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SPEAKING THE SUBJECT: THE FILMS OF MARGUERITE DURAS AND ALAIN RESNAIS

The Ohio State University

PH.D.  1986

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SPEAKING THE SUBJECT: THE FILMS OF MARGUERITE DURAS AND ALAIN RESNAIS

DISSertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of the Ohio State University

By

Diane L. Shoos, B.A., M.A.

* * * * *

The Ohio State University
1986

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To My Parents
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is an analysis of the representation of subjectivity—the process of the construction of the subject as it is described by psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic film theory—in selected films of Marguerite Duras and Alain Resnais. As such it has two goals: The first and principal one is to consider these films in the light of a body of critical theory which to date, in the case of Resnais especially, has not been applied to them in any systematic or sustained way. Although there is a substantial amount of work on Resnais' films, the greatest concentration of articles and books in French dates from the early sixties,¹ and in English from the period of the late sixties to the mid-seventies,² before theories of subjectivity had really begun to have a significant impact on film criticism. A different kind of critical gap exists with regard to the work of Marguerite Duras: despite the fact that she has been making films since 1966, it is only within approximately the last six years that Duras has begun to receive attention as a filmmaker.³ (That there are to date few articles and no book-length studies in English on her films can perhaps be partially attributed to their poor distribution outside of France.)⁴ Much of the existing criticism dwells on Duras'
literary background, especially her association with the "nouveau roman," and consequently tends to treat her films as a simple extension or appendage to her literature. There is undoubtedly a relationship between Duras' written and cinematic texts, if only to the extent that several of the films and novels (Le Ravissement de Lol V. Stein, Le Vice-Consul, India Song, Son nom de Venise dans Calcutta désert) are drawn from the same narrative matrix--yet the films, as Elizabeth Lyon remarks, "... are not reducible simply to translations into cinematic terms of those fictions" ("The Cinema of Lol V. Stein" 7). Lyon's own article on India Song is an important contribution to Duras criticism both in its attention to the film's cinematic specificity and its foundation in Lacanian theory of the subject. This dissertation is in one sense, then, an attempt to continue and expand on the critical perspective on Duras' films initiated by Lyon's study, and to extend this perspective to Resnais' work.

In 1959 Resnais asked Duras to provide the scenario for what became the film Hiroshima mon amour. The production marked Resnais' entry into feature filmmaking (he had previously been an editor and a documentarist), and the beginning of Duras' own involvement in the cinema. The decision to consider the work of these two filmmakers here stems not so much from the coincidence of their collaboration on Hiroshima, however, as from what appears to be their common concern, as expressed in their work together and in their respective films, with questions of memory, sexual difference, language, narrative and
enunciation, questions which also inform discussions of subjectivity and/or subjectivity and representation. Since the past figures prominently in the majority of the films considered, memory serves in this study as a pivot point for the consideration of these other elements. Although memory is frequently cited as an important component of the work of both filmmakers, it is most often discussed as a "theme" or "motif"—that is, once again, without concern for its particular structure and function in the cinema.

In effect, it is the centrality of memory to the process of subjectivity in film which explains its importance to the analyses undertaken here. Memory as it materializes in dominant cinema has been tied, especially in the writing of Stephen Heath, to the "novelistic." The novelistic can be defined as the ideological category of narrative—epitomized in the nineteenth-century novel—promoting the illusion of the unified subject, an illusion played out most typically in the arena of the family:

The title of the novelistic is *Family Romance* . . . ; the problem it addresses is that of the definition of forms of individual meaning within the limits of existing social relations, the provision and maintenance of fictions of the individual; the historical reality it encounters a permanent crisis of identity that must be permanently resolved by remembering the history of the individual-subject. Narrative lays out—lays down as law—a film memory from the novelistic as the re-imaging of the individual as subject, the very representation of identity as the coherence of a past safely negotiated and reappropriated. . . . (*Questions of Cinema* 125)

Memory as it is activated by mainstream cinematic narrative functions to replay, to offer up through the processes of narrative and
spectacle, and ultimately to confirm the unity of the self; it is this function of memory with regard to subjectivity that will be tested here with reference to the films of Duras and Resnais.

The shape of this study is to a large degree determined by a perceived interface between a body of theory and a set of individual film texts. The discussions here nonetheless attempt to avoid a blanket "application" of this theory in a way which might smooth over the textual "idiosyncracies" of the films or reduce them to illustrations of a set of theoretical concepts. Rather, this study seeks to strike a balance: to both tap the recent developments in theory for what they may suggest about the films and to examine the films with an eye to the ways in which they may push beyond or elude these theoretical parameters. Another, if secondary, goal of this dissertation, then, is to contribute to the growing body of criticism engaged in a reconsideration of psychoanalytic theory and film theory from the perspective of the specifics of concrete film practice. Two assertions inform this criticism: first, that the dominant psychoanalytic models describe the construction of a certain "normative" (male) subject and thereby exclude (or dismiss as deviant) other, possible subject positions; second, that the film theory which appropriates these models inherits their biases, and, in its effort to describe the construction of subjectivity in cinema, comes dangerously close to reducing to essences both the notion of the "subject" and of the "cinema." Heath, in "The Turn of the Subject," articulates this second difficulty in the formulation of psychoanalytic film theory:
the major error of the production of the question of cinema and representation in conjunction with its appeal to the explanatory powers of psychoanalysis has been the location of a complete subject of cinema, via the description of the latter exclusively as single apparatus, instance, or whatever. Primary identification, voyeurism, and so on have entered as static and absolute determinants, without history; in every case, there is primary identification, the all-perceiving subject, the phallic look. . . . The point is not to deny these descriptions but to insist on their historicisation (and thus, in fact, on the historicisation of the concept of "subject" in the context of the terms of the engagement of subjectivity . . . ). We have to learn to understand and analyse the redistribution in specific conjunctures of the operation of the cinema, the redeployment of limits—for example, the recasting of the "all-perceiving subject" from the reality of a film practice in its material complexity, its possibility of contradictions. (45)

Implicit in Heath's remarks is the notion that much of the film theory addressing the question of subjectivity does so from the perspective of dominant cinema. The respective work of Resnais and Duras, lying, as I shall argue, to varying degrees, outside of that tradition, opens up the terms of subject production as it occurs both "inside" and "outside" the film text, both in characters and in spectators. As overlapping yet distinct instances of alternative cinema, the films of these directors, especially when considered in conjunction with, for example, feminist theory, which itself departs from dominant models, provide an opportunity to turn practice back onto theory in order to begin to interrogate its assumptions.

This study begins with an introduction to the concept of subjectivity through a discussion of the crisis in the ideology of the individual as manifested in the works of two early twentieth-century thinkers, Marcel Proust and Henri Bergson. The second chapter provides
an overview of the development of theories of the subject, from their
genesis in linguistics and semiotics to their culmination in the
formulation of Freudian and later Lacanian psychoanalysis; the final
section of this chapter examines briefly the way in which these
theories of subjectivity have been appropriated by film theory, most
notably in the work of Christian Metz. The body of the dissertation
consists of a textual analysis of *Hiroshima mon amour*, followed by
analyses of three pairs of films comprised of a work by each
filmmaker. These analyses occur in chapters which investigate
respectively the relationship of sexual difference, language,
narrative and enunciation to subjectivity and memory. This
organization reflects the comparative nature of the dissertation, but
is also, in an important sense, tentative: not only do these topics
themselves represent interconnected more than discrete categories,
each of the films could be discussed in relationship to each of the
others, and/or analyzed with respect to the other topics. If, then,
the discussions in individual chapters overlap in a way which seems to
undo the organization imposed, this is intentional. Indeed, to
consider each set of films or each element in complete isolation would
be to misconstrue and misrepresent their complex interrelation.
"Subject" and "subjectivity" are terms which have surfaced relatively recently in theoretical vocabulary. As Kaja Silverman indicates in *The Subject of Semiotics*, their emergence marks, if somewhat belatedly, the demise of a philosophical concept of the human being as stable, whole and autonomous, a concept which inheres in the term "individual." The notion of the individual finds its most complete expression in René Descartes' *Discours de la méthode* (1637) and *Méditations sur la philosophie première* (1641). The first of these works, especially, reaffirms the transcendence of "man," the existence of an eternal and immutable human essence. Descartes' familiar assertion "Je pense donc je suis" includes several significant assumptions which inform what has come to be known as the humanist tradition: first, man is ultimately immune to the limitations that the material world and other human beings might place on him—his core exists apart from culture, history and discourse; second, man's being is coherent and completely accessible to cognition; in other words, there is no part of the self which remains irrevocably hidden from consciousness, and man, through reason, is capable of complete self-knowledge.
Most of the developments in late nineteenth/early twentieth-century philosophy, ethnology, linguistics, psychology and art can be seen as in some way responding to, or, more accurately, as challenging the assumptions of the humanist tradition which is given such a compelling voice in Descartes' writings. The turn of the century, that is, witnessed a crisis in the idea of the individual. In psychoanalysis this crisis takes the form of Freud's "discovery" of the unconscious and its implication of a split self not subject to laws of coherence. This divided identity could not be dismissed as purely theoretical, since, as Freud demonstrated, it had a clinical profile: the unconscious persistently made its presence known through neuroses, dreams, jokes, and slips of the tongue. With the questioning of the stability and wholeness of the self, the unity and coherence of everything that was thought to emanate from it—language, memory, even gestures—is likewise called into question. Gradually impinging on the idea of the individual is a conception of the self as decentered and mutable, a product rather than a producer of signification.

The literature of Marcel Proust and the philosophical writings of Henri Bergson, appearing as they did around the turn of the century (Proust began writing the first volume of *À la Recherche du temps perdu* in 1909, and Bergson's *Matière et mémoire* was published in 1896) were at once manifestations of this crisis of the individual and responses to it. Both writers were engaged in a struggle to describe, define and comprehend consciousness and experience in the
kaleidoscopic light of a decentered self. Although the theories of
the two writers were and still are often proclaimed to be parallel,
they in fact, as Joyce Megay has so thoroughly and clearly
demonstrated in her study Bergson et Proust, embody two opposing
perspectives. Both Proust and Bergson merit consideration within this
discussion of the development of theories of subjectivity because of
the importance of memory and language to the formulation of their
respective philosophies of the self. Their work is also particularly
relevant to an examination of subjectivity in film because of the
relationship, either explicit or implicit, in their texts between
metaphors of the self and the cinema. Drawing on Megay's analysis, I
will outline Proust and Bergson's respective theories in order to
elucidate their status as what might be called "threshold"
discourse—that is, as texts which, in distinct and nonetheless
related ways, attempt to reconcile the notions behind the terms
individual and subject. Finally, I will discuss the place of the
cinema in these texts, and consider briefly the way in which they
articulate the tensions which structure film theory and practice.

At the center of a Proustian philosophy of memory and identity is
a conception of time as discontinuous and fragmented, a series of
moments comprising temporal planes which are distinct and static and
without communication—"comme s'il y avait dans le temps des séries
différentes et parallèles—sans solution de continuité . . ." (qtd. in
Megay 56)—and yet which somehow, mysteriously, progress one to
another. The Recherche is replete with imagery which alludes to this
temporal isolation. In *Le Temps retrouvé* the narrator observes, "... le geste, l'acte le plus simple, reste enfermé comme dans mille vases clos dont chacun serait rempli de choses d'une couleur, d'une odeur, d'une température absolument différentes ..." (qtd. in Megay 57). As these passages aptly demonstrate, Proustian time is frequently conceived of and expressed in spatial terms; it takes on the character of a substance which can be isolated, immobilized and made visible. Ultimately, as many critics have noted, the temporal and the spatial become interchangeable for Proust, so that time "materializes" into, in essence, the fourth dimension of space.

As the image of the "vase clos" suggests, a fundamental component of Proustian time is forgetting. Paradoxically, it is in fact precisely this aspect of time, oubli, which makes possible the moment of the mémoire involontaire—a sudden eruption of the past into the present, brought on by a material object which provokes a sensation identical to one previously experienced. Megay notes of the famous episode of the madeleine that, whereas the familiar sight of the cake does not succeed in eliciting the past (the narrator has seen the scalloped shape many times since the days at Combray), its forgotten taste has the power to call forth an entire childhood:

>C'est parce qu'il [le narrateur] n'en avait pas mangé depuis son enfance, que le goût de la madeleine pouvait porter "l'édifice immense du souvenir." Seule, en effet, la distance permet au souvenir de garder sa date et d'être retrouvé intact. . . . (94)
For the author of the *Recherche*, the relationship between memory and forgetting is one of reciprocity as well as opposition.

The image of the sealed vase epitomizes not only Proust's notion of lived time as disjunct, of duration as distance, but also of identity as fragmented and multiple, so that past others and selves alike are often unrecognizable to a present self. At the end of *Le Temps retrouvé* Gilberte introduces her daughter to the narrator, who consequently experiences a sudden, intense awareness of how much he himself has aged: "Ainsi, chaque individu . . . mesurait pour moi la durée par la révolution qu'il avait accomplie non seulement autour de soi-même, mais autour des autres, et notamment par les positions qu'il avait occupées successivement par rapport à moi" (qtd. in Megay 55).

Similarly, upon being reunited with other old acquaintances whom he has not seen for many years, the narrator finds that "pour les identifier à celui qu'on avait connu, il fallait lire sur plusieurs plans à la fois, situés derrière elles et qui leur donnaient de la profondeur . . . on était obligé de les regarder, en même temps qu'avec les yeux, avec la mémoire" (qtd. in Megay 63).

Both the "moi superficiel"—Proust's term for what might be called the social self—and the "moi profond"—the interior self, either conscious or unconscious—are subject to the same law of discontinuity, which is, for Proust, what makes human subjectivity tragic. Proust nonetheless affirms the existence of—or, at the very least, the potential for—a "moi permanent, qui se prolonge pendant toute la durée de notre vie" (qtd. in Megay 104). This unified self is
not, however, simply the sum of all of the successive selves, but an extratemporal being, created to "jouir de l'essence des choses" (qtd. in Megay 104). For Proust the "jouissance" of the essence of things is inseparable from the recognition of one's own essence: it is due to the capricious miracle of the mémoire involontaire that the mind can grasp, by means of the analogy of two identical sensations, the common core of a past self and a present self.

The celebrated mémoire involontaire is thus the mainspring of Proustian time in that it establishes the possibility of repetition, which in turn leads to the discovery of general laws or principles of the self and enables the reconstitution of the "moi permanent." It is important to note that such a reconstitution takes place outside of the temporal flow, in an atemporal experience. The phenomenon of involuntary memory cannot thereby be defined, as it so often has, as a simple fusion of past and present. As Roger Shattuck writes in Proust's Binoculars:

A mere succession of images, unequally retained and seen without uniform clarity, produces an effect of "volume,"... But a fuller grasp of the object comes only when all images, including the closest, have been brought to rest "on a uniform plane"—just as two stereopticon views must be equidistant from our eyes. The act of ultimate recognition removes all images from the stream of time to set them up temporally equidistant in Time, equally available to our consciousness. And then we are no longer pinned to the present looking backwards, we are no longer bathed helplessly in the Heraclitean flux or the Bergsonian durée. The act of involuntary memory, fleetingly, and the act of recognition more permanently, wrench themselves free of clock time to find a perspective vast enough to hold all our experience. (48)
What is most valuable in Shattuck's discussion is the association of the process of involuntary memory with the operation of the stereoscope. Just as this optical instrument functions according to a principle of simultaneity, involuntary memory, rather than representing an instance of the perfect amalgam of past and present, involves a kind of "double vision" which operates outside of a temporal framework.

Although the Proustian quest for "truth" commences in the chance occurrence of involuntary memory, its culmination is a deliberate, concerted effort to escape the contingencies of time. Megay outlines the chronology of the process when she notes, "C'est en le retrouvant dans la résurrection de la mémoire involontaire que l'instant prend toute sa valeur; il est maintenant immobilisé, affranchi de l'ordre du temps, et pourra être fixé d'une manière permanante dans une oeuvre d'art" (69). Clearly the principle realization of the narrator of the Recherche is that it is finally only through art that the split self can be mended and its essential unity discovered. The importance of this final step—an aesthetic rendering of the experience first resurrected by involuntary memory—and the role of the intellect in this process cannot be overestimated. Georges Poulet observes, "... tout finalement dépend d'une mémoire qui n'est nullement la mémoire involontaire: mémoire de l'oeuvre totale, mémoire elle-même totale, qui conserve et reproduit l'ensemble des épisodes" (qtd. in Megay 92). Voluntary memory and the intellectual struggle of the artist are as important as involuntary memory to the discovery of the
unitary self. Megay corroborates Poulet's thought on another level when she points out that certainly the complex structure of the Recherche itself is accessible only to those careful readers who strive to remember apparently insignificant details which will later be of capital importance (92).

For Proust, memory is the springboard of a potential escape from time, that is, of transcendence, accompanied by the revelation of the unity of the self. It is nevertheless undeniable, given the infrequency of involuntary memory, that the predominant experience of the past, time and the self is one of discontinuity and flux. Proust's attitude to lived time is therefore of necessity fundamentally antagonistic: the always deceptive present is too ephemeral and tied to the material; the future permits the hope of a new life and a temporary evasion of the present but is followed inevitably by disillusionment; the past has no value in and of itself. As Megay notes, "Si, à la premiere vue, Proust semble se complaire dans la contemplation du passé, c'est seulement parce que le passé l'assure de la permanence du moi" (73). In a Proustian perspective, then, memory is, ideally, at the service of the abolition of time.

Early Proust criticism saw the Recherche as a literary demonstration of the philosophy of Henri Bergson, although Proust himself denied the connection and his correspondence and notes offer no evidence of any direct influence. As Megay indicates, it is not until the forties and fifties that critics and theorists—most notably
René Etiemble, Henri Bonnet, and Georges Poulet—begin to discern the crucial differences between Proust's and Bergson's visions of time, memory, and the self. Whereas for Proust, time is an enemy whose flow must be arrested, for Bergson time has a unique value stemming from its very fluidity and irreversibility. Whereas the Proustian duration is a kind of discontinuous vide, the Bergsonian durée is a perpetual fullness, a plenitude in which the past, present and future continuously permeate each other. Correspondingly, Bergson's conception of the self is, in contrast to Proust's, that of an indivisible, unchecked flow of consciousness which belies the possibility of the instant.

At the root of Bergsonian philosophy is a critique of the artificial and habitual tendency of the intellect to spatialize, and so to fragment time, and, similarly, in the process of perception, to arrest movement. Neither immobility nor homogeneity are, according to Bergson, inherent properties of things; nor are they des conditions essentielles de notre faculté de les connaître: ils expriment, sous une forme abstraite, le double travail de solidification et de division que nous faisons subir à la continuité mouvante du réel pour nous y assurer des points d'appuis. ... ce sont les schèmes de notre action sur la matière. (qtd. in Megay 53)

While acknowledging the possible usefulness to science and mathematics of such linear, homogeneous conceptions of time and movement, Bergson unconditionally refutes the appropriateness of this model to human consciousness, which is of an entirely different order.
For Bergson, consciousness is equal to lived duration, which, he insists, defies analytical description but that he attempts to convey through numerous images. Each of these addresses a facet of the notion of durée, without, however subsuming the notion. Duration’s continual flow, for instance, is evoked in the comparison to "le déroulement d’un rouleau," or an "enroulement continu, comme celui d’un fil sur une pelote" (qtd. in Megay 53), the latter image more closely approximating the idea of an entire past which continually accompanies us. To convey the indivisibility of durée, Bergson constructs a similar but more detailed image:

... un élastique infiniment petit, contracté ... en un point mathématique. Tirons-le progressivement de manière à faire sortir du point une ligne qui ira toujours s'agrandissant. Fixons notre attention, non pas sur la ligne en tant que ligne, mais sur l’action qui la trace. (qtd. in Megay 53)

Duration is also compared to, "une phrase musicale qui serait toujours sur le point de finir et sans cesse se modifierait dans sa totalité par l'addition de quelque note nouvelle" (qtd. in Megay 52). As Megay is quick to point out, the key word in this analogy is "totalité": it is only our habits of perception which persist in separating out the "note nouvelle" from the indivisible melody of our consciousness which continues to evolve (52). It is apparent that multiplicity and perpetual change are for Bergson in no way incompatible with unity. This means that in the end images (and, as I will discuss later, all language) are inadequate to communicate the essence of duration,
since, as Bergson notes, "aucune métaphore ne peut rendre un des deux aspects sans sacrifier l'autre" (qtd. in Megay 53).

Memory figures prominently in Bergson's formulations of duration and subjectivity. Although some Bergsonian concepts of memory intersect with Proustian ones, these similarities are less important than the radically different function assigned to memory by the philosopher. Rather than employing memory to arrest time with the intention of freeing oneself from it, Bergson advocates using experiences of "pure memory" (where the past is remembered imaginatively and re-created) to direct "motor mechanism" or habit memory so that we can perceive or, better yet, "intuit" life as a continuous process of becoming in time. Again it is clear that, just as multiplicity is not incompatible with unity, memory is not hostile to liberty or creativity—there is no hint, as there is in Proust's formulation of subjectivity, of a kind of determinism. It is equally apparent that oubli, so crucial to the Proustian schema of memory, has no place in a Bergsonian one; as Megay remarks, for Bergson, "tout change mais rien ne se perd; il s'agit, en effet d'un changement 'toujours s'adhérant à lui-même dans une durée qui s'allonge sans fin!'" (106). Repetition, in the strict sense, is as improbable as forgetting: Bergson affirms, "Notre personnalité change sans cesse. En changeant, elle empêche un état, fût-il identique à lui-même en surface, de se répéter jamais en profondeur" (qtd. in Megay 108). The experience of mémoire involontaire as it is formulated by Proust—or, at the very least, its causes and consequences—is thereby an
impossibility in Bergson's philosophy. Despite his conviction that duration cannot be portrayed, Bergson supplies an image that communicates quite effectively the heterogeneous accumulation of memory in duration: "Mon état d'âme, en avançant sur la route du temps, s'enfle continuellement de la durée qu'il ramasse; il fait, pour ainsi dire, boule de neige avec lui-même" (qtd. in Megay 106).

The difficulty of defining duration, the necessity in fact for constantly evolving and mutually correcting definitions, points not only to the complexity of the concept but to the limitations, for Bergson, of two faculties which are of considerable import to Proust—intelligence and language. Intelligence is unable to represent "la continuité vraie, la mobilité réelle, la compénétration réciproque, et . . . cette évolution créatrice qui est la vie" (qtd. in Megay 115). It is true that for Proust as well as Bergson, sensation or concrete experience provides the point of departure for the discovery of the unified self, yet for Proust, unlike Bergson, this empirical data must be analyzed or "interpreted" by the intellect. And if such data is intelligible, comprehensible, then it can and must be fixed in language. Proust's faith in the ability of poetic language to express essence (if he has reservations, they apply only to ordinary or habitual language) is evident from the Recherche: it is no accident that the resolution of the narrative is the promise of the creation of a text, a promise whose fulfillment is implicit in the existence of the Recherche itself. For Proust, everything moves
towards and culminates in the work of art, which is the revelation of the *moi permanent*.

For Bergson, on the other hand, it is language which "écrase ou tout au moins recouvre les impressions délicates et fugitives de notre conscience individuelle" (qtd. in Megay 99). Language—both everyday and poetic—immobilizes and is therefore profoundly unsuited to expressing the fluidity and heterogeneity which are the essence of duration, and of the self. Henri Bonnet summarizes the divergent attitudes of Bergson and Proust: "... le moi profond du premier est le moi non déformé par l'expression et irréductible au langage. Il tend à l'inconscience. Au contraire pour le second ... le moi profond n'est nullement réfractaire à l'expression" (qtd. in Megay 101). For Bergson intuition supersedes intelligence as the paramount human faculty. Intuition alone permits an "understanding" of the participation of all things, even material ones, in spirituality; it facilitates an awareness of difference, of uniqueness, which, more than resemblance, is the sign of essence; finally, it not only leads to the recognition of the heterogeneous unity of time and consciousness, but actually enables us to experience it. For Bergson, if we make use of intuition, there is no Proustian split between the self as it is lived and as it exists ideally or essentially, for the two are one and the same.

These brief summaries reveal the tensions within both Proust's and Bergson's thought. Their respective texts can be seen as instances of "threshold" discourse in the sense that they acknowledge
the threat of the subject—the possibility that, on some level, the self is not coherent, whole, or stable—while at the same time adhering to the ideology of the individual: in the end, both reaffirm the existence of a human essence and assert the unity of the self. For Proust, however, this unity is not immediately apparent or accessible; it is hidden by the discontinuous experience of time and memory and, furthermore, can be uncovered only through involuntary memory and poetic language. Attainment of this essence, in other words, depends to a large degree on chance and the fluctuations of artistic creation. The Bergsonian self also admits to instability and fragmentation, but in a more disguised way. For Bergson, the moi profond is not outside or even in duration or time, but is duration itself. Bergson thus redefines the concept of unity, and thereby of the human essence, to include heterogeneity and mobility. While not to be dismissed as a kind of semantic equivocation, his philosophy nonetheless bears the marks of an incredible effort of accommodation—one which does not, however, take him completely outside of the conceptual bounds of the ideology of the individual.

Both Proust and Bergson, then, can be seen as on the verge of a radical assertion of the dissolution of the individual, an assertion from which they ultimately back away. Given the affirmation of a human essence, the most obvious remnant in their thought of the ideology of the individual is the assumption of the existence of a boundary between discourse and the self. Despite the fact that for Proust language is essential to the discovery of the unity of memory
and being, while for Bergson it artificially fragments and
dissimulates that unity, it is clear that both writers conceive of
language as a human capacity, an instrument (to be manipulated or
not), autonomous from the self as the self is from it. Proust and
Bergson thus remain at a distance from the concept of subjectivity
through their implicit refusal of its defining principle: the notion
that the self is formed in and through—indeed has no existence
outside of—discourse.

Proust, Bergson and the Cinema

If in a summary of the work of Proust and Bergson there appear to
be many cinematic "motifs"—some of Bergson's images, especially,
bring to mind the material process of film—determining the
implications of these motifs is more difficult than might be presumed,
and is in fact greatly complicated by the views the writers themselves
formulated about the then nascent medium. As Gilles Deleuze
demonstrates in L'Image-mouvement, the case of Bergson is particularly
complex because of the place cinema holds within his thought. In
L'Evolution créatrice, in the course of the presentation of the first
of his three theses on movement, Bergson describes what he terms
"l'illusion cinématographique." In this process, "coupes
instantanées" or images are paired with an abstract, uniform time
which is "in" the apparatus and "with" which the images are joined. This cinematographic procedure is denounced as "false" by Bergson, since it confuses movement, and so attempts to reconstitute it, with the space traversed. Bergson identifies this illusion as that of natural perception as well as, of course, intelligence and language:

Nous prenons des vues quasi instantanées sur la réalité qui passe, et comme elles sont caractéristiques de cette réalité, il nous suffit de les enfiler le long d'un devenir abstrait, uniforme, invisible, situé au fond de l'appareil de la connaissance... Perception, intellection, langage procèdent en général ainsi. Qu'il s'agisse de penser le devenir, ou de l'exprimer, ou même de le percevoir, nous ne faisons guère autre chose qu'actionner une espèce de cinématographe intérieur. (qtd. in Deleuze 10)

As Deleuze remarks, the weak point in Bergson's analysis of the cinema is that he assumes the artificiality of cinematic effect from the artificiality of its means or process. As a corrective to Bergson, Deleuze reiterates a well-established tenet of film theory—that the cinematic illusion cannot be reduced to the sum of its parts:

Le cinéma procède avec des photogrammes, c'est-à-dire avec des coupes immobiles, vingt-quatre images/seconde (ou dix-huit au début). Mais ce qu'il nous donne, on l'a souvent remarqué, ce n'est pas le photogramme, c'est une image moyenne à laquelle le mouvement ne s'ajoute pas, ne s'additionne pas: le mouvement appartient au contraire à l'image moyenne comme donnée immédiate... Bref, le cinéma ne nous donne pas une image à laquelle il ajouterait du mouvement, il nous donne immédiatement une image-mouvement. Il nous donne bien une coupe, mais une coupe mobile, et non pas une coupe immobile + du mouvement abstrait. (11)

Deleuze goes on to observe that Bergson had already "discovered" the existence of the "coupe mobile" and the "image-mouvement" in the first
chapter of Matière et mémoire, written in 1896, ten years before the passage on the cinematic illusion found in L’Évolution créatrice. According to Deleuze, if Bergson failed to recognize these phenomena in their cinematic incarnations it was due to the fact that primitive cinema, with its fixed point of view and static shots, gave little indication of the full possibilities of the medium, which became evident later with the advent of montage, a mobile camera, and the emancipation of camera point of view from that of projection.

Passing over what he considers to be Bergson’s premature categorization of film, Deleuze considers another thesis from L’Évolution créatrice, wherein movement as a "coupe mobile" is designated as a subset of duration, that is of a whole, and can thereby be seen to express change in duration or a whole. This Bergsonian concept of "tout" is to be distinguished from other philosophical uses of the term:

... quand Bergson compare le vivant à un tout, ou au tout de l'univers, il semble reprendre la plus vieille comparaison. Et pourtant il en renverse complètement les termes. Car si le vivant est un tout, donc assimilable au tout de l'univers, ce n'est pas en tant qu'il serait un microcosme aussi fermé que le tout est supposé l'être, c'est au contraire en tant qu'il est ouvert sur un monde, et que le monde, l'univers, est lui-même l'Ouvert. (20)

Deleuze notes that it is also to be distinguished from a closed system or "ensemble clos":

C'est que l'organisation de la matière rend possible les systèmes clos ou les ensembles déterminés de parties; et le déploiement de l'espace les rend nécessaires. Mais, précisément, les ensembles sont dans l'espace, et le tout, les
touts sont dans la durée, sont la durée même en tant qu'elle ne cesse pas de changer. (21)

Deleuze specifies that "tout" can only be defined by relation, which is not a property of things, but always exterior to them, always spiritual or mental.

From his investigation of these Bergsonian concepts Deleuze himself concludes that movement has two sides: it passes between objects and parts, but also expresses duration or "tout," and permits an interpenetration of one in the other:

On dira donc que le mouvement rapporte les objets d'un système clos à la durée ouverte, et la durée aux objets du système qu'elle force à s'ouvrir. Le mouvement rapporte les objets entre lesquels il s'établit au tout changeant qu'il exprime, et inversement. Par le mouvement, le tout se divise dans les objets, et les objets se réunissent dans le tout; et, entre les deux justement, "tout" change. (22)

Deleuze sees these concepts as the logical development of Bergson's original thesis of *Matière et mémoire* and concludes that there are not only "images instantanées" or "coupes immobiles du mouvement," but also "des images-mouvements" which are "des coupes mobiles de la durée," and finally "images-durée" or "images-temps," which are beyond movement itself. From these designations Deleuze undertakes a classification or taxonomy of cinema images.

Since Deleuze addresses purely formal categories of perception outside of their relationship to memory and subjectivity, his application of Bergsonian theory to the cinema is in the final analysis less pertinent to this discussion than are Bergson's theories themselves. As Deleuze himself suggests, duration is the Bergsonian
idea that is particularly relevant to the cinema—the concept which, in its seemingly contradictory pairing of multiplicity and change (or "l'ouvert") with unity (or "tout"), is unique to Bergson's thought and most clearly opposes it to Proust's.

