Visual Duras: The Paradox of the Image in the Cinema of Marguerite Duras

Elizabeth Lee Groff
Raleigh, North Carolina

B.A., North Carolina State University, 2007
M.A., University of Virginia, 2011

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Department of French

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Table of Contents

Abstract

In the June 1980 edition of *Cahiers du Cinéma* (*Les Yeux Verts*)*,* penned by Marguerite Duras, the writer-filmmaker declares, "je suis dans un rapport de meurtre avec le cinéma." Her proclaimed violence imposes itself through barrages of black frames, relentless immobility, her near elimination of actors, or her filming the reading of a text that "would have been a film." And yet the image resists. Despite their seemingly unrelenting slowness, whether it be a shot of a deserted beach or even black screen, Duras's images require the spectator to engage with her films even more. What *does* happen in Duras's films?

Despite her rather prolific career as a filmmaker, producing fifteen full-length and four short films during a period of eighteen years, scholars have only begun to explore the cinema of Marguerite Duras. *Visual Duras: The Paradox of the Image in the Cinema of Marguerite Duras* traverses the understudied domain of Duras's cinema and investigates the manners in which the filmmaker goes *against* the *doxa,* challenging conventions of the medium and questioning ontological aspects of the art form. Each chapter of this dissertation investigates a fundamental cinematographic element and the immediate paradox that Duras constructs. The first chapter analyzes perception in two of Duras's early films, *Détruire, dit-elle* and *Jaune le soleil*. In Duras's films, conventional means of perception break down; to see is not to see. We must find other ways of conceiving perception. In light of Gilles Deleuze's notion of affect, Chapter Two examines Duras's concern with cinema as an art form that feels and the image's capacity (either physical and mental, actual and virtual) to produce affect. I continue to explore the porous boundaries between interior and exterior in Chapter Three and detail the construction of Durassian space-time in *La Femme du Gange* and *Le Navire Night*. These questions culminate in the indiscernibility of actual and virtual images, which challenges cinematographic time. Chapter

Four considers the images in *Agatha et les lectures illimitées* as direct representations of time in a Deleuzian *espace quelconque*. In Chapter Five I argue that *L'Homme Atlantique* is a virtual film – is a "film de cinéma" states Duras in *Les Yeux Verts* – and realizes the full *potential* cinematographic apparatus, which ultimately includes the spectator-reader. At every moment Duras destabilizes conventional notions of cinema all the while manipulating them; she subverts established means of understanding cinema and of approaching her work. This dissertation puts forth a new way of *experiencing* the work of Marguerite Duras.

To Alison

To Mom and Dad

To Philippe

Thank you.

Introduction
The Magic Lantern of Marguerite Duras

"– Où est-on?
  – Par exemple, dans un hôtel."

<div align="right">(Détruire dit-elle, 1969)</div>

"*La Femme du Gange* c'est en quelque sorte deux films."

<div align="right">(La Femme du Gange, 1974)</div>

"Où est la villa?"

<div align="right">(Baxter, Véra Baxter, 1977)</div>

"Ça aurait été une route."

<div align="right">(Le Camion, 1977)</div>

"Je vous avais dit qu'il fallait voir."

<div align="right">(Le Navire Night, 1979)</div>

"Nous avons toujours parlé de partir."

<div align="right">(Agatha et les lectures illimitées, 1981)</div>

"Vous ne regarderez pas la caméra."

<div align="right">(L'Homme Atlantique, 1981)</div>

"– Vous avez fini l'image?
  – …Oui…"

<div align="right">(Dialogue de Rome, 1983)</div>

The above quotations represent the opening lines of eight films, spoken to the spectator by the voice of the director herself, Marguerite Duras.[1] Although it may not be immediately evident, each of these texts actually asks the question: What is cinema? A voice-over metaphysically asks, "Where are we?" (*Détruire)*. While spectators view an image of a villa projected on the screen, Duras's voice-over ingenuously inquires, "Where is the villa?" (*Baxter)*. The director's voice explains over an image of a road, "this would have been a road," before revealing that actually "this would have been a film" (*Le Camion*). A voice (Duras's) prefaces over a black screen: the film we are about to watch is in fact two films (*La Femme du Gange*). A

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[1] For *Détruire dit-elle* and *Dialogue de Rome* Duras answers the question asked by a different voice.

camera scrolls along the first page of a book providing stage directions for a man and a woman, and yet the following shots show a deserted beach villa, suggesting that the referenced departure in the opening line, "we have always talked about leaving," has already taken place (*Agatha*). Duras tells us not to look at the camera (*L'Homme Atlantique*). She tells us it is necessary to see, and yet the screen before the spectator's eyes is an empty, black screen (*Le Navire Night)*.

The filmmaker begins each of her films with a provocative dissonance, by questioning cinema, what it can do, what it is supposed to do. Duras immediately casts doubt on the most fundamental aspects of cinema: the image and the purpose of cinema – to tell a story. The urgency expressed by evoking cinema, by questioning its inherent ontology as a visual medium at the forefront of each film highlights the paramount importance Duras places on the medium itself in her creative cinemato-graphic project.[2] In fact, it will become clear through the course of this dissertation that Duras's entire cinematic œuvre echoes André Bazin's legendary question, "*Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?*" and asks the underlying question, why should an artist make a film?[3] These questions, though not explicit, haunt Duras's work. The purpose of this dissertation is to define how Duras re-thinks cinema and pushes the limits of the cinematographic apparatus– Duras's magic lantern.[4]

Duras notoriously stated: "Je suis dans un rapport de meurtre avec le cinéma" (*Les Yeux Verts* 77*)*. Because of this statement, previous studies of Duras's cinema have argued that Duras

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[2] I hyphenate not only to emphasize the *writing* process involved in cinema, both technically and artistically speaking (Alexandre Astruc's "caméra-stylo" or Agnès Varda's "cinécriture"), but also to suggest the simultaneous *textual* creations that comprise Duras's text-film pairs –- the subject of this dissertation. The term *cinémato-graphie* is borrowed from Jean Cléder ("Métissage cinémato-graphique," *Études cinématographiques: Marguerite Duras, le cinéma)*.

[3] Bazin, André. *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?*

[4] With this term I wish to evoke Marcel Proust's *La Recherche* (See Howard Moss, *The Magic Lantern of Marcel Proust)*. Indeed, resonances with Proust abound in Duras's corpus – a subject I would have wished to incorporate in this dissertation, but which does not have a place in this study (Stéphane Chaudier has likened Duras's poetics to Proust in "Duras et Proust: une archéologie poétique"). Duras's cinema, as we will see, questions in analogous ways to Proust's *Recherche*, the nature of perception, the experience of a spectator, and the relativity of space-time. I will also return explicitly to Proust's magic lantern in Chapter 2.

"destroys" cinema, that she "destroys" the image, as is suggested by the title of her first film,

Détruire dit-elle.[5] They have given priority to the aural over the visual. They have placed sound,

voice, and meaning, or in other words, the text, over the cinematographic. They have neglected

the filmic object, the images, in placing Duras, writer of books, over Duras, filmmaker. I will

argue that Duras should be regarded just as equally as a veritable filmmaker. How Duras

articulates in her films the question "Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?" is the central question of this

dissertation.[6] To answer it I will study six of Duras's films and text-film pairs that are

understudied in previous scholarship and are, as I will maintain, Duras's most complex and

critical films for determining the Durassian cinematographic apparatus*: Détruire dit-elle* (1969)*,*

Jaune le Soleil (1971)*, La Femme du Gange* (1974)*, Le Navire Night* (1979)*, Agatha* (1981)*,* and

L'Homme Atlantique (1981).[7] Each of these films demonstrates Duras's concern for what cinema

is, a concern that breaks down into four parts. Each part of the dissertation interrogates a

fundamental aspect of cinema: perception, affect, space and time, and actual and virtual images.

Duras manifests these essential elements of cinema in non-conventional ways precisely to push

the medium to its limits and to realize what cinema can and cannot do. Duras's films go against

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[5] See note 6. For criticism on this subject see, for example: Michelle Royer's analyses in her various articles and book chapters (*L'Écran* and "Voix off et plans noirs: Représentations de la scène de l'écriture dans les films de Marguerite Duras"). Royer states in *L'Écran*: "Le plan noir annonce la mort du cinéma [...] *L'Homme Atlantique* avec ses 25 minutes de noir total et ses 20 minutes d'image, ne figure pas la destruction totale, mais plutôt une mise en images du processus de la destruction" (77). See also Wendy Everett, "Destructive Directing: The Film Language of Marguerite Duras"; Rafael Garcia, "*L'Homme Atlantique* de Duras: un signifiant noir pour un texte"; Thierry Jutel, "Marguerite Duras et le cinéma de la modernité: Tout [est] ce qu'il n'y a pas dans *India Song*"; Madeleine Cottenet-Hage,"The Cinema of Duras in Search of an Ideal Image."

[6] The purpose of this dissertation is not to define "Qu'est-ce que le cinéma de Duras?" – a question that would require multiple dissertations to begin to answer. Duras explores the question of what cinema is in experimenting with the limits of its form as a medium. I thus incorporate in my understanding of "cinema" the physical conditions of the cinematographic apparatus (see Jean-Louis Baudry's critical article, "Le Dispositif," which we will consider in more depth in Chapter 5 – a notion that necessarily engages with apparatus theory).

[7] This list admittedly omits films that have been widely analyzed, namely *India Song*, in order to focus on her lesser-known films. It will however be necessary at times to cite *India Song* and scholarship on this "texte théâtre film." A more comprehensive corpus that included other understudied films such as *Son nom de Venise, Dialogue de Rome, Baxter, Véra Baxter*, and her first film that she co-directed, *La Musica,* was originally envisioned. However, given the realistic scope of this project, fully developing each of these films was more important than covering more films for doing so would run the risk of only scratching their surface, as previous studies have done.

the *doxa,* against conventional cinema, hence the title of this dissertation, "The Paradox of the Image in the Cinema of Marguerite Duras." And yet in doing so, as I suggest, the films must engage with these very conventions. The paradox of the image is that even on a black screen, there is still a picture; even in a static, frozen image there is movement.

Why Duras, why cinema, why *now*?

The year 2014 marked the centennial of Marguerite Duras's birth. It was a year of enormous activity centered on the writer-filmmaker. Five major international Marguerite Duras conferences were held, one of which was the second conference at Cerisy dedicated to Duras. The fourth and last volume of Duras's complete works in the Pléiade was published. Original theatrical adaptations related to Duras and her œuvre were performed around the world.[8] Celebrating the writer-filmmaker, the Centre Pompidou held an exhibit, "Duras Song," where rare manuscripts as well as the director's films were displayed to the public for the first time. Also for the first time, as part of the Beaubourg exhibit, a complete retrospective, "Duras Cinéaste," screened all of Duras's 18 films. The introduction to the retrospective, written by contemporary cineaste, Bertrand Bonello, begins "Ce n'est pas la Marguerite de la Gaumont. C'est une autre Marguerite de cinéma, qui, quoiqu'on le dise, n'est plus écrivain quand elle fait des films, mais complètement cinéaste." And the screenings were packed.[9] No longer must Duras put a "warning" out in the newspaper cautioning possible spectators that the film they will see is not for everyone, to be appreciated only by the "happy few," ideal readers (to borrow Stendhal's

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[8] For a list and review of these events and performances, see volumes 34 and 35 of the International Marguerite Duras Society bulletin.
[9] I attended four showings.

and Montaigne's recognizable expressions), devoted Durassiens.[10] Today spectators-readers

know what they are getting into, and "du Duras" is what they want. Not only is Duras's work

still pertinent today, but interest in the writer-filmmaker also continues to increase

internationally; these events only sparked a renewed desire in her work – one that has yet to be

exhausted.

Her cinema is one of the large voids in Duras criticism that has only begun to be

explored. If Duras's entry into the Pléiade solidified the writer in the French literary canon, in the

same way, the retrospective held by France's National Center of Art and Culture (The Pompidou

Center) placed an equal importance on the filmmaker and raised an acute awareness of Duras's

cinematographic œuvre. The purpose of this study is to begin to fill the lacuna in scholarship on

Duras's cinema, and also to open Duras's cinematographic work to film studies, which seems to

set her cinema aside, pigeonholing it to the category of post-Mai 68 "experimental cinema."[11]

Film studies and film theory would also greatly benefit by considering Duras as a cineaste on the

same level as other "true cineastes," and her films as objects of cinematographic analysis. The

director herself worked and corresponded with many of cinema's great directors: Resnais,

Antonioni, Kazan, Losey, and most notably, Godard, to name a few. In the work of many of

today's contemporary filmmakers, Duras's influence can be discerned (before Michael's

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[10] Duras published an "Avertissement aux spectateurs du film" in *Le Monde* for her film, *L'Homme Atlantique*. Certainly aware of what she was doing and playing the game so to speak, Duras writes to begin this article, "J'ai demandé au journal *Le Monde* de me donner un espace pour parler de mon dernier film, *L'Homme Atlantique*. Il m'a semblé que si j'acceptais la sortie d'un tel film, même dans une seule salle, j'étais tenue de prévenir les gens de la nature de ce film, de conseiller aux uns d'éviter complètement de voir *L'Homme Atlantique* et même de le fuir, et aux autres de le voir sans faute […] (*Pléiade III* 1171).

[11] According to Juan A. Suarez, "Across the Atlantic, an analogous animosity toward the established media and pop culture subtended post-May '68 film culture in England and France, spearheaded by Jean-Louis Comolli and Jean Narboni's programmatic "Cinema/Ideology/Criticism," which proposed ideological critique as the way to engage and disarm commercial cinema's complicit pleasures (*Experimental Cinema: The Film Reader* 132). Duras was certainly against conventional cinema, thus her notable remark, "Je suis dans un rapport de meurtre avec le cinéma" (*Les Yeux Verts* 77). Even the term "experimental cinema" is highly problematic, as Dominique Noguez argues in *Eloge du cinéma expérimental* (1995). Noguez crosses out the word "expérimental" in the title of his first chapter, "Qu'est-ce que le cinéma ~~expérimental~~?"

Haneke's relentless fixed frames, there was *La Femme du Gange)* as her films enter into

dialogue with many longstanding debates in cinema.

Two of these longstanding debates are the relationship between literature and cinema,

and the ensuing problem of authorship. Cinema has always maintained a special contentious

relationship to its sister art, literature. Jean Cléder affirms to open his recent book, *Entre*

littérature et cinéma. Les affinités électives (2012)*,*

> L'histoire des rapports entre littérature et cinéma est en quelque sorte raturée par une censure discrète, peu sûre de ses droits, et qui s'exerce pourtant à plusieurs niveaux de la réception des films […] les études cinématographiques s'écartent le plus possible du voisinage de la littérature […] tandis que les études littéraires continuent de regarder le cinéma avec une condescendance marquée ; parallèlement, la critique accueille avec la plus grande méfiance la production des écrivains qui se mettent à faire du cinéma (et inversement), tandis que l'adaptation cinématographique des œuvres littéraires continue de provoquer des discussions dont les termes et les enjeux n'ont guère évolué depuis le milieu des années cinquante (4).

Due to this animosity, Cléder continues, cinema has a sort of inferiority complex towards

literature. To free cinema from literary adaptation was one of the purposes of the French New

Wave in the fifties and sixties.[12] On one hand, cinema was to be liberated from a certain "cinéma

de qualité," or "cinéma de papa" that consisted predominantly of literary adaptations written by

established screenwriters. On the other hand, French New Wave filmmakers vindicated what is

now called "auteur theory," which argues the director of a film is like a writer, and although

many people help make the film, the director's idiosyncratic style ultimately prevails above all

else.

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[12] See Bazin, André: "Pour ou contre l'adaptation" in *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?* and François Truffaut's polemic article, "Une certaine tendance du cinéma français" (1954).

In both cinema and literature, *avant-garde* artists of the fifties and sixties began to alter the relationship between literature and cinema.[13] Alongside Truffaut, Godard, and Co., another "bande à part" was making its own waves in literature – The New Novel. The New Novel was certainly interested in cinema and exploring how writing can reproduce characteristically cinematographic elements – we recall the "camera's eye" of Robbe-Grillet's *La Jalousie* (1957) and Claude Simon's masterful *montage* in *Triptyque* (1973).[14] At the same time, New Wave "auteurs," frustrated with literary adaptations, were developing a new kind of literary cinema: François Truffaut gives the example of Robert Bresson's *Journal d'un curé de champagne* adapted from George Bernanos' 1936 novel ("Tendance"). Some directors collaborated with prominent *avant-garde* writers (some New Novelists), among them "Rive Gauche" director Alain Resnais (Paul Éluard, *Guernica;* Jean Cayrol, *Nuit et Brouillard;* Raymond Queneau *Le Chant du Styrène;* Alain Robbe-Grillet, *L'Année dernière à Marienbad;* and Marguerite Duras, *Hiroshima mon amour)*. Some writers began to experiment with cinematographic form towards the end of the fifties and into the sixties, including Alain Robbe-Grillet, Claude Simon, Georges Perec, Roland Barthes, Guy Debord to name a few. One group of writer-filmmakers in particular Jean-Luc Godard calls the "bande des quatre": Jean Cocteau, Sacha Guitry, Marcel Pagnol, and finally, Marguerite Duras (Cléder, "Anatomie" 1). In these above lists, two names stand out – Alain Robbe-Grillet and Marguerite Duras. Robbe-Grillet and Duras are certainly the most prolific examples of writer-filmmaker *auteurs* (Robbe-Grillet made eight films while Duras made eighteen films), and present singular cases of experimentation with the two arts.

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[13] I say "*avant-garde* artists" to avoid restriction to either New Novel and New Wave writers and filmmakers, and also problems with naming. Some of the writers listed were not formally part of the "New Novel," and not all filmmakers of that time are considered "New Wave."

[14] Since the advent of cinema, the visual possibilities of writing have led critics to call writing that is vividly visual as cinematographic, and sometimes anachronistically when referring to, for example, Flaubert or Whitman. Sergei Eisenstein analyses Charles Dickens' "precinematic" techniques in "Dickens, Griffith, and the Film Today" (*Film Form*).

But Duras has always stood apart from her contemporaries, New Novel and New Wave alike. She is notorious for refusing to affiliate herself with the New Novel. Duras once said in an interview, "Je ne crois pas à ce mouvement littéraire qui est un rewrite plus ou moins adroit de la littérature américano-surréaliste" ("Paris-Théâtre"). Nevertheless, many anthologies list her name among its "members" for their common experimentation with writing, in search of something "préexistant à l'écriture" (Calle-Gruber).[15] Despite this common goal, Duras's writing (textual and also filmic) is charged with a particular emotion and desire that differs from the interests of experimentation with form of her *Minuit* colleagues. Duras also differs from her "experimental cinema" cohort (Noguez) (another unsolicited association), whose purpose is non-narrative. On one hand, her films are not entirely "experimental" because the entire purpose of dialogue in her films is narrative, i.e., to (re)tell a story.[16] On the other hand, her films are not entirely narrative; nothing seems to *happen* within the images. Disregarded as "different cinema" or relegated to the category of 70s "experimental cinema," her films thus remain largely unstudied. Yet Duras demonstrates many original, revolutionary practices with the form that filmmakers and theorists alike acknowledge (e.g., Jean-Luc Godard and Gilles Deleuze).[17] Some call her cinema literary – a cinema that focuses on writing (Royer, Cléder)– some call her writing cinematographic (Borgomano). How are we to confront this double process and negotiate between literature and film?

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[15] The "Nouveau Roman" was a group of writers and not an official movement. Duras is absent from the iconic picture of this group taken in front of the Éditions de Minuit and refused to participate at the Cerisy conference.

[16] For more on this point see Michel Larouche, "La Place singulière des films de Marguerite Duras au sein du cinéma expérimental." Both Noguez and Bellour reiterate numerous times in their respective works the difficulty in using the term "experimental" (*Éloge; L'Entre-images*). In *Éloge*, Noguez crosses out the word in each usage.

[17] Deleuze dedicates a whole chapter to Duras in his second book on cinema, *L'Image-temps*. In *Sauve qui peut (la vie)*, Godard gives homage to the filmmaker in a scene where the character Paul Godard states with regard to her film *Le Camion* "you will never be able to look at a truck the same way." For more on Duras and Godard and their collaboration see Cléder, "Anatomie d'un modèle: Duras/Godard."

The interaction between literature and cinema is still a principal preoccupation among scholars, as Cléder's study shows (*Entre littérature et Cinéma*).[18] *Cinéma littéraire, écriture cinématographique, écriture filmique,[19] ciné-roman, texte filmé, film du texte, texte issu d'un film, roman-cinéma* are just a few of the terms that combine the two art forms. It is also a relationship that continues to puzzle Duras spectator-readers and critics. Maurice Blanchot was the first to remark on this puzzle. He notably asked about *Détruire, dit-elle*, "Est-ce un 'livre,' un 'film?', l'intervalle des deux?" ("Détruire," *L'Amitié* 132*)*. The question of genre, how to classify these "hybrid works" – "Encore ces fameux textes hybrides!" exclaims Duras during an interview" (Narboni 45) –, has been the focus of numerous studies.[20] So far no one has provided an answer to Blanchot's question nor expounded on what might be meant by "entre les deux." And yet, we need an answer to this elusive question because it expands our understanding of Duras's corpus – Duras as *auteur* – and how the artist pushes the limits of literature and cinema in original ways.

However, to answer this question paradoxically requires looking at Duras's cinema as cinema, that is to say to consider the films as images that are not reducible to words: "En somme, oui, ça [writing] pose la question du cinéma, là, de l'image. On est toujours débordé par l'écrit, par le langage […] ce n'est pas possible de tout rendre," writes Duras (*Les Lieux* 91).[21] Doing so opens up new avenues of exploration in scholarship on Duras's cinema and film studies. Considering Duras's cinema and text-film pairs can help us better understand the above

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[18] As does Leutrat's extensive "Roman et Cinéma" bibliography. For a complete list see Jean-Louis Leutrat, "Roman et cinéma."

[19] Borgomano, Madeleine. *L'Écriture filmique de Marguerite Duras*.

[20] See for example Youlia Maritchik's dissertation: "The hybrid works of Marguerite Duras."

[21] Indeed, Duras's films and images, as I will argue in this dissertation, demand to be *experienced* aesthetically (in the sense of feeling and having to do with the senses) and not just read in the sense that we read words.

questions about authorship and cinema that are still debated today in film studies, literature studies, and comparative film and literature studies or sister arts criticism.

Corpus and Central Question

One immediately encounters two questions when studying the writer-filmmaker: which is more important, text or film, and in film, which is more important, sound or image? Because Duras's revolutionary separation between sound and image is without a doubt the filmmaker's main contribution to cinema, scholarship on her cinema focuses on what critics deem a primacy of sound and *parole* over the image. Duras thus reverses the common conception that cinema is primarily a visual medium (although when we use the term audio-visual, we place the aural first); images, critics maintain, "serve only as a corollary of what is heard" (Guers-Villate 61). Yet, if diminishing the image's function was her goal, why work considerably on the images' construction and function in the film? Critics that give importance to word over image uphold the predominance of the text over the image, placing the textual object in a superior position (Maritchik, Beaulieu). While it is true that the "text" cannot be completely ignored – Borgomano declares at the start of *L'Écriture Filmique*, "L'étude de l'œuvre filmique de Marguerite Duras ne saurait être séparée complètement de celle de son œuvre littéraire sans devenir infidèle et même incompréhensible" (9) – it is also true that Duras's images cannot be completely ignored. Duras herself states that her films are also texts; making films in turn constitutes writing: "Alors que dans l'image vous écrivez tout à fait, tout l'espace filmé est écrit, c'est au centuple du livre" (*Les Lieux* 91). This dissertation considers Duras's film as film (i.e., as cinema, to be seen and experienced not just "read"), which does not mean that the film is more important than the text, but it does mean that we consider it just as important (and not less), and likewise, within film,

that we consider sound and image as equally important. In other words, the relation between

image and word is one of autonomy rather than of hierarchy.[22]

In studying Duras's cinema as cinema, it becomes evident that Duras's films question

what cinema is. One of the most important concerns about the nature of cinema is how film can

represent human perception, how film itself is an art form that sees. This is one of Duras's

principal preoccupations and will therefore be a central concern of the dissertation. Related to

perception, another question Duras confronts is how film is also an art form that feels, and how

the viewer can experience that feeling by being drawn into an atmosphere. The aesthetic

experience involves how film as an art form can represent the relationship between the inside

and the outside of the self, or the mind. The nature of film as a medium that unlike all other art

forms unfolds in time is another aspect of cinema that Duras works out in various films. Her

interest in cinema's spatio-temporal constraints culminates in questioning the fundamental unit

of cinema: the image.[23] Duras's cinema calls into question the nature of the image, moving

beyond the matter of the "real" or "reality," and instead towards actuality or virtuality.[24] Each

chapter of this dissertation addresses one of these fundamental questions in multiple works,

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[22] Duras even states in the "Avant-Propos" of *La Femme du Gange* that the "film de l'image" and the "film des voix" (i.e. words) coexist, albeit in a "totale autonomie" (*Pléiade* 1431). While critics have certainly upheld this notion, they still see the relationship as a hierarchy.

[23] By image I intend both in the cinematographic sense as the smallest, basic unit of the individual frame on the celluloid, as well as in a general sense of the word, something to be seen: "a visible appearance; a manifestation of a figure, an apparition" ("Image," *OED Online*). See also my discussion in Chapter 4 of how Deleuze, borrowing from Henri Bergson (*Matter and Memory),* conceives the image as the set of what appears (*L'Image-mouvement; L'Image-temps).*

[24] I avoid the terms "real" and "reality." The dictionary defines "real" in its relationship to the imaginary: i.e., that which is *not* imaginary. Yet one of the defining characteristics of Duras's work is precisely this indistinction; therefore, I avoid the word "real" as it holds no meaning for me as far as Duras's work is concerned, and while many critics discuss this problematic issue in Duras, this conflict does not reach the core of Duras's creative enterprise. Instead, I prefer the terms actual and virtual, whose definitions I will get to shortly and which I explore in depth in chapters four and five. In brief, I primarily refer to "virtual" as that which is not in the present, not actualized or realized, and remains in a state of potential, and actual as that which is physically in the present.

beginning with her first film and ending with her last[25]—*Détruire Dit-elle* (1969)*, Jaune le Soleil* (1971)*, La Femme Du Gange* (1974)*, Le Navire Night* (1979)*, Agatha* (1981)*,* and *L'Homme Atlantique* (1981)—and there will doubtless be resonances and thematic intertwining among the chapters, each of which nonetheless maintains a distinct focus. It will become evident through each chapter how Duras's films work through the larger problem of what cinema is and what it can do.

Defining Duras: Review of Literature

In 1973, a revolutionary book hit the shelves entitled *India Song*, which used the generic subheading "texte théâtre film." Two years later, provocatively blurring and resisting generic boundaries, the author Marguerite Duras shocked the public once again in Cannes. In the film, *India Song*, starring Delphine Seyrig and Michael Lonsdale, all dialogue is held in voiceover; nobody on screen ever "speaks."[26] Due to its success in Cannes winning the "Sélection 'hors compétition,'" the "Prix de l'Association Française du Cinéma d'Art et d'Essai," and the "Grand Prix de l'Académie du Cinéma," *India Song* put Duras on the cinematographic map.[27] Duras was

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[25] Duras co-directed *La Musica* with Paul Seban in 1967. After *L'Homme Atlantique* she was commissioned to make *Il Dialogo di Roma* (1983) and co-directed *Les Enfants* with Jean Mascolo and Jean-Marc Turine in 1984.

[26] The dialogue between Delphine Seyrig and Michael Lonsdale was originally recorded for a radio broadcast (Chalonge, "Notice" 1874). Duras specifies in "Notes sur *India Song,*" "sur scène, rigoureusement, aucun mot ne sera prononcé" (22). During the filming of *India Song,* the actors listened to the script being played. Duras specifies how this functioned in "Notes on India Song: Introduction": "Pendant les répétitions d'*India Song,* les textes dits par les voix et les invités, de même que les textes descriptifs du plan lui-même […] étaient lus à haute voix et enregistrés […] Pour, d'une part, que le sens de ces plans soit présent aux comédiens (et à la caméra) au moment même où ils devaient le faire apparaître, l'exprimer, et, d'autre part, pour qu'il apparaisse et s'exprime en même temps, *hors d'eux-mêmes. Fait là,* exprimé là, et *dit ici* […] Si on disait par exemple dans le scénario oral: 'A.M. Stretter entre dans le salon particulier, regarde le parc,' Delphine Seyrig, effectivement, entrait, regardait le parc. *Mais en même temps elle écoutait qu'on disait qu'elle le faisait.* Alors elle entrait *en moins,* regardait *en moins* le parc, mais par contre écoutait *en plus* […]" (16). Duras criticism has thoroughly and widely analyzed Duras's original use of the voice-over. See notably Llewllyn Brown, "Les Voix off de Marguerite Duras."

