers used their films to disrupt or "jam" the acceptable filmic codes, what I think of as the coded ideological frequencies. This creates a jamming of norms or ideological frequencies because, in the end, it is about film's redirecting and rerouting of information that is still made for mass audience, or consumption. (Of course, for early feminist film studies, it is also about the representation of the female figure that is transmitted via the cinema—the circulation of images—to the public.) Alternative narrative strategies also can be seen as a way to jam viewers'

expectations, because, as I mentioned earlier, film spectators are used to having all elements subordinate to the plot, so that nothing disrupts the smooth flow of the story. Yet this disruption of linear plot is exactly one of the ways cinema can function as a social or political intervention as opposition or resistance to the mainstream. And, most obviously, it can influence how ideas are received by the spectators who watch the film. In one sense then, this jamming is what Roland Barthes talks about as "le blocage" in S/Z,[55] that is, the ultimate insolubility of an enigma, and in this case, the insolubility of the matter of representation within dominant ideology.[56] Barthes tries to codify the notions encompassing "dominant ideology" in Mythologies, and especially in "Le mythe aujourd'hui," by reading the figure of myth through the use of semiology as a science of signs. And so, film language became an important factor in discussing film itself. Film semiotics, in which film is considered to be a textual material whose system of communication (filmic discourse), can be read as a kind of a language.[57] Editing is the structuring mechanism of these discourses. It is the process by which meaning can be assigned to a series of shots and sounds, when individual shots and sounds or music are all linked together from seemingly unrelated images and sounds[58] by placing them one after the other or by overlapping them on the film. Since the discourse and the structure are the

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[55] Roland Barthes, S/Z (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1970) 215.

[56] For discussion of Marxist and materialist analysis of cinema see Harvey May '68 and Film Culture 87-119. She includes the concept of "dominant ideology" in cinema as Hollywood production using the Cinéthique collective statement that Hollywood is "the monolithic representative of a monolithic entity" (95). See also Cinéthique 4 (1968): 26.

57 One of the most complete developments of the semiotics of cinema can be found in Christian Metz, Essais sur la signification au cinéma, Vol. I and II, Paris: Klinckseick, 1971, 1972. For extensive definitions and further discussions of the postmodern in the study of film semiotics see Robert Stam, Robert Burgoyne, Sandy Flitterman-Lewis, eds. New Vocabulaires in Film Semiotics (New York: Routledge, 1993).

[58] Of course, "nonmeaningful" is impossible. See Roland Barthes' "Le mythe, aujourd'hui," in Mythologies (Paris: Seuil, 1959) 191-247.

basic components of cinema it is only through the manipulation of their processes that the alternative can shift them.

Counteracting Ideological Filmmaking

The Marxist-based counter-cinema and some of the experimental cinema in Europe of the 1960s and 1970s reacted to this tradition of the American-style narrative that was economically dominated by Hollywood. It was the cultural hegemony of American ideology inherent in its filmmaking which they felt had to be attacked, though, later feminist film theorists of the 1970s saw that both the Hollywood standards and the "revolutionary" *Nouvelle Vague* were both fundamentally patriarchal institutions that had to be contested and formally interrogated. Sergei Eisenstein's films and theoretical writings stand out as one of the many influential subtexts behind this movement in cinema. Both a filmmaker and a film theorist, Eisenstein was writing on cinema and making films in the Soviet Union in the 1910s and 1920s at the height of the Russian constructivist and formalist movement in art and filmmaking. His most well-known films from the 1920s, Strike (1924), Potemkin (1925), and October or Ten Days That Shook the World (1927), sum up the practice of his film theory, called *montage* editing. This is distinguished from the continuity editing often called "découpage" or invisible editing, because it is based on a dialectical system, on the "collision" of opposites and contrasts, not on narrative flow and subordination to cause and effect. Images are linked by metaphor and association through composition and rhythm. By looking at the development of Eisenstein's arguments on editing my goal will be to present a very broad introduction to the innovative dialectical film practices of the 1970s. The various traditions—and reactions to these traditions—of filmmaking practices and theory, including the classical narrative cinema, early French avant-garde, Soviet montage filmmaking, and the French *Nouvelle Vague* are all brought together in this discussion. In the Introduction to the Politics of Representation, Nick Browne offers insight into the rereading of Eisenstein for the post-1968 "socio-filmic"

production for the Cahiers du cinéma group. He wrote that "Cahiers set about clarifying its historical and polemical co-ordinates by reference to Bazin and Eisenstein, and self-consciously began the process of shaping the passage from the old to the new socio-filmic order by the force of its critical intervention."[59] What was happening at the Cahiers in the late 1960s had already to some degree occurred in the films of the late 1950s and 1960s of the *Nouvelle Vague*, only that at this point, all of the notions of the tampering with the film langugage found a "science" of semiotics in order to articulate its theory. Browne further notes that "[t]he writing eclipsed traditional auteurism and assimilated for its own account the various strains of French structuralism—including that of the 'first semiotics'. In its integration and deployment of the larger framing discourses of psychoanalysis, Marxism and, more cautiously, deconstruction, Cahiers took up what is now recognizable as the privileged themes of post-structuralism—the critique of representation—premised on the distinctively Althusserian ideological critique" (5). It is this frame of highly theorized concepts of film production in culture within which the 1970s filmmaking will act and react. From this period certain films will tend toward more subversive (and manipulative) narratives such as Alain Robbe-Grillet's Glissements progressifs du plaisir (1974) or more political narratives such as Chantal Akerman's Jeanne Dielman (1975). Not all of the filmmakers discussed in the following chapters adhere to the Cahiers structuring theories of production, and this in itself creates yet another layer of resistance to yet another dominant ordering structure of post-1968 filmmaking created by the Cahiers editorial board.

Thus, in connection with my interest in the Cahiers' theoretical points of departure, my reasons for examining Eisenstein's influence on filmmaking theory and praxis and notions of patriarchy are two-fold. In the first place, his writings will play a key role in post-May 1968 explorations of dialectical filmmaking in Europe; and secondly, he sees patriarchal/hierarchical factors constituting early American filmmaking whose techniques

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[59] Nick Browne, ed. The Politics of Representation: Cahiers du Cinéma 1969-1972 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990) 1.

became the most widely used within the tradition of narrative cinema. The Cahiers du cinéma collected, translated and published writings of the Soviet montage school from February 1969 to January-February 1971, bringing theoretical discussions of film to the center of the journal's project. The Cahiers, in other words, advocated an appropriation of Soviet montage principles to the contemporary situation of post-1968 European filmmaking.

Looking at this and other theories of editing more generally, I would suggest that in any film, the director and crew control the visual and aural contiguity via filming and editing while the spectator doing the looking determines the meaning of the images and sounds. This concept, in various forms, can be traced back to some of the earliest writings on cinema theory and praxis. In V. I. Pudovkin's Film Technique (1925), considered one of the first theoretical treatises on filmmaking, Pudovkin comments frequently on the film in relation to the film spectator who is "...an ideal, perspicacious observer. And it is the director who makes him so."[60] In this remark, Pudovkin seems almost disdainful of the spectator or at least reluctant to admit to his/her viewing capabilities. But what is interesting about this statement is that Pudovkin and many of his colleagues believed that the director had the tools, even in early film production, to control the way the spectators observe the filmic event on the screen. This controlling process is based on shot distance, editing techniques, and with the advent of sound, music and dialogue. In the early Soviet film school of Lev Kuleshov, the actual filmmaking (not the cinematography), the juxtaposing of images in the editing process, was considered analogous to building with bricks or to the linking of interlocking rings like a chain.[61] Dating as far back as the late 1910s, we find

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[60] V. I. Pudovkin, Film Technique and Film Acting, trans. and ed. Ivor Montague (New York: Grove Press, 1975) 91. Pudovkin was one of the members of Lev Kuleshov's film school and student/apprentice on the editing project that is now called Kuleshov's experiments or the Kuleshov effect.

[61] Eisenstein, "The Cinematographic Principle and the Ideogram," Film Form, 36-37. He footnotes Lev Kuleshov's Iskusstvo Kino (Leningrad, 1929.) Eisenstein mentions the late night "theoretical debates" that he and Pudovkin engaged in over the difference between the building brick idea of montage and the collision

Kuleshov's experimentations dealing with the systemization of editing styles along with his early writing on editing and montage effects on spectators. At the same time in the United States, D. W. Griffith had already begun his film career at Biograph Studios[62] and was producing films using primarily crosscutting or parallel editing to create tension and suspense in the spectator while perfecting a system of editing, known now as continuity editing. However, in 1929, Eisenstein refutes this "building" or "linking" concept in "The Cinematographic Principle and the Ideogram," where he writes that editing, or *montage*, must function as "collision."[63] This collision is created from a tension or conflict within images or shots that have an oppositional relationship with the contiguous shots next to which they are arranged. As Eisenstein later posits, this idea of montage constituted the dialectical process in Soviet cinema.[64] This cinema of the 1920s and early 1930s, according to Eisenstein, functioned in opposition to the capitalist and patriarchal filmmaking of D.W. Griffith and the American filmmaking industry.

In "Dickens and Griffith, and the Film Today,"[65] written in 1944, Eisenstein argues that the American film tradition began from the 19th-century British novel and

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idea of montage: "[Pudovkin] loudly defends an understanding of montage as a *linkage* of pieces. Into a chain. Again, 'bricks.' Bricks, arranged in series to *expound* an idea" (37).

62 See Tom Gunning, D.W. Griffith and the Origins of American Narrative Film: The Early Years at Biograph (Urbana and Chicago: Univeristy of Illinois Press, 1991).

63 "I confronted [Pudovkin] with my viewpoint on montage as a *collision*. A view that from the collision of two given factors *arises* a concept" (Film Form 37).

64 The Soviet montage movement began in the early 1920s with Kuleshov's The Extraordinary Adventures of Mr. West in the Land of the Bolsheviks (1924) and The Death Ray (1925) which were both filmed by his class from the State Film School. The movement moved into the international filmmaking scene with the release of Eisenstein's Strike (1924) and Potemkin (1925). Until about 1933 these two filmmakers along with Pudovkin, Dziga Vertov, and Alexander Dovzhenko used the montage style as the founding principles in their filmmaking. For the theoretical writings of these filmmakers, see S. M. Eisenstein: Writings, Vol. 1, 1911-1934, trans. and ed. Richard Taylor (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1988); Lev Kuleshov, Kuleshov on Film, trans. and ed. Ronald Levaco (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974); V. I. Pudovkin, Film Technique and Film Acting (New York: Grove Press, 1960). See also Richard Taylor, Inside the Film Factory: New Approaches to Russian and Soviet Cinema (New York: Routledge, 1991) and The Politics of the Soviet Cinema: 1917-1929 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

65 Eisenstein, "Dickens, Griffith, and the Film Today," in Film Form, 195-255. All subsequent references to this work will be noted parenthetically in the text. Commentaries from the 1970s on Eisenstein's theory

American capitalism, and was further developed with D. W. Griffith's editing style and the explosion of Hollywood's dominance in filmmaking. As a young filmmaker Eisenstein was attracted and captivated by Griffith's style, and he too wanted to discover this system of "the most powerful affective factors" (204) in film. This editing system, according to Eisenstein, "the rise of which will be forever linked with the name of Griffith" (204), became the dominant editing system of all classical or traditional narrative films. Like another filmmaker and theorist of the 1920s, Germaine Dulac, Eisenstein saw two strong tendencies emerging in filmmaking; however he articulated these two directions to be linked exculsively to editing: toward a proliferation of continuity editing (American or Hollywood style) or toward ideological editing (Soviet montage). In this article, Eisenstein draws parallels between Griffith's early system of filmmaking and the tradition of the Victorian novel (from Charles Dickens) and the melodramas of vaudeville theatre. Eisenstein makes this connection by looking specifically at American culture and society and then at Griffith's style of film editing, especially where crosscutting or parallel editing was used. This kind of editing cut between simultaneous actions occurring in different places. These images were edited together usually to create tension or suspense. In criticizing bourgeois America and Griffith, Eisenstein juxtaposes "the abundance of small-town and patriarchal elements in American life and manners, morals and philosophy, the ideological horizon and rules of behavior in the middle strata of American culture" with the "Super-Dynamic America" (198) organized by and indicative of innovations and advances in technology. Parallel editing was seen by Eisenstein as reflecting this paradigm of the American capitalist and bourgeois project:

> The structure that is reflected in the concept of Griffith montage is the structure of bourgeois society. And he actually resembles Dickens's 'side of streaky, well-cured bacon;' in actuality (and this is no joke), he is woven of

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are varied: see Roland Barthes, "Le troisième sens: Notes de recherche sur quelques photogrammes de S. M. Eisenstein," Cahiers du cinéma 220-221 (mai-juin 1970): 12-19; Barthélémy Amengual, "Propos sur et autour de S. M. Eisenstein," Cinéma 74 185 (mars 1974): 78-95.

> irreconcilably alternating layers of 'white' and 'red'—rich and poor. And this society, perceived *only as a contrast between the haves and the have-nots*, is reflected in the consciousness of Griffith no deeper than the image of an intricate race between two parallel lines.... And, naturally, the montage concept of Griffith, as a primarily parallel montage, appears to be a copy of his dualistic picture of the world, running in two parallel lines of poor and rich towards some hypothetical 'reconciliation' where... the parallel lines would cross, that is, in the infinity, just as inaccessible as the 'reconciliation' (234).

Those same principles of hierarchy of the "haves and the have-nots," as Eisenstein pointed out, are imbricated in the structure of Griffith's filmmaking. Today, we would refer to the historical and filmic context in which Griffith created as historico-cultural production, that is, production of a culturally specific and particular geographic place and moment. Without using these exact terms, this seems to be what Eisenstein is addressing in his criticism of Griffith's film style. His critique of the Griffith-esque "*quantitative acculmulation*" seen in the crosscutting, for example, "remains on a level of *representation and objectivity*" that is inherent in a capitalist system (but that is not necessarily explicit in the narrative of the film), whereas, as Eisenstein argues, the Soviet montage is based on "*qualitative fusion*, flowing out of the process of *juxtaposition*... as a means before all else of revealing the *ideological conception*" (238-240), not simply reproducing (representing) the ideology as limitation. This is why Eisenstein ultimately felt that "montage imagery" as a "definite structure and system of thinking" is "derive[d] and has been derived only through collective consciousness," so that one "could not read the content of a shot without, before all else, having read its ideological nature" (245). By borrowing from Marx, Eisenstein insists on the fact that cinema follows *laws of process* and by extension is a means of

communication.[66] It is important to understand that for Eisenstein the "collective consciousness" appeared as "a reflection of a new (socialist) stage of human society and as a thinking result of ideal and philosophic education, inseparably connected with the social structure of that society" (245). And this concept of "new" thinking in society that is inseparable from the social fabric of that society is what became a significant foundation for the filmmakers who were influenced after May 1968 by this writing. The foundations of dialectical materialism, being already in place in the 1970s, and Eisenstein's particular application of Marxist principles, along with the undercurrent of anti-American sentiment in France during the Vietnam era through the 1970s, also made Eisenstein's writings more politically popular than they would have been directly following World War II when they were first published in Russian.

In opposition to Griffith, Eisenstein, whose early films also have an integrally important editing and montage style, places the emphasis not on editing as a narrative device but as an ideological one that creates signification within the interstices, that is, within the dialectical potential of every cut and splice between images. He further notes that film montage no longer could mean just producing effects in the spectator, such as the suspense created in crosscutting or parallel editing. It had to work toward "a means of communicating ideas" in the form of a special film langugage or what Eisenstein called "film speech" (245). Though much of Eisenstein's work was already known when his theoretical writings were published in the Cahiers du cinéma, French filmmakers wanted to re-assess the ideological production in film as posited in Eisenstein's theory of montage. They placed in their own editing style an ability to convey personal and political ideas specific to the post-May 1968 French culture. The form, or the way the images were put together, was just as important as the images themselves. By applying the "montage principles" of the 1920s to filmmaking practices, film was utilized for the dissemination of

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[66] This is in some ways similar to the semiotics of cinema which is founded on a system of signs and coded meanings that are themselves at the base of cultural communication.

ideology found in early Soviet cinema. After May '68 it was employed "to make cinema politically." Yet for all of its use in and against the name of ideology, it is also associated with the experimentation of such "high art" forms as Surrealist cinema, compilation films, and the avant-garde.[67] The avant-garde, in this case, refers to the use of cinema to achieve purely kinetic relationships between images or for nonnarrative and/or nonrepresentational sound and image visual productions.

The split from accessible (that is, accessible to mass consumption) to the high art consumption of the avant-garde began in the early period of film history. In France, for example, in the 1920s and 1930s the purely abstract cinema always coexisted and progressed along side the narrative films of French Realism, but they represented clearly two separate artistic forces. As early as 1927, Germaine Dulac, in her article "Les Esthétiques, Les Entraves: La Cinégraphie intégrale," commented on this division in filmmaking arising from these two aesthetic tendencies which were artistic expression on the one hand and entertainment value on the other.[68] By then, film was already organized into two basic forms. The art production that Dulac referred to as "la symphonie visuelle" [visual symphony] (43) and "le cinéma pur" [pure cinema] (49) was an avant-garde art-form associated with high art and the intellectual elite. The other form, the narrative cinema for the mainstream, made by "les premiers cinéastes qui crurent habile d'enfermer l'action cinégraphique dans une forme narrative..." appealed to popular or mass consumption (36).[69] Dulac formulates an early history of cinema beginning with the Arrivée du train (1895) made by the Frères Lumière on the one hand and the Impressionist or psychological

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[67] See Raymond Williams, "Base and superstructure," Problems in Materialism and Culture (London: Verso, 1980).

[68] Germaine Dulac, "Les Esthétiques, Les Entraves: La Cinégraphie intégrale," L'Art cinématographique, vol. 2 (Paris:Alcan, 1927) 43, 49. Subsequent references to this article will be noted in the body of the text. The English translation for long quotations are from Stuart Liebman, "The Aesthetics, the Obstacles: Integral Cinegraphie," in Framework 19 (1982): 6-9.

[69] "The first cineastes who thought it was clever to confine cinegraphic action within a narrative format..." ("The Aesthetics" 7).

filmmaking movement (in which both she and Louis Delluc among many others were participants) on the other. She concludes by praising Abel Gance's La Roue (1922) and the innovations in filmmaking style of Werner Krauss' The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (1919) where "the images and their juxtaposition" (45) take on greater importance through editing. Although she realizes that for economic reasons the gap between narrative and purely kinesthetic film is becoming greater, she still advocates for "the true cinema," or as she writes:

> Les films narratifs et réalistes peuvent user de la souplesse cinégraphique et poursuivre leur carrière. Mais que le public ne se méprenne pas: le cinéma ainsi considéré est un genre, mais non le cinéma véritable qui doit chercher son émotion dans l'art du mouvement des lignes et des formes.... Il me serait facile de dire: 'La force de l'argent seule arrête l'évolution cinégraphique.' Mais ceci n'est que fonction de cela et cela englobe le goût du public et son accoutumance à une manifestation d'art qui lui plaît ainsi.... Le cinéma, septième art, n'est pas la photographie de la vie réelle ou imaginée comme on a pu le croire jusqu'à ce jour. ("Les Esthétiques" 49-50).[70]

She herself notes the filmmaking ascendancy of the Americans, "les Américains furent Rois" [the Americans were Kings] (37-38), in the early period of cinema history in the 1910s, for their "harmonious juxtaposition" (38) by linking images together to strive for a perfect duplication of reality. But it is this *illusion* of reality that she feels is dangerous. According to Dulac, this game of illusions removes cinema from its own artistic *truth* by

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70 "Narrative and Realist films can make use of cinegraphic plasticity and continue along their chosen paths. The public, however, should not be misled: this is a mode of cinema but not the true cinema that must try to find its emotion through the artistic movement of lines and forms.... It would be easy for me to say: 'Only the power of money impedes the evolution of *cinégraphie*.' But this is only a function of that (the public's conception of the cinema), and *that* comprises the public's taste and its familiarity with an artistic mode that it likes the way it is.... Cinema, the seventh art, is not the photographing of real or imagined live as it has been believed to be up till now" ("The Aesthetics" 9).

fastening it onto the narrative traditions already established in literature and drama. She associates the ephemeral effect of the sound of a musical note played for a listener as analogous to the effect the image in cinema should have on the spectator. This comes from her understanding of the complex layers within the image and the arrangement of the images. In "Films visuels et anti-visuels" she writes: "Or, l'image peut être aussi complexe qu'une orchestration puisqu'elle peut se composer de mouvements combinés d'expression et de lumière."[71] Though her view, in "Films visuels," of an aesthetic approach to filmmaking might by our standards seem a bit odd, especially when she uses such expressions as a sense of "feeling the images" (35) or "inspiration... of the spiritual kind,"(36) her theoretical observations are formed by her insistance on the visual nature of film and its ability to express movement and rhythms by juxtaposing images.[72] This notion of juxtaposition and rhythm bring us close to a conceptualization of film form and structure; in her theoretical discussions, however, what remains unarticulated are the words *editing* or *montage* that, as I hope I have shown, are better understood in the context of their creation: in the Soviet montage school. Yet sole regard for the juxtaposition of the images and sounds does not take into consider what is being transmitted in the film medium itself, the subject that is being filmed, and ultimately what is being projected in movie theatres. Many filmmakers had already begun working against the cinematic techniques that informed the narrative style in the late 1950s and 1960s, and the alternative cinema of the 1970s continued in this use of oppositionality.

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[71] Germaine Dulac, "Films visuels et anti-visuels," Le Rouge et le noir (juillet 1928): 41. Translations are my own. "But the image can be as complex as an orchestration since it can be composed of combined movements of expression and light."

[72] In fact these two pages (35-36) of "Films visuels" might also seem rather unsettling in Dulac's insistence on "national sincerity," because she goes on further to suggest that perhaps "[p]our le bien du septième art ne faudrait-il pas nationaliser l'inspiration du film, laisser chaque race trouver son expression visuelle dans son propre fond?" [For the good of the seventh art, ought not the film's inspiration be nationalized, allowing each race to find its visual expression in its own depths?]

Documentary

This resistance to classical narrative can also be examined by the alternative cinema's use of documentary film techniques. It does this by examining the way in which the documentary film discourse has been understood or coded to show or reveal events. According to Cahiers critic, Louis Marcorelles, this is the kind of filmmaking that "gives us the tool needed to discover on the screen how things *really* happen [and how] the social fiction that underpins all our actions can be revealed." Marcorelles further sees these "actions" as "the drama we act out each day for society."[73] It is from this tradition that some of the alternative cinema will derive its use of "realism." This is not the realism of the classical narrative tradition, nor is it the "neo-realism" of post-war Italian cinema, but it is the aesthetic of the "authentic" in the *cinéma vérité* or *cinéma direct* of documentary filmmaking that will be interrogated, borrowed, and used. The second way, however, that the alternative cinema works in conjunction with the documentary is by concentrating on technology, on the camera, itself. In Jean-André Fieschi's terms the camera becomes a "*provocateur*, a stimulant" [and additionally] the camera "transform[s] its role by asserting its presence, by stressing the part it plays, by turning a technical obstacle into a pretext for revealing new and astonishing things."[74] In addition, Godard will espouse the filmmaking principles of Russian Formalist filmmaker and theorist, Dziga Vertov, forming with a number of other Cahiers critics, including Jean-Pierre Gorin, the *Groupe Dziga-Vertov*. Vertov's "compilation films," made of found footage or available footage combined with filmed shots of various sizes and angles and editing, superimpositions, dissolves, etc., produced meaning through filmic metaphors. For example, in The Man with a Movie

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[73] Louis Marcorelles, "The Leacock Experiment," Cahiers du Cinéma (février 1963) in Browne 264-270.

[74] Jean-André Fieschi, "Neo-neo-realism: *Bandits at Orgosolo*," Cahiers du Cinéma (mars 1963) in Browne 271-275. See also Alain Tanner's Le milieu du monde (1974) in which he introduces the spectators to the technical "part that the camera plays." He shows the film set, the camera, crane, and microphone boom intercut with the arrival of the main character, Adriana, to the village, a peat field, and a political discussion, in a café, regarding Paul (the other main character) and the upcoming elections.

Camera (1929), when he superimposes an image of an eye over the lens of a camera, we understand the connection he is making between the camera lens functioning as an eye on the world. By extension, since the camera is an apparatus through which the images are mediated to the cinematographer, this can also be understood as a comment on our reliance on machines, through which the world is mediated to us. It is this double or meta-characteristic of Vertov's work, of the "Kino-eye," that intrigued Godard: "Kino-eye is the overcoming of time, a visual bond between chronologically separated phenomena. Kino-Eye is concentration and decomposition of time. Kino-Eye is the opportunity to see the process of life in any chronological order and at any speed."[75] Not surprisingly Godard's own film in 1967 was entitled Caméra-oeil. It is a documentary made with Chris Marker's production company SLON, and was featured as part of the series of short documentaries edited together and entitled Loin du Viêt-nam (1967). Vertov's concern was in the use of everyday life for the action of his films. Vertov scorned melodrama and professionally acted performances; he preferred the subject of the quotidian. He found it more exciting, more truthful, and yet he used editing to manipulate his film's time and space because that was just as crucial to reveal everyday life to the viewer. As the term "compilation" suggests, his film The Man with a Movie Camera was a composite portrait of 1920s Soviet society in the city, at work, at the beach, and in various other locations. The on-site location shooting, in the streets, in homes, in a car are some of the elements we see used by Godard, and later by Akerman, Alain Tanner, and Varda.

These are just a few of the ways in which the "alternative" always invokes, without denying, that it has a relationship to theory and to these narrative and documentary film practices. Borrowing the implements of this mainstream in theory and practice by interrogating its structural and discursive elements is one way in which the alternative cinema could raid the coffers of the existing structures and discourses in place. Its practice

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[75] Dziga Vertov, "The Vertov Papers," trans. Marco Carynnyk Film Comment 8.1 (Spring 1972): 48. See also John Berger, Ways of Seeing (British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin Books, 1972) 17-20.

of subversion by inclusion, though different for each filmmaker, is also a way in which this cinema was made in the margins of cultural production.

What did working in/at this margin give to the alternative cinema? Was it "more open to chance," as Bonitzer argues (331)? Was it the feeling of freedom to produce outside the normal channels of the film industry? Perhaps. But, what I suggest, here, is that this kind of filmmaking allowed for a political film production in "an aesthetic sense." These interventions must also be taken up from a feminist perspective as well. Teresa de Lauretis in Technologies of Gender does in fact ask these questions of this alternative cinema when she writes that

> "for example, if we say that certain discourses and practices, even though marginal with regard to institutions, but nonetheless disruptive and oppositional [...] do have the power to 'implant' new objects and modes of knowledge in individual subjects, does it follow that these oppositional discourses or counter-practices (as Claire Johnston called women's cinema in the early 1970s 'counter-cinema') can become dominant or hegemonic? And if so how? Or need they not become dominant in order for social relations to change?" (17)

She asks the profound question of whether or not alternative cinema, far from the crowd-pleasing and profit-making mainstream blockbuster, is a viable agent in bringing about social change. Yet, especially for feminist filmmaking practices of the 1970s, the alternative practices provided for a way to address political agency that resisted appropriation by (and back into) the mainstream. The only way any cinema can produce resistance, therefore, is through the historical, political, cultural processing of the power structure in which it circulates without being swayed into a production of hegemonic discourse.[76]

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[76] A radical Left film practice that is inflexible can be just as dogmatic as the hegemonic discourse on the Right. It may not reproduce the same images, combinations of images, or narratives as the mainstream Right, but the rigidity of its discourse would produce the same intolerance and prejudice in its structure.

Thus we come back to politics, to a politics of resistance, but one that is linked to the use of post-structuralism, psychoanalysis, and semiotics in film praxis. Griselda Pollock, in Vision and Difference, sees the connection between these theoretical concerns in combination with the theory of Bertolt Brecht as "providing a bridge between political engagement and a commitment to develop artistic strategies which could have a political effectivity within the sphere of culture" (162). Jean Narboni of the Cahiers du cinéma, in "Brecht et le cinéma," provides the "schéma de démontage" that Brecht used in 1930 in his lawsuit against Nero-Films for an adaptation of his L'opéra de Quat'sous [The Three Penny Opera].[77] It shows the "double mechanism of distortion and repression that a subversive work goes through" as it is presented to, read by, or projected for a public (56). The "schéma" details the way a work circulates from its author to the text and from the text to its subject down to the level of market value. Yet Brecht's theory of distantiation was most useful for these filmmakers who could constitute "dis-identificatory practices" for their spectators so that the viewers would be able to distinguish the illusion from reality, thus not getting passively caught up in the system of identification or suture. "For Brecht the viewer was to become an active participant in the production of meanings across an event which was recognized as representation but also as referring to and shaping understanding of contemporary social reality" (Vision 162). According to Stephen Heath, in "Brecht and a Revolutionary Cinema," Brechtian distantiation allows the spectator to become an active agent in producing culture. In cinema, therefore, viewing becomes an act of production by breaking down the traditional role of the spectator as consumer of

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[77] Narboni is quoting from Brecht's "Sur le cinéma," Ecrits sur l'art et la littérature (Paris: Editions de l'Arche, 1970). In Screen see Stephen Heath, "Brecht and a Revolutionary Cinema," Screen 15.2 (1974): 24-109. See also "Transcript of the Edinburgh Film Festival Brecht Event," Screen 16.4 (1975/6); Stephen Heath, "From Brecht to Film: Theses, Problems," Screen 16.4 (1975/6); Claire Johnston and Paul Willemen "Brecht in Britain: the Independent Political Film (on The Nightcleaners)" Screen 16.4 (1975-6); Sylvia Harvey, "Whose Brecht? Memories for the Eighties," Screen 23.1(1982): 45-59; Roland Barthes, "Diderot, Brecht, Eisenstein," Cinéma: Theorie, lectures, ed. Dominique Noguez (Paris: Klincksieck, 1973); rpt. in Screen 15. 2 (Summer 1974); in Image/Music/Text, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977).

information (39). Here the spectator is responsible for creating. Brecht's distantiation insists on audience pleasure, but notions of pleasure in cinema, especially in narrative cinema, are still problematic for feminists. Yet, as feminist artist Mary Kelly reveals, the nature of this pleasure is the kind that "should engage the viewer, because there is no point at which it can become a deconstructed critical engagement if the viewer is not first--immediately and affectively--drawn into the work."[78] But how are spectators drawn into a text except by recognition of discourse and structures? Ultimately, the goal of distantiation is a critique of realist representation while at the same time a device for a different form of realism that actively involved the spectator. This is the kind of experimentation with realism that we see in the alternative cinema of Akerman and Tanner.

Feminism in / on Film

> ... le plaisir des femmes est révolutionnaire.
> Françoise Flamant [79]

The general criticism of mis-representation of female bodies in films (though an early project for the feminist critics) was no longer a priority in film theory, but rather it was looking at systems and their underlying mechanism that produce representations.[80] Within the context of 1970s film theory, Teresa de Lauretis points out, in Technologies of Gender, that feminist film theorists were aware of and writing on the sexualization and fetishization of women's images on screen.[81] According to de Lauretis, these feminist

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[78] Based on a conversation with Paul Smith in Parachute 1982 (26) reprinted in Sense and Sensibility in Feminist Art Practice (Nottingham Midland Group, 1982), no pagination; rpt in Vision and Difference 180.

[79] Françoise Flamant, "Des femmes organisent un festival," Revue du cinéma 283 (avril 1974): 70.

[80] See Joan Mellen, Women and Their Sexuality in the New Film (New York: Laurel Edition, 1973). For the history of feminist critical theories of film see "Introduction: Critical Methodology," Issues in Feminist Film Criticism, ed. Patricia Erens (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990) 2-9.

[81] Claire Johnston, "Women's Cinema as Counter-Cinema," Notes on Women's Cinema ed. Claire Johnston (London: Society for Education in Film and Television (SEFT), 1974; Joan Mellen, Women and Their Sexuality in the New Film (New York: Horizon Press, 1973); Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and

theorists "had been developing both an account and a critique of the psycho-social, aesthetic, and philosophical discourses that underlie the representation of the female body as the primary site of sexuality and visual pleasure" (13). As we have seen in the work of Althusser and Foucault, these "discourses" and the "sites of pleasure" must imply more than just narratives and spectators. They call forth the entire system of culture and ideological underpinnings within it. In "Women's Cinema as Counter-Cinema," Claire Johnston understands that the relationship between camera and film and spectator is intimately linked to the question of ideology: "What the camera grasps," she writes, "is the 'natural' world of the dominant ideology" (28). This claim of dominant ideology as bourgeois and patriarchal is echoed in the work of French sociologist, Marie Antonietta Macciocchi, in De la France: "La France est entièrement structurée sur le modèle bourgeois, et les femmes y sont le noeud de beaucoup de contradictions, ce qui apparaît clairement quand elles essaient d'exprimer ce qu'elles veulent" [France is entirely structured on the bourgeois model, and women are the knot of many contraditions in it, which becomes clear once they try to express what they want] (23). But as Johnston notes it is not simply enough to say what feminists want.[82] She advocates for a shift in the paradigm. She writes that "new meanings have to be created by disrupting the fabric of the male

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Narrative Cinema," Screen 16.3 (August 1975): 6-18. See also the "Feminist Film Criticism: An Introduction," in Re-Vision: Essays in Feminist Film Criticism ed. Mary Ann Doane, Patricia Mellencamp, and Linda Williams (Frederick, MD: University Publications of America, Inc. and The American Film Institute, 1984) 1-17, as well as Christine Gledhill's "Developments in Feminist Film Criticism," 18-48 and Judith Mayne's "Feminist Film Theory and Criticism," 81-100; Annette Kuhn, Women's Pictures: Feminism and Cinema (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982). Early studies on women's and feminist cinema in the United States placed a strong emphasis on documentary filmmaking and pedagogy. See Jan Rosenberg, Women's Reflections: The Feminist Film Movement (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1983); Jeanne Betancourt, Women in Focus (Dayton, Ohio: Pflaum Publishing, 1974); Bonnie Dawson, Women's Films in Print (San Francisco: Booklegger Press, 1975); Sharon Smith, Women Who Make Movies (New York: Hopkinson and Blake, 1975).

82 Coline Serreau's first film Mais qu'est-ce qu'elles veulent? (1977) addresses this issue in a series of interviews with women. In addition, Françoise Audé, in "Images de la femme dans le cinéma français de 1958 à 1976," Cinéma, service public, ed. Olivier Barrot, Jean-Pierre Jeancolas, and Gérard Lefèvre (Paris: Maspero, 1977), tries to enumerate a feminist aesthetic based on what feminist filmmakers no longer want to put in their films. Her list of the "stéréotype féminin" of traditional cinema is just the beginning. Her work is based on Anne-Marie Rocheblave-Spenlé research which is published in La Notion de rôle en psychologie sociale (Paris: PUF, 1969) and Les Rôles masculin et féminin (Bruxelles-Paris: Editions universitaires, 1971).

bourgeois cinema with the text of the film" (29). Although Johnston does not offer any details of the "text" *per se* I understand it to mean structures and discourses of film, not only a change in the "story" of women. In 1975, Laura Mulvey, in "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," offered a way to talk about filmic representation in its fundamentally patriarchal (and Western) paradigm, which places woman at the center of representational arts.[83] Based on her readings of Freud's and "Three Essays on Sexuality," Mulvey wrote that, "...the cinema poses questions of the ways the unconscious (formed by the dominant order) structures ways of seeing and pleasure in looking"(15). This concept of the "unconscious" in and of the patriarchal order, as understood by Mulvey, contained what she articulated as the "male gaze"—the who-is-doing-the-looking of both directors and spectators—that determines meaning. She formulates this active male gaze by underscoring that "the actual image of woman as (passive) raw material for the (active) gaze of man..."(25) and "the function of woman in forming the patriarchal order... is bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning"(15). She recognizes that the mainstream narrative cinema effectively upheld the male gaze as the only possible site of pleasure. Viviane Forrester, in "Le regard des femmes," argues that this gaze cannot be defined as a quality of "male" but as a process of the hierarchy inherent in cinema and in society (22). I would say, however, that her use of the term "male" means something much more pervasive than a gender construction. It is an attitude that reflects the dominant patriarchal ideology that is in place in Western society, an attitude of a spectator that can be called "in ideology." Though now much has been written on Mulvey's terms and findings (and she herself has gone on to re-examine and re-formulate these notions), what she did was open up the use of psychoanalysis (referring to both narcissism and scopophilia in pleasurable looking practices) for discussions of how film works in the reception of images and sounds by

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83 Claudine Serre further argues that it is not just at the center of the representational arts that the woman and especially her sexuality are placed, it is also in the press and especially in the "woman's magazine" (37). "Les femmes du cinéma et la presse féminine," La revue du cinéma 283 (avril 1974): 37-41.

spectators and in the coding of Hollywood production in the patriarchal order ("Afterthoughts" 29). This use of psychoanalysis ties her work to that of the French Feminist thought of the 1970s. As the popular women's movement of the early 1970s developed in conjunction with a questioning of the representation of women in cinema, many feminist filmmakers and theorists attempted to address female subjectivity and agency in their films and work.[84] With the introduction of psychoanalysis to semiotics, the critical, theoretical, and methodological stage is set for the beginning of feminist film theory of the 1980s. Mulvey's article is an important feminist marker because the patriarchal (director/spectator) *gaze* is still considered (though with much contention) the dominant appropriating gaze in cinema.

Understanding the reproduction of a patriarchal system or the representation of hegemony in traditionally constructed films is not part of the average movie-goer's film experience, and filmmakers know that few spectators are aware (or want to be aware) of what is represented to them on screen. As many theorists have pointed out, there is a psychological attraction to viewing films that maintain the dominant ideological systems of culture and suppress difference and change.[85] French film critic Françoise Audé, in "Images de la femme," is, on the other hand, extremely generous with the spectators' ability to think critically about what is in front of them. She says that spectators "interrogate" the multiple meanings of the images, "both the primary and secondary, the explicit and the implicit, the *signifié* and the *signifiant*" (115). In classical narrative cinema,

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84 These filmmakers include Chantal Akerman, Marguerite Duras, Valie Export, Nelly Kaplan, Yvonne Rainer, Helke Sander, Agnès Varda, and later Lizzie Borden, Jutta Brückner, Julie Dash, Su Friedrich, Bette Gordon, Marlene Gorris, Sally Potter, Trinh T. Minh-Ha. In the beginning of the 1980s Mary Ann Doane further notes the crisis of writing on "woman as spectacle" as opposed to "woman as spectator" and puts psychoanalysis to further use by calling into question the structures of seeing in "Misrecognition and Identity," Ciné-Tracts 3.3 (Fall 1980): 25-31. In contemporary film studies, Jürgen Habermas's notion of the "public sphere" has proven to be useful for a historical approach to spectatorship. See Miriam Hansen, "Early Cinema and Late Cinema: Transformations of the Public Sphere," in Viewing Positions: Ways of Seeing Film, ed. Linda Williams (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995) 134-154.

85 See Stephen Heath, "Narrative Space," Screen 17.3 (Autumn 1976): 19-75 and Colin MacCabe, "Theory and Film: Principles of Realism and Pleasure," Screen 17. 3 (Autumn 1976): 2-18.

the spectator's gaze or act of looking is complicitous with the camera and therefore with the filmmaker's. Yet, at the same time, the spectator's experience of identification with the main screen actor complicates the first relationship established with the camera. A filmic gaze begins with a binary construction, one of directorial control and the other of "spectatorial" creation, but this does not sum up some tidy equation that equals "the gaze." The subtext for the feminist practices in the alternative cinema, I would argue, stems from anything but a monolithic "gaze." Rather, it is more the development of a complex relationship to power and the mainstream. It is a product of post-'68 radical anti-establishment sentiment, the growing women's movement in Europe, the expanding feminist discourse in both the academic and popular sectors, and most importantly the post-structural experimentation in film language as well as the developing field of film theory and criticism.[86] Through these various venues, theories and practices, we can begin to think of the gaze as always a part of the socially constructed and ideologically constructed space in which it is put into circulation. Therefore, spectators derive meaning, by way of the gaze, from these represented images and their juxtaposition in the editing, and from the underlying ideology of society *and* of the cultural production itself. Mulvey's work exposed the levels of interpretation necessary to further analyze film in society, and further

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[86] Jean-Luc Godard was one of the first filmmakers to experiment with many of the post-structuralist ideas circulating after 1968. He studied the function of the basic filmic elements—the image and sound and their juxtaposition in the editing process—in his 1969 "film experiment" entitled Le gai savoir /Joyful Knowledge, made for French television. By examining the historical elements in Godard's Le gai savoir we recognize immediately that he has taken a political stand with this film because he uses the historical events as a part of his film discourse. This is not a documentary about May '68, nor does it propose to be one, but it is a politically Left film. How did Godard make sure we understood his politics? Besides the obvious political message given by the voice-over, there is a shift occuring in the filmmaking itself in a number of ways. Godard uses documentary images and sounds to examine film's relationship to the history and juxtaposes them in the editing to the narrative of the young revolutionaries who indicate, though only through dialogue, that they are participating in the revolutionary actvities of May. Simultaneously, the romantic notion of revolution is challenged by the reappearance of soldiers, wounded children, and the world's Communist leaders, and the sounds of screams, crowds, and explosions. The underlying messages of the corruption of images and sounds by capitalism for profit and the imperialist tendencies of the West are inserted throughout in the voice-over, images, and dialogue of the revolutionaries. The film not only gives us these messages, but tells us that we are receiving them because of film language, like the film language used in the very film being viewed. It is this film's practice of auto-critique that functions at the same time as a mechanism of dissemination of information telling the spectator to be just as self-aware and self-critical of the images proposed to them.

points out that only an "alternative cinema," keeping in mind the Brechtian model of making the spectator active, could critically engage all of these forces at work on it and give pleasure.[87] Tom Gunning refers to this engagement as "an understanding of film in relation to social and ideological history [that] can be seen as a movement from the filmic discourse of an individual text to the economic or ideological discourse that penetrates it."[88] This interconnectedness of form and ideology seeps into the fabric of all cultural production. Representation, and especially cinematic representation, therefore, must be understood in its role as a cultural practice in that it stands in, not for reality, but for the point of view from which meanings can be understood or consumed. It is not merely a reflection, because by using the term *point of view* it refers directly to a mediated re-production that is highly coded and constructed in opposition to its corresponding referent in reality. If we see representation as a cultural practice, then it can also be discussed in terms of ideology, ideology being what Griselda Pollock determined as the "systematic ordering of a hierarchy of meanings and a setting in place of positions for the assimilation of those meanings."[89] In art practices, feminist materialism produces and "recognizes a textual politics," which according to Mary Kelly, is "an interrogation of representation as a social site of ideological activity" (Vision 161). The problematic power of the representations and their role in our perception of the filmic world are more deeply embedded than we as viewers would admit to, since both cultural practices and ideology produce cinema (in the most theoretical sense of the term "produce").

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[87] Julia Kristéva in "Ellipsis on Dread and the Specular Seduction," Wide Angle 3.3 (1979): 42-47, notes that "it was probably necessary that specular fascination arrive at its peak of perfection in the cinema, in that both its dread and its seduction might break out in laughter and in distantiation. Without this demystification, the cinema would be nothing but another Church" (47). This article was originally published as "Ellipse sur la frayeur et la séduction spéculaire" in Communications 23 (1975).

[88] Tom Gunning, D.W. Griffith and the Origins of American Narrative Film: The Early Years at Biograph (Urbana and Chicago: Univeristy of Illinois Press, 1991) 11.

[89] Griselda Pollock, Vision and Difference (London: Routledge, 1988) 7. This is part of her discussion on an elaboration of theories of representation in relation to Marxist positions of ideology.

Contemporary feminist film studies are more critical of the notion of one feminist aesthetic. In fact, one of the unavoidable issues raised in any feminist work on cinema is that not all films made by women fall into the paradigms of one particular aesthetic, nor for that matter do all films made by men perpetuate partriarchal culture. In the first place, the dominant patriarchal system—in terms of film aesthetics and history, the classical film narrative—is far from always being homogeneous itself. Pollock, for one, does not address feminist aesthetics but prefers the term "feminist interventions" because of its obvious political overtones. She sees feminist intervention as a force of empowerment that will bring "art and its institutions on a continuum with other economic, social, and ideological practices" (161). Forrester sees the importance of feminist production as a commentary on the previous lack of all cinema of difference, not simply feminist, because without the difference of feminist cinema, this lack takes on a larger social and political significance of exclusion. This lack engenders, in her words, "pas simplement un vide, mais qui pervertit, qui altère, annule toute proposition" [not simply a void, but perverts, alters, and annuls all propositions] (22). Teresa de Lauretis's work in both Alice Doesn't and in Technologies of Gender recognizes the importance of the position of feminist work in this process of creation as "a personal-political consciousness of gender as an ideological construct which defines the social subject" (Technologies 114). This problematized space of being inside and outside ideology is an issue for all of the alternative cinema of the 1970s. It is especially complicated for feminist filmmakers who realize that the "social subject" is by default a "political subject" in feminism. That is, as de Lauretis argues, the subject, "unlike Althusser's or Jameson's or Eco's, is not either 'in ideology' or outside ideology (e.g., in science [Foucault]), but rather is at once inside and outside the ideology of gender" (114). How, then, do we account for the feminist, and in this case the alternative cinema's, relation to this ambiguous position *vis à vis* desire and fantasy? This is especially important when considering how power, violence, and sexuality are represented in the alternative cinema. Constance Penley has said that we must account for

feminist filmmakers' "relation to their own aggressivity (not just that which comes from outside) and their complicity with desire (both their own and that of others) that cannot be described as politically correct," or as I might say, "inside" feminism.[90] Forrester argues that operating within this "fault zone" of inside and outside there still must be a way for feminists to represent "leurs propres fantasmes" [their own fantasies] (22), but does not propose a method, except that it be nonhierarchical. Both Kelly and Pollock wonder how to manage desire and pleasure, fuel fantasies, and continue to situate the viewer in feminist artwork (Vision 161).[91] These are some of the various problems of representation that the alternative cinema will address, but it will address this at the level of the structure and discourse of cinema, especially in the cinema of Akerman, Robbe-Grillet, and Godard.