The relationship of Proust's ideas to the cinema is equally if not more problematic than Bergson's. The impetus behind at least one of the references to the cinema in the Recherche is a refutation of the purported connection between the novel and the cinematic process: "Quelques-uns voulaient que le roman fût une sorte de défilé cinématographique des choses. Cette conception était absurde. Rien ne s'éloigne plus de ce que nous avons perçu en réalité qu'une telle vue cinématographique" (3: 882-83). Despite Proust's assertion here, film theory has established that the connections between the novel and the cinema are not only many but significant: Briefly stated, both have been, from their inception, predominantly narrative forms, that is, means of storytelling. Moreover, many cinematic techniques, such as camera position as point of view and editing as a way of manipulating time, correspond to literary devices. Perhaps most importantly, dominant cinema has been described as the twentieth-century successor to the nineteenth-century novel in terms of the production and reproduction of the "novelistic," the ideological function of narrative whose primary operations include, as already noted, "the re-imaging of the individual as subject, the representation of identity as the coherence of a past safely negotiated and reappropriated" (Heath, Questions of Cinema 125). A
central concern of the narrative arts of both film and the novel is thus the confirmation of unified subjectivity through the tracing or remembering of the history of the individual.

That Proust's own novel does in fact have certain ties to the cinema is suggested not only by the historical coincidence of the two—both the Recherche and the cinema were taking shape as narrative structures in the early part of the century—but also in part by the prevalence in the Recherche of optical figures, a phenomenon analyzed in depth by Roger Shattuck in Proust's Binoculars. Interestingly, not only are some of these figures direct precursors of the cinema, but, in addition, in many cases Proust's prose associates them directly with narrative. The famous magic lantern is a case in point: the progression of lantern slides is the visualization of the story of Geneviève de Brabant and Golo, and is described as accompanied by a text read aloud by Marcel's great aunt. Even more significant in light of this discussion is the fact that the narrative of the magic lantern will ultimately reflect on the self:

Et dès qu'on sonnait le dîner, j'avais hâte de courir à la salle à manger où la grosse lampe de la suspension, ignorant de Golo et de Sarbe-Bleue, et qui connaissait mes parents et le boeuf à la casserole, donnait sa lumière de tous les soirs, et de tomber dans les bras de maman que les malheurs de Geneviève de Brabant me rendaient plus chère, tandis que les crimes de Golo me faisaient examiner ma propre conscience avec plus de scrupules. (1: 10)

Later references in the Recherche suggest that Proust's denial of any connection between the cinema and the novel stems from his equation of cinematic vision with a continuous vision of habit which
is inherently incapable of capturing essence; the narrator observes, for example (using a by now familiar metaphor):

Une heure n'est pas qu'une heure, c'est un vase rempli de parfums, de sons, de projets et de climats. Ce que nous appelons la réalité est un certain rapport entre ces sensations et ces souvenirs qui nous entourent simultanément—rapport que supprime une simple vision cinématographique, laquelle s'éloigne par là d'autant plus du vrai qu'elle prétend se borner à lui . . . . (3: 889).

Despite such assertions, several details of description in the Recherche work against the very notions of continuity and regularity or habitude that Proust associates with the film medium. In the passage on the magic lantern, for instance, the narrator comments almost immediately on the unsettling effect of the projections:

"... Mais ma tristesse n'en était qu'accrue, parce que rien que le changement d'éclairage détruisait l'habitude que j'avais de ma chambre. . . ." (1: 9) Later he describes at length how the projected figures take on the shapes of the background objects of the bedroom in a chameleon-like fashion which renders the room uncomfortably unfamiliar or "other":

... Mais je ne peux dire quel malaise me causait pourtant cette intrusion du mystère et de la beauté dans une chambre que j'avais fini par remplir de mon moi au point de ne pas faire plus attention à elle qu'à lui-même. L'influence anesthésiante de l'habitude ayant cessé, je me mettais à penser, à sentir, choses si tristes. Ce bouton de la porte de ma chambre, qui différait pour moi de tous les autres boutons de porte du monde en ceci qu'il semblait ouvrir tout seul, sans que j'eusse besoin de le tourner, tant le maniement m'en était devenu inconscient, le voilà qui servait maintenant de corps astral à Golo. (1: 10)

Not only is the impression of "habit" strongly refuted by the magic
lantern's ability to "make strange," but there is again a hint that the transformations effected by the magic lantern have implications for the stability of the self. In addition, earlier in the passage the narrator comments specifically that the edges of the lantern slides are visible—a phenomenon which appears to break the illusion of reality and call his attention to the process of projection: "Ce château était coupé selon une ligne courbe qui n'était autre que la limite d'un des ovales de verre ménagés dans le châssis qu'on glissait entre les coulisses de la lanterne..." (1:9). Thus a close examination of the passage reveals that it undermines the author's own definition of cinématographique as a continuous vision of habit, relaying instead a vision in which discontinuity and defamiliarization are prominent. (The description of the magic lantern is, moreover, certainly no less intriguing for the fact that it inadvertently deconstructs the cinematic image by pointing to the fragmentation behind the deceptive flow of continuous reality on the cinema screen.)

That the magic lantern is the very first extended or "complete" memory of the Recherche suggests a strong link between the two, and in fact the figure of the magic lantern may be seen as representative of Proust's conception of the process of memory. In the text the occurrences of mémoire involontaire have the "pas saccadé" of Golo's horse. Memory is a succession of fragments, of achronological instants; its rhythm is reflected in the textual process of the Recherche itself, which demands that the reader confront the
narrator's experience of discontinuous time rather than being the passive consumer of a smooth, chronologically-ordered retrospective.

In general it seems clear, despite Proust's own statements about the cinema, that there is a direct correspondence between the novelist's conception of the self as it is lived in time, the experience of memory, and the representations of cinematic process in the Recherche: all, in effect, are characterized by disjunction and discontinuity. Thus, although in Proust's writing the cinema is associated more directly with memory and the self, there are important analogies between cinema as a system of representation and the philosophies of both Proust and Bergson: not only does the informing principle of each philosophy coincide with a fundamental aspect of film—Proust's with its discontinuity and fragmentation and Bergson's with its continuity and heterogeneous unity—but, as we will see, these principles in turn enter into the ideological operations which, according to psychoanalytic film theory, inform the construction of the subject in the cinema.
NOTES

1 The major studies in French published at this time include Bernard Pingaud's *Alain Resnais* (1961) and Gaston Bounoure's *Alain Resnais* (1962).

2 The major studies in English published during this period are Roy Armes' *The Cinema of Alain Resnais* (1968), John Ward's *Alain Resnais or the Theme of Time* (1968), and John Kreidl's *Alain Resnais* (1977).

3 Major recent articles on Duras' films include Marie-Claire Ropars-Wuilleumier's "La Mort des miroirs: India Song, Son nom de Venise dans Calcutta désert" in *Avant-scène du cinéma* 225 (1979) and "The Disembodied Voice (India Song)" in *Yale French Studies* 60 (1980), and Elisabeth Lyon's "The Cinema of Lol V. Stein" in *Camera Obscura* 6 (1980); an important but less recent publication is the collection of articles and notes by Duras herself, Maurice Blanchot, Jacques Lacan and others entitled *Marguerite Duras* (Albatros, 1975).

4 During the time this study was written, the only films by Duras in distribution in the United States were *Détruire, dit-elle*, Nathalie Granger, *India Song*, and *Aurélie Steiner*. By contrast, the only films by Resnais not in distribution here (resulting, unfortunately, in their exclusion from this analysis) were *La Guerre est finie* and *Je t'aime je t'aime*.

5 Representative of this tendency in Duras criticism is John Michalczyszuk's *The French Literary Filmmakers* (1980) and the chapter on Duras' films in Alfred Cismaru's *Marguerite Duras* (1971).

6 Even as a documentary filmmaker during the years 1948-1958, Resnais frequently solicited original scripts from published writers: Jean Cayrol wrote the commentary for *Nuit et Brouillard* (1955), Raymond Queneau the text for *Le Chant du Styrène* (1958), and a text by Paul Eluard is used in *Guernica* (1950).


8 I am grateful to Renée Kingcaid for suggesting this term to me.
CHAPTER II
THEORIES OF THE SUBJECT

The preceding introduction outlined a crisis in the ideology of the individual in order to provide a context for a discussion of the subject. In The Subject of Semiotics Kaja Silverman proposes a definition of subjectivity which elucidates its radical opposition to the concept of the individual:

The term "subject" foregrounds the relationship between ethnology, psychoanalysis, and semiotics. It helps us to conceive of human reality as a construction, as the product of signifying activities which are both culturally specific and generally unconscious. The category of the subject thus calls into question the notions both of the private, and of a self synonymous with consciousness. It suggests that even desire is culturally instigated, and hence collective; and it de-centers consciousness, relegating it . . . to a purely receptive capacity. Finally, by drawing attention to the divisions which separate one area of psychic activity from another, the term "subject" challenges the value of stability attributed to the individual. (130)

The salient characteristics of the subject, then--those interwoven traits which distinguish it from the tradition of the individual--are its position as a construction of signification, of culture and, most importantly, of the unconscious.

The fact that the notion of the subject arises gradually under the auspices of several disciplines makes even a general description of its
history a difficult task. The *Subject of Semiotics* gives a comprehensive account of the concept of subjectivity as it evolves across linguistics, semiotics and psychoanalysis. Even more important than this summary of a whole generation of thought is Silverman's discussion of its application to, as well as its further implications for, the cinema. The double perspective of Silverman's work makes it invaluable to this study. Although it is not my intention here to duplicate Silverman's analysis, there are moments in the history of subjectivity which are central to the consideration of the question of the subject in the films of Resnais and Duras. The following discussion, while by no means exhaustive, draws on *The Subject of Semiotics* in an effort to trace the conceptual threads leading to the primary theories of subjectivity.¹

A major premise of the *The Subject of Semiotics* is that signification and subjectivity are inextricably bound up with one another. Silverman also makes it clear that, from a theoretical standpoint, signification precedes subjectivity—that is, that the subject derives from, is an effect of, the sign—and that the evolution of semiotic theory reflects this "secondary" status of the subject. The revisionist nature of such a theoretical chronology can be understood only in the context of an anthropocentric humanist tradition of the individual as a pre-existent producer and manipulator of language, a language which in turn transparently reflects real objects, things "as they really are." The work of Ferdinand de Saussure, the linguist who conceived of and initiated the science of semiotics, is
radical precisely by virtue of both its insistence on the arbitrary nature of the sign and its de-emphasis of the human part in signification. For Saussure, for example, langue is a more appropriate object of study than parole; hence his account of language privileges its status as an abstract system which is larger than the individual over its complementary position as the sum total of all individual discursive instances.

The genesis of a theory of signification is thus accompanied by the marginalization of a certain conception of the human element, the ideology of the individual. Semiotic theory gradually reinstates this same human element, but in a scarcely recognizable, because vastly restructured, form. Charles Sanders Peirce's theory of the sign, for instance, departs from Saussure's not only in its elaboration of motivated signs but also, more importantly, in its description of a chain of signification initiated by the sign and played out within human consciousness:

A sign . . . is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. It addresses somebody, that is, creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign. That sign which it creates I call the interpretant of the first sign. The sign stands for something, its object. (qtd. in Silverman 14)

According to Peirce, then, human beings, although they by no means absolutely control "meaning," act as points of relay for the successive—and in a sense infinite—representations generated by signification. In Silverman's words, "Peirce reminds us that the
connections which are productive of meaning can only be made in the mind of the subject . . . " (19).

Hence the Peircean scheme re-establishes the importance of human cognition in the signifying process. Yet Peirce takes another, even more significant step, one which completely and unquestionably divorces the human being as described here from the humanist tradition of the individual: he identifies the subject itself as a sign, as the result of signification:

... the word or sign which man uses is the man himself. ... the fact that every thought is a sign, taken in conjunction with the fact that life is a train of thought, proves that man is a sign. ... the man and the ... sign are identical. ...
Thus my language is the sum total of myself; for the man is the thought. (qtd. in Silverman 18)

It is in this manner that Peirce resurrects the human being as an important factor in language while simultaneously designating that human being as a mere product of language, another signifier in an endless network of signifiers which are our only link to ourselves or to others. Silverman notes, "The point upon which Peirce ... insists is that our access to and knowledge of ourselves is subject to the same semiotic restrictions as our access to and knowledge of the external world" (18). In other words, from Peirce's perspective, human consciousness cannot escape signification as the prime condition of self-cognition. This idea is later echoed in Lacan's statement, "A signifier is that which represents a subject for another signifier" (qtd. in Silverman 18).
The theories of contemporary French linguist Emile Benveniste give the interrelationship of language and the subject its strongest articulation within semiotics. In an article entitled "Subjectivity in Language," Benveniste analyzes the implications of pronouns as signifiers that resist anything more than the briefest alignment with individual signifieds:

The "I," then does not denominate any lexical entity. . . . We are in the presence of a class of words, the "personal pronouns," that escape the status of all the other signs of language. Then, what does I refer to? To something very peculiar which is exclusively linguistic; I refers to the act of individual discourse in which it is pronounced, and by this it designates the speaker. It is a term that cannot be identified except in what we have called elsewhere an instance of discourse and that has only a momentary reference. The reality to which it refers is the reality of the discourse. . . . And so it is literally true that the basis of subjectivity is in the exercise of language. (qtd. in Silverman 44-45)

Since Benveniste's comments elaborate on the nature and consequences of the tie between subjectivity and language, they are worth examining in some detail. Benveniste begins by rejecting the priority Saussure assigns to langue, and focuses his attention on discourse or parole. Next, he asserts the dependence of one signifier on another for meaning and locates the construction of subjectivity within the binary opposition of the discursive paradigm of "I" and "you." Benveniste then demonstrates the instability of the personal pronouns, the fluidity of the relationship between signifier and signified. Finally, Benveniste attributes this same fluidity to subjectivity, which, since it is activated in the exchange of language, also partakes, as Silverman notes, in its momentariness:
In the space between two discursive events, subjectivity, like the pronouns which sustain it, falls into abeyance. Benveniste emphasizes the radical discontinuity which characterizes the condition of subjectivity, its constant stops and starts. (45)

Benveniste thus strays even farther than Peirce from the concept of a human essence which transcends the concrete bounds of the linguistic system within which communication takes place. Indeed, Benveniste situates the subject unequivocably within these shifting bounds, and so confirms the total mutual dependence of subjectivity and language.

There are two additional points in Benveniste's work which deserve mention here. The first is the Freudian notion that discourse emerges from the unconscious as well as conscious speaking subject, so that discourse and the subject are always divided; each division is, moreover, often in opposition to the other. The second point is Benveniste's distinction between two different types of subjects, the speaking subject or "referent" and the subject of speech or "referee," both of which are constituted in any particular instance of discourse. The speaking subject is, simply, the writer or speaker, the person who engages in discourse. The subject of speech is the element of discourse which functions as the point of identification for the person engaged in discourse. In language both of these subjects, as Benveniste notes, are subsumed under the rubric "I":

What then is the reality to which I or you refers? It is solely a "reality of discourse," and this is a very strange thing. I cannot be defined except in terms of "locution," not in terms of objects as a nominal sign is. I signifies "the person who is uttering the present instance of the discourse containing I." This instance is unique by definition and has validity only in its uniqueness. . . . There is thus a combined double instance
in this process: the instance of $I$ as referent and the instance of discourse containing $I$ as the referee. The definition can now be stated precisely as: $I$ is "the individual who utters the present instance of discourse containing the linguistic instance $I$." (qtd. in Silverman 46)

Silverman is careful to point out that, although the speaking subject and the subject of speech sustain one another, the fact that the former acts as a signified for the latter in its capacity as signifier means that they comprise two separate categories which cannot be collapsed. The distinction between these two categories of subjectivity, and of a third, the spoken subject, has proven, as I will discuss later, very fruitful for film theory.

The Freudian Subject

The theories of Sigmund Freud represent, of course, a monumental step in the history of the concept of subjectivity, since they explicity address—and fundamentally revise—the notion of the identity and nature of the individual. The Freudian subject is, first and foremost, divided; moreover, these divisions are inaccessible to one another in any direct way. The early Freud of The Interpretation of Dreams labels these separate areas memory, the unconscious, and the preconscious. The mnemic or memory traces consist of diverse sensory imprints which perceptual activity has placed on the most recessed area of the mind. Silverman points out that these traces include material
received from all of the senses and likens the traces to a slide
"capable of projecting upon a psychic screen not only images, but
sounds, smells, tastes, and tactile sensations" (55).

The mnemic traces are infused with affect and are freely
accessible to the unconscious. The unconscious itself is governed by
what Freud calls the pleasure principle, the psychic mechanism defined,
if somewhat tautologically, as the drive to reduce tension or
unpleasure. The exclusive goal of the unconscious' use of memory is to
diminish excitation by reactivating the affect linked to an original
pleasurable situation. The unconscious proves to be conservative and
predictable in its pursuit of this goal in that it resorts to the same
tactics every time: when confronted with unpleasure, the unconscious
attempts to revive the corresponding situation of satisfaction through
the easiest route, i.e. sensory projections or hallucinations. Thus
internal, imaginary stimuli, primarily visual and auditory, derived
from the mnemic traces are the customary solution of the unconscious to
unpleasure.

Although the preconscious is likewise ruled by the pleasure
principle, and also employs the mnemic traces, it operates in a
different manner. Freud notes that preconscious memories "exhibit no
sensory quality or a very slight one in comparison with perceptions"
(qtd. in Silverman 60). Instead of seeking reduction of unpleasure
through sense data, the preconscious patiently works to recover
ideational relationships between memories, to construct a logical or
cognitive mnemic network which will eventually lead to real or external
gratification. Silverman notes, "Instead of establishing a perceptual identity with the past, the preconscious works to establish a thought identity with it . . ." (59). By giving priority to the connections between memories rather than to individual memories, the preconscious forsakes immediacy and affective intensity for delayed but more concrete gratification. Accordingly, and also because this process entails the risk of encountering negative memories, the strategies of the preconscious run somewhat counter to the drive for immediate pleasure that is the dominant instinct of the primary process.

While both the unconscious and the preconscious reply to the pleasure principle, these responses do not have equal legitimacy or authority in the psychic economy. The material of the unconscious, and the memories and wishes it evokes, is eventually subject to scrutiny by the preconscious, which assumes the role of censor for the conscious self. The preconscious both screens out forbidden material and regulates the form that admissible materials may assume. The unconscious, yielding to the demands of the preconscious, must structure its wishes in a way that disguises their true—most often infantile or oedipal—nature. Condensation (the compression into a single element of qualities of two or more elements) and displacement (the transfer of psychic energy from one element to another) are the primary means by which the unconscious accomplishes this acceptable structuration, which takes the specific form of dreams, parapraxes, jokes, day-dreams, and neuroses. Together these forms constitute a signifying system or discourse particular to the unconscious.
Freud, at the end of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, takes pains to emphasize that the unconscious and preconscious should not be viewed so much as distinct psychic areas as different "processes of excitation or modes of its discharge" (qtd. in Silverman 66). The unconscious is identified with what Freud terms the primary process, and the preconscious with what he calls the secondary process. Even if one retains a topographic psychic model, these processes must be said to predate the topographical divisions, since the unconscious comes into being as a result of the repression that accompanies the formation of the preconscious. More basic than the divisions of the unconscious and preconscious per se, then, are the respective signifying systems which are associated with them.

The primary process conforms closely to the basic impulse of the pleasure principle in that it makes use of hallucination in order to achieve immediate gratification. It is more preoccupied with the emotional charge that accrues in certain objects in the course of the subject's history than with the objects themselves. As a consequence, the primary process does not categorize or make distinctions; it does not, for example, differentiate between external and internal, with the result that the image or memory of an object and the real object have absolutely equal value. This equivalency extends to all aspects of the primary process and affects all of its operations. It means, for instance, that the censorship of the secondary process is not totally insurmountable; if a certain affect is tied to unacceptable memories and thereby denied access to the preconscious, the same affect is
simply transferred to another, sanctioned object. This technique of
displacement leads J.B. Pontalis and J. Laplanche to describe the
primary process as characterized by a "constant sliding of meaning"
(qtd. in Silverman 68).

The primary process persists in using the same methods to attain
pleasure despite the fact that it is consistently unsuccessful in doing
so. The secondary process, on the other hand, learns the lessons that
the primary process does not: it controls the energy or excitation
behind a wish until it finds a real answer to that wish; once found, it
does not expend all the pent-up psychic energy but instead maintains a
reserve, a "hypercathexis," within the preconscious so that in the
future the excitation can be more easily controlled or bound.

Silverman explains at greater length the motivation behind "binding":

The preconscious can only seek out more reliable paths of
gratification if it has at its disposal those memories which
constitute the subject's culturally admissible history, and if it
has the resources for manipulating those memories in voluntary
and relational ways. However, as long as the mnemonic traces
retain their full affective and sensory intensity, such
manipulation is impossible; certain memories are automatically
privileged because of their pleasurable affect, and others as
automatically avoided because of the unpleasure which they
evoke. Moreover, the sensory vividness of the original memories
blurs the distinction between the internal and external
registers. For these reasons it is imperative that the secondary
process diminish both the affective and sensory values of the
mnemonic traces. . . . (69-70)

Silverman continues by noting that Freud considers language to be
the agent of this transformation, as evidenced by the fact that in his
writing Freud constantly pits language against affect. His statement
that language facilitates "the highest, securest form of cognitive
thought process" (qtd. in Silverman 71) must be understood, Silverman suggests, in the context of a notion of the capability of linguistic patterns to attenuate the affective intensity of the memory traces. In being linked to a linguistic system, the mnemonic traces are organized into a network of pre-existing relationships which enable them to be manipulated and controlled in multiple ways. For one, verbal memories, in Freud's words, "endow the process of thinking with a new mobile cathexis" (qtd. in Silverman 70), so that psychic energy is dispersed throughout the preconscious, rather than accumulating and pressing for immediate discharge. The end result is that all memories share approximately the same, relatively minimal emotional weight, and are thus equally available to cognition.

The signifying processes which are associated with the unconscious and the preconscious thus diverge and can thereby be defined according to their incorporation or omission of a linguistic component. Freud, in the essay entitled "The Unconscious," is explicit about this definition:

... the conscious presentation comprises the presentation of the thing plus the word belonging to it, while the unconscious presentation is the presentation of the thing alone. The system Unc. contains the thing-cathexes of the objects, their first and true object-cathexes; the system Pcs. comes about by this thing-presentation being hypercathedet through being linked with the word-presentation corresponding to it. It is these hypercathexes ... that bring about a higher psychical organization by the secondary process which is dominant in the Pcs. (qtd. in Silverman 71-72)

From these remarks it is clear that the unconscious possesses a single signifying register, made up of "thing-presentation" derived from
perception, while the preconscious has a dual signifying register, one that draws on both things-presentations and "word-presentations."

Silverman likens the thing-presentation to Saussure's idea of a signified or concept, and the word-presentation to that of a signifier or sound image, highlighting in yet another way the connection between subjectivity and signification.

The continuation of the above passage from Freud also demonstrates that repression is, to use Silverman's words, "an event which is played out at the level of signification" (72):

Now, too, we are in a position to state precisely what it is that repression denies to the rejected presentation in the transference neuroses: what it denies to the presentation is translation into words which shall remain attached to the object. A presentation which is not put into words, or a psychical act which is not hypercathexed, remains thereafter in the unc, in a state of repression. (qtd. in Silverman 72)

For Freud the repressed materials which remain beyond the reach of language are the crux of the subject. In The Interpretation of Dreams he asserts that "... the core of our being, consisting of unconscious wishful impulses, remains inaccessible to the understanding... of the preconscious" (qtd. in Silverman 72-73). What Freud suggests here is that those impulses that are denied linguistic expression are for all intents and purposes lost to cognition; yet these impulses are the most vital forces in the psyche. Consequently, Freud privileges these unconscious wishes and their signifying forms, especially in his early writing.
Although Freud draws many distinctions between primary and secondary processes, he also emphasizes that discourse, and with it subjectivity, are products not of one process or the other, but of a collaboration between the two. The discourse designated as particular to the unconscious, for example, comes about solely because its materials are denied entry into the preconscious—which is to say that without the repression of the preconscious, unconscious signification would not exist. Dreams offer perhaps the best example of this reciprocity. Freud indicates that the entire process of the dream-work, whereby the dream thoughts are continually re-routed until they find an acceptable form (one which nonetheless covertly expresses a fundamental wish), originates in and is structured by preconscious censorship. It is in this sense that dreams, despite their association with the unconscious system of signification, can be said to be the result of a continuous "compromise" between the primary and secondary processes.

Silverman points out, in addition, that it is the secondary process, operating on a principle of difference, which singles out certain infantile wishes for prohibition:

The secondary process, not the primary one, defines the subject's mother as distinct from all women, and isolates the subject's father from the available group of males. In short, the privileged status enjoyed by certain mnemonic traces over all others is the result of a secondary interference in the sensory and affective register of the unconscious. (82-83)

Thus the secondary process limits, for some memories, the continuous slippage or displacement of affect, preventing those memories from
being replaced by others, and insuring them a prominent place in the
construction of the subject.

Just as the secondary process influences or inhibits the primary
process, the latter interferes with the former. The nature of the
secondary process, its orientation of ongoing differentiation within a
closed system, means that it eschews any notion of positive or fixed
terms. Yet as Silverman illustrates through her discussion of Proust's
A La Recherche du temps perdu, there are nonetheless instances of
language which clearly represent an affective privileging of certain
terms over others. In the Recherche, the names of certain cities
(Balbec, Venice, Florence) assume the emotional charge of the memories
with which they are associated. Rather than diminishing the affect of
a mnemonic trace, language here inherits and perpetuates affect in a
manner that contradicts the normal operation of the secondary process.
This atypical linguistic relay of affect appears to be the result of
the momentary dominance of the primary process, especially since,
according to Freud, the primary process exhibits a tendency to equate
words with things. Examples such as these suggest that, despite the
existence of the secondary process, relatively undisguised affect or
desire is not automatically or permanently subdued, and may still find
ways to break through the fortifications of repression.

Silverman's analysis demonstrates that, although it is not
inaccurate to speak of the dominance of the primary process over
unconscious discourse, nor to associate the secondary process primarily
with the preconscious, neither is it accurate to definitively
circumscribe the workings of each process within these limited territories. Just as memory, as the raw material of the psyche, does not naturally or inevitably assume a certain form, but is subject to both primary and secondary processes to varying degrees, so the discourse of either psychic domain is not immune—indeed is constantly subject to—the influence of the other. Subjectivity must in turn be understood as the product of a complex of continuing interactions between both primary and secondary processes.

Freud's conceptualization of subjectivity sustained certain transformations over the course of time. The early subject divisions of *The Interpretation of Dreams* that we have just described were later replaced by the more elaborate yet more static designations of *New Introductory Lectures*—the id, ego and superego. Accompanying this reformulation of psychic topography is the development of a relatively rigid chronology of "normal" subjectivity, one which places increased emphasis on oedipal events as the pivot points of progression from one stage to another. Freud appears more and more to conceive of at least the Western subject as bound by, in Silverman's words, "a predetermined narrative" (136). The specifics of this narrative are critical, not only because they differ for male and female subjects, but because this difference is the basis of certain positive or negative judgments made about each sex.

The early stages of the history of the subject, which are the same for both males and females, are characterized by oral and anal drives wherein objects which are taken into and expelled from the body (the
breast, feces) are not distinguished from the self. During this so-called "preoedipal" period the lines of subjectivity are not yet definitively established, so that the mother, who is the primary love object, is not experienced as separate. In Freud's scheme, one cannot speak of an identity of the subject until the advent of the genital stage; when boundaries between self and other are finally drawn, they are based on awareness of sexual difference. Freud's "Some Psychical Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction Between the Sexes" describes the genesis of this awareness:

There is an interesting contrast between the behaviour of the two sexes. . . . when a little boy first catches sight of a girl's genital region, he begins by showing irresolution and lack of interest; he sees nothing or disavows what he has seen. . . . It is not until later, when some threat of castration has obtained a hold upon him, that the observation becomes important to him. . . . A little girl behaves differently. She makes her judgment and her decision in a flash. She has seen it and knows that she is without it and wants to have it. (qtd. in Silverman 137)

Silverman notes that two important observations can be made from this passage: first, that for Freud vision plays an absolutely pivotal role in the narrative of the subject. Sight is the agent which establishes sexuality, and, along with it, subjectivity. However, Silverman suggests, the terms of description in the passage, what is "seen," completely removes vision from any imagined realm of empirical, objective truth and sets it firmly within the arena of cultural bias. Hence the second observation to be made—that the penis serves as the arbitrary, pre-established standard against which female sexuality is weighed and found wanting:
sexual definition means definition in relation to the penis. Freud refers to the male sex organ as "large" and "superior," and what he takes to be the female equivalent (i.e. the clitoris) as "stunted" and "inferior." (Silverman 137)

Silverman goes on to point out that the biological slant of Freud's argument, the supposed "natural" superiority of the penis, is undermined at the end of the passage cited: the assertion that the girl "has seen it and knows that she is without it and wants to have it" exposes the bias of the argument by implying that in fact the penis has no "natural" or existential worth, but finds its sole valorization in the complementary absence of a penis in the female subject, and in the supposed jealousy of that same subject. This relative valorization has its sociological counterpart in a dynamic of male/female relationships which implies that men can only be "strong" and "potent" if women are "weak" and "impotent." It is, moreover, a reflection of the perceived privilege of the male within society. Silverman concludes:

... the moment isolated by Freud as inaugurating the division of the sexes must be understood as the product of intense cultural mediation, as an event which is experienced retrospectively by both male and female subjects. The perceptual model which Freud elaborates for the little boy ("he sees nothing. ... It is not until later ... that the observation becomes important to him") must be extended as well to the little girl. Both refer back their cultural status to their anatomical status after the former has been consolidated, and they do so at the suggestion of the society within which they find themselves. (140)

Whereas the preoedipal stage is the same for children of both sexes, the awareness of sexual difference introduces a split in the trajectory of male and female subjects which culminates in differing
versions of the Oedipus complex. As the male child's attachment to the mother takes on erotic tones he begins to feel and demonstrate an increasing competition with the father for her attention and love. The child's demands on the mother are met by what he sees as a castration threat. According to Freud, this threat only takes on real meaning when the child remembers the sight of the female genitals, which he now interprets as "castrated" as punishment for some wrong-doing. Fear of the same fate leads the male child to give up the mother as a love object and, by internalizing the father's authority and status, to identify increasingly with him. Silverman notes that this identification, which forms the superego and constitutes the dissolution of the male Oedipus complex, is "... in essence an assimilation of cultural prohibition. ... The male child will henceforth measure and define himself in relation to this repressive paternal representation, and thus to his society's dominant values" (141).

The female subject's development differs from the male's in that she is called upon not simply to relinquish her preoedipal attachment to the mother but to replace it with desire for the opposite sex, initially the father. There is thus, in Freud's model, a radical interruption in the psychic life of the female child which is in contrast to the relative continuity of the emotional bonds of the male. In addition, the female Oedipus complex, unlike the male version which is terminated by internalization of the castration threat, commences with the awareness of sexual difference as the realization of
lack—the implication in Freud's description, as Silverman suggests, is that the female "immediately and spontaneously reads her anatomical difference as a deficiency" (142). This deficiency is at first perceived as the mother's, next as the child's own (linked, however, to the mother), and later the deficiency of all women. The result of this process is, Freud proposes, a rejection on the part of the female child of her own sex and the complementary wish to "become" a man:

When she has passed beyond her first attempt at explaining her lack of a penis as being punishment personal to herself and has realized that the sexual character is a universal one, she begins to share the contempt felt by men for a sex which is the lesser in so important a respect, and, at least in holding that opinion, insists on being like a man. (qtd. in Silverman 142)

Freud suggests that this wish to be like a man takes the form not only of a turning towards the father, but the desire, given the impossibility of possessing the penis, for a child in its place.