[27] Chalonge describes the reception of the film in the *Pléiade* "Notice": "La critique a été très sensible à l'audace de ce film qui, pour Robert Chazal, 'a des années d'avance,' parce qu'il représente, comme le suggère Annie Coppermann des *Echos,* 'un nouveau cinéma,' à la manière dont il y eut en son temps un 'nouveau roman.' Le film 'se situe dans l'avant-garde,' confirme le critique de *La Dépêche du Midi* et, pour cette raison, Michel Mohrt du *Figaro* y voit l'œuvre 'la plus originale de l'année.' Si Duras cinéaste s'est livrée à un 'travail passionnant sur le

already a well-established author; the question became: What is to be made of this "texte théâtre film?"

Critics have tried to define what Duras's cinema is and how it relates to literature in many ways. The principal way they have done this is by considering her films in a subordinate relationship to her texts and to her writing: "Passer par le cinéma pour aborder la lecture," states Marie-Claire Ropars-Wuilleumier at the beginning of her critical work, *Écraniques: le film du texte* (11). The most prominent critic on the intermedial relationship in Duras and an important theorist in the field of text and film studies, Marie-Claire Ropars-Wuilleumier was the first to perform an in-depth analysis of Duras's cinema (*India Song* and *Son nom de Venise dans Calcutta Désert*). Her shot-by-shot description and side-by-side comparison of the two films in *L'Avant Scène* still stands as the established reference for these two films. Ropars-Wuilleumier's scholarship tackles the difficult subject of "le langage cinématographique," or the "contamination and transfer that are thought to govern the relationship between literature and the visual arts" ("Filmic Rewriting" 63**)**, not only in the work of Marguerite Duras but also in modern cinema. Ropars-Wuilleumier maintains that Duras's "filmic rewriting" demonstrates a "*dispositif* of destruction," whereby, in opposition to the

> Classical model of adaptation [,] the hypothesis of a rewriting which proceeds by duplicitous reflection and identity-destruction: one art – literature – comes to be reflected in another – cinema – which removes from it its own power of representation in order that within language itself, only the outline of a writing, without meaning, is permitted to remain ("Filmic Rewriting" 63).

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langage cinématographique,' ainsi que le suggère *Témoignage chrétien*, cette aventure n'éclipse pas cependant ce que Guy Braucourt des *Nouvelles littéraires* porte aux nues, 'cette chose indicible,' la 'beauté' du film […] Selon Henry Chapier, le spectateur est plongé dans un 'rêve éveillé', tandis que, plus simplement, Claude-Marie Trémois célèbre dans le film un 'poème incantatoire' et Christian Zeender, du *Journal de Génève,* 'un magnifique poème visuel et musical.' […] pour l'immense majorité de la critique, *India Song* correspond, comme le dit *Le Monde*, à 'l'aboutissement de l'art cinématographique (et romanesque) de Marguerite Duras' et pour Henry Chapier encore, le film est tout simplement un 'chef-d'œuvre'" (1869).

For Ropars-Wuilleumier, in light of Blanchot, Genette, and Barthes, any writing is always in some manner a rewriting; the filmic image is invaded by an "autre" (i.e. the text).

Following in Ropars-Wuilleumier's footsteps, many other scholars have also focused on Duras's cinema as rewriting.[28] Sarah Gaspari's book, *Formes en mutation: Le cinéma "impossible" de Duras,* discusses Duras's rewritings in terms of intertextuality and the "*intertexte*" using Genette, Derrida, and Guarda as her theoretical framework. In her article, "Le Cinéma de Marguerite Duras: Entre *'impossible'* et 'sublime,'" Gaspari defines Duras's "impossible" cinema as:

> Teinté de cette double acception qui rend compte surtout du travail de "transfiguration" opéré par l'intertextualité dite, ou mieux, récitée par les voix *off* et les musiques, extraordinaires, de ces films. C'est donc par ces effets intertextuels – de diction, qui ne rencontrent le voir qu'à un état de "dérèglement" que l'image filmique durassienne va au-delà des catégories génériques, et touche au sublime (194).

Similar to Ropars-Wuilleumier, for Gaspari, Duras's *impossible* cinema has more to do with the fact that the writer cannot escape the text. If for Gaspari Duras "va au-delà des catégories génériques," (194) Julie Beaulieu considers Duras's rewritings as the perpetual interchange among different genres – text, theater, and film – in what she terms "*entrécritures*" in her dissertation, "L'Entrécriture dans l'œuvre de Marguerite Duras: Texte, Théâtre, Film" (2007). Using Gilles Deleuze's notions of the interstice and becoming as a theoretical framework, her objective is to define the Durassian aesthetic (or poetics) of the in-between. For her part, Sylvie

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[28] The following three studies that treat Duras's cinema are all rather recent (Gaspari, 2005; Loignon, 2007; Beaulieu, 2007); however, the notion of rewriting and repetition has been a dominant discourse in Durassian studies, not just as it relates to her cinema but also in scholarship focusing solely on her texts. Critics have explored her cycles. See notably Florence Chalonge's study of the "India Cycle," *Espace et récit de fiction: Le Cycle indien de Marguerite Duras* (2005) and Joëlle Pagès-Pindon on the "Atlantic Cycle," in *L'Écriture illimitée* (2012). Bernard Alazet also treats the notion of *réécriture* in his critical study on Duras's writing using *Le Navire Night* (the book) as a case study. *Le* Navire Night *de Marguerite Duras: Écrire l'effacement* presents the complex narrative layering in a work of Duras. Duras confronts the blank page and materializes the "becoming" of a *récit*. Alazet asks the following questions: "Comment l'écriture advient-elle à tant approcher les lieux où elle s'efface? Comment peut-elle constituer un récit là même où elle donne à voir son exténuation?" (11). Alazet answers these questions through a breakdown of the narrative modes in play, the systems of repetition, erasure, and "*réécriture*."

Loignon echoes Ropars-Wuilleumier's notions of the subterranean text, filmic rewritings, and of reading as latent, like a palimpsest. In "Lectures latentes: Sur le cinéma de Marguerite Duras" Loignon posits that Duras's films manifest the latent "other" or the *détour* – a spatial and temporal metaphor – and therefore expose hidden desire. By inserting elements of the cinematic apparatus into the image (e.g., *Le Navire Night* and *Le Camion*), Duras negates the "reality" that is supposed to be shown by cinema. For these critics Duras's separation of sound and image (what is uttered and what is shown) demonstrates a certain paradox of cinema. Duras separates representation (the image) from signification (that is, to separate images and words) and refuses representation (that is, to redefine "image").

In working on Duras's cinema, it is impossible not to discuss her emblematic separation of sound and image – without a doubt her main contribution to cinema. Brown, Collot, and Wert have written important articles on this subject, considering how sound and voice function, the process of enunciation, and Duras's disembodied voices. [29] The enunciator/enunciated problematic remains a central concern among criticism on Duras's films (Wert, Marie, Ropars-Wuilleumier, Ishaghpour, and Brown). [30] Marie analyzes the de-synchronization of voice and characters and the question of presence or absence in the "India Cycle." He notices six degrees of distance of being "in" or "off." For his part, Brown recounts the emergence, confusion, and desire of the voices in *La Femme Du Gange*, which ultimately rejoin the imaginary. The de-synchronization of sound and image, according to these critics, is one manifestation of the "impossible" in Duras's œuvre. Cottenet-Hage and Gaspari have made this assertion respectively in "The Cinema of Duras in Search of an Ideal Image" and "Le Cinéma de Marguerite Duras,

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[29] Llewellyn Brown, "Les voix off de Marguerite Duras"; Michel Collot, "D'une voix qui donne à voir"; William F. Van Wert, "The Cinema of Marguerite Duras: Sound and Voice in a Closed Room."

[30] Michel Marie, "La parole dans le cinéma français contemporain: L'exemple *d'India Song*"; Marie-Claire Ropars-Wuilleumier, "La mort des miroirs: *India Song/Son nom de Venise dans Calcutta désert*"; Youssef Ishaghpour, "La Parole, l'image et le réel."

entre 'impossible' et sublime." These works state that Duras's cinema strives to achieve an ideal, a sublime, or to use Duras's own phrase "*l'image passe-partout*" (*Yeux Verts* 77). For Cottenet-Hage, Duras, as a modernist, "affirms the arbitrariness of the link between signified and signifier," in that cinematic representations kill the text by authoritatively selecting "one meaning among a vast range of virtual meanings" ("Ideal Image" 89). Duras's cinema undoubtedly plays into the longstanding debate of the signifier and the signified. While for Roland Barthes, the text nails down the polysemic nature of the image ("Rhétorique de l'image"), these critics will conclude, however, that Duras's "impossible" and "sublime" cinema realizes infinite readings – or to borrow the title of one of Duras's films, *Agatha et les lectures illimitées.*

All critics can agree on the fact that Duras's cinema breaks with conventional means of representation (Loignon and Gaspari). The first to perform such a study was Youssef Ishaghpour, influential film and art theorist and the first critic to approach Duras's cinema in *D'une image à l'autre: La représentation dans le cinéma d'aujourd'hui*. In a book-length chapter dedicated to the director, "La Parole, l'image et le réel," he argues that Duras refuses representation, destroys the image, and ultimately cinema itself. In order to arrive at the Durassian "endroit de la passion, là où on est sourd et aveugle" of her texts, it was necessary for the screen to become the place of the listening of the other. [31]

Many critics have considered Duras's screen as a mirror. In doing so they have naturally been drawn by a psychoanalytic approach in light of Laura Mulvey's influential psychoanalytic film theory to work through the self-other relationship in Duras. Grange, Etienne, and Loignon consider the self/other relationship in Duras's work in terms of erasure, negations, and absences

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[31] Duras's quotation is found in *Les Lieux de Marguerite Duras* (Duras 24).

of the self. [32] For instance, Etienne interestingly notes how the subject "tu" homophonically erases itself ("tue"). Copjec takes a psychoanalytical approach to Duras's films to work through what she calls Duras's "compulsion to repeat" in her article "*India Song/Son Nom de Venise dans Calcutta Désert*: The Compulsion to Repeat." According to Jean-Louis Baudry, the cinematic apparatus provides a return to a former state; this is what constitutes the production of desire in the spectator ("Le Dispositif"). Duras's separation of figures represented on-screen and voices off-screen, Copjec argues, demonstrates the Freudian compulsion to repeat put forth in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Therefore, Copjec suggests that all of Duras's films, and all films for that matter, repeat. Psychoanalytic analysis aside, Beaulieu, Guers-Villate, Limam-Tnani, Gaspari, and Ropars-Wuilleumier have also put forth interesting cinematographic analyses on how Duras uses mirrors and works through reflections and the imaginary.

Duras's use of mirrors and reflections, her separation of sound and image, her disembodied voices, and her refusal of representation which creates silence and gaps are the central characteristics of Duras's films and have been established in the two monographs dedicated to Duras's cinema: Madeleine Borgomano's *L'Écriture filmique de Marguerite Duras* (1985) and Michelle Royer's *L'Écran de la passion* (1997). Beginning with the image of cinema in Duras's third book, *Un barrage contre le Pacifique*, Borgomano traces the history of Duras's cinematographic career and explains, following a chronological order, the defining characteristics of Duras's cinema. Twelve years later, as Royer affirms at the beginning of her monograph, Duras's films were still relatively unexplored. At that time, no study on the role of cinema in the ensemble of Duras's œuvre had been published, and only one that focused on her filmic writing (Borgomano). And yet, Royer continues, cinema is an essential axis of the artist's

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[32] Marie-Françoise Grange, "Un système d'écriture: *India Song* de Marguerite Duras"; Marie-France Etienne, "L'Oubli et la répétition: *Hiroshima mon amour*"; Sylvie Loignon, "Lectures latentes: Sur le cinéma de Marguerite Duras."

work. *L'Écran de la passion*'s objective is therefore to examine the role of cinema in Duras's work and career, and also to expose Duras's cinematic career to the public. Like Borgomano, Royer commences with Duras's third book, *Un barrage contre le Pacifique*, where cinema takes on an important role. Royer structures her study around Duras's principal characteristics as a filmmaker: (once again) rewritings; the blurring of generic boundaries; the de-synchronization of sound and voice; and Duras's play with reflections. Royer concludes that space becomes indeterminable; Duras's "écran de la passion" frees the gaze of the spectator to reach, echoing Ishaghpour, "l'endroit de la passion, là où on est sourd et aveugle." Royer addresses a number of the points at hand in this dissertation, and we will build on some of the questions asked by Royer but left partially unanswered or underdeveloped. While Borgomano and Royer laid the groundwork for future studies, thus raising awareness of Duras's cinema and working through Durassian cinematographic tendencies, given the wide scope of the monographs, these studies were only able to scratch the surface of the complexities in Duras's films.

Confronted with Duras's cinema, standing face-to-face with her textual œuvre, those who have come closest in providing the cinematographic analysis that Duras's cinema necessitates are the works of Royer, Ishaghpour, Limam-Tnani, Ropars-Wuilleumier, Gaspari, and Beaulieu. Ishaghpour's epic essay marks a defining moment for Durassian cinema scholarship. Instead of relegating her films to the category of "experimental cinema," Ishaghpour places the author's cinema on the same par as her established contemporary directors. In other words, Ishaghpour studies Duras's cinema as cinema, rather than being merely secondary to her film's textual counterparts. His discussion of affect, the outside or *hors-champ*, and the repetition of signs in Duras's films enters into dialogue with Gilles Deleuze and will therefore be helpful in Chapter three. Marie-Claire Ropars-Wuilleumier also enters into dialogue with Deleuze, thereby

demonstrating the type of rigorous formal cinematographic analysis that the director's films demand. In an Eisensteinian manner, Ropars-Wuilleumier discusses Duras's montage in *India Song,* where sense is produced between the shots, between the mirrors. Her notion of the in-between supports my arguments about Duras's relationship between text and film, between actualized and virtual images as a revolving "circuit of indiscernibility," to borrow Deleuze's term. I will push Ropars-Wuilleumier further to argue that in Duras's films, not only is the text already in the film, but the film is also already in the text. The theorist's explanation of "La Pensée du Dehors" in Deleuze and Blanchot will be useful for our discussion of the outside, the inside, and the in-between. Regarding the in-between, Beaulieu's notion of "l'entrécriture" will also inform my discussion, as well as Gaspari's use of Raymond Bellour's virtual images and *entre-images* (which I introduce in the next section). Limam-Tnani's insights into Durassian space producing rhythm and movement between characters, as well as her formal analysis will support my arguments in chapters one, two, and three. Her book *Roman et Cinéma* is original in its analyses of Duras's specular economy and in her close readings of examples on Duras's form and construction of space and time in three texts and two films: *Le Vice-Consul, Moderato Cantabile, Hiroshima mon amour*, and *India Song/Son Nom de Venise dans Calcutta Désert.* Michelle Royer's recent interest in the sensorial, influenced by haptic film theorists like Laura Marks, proves to be the most innovative, taking Duras film studies in a new direction. Building from these studies, this dissertation will begin to fill in the gaps in scholarship on Duras's cinema.

A significant imbalance and lacuna exist in the cinematographic criticism of Duras. First, focusing on only six films, twelve remain largely ignored in existing scholarship.[33] The reason for this is probably in large part due to the difficulty in obtaining Duras's films that have not been released on DVD. Rosanna Maule explains:

> Discussions about Duras within contemporary cinema discourse are almost exclusively limited to these titles [*HMA, IS, Nathalie Granger,* and *SNDV*], since most of her films never reached regular film distribution and exhibition circuits, only a few have or are now being released in video or DVD format, and are still difficult to locate even in specialized venues such as universities and film archives" (*In the Dark Room* 35*)*.[34]

Another reason for this inequity could be that critics view Marguerite Duras primarily as a writer of books, and it is only until recently that scholars have begun to seriously consider her films as important objects of study. As the field is relatively new, scholars naturally chose to write first about her more well-known or successful films. Perhaps the Durassian characteristics – repetition, emptiness, *lenteur* – contribute to this deficiency (Duras is certainly not an exciting, action-packed filmmaker). Yet her early films exhibit the same Durassian tendencies present in her later films, and thus they deserve to be studied with the same scrutiny. I take issue with the lack of coverage of Duras's cinematographic corpus. In attempting to "define the cinema of Duras," studies focus on only a few of Duras's films: *India Song* and *Son Nom de Venise* (Gaspari). Furthermore, analysis of these films repeat the same discourse: Duras destroys the image, destroys cinema, creates desire, provokes an imagined image, and by dissociating sound

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[33] Critics have tended to focus on: *Nathalie Granger, India Song, Le Camion, La Femme du Gange* and *Son Nom de Venise dans Calcutta Désert* (in terms of the separation of sound and image tracks), and the short, *Aurélia Steiner, Melbourne* (in terms of poetic images). Lesser studied films include: *La Musica, Détruire dit-elle, Jaune le soleil, Baxter, Véra Baxter, Des journées entières dans les arbres, Le Navire Night, Il Dialogo di Roma, Agatha et les lectures illimitées, L'Homme Atlantique, Les Enfants, Césarée,* and *Les Mains négatives*.

[34] Borgomano, for example, also explicitly states that she will not address Duras's first three films in the section entitled "Des films disparus" at the beginning of her second chapter. Twenty years later, these films remain difficult to procure, but are not completely "disparus." Given the hype around Duras's cinema with the recent Beaubourg retrospective, this is beginning to change. Duras's son, Jean Mascolo, who owns the rights to his mother's films, is beginning to release her films on DVD. This past year, 2014, Duras's first film, *La Musica* was released on DVD, which was previously only available through special command at the *CNC,* where I viewed it in 2011. I am indebted to Jean Cléder whose help was invaluable in my viewing of *Jaune le Soleil* and *L'Homme Atlantique*.

and image, creates a reading of the film. While these studies are convincing and insightful, critics tend to describe rather than analyze, as McNeece and Limam-Tnani have both reported in Duras scholarship.

What still lacks in Duras film studies is close, formal cinematographic analysis of her images and applying film theory instead of literary theory approaches to her films. Studies of Duras's cinema often seem preoccupied with defining her cinema vis-à-vis her literature in terms of a hybrid genre. These studies place Duras's film in a secondary, subordinate relationship to their textual counterparts. Critics who have written on her cinema take a literary approach to her films by way of the written text. In her 2007 dissertation "Les formes hybrides de l'écriture dans le roman contemporain: le verbal et le visuel dans les œuvres de Marguerite Duras," Youlia Maritchik even writes:

> Il est tout à fait possible d'examiner la facette cinématographique de l'œuvre de Duras, mais dans le cadre de ce travail on n'adoptera pas ce point de vue. Tout d'abord, M. Duras – on insistera sur ce point plus loin – n'était pas un vrai cinéaste, autrement dit, le cinéma n'était qu'un moyen pour "découvrir" le texte. (10)

What does it mean to be "un vrai cinéaste"? Like many critics working on the literature-cinema relationship in Duras, Maritchik's aim is contradictory:

> [Pour] étudier cette double pratique littéraire et filmique dans l'œuvre de Duras, il s'agira d'explorer et d'analyser en premier lieu les rapports qu'entretiennent texte et film […] Il est important de signaler que l'on ne se penchera pas sur l'analyse de l'œuvre filmique de Duras, on ne s'intéressera et ne fera référence qu'à ses textes (9).

How can one concern him/herself at all with the "double pratique littéraire et filmique dans l'œuvre de Duras" without addressing her films? It is only by fully understanding the films that we can hope to arrive at a complete and more accurate comprehension of this relationship.

Terminology, Theory and Method

How, then, can we attempt to approach Duras's images? How can we conduct close readings of these films without either being subordinated to the text or getting lost in the interiority of psychoanalysis and abstract generalizations about intentionality? Are there appropriate theoretical models that we can use that are not solely based on literary analysis and rely on semiology, structuralism, etc., but instead take the image as point of departure? For these indiscernible, indeterminable, illusory, "impossible," in-between images, Gilles Deleuze offers a method and taxonomy in order to conduct a study.

Film theory asks the question "What is 'film?'" (Brown, *Film Moments: Criticism, History, Theory)*. If I choose to anchor this study of Duras's films with theory, it is because she herself asks the question, what is film? Gilles Deleuze's cinema books resonate with Duras's films on many levels, not only providing support for our readings of Duras's films, but also in providing an alternative model by which we can approach Duras's films:

> That cinema can be understood in a direct manner as a composition of images is a far superior mode of criticism than those being advanced in contemporary film studies, such [as] the critiques offered by the feminist and psychoanalyst schools […] Deleuze's approach allows the viewer to comprehend the film as it exists simply in its image components, without unraveling the seductive beauty of cinema (Oberly).[35]

As we have seen, current Duras scholarship does not approach her cinema through film theory, either in conducting literary analysis, passing by way of her films to arrive at the text, or through psychoanalytic or thematic approaches. Critics who have been inspired by Deleuze's writings have used his concepts of difference and *becoming* to read the Durassian other, referencing namely *Difference and Repetition* (Beaulieu, for example). While many of the philosopher's theories can be applied to Duras, my use of Deleuze will be from current treatment of Duras through Deleuze. We will see how Duras "thinks cinema" and realizes in her films similar ideas that Deleuze puts forth in his books on cinema and carries out in his work on art

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[35] http://csmt.uchicago.edu/annotations/deleuzemovement.htm

and sensation. Deleuze provides a theoretical model to allow us to approach Duras's cinema in

cinematic terms, as Colebrook describes:

> At the level of cinematic experience and film theory […] he does not read film according
> to external criteria, either according to themes and content - say, how a film translates a
> message or narrative from life or a novel - or in relation to film as a language in the
> narrow sense, where images would be signs of some pre-filmic content. Rather, the
> entirety of *Cinema 1* theorizes film's own language, its specific style or regime of signs
> (*Deleuze, A Guide for the Perplexed* 41).[36]

Inspired by Peirce's theory of signs and Bergson's theory of *durée* as a space-time flux, Deleuze

conceives not only a theory of cinema but also a philosophy of images. Deleuze differs from his

contemporary film theorists like Christian Metz, in that he does not conceive of cinema as a

language. The fundamental contrast is between language and image: what is image as opposed to

what is language.[37]

In his cinema books, *L'Image-mouvement* and *L'Image-temps,* Deleuze categorizes

cinematographic images derived from the basic sensory-motor sequence or action-reaction (or

cause and effect) model: a character perceives something; he/she is affected by this percept and

then reacts, or does not react. Classical narrative cinema follows this structure; Deleuze calls it

the *movement-image.* Postmodern cinema, according to Deleuze, demonstrates a breakdown in

this sequence. At this point, it is no longer a question of the movement-image but of the *time-*

image, and it is here that the second book, *L'Image-temps,* takes over. When the sensory-motor

sequence is not carried out, when linear narrative breaks down, when perception does not lead to

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[36] Deleuze's classification of signs initially draws from Charles Sanders Peirce's theory of signs and his
understanding of "firstness," "secondness," and "thirdness." For more of Deleuze's use of Peirce see Roland Bogue,
Deleuze on Cinema, or Roger Dawkins's article, "Deleuze, Peirce, and the Cinematic Sign," *The Public Journal of
Semiotics,* 2005. David Rodowick explains: "signs are not equivalent to language but rather to thought […] Peirce's
theory of signs is a logic, not a linguistics" (*Time Machine* 39).
[37] For Deleuze, everything is an image in that matter is dynamic and the process of creating an image is dynamic:
"the image is movement, just as matter is light" (*Movement-image* 59-60). For Deleuze, the structuralists' argument
of a universal structure as static and unchanging limits the creative potential of the image. For more on how Deleuze
differs from Metz, see David Rodowick, *Gilles Deleuze's Time Machine,* and Roger Dawkins, "Making Sense of
Matter in Deleuze's Conception of Cinema Language," http://reconstruction.eserver.org/Issues/022/deleuze.htm.

action, to reaction, what remains is the interval in-between, in other words, the *time-image*. For

in this breakdown, time escapes its subordination to the unfolding of action or movement. My

dissertation does not constitute a Deleuzian study of Duras's cinema, but is instead inspired by

Deleuze's theoretical model and is structured based on the intuitive sensory-motor sequence.

Deleuze's work proposes, in essence, new ways of thinking (in particular, his cinema books

which re-think cinema), and following these lines of thinking (without necessarily "reading"

Duras *through* Deleuze) can open up new ways to approach Duras's puzzling films and texts.

Since perception is the first moment of the sensory-motor sequence, let us then begin

with perception. In cinema, an image is conventionally an image of a perception: we either see

someone seeing, see what they see, or see an image of something that they do not see. For

Deleuze there is no separation between subject and object; perception is *in* the thing: "In other

words, the eye is in things, in luminous images themselves" (*Time-Image* 60). And if everything

is an image ("IMAGE=MOVEMENT" [*Time-Image* 58]), the image then also *perceives* (we will

explore this further in Chapter 5). This radically redefines what an image is.[38] We will see that

Duras's films ask the same questions regarding cinematic perception as Deleuze. For example, in

Chapter one I show that Durassian perception is not related to a particular subject or object

(including the camera), and does not carry out to movement, to action. Because the image is the

power of something to be perceived ("Let us call the set of what appears 'Image'" [*Time-Image*

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[38] On this point see Deleuze "The movement-image and its three varieties, Second commentary on Bergson: 1. The identity of the image and the movement" (*Time-Image* 57-61). Deleuze draws from Henri Bergson, and explains how Bergson departs from other phenomenologists: "This breaks with the whole philosophical tradition which placed light on the side of spirit and made consciousness a beam of light which drew things out of their native darkness. Phenomenology was still squarely within this ancient tradition: but, instead of making light an internal light, it simply opened it on to the exterior, rather as if the intentionality of consciousness was the ray of an electric lamp ('all consciousness is consciousness *of* something…'). For Bergson, it was completely the opposite. They are luminous by themselves without anything illuminating them: all consciousness *is something*, it is indistinguishable from the thing, that is from the image of light […] The opposition between Bergson and phenomenology is, in this respect, a radical one. We may therefore say that the plane of immanence or the plane of matter is: a set of movement-images; a collection of lines or figures of light; a series of blocs of space-time" (*Time-Image* 61).

58]), then even a black screen, as we will see in Chapter five, is still an image. And as "the eye is in things [image]" Duras's images are also ones that perceive, as we will explore in Chapter three and Chapter five, where ultimately the screen becomes the camera.

If perception does not carry out to action, the sequence remains suspended in the in-between, in the state of affect. Affect is the vibratory or felt movement by the perceiver that may or may not result in action, and thus constitutes a potential state. Regarding affect, I establish three points that I will come back to throughout this dissertation. First, these vibrations are sensations. We will see in Chapter one how Duras's figures, because they are not conventional narrative characters but rather bodies that are affected by sensations (Deleuzian *body-without-organs*), do not "perceive" in the sense of "to see," but are *affected* by forces. Duras's cinema is without a doubt non-representational. Therefore, we may call it *figural* as opposed to figuration, which refers to representation and narrative.[39] Duras's images remain in the in-between, they are images that *feel* and, by virtue of being haptic, are felt by the spectator who is part of this vibrational material flux of the image. In other words, in her early films we see characters that feel; Duras will then open the film up, as spectators are made to feel in the same way as the characters do. The second point is that affect resides in the in-between, or in what I consider an *any-space-whatever* that is disconnected from spatio-temporal coordinates (Deleuze, *Movement-Image* and *Time-Image*). Third, when affect is not actualized in action, it remains in a *potential,* virtual state. Bogue explains:

> The *espace quelconque* extracts affects by decontextualizing space itself. Space becomes tactile[…] It is a virtual space, whose fragmented components may be assembled in multiple combinations, a space of yet-to-be-actualized possibilities. (80).

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[39] I use Deleuze's understanding of the "figural" as he develops the term in his study on Francis Bacon, *The Logic of Sensation*. See Chapter one.

The *any-space-whatever* is "the genetic element of the affection-image" (*Movement-Image* 110). This in-between state troubles the relation between the actual and the virtual; it concerns the nature of the image, but it is also a temporal question: to review, when the sensory-motor sequence breaks down, what remains is the interval in-between, and it is in this in-between state that time escapes its subordination to movement. What is shown is an image of pure time as it contains the past, present, and future. As we progress through Duras's films, within these virtual images that remain suspended in-between, we will see that one of Duras's principal concerns with cinema is Time.

In order to understand Durassian cinematographic time, it is now necessary to define the actual and virtual. In non-Deleuzian, non-cinematographic terms, we can understand the actual and the virtual in their strict dictionary sense. In French, *actuel* refers to that which is present, in the here and now. The actual is not synonymous with the "real" (whatever "real" means). Defining what is "real" or "unreal" is not our concern. Instead, the actual is opposed to the virtual, that which is not *actualized* and remains in a potential state, and thus physically absent and elsewhere. Deleuze uses the term virtual both in its sense of potential, but also in terms of time. Put simply, that which is virtual is not *actuel,* not in the present but in the past or future. In cinema, this translates, for example, into a flashback, an image of a memory. Images of recollections are virtual images. Likewise, images of thought – dreams, for example – are also virtual images. In other words, it is an image that within the narrative of the film represents a time that is not in the actual present, whether it be an image of the past or a potential future. To understand the actual and virtual and how it relates to Duras's concern with time, the best example is a body and its mirror reflection – a metaphor that Duras often employs in her films. When we see our actual face in a mirror, we see a virtual image of our face, as if the mirror

exists in a perpetual and simultaneous past and future of the actual, present image it reflects. I

return to all of the terms – perception, affect, actual, virtual– in more detail in each respective

chapter.