All of the theoretical strategies that came to be looked at as powerful tools of analysis such as psychoanalytic inquiry, semiotics, and historical materialism in the 1970s had found in the alternative polemic a political use. The filmmakers involved in the early 1970s cinema implemented what Pollock refers to as "strategies for displacing the spectator from identifying with the illusory fictional worlds offered in art, literature, and film disrupting the 'dance of ideology' which engages us on behalf of oppressive regimes of class, sexist, heterosexist, and racist classifications and placements" (158). Through a Brechtian approach to representational art, she can see the relationship historically and practically unfolding in this era. The 1970s alternative film politics and practice can only truly be one of rupture.

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[90] Constance Penley, The Future of an Illusion: Film, Feminism, and Psychoanalysis (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989) xiv.

[91] For further commentary on the issue of desire see Mary Kelly, "Desiring images/imaging desire," Wedge 6 (1984), in a slightly modified form; Kelly's article is also in Desire: ICA Documents (London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1984); Joanne Isaak, "Women the Ruin of Representation," Afterimage 12.9 (1985); Visibly Female, ed. Hilary Robinson (London: Camden Press, 1987); and for a historical approach to this issue see Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, Framing Feminism: Art and the Women's Movement 1970-1985 (London: Pandora Press, 1987).

By addressing the concepts of power and authority and, more importantly, the creation of images in society, these filmmakers used experimental narratives, editing, and experimental use of sound and image to continue to question the power that cinema has to transmit ideology within and of culture. Yet these films of the 1970s themselves defy any monolithic determination. In many cases, these filmmakers reconstructed and reproduced their own political agendas and generated new and/or controversial concepts of gender representation and power relations within film discourse. In other words, they gave voice and image to previously disenfranchized characters; they constructed fragmented or cyclical narratives in opposition to strictly linear narratives; and finally, they changed the modes of communication, including film length, framing and duration of shots, sound, and editing in order to best challenge the rules—or the *status quo* —of the mainstream. The political atmosphere, generating notions of refusal of power and authority in post-1968 Europe, found its way into the structure and narrative of many films, although, to a large degree, the alternative cinema did not reproduce these images and sounds of the '68 events but rather created within film language disruptive and tactically fluid or shifting modes of discourse. That is, by decentering and, of course, by working within the structure and discourse of the existing film culture, this cinema irrevocably problematized the relation of perception to reality. It used interrogation in praxis as political intervention and produced non-hierarchical subversion by inclusion. Furthermore, to the extent that this alternative cinema is composed of shifts and displacements, it disrupted the idealism and illusionism that supports film realism. In fact, I would say that 'realism' could no longer function as a controlling force in any political or alternative cinema after 1968.

In the following chapters, I will analyze some films that combine narrative and documentary filmmaking and that theoretically and practically reinforce their opposition to dominant ideological forms in cinema. I will look first at a comparison from the *Nouvelle Vague* to the alternative cinema to point out some of the similarities and the differences

between the two practices. After this I will turn to Jean-Luc Godard's Le gai savoir (1969), which specifically addresses May' 68 and theoretically exposes how one "makes films politically." After this, I will consider the feminist "compilation" work of Agnès Varda in L'une chante, l'autre pas (1977) and two other forms of "compilation" narratives, Le milieu du monde (Alain Tanner, 1974) and Numéro Deux (Jean-Luc Godard, Anne-Marie Miéville, 1974), which all propose changes in filmic discourse and/or narrative by focusing on the construction of film as a part of the narrative. In varying forms and to varying degrees these filmmakers all advocated the use of film as social and political intervention. At the same time we will look at the unusual and lengthy narrative in Céline et Julie vont en bateau (Jacques Rivette, 1974). In this film, two women (Céline and Julie) alternately suck on a candy and are mysteriously projected into another fictional world of two Henry James narratives.[92] It is also interesting to note that at the level of production, the narrative is also examined, as the main actresses, Dominique Labourier and Juliet Berto along with Marie-France Pisier, are credited with the film's scenario, which was often *en train de se faire* as seen in the frequent use improvisation in their dialogues and actions added to the original framework of the scenario. Rivette borrows and includes narrative structures from other sources than cinema. Rivette moves, as Tzvetan Todorov puts it, "from one discourse to another, from the text to the text," and yet again to another text. [93]

For the second section, I analyze two films, Je tu il elle (Chantal Akerman, 1974; released 1976) and Alain Robbe-Grillet's film Glissements progressifs du plaisir (1974), that concentrate on displacing narrative expectations and interrogating narrative structure. In some cases, the jamming of expectations and the tampering with film language can imply a deliberate thwarting of normative spectatorial pleasure while using the narrative to

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[92] The other narrative is based on the Henry James short story "The Romance of Certain Old Clothes" and on the novel The Other House, which was originally written by James as a play.

[93] Todorov, Introduction to Poetics, trans. Richard Howard (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981) 60-61.

construct and interrogate subjectivities as in Akerman's film, or to deconstruct and interrogate ideologies in Robbe-Grillet's film. Both films disrupt viewers' expectations and challenge the unconscious of patriarchy in their filmic discourse by using cyclical or circuitous narrative structures. This continuing exploration of the nonlinear narrative also, in Glissements progressifs du plaisir (1974), manifests itself for example in the detective's final statement: "tout est à recommencer" [everything must start over again]. Both films, though from completely different points of view, critically engage the structures of power, violence, and sexuality in opposition to the mainstream cinema.

In the final section I will discuss the nonconventional narrative and disruptive, yet inclusive, film discourse of Jeanne Dielman, 23 Quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles (Chantal Akerman, 1975). This film is constructed with nonhierarchical editing with an emphasis on long takes. The disruption of spectatorial pleasure also occurs as this film confounds stable paradigms of cause and effect with its narratives. Akerman understands how conventional cinematic language uses tropes and cultural signifiers in its editing in order to be subordinate to the progression of the linear narrative; but by refusing to work within that discourse of editing she "enregisters" her own system. This unusual technique of subversion by inclusion (including images that would normally be cut to preserve the condensed time in continuity editing) decenters the narrative to the margins of conventional cinema. Through the "minimalist" economy of the shot she formulates a new narrative structure based on the time of action as story, not on the editing of action for the story.

Chapter 2

Raid or Reference

If I were able to start this chapter like a film I would probably use a split screen with Godard's Le gai savoir (1969) on one side and, on the other, the last five minutes of his Pierrot le fou (1965) and Akerman's Saute ma ville (1968) with black leader in between, with the soundtrack from all three films playing simultaneously. Unfortunately, simultaneity in film history can only be rendered linearly in writing.[1] I think above all it would be a cacophonous experience and most likely give the spectators a headache. But the point I am trying to make is that in a traditional view of history, linear chronology plays a major role in the way that we analyze and interpret events. With film, the situation is a bit different. Linearity is at the center of the narrative process; and yet because of film's unique spatio-temporal features it can suppress and surpass time and space through the act of editing. It is in this ability to manipulate time and space within its structure that a shifting must occur. In order to produce a structurally political cinema of resistance to the mainstream, the discourse of cinema—the shots, angles, sounds, music, genre, and so forth—must also be shifted. However, before we arrive at the shifting structure and discourse of 1970s alternative cinema, we must pass through the end of the Godardian *Nouvelle Vague*, the first resonances of a feminist film practice (if one seeks to label the "first" film of French feminist cinema, I would indicate Varda's Cléo de 5 à 7), and a cinematic and theoretical approach to a political film praxis and theory. The use of *interrogation in praxis* and *subversion by inclusion* in the 1970s cinema is possible because of the interconnecting and overlapping histories of cinema, literature, philosophy, societal events. As I said above these two practices represent the ways in which the "alternative"

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[1] Godard's Histoire(s) du cinéma which are labelled 1A, 1B and 2A, 2B, etc. try to render nonlinear the overlapping histories of cinema. Histoire(s) du cinéma were produced on videotape by Gaumont. The first two parts (actually four parts) were made in 1994.

always invokes, without denying, that it has a relationship to conventional film structures and discourse, and especially to the mainstream, but also to events and ideas that circulate in the society. When the alternative cinema performs an interrogation in praxis and intervenes in the mainstream culture by becoming itself a part of the commercial distribution (which does not necessarily mean it has widespread appeal or a popular following), this also must be understood to be a political act of intervention. The same thing is true when the alternative cinema borrows from previous films or from the "history of ideas." The inclusion of those elements which may consist of a raid or a "friendly reference" can be used to subvert and change the way that the original will then be interpreted. This is particularly complicated in cinema. There are no footnotes on the bottom of the page to indicate where the ideas or images come from. The alternative cinema therefore must acknowledge, even if by default, that its best audiences are film literate and "history" literate spectators.

My split screen then will begin with an example of a raid on the *Nouvelle Vague*. I have decided to use an example first of Akerman's raid in Saute ma ville on Godard's Pierrot le fou before looking at Godard's Le gai savoir, because in fact Akerman's film uses a historical edge when questioning and interrogating the structures and discourse of the *Nouvelle Vague* whereas Godard's Le gai savoir not only comments on history but uses images and sounds from May '68 to create his "film experiment." His work in theoretical filmmaking will influence later Akerman films as well as the majority of filmmakers of the 1970s. Therefore, in the second part, I will look at Le gai savoir and some of its theoretical foundations in use of image and sound. After this, I will continue with a general overview of the early 1970s collective feminist filmmaking in France, and situate within it some of the feminist cinema of Marguerite Duras, Nathalie Granger (1972), and Agnès Varda L'une chante l'autre pas (1975, released 1977), while reserving discussion of Chantal Akerman's films Je tu il elle (1974, released 1976) and Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles (1975) for separate chapters. Included in

this chapter are some aspects of Godard and Anne-Marie Miéville's "domestic" film, Numéro Deux (1975), and Jacques Rivette's Céline et Julie vont en bateau (1974) as well as Alain Tanner's Le milieu du monde (1974). Alain Robbe-Grillet's film Glissements progressifs du plaisir (1974) will be addressed in a separate chapter. I am most concerned here with the ways in which these filmmakers use both interrogation in praxis and subversion by inclusion. I will concentrate on particular scenes or sections of the films in order to see to what extent they question the previous theory and filmmaking and try to modify it by posing the same questions of themselves and manipulate the mainstream in their films to produce resistance to it.

Raiding Godard

> Rabelais' Panurge, for once waxing lyrical, saw in this sort of debt the index of a universal solidarity. Every "proper" place is altered by the mark others have left on it.
>
> Michel de Certeau[2]

Godard was the greatest recent proponent of changing the editing structure in film. Borrowing from various influences and directors, he creates his editing style. He has acknowledged and changed Eisenstein's dialectical editing, Hollywood's continuity editing, and Bazin's theory of *mise-en-scène*. In questioning the way the film's narrative is put together he disrupts the continuity of the traditional cause and effect relationship of the scenes. But at the same time Pierrot le fou (1965) is a "very" narrative film. It is based on a pulp fiction novel, entitled Obsession, by American writer Lionel White; it also uses, while parodying, standard tropes and figures of film genres of the musical, gangster film, and road trip or adventure story, and conventional elements of the nineteenth-century romantic hero, the misunderstood man reminiscent of Benjamin Constant's Adolphe or a cross

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[2] Michel de Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life, trans. Steven F. Randall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984) 44.

between Stendhal's Julien Sorel (Le Rouge et le noir) and Flaubert's Frédéric Moreau (L'éducation sentimentale.) Pierrot in many ways is still caught up in storytelling and the classical narrative structure of the novel tradition, as is the character Ferdinand. Laura Mulvey in "J. L. Godard: Images of Women and Sexuality" writes that "escape from the confines of the home, the advertising language of his elegant wife and friends, lies for Ferdinand in the world of fantasy: nineteenth-century romanticism or twentieth-century popular culture" (57). Ferdinand (Jean-Paul Belmondo) is as caught as the narrative with romantic tendencies. And as she further points out these varying cultures, classical and popular, high art and low art, are some of the sources of contradictions that Godard is struggling with. Yet the mixing of genre codes is Godard's way of recognizing and interrogating these practices from which he cannot entirely disassociate his work. It is in his editing processes that we acknowledge these conflicting elements. The jump cut shows the discontinuity within a shot (in fact, what would normally be one shot becomes a sequence of shots, once the film is cut and some footage is removed to create the jump cut) whereas in Pierrot le fou Godard shuffles the narrative sequencing of a scene or scenes so that there is a discontinuous effect on the linear progression of the action in the scenes. In this case it is the events of an escape after a murder that Godard will formally rearrange. Ferdinand, also known as Pierrot, is seen picking up a machine gun and running on the roof of a building in long shot. In the following scene, we see a car in extreme long shot driving down the highway. And yet in the scene after that, we return to the roof and his escape down a ladder with Marianne (Anna Karina) who get into the car that we have just seen on the highway. This mixing-up of the storytelling process and logic is Godard's way of critiquing and, to a certain degree, derailing narrative continuity. At the same time, he interrogates the ideology implicit in this narrative continuity as Eisenstein has done, an ideology that Godard felt was the overarching mechanism of Hollywood, of bourgeois ideals, and ultimately of capitalism. In a later scene, after blowing up their first car, Ferdinand and Marianne steal a huge American convertible, a Ford Galaxy, and begin the

second stage of their escape. At one point Marianne turns around and addresses the camera directly. When Ferdinand asks to whom she is speaking she says "to the spectators." This is one of the ways in which Godard breaks a major Hollywood code: he disrupts the suture that is created in the narrative viewing process for the spectator. Marianne addresses the field of the spectator, the field that in classical cinema must not be allowed to exist, the one that must be "disavowed" in order for the film "to work." Godard does this by disrupting the shot/reverse shot that has been taking place between Pierrot and Marianne into a shot/reverse shot between Marianne and the spectator. It is not done simply to disorient but serves as a quick reminder to the spectator that they are accomplices themselves in making this plot just as much as the filmmaker is. (Robbe-Grillet will use this same device in Glissements progressifs du plaisir by addressing the complicitous pleasure of the spectators in one of the film's erotic fantasies. The novice turns toward the "audience" and suggests that the use of corporal punishment and instruments of torture might be "fun for the audience.") This is also Godard's way of formulating Brechtian distantiation in the film structure; yet he is also quick to indulge the implicit spectator (that every film must have) in the continuation and deepening of the adventure plot between Ferdinand and Marianne.[3] Godard's attempts to disrupt the paradigms of linear narrative and deal with the tradition of classical narrative conclude with an emblematic explosion of Pierrot and Pierrot's story. In fact, it is this explosion that I would like to look at in relation to the short 1968 film Saute ma ville [Blow up my city] made by Belgian feminist and experimental filmmaker Chantal Akerman. She was influenced by the French *Nouvelle Vague* and especially by Godard. She said in a 1980 interview with Godard that "Pierrot le fou played the role of dominant cinema for me" and that "I wanted to do the same thing with the films that would be *my*

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[3] For a closer reading of the sound and musical discontinuities in Pierrot le fou see Royal S. Brown, "New Styles, New Genres, New Interactions," Overtones and Undertones: Reading Film Music (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994) 175-220.

own."[4] This acknowledgement of Godard's work will be found in visual and auditory references in Akerman's film.

One of the major differences in these two films is the emphasis on interrelations of previously "raided" source material. Godard's Pierrot quotes from a variety of texts: the traditional Harlequin clown, Picasso's Arlequino, the romantic hero in literary texts and in pulp fiction, and knowledge of Céline's Voyage au bout de la nuit, which is the "bitter *aboutissement* of the romantic tendencies"[5] that have accumulated throughout the entire Romantic movement in literature, music, and the arts. On the other hand, Akerman's "disruptive" cinema questions her attitude and feelings of her own generation, youth in society, the women's movement, in addition to her relationship to Pierrot le fou. But besides these differences, which I will discuss in a moment, I think it is significant to note two important distinctions in these films. First of all, in Pierrot le fou the main character is played by a star, Jean-Paul Belmondo, a former boxer, with a formidable track record in the *Nouvelle Vague*. This is in strong contrast to the young woman in Saute ma ville, who is played by Akerman herself. The other important difference is that Saute ma ville was made outside normal filmmaking circuits, is in black and white, uses post-sync asynchronous sound, and is only 13 minutes long, whereas Pierrot le fou is an important, feature-length Italian-French co-production, supported by a budget that was large by *Nouvelle vague* standards, on several different locations, with a nondiegetic music track as well as with diegetic dialogue, music, and sounds.[6] I will however compare part of the final sequences of these two films because of the similarity in images and sound, even

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[4] "Jean-Luc Godard, Chantal Akerman, Entretien sur un projet-1," Ça cinéma 19 (mai 1980): 6.

[5] This expression, "the bitter *aboutissement* of the romantic tendencies," comes from Royal S. Brown and is in direct reference to Céline's Voyage au bout de la nuit.

[6] The sound track used in Saute ma ville was added to the visual track in postproduction, hence the term post-sync, even though it is not always in-synch with the visual track. The term "asynchronous" refers to sound that is derived from a source not in the image on the screen at the time it is heard.

though this comparison also signals an outstanding difference in meaning. Godard's film, though critical of the Hollywood film production and "capitalist" ideology, still remains at a certain level personal: one man's personal struggle against the alienating forces in the world, whereas the other film, Saute ma ville, opens out from the personal to the public, to what I would consider primitive political agency.

In the Pierrot sequence, Ferdinand, who has difficulty fitting into society, has just killed the woman he thinks he loves, Marianne Renoir, in a violent shoot-out on a small island in the Mediterranean. He calls his home in Paris to see whether his children are all right, but does not identify himself to the maid on the telephone. He paints his face blue like a "Pierrot" and goes out on the cliff overlooking the sea, carrying two bundles of dynamite. All of his personal struggles as seen from the beginning of the film through the final botched gangster plot seem to converge at this moment. A long shot shows him running to the edge of the cliff, with the sea and the sky as a back drop. When he is seated he ties the red and yellow colored dynamite around his head and lights a handful of matches and ignites the wick. After a second he swears and tries to stamp out the burning cord. There is an immediate cut to an extreme long shot of the cliff for the explosion, which we see and hear. On the other hand, Saute Ma Ville begins with the city, or more specifically the young woman's complex of apartment buildings that make up her neighborhood. The extreme low angle shots of the buildings as they tower above evoke a threatening presence of the city. But this outside scene moves rapidly inside to the apartment building with a neutral camera angle focusing on the bank of mailboxes in the entranceway. A young woman opens up her box and retrieves a letter. Her whistling and nonchalant attitude toward the slow elevator, and her run up the stairs are in stark contrast to the opening sequence with the buildings. But on one level the outside world still makes it inside the neutrality of the apartment. This outside world is compactly figured in the letter, a kind of

"history in a nutshell" that will be significant in the rest of the film.[7] After the opening sequence, the rest of the film takes place in a small kitchen in sharp contrast to the buildings and to the sweeping voyages of Ferdinand in Pierrot. The young woman tacks the letter up on a cupboard and begins to prepare a meal. She gobbles down a plateful of spaghetti, polishes her shoes and then her entire leg. Afterward, she frenetically scrubs down the walls and floor, in sporadic bursts of action. The last sequence of the film will begin as she finishes smearing some kind of white cream on her face and dances in front of a mirror accompanied by some inarticulate humming and laughing on the soundtrack. Then, shown in reflection in the mirror, she will light a long kitchen match in front of the stove. There is a cut to a medium shot of her popping two balloons, before we return to the stove where she sets fire to the letter, received in the beginning sequence (a gesture that I feel suggests it set off this string of actions), turns on the gas, and grabs a bouquet of wrapped flowers. The scene cuts to black and we hear the explosion but see nothing.

The similarities in these scenes are striking. Narratively speaking, both characters have rubbed something on their faces, perhaps masking their soon to be lost identity or commenting on the masks that one wears, is forced to wear in society, or, in the case of Ferdinand, he gives into the clown mask that Marianne, who always called him Pierrot, had identified in him. In Pierrot, Ferdinand is in a garage and uses blue paint on his face whereas Akerman in Saute ma ville is in a kitchen and puts some kind of cream (mayonnaise or salad dressing) on her face. The suicide scenes are shown in fairly long takes. Pierrot ironically uses a musical theme from the beginning of the film which creates a comic effect of this "romantic" suicide. In contrast, in Saute ma ville, the voice-over and

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[7] Akerman uses letters as a means of condensing the generative elements in the narratives. In Je tu il elle, in the letter-writing sequence, for example, one feels the act of letter-writing and presumably to an addressee develops the sense of "expository" in the narrative. She will do this again in Jeanne Dielman with the letter that Jeanne receives from her sister who lives in Canada. This letter introduces us to Jeanne's sister and calls attention to the fact that a package will soon arrive for Jeanne. In Les Rendez-vous d'Anna (1978) Akerman will use replayed messages from Anna's answering machine to give the spectators background information and set up Anna's relationships with her mother, lover, and boyfriend.

non-diegetic sound are jarring, more than ironic, especially the voice that says "bang-bang" when the balloons burst because we do not know where the voice or balloons come from, although the balloons would indicate a connection to the clown-like quality of Pierrot. Both scenes, then, cut to the explosion. But here is where the first difference lies. In Pierrot le fou, we cut from a close-up of Pierrot and the burning wick to a long shot of the explosion, a small short burst. In Saute ma ville we move from a full shot in reflection to a black screen and hear the explosion and its repercussions. This young woman's determined suicide figuratively blows up the city and literally destroys the "image" of it before our eyes. It is a suicide that is "for your ears only." Why does this personal act take on a larger social significance? Is this the personal that becomes political? I would say that in Saute ma ville we are led by the title of the film, Blow up my city, to understand implicitly a move from the private to the public. That is, from the kitchen to the city, and from the personal to the social, from a "singular" act to one that has plural meaning. For the women's movement this is an important shift from the individual to the community, a shift that acknowledges that the personal is often the catalyst for a collective concern. An equally important question at this point is, what does it mean for Akerman to use Pierrot le fou as a reference? By using this reference, Akerman inscribes a whole series of filmic interventions, a vast portion of film, art, literary cultures, into her film. It is like a gigantic contextualized footnote. One way to imagine this kind of practice is to consider Gloria Anzaldúa's notion of borderland, in Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza, which, she argues, is a site (an instance) of identity. Through various border crossings and raids, identity is created here using interrogation in praxis as an intervention. In cinema narratives, we might see this militancy or resistance implicitly staged in acts of defiance, or these acts may be hidden in the filmic structure or discourse and have to be unraveled (uncrossed) while viewing. In the case of the feminist experimental film practice we might see this in Akerman's "raiding" of Godard's narrative and visual thematics for the creation of her specific "filmic neologisms." She acknowledges her investment in the system and in

the circulation of image-making by simultaneously inserting and changing the reference to Pierrot le fou. These changes are both narrative and formal: from a tall solitary cliff overlooking the sea to the small kitchen in an apartment building and, formally, from the visual to the auditory: the burst of fiery explosion in long shot compared to the black screen with the sounds of chain reaction explosions. It moreover calls to mind the *Nouvelle Vague*'s reconfiguration and questioning of the Hollywood system of filmmaking without Akerman herself having to make a full-length feature. In other words, her film still interrogates the authority of the classical narrative as the *Nouvelle Vague* had already done and further questions Godard's interrogation of Hollywood, while at the same time, poses the question of the referent itself. I would even argue that it sets in place an interesting *mise en abyme* of the representation process: the structure of the reference to Pierrot le fou is such that it is shown in a mirror.[8] The young woman moves to the mirror and writes out two words the last one of which is "fou." The suicide is then seen through the mediating reflection of the mirror. For me, this points to the fact that the referent image of Pierrot le fou can only be found through its own mediation process, that of a projector. Even to run the two films at the same time would not ever be able to capture one original referent, because the referent itself (a man sitting on a cliff) is not retrievable. And it is only a representation, a filmed version of some profilmic elements and actions of Jean-Paul Belmondo sitting on cliff which is not one referent, but refers to the entire cinematic apparatus (e.g. the diffusion of light through emulsion at 24 frames per second, the editing staff, director, producer, distribution system, etc...). This is exactly how the notions of representation and referent must be taken to task if one is to understand the alternative

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[8] For literary uses of *mise en abyme*, Lucien Dallënbach, Le récit speculaire: Essai sur la mise en abyme (Paris: Seuil, 1977). For the "process of subject," see Althusser 127-188. For the "structure of citationality" see a possible film-related reading of "The Double Session" on Derrida's reading of Mallarmé's "Mimique" in Dissemination. For Akerman, the explicit critique or the resistant intervention of Godard and Pierrot le fou is "there" and "not there" (because the reference is only a reflection) with the use of mirror. Akerman moves toward a conceptualization of intertextuality without imposing a new set of hierarchical relationships vis à vis Godard and his films.

cinema as it developed in the 1970s. And yet, there are many other factors involved here. For these films, I can suggest three possibilities: the first and most obvious difference is that Godard's portrayal of women, especially Marianne Renoir (Anna Karina), sets him apart from Akerman's early feminism and betrays his misogynistic treatment of her character; secondly, the difference we see in these two clips is the difference and the distance of history (Pierrot le fou is from 1965 and Saute ma ville is from 1968), and the third is the difference of authority and the growing women's movement throughout Europe. If we closely examine the historical events, we find that we are looking directly at 1968 when the student and worker strikes in Paris nearly paralyzed France; when the Belgian feminists called their first "Etats généraux de la femme;" and when a group of critics and directors closed the curtains at the Cannes Film Festival.[9] For Godard, in 1965, the political questions of Vietnam (Ferdinand and Marianne even act out a "battle scene" for two American sailors as part of their way to get money) and imperialism are not quite yet posed in his formal and structural considerations. Mulvey sees this sequence as emblematically depicting the urgency of history: "It was no longer possible to separate the romantic violence of imperialism, and the high cultural traditions from Velasquez to Picasso" (57). In the end of the film, as Mulvey puts it, these conflicting elements "lead to a beautiful but arid dead-end on a Mediterranean island, cut off from history" (57). Though both films ultimately are concerned with history it is the immediacy of Akerman's that deals with the moment of 1968 and the place of women in society and to the larger women's movement that brings us closer to the alternative cinema of the 1970s. Although Godard was committed to other political issues that were developing in the late 1960s, he never quite dealt with the issues of the women's movement or feminism even though he began making political films whose central figures were female characters, beginning with Deux

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[9] "Historique: Les États Généraux du Cinéma," Cahiers du Cinéma 203 (août 1968): 23. Michel Delahaye, "Fin d'un festival: Cannes," Cahiers du Cinéma 203 (août 1968): 26-27.

ou trois choses que je sais d'elle (1966) and Made in USA (1966) before La Chinoise (1967) and Le gai savoir. It is this tension between his use of the images of woman and the representations he chooses to depict that are at the heart of the 1970s alternative filmmaking, or as Mulvey puts it, "more than any other single film-maker Godard has shown up the exploitation of woman as an image in consumer society. For Godard this image is the very basis of consumer society... the contemporary world as *la civilisation du cul*" (50), even though his image of woman is always divided into relations pointing to pleasure and to the romantic tradition of "an essence that is only knowable at risk, deceptive and dangerous" (51). Both of these images, of course, are ones that feminist filmmakers will try to challenge in their films. But changing the object of the film, that is the story or narrative goal of the film, was not as important as shifting the structures and discourse. One of Godard's contributions to the filmmaking of the 1970s is his interrogation of meaning and systems of meaning in his compilation film Le gai savoir made in 1968 and released in 1969, though it was mildly censored in parts for a number of years, it is still only available in the censored form.[10] By redefining the filmic process using Marxist dialectics (the dialectical editing of Eisenstein, in particular) and auto-critique, Brechtian aesthetics, as well as collective decision-making with the group Dziga-Vertov, he advocated that film be a social and political intervention.

Jean-Luc Godard was one of the first filmmakers to use the May events from 1968 to try to understand the relationship between image, sound and meaning. His film Un film

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10 The film was censored because it gave instructions on the making and launching of Molotov cocktails. However, the 16mm version released in the United States and a recent video release of Le gai savoir had placed ironically, over the entire section of the discussion of the Molotov cocktails, the running dialogue in the English subtitles. We might make the case, in the spirit of Godard's questioning of reality and the real in cinema, that there is no "real" version of Le gai savoir in existence since the original text was initially destroyed by the censor, only to have a new version (the bleeped one) released, only to have an even newer one spring up from that (the subtitled one). The fallacy that film represents reality seems to have been proven materially and we might even consider that, in this case, the film that is suppposed to represent the film is itself a fallacy, and doubly so.

comme les autres [A film like any other] from August 1968 combines the images of the May uprising and strikes of students and workers with a sound track comprising conversations between students and workers and rallies. Before he made this film, however, he had shot a film for French television in 1968. To this film he applied his methods of the Dziga-Vertov group in order to make his film politically and to take a political stance. This particular form of filmic resistance to the mainstream is his highly provocative Le gai savoir (1969), whose title in English, The Joy of Learning/Knowledge is a direct reference to Friedrich Nietzsche's The Gay Science, in French Le gai savoir. Part of Le gai savoir's goal was Godard's own re-reading and then re-working of Rousseau's Emile, an eighteenth-century treatise on education. The theme of education and schools becomes, after this film, a constant presence in the alternative cinema of the 1970s. It is a subject that will be taken up later by Alain Tanner in Jonas qui aura 25 ans en l'an 2000 (1976), though presented in a very conventional form. Le gai savoir was anything but conventional. It represented a thinking through of the current educational system while proposing new ways to learn based on a three-year project using images and sounds from video, film, radio, and television, as well as from all forms of cultural productions. He proposed that the "theory and the practice" should follow a plan of first collecting images and recording sounds, then critiquing and deconstructing, substituting, and recomposing them, and finally "fabriquer des modèles" [making new models]. Another goal of the film was to show how images and sounds affect our daily lives. Godard however did not stop his questioning there. He pursues these effects and tries to uncover what the relationship is between people and these images and sounds. The film attempts to convey the possibility of using "liberated images and sounds" to make a politically engaged Marxist (or more exactly Marxist-Leninist) cinema by using the compilation technique of Vertov and applying it to images and sounds. It is important to understand what "liberated" means in this context. For Godard it means finding images and sounds that do not already have pre-determined meanings or that are not ideologically contaminated by bourgeois capitalism.

His task, to conceive of something that has "nonmeaning," is nearly impossible and he realizes this. But his interrogation in praxis is taking place when he poses such challenges to himself. It is not in the image and the sound that he seeks meaning but in their juxtaposition on screen and on the sound track. When the voice-over says, "the eye should listen before it looks" the film is explicitly commenting on the interdependence of the visual and the auditory, which are the first things that need to be examined in the cinema or in the media. This refers to the contiguous or simultaneous relationships that the editing puts in place between the two distinct parts of the film. Thus when the film further proposes "to criticize, decompose, reduce, substitute and recompose" these images and sounds to get at the core of a film's meaning and political potential, it is emphasizing the role that the editing process plays in creating and perpetuating ideology.

The film itself includes a collage of documentary moving images and photographic and drawn or painted stills, for example, from the May student/worker revolts, the Vietnam War, communist leaders across the world (Mao Tse-tung, Ché Guevara, Fidel Castro, Lenin). The sound track functions like an auditory collage as well, including music, taped speeches, radio broadcasts from the student meetings, from the solidarity meetings that were attended by both workers and students, manifestations, rallies, and a voice-over which talks about the film's theoretical base. Godard confronts history in many of the socialist and communist countries of the world, but his political engagement is not only with the subject matter—revolution, change, relationships—it is also with the representation of these ideas and their construction in film and television. But what is important in this instance is Godard's concept of history. The film's voice-over says that the "history of man is the history of his repression" which necessitates a return. "Le retour de ce qui a été refoulé constitute l'histoire souterraine de tabu d'une civilisation. L'exploration de cette histoire ne récèle pas seulement le secret de l'individu mais aussi celui de la civilisation" [The re-emergence of repressed factors constitutes the taboo history of our civilization. The exploration of this history contains the key not only to individuals

but to civilization]. Thus the historical factor in his films can be extended from the particular or singular event or act to the history of Western civilization. These images and sounds, when all linked together, create a particular narrative, namely Le gai savoir, and produce a narrative of cinematic storytelling. At the same time, both forms critique the everyday bombardment of visual and auditory representations that people face in society. Narratively, on the particular level, these elements are connected to the two young revolutionaries played by Jean-Pierre Léaud (known to most people as Truffaut's Antoine Doinel) and Juliet Berto (who will later play Céline in Jacques Rivette's Céline et Julie vont en bateau). They sometimes speak in sound bites such as "apprendre" or "savoir" and sometimes ask each other questions or respond to the voice-over or radio announcements. Their activity on screen is to narrate the new way in which film should bring these different images and sounds together theoretically and practically. At one point, Emile (Jean-Pierre Léaud) thinks he's found the solution and he says, "alors ce qui est en question c'est l'image de soi" [what's at stake here is one's own image]. In the form of response to his statement, an insert title with the words "l'image de nylon" [the image of nylon] is put on screen superimposed over a fashion magazine image of a woman in stockings. Obviously this kind of commentary investigates the creation of identity in consumer culture as it affects, in this case, women. Representation of women is one of Godard's least effective uses of polemics in his films, as we will see also in Numéro Deux.

Ultimately it is the formation and use of language systems that Godard is questioning. He can subvert the language of cinema by confronting it as if it were a weapon, and using it, turning it back on his oppressors. The voice on the soundtrack says: "et à moi à retourner contre l'ennemi l'arme avec laquelle dans le fond des choses il nous attaque: le langage" [it's up to me to turn against the enemy the weapon which if you get right down to it they attack us with: language]. As Colin MacCabe puts it in "Godard since '68," he is "taking his film at its word: that it was necessary to start from zero; more exactly, as Juliet Berto points out, to get back to zero, Godard began an investigation into

the language of film" (21). Among some of the challenges Godard poses here for his contemporaries are that film should perform three tasks: it ought to be a political intervention, expose the fallacy that film represents reality, and demand that filmmakers take responsibility for the public circulation of their representations. It is important to see that Le gai savoir suggests, proposes, and interrogates. It argues that filmmakers find a political or even a theoretical solution in the continued questioning of the cinematic medium. And, finally, it says that this is not the film that must be made, "mais comment si l'on a un film à faire passe nécessairement par quelques uns des chemins parcourus ici" [but how, if one has a film to make, it ought to pass through some of the paths shown here]. The alternative cinema will take up this challenge and constantly interrogate its form and the role it plays in the production of culture, from inside and outside of the mainstream that it opposes. Yet however radical Godard's film is, and no matter how much he investigates representation as a function of dominant ideological structures of Western culture, this kind of intellectual revolutionary action did not touch one of the fundamental problems of this era, the "woman's question." Godard does attempt a self-conscious exploration of the significance of women in representational arts such as in cinema, on TV, in copy ads and billboards, but it is just a tap at the surface of the issue, and at many times Le gai savoir offers strictly a challenge of the formal considers of women in culture and society. Feminists' demands for social change in the arts as well as in the legal codes did not seem to have a voice in the immediate post-'68 period.

Le Cinéma féminin, le cinéma féministe, les films de femmes?

> Le discours de la femme la plus banale qui parle de sa journée la plus banale, est, *si on l'écoute*, un discours subversif.

Marie Cardinal [11]

In my previous discussion of the French women's movement I mentioned that the early objective of this movement was consciousness-raising or grassroots efforts on a local scale. Feminism in Europe in general began in the same way, but it soon was anything but a local issue. *Le Mouvement de Libération des femmes* (MLF) was the collective name given by the French Press to groups of feminists, then known as *militantes* (militant women), that began in Paris 1968; but this name, MLF, was used even in Belgium to designate any women's or feminist group. Only two organizations of all the original French feminist groups still exist in one form or another, one of which is called *Psychologie et Politique* (Psy et Po), which uses the MLF insignia and trademark at the edition *des femmes* in Paris. The other was originally set up in two parts, one as a group to provide media interventions in society, known as MAI, *Mouvement audiovisuel d'intervention sociale et politique*, and the second, to promote media presentations and film festivals called *Musidora*. They now co-exist as *Le Festival de Créteil* and run the annual women's film festival outside of Paris every year. In the early 1970s these two groups promoted the production and direction of collaborative films, wrote extensively and published articles and collections on film theory and film criticism, while the other main activity was to plan and organize women's film festivals.[12] MAI was organized most notably by Michèle Borghi, Bénédicte Delesalle, and Monique Martineau. Bénédicte Delesalle was the cinematographer for Chantal Akerman's film, Je tu il elle, and wrote on the positions that

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[11] Quoted in Mona Fillières and Anita Perez, "Douze fois impure: Entretien avec Philippe Durand," Cinéma pratique 152-153 (juin-juillet 1977): 110. "Even the discourse, of the most typical woman who is speaking about the most typical day, is, *if you listen to it*, a subversive discourse." (Emphasis mine).

[12] Mirielle Amiel, "A propos de Musidora: Un folklore dépassé," Cinéma 187 (mai 1974): 90-91; Claire Clouzot, "La femme et le celluoïd," Écran 55 (août/sept. 1974): 8-27; Paule Lejeune, Le cinéma des femmes (Paris: Éd. Atlas, 1987.)

women held in the film industry.[13] Monique Martineau wrote extensively on film criticism and edited special feminist issues of the French film journals Revue du cinéma and Écran and was one of the co-founders of CinémAction in 1978 with Guy Hennebelle. Martineau wrote in 1979 that this organization was most interested in increasing the activist point of view, that of "films d'action féministe" [films of feminist action].[14] Martineau further explains that this did not mean that if a film were proposed by a woman that it was automatically supported by MAI. Films with a specific feminist point of view of the women's cinema did however get support and funding (6). This was an issue of "le cinéma féminin," basically films made by women, as compared with "le cinéma féministe" which was distinguished by the activist "feminist point of view" conveyed in the films through restructuring narrative or discursive elements. The original concept of MAI was to assist through public funding in the making and producing of feminist cinema, which was informed by and participating in the construction and integration of socio-political and cultural perspectives. Their first film, Amorce '74 (1974), was a documentary of the filmmakers in the women's movement.[15] Made in 1974 it employed nearly all of the women technicians who did not want to work on films that did not critically address the representation of women in film. Nicole-Lise Bernheim and Françoise Maupin focus on the aspect of funding in France where the government granted 10% of the *avances sur recette* to women. The government funding bureau was not particularly concerned whether the content of the film was feminist or not. It was mostly interested in making sure the film

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[13] Françoise [Maupin] and Bénédicte [Delesalle], "Les femmes et la technique du cinéma," Revue du cinéma 283 (avril 1974): 23-29; Bénédicte Delesalle, "Toute une histoire!" CinémAction 9 (1979): 82.

[14] Martineau, Monique. "Le premier fruit d'un double lignage." CinémAction 9 (1979): 5. "Il ne s'agit d'ailleurs pas d'encenser systématiquement un film, sous prétexte qu'il est fait par une femme, mais d'analyser d'un point de vu féministe le cinéma féminin" (6).

[15] "Cinéfemmagories: *Amorce 74*," Paroles...elles tournent! (Paris: Éditions des femmes, 1976).

made money in order to be repaid.[16] In many cases, this bit of money, given to filmmakers who turned in outlines, story boards, or sketches of potential films, was the only means available for some directors to make the independent films that they wanted. The government funding along with the growing interest in feminism began to move the topic of women's filmmaking into current debates in film journals. In much of the French press and film journals there were special issues on "women's cinema," but invariably the articles were based on a critique of the representation of women within French and world cinema. They were vehemently opposed to the Hollywood tradition of cinematic images of "women as dolls."[17] These were representations that they felt had taken over all film production. In 1974, the same year that Amorce '74 was made and produced, these women plus a handful of administrators started a women's film festival at the *Musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris* and at *l'Olympic*.[18] This group, called *Musidora*, named after French film actress and director, Jeanne Roques, whose stage name was Musidora, began in October 1973. Françoise Flamant calls attention to their original goal, which was to get women together who were interested in film (70). Flamant, who credits the public's lack of knowledge as the films' worst enemy: "mal aimés d'un public conditionnés par les séductions faciles du cinéma masculin" [not well-liked by a public conditioned by the easy seduction of men's films] (70), notes that when they decided to program screenings of women's films only, they met with opposition. This criticism, based on the gender of the director as well as the classical narrative paradigm with its "séductions faciles," was widely

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16 Nicole-Lise Bernheim and Françoise Maupin, " 'Voilà pourquoi votre fille est muette': Quelques réflexion sur les films de femmes," Revue du cinéma 318 (juin-juillet 1977): 28 (28-34)

17 Mark Lewis, "Ce que les stars pensent du féminisme," Ciné-Revue 52 (décembre 1975): 33. Royal Brown reminded me that Mark Lewis is the name of the "hero" in Peeping Tom (1960), directed by Michael Powell.

18 C. Bronchain, "La femme dans le cinéma (Le premier festival international 'La femme dans le cinéma')," APEC (Revue belge du cinéma) 13 (1976): 40-49; Françoise Flamant, "Des femmes organisent un festival," Revue du cinéma 283 (avril 1974): 70-73. Subsequent references to this article are in the text. The translations are my own.

accepted and was basically the foundation for Musidora's first women's film festival. The women who began the film festival were adamant in their position, which was as much political as theoretical. Therefore, men were not permitted to send in entries to the festival. But they were criticized for this position, and Flamant gives the following example of the type of criticism that they were subject to: "Pourquoi ne montrez-vous pas des films d'hommes? C'est sexiste!" [Why don't you show men's films? That's sexist!], "Vous êtes récupérées par la culture officielle: on vous cautionne, on vous subventionne" [you are being co-opted by the official culture: they are your guarantor and are supporting you], and finally "Moi, je n'ai tourné que dans des films d'hommes, alors votre festival ne me concerne pas" [I've only been in men's films, so your festival doesn't interest me] (72). Musidora responded by setting out its objectives after that first festival. They wrote a manifesto which responded to a number of these critiques:

> -De favoriser la création, la réalisation et la diffusion cinématographiques et vidéo des femmes cinéastes;
>
> -De poursuivre des recherches sur les rôles et l'image des femmes au cinéma, ainsi que sur les oeuvres des cinéastes féminins;
>
> -De développer des rencontres en vue d'améliorer l'accueil réservé à ces films auprès du public. (71)[19]

From their gender-specific critique of cinema grew a concentrated study of all women and feminist filmmakers published in CinémAction in Autumn 1979. In this issue the editors also include the "Manifesto pour un cinéma nonsexiste" created by the participants of a women's film festival in Utrecht in 1977. It is this manifesto that served as the framework for much of the French feminist film criticism in the late 1970s. One of its key ideas was that "le noyau de l'oppression sexiste est la structure familiale actuelle, dans la mesure où

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[19]"To foster the creation, production, and distribution of film and video by women filmmakers; To do research on the roles and images of women in the cinema as well as in the works of women filmmakers; To develop meetings in order to improve the reception of these films with their audience."

elle est encore tributaire de l'héritage du patriarcat" [the heart of sexist oppression is contemporary family structure, in the sense that it is still attributable to the patriarchal heritage] (21). The feminist and women's films of the 1970s in many ways reflect this interest in producing a nonsexist and antipatriarchal cinema through the shifts in stories being told in the films, but also in the shifts in modes of telling the narrative using nonhierarchical film discourse. In a recent article, "Regards de Françaises," Georgiana Colvile remarks that the women filmmakers of the mid-1970s wanted to produce a cinema that would reconstitute their own image, which she compares to the the self-portraits that were done by the women painters of the 1940s.[20] But I would argue that only a few chose to make their films as "self-portraits." Even in Akerman's Je tu il elle, where Akerman plays the lead role, I would say that ultimately this film is not about self portrayal. Rather, it is a commentary on the way to get at a system of representation that she is resisting in her filmmaking. Through the use of narrative discontinuities and discursive dissonance, Akerman resists the hierarchical discourse of the mainstream. The narrative discontinuity can be seen in her refusal to follow a suturing narrative structure or to use traditional shot/reverse shot sequences and cutaways. In addition, her discursive dissonance is seen from the beginning with the title sequence. The first two words of title (je, tu) appear in a column going down the right edge of the screen, as if to start a verb conjugation with the pronouns, and the third term, "il," appears. Finally, the last word "elle" appears by itself, off to the left of the column, but equal to the position of the "il". Thus we have on the screen:

je

tu

il elle

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[20] Georgiana M. M. Colvile, "Mais qu'est-ce qu'elles voient? Regards de Françaises," The French Review 67.1 (October 1993): 73.