In Freud's schema not only does the female Oedipus complex begin where the male's ends, it is also not "dissolved"—that is, women do not ever really reject the father as a love object or internalize his ideal image, as a result they also do not acquire a fully formed superego, whose absence stands, then, as Silverman remarks, as "the moral equivalent and 'consequence' of the missing penis" (145). It is significant that Freud views the non-resolution of the female Oedipus complex and the consequences of this non-resolution as normative and "natural":

It does little harm to a woman if she remains in her feminine Oedipus attitude. . . . She will in that case choose her husband for his paternal characteristic and be ready to recognize his
authority. Her longing to possess a penis, which is in fact unappeasable, may find satisfaction if she can succeed in completing her love for the organ by extending it to the bearer of the organ. . . . (qtd. in Silverman 143)

The only "cure" for the female subject's deficiency, then, is a combination of passivity, heterosexuality and procreation, all of which, as Silverman points out, not coincidentally meet the needs of male-dominated society.

The Lacanian Subject

The theories of French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan are based in a reconsideration of Freud's concepts, especially as formulated in the latter's early writings. For Lacan, as for Freud, the subject is not pre-existent or transcendent, but is constantly created in a process of identification and differentiation within an already existing structure. This process, which begins at birth, is organized around several key moments of separation initiating lack: The subject is alienated first from the sense of continuity with the mother's body, then from the illusory coherence and wholeness associated with what is termed the "mirror phase," and finally, as it assumes a place in signification, from the real as seemingly unmediated. Language is thus at the apex of the Lacanian model of subjectivity—it is, in fact, "the
The imaginary and the symbolic are the two primary "orders" of developing subjectivity identified by Lacan. The imaginary is, in essence, a restatement of the "preoedipal" period where the child is dominated by the constant movement of drives across its body and thus experiences oscillation and duality. At this stage the child is also totally dependent on the mother, with whom, since she satisfies the majority of the needs generated by the drives, the child feels his/her body to coincide. Lacan's formulation thus retains Freud's notion of the young infant's illusion of unity with the mother, and the resultant incognizance of difference, and situates these in the context of a prelinguistic state: although on one level already a signifier within a signifying system, the child is at this stage unable to recognize him/herself as production and, more importantly, to produce his/herself in this system. In "Lacan and the Discourse of the Other," Anthony Wilden cites, as an indication of this inability, the tendency of young children to refer to themselves by proper name rather than by the shifter/pronoun "I." "... an 'alienable' word ... which seems to be the property of others and not something designating the child himself" (161).

In Lacan's schema, the acquisition of language is preceded by the mirror phase, and it is at this early point that relations of looking and seeing, of specularity, become bound up with subjectivity. Lacan notes:
Il y suffit de comprendre le stade du miroir comme une identification au sens plein que l'analyse donne à ce terme: à savoir la transformation produite chez le sujet quand il assume une image,—dont la prédestination à cet effet de phase est suffisamment indiquée par l'usage, dans la théorie, du terme antique d'imago. (Ecrits I 90)

The mirror phase is actually comprised of two crucial operations rooted in the specular: the child's recognition, through the reflection in the mirror, of the mother as a separate image/entity, paving the way for the linguistic distinction between subject and object, and his/her self-misrecognition in a unified, ideal image which inaugurates the illusion of a coherent subject:

L'assumption jubilatoire de son image spéculaire par l'Être encore plongé dans l'impuissance motrice et la dépendance du nourrissement qu'est le petit homme à ce stade infans, nous paraîtra dès lors manifester en une situation exemplaire la matrice symbolique où le je se précipite en forme primordiale, avant qu'il ne s'objective dans la dialectique de l'identification à l'autre et que le langage ne lui restitue dans l'universel sa fonction de sujet. (Lacan, Ecrits I 90)

This latter operation of identification with an ideal image is especially critical in that eventually, in order for social communication to occur, the subject must seem to occupy the point of juncture of the signifier and signified and produce itself as the site and origin of meaning. In other words, the subject, although definitively split or ruptured, must be able to represent him/herself as whole and in a more or less fixed relation to the external world in order to manipulate language. The mirror phase thus functions as "the threshold to the positionality necessary for language, and the representation of self and others;" it constitutes "the establishment
of a signifiable outside but also includes the imaginary projection of an image by which to represent that outside" (Coward 16). What is most striking in this stage of the Lacanian formulation, then, is the insistence on alteriority, on the construction of the subject as dependent on a moment of identification with itself as otherness, alienation.

When the child acquires language, he or she enters the symbolic order, governed by the Law of the Father, introducing a third term which contributes to the rupture of the Mother/child dyad. Following Freud, Lacan identifies the phallus—the symbolic representation of the penis and of an unattainable fullness of being—as the privileged signifier of patriarchal culture, so that the assumption of subjectivity in the symbolic necessarily involves a certain positionality with regard to this primary signifier. The complex and difficult question of the role of gender in the establishment of a relationship to the phallus will be addressed later in this discussion. At this point we shall simply note, following Annette Kuhn, that the entry of the infant into the symbolic hinges on lack—both males and females are removed, if to varying degrees, from the phallus—and also on difference, since sexual difference is "mapped onto the operation of language as difference—the linguistic premise being that meaning emerges through differences between signifiers, in their articulation with each other, rather than from signifiers in themselves" (62). It is, in fact, in the movement into the symbolic that the child discovers his/her position as a signifier in a realm of
signifiers circulating around the Father/phallus, which anchors signification and thereby regulates "meaning." The symbolic finalizes the rupture of the subject from itself, from the phenomenal world, and from desire, which is culturally and linguistically determined, located irrevocably in the field of the Other. The entrance into the symbolic thus forms the unconscious, which is itself structured like a language:

Nous enseignons suivant Freud que l'Autre est le lieu de cette mémoire qu'il a découverte sous le nom d'inconscient, mémoire qu'il considère comme l'objet d'une question restée ouverte en tant qu'elle conditionne l'indestructibilité de certains désirs. À cette question nous répondrons par la conception de la chaîne signifiante, en tant qu'elle a été inaugurée par la symbolisation primordiale (que le jeu Forti Dal, mis en lumière par Freud à l'origine de l'automatisme de répétition, rend manifeste), cette chaîne se développe selon des liaisons logiques dont la prise sur ce qui est à signifier, à savoir l'être de l'étant, s'exerce par les effets de signifiant. . . . (Lacan, Ecrits II 92-93)

Even after the acquisition of language and the accession to the symbolic, however, separation from the mother is not complete, and can only be actualized through sexual identity and the realization that desire for the mother cannot be expressed in sexual terms. The resolution of the Oedipus complex, wherein the child renounces his or her preoedipal bisexuality and the mother as a love object—the institution of the incest taboo—achieves this final separation. Thus the Oedipus complex, conceived of by Lacan as dependent on linguistic denominations of kinship, operates as the culmination and retrospective sanction of previous separations and differences, and assures the reproduction of differentiated sexuality by setting up the parent of the same sex as the ideal object of identification. These
identifications define the subject and also mark its inadequacy, its symbolic castration, since they stand as reminders of what the subject can never completely be. In the case of the male subject, however, inadequacy or castration is compensated for by a legacy of symbolic potency: through what Lacan terms a "mortgaging" of the penis in the form of relinquishment of unmediated access to sexuality, the male subject assumes a position of privilege and status within the symbolic, thus aligning himself with, if not actually attaining, the phallus.

The crux of Lacanian theory lies in the idea that a relationship to the phallus as primary signifier regulates the transition from the imaginary to the symbolic. Within such a model, the subjectivity of women is necessarily problematic. Contrary to what some have implied, it seems clear that in the Lacanian formulation the female child does undergo a version of the Oedipus complex to enter the symbolic—she does not remain imprisoned in the imaginary and therefore outside of language—but it is also clear that in so doing she must, in contrast to the male child, continually confront her more absolute lack in terms of the phallic function. As Claire Johnston observes, "In light of the fact of the privileged place of the phallus in patriarchal culture . . . entry into the Symbolic, for the girl in her lack of a penis, must necessarily be a negative entry" (55). The female child's relationship to language is thus simultaneously one of inclusion and exclusion; it consequently remains gender-specific.
Female Subjectivity Reconsidered

It is evident that the Oedipus complex and the concept of castration are as crucial to Lacan's reformulation of Freud as they were to Freud's own theories, and that they suggest that sexual difference is a factor in determining the subject's place in the system of signification. Yet Lacan gives only cursory consideration to women's relationship to the symbolic. His treatment of female subjectivity intersects with Freud's in that it focuses primarily on women's divergence or "failure" in relation to a male norm—that is, on the "fact" (although this fact is for Lacan admittedly not simply biological) of women's somehow "greater" castration. It does not seem unfair to say that ultimately Lacan is content to designate women as "other," as non-male, and leave the matter there. Similarly, Freud himself was, as Nancy Chodorow points out, uncharacteristically incurious about the reason for female children's rejection of women as love objects upon discovery of the mother's castration, while male children, confronted with the same discovery, reject only the mother, but not women in general.

Other neo-Freudian reconsiderations of the Oedipus complex have also discerned in it a certain sexual asymmetry, but do not tie this disparity to castration, and so are not obliged to interpret "difference" as "failure." In The Reproduction of Mothering, Nancy
Chodorow describes the female dilemma of the oedipal period in this way:

For a girl . . . there is no single oedipal mode or quick oedipal resolution, and there is no absolute "change of object." Psychoanalytic accounts make clear that a girl's libidinal turning to her father is not at the expense of, or a substitute for, her attachment to her mother. Nor does a girl give up her internal relationship to her mother which is a product of her earlier development. Instead, a girl develops important oedipal attachments to her mother as well as to her father. These attachments, and the way they are internalized, are built upon, and do not replace, her intense and exclusive preoedipal attachment to her mother and its internalized counterpart. (127)

Chodorow's argument is that because women are called upon by patriarchal society, which depends on women's heterosexuality, to totally renounce the preoedipal love object for the father, and cannot, like men, fill the psychical place of the maternal figure with someone of the same sex, they tend to retain the strong preoedipal attachment to the mother.

Chodorow’s analysis connects to Freud's and Lacan's to the extent that the oedipal process is seen as more complex and ultimately less "complete" for women than for men; her argument diverges significantly from these theories, however, on the question of the origin of this difference: for Chodorow, the specific characteristics of the female Oedipus complex are attributable not to a "deficiency" in relation to the phallus, but rather to the fact of the mother's role as primary caretaker and the demands of heterosexuality. The same factors then have consequences for women's post-oedipal "gender personality":

From the retention of preoedipal attachments to their mother, growing girls come to define and experience themselves as
continuous with others; their experience of self contains more flexible or permeable ego boundaries. Boys come to define themselves as more separate and distinct, with a greater sense of rigid ego boundaries and differentiation. The basic feminine sense of self is connected to the world, the basic masculine sense of self is separate. (169)

Despite the fact that in most respects Chodorow's perspective is radically different from Freud's and Lacan's, her analysis does have a certain relevance for their respective theories. Whereas Freud saw the oedipal period as superseding the preoedipal, and Lacan speaks of the imaginary as co-existing with but subordinate to the symbolic, Chodorow proposes that there is for women not just residual but significant maintenance of relations of an original order of subjectivity, even after separation from the maternal figure appears to be complete.

Such a hypothesis could in turn have implications for women's relationship to language. Although his work clearly points in this direction, Lacan himself did not pursue the question of the nature of the specificity of a feminine relationship to language. This has, on the other hand, been one of the primary areas of inquiry of feminist theory. French writer and theorist Luce Irigaray, for example, hypothesizes a linguistic paradigm outside the bounds of an "Aristotelian type of logic" (qtd. in Kuhn 11). Taking the labia as a metaphor for plurality, Irigaray has suggested that a feminine relationship to language is characterized by process and heterogeneity:

"Elle" est indéfiniment autre en elle-même. De là vient sans doute qu'on la dit fantasque, incompréhensible, agitée, capricieuse ... Sans aller jusqu'à évoquer son langage, où "elle" part dans tous les sens sans qu"il" y repère la cohérence d'aucun sens. Paroles contradictoires, un peu folles pour la logique de la raison, inaudibles pour qui les écoute avec des
grilles toutes faites, un code déjà tout préparé. ... Il faudrait l'écouter d'une autre oreille comme un "autre sens" toujours en train de se tisser, de s'embrasser avec les mots, mais aussi de s'en défaitre pour ne pas s'y fixer, s'y figer.

(28)

Thus Irigaray rejoins but also pushes beyond Lacan's model by positing that a women's relationship to language, rather than existing as pure negativity (as only what it is not), in fact sets in motion a play of multiple meanings which stands in opposition to the fixing of meaning, its anchoring around the phallus as primary signifier, that characterizes the symbolic.

If we return for a moment to Chodorow's analysis of women's oedipal period we find that it has echoes in Irigaray's discussion in terms of the centrality assigned to relation and connection and heterogeneity; accordingly, it seems equally possible to attribute these characteristics of a feminine relationship to language, as Chodorow does those of female subjectivity, to the continued importance for women of the structures of the preoedipal/imaginary. The work of both of these feminists fills the gaps/lack of Freudian and Lacanian theory and valorizes what the latter devalues or fails to explore--women's unique position in a phallocentric system. Taken together, Chodorow's and Irigaray's theories have far-reaching implications: they suggest that women retain a privileged place in relation to the imaginary, that they are significantly closer to the preoedipal memory of union with an Other, and that this very position enables women to pose a non-fixity of meaning and subjectivity as against the coherence and hegemony which constitute the symbolic.
These implications will be explored in subsequent chapters in the context of specific films by Duras and Resnais.

**Cinema and Subjectivity**

Along with semiotics, psychoanalysis has had a huge impact on contemporary film study, influencing both the orientation of textual analysis and the general direction of film theory, the issues and questions it has taken up. Freudian psychoanalysis provides the framework, for example, for Raymond Bellour's investigation of the oedipal logic of classic narrative and of the process of enunciation as it occurs in the films of Alfred Hitchcock. It lays the groundwork as well for Laura Mulvey's watershed analysis of how cinematic spectacle functions according to sexual difference, thus "demonstrating the way the unconscious of patriarchal society has structured film form" (6). Similarly, Freud's description of the dream-work in *The Interpretation of Dreams* is the basis of Thierry Kuntzel's analysis of the initial sequence of a classic film as a kind of condensed *micro-récit*, a matrix whose elements are repeated and displaced in the movement of the signifying chain which is the film's narrative.

Lacanian psychoanalytic models of the subject have been given a prominent place in film theory in the last decade through the work of Christian Metz. Metz's early writing in *Langage et cinéma* and *Essais*
sur la signification au cinéma drew on semiotics in an attempt to
describe and characterize cinema as a language—that is, as a system of
signification which makes use of a set of codes and subcodes which
together operate to construct meaning. It is not until the
mid-seventies, in an essay entitled "Le signifiant imaginaire," that
Metz turns to the question of the spectator and begins to investigate
the nature of the relationship between this spectator and the cinematic
signifier. Metz's analysis presumes Benveniste's model of the
different yet conflated subject positions produced in language—the
speaking subject and the subject of speech—and explores the nature of
the third and distinct position generated by cinematic signification:
that of the spoken or viewing subject, a subject produced by but
separated—by the cinema screen—from discourse.

The discussion in "Le signifiant imaginaire" centers on the issue
of cinematic identification and draws on the notions of the mirror
stage, the imaginary and the symbolic. The concepts of the mirror
stage and the imaginary are also used by Jean-Louis Baudry in "Cinéma:
effets idéologiques produits par l'appareil de base" to describe what
he sees as the regressed state of the cinema spectator. Baudry
attributes this complete regression not only to the conditions of film
viewing (darkness, immobility and passivity), but also to its technical
base, the optical design of the camera which duplicates the centered,
monocular perspective of Renaissance painting, thus giving the
spectator the impression of a mastery of time and space. Metz's
analysis of the spectator as subject makes reference at certain points
to Baudry's, but is at once more developed and more nuanced in its use of Lacanian theory. Metz begins by noting that cinema is "more perceptual" than many other modes of expression in that it involves a greater number of sensory registers; he goes on to point out, however, that it is also "less perceptual" in one crucial respect—in the sense that what is perceived is not really the object, but rather "son ombre, son fantôme, son double, sa réplique dans une nouvelle sorte de miroir" (32). It is this extraordinary combination of presence and absence, the lack which is inscribed in the film image, which for Metz designates cinema's tie to the imaginary:

La position propre du cinéma tient à ce double caractère de son signifiant: richesse perceptive inhabituelle, mais frappée d'irréalité à un degré inhabituel de profondeur, dès son principe même.—D'Avantage que les autres arts, ou de façon plus singulière, le cinéma nous engage dans l'imaginaire: il fait lever en masse la perception, mais pour la basculer aussitôt dans sa propre absence, qui est néanmoins le seul signifiant présent. (32)

Metz also posits the screen as a kind of mirror, analogous to that which first constitutes the subject. He further suggests, however, that since what is reflected is not the spectator's own body, film nonetheless differs from the "primordial" reflection of the mirror stage. Unlike the child who identifies with itself as object, the cinema spectator possesses an ego, a consciousness of his or her position as subject. Thus cinema, Metz remarks, although it on one level reactivates the perceptual lure of the imaginary and restages the genesis of the subject, is already, necessarily, on the side of the symbolic.
Having established the double nature of the cinematic signifier, Metz examines more closely the question of the spectator's identification. While conceding that characters constitute possible sites of identification, Metz notes that this is valid only for narrative-representational cinema and that even in these films there are often long periods of time when the screen is absent of human figures. Identification with a character or characters does not for Metz adequately answer the question of the place of the spectator's ego in relation to the signifier:

"... Ce Moi ... est déjà formé. Mais puisqu'il existe, on peut justement se demander où il est durant la projection du film. (L'identification vraiment première, celle du miroir, forme le Moi, mais toutes les autres supposent au contraire qu'il soit formé et puisse "s'échanger" contre l'objet ou le semblable.) Ainsi, lorsque je "reconnais" mon semblable à l'écran, et plus encore si je ne l'y reconnais pas, où suis-je? Où se trouve ce quelqu'un qui est capable de se reconnaître lorsqu'il y a lieu? (33-34)

Metz argues that identification with characters is secondary, and that the primary identification of the spectator is with himself as all-perceiving, as that which appears to constitute and control the cinema signifier:

Le spectateur, en somme, s'identifie à lui-même, à lui-même comme pur acte de perception (comme éveil, comme alerte); comme condition de possibilité du perçu et donc comme à une sorte de sujet transcendental, antérieur à tout il y a. (34)

Specifically, Metz proposes that the spectator identifies with the camera, which precedes and anticipates the spectator's look and which is present during screening in the form of the projector, situated at
the back of the spectator's head, that is, in line with the vanishing
point, at the imagined place of origin of all vision. The alignment of
the spectator with the camera and the projector implicates the human
look in a double movement that is both projective and introjective:

Lorsque je dis que "je vois" le film, j'entends par là un
singulier mélange de deux courants contraires: le film est ce que
je reçois, et il est aussi ce que je déclenche, puisqu'il ne
préexiste pas à mon entrée dans la salle et qu'il me suffit de
fermer les yeux pour le supprimer. Le déclenchant, je suis
l'appareil de projection; le recevant, je suis l'écran, dans ces
deux figures à la fois, je suis la caméra, dardée et pourtant
enregistreuse. (36)

Thus in Metz's analysis the cinema as signifier, as constituted within
the symbolic, depends even in its specific organization and operations
on the imaginary—on the spectator/subject's misrecognition of itself
as centered, coherent, and, equally, as the source of knowledge, both
the origin and destination of the look.

In the course of his discussion in "Le signifiant imaginaire" Metz
proposes certain parallels between the position of the spectator and
that of the fetishist and the voyeur, analogies which are also
developed by Laura Mulvey in her now classic essay "Visual Pleasure and
Narrative Cinema," and which will be considered in greater depth later
in this study in the context of sexual difference and cinematic
enunciation. Metz notes that the scopic and invocatory ("desire to
hear") sexual drives are brought together in the cinema in the "pulsion
percevante," which concretely represents "l'absence de son objet par la
distance où elle le maintient et qui participe à sa définition même

..." (42) Thus the condition of the spectator's access to the image
is, like the voyeur's, the maintenance of a space between self and object. The film, moreover, completes this voyeuristic scenario via its own exhibitionism, its position as an instance of visual and auditory discourse whose express purpose is to elicit the spectator's pleasure. This notion of the cinema as exhibitionist is eventually qualified by Metz in terms which foreground yet again its founding lack:

Le film sait qu'on le regarde, et ne le sait pas. Il faut, ici, être un peu plus précis. Car, à vrai dire, celui qui sait et celui qui ne sait pas ne se confondent pas tout à fait. ... Celui qui sait, c'est le cinéma, l'institution (et sa présence dans chaque film, c'est-à-dire le discours qui est derrière l'histoire); celui qui ne veut pas savoir, c'est le film, le texte (le texte terminal); l'histoire. Durant la projection du film, le public est présent à l'acteur, mais l'acteur est absent au public; et durant le tournage, où l'acteur était présent, c'est le public qui était absent. Ainsi le cinéma trouve-t-il le moyen d'être à la fois exhibitionniste et cachottier. L'échange du voir et de l'être-vu va être fracturé en son centre, et ses deux flancs disjoints répartis sur deux moments du temps: autre clivage. Ce n'est jamais mon partenaire que je vois, mais sa photographie. Je n'en reste pas moins voyeur, mais je le suis selon un régime différent. ... ("Histoire/discours" 304)

This regime, Metz continues, is that of the primal scene, the keyhole, whose unauthorized scopophilia is however, in the case of film, brought partially inside the bounds of the law through its institutionalisation, the growth of cinema as an industry.

The theoretical formulations of the collection Le Signifiant imaginaire, Psychanalyse et cinéma represent the first extended analysis of the cinematic subject. The subsequent preoccupation of film theory with the question of subjectivity has led to a critique as well as an affirmation of many of Metz's ideas. Mary Ann Doane, in
"Misrecognition and Identity," articulates the primary objections to Metz's analysis:

... there are difficulties with Metz's use of the mirror analogy—most acutely in his obsession with locating a primal scene for the cinema, an original grounding event which would accurately define or delineate spectatorship. A corollary of this difficulty concerns the conceptualization of identification as instantaneous—a conceptualization which presupposes an undialectical notion of temporality in the film viewing process. Metz upholds the priority of a before/after distinction—the look of the spectator is the originary moment within his system. Finally, identification cannot be located solely in the axis of the look. Yet Metz's emphasis upon primary identification isolates the image as the determinant cinematic unit and bestows upon perception the quality of immediacy. It is this immediacy imputed to the process of identification which needs to be questioned along with the strict separation effected between primary and secondary identification. (28)

Doane's remarks point to the need for not only a consideration of certain aspects of the cinematic signifier neglected by Metz, such as sound or temporality, but also for other, less monolithic and static models of identification and spectatorship which might take into account issues like sexual difference. What Doane is calling for here indirectly invokes Benveniste's notion of identification and subjectivity as activated only within specific instances of discourse and thus as first of all a process, and one which entails the taking up of varied and ever-changing positions. Her comments identify an ironic blind spot in Metz's work, which, predicated as it is on Benveniste's formulations, nonetheless circumvents to some extent the latter's insistence on subjectivity as always emergent and mobile, synonymous by definition with multiplicity.
Although many of the issues cited by Doane have yet to be adequately addressed, other recent developments in film theory are evidence of an effort to follow up on and/or rethink the theories presented in "Le Signifiant imaginaire." Metz’s work has connections to, for example, theories of suture which attempt to describe more precisely—that is, in ways which take into account the different formal articulations of film, its specific techniques or codes—the construction of the viewing subject by a cinematic text. Individual theories of suture will be discussed in this study in the context of particular films by Duras and Resnais; the basic concept nevertheless warrants a brief introduction here. The term "suture" originates not in film theory but in the writing of Jacques-Alain Miller, a disciple of Lacan. Miller defines suture as

... le rapport du sujet à la chaîne de son discours; on verra qu’il y figure comme l’élément qui manque, sous l’espèce d’un tenant-lieu. Car, y manquant, il n’en est pas purement et simplement absent. Suture par extension, le rapport en général du manque à la structure dont il est élément, en tant qu’il implique la position d’un tenant-lieu.” (39)

What suture describes is the process by which the subject actually enters discourse, is "represented" in a particular signifier (a pronoun or proper name, for example) which then stands in for the subject but simultaneously signifies its absence or lack. In cinema this process is generally agreed to occur in the transitions between shots, either by means of specific tropes such as shot/reverse shot or through more general codes of editing and narrative. Cinematic suture is, moreover, closely connected to questions of ideology and sexual difference,
issues which will also be examined in greater detail in subsequent chapters.
NOTES

1 All textual and parenthetical references to "Silverman" in this chapter are to The Subject of Semiotics.

2 The central text by Bellour dealing with the Oedipal scenario is "Le blocage symbolique" (1975), and concerning enunciation, "Enoncer" (1979).

3 See Mulvey's "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975).

4 Kuntzel's analyses are found in "Le travail du film" (1972) and "Le travail du film, 2" (1975).

5 This essay is later grouped with others by Metz, including "Histoire/discours" and "Le film de fiction et son spectateur," in a collection called Le Signifiant imaginaire. Psychanalyse et cinéma (Paris: Union Générale d'Éditions, 1977).
CHAPTER III
SUBJECTIVITY AND SEXUAL DIFFERENCE:

HIROSHIMA MON AMOUR

Since its celebrated debut in 1959,1 Resnais' film Hiroshima mon amour has gained both a popular and critical reputation as the quintessential film about time. This reputation stems in part from the film's double focus on memory. Originally envisioned as a documentary, Hiroshima evolved into a fiction film when Resnais decided that a factual account of the effects of the bomb was impossible and asked Duras if she could create a love story along the lines of her novel Moderato Cantabile, but "one in which the atomic agony would not be absent" (qtd. in Armes 66). The script which Duras subsequently wrote juxtaposes a kind of meditation on the tragedy of Hiroshima with an encounter between a French woman and a Japanese man whose relationship unearths the memory of the woman's adolescent love affair with a German soldier during the French occupation.2 The question of memory as both an individual and a historical or collective phenomenon is thus at the core of Hiroshima.

Much of the initial attention awarded the film was also due to its technical innovation with regard to time—the extensive use of uncoded and a-chronological flashbacks (paired for the most part with "present
tense" sound) to convey the eruption of past into present. In The Cinema of Alain Resnais Roy Armes remarks,

It is in its handling of time that 
Hiroshima mon Amour proves its total originality, being a film that owes nothing to the conventions of narrative of other art forms but uses simply the cinema's ability to fuse past and present into a continuous flow. The stories of Nevers and Hiroshima develop simultaneously and with the heroine we move constantly from one to the other as they illuminate each other across a gulf of fourteen years. . . . in Hiroshima mon amour, perhaps for the first time a film explored the full possibilities of cinematic time. (86-87)

Despite Armes' comments about the specifically cinematic originality of Hiroshima's treatment of time, much of the critical work on the film has been devoted to establishing its sometimes formal but primarily thematic links with literary and philosophical representations of memory. Within this body of criticism comparisons to Proust and/or Bergson are most common. Although he alludes briefly to Resnais' "development of a vocabulary of associationism specifically geared to the cinema" (57), John Kreidl's assertions about Hiroshima are representative of this widespread approach to the film:

The groundwork for the interpretation of time in Hiroshima was basically done not by filmmakers but by novelists and physicists, by Marcel Proust and Henri Bergson. Proust gave novelistic expression to Bergson's "anti-rational" interpretation of time as expressed in Time and Free Will. By Proust's day, Bergson's concept had been demonstrated--by Einstein in 1905 and others—to be quite rational. (59)

Directly in line with the trend expressed in Kreidl's comments is John Ward's 1968 study Alain Resnais or the Theme of Time, which applies Bergson's theories directly to Resnais' films. At the beginning of the introductory chapter of his study, Ward states:
Alain Resnais is not an original thinker, yet from heterogeneous sources he has produced a series of highly idiosyncratic films which are not just stylistically similar, but have a thematic continuity not always apparent in the scripts on which they are based. The framework within which this act of synthesis is made possible is the philosophy of Henri Bergson, augmented by an almost Proustian obsession with associationism. In view of the theoretical bias of his work, an excursion into philosophy is an unavoidable prelude to an analysis of Resnais' themes. (7)

As his opening comments suggest, Ward is limited from the outset by his narrowly philosophical perspective and his methodology, which employs Bergson's theories relatively uncritically, and which, moreover (despite the allusion in the above passage to Resnais' "style") considers memory primarily on the level of content, divorced from formal questions of representation. It is perhaps inevitable that Ward finds Hiroshima to be a counter example of Bergsonian continuity. He is lead to conclude, in fact, that the woman in the film is psychologically deformed, and not simply as a result of her traumatic wartime experience. He notes, "Basically, no experience is unassimilable given an instinctive response. That the girl could not assimilate 'Nevers' points to something wrong even before her affair with the German soldier" (38). According to Ward, this flaw in the woman has serious consequences for the narrative, and points in turn to the source of the film's weakness, the script:

Resnais' difficulty springs from the fact that Marguerite Duras made the mistake of choosing to examine the wrong experience for his case. If she had concentrated on the more normal (i.e. in the sense of being non-traumatic) though by no means typical experience of the Japanese, the film would have gained a greater breadth of reference. (34)
Ward's adherence to Bergsonian concepts such as duration and the necessity of "intuiting" the past categorically determines his reading of the film. His final pronouncement on *Hiroshima mon amour* is that it is a success "because it makes inspired connections, not because it makes a correct statement" (38).

Happily, Proustian critics proved to be more perceptive and less rigid in their analysis and evaluation of the film. Wolfgang Luchting, in an article entitled, "Hiroshima mon amour, Time and Proust," sees, for instance, a mirror relationship between Proust's perspective and Resnais':

Proust's two main themes are, first, the time that destroys; second, the memory that conserves. Resnais treats these themes, too, but the other way around: first, for his protagonists, memory destroys; second, time restores. Proust is interested in memory. Resnais studies forgetting. (312)

Although Luchting justifiably identifies oubli as central to *Hiroshima*, he persists in separating it from memory in a way which masks the fundamental interrelationship of the two in the film, a point to be addressed in more detail later.

In the work on *Hiroshima*, two critical difficulties arise again and again. The first, as the remarks by John Ward demonstrate, is the question of the unequal weight or importance of the man's and the woman's respective pasts, the "imbalance" of the film in this regard. The second, not unrelated difficulty has to do with the film's overall coherence, especially the function and relationship to the body of the film of the "prologue," the so-called "documentary" on the bomb which,
alternating images of Hiroshima with close-ups of the lovers' bodies, comprises the first fifteen minutes of screen time. James Monoco voices the most popular critical solution to this second dilemma:

*Hiroshima mon amour* then is two films, often working against each other. There is the fact of the place, and there is the fiction of the people. There is Japan, and there is France. There is the film for which Giovanni Fusco provided the music, and there is the one for which Georges Delerue did. There is the false documentary and the truly egregious love story. The film of images and the film of words. (49)

It is clear from his remarks here that, having perceived the basic tensions at the root of the film, Monoco is then at a loss to account for or understand them except as the unfortunate result of an unsuccessful cinematic collaboration (and one in which Duras is more to blame than Resnais). In this respect his analysis is typical of a great deal of *Hiroshima* criticism.