The any-space-whatever is a space that is disconnected from movement (whereby time

can become perceptible) and is thus situated in an in-between space of pure potential, in other

words, in a virtual state. At this point, where images are in this abstract, virtual, in-between state,

Raymond Bellour's notion of *l'entre-images* sheds light on Duras's in-between images. *L'Entre-*

Images is a compilation of essays on works that demonstrate an intermedial approach between

photography and cinema, cinema and video, and video and photography. Bellour's *entre-images*

closely resembles Deleuze's any-space-whatever:

> L'entre-images est ainsi (virtuellement) l'espace de tous ces passages. Un lieu physique
> et mental, multiple. A la fois très visible et secrètement immergé dans les œuvres
> remodelant notre corps intérieur pour lui prescrire de nouvelles positions, il opère entre
> les images, au sens très général et toujours singulier du terme. Flottant entre deux
> photogrammes comme entre deux écrans, entre deux épaisseurs de matière comme entre
> deux vitesses, il est peu assignable : il est la variation et la dispersion même. C'est ainsi
> que les images désormais nous parviennent, l'espace dans lequel il faut décider quelles
> sont les vraies images, c'est-à-dire une réalité du monde aussi virtuelle et abstraite soit-
> elle, une réalité d'une image comme monde possible (12*)*.

Noticeably influenced by Gilles Deleuze's cinema books, Bellour also sees modern cinema

dealing with a crisis in movement, whether it be a breakdown in movement in the sensory-motor

sequence, or in the way images in a film flow on the screen (such as in Godard's jump cuts and

his "pausing" or "slow-motion" effect which plays with the individual photogram that makes up

cinema's *vérité*, "vingt-quatre fois par second").[40] He also witnesses an aesthetic of the in-

between: in between percept and affect, immobility and movement, actual and virtual. Like

Deleuze and Duras, Bellour does not believe that images are reducible to words. He differs,

however, from Deleuze in that he does not put forth a taxonomy of signs or a philosophy of

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[40] For it is not movement that fundamentally distinguishes cinema, but time.

cinema. Instead, he analyses moments in both "mainstream" and "experimental" cinema where we witness what he calls "l'arrêt sur image, ou de l'image" (26). Bellour was the first to tackle the new visual medium of video and a certain "experimental cinema" which he places alongside modern "narrative" cinema, thereby bridging the divide between the two.[41] He considers immobile moments, moments where the material of cinema is made visible, where images of photographs enter into the image or where the individual image on the celluloid is made visible.

Duras's images also float in this in-between state, passing between photogram and screen, between states of matter through atmospheric conditions, between solidity and liquidity (which I develop in Chapter two), as in these images from *Césarée,* where statues float and swim in fog:

Despite the resonances between Duras and Bellour, other than one brief reference, Bellour does not discuss the work of Marguerite Duras.[42] Bellour focuses mainly on the cinema of Godard and Marker, and the experimental video of Kuntzel and Bill Viola. I find that Bellour's *entre-image* and his analysis of the filmic apparatus resonate with what Duras conveys in her cinema. In Chapter five, we will see how Bellour's discussion of the "appareil filmique" will help us

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[41] The term "experimental cinema" is highly controversial and charged. See Noguez and note 10.

[42] "Cela implique ensuite d'attaquer la matière de l'image, son penchant irrépressible au naturel, et son consentement mécanique au dispositif (il y a bien des façons de le faire; mais la voix – les mots, le texte – est certainement un des accès privilégiés: touchant l'image par son extérieur, elle l'altère et la reconstruit, en modifiant l'énonciation). Enfin, ce déplacement est lié, bien sûr, aux conditions de la lecture. Il suppose la rupture (à tout le moins virtuelle) du pacte si bien désigné par le mot de projection.[…] Voilà ce que me disent [….] par Proust interposé : Godard, Snow, Syberberg, Marker, Duras" (72).

understand the Durassian cinematographic apparatus. In *L'Homme Atlantique,* Duras turns the

screen into the camera and films the spectator. We can consider *HA* as a "film virtuel" as Bellour

defines the term:

> Dans ce miroitement de machines, tandis que le système perception-conscience est soumis à un effet-écran, l'inconscient ne pourrait-il pas, à travers le film projeté, appréhender un autre espace, un autre temps, une autre logique – le film-pellicule dont il est structurellement proche? [Bellour refers to the claim made by psychoanalysis that the unconscious is structured like a language; this other logic would then be that the unconscious is structured like a film] […] comme un film virtuel, le film-sous-le-film, *l'autre film*. Cet autre film, pour faire image encore: le ruban enroulé en bobine, en volume; un film délivré des contraintes temporelles, où tous les éléments seraient présents en même temps, c'est-à-dire sans nul effet de présence – effet-écran –, mais se renvoyant les uns aux autres sans relâche, se recoupant, se recouvrant, se regroupant en configurations "jamais" vues ni entendues dans l'ordre du défilement (28).

Duras shows us "*l'autre film*." To her statement in *HA*, "le cinéma ne peut pas," Bellour can

provide a response to the Durassian "impossible," Duras's "cinéma impossible":

> Ainsi s'invente une image qui répond à cette double impossibilité: représenter vraiment, ne pas représenter. Elle naît au tournage d'une attention extrême portée à la lumière […] 'Quelque chose comme ce désir insensé, rendre visible la lumière,' entendons la lumière comme condition d'apparition de la forme dans l'expérience visuelle modelée par la production continue du flux mental. Comme s'il y avait une lumière psychique et que là sous nos yeux, elle devenait perception parce que la perception ne serait-elle-même qu'une projection de lumière interne (31).

On this point, Bellour enters into dialogue with Husserl, Bergson, and in consequence, Deleuze,

and reconciles Husserl and phenomenology on the one hand, and Bergson and Deleuze on the

other. He seems to reside (naturally) in-between. "La perception ne serait-elle-même qu'une

projection de lumière interne" evokes Husserl's intentionality between subject and object.

Perception is in a continuous flux, but as we will see in this project, perception is also *in* the

image, as it is in the viewer, as the viewer is *in* the image (Duras's voice addresses the spectator

of *L'Homme Atlantique*: "Je vais vous dire ceci: vous allez réapparaître dans l'image")[43] – to

borrow Lacan's notable phrase, "Le tableau, certes, est dans mon œil. Mais moi, je suis dans le

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[43] See Chapter 5.

tableau" (*Séminaire* 89). It is in this constant material flux, oscillating between inside and

outside, through the in-between that we ultimately extract rhythm (i.e., movement, although not

in the sense of action or narrative) in Duras's images.

Chapter Breakdown

Drawing from Deleuze and Bellour and building upon existing Duras scholarship, this

dissertation will investigate the under-addressed problem of Duras's cinematographic form, and

will focus primarily on films that have been less studied (*Détruire dit-elle, La Femme du Gange,

Le Navire Night, Agatha,* and *L'Homme Atlantique*). Film theory will shed a new light on what is

going on in Duras's cinema and help us analyze her films in a way other than current discourse,

and other than attempting to define genres or coining new terms assembled from various

cinematographic and literary terminologies. Duras's films are not adaptations or translations of

the texts, and in the same way, neither are her texts *scénarios*, scripts, transcripts, or texts

derived from the film. [44] Nevertheless, each medium evokes the other, echoing and interacting

with the other in a peculiar way that can only be understood if we consider these works together

as text-film pairs. [45] I will examine some of the "multiple relations" in this "interstitial space" the

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[44] For example, Duras states in an interview with Germaine Brée that *L'Amour* is "juste un texte" and "ne peut être appelé autrement" (*Contemporary Literature*, vol. XIII, n. 4, 1972, p. 418). For more on the use of the designation "texte" see Florence de Chalonge, "Genre, texte, sujet: quelques enjeux de l'écriture durassienne dans les années 70," in *La tentation du poétique*. The word "texte" is used as "catégorie supragénérique et matérielle" (180). Chalonge explains: "Dans les années 70, l'avènement du post-structuralisme, avec Tel Quel, substitue à la perspective du récit, défini par sa clôture et la prégnance de son ordre narratif, l'horizon du texte, comme structure ouverte et fragmentaire. L'introduction de cette catégorie rend caduque celle du genre – déjà refusée, au nom du livre, de Mallarmé à Blanchot – et remet en cause la conception de l'œuvre, en révisant le rôle du sujet de l'écriture" (177). However the notion of "histoire" remains essential for Duras: "À la différence des conceptions du texte qui – de Barthes à Ricardou – s'édifient contre l'ordre de l'histoire, il ne s'agit pas pour Duras de détruire le récit comme agencement du sens" (183). With *Détruire* ('69), the "mention générique dispar[aît] […] en sera de même pour la suite. Sauf mentions « théâtre » maintenues (p178). Après *L'Amour* ('71), Duras filme avant d'écrire […] Deux mentions rhématiques subsistent quand même: « texte théâtre film » pour *India Song*; *Navire Night et autres « textes*.» Pour *IS*, « texte » serait ni film, ni théâtre, serait le « livre », sa matérialité […] donc texte catégorie supragénérique et matérielle" (178;180).
[45] Common usage in Duras scholarship refers to these hybrid works as "text/films" or "text-films." I choose to adopt the phrase "text-film pair" not only to avoid the issue of genre that the label of calling a work a "text/film" raises,

common threads between these text-film pairs (Royer, "Figures de l'hybridation" 197). Each

chapter of this dissertation investigates a fundamental aspect of cinema and the immediate

paradox that Duras creates.

Following the *movement-image/time-image* development, the evolution of Duras's

cinema parallels this progression, beginning with perception – this "*degré zéro.*" In her early

films (*Détruire* and *Jaune le Soleil*) we witness a preoccupation with this primary question.

Perception does not occur conventionally through vision but rather through affect. At this point,

the sensory-motor sequence breaks down. Suspended in affect, Duras's cinema remains in an in-

between state. In her next films, accordingly, we witness a concern with the in-between through

her construction of space (*La Femme du Gange* and *Le Navire Night*). What we are really seeing

in Duras's intervals is time.[46] Consequently, *Agatha* demonstrates a preoccupation with escaping

cinematographic spatio-temporal confinements, ultimately arriving at *L'Homme Atlantique,* a

film that remains in a purely potential state.

I begin my study, then, with "The Paradox of Perception." Evoking the postmodern

condition of an in-between, disconnected, dissociated state, Duras's *figures* can be characterized

by existing in a solely perpetually perceptive act of gazing or looking. But with Duras seeing is

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but most importantly to account for the separate textual or filmic unit, each of which could be considered
independently; to conceive of the two as a mutually-interdependent entity; to evoke the fact that what constitutes,
say, (the) *India Song*(s), is neither one and/or the other but rather an *ensemble*. This designation does mean that we
cannot treat Duras's film as film, as I argue. We can approach her films and thus text-film pairs from a
cinematographic point of view instead of a literary one, and also see how, in this regard, the text is incorporated into
the film, and vice-versa.

[46] Marie-Claire Ropars-Wuilleumier clarifies: "In reality, cinema makes perceptible, with and against the time-image,
the movement whereby time escapes the image at the very moment when the image aims for it. Such is the
constitutive aporia of time, which assumes and removes the present in an incessant short circuit, where the instant
slips away by advancing backward" (26). As we will see in this dissertation, this occurs through a constant
negotiation between "outside" and "inside," as Ropars-Wuilleumier continues to argue: "The attraction of the
outside, even withdrawn into the visibility that comes from a relationship to the inside, is not limited to the modern
cinema inventoried by Deleuze in 1985. The attraction of the outside operates on the whole of the Deleuzian
apparatus, which situates, as we know, the paradox of movement – both visible and nonvisible, continuous and
continually discontinuous – as the very principle of cinematographic imaging" ("Image or Time," *Afterimages of
Gilles Deleuze's Film Philosophy* 26).

always negated: "Tu n'as rien vu à Hiroshima." Characters do not really "see" in a normal sense of the word, with their eyes. Rather, they perceive stimuli from external/internal forces both acting upon and coming from within them. This chapter is concerned with how perception comes across in Duras's films: how characters, including us the spectator-reader, perceive. It is divided into three parts. The first part will introduce the motivation behind Duras's turn towards the cinematographic form and provide background in order to understand the Durassian "figure." The next two parts will analyze how Duras works through cinematographic perception in her first two films, *Détruire dit-elle* and *Jaune le Soleil*.

If perception is not realized conventionally, Duras instead produces affect in her images. By questioning cinematographic perception, what the spectator-reader *sees* ("Où est-on?"; "Ça aurait été une route"), Duras questions the physical image on the screen. Chapter two, entitled "Weather, Atmosphere, and Affect in the Text-film Pairs of Duras: A Logic of Sensation" investigates how Duras abstracts the image through atmospheric conditions. This chapter will analyze Duras's process of abstraction through atmospheric conditions on three levels: the abstraction of the image, of characters from their environment, and of narrative from representation. I draw examples from various text-film pairs: notably, *L'Amour, Détruire*, and *Le Navire Night*. In abstracting the image through atmospheric conditions – *le temps* – Duras realizes a direct representation of time – *le temps.*

Duras's cinema is preoccupied with escaping the spatio-temporal constraints of cinema, what is intra or extradiegetic, outside or inside the world of the film. Chapter three, "*Hors champ? Hors cadre?*: Durassian Space-Time" discusses this preoccupation on the level of narrative layering and visibly in the image, through the separation of exterior and interior space and the visual stratification of images. This chapter is accordingly divided into two parts. We

will first consider the complex narrative layering in *La Femme du Gange.* The next section will

explore how narrative layering is only a small part of how Duras constructs an oscillation

between interior and exterior space-time in *La Femme du Gange* and *Le Navire Night.* In a way,

Duras's work can be summed up as presenting the confrontation of exterior and interior:

structurally or topographically; perceptually or physically (the exterior world affecting the body

and mind); cinematographically (what is *in* or *off*); and finally metaphysically or meta-

cinematographically.

      With the film *Agatha,* Duras is no longer concerned with the separation of interior and

exterior, nor their reversal and 'Klein bottle'-sameness of container and contained. [47] Instead, I

show in Chapter four, "The In-between or Coalescence of Actual and Virtual," a preoccupation

with the interval, the in-between space, a zone of indetermination that Deleuze calls *l'espace-*

quelconque (*L'Image-mouvement)*. Duras's concern with the in-between lies at the heart of her

cinema. The interval is the result of the indiscernibility of actual, that is to say present, and

virtual, or "presently" absent images. It calls into question once again the nature of the image,

because if we follow the body/ mirror-image metaphor, for example, the image would lie entirely

on the side of the mirror-image, without a determinable body as actual referent. Is it an actual

(present) image or a virtual (past or future) one? As the title of the film suggests, *Agatha et les*

lectures illimitées is a film whose images resist any determination. The empty beaches, the

indistinguishable horizon between sky and sea, the detached or disembodied characters and

camera that aimlessly perambulate, all suggest that everything is disconnected.

      When nothing subsists but interstices, what remains is an image in a purely potential

state. Chapter five, "*L'Homme Atlantique,* a Virtual Film?" considers Duras's (ante)penultimate

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[47] The Klein bottle, invented by German mathematician, Felix Klein, in 1882, is analogous to a three dimensional Mobius strip in that it has only one side. It intersects itself by way of a fourth dimension so that container becomes contained and vice versa.

film as a virtual film, [48] a film that pushes cinema's potential to its limits. If I began my study with Duras's entry into the medium, I end with this important film that caused Duras's exit from cinema.[49] In *L'Homme Atlantique,* perhaps Duras's most difficult and "experimental" film, scholars have pointed out the destruction of representation that is put in performance by the film: the spectator hears the director addressing a "vous" over a black screen, which remains for the fifteen eleven minutes of the film.[50] But what about the rest of the film? *L'Homme Atlantique* deserves more than a cursory description; it represents a case study for all of the elements considered in this dissertation. Throughout the film Duras evokes the cinematographic apparatus: "Vous ne regarderez pas la caméra." If Chapter three shows how Duras films cinema by inserting the "reality" behind the film – the *hors cadre,* the cinematographic conditions – into the narrative universe of the film, in *HA,* Duras is no longer concerned with *showing* these conditions. *L'Homme Atlantique* realizes the Durassian filmic apparatus. Duras is concerned with cinema's capacities to represent time, cinematographic time, its *potential* to represent *all* temporal layers including: the past – the film's production and the conditions of the making of the film or the *hors cadre*; the present – the screen, the cinema theater and room itself where the spectator resides during the viewing of the film (i.e., "Où est-on?" The use of the present tense and the pronoun "we" place the voices alongside the spectator's actual present condition); and finally the future conditions, mixing the time of making the film and the time of reading-viewing the text-film – *"Vous ne regarderez pas la camera"; "Vous avez fini l'image?"; "Je vous avais dit qu'il fallait voir."*

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[48] If we include Duras's last film *Les Enfants* (1984) that she co-directed with her son, Jean Mascolo. See note 24.
[49] Duras is said to have returned to her "pays natale de l'écriture" (Ceton, *Entretiens* 19). In essence, she was then to make texts without a film counterpart (*L'Homme assis dans le couloir,* 1980).
[50] The duration of the final black shot varies from critic to critic, who perhaps have not seen the film, and ranges anywhere between fifteen and thirty minutes. The last "image" cuts exactly at minute 22:00 and the film is 36:48 minutes long.

Conclusion

      With Duras's cinema we have different types of images. There is always the physical image on the screen, but that physical image, coupled with the "image" created by the sound (the "sound-image"), also evokes an imaginary image created in the spectator-reader's imagination. Impossible to represent or materialize a person's subjective imaginary image, Duras recreates the conditions of reading; the image is always effervescent and fragile before the actual image in front of our eyes. It is easy to state that Duras creates a reading with her films. Yes, we do indeed *read* her films, but what does that mean? When we begin to try and answer that question, the issue becomes more complicated. Perhaps it is due to this elusive question that Duras continues to fascinate critics, inspire and captivate spectator-readers. Two works inspired by Duras's cinema appeared in 2015: a new book on her cinema (Maurice Darmon, *Le Cinéma de Marguerite Duras (II): La trilogie Anne-Marie Stretter)* and a new film, *Orage,* adapted from her novel, *Dix heures et demie du soir en été* (1960).[51] Perhaps it is due to the powerful Durassian affect produced by her text and films – something that cannot be put into words (yet there is a text), cannot be articulated or represented (and yet there is a film), but only *felt* – that Duras's work remains on the level of intuition, in the in-between.

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[51] Solely from the trailer, it is clear that this film is definitely *not* Durassian. See Background in Chapter one on adaptations. *Dix heures et demie* was previously adapted in 1966 by Jules Dassin.

Chapter 1
The Paradox of Perception: To See or Not to See

Vous ne regarderez pas la caméra. Sauf lorsqu'on l'exigera de vous.
Vous oublierez.
Vous oublierez.
Que c'est vous, vous l'oublierez.
Je crois qu'il est possible d'y arriver.
Vous oublierez aussi que c'est la caméra. Mais surtout vous oublierez que c'est vous.
Vous.
Oui, je crois qu'il est possible d'y arriver, par exemple à partir d'autres approches, de celle entre autres de la mort, de votre mort perdue dans une mort régnante et sans nom (HA).

Looking at a black screen for the opening minute, viewers of the film *L'Homme Atlantique* hear Duras's voice read the above text. The writer-filmmaker often opens her works with a puzzle about seeing. She repeatedly tells viewers to see what is not there to be seen; at times when we believe we are seeing, she emphatically insists otherwise: "Tu n'as rien vu à Hiroshima" (Duras, *Hiroshima mon amour)*. She pushes us to look to the point of no longer understanding the subject of our gaze, as if to incite a figurative blindness in the spectator:

> *Vous regarderez ce que vous voyez. Mais vous le regarderez absolument. Vous essaierez de regarder jusqu'à l'extinction de votre regard, jusqu'à son propre aveuglement et à travers celui-ci vous devrez essayer encore de regarder. Jusqu'à la fin (HA).*

In essence, the act of looking, the gaze, is the critical action of Duras's *œuvre*.

The ubiquitous gaze pervades Duras criticism.[1] Critics have analyzed this act concerning questions of object-subject, the "other," loss of self, absence and desire, and gender (male-

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[1] Martine Jacquot (*Duras, ou le regard absolu* and "Le Regard dans l'œuvre de Marguerite Duras"); Sandrine Léopold (*L'écriture du regard dans la représentation de la passion amoureuse et du désir* and "Fantasme voyeuriste et perversion narcissique dans *Le Ravissement de Lol V. Stein* de Marguerite Duras*)*; Tytti Rantanen ("Gazing me, gazing you: Narrativity, visuality and the questions of power and desire in Marguerite Duras' *Le Ravissement de Lol V. Stein* and *India Song*"); Deborah N Glassman ("Marguerite Duras. Fascinating Vision and Narrative Cure") Funel Da Corta ("La question du regard dans les récits de Marguerite Duras"); Viviane Forrester ("Voir. Être vue"); Sylvie Loignon (*Le regard dans l'œuvre de Marguerite Duras [Circulez, y'a rien à voir]* and "'Je-voix,' la figure du voyant*)*; Arnaud Rykner ("Le paradoxe du regard"); Chiara Bertola ("Uno sguardo "intruso" su Marguerite Duras"); Laura Graziano ("Spostare lo sguardo sulle immagini sonore: *Son nom de Venise dans Calcutta désert*"); Mary Theis ("Marguerite Duras' *Le Ravissement de Lol V. Stein*. The Role of Gazing in Her Psychic Maze").

female), principally through Lacanian and Freudian, or otherwise psychoanalytic and psychological theories (Loignon, Rykner, Léopold, Rantanen). Psychoanalytic and voyeuristic discussions about desire for identification also lead to reflection on the creative process and writing itself. Jacques Lacan himself was the first to perform such a study on Duras in his "Hommage fait à Marguerite Duras, du *Ravissement de Lol V. Stein*." The theorist memorably states that without ever having read or heard his lectures, Duras reaches the core of his theory. According to Lacan, *Le Ravissement* is an example and confirmation of his own psychoanalytic theory; "It turns out that Marguerite Duras knows, without me, what I teach" ("Hommage" 124).[2] It is precisely through her gaze that Lol (and consequently the reader, including the author herself) becomes the subject of her own *ravissement*.[3]

Most of these studies focus on Duras's texts (primarily *Le Ravissement*), although some address Duras's cinema to support their arguments. Rykner reiterates the paradoxical nature of the visible and the visual: the *regard* of Duras's *personnages voyeurs* never reaches the object of their gaze. Such is the case in cinema, according to Lacan. The screen acts as a mediator: the subject identifies him/herself with the image on the screen, and thus the subject, alienated from itself, is denied his/her full subjectivity, which constitutes a Lacanian loss ("The Split between the Eye and the Gaze").[4] In light of Lacan and Laura Mulvey, critics also consider how Duras's

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[2] Lacan sees in *Le Ravissement* an expression of the unconscious structure of desire in that it is mediated and requires a certain staging. Lacan writes, "I teach that vision splits itself between the image and the gaze [that is object, and subject respectively], that the first model for the gaze is the stain, from which is derived the radar that the splitting of the eye offers up to the scopic field" ("Hommage" 126). For more on Lacan's theory of the gaze see, "The Split between the Eye and the Gaze" in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*. See also the monographs on Duras by Michel David, a psychoanalyst who has worked extensively on Duras: *Le ravissement de Marguerite Duras* and *Une écriture de la jouissance*. For more on Duras and Lacan specifically see: Pamela Tytell, "Lacan, Freud, et Duras"; Leslie Hill, "Lacan with Duras"; and Kimberly Van Noort, "The Dance of the Signifier: Jacques Lacan and Marguerite Duras's *Le Ravissement de Lol. V. Stein.*"

[3] As evidenced by the above sources, most scholarship on the gaze in Duras focuses on *Le Ravissement*.

[4] Phil Lee annotates this essay: "The gaze alienates subjects from themselves by causing the subject to identify with itself as the *objet a* [analogous to Freud's concept of the "lost object"], the object of the drives, thus desiring scopic satisfaction. Yet, in constructing the human subject as this *objet a*, the gaze denies the subject its full subjectivity. The subject is reduced to being the object of desire and, in identifying with this object, it becomes alienated from

screen functions as a mirror.[5] Using Mulvey's psychoanalytic film theory, Rantanen argues in "Gazing me, gazing you," that the problems of perception and narration in *Le Ravissement* and *India Song* "are inseparable from the voyeuristic pleasure of gazing" (61).

Given the omnipresent motif of voyeurism in her work, it is unsurprising that Duras was attracted to the cinematic form. Since the early days of cinema, from *Un Chien Andalou*, to *Peeping Tom* and most famously *Psycho*, filmmakers have reflected on cinema's voyeuristic nature, its inherent possibilities for identification, and its production of desire in the spectator through the gaze, as detailed famously by Mulvey and Metz ("Visual Pleasures"; "Identification Miroir," *Signifiant*).
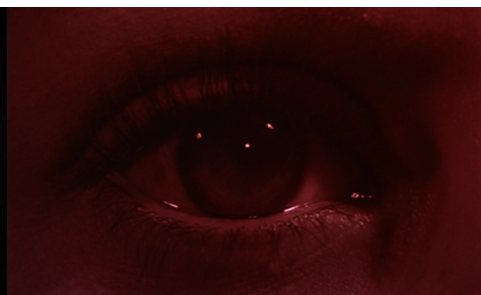
Un Chien Andalou (Buñuel)   *Kino eye* (Vertov)
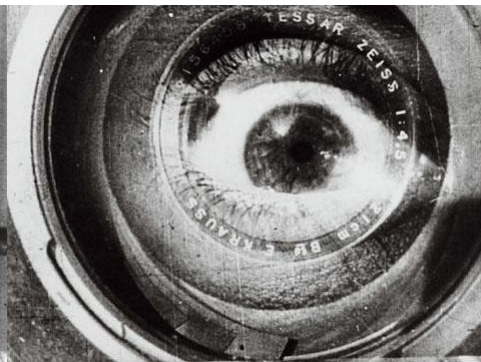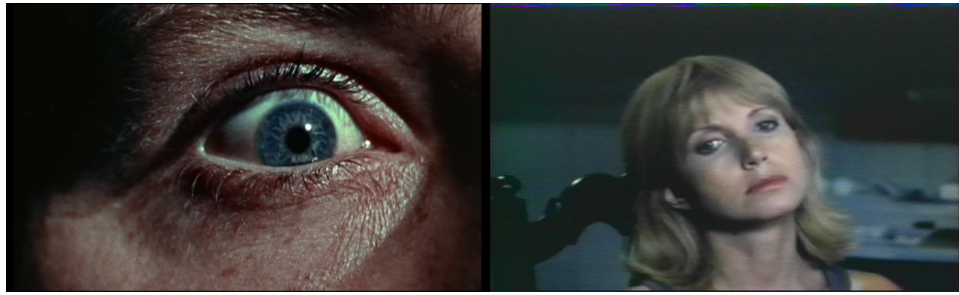

Psycho (Hitchcock)   *Vertigo* (Hitchcock)

itself […] Lacan's depiction of intermediate space between the eye and the gaze can be identified with the space of the screen" (*Theories of Media* Web).
[5] See also Ropars-Wuilleumier's studies on the *regard* through the use of mirrors in *India Song* (*Texte Divisé;* "La Mort des miroirs").

Peeping Tom (Powell)   *Le Navire Night* (Duras)

And yet, as evidenced in the opening quotation from *L'Homme Atlantique*, Duras challenges the meaning of one of cinema's fundamental elements.

In contrast to a psychoanalytic or related approach, I will show that Duras's films invite us to investigate *how* the gaze is represented. By which means and *what* exactly do her figures "*see*"? Take, for example, actress Bulle Ogier who star(e)s in three of Duras's films. Her eyes look glossily into a void, and then, for no discernible reason, widen or close as if affected by something. What caused this effect? In Duras's cinema, characters do not "see" in an optical sense.

One of Duras's principal concerns in her cinema is how film can represent human perception and how film itself is an art form that *sees*. In his book-length chapter on Duras, "La parole, l'image et le reel," Youssef Ishaghpour explains what is at stake: "la vision n'est pas représentable [...] Il s'agira […] de conquérir la dualité de la vision et du visible […] à dépouiller le visible et la vision […] [O]n ne peut voir la vision" (231). In conventional cinema, seeing is the primary means of perception: we either watch characters seeing, watch what characters see, or see another image within the film's world that they do not see. And yet, as evidenced in the opening quotation, at every moment Duras challenges cinema's fundamental act: we watch characters *not* seeing, we do not watch what characters "see," and sometimes there is not even an

"image" on the screen to "see." For Duras, to see does not mean to see. Despite the scholarship

on this "seeing" which is not one, the paradox still remains.

Opening seeing up to the larger question of perception can help us resolve this paradox.

Seeing belongs to the broader category of what we call perception: to become aware through the

senses. As seeing is the primary means of perception when dealing with cinema, when we speak

of perception in cinema, we generally refer to seeing. This is especially true for Duras's cinema

where looking is the main action of her characters (like the spectator him/herself). And yet in

Duras's cinema we can no longer apprehend (i.e., perceive) through seeing alone. We must

therefore find another way to approach the act of seeing in Duras's work.

