ABSTRACT

CHILDHOOD FANTASY AND THE LOOK IN ALAIN BERLINER’S MA VIE EN ROSE AND FRANÇOIS OZON’S RICKY

by Jonathan Devine

This study brings together two films in conversation about the nature of a series of critical transitions in form, gender, and representation. *Ma vie en rose* depicts the interior fantasies of Ludo, who believes that he is a *garçon-fille*, physically a boy, but mentally, and emotionally, a girl. *Ricky* tells the story of an infant who grows wings. I will focus on how the camera looks *with*, as well as looks *at*, these two children within their respective fantastic contexts. While Ludo’s interior fantasies (including his own fabricated characters) are projected unproblematically onto a public screen, in *Ricky*, the camera views the titular bird-baby as an object, his hybridity digitally recorded via cell phone, creating a sort of fictional history. *Ma vie en rose* and *Ricky* thus present films within films, this sort of *mise en abyme* emphasizing the fantastic nature of these two children.
CHILDHOOD FANTASY AND THE LOOK IN ALAIN BERLINER’S *MA VIE EN ROSE* AND FRANÇOIS OZON’S *RICKY*

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Chapter One. Introduction

*Ma vie en rose*¹ and *Ricky*² present the intersection between fantasy and the look within the context of films about childhood experience. In each film, fantasy results from the entrance of an otherworldly component, and ruptures an otherwise realistic, quotidian setting. In *Ma vie en rose*, Belgian director Alain Berliner depicts the inner struggles of Ludovic, a seven-year-old boy who calls himself a *garçon-fille*, believing that “God” made a mistake when assigning his gender at birth. Ludo wants to become a girl, so he can marry his school friend, Jérôme. These transgender desires bring about considerable distress to Ludo’s parents, putting strain on their marriage, especially since Ludo’s father, Pierre, works for Jérôme’s father. This anguish also has a negative impact on Ludo himself, who attempts suicide by hiding in a freezer. However, by the end of the film, his parents eventually accept him as their son, regardless of his differences. One of the recurring cinematographic motifs in *Ma vie en rose* is the camera’s direct unfiltered representation of Ludo’s interior fantasies, whether he imagines his future marriage,³ his gender assignment at birth,⁴ or simply runs away from his dysfunctional family life.⁵ What signals the transition from third-person narrative to subjective point of view what, I will call fantastic perspective in this thesis, is the use of bright, garish, almost simplistic, colors to create an artificial ludic appearance on screen. In combination with the playful color scheme, Berliner adds a jaunty and childlike extra-diegetic score to these privileged moments in the film, and includes the characters Pam and Ben, human versions of their American doll counterparts, Barbie and Ken. The fantasy in *Ma vie en rose* comes from within, taking place within Ludo’s mind. Berliner intersperses these very distinctive points of view among his otherwise standard, third-person narrative; for the most part, it is clear when the camera depicts Ludo’s interior thoughts, as these are signaled by the shift to include fantastic colors and sounds, in distinct contrast to the shots that precede and follow them.

Roughly a decade later, French director François Ozon includes similar treatments of fantastic point of view in *Ricky*, yet one where the camera allows the viewer to look directly at Ricky’s hybrid nature. A brief affair between two factory workers, Katie and Paco, results in the

¹ Alain Berliner, 1997.
² François Ozon, 2009.
³ 23:00.
⁴ 41:00.
⁵ 1:22:00.
birth of a baby boy, whom they name Ricky. The film traces the growth of Ricky’s wings, which initially appear as bruises on Ricky’s back, but, by the end of the film, are fully formed. Like Ma vie en rose, Ricky’s hybrid condition puts considerable emotional strain on his family. Katie, who ends up living with Paco, accuses him of abusing Ricky when the bruises initially appear. Furthermore, Lisa, Katie’s seven-year-old daughter from a previous relationship, occupies a parental role throughout the film, caring for Ricky in a motherly fashion as he is in the process of growing his wings, possibly exhibiting envy towards Ricky being “special” and the center of attention. Ricky’s hybridity is first revealed to those outside his family circle in the sequence where he takes flight in a department store, which is recorded digitally within the film via cell phone. As a result, this acts as a “big reveal” within Ozon’s narrative structure, and the fantastic aspect of Ricky’s flight is cued in part by the onlookers’ awestruck expression; Ricky is treated as something different, as evidenced by the desire to record his “abnormality” via digital footage.

Accordingly, my thesis aims to bring together these two films into a broader conversation about the nature of critical transitions in form, gender, and representation. Michael Schiavi, Cynthia Degnan situate Ludo’s transgender desires within pre-pubescent child development, since his beliefs transcend normative binaries, even at such a young age, while Nick Rees-Roberts emphasizes the colorful, fantastic nature of Ludo’s interior projections. Similarly, Thibaut Schilt and Neil Young have examined how Ricky’s growth of wings act as a sort of fantastic rupture that severs the otherwise realist setting of Ozon’s film. In my view, whilst numerous films in both Berliner’s and Ozon’s oeuvre include fantastic and unreal imagery, Ma vie en rose and Ricky, in my view, link the experience of fantasy to that of the gaze, and introduce an interesting dichotomy within the experience of looking that differentiates how one looks with or at these pre-pubescent characters, and relates to their unnatural and fantastic qualities. In defining the term look (and its counterpart, the gaze) I will primarily draw on Jacques Lacan’s Les quatre concepts fondamentaux.

6 38:00.
12 See, for example, Les Amants criminels (Ozon, 1998) and Passion of Mind (Berliner, 2000).
and also how scholars, namely Todd McGowan and Kaja Silverman, understand Lacanian notions about vision within cinematic contexts. As I will suggest, the look can become trans-, a crossing, so to speak, either trans-gender, in the case of *Ma vie en rose*, or a type of trans-formation from human to human hybrid, as in *Ricky*.

The first chapter analyzes two key sequences in *Ma vie en rose*. In the first sequence, Berliner presents a projection that takes place within Ludo’s mind, a sort of naïve re-enactment of Ludo’s own conception, but through the point of view of “God,” a character seemingly created out of Ludo’s imaginary and interiorized dialogue. In other words, the camera depicts the point of view of a character constructed from within Ludo’s own consciousness, and projected unproblematically on a public screen. This fantastic nature of Ludo’s inner projections becomes even more complex in the second sequence, where Ludo’s interior projections blur into the general fictional reality that *Ma vie en rose* presents, two domains that, up until this point, had remained distinctly separate. Berliner blends Ludo’s inner imaginary world, suturing it to the fictional fabric of the film, layering two simultaneous fictions to the present tense of the diegesis.

The second chapter will study the relationship between the look and fantasy in *Ricky*, where Ricky’s arrival and transformation into a “bird baby” similarly ruptures the otherwise realist cinematic space Ozon presents. Different from *Ma vie en rose*, where the camera allows the viewer to share in the first-person point of view of fictional characters such as Ludo, Ozon’s cinematography examines Ricky directly, yet always as an object, the camera instead emphasizing his inhuman birdlike qualities, a situation that is labeled as “unnatural” within the narrative of Ozon’s film. In the first of three sequences I will analyze, the camera depicts through the point of view of Lisa, Ricky’s sister, when Ricky is absent from the screen visually, but is present aurally because Ozon denotes his presence through use of extra-diegetic sound. The next two sequences are directly interrelated, and will be read together, as they present a film within a film, but one that

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16 42:00.
17 1:23:00.
18 38:00.
19 53:15 and 1:00:34.
also brings to the fore questions of accuracy and truth in fiction films; Ricky’s flight through the department store is digitally recorded via cell phone, and is later re-broadcast on television, in order to present evidence about Ricky’s hybridity. However, since it is a cell phone camera, the footage’s accuracy is brought into doubt. Nonetheless, the act of recording Ricky creates a sort of history within Ozon’s cinematic universe, one where Ozon himself is the one who changes and appropriates this archive footage, in order to advance his film’s narrative. Just as Ricky is a hybrid bird-baby, Ozon’s own film also adopts this visible multiplicity.
Chapter Two. Ludo’s Look in *Ma vie en rose*

*Ma vie en rose* remains one of Berliner’s most famous and critically acclaimed features. His filmography covers various media and genres, namely television films,\(^{20}\) short films,\(^{21}\) as well as the feature-length *Passion of Mind*,\(^{22}\) where Demi Moore’s character “seems unable to distinguish between fantasy and reality.”\(^{23}\) This latter film, a psychological drama, was poorly received, being described as “shallow” and “bland.”\(^{24}\) On the other hand, reception of *Ma vie en rose* was very positive; it won, in 1998, the Golden Globe for Best Foreign Language Film. Stephen Holden of the *New York Times* gave high praise to the film’s narrative structure, which “could easily have been milked for pathos and weighty social commentary,” yet was a “jolly modern fairy tale that is as benign as the imaginary figure who floats through Ludovic’s fantasies, offering comfort and escape.”\(^{26}\) Berliner’s signature style could be classified as “magical realism,”\(^{27}\) his films combining elements of surrealism (such as the absurdism in *Le Mur* in 1998, and the dreamlike sequences in *Passion of Mind*), with sharply drawn characters, and relatable plot lines. For example, in *Le Mur* (a possible play on words, considering Berliner’s name), a wall is spontaneously erected in Belgium, separating French and Flemish speakers, which also happens to divide in two a “hot chips” owner’s small store.\(^{28}\) Moreover, whilst *Ma vie en rose* itself contains fantastic sequences whose colors are almost psychedelic, it also presents a sensitive and thought-provoking narrative on tolerance and respect towards transgenderism in children:

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22 Alain Berliner, 2000.
27 http://www.nytimes.com/movies/person/225626/Alain-Berliner/biography
28 This absurd situation also brings to mind similar predicaments in Douglas Adam’s *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy*, where Earth is destroyed in order to build a “hyperspatial express route.”
Ma vie en rose est bien évidemment et avant tout une très jolie parabole sur la notion de différence et de tolérance. Il est également bien plus que cela. Berliner joue le jeu de la fable humaniste sans endosser outré mesure la bienséance cinématographique qui caractérise en général ces « films de thèse » portant leur grossière abnégation en bandoulière. 