Judith Mayne's 1978 article "*Hiroshima mon amour*: Ways of Seeing, Ways of Telling" marks a crucial point in critical work on the film because it constructs a convincing argument for understanding *Hiroshima* as a tightly structured whole, and does so without disregarding or discrediting the film's complexities and contradictions. Mayne rephrases the terms of previous analyses by maintaining that the film's fundamental principle of organization is that of confrontation rather than complementarity between levels of discourse, and that this textual principle includes, but is larger than, questions of temporality:

This is a film concerned with tensions between what appear to be irreconcilable opposites. Different time levels and time relationships are one aspect of this tension. There are others: the ever-present significance of Hiroshima as opposed to the
repressed, apparent insignificance of Nevers; the embrace of physical love versus the horror of physical destruction; and the stylistic features of the filmwork itself, characterized by strong contrast of light and dark, and by a sometimes disturbingly still camera versus the sweeping tracking shots that have become Resnais' cinematic trademark. ... *Hiroshima Mon Amour* examines the very process by which such opposing terms map onto each other and examines the conditions and possibilities for such a union of opposites. (46)

Mayne goes on to suggest that if any of the many oppositions in *Hiroshima mon amour* are foregrounded, it is not so much present and past as seeing and telling, elements which are constantly pitted against each other, and, equally, constantly denied authority from the first few moments of the film. What in fact ties the beginning of the film, the "documentary," to the love story is this consistent emphasis on and refusal of illusion based in sight and narrative, in representation. Mayne argues that the film can be read on one level as an investigation of the two primary components of cinematic representation: vision as truth (seeing as believing) and narrative as a hold on real time. By continually denying the truth of narrative and sight the film asserts the inability of representation to make contact with the past, to provide "an immediate link with another time or another place" (52).
Language, Sight, and Sexual Difference

In the course of her analysis of Hiroshima, Mayne notes that the two elements associated with cinematic representation, narration and sight, divide in the film along sexual lines:

The roles enacted by the French woman and the Japanese man are primarily defined as functions of representation. Each lives, within the film, an illusion of representation. To the French woman, seeing all there is to see in Hiroshima would afford a total understanding; and the Japanese man, listening to the tale of Nevers—and being a sole, privileged listener—would similarly obtain a total understanding of the elusive actress. (52-3)

The man's elation when he discovers that he is the lone recipient of the story of the love affair—a reaction which implies that he sees the act of telling as the emotional complement of physical intimacy—does appear, as Mayne suggests, to associate him with a belief in narration as truth, while the woman's words in the prologue especially identify her with a corresponding belief in vision. Yet these associations are not as clear-cut as they might at first seem. A closer look at this opposition and at others in the film suggests that it is possible to qualify the particular sexual split identified here, and at the same time to expand on its underlying principle, to read the film at once more specifically and more broadly in terms of the question of sexual difference.
Further investigation of the woman’s relation to seeing, for instance, uncovers considerable ambiguity. Although clearly fascinated by images, by the power of sight, the woman is also uninitiated in its structures. Quite early in the film she identifies herself as a visual novice by her statement, "... de bien regarder, je crois que ça s'apprend." Rather than relying on sight, the woman instinctually relies on her other senses. In the cellar in Nevers where she is isolated as punishment, the taste of blood from her scraped fingers keeps the memory of the German alive, and the warmth of a marble which falls through the grating helps bring her back to sanity. There are numerous other moments which demonstrate that sound, taste, and touch are privileged through the woman and sight is denied: at the very beginning of the film, the woman tells the time by the cough of a man who is passing on the street; later, during the Nevers sequence, the regrowth of her hair is measured by touch; similarly, in the first few moments following the prologue she remarks that the Japanese man has beautiful skin, while he, on the other hand, wants to know if her eyes are indeed green.

Unlike the woman, who is distanced from but fascinated by the visual, the man, as Mayne’s analysis implies, seems at first to recognize implicitly the impossibility of grasping truth through sight. During the prologue he constantly replies to the woman’s naively insistent "J'ai tout vu" with "Tu n'as rien vu." Yet his response, which is almost automatic, may stem from the simple fact of his residence in Hiroshima, where, surrounded by the many museums and
monuments to the war, he is saturated with evidence of the failure of visual representation to capture experience. In the end the man too manifests a contradictory relationship to seeing. Despite his vehement words in the prologue, he later follows the woman around Hiroshima, maintaining the distance of a voyeur. His actions betray what is perhaps a subconscious but nonetheless overwhelming impulse to exercise control through vision: it seems that in order not to lose the woman, in order to affirm his tie to, his potential possession of her, the man must not let her out of his sight. Thus the man's apparent immunity to the illusion of the power of the specular waivers, is limited to a certain impersonal realm; what is realized on a conscious, public level is, in other words, clearly not operative on an unconscious or private one.

The association of the man with narrative can also be qualified in that it can be described as a subset or manifestation of a general conception of language as stable and linear, a transparent instrument of knowledge. In the film it is the man who initiates and pursues the discussion of Nevers, pushes the French woman to talk, and, in the manner of a psychoanalyst, guides her exploration of her past. Remarking that the man interrogates the woman so frequently that he becomes "the celluloid embodiment of a question mark" (28), Freddy Sweet concludes in his chapter on Hiroshima in The Film Narratives of Alain Resnais, "Okada is a spur that impels Riva's introspective quest forward. It is only because of his persistence as questioner and pursuer that Riva's private secret is brought to the surface" (27).
Even more convincing proof of the man's investment in such an ideology of language is the fact that he occasionally verbalizes the woman's memories for her: when she states, "Ma mère pleure," he follows with, "Tu craches sur le visage de ta mère?", a suggestion which the woman then affirms. Later the man brings the woman's memories to a close by saying, "Et puis, un jour, mon amour, tu sors de l'éternité." Thus his supervision of the past, and by extension, of the woman, is accomplished by means of the simple concretization or fixing of memory in language, as well as through its linearization via the markers of narrative closure.

Both the dialogue itself and Emmanuelle Riva's performance suggest that the Frenchwoman, on the other hand, manifests a certain estrangement from language. She articulates words in an exaggerated manner, lingers on them as if she were unaccustomed to their sounds. The woman persistently plays with words, fractures them, establishes an unpredictable poetic rhythm which contrasts with the reasoned, logically questioning voice of the man. Indeed, her highly stylized, sometimes halting speech identifies her, rather than the Japanese (whose French, both of them remark, is quite good) as a kind of "linguistic" foreigner. Moreover, whereas the man's interest in language is primarily in its denotative meanings ("Ça ne veut rien dire, en français, Nevers, autrement?"); the woman is particularly sensitive to its connotative potential, the multiple and often contradictory implications of words: when asked to explain what she means when she calls herself a woman "d'une moralité douteuse" [of
"doubtful" morals], she responds with a pun—"Douter de la morale des autres" [to doubt the morals of other people]. The woman similarly casts doubt on the coherence and stability of her own speech when she replies to the man's rhetorical question as to whether she lies or tells the truth by saying, "Je mens. Et je dis la vérité."

Imaginary, Symbolic and Sexual Difference

As we have seen from the theories of subjectivity outlined in the preceding chapter, sight and language have significance not only, as Mayne points out, as elements of representation which converge in the cinema, but also as pivotal operations in the development and continued construction of the subject, especially as this process is articulated by Lacan. Moreover, Lacan's description of the symbolic as a relationship to the phallus suggests that a discussion of subjectivity ultimately intersects with the question of sexual difference. Having established that sexual difference as it relates to sight and language also informs, on some level, Hiroshima mon amour, it may be fruitful to reconsider the film from the perspective of Lacan's formulation of the subject, keeping in mind at the same time the important implications of the work of Chodorow and Irigaray in terms of the specificity of female subjectivity and of women's relationship to language.
In *Hiroshima mon amour*, the woman's distance from language and her reliance on touch and taste do bring to mind the primarily tactile and oral stimuli which characterize the infant's early relationship with the mother and form the framework of the Lacanian imaginary. These stimuli involve direct contact, and thus the probability, or danger, of an intermingling or melding of normally separate elements.\(^3\)

Significantly, the woman appears to accept, even seek, the sense of fusion, the potential confusion of identities which a sense like touch entails. There is no fear of loss or death on her part. She recounts how, rather than watching her German lover die, she laid her body on top of his; the actual moment of his death escaped her because, she tells the Japanese man, "... je n'arrivais pas à trouver la moindre différence entre ce corps mort et le mien. ... Je ne pouvais trouver entre ce corps et le mien que des ressemblances ... hurlantes, tu comprends?" The woman's body, which recalls the maternal body, is the source of her own regeneration (in the cellar, for example) and is also her link to an other who is, however, not experienced as such.

In *Hiroshima* the structures associated with a primordial order of subjectivity are most prominent in the scenes of the first love affair in Nevers. Resnais depicts this idyllic past via fluid tracking shots devoid of dialogue, and thereby strongly suggestive of a prelinguistic moment. The nationality of the French woman's lover also points to a certain marginalization, if not absence, of language as a means of communication. His identity as a foreigner takes on increased significance when we consider that, in taking the "enemy" for her
lover, the woman demonstrates a seemingly innate incognizance of difference: not only the details of their relationship but the very fact of their intimacy suggests that for her, from the beginning, this man is not an other. Moreover, when the German is killed and the love affair is discovered, her father closes his pharmacy out of shame—the mother's reaction is conspicuously absent—but the woman herself professes to feel, and indeed manifests no disgrace, even when she is tonsured by the townspeople.

If taste and touch as they represent an absence of difference can be considered emblematic of relations of the imaginary, sight, on the other hand, is associated with the mirror stage, a moment of privileged specularity which, as we have seen, is a condition of entry into the symbolic, the order of difference. In contrast to taste and touch, sight implies a separation, a distinction between self and other, I and you, which is also operative in language, and which implies authority, control, possession. In considering Hiroshima, it seems possible to locate the operations of the symbolic—the drive to stabilize, to fix meaning and identity through language and sight—primarily in the man. The Japanese desires the resurrection of the past so that he can "know" the woman, but also so that the past may be replaced with the present and the German with himself. Indeed, Debbie Glassman remarks of the man, "His story writes him into the account, preserving a place for him in future narratives" (51). The woman, on the other hand, seems willing to sustain the paradox of a present which will not relinquish the past, which will not remember for fear of, subsequently,
forgetting. Her tolerance of ambivalence, of multiplicity, of contradiction, confirms her stronger link to the mode of being identified with the imaginary.

Resnais and Duras' film, it seems, marks out two very different subject positions, and identifies these with the man and the woman respectively. Yet the narrative of Hiroshima also suggests a continuing struggle, centered in the woman, between these two orders for dominance, a conflict dating back to her youth in Nevers. Not coincidentally, in the scene in the café, the woman begins her story by remarking to the Japanese that Nevers is a city that a child could circumnavigate, and immediately after describes it as the place where she learned to read. The flashbacks to the past in the French town thus sketch the formation of a divided subjectivity. The most sustained set of images from the past, especially, outlines the woman's lingering tie to the imaginary, condensed in the brief shot of the mother and daughter embracing, but also records her initiation into the symbolic, epitomized by the single image of the father's stern gaze through his shop window.

The early flashbacks to Nevers imply that within the woman's subjectivity the imaginary has, if not a dominance, at least parity with the symbolic until war—supremely emblematic of difference in its dependence on the binary opposition ally/enemy—forces a confrontation with the socially and culturally sanctioned order. In "Lacan and Signification" Rosalind Coward emphasizes that from the perspective of the Lacanian model the subject's only alternative to submission to this
order is to fall ill (17). Indeed, the woman's self-proclaimed folie following the German's death, emphasized by so many critics, may be read as stemming from her persistent adherence to an original, pre-social order. The symptoms of her madness—crying, sucking, the fact that she screams "comme une sourde," the womblike darkness of the cellar—suggest an attempt at a complete re-immersion in the pre-oedipal which comes to an end only after an extended time of punishment, culminating in the tonsure. This latter event can be interpreted on one level (and all the more so because it is a public act) as the re-assertion of the Law of the Father through symbolic castration; as such it is the personal equivalent of the dropping of the bomb on Hiroshima, whose victims the woman is tied to iconographically in the film through shots in the prologue of the hair that fell from women's heads due to exposure to radiation. The tonsure thus stands as an attempt to literally transform the woman into a signifier of lack/otherness (here, collaboration) as well as to teach her to heed difference, to read signs. The emergence from the cellar is in a sense an indication of the temporary success of this endeavor: as the woman becomes "raisonnable," she once again adopts the strictures of language and specularity (and later, those of marriage and procreation).

Looking around her room—which, interestingly, has a mirror which figures prominently in the shots—she says, "Je commence à voir. . . . Je me souviens. Je vois l'encore. Je vois le jour. Je vois ma vie. Ta mort. Ma vie qui continue. Ta mort qui continue." Through language and sight she relearns difference and identity.
The end of the woman's monologue above points to a third factor in her "rehabilitation," an element which also figures prominently in the Lacanian model of the symbolic--absence or lack, here taking its ultimate form of death. Anthony Wilden notes in "Lacan and the Discourse of the Other":

Lacan would view the newborn child as an "absolute subject" in a totally intransitive relationship to the world he cannot yet distinguish from himself. For the object to be discovered by the child it must be absent. At the psychological level the partial object conveys the lack which creates the desire for unity from which the movement toward identification springs--since identification is itself dependent upon the discovery of difference, itself a kind of absence. (163)

In Hiroshima the German's death is an indirect punishment for collaboration which also both marks and promotes the reinstatement of the symbolic. Furthermore, his death has its complement in the woman's departure for Paris, which, represented in the film as witnessed by the mother alone, signals the "final" separation from the maternal and the imaginary.

The woman's rehabilitation, the apparent dominance of the symbolic, is, however, superficial, as the persistence of the memory of the love affair proves. The woman herself alludes to the repressed, but nonetheless powerful presence of the imaginary when she tells the man, "Nevers ... c'est la ville du monde, et même c'est la chose du monde à laquelle je rêve le plus. En même temps que c'est la chose du monde à laquelle je pense le moins." And in fact, somewhat in the manner of dreams, Nevers, and with it the imaginary, eventually erupts into the woman's consciousness, challenging the tenuous rule of the
symbolic. The eruption of the imaginary has a parallel in the evolution of the fiction itself; although initially the film seems to highlight difference, and appears to be the man's story as much as the woman's, with the first instance of what has been labeled mémoire involontaire—the moving hand of the Japanese which evokes the memory of the German soldier—the focus of the narrative shifts to the woman and to the uncovering of her memories. Moreover, as the invasion of the past of Nevers into the present of Hiroshima escalates, the presence of the imaginary is felt not only in the flashbacks but in the increasingly suggestive visuals of the present of the film. In the scene where the woman tells the man her story, for example, he makes the woman drink, holding the glass for her as a mother would for a very small child, while her arms remain at her side in a way which recalls the dependence and immobility of a young infant. The film calls attention to this unconscious maternal role of the man by means of a rare match cut—the shot of the young woman in her mother's arms is immediately followed by a virtually identical shot of the woman being embraced by the man.

There are other transformations in Hiroshima, all of which are characterized by the gradual disappearance, on numerous levels, of difference. As we have remarked, the film's narrative, rather than advancing chronologically, juxtaposes past and present in a manner superficially reminiscent of yet fundamentally opposed to traditional flashback techniques. To the extent that one has simply to reconstruct an ordered past from the scrambled or separate fragments of a story, as
one would a puzzle, traditional flashback poses no real threat to linear chronology and thus no problem for the spectator. *Hiroshima*, on the other hand, does not facilitate the spectator's "ordering" of time, but rather eventually dissolves, or more appropriately, fuses temporal levels: past, present, and future evolve from fixed poles to floating points between which the moments of the narrative rebound. Emblematic of this fusion of time levels is the scene in the second tea room, the Casablanca. This action takes place in the present of the narrative, yet, as the Japanese man watches the woman being approached by another man, the couple re-enact their past (since this is how they met) and also anticipate the future, the now inevitable "forgetting" of each other. This "unraveling" of linear time means that no resolution is possible: indeed, as in classic film, the end of *Hiroshima* replies to the beginning, but in contrast to classic film, little is set in order. Instead, the narrative inscribes a perfect circle, passing from the war and the mass tragedy of Hiroshima, through the individuals, back (or forward) once again to the plural existence embodied in the characters now bearing the names of their respective cities.

The redefinition of narrative as non-linear and circular is mirrored in the conception of history presented in the film. *Hiroshima's* prologue conveys the impossibility of historical memory and the paradox of memory as forgetting: the monuments and museums which "commemorate" the tragedy of Hiroshima have, ironically, assuaged our collective conscience, relieving us of the individual responsibility of remembering what happened there and thereby creating the condition for
its very reoccurrence. The placards carried by the marchers as part of the film in which the woman appears refer similarly to a discrepancy between man's technical prowess, which allowed him to develop the atomic bomb, and his political intelligence, which is, as one of the posters notes, "100 fois moins développée que son intelligence scientifique," ensuring that the same mistakes will be made over and over again. Thus the lack of progress in humankind's intelligence, the film suggests, guarantees a repetition of events, despite the oath of "jamais plus Hiroshima"—a phrase which recalls the woman's early statement to the Japanese that she will "never again" return to Nevers, a pronouncement that is, equally, refuted by the actual process of the film.

Finally, and most importantly, a central transformation occurs in the film in terms of identity. The script, as we noted, begins with the man's statement, "Tu n'as rien vu à Hiroshima. Rien." The woman responds, "J'ai tout vu. Tout," thus immediately situating language within a framework of binary opposition. Later, in the first moments following the prologue, as the camera tilts up to reveal, by means of a shot/reverse shot, the face of one and then the other lover, the woman exclaims, "Toi" and the man answers, "Oui, moi. Tu m'auras vu," thereby linking sight and language as binary systems to identity as difference. Here, as elsewhere throughout Hiroshima, however, these oppositions are established only to be undermined. Language as it is structured in narrative leads not to a fixed, knowable identity but to multiplicity: the Japanese man becomes identified with the German lover.
of the woman's past, his use of the pronoun "je" signaling his eventual encompassing of this former other; correspondingly, the unveiling of the woman's past does not pinpoint her, but instead reveals her to be at once a responsible wife and mother, the woman, as she says, "de moralité douteuse," and the young girl of Nevers, mad and bitter with love. This intermingling, fluidity of identity, persists, so that there is no resolution of opposing elements. When, at the end of the film, the man and woman name each other "Hiroshima" and "Nevers-en-France," they conflate themselves with a million others, abstract each other out of particular existence and into infinite plural existence in the same moment. This final act of naming, in contrast to that which begins Hiroshima, can be said to identify only if by identification we understand a failure to delineate the individual, to mark difference. Thus this film about time and memory "ends" with an image of subjectivity redefined according to the heterogeneity and flux of the imaginary.
The year of its release the film won the International Critics Prize at the Cannes Film Festival and in 1960 it received the New York Film Critics Award.

James Monoco notes of the writing process, "Duras conferred at every stage with both Resnais and Gérard Jarlot, who acted as literary adviser, never beginning a scene until both of them had commented upon the previous passage" (37).

Metz makes reference to this distinction between "senses of contact" and "senses of distance" in his discussion of the scopic drive in "Le signifiant imaginaire" (42).

For an analysis of the rhetorical strategies which organize the various histories of Hiroshima—a discussion which intersects at several points with this one, while nonetheless coming to quite different conclusions about the film—see Glassman's article "The Feminine Subject as History Writer in Hiroshima Mon Amour" (1981).

For a feminist reading of hysteria in the female characters in Duras' texts—its connection to the preoedipal and its repercussions for language—see Patricia Fedkiw's "Marguerite Duras: Feminine Field of Hysteria" (1982).
CHAPTER IV

SUBJECTIVITY AND LANGUAGE:

PROVIDENCE AND DETRUIRE, DIT-ELLE

Language in Resnais' Providence

Providence, Resnais' first English language film, was made in 1976 from a script by British absurdist playwright David Mercer. Centering on Clive Langham, a writer who is slowly dying of rectal cancer, the film's first-person narrative is divided into two distinct parts: in the first section, which comprises three-quarters of the screen time, Clive spends an uncomfortable, angst-ridden night during which his family life and the novel he is writing apparently merge; in the brief second section, which takes place the following day, Clive's family arrives to celebrate his seventy-eighth birthday; their essentially warm, loving interaction vitiates what in retrospect were the fictional nightmares of the previous night. The film concludes with a shot of a contented Clive, alone, but by his own volition, and at peace.

Just as Providence itself possesses a bipartite structure, it has divided critics into two interpretive camps. John Kreidl, in his book on Resnais, summarizes and joins in this critical polarization:
If we want to "read" the meaning of Providence, we are soon compelled to choose between two opposed possibilities. Providence is about a man writing a novel and the problems he has with it. Or, on the other hand Providence is a dream and has a dream structure. Like Fellini's 8½, it plays with itself. I cannot reconcile these two readings. Either it is one or the other. (189)

Rejecting Marsha Kinder's argument for a dream structure because what is visualized on the screen is too "explicit and uncoded" (190), Kreidl enumerates the film's Brechtian distancing devices to support his view that Clive is an artist "in full possession of his faculties" (190), and that Providence is primarily a self-reflexive text. He affirms at the end of his introduction,

Resnais' film is about a narrator named Clive Langham who narrates that he is about to write a novel. I therefore favor reading Providence as if it were the story of a creation, not a study of the characters themselves. (190-191)

While Kreidl is certainly correct to identify fiction and dreams as two major critical categories suggested by the film, his insistence that they are mutually exclusive, that there is no critical perspective which can reconcile them, seems hasty. In effect, the common boundary of these interpretations comes into focus if we refer to Freud's notion of the divided subject and treat literary creation as a subset of language, and thus as a product of the preconscious, and view dreams as one instance of the "language" of the unconscious. This perceptual shift afforded by a psychoanalytic framework makes it possible to see that what joins Providence as a film about literary creation and Providence as a dream is precisely the question of subjectivity--the
divisions of the subject, the signifying systems and operations associated with these divisions, and the place of each of these systems in the construction of the self. Identification of this common boundary transforms the shape of the interpretive territories elaborated by Kreidl. Providence pushes beyond modernist questions about the line between fiction and reality or dream and reality, posed with the assumption of the ultimately still unitary individual, the unified self; it turns a critical eye on that self, and reveals it to be not a stable, autonomous entity, but a continuous construction. Providence is indeed concerned with the writer and the dreamer and their "production," not simply in the sense of what or how they create, but also from the standpoint of how they themselves are produced in and by the flux of those processes. The starting point of the following discussion of Resnais' film, then, is the subject as the point of intersection of various signifying systems; its central object of inquiry is the purportedly opposed functions of these systems within subjectivity—specifically, and most importantly, in relation to memory.

Language provides a structural framework for Providence, a framework which finds its major support in the character of Clive. Clive is identified with and defined largely by language: not only is he a writer by profession, and the film's narrator, but for most of the film language is the primary mode by which the spectator has access to him at all as a character. Physically absent from the scenes he "imagines," Clive's sole representation in them (on a manifest level)
is his own voice-over and the references to him by the characters he envisions and/or creates. Even in his own scenes Clive's presence materializes principally through his monologues. The dark, infrequent shots of Clive fragment his body, lending a relative coherence to his voice and thereby giving it a certain dominance. The spectator's introduction to Clive typifies this sound/image relationship: our first glimpse of him is a close-up (not preceded by any establishing shot) of a hand knocking over a wine glass, accompanied on the soundtrack by four vehement "damns." The filmscript contains numerous allusions to the close association between Clive and language: his son Claud remarks in a letter he is composing to his father, "The silence when you get to the other side will be our only reassurance that you have actually gone"; he similarly refers later to his father's ongoing search for a "moral language."

The trial which constitutes the film's first coherent scene underscores this focus on language. The courtroom as Resnais portrays it is a largely linguistic environment. The prominence of the lawyer Claud's voice, for example, designates litigation as a process wherein "truth" is established and "justice" is achieved primarily through rhetoric: here, legal argument, rather than physical evidence or proof, is instrumental in determining innocence or guilt. The accused man Woodford's defense, similarly, is limited to a first person narrative; the accompaniment of this narrative by first person point of view flashbacks emphasizes, moreover, that his testimony—elicited by a rhetorical procedure—is the verbal expression of memory, a particular
version of the past further distilled through language, not a direct, (impossible) "objective" reporting of "facts."

As a battle of words, a struggle for control over narrative, the courtroom scene also establishes within the film a direct link between language and authority. Both the dialogue and the iconography of the trial (Claud mobile and looming above the seated, slumping Woodford) serve to draw attention to the prosecutor's linguistic proficiency and tie it to his apparently greater power. This scene acts as a metaphor for the function of language throughout much of the film: language is the medium of control, the means by which Clive attempts to exercise his authority. Such manipulation is evident in the "fictional" structure of the body of the film, where the members of Clive's family appear as characters in one of his novels. This fictional control operates on several dimensions. On a conscious level, Clive, as omniscient narrator, determines the personalities of the characters we see on screen (the echo effect in the soundtrack serves to make us aware that Clive literally puts words in their mouths). On a less conscious level, Clive's sarcastic, self-critical narration serves to distance him emotionally from his sons and wife, limit his vulnerability.¹

Moreover, the very fact that Clive's family is the object of such extensive linguistic process suggests that an even more fundamental operation of containment or management is at work here. The literary structuration of these relationships points to the "interference" of the secondary process, which diminishes their direct affective
charge—pleasurable as well as unpleasurable. The patterns of language appear to control the sensory and emotional intensity of past experience, and perhaps even serve to disguise its status as memory: although Clive refers to Claud, Claud's wife Sonia, etc. by terms which imply that they are actually related to him, Clive's own identity as a writer and the fictional framework introduce the possibility of a future denial of the accuracy of these identifications.

At this point it may seem that Clive's narrative in Providence is wholly the result of the workings of the secondary process. Yet, though the signifying system of the preconscious is certainly dominant here, it is not monolithic. The authority of language is challenged or disrupted in the film in many ways. The outcome of the trial sequence is one example: despite his superior verbal skill, Claud fails to prove Woodford guilty. Even more importantly, if the analogy of the omniscient narrator is generally appropriate to Clive, it is not uniformly so, since he is not always successful in manipulating characters or events. Early in the film, for instance, immediately following the trial, Sonia races out of the court building, and Clive's voice-over exclaims in frustration, "Sonia, where are you going?" Even though at times Clive is able to rewrite a scene that he does not like (the reunion of Claud and his former mistress Helen, for instance) at other times he is at the mercy of his characters—most notably the capricious "footballer"—and appears to lose control of the narrative he is ostensibly creating.
These momentary lapses in authorial power are echoed in other aspects of the film. Providence is punctuated by numerous isolated shots and scenes which are not accompanied by Clive's otherwise omnipresent voice-over narration. These silent images occur without warning or transition and cause additional, noticeable ruptures in an already relatively fragmented narrative. Although not easily categorized, these images coalesce around two characters—the "wolfman" whom Woodford is accused of murdering, and Clive's wife Molly. The longest and most cryptic unncirrated sequence occurs while Claud is driving to meet Helen at her hotel, and is comprised of shots of an old man falling down, a body being thrown into a river, a building collapsing, and the wolfman being carried out of the hotel on a stretcher. The shortest consists of a shot of Clive discovering Molly's dead body.

Leaving aside for a moment the question of a possible thematic link between these unnarrated scenes, it is clear that they are connected by their "illogical" quality and by the fact that they are exempt from Clive's linguistic control. Although these scenes appear to take place, like the others, within Clive's mind, their eclecticism and segregation from the rest of the narrative suggest that they emanate from a somewhat different source. Recalling Freud's contention that the preconscious seeks to establish a thought identity and the unconscious a perceptual identity with the past, it is possible to argue that these images represent instances of unconscious discourse. Their presence seems to signal the surfacing, in a "disguised"
form, of repressed material, and as such marks a tension within Clive and within the narrative.

In order to understand more fully the mechanism of repression in Providence we must return to the question of the dream analogy. While the argument for reading the first part of the film as a dream is supported by the fact that Clive's scenes occur at night, with him in bed, and that the latter part of the film is heavily coded, through the use of shots of Clive waking up outside, bathed in sunlight, as an entry into "consciousness," these details do not constitute the most convincing proof of the legitimacy of such a reading. Stronger evidence for a dream analogy lies in the film's structuring by the overlapping operations of condensation and displacement. In the scenes involving Clive's family, for instance, each individual contains or condenses the traits of several people. Although he himself is absent, Clive's characteristics are projected onto the various family members; his sons, wife, and daughter-in-law are like schizophrenic puppets which stand not only for themselves, but for Clive and also for each other, and thereby play (often simultaneously) multiple roles. Just as Clive apparently neglected Molly, for example, Claud here ignores Sonia, their only interaction consisting of the insults they continually fling at one another. The displacement of the dream-work manifests itself clearly in Providence in the way that qualities, even entire identities, shift or flow between people like the wine that is constantly being poured. The quest for a "moral language" is first attributed to Claud, then to Woodford, then finally to Clive. Both
Sonia and Claud exhibit the sarcasm and coldness which is finally associated primarily with the writer. Similarly, Helen, identified by Clive as Claud's mistress, is ill like Molly, and later she berates Woodford (who at this point speaks as if he were Clive) for having mistreated her.

This dream structure sheds light on the temporal ambiguity which characterizes this first part of the film. Clive narrates in present tense, as if events and encounters are taking place at the moment he describes them, yet certain scenes like the one where Clive finds Molly dead in the bathtub are certainly flashbacks; still others, as I indicated above, have the aura of the past because of the presence of traits and events associated with other characters. Much as dreams employ elements from past and present experience and recombine them, causing them to lose their temporal specificity, the narrative of Providence is a complicated weave of the disparate elements of Clive's life, one in which time and place are displaced along with everything else.

Such an interpretation of the first section of Providence is to some degree dependent on the end of the film, where we learn that some characters are not entirely, and others not at all as they were previously portrayed. The resolution is of course critical to most dream readings of the film, but in an entirely different way. For James Monoco, for instance, the "surprise" ending of Providence is proof that the dream narrative is no more than the paranoid hallucination of an intoxicated mind.
From all we can see, Claud and Sonia are quite contentedly married (not, as Clive would have had it, bitchy characters out of marital melodrama). The 'real' Claud makes a striking contrast with the fiction his father fantasized: stiff, yes, but also subdued, cautious, thoughtful, almost obsequious. It's entirely clear that he finds his father as difficult as his father has dreamt and written that he finds him. But he keeps these feelings quite under control. He is not yet free of his father as Clive thinks he is. He hardly has the cold, satanic wit his father/author ascribed to him last night. (202)

Although Monoco himself observes that Claud "finds his father as difficult as his father has dreamt and written that he finds him," he chooses to disregard this similarity between the first and second narratives in order to emphasize their differences, and ultimately to dismiss the first. Unless we agree, however, that Resnais is simply playing an elaborate cinematic trick on his audience, there is little justification for completely discrediting the dream narrative, even in light of the ending. What is missing from Monoco's analysis, and what is integral to a reading of the film, is a sensitivity to the processes of condensation and displacement at work in the first narrative.