This first chapter will explore perception in Duras's films for perception is the "degree

zero" of the sensory-motor schema that dictates movement in cinema (Deleuze, *L'Image-temps*

47).[6] To review (from my Introduction), in *L'Image-movement* Deleuze details three types of

images that correspond to the triumvirate of the sensory-motor schema in cinema: the

perception-image, the affection-image, and the action-image. Put simply, a subject perceives

something, is affected by this perception, which typically results in an action or reaction. Duras's

films continually challenge the sensory-motor sequence, starting with perception. Her figures

exist solely in a perceptive-affective state that never carries out to action.

This chapter is divided into three sections. First, I provide background concerning

Duras's turn towards the medium and how her concern with cinema's capabilities revolves

around the fundamental question of human perception. I will also define perception and the key

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[6] "L'image-perception sera donc comme un degré zéro dans la déduction qui s'opère en fonction de l'image-mouvement" (*L'Image-Temps* 47). It is worth noting that Duras spoke of a "point zéro" in an interview around her first film, *Détruire*. Her description of this "point zéro" reveals an agreement with my understanding of perception that I put forth in this chapter and dissertation: "Là, c'est un clivage […] Où ils se tiennent. Et qu'on ne peut pas encore qualifier. Je crois qu'il échappe à la qualification. C'est ce que j'appelle le vide, le point zéro. Peut–être le vide c'est trop dire… Le point zéro. Le point neutre. Où la *sensibilité* se regroupe, si vous voulez, se retrouve […] Ça prouve seulement que la *sensibilité* augmente" (emphasis added, Narboni 50).

elements related to it that will be explored in this chapter: tone, representation, the figural, and affect. This will establish the foundation for the rest of this dissertation.[7]

The remainder of this chapter will show how Duras is concerned with perception and how film can represent human perception by taking her first two films *Détruire dit-elle* (1969, *Détruire*) and *Jaune le soleil* (1971, *JLS*) as examples. In these films, we encounter the seeds of the Durassian idiosyncrasies that fully burgeon in her later films, explored in the subsequent chapters of this dissertation. First, her characters do not perceive by conventional means – that is, namely, by seeing an object or the perception of an object – but are affected by a vibration of forces oscillating between figures, or in other words, sensation. Second, as perception resonates between figures, Duras creates a free-floating perception that is no longer linked to a subject doing the perceiving. I examine these two concerns in *Détruire* (section two), which prepares us for Duras's more affective turn in *JLS* (section three). This will then lead us into Chapter 2, which focuses on affect and sensations. If "[t]he work of art is a being in sensation and nothing else: it exists in itself," this project argues that Duras's films are experiential: "a material capture" of the *processual*, rather than the merely representational.[8]

Background

In order to understand Duras's cinema, it is helpful to consider why Duras turned toward the medium. Duras saw two main problems with the cinematic form. She was dissatisfied both with directors' inabilities to translate the tone of her texts, and with conventional

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[7] There is certainly a creative progression in Duras's films; her later works push cinema's representational ontology to extremes. Although it was not until her fifth film, *La Femme du Gange* (1973), that Duras undertook a deeper exploration into the possibilities of dissociating sound and image, we can begin to discern her interest in re-working perception from the very beginning of her cinematic work.

[8] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, p. 164.

cinematographic representation.[9] Understanding these two problems will inform Durassian

cinematographic perception: Duras (re)produces *tone* in her films through affect (which I will

define shortly); and addressing the limit of cinematographic representation, since we cannot see

vision, we must "see" or perceive by other means.

Duras's first major novel, *Un barrage contre le Pacifique*, already demonstrates a

fascination with cinema.[10] In turn, her writing incited numerous directors to undertake

adaptations of her texts: René Clément (*Un barrage contre le Pacifique,* 1956), Tony Richardson

(*Le Marin de Gibraltar*, 1967), Peter Brook (*Moderato Cantabile* 1960), and Jules Dassin *(Dix*

heures et demie du soir en été, 1967).[11] Duras's great dissatisfaction with these adaptations of

her work led to Duras's turn towards cinema.[12] Sylvie Loignon recalls:

> On connaît la position de Marguerite Duras concernant les films adaptés de son œuvre.
> Elle avait pourtant donné elle-même une indication concernant l'adaptation réussie à ses

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[9] After publishing *L'Amour* (1971), Duras reached a block in her writing: "Duras associe plus étroitement *L'Amour* avec *Détruire,* dont elle fait des 'livres de crise'" (*Pléiade II* 1823). The writer states in an interview, "Je fais des films pour occuper mon temps. Si j'avais la force de ne rien faire, je ne ferais rien. C'est parce que je n'ai pas la force de ne m'occuper à rien que je fais des films. Pour aucune autre raison. C'est là le plus vrai de tout ce que je peux dire sur mon entreprise" (*Les Lieux* 11*)*. However, Duras will also affirm that she is writing with her films. The texts *Détruire* and *L'Amour* already demonstrate a preoccupation with cinematic form. Gilles Philippe informs about *Détruire:* "Duras a fréquemment tenu à rappeler qu'il y eut, à l'origine, un projet de film conçu dès le milieu des années 1960 […] En 1967, c'est vers Joseph Losey que Duras se tourne pour un film intitulé *La Chaise longue*: 'C'était un scénario superbe.'" (*Pléiade* 1792**)**. I take Duras's remark that she "makes films to occupy her time" as a modest statement, a way of humbling herself to other "vrais cinéastes." This dissertation will show that Duras's career as cineaste was not just a brief hiatus from writing that she dappled into as a hobby.

[10] Critics on Duras's cinema often begin their studies by tracing this pre-cinematic stage. See, for example, Borgomano's analysis of the novel in *L'Écriture Filmique de Marguerite Duras*, and Beaulieu's *Entrécritures*.

[11] For a complete list of adaptations and collaborations, see Duras's full bibliography in Appendix I.

[12] During the time between *Hiroshima* and Duras's first experience directing a film (*La Musica,* 1966), Duras gained experience in the medium by writing screenplays for other directors (see Appendix I). Duras learned a great deal working alongside and studying under Karmitz during the filming of *Nuit Noire Calcutta* (Duras's scenario, 1964). See Sylvie Loigon's text on *Nuit Noire Calcutta*. Duras also frequently corresponded with directors: Joseph Losey and Michelangelo Antonioni, among others. The most outrageous adaptation was Annaud's *L'Amant* (1992) where he completely ignored Duras's suggestions, against their contractual agreement. As a result, Duras wrote *L'Amant de la Chine du Nord* to show how *L'Amant* should have been filmed. One wonders what Duras's reaction would have been to Panh's recent *Un Barrage Contre le Pacifique* (2007). *Hiroshima* is an exception. Resnais and Duras repeatedly confirm their mutual, intuitive collaboration, and respect for one another. Duras and Resnais worked hand-in-hand together throughout the entire process, and Duras was very satisfied with the outcome. Duras greatly admired Resnais and *Hiroshima*. Indeed, there are many similar parallels between Resnais and Duras in their tone and treatment of memory and time. For more see Clerc, Jeanne-Marie. "Marguerite Duras, collaboratrice d'A. Resnais, et le rapport des images et des mots dans les "textes hybrides." *La Revue des Sciences Humaines* 73, nº 2 [202], avril-juin 1986, pp. 103-16.

yeux: "Les adaptateurs sont trop fidèles […] L'essentiel, si l'on veut être fidèle c'est de conserver un ton*"* (183).

But how does one, for example, "montrer et faire voir un ventilateur 'à une lenteur de cauchemar'" as Maritchik asks about *India Song* (113)? Throughout this dissertation I will address the question of "tone" in its figurative, pictorial, affective, musical, and aural senses. [13]

The inability of others to adapt her work leads us to the second aspect of cinema (commercial, narrative cinema) that Duras opposes: representation. Like many modern artists, Duras moves away from representation towards the *figural*: "Both Modern art and philosophy can be said to have converged on a similar problem: both renounced the domain of representation and instead took the *conditions* of representation as their object (Smith, *Sensation* xiii). Barbara Kennedy explains the figural in *Deleuze and Cinema: The Aesthetics of Sensation*, "Deleuze takes from Lyotard the notion of the 'figural' as opposed to figuration. Figuration, or representation, has meant an image which is both representational and narrative" (110). The problem with figuration is that "it relates the image to a particular object of recognition. It thus loses any intensity in sensation" (Kennedy 110). The figural operates on forces, intensities, sensations, and affects – this is what Duras means by *tone* (as further explored in Chapter 2 on atmosphere). Deleuze conceives of the figural in his study on Bacon as an immanent process of forces. Bacon *defigures* representation; his figures break away with the aim of rendering sensation, pure force, and intensity: "Whereas figuration refers to a form that is related to an object it is supposed to represent, the 'Figure' is the form that is connected to a sensation, and that conveys the violence of this sensation directly to the nervous system" (Smith, *Sensation*

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[13] Chapter two suggests that Duras's images are like tonal paintings (Whistler, for example.) The resonances between the images of Whistler and Duras cannot help but evoke Proust, whose work greatly influenced Duras. Indeed, there are many links between Duras and Proust (Chaudier). The painterly in Duras is essentially unchartered territory in Duras scholarship. See Cécile Hanania's recent conference paper, "Passage par la peinture: Marguerite Duras, de Joe Downing à Robert Lapoujade." Painting in Duras and Proust is a topic I wish to pursue.

xiii).[14] To be clear, the figure aligns with the figural rather than with figuration; the form is not

related to an object it is supposed to represent (figuration), but rather to sensation (figural).

Instead of *re-presenting,* it is a question of rendering "*présent.*" Ropars-Wuilleumier clarifies

that Deleuze uses the term "présent" in Deleuze's *Logique du Sens* synonymously with the

perceptible: "une forme d'accomplissement *esthétique* d'un événement emportant le système

[…] de rendre 'présent' comme pure opération toujours répétable, donc chaque fois *perceptible*

cette notion de dehors" (my emphasis "Dehors" 18). In other words, the figural operates on

sensations or affect, a vibration of forces ("une forme d'accomplissement *esthétique* d'un

événement emportant le système").

     Scholars have written on how Duras breaks with representation in her cinema (Royer,

Ishaghpour, Cottenet-Hage). Michelle Royer provides an example: "En faisant entrer la caméra

imaginaire dans le champ, elle rompt l'illusion mimétique de la même façon qu'elle le faisait en

faisant soudain apparaître le cadre des fenêtres et des miroirs dans ses films" (*L'Écran* 118).

Maritchik resolves the problem of representing a fan "à une lenteur de cauchemar" by

concluding that Duras "fait voir" by putting into place "une réalité rythmique audible qui fait

voir." As such, spectator-readers pass through voice (Duras's voice-overs) to arrive at seeing

(114).[15] In short, critics conclude that by refusing representation Duras makes visible the

invisible, that Duras "fait *voir.*" In doing so, they fail to ask the question: What does it actually

mean to "faire *voir*"? Furthermore, critics discuss how the voices *font voir,* but do not take into

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[14] "Affect" (discussed shortly) can also be defined as "sensation directly to the nervous system."

[15] "La nature du présentatif "voici" n'est pas picturale non plus. La "formule curieuse" "Voici […] des voix" réunit la vue et l'ouïe de la sorte que la vue passe par l'ouïe, elle n'est pas autonome. Il faut voir (voici, [vwasi]) par des voix ([vwa]), les voix font "voir" en rendant comme présent par le présent de la parole. Grâce aux couplages prosodiques elles deviennent à leur tour déictiques et font passer au lecteur/spectateur, mettent en scène une réalité rythmique audible qui fait *voir*" (114). As I noted in the Introduction, Martichik does not analyze Duras's films themselves; rather, the scholar concentrates on how dialogue functions in Duras's "hybrid" texts: "Le dialogue chez Duras ne peut pas être traduit en termes d'échange ou de communication […] Il suffit de parler, de proférer des mots, sans attendre la réponse en retour" (161).

account the perceptions of these characters whose voices we hear but do not see in Duras's films.

Spectators of Duras's films witness perception taking place in these character-voices, but this is

not necessarily by auditory measures exclusively; perception also transpires between affective

relationships in the film that could be either visible or invisible, perhaps a "dialogue" if you will

between images, images that also *see*. I argue instead that to "faire *voir"* is a question of

perception ("to become aware through the senses"), which transpires through affect, produced

and carried out to the spectator-reader by the overall tone.

Merriam-Webster defines perception as the ability to see, hear, or become aware through

the senses. It is a negotiation between the outside and inside (a notion we will explore in Chapter

3). What, then, if there is no external stimulus, no *object* of perception? In Duras's films,

perception is simultaneous and indistinguishable from *affect*, in the Deleuzian sense:

> AFFECT/AFFECTION. Neither word denotes a personal feeling (sentiment in Deleuze
> and Guattari). *L'affect* (Spinoza's *affectus*) is an ability to affect and be affected. It is a
> prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body
> to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body's capacity to
> act. *L'affection* (Spinoza's *affectio*) is each such state considered as an encounter between
> the affected body and a second, affecting, body (Massumi, *Plateaus* xvii).

This means that there is no longer a distinction between the individual and the environment; and

the message consciously received is less important than his or her "non-conscious affective

resonance" (Shouse 3) with the source of the message.[16] We will see how in Duras's cinema, it is

impossible to determine the point of view or any notion of subjectivity. Perspectives become

confounded to the extent that they transform into a free-floating perspective, a "non-conscious

affective resonance" "between the affected body and a second, affecting, body*"*(i.e., the

figural).[17] And a "prepersonal intensity"-perception operates through a simultaneous affect – let

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[16] See Teresa Brennan (*The Transmission of Affect)* and Eric Shouse ("Feeling, Emotion, Affect").

[17] The figure, the figural, and affect are notions involved in the Deleuzian "body-without-organs" that is in a state of
becoming, a *devenir*. Derrida puts forth a similar notion in *Les spectres de Marx*: "une incorporation paradoxale, le

us call it perception-affection – that negotiates between exterior and interior forces, through

sensations (i.e., the figural*)*.

Barbara Kennedy has done ground-breaking work in proposing a fresh, post-structuralist

way of looking at films through the lens of *affect* which allows for more interesting models of

the filmic experience to emerge, and moves away from a concern with visual representation.

Film criticism (and scholarship on Duras's cinema) tends to only take into account *signification*,

which is founded on representation and meaning. Barbara Kennedy explains this limited view:

> Contemporary visual culture has been written and theorized through a wide range of
> discourses, one of the predominant areas being the theatre of representation, the scopic
> and the specular economies of the visual. How can we understand the visual structures of
> desire if not through the specular economy? […] [t]he look and the gaze have dominated
> film theory. Feminist film theory has specifically utilized the theatre of psychoanalysis,
> replete with metaphors of castration anxiety. We need to rethink a post-semiotic space, a
> post-linguistic space, which provides new ways of understanding the screenic experience
> as a complex web of inter-relationalities. The look is never purely visual, but also tactile,
> sensory, material and embodied. The eye in matter (3).

Instead, Kennedy proposes that we can move towards an aesthetics of sensation:

> Rather than thinking of film theory in terms of representation, signification and semiotics
> and the roles of pleasure or desire, we can consider film in terms of a neo-aesthetic of
> sensation and becoming […] Rather than think only about the sign of the cinematic, or
> what a film 'means,' we can also debate how the film connects across a diverse arena
> such as the mimetic, the pathic, the gestural, the cognitive, the affective (69).

Kennedy's approach can unlock Duras.

Duras's cinema does not operate as representation but as figural. People or bodies

function not as characters, but as *figures*. They are, for example: the disembodied *voix* that *voient*

of *India Song* (*IS*)*, Le Navire Night,* and *Agatha* that inhabit an indeterminate vacuous space; the

actors who do not "act" in *IS,* but listen to their voices; and the elusive figures of the beggar

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devenir-corps, une certaine forme phénoménale de l'esprit. Il devient plutôt quelque "chose" qu'il reste difficile de
nommer: ni âme ni corps, et l'une et l'autre. [...] C'est aussi, sans doute, l'intangibilité tangible d'un corps propre
sans chair" (26-27). In this regard, Julie Beaulieu briefly touches on a ghostly " voyage entre le corps et l'esprit " of
the women in Duras's *Nathalie Granger* (34).

woman, Lol V. Stein, Anne-Marie Stretter, and Le Vice-Consul who haunt Duras's corpus

reincarnating themselves in various forms throughout her work. Because "la vision n'est pas

représentable" and conventional means of cinematographic perception break down, we can begin

to understand this paradox if we consider the figural. For Duras's figures do not "see"

(optically), but as we will see, affected by invisible forces and manifold intensities, Duras's

"defigured" figures perceive and react through sensations.

Understanding Duras's cinema in this new manner is important for many reasons. As

discussed, the gaze (and by extension, the nature of perception, as it is directly related to the act

of looking) is critical for Duras. We also saw that the gaze has been thoroughly analyzed in

Duras scholarship predominantly using Lacanian and Freudian psychoanalysis.[18] Cinema, a

visual medium, naturally resonates with these types of studies: "The significance for film theory

is of course Lacan's prioritizing of the visual. This is because vision, more than any of the other

senses, can be split between the looked at and the looking" (Kennedy 49). Instead, we need to

consider other means of perception, because it

> is not premised upon the visual alone, but through the synaesthetics of sensation […]
> images on the screen operate as movement-images, as affect, as modulation in process,
> dynamic and unfixed […] processual, not purely representational (Kennedy 5).[19]

Currently, no critic has considered the figural to resolve the paradox of vision and understand

Durassian cinematographic perception. A remark by Julie Beaulieu comes closest: "Voir se

rapporte aussi à la rencontre: rencontre entre les êtres, les corps, les voix. Dialogue, intersection,

croisement," however, the scholar focuses mainly on the voices and writing, not Duras's images

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[18] For more on the "pulsion scopique freudienne " see Noguez on what he calls a "voir-voyeurisme" in Duras's
cinema ("Duras: d'une écriture visionnaire à une écriture aveuglante" *Duras, Marguerite*). For Noguez, writes Julie
Beaulieu "voir signifie y être et ne pas y être à la fois" (59). "*Voir* comme substitut d'une impossible être, voir
comme retirement, retraite" (Noguez 63).

[19] I wish to highlight the word processual because it returns to Deleuze's notion of the figural and the esthetic
experience as in "'présent,' comme pure operation toujours répétable, donc chaque fois perceptible" (Ropars-
Wuilleumier 18). The processual continues outside to the spectator-reader to make up Duras's cinematographic
apparatus, which I develop in Chapter 5.

(59).[20] Michelle Royer's work on sensations also seeks to understand what Duras calls

"L'endroit de la passion. Là où on est sourd et aveugle" (*Les Lieux* 94), but is also primarily

concerned with audition.[21] I do not intend to negate previous studies, but offer a new angle from

which to *experience* (as opposed to "read") Duras's texts and films. Kennedy provides a model

that applies Deleuze's theory to certain films. However, if we can analyze Duras's films in this

way, it is not due to an imposition of a theory on her films, but rather because Deleuze's ideas

resonate with what is already going on in her cinema.

Images of perception

Détruire dit-elle[22]

Détruire dit-elle (1969) is both a text and a film. Duras wrote the text between the end of

1968 and the beginning of 1969, and later made the film in 1969. Duras's first film, it is a full-

length feature film of 100min in black and white.[23] Manuscript studies show however that Duras

did have cinema and a film in mind when she wrote *Détruire* (*Pléiade,* "Notice" 1792). In *La*

parole, l'image, et le réel, Youssef Ishaghpour writes of the film *Détruire*:

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[20] I discussed in the Introduction that work on Duras's cinema focuses on these voices, and privileges sound over image. Certainly, if cinema maintains a primacy of the visual, Duras balances out the audio-visual. See, for example, William F. Van Wert, "Sound and Voice in a Closed room." Beaulieu confirms: les études durassiennes ont jusqu'à présent privilégié (ou étudié) l'importance de la voix chez Duras, parfois même au détriment du regard ou du voir qu'imposent bien des textes, quoique la question du regard ait été traitée par les voies de la psychanalyse et généralement en rapport avec son cinéma" [Günther, Loignon] (125). Just because Duras's cinema creates this paradox of vision and does not conventionally "represent," it does *not* mean that we should ignore the images themselves on the screen. I am not suggesting that we ignore or subordinate vision, but that we should consider new ways of understanding what it means for Duras.

[21] See Royer, *L'Écran de la passion*. Her currently published work on sensations focuses on hearing. However, her recent conference paper presented at Cerisy (2014) posited a haptic analysis of Duras's films.

[22] As stated in the Introduction, the text cannot be ignored. Therefore in this chapter and throughout the rest of this dissertation I will be referring at times to the text. The problems I am trying to elucidate are cinematic ones, but they are partially worked out in the texts (c.f. Introduction). Seeing how Duras works out her concerns with cinema *in* her texts will elucidate what is going on in her films. Therefore, where relevant, I will refer to the texts as well as the films. For ultimately the text and film are both "outsides" of one another, inserted into the other. Unless otherwise specified text or film, when I write *Détruire,* I refer to the *entity* that is *Détruire* and thus the statement is true for both text and film. I provide pages numbers when possible for dialogue in the film that is also found in the text, *Détruire dit-elle*.

[23] Duras co-produced *La Musica* with Paul Seban in 1967.

> *Détruire, dit-elle* se heurte à trois limites. D'abord, c'est une reprise pure et simple d'une œuvre précédente et non pas une création. Et par là même, c'est sa deuxième limite, ce film n'a pas été pensé par rapport au cinéma. Enfin, l'allégorie n'y est pas suffisamment abstraite, universelle, et ne dépasse pas un milieu limite: la réunion de ces personnages dans un hôtel est donc parfaitement vraisemblable et ainsi le compromis avec le cinéma narratif et "réaliste" devient possible, de là la relative réussite esthétique de ce film qui le rend acceptable (230).

Due to the timing of *Détruire,* scholarship often analyzes how it relates to Duras's political stance (*Pléiade* 1791).[24] We will see how the film *Détruire* is not "une reprise pure et simple d'une œuvre précédente." The text-film pair is a creation that is conceived exactly "par rapport au cinéma." "Le compromis avec le cinéma narratif et réaliste" is *not* possible; instead, to Ropars-Wuilleumier's words, Duras "donne […] pour lire ce qui dans l'image de cette fiction dément et le regard et la représentation," thus reflecting the aesthetic accomplishment of this film (*Texte Divisé* 165).[25] *Détruire* therefore deserves more attention instead of being solely relegated to a political film issued from the events of May '68. With *Détruire* Duras questions the essential problem of representation and cinematographic perception to penetrate beyond the limits of the gaze and conquer the duality of vision and the visible.

<div align="center">**</div>

Détruire takes place in what seems at first like a "normal" hotel. The spectator-reader soon intuits – and later confirms – that it is likely a recovery asylum for the mentally ill. "Il n'y a que des gens fous ici," says the character called Stein who comes across as the source of knowledge, the one "sane" person in this group of four: Stein (Michael Lonsdale), Max Thor (Henri Garcin), his wife Alissa (Nicole Hiss), and the enigmatic Élisabeth Alione (Catherine Sellers) who is at the hotel in convalescence. There is not much to be said for the action that

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[24] Gilles Philippe writes in the *Pléiade* "Notice," "Écrit dans le sillage et la jubilation de Mai 68, c'est, tout d'abord, selon ses dires, le premier de ses textes littéraires 'politiques'" (1791). Florence de Chalonge confirms in her respective "Notice" of *L'Amour,* "*L'Amour* fait suite à *Détruire dit elle* et *Abahn Sabana David,* que l'auteur présentera comme les trois œuvres de l'après 1968" (1824).

[25] Ropars-Wuilleumier is speaking here about *IS,* but we will see that the seeds of *IS* are already present in this film.

takes place. Either outside in the enclosed park or inside the hall of the hotel, the story advances

through the characters' dialogues that progressively reveal (or invent) information about one

another. Triangular relationships quickly form: Stein-Alissa-Max and Max-Élisabeth-Alissa.

When *Détruire* opens, Max has not yet spoken to Élisabeth; he watches her. In a letter he writes,

"il y a des jours et des jours que je vous regarde." Alissa soon arrives at the hotel, launching the

love triangle between Max, Stein, and Alissa. For the spectator-reader, through the ambiguous

"il" designation, through the dialogue and oscillating points of view, Max and Stein merge into

one "il" at the same time as Alissa and Élisabeth become increasingly indistinguishable (we will

see how shortly). Élisabeth and Alissa bond in a mother-daughter relationship and begin to

resemble one another: Alissa cuts her hair short like Élisabeth; Élisabeth gets shortened to

Elisa.[26] Élisabeth's story is slowly disclosed. She suffered a painful pregnancy and labor, finally

bearing a stillborn girl. Assuming she has recovered, Élisabeth's husband, Bernard Alione,

finally arrives at the hotel to retrieve her and they leave for vacation. *Détruire* dramatically, yet

unclimactically, culminates in a sort of earthquake-bombardment heard off-screen (i.e.,

"*Détruire dit-elle*," "la destruction capitale," *"*d'ordre général" – phrases repeated in the

characters' dialogues) over the music of Bach's *Art de la fugue*. From the inside of the hotel, the

characters, absorbed into the darkness of the room in a lethargic mummified state, look towards

the outside, apparently unfazed by this onslaught (intra or extradiegetic?). The dialogue, at times

bordering on a Beckettian absurd (e.g., the nonsensical, Carrollian card game),[27] becomes

increasingly incomprehensible, while the dark images and the impenetrable ominous forest

reinforce this obscurity. In the examples that follow from *Détruire,* through an analysis of

Duras's cinematographic form and her use of vertical and horizontal montage, we will see that

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[26] Alissa is also a combination of parts of Élisabeth Alione: Ali-ssa. Christophe Meurée has noted that Alissa Thor is also a play on words Alice-a-tort evoking the de-rationalized world of Lewis Carroll ("L'Histoire de l'avenir").
[27] See Meurée: "L'histoire de l'avenir."

perception does not transpire through vision but by other means: figures are affected by invisible "outside" forces or internal perceptions that flow between subjectivities (this will factor into Duras's preoccupation with negotiating between the inside and outside analyzed in Chapter 3).

Voix-"off" or "in"?

The first example comes from the opening sequence that begins, unsurprisingly, with a puzzle regarding perception, point of view, and subjectivity. The film opens with a quiet, long shot over a large deserted park. The camera glides in a horizontal tracking shot to the left over the lawn, noting empty, stacked chairs, and zooms in on the shaded ground.

The pan itself would not be so disturbing were it not for the two voiceovers – the second voice unmistakably Duras's – who ask:

Voix 1: Où est-on?
Voix 2 (Duras): Par exemple dans un hôtel.
Voix 1: Quelle heure est-il?
Voix 2: On ne sait pas. Ça n'a pas d'importance.
Voix 1: Quel temps?
Voix 2: L'été froid. [The sound of a tennis game begins, and then the title and credits appear, bringing the spectator into the world of the film].

The film starts with immediate uncertainty. While the spectator watches an image of a park, the "authorial voice" of Duras calls this image into question: We could be at a hotel, for example. We don't know. It doesn't matter. The spectator-reader cannot help but wonder: Who do these

voices belong to? Where are they coming from? Are they in another space? A dissociated vacuum? Why are they asking these questions? Indeed, where (and who) are "*we,*" in the all-encompassing sense of the French *on*? In essence, are the voices *inside* the world of the film (intradiegetic) or *outside* (extradiegetic)?

Marie-Claire Ropars-Wuilleumier comments on the voices in the film *La Femme du Gange* (*LFDG)* the "singularité de cette position *off* qui spécifie au mieux l'activité des voix dans le film," which we can apply to the voices in the film *Détruire* (*Écraniques* 69). The impossibility for us to see them seems even stranger because:

> Elles se définissent par la modalité du voir […] mettant donc en place, pour le spectateur dont elles semblent prendre la place l'insertion d'un non-voir dans le voir, d'une absence de l'image qui double le défilé des images et renvoie l'œil à la voix au moment où la voix détourne le regard de l'œil […] prise[s] entre voix et voir, saisissant la narration dans la fiction et la fiction dans la narration, ne se plaçant ni dedans (*in*) ni dehors (*off*), mais au point mouvant où s'échangent ces catégories ; à la fois présentes et absentes ; donc ; *off* – ou hors – mais en appelant un *in* – ou en – toujours refusé (*Écraniques* 69).