Critics thus hailed Berliner’s film as original, a “surprisingly toned and attuned portrait of a seven-year-old”, which “puts at center screen an aggressively narrative-resistant protagonist: an effeminate, cross-dressing, boy-loving, girl-identified, pre-pubescent male”.

A self-described garçon-fille, Ludo exhibits signs of a transgender identity early on in the film. In his mind, he has the appearance of a boy, but, inside, he believes that he is in fact a girl. “Pour faire un enfant, les parents jouent au morpion,” he exclaims, “Quand il y en a un qui gagne, Dieu envoie des X et des Y. XX pour faire une fille, XY pour faire un garçon. Chez moi, il y a mon X de fille qui a glissé et qui est tombé dans la poubelle. A la place, il y a un Y qui s’y est mis. Erreur scientifique!” The repetition of the XX/XY in Ludo’s dialogue verbally anticipates the blurring of lines in between genders Ludo wants to effectuate, and reflects his desire to justify and rationalize his transgender desires through his own limited and naïve understanding of science. Ludo wants to be a girl, and marry his school friend Jérôme, insisting that: “On va se marier quand je ne serai plus un garçon.” These convictions strain his parents’ marriage, especially since Ludo’s father works for Jérôme’s father. Nonetheless, Ludo’s mother, Hanna, attempts to rationalize her son’s desires, proclaiming: “Mais c’est normal. Je connais ce temps. On joue avec son identité. Il y avait un article dans Marie Claire là-dessus.” Hanna’s word choice here is interesting, as the generic “on” is both plural and singular, and has an indiscernible, undifferentiated quality as a signifier. Furthermore, the word “on” itself has a dual quality, akin to Ludo’s belief that he is both a boy and a girl, a garçon-fille. Yet it is Ludo’s “Granny” who is the

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33 43:55.
34 14:40.
35 8:56.
most understanding, having a “rare insight into make-believe,” who encourages Ludo to create his own fantasy world, where his gender has in fact been corrected.

Judith Butler, in her 1990 text *Gender Trouble*, postulates that the limits of what constitutes *gender* is limited by binaries, constructed by both our language and cultural norms; she labels these as the “terms of a hegemonic cultural discourse predicated on binary structures that appear as the language of universal rationality.” Gender is thus *performative*, in that it is also defined by one’s actions:

constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed … There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very expressions. That are said to be its results.

In other words, gender comprises the act of doing, “within the inherited discourse of the metaphysics of substance.” What is *trans*-gender, then, is what dismantles these heteronormative gender binaries, encompassing “any and all kinds of variation from gender norms and expectations.” Someone who is transgender crosses the gender barrier, in acts such as cross-dressing, which do not conform to an archetypical male or female identity:

Studies of transgenderism began with those made an ‘M to F’ to ‘F to M’ transition. That said, transgender theory argues that bodies cannot conform within binaries … Indeed, transgender studies includes cross-dressing, intersexuality and other performativities, and legalities pertaining to gender identity.

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37 Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 9. Butler also cites Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* (*Le Deuxième Sexe*, in the original French): “one is not born a woman, but, rather, becomes one” (301).
38 Ibid., 25.
39 Ibid., 24-25.
Ludo exhibits transgender qualities, not only physically (as he engages in cross-dressing, for example), but also mentally, as he fantasizes in the film his transformation from male to female. However, it is also important to note that Ludo’s interior thoughts pertain to his gender, rather than sexual, identity. Schiavi highlights that “although Ludo proclaims his love for Jérôme openly, at seven he is not seen as making a definitive statement about his sexuality.”

Ludo is pre-pubescent, and one could make the argument that it is inappropriate to label his desires as sexual at such a young age. On the other hand, some sexual awareness may nonetheless be present on Ludo’s part, as Degnan explores when situating Ma vie en rose within the context of Sigmund Freud’s “Infantile Sexuality,” since Freud claims that some sexual awareness occurs at the pre-pubescent stage. Ludo’s fantasies are a seeming aberration in his development as a child, as his parents express concern that Ludo does not develop at the expected rate. In my own reading of Freud’s essay, it is also important to note that young children’s understanding of sexuality, especially in relation to conception and childbirth, is naïve, often containing significant misunderstanding and over-simplification of biological concepts:

Many people can remember distinctly how intensely they interested themselves, in the prepubescent period, in the question where children came from. The anatomical solutions at that time read very differently; the children come out of the breast or are cut out of the body, or the navel opens itself to let them out.

Ludo’s fantasies do not contain any sexual content. In fact, his own version of his conception is completely sexless, his parents completely absent, and his gender assigned by his own fabricated, Godlike character. It is interesting to me that he imagines an origin story that is outside of sex, recalling the origins of humanity in the Garden of Eden, where “God” creates and assigns gender

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42 Schiavi, “A ‘Girlboy’s’ Own Story,” 3.
43 Ibid., 20.
44 Degnan, “Living on Girlboy Time,” 42.
45 Found in Freud’s Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality, 1905.
46 http://www.gutenberg.org/files/14969/14969-h/14969-h.htm
47 Ibid.
to Adam and Eve.\textsuperscript{48} Moreover, when Ludo does imagine himself as a girl, his defining female characteristics are clothing (a dress and make-up), rather than anatomical features; moreover, given his long hair, it would be quite difficult to discern his gender, male or female, at such a young age. Ludo’s fantasies thus appear to reflect his own naïve understanding of the world.\textsuperscript{49}

Two sequences demonstrate this indeterminacy of Ludo’s gender assignment: the first, where Ludo attempts to rationalize being a \textit{garçon-fille} by imagining his own gender assignment by this “God,” and the second, where, at the end of the film, he tries to escape reality, running away from his mother to join “Le Monde de Pam.”

\subsection*{2.1 The Gaze of “God”?}

Ludo imagines his gender assignment mid-way through the film,\textsuperscript{50} following his realization that he has feelings for Jérôme, and his subsequent attempt to marry Jérôme in a mock ceremony. In depicting Ludo’s imagination, what Berliner presents on screen is in distinct contrast with what the shots that precede and follow it, it being brighter in color than these other shots, and also containing an extra-diegetic score that only takes place when Ludo is fantasizing. More specifically, the sequence opens with a close-up of Ludo’s face, but Ludo looks off camera, at something beyond the screen, and, since there is no shot/counter-shot, the object of Ludo’s gaze is indiscernible. Ludo has just asked his sister about how he was assigned his gender at birth. “C’est pas Dieu qui décide?” Ludo inquires, to which she replies, “Si, évidemment.” The camera lingers on Ludo’s face, slowly zooming in to an extreme close-up. Even though frame does not display what Ludo is looking at, the camera, at least in this context, silences the object of Ludo’s gaze, but the dialogue implies that he is in fact \textit{thinking}, and also \textit{looking}.

Berliner jump cuts to an image of a suburban street, and the camera is situated at a bird’s eye point of view. There is a clear rupture between the last shot and this one, and, at this point in the sequence, Berliner does not specify the new location, but it appears to emanate from within Ludo’s mind, since these two shots are linked by a sound bridge, namely, a buoyant, woodwind melody that begins while the camera lingers on Ludo’s face, and continues through to the next shot. Does Berliner create a link between these two shots, perhaps suggesting that this image was

\textsuperscript{48} Genesis 1:26-30. 
\textsuperscript{49} See, for example, 18:00, 23:00, 36:00, 41:00, 1:00:00, 1:12:00, 1:17:00, 1:22:00, and 1:24:00. 
\textsuperscript{50} 42:00.
the object of Ludo’s gaze? This appears to be the case at first glance, but this is further complicated by the fact that Ludo claims that it was Dieu/God, which possibly infers that this “God” is the source of the bird’s eye view. Moreover, the bird’s eye view would suggest that someone is looking down at the urban setting, and a book is partially shown in the foreground of the frame, which suggests that whoever is doing the looking is peering over the book at the suburban setting. Berliner places the viewer directly in a privileged, subjective point of view, where the viewer gains access to the subject’s own field of vision. For Jacques Lacan, *le regard*, which translates as both *look* and *gaze* in English, is defined in relation to an Other: “Ce regard que je rencontre … est, non point un regard vu, mais un regard par moi imagine au champ de l’Autre.” Lacan relates vision to images in terms of a spatial relationship he calls “deux unités dans l’espace”:

La vision s’ordonne sous un mode qu’on peut appeler en général la fonction des images. Cette fonction se définit par une correspondance point par point de deux unités dans l’espace. Quels que soient les intermédiaires optiques pour établir leur relation, qu’une image soit virtuelle, qu’elle soit réelle, la correspondance point par point est essentielle.

If we read *Ma vie en rose* in terms of vision and spatial configuration, it seems that both Ludo’s and the viewer’s field of vision coincide. Jack Halberstam argues that discerning the transgender look in film can be obscure and ambiguous for the viewer, depending on the context in which the transgender character is shown on screen.

Visibility, under these circumstances, may be equated with jeopardy, danger, and exposure, and it often becomes necessary for the transgender character to disappear in order to remain viable. The transgender gaze becomes difficult to track because it depends on complex relations in time and space upon seeing and not seeing, appearing and disappearing, knowing and not knowing.