Taking as a model Freud's formulation of the dream-work as a mediation between the dream-thoughts and the dream, we must, in order to understand the relationship between the first and second parts of Providence, rearrange or decode certain elements rather than eliminating some and taking others at purely face value. It is indeed not Claud but Clive who possesses a "cold, satanic wit," just as the "control" which Claud later manifests indicates that he is without a doubt his father's son. In the end Claud's character, as a "fiction
his father fantasized," is important not so much in itself but as a signpost to Clive's own psychic operations.

If we subscribe to the opposition dream/reality and agree that the former term inhabits a space which does not coincide with that of the subject, there is no question that Resnais' film bears little more than superficial resemblance to a dream. If, on the other hand, we accept Freud's argument that, as a means of circumventing the preconscious' censorship of taboo material, dreams are key indices to subjectivity, Providence appears to be extremely dream-like in its processes of representation. The first part of Providence traces the eruption of Clive's buried, but nonetheless very "real"--in the sense of their vital part in subjectivity--desire, guilt, hostilities and fears.

Molly's physical absence from the narrative, coupled with her overdetermined indirect representation in the characters of Sonia and Helen, indicates that she is at the center of this repressed material. The dream narrative circuitously traces (in the guise of other relationships) the Langham's marriage, gradually uncovering Clive's love but also his neglect of Molly (his numerous affairs, his refusal to acknowledge her in public) and eventually hinting at a connection between this neglect and her suicide. Accordingly, death, or the threat of it, is the thread linking the unnarrated shots and scenes in Providence, including the reoccurring images of a stadium cum concentration camp in which most of the characters are at one time pictured. In Providence death is repressed both as a memory--Molly's--and as an all too imminent future. Clive's ill
health, which leads to a loss of control over his bodily functions, serves as a constant reminder of his mortality, and is mirrored in his loss of control over the narrative. And just as, as the film progresses, Clive is more and more at the mercy of his ailing body, he is more and more subject to the unrestricted wishes of the unconscious.

Her multiple representations in the film suggest not only that Molly is the central object of the operation of repression but that she poses a psychic dilemma for Clive. Because Molly evokes a broad range of feelings, some manageable and some unmanageable, the memory traces connected to her are channeled into both the unconscious and preconscious, are thus subject to competition between the primary and secondary processes. The opposing patterns of language surrounding Molly demonstrate her paradoxical position in the process of subjectivity. If we recall from Silverman's discussion of Freud that repression is an event which is played out at the level of signification, that what is denied certain mnemonic traces is precisely a "word presentation," it is not surprising that Clive's feelings towards Molly remain for the most part unexpressed. On the other hand, the few direct references to Molly, consisting primarily of exclamations of her name, are unique in the intensity of feeling which they convey. Like the names Balbec and Venice in Proust's *Recherche*, these utterances do not conform entirely to the restrictions posed by the secondary process, but instead preserve to a large extent the affect associated with the unconscious.
To summarize we may say that certain components of the first
narrative—the constant slippage of condensation and displacement which
characterizes character and identity, the scenes without narration, the
affective intensity of certain instances of language—point to the
operation of another signifying system, that of the unconscious.
Indeed, to the extent that it occasionally moves outside of a
linguistic framework and succeeds in representing in a relatively open
way certain repressed materials, this first, dream narrative overrides
the controls of the secondary process, challenges its dominance. The
absence of these elements in the second part of the film, along with
the switch in point of view whereby the spectator is no longer allowed
"inside" Clive's mind, mark the reemergence of preconscious censorship
and of the mechanism of repression. Clive's voice-over, the
fragmented, unnarrated shots and scenes and the claustrophobic,
nightmare atmosphere disappear and are replaced by a sunny exterior
recorded, in the last few minutes of the film, in slow 360° tracking
shots which "reveal" all and convey a feeling of peace and "all's right
with the world"-ness. The members of Clive's family arrive and,
adoring and obedient as the servants who wait on him, sit at his feet
and offer him birthday gifts. Predictably, Clive's reaffirmed
authority manifests itself in and through language, both his own and
his children's: Sonia, Kevin the bastard son (the character Woodford in
the dream narrative) and even Claud, of whom Clive is openly critical,
speak respectfully to him and leave immediately and silently when he
asks them to. The almost ideal nature of the children, given the less
than ideal nature of the father, suggests a resumption of complete
authorial control—these are, now more than ever, characters completely
"written" by Clive. The erasure of the marks of writing is simply one
more instance of repression, carried out on the level of enunciation.

At the end of Providence, Clive regains a mastery over others and
self, over "providence:" his final pronouncement that "nothing is
written" stands as a repudiation of the power of any "external" force
(fate, or the unconscious) to exert control. What is simultaneously
affirmed is a unified subject synonymous with the preconscious—that
is, a certain psychically coherent and socially sanctioned
representation of the self. Not surprisingly, then, the resolution of
the narrative of Providence appears to conform quite closely to the
traditional male oedipal model. The first part of the film, with its
abundant connotations of impotence or castration, is informed by the
question "Who is the Father?" i.e. "Who has control, power, the
phallus?" The momentary ascendancy of Clive's sons is suggested by
Claud's verbal proficiency and Woodford's sexual attractiveness to
Sonia/Helen. Ultimately, however, both men return to a state of lack:
Claud's authority is revealed as flawed, a faint reflection of a
greater authority residing outside of him in law or legal code, and
Woodford, when questioned by Sonia about his sexual arousal, admits,
"It isn't my erection." Here Providence departs slightly from the
standard oedipal narrative: rather than assuming the status of the
father, the sons remain subordinate, as the authority they temporarily
possess is reclaimed. In this regard, the birthday gifts which Clive
receives are particularly significant: the knife, telescope, and book are clearly representative of the phallus, returned to its rightful site in the father.

Molly constitutes the strongest challenge to Clive's authority, as she does to preconscious control. Her suicide is simultaneously a declaration of independence and a demand for recognition which has a parallel in the demand of the desires of the unconscious for expression. If, following Monoco, we read the end of the film as a return to "reality," Molly's noticeable absence—or, equally, her incarnation in a tamed, devoted Sonia who assures Clive that Molly's death was not his fault—appears to affirm Clive's complete power. If we admit a resurgence of preconscious censorship and look beneath the veneer of repression, however, we can read these same elements as empty substitutes, screens for Clive's inability to really control Molly, to command her presence as he does the others'. (In one sense, Molly's absence is the necessary condition of Clive's triumph, since she might threaten to undermine his authority.) Her silence amid otherwise universal homage alerts the spectator to a gap in Clive's power and alludes to his part in her death. From a perspective which reads "against the grain" of the film, Molly is a point of resistance in the resolution of the narrative.

Providence reformulates the relationship between memory and identity, situates it outside of the framework of simple dichotomies such as past/present, dream/reality, fiction/reality, or self/other. Ultimately what is at issue in the film are not the factual details of
Clive's life (Claud's comment during the trial—"Surely the facts are not in dispute"—is applicable to the film as a whole), nor their exact chronology. Rather, Providence uncovers the very modes of reconstruction of the past, the different processes to which memory is subject, and the varied functions of memory in subjectivity. Molly's death, for example, fosters no narrative suspense, since this memory surfaces fairly early on in the film. Doubtless a certain interpretation of this death, revolving around Clive, is suppressed until relatively late, but more than that, what is withheld is its incredible affective charge. This repression (which both disguises and, through its very existence, discloses Molly's centrality to Clive's psyche) forces a compromise on the unconscious, causing it to adopt alternative signifying strategies. The dream structure of the first narrative is one result of this compromise. The force of this unconscious material means that it occasionally enters the preconscious in a less disguised form, as demonstrated in the unnarrated scenes and at certain moments in language. This lapse in preconscious censorship leads in turn to a backlash of repression, manifested in the second narrative.

Providence thus presents a single family romance in multiple versions, each of which is the product of a series of checks and balances between various psychic operations. Although initially the film appears to point to the preconscious as the sole source of these narratives, and thus as the site of identity—there is a sense in which Clive is consciously using language to affirm a certain representation.
of the self—it becomes clear that Clive is, equally, being "written" by the unconscious. The influence of the unconscious is played out on many levels, and is even indirectly responsible for the final resurgence of repression, which appears at first to be the work of the preconscious alone. Providence thus makes explicit the position of the subject at the juncture of unconscious and preconscious signification, its structuration according to an ongoing process of negotiation between primary and secondary processes.

Language in Duras' Détruire, dit-elle

While on one level Resnais' Providence invites a deconstruction of the coherent subject as it is expressed in the tradition of the individual, on another, more dominant level the film bears witness to the incredible force of the illusion of stable identity and of the notion of a transcendent reality. Marguerite Duras' aptly titled Détruire, dit-elle, on the other hand, challenges from the outset the possibility both of the individual and of any reference outside of language itself. In the film four characters who meet at a hotel for convalescents participate in a sustained exchange of identity: the two women, Alissa and Elizabeth, gradually grow to resemble each other, following the two men, Stein and Max Thor, who from the first few moments of the film are interchanged. Just as in Duras' novel Détruire,
dit-elle sections of the narration are repeated, often word for word, in the dialogue ("'Je suis toujours tremblant,' dit Stein, dans une incertitude tremblante"), here the speech of different characters constantly overlaps: when Max Thor exclaims to Alissa, "Comme je te désire," Stein asserts, "Comme il vous désire, comme il vous aime." In both the literary and cinematic text this echo effect, along with continual interpolations such as "dit-elle," "dit-il," insist on the text's status as a written or verbal trace which can do no more than constantly refer to itself.

This refusal of Duras' texts to signify beyond themselves and of identity to become fixed have their common source in a radical reformulation of language. Eschewing the horizontal axis of syntagmatic relations, Durasian language denies difference, and operates principally along the vertical axis of paradigm. What results is a constant substitution and repetition not contained by closure. Since language is both emblematic and generative of subjectivity, this redefinition means that identity as understood in traditional narrative can now only be shifting and fluid. This fluidity of identity is not simply a question of forming new romantic pairs for the sake of plot, but of circulation among infinite "others" barely distinguishable from each other through their shared identity as discourse: hence the prevalence in Duras' texts of pronouns or "shifters," whose simultaneous application to several characters blurs the distinctions between individuals, and the importance of the triad, a figure which,
unlike the couple, implies a certain instability, and thus a continuous movement.

This non-referentiality and syntagmatic poverty of language transform the structures of classical narrative. Détruire, dit-elle begins, for instance, with the voice-over of two women who are never associated with the characters on screen or identified in any way; moreover, their exchange in the form of questions and answers gives the appearance of an introduction to the film's diegesis, but in fact conveys only the most ambivalent and most trivial information: when the first voice inquires, "Où est-on?" the second equivocates, "Par exemple, dans un hôtel"; to the second question about the time, the same voice replies, "Je ne sais pas. Ça n'a pas d'importance." The only direct response is to the last, peripheral question about the weather. Later, when the voices reappear, their conversation is either equally vague or reiterates what is already known: "Qui est dans ce livre? ---Max Thor./ Que fait-il? ---Rien. Il regarde. Max Thor décrit ce que Stein regarde./ Par exemple, cette femme? ---Par exemple, oui." Because narrative closure depends on a limited field which the paradigmatic function does not provide, the privileging of paradigm has grave consequences for narrative progression. In Détruire the "sense of an ending" which might normally accompany Elizabeth's departure with her husband is "destroyed" by the immobility of the three other characters who remain, listening to the crashing music "sur le nom de Stein," as if waiting to begin again with the next Elizabeth.
Thus the dominant impression conveyed here, as in many of Duras' texts, is of an unending circularity of narrative.

In contrast to Providence, then, where linguistic structuration functions largely to delimit, define, and control, in Détruire, dit-elle a restructured language institutes and perpetuates a mobile subjectivity which informs all aspects of the film. In the dialogue, pronouns evolve consistently and immediately from singular to plural: when Max Thor notes, "Je dors mal, je suis comme vous," Stein, in affirmation or even correction, says, "Nous dormons mal." Many of the actions described in the film enfold or encompass those of other characters: the second narrator's voice says, as noted above, "Max Thor décrit ce que Stein regarde," and Alissa tells Elizabeth, "Nous n'avons pas besoin d'écrire. Stein écrira pour nous." Similarly, the letter which is written to Elizabeth is later left for Alissa. The two game sequences, especially, are emblematic of this new identity. In the card game the random playing of cards and the rapid alternation between different dealers mimic the absolutely fluid "boundaries" of the self. Both here and in the other game there are no rules—circulation itself has priority over outcome or means. Accordingly, the card players show little interest in whether they are winning or losing, and during the croquet match Max encourages Elizabeth to cheat.

Détruire, dit-elle thus departs from the more classical narrative of Providence not so much in the Beckettian sense that "nothing happens," but in the sense that what transpires is, in Stein's words, "la destruction capitale," a disintegration of language accompanied,
inexorably, by a breakdown of the familiar structures of subjectivity. Like Resnais' *L'Année dernière à Marienbad*, however, *Détruire, dit-elle* incorporates the story of a persuasion, or rather, in this case, a failed persuasion: in the film Max Thor, his wife Alissa, and Stein attempt to convince Elizabeth Alione to renounce her tedious, bourgeois life with her husband and join their communal relationship. Elizabeth's unwillingness to leave the park to walk in the forest with the others is a metaphor for her fear of this unknown, even unimaginable, existence, one that includes but clearly goes beyond simple sexual freedom. Her encounters with Alissa, and later Stein and Thor, mark the space of a confrontation with the new order of identity and language which they represent.

Although all three characters are a part of the attempt to "convert" Elizabeth, Alissa is the agent or emissary for the group, a fact acknowledged in Stein's statement, "La destruction capitale en passera d'abord par les mains d'Alissa." Using gentle but insistent inquiry, Alissa learns the reasons for Elizabeth's stay at the hotel and invites her to question the external authority (in the form of her husband and doctors) responsible for her repressed life. Alissa's role as a kind of psychoanalyst recalls on the surface that of the Japanese man in *Hiroshima*, but nonetheless contrasts with it in several salient ways: Alissa is not aggressive, claims no privilege because of her position as confident, and, finally and most importantly, demonstrates no particular investment in language. Indeed, several times when she seems most likely to convince she brings the conversation abruptly to a
halt. At one particularly critical moment, when Elizabeth inquires "Vous voulez me désespérer?" Alissa's response is "Oui. Ne parlez plus."

Such moments suggest that if language, especially as it conforms to a particular linear, rhetorical tradition, has any place in Elizabeth's awakening, it is at most a temporary and secondary one. In the end the real process of persuasion (which is so understated as to render the term inappropriate here) takes place by means of paradigm or imitation rather than explanation. Having earlier cut her hair in order to increase the resemblance between them, Alissa stands in front of a mirror with Elizabeth and points out their physical similarity. Reliance on example and nonverbal communication is not exclusive to Alissa, but characterizes virtually all the major interactions in the text. During the card game, for instance, neither she, Max, nor Stein offer any explanation or justification—the absence of rules is conveyed to Elizabeth entirely through action.

The cumulative effect of the film is to underscore the limitations of traditional language, and to oppose it to a redefined, paradigmatic "language." The tension between the two is evident in the ambivalence of the term "écrire." Although on the one hand its phonetic similarity to "détruire" and its frequency in the dialogue suggest that "écrire" has a positive value in the text, there are other references which give the term another, more negative connotation: When Elizabeth confesses to Max Thor that she only pretends to read, and offers him her book, he refuses, saying, "Il faut les jeter." Thor himself responds to
inquiries about whether he is indeed a writer by saying that he is about to become one, and at another point in the dialogue distances himself even further from language: "Ecrire, peut-être . . . chaque nuit, depuis que je suis arrivé dans cet hôtel, je suis sur le point de commencer . . . je n'écris pas, je n'écrirai jamais. . . ." Finally, the cursoriness of most of the verbal exchanges and the long periods of silence are in and of themselves an index to the inadequacy of words. And in the same way that language is frequently weighed and found wanting, logic and reason are rejected in favor of intuition or suggestion: Max Thor advises Elizabeth, who confesses her confusion, "Ne cherchez pas à comprendre." Similarly, in another scene, Stein, watching Alissa tear up a letter, remarks, "Je l'ai écrite pour toi . . . quand je ne savais pas que tu avais tout deviné."

The reformulation of language and identity in evidence in Détruire, dit-elle inevitably results in the impossibility of memory. The structure of remembrance, based as it is here on the quicksand of a non-referential language, can only crumble. Not surprisingly, the film abounds with instances of forgetting: Thor remarks to Stein that he can never remember Elizabeth Alione's name, and admits that he has difficulty recalling his wife's face; Stein, having told Thor about his attraction to a woman whom he met at the hotel several years before, finally "recognizes" this woman in Alissa. The examples are almost too numerous to cite. Elizabeth appears at first to represent a reversal of this universal amnesia: her conversations with Alissa reveal several "hidden" facts about her recent past, including the death of her baby.
and her affair with the young doctor who later tried to kill himself. Yet this initial impression of a movement out of oubli is mitigated by several other factors. First, it is clear that, unlike Clive's repression in Providence, the "forgetting" which precedes this instance of memory is superficial, and externally imposed—that is, it is because Elizabeth has been encouraged by others not to speak about these past events that she has previously not done so. Second, as the film progresses, the inability to remember which characterizes the others overtakes Elizabeth as well. During the card game, for example, she becomes less and less sure about which Italian city she visited one summer. Max Thor, noticing that she seems to be making little progress in her book, concludes that she must read and forget what she reads; in addition, in the last scene he states matter of factly to Elizabeth's husband that she has forgotten the young doctor.

In the last analysis, neither linear language nor memory are central to the new identity in Détruire, dit-elle. Even if one argues in the case of Elizabeth that the verbal exchange with Alissa does serve to force the past to the surface, both this past and language are ultimately abandoned. Words and what they "reveal" have no importance in and of themselves: their only, momentary function is to introduce multiplicity into the apparently coherent self; as such, they are merely steps on the way to a fundamentally "other" subjectivity which by nature excludes the possibility of memory. Seen in this light, Elizabeth's "confessions" can be understood as the linguistic counterpart of her vomiting—they revive the past only in the form of a
renewed capability to love outside of her relationship with her husband; more importantly, they serve to purge, to clear the way for her increasing amnesia, itself directly tied to her growing intimacy with Alissa, Stein, and Thor, and a sign of her imminent "conversion."

In the film, the impossibility of memory broadens to a general collapse of temporal distinctions which is in evidence throughout the narrative, but intensifies noticeably in the final scene: Max Thor informs Bernard Alione that he teaches "l'histoire... de l'avenir"; Thor identifies Alissa's age both in the present and at the time that he met her as eighteen, and refers to her several times as an "enfante"; of Stein and Alissa together he remarks to Bernard, "... eux, ce sont déjà des enfants." The increasing allusions to children and childhood which occur alongside the temporal "leveling" suggest that the end product of "destruction capitale" is a state of tabula rasa whose sole possible temporal signifier is the future tense.

The numerous structures of identity and language we have analyzed up to this point are found in both Duras' literary and film texts to varying degrees. Yet in the films these structures also possess a cinematic specificity which warrants close examination. In Détruire, dit-elle Duras makes use of filming and editing techniques which depart significantly from those of dominant cinema. Transitions between shots are abrupt, and the beginnings and ends of scenes are not coded in a way that makes them easily recognizable. Establishing shots and close-ups are used sparsely, with medium shots predominating; these are for the most part two-shots, so that the frame does not in general
isolate individuals, but routinely incorporates more than one person. (When Alissa introduces Stein and Thor to Elizabeth, the camera drops back in order to include all four of them within the frame.) Elizabeth is the subject of most of the close-ups which do occur, a visual segregation that parallels and reinforces her social and psychological separation from the others.

Perhaps the most striking visual characteristic of Détruire, dit-elle is the infrequency of either shot/reverse shot sequences or eye-line matches. In fact, as the film's first scene between Thor and Stein demonstrates, characters rarely look at each other, even when they occupy the same frame. Despite the frequent references to watching or being watched—Alissa tells Stein, for example, that when she and Thor make love, they leave their window open so that Stein can see—many of the verbal exchanges proceed virtually without visual contact. The images of Alissa and Elizabeth are a notable exception to this pattern. After their initial meeting, they affirm their mutual interest in one another by exchanging glances and smiles several times. As the film progresses, however, this gaze is ruptured dramatically, suggesting a shift in their relationship: In an exceptional scene, the characters are filmed in a series of two-shots with Elizabeth standing first to the right and then to the left of Alissa's reflection in a mirror. As the women converse they do not, for the most part, look at each other, but instead face in the same direction, creating a strange "doubling" effect which is further intensified by their physical resemblance. On the two occasions when
Elizabeth turns her head to glance offscreen at Alissa, there is no corresponding on-screen eye-line match with Alissa's reflection. Here the change in visual tropes marks an evolution in the structure of identity. The very avoidance of those techniques such as shot/reverse shot used previously in filming the women—techniques whose effect is to affirm the autonomy of individual characters while at the same time bringing them into proximity—implies a heterogenous identity that transcends the individual. In this way the formal components of the film work in tandem with other narrative elements to suggest the breakdown of the boundaries of subjectivity.

Not the least of the functions of the many shifts in narrative and identity we have been tracing is to begin to fundamentally redefine the traditional relationship between the spectator and the film. The most obvious consequence of the aforementioned techniques is that the spectator is rarely permitted to focus attention, even momentarily, on individual characters, a situation which does not totally block but nonetheless presents an obstacle to spectator identification. Although less radically than Duras' later films—perhaps because the conjunction of sound and image which is absent from certain of those films is still largely maintained here—Détruire, dit-elle repositions the film viewer: we, like the characters themselves, are obliged to circulate, take up multiple and increasingly multiplied perspectives. Thus, in addition to destroying the spectator's position as the privileged recipient of an ordered, coherent world, the film no longer produces that unified spectator because the product itself is no longer unified
or coherent in a way that the spectator easily recognizes. In other words, the shifting subjectivity within the cinematic text is mirrored in the now decentered spectator/subject.

An interrogation of the coherent subject is at the basis of both *Providence* and *Détruire, dit-elle*. In Resnais' film the unitary facade of the character of Clive gives way as the drives of the unconscious assert themselves with less and less restraint from the preconscious. In Duras' film *Alissa*, Stein and Thor initiate a plural subjectivity in which Elizabeth is gradually caught up. To some extent, the respective denouements of the films also overlap: in *Providence* the divisions of the self appear to recede, and in *Détruire, dit-elle* Elizabeth and Bernard leave the hotel, rejecting the final invitation to walk in the forest. These similarities should not, however, cause us to lose sight of the more fundamental differences between the two films. The frame of reference of Resnais' film—its "premise" if you will—is the internally-divided self: the "dream" circulation of identity between self and other is presented as the manifestation of an inner tension which, although it may contain the germ of a more radical rupture of the conventional boundaries of subjectivity, does not destroy them. The premise of *Détruire, dit-elle*, on the other hand, is a subject already so decentered by virtue of its heterogeneity that it can no longer be contained within the framework of the individual. Categories such as unconscious or preconscious have limited application here; where they do (arguably) apply, as in the case of Elizabeth, they are quickly subsumed by a larger movement of identity; hence the slow but
persistent increase in the number of characters and the decreasing instances of first person point of view.

Even more importantly, Providence and Détruire, dit-elle diverge in terms of the place they assign to both language and memory, and especially in the way that they formulate the relationship between the two. In Resnais' film, language is the means by which the preconscious exerts control over the intensity of memory. Although this control is challenged and disrupted by unconscious discourse, which also at moments erupts into language, in the end preconscious signification reasserts its dominance. In Duras' film, language is an intermediate and subordinate force: it may serve as a tool to elicit memory, but wields no authority over the past; moreover, just as the past loses its specificity, the differential linguistic function dissolves, and language subsists only in a restructured, paradigmatic form.

In conclusion we may say that in both films memory has the ability to introduce multiplicity and heterogeneity into the apparently unified self, thereby undermining rather than confirming that unity. Where these films differ most dramatically is the degree of seriousness of the threat which memory poses: in Providence, the deconstructive force of memory can be contained; in Détruire, it cannot. This question of differing levels of containment manifests itself in the deeper narrative structures of the respective films. Whereas in Providence the final repression of the split self makes it possible for both Clive and the spectator to view this heterogeneous subjectivity as a temporary aberration, Détruire, dit-elle contains no textual opening
which might support a similarly recuperative reading. Bernard’s willingness to remain with the others, along with Stein’s comment that in a few days Elizabeth would have submitted to Alissa’s desire, indicates that, despite this momentary "failure," the circulation of subjectivity, like the increasing crescendo of music coming from the forest at the end of the film, is overwhelming and irreversible. The fact that the camera, rather than exiting with Elizabeth, remains with Alissa, Stein, and Thor, suggests that theirs is the dominant discourse. Thus Détruire, dit-elle, in its ultimate disavowal of even the possibility of the illusion of a unified subject, takes a fundamentally more radical stance than Providence.
NOTES

1 For a discussion of Providence as "Brechtian comedy," see John Kreidl (193-202).

2 "Syntagm" and "paradigm" are linguistic terms, the former designating linear relations of combination in the signifying chain, the latter relations of substitution.
The most frequently noted characteristic of Resnais' 1963 film *Muriel* is its pronounced and persistent fragmentation. In addition to rapid, at times almost frenetic cutting in the visual track, the film makes use of such devices as overlapping of sound from scene to scene, repetition of brief sections of dialogue, and the sudden intrusion into the sound track of dissonant operatic airs, written and recorded especially for the film. Even the color values in the film are deliberately uneven. Surprisingly, though, in *Muriel*, in contrast to a film like *L'Année dernière à Marienbad*, for example, fragmentation exists in the context, and indeed, contributes to the creation of a kind of dialectical realism. In a 1961 interview Resnais explained his use of formal discontinuity in an intentionally "realist" work:

> A classic film cannot translate the real rhythm of modern life. In the same day, you do twenty-six different things, you go to lectures, to the cinema, to your party meeting etc. Modern life is fragmented. Everybody feels that, painting, as well as literature, bears witness to it, so why should cinema not do
likewise, instead of keeping to the traditional linear construction? (Armes 120)

For Resnais, then, discontinuity on the level of enunciation was necessary in order to convey contemporary reality, not in any "objective" way, but to translate the experience of the correspondingly fragmented, decentered self.

Despite its fragmentation, Muriel, based on an original screenplay by writer Jean Cayrol, has a clear structure and one that is deceptively symmetrical. The film is set in Boulogne and is divided into five "acts" which together span two weeks: Acts I and V are single days at the beginning and end of the fortnight, Acts II and IV each take place over indefinite time periods that, however, cover more than one day, and Act III comprises several central days. Muriel also has identifiable characters and a recognizable, if convoluted, plot. At the beginning of the film Hélène Aughain, who sells antiques from the apartment where she lives with her stepson Bernard, goes to the train station to meet her first lover, Alphonse, whom she has not seen since World War II. Alphonse has arrived with his "niece" Françoise, in actuality his mistress. The three walk from the station (the occasion for a montage of shots of new and old sections of Boulogne) and later eat a meal that Hélène prepares and serves on china that has been sold "since yesterday." Bernard arrives during the meal but refuses to eat what the others do and in general behaves unsociably and strangely. We learn that he has just returned from the war in Algeria, where Alphonse had also lived for many years. Later Bernard and Françoise leave,
unannounced, to walk in the city, while Hélène and Alphonse begin to
discuss their mutual past. Their conversation does not progress very
far, since neither remembers very well—Alphonse, for example, has
confused Hélène's story with that of another woman. Hélène later goes
to the casino with her lover De Smoke, leaving Alphonse to explore the
apartment, including Bernard's mementos of Algeria. All of the
characters eventually return to the apartment to sleep, with the
exception of Bernard who departs for his loft workshop.

Act Two deals, although not exclusively, with Bernard, following
him on an early morning horseback ride, and presenting bits and pieces
of numerous rendez-vous with his girlfriend Marie-Do, bound soon for
Argentina. It becomes clear that Bernard is obsessed by the memory of
an Algerian girl he had helped to torture, and whom he has named
"Muriel." Act Three is a montage of the actions and movement of all of
the characters, individually and in pairs, throughout the city, and
includes a scene at a restaurant where the conversation focuses on life
in Boulogne before and after World War II. At the end of the act
Bernard meets up with his friend Robert, an accomplice in Muriel's
torture, and Alphonse is found by his brother-in-law Ernest, sent by
Alphonse's wife to look for him. In Act Four tensions, some definable
and some not, mount as the film records a multitude of encounters
between different characters. In the last act the tensions explode:
Ernest arrives at Hélène's apartment, where yet another meal is in
progress, and reveals that Alphonse is married and, moreover, has never
been in Algeria. A fight ensues between Ernest and Alphonse, during
which Bernard's taperecorder, with a recording of noisy laughter, is set off; Bernard destroys the tape and rushes out of the apartment crying. He goes to Robert's house, calls for him, and then shoots him when he appears. Françoise departs quietly, by herself, and Alphonse, about to leave to return to his wife, escapes from Ernest and boards a bus for Brussels. Hélène goes to look for Bernard, finally finding him in his workshop, where the roof has collapsed. He too departs. Hélène returns to the house of some old friends, who, along with De Smoke, try to reassure her about Bernard. She hurries to the train station only to discover that the train for Paris now leaves from the "new" station. Meanwhile, Alphonse's wife Simone has arrived at Hélène's. The narrative ends with a tracking shot, the only one of the film, that follows Simone's search through the now empty apartment.

Not surprisingly, much of the criticism on Muriel has centered on its formal complexities. In the most complete discussion of this kind—a four hundred page manuscript which includes a complete découpage of the film's 773 shots—Claude Bâlblé, Michel Marie, and Marie-Claire Ropars undertake a semiotic analysis of the narrative of Muriel that focuses on its spatial and temporal articulations and their place in the "écriture cinématographique" which is the film. Although a succinct summary of this detailed work is difficult, several particularly important points surface in their analysis which warrant mention here. Bâlblé, Marie and Ropars observe that the process of the film is one of a play of alternation and opposition, especially between the level of narration and that of the fiction. Thus, for
example, the acts which represent the shortest time periods are of the longest duration on screen, and vice-versa; similarly, scenes with particularly rapid montage are often those which nonetheless demonstrate a certain continuity in the fiction; in addition, although the characters speak of almost nothing but the past, the film contains not a single flashback, and only two representations of past events (Bernard’s film and his taperecording), both of which have the status of objects rather than events within the diegesis. This play of oppositions means that, although the film displays discontinuity on virtually every level, the fragmentation constantly shifts position. It is, moreover, balanced by an impression of continuity constructed through a system of actual repetitions (the reappearance of the same characters in the same locales, often performing the same actions) and "false" analogies (Helene helping one antique client in Act I and other clients in Act V; Bernard greeting first Marie-Do and later Françoise on the street) which are spread across the film.