The very first image we see is a room in full shot with a young woman sitting off to the left at a table. We think, perhaps, this is "elle." But then we hear on the sound track, in a female voice, "...et je suis partie," changing immediately our relationship to the image of the woman we had moments before designated as "elle." The off-screen voice gives us in sound the identificatory "je" of the image on the screen. It cannot be considered one self-portrait even though we, as spectators, identify the "je" with the character. This striking dissonance from the title sequence through the beginning voice and image will set up the kind of shifting of identities and subjectivities that Akerman will examine. The filmmaking that perhaps comes closest to this kind of cinema as self-portrait is Agnès Varda's L'une chante l'autre pas, and I would find it very difficult to attribute any films of Marguerite Duras to this category. For Varda, the self-portraiture is not of herself, *per se*, but is a composite portrait of all the women involved directly and indirectly in the women's movement. This once again will reinforce the idea of the personal as a springboard to the collective. For this reason, her film is mostly narrative, recreating a narrative of the women and of the history of the movement. The possible reading of portrait is even more deeply embedded within the film as Varda choses to employ the discourse of "authenticity" of documentary cinema. The films that I will discuss in this next section are all fictional narratives that shift, in one form or another, in one part or in the entire film, the conventions of cinematic structures and discourses.

The cinema of Marguerite Duras is most closely related to the cinema of Alain Resnais in L'Année dernière à Marienbad, the *cinéma-direct* documentaries of Jean Rouch, and the fiction of Agnès Varda's Cléo de 5 à 7. It borrows from these three films a very important use of time and space. It will also make use of sound, or rather, the absence of sound, depending on how you listen to the film. She places a heavy emphasis on diegetic sound. For example, even when the camera remains in a room after the characters have left, we still hear the sounds of the empty room diegetically. These two important elements will later be employed in Akerman's Jeanne Dielman to show the routine and repressive lifestyle

of a Belgian housewife, or as Bernheim and Maupin have suggested, it is "le tempo lent" [slow tempo] and real time that distinguish feminist cinema from the mainstream (32). But if what they cite is true about the slow tempo and real time of the household and everyday life, then how does Varda's film fit into this? Cléo de 5 à 7 is about a singer, Cléo (played by Corinne Marchand, a professional singer herself), who is waiting from 5 to 7 to hear a diagnosis as to whether or not she has cancer, which is shown in real time. The running time of the film is almost precisely the two hours of Cléo's wait and yet she performs no household tasks and spends a greater portion of her two hours outside, in Paris, in a park, and on a bus. Time is an important aspect of the feminist cinema of this era, but it cannot signify any "real" action and certainly does not represent what Bernheim and Maupin call "nouveau réalisme utérique" [uterine neo-realism], nor imply in all cases the domestic situation of women. But it does point to an interest in the hyperreal, something that is beyond the reality of everyday life while still evoking its presence. That is one way that Duras and Varda can approach an interrogation in praxis, to interrogate the time as a fundamental unit of film and to pose questions about how we hear the cinema. In Duras's film, the woman is most frequently in the home or framed by windows or doorways to express the claustrophobic nature of her oppression. E. Ann Kaplan calls this use of defined interior space as "the house-versus-street polarity" that represents the outer, public male and the inner, private female.[21] Duras will also use silence as an empowering refusal to access the discourse of authority. I would like to consider the Durassian silence not as a refusal to access language but as a form of resistance and interrogation of the discourse produced in ideology, in the authority of mainstream cinema, the metaphor for which is the silence of characters when approached by the authorities of the consumer market or societal institutions. Kaja Silverman's The Acoustic Mirror provides us with a way to refer to a moment of speech, not as a speech-act or performance, but as an acquisition of language,

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[21] E. Ann Kaplan, Women and Film: Both Sides of the Camera (New York: Methuen, 1983) 96.

desire, and subjectivity, and "the aspiration toward discursive mastery."[22] Therefore to not speak but still have speech is not the refusal of "discursive mastery" but is rather the interrogation of its properties of power. That is, speech, when used to access discourse and subjectivity, throws the individual into the sticky center of ideology; yet when silence is evoked it calls forth an opposition to that form of power, be it mainstream cinema or consumer culture. In Nathalie Granger (1972) both Lucia Bose (Isabelle Granger) and Jeanne Moreau (Florence) are for the most part silent as they go about their daily tasks, especially Isabelle who rarely speaks with her daughter. They remain almost entirely indoors except when they are in the backyard of the house. The film's title refers to Isabelle's young daughter, Nathalie, who has been suspended from school because of her violence toward other children. Isabelle must decide whether to send her daughter away or face the school's authorities. Although the film seems to highlight the mother-child relationship in the story, there is in fact very little contact between them. The focus of the narrative is on the resistance to the power structure of the school shown, or rather, heard through the strength of silence in the film, although other voices and sounds seep into the quiet home. The voice of the male radio announcer in the kitchen seems to invade the space of these women, but it is not until the arrival of the washing machine salesman (Gérard Depardieu) that the silence of the women takes on the full measure of its resistance. The tricky but altogether humorous subversion by inclusion in this scene is put in place by the comical rambling on of the young salesman about his company's wonderful machine as the two women stare at him in silence. His voice is included onto an almost nonexistent sound/dialogue track as a metaphor for the invasive outer, "male" world, but it is an inclusion or an invasion that is necessary in order for Duras to posit the silence of the

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22 Kaja Silverman, The Acoustic Mirror: The female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988) 44.

women.[23] The scene further derails the visual interest in this visit by using a very straightforward shot/reverse shot editing sequence and a neutral camera angle that do not allow for any visual commentary to interrupt the meditation of sound and space. Madeleine Borgomano calls this limited camera movement the "inquiétante étrangeté d'une technique reniée" when speaking of Duras's 1974 film India Song.[24] Thus, the refusal to use extensive dialogue and sound or a music track, except for the piano practicing of the child and the sales pitch of Depardieu, function as a refusal to allow the film to be penetrated entirely by the mainstream. Yet to counteract that distancing of the audience, Duras uses Jeanne Moreau, a "star," in the film to attract a mainstream audience. Jeanne Moreau's character, as an independent woman, has echoes from other film characters she played in the past, such as in Les Amants (Louis Malle, 1958) or Jules et Jim (Truffaut, 1961). Her stardom also propelled her into her own short directing career in the 1970s. She made Lumière (1975) and L'Adolescente (1976, released 1978). L'Adolescente is based on an autobiographical account of a summer vacation she spent with her grandmother and parents at her grandmother's home in a small country village. Lumière on the other hand is also semi-autobiographical but it includes commentary on the experiences of five fictional women involved in various ways in the film industry. Moreau herself plays a multi-lingual film star working for French, German, and American directors while ending an affair with a young French gaffer and starting one with a famous German writer. The film shows the intertwining relations of the film industry's public life and the personal lives of the other women characters. It further comments on the tensions that are created in the public and private spheres for career actresses and for women married to directors. Unlike Moreau's

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[23] Jean-Louis Comolli in his article on women's cinema of the 1970s refers to this mode of cinema as "Récession de l'image, 'monté' du son" [Decrease in image, increase in sound]. "Mais qu'est-ce qu'elles veulent?" Revue du cinéma 356 (décembre 1980): 117. However I do not entirely agree with him since this would place another hierarchy into the system that feminists are trying to dehierarchize. Another source of the use of silence as language would be in the work of John Cage.

[24] Madeleine Borgomano, India Song (Limonest: L'Interdisciplinaire/Film(s), 1990) 65.

character in Lumière, who is always mediating between these two spaces, in Nathalie Granger she appears to have no occupation, so we are only given the domestic space. But we still feel the tension of the inside and the pull of the outside just as strongly. Though this "domestic" scene in Nathalie Granger could be compared to Akerman's Jeanne Dielman or to Tanner's Le milieu du monde, it is important to note that Duras's work has always been received as a polemic, partly due to her work's experimental narratives but also due to the sexual explicitness that she uses in her films.[25] In this way however her work is most closely linked to the films of Akerman. However, the main difference is that Akerman explores sexualities and subjectivities whereas Duras's work is mostly concerned with the woman in heterosexual relationships and with oppression under patriarchy, especially seen in the erotic fantasy sequences in India Song.

In contrast to these uses of sound interrogation by Duras, Varda, in L'une chante, l'autre pas, will take sound to the other extreme. Her film is part musical, part adventure, part manifesto, part history. In the early 1970s Varda challenged other filmmakers to be active and self-conscious in their work. She focused on the filmmaking of feminist praxis against the regime of "women as images." In 1974 she said to a group of feminist filmmakers, "Il faut que le cinéma aille plus vite que les mœurs, que les femmes inventent leur propre futur, en modifiant leur propre représentation" [Cinema must move faster than social mores, women must invent their own future by modifying their own representation].[26] Varda's own optimistic vision can be seen in her multi-genre film, L'une chante, l'autre pas (1975, released 1977, after she received an *avance sur recette* in 1976), that re-constructs 15 years of two women's lives, Suzanne and Pomme, from 1962

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[25] For a very interesting reading of the theme of desire throughout all of Duras's works see Leslie Hill, Marguerite Duras: Apocalyptic Desires (New York: Routledge, 1993).

[26] Quoted in Catherine Arnaud, "Les métamorphoses des femmes: Glissement progressif d'un désir de subversion," CinémAction 9 (1979): 28. Arnaud's title is a play on the Alain Robbe-Grillet film Glissements progressifs du plaisir (1974), which also takes up the question of the representation of women seen in the fantasies of three figures of authority a judge, a minster, and a lawyer that I discuss in chapter 4.

to 1976 by calling up various events in the women's liberation movement: illegal abortions in France, overflowing clinics in Amsterdam, rallies, the Bobigny Trial, and indirectly to the "Appel de 343 femmes" [Manifesto of 343 Women] which was published in a French newspaper, Le nouvel observateur in 1971, demanding free access to birth-control methods and the right to obtain abortions. It was signed by 343 women, many of whom were well-known writers, politicians, actresses, and activists, who declared that they had had abortions in the past.[27] The Bobigny trial of 1972 which brought national attention to the abortion issue also triggered the formation of the *Mouvement de la libération pour l'avortement et pour la contraception* [Movement for the freedom of abortion and contraception] (MLAC) in France in the early 1970s. Even though Varda approaches this film from an activist point of view, we still find some tension in the portrayal of women's utopian dreams and situations. But by focusing in on differences within her film language, that is, by her mixing of genres—using postcard stills, voice-overs reading letters, staged public concerts, or documentary footage—Varda can portray this tension as the differences within feminism.

After Varda's extensive work on documentaries in the 1960s she returns to narrative film with a sense of cinema's sociological applications.[28] From her work, then,

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[27] Varda has called this film a "documentaire utopique" about the women's movement. See "60-80: vingt ans d'utopies," CinémAction 25 (1983): 92. This manifesto was published in Le nouvel observateur, 5 April 1971 signed by Simone de Beauvoir, Christiane de Rochefort, Françoise Sagan, Colette Audry, Violette Leduc, Gisèle Halimi, Romy Schneider, Delphine Seyrig, Jeanne Moreau, Catherine Deneuve, Micheline Presle, among others. It has often been pointed out that not all of these women actually had abortions.

[28] Her commitment to Left politics in many ways determined her choice of film subject in the 1960s. Her films include a documentary section on Chris Marker's Loin du Viêt-Nam (1967), Black Panthers (1968, a film regarding this militant Black Power group and the trial of Huey Newton in Oakland, California), Lion's Love (1969), Nausicaa (1971, a television documentary about immigrant Greek exiles living in France), Réponses de femmes (1975, an 8-minute *ciné-tract* that looked at the French women's movement and tried to answer the question of what it meant to be a woman). She will later go back to California to make Mur Murs (1980, a study of the murals in the Los Angeles spillway) and Documenteur (1981). For a recent study of all of her films see "Agnès Varda," Etudes cinématographiques [Lettres Modernes] 179-186 (1991).

on both narrative features and documentaries she works to combine these different film discourses and structures to interrogate the film medium. One example of this combination, is her fictionalization of the October 1972 Bobigny abortion trial in her film. This scene is charged with the knowledge of history and shows the "disruptive" chanting women pushing at the barricades outside in the streets (reminiscent of the demonstrations in May '68). This scene is shot and edited in a style typical of documentary footage. It begins with a long shot over the crowd of women showing the large double doorway of the court house. Then there are sweeping pans over the crowd, we hear chanting and shouting on the soundtrack, and close-ups of posters and banners announce that it is an abortion rally. Upon closer scrutiny, however, we recognize the changed Pauline/Pomme (Valérie Mairesse) with short blonde curly hair in the center of chanting women and Suzanne (Thérèse Liotard) with her short-cropped brown hair as she shows her credentials to the Police in order to be able to pass beyond the barricades. This straightforward "realist" narrative of an event should not be mistaken as a lack of interest in interrogating the process of cinematic representation.[29] Her casting of Gisèle Halimi, the lawyer for the Bobigny trial, playing herself, is a well-placed gesture of political intervention.[30] At the very moment that the crowd is shown in a high crane shot, there is a cut to the doors of the court house, showing in the same high angle Halimi, who bursts out of the doors. The sound track uses the general din of the women to convey the size and importance of this rally, but

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[29] In Documenteur (1981) "...Varda attempts a reformulation of the very notion of textual space by allowing a fictive and documentary interplay to work across two different film-texts, thereby creating the reflection on representation that was lacking in L'Une chante." Sandy Flitterman-Lewis, To Desire Differently (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990) 241. I believe that this "reflection on representation" is already present in L'Une chante but is at times overshadowed by the utopian dreams of the portrayed characters.

[30] In 1973, Gisèle Halimi starts MLAC in order for women to obtain information about birth control and abortions. The group planned organized trips to Holland and England where abortions were legal and helped the poorest women who sought its assistance to find doctors in France. Abortion law is repealed in 1974, and contraception is legalized in 1974. For a history of MLAC see Gisèle Halimi, Notre corps, nous mêmes (Paris: Ed. Albin-Michel, 1976).

it also adds some clear and articulate voices of women identifying Halimi: "C'est Gisèle Halimi?" "C'est Gisèle Halimi." "Gisèle Halimi!" as if they were rippling waves of recognition out across the crowd of women from the front, on the barricades, to the back of the group in the street. As Halimi begins pulling women through the barricade, we hear her voice distinctly demanding that the trial and verdict be public.

In this sequence outside the court house we witness a re-staging of the political events in order for Varda to re-inscribe their importance in the representations of the women's movement. The explicit trajectory here is once again of the private to the public to agency. Agency here is seen as activism, expressed within the specific context of the questions of choice and abortion where the "personal is political."[31] The main characters, Suzanne and Pauline, have arrived at this trial to participate as individuals in this larger social event. Once again, we find, in the feminist cinema of this era, the tension between private and public. This tendency to underscore the disparities between the two spheres is frequently seen in the feminist films throughout the 1970s. In this film and in both Duras's and Akerman's films this tension becomes a space of production, a site to investigate and critique the socially and politically motivated use of exclusion and inclusion. Also at work in this re-enactment of the demonstrations at Bobigny is a direct commentary on the politics of representation. In the first place it questions the representability of women in film, and, secondly, it points to the legal form of representation that is one of the ways in which one can tamper with the inside/outside power structures of institutions. On the filmic level, Halimi herself was the lawyer representing the clients in this trial in 1972.[32] In the film,

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31 de Lauretis, Alice Doesn't 3.

32 October, 1972: Bobigny Trial: In the Paris suburb of Bobigny, four women who had helped 16 year old Marie-Claire Chevallier procure an abortion were tried and found guilty (their fine was a symbolic 8 francs) of breaking the 1920 law prohibiting abortion. Gisèle Halimi, as I pointed out above, was the head attorney for the defense. The documentary by Charles Belmont and Marielle Issartel, entitled Histoires d'A (1973), on the abortion issue in France was banned because it was considered too realistic. Its opening scene shows an abortion being performed using aspiration, "la méthode Karman." Amalvy and Polinski's documentary also on abortion, Liberté au féminin (1974), itself did not have better luck and was banned because it also

she re-represents herself as the fictional lawyer of a landmark case concerning abortion rights. Here her presence alone comments on the impossibility of historical representability, even subverted with this kind of auto-reflexive image. By the time this film is made Halimi had become to a certain degree an element of history, a landmark, an institution, thus ironically unable to be outside the shifted ideological apparatus that she herself put in place. By the same token, Varda signals this fictionalized "truth" of representation by using two very common techniques from the documentary. First, she uses a map, seen at the beginning of the court house sequence, in close-up pan following a hand moving over the map, which shows the distance of central Paris to Bobigny. She tries to upset the notions of "maps," "geographies" and "distances" as authentic conveyors of truth in film. And secondly, she uses this visual aid (the map) along with a voice-over "of truth," which is in fact her voice, giving the details of the trial date and place. Varda is once again subverting the discourse of the narrative film by trying to force a questioning of authenticity in mentioning calendar time and place. This interrogates and problematizes the role of "documentary" as vehicle of truth. I think its use here is a subtle but important element in this film. It poses such questions as: is it possible to represent "real" women's lives? If so, what to represent to make it different? How must this be different from the currents of narrative realism? Are we closer to the "real" in the documentary? In this film, Varda is interrogating history and how it is told or retold in its narrative form. In later films, she will address the questions of "truth" in her documentary, Documenteur (1981), which announces the falsehood of film's discursive representability and truth right from the

beginning, in the title itself.[33] The problem of taking from narrative fiction and from documentary is that it creates a blur. This blur, or infusing of the two discourses, both underscores and hides the apparatus at work. In hiding the mechanisms of documentary in the fictional text she does not displace the invisibility of classically constructed narratives, but promotes the hierarchically based systems in patriarchal filmmaking. However Varda's deliberate use of the documentary within the fictional text calls forth the problems of filmic veracity in trying to re-enact history.

Many feminist critics do not see L'une chante l'autre pas as entirely successful. They felt that Varda had unproblematically depicted the world in which these characters exist. But Varda's utopian vision is also a part of the feminist culture that was developing at this time. Her aim in reviewing the historical events, it seems to me, was not to get at a "realistic" portrayal of a few women but to attempt to show thematically that "the personal is political." As Jill Forbes has pointed out in The Cinema in France After the New Wave, the title of the film, itself L'une chante, l'autre pas "is a reference to the utopian slogan 'les lendemains qui chantent' (translated as "a brighter tomorrow"), used mostly in the context of the class struggle but here reappropriated [by Varda] for women" (90). By the conscious use of these words Varda is giving credence to the notion that women saw their cause for choice as a part of the ongoing struggle for equality that was being waged in the 1960s and 1970s. Yet, the use of this song here is also ironic in that feminists saw that they gained nothing from the changes inaugurated by the events of May 1968. In a sense Pomme becomes a metaphor for a feminist voice, one that was not silenced in the political struggle surrounding the repeal of the abortion laws in France, or ultimately, in any fight

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showed the "méthode Karman." For important discussions on the *cinéma militant* of these two documentaries see Gérard Frot-Coutaz, "Films militants," Cinéma 74 186 (avril 1974): 13-14; Françoise Audé, Ciné modèles, cinéma d'elles 106-111; and Monique Hennebelle-Martineau, "Les filles de Mai," Revue du cinéma 318 (juin-juillet): 54-57.

[33] Documenteur is about a woman living in exile, in Los Angeles, with a child, while she is searching for a new identity. The film's title is a French play on the words *documentaire* (documentary) and *menteur* (liar) which belies the critical attention that she gives to the socio-ethnographic quality of film.

for social change. It seems to me that Varda employed different modes of communication within this film to convey ideas of political and social changes that took place in this given time in France. She does this without having recourse to a strictly documentary style or to a simple linear narrative, but by socially constituting female characters who questioned their various representations within a particular vision of an ideal and unattainable future.

Varda ends her film with a review of all the "happy" characters in a sunny field on a Spring day. The camera consciously moves around the group in the tall grass while *Les Orchidées* sing blissfully on the soundtrack. One is caught wondering whether the "lendemain" of *les lendemains qui chantent* has arrived. It is nearly impossible to take Varda's film in any other way than ironically at this point in its movement from family crisis to social crisis to resolution to idyllic happiness. Marie-Claude Tigoulet in "Voyage en pays féminin" suggests that this ending sums up the heavy toll that the 1970s exacted on the family. She writes: "«Que reste-t-il sur les cendres du couple, au bout de cette 'mort de la famille'?» Il reste la maternité et les relations mère-enfants longuement décrites dans ces films où elles prennent toute la place que laisse l'absence d'homme" (62). [34] Did the couple ever exist in the alternative cinema of the 1970s? If so, how did the story of the relations become in some ways a metaphor for the relation that the film will have with its political and theoretical resistance to the mainstream or conventions? French sociologist Marie Antonietta Macciocchi also pointed out in 1977, at the same time that L'une chante was released, that "despite everything, May '68 changed more than we think regarding the relationship between men and women, and France is currently in the middle of a domestic crisis."[35] This "domestic" crisis is indeed hovering in the margins of both the changing

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[34] Marie-Claude Tigoulet, "Voyage en pays féminin," Etudes cinématographique 179-186 (1991): 57-70. "What's left of the ashes of the couple at the end of this 'death of the family'? Maternity and mother-child relations remain, described at length in these films where they take up the place by the absence of man."

[35] Macciocchi, De la France 21. She is refering to the domestic market of France, the home, and the family at the same time. Her work focuses on the drastically changed domestic situation under the fast-growing capitalist economy of France in the 1970s.

cinematic practices of the 1970s alternative cinema as well as in the feminist cinema. Before Varda's film L'une chante, in Duras's Nathalie Granger and especially in India Song or in Akerman's Je tu il elle, a questioning of the feminist cinematic interrogation in praxis simply does not take the social unit of the nuclear family into structural or narrative consideration except in its repressed state, as in Jeanne Dielman, because the large task at hand is the necessary shifting of structures and of discourses within the patriarchal order or ideological institutions of which the family, as well as the church, legal codes, education are all a part. The family could not be seen as a positive or reinforcing agent of subversion or interrogation in nearly any of these films. Either the female characters are single (also single parents) or the relation that is put into place by the film is unconventional. The exception to this "family" rule is Godard and Miéville's Numéro Deux. Even the main character of Alain Tanner's Le milieu du monde, Paul Chamoret (Philippe Léotard), has only an "invisible" family for whom he speaks and acts and who prevents him from pursuing his relationship with Adriana (Olympia Carlisi); and any conventional family relations that appear in Jacques Rivette's Céline et Julie vont en bateau are a function of the closed narratives that Céline et Julie are disrupting. The reason why I am interested in this use of "the family," as opposed to, say, "the domestic," is to undertake a reading of Godard and Miéville's Numéro Deux, which uses the family unit as the center of an interrogation of consumer and capitalist culture. Its use of subversion by inclusion in the editing of mixed media is in strong contrast to the long camera takes and "tempo lent" of some of the feminist alternative cinema.

> Il n'y a pas d'innocence dans le spectacle cinématographique.
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> Alain Tanner [36]

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[36] Alain Tanner, "Le «pourquoi dire» et le «comment dire»," Le milieu du monde ou le cinéma selon Tanner, ed. Michel Boujut (Lausanne: L'Age d'homme, 1974) 12.

In Numéro Deux (1975), Godard relies on the techniques of the compilation film and sets up a practice of the theoretical notions proposed in Le gai savoir, . Briefly these are that "theory and the practice" in film should follow a plan of first collecting images and recording sounds, then critiquing and deconstructing, substituting, and recomposing them, and finally making new models. After a trip to the United States in 1969 to work on a documentary with Richard Leacock and D.A. Pennebaker, and some experimental work with the Dziga-Vertov Group and Jean-Pierre Gorin, Godard returned to Switzerland to co-direct with Anne-Marie Miéville this post-'68 political film, Numéro Deux. Godard and Miéville's preoccupation with sound as well as image is acknowledged even in the name of their new company in Switzerland, called "Sonimage," giving equal importance to "son" (sound) and image. Numéro Deux will use the gathering and collecting of sound and images as raw data to analyze the location of the family in society. The film is also linked to an interest in interrogating the representation of women in relation to living habits in a consumer society which, here specifically, connects the alienation of work produced by oppression under capitalism to sexuality. By singling out the domestic crisis in the family unit (three generations living in one house), Numéro Deux proposes to show the family's day to day activities with a "documentary style" that imitates collage and compilation. At the same time the film problematizes this relationship of the film to conventional "family" and filmic discourse by using various video screens; sound tracks of voice-overs, confessions, and nondiegetic noises; titles on the screen; split screens or embedded video screens on the image-track; and the intervention of clips of Godard in the editing studio. These elements combined imply not only the interrogation in praxis that questions the film's production of culture within the institution of filmmaking (ideology), but also the subversion by inclusion in a compilation style that poses resistance to conventional film construction and therefore to film viewing. Godard, in general, uses the images of women metaphorically to show the underlying ideological mechanisms of consumer culture. Woman's place in a Godardian narrative is most often linked to her sexual function in a social institution like marriage, a

couple, or even prostitution. On a certain level Godard does not want to distinguish between an oppressed factory worker under authoritarian control or a woman in patriarchy (as he shows in the 1969 British Sounds) by comparing a man's factory work to a woman's domestic work, not an unusual comparison except that the man is clothed and the woman is naked) because any exploitation in a consumer society based on materialism ought to be met with resistance, resistant images or sounds or both. In Mulvey and MacCabe's words, "the female body has become industrialised" (90) in Godard's cinema.

Right from the beginning of Numéro Deux the spectator is confronted with this mode of production: two video images, written titles, and sounds of birds, dishes rattling, and talking (yelling even). The small titles say "My, Your, His Image...My, Your, His Image Sound...My, Your, Her Image"—we are instantly reminded of Akerman's use of the pronouns in Je tu il elle (1974) to question subjectivity and sexuality—while the top left-hand video screen remains red and the right screen variably shows the close-up image of a man's face and then of a woman's face before switching to a medium shot of two children leaning on a balcony talking. After Godard has introduced his notions of film production as "factory" with some introductory film clips of the family in question, there is a cut to a production room with two video monitors, and a tape recorder and sound board that Godard manipulates independently of the videos. At this point, Godard and Miéville put forward ideas and images that are suggestive of what their film will analyze: "Cinema, sex, politics...." In Godard: Images, Sounds, Politics, Colin MacCabe argues that these are the elements that "start to work together almost subliminally for the spectator but actually define quite explicitly the film's area of interest" (92). On one monitor, there are scenes from various movies and trailers, including pornographic film. The other shows newsreel footage of a May Day parade in Paris.[37] The sequence's voice-over states: "Ce

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[37] "Cul" in French means "bottom" as in "ass" or as in the bottom of a bottle or a jug. Godard's earlier film, Pierrot le fou, refers to "la civilisation du cul." These include "a Kung Fu movie and episodes from

n'est pas de la politique c'est du cul. Non, ce n'est pas du cul. C'est de la politique" [No, it's not about politics, it's about porno (sex). No, it's not about porno (sex) it's about politics]. It is difficult to determine in Godard's films what "du cul" can mean, whether it is simply a commentary on sex or on pornography, or on the entire valorization of heterosexist sexuality on display in culture. He has often referred to consumer culture as "la civilisation du cul" which is tied to the proliferation and circulation of images of women in Western civilization. Robbe-Grillet takes up a very similar position in Glissements progressifs du plaisir *vis-à-vis* the proliferation of erotic images of women in his films: the spectator can be the only determinant of whether or not it is pornographic, erotic, or ghastly ironic. Robbe-Grillet knowingly participates in the circulation of images of crime and sexuality that a film like Godard and Miéville's Numéro Deux tries however unsuccessfully to interrogate. Yet like Godard and Miéville, he attempts to self-consciously analyze the film as a production of its proper culture, within the film's narrative, through the various encounters that the main female character, Alice (Anicée Alvina), has with the figures of authority and through the use of unusual punctuation editing. In Numéro Deux, the editing provides an unconventional narrative, like testimonial episodes of each family member, as if in confession, and leaves any decision of "porno" or "politics" open as is the "story" of the family. In fact, the film's structure can suggest only that no solution be reached and that the interrogation in praxis continue. The film leaves the spectator to decide whether this film is about porno or politics or whether is it about something entirely different. Ultimately, the interrogation factor that Godard and Miéville construct into the discourse of this film functions in two ways. It is their way of jamming the spectator's culturally founded notions that, first of all, film must tell a story and that this story must follow certain rules of narrative and come to a conclusion. And secondly, it questions film culture by proposing an "auto-critique" (self-criticism) in order to continue to challenge the "truth

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two contemporary films, Bergman's Scenes from a Marriage and [Claude] Sautet's Vincent, François, Paul et les autres" (After the New Wave 116).

in film," by alternating between video and film; by switching between genres: testimonial-documentary, pornography, and narrative fiction; and by experimenting with sound and multiple screen images. This process of self-criticism, as a use of Brechtian principles, also tries to break up the identificatory practices of the viewers that would be found in a smooth flowing narrative. Film conventions once again meet with resistant cinematic language in images, voices, and sounds.

In examining a number of these films together for a moment, we notice that they all seem to attempt to meet the challenge implicit in Godard's early statement: "to make political films politically" by shifting the codes, structures, and discourses of an existing mainstream and filmmaking institution. They all express a unity between theory and practice in their filmmaking and propose an investigation of the social and political determination of women's positions in society as well as "in ideology." The investigation continues as they interrogate the images that they themselves, as films, as social productions, use to question the traditional conventions of cinema. Let's consider for a moment the film, Numéro deux, which is mostly about "women and sexuality," a pun or a statement regarding the status of woman as still being a second-class citizen in society (but I am sure that it comes also from a bad pun on Le deuxième sexe (1949) of Simone de Beauvoir). [38] The film conveys themes in its repetitive images and sounds that relate to women and heterosexuality, as well as to male heterosexuality and sexual aggression (the husband forces his wife to have anal sex, which further complicates the wife's sexual "blockage"). If, as Godard has suggested, images of woman are emblematic of the consumer society's exploitative nature, then we might wish to make the connection to

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[38] MacCabe says that the film is about "women and shit" (103). He also noted that "Numéro Deux has a multiple-determined title: on the one hand it refers to its subject matter, woman and anality, but on the other hand it is dependent on the fact that it was made with the same director, Godard, the same producer, Georges Beauregard, and the same budget (500.000FFr) as had been used sixteen years earlier to make A bout de souffle" (24) and, I would add, on the euphemistic "Number 2" of excrement. For further commentary on Numéro Deux, see the interview with Godard in "Images of Woman, Images of Sexuality" by Laura Mulvey and Colin MacCabe, 79-100.

Michel Crozier's socio-historical text on France's consumer culture he called "la société bloquée" [stalemate society or blocked society].[39] That is, like this emblematic woman in this image, modern French (European) society is blocked and stalled in its inability to move forward economically by warding off American consumer ideology and by simultaneously being seduced by its industrial production and cultural reproduction. This "blockage" is also emblematic of the filmmakers' inability to represent women sexually in any way other than in a pre-determined manner through patriarchally- or ideologically-centered discourse that Godard himself knows he is a part of. As Mulvey and MacCabe remark:

> The housewife is tied more tightly to the home and the camera echoes her imprisonment, never moving outside the confines of the flat, except to show her once, returning from a doomed search for work, refusing to give her attention to the demands of the outside world, refusing to listen to a woman campaigner for Chile. The camera registers this scene from the balcony above, maintaining its own sense of imprisonment. (95)

Proof of this metaphor of blockage and imprisonment is seen at the end of the film, where Godard is shown with his face down on the sound board, in a posture of frustration and acknowledgement of it. If however we were to take this notion of blockage and apply it to Akerman's Jeanne Dielman we might also consider that the narrative metaphorically questions some of the same notions of imprisonment, claustrophobia, and women in its use of small spaces (e.g. bathtub, kitchen, elevator). But in Akerman's film the "blockage" is an interrogation of woman's immobility within the symbolic order "in ideology" where she exists in the quotidian. As in Tanner's Le milieu du monde, this blockage attempts to

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[39] "The second part of the film is more symbolically linked to Sandrine's constipation. Her blocked body comes to stand for the blockage in the social system as a whole; she consumes but she cannot produce" (Mulvey and MacCabe 99). Roland Barthes's term "blocage" from S/Z is rendered into English as "jamming," a function that must be set in place to derail the closed narrative readings of nineteenth-century novels and carries with it a rather positive connotation, seen, for example, in Flaubert's critique of narrative and the ideological "idée reçue" in Madame Bovary.

question Europe's acceptance of "le temps de normalisation" [time of normalization] that in many ways is a return to pre-'68 morality, ethics, and socio-political "stalemate," as if the revolutionary concepts of 1968 were nothing but a blip on the screen of history. In contrast to this investigation of social stasis, both Jacques Rivette's Céline et Julie vont en bateau (1974) and Alain Robbe-Grillet's Glissements progressifs du plaisir (1974) investigate the unconscious of patriarchy within the construction of narrative, and especially within the film's form. This is quite explicit in Glissements if we consider Alice, who is constantly subverting the Minister's notion of truth in language (in confession). Alice constructs sexual fantasy narratives for the Minister in lieu of a narrative reconstruction of the events (confession) of the crime of which she has been accused. Alice's actions can be considered in light of Hélène Cixous's "Le rire de la méduse" where she writes: "Qu'ils tremblent, les prêtres, on va leur montrer nos sextes" [Let the priests tremble, we're going to show them our sexts],[40] because this combinatory pun, that works in both English and French, of "nos sexes" (translated as genitals and gender or sex) and "les textes" (texts) is also at work for Alice. Her sexuality is used to construct texts as a critique of patriarchy and ideology. Both Numéro Deux and Glissements use female sexuality and female nudity as a point of departure for subverting the ideology inherent in culture and its institutions that perpetuate the formation of subject "in ideology."

These two extremes of radically traditional depictions of female sexuality in male fantasy (although Robbe-Grillet is trying to subvert the notion of male fantasy by structuring it as female resistance to the ideological apparatuses of patriarchal fantasy) are counterbalanced with a complete shifting of the discourses that subtend those images. In Tanner's Le milieu du monde (1974) this emblematic use of the liberated female body does not seem to be put to such radical use as it is in these two other films, but it is used to

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[40] Hélène Cixous, "Le rire de la Méduse," L'arc 61 (1975): 47 (39-54.) "The Laugh of the Medusa" New French Feminisms 245-264. Also in Signs (Summer 1976).

counter and subvert the mentality of complacency that everything is normal, that "everything really is so" ("Ideology" 181). This film is about the unlikely romance between a young, widowed Italian working class woman , Adriana (Olympia Carlisi), who has come to Switzerland to find employment, and a local businessman and political candidate, Paul Chamoret (Philippe Léotard). Tanner's title also implies that geography and location are political elements in his cinema. "Le milieu du monde" refers to an actual place in Switzerland, described as the "point de partage des eaux entre le Nord, les ruisseaux qui coulent vers le Rhin, la mer du Nord, et le Midi, ceux qui descendent ver le Rhône, la Méditerranée."[41] This center is used metaphorically as it refers to what Tanner is trying to decenter and marginalize, whereas it refers narratively to the point of collision of two different ideals (worlds) found in the characters, Adriana and Paul. This is seen when Paul takes Adriana to this geographic location: Adriana, though slightly amused, will point to her belly and say "C'est ça le milieu du monde!" [This is the center of the world]. Technically, Tanner's Le milieu du monde uses visible editing and camera work to "signify a break with and opposition to" the ideological foundations of film as spectacle, as the "infirmité" [disability] of cinema ("Le pourquoi dire" 17, 16). Therefore, editing for Tanner is "to eliminate as much as possible the effects produced by the 'disability' of the camera and lighting" (16) and to create relationships "qui ne sont pas faussés par l'appareillage des studios."[42] Tanner is trying to create narratively a relationship between Paul and Adriana that also describes the representation of time of the relationship. He does this by editing visibly and audibly various ideas together within a sequence of scenes. For example, in Scenes 95-97, the question of time and temporality (though always present with the intertitles of dates, e.g., "le 20 février," "le 21 février" written on the screen) is brought

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[41]François Debiesse, "Les films: Le milieu du monde," Cinématographe 10 (novembre-décembre 1974): 4. Akerman's Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce 1080 Bruxelles places a similar emphasis on the specific geography of a working-class neighborhood in Brussels where Jeanne quietly lives and works.

[42]Alain Tanner, "Entretien avec Jo Van Osselt," Clés (octobre 1974): 57.

into the dialogue to emphasize its relationship to the film and to the historical "temps de normalisation" (the era of the 1970s that Tanner believes people did not question and accepted as "normal"). In the first scene, at the Café de la Gare, Paul gives Adriana a watch and says, "Elle te donne les secondes, les heures, les jours, les mois, les années, les années bissextiles, les marées, les pleines lunes, les équinoxes, les siècles. Tu ne la remontes jamais" [It gives you the seconds, the hours, the days, the months, the years, the leap years, the tides, the full moons, the equinoxes, the centuries. You never have to wind it]. Adriana's response to this litany of temporal measurements is also a "temporal" comment but without the precision of a Swiss watch. The conversation continues as she asks (in response to the statement "Tu ne la remontes jamais"), "Jamais?" [Never?]. Paul's response is: "Non, jamais. Elle marche toujours" [No, never. It always runs]. Adriana's final question, "Toujours?" [always?] points to the larger questions of their opposites (always or never), to Paul's desire for permanency and stability in stasis and Adriana's desire to remain free from constraints, temporal or otherwise, social or political. This difference in Adriana and Paul is once again emphasized when Paul asks her what time she would be off work, and she responds with "Bientôt" [soon]. Obviously she does not give the exact precise time even though she is wearing the watch that she just received from Paul in order to underscore that her "time" is different from his. This theme of time in the narrative is imitated in the editing as time is compressed in a direct cut from the café to Paul's home and then is allowed to reveal its presence in the use of "real time" in the scene of the field. In scene 96, Paul takes Adriana to his home and says that his wife is gone "for a time" to her mother's and now the home is Adriana's, "c'est chez toi." She says nothing but gets back into the car. The wife's time and place, marriage and the house, do not interest Adriana who does not wish to be pulled into Paul's sense of "le temps de normalisation." She, therefore, refuses the "normalcy" of house and home because it is consistent with Paul's time. The next scene in this sequence is the empty field in winter, and it is snowing. This third temporal insertion is usually accompanied with the words "le

temps de normalisation" on the screen, but in this case it is unnecessary and would be redundant. We already understand that the "normalisation" kind of time that Paul wants is in contrast to Adriana's. The only temporal exchange they can both understand is the natural change of seasons shown in the empty, snowy field.

The question of the film's relationship to the camera as a voyeur, as a visible, "nosy" character in the film corresponds to Tanner's critical engagement with visible editing. It is both an aesthetic engagement as it is a political one. This concern with editing, which Tanner calls "découpage" as opposed to "montage," comes from his work in London in the 1950s with the Free Cinema of Lindsay Anderson, Tony Richardson, and Karel Reisz and his involvement with the London-based film journals Sequence and Sight and Sound, for which he wrote extensively on the documentaries of Jean Rouch and the French Left Bank filmmakers. It is from this interest in documentaries that Tanner will explore the fiction in narrative structures of cinema. What sets Tanner apart from his contemporaries in continental Europe is that this narrative work does not necessarily come from the Western model of filmmaking. Louis Marcorelles points out in "Planète Tanner" that this difference exists for most Free Cinema filmmakers.

> C'est tout naturellement que, à travers les exemples d'Ozu et de Satyajit Ray, l'approche documentaire de base aboutit à une exaltation de la fiction, à une dilation du temps qui remet en cause toute acceptance béate du monde et de la société tels qu'ils fonctionnent. Voyage à Tokyo et Pather Panchali sont les dates pour toute l'équipe du Free Cinema.[43]

Also from this important beginning in England is Tanner's subsequent co-scripting with John Berger on three films from the 1970s, La Salamandre (1971), Le milieu du monde, and Jonas qui aura vingt-cinq ans en l'an 2000 (1976). Berger's BBC series and book, The

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[43] Louis Marcorelles, "Planète Tanner: Le cinéaste de l'utopie," Le Monde 18 juillet 1985. Voyage à Tokyo (Japan, 1953) and Pather Panchali (India, 1955).

Ways of Seeing, on all visual media cannot be underestimated in its influence on Tanner and other 1970s filmmakers or visual media artists. When the camera explores, on its own, the socially ingrained figures of dominant cultural ideologies in the small-town Swiss political party, in the "temps de la normalisation" scenes, or the film crew and camera as it shoots a scene from the film, it is adding a direct commentary on this relationship between the visible camera as simulacra or substitute reality and its awareness of its production of it spectacle and simulacra. We can begin to analyze this relationship by looking at the role of the camera in the first few scenes of Le milieu du monde. We should also ask ourselves how the camera's function contributes to the general shift in discourse and in narrative structures as it also relies on the editing. The camera is given an independence that expresses its own existence in the creation of the film and the filmic narrative. At the beginning of the film, the camera presents itself as the means to produce filmic material. By this I mean that the camera is used as the gaze from the exterior—it films the other characters, and Paul and Adriana—while reproducing its own interior look at the institution of filmmaking. This independent and roaming camera—along with the punctuation editing (inserts of titles and the peat field in different seasons)—will function in Tanner's cinema as the interrogation in praxis of the filmic medium. For example, one of the first images that we see is a long shot of the film crew shooting a scene of the actors in the country. In a sense, the camera films itself as an integral character to both the film's interior storyline and exterior narrative structure. The camera will be an omnipresent and omniscient narrator as it critically engages its position as a producer of that camera-narrator's "voice" / "look." That is, it re-presents not only the story taking place on the film set which will ultimately be on the screen, it also represents itself as part of the apparatus or mechanism to do so. The spectators get to know the camera little by little as they might be introduced to a leading character as if it were a third main character in the film, playing the role of the matchmaker, as it connects the two other main characters, Adriana and Paul. But it paradoxically

functions as the means by which the spectator identifies with the narrative, and this is the convergent point, or center, that Tanner is interrogating.

The spectator is able to understand the surprising presence of this camera as another "being" who has the capacity to see and foresee everything right from the beginning. For example, we can identify how the film performs this interrogation in praxis when Adriana enters the city for the first time. In this scene (Scene 3), the spectator recognizes relationships of distance from the filmic subject (Adriana) and of the aleatory (arbitrary intersection) caused by the tracking shot of the camera.[44] This tracking shot shows only what is in its field of vision as it passes in a parallel line to the city's train station. The lateral tracking of the camera from right to left covers a great deal of space but it creates a tension, or a potential anxiety, in that it might "cross paths" perpendicularly with something, or in this case, someone. We catch a fleeting glance of Adriana, in a long shot, as she climbs the stairs from the train station to the city (Scene 3, Shot 8). It is the spectator who plays the role of intermediary in this fortuitous anti-encounter between Adriana and the camera. It functions to suggest a possible crossing in the future. Yet the passing "intersection" of the camera's wandering and Adriana's path is the tension that interrogates the spectator's desire to see a story develop.

This shot leads to desire, the desire that Adriana will reappear as a "point de repère" for the story. But there are no other possible "intersections" at this time because there is an abrupt cut to an interior shot of a political meeting. The camera, once again, will track from right to left but it will also pan from left to right as it shows all of the men sitting around a table talking about a potential candidate for their party (Scene 4, shot 9). They are discussing the possible nomination of Paul Chamoret (who will eventually become the candidate and Adriana's lover). Paul is initially introduced to the spectators as he is

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[44] Le milieu du monde ou le cinéma selon Tanner includes the script, shooting script, and editing notes from which I have taken the scene and shot numbers. At the very beginning of Robbe-Grillet's Trans-Europ-Express, he shows the camera and film crew on the set of the film.

described through the comments of various members of this party. Tanner's fictitious political party, *Parti du Progrès* (ADP), wants to represent Paul as the moderately conservative and respected family-man and longtime resident in the community. These men around the table discussing Paul have nothing to do with the arrival of Adriana yet they function as the medium by which the spectators will get to know Paul as his community knows him. Once again this creates a feeling of distance and anticipation. The opinions of the party members create a sort of portrait of the man that the spectators will meet: a "flexibly rigid" man who will accept the ideas of the party and be easily formed by and for the upcoming election.

This scene of the party meeting is then interrupted by a second crossing of the camera and of Adriana (Scene 5). The camera takes along the spectator at the whim of its vision. The image of Adriana is still only of a passerby. This second fleeting view of her however makes the spectator curious and anxious. The lateral tracking technique used throughout the film by Tanner establishes a sort of anti-voyeur voyeurism that will record the events of the film that seem to touch the surface of the characters. The camera shows the events and the characters in an implicitly neutral way so that the spectators feel responsible in the voyeurism that is created by the tracking shots of the camera. It is however the visible-invisibility of the camera and editing that is the source of this complicity with the spectator's voyeurism. Three times, the camera demands that the spectators take part in the accidental passing by of Adriana. It forces us to be aware of the the rapid and ephemeral image, kept at the surface of the film. Finally, at the cafe where she finds work, she comes in contact with the camera and simultaneously with the local men sitting around playing cards. They look at her curiously, and using their point of view the camera tries to imitate the look of the men at the cafe. It shows only what interests the card players—Adriana from the thighs to the throat. The camera, and Tanner with it, is making fun of the ridiculous gaze of the card-players, the sexist and patriarchally-bound gaze of the mainstream cinema.

Tanner further comments on the construction of gazes and of traditional narrative by subverting both of these with his editing. The two insert-images he uses as punctuation are of a peat field and of a passing train. The field is shown in various seasons indicative of the passing time in the relationship of Adriana and Paul and of the temporal quality of cinema. The insert titles give the date of their relationship or comments on the socio-political stasis of the city as "le temps de normalisation" [time of normalization]. This is directly related to that society's inability to recognize the modified economic and political situation of 1970s European culture including the women's movement, worker relations, and governmental changes. The film comments on the fact that people wanted to forget that 1968 changed the way ideologies were transmitted and exchanged in relationships of the individual to the social. At the same time, Tanner uses the image and the sound of the passing train to comment on the idealization of that change. The relationship between Paul and Adriana, like the passing train, is momentary and ironically fixed like the schedule of the train. The train metaphorically captures the ephemeral quality of the relationship and the ephemeral quality of images by using it as an analogous auditory experience. The sound of the passing train produces a Doppler effect—the muffled sound of the oncoming train which becomes extremely loud, in front of the microphones, as it changes pitch at its moment of passing and then fades away almost instantly—and recalls the fleeting passage of time and the intangible quality of the image as it is projected through light. Tanner uses these techniques to interrogate the "spectacle trap" that the audience in the mainstream cinema uses to create conventional narrative meaning in films.