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52 Ibid., 81.
54 Ibid., 78.
Halberstam’s argument relating to temporality is especially pertinent to this sequence, as it concerns the temporality of an origin that Ludo could not have witnessed, since he did not exist yet when this fantasy supposedly takes place. Halberstam proposes that when a character is revealed as transgender, the viewer “literally has to rewind the film after the character’s exposure in order to reorganize the narrative logic in terms of the pass.”55 In Ludo’s case, he himself rewinds to re-image his own gender assignment, but this is alternative, and devoid of sexual and biological understanding. Furthermore, the transgender look, a look that Ludo perhaps inhabits, has the potential to “give the viewer access to the transgender gaze in order to allow us to look with the transgender character instead of at him.”56 Berliner’s cinematography seems to allow us to look with Ludo, due to the link between the two shots. In my view, the terms “looking with” refer to a type of cinematic intimacy and privilege, where Ludo’s inner projections are made public on screen via film. Furthermore, in Ma vie en rose, the dialogue also implies that it is in fact this “God” (or, perhaps more accurately, Ludo’s own mental construction of God) who is the one who is also doing the looking.

This kind of cinematic privilege in Ma vie en rose also brings to mind Jonah Corne’s 2010 analysis of Le Scaphandre et le Papillon.57 Schnabel’s film raises similar questions, as the audience frequently shares the viewpoint of paralyzed character, Jean-Dominique Bauby, since the first forty minutes solely consist of his first-person point of view:

One of the most profusely and justifiably celebrated features of Schnabel’s adaptation of the Diving Bell is its use of sustained – marathonic is perhaps a more fitting adjective – first-person point-of-view cinematography.58

The audience sees what Bauby sees, but what complicates this cinematographic choice is that Bauby does not initially comprehend his predicament, and the audience consequently shares in this frustration. Corne therefore posits that “this hyper-intensive use of perspectival shooting works

55 Ibid.
56 Ibid.
to establish the spectator’s identification with Bauby as he struggles with a condition that few can imagine themselves experiencing directly.”⁵⁹ A similar argument could be made with respect to *Ma vie en rose*, where the camera provides the audience with a privileged viewpoint where we can see Ludo’s own thoughts, and even his own mental fabrications. However, this look has been completely de-identified, seeing as the camera paradoxically allows us to see inside Ludo’s mind, and this is even further complicated by the fact that this interior projection includes a character that Ludo himself has mentally constructed, and moreover, a character that is barely shown on screen. In other words, the camera inhabits Ludo’s mind, but Ludo’s own mind also inhabits the mind of another character, that is, a character created by Ludo. Furthermore, this projection of God does not exist in the fabric of the fictional reality that Berliner presents in his cinematic universe in *Ma vie en rose*, since this version of God only exists within Ludo’s mind. Schiavi and Degnan term sequences that take place within Ludo’s mind as “fantasies,” while Rees-Roberts labels them as “individual fantasies.”⁶⁰ I agree with Rees-Roberts’ terminology, but I would add that while Ludo’s projections are indeed unique to him, the way in which Berliner frames the sequence allows an Other access to his fantasies, which is paradoxical, due to the absence of any concrete identification in the sequence. What is shown on screen is in essence a plural gaze that takes place within a framework (Ludo’s fantasy) that should be singular. Just as Ludo claims to be a garçon-fille hybrid, the gaze presented here also has a dual character; seemingly, it leads to a redefinition of the camera’s point of view through Berliner’s innovative folding in of the distinction between singular self and plural vision.

This sequence also represents a “fantasy,” as the frame contains bright and gaudy greens and pinks, which are in distinct contrast to the preceding shot of Ludo’s face, where these garish colors are not present. Exaggerated color can cue a type of fantasy in a cinematic context, as Steve Neale⁶¹ cites, especially where colors appear unrealistic within the diegesis of the film:

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⁵⁹ Ibid. Corne also states that: “this process of identification is also vastly complicated by the fact that Bauby, too, is trying to forge an identification with an entity that he can with some modicum of stability and assurance call ‘himself’.” (219)
⁶¹ Steve Neale, “Colour and Film Aesthetics.” In *The Film Cultures Reader*. Ed. Graeme Turner. (Oxford and New York: Routledge, 2002). It is also important to note that Neale is stating this in relation to another text, an article entitled “Sound and Color” by Edward Buscombe, cited earlier in Turner’s edited volume (pages 77-84).
Because colour was initially associated with fantasy and spectacle its use tended to be restricted to genres like the cartoon, the western, the costume romance and the musical rather than the war film, the documentary and the crime picture. More than that, though, colour was a problem for realism because colour could distract and disturb the eye.  

This citation appears wholly pertinent to *Ma vie en rose*, as colors are used in a way that create a marked contrast between what is and is not inside Ludo’s mind, an apparent distortion of the reality of the film reel. The images in the frame seem disproportionately bright, a white-like glow emanating from God’s hands in particular; it is almost as if Berliner is using color grading to the highlight the surreal quality of the sequence, in a similar manner to Jean-Pierre Jeunet and Marc Caro in *Delicatessen*. Furthermore, it is likely that some animation is present in *Ma vie en rose*. In particular, when the camera shows the street view of houses from a bird’s eye view, a hand, which clearly does not belong to a child, but an adult, turns the pages of the book; this contradiction again brings to the fore jarring problems of proportion. While no face is shown at all in this sequence, Berliner renders a close-up of the hand, which hurls gray formations of animated letters “X” and “Y” down at the houses. The shape of these block letters is simple in nature, indicating perhaps that the letters are the result of computer animation. Berliner then cuts to a close-up of a chimney, where all but one of these letters fall in the chimney; one X bounces off, as there is a ding of xylophone in the extra-diegetic score. The camera finally cuts back to a close-up of Ludo’s face, who continues to look, just as he was at the beginning of the sequence. Ludo proclaims, out loud, “j’ai compris qu’est-ce qui s’est passé avec mon X,” connecting, via dialogue, the preceding shots in the form of another sound bridge. Ludo fabricates his own space, as well as his own character, as a response to his conviction that he is a *garçon-fille*. Moreover, he has constructed a naïve, sexless version of his own gender assignment, a childlike Garden of Eden as it were, an understanding of biology conspicuously absent. Following Freud, children’s awareness of sexuality can be limited, containing a partial and naïve understanding in particular of conception and childbirth. Ludo’s projection is a re-imagining, a re-enactment as it were, of his own gender

64 Genesis 2-3.
assignment, an event that has already happened, but one where he was not present. Ludo has imagined a portion of own “history,” but one that is flawed and inaccurate.

2.2 Fictional Realities

In contrast to the previous sequence, the film’s climax,65 where Ludo attempts to run away from his mother in order to escape reality, blurs the lines between what is “real” and “unreal,” as it is unclear what is shown on screen takes place within Ludo’s mind, or the fictional reality of Berliner’s cinematic universe. The sequence opens with a shot/counter-shot of Hanna, Ludo’s mother, and a billboard that shows an image of Pam. This “Pam” refers to the “corny, garish television romance of Pam and Ben, fictive European clones of Barbie and Ken,”66 whose presence is a recurring thread in a number of Ludo’s fantasies.67 The shot of Hanna stands in direct opposition to that of Pam, since the latter contains gaudy and artificial-looking pinks and blues, in contrast with the light, more natural, blue of the sky. The camera also shows a ladder that leans against this billboard, with the written text “Le Monde de Pam”; this signifies the entry-point to a different space, as the written text explicitly states that that billboard is Pam’s World. Pam is stationary and unblinking, and the next shot of Hanna also shows her looking, Berliner seeming to present a wordless conversation between the two characters, even though Pam is lifeless and motionless, and “fictional” within Berliner’s world. This is further exemplified by the fact that the following shots alternate between the two characters, the camera gradually zooming in an extreme close-up towards both characters. Pam, who is in fact lifeless, seemingly comes to life, opening the doorway to “Pam’s World,” inviting Hanna to join her via a conversation where spoken words are absent.

The camera then cuts to an establishing shot of a locality that has an artificial and fabricated appearance, consisting of bright green hills and pink constructed houses. These garish, block colors, as well as the almost simplistic, block-like construction of the buildings give the impression that this space is assembled in the style of a child’s toy. Further, this geometric quality reflects Ludo’s own mindset, whose understanding of the adult world is naïve and simple, analogous to

65 1:23:00.
66 Rees-Roberts, French Queer Cinema, 77.
67 See, for example, the sequences at 15:13 and 18:00. See also 16:09, where Ludo’s particular fantasy seems to be based on the images he just saw on his own television screen.
the shapes that Berliner presents on screen. Moreover, the artificiality of cinematic spaces in this way gives rise to striking similarities with Jacques Tati’s *Playtime*, where a particular “Paris” was constructed specifically for the film, almost a whole new entity within Tati’s cinematic universe. Nothing was “real,” as Tati “emphasizes their artificial reality to the point of using cardboard figures in the background of many shots.” Jacques Tati’s sets evoke a sort of postmodern mentality, an artificial space that appears only for fleeting moment of time:

contains moments of “pure cinema” that unfold in long takes and exquisite depth of field; but it explores an entirely artificial, just-completed, and soon-to-be-discarded space where the aging modernity of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and nature itself exist only in traces.

In a similar vein, this sequence in *Ma vie en rose* entails the creation of a different world, one that appears both fabricated and childlike, one that also emanates from the mind of Ludo, a child whose inner projections are otherworldly and simplistic.