As Bailblé, Marie and Ropars note, one of the salient characteristics of Muriel, and a further example of the film's fragmentation, is the constant multiplication of characters. Hélène and Bernard, the first of the major figures to appear on screen, are joined by Alphonse and Françoise, de Smoke, Hélène's friend Claudie and her husband, Marie-Do, Ernest, Hélène's old friends Angèle and Antoine, and finally, briefly, Simone. The three meals which punctuate the narrative not only serve as structural supports within the diegesis—occurring as they do at the beginning, middle and end of the
film—but also draw attention to this progression. This increase in characters continually alters the shape of the narrative. What begins as the story of Hélène and Alphonse forms and reforms as characters appear and couples metamorphize. In a kind of hyperbolization of what Roland Barthes in S/Z terms the hermeneutic code (the process wherein a narrative poses questions, delaying and finally revealing the answers), Muriel generates an unending series of "false leads": Alphonse and Hélène's newly resurrected love affair, for example, dies out almost immediately; similarly, the nascent relationship between Françoise and Bernard, suggested by their departure together at the beginning of the film, in fact goes nowhere; much later in the film De Smoke, up to this point Hélène's companion, appears several times with Françoise, but she leaves and the film ends before the rapport has a chance to develop further. Marie-Claire Ropars, in an introduction to the analysis, comments on this perpetual branching of the narrative:

Certes, en apparence, le récit propose l'image stable de deux couples et de leurs deux histoires, celle d'Alphonse et d'Hélène d'une part, et celle de Bernard et de Marie-Do d'autre part; mais cette distinction ne résiste pas à l'analyse: chaque personne est en relation avec tous les autres et poursuit avec chacun un type particulier de problème ou de rapports; en outre, les liaisons dominantes connaissent des chasés-croisés, ou des déplacements. Il y a donc une circulation très complexe entre tous les personnages. (24-25)

Thus in Muriel each relationship which appears to be stable or in the process of stabilizing is in fact only in a momentary state of suspension until caught up again in the movement that is the film's narrative. This circulation has implications for subjectivity: since,
as Benveniste's linguistic model demonstrates, identity is inherently intersubjective—that is, since the self is defined in terms of a position with regard to an other—the chronic instability of relationships in _Muriel_ jeopardizes the coherence of the subjects constituted in and through those relationships. The film reflects this fragmented subjectivity in its own discontinuity—in its temporal ellipsis and, especially, in the mutability of space and spatial relationships. Just as the characters in _Muriel_ are constantly in motion, _en route_, the film's setting is variable. Hélène's apartment, for instance, changes from day to day as pieces of furniture are bought and sold. Moreover, since each decor is associated with a different period, each spatial displacement introduces a new temporal level, causing Bernard to remark, "On ne sait jamais quand on se réveille si c'est dans du Second Empire ou dans du rustique normand." Boulogne itself is both in flux and fragmented, divided into old/pre-war and new/post-war sections; a man asking for the center of the city is met with the reply, "Mais vous y êtes!"²

The film's découpage also creates, as already mentioned, an impression of disequilibrium. In his script Cayrol describes the camera as remaining relatively independent of the narrative, "turning around the intrigues, fleeing, then returning like a restless animal" (qtd. in Armes 129). The visual track, in fact, abruptly juxtaposes not only different locations within the story, including exteriors and interiors, but also narrative and "non-narrated" space: the scene of the third meal in the apartment is interrupted by shots of the city.
apparently unrelated to the action. As Bailblé, Marie and Ropars demonstrate, movement invades even what seem to be completely static sequences. In several scenes which appear to be shot from a single vantage point, the camera in fact subtly shifts position, repeatedly altering the perceived relationship between the characters and the environment.3

Alongside this spatial fragmentation and fluctuation, and an extension of the rapprochement of interiors and exteriors which takes place through editing, is a gradual disappearance of any true private space. Beginning with the second act the characters are depicted for the most part on the street or in shops, restaurants or cafes. Hélène's apartment itself is transformed into public space by the constant stream of customers or visitors; even at the end of the film, when the exodus of the characters has left the apartment completely empty, it remains open and accessible to the newcomer Simone. The sound track also bears witness to the intrusion of the outside world in the form of voices, traffic noise, boat whistles, etc. During one of their rare private conversations Alphonse comments to Hélène that he can hear the neighbors talking through the walls. This metamorphosis of all space into public space serves to underscore the impossibility of the subject as individual, as discrete, centered identity.
Narrative as Oedipal Drama

Bailblé, Marie, and Ropar's analysis of Muriel as a set of spatial and temporal manipulations which generate meaning represents but one possible approach to the question of cinematic narrative and subjectivity. In "Screen Images, Film Memory" Stephen Heath articulates another which we have already alluded to:

... film is developed and exploited like the novel, which it relays, as a production-reproduction of the "novelistic." In a real sense, the sense of this development and exploitation, novels and films have one single title (the title of the novelistic)—*Family Romance*. ... (41)

Heath's remarks here express a common notion of much of film narrative as the replay and eventual reaffirmation of the patriarchal structuration of the family. Although this formulation of narrative has special relevance to classic Hollywood film, it is not without application to a film like Muriel, if only as a model that is subverted. Precisely, one of the aspects of Resnais' film that is most intriguing is the way that it presents a series of apparently "normal" family relationships and then gradually reveals them as fraudulent or in some way unstable: Mélène, as Bernard informs Françoise shortly after she arrives, is not his mother but stepmother; Françoise in turn later admits to Bernard that she is not Alphonse's niece but his
mistress. The evening of Alphonse and Françoise's arrival Hélène tells the croupier at the casino that she will probably not come to the casino the next day because she has "family" visiting her; the croupier reveals to Hélène that he and his wife stay together only because it is convenient, and intend to divorce eventually. A false notion of "family" even figures in Hélène's antique business: she tells Alphonse and Françoise that she sells from her apartment because, "Les gens ont l'impression qu'on vend des meubles de famille. . . ."

As Heath indicates, the term Familienroman originates with Freud, who identifies the family as the framework for the development of the sexually differentiated subject, a development for which the oedipal drama is the "key narrative" or prototype. In Lacanian theory, the oedipal paradigm takes on a linguistic dimension in that the incest taboo only functions in the context of the differentiation of various cultural positions according to the designations "mother" and "father," "son" and "daughter," etc., and even more importantly, in that the paternal signifier, the "Name-of-the-Father," as the center of the symbolic field, is the defining one in the history of the subject. The other crucial shift in Lacan's version of the Oedipus complex is the identification of the phallus rather than the penis as the privileged term. Closely allied to the "Name-of-the-Father," the notion of the phallus, as Kaja Silverman points out, comprises two opposed meanings: on the one hand it is a signifier for all the losses sustained by the subject, both male and female, in the course of its very construction; on the other hand (and this is its dominant meaning), it stands for the
cultural power or privilege inherited by the male subject in patriarchy (The Subject of Semiotics 183). Despite the fact that both male and female subjects are "castrated," the male subject is compensated for this loss by a legacy of symbolic potency.

Although Lacan, like Freud, designates the family as a crucial factor in the construction of subjectivity, unlike Freud he defines the family as a set of symbolic relations which transcend the individuals who are constituted through them. This definition further distinguishes the Lacanian Oedipus complex from its Freudian counterpart. In Lacan's model,

The discourse of the family produces the subjects it needs by aligning them with the symbolic positions of "father" and "mother," . . . . That operation begins when the subject confuses its actual parents with their symbolic representations, and concludes at the unhappy moment of a fully realized lack or inadequacy. (Silverman, The Subject of Semiotics 182)

Like the mirror stage, the Oedipus complex originates in a misrecognition wherein the male child conflates the real and symbolic father, believing in the former's possession of the phallus, and, correspondingly, the mother's lack. Thus by identifying the actual with the symbolic and internalizing the image of the parent of the same sex, the child is structured in relation to the phallus—the male positively, and the female negatively. As Silverman points out, however, this internalization which marks the resolution of the oedipal crisis is not without its price:

The result can only be a brutalizing sense of inadequacy both for male and female subjects—for the former because he can never be equivalent to the symbolic position with which he identifies, and
for the latter because she is denied even an identification with that position. (The Subject of Semiotics 191)

If lack and alienation characterize even the successful process of the formation of subjectivity, this lack is magnified in cases of the unsuccessful resolution of the Oedipus complex, that is, where the male child either maintains his original desire for the mother or where the mother's desire, which acts as a kind of metaphor for the child's, has as its object something other than the phallus. *Muriel* is in fact a prime example of a narrative where the prototypical oedipal itinerary is arrested. The absence of the father—an absence which is brought to our attention within the first few minutes of the film—marks a critical lack within the structure of the family. Alphonse, a possible father substitute as emphasized by Hélène's reproach to Bernard, "Il pourrait être ton père," is, in Lacanian terms, never identified with the symbolic Father, never appears to possess the phallus: not only does a relationship between Hélène and Alphonse never (re)develop, but Alphonse is eventually revealed as both a liar and an irresponsible husband who abandoned his wife, leaving her with his bankrupt restaurant.

The absence of the actual father and the inadequacy of the potential substitute obstruct Bernard's accession to the symbolic, since he is deprived of both an authority against which to test his potency and an ideal figure with which to identify. This paternal lack results in a failure to succumb to the law of the Father, manifested in Bernard's ambiguous, sexually charged (if not literally incestuous)
relationship to Hélène. (Although not his "real" mother, Hélène's maternal function for Bernard is unquestionable.) The structural importance of this relationship is established by its position in the film as the "frame" for the other narratives—the first scene and what might be considered, in dramatic terms, the film's denouement, focus on Hélène and Bernard. Moreover, since most of the other relationships in the film are romantic or potentially romantic, the numerous scenes between Hélène and Bernard structure them, by analogy, as a couple. The emotional intensity of their encounters is equally suggestive: Hélène's exasperation at Bernard's idiosyncratic behavior and Bernard's shortness with Hélène have the tone of a prolonged lover's quarrel as much as that of a dispute between parent and difficult child. Likewise, their embrace towards the end of the film marks at least an instant of "reunion," one which stands in pointed contrast to the failed reunion of Hélène and Alphonse, and to the other unrealized relationships within the film.

The particulars of Hélène and Bernard's rapport and its position within the film point to a weakening of the incest taboo, a weakening prefigured, from a Lacanian perspective, in Hélène's linguistic designation as "stepmother." Yet if Bernard's tie to Hélène threatens to violate the oedipal prohibition, the threat never fully materializes, as he remains unable either to dispel or inherit for himself the power of paternal sanction. Although the killing of Robert, whom Bernard holds responsible for the death of Muriel, might be considered a "patricide" aimed at claiming the authority of the
father for himself, the almost accidental nature of the death (as indicated in Bernard's conflicting commands to Robert: "Descends . . . Ne descend pas") paired with its failure either to resolve Bernard's guilt about Muriel or license his desire for Hélène, is indicative of its futility. The uselessness of the murder in fact only bears out the definition of the symbolic Father as a dispersed signifier residing not in individuals, but spread across the whole structure of society and its institutions. In Muriel, the entity which comes closest to embodying the symbolic Father is not Robert or Alphonse but the French Republic, a structure which supersedes, indeed determines the fate of, individual subjects, and against which they are powerless. 

Bernard, then, can be seen as inserted in and regulated by the symbolic while nevertheless removed from the phallus and its privileges. His position, in other words, is a feminine one. Both Bernard's obsession with Muriel, his description of her tortured body (coded with lack through its comparison to "un sac . . . éventré") and his alleged but impossible "familial" resemblance to Hélène, commented on by Alphonse, suggest a measure of feminine identification that is striking and otherwise unmotivated. In effect, Hélène's forgetfulness (with regard to relationships, appointments and most significantly, her keys), her repeated losses in gambling, and her "otherness" with regard to language, evident in her repetition of words and phrases, designate a distance from the symbolic order which has a parallel in Bernard's own relative inaccessibility to signification, especially to visual representation. During the first meal, Bernard dons a pair of "joke"
glasses with fake eyes which symbolize his separation from the power of sight and thus from the phallus. Although he constantly carries a movie camera, the results of his filming are never seen. Later, after Françoise has inadvertently activated the taperecording of laughter possibly related to the torture, he throws the camera into the sea, relinquishing all attempt to document. The primary proof of Bernard's signifying lack lies, however, in his inability to convey the experience of Algeria, most notably the story of Muriel. Not only are the excerpts from the notebooks which Alphonse finds in Bernard's room vaguely allusive rather than explicit, the photos are fuzzy and the people in them unidentified. An even more pronounced "lack" characterizes the "film within the film" which Bernard shows to Vieux Jean: during the screening Bernard recounts the torture of Muriel, but the scratchy, washed-out images depict only the innocent antics of smiling young recruits. The visuals undermine the narrative authority of the voice, confirming Robert's comment to Bernard: "Muriel, ça ne se raconte pas."

Thus both the main characters in Muriel, male as well as female, are defined negatively in relation to the phallus, marginalized within the symbolic. Bernard's unresolved Oedipus complex reveals the lack which structures all subjects in relation to the Name-of-the Father. His embrace with Hélène towards the end of the film can be seen as the expression not only of incestuous desire but also of their shared alienation from paternal privilege. This second interpretation in turn suggests a third—that the scene represents a desire to return to the
"privilege" of the imaginary. In effect, the mother and son's displacement from the public space of Hélène's apartment to the private space of Bernard's loft (inaccessible to unwelcome outsiders and never in the course of the film occupied by more than two people) is significant if only because it runs counter to the movement of the rest of the characters. The embrace in this secluded space which is, as she reminds Bernard, "owned" by Hélène, implies an attempted regression to the security of the pre-oedipal dyad—an attempt which is, then, already failed, as born out by the fact that Hélène hurries to the loft because she hears the crash of the roof caving in. The impossibility of such a regression is emphasized in the ensuing exchange between Hélène and Bernard. Referring to the bombing that marked the beginning of his childhood attachment to her, Bernard asks Hélène, "Tu te souviens du plafond crevé, du linge en cendre, de l'argenterie fondu? La neige tombait sur mon lit," to which she responds, "Non, c'était la pluie, c'était la pluie . . . Tu avais les cheveux tout blancs à cause du plâtre." Thus, even while their dialogue here recalls a primal scene of bonding between mother and child, it at the same time evokes a moment of destruction and is marked by discord. This exchange, moreover, is immediately followed by Bernard's assertion, "Je vais m'en aller . . . " and his departure.

In Muriel both the failure of a return to the imaginary and the relative alienation within the symbolic and thus from control over signification are linked to the impossibility of memory. Many critics have spoken of Muriel as the aftermath of a drama, one which cannot be
reconstituted and thus leaves the subject in limbo. This problem of memory is most marked in the case of Bernard, for whom the drama exists in a double sense—as the experience of Algeria and as oedipal conflict, both of which are the occasion for guilt and desire which cannot be cathartic. Memory is also problematic for Muriel as a system of signification: the film, like the characters it describes, fails to "attain" the past in the sense that it fails to represent it, either "objectively," (in omniscient, third person narration) or "subjectively" as Hiroshima or even Providence does. As Bailblé, Marie and Ropars indicate, the process of Muriel is, on the contrary, that of,

Muriel thus ends at the point where the fiction, which speaks of nothing but the past, finally joins the narration, which never "speaks" it, in a pure present. It is a present, however, that can sustain no discrete subject, as indicated by the emptying of space and the departure of all of the characters. The process of the film bears witness, then, to the impossibility of memory as the impossibility of unified subjectivity.
If *Muriel* is remarkable for its narration of an unsuccessful male oedipal trajectory which exposes the lack underpinning not only female but male subjectivity, then Marguerite Duras' 1972 film *Nathalie Granger* is unusual in its portrayal of a family which is not centered on the figure of the father. In the film's first scene the father's voice dominates the lunchtime conversation, which concerns a decision about whether to send the "problem" daughter Nathalie away to school. After this brief initial scene, however, the father leaves the house, and, significantly, does not return, even at the end of the film. Most of the narrative of *Nathalie Granger* is devoted to the largely, although not exclusively, nonverbal interaction of the mother, Isabelle Granger, her unnamed friend (played by Jeanne Moreau), and, later, Nathalie and her sister, Laurence. As Ann Kaplan points out in her chapter on *Nathalie Granger* in *Women and Film: Both Sides of the Camera*, the silent communication of the two adult women constitutes a form of female resistance to patriarchal society. At the conclusion of her discussion Kaplan expresses reservation about the ultimate value of silence as resistance:

For Duras, this politics does not leave women in the position of negativity, for she views silence as a positive and liberating stance. Yet it is dangerous to accept women's exclusion from the symbolic realm, since this realm involves large and important areas of life. Obviously, in any new order, women will have to
function in the symbolic. The questions that Duras leaves unresolved have to do with how women will gain access to the symbolic, the voice, subjectivity, through silence. Silence seems at best a temporary, and desperate, strategy, a defense against domination, a holding operation, rather than a politics that looks toward women's finding a viable place for themselves in culture. (102)

While Kaplan's concerns about silence as a long-term strategy for women seem valid, I do not think that this summarizes Duras' position, or constitutes the primary contribution of Nathalie Granger. Whether the film specifically advocates a "politics of silence" that is the equivalent of a refuge within the imaginary is, first of all, debatable; secondly, silence is not more important within the film than the reformulation of the family and the representation of the tensions and contradictions experienced by women as they are constructed through, but marginalized within, the symbolic. What is perhaps of most value in Nathalie Granger is the discernment of a variety of "feminine" positions with regard to male discourse (of which silence is only one) and, similarly, the refusal to absolutely dichotomize experience according to imaginary and symbolic, to associate certain areas of life exclusively with one or the other order. Indeed, the film suggests how these "realms" co-exist not only within the subject, but within operations such as language. At the same time it suggests that women especially may be in a position to uncover and exploit this co-existence.

Nathalie Granger is first of all an important reconsideration of the structure of the family. The impression of male dominance conveyed in the first scene is quickly dispelled by those that follow: not only
is the relationship between the mother and daughter the center of the film, the real deliberation about Nathalie and the decision about her fate take place without the father. A note by Duras in the published text of Nathalie Granger confirms that, although the father is in one sense "absent," this absence is not conceived of and hence not represented on any level as lack:

Cette élimination, à aucun moment du tournage, n'avait été mise en question. Personne n'a demandé ce que devenait le mari d'Isabelle Granger (celui qui jouait le rôle non plus). Ce qui signifie que la présence du père n'a jamais manqué lors d'une scène quelconque. Au contraire sans doute. (89)

The "missing" father, then, is not here identified as the source of dysfunction in the family or in the subject—except perhaps, fittingly, in the mind of the school principal (despite her female gender, clearly a representative of patriarchy), who notes in her report that she would like to see Nathalie's father.

If Nathalie's problems do not hinge on the absent father, then neither can they be tied to an oedipal rivalry with an omnipotent mother. It is important to note in this regard that the family portrayed in Nathalie Granger is not simply a reverse image of the patriarchal family: the restructuring at work here, in other words, is not limited to the replacement of the father by the mother as the head of the household. Rather, this position ceases to exist as such, since the family is no longer based on a linear hierarchy, and does not thereby culminate in a single figure. In Nathalie Granger, in fact, the figure of the mother Isabelle is "doubled" in the friend, who bears
a striking resemblance to her and who assumes a nurturing role with regard to the two children. As the film progresses the fact that the friend is not, strictly speaking, a member of the family becomes irrelevant. Her close relationship with Isabelle and her supportive, comforting presence in the house designate her not only as "part of the family" in a superficial sense but as absolutely vital to it. It is the friend, for instance, who accompanies Isabelle on the visit to the school principal; she is, furthermore, by virtue of her intimacy with the mother, implicated in the eventual decision not to send Nathalie away. The friend's role in the narrative alters, indeed does away with, the notion of authority as located in a particular, isolable (male) individual or entity that "heads" the family. In the film authority per se is replaced by implicit cooperation as responsibility is dispersed across the female community which has itself taken the place of the traditional, male-centered family.

Nathalie Granger thus contrasts not only with classic cinematic representations of the family but also with a film such as Muriel, which, despite its in some ways exceptional perspective, still stands within a tradition linking the absence of the father figure to abnormality or deviance in the child. In Nathalie Granger, in effect, a web of association stretching across the whole of the diegesis implicates a male-dominated society in the daughter's mysterious violent behavior. The sound track over the credit sequence begins with a woman's voice (that of the school principal, we learn later) describing the misconduct of a female child (Nathalie) and
expressing shock, almost offense, at "cette violence chez une petite fille." Immediately following is a radio report about two male adolescents being sought for the apparently unmotivated deaths of three people. The connection with Nathalie is reinforced by the description of the two youths as "des enfants, . . . un blond et un brun" as the camera moves across the figures at the lunch table, coming to rest on the two Granger children, who are blond and brown-haired, respectively. The repetition of the reports at fairly regular intervals throughout the film continues to call attention to the outside world as hostile and dangerous, the site of male aggression. Nathalie's own violence is associated in a more direct way with that of the two youths through the friend's mention of the daughter's desire to "kill everyone," and with the patriarchal family by Nathalie's reported wish to be an orphan. It is, moreover, associated with the school, since her behavior at home, although anti-social and occasionally rough (as when in boredom and frustration she pushes over a doll carriage), could hardly be termed violent.

In Nathalie Granger an opposition between the women and patriarchal culture is established which is reflected in the organization and representation of pro-filmic space. As Kaplan indicates, the house and adjacent garden comprise a serene, female-identified realm distinct from the busy, noisy exterior, which is male-identified not only through the reports about the killers who are at large there, but through the father's "disappearance" into this space. The soundtrack reinforces this feeling of separation by a
reversal of the device used in *Muriel*: only very occasionally do the sounds of the city intrude on the women's space, which is so quiet that even their movement in and around the house is noiseless. In addition, the interior of the house is filmed so as to create the impression of a continuous series of interconnecting rooms without a center: Duras frequently shoots through corridors, doorways and rooms, into others. Indeed, like those of *India Song*, the visuals of *Nathalie Granger* remove the spectator from monocular perspective, but by entirely different means. The camera, as in Resnais' *Muriel*, is freed of narrative motivation; it explores the house and the garden without having to be attached to a specific character or narrator, taking in both that which seems important and that which does not. One particular shot, a 360° pan that appears to be from Isabelle's point of view, destroys this perspective when it ends on Isabelle herself. Later in the film the camera assumes the point of view of a cat who sits looking out one of the many windows towards the women working in the garden; yet in a later image which is virtually identical, the cat is gone. Significantly, the only time when the camera consistently adopts the point of view of a character is at the end of the film, when a salesman wanders about the house. In general, in *Nathalie Granger*, there are multiple and shifting perspectives and the camera, like the women, is non-authoritarian and multivalent.

Expanding upon the notion of a women's space and the separation of the house from the male-dominated world, Kaplan asserts that, "the camera defines the female space as belonging to Lacan's pre-symbolic,
pre-linguistic realm (the imaginary) through the repeated mirror shots of the women" (99). Remarking on the similarity between the two women, she adds that these shots underscore "the narcissism inherent in the pre-symbolic phase" (100). Although on one level Kaplan's argument here is quite convincing, it passes over some of the ambiguity, and thereby some of the complexity, of the film. There is evidence that the women's tie to the imaginary is not, contrary to what Kaplan implies, one which leaves them regressed in narcissism and completely excluded from the symbolic. The first clue that the imaginary is not the sole realm inhabited by the women lies in the fact that, the general impression of an "other" world notwithstanding, the film does not maintain an absolute dichotomy of space. The many windows and doors of the house, although they in one sense stand as boundaries between exterior and interior, also form points of continuity between the two; in fact, on three occasions people from the outside world enter the house, and the children and the friend, however briefly, leave it. The garden, moreover, evokes the woods where the killers were last seen, suggesting that this space and the peaceful activities, such as building the fire, that the women engage in there have a connection to violence, a capacity for destruction that is dormant but nonetheless present as potential. There is thus a partial breakdown in the spatial divisions of the film that complicates the complete identification of the house and the women with the imaginary.

Equally, Kaplan's observation about the similarity of the two women, while undeniably correct, does not totally describe their
relationship. Despite their physical and spiritual intimacy and marked physical resemblance, Isabelle and her friend are by no means identical. It is in effect the individuality of the two women that is emphasized in the text Nathalie Granger: describing the scene where the table is being cleared, Duras remarks, "... une différence subsistera jusqu'à la fin entre les gestes des deux femmes. (Différence qui se retrouvera dans d'autres gestes, plus tard, dans leur marche, etc., cela dans tout le film.)" (21) This individuality, which prevents the two from being reduced to a single, monolithic representation of "woman," also renders problematic Kaplan's interpretation of the use of mirrors and mirror shots in the film as indicative of a pure and narcissistic imaginary order. In effect, despite the presence of mirrors in virtually every room in the house and the large, glassy surface of the pond in the garden, the women never look at their reflections. Although the two are several times "caught" together in the space of a mirror, its placement and framing is usually from behind, preventing them from having a narcissistic relation to their own and/or each other's image. Furthermore, the women look at each other rarely, and both shot/reverse shot and eyeline matching are entirely absent from their scenes together. Instead, the respective gazes of the women are most typically parallel, directed outward into space in a way which, like their doubling within the mirror, emphasizes their connectedness without implying their imprisonment in the pre-symbolic stage.
The women's individuality, and their positions with regard to the imaginary and the symbolic, is nowhere more apparent than in their relationships to language. Although both women, as Kaplan points out, rely extensively on silence, the friend more than Isabelle communicates verbally. Her use of language, however, like that of the woman in *Hiroshima mon amour*, is characterized by a sense of play, and also by a negativity: her mischievous reply to a wrong number is, "Il n'y a pas de téléphone ici Madame." During the encounter with a washing machine salesman who enters the house, not only the women's silence, but the friend's calm but insistent, "Vous n'êtes pas voyageur de commerce" causes his futile salespitch to crumble. These instances of language are characteristic of the way the friend simultaneously manipulates and denies dominant discourse, exposes its heterogeneity and turns it against itself. Although her utterances are minimal, they nonetheless support rather than refute Kaplan's contention that "it is by no means clear that language is so monolithically male as to give us a choice only of domination or silence" (102).

The friend thus manifests an "otherness" which subverts and defuses but still engages with language; her namelessness in the film symbolizes not her absence as subject, her exclusion from the symbolic, but its inability to control or limit her. Isabelle, on the other hand, is linguistically "other" in the sense of vulnerability. Like the Portuguese maid, who, we learn, could not read French and so unknowingly signed her own expulsion from the country, Isabelle is, as her stilted French and heavy foreign accent suggest, a victim of the
power wielded in discourse. When an anonymous voice from the boarding school informs her that it is not up to her but to her daughter to decide whether Nathalie's piano lessons will continue, she drops the receiver in her lap, unable to protest or make any reply. It is through the friend's supportive presence and example that she eventually gains the courage to say "Non," first to the salesman, and later, more importantly, to the school, which threatens to separate her from her daughter.

The child Nathalie's relationship to language has similarities both to the mother's and the friend's. Her marginalization within the symbolic is revealed in the comments of the school principal, who cites Nathalie's torn and abused notebooks and the "taches" on her writing exercises as examples of the child's aberrant behavior. The sewing of nametapes onto Nathalie's clothes in preparation for her departure for boarding school further designates male-defined language as something which is imposed on her and determines her identity. Kaplan's remark that, "the mother and Nathalie are in some strange way in this together" (97) is born out by the latter's alienation and powerlessness, her lack of control over her own fate. Yet Nathalie's behavior, including her unwillingness to obediently reproduce the tracings of letters in the handwriting exercises, is in some sense a resistance; the torn, messy notebook, which the mother finally destroys just prior to her phone call to the Datkin school, is a symbol of Nathalie's attempt to revolt. Similarly, her violence is an extreme version of the negativity of the friend, another vehement "non" which,
although its particular form may be a result of her partial internalization of male aggressiveness, is nonetheless also a defense against the constraints placed upon her by this patriarchal institution.

Nathalie bears the marks of a hybrid subject, caught between the positive, nurturing values of the women and the oppressive mode of patriarchal society. The use of her name as the film's title highlights this struggle, epitomized in the sequence of the piano lesson. Although Kaplan points out the link between music and the imaginary, she fails to take note of its relationship to the symbolic: it is, after all, particularly on the level of its transcription, a rigidly linear "language," as brought to our attention through Duras' long, slow pan of the printed sheets of piano music. Neither does Kaplan consider the antithetical functions of music as a proposed solution to Nathalie's violence. The counterpoint in the soundtrack between the radio report and the piano refrain does suggest that music is liberating for Nathalie to the extent that it represents "a means of expression beyond the oppressive limits of male language" (Kaplan 96), yet the lesson itself is also clearly a form of socialization: the repetition and the regulation of rhythm and positioning of Nathalie's hands by the teacher recall a similar scene in Duras' novel _Moderato Cantabile_, where the lesson represents a kind of discipline that the indulgent mother proclaims herself incapable of imposing. (Note also that the idea of the music lessons is met with approval from the principal.) Moreover, Nathalie's agreement to take the lesson
following the example of the "good" child Laurence does little to refute the impression that competition or conformity figures, however minimally, in her decision. Thus Isabelle Granger's statement about Nathalie, "Si elle fait pas la musique elle est perdue," repeated several times in the film, is not without ambivalence. Music is important to Nathalie because, as for the mother, it may serve as an expressive outlet, an alternative to violence; it may, equally, teach her the obedience necessary to the maintenance of women's oppressed place in patriarchal society. The end of the narrative of the film is, fittingly, open—although the mother's refusal to send the daughter away is a temporary triumph, it is unclear, as the friend explains to Laurence, what Nathalie will do.

In her article "The Purloined Punchline: Joke as Textual Paradigm," Jerry Aline Flieger emphasizes that the imaginary and the symbolic are not successive developmental phases, but "coextensive principles of intersubjective experience" (ed. Davis, Lacan and Narration 955). Certainly in Nathalie Granger the imaginary does not exist in the sense of a pure, pre-symbolic state, but rather as a repressed force or register within the symbolic which, if cultivated, can challenge male dominance. Moreover, although the women in the film manifest the strongest ties to the imaginary, the two scenes with the salesman suggest that it is not solely a "feminine" mode. In the first scene the salesman, although hesitant and apologetic, persists in delivering his analytical discourse, until, broken down by the women's unresponsiveness, he finally discovers that they already own the very
Later, when he returns, he confirms the friend's assertion that he is not, at heart, a salesman, and states his desire to return to his "original" profession, a launderer. Unhappy with the string of false identities he has assumed in an effort to "find" himself—and it appears, with the capitalist values they represent—the man feels an affinity with the non-aggressive, non-hierarchical life shared by the women. After exploring the house, he leaves, as if afraid, as Kaplan suggests, of the power of this "other" mode. Nonetheless, the fact that it strikes a chord in the salesman at all suggests that this mode does not represent a feminine essence as much as perhaps (for want of a better word) a propensity, and, further, that the extent to which this and other, "male" modes divide along the lines of sexual difference is at least partially a function of socialization and thereby susceptible to change.

Neither reactionary nor idealist, Nathalie Granger strikes a delicate balance between the representation of women's oppression within patriarchy and the possibility of their freedom. The restructuring of the family proposes an alternative to oedipal narrative and, consequently, a radically different framework for subjectivity. Moreover, without proclaiming their imprisonment in "the half-light of the Imaginary" (Mulvey 7), Duras' film demonstrates women's connections to this order and reveals their ability to exploit it to disturb, if only momentarily, the ascendancy of the symbolic. In so doing, Nathalie Granger sketches the outlines of a feminine
discourse as it might take form within the constraints of patriarchal society, and finally, without dissolving sexual difference, begins to mark out a place where the symbolic and the imaginary, and eventually men and women, might meet.
The music for Muriel was composed by Hans Werner Henze and sung by Rita Streich.