In many ways filmmakers can "trap" spectators—whether they are male or female—in the unfolding plot of a story through cinematic discourse and structure. Filmmakers of the alternative cinema, like Tanner, Robbe-Grillet, Godard, and Varda, will "catch" the spectators by implicating them in the presentation itself of the images in a film. Jacques Rivette refused to be constrained by the limits of classical cinematic narrative and representation and used narrative structures in his film to engage spectators, neither

trapping nor capturing them. In some cases, the tampering with film language can imply a certain mischievousness, seen in some films as the absurd or playful, as in Rivette's Céline et Julie vont en bateau, subtitled Phantom Ladies over Paris (1974). In this film, there are two female characters, Céline (Juliet Berto, who also played the young revolutionary in Godard's Le gai savoir) and Julie (Dominique Labourier), who eat home-made hallucinatory candy and are mysteriously projected into another fictional world of two conflated Henry James narratives.[45] These characters are like Alice, in Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland, who falls down the rabbit hole into another world. In Glissements progressifs du plaisir, screenwriter and director Robbe-Grillet has repeatedly said that his main character, Alice, refers directly to Lewis Carroll's Alice, who upsets and disrupts authority in this world that she has fallen into unexpectedly. In a video-taped interview with French film critic, François Jost, Robbe-Grillet says that Alice "refuses to follow the rules made by the men," refusing a patriarchal order. Her way of disrupting the order is by continually reinscribing her own artistic expression in the place of patriarchally accepted notions of painting, music, and narrative. Rivette will build on the same disruptive qualities that Robbe-Grillet uses, but in a very different way. Rivette has compared these two characters' functions as "des emplois définis par des étiquettes comme les personnages de la Commedia dell'Arte" like Arlequin and Colombine or Sylvia in theatre.[46] But their names, Céline and Julie, are inspired by literature. Céline comes from Ferdinand Céline and Voyage au bout de la nuit (reminiscent of Pierrot le fou's Ferdinand) which marks the end of romanticism, but also points to a recuperation of a woman's name in that Céline had taken his grandmother's name as his own. In addition, Céline signs her name "Céline Cendrars" on an identity card for a hotel registry, a reference to the French poet, Blaise

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[45] Juliet Berto (Céline) and Dominique Labourier (Julie) along with Marie-France Pisier are credited with the film's scenario and in certain parts of the film they improvised their dialogues.

[46] Jacques Rivette, "Un entretien avec Jacques Rivette à propos de Céline et Julie: Quand le réel court après la fiction, il se passe des choses étranges," Le Monde 19 juillet 1976, 17.

Cendrars. Julie, refers to Julie, ou la nouvelle Héloïse of Rousseau (Akerman's will also use this name, Julie, for the main female character that she plays in Je tu il elle), the Enlightenment heroine who is torn between duty to the father and husband and her own feelings of love and passion which override them. He emphasizes literary borrowing, as opposed to Robbe-Grillet's cinematic and, literally, pornographic, borrowing, as a tactic toward subversion by inclusion. This re-working of literature is used to reconstruct the narrative playfully and deconstruct the tradition of nineteenth-century romanticism. At around the same time that Céline et Julie vont en bateau (1974) was made, the field of literary theory was "being caught" in its own plot. I am referring to the study of semiotics (Barthes, Eco), which was a very influential theoretical device then used by certain filmmakers in their story and narrative structure. Jacques Rivette offers in Céline et Julie a filmic structure and discourse for the construction of the open versus the closed text; the readerly text versus the writerly text proposed by Umberto Eco and Roland Barthes as the formal breaking of tradition and movement toward the modernist text.[47] Though Rivette has chosen to use these theories in a filmic fashion, he relies on the the literary texts of Henry James to express the closed and "filmed" texts in opposition to the anti-patriarchal open and "filmic" text perpetually created by Céline and Julie.

"Toying" with film language can create a certain mischievousness, seen in most films with special effects or illusions. But in Céline et Julie, it is presented as the absurd or playful. The film makes this "playfulness" one of the tenets of its anti-patriarchal stance. The two main characters, Céline and Julie, meet after a long game of follow the leader or tag (depending on how you play the game), finally meeting back at Julie's apartment. There Céline tells an outrageous tale of safaris and heart-shaped swimming pools and is nonetheless comforted by a skeptical Julie. They will later prepare a witchcraft-inspired

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47 Umberto Eco, A Theory of Semiotics (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976); Roland Barthes, S/Z (Paris: Seuil, 1970).

candy and are mysteriously projected into another fictional world of the two James narratives. This metafictional world takes place in what I call the "Jamesian house." Rivette employs two Henry James narratives, the novel, The Other House and the story, "The Romance of Certain Old Clothes," as the fixture of narrative in the Jamesian house on "rue du Nadir aux Pommes." This house is also figured in the film as a stage, where Céline and Julie will act out their re-structured narrative and eventually save the little girl from the fate of being fixed (killed) in that story. In this house they play the same "nurse," Miss Angèle, to the dying girl, Madelyn, in the closed plot of the Jamesian fiction. They must however constantly deal with the intervention of their primary fictional lives as magician and librarian, respectively. [48] Like Alice, Céline and Julie ultimately upset the events of the Jamesian plots and disrupt the *author*ity in this world that literature has produced. In this film the unfixed and innovative narrative is created by the main female characters Céline and Julie. Rivette, with the help of improvisational work of the screen actresses, investigates and challenges the unconscious of patriarchy in filmic and literary structures. He uses a cyclical or circular narrative, which can be seen in such introductory insert titles as: "le plus souvent ça commençait comme ça" [usually things started like this] and in the repetitive returns to the Jamesian house where the actions of the pseudo-Jamesian characters are repeated incessantly, even with the intervention of Céline and Julie.[49] Gérard Legrand, in "Un film est un complot," sees this film functioning as the "l'implication réciproque du spectateur et du spectacle" [the reciprocal implication of the spectator and the

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[48] The strange figure of Alice keeps reappearing in the 1970s. Teresa de Lauretis picks up on this in the beginning of Alice Doesn't. There are quite a few references to Alice in the 70s, including the anonymous publication, Go Ask Alice, the diary of a young woman addicted to drugs and the subsequent Jefferson Airplane's song "Alice," sung by Grace Slick whose lyrics include "go ask Alice when she's ten feet tall;" Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore (1974) one of Martin Scorsese's earliest films; Wim Wender's Alice in the Cities (1974) which deals with American pop culture, but strangely enough uses the figure of a little girl (as in Céline et Julie) as a pivotal character of the narrative.

[49] The imparfait of "ça commençait" would be indicative of a habitual action in the past or of a continuous action in the past already hinting to the repetitive structure that will be developed in the film.

spectacle].[50] Though not altogether outside of the mainstream, this film produces ways to disrupt viewers expectations at various levels. Céline et Julie was a very popular film, though long in terms of acceptable fiction feature lengths. It is Rivette's choice of filmic matter, women and circularity, that reinforces the narrative structure and anti-commercial, subversive length (over three hours) at the material level. Rivette also uses the film's length (which we will also see in Akerman's Jeanne Dielman) to challenge conventional cinema by rejecting the fast-based editing of a typical Hollywood length feature of 90 to 105 minutes. Films of the length of Rivette's are usually based on epic linear plots that are always moving forward in order to come to closure. With Rivette the narrative is more circular and contains repeating elements throughout. The story in the Jamesian house is still the same story every time that either Céline or Julie eat their candy and are "sent" there. In opposition to the Jamesian house as the metafictional world that will be closed and fixed is the unfixable nature of Céline and Julie's filmic text that "usually begins like this."

Subversive narrative structures in this alternative cinema continue to investigate and interrogate the representation of the film spectacle as a function of dominant ideological structures of Western culture (and film's complicitous relationship in it). But it is the feminist mode of production from the 1970s which will make filming politically for the women's movement an interrogation in praxis that has social consequence. This kind of filmmaking can be seen in Chantal Akerman's 1975 film Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles. Her feminist filmmaking is closely linked to the "tempo lent" of Duras, Tanner and Rivette but also to feminist theory, specifically to the French feminist thought of Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray, and Monique Wittig, who focused on the need to revolutionize and subvert language in order to get out of the constraints of a symbolic order. Akerman will work through and against the mainstream film and the documentary through the subversion by inclusion of film images and sounds in both Je tu il elle and

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[50] Gérard Legrand, "Un film est un complot," Positif 162 (octobre 1974): 15. 14-16.

Jeanne Dielman. What I will propose in the next section is another way of looking at Varda's challenge for feminist filmmakers to invent their future by modifying their representation, using a completely different structure that is experimental and theoretical in nature in Chantal Akerman's film Je tu il elle (1974, released 1976). Here, Akerman, herself, is the central female figure, inscribing her image and voice onto the film as an act of authorship and modification of the typical representation of subjectivities in film. This feminist urgency in the 1970s to self-inscribe is one way to remove the female representation from the objectification of patriarchal or ideological discourse. However, even given these notions of subversive tampering and blocking, we cannot forget that what the spectators see is still coming from the filmmakers who themselves are a part of the society of ideas and history of their era, still participating, though marginally so, in the ideology of the culture. In Robbe-Grillet's Glissements progressifs du plaisir (1974) the narrative structure will be disrupted by constructing the narrative according to the fantasies of the representatives of authority and ideology. Robbe-Grillet further will use editing techniques that do not follow a linear logic to deconstruct the spectator's complicity in the erotic images of the naked female body. This editing with punctuation is in stark contrast to the last film I will discuss in this study, Akerman's Jeanne Dielman. With this film we come to a crossroads of feminist filmmaking and alternative cinema and where I think Akerman bridges the gap between the two emerging tendencies of feminist filmmaking of the 1970s by borrowing from both documentary and narrative cinema to subvert the patriarchal structures of dominant cinema.

This feminist and experimental film preoccupation with changing structures and discourses in film and in culture will be a challenge always on the verge of solution. I think that Laura Mulvey expresses this notion best when she wrote of Godard in regard to Numéro Deux that "his consciousness of image as cultural production, consciousness of himself as part of and torn by cultural traditions, gives him an awareness of the levels of meaning that the image of woman has acquired in history like grime on ancient

buildings..."(92). As Mulvey suggests in this quotation, even given these examples of "subversive" tampering with film language and social and artistic challenges in film, cinema participates in the ideology of the culture. In working through and against the conventional codes of cinema the alternatives resist the mainstream's lure of classical narrative structure and remain in the margins, a margin where the alternative cinema can interrogate and, as Tanner points out, "reconnaître ce que ces conventions signifient et de les faire 'déraper' " [to recognize what these conventions signify and to derail them] ("Le pourquoi dire" 14). For the alternative cinema and for feminists the nature of this polemic is found in the mediation between the real and the fantasy in the filmic image/sound discourse that takes into account that film is still a product of its own culture.

Chapter 3
A(t)tempting Narrative and Developing Subjectivities: Chantal Akerman's Je tu il elle (1974)

> We must produce a political transformation of the key concepts, that is of the concepts which are strategic for us. For there is another order of materiality, that of language, and language is worked upon from within these strategic concepts. It is at the same time tightly connected to the political field, where everything that concerns language, science and thought refers to the person as subjectivity and to her/his relationship to society. And we cannot leave this within the power of the straight mind or the thought of domination.
>
> Monique Wittig [1]

> Histoire du cinéma, art industriel, dont le développement est lui aussi conditionné depuis le début du siècle par les conjonctures économiques et politiques. Les progrès de la technique et du langage du cinéma n'ont jamais pu se soustraire à la contrainte des nécessités économiques, ni aux obligations idéologiques des situations politiques.
>
> Bénédicte Delesalle [2]

> I can't resist the temptation to make a story. The attraction is evident. But... is the suspicion also justified?
>
> Teresa de Lauretis [3]

In Teresa de Lauretis's chapter on narrative cinema, "Strategies of Coherence," she identifies a new narrative practice in feminist filmmaking in relation to filmmaker Yvonne Rainer's own movement toward narrative techniques away from the avant-garde. De

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[1] Monique Wittig, "The Straight Mind," The Straight Mind and Other Essays (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993) 30.

[2] Bénédicte Delesalle, "Toute une histoire!" CinémAction 9 (1979): 82.

[3] Teresa de Lauretis, Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film and Fiction (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987) 109. Subsequent references to this work are given in the text.

Lauretis's theoretical position on the need for the recuperation of narrative conventions is applied to one of Rainer's later film The Man Who Envied Women (1985), which exemplifies this use of the conventions of narrative for feminist filmmaking. Rainer's statement about her own poetics of filmmaking begins itself as a narrative of development. During the first phase of feminist filmmaking she said that her earliest attempts represented the "... description of individual feminine experience floating free of both social context and narrative hierarchy...."[4] It is this kind of filmmaking that de Lauretis describes as "the early and more formally experimental phase of a cinema of women which was aesthetically connected to avant-garde film and to performance art" (119) and has been associated with feminist films from Belgium, England, France, Germany, and the United States, including, Chantal Akerman's Je tu il elle (Belgium, 1974).[5] And yet I will argue that Akerman's film, Je tu il elle, though clearly marked by the avant-garde and a refusal to use a linear narrative structure, processes and produces an insistence on narrative in the social context of the 1970s cultural history, especially in relationship to questioning systems of meaning and of power and exclusion.

Je tu il elle is influenced by two different film styles, the French *Nouvelle Vague* and the American avant-garde, though it is important to note that Bénédicte Delesalle, the Director of Photography for Je tu il elle, collaborated materially toward the making of this film and was herself mostly influenced by the *cinéma-direct* of Jean Rouch and the Left-Bank documentarist style of filming.[6] Akerman's work can be characterized as part of the

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[4] Rainer is quoted in Technologies of Gender, 107. The whole text is published in Yvonne Rainer, "More Kicking and Screaming from the Narrative Front/Backwater," Wide Angle 7.1-2 (1985): 8.

[5] Je tu il elle (Belgium) - Dir., Sc., Dial.: Chantal Akerman; Ph.: Benedicte Delasalle; Ass. Ph.: Charlotte Szlovak, Renelde Dupont; Bruitage: Marc Lobet; Sons seuls: Alian Pierre; Son direct: Samy Szlingerbaum; Mixage: Gerard Rousseau; Montage: Luc Freche; Prod.: Paradise Films; Cast: Chantal Akerman, Neils Arestrup, Claire Wauthion. B&W 90 min. (1974: Festival de Bruxelles, Festival de Films de Nice. Filmed in 1974. Released in 1976.

[6] Bénédicte Delesalle, "Toute une histoire!" CinémAction 9 (1979): 81.

European alternative cinema of the 1970s, which borrowed from the French *Nouvelle Vague* an interest in problematizing the discourse of filmmaking, even though the largest number of directors of the *Nouvelle Vague* still upheld the ideology of its dominant, patriarchal-centered culture. As I have already suggested, for the most part, the *Nouvelle Vague* used experimental film language to break away from conventional narrative but maintained traditional representations of gender and the hierarchy of images in the editing process.[7] Female characters were still presented as fetishized objects of desire in the use of close-ups of legs, facial features, breasts, etc... or, within the story, these characters were given many male sexual-partners as a mark of their *liberation* from societal constraints. Filmmakers utilized filmic intertextuality to explore its basic components and its own reproduction of culture. Many of the filmmakers in the 1950s and 1960s were not however ready to use film's signifying functions to deconstruct gendered representation in their films, and therefore reinscribed many of the popular images of *femme fatale* or the new *liberated* woman onto the narratives.

Yet curiously even Chantal Akerman, as we have seen, dates her initial interest in film to her first screening of Jean-Luc Godard's Pierrot le fou (1965). In an interview with Godard, Akerman concretizes her relationship to this initial film-going experience and Pierrot le fou when she says,

> "Et puis j'ai vu Pierrot le fou et j'ai eu l'impression que ça parlait de notre époque, de ce que je sentais. Avant, c'était toujours Les Canons de Navarone, et je m'en foutais de ces choses-là. Je ne sais pas, mais c'était la première fois que j'étais émue au cinéma, mais alors... violemment. Et sans doute que j'ai voulu faire la même chose avec des films *qui seraient les*

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[7] I address how Akerman has theorized the hierarchy of images in detail in Chapter 5. Briefly, it includes images that Akerman has specifically chosen because technically they are the scenes that are typically "elided" from most narrative cinema and eliminates narratively these images that are clearly linked to what Akerman called "the place of women in the hierarchy of [patriarchal] society." Marie-Claude Treilhou, "Interview-Chantal Akerman: 'La vie, il faut la mettre en scène,'" Cinéma 76 206 (février 1976): 92.

> *miens*.... Au fond, Pierrot le fou a un peu joué pour moi le rôle du cinéma dominant... ça m'a masqué les autres films.... Il m'a fallu un certain temps pour commencer à aimer d'autres films."[8]

Through this cinematic experience, Akerman decided to quit high school and become a filmmaker. Because Akerman wished to use this cinematic language as an innovative force in order to question her attitude and feelings toward her own era, she enrolled in film school and made her first film. In a 1976 interview with Marie-Claude Treilhou, Akerman explained that "en 1967, je suis rentrée dans une école de cinéma—j'y suis restée juste quelques mois—et en 1968 j'ai fait mon premier film."[9] And just like many established filmmakers she lacked the funds necessary to finish her film, and Saute ma ville (1968) remained in the lab unedited. In the meantime, she moved to Paris for two years, and upon returning to Belgium discovered that she could get her film finished and onto Flemish television. Around the same time, she tells Treilhou, she heard about the "subvention accordée par le Ministère de la Culture française" (89) [financial support from the Ministry of French Culture] for the funds to make another film. But her scenario about a 5-year old who poisons her parents was vetoed by the Ministry.

Her use of the *Nouvelle Vague*'s techniques changed once she began filming again during an influential trip to the United States where she screened the films of American avant-garde and independent filmmakers: "J'y ai vu des films de Brakhage, mais surtout de

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[8] "Jean-Luc Godard, Chantal Akerman, Entretien sur un projet-1," Ça cinéma 19 (mai 1980), 6. (Emphasis mine). "And then I saw Pierrot le fou and I had the impression that itwas about our era, of what I was feeling. Before, it was always The Guns of Navarone, and I really didn't care about those things. I don't know, but it was the first time that I was moved by cinema, and really, violently. And then of course I wanted to do the same this with films that would be my own... Basically, Pierrot le fou played for me the role of dominant cinema...it blocked out other films for me... It took me a while to begin to like other films."

[9] Marie-Claude Treilhou, "Interview-Chantal Akerman: 'La vie, il faut la mettre en scène,'" Cinéma 76 206 (février 1976), 89. Subsequent references to this interview are given in the text. "in 1967, I enrolled in film school—I stayed there only a few months—and in 1968 I made my first film." Her first film, Saute ma ville (1968), is discussed in chapter 2 of this dissertation.

Michael Snow. Ce sont des films qui ne travaillent que sur le langage du cinéma, où il n'y a pas d'histoire ni de sentiments" (89). [I saw the films of Brakhage and especially of Michael Snow. These are films that work uniquely on cinematic language, where there is no story, no feelings.] Akerman's own films decenter classical Hollywood techniques by appropriating parts of experimental film technique and using them in her own untraditional narratives. In fact her film News From Home (1976) is strongly connected to this influence of the American experimental artists of the 1970s, as are her earlier short films Hotel Monterey (1972) and La chambre (1972), both made at the Hotel Monterey in New York during her stay. In a review of a retrospective of her work in the 1980s, a Boston journalist, Karen Rosenberg, wrote that during this time in New York "Akerman supported herself by working in a restaurant, a thrift shop, and a photo lab, and at the 55th Street Playhouse, the porno pictures, as a cashier [who] in three weeks... stole $4,000, and made Hotel Monterey and La chambre with that."[10] News from Home, made after both Je tu il elle and Jeanne Dielman, is a return to experimental film where sounds and images are layered but no conventional narrative exists within the contiguous structure of the images. The film's heavily accented voice-over reading the translated letters from the narrator's Belgian mother is juxtaposed with images of New York City's desolate city-scapes and rumbling subways to create the narrative. The strong family "story" seems to be sometimes just as oppressive as the City's desolation and emptiness. Here, as in her earlier film, Je tu il elle, it is voice that gives author-ity to the film. And yet Je tu il elle was made without funding, outside of both film school and the Belgium film industry's authorities. Marie-Thérèse Pelacot wrote in her 1976 review that "Je tu il elle est un film sauvage, tourné en huit jours, en dehors de tous les circuits, sans subsides, un film tourné ailleurs, autrement,

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[10] Karen Rosenberg, "Akerman unbound: Life before and after *Jeanne Dielman*," The Boston Phoenix February 25, 1986, III, 5. In Bette Gorden's Variety (1982) the main character is a woman who, as a porno picture cashier, questions the exploitative nature of voyeurism within the porno industry and becomes fascinated with her own possibilities of voyeurism and desire.

qui n'est pas passé à travers la machine normalatrice de l'industrie cinématographique...."[11] This resistance to the "proper channels" of authority—"un film sauvage," can mean an unauthorized or unofficial film—may have been one of the reasons why it did not have a theatrical release until 1976, one year after Jeanne Dielman was made and released.[12] This is interesting on several different levels: at the practical level this resists the authority of the film industry's power to create a distinctly "Belgian" cinema that Je tu il elle obviously is working against.[13] But also by the film's mere existence it questions the industry's system of power and exclusion based on financial ability to make films and with an "acceptable" narrative content. This double exclusion seems to me to be addressed narratively in the film as a series of inclusions—in the hitch-hiking sequence and in the lesbian love-making sequence—that recognizes the total interrelation of power and sexuality.[14] This is an example of Akerman's active inclusionary practice that creates subversion by inclusion. We can see this in her filmic structure, which uses various unedited sequences, thus including entire scenes in long takes, and in the narrative itself. It includes, as the title suggests, the centrality of agency where "je," "tu," "il," "elle" can all

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[11] Marie-Thérèse de Pelacot, "*Je tu il elle*," Jeune Cinéma 99 (décembre 1976/janvier 1977): 43. "Je tu il elle is an unauthorized film, shot in eight days, outside of all circuits, without financing, a film made 'elsewhere,' in other words, a film that did not pass through the normalizing apparatus of the film industry..."

[12] Françoise Maupin, "*Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles*," Revue du cinéma/Image et Son 303 (février 1976): 86-88. "Jeanne Dielman est le premier film de Chantal Akerman à être présenté en salle à Paris. Pourtant celle-ci, 25 ans, a déjà à son actif un autre long métrage: Je tu il elle; deux moyens métrages, dont Hôtel Monterey primé à Toulon en 1973 et quatre courts métrages. D'autre part, la Biennale de Venise lui a consacré, en 1975, une rétrospective. Elle n'est donc pas inconnue des cinéphiles..." (87).

[13] See Paul Davay, "Les éléments promoteurs du cinéma belge," Cinéma de Belgique (Gembloux: Editions J. Duculot, 1975) 159-166.

[14] See Liz Kotz, "Anything But Idyllic: Lesbian filmmaking in the 1980s and 1990s," Sisters Sexperts, Queers: Beyond the Lesbian Nation, ed. Arlene Stein (New York: Plume [Penguin], 1993) 67-80.

be, all inclusively, potential subjects.[15] This collectivization of pronouns as "collective agency" or as subjectivities outside the mainstream is always recognized by Akerman to be in a relationship to dominant cinema. This means that the collective includes the margin and its relationship to the center. I also agree with Judith Mayne in "Mistresses of Discrepancy" that these pronouns are "stubborn knots both contained by and resistant to patriarchal logic" (134-5) and connect Akerman's work to that of Monique Wittig's in both her early Les guerillères (1969) and Le corps lesbien (1975).[16] This refusal of conventional narrative does not need to be seen as a *subtraction from* her cinema, but ought to be understood as an avoidance of the limitations of the rules of conventions. But by nonetheless constructing a film narratively, Akerman remains in a position that is never quite within the system but never too far from the dominant cinematic practices. A closer look at the elements of her relatively marginalized "narrative" cinema reveals a particular structural coherence that constantly comments on her exclusion from the dominant without ever desiring to become a part of it.

Indeed, Akerman's film offers explicit and contradictory narratives at many different levels in the film's three sections: in the voice-overs and letter-writing of the first part; in the exploration of subjectivity and sexuality focused in the second— "on the road" with a trucker—and third parts; and in the explicit "trajectory of desire"[17] of the main

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[15] In keeping with de Lauretis's "subversive strategies" one can read the "je, tu, il, elle" as "je tue il, elle" as suggested by Françoise Collin's reading of Hadelin Trinon's joke about the tension present in the film.. She writes "Emporté par le souci du je («je tue il, elle» comme le disait avec humour Hadelin Trinon, mais aussi «il, elle tue je») consciente par ailleurs de ce que le je ne fait pas image..." Françoise Collin, "Cadres, cadrages et encadrement," Chantal Akerman ed. Jacqueline Aubenas (Bruxelles: Ateliers de Arts, 1982) 134.

[16] Judith Butler points out in Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity (New York: Routledge, 1990) that Wittig's work is linked to a materialist feminism with traces of Marxist thought. She writes that Wittig's theory "delineates the performative construction of gender within the material practice of culture..." (25). The other very interesting aspect of Wittig's work as it applies directly to Akerman's is, as Butler further points out, that Le corps lesbien is "Wittig's narrative (which is at once an antinarrative) [that] brings those culturally constructed notions of bodily integrity into question" (163).

[17] Judith Mayne, "Mistresses of Discrepancy," Woman at the Keyhole (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1990) 127, 128. Mayne makes "the connection between lesbianism and cinematic representation" where

character—played by Akerman herself—that is both lesbian and feminist shown in the third part, where she meets her lover; the scene of their sexual encounter is filmed in three long takes with diegetic sound. Akerman works against a heterosexualization of narrative hierarchy in a move toward lesbian cinematic representation. To show this, I will be referring to the narrative structure, authorship, and sexuality in Je tu il elle by taking into consideration de Lauretis's arguments for "narrative coherence" and the contradictory feminist need for "author-ity" and continual "strategies of subversion" along with the "authorial signature" as developed by Judith Mayne in "Mistresses of Discrepancy."[18] Yet I will keep in mind de Lauretis's use of Michel Foucault's History of Sexuality and her definition of "technologies of gender"[19] in order to further develop a reading of Akerman's film.

In "Strategies of Coherence" de Lauretis maps out the development of "narrative" and "poetics" in relation to Lacanian psychoanalysis and "the European debate around cinematic articulation" (116) that occurred in the mid to late 1960s through both the French film journal, Cahiers du cinéma and its British counterpart, Screen. As I have already

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Akerman expresses a desire for other women that is central to her filmic project. (This desire is found in both Je tu il elle and Les rendez-vous d'Anna [1978].) Akerman's self-representation is used to "expose and undermine those fictions [of narrative cinema] not only because of the explicit lesbian desire which defines the relationship of [author to text], but more specifically because of how that desire is represented, through the exposition of pain, narcissism, infantilism, and neediness." See also Françoise Audé, "Le cinéma de Chantal Akerman, la nourriture, le narcissisme, l'exil," in Chantal Akerman ed. Jacqueline Aubenas (Bruxelles: Ateliers de Arts, 1982) 151-165.

[18] Judith Mayne, "Mistresses of Discrepancy" Woman at the Keyhole (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1990) 124-154.

[19] De Lauretis derives her meaning of "technologies of gender" from a reading of Michel Foucault's "The Deployment of Sexuality" in History of Sexuality: An Introduction, Vol. 1, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990). In Chapter 4, "Periodization," Foucault writes: "It was during the same period—the end of the eighteenth century—and for reasons that will have to be determined, that there emerged a completely new *technology of sex*; new in that for the most part it escaped the ecclesiastical institution without being truly independent of the thematics of sin." (History: Vol. 1, 116.) Emphasis mine. See also Chapter 4 of this dissertation for further discussion of Foucault and sexuality in relation to Alain Robbe-Grillet's Glissements progressifs du plaisir (1974). The other two volumes to Foucault's trilogy are History of Sexuality: The Use of Pleasure, Vol. 2, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990) and History of Sexuality: The Care of the Self, Vol. 3, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1988).

shown, in the 1970s psychoanalysis and feminism are introduced into structuralist and poststructuralist film theory and semiotics, and, as de Lauretis maintains, this combination of theories changes the basis of film theory and criticism, because "both the feminist critique of representation and psychoanalysis, or certain epistemological assumptions derived thereof, became established at the center of film narrative theory" (117). One of the feminists about whom de Lauretis writes is Laura Mulvey. I stress here once again her contribution to feminist film theory, because of her article's particular timely importance to Akerman's film practice and to de Lauretis's later formulation of "social technology" from her studies of Foucault. Mulvey, based on readings of Freud's "Three Essays on Sexuality," questioned narrative cinema and its "psycho-social" underpinnings where the woman is the object of the (male) spectator's gaze.[20] Yet Mulvey's use of the term "male gaze" refers to a patriarchal gaze, since it is the unconscious of patriarchy that Mulvey explores in it. She further examines how this patriarchal gaze structures film representation of the female figure within the phallocentric (symbolic) order. The "gaze" functions in relation to a "social technology," as de Lauretis calls it. That is, it participates in a system of social representations within the cinematic apparatus, and therefore is both a part of and participates in the creation of the socially constituted gendered subject.[21] This means that,

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[20] As I have presented earlier, in the Introduction to this dissertation, I do not necessarily agree with Mulvey's formulation of this kind of monological gaze; but she saw possibilities for breaking the patriarchal code and giving space to feminist filmmaking in experimental cinema, or as she called it, "alternative cinema."

[21] For detailed theory and discussions of the cinematic apparatus see Teresa de Lauretis and Stephen Heath, eds., The Cinematic Apparatus (London: Macmillan, 1980) and Bill Nichols, Ideology and the Image (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981). See also Jean-Louis Comolli and Jean Narboni, "Cinéma/Idéologie/Critique," Cahiers 216 (1969) and Comolli, "Téchnique et Idéologie: Caméra, perspective et profondeur de champ," parts 1-4 Cahiers 223 (1970) translated in Philip Rosen, Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology (New York: Columbia U Press, 1986). These Cahiers writers—Comolli, Narboni, Oudart, Baudry, Pleynet—all adhered to a particular kind of Marxist theory. Most of the writing in Cahiers du cinéma was from a Marxist perspective and Marxist conception of ideology from Althusser and Macherey (Cf. Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses.") Althusser derived a 'symptomatic' reading, from Freud and Lacan, which he applied to Marx's text to challenge the traditional treatment of a

when combining the social construction of the gendered spectator and classical narrative cinema, the filmic image of woman can only be "bearer of meaning" in the patriarchal order, and never "maker of meaning."[22] Yet de Lauretis sees in both Mulvey's and Foucault's positions a clearly bounded limitation. Whether it is Foucault's "technology" (History: Vol. 1, 116, 127) or Mulvey's "gaze," de Lauretis argues that these theories are subject to a fundamental heterosexualization of both the gendered subject, and by extension the filmic object. That is, the scopophilic pleasure fulfills male (hetero)sexual desire because the sexualization of the image of woman is always performed for the gaze in terms of a heterosexualization of the spectacle. This process of heterosexualization, along with what de Lauretis's points to as a critique of Foucault who, she says, denies gender difference because he posits not two gendered sexualities but "one and the same for all—and consequently male" (14), is the crisis of filming "in ideology." The problem of heterosexualization of the spectator in conventionally constructed narratives leads me back to reconsider de Lauretis's call for feminist use of narrative conventions in cinema, and to Akerman's film, which seems to address this issue. There is a great deal at stake here for de Lauretis's work on narrative conventions and gender because of spectators' needs for pleasurable movie-going experiences within the cinematic apparatus. As de Lauretis herself has said, her critical work on the apparatus which is derived from Althusser's "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," "is producing a knowledge of cinema *and* of the technology of sex which Foucault's theory could not lead to, on its own terms; for there, sexuality is not understood as gendered." She further describes her project as "speaking of sexuality as a construct and a (self-) representation; and that does have both a male form and a female form, although in the patriarchal or male-centered frame of mind, the female

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"homogeneous system of thought" which the Cahiers writers used to critique the social and ideological foundations or 'system of thought' that film is founded on.

[22] Mulvey, 15.

form is a projection of the male's..." (14).[23] But these elements are a part of the interrogated filmic subject and object seen through experimental film technique, which develops the discourses of subjectivity and sexuality in Je tu il elle, even as Akerman directly constructs the spectator—or in her terms, the "tu" character—into her film. It is important to see that though de Lauretis's argument points to the patriarchal ideological system of representation, her position does not account for the fact that both men and women are subject to the "patriarchal frame of mind," a particular frame of mind that is indicative of being "in ideology."

Looking once again to de Lauretis we observe that, according to her, Foucault's position on "one and the same" functions "to deny the social relations of gender that constitute and validate the sexual oppression of women; and second, to deny gender is to remain 'in ideology,' an ideology which (not coincidentally if, of course, not intentionally) is manifestly self-serving to the male-gendered subject" (15). This creates what de Lauretis calls the "patriarchal or male-centered frame of mind," one in opposition to the possibility for "non-male related sexual identities for women" (14) in contemporary feminist film theory and practice. Thus, when conventional cinematic narratives are said to share some of the basic structures of patriarchy where spectators are privileged as male or "in ideology," we can see how within traditional narrative cinema this allows the production and reproduction of a distinctly heterosexual male site of desire. For example, Patricia White has said in reading de Lauretis' "figure of narrative closure" (Alice Doesn't, 118) that "we can recognize the 'narrative image' as fundamentally an image of heterosexual closure, or,

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[23] Although I understand de Lauretis's concern for power-knowledge's complicity in the patriarchal system which she feels Foucault perpetuates, I would like to use a reading of Foucault that can work toward the possibility of reading Akerman's body and sexuality, that is gender-marked by discourse development and formation.

in [Jurij] Lotman's equation, death."[24] White continues her reading of Lotman's formulation of narrative as heterosexual slippage by ultimately relating it to the difficulty to represent or "envision" lesbian desire in film. And yet how is it then that de Lauretis calls for the re-inscription of conventions of narrative for feminist filmmaking? And how can the "non-male sexual identities for women" be implemented or produced in narrative cinema? On the one hand, de Lauretis posits that "[f]eminist cinema... begins from an understanding of spectatorship as gendered... and then essays to fashion narrative strategies, points of identification, and places of look that may address, engage, and construct the spectator as gendered subject...." On the other hand, feminist cinema must continue to use "strategies of subversion" (123). These might include the use of a reversal of grammatical syntax such as in the examples that de Lauretis gives of the title of Rainer's film Film About a Woman Who, or the invention of new words such as "a-woman" from the voice-over of Trisha in The Man Who Envied Women (Rainer, 1985),[25] or as I might suggest, in the combinations of subjectivities using the subject pronouns in Akerman's film title Je tu il elle. And yet if we look again to the "subversive strategies" of de Lauretis, these

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[24] White writes: "de Lauretis analyzes Lotman's reduction of plot types to a mere two narrative functions: the male hero's 'entry into a closed space, and emergence from it...' Lotman concludes that

> *inasmuch as closed space can be interpreted as "a cave," "the grave," "a house," "woman"...entry into it is interpreted on various levels as "death," "conception," "return home" and so on; moreover all these acts are thought of as mutually identical*

...The sinister slippage in the chain of designations from grave to house to woman lends a narrative progression to Freud's uncanny. Given the collapse of 'woman' on the space rather than the subject of narrative, and given the identification of heterosexuality *qua* conception with the very prototype of narrative progression, it is no wonder that the lesbian heroine (and her spectatorial counterpart) are so difficult to envision" (White, 152). Jurij Lotman's text "The Origin of Plot in the Light of Typology" is cited in de Lauretis' Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 118.

[25] Trisha, in Yvonne Rainer's The Man Who Envied Women (1985), says "Not a new woman, not a non-woman or misanthropist or anti-woman, and not non-practicing lesbian. Maybe un-woman is also the wrong term. A-woman is closer. A -womanly. A-womanliness." Cited in Techologies 123, from Yvonne Rainer, The Man Who Envied Women, Filmscript 58; also in Helen Demichiel, "Rainer's Manhattan," Afterimage (December 1985): 19.

pronouns become interesting to feminist filmmaking only if they are used to critically engage film language or representation. This necessity to work with oppositionality in order for it to function as change is also expressed by Julia Kristéva, who said that "to tamper with the taboos of grammar... is to tamper with the veiled recommendation of identificatory sexuality: the revolution of language is an intersection of sexuality and all the social coagulations [(families, sects, etc.)] that are attached to it."[26] In Akerman's film the "social" is the total possible combination of those pronouns while proposing a disruptive practice in the use of film discourse. But at any level, feminist cinema must maintain a problematization of representation. And for this reason, Akerman's narratives of the trajectory of subject/object relations and of lesbian desire, though working against a process of heterosexualization, are frequently at odds with spectators' attempts to create "narrative coherence" when looking at unconventional filmmaking structures of narrative cinema. Without, however, having to have recourse to traditional narrative structures, we make "narrative" sense of the "story." This is in many ways very similar to what Olivier-René Veillon was arguing when he wrote that "the first way to appropriate a film is to tell the story of it."[27] Yet familiar places, sights, and sounds are grounding forces in our ability to give a "linear" sense to such cyclically and thematically constructed films as Je tu il elle. Her "minimalist procedure," as Rod McShane calls it, "applied to a very familiar subject matter [equally engrossing from social perspectives such as sexuality and political ones such as feminism as it is from purely 'aesthetic' formal ones] is a very unfamiliar

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26 Kristéva, "Le sujet en procès," Tel Quel 53 (1973): 24. Translation in Nancy K. Miller, "The Exquisite Cadavers: Women in Eighteenth-Century Fiction," rev. of Pierre Fauchery, La Destinée féminine dans le roman européen du dix-huitième siècle 1713-1807: Essai de Gynecomythie romanesque in Diacritics (Winter 1975): 41.

27 See Olivier-René Veillon, "La fiction contre le récit," Les actes du colloque Chantal Akerman, ed. Jacqueline Aubénas (Bruxelles: Ateliers des Arts, 1981): 100-106. "...la première manière de s'approprier un film est bien d'en raconter l'histoire" (101).

awareness in the spectator"[28] that s/he is in charge of constructing the narrative. Even though Akerman constructs her narrative without typical cinematic conventions, what Akerman achieves in this film is the interrogation of both sexuality and subjectivity and the articulation of desire as strategies of subversion within narrative, as a resistance to those male and female spectators "in ideology."

> the articulation of lesbian authorship as a critical exploration of the very components of subjectivity
>
> Judith Mayne [29]

In Je tu il elle, the "je/elle" character, whom I will simply refer to as "je" (the first possibility in the title sequence's use of pronoun-play), is portrayed by Chantal Akerman herself. This character begins to explore the systems of power of the subjective gaze in representation and self-representation, while Akerman, the director, is deconstructing the film's visual and auditory cues and separately addressing the operations (and at times, subversions) of the subject/object relations within the film's three segments. She is producing a film against heterosexual symmetry and formally manipulating the subject/object of her film as she and the two other characters are in turn narrating and/or active subjects or objects of the camera gaze at various moments throughout her film.

Divided into three parts, Je tu il elle is loosely constructed on a series of decreasing lapses of time. The first part begins with the words "...et je suis partie..." [...and I left...] and then uses a voice-over chronology ("le premier jour," [the first day] "le deuxième jour," [the second day]...) but does not maintain this, and instead conveys a general and natural temporality evoked by "je's" menstrual cycle and the seasonal changes of the falling

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[28] Rod McShane, "Je tu il elle," Time Out 248 (November 1979).

[29] Judith Mayne, "A Parallax View of Lesbian Authorship," Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories, ed. Diana Fuss (New York: Routledge, 1991), 177.

and melting snow. This refusal to maintain the temporal rules in terms of days and hours is our first clue that this film will not follow the linear pattern of the classical narrative. In fact the contiguous relationship between the images leaves very little doubt that this film will try to function outside the hierarchical or patriarchal structures put in place by the use of temporal ellipsis or continuity editing, which is arguably the single most important element in generating narrative film. The second part, or the "travelling sequence" as I refer to it, begins with dusk on the roadway and continues through a series of nighttime scenes until it closes in the artificial light of a men's bathroom. In this section of the travelling and bar/restaurant sequences, "je" briefly extends her connection as the producer of a gaze, since she introduces us to a truck-driver via her own voice-over. Moreover, Akerman, as filmmaker, uses the travelling as a metaphor to underscore the momentary displacement of her sexual desire as well as her subject position which were projected from the beginning (in the letter-writing sequence and in the off-screen voice). Jean Narboni, in "La quatrième personne du singulier," argues that the "true voyage in the film" is in the first part in "je's" apartment. He takes up this position in his reading of the cyclical structure of the film. He writes: "Voir la première partie ... comme le véritable voyage du film, d'autant plus intense qu'il est mobile, et la seconde comme une suite de *trépidations* ou de *vibrations* sur place (il roule ou il ne roule pas ce camion?)... le film fonctionne *cycliquement*."[30] Finally, in the third and final sequence, we are introduced to her lover, the object of her desire at the end of her journey. It consists of one night and ends with the sun coming in the window in the morning. Akerman divides the film, according to Judith Mayne in "Mistresses of Discrepancy," so that the "separation of the woman as narrating subject and as object"[31] in

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30 Jean Narboni, "La quatrième personne du singulier," Cahiers du cinéma 276 (1977): 11. "To see the first part...as the true voyage of the film, more intense as it is mobile, and the second as a continuum of stationary trepidations and vibrations (is this truck moving or not?)... the film fonctions cyclically."

31 Judith Mayne, "Mistresses of Discrepancy," 127: "Je tu il elle consists of three parts, each of which turns centrally on the separation between the woman as a narrating subject and as object."

each of the three parts offers differing positions to be experimented with narratively and technically.

> "Sautez, dansez, embrassez qui vous voudrez." [32]

The first sequence begins with Akerman's voice-over saying, "...et je suis partie..." [...and I left...], although no departure seems to have taken place, let alone any real displacement within the narrow space of this studio apartment. At first, we see a woman on the screen whom I call "je," the narrating subject of the voice-overs. She performs a certain number of actions, but the off-screen voice and the action never coincide. At times the voice-over comments on an action we have just seen or announces some action that does not happen at all on the image track. She lies down, gets up, moves furniture, sits in one corner, stands in another, gets undressed, gets redressed, compulsively eats spoonfuls of sugar, writes a letter, reads the letter, tacks the letter on the floor, and looks at herself "dans une étrange porte-fenêtre-miroir qu'elle finira par ouvrir pour sortir" [in a strange door-window-mirror that she'll eventually open up in order to leave] ("La quatrième personne" 6). Akerman, the director, "creates" the story or "authorizes" the narrative because it is her voice and her image which determine the character's and her own vocal and visual representation. And yet an interesting question arises. What if the spectator is unaware of this double presence, Akerman as director and as principal actress? In fact the credits at the end of the film list simply "Claire Wauthion, Neils Arestrup, Julie" ("Julie" is the pseudonym chosen by Akerman) and nowhere is Akerman's name mentioned except as director. How then can the "authorizing" take place at this other level? This tension can be activated by once again turning to the desire to create a story. This "attraction" to narrative, as de Lauretis points out, is in the potential "to make

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[32] I have translated this as "jump, dance, kiss whomever you like" which comes from a voice-over song at the end of Akerman's Je tu il elle (1974) and is sung by a woman's voice and a chorus of children's voices.

up one's story, the possibility to speak as subject of discourse, which also means to be listened to, to be granted authorship and authority over the story" (113). The ambiguity of the actress named "Julie"—incidentally the name of the main character of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's epistolary novel Julie ou La Nouvelle Héloïse—and Akerman's status as director as one in the same person are not necessary to understand how the narrative is "authorized" in this film. As the only character in this part Akerman is also the only object of the camera-eye/gaze, and so is paradoxically the nondiegetic narrating subject, or in Françoise Collin's terms she is "la femme regardante-regardée qui se taît" [the looking/looked at woman who is silent].[33] I would argue that the image is not one reproducing the "silent" figure of a woman; rather it points to the creation of a tension of the coincidence of image and sound in narrative that Akerman introduces here in order to be able to work through it during the film. The double authoring (director/actress) is however integral to understanding how the subject—*la femme regardante*—can be at the same time and in the same instance the object—*la femme regardée*. In many ways this can be understood to reflect what Daniel Robberechts said when he wrote that "L'objet se trouve subjectivé quand l'auteur s'avance elle-même en tant qu'objet, ou quand elle se 'compromet' avec l'objet."[34] It is in this sense, then, that this first sequence of images serves as the formation of herself as object while simultaneously taking on the role of desiring subject—looking directly into the camera, undressing for herself, writing, and referring directly to her body and her menstrual period: "il était certainement 28 jours que j'étais là" [I was certainly there for 28 days]. These elements take on the gesture of "narrative coherence" creating a kind of narrative of the body. Marie-Thérèse de Pelacot

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[33] Françoise Collin, "Cadres, cadrages et encadrement," Les actes du colloque Chantal Akerman, ed. Jacqueline Aubénas (Bruxelles: Ateliers des Arts, 1981) 135.