However, the distinction between fiction and reality becomes ambiguous in the remainder of the sequence, when the camera cuts to close-up of Hanna’s face, which is of a distinctly whiter shade than in the previous shots. Again, change in color can denote a type of fantasy, perhaps signaling in this context that Hanna has entered a different dimension. Yet what is real here? Has Hanna entered Ludo’s mind via Pam’s World, since Pam acts as a motif that denotes Ludo’s interior projections? Berliner appears to have combined both Ludo’s and Hanna’s respective domains, which, up until this point, have remained separate. This is most evident in the next shot, where the camera shows Hanna as a giant within the composition of the frame. In particular, Hanna peers through a rectangular, window-like shape, looking out into a new world, where her world

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71 Ibid., 138.
(or perhaps, her film) is characterized by the light blue background, whilst Ludo’s own film contains garish colors and an artificial, fabricated quality; a distinct contrast is thus present between the two worlds. Moreover, Ludo and Pam are of a much smaller size than Hanna. Pam and Ludo are like toys, and Hanna, a gargantuan, almost God-like, figure, peers over them, perhaps even giving the impression that she is about to play with them. Just as “God” handed out chromosomes in the first sequence, here, a different “God” watches over Ludo once more. Moreover, this is followed by a shot/counter-shot where Ludo talks with Hanna, proclaiming, “Ici on ne gâchera pas votre vie. Je vous laisserai en paix!” Berliner chooses to use close-ups in this conversation, suggesting that a regular conversation is taking place, and that Ludo and Hanna are now the same size. In other words, in this short timeframe, both Ludo’s and Hanna’s own films converge, and become one. However, this illusion is swiftly broken, the camera cutting to an image of Ludo and Pam, who are, once again, miniature in size, standing on a yellow road and framed by artificial hills. To me, this yellow road is clear quotation of the American classic The Wizard of Oz,73 where the Yellow Brick Road is a motif that signals the fantastic nature of Dorothy’s journey through Oz; sepia-toned Kansas acts as a bookend to magical world of Oz, which, at the end of film, is revealed as taking place in Dorothy’s mind. This Yellow Brick Road “provides a valuable metaphor for making sense of Dorothy’s saga – it brings to visible awareness the notion of a journey or adventure, and relates the story to all the adventure epics written before.”74 Ludo’s interior projections also take the form of his own colorful, whimsical world, pleading with Pam, “Amène-moi! Amène-moi loin!” Ludo is trying to escape the turmoil and anguish arising from his so-called “gender trouble” with Pam, an apparent alternate maternal figure. This inner fantasy world, “Le Monde de Pam,” is seemingly used here as a substitute for his current reality, a parallel world where he is no longer a boy, his gender “mistake” finally remedied.

Thus, Ma vie en rose appears to meld both fiction and reality in this way within Berliner’s cinematic universe, by presenting us with a film within a film. Yet it is perhaps more appropriate to label the sequence here as two films presented simultaneously, where each film’s substance bleeds into the other one, since both Ludo’s and Hanna’s worlds are so distinct stylistically.

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73 Victor Fleming, 1939.
speaking, and are both present at the same time; a case in point is where Hanna peers through the rectangular, window-like shape, as I previously highlighted. However, just whose gaze is present in this sequence? There are points where we see what appears to be Hanna’s subjective point of view (such as when she was looking at the still image of Pam), but this is seemingly disrupted by cinematic motifs that signify Ludo’s gaze, namely the colorful and unnatural projections that take place within his mind (motifs that are also present throughout the film as a whole). This becomes even more complicated at the end of this sequence, where the camera cuts to an image of Hanna falling through her frame, and right through the plastic, artificial landscape of Pam’s World. This gives the impression that Hanna traverses her own film’s screen, physically entering into Ludo’s own projection via falling through the landscape of Pam’s World. A possible interpretation could be that Hanna’s own reality has been veiled by a screen, namely Ludo’s own mental projection. In defining the term “screen,” Silverman posits that “it is not only this imaginary camera lens intervenes between the world and our look, structuring what we see in photographic terms, but that we experience ourselves-as-spectacle in relation to it.” In Hanna’s case, Ludo’s fantasies could act as a mediator between Hanna and Ludo, as her view of her son is clearly ruptured by these colorful, almost psychedelic images.

Berliner then jump cuts to a blank, monochromatic blue screen, linked only by a sound bridge, namely the extra-diegetic sound of Hanna’s scream. Following this, the camera shows a close-up of Hanna’s face as she slowly awakens, implying that she has been aroused from a dream (which links the previous sequence to her gaze). But, again, was it solely her gaze? And, evoking The Wizard of Oz once more, was it her dream? The sound bridge and the shot of Hanna awakening suggest that she was the one doing the looking, but the numerous cinematographic motifs, such as the colors and the presence of Pam, strongly suggest that it was Ludo’s own look. As with the gaze of “God,” Ludo shares the gaze with other characters, yet, this time, it is shared with a character that exists not inside Ludo’s head, but as someone who is presented as real in Berliner’s cinematic universe. In defining what is “real” in a cinematic context, Jean-Luc Nancy proposes that “[l]a réalité de l’image est l’accès au réel même : à celui qui a la consistance et la résistance, par exemple de la mort, ou par exemple de la vie.”

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75 1:23:46.
76 Silverman, Threshold of the Visible World, 197.
experience and enjoy the world the film in question creates.\textsuperscript{78} Cinema thus consists of a combination of both imagination and reality, which are directly interrelated:

Their [films’] particular strength lies in their capacity to let the imagination of reality and the reality of their imagination \textit{play with each other} in the awareness of the viewer in such a way that they carry or interrupt each other, that they penetrate each other, that the one dominates the other, or that a delicate balance is created.\textsuperscript{79}

Furthermore, as Johannes Riis highlights, cinema is real in the sense that the audience experiences the events as they occur in the film, but are simultaneously aware that the film itself is artificially constructed.\textsuperscript{80} Cinema is “unreal,” so to speak, but it also acts as a way to capture reality; in particular, Siegfried Kracauer proposes that:

Film renders visible what we did not, or perhaps even could not, see before its advent. It effectively assists us in discovering the material world with its psychophysical correspondences. We literally redeem this world from its dormant state, its state of virtual nonexistence, by endeavoring to experience it through the camera.\textsuperscript{81}

This unreal nature of films also brings to the fore a comparison to dreams, or, as Brett Walpole puts it, a “waking dream.”\textsuperscript{82} Film is an invitation to join another world, yet a “world which we are close to all the time yet is so often just out of reach.”\textsuperscript{83} Two worlds collide, or perhaps are present simultaneously, a noticeable feature of this sequence in \textit{Ma vie en rose}.

\textsuperscript{78} Martin Seel, “Realism and anti-realism in film theory.” \textit{Critical Horizons} 9, no. 2 (2008), 172.
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{80} Johannes Riis, “Is a Realist Film Style Aimed at Providing an Illusion?” In \textit{Realism and ‘Reality’ in Film Media}. Ed. Anne Jersley. (Copenhagen: Museum Tuscalanum Press, 2002), 93.
\textsuperscript{82} Brett Walpole, \textit{Films, Visions and Dreams: From Action to Cut} (Durham, CT: Eloquent Books, 2010), 49.
\textsuperscript{83} Ibid.
The comparison between fantasy and dreams in film is interesting, especially considering Freud’s description of the fantastic and supernatural quality of dreams. Freud emphasizes that during classical antiquity, dreams were thought of as communication from supernatural beings such as gods and demons.\footnote{Freud, \textit{The Interpretation of Dreams}, 4.} This stems from the strange quality of dreams, which act as an access point between the real world, and the alien, the presence of two different dimensions:

Further, it accounted for the main impression made upon the waking life by the morning memory of the dream; for in this memory the dream, as compared with the rest of the psychic content, seems to be something alien, coming, as it were, from another world. It would be an error to suppose that the theory of the supernatural origin of dreams lacks followers even in our times ...\footnote{Ibid., 5.}

The camera not only shows Ludo’s own fantastic projections, but also Hanna’s own reality. Yet one could also categorize this second film as Berliner’s film, since the reality that Hanna inhabits is the same universe that Berliner presents within \textit{his} own fictional reality in \textit{Ma vie en rose}; since one could classify sequences within Ludo’s mind as \textit{fantasies}, then where does one draw the line? Is not all film a fantasy, a projection of some sort, a construction of fictional characters? McGowan’s text on Lacan pertains to this very subject, distinguishing the term “fantasy” in terms of \textit{genre}, and in terms of \textit{psychoanalysis}. As a \textit{genre}, texts typically contain a type of “magical world,” where the “limitations of our physical universe no longer hold.”\footnote{McGowan, Todd. \textit{The Real Gaze: Film Theory After Lacan}. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 23. See also Jaqueline Nacache, “‘I’ve a feeling we’re not in Kansas anymore’: passing from one world to another in Hollywood musicals.” \textit{Neochelicon} 40, no. 2 (2013), 449-459.} There also can be an “ontological rupture,” a term that Katherine Fowkes adopts, where there is “a fundamental break with our sense of reality.”\footnote{Katherine A. Fowkes, \textit{The Fantasy Film} (Chichester, West Sussex: John Wiley and Sons, 2010), 2.} Ludo’s mental fabrications could definitely be classified as such, but one should also take note of what is fantastic in a psychoanalytic context, as this second way of defining \textit{fantasy} consists of a sort of distortion of reality within the mind, where desires are
fulfilled. Film, or other art forms for that matter, can become a medium where these private, individual fantasies are on public display, as McGowan postulates:

By distorting social reality through an imaginative act, fantasy creates an opening to the impossible object and thereby allows the subject to glimpse an otherwise inaccessible enjoyment. Works of arts translate private fantasies into public ones, which provide an imaginary response to shared forms of dissatisfaction and thus have an appeal beyond the individuals who generate them.88

Following McGowan, one could definitely say that Ludo exhibits these characteristics; his interior projections are a clear distortion of reality (owing in part to naïve, childlike understanding of the world), and are used as a means to justify and allay his turmoil at being a garçon-fille. Moreover, through Berliner’s film, his private fantasies become public. In addition, this “impossible object” that McGowan cites refers to the Lacanian concept of objet petit a, the object of desire: “Dans le rapport scopique, l’objet d’où depend le fantasme auquel le sujet est appendu dans une vacillation essentielle, est le regard.”89 One could therefore make the argument that Ludo’s fantasy is to “correct” the divine error of his gender allocation, and become female, as he believes he should always have been. Yet the question still remains: is not all cinema a fantasy? Film in itself is fantastic, as McGowan asserts, as even “realist film has a fantasmic dimension,” and “the very representation of reality mediates that reality and moves it into another form.”90 Film is a way to immerse the viewer in a different world that consists of new images and new sounds that “overwhelm” the viewer:

Film is fantasmatic because it overwhelms the spectator with image and sound. In a sense, an emphasis on fantasy in film represents an attempt to remain faithful to the exigencies of the filmic medium itself. Films allow spectators to immerse