These voices do not function as "normal" voice-over narrators of conventional cinema (even ones that interfere going as far to pause the film; we think of Mankiewiecz's angels in *It's a Wonderful life*). Simultaneously, as we are introduced to this park, the voices' questions parallel and anticipate those of the spectator-reader. Asking who, what, and when transmutes these voices into spectator-readers. Like the spectator-reader, the voices are in an audio-visual perceiving state, "prise[s] entre voix et voir." They are also seized in-between "la fiction dans la narration" (e.g., "Où est on?"), and "la narration dans la fiction" (e.g., "Un autre homme *était* là"). They are simultaneously inventing what unfolds. Julie Beaulieu, who writes about Duras's use of "on" in the text *L'Amant de la Chine du Nord*, would argue that it constitutes a *reading*: "mais ce "on" inclut le lecteur-spectateur, l'interpelle. En effet, le lecteur-spectateur voit ce que le texte place devant lui, sur cet écran imaginaire, et c'est dans cette mesure que le texte demeure

virtuellement cinématographique" ("L'Entrécriture" 164). She goes on to conclude,

"Comparativement à l'écriture, la lecture est un acte de création virtuel. Je dis *virtuel* en tant que

la lecture fait appel, comme l'écriture, à l'imaginaire, donc à la création" (169).[28] Yet where

Beaulieu would consider the voices of *Détruire* as spectator-readers of the film,[29] I would go

further to say their role as narrators juxtaposed against the image suggests they are also *inventing*

(writing?)[30] the film being played in front of both us and them. This conclusion is bolstered by

the fact that one of the voices is that of the filmmaker herself.[31]

Given the manner in which these narrator-spectator-commentator voices introduce the

film, are we to consider the images as objective or subjective images, presented from the voices'

point of view? Najet Limam-Tnani suggests that the images represent a narrator-like subjectivity

that mediates between the spectator (including the voices) and the representation presented to the

spectator:

> Alors que dans le rêve les images semblent échapper à la tutelle de tout récit et se former en
> dehors de tout organisateur, dans les films de M. Duras elles [images] sont sans cesse
> appréhendées comme les *émanations d'une subjectivité qui s'affiche*. La caméra ne
> fonctionne plus comme un appareil d'enregistrement du réel, ou tout au moins d'un spectacle
> référant au réel, mais comme le *substitut du narrateur* dans son rôle de relais, de *médiateur
> entre le spectateur et la représentation qui s'offre à son regard* (my emphasis 156).

Is the subjectivity of the images, then, from the voices' perspective; is it the same as the

camera's? Or is there yet another subjectivity, somewhere *entre les deux*? Is there a third

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[28] See my use of "virtual" put forth in chapters four and five.

[29] One can infer such, based on Duras's analogous use of "on." Beaulieu does not discuss *Détruire*.

[30] Beaulieu states, "la majorité des écrits durassiens témoigne d'un désir ontologique de l'écriture" (102). Or is it reading? For the ontology of writing resides in a reading (as Duras would say) of the "ombre interne." See note 39.

[31] We can already distinguish here Duras's concern with the temporal limitations of the cinematographic apparatus, analyzed in Chapter 5. Rosanna Maule asserts that Gilles Deleuze considers Duras's desynchronization of image and sound as a performative utterance "in which the *voix off* no longer assumes the role of the omnipotent narrator and the sound is completely autonomous from the image" (Rosanna Maule *In the Dark Room* 38).

possibility that merges the two, a further "thought from the outside," to borrow the expression

from Maurice Blanchot?[32]

"Parler ce n'est pas voir" declares Maurice Blanchot in *L'Entretien infini.* Indeed, the

voices of *Détruire* initially appear to be in a space where they do not "see" as is suggested by the

fact that they do not know that they are in a "hotel, par exemple" (an impression further

reinforced by the fact that we as spectators do no see them). Now if we consider perception as

negotiating between interior and exterior these invisible, disembodied, blinded voices must exist

in a solely perceptive state inventing (interior) and watching (exterior) the film that is

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[32] In her critical article "La pensée du dehors," Ropars-Wuilleumier very succinctly and coherently explains the thought of/from the outside of all three theorists – Blanchot, Foucault, and Deleuze – who use this expression. We will return to the "outside" in Chapter 3. According to Ropars-Wuilleumier: "La pensée du dehors" in *L'image-temps* "et son renversement, assurent donc une forme d'accomplissement esthétique d'un *événement emportant le système*, et que l'art aurait pour fonction, si l'on en croit *Logique du sens*, de rendre '*présent*,' comme pure opération toujours répétable, donc chaque fois perceptible" [that is to say, *rendre visible, faire voir*] the notion of the dehors, "'vers lequel, hors duquel' le discours parle" ("Dehors" 18-20). She continues: "Pour Foucault, le dehors relève bien du paradoxe d'un attrait-exclusion; mais il l'associe à 'l'être même du langage,' tel qu'il s'incorpore en un 'je parle' 'libéré de tous les vieux mythes où s'est formée notre conscience des mots.' On comprend que Deleuze ait retenu cette interprétation du dehors pour aborder le paradoxe de la pensée que véhicule la crise du cinéma: c'est ce dehors lu par Foucault qui détermine la posture énonciative finale, où 'voir' exclut 'parler' en l'incluant dans un énoncé purement visible" (20). This quotation opens up to the larger and more studied question of the visual and oral, the primacy of oral, and visual images (cinematographic images) as enunciations. On this level, the three philosophers cited above enter into dialogue with Derrida, also analyzed in other works by Ropars-Wuilleumier. For more on this issue see Julie Beaulieu who uses Derrida (*De la grammatologie*) to inform the complexities between "l'oral et l'écrit" in Duras. Beaulieu argues that Derrida refutes the anteriority of the oral; writing is already inscribed in the nature of language. For Derrida, the "original" language has always been writing. He proposes the concept of *archi-écriture*. But there is still a tension in writing which is at once articulation and inscription of the trace. Beaulieu writes that the trace "appartient au mouvement même de la signification, celle-ci est *a priori* écrite, qu'on l'inscrive ou non, sous une forme ou sous une autre, dans un élément 'sensible' et 'spatial,' qu'on appelle 'extérieur.' La trace, ce qui est inscrit sur un matériau (papier, pellicule sensible...), est une forme d'archi-écriture. C'est donc dans cet esprit que je considérerai l'écrit Durassien, peu importe son genre" (11). While I will discuss this unconventional Durassian seeing in terms of voices, my purpose is not to theorize their relative enunciative importance in Duras, nor question the image as an "enunciation," so as not to enter into the long-standing debate in cinema of cinema as a language and images as signifying utterances (Metz). As stated in the Background section, "signification" or "representation" is not the question here. For what if "les mots sont vidés de leur sens lexical" (Limam-Tnani 198)? Furthermore, as we saw, Duras's unreliable narrators destabilizes the nature and "authority" of the image; we can say that the images are also "vidées de leur" referential and indexical senses. Regarding voices, critics have focused on Duras's famous dissociation of sound and image that she establishes in *La Femme du Gange* (where the voices also pose the question, "Où est-on?") and then further works out in *India Song* and *Son nom de Venise*, to the extent that they subordinate the image to the word (Beaulieu). My discussion of the voices departs from previous criticism regarding the role of the voices. My interest in them here is how they demonstrate my argument on perception as affective.

unfolding.[33] That perception is felt becomes more apparent as after the opening sequence the

voices disappear such that "ne pas parler […] c'est voir" (Ropars-Wuilleumier, "Dehors" 17).

Does Duras render "*vision,*" perception, visible? I reiterate Deleuze; perception is *in* the image

(*L'Image-Mouvement*).

Despite the most unconventional opening of *Détruire*, no critic has yet remarked on this

beginning. Perhaps because the two voices only appear twice in the film, this opening could

easily be forgotten. Yet it establishes from the very beginning of Duras's career as a *cinéaste* all

of the key elements necessary to understand her cinematographic project.

"Interior" perception: "Qui parle"?

The shifting points of view in *Détruire* give testimony to the instability of the characters'

identities. Analysis of Duras's montage in the opening sequence will show the complexities of

interior perception and subjectivity.

1.
(off)
Voix 1: Où est-on?
Voix 2 (Duras): Par exemple dans un hôtel.
Voix 1: Quelle heure est-il?
Voix 2: On ne sait pas. Ça n'a pas d'importance.
Voix 1: Quel temps.
Voix 2: L'été froid.
(*sound of a tennis game*)

2.

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[33] Ropars-Wuilleumier characterizes the "voix off et voyeuses de Duras": "Puissance d'inclusion, d'extériorité, […] vient s'enfouir dans le dedans de l'image […] L'équation […] du dehors-dedans préserverait la totalité *imageante* par la réunion de deux faces, hétérogènes et disjonctives, mais se touchant au sein d'une perception unique opérant au profit du visible" ("Dehors" 17).

3. *(off)*
Voix 1: Et l'autre homme était là?
Voix 2: Oui.
(Stein): Je suis toujours tremblant.

4.
Stein : Je suis toujours tremblant. Dans une incertitude tremblante.

[…]
7. *(pan across park back to Stein and Max sitting side-by-side on a bench)*
Stein: Il n'y a que la forêt. Elle est là de tous les côtés.
Max: Je ne connais que le parc. Je suis resté ici. Au bout de cette allée il y a une porte.
Stein: Ah, vous avez remarqué?
Max: Oui. Ils ne vont pas dans la forêt.
Stein: Ah, vous saviez aussi?
Max: Non. Non. Je ne savais pas.

[…]
9.
Stein: Je ne saurais pas vous le dire. Il s'agissait de moi…

10. Stein (off): De moi, devant elle.

11.

To begin, the quick, unexpected cut to the second shot, a jarring close-up, complicates the objective point of view of the narrator-like voices established in the first shot, because the spectator-reader soon realizes (in shot 11) that other characters in the film are watching this woman (Élisabeth). A man, barely perceptible as he blends into the shadows, walks by her chair. The cut to the next shot of the woman (shot 2) indicates that he is looking at her. Shot 11, which repeats the second one, indeed confirms a vigilant presence.[34] But Duras makes a subtle yet tricky move that intentionally confounds perspectives. She cuts the 9th shot in the middle of Stein's sentence, "Il s'agissait de moi," to an image of Max looking on from another location whereupon Stein's sentence picks up, now off, "De moi, devant elle," when suddenly the camera cuts back to a close-up of the sleeping woman. The juxtaposition of shots 10 and 11 places her image from Max's point of view, yet it is Stein who states, "de *moi*, *devant elle*." Though the "elle" in that conversation refers to another woman (Alissa), Duras deliberately edits the sound and frames to make Stein's comment "de moi, devant elle" seem to mean Max before Élisabeth, and to shift the point of view between Max and Stein (and to confuse Élisabeth and Alissa– "elle").

In fact, short of Max calling himself Stein and Stein Max, the two constantly borrow properties from one another like two bodies with one consciousness. In the documentary "Autour

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[34] For a reader of the text, this is explicit from the very beginning – "Elle ignore qu'*on* la regarde" (my emphasis, 9).

de *Détruire dit-elle,"* Duras instructs the actor who plays Max Thor: "Stein, c'est toi." Often,

when Max or Stein says "il" to refer to the other, he means "moi," and vice-versa.[35] Van Wert

confirms:

> He [Stein] refers to Max Thor elsewhere as "he" when he really means "I" in talking to
> Alissa. And she in turn moves from the "you" to the "he" (24).[36]

In fact, the only other time the voices intervene (whose function as narrators is presumably to

shed light on the situation) only complicates these matters further:

> Voix 1: Qui est dans ce livre?
> Voix 2: Max Thor.
> Voix 1: Que fait-il?
> Voix 2: Rien. Quelqu'un regarde.
> Voix 1: Quoi?
> Voix 2: Le tennis.
> Voix 1: Une femme?
> Voix 2: Oui. Distraite.
> Voix 1: Par quoi ?
> Voix 2: Le néant.
> Voix 1: Qui la regarde ?
> Voix 2: Stein. Max Thor décrit ce que Stein regarde (39).

This obscure, Ionescoesque dialogue mixes the "who" and the "what." To the question, what

does *Max* do, the response is: Nothing. *Someone* looks at a woman. Who looks? Stein. Max

describes (in this - "ce" - book, which is *Détruire,* that is in and *is* this film, *Détruire*!) what

Stein sees. The perception of Max and Stein is one and the same.[37] Duras blurs identities –

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[35] A comparative side-by-side analysis of text and film also reveals that Stein frequently utters what is attributed to Max in the text, and vice-versa.

[36] Van Wert points out that this is "reminiscent of the pronoun-disguise of the Japanese lover in *Hiroshima mon amour*, in which he assumes the pronoun and identity of the dead German lover in order to unlock Riva's past and install himself in that memory" (24).

[37] Two clarifications must be made on this point. First, it should be noted that while we could certainly analyze this taking on the identity of another through a voyeuristic, scopophilic, psychoanalytic lens, such is not the purpose of this chapter. See Lacan on *Lol V. Stein* ("Hommage"). I analyze Duras's free-floating perception in a way to show that she seeks to go beyond the conclusions of a "loss of self," or "becoming other" in order to consider Duras's relationship to cinema, to the viewing-reading-writing-creating experience. In fact, it matters little who they are: when Bernard Alione asks, "Qui êtes-vous?" Stein replies, "Des juifs." To cite the *May '68* slogan "Nous sommes tous des juifs allemands." Secondly then, while a political reading of this film is certainly relevant, that is not our purpose here either.

moi/il; the who and the what – perceiving/perceived?; and ultimately text and film – "Qui est

dans ce livre?"

Accordingly, this free-floating perception-narration-invention manifests itself in the text

and is a cinematic one: "Le narrateur, c'est la caméra" declares Duras in an interview after

Détruire (Narboni 45). In light of my analysis of the film's opening sequence, let us now

consider the beginning of the text. Duras creates a similar voice that is spectator-reader-narrator-

creator-author:

> Temps couvert.
> Les baies sont fermées.
> Du côté de la salle à manger où *il* se trouve, *on* ne peut pas voir le parc.
> Elle, *oui*, elle voit, elle regarde. Sa table touche le rebord des baies.
> A cause de la lumière gênante, elle plisse les yeux. Son regard va et vient. D'autres clients regardent aussi ces parties de tennis que *lui* ne voit pas.
> *Il* n'a pas demandé de changer de table.
> Elle ignore qu'*on* la regarde.
> […] Devant elle, il y a *le* livre. Commencé depuis son arrivée à *lui*? Ou encore avant?
> […] Aucun des clients de l'hôtel ne joue au tennis. Ce sont des jeunes gens des environs. Personne ne se plaint.
> – *C'est agréable cette jeunesse. Ils sont d'ailleurs discrets.*
> *Aucun autre que lui ne l'a remarquée.*
> – *On se fait à ce bruit* (my emphasis 9).

There are two ways to read this opening: either in the form of a written journal from the

subjective point of view of a narrator internal to the story who describes what he/she sees (i.e.,

"Max décrit ce que Stein regarde"), or from an external, omniscient narrator. Subjective

comments, questions, and assertions such as "oui," "mais," "sans doute," all suggest a first-

person interior monologue-like perceiving subject. "Devant elle, il y a le livre. Commencé depuis

son arrivée à lui? Ou encore avant?" must be from the point of view of Max who watches and

has been watching Élisabeth ("il y a des jours et des jours que je vous regarde"). Yet if that is so,

the opening passage contains no first-person pronouns. Either the third-person pronoun *il* ("Du

côté de la salle à manger où *il* se trouve, *on* ne peut pas voir le parc"; "*Il* n'a pas demandé")

refers to another ambiguous man also not aforementioned (Stein), or perhaps this narrator is referring to himself in the third person. Furthermore, the typographical use of a dash suggests reported direct discourse, though no speaker is attributed: "– C'est agréable cette jeunesse. Ils sont d'ailleurs discrets. /Aucun autre que lui ne l'a remarquée. / – On se fait à ce bruit." Additionally, these "utterances" occasionally come in response to what appears to be a *thought*. A peculiar *voice* disrupts the silence of the park:

> Septième jour. Mais dans la torpeur de la sieste une voix d'homme éclate, vive, presque brutale.
> Personne ne répond. On a parlé seul […]
> La voix qui vient de parler résonne dans l'écho du parc (12).

This "voice" seems to come out of nowhere and no one else notices it ("Aucun autre que lui ne l'a remarquée"; "Personne ne répond. *On* a parlé *seul"*), suggesting that it is heard solely by the "narrator." Interestingly, this voice is confused with a certain "voice" with which the narrator enters in dialogue:

> Elle est belle. C'est *invisible.*
> *Le sait-elle?*
> — *Non. Non.*
> *La voix se perd* du côté de la porte de la forêt.
> *Personne ne répond. C'est la même voix*, vive, presque brutale (my emphasis 12-13).

If we had been considering the narrator's voice as an interior monologue or journaling, initially "Elle est belle. C'est *invisible./ Le sait-elle?"* appears to be the narrator's thoughts. Yet "–Non. Non" comes in response to this. Furthermore, "–Non. Non" proceeded by a dash suggests that it is an utterance and an utterance that comes from a certain "voice": "*– Non. Non./ La voix se perd* […] *Personne ne répond. C'est la même voix.*" Yet if the narrator did not utter *out loud* what the voice responded to, coupled with the fact that this "voice" is heard only by the narrator, thus suggests that this "voice" seems to read the narrator's thoughts.

Similar to the troubling voice that interrupts the voices in the third shot of the film, "Je suis toujours tremblant," this brutal *outside* voice in the text bursts out of nowhere. Is this "voice" the narrator's, Stein's, or is it the narrator's own voice that escapes himself and externalizes itself, responding to his own thought? Does "il" refer to himself, Stein, or is it an "outside" presence that oversees everything and continually intervenes? Is it a cinematographic voice-over or an uttered thought? It must be a combination of all of these possibilities – or simply, "On" – for our first-person journal theory is disrupted on page 18 where the reader discovers the identity of these characters and who is speaking. Duras finally writes "dit Max Thor."

Because Duras's voices oscillate between first person and third person, it is hopeless to locate a fixed perspective. As we saw earlier, it is impossible to determine the point of view; it seems to float and flicker around like the sunlight over the shadowy image. By entering the story *in medias res* and not stating who is speaking nor who *il* or *elle* is, Duras traps the spectator in a puzzle, literally *into* the diegesis of the text-film. Vogt writes of *Moderato Cantabile* about this particular voice of the narrator-reader:

> Le mouvement des énoncés coïncide entre moment d'énonciation et moment de lecture. La présence du narrateur se retrouve, aux côtés du lecteur, dans la vivacité des sentiments exprimés au présent d'énonciation dans un récit au passé" (113); C'est alors que se dessine, sous les yeux du lecteur, ce mouvement dont l'œuvre constitue une véritable quête: "le mouvement vers l'autre," "le... sortir de soi" (*Parleuses* 210), pour finalement se fondre dans sa propre expérience. D'une décroissance progressive du décalage entre soi et l'autre, fusionnent les deux plans opposés de la passion criminelle effective dans la mort et du désir généré par la conversation dans l'aboutissement de l'œuvre. (79)

But something else is going on; the question is a cinematic one. A new "outside" voice emerges through a cinematic montage. Ropars-Wuilleumier asks "Qui parle?"

> Mais ce "qui" peut-il encore s'énoncer quand il devient un pluriel irréductible à l'addition de deux entités stables ? La narration se dit l'origine du récit. Mais à l'origine de la

narration s'ouvre la faille d'un discours double, où vacille aussi bien l'unité que l'unicité du sujet. Le montage est déjà dans la voix (*Texte Divisé* 138).

A voice is "perceived" in the sense that I have defined it as a simultaneous perception-affect because it is unclear whether it arises from the *exterior* environment or from within someone's *interior* consciousness.

The "brutal voice," like the tennis balls that "frappent dans les tempes" (recall that the sound can only be a subjective mental sound since no one is playing tennis), represents an internal voice, perceived from within and exteriorized, similar to Duras's idiosyncratic "cri sourd" – an invisible interior shout that is never heard but only *felt*, like in the exemplary passage from *L'Amour*:

> Pendant un instant personne ne regarde, personne n'est vu… Pendant un instant personne n'entend, personne n'écoute. Et puis il y a un cri: l'homme qui regardait ferme les yeux à son tour sous *le coup d'une tentative qui l'emporte*, le soulève, soulève son visage vers le ciel, son visage se révulse et il crie (13*)*.

We will return to the "cri sourd" that best exemplifies this simultaneous interior percept-affect in more detail in the next section and see how Duras produces in cinema this type of interior perception, a pure affect that marries the subjective perspective of the spectator-reader.

The puzzle posed by the opening of the text is the same as the opening sequence of the film. We can solve this problem if we consider this textual montage as we did for the film. This "narrator," this "voice," is analogous to the voices and free-floating perception in the film (a voice-over in a text being entirely impossible!). "Elle ignore qu'*on* la regarde" comes from an invisible voice (or voices) that "watches" *and* invents, that perceives *interior* perceptions: "Elle est belle. C'est *invisible*./*Le sait-elle ?/ –Non. Non*"; "Du côté de la salle à manger où *il* se trouve, *on ne peut pas voir* le parc./ Elle, *oui*, elle voit, elle regarde. […] A cause de la lumière gênante, elle plisse les yeux. Son regard va et vient. D'autres clients regardent aussi ces parties

de tennis que *lui ne voit pas*." "On" is the all-encompassing point of view of the narrator, Max Thor, Stein, *and* a third party, an *outside* spectator-reader-inventor who is at once *outside* (invisible, absent) and *inside* (present with*)* the diegesis. It is perception or an image of perception that resides in-between sound and image and that is at once seeing (reading) and writing (inventing) what is in the process of happening. Ropars-Wuilleumier writes about the narrator of *Le Ravissement* (Jacques Hold):

> Le flottement dans les temps qui caractérise ainsi la scène du bal est d'autant plus intéressant à relever que le narrateur ne se représente plus en *je* à ce moment du texte ; la voix du récit s'inscrit alors obliquement, ni dans un temps ni dans l'autre, mais avant tout par leur montage ; donc dans les oscillations temporelles d'un texte, où la position narrative paraît d'autant plus cruciale à évaluer qu'elle se définit par l'instabilité et l'hésitation (*Écraniques* 64).

In both the text and film, the narrator-reader-spectator-voice(s) floats in time and space, creating an unstable image: "Chez Duras, les images visuelles, les perceptions, les événements et les mots forment un univers souvent disloqué, fragmenté, décalé," asserts Gaspari (*Formes en Mutation* 12). And it is in this "'inquiétante instabilité,' (Duras, *Parleuses* 210), continues Julie Beaulieu, "où valsent à contrepoint le sensible et l'imaginaire, que la projection a lieu, que le film prend forme" (14).[38]

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[38] An initial reaction might be to understand this writing as a "cinematographic" style of writing. Here is an example, taken from Margaret Mehring's script of *An Officer and a Gentleman*, of a form of cinematographic writing that Jacqueline Viswanathan analyses in her article, "Écriture cinématographique?": "We are the first to ride the Dilbert Dunker and we are suddenly shooting at high speed down a steep incline inside a cage-like contraption, painted red. Wham! […] What's happening? […] Which way is up ? […] We rush toward the promise of light and air at the surface, We can hear our own tortured breathing. Will we make it ?" (15-16). No technical cinematographic vocabulary is used. Instead, as Jacqueline Viswanathan explains, the effects of this style are: "traditionnellement proscrits du scénario parce que trop 'littéraire' s'y retrouvent, car ils expriment l'affectivité du spectateur [...] Le spectateur dont il s'agit est, bien entendu, tout à fait fictif. C'est un construit du texte. Il n'est ni tout à fait le narrataire ni tout à fait le double du lecteur du scénario" (15-16). There are definitely resonances in Duras's writing with this type of "écriture cinématographique," which is read like a fictive spectator's viewing experience. Instead of a cinematographic style of writing, what is more interesting is that we discern an original type of cinematographic perception happening in (and outside!) both the text and film. On cinematographic writing see Cléder and Maritchik and specifically for *L'Amour* see McNeece and Gaensbauer, Deborah B. "Revolutionary Writing in Marguerite Duras' *L'Amour*."

Returning to the film, we can also see how characters are affected by inexplicable forces that manifest themselves as internal percepts/affects: for example, when the reactions of the characters come out of nowhere. The seventh shot reveals how these "internal percepts," in the form of knowledge derived from thin air, affect the characters of *Détruire.*

> Max : Au bout de cette allée il y a une porte.
> Stein: Ah, vous avez remarqué?
> Max: Oui. Ils ne vont pas dans la forêt.
> Stein: Ah, vous saviez aussi?
> Max: Non. Non. Je ne savais pas.

"Non. Non. Je ne savais pas" is a rather curious comment. Max's declaration of not knowing supports the view that, like the recounting-inventing "narrator" voices, Max invents. Or, as if affected by an "*événement emportant le système,*" "sous *le coup d'une tentative qui l'emporte,*" he is suddenly bestowed with some knowledge. Max is not in control of himself; he says things he does not know because he is a construction. Duras shows us that these character-figures are constructs. Like in a Godard film where a character asks about the extradiegetic music, "do you hear that music, where is it coming from?" Duras plays with her characters like marionettes. They say something and then, "don't know where that came from." It is Stein for whom the tennis balls "frappent dans les tempes" (and also in *les temps*!) and who, as he directly addresses the spectator-reader (or is it Michael Lonsdale speaking?), is always in an "incertitude tremblante." Duras's characters "se présent[ent] aussi comme artifice, comme construction audio-visuelle. La composition matérielle du personnage cinématographique se trouve mise en lumière. Il n'est qu'image et voix" (Royer 35). While Duras reveals their audio-visual construction, we can also consider these characters as figures, affected by forces. Who is holding the strings?

Vogt explains that in Duras's work, "les personnages n'ont pas de réalité propre. Leur condition d'existence est liée aux voix qui les constituent dans l'énonciation" (191). Vogt writes that Duras's voices inhabit the characters:

> Les voix ne citent pas les paroles des personnages, il n'y a pas de guillemets […] Le discours des personnages est pris en charge par les voix narrantes. Les personnages ne sont plus. Leur condition d'existence c'est la voix qui se nourrit du discours de l'autre et qui dans le même mouvement le voue à l'inexistence. L'acte de parole est également réflexif […] Entre l'acte de parole réflexif et l'acte de parole interactif, s'établit un réseau de circulation qui constitue le continuum sonore du film […] Elle [la parole] présente une suite d'états d'esprit qui se déduisent les uns des autres, comme la pensée se déduirait de la pensée, et non plus d'une narration ou d'une histoire linéaire (278).

But the voices, like the characters, are also constructs. Therefore, Vogt continues:

> Quand la voix-off cesse de tout voir […] la faille entre l'image sonore et l'image visuelle se manifeste dans un autre langage: la voix-off-off (Bonitzer *Décadrages*, 1985). Le cadrage visuel se définit par l'invention d'un point de vue qui déconnecte les deux côtés de l'image visuelle et instaure un espace vide en marge des contraintes habituelles de communication (278).

The figures' (including the voices) comments reveal that something deeper is at work other than a simple wink to the spectator-reader reminding him/her that what he/she is watching is a construction. If we consider perception in this manner, where characters react to inexplicable affect-perceptions that cannot be attributed to anything "seen" *or* heard, we can begin to understand the perplexing sequence of shots 24-35.

Shots 24-35 give us another example where an outside, invisible force penetrates the figures, as well as the text/film. Alissa has just arrived and she and Max are discussing the "hotel." Their dialogue would appear rather innocuous were it not for one minor incident (or rather *"accident"* as Duras sometimes calls moments like this, where for no *apparent* reason an invisible force penetrates the text and the characters).[39] Suddenly Alissa asks, "Pourquoi cette

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[39] The durassian "événement," or "accident" best represents this type of interior perception. See *l'accident* analyzed in Chapter 3 on the outside-inside relationship with examples from *L'Amour* and *La Femme du Gange*. I will also return to the accident in Chapter 5.

femme pleure-t-elle?" This question greatly disturbs Max; he cries, "Comment le sais-tu?"

Alissa's expression turns disoriented and confused; she does not know why she asked that, nor

how she knows that the woman is crying. Here is how Duras writes this sequence in the text:

"Élisabeth Alione pleure en silence […] *Personne ne peut voir* qu'elle pleure, excepté *lui*

[unidentified] *qui ne la regarde pas* […] – Comment le sais-tu? Crie Max Thor. / Personne ne se

retourne. Alissa cherche. Et elle lui fait signe *qu'elle ne sait pas*" (35). The "accident" passes and

they resume the thread of their conversation as if nothing happened. We can understand this

inexplicable exchange as the type of interior/exterior perception-affect suggested in this chapter,

analogous to a "dehors de la pensée," as described by Ropars-Wuilleumier:

> Un mouvement du dehors, qui affecte la pensée et son rapport à la perception [...] Le dehors
> de la pensée" […] Cet "événement" qui emporte le mouvement de penser, se transforme en
> un acte de pensée formulable, énonçable, quelle que soit par ailleurs la "force de dispersion"
> dont il relève (selon les termes mêmes de Blanchot dans *L'Entretien infini*, cité par Deleuze
> ("Pensée" 16).

In Duras's texts and films we witness the event of perception, "thoughts" that suddenly arise and

then disperse. It is the same force of sensation upon which the *figural* operates.[40]

This "accident" in the above scene could easily go unnoticed. The shot that directly

follows, however, illuminates (quite literally) its peculiar placement:

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[40] See above note 39.