[34] Daniel Robberechts, "Une caméra fétichiste," Les actes du colloque Chantal Akerman, ed. Jacqueline Aubénas (Bruxelles: Ateliers des Arts, 1981) 127. "The object becomes subjectivized when the author presents herself as an object, or when she associates herself with the object."

sees Akerman's self-staging as a subversive act in itself. She says that Akerman affronts cultural problems even in the simple act of showing herself "dans une civilisation où le corps est victime de tant de censures."[35] Basically, this is in keeping with a certain commitment to experience (an essentialist notion, but one that definitely was circulating in the early 1970s) because the body has its own "natural" narrative of cycles and appetites. In fact it is the appetite, a compulsive eating of sugar, that functions in two ways. In the first place, it points more to an obsessiveness with orality (a theme fully developed throughout the film) than to a "natural" narrative of the body. And, secondly, it begins the "trajectory of desire" which will be consistent throughout the remainder of the first part and then through the other two sections. Yet at the same time Akerman's body incorporates itself into the history of representation. Many of the poses she assumes when naked reveal a kind of feminist critical narrative of the history of the representational arts. The one image that stands out in my mind is when Akerman is turned, her back to the camera with clothing draped over one shoulder that is supporting her sideways against the wall. The brightness of her skin and the curve of her waist and hip look strangely like Ingres's nineteenth-century painting, La Grande Odalisque (1814), without the female figure's glance of complicity. Akerman's image could even be compared to the seventeenth-century Velasquez painting, Venus, but once again without the mirror to return the gaze of the female figure to the viewer.

Nevertheless, these seemingly perfunctory words and actions (all held in static medium shots with long takes) call attention to her tableau-like filmed body in a way that simply does not conform to image production in conventional narrative cinematic discourse. Akerman's refusal to use close-ups, especially with the naked body, is as significant as her refusal to edit the sequence using the standard system of cause and effect of continuity editing. Akerman's editing style, which seems to be a logic of fits and jumps,

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[35] Marie-Thérèse de Pelacot, "Je tu il elle," Jeune cinéma 99 (décembre 1976/janvier 1977): 44.

forces the spectator to do the narrative work of creating a story of the images and sound track. The constant camera angle and shot size and length remind us of the importance of Akerman's constant presence in her own work, especially if one considers the mere fact that her authorial presence (the inscription of her name, her body on the film) signifies a movement toward the confirmation of a specific female subjectivity. I am thinking of how Luce Irigaray commented on such an authorial inscription in an interview regarding her own work, Speculum de l'autre femme, from 1974. She said:

> Speculum is a critique of the exclusive right of one sex to use, exchange, and represent the other. In addition, it begins to elaborate a phenomenological description by a woman—Luce Irigaray, whose name is on the book—of the self-affection and self-representation of her body. In doing this, I am implying that the female body should not remain the object of masculine discourse and various masculine arts, but that it should become central to the process of a female subjectivity experiencing and defining it/herself. [36]

Just as Irigaray was dialoguing with and re-examining the (male and canonical) Philosophers in Speculum, Akerman, too, is dialoguing with and protesting against the patriarchally and hierarchically dominant discourse in cinema and in artistic representation. She performs her dialogue through a reconfiguration of the female subject in order to posit subjectivity. Or, as Judith Mayne points out in "A Parallax View of Lesbian Authorship", this processes "...the articulation of lesbian authorship as a critical exploration of the very

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[36] This quotation is from an interview with Luce Irigaray by Alice Jardine and Anne Menke. This is part of her answer to the following question: "The form your 'fling with the philosophers' took in *Speculum*, published in 1974, could be described as introducing a female-gendered and -embodied subjectivity into the male corpus. Is this still an indispensable strategy for women today?" Shifting Scenes: Interviews on Women, Writing, and Politics in Post-68 France, ed. Alice A Jardine and Anne M. Menke (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 103. See their Chapter 8, pp. 97-103 for the entire interview.

components of subjectivity."[37] Thus when the voice-overs and the action rarely coincide, or when the voice-overs disrupt the simultaneity of an image by narrating actions that we then see three or four minutes later, this is Akerman's conscious re-appropriation of classic filmic devices in order to articulate her nontraditional subjectivity within film. The deliberate absence of the zoom and close-ups throughout the film thwarts conventional spectatorial expectation, as it frustrates voyeurism. This is especially evident when she is lying naked on her mattress, once again in a full shot with a long take, and stands up to confront the voyeur on the other side of the glass window/door of her apartment. Since the glass is vaguely mirrored we see her reflection and the barely visible feet of a man. This man/voyeur has come to look at her, but will eventually walk away, perhaps frustrated by her indifference to his arrival. She has no other reaction than to calmly turn her full nakedness to the spectator (but we do not leave). This nakedness is not without its own set of contradictions. As Laura Mulvey and Colin MacCabe pointed out in "Images of Woman, Images of Sexuality,"[38] earlier attempts to question the representation of the female nude on screen, usually exploited for the titillation of the spectator/voyeur, were just as problematic. Their chapter on Jean-Luc Godard analyzes a number of his films. In their discussion of British Sounds (1969) they understand that Godard is also struggling with the coincidence of image and sound. He tries to set them up in a contradictory relationship seen in the beginning of the film, which juxtaposes a factory and a suburban house.

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[37] Judith Mayne, "A Parallax View of Lesbian Authorship," Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories, ed. Diana Fuss (New York: Routledge, 1991), 177. For other discussions of lesbian/feminist production see B. Ruby Rich, "The Crisis of Naming in Feminist Film Criticism," Jump Cut 19 (1979): 9-12, Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," Powers of Desire, ed. Snitow, Stansell, Thompson (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983) 187-205, Richard Dyer, "Lesbian/Woman: Lesbian Cultural Feminist Film," Now You See It: Studies in Lesbian and Gay Film (London: Routledge, 1990) 174-210.

[38] Laura Mulvey and Colin MacCabe, "Images of Woman, Images of Sexulaity," Godard: Images, Sounds Politics. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980) 79-104. This essay an also be found in Laura Mulvey, "Images of Woman, Images of Sexuality: Some Films by J. L. Godard *(co-written with Colin MacCabe)*," Visual and Other Pleasures (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989) 49-62.

Mulvey and MacCabe develop this juxtaposition in a critique of Godard's use of the nude, while at the same time understanding this nudity as an "event" outside of the narrative spectacle:

> But Godard's presentation of woman simply identifies woman and sexuality....The use of a naked female body immediately casts doubts on Godard's project. The very image for the most visible exploitation that women endure in a sexist society cannot be used with impunity, cannot be used without a certain complicity.... If we look at this woman's body then we are aware of our our own look, which is not hidden in the folds of the narrative and the movement of the camera.... (86-87)

Akerman's film advances much the same proposition in that we become painfully aware of our own look reacting to this image of a naked woman on the screen. It is doubly complicated by the fact that this naked body is that of the director herself. In one way, however, this use of the nude figure questions not only the filmic subject/object but also its constitution in the film. This is especially important if we are to understand how they help to construct the subjectivities that Akerman posits from the beginning narrative in the film's title itself.

Another way of addressing the "components of subjectivity" is through a closer look at the letter-writing sequence. In this scene, she writes, re-reads, and edits her letter addressed to the ambiguous "lui" (which can either mean "to him" or "to her.") Yet is this use of an indirect object pronoun—"lui"—one of the "subversive strategies" proposed by de Lauretis? Or is it simply a "normative narrative" trap? This would seem to be the case, as Mayne suggests "given the so-called normal viewing expectations, one assumes the indirect object of unspecified gender, 'lui,' to be a man" ("Mistresses," 127). Yet this letter-writing sequence is accompanied by the ritual-like (obsessive even) removal of furniture, undressing, and sugar-eating that are associated with "je's" desire. I think the ambiguity of the letter's addressee plays once more into our considerations of subjectivity and might well

be read as a strategic foil to the desiring "je" and therefore whether or not "lui" means "to him" or "to her" is immaterial at this point. When "je" finally makes a move (after she has spent quite a few moments looking at herself in the mirrored window before dressing) we are left with the impression that something has begun/is beginning and that we ought to feel a certain release or relief after the building-up of what seems like "je's" desiring tension. This impression we feel is the emergence of a narrative amid the nonlinear "incoherence" of the various elements.

The change from the first part of the film in the apartment to the second part is radical. The extremely long shot of "je" outside miniaturizes her in relation to the network of roadways on which she is standing. Here, "je" goes hitchhiking and is picked up by a "friendly truck driver."[39] She accompanies him on stops at various cafés and roadside diners, gives him a hand job, listens to his monologue on married life and the road, spends more time with him in restaurants and bars, and finally watches him shave in a brightly lit men's restroom. There is obviously a change in dynamics within the subject/object relations set out from the beginning of the film. The truck driver is mostly seen from her perspective, as if she were filming with a hand-held camera. Yet at times she too is on the periphery of the frame, for example when he is talking about his family and the work his brothers do, or when she is shown in frame with him when he wakes her from a nap in the cab or when, in a long shot, they leave the truck together, hug, and walk toward an eatery. This "travelling" section or the "on the road" section comments on the subject pronouns from the title as the "je" narrating subject is replaced by the narrating subject "il" of the truck driver. This switching of filmic subject/object is one way, in fact, that Akerman shows that there is no simple representable notion of subject/object of desire, lesbian or otherwise. As Mayne suggests "[lesbian desire] is inextricably linked to other forms of

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[39] B. Ruby Rich, "Chantal Akerman's Meta-Cinema: Designing Desire," Village Voice 29 March 1983, 51. I am not sure that I would use the term "friendly" myself, but I think it fits into the irony that is very much a part of this sequence.

sexual desire," and then further observes "that the lesbian author is defined as both complicit in and resistant to the sexual fictions of patriarchal culture" ("Parallax," 183). This is what Mayne goes on to call "lesbian irony." Akerman seems to recreate this interesting subtext with her voice-overs, which indicate the remote possibility of her sexual contact with the driver that is ultimately (ironically) played-out in her giving him a hand job out-of-frame. Once again Akerman disrupts conventional voyeuristic pleasure as she did in the first sequence with the long takes of the nude. Here she does it by (dis)placing the sexual activity out of the frame. Granted the trucker is on screen in a close medium shot but the sexual act is not to be seen, nor can the typical auditory "voyeuristic" cues such as moaning, groaning, and heavy breathing be heard. Technically, Akerman gives us the feeling of watching a cheap porno-flick filmed as if with a hand-held camera; further, the special light-sensitive film gives a very grainy effect to the whole scene. I would argue that this is a deliberate instance of irony, primarily because we can understand the correlation between the *hand* job and *hand*-held camera, especially if we consider that the camera in traditional pornography is the tool (or eye) of phallocentric film logic and that Akerman is playfully suggesting that she has to hold the phallus (hold the camera) to make her film. However, she can choose to not represent that logic in her editing or in her on-screen images. She refuses to represent the sexual act of the hand job scene—but does not deny a space for it in the diegetic narration that the trucker gives—as an explicit challenge to hierarchically-centered filmmaking which has been historically denying space to female subjectivity and female desires in most conventional cinema.

And yet for all of this scene's playful metacommentary it is the most disturbing moment in the subject/object relations that Akerman explores. I read this hand-job scene as a metaphor for the controlling gaze within mainstream cinematic practices, and traditional cinema's refusal to relinquish the privilege of "authoring" for heterosexual/patriarchal pleasure. Akerman creates this aural space for the unseen (therefore only spoken) pleasure: At first the driver pulls "je's" hand over to him placing it in his lap and then says,"Tu vois

c'est ça qui est important" [You see this is what's important]. He then proceeds to give instructions for a "good" hand job and narrates its effects. He says, "Tu obéis mais tu as peur" [You obey, but you're frightened] and then, "Tu crois que c'est mal" [You think it's wrong]. This scene functions as a critical engagement of the filmmaker with the phallocentric position as subject. In an ironic switching of the voiced authority it is he, now, the authority to "obey" even if it seems "wrong" because he is on the receiving end of pleasure. It is interesting to note how Akerman has set up a false "passive/active" dichotomy by implying the use of "je's" hand (which, again, is not even seen) and her silence in juxtaposition to what we hear—the driver's instructions and description of his orgasm—and see—his upper torso as he sits behind the steering wheel—in the small enclosed space of the truck cab. There is no true active element in this arrangement. Both "je" and "il" are placed into a causal relationship. She is effaced into a cause for his pleasure and he becomes merely the effective words of its completion. There is a strange casualness also about the way in which this scene is acted. Yet in the end, the quick honk of the horn, his smile, and direct look into the camera, at the spectator, affirms the insidiously present patriarchal (heterosexual) gaze/desire found in most films of the mainstream cinema or in pornography. These are the kinds of films against which Akerman has posited Je tu il elle. There are two more interesting elements that deserve commentary in this scene. First, the sexual act itself: a hand job is not heterosexual penetration (coitus), and it seems to me to be Akerman's way of critically addressing the problem of heterosexualization of the subject/object relations.[40] Also the scene does not stand out *visually,* as will the lesbian love-making sequence, but *aurally,* which paradoxically is also

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[40] What I find very interesting is that Akerman's rejection of coitus becomes nearly a rejection of the entire "symbolic order." See Monique Wittig in "The Straight Mind" "[T]o reject the obligation of coitus and the institutions that this obligation has produced as necessary for the constitution of society, is simply an impossibility, since to do so would mean to reject the possibility of the constitution of the other and to reject the 'symbolic order,' to make the constitution of meaning impossible, without which no one can maintain an internal coherence" (The Straight Mind and Other Essays, 28).

linked to female subjectivity, as Mayne suggests with the voicing of "authority" and by extension the "orality" of this film leads toward an "affirmation of female subjectivity" ("Mistresses," 132). Yet the scene's "aural" quality is not linked to conventional sounds of sexual pleasure, as I have stated above, rather the sound is a spoken text of how to give a hand job. However, this scene also stands out narratively since it is the only to follow a linear logic (including the narrated ejaculation of the trucker) that the other two sequences do not follow. In fact one reviewer who is extremely critical of Akerman's film not surprisingly finds the only logic of the film in this second sequence. John Pym of Monthly Film Bulletin refers to this panel as "The central section [—note, he says 'central' not second—] and the most effective, a *cinéma-vérité* monologue from the truck-driver about his casual infidelities and the barren expanse of his married life...." Of course he curiously sees the film as symbolic of "the actual desolation of modern life"[41] shown perhaps in the dingy eateries of the second sequence. Pym seems not to recognize that Akerman is using heterosexual male sexuality as a paradigm for linear narrative; he also fails to acknowledge the importance of the monologue in this sequence, which reveals an unlikely confession by the truck-driver.

The odd confession reveals his desire for helpless, weeping women he meets on the road and his incestuous desire for his daughter.[42] Obviously, Akerman sees this incestuous desire as a part of his sexual arousal at seeing "weeping women" who are, in their

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41 John Pym, "Je tu il elle," Monthly Film Bulletin 547 (August 1979): 175.

42 The trucker seems unable to distinguish between his sexual desires for the hitch-hiker ("je"), for his daughter, and weeping women as if all women were desirable as long as they are not his wife, for whom he no longer has sexual feelings. Another point of inquiry would be to look at the film La Passion Béatrice (Bertrand Tavernier, 1988), which addresses the incest between father and daughter as the locus of all the power that is bound up in the patriarchal system. It is a period film about the Hundred Years War that shows the return of a father to his home after fighting for many years. His daughter, Beatrice, is eager for his homecoming so that he will bring order to the household and give her in marriage to a young neighbor. She is cruelly deceived by this man she barely knows. The father rapes her and then humiliates her in front of her suitor by accusing her of no longer being a virgin, leaving her unmarriable and bound to his rules forever.

powerlessness, asexual. This seems to be a part of Akerman's inquiry into power relations and sexuality. This small part of the trucker's monologue is more interesting when read in conjunction with Foucault's History of Sexuality, Vol. 1, where he addresses repression as "the fundamental link between power, knowledge, and sexuality" and also as the "triple edict of taboo, nonexistence, and silence" (5). In this section of the film, all notions of power relations (e.g. the authority of mainstream cinema, pornography, voice, sound, and action) are contested in terms of sexuality. For instance the incest taboo, a standard psychoanalytic trope, is not only "nonexistent" and not "silenced" by the trucker, but is an identificatory element of his subjectivity. This is an integral part of his need to put into discourse his sexual desire as if in a confession of truth.[43] One might think that this is contradictory to Akerman's critique of the phallocentric logic of conventional cinema, especially in the strange privileging of the male utterance regarding incest, but I look at it as her intentional refusal to stay within the established parameters of (repressed heterosexual) mainstream discourse. Within this travelling sequence "je" is also subjected to an omniscient gaze of the camera (always in long shot), along with the looks and stares of the truck driver's friends at the local bar they stop in. She seems to be dislocated when she is not the narrating subject (and as I mentioned above, she is frequently on the fringe of the frame or out of it completely), yet this seems to be a part of the subject/object relations that Akerman wants to explore. The spaces of the restaurants are relatively silent and sometimes the two characters seem uncomfortable at the table together. Unlike the the scenes with voice-overs or the explicit heterosexual monologue of the trucker, these scenes are filled with eating and drinking, and the diegetic sounds of clinking dishes, scraping forks, and in one restaurant, we hear an American program on the television and see the flickering of the light on the two travellers' faces as they eat. It is in this second sequence where Akerman

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[43] On the false sense of "power" inherent in the confession, see Foucault, "Scientia Sexualis," History of Sexuality: Vol. 1, 53-73.

most thoughtfully addresses the relations of power and sexuality by critically looking at the conventions of narrative cinema. In addition, this is also where "je's" trajectory of desire (and sexuality) seems to be blurred (the blur in the text actually exists in the very grainy film quality) and, at the same time, tends to "mobilize" the manifestations of various other desires. These include the traveller's potential desire for the driver that eclipses the as yet unnamed desire she is in search of; the truck driver's desire for his wife, his daughter, and for the traveller's compliant hand.

The trucker's own narrative about his life on the road, his family, his particular sexual arousal at seeing "weeping women," depart from "je's" body or natural narrative from the first section. In fact these elements of the truck driver's narrative do not resist "the drift of narrativization (the operation of narrative closure, or the 'family plot,')" that de Lauretis presents as a way for feminist "cultural narrative... to construct another form of coherence" (114), but they do function in a critical juxtaposition to the feminist and lesbian narrative of the third part. Akerman and the trucker part company after the driver has performed his "male" rituals: shaving, urinating, washing his face, combing his hair, while "je" and her reflection watch on and smile at him in the vast wall mirror in a men's restroom. Akerman uses the brightness and starkness of the male-ritual in direct contrast to the darkness of the next scene as "je" arrives at the apartment building of her lover, once again juxtaposing, though formally through the use of lighting and an abrupt edit splice, these two "stories" of subjectivity and sexuality.[44]

In the third part, the structural thematics of orality that Mayne identifies with sexuality and female subjectivity literally becomes communication and voice. "Je" arrives at

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[44] After reading an earlier version of this chapter, my colleague, Jay Prosser, suggested that I have set up a curious, and, perhaps, essentializing opposition between the use of the terms "truck-driver" and "lover" for the two other characters in the film. The problem lies in the identification of the trucker by his occupation and of the lover by her sexual and emotional relationship with "je." I think that the quality of the relationship, one is of convenience and conveyance (trucker), while the other, seems to be more emotionally-bound in mutual caring (lover), led me to this identificatory distinction.

the apartment, asks for food, makes a few sexual ouvertures to her lover, "elle," who seems to resist. They make love, and "je" leaves the bedroom in the morning by walking out of the frame. "Je" finally becomes the speaking subject and identifies herself and her desire, in sync sound, "C'est moi," [It's me] "J'ai faim" [I'm hungry], and "Encore" to Nutella, appetite, and desire. This differs radically from her voice-overs in the first part and her almost complete silence in the second. Here, however, both "je" and "elle," her lover, who could also be the corresponding "tu" in this relationship, switch constantly between the figures of subject and object. During the lovemaking scene, Akerman critically engages the specific "vocal" male / "silent" female subject/object relationship built-up from the travelling sequence with the trucker. This scene is divided into three parts like the division of the film itself. Mayne describes this tripartite movement within the film as a "trajectory of desire." She writes: "Given Akerman's departure at the conclusion of the film, and the first words uttered by her voice in the first section of the film ("...et je suis partie" [... and I left]), it is tempting, rather, to see the process of departure, isolation, and return as the trajectory of desire that the film inscribes" ("Mistresses," 133).[45] The three extremely long lesbian love-making shots block conventional, heterosexual voyeuristic pleasure as they create a filmic space for narrating lesbian desire. Jean Narboni suggests that the self-representation of Akerman in the lesbian relationship "ruptures" the heterosexual male fantasy (7) of pornography; but as in the first section of the film, Akerman does not use close-ups or cause-effect editing, once again thwarting this kind of fantasy. In the first part "je" and her lover move on the bed, rolling about, switching top and bottom positions; then, in the second part, the camera position shifts to a high angle in a close medium shot that focuses on the tender and passionate kisses and on the faces which their hair frequently

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45 See again Jean Narboni, "La quatrième personne du singulier," Cahiers du cinéma 276 (mai 1977): 5-14 who sees this voice-over "...et je suis partie..." as a part of the cyclically constructed narrative as opposed to an explicit "trajectory" of desire. I would argue however for the trajectory as an important feature in each cycle or panel of the narrative.

covers, and finally in the third part they engage in oral sex. Basically, they both become a "tu" for the other's "je," mutually interpellating each other's subjectivity and identity in this scene. Mayne points out that "little separates the initiator from the recipient; little, that is, isolates active subject from passive object" which further complicates a clearly delineated space for the spectator who can situate "neither Akerman nor the lover... neatly within the pole of subject or object" (129). Akerman uses this variable relationship to make further conjectures regarding subjectivity and sexuality as well as to break with the conventional identificatory practices of spectators found in traditional narrative cinema.

In "Mistresses of Discrepancy" Mayne's emphasis on a "radical otherness of lesbian identity and lesbian sexuality" (133) in Je tu il elle is linked to orality and literally to food. In fact, "je" only becomes a speaking subject when she asks for more food. In the second sequence she never speaks though she does eat and drink at the roadside cafés. Mayne writes that "the link created in the film between food and sex evokes clinical diagnoses of homosexuality as regressive, as arrested development, as the desire—for women—to fuse with the maternal object" (133). We might also read this scene with Michel Foucault's formulation about repression and sexuality. He writes that: "We are informed that if repression has indeed been the fundamental link between power, knowledge, and sexuality since the classical age, it stands to reason that we will not be able to free ourselves from it except at a considerable cost: nothing less than a transgression of laws, a lifting of prohibitions, an irruption of speech, a reinstating of pleasure within reality, and a whole new economy in the mechanisms of power will be required" (History, Vol 1, 5). It would seem to me that "je's" "irruption of speech," the love-making scenes that focus not on the climax or *jouissance* of narrative but on a particular kind of "long take" pleasure, and Akerman's feminist filmmaking economy of real time and medium shots are an act of "freeing" from repression and not a further implanting in "clinical diagnoses," though as Foucault suggests, this is at a considerable cost. To Akerman, however, it is merely the cost of conventional narrative. Ultimately this gives us a reading,

outside of repression and "regressive" behavior or arrested development, that further indicates that female subjectivity is representable only as resistance to the rule or convention. Yet does this subjectivity also take into account the "trajectory of desire" that Mayne writes about? And, does it address the desire for authority or authorization of the filmic text?

It seems to me that because the object of desire is not immediately located in the narrative, "je's" desire shifts into the film's structure. It is shown as the film director herself ("je") takes the role of director/organizer of an epistolary narrative in the first section of the film. (Perhaps "je" is rewriting Rousseau's Enlightenment novel, Julie ou la nouvelle Héloïse à la 1970s feminist "enlightenment")? The arranging and re-arranging of piles of letters displayed on the apartment's floor reconstructs the role of film director/editor as the voice-over talks about the frustration in writing and concentrating. This absent object of desire (that is, the letter's addressee) is alluded to, but is never referred to in any way except as "lui" which as I pointed out earlier, can mean either "to her" or "to him." Mayne points out that this can be seen as "a crisis in naming in lesbian filmmaking" ("Parallax," 176) since no one—neither the lover, nor "je," not even the truck driver—is ever named. This is even extended into the production values by way of the credits, where Akerman refers to herself as "Julie," not as "Chantal Akerman." Due to the early date of this film and the anti-patriarchal projects of early feminist filmmakers, I feel that this "non-naming" can also be read as a resistance to patriarchal naming and identification within the filmic system that Akerman has technically and narratively rejected. However this voice-over throughout the first part of the film, says Mayne, "is the major component of the film's self-mirroring quality." ("Parallax," 174), a "mirroring quality" that is shown, visually, at two other crucial moments of the film: when we see her reflection in the window-mirror before she dresses and leaves; and then, at the end of the second sequence, when we see her smiling reflection in the men's restroom mirror before she is shown arriving at her friend's building. Yet only when the voice and image correspond—as in the third part—would it

appear then that "je's" subjective voice and image are constructed into the film's mechanism as well as into the narrative of lesbian desire. Could this simply be that Akerman's authorial voice cannot be "constructed in and through [dominant] discourse," as Kaja Silverman points out? Or is it that, "the feminist author...is inseparable from the desire that circulates within her texts, investing itself not only in their formal articulation, but in recurring diegetic elements."[46] This circulating is self-evident for Akerman's text because she herself is the main character within the diegesis, travelling through the hefty apparatus of traditionally represented sexual asymmetry while exploring the filmic possibilities of both subject/object. That is, the authorial voice is a lesbian voice that says "...et je suis partie" [...and I left] giving us both the central identificative "je"/I/eye and the implicit journey of leaving the conventional realm of cinematic language. Therefore she creates a remarkably fascinating counter-gesture as to how subjectivities are constituted in film and more largely in culture and society. We can see how Akerman works against the grain of traditional story and plot by not foreclosing on any one potential narrative element and by maintaining the formal principles for meaning and signification, especially with her emphasis on long takes and static camera framing in medium shots. In this sense then, Akerman can only approach her narrative of subjectivity without formal closure. That is, within the cyclical or non-linear narrative structure, these desires circulate and have specific plot functions, while at the same time the technical manifestations of these desires serve to reinforce the position of the film and the filmmaker vis-à-vis the exposure of the subject/object relations and the articulation of desire. Further, this film does not "reflect the unconscious of patriarchy"[47] yet takes the dominant "unconscious" to task by its use of representations of women and these women's relationship. The belief is that the "Hollywood" hegemony of pop fiction in

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[46] Silverman, The Acoustic Mirror 209.

[47] E. Ann Kaplan, "Is the Gaze Male?" Powers of Desire, ed. Snitow, Stansell, Thompson (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983), 324.

film—and in pornography, according to Narboni—is insidious because it touches the unconscious and maintains or reinforces its own acceptable cultural representations. Therefore, Akerman wants to produce a resistant image without reproducing an icon in hegemonic discourse and structures. This goes back to de Lauretis' question regarding the status of the counter-cinema or marginal cinema that risks becoming the new hegemonic or dominant (Technologies, 17). Since Akerman constructs her narrative without typical cinematic conventions, the interrogation of both sexuality, subjectivity and the articulation of desire as strategies of subversion within narrative can only be reproduced as resistance to those "in ideology." It is essential for Akerman's film to avoid becoming the new dominant, and in fact the alternative cinema cannot become dominant because its status as marginal or de-centering would immediately be put into question.[48] Remaining in this space is to avoid the "trap" of "in ideology" in discourse and praxis. This film, therefore, proposes numerous points of entry into the paradoxical nature of representational arts and narrative as it relates to film and image-making in the cultural productions of the 1970s feminist film movement.

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[48] This refers directly to Foucault's discussion of power and opposition in History: Vol. 1, 95-96.

Chapter 4

What's Your Pleasure? Whose Pleasure?

Glissements progressifs du plaisir

> Le texte est un lieu en lutte en lui-même avec des conflits insolubles.
>
> Alain Robbe-Grillet [1]

> Robbe-Grillet est ravi d'avoir pu tourner au donjon de Vincennes, et dans le cachot où croupit jadis le marquis de Sade, des images de prison souterraine, de filles ligotées, flagellées, entourées de blanches religieuses (n'appartenant à aucun order connu!) et d'un pasteur lubrique.
>
> Jacques Siclier [2]

> Glissements... est avant tout une remise en question totale des valeurs morales qui supportent le poids des sociétés.
>
> Dominique Maillet [3]

As I have pointed out in the previous chapters, a shared quality of many of the films discussed in this study is the emblematic use of women in film images as part of the formula in representing metaphorically the symbol of change and of revolution. Women in these narrative and formal images are presented in opposition to the logic of the established institutional powers in which patriarchal structures abound. In Alain Robbe-Grillet's film, Glissements progressifs du plaisir (1974), we find a similar process of the image at work.[4]

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[1] Alain Robbe-Grillet, Lecture, at The Mercantile Library, New York City, New York, 11 November 1992. "The text within itself is a battle field of insolvable conflicts." All translations throughout this chapter are my own unless otherwise noted.

[2] Jacques Siclier, "Les Glissements progressifs d'Alain Robbe-Grillet," Le Monde 2 juillet 1974. "Robbe-Grillet was thrilled to have been able to film, in the tower of Vincennes in the cell where the Marquis de Sade had been held, the images of subterranean prisons, of manacled and whipped girls surrounded by nuns in white (who don't belong to any known order) and of a lecherous minister."

[3] Dominique Maillet, "Glissements progressifs du plaisir," Cinématographe 7 (avril-mai 1974): 8. "Glissements... above all, totally calls into question the moral values that uphold societies."

[4] Glissements progressifs du plaisir (1974) - Director, Screen- and scriptwriter: Alain Robbe-Grillet;

Although, in Glissements, Robbe-Grillet has chosen very specific institutions for the main character Alice to confront, contradict, and destabilize. Alice (Anicée Alvina), the "jeune fille" [young girl, adolescent], as Robbe-Grillet insists, is accused of a murder (stabbing her friend with a pair of scissors), and it is through this supposed crime that she will come in contact with various figures of authority. Here, I will refer to Robbe-Grillet's *ciné-roman*, also entitled Glissements progressifs du plaisir, where he describes Alice as "aussi peu soucieuse de logique que de morale" [as little worried about logic as about morals] (17) when she begins to answer the questions about the crime.[5] Robbe-Grillet has also said that his main character "Alice" refers to Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland who, by being from her own society with its own ideas, upsets the events of and disrupts authority in this world that she has dropped in on unexpectedly.[6] In an interview with French film critic, François Jost, on the recent Vidéothèque video-tape release and accompanying book of Glissements, Robbe-Grillet says that he views Alice as working "against the established order," against all of its tenets and those who uphold the authority. First, she will be questioned by a Police detective (Jean-Louis Trintignant) in her apartment where the body is found. Then, once put in prison (a single-sex prison run by the minister and nuns) Alice will be interrogated by a judge (Michel Lonsdale), a lawyer, Maître David (Olga Georges-

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Director of Photography: Yves Lafaye; Editor and Continuity: Bob Wade; Director of the Sound Score (*partition sonore*): Michel Fano; Producers: Coséfa Films—André Cohen and Marcel Sebaoun; S.N.E.T.C.—Henri Boublil; Distribution: Fox-Lira; Cast: Anicée Alvina (Alice), Olga Georges-Picot (Nora and Lawyer, Maître David), Jean-Louis Trintignant (Police Inspector), Michel Lonsdale (Judge), Jean Martin (Minister), Marianne Egerickx (Claudia); Claude Marcault (Sister Julia); Nathalie Zeiger (Sister Maria); Maxence Mailfort (Client); Bob Wade (Gravedigger). Color, 104 min. The title has been translated as The Progessive Slidings into Pleasure, however I will continue to use the French title shortened to Glissements when referring to it.

[5] The *ciné-roman* was published at the same time the film was released and is in four parts: the Introduction, Synopsis, *Continuité dialoguée* [script] and *Relevé du montage* [edit notes]. I will refer parenthetically to the scene numbers from the script (whose titles are given in the edit notes) and to the shot number from the edit notes throughout this chapter. Glissements progressifs du plaisir (Paris: Minuit, 1974).

[6] Most contemporary feminist film scholars are aware of the beginning of Teresa de Lauretis's Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema where she compares the chess game between Alice and the catepillar to the game of language, as de Lauretis put it, what one finds in semiotics, "daring the labyrinth of language" (2).

Picot), and a minister (Jean Martin), and admonished by a nun, Soeur Julia (Claude Marcault), and a Novice, Soeur Maria (Nathalie Zeiger).[7] She is asked by each of the interrogating figures to retell the series of events leading up to the murder. Contrary to linear logic, however, Alice creates her own discourse, her own logos of beginnings and endings, that is neither altogether linear nor cyclical, though it is repetitive and circuitous. Her recounting of the narrative events (what we see frequently on the screen) for each one of these particular representatives of authority is done in a fashion that is by no means unproblematized. In fact, Alice's narratives in Glissements uproot desire, and more specifically, pleasure and sexuality, from mainstream filmmaking and ideological thinking and put them out on display. These desires are necessarily "repressed" because they are hidden under *and* woven into the fabric of discourse.[8] Judith Butler's reading, in Gender Trouble, of Foucault's hypothesis of "repressed desires," from his The History of Sexuality, Volume 1, is particularly applicable to a reading of this film. She writes, "the desire in question takes on the meaning of "repressed" to the extent that the law constitutes its contextualizing frame; indeed, the law identifies and invigorates "repressed desire" as such, circulates the term, and, in effect, carves out the discursive space for the self-conscious and linguistically elaborated experience called "repressed desire" (65). As Butler points out, Foucault further proposes that sexuality is a complex system "to perpetuate power-relations" and he "takes a stand against emancipatory or liberationist models of sexuality..." (95). These two ideas create a certain tension for Robbe-Grillet's film in that Alice's subversive use of sexuality does undermine the patriarchal structures of the

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[7] Although there is no direct reference to Diderot's La Religieuse or Jacques Rivette's film, La Religieuse (1965), based on Diderot's novel, the same director of the sound score of both La Religieuse and Glissements, Michel Fano, produces many of the same sounds during the course of the film. In addition, the images in Rivette's La Religieuse of the convent *qua* prison is very similar to the prison in Glissements.

[8] See Judith Butler, "Prohibition, Psychoanalysis, and the Heterosexual Matrix," Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity (New York: Routledge, 1990) 35-78.

authorities controlling the discourse while it also sets up another relationship based on the ability to control nonlinear and fragmentary discourse. This ability to destroy the structures in place can be seen as a power-relation, though still heterosexist in form, it clearly breaks down hierarchically patterned relations through its nonlinearity.

> Le meurtre est le point de croisement de l'histoire et du crime.
>
> Michel Foucault [9]

Robbe-Grillet loosely bases his film on Jules Michelet's 19th-century text of La Sorcière [The Sorceress] (1862). In doing so, he sets up the notion that Alice's "witchcraft" applied to the patriarchal order is a constant disruptive intervention.[10] In a recently published interview by Anthony Fragola and Roch Smith with Robbe-Grillet regarding Glissements, Robbe-Grillet said that

> "the project I had in mind was inspired by Michelet's The Sorceress, as interpreted by Roland Barthes in his Michelet par lui-même. That gave me the idea of making the character of the sorceress a young woman who upsets masculine discourse.... The Sorceress is an ambiguous book. On the one hand, the sorceress is the spirit of revolution, while on the other, she also serves as a sexual object. Those conflictual drives can be discerned in Michelet's style.... [S]he upsets the masculine order not only with her body but also through her reasoning by which she undercuts the logic of a police investigation." ("Interview—Progressive Slidings" 70)

As I have discussed in my introduction to this study the use of the terms "masculine" and

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[9] Michel Foucault, Moi, Pierre Rivière, ayant égorgé ma mère, ma soeur et mon frère... (Gallimard, 1973), cited in "L'histoire telle qu'elle nous parle," Cinéma Pratique 149 (décembre 1976-janvier 1977): 264.

[10] Coincidentally, in 1976 a French feminist literary journal, entitled Les sorcières, was established and edited by Xavière Gauthier. Although this has nothing to do with Robbe-Grillet's film or Michelet's work, the figure of the witch in the 1970s was a positive one for feminists.

"male" especially in relation to institutional formations must be understood to represent dominant centers of power that are not simply patriarchal, but also hierarchical, heterosexist, and ideologically grounded. Furthermore, it does not necessarily stand to reason that Robbe-Grillet's "masculine order" be represented only by men. In fact the representative of the law, Maître David, is a female character. But the relationship between female and representative of the "order" is even more complex than it appears. The same actress (Olga Georges-Picot) who portrays the lawyer also plays the murder victim and friend to Alice, Nora. In one way we can see the discourse of legal power pronounced by Maître David which contradictorily represents and represses the victimization of Nora, the murdered friend. This kind of problematization of the representation of characters, the narrative, and the film's structure is at the core of my discussions. This is seen in Alice's pre-empting of the filmic narrative with her logic whether in the form of self-representation or of provocation. One example of the first form, self-representation, occurs when she paints her body with red paint and then presses herself up against the wall, making a rather unrepresentational self-image (Scene 35).[11] In the second form, in order to provoke the figures of authority, she narrativizes what she perceives of as their sexual fantasies, so that when the judge for instance asks Alice to describe the details of the murder of her friend, Nora, she replies by telling a story that would be interesting to the judge. The film, then, changes "narratives" and shows this erotic tale in which the judge becomes the central character, sucking on Alice's foot, baring his chest, and brushing his hair in front of a mirror (Scene 16, "Le pied léché"). Yet this narrative is also continually interrupted by Robbe-Grillet's editing techniques of adding fetishistic images and musique-concrète in a highly constructed and methodic fashion. This same thing happens each time the other characters address Alice, demanding the truth. Alice's subversion of the authority's

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[11]As Robbe-Grillet indicates in the *ciné-roman*, this is a reference to the Anthropométrie paintings of Yves Klein from the early 1960s (123).

investigation also then functions as Robbe-Grillet's subversion of the spectator's expectations: after a while we can no longer distinguish where Alice's narratives begin and end, which implicates us in a hopeless search for linearity. Thus, we find that she constructs a shifting discourse alluding to two things: the repressed sexuality of each inquisitor (shown in the fantasy sequences that are built on images of fear of and desire for vampires, lesbians, sadomasochism, torture, and the church inquisition) and paradoxically to her own pleasure (which we see sometimes intercut into the narrative or in the "punctuation") in keeping their ideology at bay. Alice's shifting discourse is disrupted by visual and aural "punctuation" scenes which often contain various elements of Alice's descriptions and which can be attributed to a notable design in the film's overall structure. These "punctuation" scenes and sounds are the manifestation of Robbe-Grillet's contribution to the structural circuitousness of the film and refusal to privilege traditional cause-effect filmic discourse of the detective story, the pornographic film, or the murder-mystery plot. Functioning very much like Alice's tales of murder and fantasy that derail the police investigation, Robbe-Grillet's "punctuation" scenes are edited into the narrative as a formal way of inquiring into the nature and structure of film. In many ways Robbe-Grillet's interrogation in praxis within this film, his critical engagement with the structures and discourses of cinema, is duplicated in the interrogation of Alice, which she constantly engages and reflects back onto her inquisitors. In addition, the film's explicit use of tropes and objects most often found in detective, pornographic, and crime stories interrogates the ways in which these have become recognizable elements in genres—in literature, including pulp, and film—in our culture. Once these are represented in the film Robbe-Grillet can tamper with their codes. Taken one step further in Glissements, these codes assign each image and each sound a fetish of the film with its own worth, its own determined and shifting value in the system of the film's repetitive rhythm: blood (red liquid, red paint, the color red), prostitution, the sounds of breaking glass, moaning, slashing whips, panting, and crashing waves, the shoe (one sandal from the dead school mistress which only shows

up alone except when worn in a pair by Alice or Nora), the neck of a broken bottle, a kneeler, flames, etc.[12] In many ways this thematics of repetition can be attributed not only to the Michelet text itself but also to the Barthes text Michelet that Robbe-Grillet also references for his film.[13] Roland Barthes describes the "thème micheletiste" in the following manner: "D'abord le thème est *itératif*, c'est-à-dire qu'il est répété tout au long de l'oeuvre.... [I]l faut lire Michelet comme une polyphonie, non seulement des yeux, mais aussi de l'oreille, du souvenir...." (155). I believe that Robbe-Grillet also establishes this same kind of polyphonic and polysemic theme of repetition through his use of the "punctuation" scenes and its repeating internal images and sounds that are found in them and in his earlier texts: the novel Le Voyeur (1955), his films L'Immortelle (1963) and Trans-Europ-Express (1966).

Moreover, this repetition or rhythm continues to play on the original codes exploited in the tropes and objects of Glissements. In some instances these codes are the easily accessible stereotypes that conform to the elements that make up a film genre. Robbe-Grillet has said in relation to his filmmaking on Trans-Europ-Express (1966) that the figure of the stereotype is very important and that

> people who try to avoid stereotypes are those who fall the most into stereotypes.... They are the elements of discourse. There can be no discourse without them.... I believe that stereotypes are a raw material that

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12 In commenting on the general nature of film and possible psychoanalytic readings of it, Julia Kristéva wrote, "All semiotic material (color, malleable mass, sound, etc.) lends itself to this rhythmization... " Although she is making a direct reference to "cathartic representation" her use of the examples of image and sound in rhythmic processes can be applied to Glissements as one way in which meaning is created. Julia Kristéva, "Ellipsis on Dread and the Specular Seduction," in Rosen, ed. Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986) 240. Article originally published as "Ellipse sur la frayeur et la séduction spéculaire" in Communications 23 (1975) and first translated in Wide Angle 3.3 (1979): 42-47.

13 Jules Michelet, La Sorcière (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1966); Roland Barthes, Michelet (Paris: Seuil, 1954). See also Roland Barthes's "Préface" to La Sorcière (Paris: Club Français du Livre, 1959). The preface is reprinted as "La Sorcière" in Essais Critiques (Paris: Seuil, 1964) 112-124.

> one cannot avoid; only one must manipulate them in such a way as not to be a victim of them. The best way to be a victim of a stereotype is to believe that you can escape.[14]

So in effect what we are dealing with in Glissements is the interrogation of a system in ideology from which it is impossible to extricate oneself but at the same time which proposes, through the use of stereotypes based on the same system, a production in opposition to that very system. The result of this kind of positioning in the film culture of this era calls into question all codes of cinematic production. Thus, this interrogation in Glissements is at the narrative, structural, and discursive levels of the film, producing simultaneously in all three on the one hand disruption and disorder and on the other patterns of repetition. Now, in order to approach these ideological codes in all forms of traditional storytelling—or in "Realism," as Robbe-Grillet suggests—and the contradictory and problematic representations of them in Robbe-Grillet's film, we might begin by asking ourselves questions about the narrative, or, in this case, the-narrative-that-refuses-to-be-one. Why have these particular figures of authority been chosen as the representatives of power? Who really is interrogating whom in these cases? Why do we acknowledge the often dubious character of Alice's narratives? These questions will lead us indeed toward the discussions that are inextricably a part of this inquiry: the film's structure, which will be addressed in terms of the film's editing and "punctuation," and the film's thematic emphasis on repetitions in images and in sounds.

In an attempt to answer the first question, regarding the basis of Alice's

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[14] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Interview—Trans-Europ-Express," in The Erotic Dream Machine by Anthony Fragola and Roch Smith (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992) 35-36. Robbe-Grillet has often made the distinction between Balzac and Flaubert's uses of stereotypes in nineteenth-century French literature, and especially in Realism, as his point of departure for using stereotypes. In this interview Robbe-Grillet juxtaposes the knowing and conscious use of stereotypes by Flaubert to Balzac's work "which consists only of stereotypes. [Balzac] believes his work to be original, but it is simply a catalog of stereotypes, an absolutely incredible one" whereas "Flaubert was affirming that the only elements of discourse available—events ideas, and so forth—are stereotypical ones, that the only way of affirming one's freedom and one's creativity is in the structure that will be given through what Flaubert calls form" (35).

interrogators, I turn to Robbe-Grillet's contemporary Louis Althusser and his essay, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus."[15] Since I have already established the use of Althusser's ideas in film theory and criticism, I will just briefly restate that, of the many theorists and critics in the 1970s who have pointed to the ideological nature in the cinematic process, most derive their work from Althusser's model of the apparatus.[16] Now, I am not necessarily interested in bringing into question each one of these theorists or critics and his/her work, I do however want to take another look at the Althusserian subject and the "Ideological State Apparatus" (ISA) in relation to Robbe-Grillet's film Glissements progressifs du plaisir (1974). In the first place, I would like to propose that Althusser's formulation of an "ideological state apparatus" is a narrative of ideology and that it follows, itself, a clearly delineated trajectory toward the notion of interpellation and toward closure. In the second, I argue that, though indirectly, Robbe-Grillet references in the thematics of his film this same narrative of the apparatuses at work. But instead of using the narrative structure of Althusser, he uses a nonlinear, disruptive, and quasi-cyclical reformulation that denies the interpellating power of these representatives of authority. Linked to the repressive discourses in religion, myth and superstitions, and government, these figures of authority in Glissements each represent a particular aspect of ideological thinking that Althusser, and Marx before him, examined. This questioning of the ideological foundations in social institutions is uncovered throughout the narratives in Glissements. A closer look at Robbe-Grillet's set of authority figures (police detective, judge, lawyer, minister, nun) shows that they are the stereotypical representatives of those apparatuses discussed by both

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15 Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus (Notes towards an Investigation," Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays Trans. Ben Brewster (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1971) 127-186. Originally published in French in La Pensée in 1970. Subsequent references will be noted in parentheses in the body of this text.