90 McGowan, The Real Gaze, 24.
themselves in the movement of images and to minimize – at least during the duration of the film – a sense of lack.\textsuperscript{91}

The projections within Ludo’s mind could therefore be labeled as fantasies within another fantasy, the second fantasy being Berliner’s own film, a sort of \textit{mise en abyme}. Sébastien Févry\textsuperscript{92} characterizes the term \textit{mise en abyme} as a repetition of images within images, which can occur through a screen or screens that act as intermediaries:

\begin{quote}
Le dispositif cinématographique peut encore se manifester dans le film par l’intermédiaire des écrans seconds. La configuration de ces derniers redouble la configuration rectangulaire de l’écran de cinéma. Les exemples d’écrans seconds étant innombrables (embrasures de portes, fenêtres …), nous nous attarderons ici sur deux cas typiques: \textit{le miroir} et \textit{le film dans le film}.\textsuperscript{93}
\end{quote}

Often associated with Andre Gide and \textit{le nouveau roman, mise en abyme} in fiction acts in a similar way to “a funfair hall of mirrors,” where features of Gide’s writing in particular include “contrast, parallel, exaggeration and distortion by these writer characters,” namely, “distorted reflections of Gide himself.”\textsuperscript{94} Accordingly, despite the fact that Berliner makes it unclear what is in fact “real” in the above sequence, it is evident that multiple layers of fantasy are present: the camera shows Hanna’s world, as well as Ludo’s world, altogether framed by Berliner’s overarching film, \textit{Ma vie en rose}.

In summary, in response to the distress and misunderstanding arising from Ludo’s self-description as a \textit{garçon-fille}, he imagines his own fantasy world, where the divine error of his gender assignment has been rectified. In the first sequence, Berliner creates a clear distinction

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{91} Ibid., 69-70.
\textsuperscript{92} Sébastien Févry, \textit{La mise en abyme filmique: Essai de typologie} (Liège, Belgique: Éditions du CEFAL, 2000).
\textsuperscript{93} Ibid., 27. It is important to note that Févry qualifies this description with the following statement: “La mise en abyme se différencie d’autres phénomènes réflexifs par son caractère \textit{homofilmingue}. Elle réfléchit le film même” (29).
\textsuperscript{94} Victoria Reid, \textit{Andre Gide and Curiosity} (Amsterdam and New York: Editions Rodopi, 2009), 221. See, for example, \textit{Les Faux-monnayeurs} (Gide, 1925). See also \textit{Dans le labyrinthe} (Robbe-Grillet, 1959), for another example of \textit{mise en abyme} in a literary context.
\end{footnotes}
between Ludo’s fantasy world, and the fictional reality in *Ma vie en rose* as a whole. Within Ludo’s mind, he shares the gaze of his own interpretation of “Dieu/God,” where the gaze becomes completely de-identified within his interior projection. However, in the second sequence, this sharing occurs with his own mother, a character who is “real” within the diegesis of Berliner’s film. Berliner’s cinematography makes it unclear as to whether this sequence is inside Ludo’s mind, Hanna’s mind, or perhaps a combination of the two. Nonetheless, this cinematic choice on Berliner’s part raises pertinent questions concerning *fantasy* and *realism* in film, and, in particular, how Ludo’s mental projections could be classified as *films within a film*. 
Chapter Three. Looking at Hybridity in Ricky

François Ozon is considered one of the most significant French directors working outside of France, his filmography unconventionally exploring “the masculine and the feminine, gay and straight, reality and fantasy, auteur and commercial cinema.” Andrew Asibong describes Ozon’s filmography as challenging and unorthodox, in the sense that it eschews both “knowing cynicism” and “saccharine, apolitical romanticism”:

Far from pandering to a French artistic and intellectual climate that increasingly celebrates expressions of either knowing cynicism or else saccharine, apolitical romanticism, Ozon’s work challenges – with a seriousness that is easy to miss beneath an often garish surface – the impasse of sheer indifference often claimed, or indeed championed, as an ineluctable consequence of the postmodern era.

In his 2008 book, François Ozon, Asibong compares the director’s postmodern amalgamation of melodrama and fantasy to the campy and theatrical styles of John Waters, Pedro Almodóvar, and Rainer Werner Fassbinder. Furthermore, a common thread in a number of Ozon’s films is the “queer identity,” such as in Les Amants criminels, a fantasy film stylistically similar to the fairy-tale films of Jean Cocteau and Jacques Demy. In Les Amants criminels, two teenagers murder a fellow classmate, and have a number of fantastic encounters with a sodomizing, cannibalistic ogre. Yet realism is equally present in Ozon’s oeuvre, a case in point being Sous le sable, a film whose cinematography is naturalistic and distinctly understated:

95 Schilt, François Ozon, 5.
96 Andrew Asibong, “Meat, Murder, Metamorphosis the Transformational Ethics of François Ozon,” French Studies 59, no. 2 (2005), 204.
97 Ibid.
99 See also 8 femmes (2002).
100 La Belle et la bête, 1946, L’Éternel retour, 1943.
It eschews melodrama in order to examine the process of mourning, making use of a restrained, naturalistic palette of greys, browns and blues; fluid, long takes; and contemporary mise en scène, in a realistically filmed locations in Paris and on the wide, windswept beaches of France’s Atlantic coast.  

Ozon attributes his diverse style to his own self-proclaimed freedom as a director. “I need to follow my instincts, or my desire,” he states in an interview.  

Based on Rose Tremain’s short story “Moth,” Ozon’s Ricky in 2009 tells the story of an infant who, over the course of the film, grows bird’s wings. Following a brief affair, two factory workers, Katie and Paco, have a baby boy, Ricky. At first, Ricky’s wings initially appear as bruises on his back, Katie accusing Paco of abusing Ricky. However, Ricky’s wings further develop, and he eventually learns how to fly. Another key character in the film is Lisa, Ricky’s half-sister, who starts to care for him in a maternal fashion, but also perhaps displaying a jealous attitude towards Ricky’s “special” condition. Different from the interior projections in Ma vie en rose, what is fantastic about Ricky is the outward exhibition of both human and non-human characteristics within the otherwise realistic look of a contemporary fiction film. In other words, the transformation is external. Ozon’s cinematography also presents Ricky as a human, yet with birdlike features, such as when Ricky’s mother compares him to a chicken in a grocery store. Ozon himself specifies that whilst Ricky is a fantasy, the film also adopts elements of realism, its goal to show the process of wing growth in a realistic and precise manner, as Ozon was “only interested in fantasy when it’s presented in a believable way that allows for audience identification.” Ricky’s arrival interrupts the quotidian, working-class setting, a “world of living persons,” which

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106 See, for example, the sequence at 48:56, where Ricky’s mother compares his wings to chicken wings in a grocery store.
107 Ricky almost evokes the myth of Daedalus and Icarus, as related in Ovid’s Metamorphosis, another story of a winged boy, despite the fact the wings in Ricky are not artificial. See also Pseudo-Apollodorus Library 2.6 and Hyginus Fables 40.
108 48:56.
is “disrupted by the intrusion of a supernatural element.” Schilt posits that Ozon’s cinematography has a naturalistic, analytic, even scientific, quality, focusing in detail on Ricky’s anatomical structures:

Ozon indicated that the special effects were handled in a pragmatic manner and that he insisted on exhibiting in long-duration, uninterrupted shots the anatomy of Ricky’s wings. For the director, this cinematically created anatomy had to appear realistic, not whimsical. Ricky thus repeatedly, almost ‘scientifically’ exposes the unembellished attributes of the baby’s feathered appendices.

Unlike Ma vie en rose, Ricky received mixed reviews. Neil Young, of the Film Journal International, remarks that Ricky’s blend of “art-house grit, fable-like fantasy and offbeat comedy doesn’t quite come off, but certainly has its moments.” Young describes the early sections of the film as “soberly realistic,” yet this is followed by “discombobulating gear-changes” once Ricky begins to grow his wings. Stephen Holden’s New York Times review also emphasizes how the “harshly realistic portrait of working-class parenthood” becomes a “magical-realist fable.” Yet Holden makes note that this fable is not “cutesy” in the sense of Disney or Superman.

A blend of these styles (fantasy and realism) is very much present in Ricky, as Ricky’s physical similarities to a bird are treated as abnormal in the cinematic universe that Ozon depicts. Three sequences in particular demonstrate how the camera looks at Ricky’s transformed and hybrid quality: the first one takes place early on in Ricky’s development, as his wings have only just started to grow, and the camera frames Lisa looking at a bird, her perhaps drawing comparisons between the animal and her younger brother, also placing emphasis on Ricky’s dual nature, despite

110 Schilt, François Ozon, 151.
111 Ibid., 148. See further the sequences at 50:00 and 1:07:50.
113 http://www.filmjournal.com/content/film-review-ricky
114 Ibid.
115 http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/16/movies/16ricky.html?_r=0
116 38:00.
the fact that he is not shown on screen. The next two\textsuperscript{117} act as one the film’s major climaxes, as Ricky’s wings are more developed at this stage; he takes flight in a department store, which is recorded via cell phone, and later broadcast on television, presented in the form of evidence that a baby can indeed fly. This recording, and later broadcast, of this footage brings to the fore questions of reliability of archive footage, especially since the archive footage that is presented here only exists within Ozon’s own cinematic universe.