This shot is categorically a disturbing *angle rare*. According to Metz, in the "angle rare" the camera's presence is made visible, is felt, *perceived* by the spectator.[41] In an unprecedented extreme low-angle shot (the only one in the film), Alissa hovers unsteadily over the camera while the sun pierces behind her in backlight and dapples the image. Stein asks in the next shot, "Vous ne m'aviez pas dit qu'Alissa était folle," to which Max responds, "Je ne le savais pas." This rather simple exchange actually reveals a very complex maneuvre by Duras regarding perception. Upon closer investigation, it becomes clear that Max did not know that Alissa was crazy. Stein did not know either, until *this image*. The information was only made known (and here we can say literally made visible) by the *shot itself*, that is to say, the outside world of the cinematographic shot that Stein, *in* the film, would not have been able to "*see.*" This shot could not be from the point of view of either Max or Stein. To put it another way, Stein was *affected* by the film's rare angle (like us spectator-readers), an outside perspective (the camera's) that inserted itself into the diegesis of the film, into the narrative.

The crazy atmosphere has consumed Alissa. The next sequence shows a noticeably affected Alissa.

She stares into the void as if oblivious to Max and Stein's presence and dialogue:

> Max: Il y a ici quelque chose qui me trouble et qui me retient. Je reconnais mal ce qui m'arrive. Je ne cherche pas à comprendre tu vois, je ne cherche pas.

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[41] I would add any "outside" presence of the diegetic universe of the film.

> Stein: Alissa. Il vous attendait. Il comptait les jours. Il revoyait mal votre visage.
> Stein: Quelqu'un est venu Alissa. Où était elle?
> Max: Elle est encore dans la chambre. C'est ce que je sais.
> Stein: Et dans le parc déjà. Vous étiez déjà dans le parc. Ce n'est pas la peine de souffrir Alissa. Jamais plus. Personne. Ce n'est pas la peine.
> Max: C'est dans le parc que dort Stein.
> Stein: Dans différents endroits du parc.
> Max: Comme je te désire.
> Stein: Comme il vous désire. Comme il vous aime.

It is impossible to determine who Max and Stein are talking about; Stein confuses Alissa with Élisabeth: "Où était elle?/ Max: Elle est encore dans la chambre. C'est ce que je sais./ Stein: Et dans le parc déjà. Vous étiez déjà dans le parc. Ce n'est pas la peine de souffrir Alissa." At the same time, Alissa has assumed the lethargic, passive state of Élisabeth Alione.

It is perhaps not a coincidence that the voices return immediately following this nonsensical sequence that changes subjects and verb tenses, only to further inscribe uncertainty in this already complicated narrative. Unlike the opening sequence in which we could not determine *where* these voices were, in the next shot they seem to be trapped *inside* the confines of the tennis courts.

39.
Voix 1: Qui est dans *ce* livre?
Voix 2: Max Thor.
Voix 1: Que fait-il?
Voix 2: Rien. *Quelqu'un regarde*.
Voix 1: Quoi?
Voix 2: Le tennis.
Voix 1: Une femme.
Voix 2: Oui. Distraite.
Voix 1: Par quoi.
Voix 2: Le *néant*.
Voix 1: Qui la regarde.
Voix 2: Stein. *Max Thor décrit ce que Stein regarde* (my emphasis).

The camera watches the two women from behind the barrier of the tennis court fence, ostensibly from the point of view of voices looking on. From this point of view, the voices (*off*) seem

trapped *inside* the tennis courts. Incidentally, given the voices' virtuality, new meaning is given

to the omnipresent "virtual" or imagined tennis game if we consider these voices as being

confined inside the tennis courts: there is no one playing tennis but the sound of the balls

"frappent dans les *tempes*"… Or is it "dans les *temps*"?[42] Once again, Duras problematizes

cinematographic spatio-temporal limitations through unconventional perception.

As I have suggested, Durassian perception mixes up the who, the what, the where, and

the when. It is significant then that in the text, the above exchange between the voices takes

place between Max and Alissa (or so the reader surmises as there are no direct reported discourse

indications), and that it is in the *conditional* tense:

> Elle se tait.
> – Quel est le personnage de *ce* livre?
> – Max Thor.
> – Que fait-il ?
> – Rien. Quelqu'un regarde.
> Elle se retourne vers Élisabeth Alione qui, de profil, regarde les tennis, le corps droit.
> – Par exemple une femme? demande Alissa. […]
> – Dans le livre *que je n'ai pas écrit* il n'y avait que toi, dit Alissa. […]
> – Sur les tennis déserts, la nuit, continue Alissa, y aurait-il à dire aussi ?
> – Oui.
> – On dirait des *cages*, rêve Alissa. *Inventerais-tu dans ton livre* ?
> – Non. Je décrirais.
> – Stein ?
> – Non. Stein regarde pour moi. Je décrirais ce que Stein regarde.[…]
> – Qu'est-ce que tu fais toute la journée ? La nuit ?
> – Rien.
> – Tu ne lis pas ?
> – Non. Je fais semblant.
> – Où en es-tu dans ce livre ?
> – Dans des *préambules sans fin* (my emphasis 45-46).

This meta-dialogue discusses the characters' *actual* actions in the *conditional* for the book that

Max is supposedly writing or reading – i.e., the very same book that the spectator-reader is

reading. The result of these examples and a significant consequence for this study is that both the

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[42] See Chapters 4 and 5 for more on the virtual.

text and film constantly oscillate between simultaneous and coexisting past, present, and future.[43]

The book is being written as the reader is reading/watching it.[44] Thus, the action we are reading

is what Max is presently writing/reading (or not!). This places the spectator-reader in a co-

presence with the text-film, *in* the text-film, in an eternal present, or to use Max's phrase, "des

préambules sans fin." Perhaps this is what Duras means by "Détruire, dit-elle*"*: "Aurélia. Elle est

au présent, présente, comme Alissa de *Détruire:* elles ont toujours dix-huit ans" (*Yeux Verts* 10).

For William Van Wert,

> The "destroy" that Alissa pronounces has to do with literacy first of all: reading literacy, writing literacy, visual literacy. And, because the "voices" of the four people don't usually say what they are really intending to say, because those voices are often interchangeable, because the voices are chanted in recitative fashion with a precise and measured diction (especially Michel Lonsdale's Stein character), they become the new reading and writing. They suggest the embryonic first formulations of a future dialogue (23).

Duras already questions in her first film the cinematic apparatus, which she will continue explore

with each film.

The use of the conditional in the text, adding yet another layer of confusion, further

confirms the Durassian "gaze" as a creative act of looking-perceiving-inventing. Alissa and Max

employ the conditional tense: "Je ne te *connaîtrais* pas encore, dit Alissa, on ne se *serait* pas dit

un mot";

> – Là, dit-elle, tu serais là. Toi, là. Moi, ici. On serait séparés. Séparés par les tables, les murs des chambres – elle écarte ses poings fermés et elle crie doucement: – séparés encore.
> Silence.
> – Il y aurait nos premières paroles, dit Max Thor.
> – Non, crie Alissa.
> – Nos premiers regards, dit Max Thor (43).

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[43] See Chapter 5.

[44] It is also perhaps Élisabeth Alione's book that we discussed in the opening of the text. Does "*ce* livre" in this dialogue refer back to "*le* livre" from the beginning? "Devant elle il y a *le* livre. Commencé depuis son arrivée à lui? Ou encore avant?"

They are speaking as if inventing what would become this book that already *is* (…or are they

talking about the film?). At the end of the quotation even dialogue gets transmuted into a non-

verbal looking, i.e., through montage. There is confusion between what is said vs. what is seen,

between utterances vs. gazes, between sound and image. "Parler, ce n'est pas voir." Alissa cries

"No!" Indeed, "Ne pas parler… c'est voir."

Returning to the critical phrase, "Je décrirais ce que Stein regarde," we understand that

Stein is not looking, not physically seeing; rather, Stein invents. And Stein imagines seeing Max

and Alissa:

> Alissa: Nous faisons l'amour. Chaque nuit nous faisons l'amour.
> Stein: Je sais. Vous laissez la fenêtre ouverte et je vous vois[45].
> Alissa: Il la laisse ouverte pour toi. Nous voir.
> Stein: Oui.
> Alissa: Tu nous vois?
> Stein: Oui. Vous ne vous parlez pas. Chaque nuit j'attends. Le silence vous cloue sur le lit. La lumière ne s'éteint plus. Un matin on vous retrouvera, informes, ensemble, une masse de goudron, on ne comprendra pas. Sauf moi.

If Max "décrit ce que Stein regarde," he then looks at himself from the outside, through Stein, as

if looking back at himself from his own reflection in a mirror. Stein is also, literally, *outside*

"looking" in. His position is that of Lol V. *Stein'*s in the rye field underneath the window of

Tatiana and Jacques Hold's room. Duras reproduces in *Détruire* the same effect of the critical

scene in *Le Ravissement,* only here it transpires more subtly.[46] Ropars-Wuilleumier dissects this

complicated montage in *Le Ravissement* where the narrator's voice and point of view break

down: "La voix du narrateur est un voir déguisé, qui masque sous le voir désigné de Lol son

propre désir de voir, de se voir dans la scène; 'je crois voir ce qu'a dû voir Lol V. Stein'"

(*Ecraniques* 70). This "regard," she continues, both seems to *reflect* the process at the same time

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[45] Or perhaps also *je vous voix*.
[46] Analogies and intertexualities with *Le Ravissement* abound. Nicole Hiss, who plays Alissa in *Détruire* plays "Lol" in *La femme du Gange*.

as it dictates it: "'je me souviens : l'homme vient,' mais cet homme n'est que *je* soudain devenu

il dans le regard soustrait à Lol. […] *Je* doublé d'un *il* qui dans le champ de seigle, sous le regard

de Lol, se fait 'l'homme' ou 'Jacques Hold,' avant de devenir pour Lol une simple figure de

narrateur" (*Ecraniques* 70). Thus, a plurality is introduced in the voice through this alternating

montage: "Si Hold apparaît tour à tour en *il* et en *je,* n'est-ce pas plutôt qu'il n'est ni il ni je –

figure indécidable, toujours prête à vaciller dans la fiction sans pourtant s'y résoudre? Figure *off*,

pourrait-on dire" (*Ecraniques* 70). She concludes that an infinite circuit of exchanges is

established between two reflected poles, between voices, between images in words, and words in

images (*Ecraniques* 71).[47] Duras presents her characters, Lol and Max, as spectators of

themselves (i.e., "le cinema de Lol V. Stein"). Ropars-Wuilleumier writes: "Entendre 'le vide,'

dévorer 'un spectacle inexistant' ne pas voir, ne pas se voir, se voir ne pas voir – telle est la

hantise de l'écriture chez Lol. V. Stein" (*Le Texte Divisé* 170*)*. To summarize*,* the *seeing* which

produces both the scission of identities and the narration does not occur by a process of physical

seeing, but instead through a montage where *voix* and *regard* are interchanged reflexively: a

juxtaposition of *plans* in both senses of the word – a cinematographic *plan* or shot, and a

physical plane as Stein-Max and Lol look through the window from down below.[48]

Montage

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[47] "Échange des images qui se réfléchissent en paroles, des paroles qui tentent de se relancer en images, et, fondamentalement, des pôles systémiques eux-mêmes, renvoyés de l'un à l'autre comme l'un et l'autre se renvoient la prise de voix et le geste de voir." She notes parenthetically, "Et l'on ne s'étonnera pas que la mention de la *glace*, en divisant l'image de la mer, ait préparé une division de Lol, sujet du regard et sujet d'énonciation du regard, précipitant une éventuelle scission de l'acte narratif lui-même: scission que présupposait déjà la fission du narrateur en *je*, s'appropriant l'acte de narration, et *il* débouté de la voix, renvoyé à une autre voix, absente" (*Écraniques* 71).
[48] We will see this structure further repeated and developed in *LFDG*. I allude here both to the voice/image relationship and to how we can consider text and film in this reciprocal interchangeability. I will return to the relationship with cinema and the text-film pair circuit of indiscernibility in chapters 3 and 4.

As a result figures find themselves at once spectators of themselves <u>and</u> *of* a perception, producing a scission of identities, which does not occur through "seeing" but through montage and editing (like the inexplicable perception brought about by the rare angle in shot 36: "Vous ne m'avez pas dit qu'Alissa était folle./ Je ne savais pas."). In this regard, the next sequence, shots 48-60, stands out from the rest of the film. Stein and Max assume the voices' function as their dialogue now passes off-screen while they watch Élisabeth and Alissa. Max and Stein discuss how he and Alissa met while their gaze surveys the park.
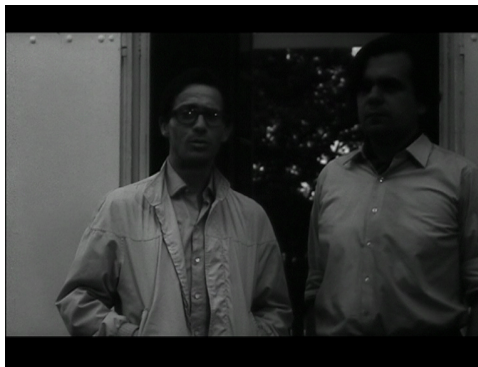
The next long shot over the enclosed, empty lawn while their dialogue continues off-screen places the image from their point of view – all of which eerily evoke the two invisible voices.

The camera pivots to the far end of the park where Élisabeth and Alissa are in conversation when, suddenly, Max's voice interrupts their dialogue:

52.
Élisabeth: Je vois très mal. Je ne vois rien. […]
Je suis ici en convalescence.
(off) Max: Lorsqu'elle est arrivée, chez moi, une nuit.
Alissa: En convalescence?
(off) Max: Alissa avait dix-huit ans.
Élisabeth: Mon accouchement s'est mal passé.
(off) Stein: Dans la chambre Alissa n'a plus d'âge. Non.
Élisabeth: Je prends des tranquillisants. Je dors tout le temps.
Alissa: Ça a été dur non?
Élisabeth: Je ne dormais plus. Et puis j'avais eu une grossesse difficile.

57. *off*
Max: Nous la laissons aller dans la forêt, avec Alissa.
Stein: Non. Non

60: *off*
Stein: Pour revenir à ce dont nous parlions, la destruction capitale.
Max: Totale.
Stein: Oui.

The frames alternate between "subjective" extreme long shots with Max and Stein's dialogue off-screen, and "objective" images of Alissa and Élisabeth. However, despite a physical separation, Max and Stein's interjections in the women's dialogue– "elle regarde le vide" – form a simultaneity that renders the men's subjectivity present with Alissa and Élisabeth. Van Wert reads the shift as a remove in point of view: "an objective presentation of a scene (Alissa and Élisabeth talking), giving way to a subjective point-of-view presentation of the same scene (the

camera stays on them, the sound switches to Max and Stein)" (24). In the end, their dialogue is no longer an independent conversation but commentary, constituting a "complete destruction of the shot/reaction shot (with synchs sound) format traditionally used for conversations in film" (Van Wert 24). Like the two voices, they "look" on:

> – Là, dit-elle, tu serais là. Toi, là. Moi, ici. On serait *séparés*. *Séparés* par les tables, *les murs* des chambres – elle écarte ses poings fermés et elle crie doucement: – séparés encore.
> Silence.
> – Il y aurait nos premières *paroles*, dit Max Thor.
> – Non, crie Alissa.
> – Nos premiers *regards*, dit Max Thor (my emphasis, 43).

Are *paroles* exchanged through gazes or do *regards* pass by way of voice?

Duras remarkably produces this alternating montage *visually* in the text (pages 54-65). Its layout suggests simultaneous yet separate actions functioning on different *plans*.

jambes aux cuisses plates, de coureuse, l'extraordinaire flexibilité des mains endormies, pendantes, au bout des bras, la taille, la masse sèche des cheveux, l'endroit des yeux.

Derrière la baie de la salle à manger Max Thor regarde vers le parc. Alissa ne le voit pas. Elle est tournée vers Élisabeth Alione. Max Thor ne voit d'Alissa que le faux sommeil, les cheveux et les jambes sur la chaise longue.
Max Thor reste un moment face au parc. Lorsqu'il se retourne, Stein est près de lui.
— Ils sont tous allés se promener, dit Stein. Nous sommes seuls.
Silence.
Les baies sont ouvertes sur le parc.
— Quel calme, dit Stein. On les entend respirer.

54

Silence.
— Alissa sait, dit Max Thor. Mais que sait-elle?
Stein ne répond pas.

Alissa s'est levée. Elle marche pieds nus dans l'allée. Elle dépasse Élisabeth Alione. On dirait qu'elle hésite. Oui. Elle revient sur ses pas, atteint la hauteur d'Élisabeth Alione et, durant quelques secondes, se tient face à elle. Puis, elle va vers sa chaise longue et la déplace de quelques mètres, plus près d'Élisabeth Alione.

Le visage de Max Thor, comme suspendu, se détourne tout à coup.
Stein ne bouge pas.

Élisabeth Alione se réveille lentement. C'est le raclement de la chaise longue sur le gravier qui l'a réveillée.
Elles se sourient.

Max Thor, en retrait, ne

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A reader unfamiliar with the film might interpret this unexpected sequence – a textual *angle rare* – in two ways. The description of action from an objective point of view (a camera's eye) could switch back and forth between the female and the male dialogue. On the other hand, the indented action could be interpreted as a textual voice-over from the subjective-objective points of view, written in both the first and third person, of Max/Stein who watch. I maintain the latter, a more

likely and ingenious choice. Indented, Max and Stein's dialogue is subordinated to Alissa's

actions, which announces that they are off-screen, looking onto Alissa and Élisabeth. Even more

telling, the optical vocabulary reinforces their vigilance, such as the evocation of "le visage de

Max," or the observations, "On dirait qu'elle hésite. Oui" and "Elle regarde le vide, dit Stein."

Duras's mise-en-page ultimately recreates textually a cinematographic montage of simultaneous

actions from the same point of view.[49] Through a textual cinematic editing, two physically

impossible space-times become *incompossible,* in the Deleuzian sense of the word: two

independent actions, whose coexistence is physically impossible, occur simultaneously. The

paradox is that subjectivities multiply at the same time as they all merge into one.

Duras also reproduces in the film an interior creative perception and original confusing of

"il" and "je," of outside, extradiegetic narrator, and internal character that Duras introduced in *Le

Ravissement* and *Le Vice-Consul.* Limam-Tnani writes about *Le Vice-Consul:* "'se regarder dans

le regard de l'autre,' chacun d'eux se constitue pour l'autre en une sorte de miroir dans lequel il

peut se contempler" (49). I suggest that it is more than just a question of looking or

contemplating oneself through the other and gets to the very core of Duras's notion of

perception. Astonishingly, the mirror-like montage has up to this point been executed without

any use of mirrors but through subtle shifts between *paroles* and *regards*.

In shot 87, Duras orchestrates a masterly choreographed use of the mirror. Until now, the

characters' gazes never met directly; at least one person always looks off-screen. Now when

Alissa and Élisabeth finally do look at one another it is by means of the mirror. At this moment

they discover their resemblance:

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[49] To my knowledge, no other writer has done this. Godard, in the published text of *Éloge de l'amour: phrases (sorties d'un film)* (P.O.L. 2001) recreates something akin to this affect on two separate pages. But its effect is more of a poetic melodic flow than one of simultaneity. The back cover of the book states: "Phrase: unité du discours partie d'un énoncé généralement formé de plusieurs mots ou groupe de mots dont la construction présente un sens complet phraser jouer en mettant en évidence par des respirations le développement de la ligne mélodique."

Throughout the shot the camera barely moves, executing one panoramic movement at the very

end where it turns away from the mirror after the women discover their resemblance. As the

camera focuses on the figures in the mirror rather than the characters themselves, it places the

point of view of the figures, of the camera, and of the spectator in an unsure position. Initially, it

is even challenging to discern whether this is in fact a mirror; it appears momentarily as if Alissa

is on the other side of the room, framed through an opening in the wall. Standing in the liminal

space of the window, she seems to exist on a separate plane altogether, only a virtual reflection

in the mirror.

Duras does not employ the traditional shot/countershot to exchange dialogue and glances.

On different planes (not *plans*), Alissa and Élisabeth do not truly look at one another. The

cumulative effect is disorienting; if the image is a reflection, the camera is therefore nothing but

another mirror. Van Wert elucidates the mirror-wall in *India Song:*

> And the "wall" that reflects everything also suggests that the filming camera is but
> another mirror, itself […] Point of view and voyeurism come through to the spectator,
> even though they cannot be appreciated by characters within the film […] Duras's use of
> the mirror "levels" into one visual plane two distinct spatial points (28).

At the end of shot 87, the camera pivots away until it is completely off the mirror, which makes

it appear as if the "actual" image is still a reflection, further reinforced by Alissa's placement in

front of the window.[50] Looking in the mirror, Alissa says, "Je vous aime et je vous désire." By

means of the mirror, the spectator enters into the muddled (triangular) relationship between the

characters throughout the film: "La réalisation figurée montre […] entre l'œil et le tableau, la

schize qui les sépare […] aussi, plus radicalement, l'interférence permanente du double et du

triangle" (Ropars-Wuilleumier, *Texte Divisé* 165). Yet through a denial of the constantly-evoked

interior – a mental or *purely* subjective image – what is ultimately reflected in the image is the

spectator's desire to penetrate beyond the image: "je vous aime *jusqu'à ne plus voir"* (*Le Navire*

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[50] Duras will perfect the use of the mirror with each subsequent film, most notably in *IS*. For more on Duras's
mirrors, see Ropars-Wuilleumier who discusses in detail Duras's use of the mirror in *India Song*. Similar to the
Lacanian mirror, Ropars-Wuilleumier considers that Duras's mirrors demonstrate "l'écart irrémédiable de l'objet et
du regard, diamétralement opposés. Si la scène du miroir, telle qu'elle est montée ici, désigne évidemment
l'opération où se structure le sujet, elle fait voir qu'il s'agit là toujours d'une suture: celui qui regarde est aussi celui
qui nie le regard" (*Texte Divisé* 165).

Night); "'Ils sont passés.' Mais pour passer, ils ont dû fermer les yeux: la vision n'est pas représentable [...] Il s'agira […] de conquérir la dualité de la vision et du visible" (Ishahpour 231).

It is critical that Duras, who was to become the master of the mirror, astutely employs the mirror here in her first film.[51] We cannot, therefore, simply relegate *Détruire* to a political *May '68* film. Duras experiments with the exchanges of glances, the "actual" and the "virtual" image, which I will further discuss in Chapter 4 as I extend this process of exchanges – what I call a circuit of indiscernibility between actual and virtual images – to the relationship between text and film. In this section, we have seen the beginnings of Duras's main concerns that will be further explored in this dissertation: affect and sensation; the relationship between interior and exterior, temporal and narrative stratification; and actual and virtual images. In the next section, we will see how Duras further carries out this experimentation with perception through affect, moving farther away from the figurative or representational and more and more towards the *figural*.

Jaune le soleil

> *Point of view […] is enveloped in variation, just as variation is enveloped in point of view"*
> *(*Deleuze, *The Fold* 22)

Détruire showcases how Duras reconfigures perception in cinema. It is unsurprising then that *Abahn Sabana David* (*ASD*), the text for *Jaune le Soleil (JLS,* 1971*)* published in 1970, the year following *Détruire*'s release (and most likely written during its production), further carries out this experimentation.

ASD/JLS directly treat Judaism and class struggle. According to Laure Adler:

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[51] *La Musica* also demonstrates a keen interest and clever use of mirrors.

In *Abahn Sabana David,* the game isn't being played with tennis balls but with bullets. It's a question of life and death. The shots are fired at point-blank range and the revolver is omnipresent. The first version was called *Les dieux de Prague* and described the recent terrible events in Czechoslovakia. Gradually Marguerite Duras changed her focus to Judaism. What is a Jew? Who is a Jew? Why is one a Jew?" (280).

Youssef Ishaghpour also examines Duras's discussion of Judaism, postulating that:

Le judaïsme est non-être, lié à l'utopie, à l'errance, à l'écriture, une nouvelle interprétation du Juif errant est proposée comme figure mythique des écrivains et des intellectuels pourchassés, d'anciens du Parti, qui ne croient plus rien, qui croient que la réussite la plus évidente, c'est l'échec le plus grave, des communistes qui pensent le communisme impossible et voudraient pourtant le réaliser en évitant de le construire, de dialecticiens du négatif, de diviseurs, qui proposent l'incertitude, parlent d'autre chose, ailleurs (*La parole* 231).

Laure Adler and Youssef Ishaghpour's brief explanations of how Duras treats the figure of the

Jew constitute what little scholarship exists on *JLS*. One reason for the lack of attention given to

this text-film pair could be that "the film made little impact at the box office and was soon

forgotten," possibly due to its difficult dialogue: "[*ASD*] is regarded as her most unreadable,

most obscure book […] She herself admitted that after having reread it, she did not understand it.

To the end of her days, she fiercely protected this book from the critics and refused to explain

herself" (Adler 280). One brief example from the text of the utter confusion will suffice:

– David, le juif veut parler.
– Non, dit David endormi.
[…] David ne répond pas. Il ouvre des yeux au regard vide.
– Tu as dit mille ans quoi? Dit Sabana.
David répond:
– Mille ans.
[…] Abahn et le juif parlent à David.
– Tu as dit le ciment, la glace, le vent, mille ans ?
– Mille ans, répète David.
– Tu as dit le ciment, la peur, le ciment, la peur, la peur, le ciment, mille ans ? Mille ans encore ?
[…] Abahn et le juif parlent encore à David endormi.
– Tu as dit mille ans encore ne rien entendre ? dit le juif ?
– Mille ans ne rien comprendre ?
– Mille ans ne rien voir ?
– Mille ans, répète David endormi.

> – Mille ans une cervelle de singe ?
> Le regard bleu de David va dans la direction de la voix. Il ne reconnaît pas.
> – Mille ans un singe Gringo? (58)[52]

As evidenced by this dialogue, *ASD/JLS* resist comprehension. Therefore, instead of trying to understand what it *means* or what is signified, I suggest we look at *how* it evokes through sensation, through the figural, and through the form of the text and film; to repeat: "whereas figuration refers to a form that is related to an object it is supposed to represent, the 'Figure' is the form that is connected to a sensation, and that conveys the violence of this sensation directly to the nervous system" (Smith, *Sensation* xiii). If we approach this abstract dialogue through the lens of perception and affect, we can begin to break down what is going on in this text-film pair.

This section will consider how perception flows through this impenetrable dialogue and through the images between perceiving figures who do not see or understand: "Il ouvre des yeux *au regard vide*. […] Abahn et le juif parlent encore à David endormi./ – Tu as dit mille ans encore ne rien entendre ? dit le juif ? / – Mille ans ne rien comprendre ? / – Mille ans ne rien voir ? / –Mille ans, répète David endormi." The overall incomprehension, reinforced by the characters' empty stares, only reiterates Durassian perception as a form of interior subconscious, preverbal insight, where affect and percept are one. Duras made the following statement regarding *JLS*: "The film is a film on speech. The role of the image is therefore to carry speech" (Adler 280). This does not mean, however, that the image is subordinated to speech; we saw in *Détruire* that "speech" is carried through the gaze ("Il y aurait nos premières paroles, dit Max Thor./ – Non, crie Alissa. / – Nos premiers regards, dit Max Thor"). With Duras, the gaze is equivalent to speech and thus equally important. An ocular lexicon litters *ASD*. "Voir," "regard," and "yeux" and their grammatical variations are used 55, 213, and 83 times respectively in the 149-page text. But as this section will show, it is not an optical seeing that

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[52] In this section I will refer to the text *ASD* when available to cite dialogue.

takes place in these figures. The extraordinary frequency of the verb *regarder*, used 213 times,

more than any other word but *unconventionally*, demands that we reexamine perception. I hope

to launch discussion on *JLS* and this text-film pair and show that it is also deeply about

perception and affect.

<div align="center">**</div>

ASD/JLS takes place in an enclosed room in the prison-like house of Abahn, "le juif."

Gringo (Grinski in the film) is the dictator of Staadt and is seeking to kill Abahn. Sabana

(Catherine Sellers) and David (Gérard Desarthe) are sent to watch over Abahn (Diurka) and have

been ordered to kill him if he flees. David soon falls into a deep sleep. Another man then enters,

a Jew, also named Abahn (in the film this Abahn is played by two men, Sami Frey and Dionys

Mascolo). At this point, the multiple "Abahns," the ambiguous "il," make it impossible to

determine who is speaking and performing the actions. The only exception is Sabana, a woman,

and thus the only feminine pronoun. The action consists of these figures retelling dialogue:

namely a prior conversation between Abahn, "le juif," and David and what Gringo said. They

ask questions to try to understand:

> – Je réponds: si Gringo tue le juif c'est Gringo qui aura tué le juif.
> – Je dis non. Je dis: si c'est David qui tire, c'est Gringo qui aura tué – elle a crié.
> – Non, dit le juif. […]
> – Dis moi.
> – On parlait de ce que dirait Gringo après, dit le juif. […]
> – Après quoi?
> – Après que David aurait tiré sur le juif.
> Elle se tait.
> Elle les regarde l'un après l'autre. Elle attend, ils ne parlent pas, elle crie:
> – Je veux comprendre (35).