16 Film, itself, is a part of, in Althusser's terms, "the cultural Ideological State Apparatus (ISA)" or "communications ISA" (143). For related film theory and criticism on this topic see Roland Barthes, Jean-Louis Baudry, Pascal Bonitzer, Jean-Louis Comolli, Stephen Heath, Teresa de Lauretis, Jean Louis Lyotard, Bill Nichols, Philip Rosen, Kaja Silverman.

Marx and Althusser.[17] Indispensable for our use as a referential narrative of ideology to Glissements is Althusser's definition of these apparatuses:

> What are the ideological State apparatuses (ISAs)?... [W]e can for the moment regard the following institutions as Ideological State Apparatuses (the order in which I have listed them has no particular significance): the religious ISA (the system of the different Churches); the educational ISA (the system of the different public and private Schools); the family ISA; the legal ISA (Law belongs to both Repressive and ISA); the political ISA (the political system, including the different Parties); the trade-union ISA; the communications ISA (press, radio, television, etc.); the cultural ISA (Literature, the Arts, sports, etc.). (142-143)

Robbe-Grillet's figures of authority represent only a portion of Marx's "repressive" and Althusser's "ideological" state apparatuses. But those that will be used in Glissement's "panorama of cultural stereotypes" are the police and prison system, the law (which as Althusser remarks takes on qualities of both the repressive and ideological), religion, and culture (art and literature).[18] I think we can now answer why these particular figures from the establishment are Alice's interrogators. In one sense, these are the representatives of the institutions that uphold the codes of societies and at the same time these are stereotypes which have filmically referential characteristics that are visually and audibly accessible. This is what Robbe-Grillet is depending on: those characteristics (objects and tropes) that have been fetishized by genre. So, for example, the detective wears a trench coat, fedora, and dark glasses and investigates by snapping out a round of probing questions; the judge

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[17] Althusser modifies the Marxist theory of repressive "state apparatus" because of the inherent violence of those systems in Marx's that he feels is not present in the "ideological apparatuses." He writes, "repressive suggests that the State Apparatus in question 'functions by violence'—at least ultimately (since repression, e.g. administrative repression, may take non-physical forms)" (142).

[18] The term "panorama of cultural stereotypes" is from Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Interview-The Progressive Slidings of Pleasure," in The Erotic Dream Machine 80.

has sprawled around him dictionaries and books of legal codes; the lawyer carries a briefcase and speaks in pacified legal jargonese; the minister and nuns in their respective vestments and habits use such statements as "Je suis le berger de toutes les agnelles perdues..." [I am the shepherd of all the little lost lambs], or "fille du démon" [demon's daughter]. Yet these characters (who must be recognizable for the spectator in order for Robbe-Grillet's tampering to occur) as forms, and I stress the term "forms," of authority upholding a set of codes or ideology are placed in direct relationship with this young girl, who for Robbe-Grillet is "the perverse young girl [who] introduces her body into the meaning, or rather against meaning" ("Interview—Progressive Slidings" 69). The young girl with her body, sexuality, and unpredictability is in opposition to the figures of authority with their object-identifiers, repression, and stasis. Yet these comparisons are problematized because there is no absolute binary being played out. Because Alice's confrontations with the authorities are most often visual (and in one case her resistance to their logic is organized by sound) the problem lies not in the deconstruction of the narrative but in the very nature of the representation of this repressed sexuality as fantasy. Therefore it is Alice's body as well as the bodies of other women in the film which we will have to take account of in her narratives as a particularly dubious aspect of the "revolutionary" qualities of Robbe-Grillet's witch/sorceress.

Right from the beginning of the film, if beginning there is (Dominique Chateau and François Jost claim that "there is no one way to begin"), [19] Alice's calm but confrontational look in the very first shot of the title sequence is an uncomfortable glance not only toward the other filmic characters but also toward us, the spectators. But the challenge to film discourse is already there, hidden in the impossibility of starting. At the beginning, ironically, of Foucault's "L'ordre du discours," he writes, "I would really like to have

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[19] Dominique Chateau and François Jost, "Robbe-Grillet le plaisir du glissement," Ça cinéma 4 (janvier 1974): 15.

slipped imperceptibly into this lecture.... I would have preferred to be... borne way beyond all possible beginnings... on the other side of discourse."[20] Robbe-Grillet on the other hand does want to begin. He even contemplates the discourse, and the necessity to always be in it (a part of it) to use it. Therefore he gives us not only *a* beginning but *all* possible beginnings in the title credit sequence. I will take a look here at the opening sequence, which can function as the introduction to the film's structure and to the punctuation scenes, and which comments on the necessity of shifting discourse. This beginning sequence also sets in place the dubious nature of the images and sounds. In the title sequence of Glissements we first see Alice in her prison uniform and we hear harp sounds and foot-steps. There is a cut to her written name on the screen, and we hear the sound of breaking glass. In the second image we see a close-up of Nora's face and we hear a train. We hear the sounds of waves on the beach when the previous shot cuts to the actress's name on the screen. After this we see a bottle crashing to the floor but the sound is from a machine gun. The title of the film is accompanied by the sound of waves and a police siren. The sequence continues with the introduction of the other characters while we hear various sounds: the waves lapping on the beach, the sound of an uprising or of a large mob or crowd yelling, and the machine gun continue as images change until we are re-introduced to Alice, whose close-up is accompanied by the sounds of breaking glass and a strange "boing" sound (doubtlessly produced by a synthesizer) and then the squeaking of hinges before returning to the auditory series of the crowd, the siren, and the machine gun. The sequence ends with the sounds of waves and the name of the director on screen. Michel Fano calls this use of sound, "ce travail sur la contiguité du musical et du non-musical" [this work on the

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[20] Michel Foucault, "The Discourse on Language," in The Archaeology of Knowledge, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon) 215. Originally a lecture given in French at the Collège de France on 2 Decmber 1970, it was subsequently published as L'ordre du discours (Paris: Gallimard, 1970). The first English translation by Rupert Swyer was published in Social Science Information (7 April): 7-30. These notes regarding the original publication and translation are taken from the A. M. Sheridan Smith translation of "The Discourse on Language" (215).

contiguity of the musical and the non-musical] as "l'organisation des bruits" [the organisation of sounds] or "musique concrète."(22). The juxtaposition of the sounds and the images produces a kind of rhythmic thematics which introduces most of the elements of the narrative or fantasies (eggs, red liquid, red imprints of Alice's hand and feet, the prison hallway, Nora tied to bed frame, a beach, a broken bottle, a manacled hand, a plastic mannequin with painted red wounds, a woman tied to a large wheel, etc.). Here, however, the elements are not connected in their only possible combination but rather represent all of the possible beginnings. Thus, the punctuation, seen in the title sequence, will develop many of these same sounds and images along side the narrative, and necessarily simultaneously in it. As Chateau and Jost have pointed out in "Le plaisir du glissement," "the relationship of punctuation with a subsequent scene is indeed reversible," so that the punctuation shot does not necessarily recapitulate but conversely introduces new information into the diegesis (13). This represents to a certain degree the use of images (and I add, of course, sound) as "generators" of the spectator's fiction or narrative (15). All of these possible beginnings then indicate the multiplicity in the viewing experiences, meanings, and interpretations. This proliferation is another way that Robbe-Grillet practices his interrogation of ideology.

The problematized representations provided to us from the credit sequence do not however establish how the authority figures function concretely in the film. Let us take the example of the detective who is present at the beginning and at the end of the film. After the credit sequence, we first are introduced to the detective with both visual and aural cues. A large black police sedan racing through the streets of Paris with a light on top, blaring an American police siren (not the traditional "pan-pon" of the Parisian police and emergency vehicles) is crosscut with various images of Alice in an apartment undressing Nora as if she were a statue, doll, or mannequin and getting her dressed again, and then painting in red on Nora's body. This crosscutting ends as the police car arrives outside a building, which we understand to be the building or the site of the crime. Upon entering the apartment, the

detective begins walking around, opens a trap-door in the ceiling (to the sound of rushing water). There is then a cut to his profile as he shuts it. He lifts the blinds on the window, walks past a bicycle, opens a door and begins to walk through it before the sequence is cut. The reverse of this shot (which would be the detective walking through the door on the other side) is in fact a reverse of him walking through a doorway, but it is the same shot of his entrance into the apartment from the beginning of the sequence. This is the first time a repetition (and it is in fact the exact same filmic sequence—Shot 76) is used during the narrative, which develops in this part of the diegesis the thematics of repetition and also begins to set the rhythmic tone of the film. The detective's actions are then repeated: he walks around the apartment, opens a trap-door in the ceiling (to the sound of rushing water), performs a discreet pirouette in front of a small table where a blue sandal is displayed under a glass globe, and finds the body of Nora. Yet in the place of a point of view shot discovering the body, as conventional cinema would use, there is another cut so that he repeats the pirouette and discovers the body once again. He finally begins interrogating Alice with a rapid succession of questions without waiting for her response. The first questions make sense for a "typical" police interrogation, but the subsequent ones seem more arbitrary and completely unrelated. The series is as follows: "A quelle heure êtes-vous rentrée hier soir?" The detective looks right and there is a cut to a close-up of the leg of a bed with a wheel. "Pourquoi les stores étaient-ils fermés?" The detective sits down in an armchair next to an orange bicycle in a corner of the apartment."Vos dernières vacances, vous les avez passées où? Vous aimez les oeufs?" He looks left and there is a cut to a close-up of the blue sandal under a glass globe, and he asks, "Savez-vous nager?" There is a cut to the detective leaning over the dead Nora, touching her neck and shirt. He says, "Vous connaissez un certain Boris?" as he looks left. This is immediately followed by a cut to a close-up of the neck of a broken bottle. Another cut shows his entrance through a doorway, he opens, inspects, and then closes a closet door. "Combien possédez-vous de paires de chaussures? Hein? Hein?" He looks slightly left. A cut to a close-up

reveals the neck of a broken bottle on a piece of animal fur. Sounds of foot-steps begin and continue through the cut to the black suit-jacket of the detective as he walks forward toward the table with the sandal shrine. A muted metallic bell rings three times. In medium shot the detective takes a closer look at the sandal and asks, "A quel âge avez-vous fait votre première communion?" Once again there is a cut to a close-up of the neck of a broken bottle, now stained with a red liquid, on the same piece of animal fur. The film cuts back to the detective inspecting the sandal, he looks up. There is a cut to a close-up of Alice who turns her back to the camera. (Scene 6, shots 85-93).[21] As Robbe-Grillet points out in the screenplay, the spectators cannot possibly know yet that these questions and visual and aural elements (bed post, sandal, neck of a broken bottle, the color red, foot-steps, or a bell ringing) are related to other parts of the film. I do not agree. Since we are dealing with a thematics of repetition and accumulation any one of these questions could and might be related to the opening credit sequence. Indeed the question: "Aimez-vous les oeufs?" is directly linked to an image we have seen already in the opening sequence of raw eggs floating about in a red liquid. The question: "Savez-vous nager?" is linked to the scenes on the beach that we have seen and also to the sounds of waves we hear often throughout the credit sequence. Thus the repetition points to the various ways in which we make sense of and/or combine filmic elements and themes. It points to the very process of signifying. However, if the spectator missed the credit sequence, (which can happen, I suppose), it is true that s/he might not be aware of these references. Indeed very few people would understand the reference to "Boris" who is a character (played by Trintignant, himself) in Robbe-Grillet's earlier film L'homme qui ment (1968). In addition, I see some importance

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21 "What time did you get home last night? Why were the blinds closed? Where did you go on your last vacation? Do you like eggs? Do you know how to swim? Do you know certain man named Boris? How many pairs of shoes do you have? Huh? How old were you when you had your first communion?" The Detective continues the questioning with the following series: Qu'est-ce que vous faites exactement? Vous êtes comédienne?... Danseuse?... Mannequin?... Call girl?... Cover girl?... Girl?... Script girl? ... Hein? [What exactly do you do? Are you an actress? A danser? A model? A call girl? A cover girl? A girl? A script girl?]. This is meant to be humorous since a script-girl is in charge of maintaining continuity from shot to shot by keeping a record of the details of each take.

to the last question regarding "the first communion" that the detective poses. This question cautiously begins a series that will show the competing law and religion apparatuses at work. Both the repressive and ideological functions are trying to interrogate the individual, Alice, to force a truth out of her. These conflicting systems will eventually attain a place of prominence in the judge/nun inquisition toward the end of the film. But throughout the film the question still arises: who can out interrogate the other, the judge or the minister/nun, the law or religion? The other effect of the repetition in the editing is to mark the characteristics of the detective. The role of the detective in a crime film or novel is to look over the crime and question the accused in order for the investigation to begin. Trintignant performs these tasks and looks menacing to perfection, as would a conventional detective. The repetitive editing however pokes fun at the conscientious and deliberate search of such a detective, so that what would seem normal, a double check behind a closed door, is here the same image edited into the scene in two different places. The effect is comedic. His zeal to find the "truth" is parodied in the editing process. It seems like he looks behind the ceiling panel twice and even enters the crime scene twice. He appears to be even a bit foolish in his exaggerated glances around the room. As he begins to interrogate Alice, in the sequence described above, we realize that Robbe-Grillet's use of the stereotype is to set up those conventions of a crime story and to break them down at the same time. The comic effect of the parody is lost when Alice responds to these questions. Her answers would seem unsatisfactory in a typical detective story that privileges "truth" and confession, while simultaneously, as in most detective novel or film, her answers are generative elements in the construction of the plot. In Glissements, however, the plot is not simply an investigation of a crime, but is the interrogation of the authority of conventions based on ideological premises of truth and veracity that have to be uncovered and exposed. Her answers, then, generate various narratives that disrupt linear and patriarchal structure and

the interpellation process.[22] Her reply: "Quelqu'un d'autre est venu. Quelqu'un d'autre que moi était là. Quelqu'un est venu" (Scene 6, shots 107-111), a variation in three instances of basically the same answer, will serve to deconstruct the interrogation by the detective. Besides this initiation into the possibilities of multiple narratives (at least three are proposed in her answers), Alice's voice will introduce the "punctuation" sequences by the continuation of her reply: "Nora est morte, je suis seule sur la plage, la mer déferle à mes pieds" (Punctuation 6a, shot 114-116). The "punctuation" is preceded by the sound of waves, a cut to a beach, and is followed by a long shot of waves whose sound is segued into the next interrogation scene with the judge (Scene 7, shot 117). The interrogation process is then projected onto the spectators who must work at finding out who is questioning whom in these sequences. We understand that Alice has already begun to question the logic and the line of questioning by her interrogators and yet we are confronted with another logic, her own. Her refusal to submit to their ideological authority does not make her a subject in their system as the implausible and improbable "linear" progression (Scenes 6, 6a, 7) shows. Indeed this question of "subject" arises when we ask who is the subject and object of the interrogation process. To consider this question in more detail I return here briefly to Althusser.

My interest in Althusser is not simply the indictment of ideology and Robbe-Grillet's references to these repressive and ideological apparatuses, it is also the complex formation of the subject in ideology that he develops in his argument around Marxist principles. Marx, in his 18 Brumaire de Louis Bonaparte, posited that the use or creation of ideological systems was to prevent people (subjects) from understanding or confronting the

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[22] For a description of the conventions of the detective novel and the "two stories" present in the *roman policier* and *serie noire* (popular in France after World War II) see Tzvetan Todorov, "Typologie du roman policier," Poétique de la prose (Paris: Seuil, 1971, rpt. 1978) 9-19. For an in-depth mathematical discussion of generative elements in Robbe-Grillet, see Alain Goulet, "Essai sur le travail des générateurs," Le parcours moebien de l'écriture: Le Voyeur d'Alain Robbe-Grillet (Paris: Lettres modernes, 1982) 11-23.

real causes of their misery.[23] It was the creation of religion and mythologies that allowed for everyday living to keep happening because these institutions shut out or created barriers to understanding (seeing) conditions of exploitation and oppression. In Althusser's terms, the creation of these and other institutions perpetuate not only the conditions described above by Marx but also produce what Althusser calls "the Beautiful Lies [...] that everything really is so" (163, 181). In other terms, in Roland Barthes's formulation, this represents that which reproduces uncritically the systemic structures and discourses and not only perpetuates "the beautiful lies" but also gives them the power of truth. This is the *doxa*, the social and cultural construction that Christopher Prendergast calls the "repository of truth," the function of ideology "as if it were the natural order of things."[24] To show how the subject formation in ideology actually occurs Althusser uses the example of "The Christian Religious Ideology." Through this model he explains the specular nature of ideology. (This element of Althusser's discussion of subject formation in ideology is especially important for theory in film because of the specular quality that is applicable to studies regarding spectatorship and the suturing of spectators to the narrative).[25] He writes:

> We observe that the structure of all ideology, interpellating individuals as subjects in the name of a Unique and Absolute Subject is *speculary*, i.e. a mirror-structure, and *doubly* speculary: this mirror duplication is

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[23] Marx, 18 Brumaire de Louis Bonaparte. Incidentally, Roland Barthes quotes from this same text at the beginning of Michelet (Paris: Seuil, 1954) 9.

[24] Christopher Prendergast, "Poison, nausea, health," The Order of Mimesis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) 12-13. Prendergast makes use of the term *doxa* by reading through Roland Barthes's "Codes" in S/Z (Paris: Seuil, 1970). For me the most relevant passages for film can be found in S/Z on pp. 9-12, 26-28, 61-62, 141-146.

[25] As Fredric Jameson points out in The Political Unconscious, literature is an ideological production mirroring such strategies of containment. Film, especially, can perform the same kind of production in a more specularly convincing way. Robbe-Grillet uses film, with its mirroring function, yet consciously or confrontationally distorting and interrogating the system of societal and ideological "truths."

> constitutive of ideology and ensures its functioning. Which means that all ideology is *centred*... and interpellates around it the infinity of individuals into subjects in a double mirror-connexion such that it *subjects* the subjects to the Subject, while giving them in the Subject in which each subject can contemplate its own image (present and future) the *guarantee* that this really concerns them... and that on condition that the subjects recognize what they are and behave accordingly, everything will be all right.... (180-181)

Now, in film—itself, a cultural apparatus—the importance of the subject in ideology is two-fold: first, that the subjects within the film's diegesis conform to a set of codes and systems (they are "interpellated" and subject to the Subject of their own filmic microcosm) while at the same time are understandable (secondly) to a given set of spectators who themselves are "in ideology" within the society in which they belong. This means that the spectators can "contemplate their own image" through the filmic medium in a way to "guarantee that it really does concern them" because it is about them. On the other hand, as I have suggested above for the case of Glissements, this specular quality does not serve this identificatory function for the spectators; instead it confronts the spectators as "subjects in ideology." The interrogation process (who is interrogating whom?) is duplicated and reversed for each subject of the film (Alice, the detective, the judge, the lawyer, the minister and nuns) and for each subject of the film as apparatus (the spectators, the director, the editor, the distributor, the reviewer, etc.). Of course, the inescapable irony that Althusser's model of the Christian Religions expresses, and one that I will look at in a moment, is that any ideological apparatus is an interpellating system, including the system in Robbe-Grillet's film, no matter how resistant it is to the codes or morals it produces. This particular connection that I am making between Althusser's paradigm of the subject in Christian religious ideology and the subject's identification within it and Robbe-Grillet's use of that institution in his film is not by chance. I think that it is significant for a number of reasons. In the first place, historically speaking, Robbe-Grillet uses the figure of the

sorceress as she was represented in the pre-modern society, as a heretic and a recidivist, even though she is projected onto and into post-modern institutions of ideology in these filmic images. And in the second place, this relates to Robbe-Grillet's use of the sorceress, the inquisition, torture, and burning at the stake in direct reference to Michelet's historical representations of such events from La Sorcière and especially to Barthes's reading of Michelet's writing on witches and the Catholic Church included in Michelet (1954).

Yet aside from the inescapability from the system of systems which Robbe-Grillet understands and parodies with his duplicating use of interrogation in praxis, it is still this truth or doxal factor in genre film "du récit traditionnel" that Robbe-Grillet is seeking to disrupt. This false consciousness produced through the inescapable matter of ideology, or the "strategies of containment" as proposed by Fredric Jameson in the Political Unconscious, is what allows for everyday living or doxal interpretation to occur within the system of institutions. Those who rely on the circulation of Truth are, in many ways, as Foucault asserts, those who are "in ideology" (History of Sexuality, Vol 1.). Jameson argues that one must destroy the customary frameworks that are set up as ideology and perform a kind of "dialectical shock."[26] In Glissements, spectators constantly undergo this sort of shock that Robbe-Grillet sets up in the structure of his film as a political critique of ideology. He does this by basing his editing on Sergei Eisenstein's "dialectical film editing." As I noted in the introduction, Eisenstein's editing is based on the juxtaposition of one image to another in order to create a new and separate meaning, creating a collision.[27] These opposing forces collide with one another in a spark of tension or energy that advances the film's meaning. Robbe-Grillet uses very sexually explicit images (at times),

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[26] Fredric Jameson, The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981). For background on Jameson and the "dialectical shock" see, William Dowling, Jameson, Althusser, Marx: An Introduction to the Political Unconscious (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984).

[27] Sergei Eisentstein, "A Dialectical Approach to Film Form," Film Form, trans. Jay Leyda (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1957) 45-63.

sounds, and experiments with the "dialectical editing" to oppose doxal and simple identificatory practices in film viewing (consuming). By confronting the spectator in Glissements with recognizable but uncustomary codes, the film, too, must be suspect of some dubious and problematic qualities. In considering these elements, I am not trying to make-over Robbe-Grillet into a feminist, nor, on the other hand, am I effacing problematic depictions of violence, eroticism, and ideological representations in this film. Rather, what the film and my analysis do provoke, and I think that this is the proper term—provoke—is a series of confrontations leveled at the spectator and at interpretation. That is, Robbe-Grillet, through the medium of his film, Glissements, proposes to make the spectator confront his/her own position which is most often a very comfortable and unconscious one based on some kind of circulation of Truth. As Robbe-Grillet said in an interview with Dominique Maillet, "L'oeuvre doit amener le public à une intervention créatrice et critique à la fois: le spectateur ne peut suivre le jeu qu'en le jouant lui-même, proposant lui-même des codes possibles et n'en acceptant jamais aucun comme dogme définitif. Cela ne concerne pas seulement mes films, mais toute oeuvre moderne, qu'elle soit roman, musique ou peinture" ("Entretien" 26).[28] The spectator would hopefully become just as engaged in the text as a critic. So it is in this sense that, through my commentaries of the film, I want to offer resistance to any clearly evident semiotic interpretation by using a critique of ideology that I argue is practiced and parodied throughout the film. The film's interrogation in praxis, as in the other films I have examined, is a double shift away from strictly classical narrative structure (and in this case, genre-driven elements) by commenting on film's ideological underpinnings inherent in what Pascal Bonitzer formulated as the "discourse-form of power" within the cultural apparatus.

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[28] "The work should bring the public to a creative and critical intervention simutaneously: the spectator can only follow the game by playing it, proposing possible codes, and never accepting any as definitive dogma. This is not only about my films but about all modern work, whether novel, music, or painting."

Pour Michelet, le sang est la substance cardinale de l'histoire.
Roland Barthes [29]

Most importantly it is this dubious character that we must interrogate as the film questions our role in it (as we view it). In my own initial interrogation of the film I asked three questions: Why are these particular figures from the establishment Alice's interrogators? Who really is interrogating whom in these cases? We have answered those first questions theoretically, but we will look at them textually in a moment. The third and last question is in relation to the particular problematic quality of the representations in this film: why do we acknowledge the often dubious character of Alice's narratives? From the images of manacled hands and a naked woman strapped on a wheel to the sounds of crowds in an uprising and machine gun fire, we are confronted with disturbing elements right from the beginning of the credit sequence. If we make it past this opening sequence, we necessarily become complicitous in the structure and narrative of the film. But we must, however, critically engage the film's representations and structures, that is, use our own interrogation in praxis as we watch. To watch this film in any other way would be to fall into the trap of the patriarchal gaze. In film, the patriarchal gaze is called up by the spectator who listens to, sees and digests the filmic elements unconsciously. This process is not always gratuitously put in place by the filmmaker who makes the film (though as feminist film critics point out it can be an important element to deconstruct in mainstream cinema). In the case of Glissements, this is precisely the contradiction at work. If one were to criticize at face value the violence and sexually explicit images and sounds in the film one would not be engaged in looking critically at the ideological system of film production that this film in particular, and generally, the films of the 1970s that I am examining in this study, are proposing that one does. This is not something new in the work of Robbe-Grillet and it is important to deal with it productively. Ever since his work with Alain

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[29] Michelet 111.

Resnais on L'Année dernière à Marienbad (1961) Robbe-Grillet has often been accused of "narcissistically reproducing his own obsessions." But as Mireille Latil-Le Dantec points out:

> il ne s'agit là que des mythes sur lesquels vit notre société et il est impossible d'ignorer 'ces objets sans profondeur... telles les images érotiques sur papier glacé des magazines de mode à grand tirage'. Mieux vaut, plutôt que de les enfouir, étaler au grand jour de l'humour ces marchandises mythologiques que sont le sexe, la drogue, le sang.... (136).[30]

Paradoxically, if we want to derive any pleasure from viewing the film ourselves we will have to get it from the questioning process that we perform, and not in the unconscious pleasure of narrative viewing, although humor, as Latil-LeDantec remarks, is an element worth looking at more closely because it plays into spectator recognition and pleasure. In one scene that I briefly alluded to above regarding Alice's resistance organized by sound, I was referring to a particular scene where the judge and Alice meet for the second time. In this instance the judge is shown in a long shot outside a cell door in the prison. He hears the sounds of sighing, moaning, heavy breathing (sounds that are associated with sex and/or pornographic movies) which then become louder and are interrupted by a whip cracking and screams. At this moment the judge opens up the one-way peephole in the door and there is a cut to a long point of view shot of the cell. He sees Alice standing up naked below the window of her cell with a phonograph playing a record on her bed. (This is humorous note number one: the judge is fooled by a recording, and of course, so is the

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30 Mireille Latil-Le Dantec, "Notes sur la fiction et l'imaginaire: Resnais et Robbe-Grillet," in Alain Resnais et Alain Robbe-Grillet: évolution d'une écriture, ed. Michel Estève (Paris: Lettres modernes, 1974) 117-145. In this passage she quotes Robbe-Grillet's "Lettre à Cinéma 70" in Cinema 70 149 (sept.-oct. 1970). "It's about the myths which our society lives on and it is impossible to ignore 'the shallow objects... such as erotic images on shiny paper in fashion magazines with a huge circulation'. Instead of running away from them, it's better to spread out humorously, for all to see, this mythological merchandise: sex, drugs, blood..."

audience.) Then there is a cut to return to the hallway where the judge slams the peephole cover and opens up the door to walk in. The next scene shows the judge walking into the frame, crossing the room to the record player, lifting the needle off the record. There is a cut to Alice as she leaves the window but she bumps up against the night table and a bottle falls and breaks. The judge then asks, "Qu'est-ce que vous fabriquez avec ce truc?" [What are you doing with this thing] and then in counter shot Alice replies "Eh bien, vous voyez, j'écoute de la musique" [Well, you see, I'm listening to music] (Scene 15, shots 225-233). This continuation of the scene is also rather funny because of the incommensurate opposition that Alice sets up with vision ("you see") and hearing ("I'm listening") that is directed at the spectator as well as at the judge. We realize quickly enough that one cannot "see" what another person hears as music. Michel Fano, the director of the "sound score" for the film, has described this as "la relation de 'substance' entre image et son musical [qui] se définit ici au niveau...du calembour."[31] This "calembour" or pun relies on our visual expectations of the scene. And yet, for me, this humor is counteracted by Alice: it is not so much her reaction as it is Alice's naked body that offsets the joke. Why is she naked? It does not serve to advance the plot of this sequence. Of course, she will cut her foot at the end of the scene, but she could be clothed and barefoot for that to take place. In finding this scene odd and in questioning her nakedness (though I think that the scene is very clever on one level) in one of the few cases where Robbe-Grillet uses cause-effect editing with match on action (i.e. the judge opens the peephole and there is a cut to a point of view; he opens the door and there is a cut to the interior of the cell) am I not falling into the same trap of the spectator "in ideology?" Instead of asking the question "Hey! why is she naked?" why don't I ask myself the questions, "Why can't she be naked?" Where has my own interrogation in praxis gone? As in Italy, when an Italian court judged that

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31 Michel Fano, "L'Attitude musicale dans «Glissements progressifs du plaisir»," Ça cinéma 4 (janvier 1974): 21-22.

Glissements was pornographic because Alice's nudity did not serve to advance the plot and ordered that film and all of its copies in Italy be burned (at the stake, I wonder?) am I condemning the humor, not because of the nudity, but because of its nonnarrativity?[32] Since pleasure is the film's central fixture, even in the title—Progressive Slidings into Pleasure—how willing are we to play the narrative shuffle and shift game in a narrative that is constantly being investigated, deconstructed, and demythified by Alice? In one way, when we accept to watch a Robbe-Grillet film, we enter into a pleasurable puzzle-like search for meaning and signifying, accumulating images and sounds, producing concepts and ideas. In performing this task of "reading" the film, we recognize those filmic and narrative conventions that we like and are reminded of the ones we dislike. I immediately ask the question, "why is she naked," because I am suspicious of the reductive nature of using "liberated" female sexuality as a metaphor for liberation from the constraints of patriarchy, classical narrative structures, and ideology. This problem of representation and the emblematic use of woman is found in many 1970s films, including the alternative cinema of Godard and Tanner. The important interrogation of film structure and discourse stands in contradiction to the simple metaphoric use of the naked female body. Akerman's films, Je tu il elle and Jeanne Dielman, undertake the deconstruction of this complex problem by interrogating both sexuality and the editing process's fragmentation and commodification of the female body.

In contrast to Akerman's subversion by inclusion of the entire sexual encounter between the two women in three long takes in Je tu il elle, which practices an interrogation of the mainstream cinema and especially of pornography, Robbe-Grillet's subversion rarely uses long takes. His trademark, if there is one to be given him, would be a subversion by proliferation and exaggeration in his use of very short takes with rapid editing. Where

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[32] The case of censorship is recounted anecdotally in Robbe-Grillet's "Interview-Progressive Slidings of Pleasure" (Erotic Dream Machine 72-73) and in the interview on the Cultural Services Vidéothèque video release with François Jost.

Akerman takes the voyeuristic gaze to task through the deliberate use of the medium shot with no close-ups, bright lighting, and a constant, unchanging camera angle, Robbe-Grillet not only provides close-ups but includes tortured bodies, repetitions of the same bodies, blood or red paint, instruments of torture, dark, dim lighting of an actual prison, oblique angles and a moving or panning camera to achieve subversion. There is no visual hint of a master/slave, sadomasochistic, or violent relationship between these two women in Je tu il elle that we find in Glissements.[33] What is striking in Glissements is in fact that all of these elements of violence and sexuality "étalés au grand jour," [displayed for everyone to see] are the result of interrogating and reproducing both specific techniques of pornography and, in a Godardian practice, the images of women in consumer society, film culture, and literature (e.g. the mannequin in a store-window, heterosexual male fantasies of lesbian relationships and "naughty" nuns dressed in white). The repetitious use of elements of a lesbian/vampire fantasy of three characters—the lawyer, the nun, and the minister—are overlapped and intertwined, and no element is specified to be the exact fantasy for one or the other figure of authority, except once for the minister where Alice announces in voice-over, "Alors je lui ai raconté ce qu'il voulait entrendre" [So then I told him what he wanted to hear] (Scene 34, shots 428-438). But even the minister's fantasy shown in this scene is signaled by a previous one (Scene 32), where Maître David meets Claudia (Marianne Eggerickx), another prisoner, in the corridor of the prison. Maître David asks whether Claudia could clarify something she had heard about the prison, whether there is corporal punishment: "On m'a parlé de cachots souterrains, de chaînes, de fouet, et même pire..." [I was told of underground hidden cells, of chains, whips, and worse...]. Claudia insists that she does not know anything about them, and that it was too bad that she did not because it

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[33] See Jessica Benjamin, "Master and Slave: the Fantasy of Erotic Domination," Powers of Desire, ed. Anne Snitow, Christine Stansell, Sharon Thompson (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983) 280-299. Robbe-Grillet refers specifically to George Bataille as his reference for the erotic scenes with the eggs ("Interview—Progressive Slidings" 80).

might be fun. Maître David is taken aback by this answer and asks for whom it would be fun. Claudia replies: "Je ne sais pas moi, pour les spectateurs" [I don't know, for the spectators], and as she says this she looks directly out to the camera, just as Alice had done in the opening sequence. This attack on voyeurism, leveled at the spectator, comes right before one of the longest fantasy sequences, but it does not, to a certain degree, dismantle the violence that will be shown, it only makes us more painfully aware of its presence.[34] In this section of the film (Scenes 34-39, shots 428-482) there is a short part called "Phantasmes lesbiens" (Scene 34). In this sequence, the proliferation and exaggeration of tortured female bodies and torturing devices becomes quite nearly surreal.[35] This is one of Robbe-Grillet's direct attacks on the discourse of repression and prohibition in language (albeit film language, consisting of visual and aural components). This sticky spot is what Foucault identified as "the complex web" where the "prohibitions interrelate, reinforce, and complement each other." This is "the danger spot" of "politics and sexuality" which are linked to "desire and power" ("Discourse" 216).[36] This is not a surprising combination of complex or dangerous relations to find in this film. Indeed toward the end of the film, Alice finds her way into a confessional in a storage room of the prison and begins to speak with the minister. Instead of confessing, however, Alice angrily reproaches the minister with his own desire. She says: "Exorcisez-moi, déchirez ma chemise, griffez ma peau fragile, écrasez-moi ma chair ... pour chercher la marque du diable" (Scene 41, shots 500-502).

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[34] I earlier compared this scene to the one in Godard's Pierrot le fou where Marianne (Anna Karina) turns around and addesses the spectators, breaking not only the cinematic suture but also confronting the complicitous (and filmically necessary) gaze of the spectator.

[35] I am using the term surreal very loosely to mean the implausible, in the sense that Michael Gould points out when he writes, "surrealism is based on the irrational juxtaposition of distant and disparate realities to activate the imagination." Michael Gould, Surrealism and the Cinema (South Brunswick and New York: The Tantivy Press, 1976) 24.

[36] We can read these lines in conjunction with Foucault's History of Sexuality: Vol. 1, where he addresses repression as "the fundamental link between power, knowledge, and sexuality" and also as the "triple edict of taboo, nonexistence, and silence" (5). All notions of power relations (e.g. the ideological authorities, the authority of mainstream cinema, pornographic film discourse, etc...) can be contested in terms of sexuality.

The minister murmurs, uncomfortably tugging at his collar, that he wants to be left alone in his tomb.[37] The scene ends with "Alice burning at the stake," flames superimposed over an image of Alice in a penitent's robe. Here is where it is important to note the proximity of the Confession (Scene 41) to the Interrogation (Scene 43), juxtaposing the competing ideologies of religion and law. The final Interrogation scene reprises most if not all of the themes presented throughout the narrative. One of the most interesting commentaries on the power of language and the power of the authorities of ideology is in this sequence where the judge and the nun are vying for the true "Truth" from Alice. Here the judge has fetishized all of the generative elements of language and objects that the film has produced. He calls out words and the nun shows all of the objects of the crime to Alice who is in a wedding gown on a kneeler and who answers back with "plaisir" [pleasure], "viol" [rape], "jeu" [game]. If at first the judge fetishized the objects of the police investigation, the neck of the broken bottle kept on a satin pillow in a little decorated jewelery case (Scene 7), then here he only has recourse to language.[38] The language of religion: heretic, recidivist; but also of law: repeat offender, patricide; are intertwined with close-ups of the nun saying "Chienne" [Bitch], "Crapaud" [Toad]. The judge ends the interrogation with a repetition of "du sang" [blood] and finally says in a defeated manner "la mer déferle sur la plage..." [the waves break on the beach] (Scene 43, shots 509-561, including the punctuation/scene of "Alice burning at the stake"). These words are nearly the same ones that Alice used to finish her statement to the detective in the first punctuation scene of the film (Scene 6 a). The judge seems to have given in to the logic and "truth" of Alice. Which is ultimately what kind of logic? It is one based on the knowledge of the impossibility to re-present or

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[37] "Le prêtre, impatient de dénoncer le satansisme chez la sorcière, y succombe subtilement. Il tente sans succès de s'en décharger sur la religieuse qu'il confesse. C'est lui qui se livre à des pratiques de possession" (23). Paul Viallaneix, Préface, La sorcière (Paris: Garnier. Flammarion, 1966).

[38] Foucault identifies confession as one of the repressive features of the discourse on sexuality, which is one of the reasons why he claims the necessity for the scientific discourse of sexuality, "Scientia Sexualis," History of Sexuality: Vol. 1, pp. 53-73.

reproduce events through discourse: speech, image, or sound.[39] When we find out from Maître David that there will be a re-enactment of the crime to find out the "truth" we recognize that what has doubled throughout the film is this impossible retelling through speech (Alice's narrative) the events of a murder, an ability that our society "believes in" and is quick to affirm and re-affirm exists (e.g. the confession of a crime, eye-witness testimony, re-enactments). Yet Alice's narrative has created a multitude of other possibilities all in opposition to the system of truths upheld by the authorities. We know that one cannot render an act into discourse without losing the temporality and the performative nature of the act. A murder is never the same thing twice, so to speak.

Therefore, as only one in a series of possibilities, the re-enactment can only fail to accurately represent, and it does. Maître David, who is supposed to play the role of Nora, the murder victim, ends up being murdered, and the detective who was supposed to arrive earlier for the re-enactment arrives too late and must investigate this new murder. He says almost nonchalantly "Tout est à recommencer" [everything must start over] (Scene 45, shot 627), while the final punctuation of the film is Alice in her penitent's robe behind the bars of a prison cell, followed by a close-up of the detective, and a long shot of small waves gently breaking on the beach. This reprise of the generative images and sounds implies a kind of circularity of form that we saw at the end of Je tu il elle and at the end of Rivette's Céline et Julie vont en bateau. As I pointed out in the previous chapter regarding Akerman's work on Je tu il elle, this ability to recognize the impossibility of narrative

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39 I am often reminded of the ending of Foucault's Les mots et les choses (The Order of Things)— "then one can certainly wager that man would be erased, like a face drawn at the edge of the sand" (387)— whenever I consider the demise of the judge, whose final words are "la mer déferle sur la plage." There is a contextual connectedness between the end of "Classical thought" that Foucault calls for and the breaking down of ideological structures and a patriarchal order that Robbe-Grillet seems to advocate. I also find myself asking the question whether the judge's recuperation or appropriation of Alice's discourse creates another hierarchical structure where she is the dominant. If this is a *mise en place* of another power relation then the discursive movement cannot be described by a shift. Rather, it would be considered a transgression. A transgression, however, would set up a modernist trajectory of displacement of the center and a reconfiguration of another set of hierarchically valued concepts.

closure is one of the structural ways of confronting and bypassing the mainstream. Remaining on the margin of the mainstream while using the tools of its system to deride or undercut its power is another common factor of 1970s cinema. Sometimes, however, it is important to remain outside the center or dominant, for no other reason than the undesirability of reconstructing a new center or a mainstream against which a new set of resistances and oppositions will posit its existence. Ultimately Glissements is not so much concerned with its position in the mainstream but with an obsession with the codes that created it. That is, it is preoccupied with the formations of codes in stereotypes and genres in literature and film and the place of these formations in the global ideological thinking that produced them. In an interview in the French film journal Cinématographe Robbe-Grillet said that

> le film est un ensemble de sons et d'images qui doit parler aux sens, à la sensibilité, au corps des spectateurs. A condition, bien sûr, que ceux-ci ne soient pas trop conditionnés par les codes du récit traditionnel.... Malheureusement, une grande partie du public est très fortement soumis aux règles fixées par l'ordre établi, les règles par exemple du prétendu 'réalisme', et cela aussi bien dans le prolétariat que dans la bourgeoisie; nous vivons dans une société où l'idéologie dominante déborde très largement hors de la classe qui l'a produite.[40]

Although, he attempts to self-consciously analyze the film as a production of its proper culture with the film's unrelenting nonlinearity, its continual questioning of Alice's self-representation in the convent-prison, and in the fantasies she molds for the authority,

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40 "Entretien: Alain Robbe-Grillet," by Dominique Maillet Cinématographe 7 (avril-mai 1974): 25. "Film is an ensemble of sounds and images that must speak to the sense, to the sensibility and to the body of spectators. Provided, of course, that they have not been too conditioned by the codes of the traditional narrative.... Unfortunately, a large portion of the public is subject to the fixed rules of the established order, rules, for example, of so-called "realism," and this is true of both the proletariat and the bourgeoisie; we live in a society where the dominant ideology overflows out of the class that produced it."

Robbe-Grillet knowingly circulates images that participate in reinforcing certain relationships of power that themselves reinforce the ideological underpinnings of false consciousness and social relations. The example of pornography works well here because as long as the joke (the disruptive fantasy) was played on the filmic characters the spectator could feel at a safe distance from the graphic and violent images; yet once the barrier of ideology is dropped, the spectator is implicated in the fantasies and participates in the fantasies, as if in the role of a figure of authority trying to make sense of the film. I think this, then, is how Robbe-Grillet's film clearly functions in a paradoxical fashion: it is both against patriarchal structure *and* is complicitous in its fragmented production of images.

Chapter 5

Decentering the Hierarchy of Images in Real Time: Jeanne Dielman, 23, Quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles [1]

> L'idéologie, elle, est dans le langage, on ne peut pas séparer les choses.
> Chantal Akerman [2]

In 1975 several important feminist markers converge. In feminist literary theory, Hélène Cixous's "Le rire de la méduse," published in L'arc, uses the Greek mythological figure of Medusa to posit a break from the "phallogocentric" (40) language, advocating the undefinable "l'écriture féminine" (45). In feminist film theory and criticism, Laura Mulvey's article "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," published by Screen, addressed the issue of the "male gaze" (21) embedded in film structure and criticized the prevailing "patriarchal gaze" in narrative film.[3] And finally, Chantal Akerman's feminist film Jeanne Dielman was completed and released, with Delphine Seyrig as Jeanne.[4] This film is

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[1] Jeanne Dielman, 23 Quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles (Belgium, 1975)- Director: Chantal Akerman; Scenario, Dialogues: Chantal Akerman; Cinematography: Babette Mangolte; Framing: Bénédicte Delesalle; Production: Unité 3/Paradise Films; Cast: Delphine Seyrig (Jeanne), Jan Delcorte (Sylvain), Henri Storck, Jacques Doniol-Valcroze, Yves Bical (clients). Color, 198 min.

[2] Marie-Claude Treilhou, "Interview-Chantal Akerman: 'La vie, il faut la mettre en scène,' " Cinéma 76 206 (février 1976): 92. "Ideology is itself in language, they cannot be separated."

[3] Laura Mulvey's contribution to early feminist film theory is extremely important for the development of early psychoanalytic applications in feminist film criticism, as is her own filmmaking with Peter Wollens.

[4] Delphine Seyrig is an important figure for the French *nouvelle vague*. In L'année dernière à Marienbad (directed by Alain Resnais, ciné-roman and script by Alain Robbe-Grillet, 1961), she played the glamorous female lead who is the unwilling recipient of the persistent advances of a man claiming to have met her the previous year at Marienbad. The "ambiguous" rape by the male character (though the rape does not seem ambiguous in the way the camera repeatedly moves into the room of the woman) was created by Resnais who refused to film Robbe-Grillet's original "exaggerated... and sufficiently extravagant sado-erotic rape scene." Quoted in Anthony Fragola and Roch Smith, eds., The Erotic Dream Machine: Interviews (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992) 143. In addition to Seyrig's film career and persona, she was one of the women who signed the "Manifesto of the 343," published on 5 April 1971 Le nouvel observateur, that listed the names of actresses, writers, filmmakers, etc... who had had abortions and demanded changes in the law (Le féminisme est dans la rue, 115). It was signed by Simone de Beauvoir,

working against the linear plot of classical narrative and offers several unusual techniques, and I propose that with this film we come to a crossroads of alternative filmmaking where narrative feminist cinema and non- (or anti-) narrative cinema meet. These three feminist markers, though only a small example of the vast amount of work produced this year, all had one thing in common. They all addressed the concepts of power and authority in systems of representation in art and language. How each of these feminists is able to address her particular field is important in the growth of the feminist reexamination of patriarchal structures in Western culture. Akerman's interrogation of the mainstream film system comes from, in large part, the French feminist thought of Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray, and Monique Wittig, who spoke about the need to revolutionize and subvert language and action in order to get out of the constraints of a symbolic order made for and by patriarchy. Akerman, however, will work through and against the mainstream film and the documentary by using subversion by inclusion of film language. We have already seen this subversion by inclusion in various forms, for example, in the theme of all-inclusive subjectivities and the long-take editing of Akerman's earlier film Je tu il elle and in the dialectical editing of Godard's Le gai savoir. Here it will mean specifically the use of familiar discursive film language without editing, or at least very little, in order that the basic components of film—time and image—become subversive. In other words, Akerman's feminist film, Jeanne Dielman, has included all images that mainstream filmmaking would have cut out in the editing process. This accumulation of images done through the use almost exclusively of long takes is what Akerman calls her "register" of images. Her main stylistic focus in Jeanne Dielman is on the shot length and the symmetry of the images she has chosen to "enregister".[5] Akerman herself has repeatedly said, "je ne

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Christiane de Rochefort, Françoise Sagan, Colette Audry, Violette Leduc, Gisèle Halimi, Romy Schneider, Jeanne Moreau, Catherine Deneuve, Micheline Presle, among hundreds of others. But as Claire Duchen points out not all of these women had actually had abortions (Feminism in France, 52).