3.1 Hybridity and the Look

Early on in the film’s narrative, as Ricky’s wings being to grow, his sister Lisa starts to draw comparisons between him and birds, attributing a dual (part-human, part-bird) quality to Ricky. In particular, the sequence opens with a close-up of Ricky’s mother’s (Katie’s) face, followed by a fade-to-black, and then a fade back to an image of a bird. Ozon connects these two images with a sound bridge, namely a quiet and ominous extra-diegetic score that establishes continuity throughout the entire sequence despite the startlingly different images. The camera lingers very briefly on this image of the bird, following its movements panning swiftly from right to left, and accompanied by the bird’s deep, throaty squawking. The camera then cuts to a shot of Lisa looking out a window; it is a medium-shot of her upper body, to the side, with her head tilted up. We are not shown the object of her gaze in this shot, but Ozon’s jump cut suggests that, in a similar way to Berliner in \textit{Ma vie en rose}, the camera has shifted from a first-person to a third-person point of view, as both of these shots are linked by the sounds of the crowing of the bird. However, while the camera remains motionless on this image of Lisa looking, Ozon suddenly silences the sounds of the bird, instead overlaying them with the sounds of a baby crying. Since Lisa seems to still be looking at the bird through the window, Ozon’s cinematography establishes a clear link between the bird and Ricky; more specifically, both types of sounds make reference to Ricky and the bird simultaneously, linked by Lisa’s continual gaze. However, Ricky and the bird are at this point both extra-diegetic to the frame, and Lisa’s looking at the off-screen bird is broken, as Lisa then turns around, shouting, “Ricky, tais-toi!” Presumably, Lisa is looking at Ricky, yet the camera remains stationary, and, refuses to show the object of Lisa’s gaze. In other words, since the camera does not move at all, what Lisa sees is not within the camera’s frame, and thus field of

\textsuperscript{117} 53:15 and 1:01:00.
vision. Ricky himself is absent from the frame, but there are sounds that make reference to him, both diegetically (“Ricky, tais-toi!”), and extra-diegetically (the sounds of the baby crying). In other words, this static camerawork is significant, in that it introduces a preliminary ambiguity about Ricky’s human/birdlike nature; the camera focuses on Lisa and her gaze, essentially referring to Ricky from a distance, his presence only signified through sound.

The camera cuts again to a long shot of Lisa in front of the same window, yet Ricky is nowhere to be seen, since there is extensive use of very dark colors and shadows, and it is difficult to discern even Lisa’s facial features. Ozon then jump cuts to a close-up of Lisa’s face looking down, yet again, what she is looking at is not in the viewer’s field of vision. Nonetheless, the extra-diegetic sound of crying continues throughout this shot as well, but this time it is accompanied by Lisa’s dialogue: “T’as mal? Ça doit être tes bosses. Ah oui. Tu saignes. Je comprends que tu aies mal. Je vais te mettre de l’alcool. Ça fait pas mal.” Lisa’s word choice here implies that she is caring for Ricky, yet this is undone when the camera pans down, revealing that the object of Lisa’s gaze in this shot is not Ricky, but instead a baby doll, reversing the viewer’s natural expectations, a sort of reverse cause and effect. Ozon uses the same foreboding score, as well as the sounds of a baby crying, and creates a repeated leitmotif that links these shots together, despite the fact Ricky has not appeared visibly once on screen. However, one could say that Ricky has also been “there,” represented first by the bird, and then by the doll, his “doubles,” so to speak. Lisa has perhaps even fabricated her own character, a second “Ricky,” like Ludo’s “God.” This rhetorical substitution could perhaps be classified as a metonymy or synecdoche, a substitution of the part of the whole, where Lisa does not “see” Ricky, but rather a bird, an entity that is associated in meaning with Ricky.

Therefore, the way in which Ozon frames Lisa looking at Ricky, or her own substitute of Ricky, further emphasizes the fantastic nature of Ricky’s wings, yet one that is nevertheless firmly grounded in the “real”. The bird is a real animal, and an animal that acts a reference point, grounding Ricky’s condition in reality; Ozon makes clear that Ricky’s wings are not just wings, but a bird’s wings. Dana Oswald defines hybridity as encompassing a duality, a “visible multiplicity,” where one has the “parts of more than one creature.”

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118 See, for example, Ozon’s Swimming Pool (2003).
119 Dana M. Oswald, Gender and Sexuality in Medieval English Literature (Rochester, NY: D. S. Brewer, 2010), 24. In this section, Oswald refers to Caroline Walker Bynum, Metamorphosis and
hybridity can arise through a process of *metamorphosis*, whereby hybrid creatures are both part-human and part-beast, yet don’t lose their original humanity:

these two categories are not independent of one another, but that hybridity also defines metamorphosis. That is, when a creature transforms from one thing into another, the transformed creature becomes hybrid – the former identity is never entirely abandoned and replaced by the new identity. The metamorphic monster is always in some way hybrid.\textsuperscript{120}

Furthermore, as Teresa Rizzo proposes, bodily transformation in cinematic context is typically intense and visceral: “the cinematic techniques employed to convey the themes of mutation and hybridity are often highly visceral soliciting bodily responses in the viewer that cause changes from one body state to another, or in other words becomings.”\textsuperscript{121} Rizzo cites the *Alien* film series,\textsuperscript{122} where Sigourney Weaver’s Ripley “enters into a process of transformation with the alien who is itself in a process of transformation.”\textsuperscript{123} In the final film, *Alien Resurrection*, Ripley is “no longer quite human,” but rather a “there is a mingling of alien and human.”\textsuperscript{124} A further illustration of this is David Cronenberg’s 1986 film *The Fly*, where Jeff Goldblum’s Seth endeavors to become a fly-like, a humanoid creature that will, in his words, “change the world, and human life as we know it.” The distinctly human quality of Goldblum’s fly-like creature was critically acclaimed, as Gene Siskel articulates in his *Chicago Tribune* review:

Whereas *Aliens* simply throws alien, spindly creatures at Sigourney Weaver for two hours, David Cronenberg’s adaptation of *The Fly* is more appealing because its

\textsuperscript{120} Oswald, *Gender and Sexuality*, 24.
\textsuperscript{121} Teresa Rizzo, *Deleuze and Film: A Feminist Introduction* (London and New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2012), 108.
\textsuperscript{123} Ibid., 110.
\textsuperscript{124} Ibid.
creature is part human. Thus – as with a Frankenstein’s monster, a classic vampire or a Mr. Hyde – we can empathize with the “monster” rather than merely fear it.\textsuperscript{125}

Goldblum transforms from man to man-fly, Ricky from baby to bird-baby, and even Ludo undergoes some form of interior transformation in developing his transgender identity. Like Ludo who psychologically crosses the gender barrier (which heattributes to a divine error), Ricky’s transformation is developed as he becomes more and more birdlike.

Yet if Lisa wants to compare Ricky to a bird, then this is seemingly reminiscent of Freud’s account of sibling relations, where birds can act as a metaphor for death. In his \textit{Sexual Enlightenment of Children},\textsuperscript{126} Freud posits that friction can arise when a younger sibling is born: “the second great problem which exercises a child’s mind … is the question of the origin of babies,” which “is usually started by the unwelcome arrival of a small brother and sister.”\textsuperscript{127} Rivalries can also develop with parental figures, as Freud puts forward in his \textit{New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis}\textsuperscript{128} when the jealousy of an older sibling for their younger brother or sister extends to their mother, who is the one who is seemingly “dethroned” as the center of a family:

But what the child begrudges the unwanted intruder and rival is not only the suckling but all the other signs of maternal care. It feels that it has been dethroned, despoiled, prejudiced in its rights; it casts a jealous hatred upon the new baby and develops a grievance against the faithless mother which often finds expression in a disagreeable change in its behaviour.\textsuperscript{129}

\textsuperscript{125}  http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1999-10-15/entertainment/9910200025_1_movie-reviews-star-film/6
\textsuperscript{127}  Freud, \textit{Sexual Enlightenment of Children}, 135.
\textsuperscript{128}  1932.
Freud called this the “Oedipus complex,”¹³⁰ a reference to Sophocles’ The Theban Plays.¹³¹ In my view, Lisa suffers from Oedipal triangulation, as her desire to look at a bird while Ricky cries is readily apparent. Freud relates the dream of one of his female patients: “a number of children, all her brothers and sisters with her boy and girl cousins, were romping about in a meadow. Suddenly they all grew wings, flew up, and were gone.”¹³² Freud interprets the growth of wings and the flight of the children as a metaphor for wishing death upon someone; “we can hardly fail to recognize it as a dream of death,” since these children “grow wings and become angels.”¹³³ Does Lisa subconsciously wish death upon Ricky, following Freud, when she makes comparisons between him and the bird? This could be the case, also owing to the fact that she seems to adopt a sort of maternal role, yet, one that does not extend in actuality to Ricky (the human being and her sibling) but instead to her “doll,” Ricky’s double. Her motherly affection could be understood as a manifestation of her jealousy of (or perhaps for) Ricky, and especially of his difference, nurturing his double as a mother would, but perhaps wishing ill upon him at the same time. In other words, while it appears that Lisa is outwardly caring for her younger brother, this maternal action could in fact indicate that she envies Ricky, feeling dethroned from the center of attention, following Freud.

3.2 Looking through Screens

The camera examines Ricky’s hybridity through a literal series of screens, when Ozon includes a montage of images showing Ricky’s flight through a department store, later in the film, when Ricky’s wings are more developed and he is able to fly. The sequence opens with a medium shot of Lisa and Katie, Ricky’s mother; “Il est où, Ricky?” proclaims Katie. The camera then cuts to a long shot of Ricky flying in the distance, the camera tilted up. The montage that follows intercuts medium shots of Lisa and Katie running, the onlookers’ awestruck faces, with long shots of Ricky flying. This montage accelerates, as Lisa and Katie run and as onlookers begin to see Ricky, and Ozon overlays these images with a dramatic orchestral score (that rises to a crescendo, creating tension), as well as an extra-diegetic voice-over, which proclaims: “Un corps étranger,

¹³⁰ See also Suzanne Haas-Lyon, “To Outdo or Undo? Siblings and Hysteria.” Studies in Gender and Sexuality 8, no. 1 (2007), 1. Has-Lyon uses the words “Oedipal sibling triangle” as well.
¹³¹ See, in particular, Oedipus Rex, c. 429 B.C.
¹³² Freud, Interpretation of Dreams, 152 (emphasis in the original).
¹³³ Ibid., 152.
non identifié, a été repéré.” However, the film’s diegesis does not provide any information as to the source of the voice; it is bodiless, unidentified, just like the “unidentified flying object” it is in fact describing. Some of the medium shots within the montage depict onlookers using their cell phones to record Ricky’s flight, which multiplies the possibilities of objective point of view shots of Ricky from these different onlookers. While shots of Ricky flying are interspersed intermittently throughout the sequence, Ozon does not specifically reveal what the onlookers are filming from their point of view until later in the film, perhaps undermining the verisimilitude of the images and the plausibility of Ricky’s flight.