Ultimately unable to comprehend, it is not what the words *mean* that matters, but rather how they

affect through form and the *figural*. In the text and film, it is not meaning that is transmitted but

invisible forces and sensations (the blind and deaf-mute wails) that are affecting these

(non)seeing-hearing figures, which is carried outside of the film to the spectator-reader. To be clear, it is not "vision" that the we observe in the figures of the film, but we do *see* them *perceiving*: "not to render the visible but to render visible" (Smith, *Sensation* xxiii).

Blind cries and affective laughter

From the brief nonsensical quotations above, it is evident that Duras once again is engaged with the nature of perception that we considered in *Détruire*: to recall, a non-ocular perception, although it appears to transpire by way of the eyes, is a perception that negotiates between sound and image, between inside and outside. David is in a half-asleep half-awake state; he reacts unknowingly; he looks without seeing: "Il ouvre des yeux au regard vide […] Mille ans ne rien entendre./ Mille ans ne rien comprendre?/ Mille ans ne rien voir?" By the shifting repetition, to hear, to see, and to understand merge, and yet, are simultaneously negated. The text confirms an obstructed vision: "Ses yeux sont deux trous noirs"; "elle a le regard opaque de David"; "le regard est voilé" and "le regard de Sabana s'absente." Many other subtle associations merge sight and sound in a synesthetic correspondence of senses: "hurlements aveugles," "hurlements sourds," "le silence augmente, il aveugle," and:

> Tu es celui qui ne sera pas tué./ – Peut-être./ – Celui qui parle?/ – Je réponds pour le juif./ – Celui qui voit? Qui dira?/ –Oui./ – A qui?/ – A ceux qui *voient, entendent*./ Sabana se tourne vers David, le *regard fermé*. Elle le montre./ – Et à ceux-là aussi? Les *sourds*? Les singes?/ –Aussi, oui, dit le juif./ – Ah – un éclat de rire silencieux déchire le visage de Sabana./ – Nous cherchons des *oreilles*, dit Abahn./ – Des *yeux*, dit le juif./ – pour les *entendre,* dit Abahn./ – Leur parler, dit le juif./ Silence" (38-39). [53]

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[53] Duras develops the movement and interchangeability between sight and sound with each work: "la montée du silence[…] cette disparition du son avec la montée du soleil" (*Navire Night*) – which only further reiterates not the *separation* of the audio-visual (and also *in* the textual for that matter) that critics have analyzed, but the movement and rhythm that oscillates *between* them. It is the *accident* in *LFDG* – the "*certaine image*," Duras writes, "que le son se soit coupé," which is *also* "la lumière arrêtée": "l'accident se résout, le bruit revient"; "le bruit de la lumière" (119).

We can understand this seeing/hearing where the senses blur and harmonize as affect, like

Duras's idiosyncratic "cri sourd," that is felt and perceived but not heard.[54]

It is significant that for the last seven pages of *ASD* the ubiquitous optical vocabulary is

absent. The *regard* gives way to a hysteric cry and deforming laugh: "un éclat de rire silencieux

déchire le visage de Sabana." On the two pages following the last occurrence of the word

"regard," "rire*"* appears ten times, a total of seven appearances on just one page:

> Le juif a levé les yeux, il regarde maintenant vers le chemin, le jour naissant, l'invisible frontière, il n'entend pas Gringo. Un sourire difficile – de la même douceur exténuée que sa voix – tire son visage. […] –Nous vivrons, dit le juif – dans le silence, entre les cris, sa voix est un murmure – nous essayerons./ –Oui, crie David./ Un mouvement désordonné secoue le corps de David. Son visage grimace en silence: David **rit**.[…] D'abord timide, englué de larmes encore, le **rire** commence à sortir du corps, du ciment de David. Les chiens crient. Le **rire** sort du corps de David dans des hoquets. Les chiens se mettent à hurler avec les violons de Gringo./ – David!/ Le **rire** de David prend une forme reconnaissable. […] Tout le corps de David **rit**./ Dans la pénombre, un autre rire commence à se faire entendre; Abahn **rit**. Les **rires** de David et d'Abahn traversent les portes de la maison du juif. […] Les **rires** de David et d'Abahn mêlés traversent les murs, roulent dans la nuit de Staadt, se répandent sur la plaine des morts […] Le **rire** repart, fou, il est irrépressible, enfantin, il se mêle aux hurlements des chiens, *il frappe le discours, l'ordre, le sens, de sa lumière*. Il est un **rire** de joie (142-144).

This laughter, albeit "de joie," is not a happy one but is rather unnervingly mixed with cries. Like

the musical bombardment at the end of *Détruire,* everything breaks down at the end: "il frappe le

discours, l'ordre, le sens." The catastrophic *rire* is a collapse into a Deleuzian-Artaudian non-

sense, the pure affected figure in sensation, a vibration of forces being externalized: "Ce n'est

plus l'archive, auditive ou visuelle […] C'est une machine abstraite […] c'est la carte des

rapports de forces, carte de densité, d'intensité, qui procède par liaisons primaires non-

localisables, et qui passe à chaque instant par tout point, ou plutôt dans toute relation d'un point à

un autre" (Deleuze, *Foucault* 44). We witness "*l'action sur le corps de forces invisibles* (d'où les

déformations du corps qui sont dues à cette cause plus profonde)" (Deleuze, *Sensation* 45) of the

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[54] The Durassian "cri" appears often in her work: in *Moderato Cantabile, Hiroshima,* and most notably in *L'Amour* (13).

rire on David's face that "tire son visage" and deforms his face like the cry in *L'Amour* where the body is actually vaporized and explodes in the shout: "Pendant un instant personne ne regarde, personne n'est vu… Pendant un instant personne n'entend, personne n'écoute. Et puis il y a un cri: l'homme qui regardait ferme les yeux à son tour sous le coup d'une tentative qui l'emporte, le soulève, soulève son visage vers le ciel, son visage *se révulse* et il crie" (13).[55]

Deleuze writes of the cry:

> C'est beaucoup plus la manière dont il ne voit rien lui-même, et crie devant l'invisible […] A la violence du représenté (le sensationnel, le cliché) s'oppose la violence de la sensation. Celle-ci ne fait qu'un avec son action directe sur le système nerveux, les niveaux par lesquels elle passe, les domaines qu'elle traverse: Figure elle-même, elle ne doit rien à la nature d'un objet figuré. C'est comme chez Artaud : la cruauté n'est pas ce qu'on croit, et dépend de moins en moins de ce qui est représenté (*Sensation* 42-43).

The laughter-cry affect is the figure of the invisible, laughing "mendiante" who wanders throughout the Ganges and Duras's *œuvre*. The dark interior escapes, exteriorizes itself and passes between everything. Tom Conley explains in his afterward:
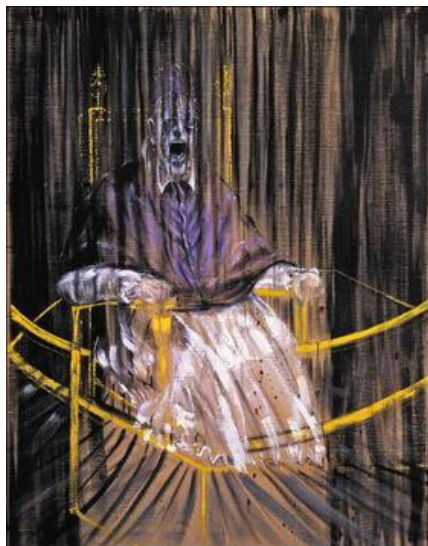
> Sensation is discerned as movement that runs transversally, that "translates" affects, that is "what passes from one 'order' to another, from one 'level' to another, from one 'domain' to another. That's why sensation is the master cause of deformations, an agent that *deforms* the body […] It appears as the *vibration* that flows through the body without organs, it is the vector of the sensation, it is what makes the sensation pass from one level to another. In the coupling of sensation, rhythm is already liberated, because it confronts and unites the diverse levels of different sensations it is not *resonance* but it is still merged together with the *melodic line, the points and counterpoints*, of a coupled Figure (*Sensation,* "Afterward" 72-73*)*.

David's laughter-cry is the melodic line that passes to Abahn, to the walls, into the night, mixing with the blind howls of the dogs, and the "violons de Gringo." If the ambiguity of subject was not confounded enough, the vibrations of the laughter reverberate, uniting all figures: "Point of

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[55] *L'Amour* in fact overlaps with both *ASD* and *JLS*. It was published the year following *ASD*, 1971, the same year *JLS* was produced. It is also Michael Lonsdale's famous long wail of the *vice-consul* in *India Song*. Even though the cry is in fact heard (but not seen) in the film, it works. It continues to resonate and reverberate throughout the film–through the images of the empty, foggy forest, through the laughter of the invisible *mendiante*, the cry is still felt to the point where the spectator still perceives it even when it is barely discernable, or no longer even there.

view is enveloped in variation, just as variation is enveloped in point of view" (Deleuze, *Fold* 22). Like in Bacon's famous *Velazquez's Pope Innocent* (1953), the Durassian laughter-cry is not literally *heard* but *felt* – it is thus "rendered visible."

It is a force so strong, which "passes from one level to another," that it permeates to the order of the page, externalizing itself in the form of literal hiccups on the page, blank silent spaces between disconnected phrases:

In the last paragraph, Duras "renders visible" the sublime breakdown into formal "hoquets" of laughter on the page, which in turn are transmitted to the spectator-reader. This formal "voice" represents an outside force, similar to the cinematographic rare angles we saw in both the text and film *Détruire.* The oscillation between *forme* and *force,* affect, or sensation, is the same kind of outside force that we discussed in *Détruire:* Ropars-Wuilleumier reminds us, "[L]e dehors deleuzien […] oscille entre forme et force" (*"Dehors"* 24). Like the forces affecting the characters-figures, the spectator-reader is not supposed to seek understanding in what is represented, but solely to perceive it. Deleuze writes:

> Sensation is not qualitative and qualified, but has only an intensive reality[…]Sensation is vibration. A sensation is produced when the wave encounters the Forces acting on the body, an "affective athleticism," a scream breath. When sensation is linked to the body in this way, *it ceases to be representative and becomes real (Sensation* 45*).*

Duras entirely reproduces this "presence" from the "outside" that is constantly felt in the film *Jaune le soleil*.

Affective perception

How does this "regard" come across in the film? Beyond the absurd dialogue, one notices immediately in the image the peculiar manner in which characters look and speak. Their eyes are at times closed:

Or they stare into the void while they recall, invent, and seek to understand: "Nous ne comprenons pas nous voulons comprendre," cries Sabana. Like Stein, they are in an "incertitude

tremblante." In the sequence that follows, the inability to understand is expressed in an inability to see. Characters "look" around but stare into the void:


Imprisoned in this closed room, the characters gaze outwards to dark portals and windows; they speak as if divining knowledge coming from elsewhere. Like in *Détruire,* characters rarely look directly at one another. Unlike *Détruire,* point of view is not at stake in *JLS*. Instead, a circuit of glances is formed. They are Deleuze's walking, wandering-watchers, "Vigilambulators" or "attendants": "the presence of the attendant, who still feels, sees, and speaks the way the body escapes from itself, that is, the way it escapes from the organism" (*Sensation* 50*)*. Although there are separate bodies, one force vibrates through all of them, uniting these figures into one perceiving, affected body (we will see this culminate at the end of the film).

As was the case in *ASD*, subjectivity is no longer a question. Although the film is composed almost entirely of static, long shots, three unexpected *angles rares* make the camera's ghost-like presence – an outside presence – felt. The camera silently pans across the white walls

of the cell completing a full circle. For the spectator, after being exposed only to fixed frames, this movement comes out of nowhere and is disorienting. Furthermore, the shot is void of characters and sound.

In *Détruire* we observed the "outside" presence of the voices and the ambiguity between subjects and the manner in which they perceive. In *JLS,* Duras realizes this affectively. Duras remarked how the film was shot in black and white in order to wash out characters: "I want to create an impression of having filmed without electricity. For there to be no lighting effects, for the whole film to bathe in a uniform light that favours no one person" (Adler 286). The shots often alternate between characters framed in the same position, in medium shots against the white wall, which instead of representing dialogue, this usage of shot-counter-shot merges these two figures.
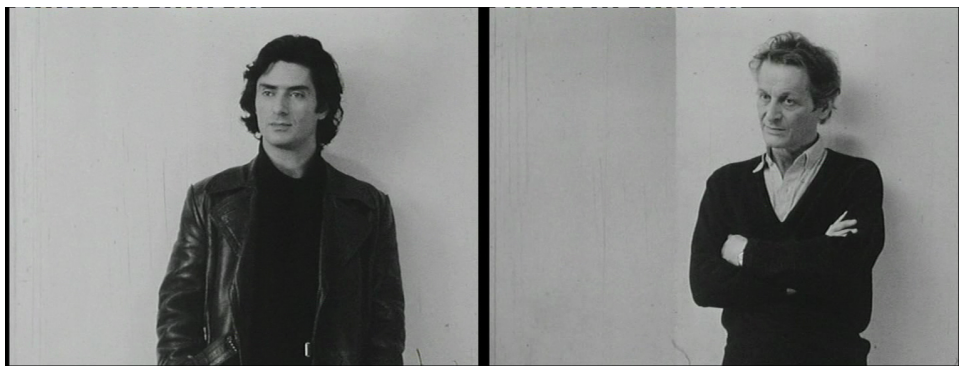
The two other "Abahns" seem to act together as one unit as they repeat one another (to distinguish between the two, I write the name of the actors):

Dionys: Il est jeune.

Sami: Jeune oui. Tu es sa femme?
Dionys: Tu es sa mère?
Sami: À quoi penses-tu?
Dionys: Tu n'as pas la pensée?
Sami: C'est la peur. Tu as peur?
Dionys: Tu as peur ?
Sami: Ce n'est pas la peur.
Dionys: C'est une souffrance.
Sami: Terrible.
Sabana: Non.
Dionys: Entière. Oui.
Sami: Qui es-tu ? Il est à la société immobilière de Staadt?
Dionys: Toi aussi.
Sabana: Il n'est pas qualifié. Il est avec des portugais.
Sami: Les portugais sont partout.
Dionys: Eux aussi oui.

Finally, the same breakdown and oscillation between form and force that we saw at the end of *ASD,* where "regard" breaks down into an affective laugher-cry also occurs at the end of the film. Once again, Duras does not *represent* the hysterical laugh – none of the characters actually cry or laugh.[56] Instead, the *sensation*, the effect of the *rire*, the breakdown of sense and form is transmitted through a choreographed polyphonic or plurivocal cacophony in the form of a musical canon as all the voices merge into one (Bach's *Art de la Fugue* at the end of *Détruire*?) – the "*melodic line, the points and counterpoints*, of a coupled Figure" (my emphasis, *Sensation* 51).

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[56] The final sequence of the film does not occur in the text.

The bodies are strategically framed and shaped to form a triangular dark mass. The refrain starts off slowly, and except for the voice of Sabana, the only way to transcribe the alternating voices is by dashes (the same procedure Duras employs in her texts):

Sabana: La forêt où est-elle? Je ne comprends pas.
– Fais-le, comprends.
Sabana : Je ne comprends pas.
– Plus rien ?
Sabana: Oui, il n'y a plus rien.
– Où est-ce ?
Sabana: Après Staadt. C'est désert.
– C'est quoi ?
Sabana: Un endroit.
– Quand?
Sabana : David, pas encore.
– C'est la forêt.
Sabana: Personne n'est là. Pas de couleur. C'est passé Staadt, après les étangs. Après.
– C'est la mort ?
Sabana: Non. Des gens traversent, loin. Ils passent. Ils sont passés.
– Où allaient-ils ?
Sabana : Ils allaient, là il y a moins d'arbres. La couleur vient.
– Jaune ?
Sabana : Oui.
–- Le soleil ?
Sabana : Oui. Il y a un feu éteint. Ils sont passés.
– Où allaient-ils ?
Sabana : Ils allaient. La couleur vient.
– Jaune ?

Sabana : Oui.
– Le soleil ?
Sabana : Oui. Il y a un feu éteint.
– C'est quand.
Sabana : Mille ans. Ils sont passés.
– Où allaient-ils ?
Sabana : Ils allaient. La couleur vient.
– Jaune ?
Sabana : Oui.
– Le soleil.
Sabana : Oui. Il y a un feu éteint.
– C'est quand.
Sabana : Mille ans. Ils sont passés.
– Où allaient ils ?
Sabana : Ils allaient. La couleur vient.
– Jaune ?
Sabana : Oui
–- Le soleil ?
Sabana : Oui. Il y a un feu éteint […]

And so on... The refrain repeats itself over and over, thus forming a musical canon until it breaks

down and the voices become superimposed on top of one another. Words are uttered but it is

impossible to determine the source. The entire shot lasts for the final five minutes of the film,

and the melody continues for a minute after the screen has gone black. Transmitted from the

figures, the sensation externalizes itself entirely to the spectator-reader; only affect remains

writes Deleuze:

> That is, "sensations" and "instincts."[…] Sensation is what determines instinct at a
> particular moment, just as instinct is the passage from one sensation to another […] It is
> no longer the material structure that curls around the contour in order to envelop the
> Figure, it is the Figure that wants to pass through a vanishing point in the contour in order
> to dissipate into the material structure […] The Figure is not simply the isolated body, but
> also the deformed body that escapes from itself. Deformation is necessary because the
> body has a necessary relationship with the material structure to which the body must
> return, which constitute passages and states that are real, physical, and effective, and
> which are sensations and not imaginings (Deleuze, *Sensation* 19).

Meaning breaks down, hence the absurd dialogue. It is as if Duras, in the process of writing the

text-film, is a spectator-reader of her own writing taking place in the present, like her figures

who remain in "une incertitude toujours tremblante," entirely in the present, not knowing what

will come next, subject to the forces of affect. In *ASD* the "hurlements aveugles" provoke this

same uncertainty: "Silence. Les chiens crient au loin, hurlements aveugles./ –Nous sommes dans

une incertitude mortelle sur le sort de David, dit Abahn" (98). It is as if in the process of writing,

Duras is watching an interior film, the image behind the eyes (what Duras refers to in *Le*

Ravissement as "le cinéma de Lol. V. Stein)."[57] It is this certain "image" behind the eyes that the

text-film seeks to penetrate – behind the bodies' eyes, beyond their gaze, to perceive their

obscure, silent, interior, which is externally reflected by the exterior conditions: "*Tout* baigne

dans une même intensité de lumière, *dedans, dehors*. Rien n'est encore allumé" (my emphasis,

ASD 19). The dark void of the exterior and the emptied interior, everything evokes an extreme

"outside" presence that makes itself felt. As we saw in *Détruire*, an unknown voice disrupts the

unobtrusive objective narration with subjective interjections like: "David le voit-il partir?" (63)

and "Quelque chose s'est brisé dans la voix du juif. Qu'est-ce qui est entré dans sa voix tout à

coup?" (68). Now in the film, rare angles make another presence perceptible – an "outside"

presence analogous to Deleuze's notion of the "hysteric"

> The hysteric is at the same time someone who imposes his or her presence, but also someone for whom things and beings are present, *too* present, and who attributes to every thing and communicates to every being this excessive presence. And in this excessive presence, the identity of an already-there and an always-delayed. Everywhere there is a presence acting directly on the nervous system, which makes representation, whether in place or at a distance, impossible (*Sensation* 50*)*.[58]

The outside/inside presence is the vibration that passes through even to the creator, the

characters, the walls, the animals, the spectator-reader – Duras as the Deleuzian "hysteric."

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[57] She was not to make *JLS* until two years later.
[58] I distinguish between a psychoanalytic understanding of hysteria. See Julia Kristeva's chapter on Duras, "La maladie de la douleur" in *Soleil noir: Dépression et Mélancolie*.

In this section we have seen how Duras attacks the "regard" and conventional cinematographic perception full on in the text-film pair *Abahn Sabana David/Jaune le Soleil*. She goes beyond meaning, beyond visual cinematographic representation. By challenging systems of representation and meaning, Duras contributes to the debate around the long-standing French tradition that prioritizes writing over reading, where the role of the author's writing is to pass on a meaning, a message to the reader.[59] Studies on Duras have focused on her writing. This chapter suggests that Duras is equally concerned with the act of "reading" or "viewing" in its perceptive-affective sense, both in her texts and films (as the title of the film *Agatha et les lectures illimitées* suggests). Instead of interpreting her writing and what it *means*, Duras invites us to consider the notion of how we read and perceive. To reiterate, if "[t]he work of art is a being in sensation and nothing else: it exists in itself," I argue that Duras's texts and films are experiential: "a material capture of the processual, rather than merely representational" (Kennedy 16). She deliberately confuses the spectator-reader, purposefully destabilizing our ability to grasp meaning. Duras re-works the traditional French writer-reader debate entirely. As we watch her films, we too are making the film – "le cinéma de Lol. V Stein."

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated how Duras challenges conventional means of cinematographic perception in her first two films, questions the act of seeing, and by refusing the conventional act of gazing, produces a new understanding of cinematographic perception that goes beyond and outside the perceiving figures on and off the screen. Her characters function as Deleuzian *figures*; they perceive in the form of affects, a process that questions the notions of

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[59] See Françoise Cusset. "Unthinkable Readers: The Political Blindspot of French Literature": "The inner axiology of literary studies in the United States, and to a lesser extent in the United Kingdom, focuses on the reading part of the process, while the writing part is stressed in France" (252).

and boundaries between the inside and the outside (both within and outside the perceptive universe of the film). These sensations are forces and intensities that flow between subjectivities that denies any notion point of view. Finally, we have seen how this Durasssian perception is carried out in both text and film. These outside forces ultimately demonstrate the relationship between text and film. I put forth a new way of considering these text-film pairs that will continue to be explored through this dissertation.

This chapter demonstrated that Duras is concerned with film as an art form that "sees." The paradox is that while we cannot "see" vision – vision is not representable – Duras "renders visible," renders *perceptible*. Perception is *in* the image. It also aims *outside* the image. At times the screen itself "sees." This chapter has established the foundation for the Durassian cinematographic apparatus that we will explore in more depth in Chapter 5. Duras "renders visible" through a process of perceptive-affective forces that the viewer witnesses transpiring in the figures on the screen but that also go outside of the film to reach the spectator-reader. I have proposed a new way of *experiencing* what is at work in her films; rather than simply "reading," "seeing," or "hearing" her films, Duras's films invite an aesthetic experience through the lens of an affective understanding of perception. With perception and affect becoming simultaneous, Duras's work allows for a non-rational understanding. By showing figures not *seeing* but *feeling*, Duras invites us to seek to go beyond signification and representation and towards a logic of sensation.[60] The next chapter will continue explore sensations and affect in more detail how Duras is concerned with film as an art form that *feels.*

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[60] In this vein, Royer is starting to break ground in this new arena of affect/sensation. See "Rencontres sensorielles: le film de Marguerite Duras et ses spectateurs" (Colloque International de MD, Cerisy, 2014); "Le spectateur face au bruissement sonore des films de Marguerite Duras et à ses images*"* (Colloque International de Marguerite Duras, Montréal, 2012).

Chapter 2
Weather, Atmosphere, and Affect in the Text-film Pairs of Duras:
A Logic of Sensation

"Quand le ciel bas et lourd pèse comme un
couvercle"
(Baudelaire, "Spleen")

"Les adaptateurs sont trop fidèles […] L'essentiel,
si l'on veut être fidèle c'est de conserver un ton"
*(*Duras, *L'Express*)
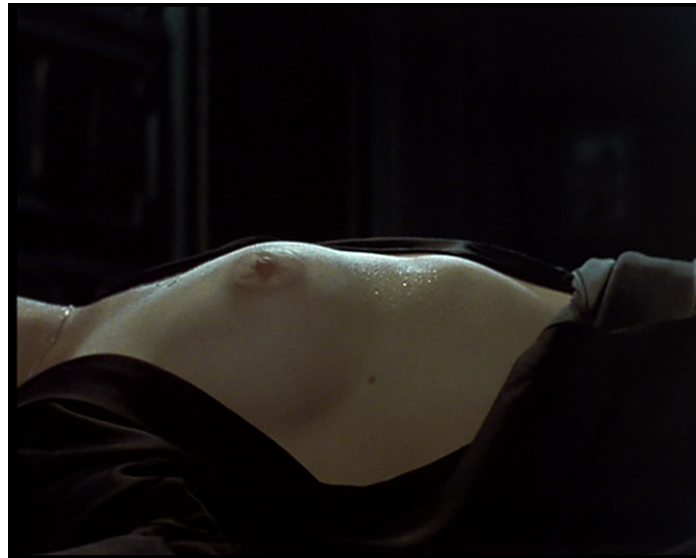
(*India Song*)

From the opening paragraph of her first novel, *Les Impudents (*1943), weather, or more precisely, atmospheric conditions, impose themselves as a fundamental element in Duras's œuvre:

> Maud ouvrit la fenêtre et la *rumeur* de la vallée *emplit* la chambre. Le *soleil* se couchait. Il laissait à sa suite de *gros nuages* qui s'*aggloméraient* et se précipitaient comme *aveuglé* vers un *gouffre de clarté* [...] *l'air chargé d'une fine brume ressemblait, glauque et dense, à de l'eau* (my emphasis, 13).

A seasoned reader of Duras will recognize her idiosyncratic dense, heavy, watery, atmosphere bathed in a blinding light. Sound, light, air, and sky merge, taking on a haptic, tangible quality, amassing into waves of clouds.

Often, heat oppresses characters, transporting them into a disillusioned, somnambulist state, carrying them into a Camusian absurdity (*Le marin de Gibraltar, Les petits chevaux de Tarquinia, Dix heures et demie du soir en été*). If it is not a hazy heat, the season appears ambiguous: a summer light in winter (*L'été 80, Agatha, Baxter Vera Baxter, L'Amour*) or a cold rain in summer (*La pluie d'été, Dix heures et demie du soir en été*). "Il n'y a pas de saisons dans ce pays-là," writes Duras in *L'Amant* (11). Due to the Durassian atmosphere, in the film *India Song,* the deserted Rothschild Palace situated in the Bois de Boulogne where the film was shot becomes an embassy in exotic, hot, humid, Calcutta: "L'ambassade de France aux Indes… Oui…Cette *rumeur*, le Gange…? Oui…Cette *lumière*?...La mousson…aucun vent…elle va crever vers le Bengale…Cette *poussière*…Calcutta central…Il y a comme une odeur de fleur…? LA LÈPRE" (my italics). It is therefore surprising that scholarship has understudied weather in Duras's work (and altogether ignored it in her cinema where weather plays a central, if not more important role than in her texts).[1]

Weather is directly linked to Duras's characteristic atmosphere, the Durassian imaginary – the constructed world of her texts and films. Critics have defined this space as undefined in terms of absence, using words like "respiration," "aspiration," "aérée," "vacuité," "virtual" (Alazet, Morgan, Ishaghpour, Mével, Borgomano, Beaulieu, Limam-

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[1] Currently, Kristi McKim's original study, *Cinema as Weather: Stylistic Screens and Atmospheric Change*, stands as the only monograph that takes weather in cinema as its subject (2013). Weather has been studied in literary criticism, romanticism in particular. See for example, Ross Chambers, *An Atmospherics of the City (*2015) and Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *Atmosphere, Mood, Stimmung: On a Hidden Potential of Literature* (2012). In Duras scholarship two articles take weather as their subject. In "La Météo et les sentiments," van Apeldoorn argues that the change of weather in *Dix heures et demie* corresponds to the characters' change in mood. Limam-Tnani also touches briefly on the exterior environment reflecting the psychological state of the characters (*Roman et Cinéma*). In his article "Habiter le temps qui s'écoule," Christophe Meurée links weather and time in *Dix heures et demie*. Like Apeldoorn and Limam-Tnani, Meurée sees weather as an exterior manifestation of the characters' desire. Michelle Royer also discusses sensations in terms of emotions in *L'Écran de la passion* but does not specifically discuss weather.

Tnani), but they have failed to see that if Duras's writing produces a "shadowy virtuality of its images [mental]" (Janice Morgan 39), it is also due to Duras's insistence on atmospheric conditions. In this chapter I refer to weather as the conditions of the atmosphere. The *OED* provides the following definitions of "atmosphere": "The mass of aeriform fluid surrounding the earth; the whole body of terrestrial air," "A gaseous envelope surrounding any substance," and "Surrounding mental or moral element, environment. Also, prevailing psychological climate; pervading tone or mood; characteristic mental or moral environment." The few critics who have analyzed weather in Duras's work have argued that it is an exterior manifestation in the surrounding environment of the characters' psychological, mental, state. Indeed, Duras's characters, as we will see, become absorbed or abstracted by the surrounding atmosphere. We also retain from these definitions the keywords "mass", "aeriform fluid," and "gaseous envelope." As the opening quotation demonstrated, Duras uses weather to rework the airy, immaterial qualities of atmosphere to produce an aesthetic experience (in the sense of perception by the senses, opposed to a rational experience) in the spectator-reader, to affect the spectator reader: "Ce renouveau de *l'air* respiré? […] Ah! Il doit y avoir au fond de la vallée un *torrent* où roulent encore les *eaux lumineuses de l'orage*." (my emphasis, Duras, *Dix heures et demie du soir en été* 121). Michelle Royer discusses sensations in terms of emotions in *L'Écran de la passion*, and her more recent work considers the haptic visuality and sensations of Duras's sounds and images in her films, but the critic does not address atmospheric conditions as they relate to a materiality of the image (both mental and physical).