[5] I am using this term "enregister" in order to make a closer connection to the French word "enregistrer" in the sense of "to record." Another way that could have been useful to talk about Akerman's "register" would

pense pas qu'un homme aurait abordé ce thème en montrant la vie quotidienne d'une femme au foyer; il ne se serait pas attaché aux mêmes images, images qui ne sont pas valorisées cinématographiquement ou socialement."[6] Akerman's constant questioning of the discursive elements in film and their circulation within the mainstream will set up her first level of interrogation in praxis of film discourse. She will further interrogate narrative and film structure through her stylistic economy of practice.

In film culture, Chantal Akerman clearly articulates filmmaking's relationship to the politics of the women's movement and the avant-garde's cinematic form with her film Jeanne Dielman, 23, Quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles (1975), the title of which indicates what the film is about: a woman and a place. Jeanne is a widowed "petite bourgeoise" from a working-class neighborhood in Brussels and a prostitute who uses her bedroom to accept afternoon clients, "pour arrondir les fins de mois" (literally: "to round out the end of the month" or "to make ends meet"). It is only after the prostitution is introduced that we are shown in both precise and sometimes excruciating detail a three-day schedule in Jeanne's life, divided into temporal segments from Tuesday to Thursday. The developing feminist cinema of the 1970s no longer took for granted its place in culture and its production of representations of women. Teresa de Lauretis, in her article "Rethinking Women's Cinema," shows that the 1970s hold that moment of rupture between feminist practice and theory in writing and in filmmaking.[7] The ground-breaking work of French feminists and the contributors to the Cahiers du Grif in Belgium at this time played a large

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be to use the term "list" and the images that she has "enlisted" into it. But "enlist" does have other connotations, especially from the military and school, institutions of authority that Akerman is putting into question, and this does not fit her interrogation in praxis of those structures.

[6] Entretien de Presse/Press Kit Interview, "Entretien avec Chantal Akerman," Presse Distribution de Paradise Films et Unité Trois Production, 1975. "I don't think that a man would have approached this theme by showing the daily life of a housewife; he wouldn't be attached to the same images, images that are not developed/actualized cinematographically or socially..."

[7] Teresa de Lauretis, "Rethinking Women's Cinema: Aesthetic and Feminist Theory," in Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film and Fiction (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1987) 127-130. Originally published as "Aesthetic and Feminist Theory: Rethinking Women's Cinema," New German Critique 34 (Winter 1985).

role in increasing the circulation of feminist thought throughout many scholarly communities, while CR groups and feminist grassroots efforts for social change concerning reproductive rights and political representation were forming and exerting force in Europe and the Americas. In other words, two distinct strains of feminism were developing: one practical, dealing with women, and the other theoretical, dealing with Woman and gender. Filmmaking, too, was caught up in these two different modalities. There often existed in film collectives and within film crews ideological struggles over what was more important to (re)present in this emerging cinema: the social "real" of everyday life, or the idealized female figure (created by restructuring the film form itself using techniques borrowed from the avant-garde). Akerman's film bridges the gap between these two emerging tendencies of 1970s feminist filmmaking. Her film works within the interstices: within the place of knowledge of both film's capacity to capture a certain realism and of film's impossibility of being realistic. Akerman focuses on this gap by using film length, editing, and experimental narratives in order to question the representational and discursive power of cinema. Unlike Helke Sander's 1971 film Eine Praemie fuer Irene/A Bonus for Irene, which explores the relationship of women in the public sphere of work and private sphere of home, Jeanne Dielman has no conventional story and does not try to balance its formal considerations and problems of representation with a standard plot.[8] Sander deals with the problems of the work-place as contributing to problems at home whereas Akerman creates a "social" work-place that never leaves the home. Akerman said in a Cahiers du Cinéma interview that "[she] wouldn't have... made the film in that manner, the idea wouldn't have been so clear, were it not for the women's movement."[9]

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[8] Sanders, though, created her film in response to the *Arbeiter* film genre. The *Arbeiter* films usually centered on men and the exploitative problems in the workplace. Most often, these films dealt with working class and the managing (upper) class in in post-World War II German society.

[9] Quoted in Judith Mayne "Revising the 'Primitive'" The Woman at the Keyhole (Bloomington: Indiana University Press,1990) 202. Originally published in Danièle Dubroux, Thérèse Giraud, and Louis Skorecki, "Entretien avec Chantal Akerman," Cahiers du Cinéma 278 (juillet 1977): 35.

By committing herself to the women's movement Akerman proves that she unites consistently the documentary approach of showing women in society and society itself (especially in the scenes of Jeanne outside in the streets of Brussels) while working formally with a new language that paradoxically expresses the impossibility of representing exactly those "real" women in the extant mainstream cinema or in conventional cinematic language.[10] Moreover, Akerman made the entire film with an all-woman crew, first with Bénédicte Delesalle as cinematographer before finally choosing to work with cinematographer Babette Mangolte.[11]

I will examine the "minimalist" formal style and techniques that have kept Jeanne Dielman at the forefront of discussions in feminist cinema since 1975 and that make up her economy of practice. I will be focusing especially on time in the long take and on diegetic sound, as well as the few but significant reverse shots and the "faux" reverse shots filmed in mirrors that function as mediating devices between Jeanne and the outside world and which in fact prepare us for the ultimate mirror shot in the final sequence when she murders the client.[12] I will further take into consideration Akerman's use of the film medium to explore film time in long takes in relation to real time (spectator time). This is counter to mainstream cinema's manipulation of film reality through editing. Her film implicitly

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[10] A generation of filmmakers, Akerman included, were influenced by the direct cinema of Jean Rouch's documentaries of the 1950s French *rive gauche* filmmaking technique. This documentary style is characterized by allowing action to take place in front of the camera with little directorial interference and by the minimalist avant-garde tradition of, for example, Stan Brakhage's Eat (1963) which shows Robert Indiana eating a mushroom in long take with no cuts. Tony Pipolo has called this a "minimalist narrative with a vengeance."

[11] Benedicte Delesalle is the cinematographer for Akerman's earlier film Je Tu Il Elle (1974, released 1976), which I discuss in chapter 3.

[12] Amy Taubin called these "reverse of the angle" in relation to Jeanne's broken routine and the subjective camera. Taubin wrote: "The most interesting aspect of the film is the questions which it raises in relation to the subjective camera....As a correlative of the beginning of her disorientation there are one or two brief shots of the kitchen from the *reverse of the angle* used up till now. With this exception, the camera maintains its established vocabulary of positions, focus, lighting." (Emphasis mine.) I agree with Taubin regarding the use of "reverse angle," however, I will posit that the camera does not ultimately maintain its vocabulary, but deviates, though perhaps slightly, from its rigor in the sequences that occur at the departure of the second client. Amy Taubin, "A Woman's Tedium," The Soho Weekly News November 25, 1978, 31.

recognizes how conventional cinematic language uses tropes and cultural signifiers in its editing in order to be subordinate to the progression of the linear narrative. By pushing her film to the margins of conventional cinema, she attempts to formulate a new structure based on the time of action as story, not on the editing of action for the story.

> J'ai dit que le véritable sujet de Jeanne Dielman était l'histoire d'un dérèglement.... Il n'aura pas fallu grand-chose pour introduire une fissure, une inquiétude dans cet équilibre qui semblait immuable et naturel.
> Boris Lehman [13]

To understand the utter banality representing Jeanne's existence a brief description of the filmic sequences—though an inadequate substitute for the visual—is helpful for those who have never viewed it. Jeanne Dielman begins on a Tuesday afternoon when Jeanne puts a pot of potatoes on the stove to boil. The door buzzer sounds, and after wiping her hands, she answers the front door. She takes a man (Henri Storck) into the bedroom of her apartment.[14] No more than a "Bonjour" is exchanged. Later, in the same hallway, but much darker, they appear from the back, she gives him his hat and coat, accepts money from him and puts it in a soup tureen on the dining room table. After this, her teenage son, Sylvain (Jan Delcorte), arrives home. They have their dinner (a long and silent one). Sylvain then recites his homework, the poem "L'ennemi" by Baudelaire, with a very strong Flemish accent. After taking out the garbage, they go for a walk, and then go to bed.

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[13] Boris Lehman, "Le parcours obligé," Les actes du colloque Chantal Akerman, ed. Jacqueline Aubénas (Bruxelles: Ateliers des Arts, 1981): 185. (182-188) He is quoting his earlier material from "Le parcours..." in Clés (décembre 1975). It is interesting for me to note the odd perceptions of some filmmakers and critics (Lehman is both) who should find Jeanne's kind of "equilibrium" "unchanging" and "natural," as if her fixed and repressed state of "equilibrium" was a positive part of the "natural" order of things.

[14] Both Henri Storck and Jacques Doniol Valcroze, who play the first and second clients, are important figures in European cinema. Storck was at this time a well-known Belgian filmmaker and Doniol-Valcroze was for many years a critic at the Cahiers du Cinema and acted in Robbe-Grillet's directorial début film L'Immortelle (1963).

On Wednesday morning, Jeanne begins her series of household tasks: shining Sylvain's shoes, preparing his clothes, and making coffee among other chores before seeing him off for the day. She methodically (mechanistically, even) washes the dishes, does some grocery shopping, figures her household accounts, babysits, prepares dinner, runs some errands, has her coffee, returns home to cook potatoes, and receives a second client (Jacques Doniol-Valcroze). As before, she leads out the client, though forgetting to turn on the hall light until she accepts money from him. She forgets to put the lid on the soup tureen after placing the money inside, and then bathes. In the kitchen, she then discovers that the potatoes have overcooked, throws them away and goes out to get more.[15] Sylvain remarks that her hair is disheveled as she peels more potatoes. Dinner is late, and her hair remains uncombed at the table.

By Thursday her order is disrupted and we notice an increasing level of break-down in her routine. Her uneven and erratic manner of shining Sylvain's shoes betrays her less than calm mood. Because she woke up too early, the post office and other stores are closed, and she prepares the meatloaf too early. When the coffee does not taste right and the child she is babysitting cannot be soothed by her constant rocking and shaking, we sense that something definitely is amiss. That afternoon she goes out to find one coat-button and at her usual café another woman is in her seat. She arrives home to find a package from her sister. A third client (Yves Bical) arrives, but Jeanne is affected by this sexual encounter (which is the first one that the spectators witness). She struggles underneath him, tries to free herself. Afterward, when dressing, "with characteristic silence

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[15] I always thought of the potatoes as being burnt, that they would be inedible and would have to be thrown away. However, I was reminded by Royal Brown that they are only overcooked, because Jeanne remarks to Sylvain at the table that she could have made mashed potatoes out of them. This is another indicator pointing to Jeanne's obsessive/compulsive nature in that she could not conceive of making mashed potatoes out of overcooked potatoes on "boiled potatoes" night.

and economy" [16] she turns around and stabs the man with a pair of scissors. In the end, she sits at the dining room table staring out blankly into the camera, waiting....

Thus Akerman portrays in a microcosm this possible "real" woman—Jeanne, who turns on and off the light switch, does dishes, fixes coffee—by repeating these images in real time that fit into a "register" of elements traditionally elided from classical cinema. There is a traditional register operating in mainstream cinema based predominantly on Hollywood filmmaking against which Akerman is working. Hollywood's register contains coded music and other extradiegetic sounds on the soundtrack and coded images of "car accidents and kisses in close-up," as Akerman mentions, but also fragmentary close-ups of the female body, and stereotypical characterizations of women which maintain narrative continuity in fiction film. In fact those very images that are edited out for continuity in mainstream film are those that Akerman has chosen to put to use in her film. Her new "register" consists of images that had never previously been put into circulation or developed formally. In an interview with a French feminist journalist, Marie-Claude Treilhou, Akerman said:

> "Je voulais surtout travailler sur le langage, en prenant des images qui dans le cinéma en général font partie des ellipses, qui sont les images les plus dévalorisées....
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> "Car il y a une hiérarchie dans les images. Par exemple, un accident de voiture ou un baiser en gros plan, c'est plus élevé dans la hiérarchie que de faire la vaisselle. Faire la vaisselle, c'est le plus bas, surtout de dos. Et ce n'est pas par hasard mais bien en rapport avec la place de la femme dans la hiérarchie sociale.... [J]e travaille dans les images qui sont entre les images."[17]

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[16] Janet Bergstrom, "Jeanne Dielman," Camera Obscura 2 (Fall 1977): 115.

[17] "I wanted to work mostly with language, by using images that are generally part of the ellipses of cinema, that are the most undeveloped images.... For there is a hierarchy in images. For example, a car

These "new" images are Akerman's register, contributing not to the established "hierarchy of images" which works for the patriarchal representability of women but to a new feminist film praxis. Real-time shots (or long takes) expose the actual time it takes the film actress to perform a gesture in the filmic time. In other words, the filmic time and real time coincide: a five-minute action on screen takes five minutes of spectator time. The whole film is not based on total inclusion of "real" time. Akerman does edit in many instances. For example, on the first night, when Jeanne goes to bed and turns out the light, Akerman cuts to an insert title on a black background that reads "fin du premier jour" [end of the first day], before cutting to the morning when Jeanne turns the light on. The ellipsis is also used to cut the evening walks that Jeanne and Sylvain take after dinner. We see them leave the building, put the garbage on the curb, and walk down the dark street. Then, we see them return to the building and go the elevator, before the scene cuts to the entranceway of the apartment. As B. Ruby Rich has pointed out "Akerman scorns the *realistic* speeded-up tempo of movieland, opting instead for the artificiality of real-time pacing.... The style is minimalist, stripped of all distractions, concentrating on the most basic and mysterious component of cinema as a medium: the passage of time."[18] The *locus classicus* of real time, as Jill Forbes in French Cinema: After the New Wave has called it, is Agnès Varda's 1962 film Cléo de 5 à 7 (86).[19] This film, though very different from Akerman's Jeanne Dielman, concentrates on the two-hour period (the film's running time) in the day of a young singer (Corinne Marchand). The camera settles into her time and her wanderings throughout Paris as she waits to get test results to find out if she has cancer. Yet for

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accident or a kiss in close-up is more valued in this hierarchy than doing dishes. Doing dishes, especially seen from the back, is the least valued. And that this is not by chance but exactly in relation to the place that women hold in society's hierarchy.... I work with the images that are between the images" ("Interview," 92).

[18] B. Ruby Rich, "Chantal Akerman: Designing Desire," The Village Voice March 28 1983, 51. Emphasis mine.

[19] Jill Forbes, French Cinema: After the New Wave (London: BFI, 1993). Also Judith Mayne compares these two films at length in "Revising the 'Primitive'" The Woman at the Keyhole (Bloomington: Indiana University Press,1990) 193-212.

Akerman, both the conceptual and abstract notions of the passage of time are more directly derived from avant-garde film technique (mostly from the United States) including the technical mastery of the long take that she has combined here with shot symmetry and constant camera-to-character distance.[20] Symmetry of set and shot sequences is put to use in the avant-garde feminist's concern with form to create a newness of space or even the monotony of an act; but when used in juxtaposition with asymmetrical or decentered shots these then take on an especially prominent place in the film. In addition, Akerman gives transcendent power to her versions of cutaways and reverse shots, because when they are used in her cinema they immediately refer to an abrupt change in Jeanne's character. As one critic has said, "It is as if the cutaway had not been discovered, and of course there are no cutaways in the real world."[21] In Jeanne Dielman, it is true, there are no conventional cutaways, but this seems logical since there is no secondary action taking place. Straight cuts are used between sequences of Jeanne's day and night actvities, condensing time, for instance, when Jeanne is sleeping, because this is "natural" time, not the time of the domestic gesture. This is another example of Akerman's economy of practice.

Akerman uses the film's length to challenge conventional cinema by rejecting the fast-based editing and typical duration (90 to 105 minutes) of feature-length film and opting for over three hours (198 min.) of a minutely exact and often times repetitious linear succession of sequences. Its use of real time does frankly exasperate any standard audience. Yet it is necessary to question whether a film's length can be subversive. Judging from positive audience reactions to two American films like Gone with the Wind (Victor

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[20] Her early filmmaking and influence by the American avant-garde is addressed at length in chapter 3.

[21] Herb. Variety 24 August 1983: 20. A "cutaway" is an element in the system of continuity editing. It is "a shot away from the main action but used to join two shots of the main action in order to designate the passage of time; build suspense by extending time; ...allow the audience some relief from the main action." Ira Konigsberg, The Complete Film Dictionary (New York: Meridian, 1987) 70. This kind of cut can be preceded by a look or a glance of a character out of the frame, or it might be a cut to something that the actors of the preceding shot are unaware of, in order for the spectators to gain information within the narrative.

Fleming, 1939, USA, 222 min.) or Dances with Wolves (Kevin Costner, 1990, USA, 181 min.), one must look elsewhere for the subversive elements. We need to look not only at the duration but more importantly at the narrative structure and the conventional use of film discourse. We see that the two films are structured by epic linear plots that recount an historical epoch. These narratives are always moving forward, staging conflicts, and finally coming to a tidy narrative closure corresponding to the end of the film. In the case of Jeanne Dielman, the film contains repeated gestures and expressions throughout which begin to instill narrative coherence and meaning to Jeanne's story when they are slightly modified. The film's abrupt departure from the repetitive gesture, seen in the murder, after the scene of prostitution, is eventually recuperated back in Jeanne's time, when Jeanne becomes immobile, forcing the action to stop. In this sense, the film's length and the specific duration of each shot combine to create a viewing experience that would strike most spectators as nonnarrative. Jeanne's "plot" is one of domestic gesture and claustrophobia, defying all traditional film narrative genres. Akerman's goal is to pull the viewer out of the collapsed and edited space and time of traditional cinematic narrative.

By focusing on the passage of time as well as Akerman's technical efficiency of shot succession, Jeanne's economy of gesture and the precision of each act clue the spectator in on Jeanne's literally silent self-effacement. These sequences show, to a large degree, the importance of Akerman's own use of ellipsis in her "register" of images that form for her a cinematic feminist aesthetic. This register contains images that do not fulfill standard criteria for Hollywood narrative. We understand implicitly that the film is about a woman who is a prostitute, yet nowhere in the beginning do we have the images of prostitution, or a hint of its condemnation. This absence is intimately part of Akerman's project. Since the Hollywood or conventional "hierarchy of images" would exploit such a site of desire and sexuality as prostitution, Akerman does not include this in her register of images. The prostitution portrayed in this film is also very different from other women filmmakers' attempts at its depiction. Nelly Kaplan's film La fiancée du pirate [A Very

Curious Girl] (1969) is a good example of an attempt to recuperate prostitution for feminism. Kaplan's film is about a prostitute (also a cleaning woman) played by Bernadette Lafont, who seeks revenge on the townspeople for their attacks on her work. Yet through paid sex and by being the "confessor" of the men, she is able to achieve a kind of power over them. She records, literally on tape, their secrets and finally leaves town, playing the voices of the men in public, in the church. In Akerman's film, prostitution has an economic function whereas the Kaplan film uses it not merely as a financial means for the woman's escape, but also as a weapon to gain the power of knowledge that ultimately liberates her from the town. Commenting on the Kaplan film, Meaghan Morris, in her book on feminism and postmodernism, The Pirate's Fiancée, calls this story "an allegory of vengeance and liberation" (1) and later an "aggressive fairy-tale" (68). In Akerman's film we are led to understand the silent centrality of prostitution since the film begins with Jeanne greeting a client, but we are not left with the impression that Jeanne ever acts out of vengeance or self-determined liberation. In other words, Akerman builds the film, to a certain extent, on a large lacuna where both Jeanne's "work" and sexuality are visually absent from the body of the film, absent that is, until the final bedroom sequence. What the film does reveal, then, is an explicitly designed repression and "hyperrealism" of Jeanne's vacuously organized existence where each gesture, each motion is created without anxiousness or excitement, completely defetishizing the figure of Woman.

One way to concentrate materially on Akerman's register is to look at one specific element in Jeanne Dielman. Here, I'd like to concentrate on the domestic gesture. As Akerman has said: the film itself has to present images that are "...more than the content.... If you choose to show a woman's gestures so precisely, it's because you love them."[22] In mainstream or commercial cinema, such domestic gestures as doing the dishes, making coffee, or shining shoes are always there to perform a narrative function to further the

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[22] "Chantal Akerman on *Jeanne Dielman*," Camera Obscura 2 (1977): 118-119.

master plot. One such example of the advancing of the plot can be seen in the contemporary "Hollywood feminist film," Thelma and Louise (1992, Ridley Scott, USA.) In the opening sequence Thelma is shown clearing the table and pouring coffee for her husband. This visual information, along with the previous dialogue between Thelma and Louise, sets up the two women counterparts. One is the independent working woman (waitress), while the other is the suburban American version of the "woman who stays at home." To borrow a Barthesian concept, this is "housewife-*ity*."[23] The character is the sum of all the meaning that her domestic gesture contains. Early in Thelma and Louise, Thelma's husband, Darrell, makes degrading remarks, "Frankly, Thelma, I don't give a shit what we have for dinner," as she finishes scraping the last of the breakfast dishes. Not only does her husband, in that one comment, deny her that signifying function for a woman who stays at home and cooks and cleans, but this will also advance the plot, in the sense that his abusive treatment of her is so blatantly repulsive that the spectators are prepared for her rebellion. That is, Thelma will leave the domestic life behind and take off for the weekend with Louise without telling Darrell. What makes this scene different from the coffee making shot in Jeanne Dielman is that this is "Hollywood pouring coffee," because Hollywood must create an opposite to Thelma. The narrative convention makes Darrell a monster before we do.[24] Hollywood always gives us cutaways to other characters in order for us to have an outlet for our feelings. We do not have to think about why Thelma might rebel, we are given an easy answer—her husband is a creep. However, in Jeanne Dielman, there is no one to transfer our feelings of outrage onto; there is no monster, there is only the domestic gesture, the monotony of routine, the *quotidienneté*. Akerman has specifically chosen her

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[23] The "-ity" suffix sums up all the coded elements of that particular concept. Barthes writes, "A vrai dire, ce qui s'investit dans le concept, c'est moins le réel qu'une certaine connaissance du réel...." The "certain knowledge of the real" is what Hollywood depends on for meaning. Roland Barthes, "Le mythe, aujourd'hui," Mythologies (Paris: Seuil, 1957) 204-206.

[24] In fact, it should go without saying that Hollywood has quite a tradition of varying degrees of conventional male characterizations from Clark Gabel's / Rhett Butler's "Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn" to Humphrey Bogart's / Rick's "Here's looking at you, kid."

domestic scenes for several reasons, because in her register technically these are the scenes that are typically "elided" from most narrative cinema. Formally, these scenes represent underdeveloped/undervalued images in the hierarchy of image-making, and narratively, these images are clearly linked to what Akerman called "the place of women in the hierarchy of [patriarchal] society" in her interview with Marie-Claude Treilhou (92). In the case of Jeanne Dielman, we see, in this coffee-making sequence, Akerman's interest in creating an aesthetic of the gesture and of time. It serves no element in the progress of the narrative (in the sense that it does not give us any clues to the murder at the end) and for its duration (7 minutes) it introduces no new thematic development. Yet the act itself, from grinding the beans to pouring the boiling water in the drip funnel, shows a slight variation from the morning's coffee preparation, so that the gesture takes the place of a "conventional narrative event."[25] In the previous sequence, Jeanne has free time and does not seem to know what to do until her next "functional" moment will occur, so she decides to drink a cup of coffee. She adds milk, but then throws away the coffee, unable to drink it. She tastes the milk alone to see whether it is sour, and then adds more coffee and two pieces of sugar, but the taste is still not satisfying. She pours this into the sink and sets out to make a new pot of coffee. What makes her decide that the coffee doesn't taste right? Has she suddenly become conscious of taste? Is her coffee-making method no good? When her system or order is disrupted is the coffee distasteful? There are a whole host of conclusions we might be tempted to draw from these shots. And yet, how unsatisfied we, as spectators, feel when she does not even try the coffee in the end, after having made it. In this sense, it was the act itself, the motions, the gestures that constitute the importance of the sequence, not the typical or conventional narrative outcome of "does she like her fresh pot of coffee?" It is possible to understand how Akerman works around classical narrative structure in this filmic text by showing some of the formal aspects that she is working through and against.

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[25] Janet Bergstrom, "Jeanne Dielman," Camera Obscura 2 (Fall 1977): 115.

I have taken the example of the coffee making mostly because it is one of the most everyday occurrences even for us; yet its presence is not reliably familiar. Stanley Kauffman has noted that "the concentration of the camera on those data, the disregard of the conventions of tempo and drama, of conventional motion in a motion picture, render the familiar into an abstraction even as we loll in familiarity." [26] In this sense then, Jeanne's coffee-making comes close to signifying a nonnarrative ritual abstraction as does the washing of her dishes, the drying of her hands, and the turning on and off the light switches.

Akerman provokes defiance of cinematic conventions not only with her "new" language/register throughout the film but also by establishing an atmosphere of fixed-income life in Jeanne's work and daily habits: after all Jeanne's only income-generating activities are babysitting and prostitution. Even her food preparation, far from being the sumptuous feast of Babette (Babette's Feast, Gabriel Axel, 1987, Denmark) or the delicate rose-petal sauce in Like Water for Chocolate (Alfonso Arau, 1992, Mexico), is very humdrum and ordinary: *Pain de viande* [meat loaf] and boiled potatoes. This atmosphere of modest living is also depicted in relation to Jeanne's son, Sylvain. He sleeps on a pull-out couch in the living room, wears a hand-knit sweater, and his shoes are polished by Jeanne to keep them around for another year. At the same time that this "story" places Jeanne in this social milieu, the film formally defines the claustrophobic spaces of her home with no outlet. Jeanne Dielman is also about blockages, "real" and metaphorical: the immobility within the microcosm of Jeanne's home and economic immobility within the society, and the repression that keeps her locked in a symbolic order made by patriarchal ideology (a former husband, clients, and her son). By working as a prostitute and a babysitter both in her apartment to provide an income for her son, her economic function is doubly inscribed as sexual and maternal. Yet we perceive her as neither madonna nor whore, simply as a

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[26] Stanley Kauffman, Rev. of *Jeanne Dielman*, New Republic 4 April 1983: 22.

woman whose oppression is visible at every moment of the film, from the obsessive way she washes the dishes to the manner in which she shines her sons shoes, or lays out the little white towel on her bed each morning, always filmed in long takes with a fixed camera at a nonjudgemental eye-level.

This framework, quite apart from film aesthetics, is what has created the space to talk about the representations of women, mothers, and prostitution in the social environment that Akerman is invoking. We immediately feel the contrast between Jeanne and the chattering "voiced" young mother (only heard, but never seen, played in fact by Akerman) who wonders out loud about what to fix for dinner, talks about her experience at the butcher's or about her marital and family problems. I take up this discussion in light of the fact that there are very few critical reactions to this aspect of Jeanne's character. When the film first came out Danièle Dubroux commented on the place of this familiar image of "mother" in the film. She wrote that "Elle [Jeanne] n'a rien à voir avec le devant de la scène, elle est ailleurs, elle est en nous, elle est notre mère, nos mères, étrangement portée au spectacle, à l'écran, dans ses gestes quotidiens, mille fois répétés et qu'on regarde enfin, ces gestes qu'on interroge."[27] When we think about Jeanne Dielman, we rarely think about how the technical aspects of the film tend toward an erasure, an effacement of Jeanne as mother; yet we try to make sense of these elements narratively, and they seem to be her *raison d'être*. Why else would she do shopping, fix food, make coffee, prostitute herself, if not for her son? The conversations, if they can be called that, between Jeanne and her son, Sylvain, seem also a part of the domestic gesture as well. Jeanne makes the exact same conventional remark ("Don't read at the table") at dinner two nights in a row and avoids any other conversations initiated by Sylvain by cutting them short. There are, however, a few exceptions. She reminds Sylvain that he chose to go to the Flemish high

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[27] Danièle Dubroux, "Le familier inquiétant (*Jeanne Dielman*)," Cahiers du cinéma 265 (mars/avril 1976): 17. "Jeanne has nothing to do with the set, she is elsewhere, she is in us, she is our mother, our mothers, strangely transformed into spectacle, onto the screen, in her daily gestures repeated a thousand times that we finally look at and question."

school. Sylvain speaks French with a thick Flemish accent, which clashes with Jeanne's impeccable French as when she reads out loud the letter from her sister.[28] And at another point, she is knitting a sweater for Sylvain and she asks him whether he's sure that he'd like it to be long. It is almost comedic to ask such a question when in fact Sylvain looks ridiculous in his tiny sweater that barely covers his elbows and crawls halfway up his back whenever he moves. We further see the tragi-comic elements in the way she gives him his little bit of wrapped candy after he puts his books away in his satchel, or in the way she "reads" the newspaper in one flowing gesture turning page after page. Her ability to deal with an obviously adolescent boy is to keep him within her system, in her mind, as the little boy (in a little sweater who eats candy) whose sexuality is not fully developed. The one conversation initiated by Sylvain, between the son and mother, expressing Sylvain's teenage interest in sexuality hints at Jeanne's repressed notions about sex. When he specifically asks about sex, comparing the penis to a sword, Jeanne replies "Oh, you know, making love, as you say, it's just a detail." (Would that be the same kind of detail that she gives to her breaded veal cutlets or to her meatloaf?) When the conversation continues, Sylvain says to her: "If I were a woman I wouldn't let a man I didn't love make love to me." This is, indeed, a romanticized view of love, but one that is in sharp contrast to what seems to be Jeanne's inability to feel anything. She responds by saying: "How could you know? You are not a woman." She wishes him good night and turns out the

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[28] Sylvain's insistence on attending the Flemish school has political overtones not fully addressed by Jeanne's "story." Historically, there has always been little communication between the Flemish and the French-speaking (Walloon) groups in Belgium. In addition, these differences are not just linguistic but are linked to a set of cultural issues and traditions. The differences are even more striking in relationship to the women's movement, and especially regarding the demands for access to information, free birth control, and abortions. For example, in Flemish Belgium, the *Belgische vereniging voor sexuele verlichting* (Belgian Association for Sexual Information) was started in the northern cities in 1955. However, French-speaking Belgium, the center of which is Brussels, did not start any such association or dissemination of information until the end of 1962, and even when a center was organized it was known as *La Famille heureuse* [The Happy Family]. This cultural, and perhaps to a certain degree religious difference, in addressing the issue of sexuality is clear from these two groups' projected goals. The Flemish women sought to inform and educate on sexuality whereas the other, and predominantly Catholic French-speaking group concentrated their efforts on "family matters." The other reading of this language difference is Sylvain's progressive rebellion against his mother's system in which he seems to be an unwilling participant, a rebellion that Jeanne would not be able to understand until she reacts to the repressive environment she has folded herself into.

light. This remark may reveal Sylvain's awareness of his mother's afternoon activities but he cannot bring himself to address directly the prostitution. He speaks about his own interest in sexuality and love. Though this film hides sexuality (and repressed sexuality) behind a closed door, and more accurately in a closed mind, it depicts an oppression that this woman/mother experiences in the masculine symbolic order at every moment. In the Treilhou interview, Akerman said that in this film "l'ordre symbolique masculin est toujours présent: il est tellement fort qu'elle [Jeanne] continue à se conduire comme si [son mari] était là."[29] The symbolic order, which is also part of how Jeanne is constructed in this ideology, is present in the claustrophobic space of each frame. Even an open window in the bedroom is not an outlet, nor are the empty urban streets where Jeanne walks to the store. There is an ever-present male in her routine. Financially and sexually other men have replaced her husband (implicitly giving the film a strong condemnation of marriage) keeping her still locked in that order. She still shines a pair of shoes every morning, though they are now her son's. In fact, this is one of the few long takes that we see repeated after the break in the routine. On the morning of the third day, the erratically performed shoe-shining subtly belies the repressed tension as the brush falls from her hands and clatters on the floor. She does not finish the third step of the shining before putting the material away and returning the shoes to her son. Her attitude in the shoe-shining sequence is similar to that of the potato peeling scene of the previous afternoon: the shot loses its "information" about how this task is performed, yet takes in other information from Akerman's "register." The beleaguered look on Jeanne's face and the faltering movement in her gestures move into Jeanne's domestic space to disrupt. This is where Akerman's direct cinema style confronts the status of Jeanne's social condition. With these ideas in mind we can understand Dubroux, who further argued that this film "parle de l'enfermement de la femme, enfermement social, enfermement spatial, enfermement temporel (un temps

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[29] Treilhou, "Interview" 93. "...the masculine symbolic order is always present; it is so strong that Jeanne continues to act as if her husband were still there."

mesuré, compté, invariable)..."[30] as a commentary on the social function of woman. At the same time, we look to B. Ruby Rich's reading of the film, as she wrote in 1983, after a screening of Jeanne Dielman in New York, "Akerman's films aren't really 'about' any subject so much as they're about cinema itself."[31] This is said in reference to Akerman's technical achievements in avant-garde cinema not in narrative fiction. These two comments point to the film's layers created by the representation and the technique which function together and need to be addressed together in order to uncover ideological (patriarchal) structures at work in film. It is in turning, once again, to the formal aspects of this film that we will discover just how Akerman sustains such a lengthy film based on repression and the ritual of domestic gestures to contain these repressions. To fully understand what the break in routine signifies for Jeanne we, as spectators, must rely on such technical aspects as the long take, minimal changing camera positions, and the sound track.

Part of the hyperrealism in Akerman's style is found, of course, in the filmic content that shows this orderliness: the exact time it takes Jeanne to do the dishes, to prepare cutlets, or to make a pot of coffee. In addition to the technical use of time, Akerman refers to her own specific past to produce these film images: "Le film est construit sur des images que j'ai enregistrées dans ma toute petite enfance, images liées à ma mère, et aux autres femmes dont j'ai été entourées à ce moment là. Moment où encore vient d'elle(s)." [32] And, in fact, what makes this film so extraordinary in the "canon" of feminist cinema is not merely that it is one of the few films made with an all-woman crew, but that the spectators, then, are engaged in the filmic system in which Jeanne exists, not through the narrative

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30 "speaks of the imprisonment of woman, social imprisonment, spatial imprisonment and temporal imprisonment (with a measured, counted, and invariable time)..." (Dubroux 17).

31 B. Ruby Rich, "Chantal Akerman: Designing Desire," The Village Voice March 28, 1983, 51.

32 Press Kit Interview, "Entretien avec Chantal Akerman," Presse Distribution de Paradise Films et Unité Trois Production, 1975. "The film is constructed with the images that I remember from my earliest childhood, images linked to my mother, and other women who surrounded me at that moment. A moment that still comes from her/them."

continuity of a story, but by her fastidious routine. In fact the spectators are so engaged that after Jeanne's second client we immediately notice the slight differences in her actions, expressions, and the camera's shift of angle. This is perhaps why Teresa de Lauretis points out, in Technologies of Gender, that this film "*addresses its spectator as a woman*, regardless of the gender of the viewers... [T]he film defines all points of identification (with character, image, camera) as female, feminine, or feminist."[33] This is also probably the closest we come to something like a "female-centered discourse" (133). Another way of thinking about this issue formally might be explained by B. Ruby Rich who suggests that "Akerman's version of cinema returns to a sort of 'filming degree zero' in which shots are held so long that meaning dissolves into play, interest into detachment, detachment back again into involvement."[34] Therefore, we as spectators are the alternately interested, detached, and involved participants working from within the monotonous routine through the gathering silent rage to the final act of Jeanne's rending herself from the orderliness and the order in which she has operated. The very first visual clues that address an obvious difference and change in routine are Jeanne's uncombed hair and the unlit hallway light after the second client. The subsequent slips and breaks in her routine originate from this dark space. This lacuna in the text or lack of information surrounding the events that went on behind that closed door becomes then the pivot around which the rest of the film will turn. The space of prostitution is marked as the repressed/the silent *and*, significantly, the center of the film. This undefined event clearly delineates the end of her monotonous existence of making coffee, shining her sons shoes, dredging veal cutlets, as if untouched by consciousness or emotion.

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[33] de Lauretis, Technologies of Gender 133. This concept is also, I feel, possibly arguable for Je tu il elle but mostly in relation to the formal considerations of Akerman's experimental cinema than in the function of both narrative and form, that is found in Jeanne Dielman.

[34] B. Ruby Rich, "Chantal Akerman: Designing Desire," The Village Voice 28 March 1983, 51.

Jeanne Dielman is filmed in a highly stylized manner particular to Akerman which consists of a stationary camera, "natural" lighting that corresponds to the lights being switched on and off in the apartment morning and evening, and rather long takes where the diegetic and real times often coincide in both image and sound. Because the film only uses these types of shots I will discuss three important long takes where Jeanne is framed in the center. We experience the time pass in these long takes as Jeanne does.[35] These scenes also suggest in both image and sound the slow passage of time, therefore doubly embedding (for Jeanne and for the spectators) this notion of time. The first scene that uses a layering of temporal elements is during Jeanne's bath after her first client has left. The scene where Jeanne bathes is filmed in one long take that lasts over three minutes without a cut. It is not that we consider, off hand, the presence of time with the running bath water, but that we come to register the sound of dripping water functioning as an element of the passage of time.[36] The spectators experience time visually and aurally. The time it takes for Jeanne to bathe is also the time it takes for us to watch the scene, for us to hear the water's steady stream, moving like the sand of a noisy hour glass. This feeling is also true of Jeanne's washing the dishes. Her back is turned to us, and we hear the clink of dishes and the running of water, marking off the time until the next scene for us, until the next domestic task for Jeanne.

This second example of a doubly inscribed passage of time comes from one of the film's recurrent sound elements. The sound emanates from the constant ticking of the *minuterie* in the lobby entrance of Jeanne's building.[37] Its ticking is always present, like

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[35] Thierry de Duve provides a very interesting reading of the thematics of time in "Les Trois horloges," Les actes du colloque Chantal Akerman, ed. Jacqueline Aubénas (Bruxelles: Ateliers des Arts, 1981) 87-96.

[36] Since this scene is relatively early in the film, I would argue that as typical spectators, we are still concentrating on the visual elements (this woman cramped up in a bathtub) and are not paying very careful attention to the sound.

[37] A *minuterie* is a light switch in most European building corridors and hallways that remain lit for a fixed period of time, usually a minute, and then go out, leaving any unsuspecting stair-climber in the dark.

the ticking of a clock that we never see. Even though the *minuterie* is outside of Jeanne's immediate domestic space its audible presence always introduces us back into Jeanne's world. Akerman uses the actual function of the *minuterie* formally in such a way that when the light goes on (and the ticking begins) we see the entranceway. When the ticking stops and the light goes out, the hallway becomes "naturally" dark. Akerman uses this darkness in order to cut to Jeanne's apartment foyer (or in one case, a cut to the interior of the elevator after Jeanne has gone out in search of a bag of potatoes.)

My last example of the passage of time in long take occurs on the third day when Jeanne, disgusted with her coffee, makes a fresh pot. The coffee-making sequence is shown in real time as Jeanne in a long shot—showing the entire length of the kitchen from the doorway—starts grinding the beans next to the table. There is one cut as the camera switches direction to give us a medium shot of her at the table which lasts through the pouring of the boiling water—pouring and stopping constantly with the sound of the coffee dripping through the funnel—until Jeanne walks out of the scene without a cup of coffee. In trying to concretize her "killing" time until the babysitting part of Jeanne's day begins, Akerman gives us the sound of the coffee dripping into the pot, the sound of fleeting time.

Akerman aurally qualifies passing time. Since there is no nondiegetic music track we concentrate on the sounds of the quotidian like the crying infant who Jeanne babysits. The baby howls as Jeanne tries to get closer to calm her. As she picks up the baby again we feel a sense of mounting tension because of the constant screaming. We might ask ourselves, what will she do to this child? But in Akerman's characteristic ambiguous narrative fulfillment this kind of a question must remain unanswerable and even unaskable. Once again, sound attracts our desire for a sustained narrative when the young mother returns for the child and talks about her domestic and financial problems. Jeanne listens, but bars the doorway to her apartment. We hear but we do not see, for there are no

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The use of such a device is tied into the economic realities of Europe and the real cost of electricity. It is the ultimate mechanism of the "be a watt watcher" conservation mentality.

cutaways to secondary images, again thwarting our attempts to place a narrative grid over this film. Akerman's style to a certain degree imitates the machine-like (like clockwork) acts of the routine performed by Jeanne, whose life is occupied with its little tasks "qui ne laissent aucune place à l'imagination, à l'improvisation" [that leave no room for imagination or improvisation].[38] Such an orderly existence that is "perfectly organized" is also symmetrically filmed with few variations until these domestic gestures take on an *air* of narrative significance: she overcooks the potatoes and her world goes awry.

In Jeanne Dielman, there are the "two logics," as Teresa de Lauretis has called them, which are ever-present. These "logics" refer to "character and director, image and camera" that operate continuously and together throughout the film.[39] But I prefer to consider these elements encompassing what I call the two "economies." As this filmic text attempts to graft the popular women's liberation movement to the theoretical considerations of representation, it merges the economic realities of a petite-bourgeoise of Brussels and the feminist formal economy of practice: "economy" of the shot, framing, and lighting (what Rich calls Akerman's "minimalist style"). At various levels, the notion of economy within the women's movement was charged with meaning: one of the French Belgian (Walloon) feminist organizations, Marie Mineur (named after a woman militant miner from the nineteenth-century and for its pun value in reference to what the feminists saw as their place in society as "eternal minors"), stated that their project was "principalement à toucher les

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[38] Françoise Maupin, "*Jeanne Dielman*," La Revue du cinéma 303 (février 1976): 87.

[39] de Lauretis, Technologies, 132. She borrows the term "logic" from Janet Bergstrom's work on *Jeanne Dielman* who wrote: "the camera look can't be construed as the view of any character. Its interest extends beyond the fiction. The camera presents itself, in its evenness and predictability, as equal to Jeanne's precision. Yet the camera continues its logic throughout; Jeanne's order is disrupted, and with the murder the text comes to its logical end since Jeanne then stops altogether." Janet Bergstrom, "*Jeanne Dielman, 23 Quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* by Chantal Akerman," Camera Obscura, 2 (1977): 117. I disagree with Bergstrom, because I see the camera following a logic of change, by not remaining in the same routine as Jeanne. See also Mary Jo Lakeland, "The color of Jeanne Dielman," Camera Obscura 3-4 (1979): 216-218. "Chantal Akerman on *Jeanne Dielman*," Camera Obscura 2 (1977): 118-119.

femmes de milieu modeste" [in principle to help women of modest means].[40] Yet at the same time in Akerman's cinema this "milieu modeste" economy is not only about Jeanne being shown adding up her receipts after her shopping trip, saving her money in the soup tureen, but it is also about slight (minimal) variations in Jeanne's routine that clue us into her change and Akerman's deliberate break from continuity editing's economy of time.[41] In addition, this film is about how Akerman understands implicitly the importance of representing a women of modest means, as well as introducing a theoretical examination of words/images describing the representations of women. Even in "Le rire de la méduse" Cixous has referred to the necessity of seeing woman's function as "an 'economy' that can no longer be put in economic terms" (264). The formal and the political aspects of Jeanne Dielman correspond, like in the first issue of Le Torchon Brûle, the earliest French feminist independent journal, to the only possible counter-cultural representations of women within the symbolic order. The journal's cover, illustrated with psychedelic designs, included the words "la putain" [whore], "la mère" [mother], "salope" [slut] inscribed on arrows pointing in all different directions. In this sense then, Akerman herself tries to contend with these varying directions of representations for women in society. The tone for Jeanne Dielman is doubly set in the early 1970s women's movement's demand for real economic change and at the same time in the theoretical notions of changing the circulation of representation in patriarchal culture. These two ideas are always operating in conjunction with Akerman's slight changes in shot direction and distance. Jeanne's repetitious switching on and off lights might refer narratively not only to some extra-filmic electric bill at the end of the month (a logical consideration for a woman living on a fixed income) but formally to Akerman's use of this as a filmic device for editing: the economic dark "cut"

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[40] This quotation is from Les Cahiers de libre examen, mai 1972, quoted in Le féminisme est dans la rue, 45.

[41] Continuity editing is a technical short-hand to condense cinematic time and space while emphasizing narrative coherence and logic. This kind of editing is discussed at length in the introduction of this dissertation.

point from scene to scene. Therefore, even if the sound track still resonates with Jeanne's high heels clicking on the floors, when the door opens up in the bathroom, and the light is switched on, we know that the camera has not followed Jeanne down the hallway, but has cut and changed positions.

This economy of the shot can also be seen, for example, where the camera, as de Lauretis points out, never gives us a [true] reverse shot (131). Yet I argue that reverse shots are used a number of times within the kitchen and bathroom scenes, and that "faux" reverse shots in the elevator mirror foreshadow formally and, along with the mounting tension, narratively the murder scene in the end. I use the term "reverse shot" knowing full well that this is not the case in the rules of classical cinema as defined by David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson.[42] Their definition of the reverse shot is found only as a part of the "shot/reverse shot" sequence which might occur in a dialogue between two people, for instance. The shot/reverse shot sequence or the reverse angle shot is a fixed, solidly encoded part of conventional editing syntax. It gives the opposite point of view—which is almost always performed by another character in the narrative. Part of Akerman's choice in contesting the old encoded and "encrusted" Hollywood register is to eliminate any one sustained opposite point of view to Jeanne; the patriarchal system cannot be explained away by one character. Even Sylvain or the shopkeepers whom Jeanne comes in contact with respond in a way that is merely conventional, using ready-made social speech. The only character who seems vaguely opposed to Jeanne is the mother who brings her child to be watched and whom we never see. Akerman recognizes that the pervasiveness of the patriarchal system, like the bourgeois ideal (ideology), functions and weighs down on Jeanne at every moment.