In this third and final sequence, some time has elapsed since his flight, and Katie, Lisa, and Ricky are on their way home following the incident. It opens with a long shot, all in one continuous take, depicting Katie walking and holding Ricky. Ricky is covered by blankets, hiding him from view, despite the fact that the sequence pertains directly to Ricky being shown to the world, despite the fact that Ricky himself is not seen at all on screen. It seems like there may also be a broader meditation about Ricky’s excessive visibility, as well as the attempts to make his “difference” invisible, almost in the same way that Ludo’s parents try to mask his difference (by cutting his hair, and telling him to wear boys’ clothes, for example), denying both children’s exceptionality. Moreover, as Katie continues to walk, onlookers enter the frame, some of them proclaiming, “On t’a vu à la télé. Montre-le-nous,” others calling Ricky a “petit monstre.” As Ozon’s camera remains stationary, more people continue to join the frame, repeatedly blocking Ricky from view. Just as the onlookers cannot see Ricky, as he is covered with blankets, Ozon’s camera refuses to show him. Yet the dialogue concerns how one looks at Ricky, emphasizing the fact that he is “different,” “abnormal,” and a “freak of nature,” an apparent contradiction between the image track and the dialogue. Some of the people in the frame are clearly reporters and photographers, shown by the flashing cameras, one declaring: “Est-ce qu’on peut vous poser des questions? Vas-y filme!” Here, screens are not a means to look directly at Ricky, but instead a way in which he is expurgated from the viewer’s field of vision. Ozon’s cinematography concerns the nature of film itself, the spoken words in particular related to the act of filming Ricky, a means to capture his winged quality on screen.

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134 1:00:17.
The camera cuts to an image of a television screen; akin to the opening of Michael Haneke’s *Caché*, this shot is literally a film within the film, as the television is framed by a second screen, which is the one the viewer watches. The camera remains stationary, but the images on the television screen move, yet appear as if decontextualized. Ozon also shows people walking and cycling, but it is difficult to distinguish their facial features, as they are filmed in the distance. This montage of images is also accompanied by another disembodied, unidentified voice-over, relating the events of Ricky’s flight: “Cet enfant soi-disant extraordinaire vivait avec sa mère dans la cité.” Ozon cuts to Katie and Lisa presumably watching the television screen, as the voice-over continues in the form of a sound bridge ("On sait peu de choses sur la mère ouvrière"), cutting back again to the television screen, which now depicts a close-up of someone talking, their dialogue implying that this person was an eyewitness of some sort (“mais je ne sais jamais qu’il était bizarre”). The television’s camera within the inside of the film’s frame also cuts to a simultaneous montage of the department store, but Ricky doesn’t appear in these shots, and the depersonalized voice-over dialogue (“La mère refuse tout contact avec les journalistes”) is the only factor the gives these images any context. In isolation, these shots would appear as simply a random assortment of images that denote any routine, quotidian day at a shopping center, since, most importantly, Ricky is entirely absent from this point in the sequence, although having seen direct footage earlier in the film, we, as viewers, understand that there is critical information missing, absent from the montage.

When the television footage finally includes Ricky in the frame, the voice-over states: “Les seules images qui circulent de cet enfant viennent de téléphones portables.” Yet while the television shows images of Ricky flying, they are brief and are of such poor quality, since these pictures themselves are fuzzy, and the hand-held camera movement is very rapid and shaky. This is suggested in the dialogue, which casts doubt upon the accuracy of the footage: “La mauvaise qualité les prélageait que toute cette histoire ne soit qu’un canular.” The object of the gaze of at least one of the anonymous spectators is finally revealed, as what was filmed on the cell phone is finally shown in the diegesis of the film (that is, the footage of Ricky’s flight). This acts as a sort of shot/counter-shot in between the “real” of the diegesis and the “reel” stock footage from the cell phones. One views Ricky’s hybridity through two simultaneous lenses (the television and the film.

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camera), where the second, inner screen bears witness to Ricky’s hybridity, yet the verisimilitude of this source is immediately contested.

In *La Chambre Claire*, Roland Barthes claimed that photography reproduces “à l’infini” what has only occurred once: “elle répète mécaniquement ce qui ne pourra jamais plus se répêter existentiellement.”\(^{136}\) Photography designates a reality, what Barthes labels as a “chant alterné” of the look, using the imperative of the verb *voir*, rather than the noun *regard* to denote the look; “elle pointe du doigt un certain *vis-à-vis*, et ne peut sortir de ce pur langage deïctique.”\(^{137}\) Kaja Silverman similarly argues that the camera acts as a substitute for the screen “through which we apprehend the gaze.”\(^{138}\) Likewise, the anonymous bystanders record Ricky’s flight on a cell phone, capturing digitally his birdlike hybridity, and this creates a sort of *history*, where the footage can repeat this extraordinary event, which has only occurred once in reality. To put it another way, the camera, a screen, is used as a way to replicate an unnatural phenomenon. Yet even this act of filming, an art form that is based on resemblance to the real casts doubt on whether his fantastic nature is “real” or not, which is disputed by voice-over that speculates that his flight could in fact be a hoax, thus, blurring the line between fiction and reality. However, unlike Berliner, who introduces deliberate ambiguity about the fantastic projections we see on screen, Ozon clearly establishes that a flying baby *does* exist within the context of the diegesis, as we witness this fantastic flight twice, directly on screen, and indirectly through a series of screens (cellular and television). Fiction and reality are not easy bedfellows, especially when fiction films claim to portray reality. This brings to mind discussions of the historicity of Alain Resnais’ *Hiroshima mon amour*,\(^{139}\) where Cathy Caruth\(^{140}\) examines Resnais’ choice to make a fictional story, rather than a documentary, about Hiroshima, which implies that a reenactment of the *experience* of Hiroshima would be more faithful to history, than simple use of stock footage.\(^{141}\) Caruth argues that Resnais “paradoxically implies that it is direct archival footage that cannot maintain the very specificity of


\(^{137}\) Ibid., 16.


the event,” and, moreover, “equally paradoxically, that it is through the fictional story, not about Hiroshima but taking place at its site, that Resnais and Duras believe such historical specificity is conveyed.” Archive footage, however, can be a reliable method to record historical events, namely those “coming from another time or from another context.” Jaimie Baron articulates that the “archive” denotes a sort of “access point” to the past, where past events are recorded, and can therefore act as evidence of what has already occurred:

archive, broadly conceived, is the point of access to what counts as evidence of past events. What is at stake, then, is precisely how certain film practices can help us to locate and trace the changing ways in which we think about history and our access to it and how we may be able to transcend rectified notions about our relationship to the past.

By recording Ricky via cell phone, the unnamed characters document the fact that a baby can indeed fly, a means to archive an event that captures an unnatural phenomenon on tape, notwithstanding the allegation that it could be a fabrication. Similar to *Ma vie en rose*, it acts as a *film within a film*, since this fictional history takes place within the fictional universe that Ozon creates.

Moreover, the disputed accuracy of Ricky’s flight partially stems from the way that Ozon presents the footage of Ricky’s flight, since the images taken from the cell phone are not shown in isolation, but used to advance the narrative in Ozon’s film, the first time Ricky’s ability to fly is revealed to the characters in the film. In other words, Ozon uses the footage, not simply quoting it, evoking Fredric Jameson’s words about postmodernism: “materials they no longer simply ‘quote’, as a Joyce or Mahler might have done, but incorporate into their very substance.”

This is particularly interesting, as one of my central questions in this thesis concerns the problem of substance when it is not merely a single essence (such as “human”), and becomes multiple.

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142 Caruth, “Literature and the Enactment of Memory,” 27.
144 Ibid., 10.
(adopting a dual character, for example). Just like Ricky is hybrid, Ozon’s own film also adopts a similar “visual multiplicity,” incorporating fictional archival footage within his own narrative. Baron also postulates that the appropriation of stock footage reframes the old footage into a brand new context:

Appropriation occurs in many ways and may have a variety of effects, but the act of recontextualization that generates in the viewer a sense of textual ‘difference’ always offers the possibility of critique and the recognition that the contexts in which we live are subject to change and are neither universal nor permanent.146

This is particularly the case in “found-footage film,” where the archive is an important component of the film’s narrative. Roger Luckhurst proposes that when found footage is used in film, it “manipulates pre-existent materials and is therefore oriented to the past.”147 Luckhurst terms this appropriation as “refunctioning,” often achieved through montage. Fiction films appropriate other fiction films, but this can also occur in relation to factual, historical evidence. The “real” becomes manipulable, as highlighted by Veena Hariharan, as the “raw unedited archival footage” can contain the “last trace of the ‘truth,’” the “ultimate referent of the historical real.”148 Hariharan proposes that this becomes a way to link both the fictional and the non-fictional, two such examples being Schindler’s List,149 and Forrest Gump,150 where Spielberg’s and Zemeckis’ cinematographic choices evoke a “heightened sense of reality.”151 Spielberg uses black-and-white, realist cinematography in Schindler’s List, acting as a “token of authenticity” in a film that aims to be a “significant testament to the memory of the Holocaust.”152 However, in Forrest Gump, Zemeckis places fictional Forrest within real archive footage that makes clear reference to US history,
interacting with prominent figures such as Presidents Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon; in addition, “Tom Hanks’s face appears in a mock period photograph,” the “national trauma of slavery and its aftermath, for example, is evoked in the beginning of the film as the source for Forrest Gump’s name.” The latter film is more reminiscent of Ozon’s filmic choices in my view, since Ozon utilizes the footage of Ricky as part of the overall narrative, to reveal that Ricky’s wings enable him to fly. Documentary, archival footage brings to the fore the veracity of an event, and, within the diegesis of Ricky, the recording of his flight via cell phone is a way to permanently capture his hybrid, fantastic quality, with a modern twist and perhaps a cautionary tale about the brave new world we have recently entered of supersaturated visuality. This footage has a documentary function, a genre that aims to represent the historical real, yet it is this same footage that also brings into doubt whether Ricky’s condition is real; “it could be a hoax,” narrates the voice-over. Yet this act of recording is in essence a false archive, created entirely by Ozon to add an air of verisimilitude to the magical unreal qualities of the film.