This exchange, occurring at what is more or less the film’s own "center" (indiscernible as such on a first viewing), has a metacinematic resonance.

See Marie’s chapter "Espace représenté / Espace construit" (123-147) for a detailed spatial analysis of several sequences in the film.

The increasing importance of the Oedipus complex to post-structuralist literary theory is evident from its development in the work of a critic like Roland Barthes.

Much of the critical work on Muriel takes note of the secondary role of the Algerian War in the film. Although the diffuse, broadly cultural nature of the paternal signifier suggests that a more detailed discussion of the historical specificity of Muriel might have a place within a Lacanian reading of the film, this discussion will not be undertaken here.

This tradition reaches its height in a film like Mildred Pierce, where the female-headed family is tied to both death and incest.

Although Kaplan makes some of these same observations about the ambiguity of space, she sees this ambiguity as emblematic of the threat of the symbolic to the women, rather than of their inclusion in it.
CHAPTER VI

SUBJECTIVITY AND ENUNCIATION:

L'ANNEE DERNIERE A MARIEENBAD AND INDIA SONG

Like Hiroshima mon amour before it, Resnais' L'Année dernière à Marieenbad has been the subject of a vast amount of critical work. That Marieenbad's ambiguity is a large part of its appeal for critics is evident from the number of interpretations that the film has sustained. Marieenbad's narrative, revolving around a man (X) and a woman (A) who may or may not have met and had an affair the previous year at Marieenbad (or Friederichsbad), has been variously described as a dream (X's and/or A's), a rendition of the myth of the Grail, a version of the Breton legend of death returning to pursue his victim after the postponement of one year, a conflict between the id, the super-ego, and the ego, the hallucination of a mad woman, and even as the story of a mad genius (M) who has invented dummies who inhabit a hotel (Sweet 43-44).

The diversity of these interpretations notwithstanding, certain trends in Marieenbad criticism are discernable. For one, Alain Robbe-Grillet's authorship of the scenario meant that much of the early work on the film took its cue from critical responses to his novels, as well as from Robbe-Grillet's own theories. 1 Treating Marieenbad as an
extension of this literature and literary theory, critics immediately placed the film within a modernist framework. As Allan Thiher points out in *The Cinematic Muse*, this criticism garnered considerable support from comments on the part of both Robbe-Grillet and Resnais:

By declaring *L'Année dernière* to be an extreme experiment in "subjective cinema," they made of their work an essentially modernist attempt to find the means for directly representing some form of psychic reality. In effect, they suggested that the film was another variation on such modernist techniques as stream of consciousness or manipulation of narrative points of view. By placing the emphasis on the film's revelation of immanent experience, rather than on the film's formal structures, the filmmakers as well as a good many later critics were able to take seriously the rather bizarre idea that the film takes place in someone's head. (167)

Thiher goes on to criticize critics such as Bruce Morrissette for their erroneous application of the notion of "narrating consciousness" to film:

Morrissette's point-of-view analogy annexes film to literary technique without questioning how this can be so. How can a film be grounded in a narrating consciousness when there is nothing in the structure of a projected image that allows it to be assigned to a consciousness? Language, to be sure, in the very process of enunciation, always presupposes a voice that offers the utterance and thus springs from what one can call a narrating (or narrative) consciousness, even if it is mediated by a third-person pronoun. But it is very difficult to see how the process of enunciation can be applied to the projection of images that, by their projection, create their autonomous world. (168)

Thiher also dismisses attempts to interpret Resnais' film as the representation of a dream world because of the absence from the diegesis of a "real" world against which to oppose it—in other words, because of the lack of codes that would allow us to read all or parts of the film as oneiric.
To this misappropriated, modernist perspective which sees in *Marienbad* a kind of filmic mental realism, Thiher opposes a postmodernist perspective that understands the film as "a work of metanarration that can account for its own unfolding." Thiher designates the representational site of the film as "the space of the labyrinth of the film itself, the space of the narration" (170). He thus pursues Robbe-Grillet's own thought, expressed in the introduction to the published script, that the film is "the story of a persuading" (qtd. in Armes 93), broadening the parameters of persuasion to include the film's seduction of the spectator through the creation of a narrative which authenticates itself. In Thiher's account, *Marienbad* is a metaphor for the desire or possession that is at the core of all narration.

**Film and Enunciation**

Thiher's discussion is extremely interesting in two, interrelated, respects: first, in terms of the critical position it takes—the interpretive dichotomy it constructs between *Marienbad* as, on the one hand, the narration of "subjective" point of view, and, on the other hand, to use Thiher's own phrase, as the "narration of narration"; second, in the way that it touches on certain theoretical issues that have recently occupied a major place in film criticism, particularly
the question of enunciation. A brief consideration of the second point will better enable us to address the first. Thiher's statement that film cannot be identified with an enunciating consciousness has been both corroborated and countered by a semiotic-based analysis of cinema. Film, although it does make use of point of view, only temporarily locates its perspective within a particular individual character in the diegesis; filmic point of view floats, is indeed, as Thiher recognizes, ubiquitous. The question of cinema's status as enunciation is, however, a somewhat different problem, and one which cannot be completely settled within a discussion of point of view. Semioticians see an analogy between cinema and language in terms of their shared status as signifying systems whose signifiers come into play only within discourse. And because they are discursive, films, as theorists such as Jean-Pierre Oudart and Daniel Dayan have indicated, are by definition "spoken." In other words, film's position as discourse links it to an enunciating agency, as well, as we shall see, to subjectivity. In the case of cinema this agency is particularly complex, encompassing, it is generally agreed, multiple voices. Auteurist theory simplifies this multiplicity by proposing that the director is the central shaping force behind a particular film. More recent theory, however, has turned attention from the director to the network of technological devices (the camera, taperecorder, etc.) and operations (editing, lighting, etc.) which make cinematic signification possible, and has considered how these apparatuses
generate meaning by bringing into play different sets of codes, some specific to cinema and some not.

At the same time that semiotics makes possible the identification of cinema as enunciation, it brings to light the necessity, in terms of the cinematic maintenance of the illusion of reality, of a denial of the enunciative process. Realist film, especially, seeks to sustain the impression of an impersonal unfolding of time and space, strives to create the feeling, remarked on above by Thiher, of an autonomous world. Taking into consideration this tendency, Christian Metz places cinematic address in the category of \textit{histoire} rather than discours:

Dans les termes d'Emile Benveniste, le film traditionnel se donne comme histoire, non comme discours. Il est pourtant discours, si on le réfère aux intentions du cinéaste, aux influences qu'il exerce sur le public, etc., mais le propre de ce discours-là, et le principe même de son efficace comme discours, est justement d'effacer les marques d'énonciation et de se déguiser en histoire. Le temps de l'histoire, on le sait, est toujours l'"accompli"; semblablement, le film de transparence et de narration plénière repose sur un déni du manque, de la recherche, qu'il nous renvoie par leur autre face . . . , leur face comblée et assouvie: accomplissement formulé d'un souhait non formulé. ("Histoire/discours" 301)

Cinema, according to Metz, disguises its position as discourse by concealing the source of enunciation, the apparatus. On the level of the individual film text, however, as several critics have pointed out, cinema does not so much deny discursiveness as shift it to the characters within the diegesis and, through identification and by extension, to the spectator. This transfer is effected through the operation of suture. Although suture takes various forms and occurs across the entire body of the film text, one of its primary sites of
operation is the transition between shots, specifically the shot/reverse shot formation. Kaja Silverman describes how this technique functions to dissimulate the real origin of the film image:

... the viewing subject, unable to sustain for long its belief in the autonomy of the cinematic image, demands to know whose gaze controls what it sees. The shot/reverse shot formation is calculated to answer that question in such a manner that the cinematic illusion remains intact: Shot 1 shows a space which may or may not contain a human figure (e.g., the wall of a building, a view of the ocean, a room full of people), being careful not to violate the 180 [degree] rule. Shot 2 locates a spectator in the other 180 [degree] of the same circular field, thereby implying that the preceding shot was seen through the eyes of a figure in the cinematic narrative. As a result, the level of enunciation remains veiled from the viewing subject's scrutiny, which is entirely absorbed within the level of the fiction; the subject of the speech seems to be the speaking subject, or to state it differently, the gaze which directs our look seems to belong to a fictional character rather than to the camera. (The Subject of Semiotics 202)

Suture, then, serves to shield from view the real source of the gaze by deflecting this gaze through a fictional surrogate. At the same time, suture as it materializes in shot/reverse shot puts the spectator in the place of this surrogate, allowing the latter to stand in for the absent enunciator of histoire. By constantly and repeatedly "sewing" the spectator into cinematic address, film imparts to the spectator an aura of control, gives him or her the impression of wielding the discursive power which in fact belongs to the cinematic apparatus. Thus suture activates the spectator's subjectivity to fill the apparently absent place of the subject within the film text and functions to assure the viewer not only of the coherence and
completeness of cinematic discourse, but of his or her part in this coherence.

The references in discussions of suture to "absence," "lack" and "coherence" are evidence of the origins of the concept in the work of the Lacanian theorist Jacques-Alain Miller. Film theorists like Oudart and Dayan have remained close to these origins of cinematic suture in describing shot/reverse shot as a condensation of the history of the subject. In their account, Shot 1 is equivalent to the child's possession of and identification with the ideal image of the mirror stage and so duplicates the plenitude of the imaginary. This stage is quickly succeeded, however, by unpleasure stemming from an awareness of the insufficiency of the gaze, the recognition of an absent, reverse field that is outside of the spectator's reach. Discovery of the frame is instrumental in this realization of a constraint upon the viewer's potency, which is experienced, according to Oudart and Dayan, as a castration, and which can only be covered over by the revelation of the absent field in the form of shot 2. This second shot in turn demands another, so that the process of suture necessarily perpetuates itself. The signifying chain of narrative obliges suture by ceaselessly and tirelessly calling up a series of non-threatening others to divert attention from the true, castrating "Other," the site of discursive power, the apparatus.

Within this formulation, character and narrative, since they work together from within the classic film text to disavow lack, entertain a relationship to fetishism. The concept of fetishism originates with
Freud, who defines it as an effect of castration anxiety. The normal male child, having assumed the universality of the penis and having been confronted at an early age with the mother's lack, becomes retroactively convinced of her castration when later threatened by paternal authority with the same punishment. The fetishist, instead of admitting to woman's castration, prolongs his denial of her lack by replacing the penis with an object or another part of the female body. This substitution enables the fetishist to suppress sexual difference, and to neutralize the potential threat to his own potency which that difference may evoke. In cinema the fictional structures of character and narrative play a similar role with regard to the maintenance of the illusion of the spectator's discursive power:

The viewer's exclusion from the site of cinematic production is covered over by the inscription into the diegesis of a character from whom the film's sounds and images seem to flow, a character equipped with authoritative vision, hearing and speech. Insofar as the spectator identifies with this most fantasmatic of representations, he or she enjoys an unquestioned wholeness and assurance. (Silverman, "Lost Objects" 20)

The subject in the text, then, as it is offered by the operation of suture, functions as a fetish for the discursive castration of the spectator.

The theorists of suture are not alone in their application of this psychoanalytic model of absence/compensatory presence to film. As Kaja Silverman so lucidly demonstrates in "Lost Objects and Mistaken Subjects: Film Theory's Structuring Lack," the paradigm of castration, disavowal, and fetishism underlies all the major theories of cinematic
signification. Along with Dayan and Oudart, Munsterberg, Metz, Comolli, and even at times Bazin speak of film as a language, and as therefore defined by the absence of the object or referent; all see film's break with the real, the foreclosure of the object, as a type of loss or castration; similarly, all, despite their very different formulations of filmic representation, envision cinema as in some way compensating for this loss, as providing a substitute or fetish. Again, the form of the fetish varies: for Metz, it is technical virtuosity, cinema's formal capabilities; for others like Comolli it is the "impression of reality," film's capacity for realism; but in all cases the general structuring principle—that of a lack underlying cinematic signification—is identical.

In her discussion of Metz and Comolli, Silverman notes how the psychoanalytic paradigm of castration, disavowal, and fetishism undergoes a "desexualization" upon its appropriation by cinematic theory. In effect, Metz and others, in their reliance on Lacan, preempt the oedipal stage and focus on the "castrations" which occur prior to sexual differentiation: the various splittings which all subjects, both male and female, sustain at the time of the mirror stage and the entry into the symbolic. Silverman looks on their analysis as an opportunity to deconstruct Freud's identification of women as the sole site of lack. She sees Freud's exclusion from the term "castration complex" of what are, by his own admission, the earlier losses structuring both sexes, as evidence of an effort to shield the male from implication in lack:
this refusal to identify castration with any of the pre-Oedipal divisions reveals Freud's desire to place a maximum distance between the male subject and the notion of lack. To admit that the loss of the object is also a castration would be to acknowledge that the male subject is already structured by absence at the moment of sexual differentiation—to concede that he, like the female subject, has already been deprived of any fullness of being. ("Lost Objects" 22)

Silverman goes on to suggest that Freud is not alone in his projection of castration onto another, alien figure. In most instances of the fetishisation of the female figure, she argues, the real "object" of the fetish is male, not female lack. According to Silverman's formulation, within representations of women as lacking, the female subject bears the burden of both her own and the male subject's pre-oedipal castrations. The castration that the male goes to such great lengths to cover over is thus his own.

Given this model, the metamorphosis of woman's sexual lack into enunciative absence that cinema engineers is clearly not accidental. In "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," Laura Mulvey demonstrates how gender difference determines and structures the very technique of shot/reverse shot. Mulvey associates classic film with a precise scopic regime which places the male on the side of the look and women on the side of spectacle. As Silverman points out, Mulvey's analysis is especially important because it indicates that suture is not sexually neutral, but, rather, a positioning of the male character/viewer with relation to the phallus. And in the context of cinema, the phallus is not other than the absent agency of enunciation. In classic cinema, the male figure's identification with
the powers of vision and hearing that belong to the apparatus assures him of his adequacy. The female figure, on the other hand, is excluded from this scopic and auditory potency: she is the object of, rather than the bearer of, the look. She thus facilitates the fetishistic mechanism by serving as the receptacle for the projection of male loss.

For Silverman there is a link between the losses inherent in cinematic representation and the lack cinema assigns to women, and that link is the structure of disavowal and fetishism that aligns the male subject alone with the discursive power of the apparatus. The female subject, although also distanced from the agency of enunciation, is already defined as sexually castrated, and so cannot profit from these avoidance strategies. Man's adherence to these operations, however, is guaranteed by his greater stake in them, his potentially greater loss:

...Since the female subject is constructed through an identification with dispossession, her exposure to further castration jeopardizes nothing. The male subject, on the contrary, is constructed through an identification with the phallus. That identification may be threatened by the disappearance of the object, but it is capsized by any reminder of the male viewer's discursive impotence. It is impossible for a subject who knows himself to be excluded from authoritative vision, speech and hearing to sustain a narcissistic alignment with the phallus. ("Lost Objects" 25-26)

It is clear from Silverman's comments that the process which, as compensation for the male subject's isolation from the phallus, associates him with the apparatus, is fragile and easily disrupted:

Every reminder of the foreclosed site of production draws attention to that isolation, revealing the gulf separating the male spectator from the signifier upon which he relies for his
cultural identity. Indeed, since every frameline and cut constitute potential reminders of that hidden scene, the classic film poses a constant threat to the very subjectivity it wishes to consolidate. ("Lost Objects" 27)

The constancy of the threat demands that the structures which confirm discursive potency be continuously reactivated. Lack is, in a sense, called up again and again so that it may be contained. The result, as Silverman indicates, is cinema's "endless renarrativizations of the castration crisis" ("Lost Objects" 27).

Enunciation and Resnais' Marienbad

The theoretical formulations of enunciation outlined above, together with the related perspectives of Silverman and Mulvey, provide a means of breaching the critical gap separating the two major readings of Marienbad as outlined by Thiher. The point of a possible join between Marienbad as the narration of individual subjectivity and as the narration of narration is the paradigm of castration, and disavowal of that castration through fetishism. In the film, X's relationship to A suggests not only sexual attraction but a fear of male as well as female lack. Although on the one hand the film may not be best described as a kind of "psychic realism," on the other hand Marienbad's narrative does suggest a certain positioning of the male subject with regard to the source of enunciation; as we shall see, many of the
film's techniques, such as voice-over and point of view shots, serve to attribute discursive potency to the male. At the same time, Thiher's interpretation of the film as a metanarrative suggests that the film undertakes an investigation of its own enunciative processes. If indeed, as Thiher proposes, Marienbad attempts to "lay bare the mechanisms that realistic works seek to hide so that they do not destroy the illusion of representation" (178), then the film, as it narrates narration, also necessarily speaks the subject's discursive castration, and with the it the subject's self-alienation, its radical disunity. Unlike in classic film, which succeeds in covering over enunciative lack, in Marienbad this lack continually re-emerges, comes to the fore. In effect, Marienbad's deconstruction of fetishism as it functions in classic film to substitute the male subject (both within and outside the text) for the absent agency of enunciation is the primary index of the film's status as an avant-garde text.

In Marienbad, fetishism and its deconstruction occur on two interconnected levels—in the image and in the soundtrack. The opening sequence of the film demonstrates how these two levels function to both cover over and discover lack. The first images of the film are successive but discontinuous tracking shots down the labyrinthine halls of a chateau. Over these images a male voice, latter identified as X's, intones the following monologue:

Une fois de plus—, je m'avance, une fois de plus, le long de ces couloirs, à travers ces salons, ces galeries, dans cette construction—d'un autre siècle, cet hôtel immense, luxueux, baroque,—lugubre, où des couloirs interminables succèdent aux couloirs,—silencieux, déserts, surchargés d'un décor sombre et
froid de boisseries, de stuc, de panneaux moulurés, marbres, glaces noires, tableaux aux teintes noires, colonnes, lourdes tentures,—encadrements sculptés des portes, enfilades de portes, de galeries,—de couloirs transversaux, qui débouchent à leur tour sur des salons déserts, des salons surchargés d'une ornementation d'un autre siècle, des salles silencieuses où les pas de celui qui s'avance sont absorbés par des tapis si lourds, si épais, qu'aucun bruit de pas ne parvient à sa propre oreille, comme si l'oreille elle-même de celui qui s'avance, une fois de plus, le long de ces couloirs,—à travers ces salons, ces galeries, dans cette construction d'un autre siècle, cet hôtel immense, luxueux, baroque, ... . (Robbe-Grillet 24-25; 26)

This first sequence contains the components of first person narration—voice-over and a synchronized image—and would at first appear to advance the identification of X as the agency of enunciation. On further consideration, however, it becomes evident that several of these elements, or the relationships between them, are skewed: the images of the chateau's corridors, although accompanied by X's voice, are shot from extreme (usually low) angles, often in extreme close-up, making it hard to conceive of them as point of view shots from X's perspective. While it may be possible to define them, as Bruce Xawin does, as a kind of "mindscreen" of the character, portraying what that character "sees" in his or her "mind's eye," the overtly cinematic nature of the shots points nonetheless to the origin of this mental image in the "look" of the camera. Similarly, X's voice is not naturalistically coded, but fades in and out of the soundtrack over the organ music in a way which draws attention to its duplication by a mechanical device.

Marienbad's opening sequence is typical of the process of the film in that the very elements which in classic film work to associate a
certain character with the discursive power of the apparatus here retroactively expose that association as the product of artifice, and consequently impede the spectator's assumption of that power. The potential for repudiation or confirmation of the subject as enunciator can be found, as it is here, in the relationship between sound and image, but these levels can also be analyzed separately for their respective fetishistic and deconstructive operations. Given the centrality of vision not only to cinema as a medium but to operations of suture, it is not surprising that in Marienbad the image is the principal (if not the exclusive) site of these operations, and that, as visual center of the film, the character of A is their particular locus.

A's role in Marienbad's narrative is that of object of erotic desire, and this position is reinforced visually by her appearance and body language. Dressed in close-fitting evening gowns and negligées and "posing" seductively in doorways or against staircases or balustrades, A is structured as a spectacle to attract the male gaze. As Mulvey reminds us, however, woman as spectacle risks calling up not only the pleasurable but the unpleasurable aspects of looking, i.e. the threat of castration or lack. ("Thus the woman as icon, displayed for the gaze and enjoyment of men, the active controllers of the look, always threatens to evoke the anxiety it originally signified" [13].) In cinema, Mulvey suggests, this anxiety is neutralized either through disavowal through fetishism (idealization of the woman's image by means of lighting, close-ups, costumes, make-up, etc.) or through avowal
accompanied by disparagement (revelation within the narrative of the female character's guilt or illness, often followed by her eventual punishment or death). The visual codes surrounding A, particularly the lighting of her face and body and the way these are isolated in the frame, adhere to the first of these strategies. Through a compensatory overvaluation on the level of the image, A's castration (symbolized in the film in her broken shoe heel and resulting limp) is denied; scopophilic fetishism holds in check a lack which is all the more dangerous because it threatens to "contaminate" the male.

Fetishism, however, can never completely remedy lack but only hold it at bay. Castration, in other words, is always only dormant, and no strategy can guarantee that pleasurable looking, since it demands a kind of visual intimacy with the female figure, will not revert to unpleasure. In Marienbad the instability of certain fetishized representations of A points up the tenuousness of disavowal. The series of shots often interpreted as A's rape by X is a prime example: the repetition of the rapid tracking shots into A's arms is as suggestive of a failure to consummate, even of a recoiling, as of violation; these overtones of anxiety are magnified by the dissonant, frenetic organ music that, however, constitutes no emotional "match" with A's expression, which is smiling and composed. As the representation of sexual aggression in the form of a sexually aggressive "look," these shots nonetheless have an ambivalence which can only be assigned to the bearer of the look, i.e. to X. Here the attempt at sexual possession which ideally would confirm the male's
potency is also a confrontation with castration and thus aggravates fear. The ambiguity of the shots in question reflect what is for the male figure the female figure's double status as substitute and snare.

The mechanism of fetishism, constituting as it does a structuring of representation in order to produce "an illusion cut to the measure of desire" (Mulvey 17), is an affirmation of the ability of the male subject to wield discursive power. Thus the existence of images which, even in their fetishization, continue to express lack, reveals a break in the line between the male subject and the agency of enunciation. To state it differently, in *Marienbad*, the sexual threat present within representations of the female subject is also enunciative. This connection is made more apparent in other images of A which manifest an instability that is less directly attributable to a failed fetishism on a sexual level: A appears at moments in a light-colored gown and at others in a dark one (but in a way which negates the possibility of establishing a temporal pattern), and is equally capricious in terms of her position in the castle: at times, during the camera's long explorations of the corridors, she is not to be found; at other times, most typically when X is not in her pursuit, she appears suddenly within the frame, as if, as he remarks, she is waiting for him.

A's position as the center link in a larger diegetic chain interweaving sexual and discursive lack is brought home by the structural parallels in representations of A and the film's setting. The castle's baroque decor has a fetishistic function similar to the overvaluation of A's body in that it too seeks to disguise a
fundamental "lack" or absence—the rooms, despite heavy ornamentation, are "empty," the halls "silent" and "deserted," the mirrors "dark," the carpets so thick and heavy that "nothing" is heard. And too, the various shots of the castle of "Marienbad," are, like the shots of A, disturbingly dissimilar (having in reality been taken at several different locations), creating a fluctuating, chameleon set for the drama between A and X. The spatial inconsistency within the diegesis is all the more significant given what Mary Ann Doane, referring to work by Stephen Heath and Julia Kristeva, argues is the importance of place to the construction of subjectivity:

While the image is implicated in the recognition/misrecognition of self, visual space is also framed (transformed into a series of "this's" and "that's") and contributes to the very possibility of recognition, nameability. The use of "this" and "that" in language precedes the recourse to "I" and "me." It is as though it were absolutely crucial to outline a space which the "I"—not yet formulated—could subsequently inhabit. Positionality—necessarily the visual image in itself—is the coagulant of identity. ("The Moving Image" 55-56)

In Marienbad, the attempted creation of a coherent space through the obsessively searching gaze of the camera is undermined by the instability of the visual field it records; this instability prohibits the subject from securing a position from which to speak, which in turn disturbs the illusion of the subject's own coherence.

In Marienbad not only the unreliability of the image but the use of technique flagrantly opposed to the "self-effasive" tropes of narrative cinema disrupts the alignment of the male subject with the source of enunciation. It does so by threatening the impression of the
real on which this alignment depends. The potential for realism inherent in the presence within the film of voice-over and implied point of view shots, for example, is outweighed by extremely obtrusive camera work and, especially, editing: if, as Silverman insists, each cut within classic film constitutes a threat to the male subject's potency, the substantially greater number of cuts in Marienbad must increase this threat proportionately. Flamboyant technique, in other words, disallows the fetishism which realist technique facilitates.

The relationship between sound and image—their belated correspondence as well as their discrepancy—generates further disturbances in the positioning of the subject. In Marienbad, X's voice, a structural constant in the sense that it is both consistently present and recognizable, acts as a hypothesis of coherency which the image can either confirm or repudiate. When, as is frequently the case, what appears on the screen—a certain pose of A, for instance—conflicts with what X describes, the impression of the real is immediately destroyed, and with it the foundation of the male subject's discursive authority. Even in those instances where the image corroborates X's voice, the often considerable temporal lag between the two undermines the enunciative illusion, since the elapsed moments, however brief, signal the autonomy of the apparatus.

The particular avant-garde strategies of Marienbad, especially this disjunction in time of the major elements of cinematic realism, correspond to certain aspects of the trompe l'oeil effect in painting. The trompe l'oeil is a deception of the eye which solicits the viewer's
appreciation through a delayed acknowledgement of skillful artifice—the realization that what one thought was real is in fact simply a painting. Trompe l'oeil has special relevance to Marienbad because of its relationship to fetishism as a strategy of realism:

There is a sense . . . in which the trompe l'oeil effects a hyperbolization of the positioning of the spectator in illusionistic or realistic artistic practices. Realism in representation always requires the spectator to adopt the stance of the fetishist, weighing simultaneously the belief that the represented matter contains the truth of the real and the knowledge that the representation is only a representation. The trompe l'oeil, on the other hand, operates a separation in time of the two components of fetishism, belief and knowledge, so that the contradiction between the two is more apparent. This delaying of "knowledge" as a secondary temporal effect is demonstrated by one of the "rules" of the trompe l'oeil aesthetic which demands that the frame contain but in no instance cut off the elements of the printing [sic]. . . . Acknowledgement of the frame must clearly succeed the moment when the eye is "taken in." The ultimate recognition of the frame in trompe l'oeil thus produces a shock or a jolt which is uncharacteristic of realism or illusionism. (Doane, "The Moving Image" 46)

In a sense, in Marienbad, this "jolt of the frame" is reproduced every time the image either contradicts X's voice or confirms it too late. The visuals accompanying a discussion between X and A about the meaning of the stone statue of a man and a woman provide a particularly provocative variation on trompe l'oeil: after X hypothesizes that perhaps the couple has stopped before the sea, the camera moves up and over the statue and isolates a section of a nearby pond, adopting a point of view that implies that the statue is in fact standing before a large body of water. As Thiher remarks, in this undisguised movement the camera foregrounds knowledge of the representation as such and bares the "ficelles" of X's narrative potency: "The camera thus
converts the narrative hypothesis into a visual reality that we know in
a conventional sense to be false, for it is merely the change in
perspective that has created the 'sea" (176). In Marienbad, this
revelation by the camera of its tricks before the fact of the eye's
decception, its reverse trompe l'oeil, if you will, deconstructs the
discursive fetishism at work in the film. And, as Mary Ann Doane
remarks, such a deconstruction of fetishism is also a deconstruction of
the coherent subject:

The threat of trompe l'oeil lies in the fact that it is
constituted as the undoing of a psychical defense. For
fetishism, in psychoanalytic theory, binding together knowledge
and belief, acts as a defense against a castration which
signifies to the subject his own structuring lack, a fundamental
splitting of subjectivity. Similarly, fetishism in the cinema
holds at bay this trauma of lack or absence, producing a coherent
subject-spectator. In the trompe l'oeil, however, fetishism as a
defense is broken down into its elements and analyzed, forcing a
gap between knowledge and belief, indicating the re-emergence of
lack and unveiling the subject's unity as fundamentally
contradictory. ("The Moving Image" 47-48)

Although, as we have seen, in Marienbad much of the responsibility
for the positioning of the male subject as enunciator lies in the
image, sound, especially voice, also has a role in this process. The
fact of X's speaking even over the film's credits, the presence of
sound before image, is indicative of the former's importance to
discursive potency. In Marienbad, nonetheless, certain fundamental
distinctions between the verbal and visual fields are in operation.
Whereas the image's realism is threatened by internal
disturbance—disturbance, that is, at the level of representation or

technique—sound, except in its initial fade in and fade out, is not
submitted to the same perceptual threat. For this reason, X's voice has a greater part in the construction of the subject's coherence and is thereby a larger component of spectator identification. While it would be overstating the case to say that in the film the fetishistic and deconstructive functions divide neatly along the axes of cinematic representation, in Marienbad a pattern nonetheless emerges whereby, on the surface at least, sound is allied with fetishism and the image with deconstruction.

In Marienbad the function of voice stems in part from the fetishistic properties of language. Just as in Providence Clive speaks/writes in order to control or disguise affect, from the first moments of the film X generates a string of signifiers in an effort to at once order and convey experience. This outpouring of language can be considered, on a deeper level, an attempt to both deny and compensate for the multiple castrations inherent in the subject's entry into signification—the loss of the object, the exclusion of the real, and, most crucially, the splitting of the self. Ironically, though, as we have seen, what X's discourse describes is an endless quest that uncovers nothing but absence and lack: the corridors are "toujours vides," A remains "toujours le même," with "les mêmes yeux absents." And, too, the form that this discourse takes is a sign of its inability to make good the promise of referentiality: the voice's internal repetition and circularity (emphasized by the frequency of the words "encore une fois" and "toujours") disclose its failure to exceed itself, to make contact with a real. In effect, to the extent that
they allude to castration even in their structural coherence, voice and language manifest a latent tension that is a reflection of the more serious ruptures present on other levels in the film.

In Marienbad, the fetishistic project of language initiated in the opening sequence expands into a self-perpetuating chain of narration. X's control over this narrative is, however, like Clive's in Providence, slippery and sporadic. The account of the entry into A's room, begun unsuccessfully several times, must finally be retold because its conclusion in the form of A's death is not the "right" one. The sequence in which X, addressing A, invokes the memory of the statue to convince her of the events of last year is typical of his fluctuating powers of narration. X recalls that, asked by A about the identity of the stone figures, he replied that did not know. Following this scene is another where X relays several hypotheses—some mythological—about the statue, each of which is then contradicted or amended by A. Later, as X and A are contemplating an engraving of the figures, M appears and explains that they represent Charles III and his wife at the moment of the trial for treason, but that the costumes are purely conventional, the statue itself dating from another period. Although, as Thiher rightly points out, M's explanation, in its mise-en-abîme of temporal layers, hardly fixes the identity of the statue, it does succeed in evoking a "real" outside of the film; as such it has a degree of narrative authority which X's hypotheses do not. M's prowess here, his unsurpassed skill at the match stick game, and his privileged relationship to A (he alone has free access to her
room) all make him a foil for X's inadequacies: a reminder of the absent agency of enunciation, M functions within the film as a representation of the phallus, and, consequently, of X's lack.