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[42] David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson. Film Art (New York: MacGraw-Hill, Inc., 1993). For more ample discussions of this kind of technique see their Chapter 7, especially pp. 262-275, or the Glossary at the end of the book, where "shot/reverse shot" is defined as "two or more shots edited together that alternate *characters*, typically in a conversation" (496, emphasis mine). Their Figure 5.76 actually shows the angle of the burnt potato episode that I will discuss (170).

Formally, then, Akerman uses the economy of space in the apartment: the light is "natural" in the sense that the apartment is darker in the morning, with less light coming in the windows than in the afternoon, and dark in the evening, and outside light is used as penetrating the closed spaces of the kitchen as well as the dining/living area. And, finally, the framing is important in that Jeanne is nearly always in the center, or in part of the center of the main action, as in the scenes at the dinner table, where Jeanne is centrally framed within the space of the room. Yet this framing changes once Jeanne is outside in the streets in Brussels or after the break: she is frequently shown off to one side of the image, small, indefinite, and being absorbed into the environment. (One American critic, Andrew Sarris, wrote that he was annoyed that he could barely make out Jeanne at the metro station, but this is precisely the point.[43] Outside her apartment, Jeanne is swallowed up by society. This is not her domestic space; she is not in control here.) Because the film's form has so closely followed Jeanne's orderliness we notice right away that after the second client she (as well as the camera) has varied from her usual routine.

The first formal change takes place in the kitchen, before this kitchen is shown in basically two kinds of shots. The first shot is somewhere between a full shot and a medium shot where the background (the window) is not so much dominant as the space is oppressive and confining by the camera's framing, so that each of Jeanne's actions is like a gesture in a closed box, a choreographed gesture that has been repeated day after day, at precisely the same time, in precisely the same way. The second one is a medium shot of Jeanne seated at the table, but showing the whole table in front of her with the stove behind her, for example, in the scenes where she is fixing dinner. After the break in the routine, however, there are some fairly interesting medium shots of Jeanne at the table that, because of our distance to her throughout the sequence of shots leading up to this part of the film, seem like veritable close-ups, though technically they are not. It is due to our perception

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[43] Andrew Sarris, "Mainstreaming versus Mainlining," The Village Voice 5 April 1983, 45.

after having seen so many long shots of her. But, in fact, we sense that something is amiss before we see, in Jeanne's kitchen, the reverse shot which is there to formally confirm our knowledge of this disturbance. First of all, she does not light the hallway for her client as she gets his coat (the camera still uses the darkness for a cut, but cuts from darkening hall facing the bedroom door to the same hall now completely dark, still facing the door) until he gives her money at the door. Secondly, she does not put the lid on the soup tureen after putting in the days wages, though she does remember to turn off the light in the hallway as usual. Thirdly, the camera seems to be hanging around for longer periods of time in the darkened hallways so that we see nothing unless Jeanne has turned on a light in a room off the hallway. This occurs as she enters the bathroom to put the towel in the laundry and wash (we presume), before shutting the door and shutting us out in the dark hallway. And finally, there is even an unusual cut from her cleaning the bathtub to the reverse angle shot of the kitchen as she is about to enter, flicking on the light switch. This is the reverse shot: at the threshold, she hesitates, not because of the potatoes (not yet) but because she has forgotten something. She must return to the bathroom (shown also in reverse shot)[44] to turn off the light there. The shock of the cut from the darkness to the bright light, the framing doorjamb, and the relative brevity of the shot make the spectator feel uncomfortable. It is as if the camera is not allowing Jeanne to move freely in her space. The camera gets to the bathroom before her and watches her as she walks out of the bathroom back to the kitchen), as if to show us a different side (a different angle) of her that we did not expect (anticipate) and that somehow we feel she did not expect either. She discovers the overcooked potatoes only when the camera is back in its "home" position showing the full length of the kitchen from the entrance, with the outside-window in the background. As in the previous sequence, the camera seems to be spending a great deal of time in the

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44 We have seen this "entrance" side of the bathroom before as Jeanne was dressing after the first client. But this is so radically different from that long take of her dressing with her back to us that we can but only feel jarred by it.

dark hallway as Jeanne, confused about what to do with her pot of ruined potatoes, goes out to the bathroom and comes back to the kitchen. She finally drains and throws away the potatoes; but of course, this is filmed differently, using that reverse shot with the doorway in the background. This unusual shot location only confirms that it is very unusual for Jeanne to overcook anything or to have to throw anything away.

The camera then will begin to follow Jeanne's altered routine: shorter takes, for one, as Jeanne moves erratically about the apartment, or shots filmed from many different positions in the dark hallway as she goes from room to room. Another example of this change is that we do not hear the customary light switch click off after she leaves the kitchen for a third time going towards her bedroom. Akerman's formal treatment of the light also undergoes change. In the past we have heard the usual 'click' of the light switch and have seen the set going black (indicating a cut and change of location) immediately followed by another click sound and light being switched on (in the next location) imitating Jeanne's orderly existence. But now the camera will stay longer in the dark without a cut. The repression that was for so long hidden away beyond the door of the bedroom seems to have crept out into the dark hallways giving the camera a chance to interrogate that lacuna, using darkness as a metaphor for Jeanne's unconscious.

The other kind of shot that stands out formally is what I called above a "faux" reverse shot. This is a shot of Jeanne when reflected in a mirror. I am not referring in this case to such other shots that show Jeanne and her reflection, as before she goes out in the morning of the second day. She sits at her mirror putting on lipstick and fixing her hair, but Jeanne is still the central figure in the shot, the reflected image is not, nor is it in the mornings when we briefly catch her reflection in the bedroom mirror as she airs out the bed or as she goes by to open the bedroom window. Most often this faux reverse shot uses the mirror in the elevator (as when she carries in the new bag of potatoes), but in the last sequence it is the mirror in her bedroom that is used to capture the murder.

It seems significant to me that the mirror shots are first shown in the elevator of the building. Akerman's characteristic long takes privilege these mediated moments of this space of inbetweenness (between the public and the private)—with medium shots not of Jeanne but of her reflection in the elevator's mirror. The shot is mediated by the reflecting mirror and therefore I see it as a "reverse" of how we see Jeanne. For Akerman, this might be a way of suggesting how "others" see her, or of how she might see herself if she were ever released from her repressed existence. What is special about this mediated space of the elevator is that the small enclosed claustrophobic space is so very much like her closed living environment. It is as if Akerman has created a microcosm within the already micro-space of Jeanne, the only difference being that this encapsulated version transports her to the outside world of consciousness and reality. The elevator can also function as a metaphor for the narrow and accepted petit-bourgeois ideology in which Jeanne seems ignorant of her own routinely organized existence. Her bedroom also is a place that functions between the public and the private, because it is the site of prostitution. And it seems perfectly fitting, and within the logic/economy of Akerman's camera, to give us the few shots leading up to and including the murder in mirrored reflection.

For Akerman, the "phantom" mirror shot constitutes a way to develop a new filmic discourse showing how Jeanne is haunted by a system of societal ideals and structures. The reverse shot used by Akerman is also logical in the context of the mirror shots since even Jeanne is a mere phantom of herself—she is not really there. In an era of women's liberation and growing feminist consciousness she has remained unchanged. The phantom is here because there is no one monster (male) to carry the narrative weight of an emotional outlet for the viewers, as the role of Darrell does for us in Thelma and Louise. The absence of Jeanne's primary image formally shows "the less than" or the accumulating absences that force the spectators to be constantly at work reading this filmic text. Jeanne Dielman is not neatly staged, articulated, collective action feminism. This is raging feminism *sotto voce*, stripped down to Jeanne's spooky realm of emptiness.

This reflected scene deserves a closer reading in light of the subversive nature of Jeanne's act. Akerman deliberately makes this scene function completely differently from all of the others, not only because of the sequence filmed in reflection but because Jeanne's disrupted routine has entered the bedroom. The clue to Jeanne's existence lies literally behind the closed doors of this bedroom and probably in the unexpected (closed) package from her sister, Fernande, whom she has not seen in years. To open the package (which contains a dowdy, pink night-gown), Jeanne has brought the scissors from the kitchen into her bedroom. These are not put back in their place and are left lying on the dressing table when Jeanne leaves to answer the door bell. Can we imagine Jeanne not untying the string from the unexpected package and saving it, as she saves the used foil in her kitchen-table drawer? Jeanne has broken her "economy" and will get the scissors to snip the string as Jeanne's mounting interest in the package sufficiently distracts her from the pre-arranged meeting of her client, forcing her to shove the box under the bed and to leave the scissors on the dressing table. On another level, we can see this scene playing out the traditional "dénouement" (literally the untying of the plot) that will soon by cut short by a feminist praxis of story and closure, a re-writing of the climax and ending. Jeanne is finally able to react uncharacteristically, though with surprising results.

We are not anxiously waiting for an ending, we do sense the building tension, but we know that something is different because we are privileged into the scene of prostitution and we see Jeanne watching herself undress in the mirror. During the sexual encounter, Jeanne struggles underneath the man. Most critics seem to think that this scene shows resistance to experiencing orgasm, pleasure, "jouissance," or climax, but I argue that Jeanne's moving and gesturing are meant to be so unfamiliar that we must read this scene as emblematic of the entire film experience—the weight of a man functions metaphorically as imprisonment in the patriarchal system. Whether or not there is pleasure, in this case, is not the question, but what is important is that the routine is entirely broken by this sexual experience. This unfamiliarity is also registered technically, with a change of camera angle,

as J. Hoberman pointed out "they have sex, depicted in the film's only high-angle shot...."[45] Jeanne acts as if she were trapped, it seems to me, more than like a woman resisting pleasure. But whatever Jeanne is refusing, even at this level, disrupts the notion that the male always gives pleasure and refutes the sacrosanct patriarchal orgasm of power and control. Akerman is not trying to achieve narrative continuity or representational accuracy, hence the sex shot's deliberate and abrupt cut to Jeanne sitting once again in front of her mirror. While she is dressing, we see her eyes wander toward the scissors and wander back again to the mirror. The characteristic long take in medium shot ends with Jeanne leaving the frame of the camera armed with the scissors, only to have her "murderous" reflection be picked up in the mirror that the camera is still focused on. She plunges the scissors into the neck of the man, seen in this mirrored reverse shot, providing an illusion of a much greater distance than during the previous part of the same shot. Technically, the moment of violence is being removed directly from the spectator (who is able to disculpate Jeanne and yet still feel ambiguous about the act) because it is Jeanne's reflected double who performed an unknown gesture in the domestic routine. This murder is ultimately (and doubly) held at a distance (long shot and in reflection) further disrupting the Hollywood narrative convention of murder as melodrama. Akerman, throughout, has jarred narrative expectations of audience and this act seems to address, even in the outcome, equivocation and ambiguity on all levels. Marcel Martin, a French film critic, felt that this film expressed throughout a feeling of distance, or Brechtian distantiation, but I think that this is only true of this moment where we are removed from/distanced from (and perhaps, gratefully so) Jeanne's primary presence in the murder.[46] In a strange way then the murder seems more an outgrowth of the camera's presence than of the man's. The camera allows the phantom space to be filled physically with a male. When the camera

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[45] J. Hoberman, "Controlling influences," The Village Voice 16 October 16, 1978, 74.

[46] Marcel Martin, "Rien qu'un cœur solitaire," Cinéma Pratique 144 (avril-mai 1976): 78.

brings the spectators into the room the coded register of hierarchical Hollywood narrative becomes operative and Jeanne can only be doomed to perform a conventional narrative act. Jeanne's reflected image is trapped in the inescapable/unavoidable modes of discourse of narrative cinema. There is a central paradox inherent in this scene: action is inevitable as feminist imperative, yet at the same time this action is trapped in narrative conventions of sex and murder, leading us back to Akerman's struggle with both film's representational power and the knowledge that film cannot represent. Her new filmic discourse does not replicate the representation of women within the hierarchical register of Hollywood, but she recognizes that a certain confrontation with narrative is necessary to cement the theoretical with the social, the avant-garde aesthetic with a feminist framework. Akerman's feminist aesthetic seems to always search for and articulate the unifying factor between theory and practice in filmmaking and storytelling, but it would seem that all paths lead to narrative. Her need to shift the paradigm of filmmaking away from narrative toward an avant-garde expression is an attempt to re-write the feminist experience without a conventional plot. However, she also realizes the necessity of exploring the reappropriations of myth and story as Cixous did with "Le rire de la méduse" when she challenges the Hollywood story conventions throughout the film except at the end. The reason why Akerman ultimately engages in the melodrama of sex and murder is to show a move into another level of action outside the domestic and quotidian. Akerman's recuperation of this act points directly to the fact that the feminist movement, whether in its political manifestations or in its artistic forms, had to reformulate a structuring narrative to relate a history, even if that history was to be subversive and contentious. It is especially evident in Akerman's open-ending that leaves Jeanne, and the spectator, to contemplate the construction and destruction of women's roles in social and cultural productions, including, narrative fiction film.

Conclusion

Did the 1970s Get Lost in Cyberspace?

> The spectator's consciousness, imprisoned in a flattened universe, bound by the screen of the spectacle behind which his [sic] life has been deported, knows only the fictional speakers who unilaterally surround him with their commodities and the politics of their commodities. The spectacle, in its entirely, is his 'mirror image.'
>
> Guy Debord [1]

> A travers les mass media, *tout* peut devenir hyper-spectacle.
>
> Marie Antonietta Macciocchi [2]

As the title of this chapter probably suggests to most readers, I am finally going to call forth the ever widening comfort zone of the "postmodern," the condition in which our world has existed since the 1950s and that has an ever increasing set of definitions and boundaries. In the arts, postmodernism is an aesthetic of fragmentary images, the borrowing, raiding, or referencing of images from previously created images, and resistance to any monological system; an emancipatory "bricolage" that defies a single subject position; or, as I recently heard it defined by Rosi Braidotti, "the simultaneous occurrence of contradictory and paradoxical effects, ...the homogenized and the fragmented;"[3] or finally, as E. Ann Kaplan argues for in the Introduction to Postmodernism and its Discontents, "a cultural break in the sense of Foucault's 'episteme,' or Kuhn's paradigms: the postmodern moment is a break initiated by modernism, which is

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[1] Guy Debord, "218," Society of the Spectacle (Detroit: Black & Red, 1983). La société du spectacle was first published by Editions Buchet-Chastel (Paris) in 1967. Guy Debord was editor of the journal Internationale Situationniste from 1958-1969.

[2] Marie Antonietta Macciocchi, De la France (Paris: Seuil, 1979) 52.

[3] Rosi Braidotti, "Gender and Generations in Feminism: 'Postmodernism and its Discontents'," CUNY Graduate Center 31 March 1995, in response to an audience member's comment regarding power and accountability in the academic setting.

here viewed as a transitional period between nineteenth-century Romanticism and the current cultural scene" (1). These definitions are important and all consistent with the films of the 1970s. They broke with previous traditions—and, especially, with those that never shook the weight of the Romantic view of the nineteenth-century—by appropriating and shifting within their image-making processes those discourses and structures that already had a history. The borrowing or raiding was done critically, deliberately and, then, was self-consciously placed within a new context, within a new form of cultural production. This kind of appropriating and self-critiquing in praxis was the alternative cinema's way of controlling the narrative structure rather than being enveloped by it. The alternative cinema did not allow itself to be corrupted into the narrative, but it did not transgress narrative either. So where, exactly, does this leave the alternative cinema, aesthetically and politically? How do we square the postmodern raids with the obvious dialectical materialism or Brechtian overtones present in this cinema? Are we vacillating between the "utopian postmodern," as Kaplan defines the kind of postmodernism that "builds on or carries to its own subversive end, certain strands of high modernism" (34), or is this the "true avant-garde" posited by Paul Willeman as art's use and subversion of certain modernist tendencies from, say, Eisenstein or Brecht? [4] I think a tentative answer lies in Dana Polan's article on the postmodern, "Postmodernism and Cultural Analysis Today," where he defines the postmodern as "a recoding of previous forms and a proliferation of the new" (49). I decided to consider Polan's definition in relation to the alternative cinema of the 1970s, which, I feel, does not produce proliferation, but does, however, create "the new." This study began as a review of the previous forms (continuity editing, Eisenstein, the French *Nouvelle Vague*, the 1960s theory explosion, to name a few) that took place

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[4] Paul Willeman, "An Avant Garde for the Eighties," Framework 24 (Spring 1984): 53-73. Kaplan derives her term "utopian" from what Alice Jardine refers to as "modernity" in Gynesis: Configurations of Woman and Modernity (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985).

within dominant intellectual and marginal cultures.[5] What I found was that in order for these alternatives to become not only indicative of, but necessary for, the development of a certain postmodern tendency, they had to maintain a relationship to the mainstream culture. Since film culture refers to the manner in which film works to make us create relations and combinations of images, words, sounds, music, or, in general, discourses, it is important that these be viewed within the culture that has done the most to develop its production, namely Hollywood. Therefore, the refusal of a trope, the disruptive use of an icon, an obvious parody of a narrative structure are all undisguised homages to a film industry that is so productive and prolific that it has produced simulacra of simulacra many times over. And, here, I am not just referring to the remakes of French films by Hollywood and Hollywood's remakes of its own films, but of the whole film culture. The kind of postmodern proliferation that Polan talks about is clear when one encounters the filmmaking of the 1980s. Emblematic of the shift from a recoding of forms and images to one of proliferation is the cover of Jean Baudrillard's Amérique. On it is a reproduction of Andy Warhol's "Les vingt Marilyn," each one slightly different from the other, but essentially depicting the same subject, a proliferation of Marilyns, multiplied by twenty for each cover, poster, and postcard of the same group of images that is reproduced. This proliferation is what I see as the postmodern, which is not as obviously signaled in the 1970s as it is in this later period.

I think the difference of these two tendencies in the postmodern, between the "utopian" and the "true avant garde," lies not only in the ability to look back over the 1970s and recognize the post-revolutionary and modernist atmosphere of Europe but also to understand this "homogeneous and fragmented" atmosphere as a mediating force for the

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[5] For other combinations of high and low cultural exchanges see, Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism and Consumer Society," The Anti-Aesthetic (Port Townsend, WA: Bay Press, 1983) and "Postmodernism: The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," New Left Review 146 (July-August 1984). Both articles are in combined form in Kaplan, Postmodernism and Its Discontents 13-29.

alternative culture. In looking at the era of post-1968 Europe as a whole, I began to consider what historical events might have played into such notions of the postmodern on the artistic level that were already a part of the larger social and political context. What I discovered was that I am not the only one curious about the aftermath of the "radical sixties." In France, since the late 1980s, a growing number of popular and scholarly works are being published on the 1970s. Some are interested in the recent academic discourse on popular culture, and the intersection of postmodernism and technologies, but most tend to refer to Roland Barthes and Serge Gainsbourg, Grace Jones and *le Front de Libération Homosexuelle* (FLH) in the same sentence, in a kind of gracious and nostalgic demystification of "ces années folles."[6] This definition, "ces années folles," may be an accurate account of the fragmented and often times chaotic atmosphere of post-crisis societies; but in the 1970s there was definitely a community of artists and thinkers who were committed to a cultural, if not political, Left. This is perhaps how we can understand the postmodern as it functioned in conjunction with the political engagement of change, found in most of Godard and Mieville's films, in Tanner's films, and in the feminist cinema of Akerman and Varda. In addition, we can see a commitment to exposing the ideological "bourgeois" and patriarchal wasteland of the "idée reçue" in the cinema of Duras, Rivette, and Robbe-Grillet.

I think that we might draw the conclusions that alternative cinema and, specifically, feminist alternative cinema were reacting to very similar concerns in both the politics of representation and the uses of film language, however differently they chose to express this phenomenon and intersect or combine theory and practice. Stephen Heath puts it into perspective, at the end of the 1970s, when he writes, "The narrative space of film is today

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6 Alex Bernier et François Buot, "Introduction," L'esprit des seventies (Paris: Grasset et Fasquelle, 1994) 13. See also Hélène Fontanaud and Frédérique Matonti, Que reste-t-il de nos manifs? (Paris: Grasset, 1990); Hervé Hamon and Patrick Rotman, Génération (Paris: Seuil, 1987); Gil Delannoi, Les années utopiques: 1968-1978 (Paris: Editions la Découverte, 1990).

not simply a theoretical and practical actuality but is a crucial and political avant-garde problem... a work on the constructions and relations of meaning and subject in a specific signifying practice in a given socio-historical situation"[7] All of the directors in this study have used the tools of film technique to explore how film creates and disseminates information by its basic units of discourse, the shot and the sounds and music on the sound track; and by the punctuation, the cut and the editing. From the enormous body of films made in the 1970s, I have only chosen a sliver of its cultural production. This encompasses and combines film theory and criticism with the films made under certain economic conditions in this given historical situation—post-May 1968 and the 1970s—of political upheaval and rejection of authoritarian institutions. I acknowledge that this gives the films I discussed here an historical grounding, though, recognizing the transient nature of film, I certainly understand that these films are most often currently screened for their contribution to both film aesthetics and film history. In deciding to acknowledge the importance of the broader context of European history and society, I am not suggesting that these films represent some historical reality. Rather I am concerned with the relationships between these factors and the cinematic production. Studying one such element of cultural production in context gives us the ability to trace the relations, as Raymond Williams points out, of the different cultural signifying systems that are at work.[8] It is my contention that this historical context provided for an opening up of film practice to theory and self-critique. An example of this can be seen in early 1975, when students and professors in the French university system began to demand a study of cinema as a "révélateur" of a historical consciousness. By May 1975, students and professors from *Paris VII* wrote up

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[7] Stephen Heath, Questions of Cinema (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981) 64.

[8] Raymond Williams, Sociology of Culture (New York: Schocken Books, 1982) 13-15.

the "Plateforme pour un forum sur l'histoire" that was published in the Cahiers du cinéma.[9] It called for an integration of mass media studies in the field of history, forming a "history of the image" studies. This is the kind of historical frame that interests me most. The particular filmmakers of this period in filmmaking were influenced by the women's movement and its ensuing theoretical questions of representation; materialist Marxist studies of cultural formation and production; film's liberation from rigid narrative structures; and a growing public for independent and alternative films. The government's financial support, however paradoxical in nature, made much of the late 1960s and 1970s filmmaking possible. It also led to greater freedom and independence in production. There was no longer the restriction of maintaining "crowd-pleasing" films when there was so much experimentation and innovation happening—and money for it. Of course, the alternative cinema that brought together praxis and theory was frequently skeptically viewed by the public. As Gaston Haustrate, in "Regards sur le cinéma français," put it :

> "Qu'un Robbe-Grillet se serve du cinéma pour jouer avec ses idées, que Marguerite Duras l'utilise plus honnêtement pour approfondir une démarche intellectuelle personnelle... cela constitue (avec de nombreux autres "cinémas différents" non négligeables) un secteur spécifique qui demanderait plus ample analyse mais où l'on retrouve souvent ces montagnes d'intentions intellectuelles brillantes qui accouchent de souris dérisoires." (111)[10]

This "ridiculing smile" brand of reception that Haustrate mentions was perhaps one of the determining factors in the ultimate retrenchment of the 1970s alternative cinema. American cultural critic Louis Menand questions the reason for the end of the 1970s cinema. He

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[9] A l'initiative d'un collectif enseignants-étudiants de Paris-VII, "Plateforme pour un forum sur l'histoire," Cahiers du cinéma 257 (mai-juin 1975) 32-34. See also the editorial statement from Serge Daney and Serge Toubiana "Les Cahiers aujourd'hui," Cahiers du cinéma 250 (Mai 1974): 5-10.

[10] Gaston Haustrate, "Regards sur le cinéma français," Cinéma 74 188 (juin 1974): 98-113.

wonders whether it was "because the major screen breakthroughs had all been accomplished," or because "by the end of the Seventies, the connection between enjoying a movie and feeling a shock of recognition, a connection that had come to seem almost automatic in the decade before, was severed."[11] I think Menand clearly understands the value of the "shock" that is not anything like the automatic recognition produced in classical narratives. Perhaps this is the "shock" found in the intersection of film practice and theory, what B. Ruby Rich called "a sphere of action" and theory. However, as the 1970s began to come to a close, films seemed to be heading back to a narrative cinematic aesthetic, a collapse into the narrative that this 70s cinema had resisted.[12] In fact, toward the end of the 1970s, one year before Chantal Akerman's Gaumont production Les rendez-vous d'Anna (1978), Monique Martineau was already lamenting the loss of the theoretical side of filmmaking. She wrote that "depuis la dissolution de Musidora aucun groupe n'a pris le relais sur le plan théorique."[13] The challenge to the alternative cinema made at the "States General of Cinema" in mid-May 1968 seemed to have been worked *through* and, then, *out of* the film culture by this time. As I stated in chapter 1, that original "States General" had set up workshops calling for an interrogation of "the nature of realism... and the veracity of the single point of view" in French cinema at the time.[14] Resistance to the realism put in place by a traditional narrative structure is one of the key concepts that grouped the alternative cinema together in the 1970s. Laura Mulvey, in "Myth, Narrative and Historical Experience," uses the figure of the parabola to group the trajectory of 1970s film culture, which she calls "the modern avant-garde." She writes, "Parabolic patterns can be applied to

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[11] Louis Menand, "Finding It At the Movies," Rev. of For Keeps, by Pauline Kael, New York Review of Books 23 March 1995: 13.

[12] B. Ruby Rich, "In the Name of Feminist Film Criticism," Heresies 9 (Spring 1980): 76. Quoted in Re-Vision 4.

[13] Monique Martineau, "Le premier fruit d'un double lignage." CinémAction 9 (automne 1979):6.

[14] Forbes, After The New Wave 16, 18.

the modern avant-garde; a sudden, marked rise into visibility, followed by a downward trend and declining energy, 'over almost as quickly as last year's fashions' " (Visual and Other Pleasures 160).[15] This comment is particularly enlightening considering the decrease and virtual nonexistence of alternative filmic practices after the 1980s. So what happened?

For feminist filmmakers there was a two-fold problem. On the one hand, Anglo-American feminist film critics and theorists argued that it was not possible to represent the "real," let alone "real" women in a film. The crisis in feminist alternative cinema was exactly that: whether to express "feminine/feminist identity" from a documentarist point of view or not. The "realist" capturing of everyday life used by many continental European feminists was rejected by the Anglo-Americans as an impossibly "utopian" subversion; according to the editorial board of the American feminist film journal, Camera Obscura, this was also impossible as a political intervention.[16] On the other hand, the European filmmaking for a long time was determined to maintain an active role in the socio-politics of filming everyday life "realism" well through the end of 1970s.[17] So, in other words, there was a struggle over how to (re)present politically in this "aging" cinema. Was it possible to do this by continuing with the social "real" or by restructuring the film form itself using techniques borrowed from the avant-garde? By the end of the 1970s the critical examination of cinema was encompassed by feminist theory, the cinema in Europe developed in image and in form the polemical nature and differences of feminisms and the representation of women. But why was it all seeming to end? Had all the structures been

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15 She quotes Fernand Braudel, Civilisation and Capitalism, Volume 2: The Wheels of Commerce (London: Fontant, 1985).

16 Teresa de Lauretis, "Rethinking Women's Cinema: Aesthetic and Feminist Theory,"in Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film and Fiction (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1987), 127-130. Originally published as "Aesthetic and Feminist Theory: Rethinking Women's Cinema," New German Critique 34 (Winter 1985): 35-57. See Re-Vision 27.

17 I am thinking specifically of Chantal Akerman, German filmmaker, Helke Sanders, who directed All-Round Reduced Personality/Redupers (1977), and Dutch filmmaker, Marlene Gorris, who made A Question of Silence (1981).

shifted as far as they would go? Was discourse no longer to be brought into question? Did government funding end? Did the 1970s "utopian" filmmaking get lost in the cyberspace of technology and economic realities of filmmaking? It is true that the economic factors played a major role in changing film production after the 1980s. The new technologies, with computer editing and HD (high density) video, were costly. But the system of *avances sur recettes* is still maintained; governmental funding sources realize that conventional narrative cinema will be able to pay back the loan whereas independent and experimental film most likely will not. Further, the government cultural funds or subsidies (not loans) had pretty much been dried up by the time the Socialists in France came to power in 1982 and the institutionalization of the Left became a reality. But in terms of film aesthetics, in the structure and discourse of cinema, changes were still taking place.

One way to consider these ever fluid changes in the interrogation in praxis and the subversion by inclusion in the early 1980s would be to look at Jean-Jacques Beineix's film Diva (1981). Here you have all the borrowing from the previous film styles, genres, directors, and codes, but all of this borrowing is an "inclusion" with no subversion of narrative. And, there is the film praxis, no doubt, but without the interrogation of film's formation in culture and ideology. What is this then? Neo-Hollywood? With a return to the classical narrative in Diva, no political interrogation of its cultural production, and no subversion with extensive homages and inclusion, you have the postmodern "praxis of proliferation." But Diva is not the only film to venture into the practice of proliferation. We saw hints of this already in Robbe-Grillet's proliferation of erotic fantasies. This sort of image-making in proliferation can be seen as a precursor to the parabolic end of the 1970s "utopian postmodern" alternative cinema. Godard turns his filmmaking to both narrative fiction film, Prénom Carmen (1982) and Je vous salue Marie (1984), and video production Histoires du cinéma (1994) and JLG par JLG (1990), but he no longer mixes straight-forward Left politics with the mixing of mass media. Akerman, too will follow a similar path, producing avant-garde cinema such as Est (1991) while reserving her feminist politics

for a narrative fiction, Nuit et jour (1990), a feminist re-make of Truffaut's 1961 Jules et Jim, and cultural identity politics with a dash of musical in The Golden Eighties (1985). Varda is one of the few filmmakers who will use both the subversion by inclusion and the interrogation in praxis common to the 1970s alternative film culture in her 1985 Sans toit ni loi. Flitterman-Lewis calls this film a restructuring of "relations of desire, both *in* the text (desire of its characters) and *for* the text (desire of its viewers)" (285). It returns to a fundamental questioning of identity and subjectivities that Akerman posed in her film Je tu il elle, but in Sans toit ni loi the identity of the main female character, Mona (Sandrine Bonnaire), will try to be reconstructed through interviews with the people she came in contact with during her travels. The nature of the task is posed in full knowledge of its impossibility: it is not possible to re-create identity through the subjective lens of other people's opinions. The movement of Mona from one place to the next and never settling down recalls the unsettled political situation and the bohemian lifestyle of the 1970s. Does this indicate something about the nature of the unsettled film culture of the 1970s? Perhaps not much? But it does offer a reflection on film culture that is also always in flux. It comments on film's ability to reproduce these kinds of differing messages under varying conditions of projection, of spectatorship, of cultural manifestations. Film culture is tied to its unique relationship to deceptive reproductions of reality-like elements that are represented on the screen and in the soundtrack. It is both historically bound and constantly dynamic, moves across cultures and contexts, and produces meanings in ways that in a given moment seem clear and discernible. Yet in another moment it may seem strange and obtuse, for example, the projection of the 1970s cinema in an end of the millennium film culture that is based on a different postmodern aesthetic of technologically perfected proliferation and rapid consumption.

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Filmography

Films Cited:

Akerman, Chantal. Saute ma ville (Belgium, 1968) - Dir.: Chantal Akerman; Ass't.: Richard Brechet; Dir. of Phto.: René Fuchter; Ed.: Geneviève Luciani; Son: Patrice. Cast: Chantal Akerman (young woman). B & W, 13 min.

---. Je tu il elle (Belgium, 1974, released 1976) - Dir., Sc., Dial.: Chantal Akerman; Dir. of Photo.: Benedicte Delasalle; Ass. Photo.: Charlotte Szlovak, Renelde Dupont; Bruitage: Marc Lobet; Sons seuls: Alian Pierre; Son direct: Samy Szlingerbaum; Mixage: Gerard Rousseau; Montage: Luc Freche; Prod.: Paradise Films; Cast: Chantal Akerman, Neils Arestrup, Claire Wauthion. B&W 90 min. Festival de Bruxelles, 1974; Festival de Films de Nice, 1974. Filmed in 1974. Released in 1976.

---. Jeanne Dielman, 23 Quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles (Belgium, 1975) - Dir., Sc., Dial.: Chantal Akerman; Dir. of Photo.: Babette Mangolte; Framing: Bénédicte Delesalle; Production: Unité 3/Paradise Films; Cast: Delphine Seyrig (Jeanne), Jan Delcorte (Sylvain), Henri Storck, Jacques Doniol-Valcroze, Yves Bical (clients). Color, 198 min.

---. Les rendez-vous d'Anna (Belgium-France, 1978) - Dir., Sc., Dial. : Chantal Akerman; Dir. of Photo: Jean Penzer; Editor: Francine Sandberg; Photo. Michel Huossio; Sound: Henri Morelle; Prod. Alain Dehan; Ass't: Romain Goupil; Continuity: Margot Catala; Set Design: Philippine Graaf, Make-up: Christine Sawage; Prod.: Hélène Films (Paris)-Paradise Films (Bruxelles)-ZDF (Allemagne); Filmed January-February 1978. Cast: Aurore Clément (Anna); Helmut Griem (Heinrich); Magali Noël (Ida); Lea Massari (la mère d'Anna); Hans Zieschler (Hans); Jean-Pierre Cassel (Daniel).

Duras, Marguerite. Nathalie Granger (France, 1972) - Dir., Sc., Dial.: Marguerite Duras; Ass't.: Benoit Jacquot; Dir. of Photo.: Jean Mascolo; Ass't: Bruno Nuytten; Editor: Nicole Lubatchansky; Sound: Paul Lainé; Continuity: Geneviève Dufour; Prod. Luc Moullet and Cie. Cast: Lucia Bose (Isabelle Granger), Jeanne Moreau (l'amie), Luce Garcia Ville, Gérard Depardieu (salesman), Dionys Mascolo, Valérie Mascolo (Nathalie Granger), Nathalie Bourgeois. B & W, 83 min.

---. India Song (France, 1974) - Dir., Sc., Dial.: Marguerite Duras; Ass't: Benoit Jacquot; Dir. of Photo. Bruno Nuytten; Ass't : Pierre Gautard; Editor: Solange Leprince; Ass't: Nicole Bernheim; Music: Carlos d'Alessio; Sound: Michel Vionnet; Make-up: Elaine Marcus; Prod. del.: Stéphane Tchalgadeff. Prod.: Sunchild and Les Films Armorial, S. Damiani, A. Valio-Cavaglione. Cast: Delphine Seyrig (Anne-Marie Stretter), Michael Lonsdale (Le vice-consul), Mattheiru Carrière (the young attaché culturel), Claude Mann (Michael Richardson), Vernon Dobtcheff, Didier Flamand, Claude Jann; Satasinh Manila (voice of the beggar); Nicole Hiss, Monique Simonet, Viviane Forrester, Dionys Marcolo, Marguerite Duras (atemporal voices); Françoise Lebrun, Benoit Jacquot, Nicole Lise Bernheim, Kevok Katudjan, Daniel Dobbeis, J. Cl. Biette, M.O. Brissot, Pascal Kané (voices at the Reception). Color, 120 min.

Godard, Jean-Luc. Pierrot le fou (France-Italy, 1965) - Dir., Sc.: Jean-Luc Godard, based on Lionel White's novel Obession; Dir. of Photo.: Raoul Coutard, Georges Liron; Editor: Françoise Collin; Prod.: Rome-Paris Films (Paris), Dino de Laurentiis, Cinematografia (Rome); Cast: Jean-Paul Belmondo (Ferdinand Griffon aka Pierrot), Ann Karina (Marianne Renoir), Dirk Sanders (Marianne's "brother", Fred), Grazielle Galvani (Ferdinand's wife), Roger Dutoit and Hans Meyer (Gangsters), Jimmy Karoubi (Midget), Christa Nell, Laszlo Szabo,

Jean-Pierre Léaud, Pascal Aubier, Alexis Poliakoff, Pierre Hanin, and Samuel Fuller, Princess Aicha Abidir, Raymond Devos as themselves. Color, 112 min.

---. Le gai savoir (France, 1968, edited 1969) - Dir., Sc., Dial.: Jean-Luc Godard; Dir. of Photo.: Jean Leclerc; Editor: Germaine Cohen; Prod.: Originally ORTF (Office de la Radiodiffusion-Television Française); later Anouchka Films (Paris), Bavaria Atelier (Munich); Cast: Juliet Berto, Jean-Pierre Léaud. B&W, 95 min.

--- and Anne-Marie Miéville. Numéro Deux. (Switzerland-France, 1975) - Dir. Jean-Luc Godard and Anne-Marie Miéville; Video Engineer: Gérard Teissèdre; Technical Ass't: Milka Assaf, Gérard Martin. Prod.: Sonimage (Genoble) and Bela Productions (Paris). Cast: Sandrine Battistella, Pierre Oudry, Color, 88 min.

Moreau, Jeanne. Lumière (France, 1976) - Dir: Jeanne Moreau; Dir. of Photo.: Ricardo Aronovich; Music: Astor Piazzola; Prod.: Orphée Arts, FR3; Dir. of Prod.: Claire Duval; Cast: Jeanne Moreau (Sarah), Francine Racette (Julienne), Lucia Bosè (Laura), Caroline Cartier (Caroline), François Simon (Grégoire), Neils Arestrup (Nano), Francis Huster (Thomas), Bruno Ganz (Heinrich Grün), René Feret (Julien), Keith Carradine (David), Jacques Spiesser (Saint-Loup), Georges Wood. Color, 101 min.

Rivette, Jacques. Céline et Julie vont en bateau (France, 1974) - Dir.: Jacques Rivette; Sc.: Juliet Berto, Dominique Labourier, Marie-France Pisier, avec la collaboration de Eduardo de Gregorio, Bulle Ogier, J. Rivette; Ass't: Luc Béraud; Dir. of Photo.: Jacques Renard; Chief Editor: Nicole Lubatchansky; Music: Jean-Marie Senia; Ass't opérateur: Michel Cenet; Sound: Paul Laine; Perchiste: Gilbert Pereira; Prod.: Les Films du Losange; Cast: Juliet Berto (Céline), Dominique Labourier (Julie), Bulle Ogier (Camille), Marie-France Pisier (Sophie), Barbet Schroeder (Olivier), Philippe Clévenot (Guilou), Nathalie Asnar (Madelyn), Marie-Thérèse Saussure

(Poupie), Jean Douchet (Monsieur Dédé), Adèle Taffetas (Alice); Anne Zamire (Lil), Monique Clément (Myrtille), Jérôme Richard (Julien), Michael Graham (Boris), Jean-Marie Senia (Cyrille), Spectateurs voyants: Jean-Claude Biette, Jean Eustache, Jean-Claude Romer, Michel Caen. Color, 192 min. Sorti le 20 septembre 1974.

Robbe-Grillet, Alain. Glissements progressifs du plaisir (France, 1974) - Dir., Screen- and scriptwriter: Alain Robbe-Grillet; Dir. of Photo.: Yves Lafaye; Editor and Continuity: Bob Wade; Director of the Sound Score (*partition sonore*): Michel Fano; Producers: Coséfa Films—André Cohen and Marcel Sebaoun; S.N.E.T.C.—Henri Boublil; Distribution: Fox-Lira; Cast: Anicée Alvina (Alice), Olga Georges-Picot (Nora and Lawyer, Maître David), Jean-Louis Trintignant (Police Inspector), Michel Lonsdale (Judge), Jean Martin (Minister), Marianne Egerickx (Claudia); Claude Marcault (Sister Julia); Nathalie Zeiger (Sister Maria); Maxence Mailfort (Client); Bob Wade (Gravedigger). Color, 104 min.

Tanner, Alain. Le milieu du monde (Switzerland-France, 1974) - Dir. and Dial.: Alain Tanner; Scen.: Tanner and John Berger; Dir. of Photo.: Renato Berta; Music: Patrick Moraz; Editor: Brigitte Sousselier; Sound: Pierre Gamet; Prod. Citel Films (Geneva) and Action Films (Paris). Cast: Philippe Léotard (Paul), Olympia Carlisi (Adriana), Juliet Berto (Juliette), Denise Perron (la veuve Schmidt), Jacques Denis (Marcel), Roger Jendly (Roger), Gilbert Bahon (Albert), Pierre Walker (Président ADP), Paul Pasquier (Gavault). Color, 138 min.

Varda, Agnès. Cléo de 5 à 7 (France-Italy, 1961) -Dir., Sc., Dial.,: Agnès Varda; Dir. of Photo.: Jean Rabier; Music: Michel Legrand; Editor: Janine Verneau; Sound: Jean Labussière, Julien Coutelier; Prod. Rome-Paris Films (Georges de Beauregard and

Carlo Ponti); Interprètes: Corinne Marchand (Cléo), Antoine Bourseiller (Antoine), Dominique Davray (Angèle), José-Luis de Villalonga (Cléo's lover), Michel Legrand (Bob), Serge Korber (Plumitif), Lucienne Marchand, Dorothée Blanc (Dorothée), Jean Champion (the boss), Jean-Pierre Taste (the boy), Loye Payen (Irma), Robert Postec (the doctor), Burlesque actors: Jean-Luc Godard, Anna Karina, Samy Frey, Eddie Constantine, Danièle Delorme, Alan Scott, Jean-Claude Brialy, Yves Robert. B& W and color, 90 min.

---. L'une chante, l'autre pas (France-Belgium, 1976; 1977 released) - Dir., Sc., Dia.: Agnès Varda; Ass't.: Jean-Claude Mallet, France Debuisson; Dir. of Photo.: Charlie Van Damme; Editor: Joële van Effrenterre; Music: François Wertheimer; le groupe musical Orchidée: Micou Papineau, Joëlle Papineau, Doudou Greffier; Chansons: Agnès Varda Prod.: Ciné Tamaris, Société Française de Production, Institut National de l'Audiovisuel, Contrechamps (Paris), Paradise Films (Brussels), Population Films (Curaçao); Cast: Valérie Mairesse (Pomme), Thérèse Liotard (Suzanne), Ali Raffi (Darius), Robert Dadiès (Jérôme), Gisèle Halimi (Herself), Jean-Pierre Pellegrin (Dr. Pierre Aubanel),.Salomé Wimille (Marie age 3), Isabelle Eduards (Marie age 5), Dominique Ducros (Marie age 13), Rosalie Varda (Marie age 17), François Courbin (Mathieu age 9 mos.), Frédéric Boyot (Mathieu age 2), Laurent Plagne (Mathieu age 13-15), Mona Mairesse (Pomme's mother), Francis Lemaire (Pomme's father). Color, 105 min.

---. Sans toit ni loi (France, 1985) - Dir., Sc., Dial.: Agnès Varda; Dir. of Photo.: Patrick Blossier; M.: Joanna Bruzdowicz; Prod.: Ciné Tamaris (A. Varda); Cast: Sandrine Bonnaire (Mona), Macha Méril (Mme Landier), Stéphane Freiss (Jean-Pierre, scientist), Yolande Moreau (Yolande, maid), Marthe Jarnias (Aunt Lydie), Laurence Cortadellas (Éliane, Jean-Pierre's wife), Joël Fosse (Paulo, Yolande's boyfriend), Patrick Lepczynski (David, the wandering Jew),

Yahiaoui Assouna (Assoun, Arab farm-worker), Christian Chessa (the druggie). Color, 105 min.

Suggested Viewing (Listed by Director):

Akerman, Chantal. L'Enfant Aimé (1971).

---. Hotel Monterey (1972).

---. La Chambre (1972).

---. Le 15/8 with Samy Szlingerbaum (1973).

---. Hanging Out Yonkers 1973 (1973).

---. News From Home (1976).

---. Toute une nuit (1982).

Brückner, Jutta. Hungerjahre / The Hungry years (1980).

Duras, Marguerite. La musica with Paul Seban (1966).

---. Détruire, dit-elle (1969).

---. Jaune le soleil (1971).

---. La femme du Gange (1974).

---. Des journées entières dans les arbres (1976).

---. Son nom de Venise dans Calcutta désert (1976).

---. Baxter, Véra Baxter (1976).

---. Le Camion (1977).

---. Le Navire Night (1977).

---. Césarée (1979).

---. Les mains négatives (1979).

---. Aurélia Steiner, dit Aurélia Melbourne (1979).

---. Aurélia Steiner, dit Aurélia Vancouver (1979).

Godard, Jean-Luc. Le petit soldat (1960).

---. Une Femme mariée (1964).

---. Alphaville (1965).

---. Masculin/Féminin (1966).

---. Made in USA (1966).

---. Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle (1966).

---. La chinoise (1967).

---. Caméra-Oeil (1967).

--- with Groupe Dziga-Vertov. British Sounds / See You at Mao (1969).

--- and Jean-Pierre Gorin. Tout va bien (1972); Letter to Jane (1972).

--- and Anne Marie Miéville. Ici et ailleurs (1974); Commen ça va (1976); Sauve qui peut La vie / Slow Motion (1980).

Gordon, Bette. Variety (1982).

Gorris, Marlene. De Stilte ronde Christine M. / A Question of Silence (1981).

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