One could therefore argue that Ricky is present in an almost Foucauldian sense, since Ozon’s camera does not present Ricky, but instead images of Ricky, since we are looking through a screen. It is akin to Magritte’s painting La trahison des images, where the words Ceci n’est pas une pipe are used, and “peut-être la phrase se réflère-t-elle précisément à cette pipe démesurée, flottante, idéale – simple songe ou idée d’une pipe.” Floating, bodiless words accompany the brief images of Ricky, almost leading the viewer astray, appropriating and changing the raw, untouched archival footage. As Michel Foucault proposes, words and signs create meaning, which assign this meaning in visible forms:

[S]avamment disposés sur la feuille de papier, les signes appellent, de l’extérieur, par la marge qu’ils dessinent, par la découpe de leur masse sur l’espace vide de la page, la chose même dont ils parlent. Et en retour, la forme visible est creusée par l’écriture, labourée par les mots qui la travaillent de l’intérieur, et, conjurant la

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154 See: Michel Foucault, Ceci n’est pas une pipe : Deux lettres et quatre dessins de René Magritte (Montpellier: Scholies, Fata Morgana, 1973).
155 Foucault, Ceci n’est pas une pipe, 12.
présence immobile, ambiguë, sans nom, font jaillir le réseau des significations qui la baptisent, la déterminant, la fixent dans l’univers des discours.\textsuperscript{156}

Ricky is there, but not there, so to speak. Thus, one could say that the unnamed characters in \textit{Ricky} capture Ricky’s birdlike characteristics on tape, raw and untouched, yet Ozon himself appropriates this, using it to form part of his overall narrative, placing clear and strong emphasis on the fact that Ricky is abnormal, and fantastic, perhaps even exploring the problem of truth value contained in a frame. Words, such as the anonymous voice-over, act as signifiers, indicating his presence, even though all we see on screen is images of Ricky, not Ricky in his original form, as it were.

In brief, throughout Ozon’s film, Ricky being a baby with wings is considered abnormal, an element of fantasy working as an \textit{ontological rupture} (as Fowkes would say) in the film’s otherwise quotidian, working-class setting. In the first sequence, Lisa appears to be looking at Ricky, but Ricky is not shown at all on-screen, and the extra-diegetic sounds associated with him are bodiless and de-identified. Moreover, Lisa’s look here draws clear comparisons between Ricky and birds, grounding his fantastic nature in reality. The second and third sequences bear some resemblance to \textit{Ma vie en rose}, partly because they seem to present a film within a film. Ricky is shown on screen this time, albeit briefly, and even this is done through screens within the film’s diegesis. Ricky is filmed, but the actual footage of Ricky flying is not shown until later in the film, where it has then been appropriated, both by the anonymous voice-over on the television set, and also by Ozon himself. Akin to Berliner in \textit{Ma vie en rose}, Ozon’s cinematographic choices in \textit{Ricky} also directly pertain to questions of \textit{fantasy} and \textit{realism} in film, and in a childhood context in particular.

\textsuperscript{156} Ibid., 22-23.
Chapter Four. Conclusion

This study set out to explore the nuanced relationship between fantasy and the look in Berliner’s *Ma vie en rose*, and Ozon’s *Ricky*. What I found to be particularly interesting was how these two films engage with the fantastic in a cinematic context, since a common thread that arose in analyzing these two films is the difference between looking *at* and looking *with* characters within the films’ diegeses. The fantasies in *Ma vie en rose* are, for the most part, interior, taking place solely within Ludo’s mind; they are “individual,” as Rees-Roberts puts it. Berliner creates a distinct contrast between what is inside and outside Ludo’s imagination, a world that has its own distinct character, and contains naïve, fabricated characters such as his own mental construction of “Dieu/God.” However, at the climax of the film, Berliner blurs the lines between fiction and reality, as it is unclear whose gaze is present, whether it be Ludo’s or Hanna’s. There is also a distinct contrast between what is real and fantastic in *Ricky*, with Ricky’s gradual growth of wings acting as a sort of “ontological rupture,” to quote Fowkes, within Ozon’s cinematic universe. However, unlike *Ma vie en rose*, the fantasies in *Ricky* are exterior, in that Ricky’s presence itself is the fantasy. Yet whilst Ozon raises the question of what is real and what is not, he does not leave it ambiguous like Berliner; instead, it is only ambiguous for the characters in the diegesis of the film, as we the viewer are constantly made aware that Ricky in fact has wings, and that his hybridity is in fact real.

Another similarity between *Ma vie en rose* and *Ricky* is that the presence of fantasy gives rises to films within films, a type of *mise en abyme*, so to speak. Ludo’s interior projections are types of film, his own world different to and independent from the overall cinematic universe that Berliner presents (at least, until the final sequence). This is arguably even more evident in *Ricky*, as Ricky himself is filmed, and the footage of his flight during Ozon’s own film is a “film within a film” in its most literal sense (the television is literally framed by the film’s own frame). Yet what is particularly noteworthy is that when I chose these two films, my rationale was that they portrayed pre-adolescence in a fantastic manner; it was only when I explored these two films in further detail that I realized that the “film within a film” was a very clear point of comparison, a correlation that was not my intent from the outset. This is also especially interesting, as it is generally agreed in the academic literature that film itself is fantastic, as the language of cinema dictates an artificial construct, usually with a fictional universe; even documentary film itself can
be thought of as a fabrication, an appropriation of pre-existing materials. It seems to me that fantasy is so distinct in *Ma vie en rose* and *Ricky*, that these fantasies take the form of films within films. Moreover, as evidenced literature on fantasy film, what classifies as fantasy in a cinematic context is not often clear-cut. One reason for this is that the word “fantasy” can be defined both in terms of genre and psychoanalysis. As a result, there is in my view a definite avenue for future research in this field, as it would be interesting to analyze other fantasy films, and see whether films within films (or other forms of *mise en abyme*, at the very least) are present.

Another noticeable point of comparison that I found was the source of the fantasies themselves, in that they stem from some sort of transformation. In Ludo’s mind, his transformation occurred at birth, when he was erroneously assigned a wrong set of chromosomes. He believes that he is a *garçon-fille*, a hybrid of male and female, an “error” he wants rectified so he can marry Jérôme. Ludo’s seems to mentally cross the gender barrier, as his transgender beliefs take place in the form of interior projections, that is, his “individual fantasies.” It is clear that Ludo’s thoughts exemplify an archetypal transgender identity (especially taking into consideration the definitions of Butler, Halberstam, and Stryker), but this is also outward as well, as Ludo does engage in cross-dressing in the film. Nonetheless, the vast majority of Ludo’s transformation seems to be inward, as Berliner’s cinematography focuses primarily on Ludo’s fantasies. Ricky’s transformation and hybridity is also clear, since the process of change from baby to baby-bird hybrid is a major underlying theme in the film’s narrative. Both Ludo and Ricky are hybrid in a way, but again, one is internal, while the other is distinctly external. Furthermore, it is interesting that the major focus point of the fantasy in each of the films derive from a sort of transformation taking place. To me, it seems that this is due to the fact that both *Ma vie en rose* and *Ricky* deal with childhood development within a pre-teen context. It is a point of contention whether Ludo’s development is sexual in nature, yet it is clear that growth is occurring, especially since Ludo is attempting to form a distinct gender identity, even at such a young age. Ricky, an infant, is obviously even younger, but his transformation could be read as a metaphor for sexual development, as he undergoes drastic bodily changes in such a short period of time. In my view, these similarities between *Ma vie en rose* and *Ricky* arise because both films deal with pre-pubescence, a time of growth, especially following Freud’s theories of child development.

In summary, following this analysis, it is evident that both Berliner and Ozon clearly portray the intricate relationship between the fantasy and look, within the context of pre-pubescent
childhood development. These two films, made only twelve years apart, provide an interesting comparison between inward and outward fantasies, especially taking into consideration looking with and looking at characters within the films’ diegeses. This relationship between fantasy and the look could be a possible area for future research, as it would be interesting to examine whether similar issues arise in other films, since there are a number of very clear similarities between *Ma vie en rose* and *Ricky*. Children undergo substantial transformation, and it seems to me that that the domain of fantasy is an ideal space to explore this transformation in a cinematic context.
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2003: *La maison du canal (The House by the Canal)*

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1998: *Le Mur*

1997: *Ma vie en rose (My Life in Pink)*

1993: *Rose*

1991: *Le jour du chat (Day of the Cat)*
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   1986: *Aliens*

Jean Cocteau:
   1943 (writer): *L’Éternel retour* (*The Eternal Return*)
   1946: *La Belle et la bête* (*Beauty and the Beast*)

David Cronenberg:
   1986: *The Fly*

Guy Debord:
   1973: *The Society of the Spectacle*

Jacques Demy:
   1970: *Peau d’âne* (*Donkeyskin*)

Harriet Doege and Silas Howard:
   2001: *By Hook or by Crook*

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   2005: *Caché*

Jean-Pierre Jeunet:
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Neil Jordan:
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   2004: The Case of the Grinning Cat

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1994: *Forrest Gump*