In Marienbad, X's wielding of narrative is not arbitrary, but, like the look of the camera, which stands in for the male gaze, is directed at A. The struggle to convince A that there was a last year at Marienbad is paramount because success would constitute a confirmation of discursive potency. Thus not only does the cure (or threat) of discursive lack reside, once again, in A, but, too, the ultimate proof of potency lies in the evocation of memory. The premise of X's seduction—and, as some have noted, perhaps its pretense—is the verification of a previous affair with A; desire materializes at the juncture of present and past. However, as Thiher puts it, within the film "there appears to be no narrative finality that can vouchsafe the past, that can guarantee there was an entrance into the woman's room, that there was a last year at Marienbad" (173). Just as the irrevocable alienation of the subject from the real upon entry into language leads to a proliferation of signification, in Marienbad the dependence of discursive potency on an unverifiable memory results in a solipsistic redoubling of narrative. In the film a tautological logic takes hold by which representation is elicited in a futile attempt to compensate for itself: accordingly, the only evidence of last year which X can produce is a photograph whose temporal ambiguity and multiplication within the narrative are the marks of its very inadequacy.
In Marienbad, then, one of the primary functions of narrative is self-validation. The film, as Thiher indicates, engages in the creation of its own past, becomes its own memory:

It would seem that when the metanarration reaches its goal, one has effectively created or seized a past that exists in function of the present narrative project. In a sense, the metanarration is then sublimated into a "pastness" that is the aim of its quest. (177)

Moreover, it is by means of this representational memory that A is eventually seduced: "From the moment the narrative voice shifts to the past tense, we know, as does the woman's companion, M, that she has accepted the seduction and that the stranger has created the past into which she will enter" (177). In a certain sense, then, persuasion as it takes form in narrative is a substitute or fetish covering X's inability to authenticate the past, to provide a "true" memory. In effect, the entire process of narrative can be conceived as a kind of fetishism on a grand scale, since it serves to disguise a potential, referential lack—the possibility that the events which supposedly took place last year at Marienbad never took place at all. Furthermore, in Marienbad, as narrative constructs its own memory it satisfies another, even more fundamental drive:

... present identity ... demands the creation of the narration whose causal chain will guarantee the existence of a substantial self through time. The need for an identity is, then, a generator of fictions, or at least of narrative, and in this respect the stone couple stands in a metaphorical relationship not only with the living couple, but with the entire narrative quest. (Thiher 176)

It seems clear from Thiher's remarks here that the creation of a
"causal chain," "a substantial self" which the accumulation of narrative accomplishes is synonymous with the movement towards coherent subjectivity.

Returning at this point to our original theses about Marienbad, it appears that both are confirmed. First, the seduction of A and the seduction of the spectator intersect in the problem of enunciation in that the attempt to convince A of the reality of last year is the diegetic or intra-narrative equivalent of the assertion that the narrative itself emanates from and is controlled by X. Second, as Silverman suggests, the female figure in the film does indeed serve as a screen for the "projection" and concealment of male lack. A's fetishized image and her departure with X are, on different levels, both assurances of male potency. However, in the film, as we have seen, A's image remains highly unstable, and continues to pose a sexual and enunciative threat. The persistence of this threat sheds a different light on the developments within the fiction and in fact emerges as their probable cause: in the same sense that, in Mulvey's model, denigration or punishment of the female subject accompanies avowal of sexual lack, in Marienbad X's ultimate narrative control of A compensates for his failure to completely control her image. A's compliance to X's will, in other words, can be seen as a kind of narrative retribution for the castration she persists in articulating on the level of enunciation. From this perspective the ending of film is yet another "covering over," stands, it might be said, as a kind of fetishism within fetishism.
Enunciation and Duras' India Song

Duras' 1975 film India Song has an uncanny pictoral similarity to Marienbad: both the spacious, château-like setting and the preeminence of a female figure—played, as is A, by the actress Delphine Seyrig—bring to mind the earlier film. India Song, however, does not so much duplicate the deep structures of Marienbad as carry them to their logical conclusion or limit. In an important article Elizabeth Lyon argues that the film replays a mise-en-scène of loss within which operations such as looking, because they evoke the separations which structure subjectivity, represent not pleasure or satisfaction but their absence. Moreover, Lyon sees the structure of the film as analogous to that of a fantasy in the sense that the term came to be employed by Freud. The observations made by Laplanche and Pontalis about the formula "a father seduces a daughter," a condensed version of the seduction fantasy, articulate the salient features of this structure:

The indication here of the primary process is not the absence of organization as is sometimes suggested, but the peculiar character of the structure, in that it is a scenario with multiple entries in which nothing shows whether the subject will be immediately located as daughter; it can as well be fixed as father, or even in the term seduces. (qtd. in Lyon 11)

From these remarks it is clear that the defining structural
characteristic of fantasy is the mobility of the subject, both in terms of projection into the scene and the slippage among the various positions of identification therein. Lyon sees *India Song* as tracing just such a movement of circulation, a play of identity and difference, inclusion and exclusion, presence and absence, which ultimately links the character of the Vice Consul of Lahore to the figure of Anne-Marie Stretter in a reciprocity of lack.

The fantasy structure that Lyon discerns in *India Song* has many implications, not the least of which is the disintegration in the film of the prototypical framework of cinematic enunciation. The continual displacement of the subject and the association rather than differentiation of male and female figures means that the unstable fetishism in evidence in *Marienbad* in the tenuous substitution of a male figure for the apparatus has here given way. The place of enunciation, though marked, is empty, inhabited only intermittently, and then by a plurality of subjects. In the sound track a fragmented narrative floats between numerous disembodied voices which constantly discount their own discourse. In the image track the look of the camera is consistently deflected or "decoyed"—while it still locates the male subject, the voices and the spectator on the side of seeing, this gaze is no longer authoritative. In *India Song*, too, temporal distinctions and chronology have fallen aside; memory, finally achieved in Resnais' film through the activity of the metanarration, is here at once so incomplete and so blended with the present that it remains irretrievable; similarly, in the film narrative progression yields to
pure circularity. As a result, neither can be manipulated and held as proof of discursive potency.

In general in India Song the components of cinematic discourse which support the construction of the potent, unified male subject are either altogether absent or function simply as markers of lack. As we shall see, the film is remarkable for the way in which it "acts out" this male disenfranchisement. Moreover, the disruption in the subjectivity within the film has repercussions which extend beyond the immediate boundaries of the text. The refusal to erect, or at the very least to activate, traditional structures of identity and identification within the text also obstructs the operations of suture. Indeed, the film goes the furthest of those we have considered in displacing and challenging the privileged position and coherence of not only the male enunciator but the spectator. It is the specifics of these parallel processes of deconstruction in India Song which merit close investigation.

India Song differs from Marienbad but recalls Duras' earlier films in the central role of sound in the subject/spectator's displacement. Interestingly, Duras' published notes on the film confirm the primacy of voice by revealing its hidden part in the filmmaking process. The notes explain that during the rehearsals of India Song, the texts recited by the voices and the guests, as well as the texts describing the shot itself ("il entre, il regarde, il voudrait la voir. . . .") were read aloud and taped, and that during the shooting this oral scenario was played through in its entirety. Duras goes on to say:
Cette parole, ce scénario oral, devait disparaître au montage et Delphine rester seule à opérer l'entrée et le regard. . . . N'empêche: la distraction de Delphine due à cette écoute corporelle, elle est dans le film. A mon avis il n'y avait que cette distraction, cette subordination à la parole, qui pouvait, dans India Song, être dite: connaissance du sens. ("Notes sur India Song" in Marquerite Duras 14)

Later she writes of the reception sequence in the middle of the film, "Je la vois avant tout comme une masse sonore qui tourne autour d'images à peine variables, sortes de supports fixes qui ancrent cette masse sonore dans des lieux fixes, l'empêchent de dériver vers l'illustration" (15).

Even if we disregard Duras' comments, the opening sequence demonstrates the importance of sound and identifies it as the key to the operations at work in the film. India Song in fact begins with a woman singing in an Asian language. The first shot of the film is of the setting sun. The singing stops, and, over this same image, two very similar but anonymous female voices take turns relaying, in staccato sentences, the story of the beggarwoman, who, except for one brief moment when her shadow passes across some steps, is never seen during the film. Eventually the story of the beggarwoman is subtly intertwined via the pronoun "elle" with that of Anne-Marie Stretter, ambiguously referred to at first only as "la blanche." This beginning sequence of the film is notable not only for the complete lack of a male presence but for the absence on the screen of any human figures who might serve as visual referents for the spoken subjects. This means that as spectators we are totally dependent on the voices as a
way into the film. Yet even here we are confronted with a perplexing multiplicity: there is not one voice but several, and their origin and identity, as well as those of the others which, unannounced, take their places, are unknown. It is through sound that we are able to make any sense of the images which follow, yet the sense we make of it is constantly in flux. Again as in Détruire, dit-elle, although more immediately and insistently, language does not "mean" by a syntagmatic structure of difference, but rather constructs a web of association, moves along a paradigmatic axis of substitution. The result, especially in the initial moments of the film, is a kind of disorientation, a constant shifting which results in an increased distance from the fiction, and, simultaneously, an increased awareness of and participation in the cinematic process on the part of the spectator.

In the initial sequence, then, voice and language initiate a circulation which reverberates throughout the diegesis. Such a movement is in a sense prefigured in the complex intertextuality of the film: as part of what has been referred to as Duras' "Indian" cycle (along with the novels Le Ravissement de Lol V. Stein, Le Vice-Consul and L'Amour, and the films La Femme du Gange and Son Nom de Venise dans Calcutta désert), India Song, as Lyon remarks, "repeats and transforms" a narrative which has its "fantasmic" origins in Le Ravissement de Lol V. Stein in the account of the ball at S. Thala where Michael Richardson leaves Lol V. Stein for Anne-Marie Stretter. The film's story, then, comes already imbricated in a history, other moments of
which filter into the sound track: the voices refer not only to the beggarwoman and to the Vice Consul, but also occasionally to Michael Richardson and Lol V. Stein. The ambiguousness of linguistic references means that as the stories of the fiction multiply and intertwine it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish between different characters. Through the play of substitutions originating in the voice-over and extending to the film's images, the characters of the beggarwoman, Anne-Marie Stretter, and the Vice Consul become bound together, as Lyon indicates, in the themes of desire, exile and death. The subjects within the diegesis thus mirror the film's larger framework of intertextuality in their heterogeneity and circulation. Ultimately, as in Détruire, this overlap threatens the unity of the individual subject, each of whom contains the others. At the film’s conclusion—and indeed one could say that this is the condition of that conclusion—the histories of the three principal characters condense in the person of Anne-Marie Stretter; her suicide in a sense also accomplishes their deaths.

This shifting fantasy structure is reflected in the images as well as the sound track of the film. India Song again recalls Détruire in that the characters appear on screen in ever-modulating groups of two or three. The film's center section—the reception sequence—portrays an actual circulation in the exchange of dancing partners. In the opening sequence, too, Anne-Marie Stretter is first pictured dancing with Michael Richardson; although here there is no real exchange, the potential stability of the pair is nonetheless undermined by the
camera's advance revelation of the presence of a male observer.

Similarly, the Vice Consul of Lahore later appears in the doorway of the embassy and watches Anne-Marie Stretter and the two men sleeping. These scenes incorporating a spectator replicate not only the form but the operations at work in the "original" fantasy of India Song, the ball at S. Thala:

The scene of the ball at the beginning of Le Ravissement de Lol V. Stein describes a kind of substitution operated through an exchange of looks in which the couple Lol V. Stein and her fiancé Michael Richardson is replaced by the couple Anne-Marie Stretter and Michael Richardson. At the moment of that substitution, however, the couple becomes a threesome, Lol being inextricably bound to them by her look, as the spectator in the scene, a witness to her own no-longer-being-there, her own absence. (Lyon 8)

Spectatorship, then, in the Indian cycle, is comensurate with "the desire to see loss, to see what is by definition that to which the subject can have no access, but through which, at the same time, the subject is marked" (Lyon 25).

Within the various texts of the Indian cycle the figure of the spectator does undergo certain transformations: in India Song the character of Lol materializes, as noted above, in the male characters Michael Richardson, his friend, and eventually the Vice Consul. The shift in the sexual identity of the bearer of the look accompanying the transposition of the fiction to the cinema is doubly significant given that the look is no longer defined as controlling. Constituting himself, through the gaze, as the third point of a triangle of subjectivity which forms and reforms, the male subject in the film also
acts out his discursive impotence, his alienation from the typically
male-identified position of enunciator. This visually constituted
alienation is reinforced by the virtual absence from the image track of
shot/reverse shot. As Lyon points out, this trope in fact occurs only
once in India Song, at the end of the first section, and here the
variations imposed on the classical model are of particular impor-
For one, the shots mark a dispersion in time, a missed connection: the
Vice Consul's gaze is not returned by Anne-Marie Stretter until he has
already turned and left the frame; furthermore, Lyon notes that the
look of the camera, coinciding with the axes of the looks of Anne-Marie
Stretter and the Vice Consul, "establishes a relation of doubling,
ensuring their eventual substitution" (29). This single manipulation of
shot/reverse shot thus fails to differentiate the two subjects in
question, does not subordinate one to the other within a framework of
enunciation, but continues the movement, begun in the voices, which
associates the two in death and lack. Interestingly, the other major
confrontation between Anne-Marie Stretter and the Vice Consul is
represented as the condensation within a reflection of the two
perspectives of a reverse field, as if the space marking the
distance/difference between the two positions had collapsed.

The extradiegetic gaze necessarily partakes of the consequences of
the redefinition of the gaze within the diegesis. The absence of
shot/reverse shot, for instance, deprives the film of one of the
primary mechanisms whereby the spectator is positioned as enunciator.
The image track alters the privileged position of the viewer not only
by failing to provide a textual surrogate with authoritative vision, but by actively expressing the camera's capability for deception through the use of trompe l'oeil technique. Frequently what appears to be the "real" image of a character—often Anne-Marie Stretter—is discovered, via camera movement, to be a reflection. This technique foregrounds the image as representation while in addition, as Lyon remarks, introducing another dimension of "lack" into the film:

The position of the mirror in the scene produces a temporal and spatial gap in the image into which the characters disappear as they enter and dance across the room, leaving the field of the camera only to reappear a few seconds later reflected in the mirror. An absence, then, is written into the filmed present in the actual filming of the scene by the triangulation of the look of the camera: camera--mirror--object. (30)

Lyon further notes that the space of the mirror eventually completely engulfs both Anne-Marie Stretter and the Vice Consul, joining them, in the condensed reverse field shot that is the penultimate shot of the reception sequence, in "a common space of exile" (31).

In India Song the alternation between normal shots and mirror shots and the consequent triangulation of the look means that, in an immediate sense, the spectator's relationship to the screen is constantly in flux, and that, on another level, the image cannot, at least in any consistent way, be conceived of as emanating from the spectator. The oblique angle from which many of the mirror shots are filmed further complicates the spectator's relationship to the visual field by capturing both the characters and their reflections in the frame. This doubling effect deprives the image of a single center or
vanishing point, marking a fracturing of Renaissance perspective which in turn displaces the spectator from his or her traditional, centered position. The ultimate implication of this technique rejoins that of trompe l'oeil: the multiplicity within the image having undergone a transfer to the viewing subject, the illusion of this subject's unity is dispelled.

Throughout the film, Duras uses other techniques which alter the single, centered position of the spectator. Most simple yet most striking among these is the fact that the human figures of the film's images are mute. Even when the sound track provides what seems to be an on-screen exchange of dialogue between two characters—during the reception scene, for example—they are not seen conversing. Such a disjunction between sound and image tracks that are nonetheless on one level related perpetuates the autonomy of visuals and sound that characterizes the opening sequence, and builds a temporal gap into the center of the film. The figure of the Vice Consul once again exemplifies this disjunction. During the reception his body, after Anne-Marie Stretter's, dominates the image track, yet his voice is lost in the general ebb and flow of off-screen sound. It is only later, when he is no longer physically present (due, as the other voices tell us, to his disgrace and banishment from the embassy) that his voice stands out in the sound track: over a frontal tableau shot of Anne-Marie Stretter and several male characters, all of whom remain immobile and indifferent, he is heard crying, at first loudly and then more and more faintly, the name of Anna Maria Guardi.
The disjunction within India Song recreates in the spectator the "distraction" identified by Duras as basic to the film. The association yet non-synchronization of visual and verbal components means that our attention is at no time allowed to lapse or "settle" into an exclusive focus on either image or voice. India Song, in other words, maintains an ambiguity which continuously "divides" the viewer. This multiplicity and indeterminacy coalesce in the film's temporal scheme. The same voices which continually transmit the past—the narrative's history and the narrative as history—frequently (often in virtually the same moment) highlight the immediacy of the image: over a shot of Anne-Marie Stretter and Michael Richardson dancing, one woman asks, "Ils dansaient le soir?" and another replies, "Ils dansent." This sequence and others like it suggest that sound is instrumental in preventing the image from stabilizing into a temporally denotative illustration, from becoming either immersed in the pastness of the fiction or the presentness of the film. When the "live" image of Anne-Marie Stretter stops at the piano to examine her photograph, it is its previous association with her absence, through the fiction relayed by the voices, that causes us to experience this moment as fundamentally contradictory. If indeed as Lyon, following Barthes, proposes, the photograph itself serves as a condensation of the tension between the "already-there" of the fiction and the "being-there" of the film, then sound can be said to sustain this tension within the diegesis (16).
India Song's inalterable, dual status as both memory and present experience freezes the movement of narrative—Anne-Marie Stretter's death is from the beginning so woven into the fabric of the diegesis as to dissolve any sense of progression. Having noted the classical, three-part composition of the film, Lyon describes the fantasmic "doubling back" which characterizes its "resolution":

The trajectories of Anne-Marie Stretter and the beggarwoman, told in the present tense by the voices at the beginning of the film, are then retraced in reverse as history at its end... By the end of the last part the fiction has folded back onto itself, the two temporalities of the film condensing—the already-there of the fiction joining the being-there of the film as Anne-Marie Stretter leaves (shot 71) to accomplish that death that has been at once inexorably present in the film and the condition of its mise-en-scène. (36)

Again the film manifests its tie to fantasy in its return to origins. In comparison to Marienbad, then, India Song is more purely circular: while the earlier narrative results in A's seduction, the later one, as Lyon indicates, results in nothing but itself. Although there is a temptation to point to the expulsion of the male figure as evidence of an actual progression within the film, this movement also bears marks of circularity: the Vice Consul's disappearance from the diegesis following his outburst merely eclipses his already-established exile within the fiction and from the position of enunciation.

In effect, both the film's circularity and its complete divorce from the functions of persuasion or seduction are related to the absence of a single, authoritative enunciator who would wield or direct the movement of the narrative. This absence, and its marking out
within the diegesis, also alters the entire framework and meaning of desire within the film: just as Hiroshima does not provide the certainty of an "inconsolable mémoire" referred to by the woman's voice in the prologue, India Song represents not the mise-en-scène of desire, but of an "impossible desire--the desire for that to which the subject can have no access" (Lyon 37). A similar unattainability informs the film as the desire of the spectator for enunciative control which would lend assurance of power and coherence. Thus in India Song memory and desire, subjectivity and enunciation echo one another as floating, interchangeable signifiers of a common signified of loss.
NOTES

1 Robbe-Grillet's primary theoretical text is *Pour un nouveau roman* (Paris: Minuit, 1963).

2 See for example Oudart's "La suture" (1969) and Dayan's "The Tutor-Code of Classical Cinema" (1974).
Summarizing the question of subjectivity as it takes shape in the films of Resnais and Duras poses problems of analysis and organization similar to the ones encountered in the individual discussions in the preceding chapters. First, the notion of subjectivity itself escapes to some extent the very terminology which defines it, for in speaking of "the subject" or even of "subjectivity," what always threatens to be lost is the sense of movement, of ongoing process, of the continuing "formation" of the subject in and through operations of signification:

The history of individual subjectivity is never over, never concluded (were this so, there would be no scope for psychoanalytic practice) but is interminably actual, ceaselessly going on in the present. I do not become a subject, "I" am the term of a structuring production in process which defines "my" instance of subject. . . . Critically, Lacanian theory thus says the impossibility of "the subject" (every schema drawn, every reference to this or that topological figure, every knot tied and untied is an immense effort to represent that impossibility—the process, the division, the articulation of instances); finally, "the subject" is there nonetheless as the unity that psychoanalysis gives itself as its closed area of operation and conception, its truth. (Heath, "The Turn of the Subject" 39)

Much like the psychoanalytic theory on which it has drawn, then, this study has marked out an area of investigation which always exceeds the terms by which it is described or analyzed. One such set of terms are
those of the "speaking subject" or cinematic apparatus which then
determines subjectivity "within" and subjectivity "outside" of the
cinematic text, the former having been referred to here as the
character or "subject of speech," the latter as the spectator or
"spoken subject." What such distinct categories attempt to express yet
at the same time misrepresent is the reality of the complex of
relations which define and encompass them:

Thinking quickly of cinema in this context of subject production,
it is not a question of "a" or "the" subject "in" or "outside" a
film . . . it is a question of insisting on the experience of a
film, its signifying practice, as so many relations of
subjectivity, relations which are not the simple "property" of
the film nor that of the individual-spectator but which are those
of a subject production in which film and individual have their
specific historical and social reality as such. (Heath, "The
Turn of the Subject" 43-44)

What thus may have been referred to on occasion in this study as
"structures" are only so from an inevitably limited and limiting
perspective which attempts to grasp instances of subjectivity,
particular moments of intersection within the continual movement of
processes.

Admitting from the start such limitations, it is nevertheless
possible, given a socio-historical perspective which proposes,
following the theoreticians of suture and cinematic enunciation, that
there exists a so-called "dominant" film practice involving certain
ideological operations, to generalize to a certain extent about the set
of films under consideration here. If, as contemporary film theory
suggests, such a dominant practice strives to present or disguise the
subject as individual—that is, as a unified, centered essence which creates and controls discourse—then the respective work of Resnais and Duras must be seen as diverging from such a practice. What these films lay bare is precisely the fact of subjectivity—the radical discontinuity and alienation of the self, its irremediably unstable position as the product of signifying operations.

Nonetheless, if all of these films in a sense "speak" the subject, they do so, as I have tried to suggest, in different ways and to varying degrees, approaching or backing away, one might say, from Lacan's assertion of its "impossibility." At the conclusion of Providence, for instance, one can still speak, if not of the individual (any recognition, in a reading of the film, of the operation of unconscious discourse destroys this notion), then of "a subject." With regard to Hiroshima, Détruire, dit-elle, and Muriel, one can speak perhaps initially of "a subject," but ultimately only of subjectivity. In India Song, any notion of "the subject" is completely absent (it is this film's total refusal to anchor or delimit subjectivity with reference to consciousness or enunciation which explains at least partially the amount of attention awarded it by contemporary criticism). What is interesting, if not surprising, about this set of films, then, is their diversity, the scope of positions which they represent within any broad notion of the representation of subjectivity.

Connecting the varied tracings of the subject/subjectivity in these films is a common notion of the relationship of memory to this
process. The beginning of this study introduced a theoretical formulation of the function of memory in dominant cinema as that of the replay or re-establishment of the coherence of the self. From the perspective of such a formulation the past, even when represented as fragmented or discontinuous, is ultimately subjected to an ordering by the cumulative process of narrative, which, in closing itself, completes the subject. In the majority of the films considered here, however, memory is either an impossibility—that is, the past cannot be remembered or represented, since to do so at all presumes not only a direct relationship between signification and a phenomenological "reality," but also a centered subject who can wield discourse—or its representation uncovers the very disunity and heterogeneity of experience and identity. In Nathalie Granger memory is completely absent (the two women do not remember what kind of washing machine they own), except for the conversation with the school principal, which is not, however, coded as a past event, since its sole importance in the film is to articulate a present dilemma; in Hiroshima, the surfacing of the past unleashes a multiplicity which then cannot be contained; in a film like Détruire, dit-elle, memory is invoked in order to be expunged, while in India Song it is always tentative and incomplete; in Marienbad one cannot speak of verifiable memory but only of the transparently fetishistic project of narrative. Within most of these films, then, the function of memory is in opposition to its role in dominant cinema. These works thus fall in line with Heath's parenthetical remark in "Screen Images, Film Memory" that avant-garde
cinema often engages in "the dismantling of a unity of memory and of memory in film into the contradictions of its construction . . . ." (Questions of Cinema 35). More importantly, they demonstrate that such a dismantling contributes to the deconstruction of the individual and entails the revelation of the subject.

In the course of this study it has become apparent that, especially in the films by Resnais and Duras examined here, the destabilizing of memory and of subjectivity cannot be considered apart from the question of language. For Freudian psychoanalysis language is the site of the secondary process and thus is the medium of psychic control, the primary means by which the preconscious censors unconscious wishes; according to this model language is for the most part immune to the direct influence of the primary process which structures the unconscious (the phenomenon of parapraxis is the chief exception). For Lacanian psychoanalysis language is a system of signification whose process is, like that of the subject which it produces, ongoing and multiple; to the extent that the circulation of signifiers is contained within a closed field, however, and is offered upon entry into the symbolic as a substitute for radical alienation, the subject is similarly contained, or, more precisely, allowed the illusion of containment as sufficiency. Thus in both psychoanalytic models language is tied to an ideological operation which promotes a facade of unified subjectivity. This operation is reflected in many of the films at hand, most notably in Providence, where Clive writes in order to disguise memory, emotions, the threat of death—
vulnerability or insufficiency. Similarly, in Hiroshima, the man employs language to prod memory and to fix the identity of the women, and thus to secure his own relationship to her; in Marienbad X wields language as a means of seducing A; and in Nathalie Granger the salesman relies on words to sell not simply a product but the very idea of himself as salesman.

This catalogue of cases is important in that it reveals a pattern in the films not only of a certain conception of language, but of its association with a particular, male, subject. Significantly, though, this conception is challenged and, with the exception of Providence, eventually refuted by the films in which it occurs. Taking its place, along with silence and non-verbal communication is "an-other" relationship to language—or what might be considered, in the case of Duras' films Détruire, dit-elle and India Song, a redefined (what I have termed "paradigmatic") language—which unleashes the multiplicity and contradiction at the root of signification and, similarly, subjectivity. Language as it is represented in these films thus initially conforms but ultimately breaks with the dominant functions assigned it by both Freud and Lacan. The process of the films suggests that if the subject is indeed the site of splits and repressions, then language is not simply the censor of the unconscious, (or, untouched by the imaginary), only indirectly shaped by it, but also, on occasion, its agent.

Moreover, in Duras' films and scripts it is women who tap into or expose this heterogeneity. Duras' cinema thus directly addresses the
question of the specificity of female subjectivity. To the extent that all of these films narrate subjectivity, they can be said on some level to also narrate sexual difference. Yet in Resnais' films other than Hiroshima, the female subject assumes a place analogous to that of the unconscious in the psychic economy: women "speak," but their voice is muted, repressed; it can only be heard in and through the gaps in male language, in the rare moments when it succeeds in disrupting that discourse. In Duras' films, on the other hand, this rapport is reversed: this other discourse is the law rather than the exception. The female subject speaks, not necessarily from an essentialist position located within the unconscious or the imaginary, but in closer proximity to it. Women are clearly identified as the index of the existence and potential force of these orders in all subjects. There is, then, another sense in which in these films one cannot speak of "a subject," and that is on the level of the divergent, if not totally dichotomous, positions inhabited by men and women within subjectivity, as reflected in the intersecting yet distinct perspectives of the filmmakers.

Sexual difference not only informs the relationship between memory, language and subjectivity, but also, as we have seen, structures cinematic narrative. The importance of the oedipal model to dominant cinema has been established and re-established by film theory: film is said to focus predominantly on the male subject (or the absence of this subject) and also to trace a particular itinerary in the history of this subject, the conquering of (often female) obstacles on
the way to a position of potency and privilege (the assumption of the phallus). The films of Duras and Resnais break with this history (without, however, eschewing narrative, a tactic of many avant-garde films). This departure takes several forms: either the typical trajectory of the male is deconstructed, its process unveiled (Providence, Marienbad), and/or it is permanently disrupted (in Muriel and to some extent India Song), and/or the female subject is the focus of a narrative which in the end has no center, which is itself posed as nonlinear and circular (Hiroshima, India Song, Nathalie Granger). Again, it is Duras' films which embody this last, most radical, position. (Only in Détruire, dit-elle are the issues of sexual difference and female subjectivity somewhat peripheral, present simply to the extent that it is Alissa who is the agent of the mobile subjectivity which incorporates men, but whose immediate narrative object is another woman, Elizabeth.) Yet even in the (in this respect) most "conservative" of Resnais' films, Marienbad and Providence, where the dominance and coherence of the male subject is challenged and then apparently re-established, the process of narrative makes clear by what means—fetishism—and at what price—that of repression—this potency is reclaimed.

All the major elements of subjectivity under consideration here—language, narrative, memory and sexual difference—rejoin in cinema in the question of enunciation. Enunciation is the interface, present in every film in its status as signifying system, between the speaking subject, the subject of speech and the spoken subject. It is
the work of dominant film to insure that this interface is smooth, that these positions are constantly brought into alignment, so that although on one level the spectator "knows" that it is the subject within the text who speaks and that this subject is in turn spoken by the apparatus, he is also permitted to (momentarily) forget, to "believe" that it is he who is speaking and thereby possessed of discursive power. The pronoun "he" is, moreover, precise here, for the scopic and auditory regime which in dominant film accomplishes this alignment privileges not "the subject" but the male subject, locating sexual difference within the very mechanisms of enunciation. In both Duras' and Resnais' films this privileged, male position is threatened or does not exist. Again there are variations on this de-privileging: sound and image do not coincide, or this "match" is dispersed in time; frequently it is the image track which is unstable, the site of, in the case of Resnais, an extreme fragmentation and in the case of Duras, a continuity which opens rather than limits or controls space, takes in contradiction rather than excluding it; often the voice is ruptured, subject to distortions or repetitions which undermine its authority. The disturbance or elimination of certain familiar structures of enunciation complicates or even blocks spectator identification on several levels: certainly with "characters," but also with the apparatus, since the camera and recorder are themselves no longer all-perceiving. Following Doane, we can suggest that the imaginary plenitude which, according to Metz, characterizes the cinema spectator through a founding, primary look, is in these films sorely tested, if
not completely inoperative. The cinema of Resnais, and, to an even greater degree that of Duras, thus engages the spectator's subjectivity in a way which negates the work of suture, undermining rather than confirming the subject's coherence.

This dissertation has attempted to continue the project of psychoanalytic film criticism by both expanding it to a set of films and filmmakers that have remained, with few exceptions, outside of its domain, and by exploring in a broad way the implications of film practice for film theory. In the course of these discussions Duras' work has been found to fall consistently outside of the dominant theoretical formulations. That Duras' films go farther than Resnais' is not here imputed to any simple "fact" of Duras as a woman director. The identification of her films as more radical is offered not as support for the notion of a female "essence" writing itself in the film text, but as an impetus for other, more flexible and diverse notions of not only subjectivity in cinema but subjectivity in alternative cinema. The primary, and hardly surprising, conclusion of this study is that it is not enough to say that film "speaks the subject," for the subject which it speaks is, as psychoanalysis itself suggests, not static or monolithic, but is as mobile and as heterogeneous as the practices which produce it. It is only, then, by the continuing investigation and analysis of concrete film practice that film theory can begin to articulate, if not exhaust, the scope of the multiple relations comprising subjectivity.
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