Critics have also described the imaginary world evoked by Duras's films in the same terms as her texts – "la respiration particulière des films" and "la forme spécifique de l'aspiration" (Ishaghpour) – because like a reading, "the images as well as the words (like the writing on the page of a novel) are comparable to the negative that must be developed in each spectator's own dark chamber" (Guers-Villate 61-62). These critics thus draw a parallel between how we process words and how we process Duras's films; we must "read" Duras's films, they conclude. Yet in doing so they also have put in opposition the physical images of cinema and the spectator-reader's mental images stemming from reading words and generated by the film through the dissonance between sound and image. [2] In other words, the contrast – "la dualité irréconciliable" (Ishaghpour 250) – is between "monde" (perception as connected to an outside world) and the imaginary or "l'anti-monde," to borrow Sartre's term. [3] And their arbitration opts for the imaginary.

The issue at stake is the "visible" nature of Duras's images, both physical images – not only cinematographic images (on the screen), but also the image of the material text, the visual layout of the *mise-en-page* – and mental images produced in the spectator-reader: that is to say, the images produced on screen (physical) and off screen (mental); by the words on the page (mental) and by the words *on the page* (physical). On one hand cinema is more limited than its literary counterpart: once an image appears on the screen, its presence limits the possibilities for more mental images. Duras notably declared, "Le texte seul est porteur indéfini d'images" (*Le Camion* 75). Duras criticism thus stresses the

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[2] To be clear, the "imaginary" can be generated by words or by images.
[3] This chapter continues to develop the outside/inside negotiation introduced in Chapter 1 and further advanced in each subsequent chapter.

imaginary image produced by the spectator-reader (which is unknowable) to the detriment of the actual image on the screen.[4] On the other hand, Duras also declared:

> La mer est complètement écrite pour moi. En somme, oui, ça pose la question du cinéma, là, de l'image. On est toujours débordé par l'écrit, par le langage, quand on traduit en écrit, n'est-ce pas ce n'est pas possible de tout rendre, de rendre compte du tout. Alors que dans l'image vous écrivez tout à fait, tout l'espace filmé est écrit, c'est au centuple l'espace du livre. (*Les Lieux* 91)

…A picture is worth a thousand words. Ishaghpour further explains the dichotomy:

> Le mot renvoie à l'imaginaire, l'universel indéterminé, l'image au sensible, le particulier déterminé; aussi inséparable soient-ils l'un de l'autre, l'imaginaire et le sensible ne sont pas affectées de la même manière: l'image appauvrit l'imaginaire en le réduisant à une seule possibilité, tandis qu'en retour le mot ne parviendra jamais à épuiser complètement la richesse particulière de l'image (Ishaghpour 238).

To put it another way, for Ishaghpour image=sensible, words=imaginary. We appear to have reached the limits of each medium. On one hand there is the text and "lectures illimitées," to borrow from the title of Duras film, *Agatha et les lectures illimitées*. On the other there is the film and sensation, which are both hard to reproduce in words. But do the visible and imaginary have to be in opposition? This common impression of respiration and aspiration – both airy characterizations – rendered by Duras's texts and films strikes my attention, and why I argue it is precisely through atmosphere that we can analyze how Duras challenges this dichotomy. Instead of arguing in favor of one or the other, I suggest we look at how Duras manipulates the limits of each medium by using weather to rework the ontology of images.

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[4] Arnaud Rykner claims: "Chez Duras, l'image tue l'Image, la *vue* empêche la *vision*. L'œuvre rencontre ainsi une problématique très contemporaine qui confère à l'image visible (regard socialisé et culturel, régi par les lois du *studium* barthésien) la fonction d'occulter le réel. Pour reprendre les deux temps du titre de Georges Didi-Huberman, « ce que nous voyons » cache « ce qui nous regarde », le « visible » cache le « visuel »" (91-92).

I argue that the sensible (the cinematographic image) and the "imaginary" (the text) do not have to be opposed: "la sensation donne accès à un imaginaire," affirms Yann Mével (*Orients* 244). Sensations factor into Duras's atmosphere, and critics have linked weather to sensation in her texts. Christophe Meurée describes in his article, "Habiter le temps qui s'écoule," "l'orage se livre comme une expérience sensorielle à caractère synesthésique" (*Orients* 8). Mével similarly analyzes the synesthetic sensorial experience of "la peau de la pluie" in *L'Amant* (*Orients* 149). If weather produces Duras's characteristic imaginary world and if weather produces sensations, with the common denominator of weather, can we not define the "Durassian imaginary" by sensorial experience? Duras uses weather to create an atmosphere in both her texts and films. We will see how Duras's haptic, affective images, textured by atmospheric conditions, "make visible," which as we saw in chapter one, means to evoke or to make felt.

This chapter will de-m*i*stify the aerial realms of the Durassian imaginary and bring the palpable, affective force of Duras's images, hitherto neglected, to scholarly attention. I will look at how Duras constructs atmosphere through weather in the text-film pairs *L'Amour*, *La Femme du Gange*, and *Détruire dit-elle*, and discuss its effect on how the spectator-reader experiences her texts and films.[5] We will first investigate Duras's texts; Duras underscores atmospheric conditions to exploit the foggy conditions of the imagination, to create affect, and to reinforce sensation in the imaginary. Next, we will turn towards cinema and see how Duras films weather. Duras pushes the problem in cinema that there is an image on the screen and imposed on the spectator. Three aspects

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[5] The text *L'Amour* factors into the text-film pair *La Femme du Gange*. See Chapter 3.

surface in this development. First, weather functions to abstract both the mental image –
projected by the spectator-reader – and the physical image – projected on the screen.
Secondly, it abstracts – in the etymological sense of *ab-straire*, to pull away or to take out
– characters from their milieu and creates an indeterminate space.[6] Finally, Duras exploits
the double entendre of *temps,* linking weather and time directly to create an ambiguous,
vaporous image that blurs *le temps* and *le temps*, abstracting the narrative from
representation. As a result, the spectator-reader is left suspended in an in-between state
where the image is at once haptic and yet resists form, resists solidity, and remains
suspended in an undefined, gaseous state. The material image is dematerialized, while
sound and light – the immaterial – are materialized.

Method

      To negotiate between physical perception and the imaginary, I will be in dialogue
with Elaine Scarry's original article, "On Vivacity: the Difference between Daydreaming
and Imagining-Under-Authorial-Instruction." Scarry adopts an innovative approach to the
physical quality of literary images and their impact on the construction of the imaginary.

      Scarry's article sets in opposition sensory content of the visual arts and mimetic
content of verbal arts – imagination works in the latter case. The perceptual world is
solid, and objects in our imagination are gauzy and two-dimensional. If I close my eyes
and try to imagine this computer I am writing on, the computer loses its solidity, its
materiality. Yet, what is interesting – and this is what Scarry details – is how a text,
which lacks sensory content, gives rise to such vivid mental images in the mind of the

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[6] We will return to this space – a Deleuzian any-space-whatever – in Chapter 4.

reader. Literature can – while music, painting, theater, sculpture, and cinema cannot – render solidity to objects of the imagination.

In an example Scarry takes from *La Recherche*, "images somehow do acquire the vivacity of perceptual objects" ("Vivacity" 2). The images projected by the magic lantern on the walls of Marcel's room in Combray demonstrate how this process of solidifying objects of the imagination works: "overlaying the wall's opaqueness with their own 'impalpable iridescence' the figure of Golo, now moving in a jerky trot, now stopping quizzically, his form adaptable to any part of the wall" (5). It is by instructing the reader to move one surface over another, to project in its cinematic sense, or what is called kinetic occlusion (i.e., analogous to how cinema operates), that "the transparency of one works to verify the density of the other" (6). Thus, if up to now, the computer I imagined when closing my eyes floated in an undefined vaporous space, if I imagine, as a writer such as Proust would instruct me, a shadow passing over the computer, the computer's contours will become clear and it will duly solidify. Its image will be more vivid, and thus closer to the perceived image I find when I open my eyes and look at the computer.

Although Scarry's argument pertains only to the verbal arts, the ideas she puts forth can help us think through Duras's "authorial instructions" not only in her texts, but also in her images. Duras differs from Scarry's examples (Proust's description of his bedroom in Combray), but works with the same principles. In the first place, in her texts, Duras does not seek to make objects solid and vivid in the imagination as we would perceive of them from the external world. Instead, Duras's description reinforces the inherent airy, indistinct, two-dimensionality of the imagination. Duras's descriptions instruct a mimesis of touch, not of solid objects per se, but of substances we normally

think of as immaterial: i.e., light and air. Using the process through which Scarry details "solidity" is achieved, we can think through how, in a similar way, Duras "materializes" atmosphere. Moreover, Scarry notices that writers rely on this type of authorial instruction at moments when "the friction is very fragile" (12), when the reader has not yet formed a "vivid" mental image of the fictional world they wish to construct. The Durassian imaginary is founded upon this fragility; Duras manipulates this fragility to her own ends. While Scarry briefly addresses a reader's visual perception of the text – "immediate sensory content" (3) – I equally account for the visual aspect of Duras's texts. With Duras, we are dealing with both the perceptual world and the imaginary, with actual images and mental ones.

I will extend what Scarry says of the verbal arts to the cinematographic art. While Scarry speaks only of the verbal arts, the facts that Duras's films elicit the imaginary, as many critics have argued, and that Duras uses atmosphere in a similar way in both her texts and films to construct this particular form of "respiration"/"aspiration" invites us to consider how Duras instructs in her films as well. If a mental image can become "vivid" and "solid" (Scarry), is the opposite possible? Can an actual, "solid" image become imaginary? In the same way that Scarry can help us think though Duras's use of atmosphere in her texts, we can extend her ideas to think through Duras's similar concern with atmosphere in her films. Therefore, in a second place, I wish to transpose Scarry's use of "authorial instruction" to cinema and consider what the camera and images instruct the viewer to do. Duras also functions upon fragility; Duras manipulates the fragility of narration, and thus the construction of images: not only mental created ones but also the ones on screen. Her cinematic images tend towards abstraction or "de-solidification"

instead of solidification. Duras's cinema hence works in a parallel albeit inverse direction of Scarry's examples. In the same way that Duras's texts create a haptic, vaporous atmosphere which materializes light, the images in her films work to dematerialize the image through a haptic vaporous atmosphere which materializes light.

Indefinite Images

The Text

Like the opening citation from Duras's first novel, both *L'Amour* and *Détruire* begin with an insistence on atmospheric conditions.

L'Amour	*Détruire*
Un homme. Il est debout, il regarde: **la plage, la mer**. La mer est **basse, calme, la saison** est **indéfinie, le temps, lent**. L'homme se trouve sur un chemin de planches pose sur le sable. Il est habillé de vêtements **sombres.** Son visage est **distinct.** Ses yeux sont clairs. **Il ne bouge pas**. Il regarde. **La mer, la plage**, il y a des flaques, des **surfaces d'eau calme** isolées.[…] Le jour **baisse**. **La mer, le ciel, occupent l'espace**. Au loin, la **mer** est déjà **oxydée** par **la lumière obscure**, de même que le ciel. Trois, ils sont trois dans la **lumière obscure**, le réseau de **lenteur**.	**Temps couvert**. Les baies sont **fermées**. Du côté de la salle à manger où il se trouve, **on ne peut pas voir** le parc. Elle, oui, elle voit, elle regarde. Sa table touche le rebord des baies. A cause de la **lumière gênante**, elle plisse les yeux. Son regard va et vient.[…] Il a **plu** ce matin vers cinq heures. Aujourd'hui c'est dans un **temps mou** et **lourd** que **frappent** les balles.

A lack of clarity irradiates these two texts. Duras insists on atmospheric conditions, inundated in uncertainty by a vocabulary of obstructed vision, making it difficult for the reader to form a concrete, solid, mental image; instead, the reader conceives a scene of

indeterminacy, of haziness. "La saison est indéfinie," and very quickly, light loses its primary quality of illumination; it diminishes visibility becoming "lumière gênante," "sombre," "obscure," and soon, "on ne peut pas voir." The visual aspect of the text factors into the construction of this imaginary of indeterminacy due to the space left by the typographic blank materialized on the page, creating a visible textual horizon. The "page" becomes the "plage." Limam-Tnani confirms this tendency in Duras's writing: "La page apparaît-elle très aérée et 'l'écriture sans densité, rare, comme des herbes sur une p(l)age blanche' (61).
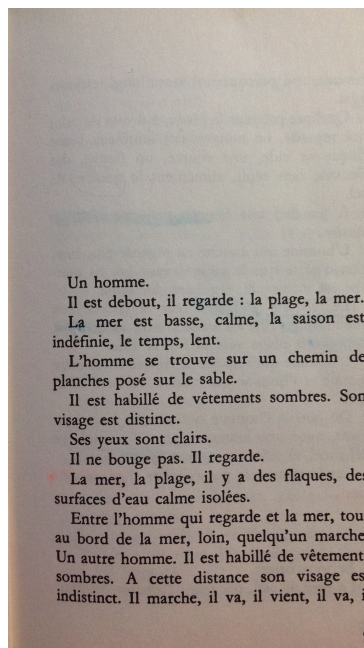
As if the atmosphere were pressing the text down to the bottom of the page, the feeling is: "lourd" like the saturated tennis balls; oppressive, the sea and sky occupying and enclosing space ("temps couvert") and time ("temps couvert"); static ("il ne bouge pas"), and the little movement there is is gangrened with "lenteur." The watery lexicon suggests a vaporized atmosphere, a Baudelarian, suffocating heaviness in the air (*Spleen et – image – liminale*?):

> Quand le ciel bas et *lourd pèse* comme un *couvercle*
> Sur l'esprit gémissant en proie aux longs ennuis,
> Et que de *l'horizon embrassant* tout le cercle
> Il nous verse un *jour noir* plus triste que les nuits (my emphasis).

At this point, Elaine Scarry's original article, "On Vivacity: the Difference between Daydreaming and Imagining-Under-Authorial-Instruction," can help shed light on what is at work in Duras's insistence on atmosphere.

A literary description is, according to Scarry, an instruction to form from a purely imaginary object (an object that could have a real referent but which is not present before me when I read the words written on the page from which I fabricate a mental image), an image which is closest to the perception that I can have of real objects. To be sure, Proust orients the Golo sequence around a reflection of habit, but this reflection would be, according to Scarry, an alibi to justify description, and in doing so provide the keys to the perceptual construction of mental images. Some writers do not hesitate to place at the forefront of their works descriptive sequences, sometimes excessively long (think Balzac), and in doing so entice the reader to look for symbols, indications of personality, sociological markers, etc. (i.e., realism), where description instructs us little on how to form mental images. Some writers seek to describe "real" objects whose properties are indeed solid when we actually perceive them visually.[7]

A writer like Duras, to the contrary, seeks to describe things that, already in our quotidian perception, have lost their solidity, their vivacity, and that mimic qualities of objects of the imagination, such as fog or haze that are by nature vaporous and imprecise:

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[7] Roland Barthes puts forth that realist writers may insert real objects in description (such as Félicité's barometer in Flaubert's *Un Cœur Simple*) to give an "effet de réel." These objects do not have any meaning or significance attached to them; their purpose is to exist as someone would have a barometer hanging on his/her wall, thus making the created world more "real" for the reader ("L'Effet de réel").

> Some physical objects have features that more closely approximate the
> phenomenology of imaginary objects than do others. In fact so true is this that we
> often speak of actual mist, actual gauze, filmy curtains, fog, and blurry rain as
> dreamlike […] and thus we may say that in fog the physical universe approaches
> the condition of the imagination (Scarry 12).

With a few words, the choice of certain objects over others can install at the heart of the text an atmosphere that the reader finds corresponding to the same conditions of the imagination, whose characteristics are neither vivid nor solid for either the perceived or imagined object of description.

I stress an essential point: in Duras's choice of describing atmospheric conditions above other objects, and particularly in describing these atmospheric conditions marked by a vaporous indistinctness, she does not seek to solidify already real, perceived solid objects in the spectator-reader's imagination (she doesn't even mention any); she doesn't make an effort either to *real*ize the already non-vivid atmospheric conditions that she chooses. Instead, Duras evokes and further vaporizes the ethereal, imprecise quality of the imagination itself. To put it another way, Duras does not attempt to supplement or improve upon the imagination's weaknesses; on the contrary, she accentuates these limitations, she works upon the lack of precision. Any object, then, that is inscribed in this vaporous environment is not solidified, but will find itself absorbed by the lack of visibility and lack of distinction.[8]

To demonstrate the process of absorption, let us return to the opening of *L'Amour*. Rare are the objects that in real quotidian perception are vivid as compared to the attention given to atmospheric objects; and when Duras does incorporate them it is certainly not to solidify them, such that the "chemin de planches" is only "posé sur le

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[8] I linger on this point because many critics have pointed out the airy, illusory image but have not addressed or explained the mechanics of what happens, and the process by which this particular image arises, its results, and how Duras differs from other writers. This process will factor in when we arrive at her cinema.

sable" (*L'Amour* 9). Its stability is undone, and the man that is found there loses his solid footing upon the indefinite, vacuous beach. His presence is vaporized into an airy floatation. In the same manner as the "chemin de planches," the wall against which the woman (who is understood to be Lol V. Stein, or rather her ghost) is supported, "délimite la plage vers sa fin, la ville." A wall is certainly a distinct element, but Duras's wall is in-between two indefinites and thus loses its delimitating quality. Whatever limit (the horizon) the text introduces, it is perpetually pulverized: when we think ourselves at the city's limit, there are "d'autres villes, d'autres encore [c'est]: la même" (*L'Amour* 13). If we are led to believe that the river delimits S. Thala, we fall to the same deception: "Ici, c'est S. Thala jusqu'à la rivière […] Après la rivière c'est encore S. Thala" (*L'Amour* 20-21). Finally, "l'homme" (Michael Richardson) "est habillé de vêtements sombres," just like "l'autre homme [Jacques Hold] […] est habillé de vêtements sombres." Their clothing does not serve to distinguish, but is "sombre" – a qualification that is not without consequences. Due to their clothing along with this opening ("le jour baisse" and "la mer est déjà oxydée par la lumière obscure, de même que le ciel"), these figures become absorbed into the indistinctness, absorbed into the confusion that takes over sea and sky where there is no longer a horizon, the same as Lol is "dans la lumière obscure, encastrée dans le mur," also absorbed by the overall confusion to the point that the wall, the sea, and sky are all the same.[9] Duras's atmosphere incrusts her figures into the abstracted environment. S. Thala is more than a "space," it is an "épaisseur" (*L'Amour* 21).

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[9] We will soon witness this transpire in the film *L'Homme Atlantique*.

Abstraction of figures

Scarry explains that it is important in writing to produce solidity because it is

impossible to create imaginary persons if one has not created a space for them, because in

the perceptible world, "space in itself seems to be nothing but a capacity or possibility for

extended beings, or bodies, to exist"; space is "only the consideration of a bare possibility

of body to exist" (7).[10] To explain, Scarry provides Sartre's example:

> Sartre complains that the image of the person in his daydreaming mind is
> extremely difficult to move. And, in fact, most of us will probably discover – if
> we try Sartre's experiment – that what he says is more or less true. But if we now
> put a sheet of ice under the image, it becomes much easier to move the man
> around: indeed, even if the figure is seated in a chair, he can be moved about with
> startling ease. The glide of the transparent over the surface of something else is, as
> was acknowledged earlier, only one way of achieving solidity (12).

Duras on the other hand, exploits the fragility of the image; in Duras, "la terre (stabilité)

est absente, le ciel présent," affirms Elena Ciacoiu (*Orients*, "La Construction imaginaire

de l'Orient" 113). "Le movement de la lumière" (*L'Amour* 14) over the surface of the

beach, does not solidify by way of the kinetic occlusion (Marcel's Golo magic lantern).

While Scarry would argue the surface of the beach gets highlighted, the Voyageur in

L'Amour suspends in the oxidized, washed-out atmosphere. As he looks onto the

indistinct beach and sea, his static figure blends into the atmosphere, disappears on the

beach. Limam-Tnani explains the fluidity between characters and their environment in

Duras's texts, an "identification spatiale":

> Un échange continuel et illimité s'établit entre les personnages et les lieux, de
> sorte que chacun d'eux devient le reflet de l'autre et renvoie immédiatement à
> l'autre, dans un mouvement impulsif programmé par le texte ou le film […] une
> continuité entre les êtres et l'espace et nous incitent à appréhender les corps et les
> lieux comme le prolongement l'un de l'autre […] Deux paradigmes se
> construisent parallèlement à l'intérieur de ces pages et traversent le chapitre dans

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[10] Scarry quotes John Locke. "Miscellaneous Papers," cited in *Locke, Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 155-56 n. 4.

> sa totalité : il s'agit du paradigme du corps et du paradigme de l'espace […] l'intériorité corporelle est explorée et décrite à la manière d'un espace…supprime le cloisonnement entre le dedans et le dehors (97; 108; 111).

This chapter argues that the character's dissolved figure into space is not just a psychological question, but also an aesthetic one. Much like Whilstler's tonal paintings, Duras generates a harmony between colors, textures, and forms. *Harmony in Blue and Silver* (1865) could serve as a visual illustration of the beginning of *L'Amour*:
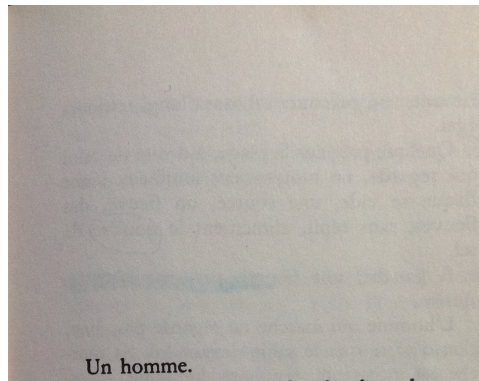
Harmony in Blue and Silver

La Femme du Gange

The figure's absorption by the environment is reinforced by the visual *mise-en-p[l]age* of the text itself; the sentences on the page are surrounded by an abundance of blank space. "Un homme" simply appears:

Un homme.

Here Duras makes an ingenious move. It is the "empty" space, air itself, that is *solidified*. In "L'Atelier de Giacometti," Jean Genet writes that blank spaces are used "non pour qu'ils prennent valeur significative, mais à seule fin de donner toute signification aux blancs. Les traits ne sont là qu'afin de donner *forme* et *solidité* aux blancs" (my emphasis 63). I would add to Genet that the blanks are also there in solid form and image as *atmosphere* in order to provoke an *affect* on the spectator-reader. The physical image of the blanks (atmosphere, spatial "épaisseur" solidified) provokes a sensorial experience (one that Ishaghpour reserved for cinema). Scarry writes, "through the mimesis of touch […] the 'solidity' of an imagined object is achieved" (5); "solidity relies on *touch* to provide access not just to material surfaces but to deep *haptic experience* as well" (my emphasis 7). With Duras, instead of objects, it is the atmosphere that is "solidified." Duras's images (physical and mental) produce deep haptic experience precisely by exploiting this gauziness of the imaginary: "solidity is difficult to reproduce in the imagination because it entails touch, the sense whose operation is most remote to us in imagining" (7). Duras capitalizes on the lack of "vivacity" of the imaginary image in her writing, and this exploitation is a kind of double negation: the aerial atmospheric language does not produce a "solid" imaginary image in the sense of Proust's Golo, but her painting of the atmosphere gives the mental image a haptic *texture*, a sensation – we

can *feel* the cold or heat, the water in the air, the haze, the mist. Put differently, Duras transcends the material and immaterial, the perceptible and the imagined. In a way, if anything is "solidified," Duras's tonal textured image materializes the gauzy matter of the imagination itself.

Many critics equate Duras's blanks with silence; for them, the blanks only have a "technical" function.[11] They also often endow the blanks with the cinematographic function of the black screen. For Maritchik, "Rédigé dans le style cinématographique, *L'Amour* est déjà un film parce que des blancs dans le texte 'remplacent' des noirs de l'écran: lorsque les personnages se déplacent ou disparaissent dans l'obscurité, comme sous le 'dictatum' d'une caméra narrative, un véritable espace blanc apparaît sur la page 39" (92). My reading of Duras's atmosphere suggests that something else is also going on; these blanks do not solely serve a technical function. The question is certainly a cinematic one: in her writing, Duras instructs the movement of light across a blank surface (the "mouvement de la lumière sur le sable"). Duras exploits the mechanisms by which the cinematographic apparatus produces images to her own ends, both in text and film. Duras uses atmospheric conditions such as a dense, foggy, watery air, and materializes darkness and light to construct a sensorial atmosphere, one that becomes *felt* and produces an affect, a tactile, haptic experience in the spectator-reader rather than a vivid mental image that seeks the "solidity" of the perceptible universe.

Haptic Haze in Duras's Cinema

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[11] Maritchik writes: "Des blancs ont un statut 'technique' non seulement dans le travail de M. Royer, mais aussi chez S. Gaspari" (92).

What, then, can be said for the actual cinematographic image – an image that, on the contrary of the literary, imaginary image, mimics the "real" image drawn from perceptual qualities: namely, solidity, vivacity? The cinematographic medium cannot but pose a problem for Duras (a problem, to be sure, that attracted her to the form). We will now see how Duras works out this absence of the fog of the imagination that the filmic image imposes: "l'image appauvrit l'imaginaire en le réduisant à une seule possibilité" (Ishaghpour 238).[12]

In her cinema, Duras's task is in fact that of Proust's, but in reverse: if Proust attempts to solidify the gauzy imaginary image, Duras must in a way de-solidify the material image. Duras's cinema is also based on the *fragility* of the image. Without cliché special effects or categorical "dreamlike" sequences, but only by the actual atmospheric conditions, Duras makes the "real," solid image gauzy, gray, "unreal." In essence, the image is never fully realized and instead remains imaginary. Yet, how can that be so in cinema, which presents an actual image on the screen? "The imagined object is not incidentally two-dimensional. Its two-dimensionality is what it is […] The perceptible world, in contrast, is not just incidentally but essentially solid" writes Scarry (5). If Duras's cinema invites the spectator-reader's participation and forces a "reading" of her films by the spectator's own created imaginary image, it is by visually manifesting the emphasis on atmospheric conditions that Duras explodes and virtualizes the image to

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[12] As previously stated, many critics have written on how Duras arrives at "lectures illimitées" (Duras, *Agatha et les lectures illimitées)* namely through the separation of sound and image and the black screen (Ishaghpour, Brown, Wert, Marie). Beaulieu affirms: "rendre l'imaginaire au spectateur […] Duras voudra se débarrasser de ces lourdes chaînes de l'apparat cinématographique classique pour enfin libérer l'imaginaire du spectateur (51). But Duras's genius resides in how she works through this problem precisely *with* the image itself as well, as we will now see.

create an affect, to make the imagination *feel*. To do so, Duras uses the same mechanisms that we previously witnessed in her texts.

The director prefers to film atmospheric conditions over other objects. In this sense, a landscape is a typical Durassian image. The panoramic quality that a landscape offers could show in one image a great number of objects, but not with Duras. Her landscapes are deserted, evacuated to a bare minimum of objects and people.[13] What remains is an atmosphere-landscape (this may be not only natural but also urban). Reduced to a bare minimum, what stand out are the atmospheric conditions.

Aurélia Vancouver   *La femme du Gange*

Agatha et les lectures illimitées

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[13] We must account for the one critical "solid" object in her films – the hotel building. But it is precisely the juxtaposition and contrast of these buildings with the airy atmosphere that is significant. We will see in the next chapter how it factors into the outside/inside relationship.

Furthermore, Duras chooses to film these atmospheric conditions at hours and seasons

that highlight these conditions: for example, crepuscular and twilight hours where the air

is saturated and dense, obscuring the horizon.[14] Water and vapor saturate the image.

Refraction and dispersion of light particles hinder distinguishing whether it is day or

night that approaches. In this light, we can reconsider the frequent puzzling jumps in time

in *L'Amour,* such as *"*Jour. Nuit," not as temporal ellipses, but as simultaneous, occurring

at these indistinguishable hours ("Et que de *l'horizon* embrassant *tout le cercle*/II nous

verse un *jour noir* […]"). These images can be best described using Duras's own words

taken from *L'Amant:*

> Le crépuscule tombait à la *même heure* toute l'année […] A la saison des pluies
> […] on ne voyait pas le ciel, il était pris dans un *brouillard uniforme* […] Je me
> souviens mal des jours. L'éclairement solaire ternissait les couleurs, écrasait […]
> Le bleu était plus loin que le ciel, il était derrière toutes les *épaisseurs* […] Le
> ciel, pour moi, c'était cette traînée de pure brillance qui traverse le bleu, cette
> *fusion froide* au-delà de toute couleur […] la lumière tombait du ciel dans des
> *cataractes* de pure transparence, dans des trombes de silence et d'immobilité.
> L'air était bleu, on le prenait dans *la main. Bleu.* Le ciel était cette *palpitation*
> continue de la brillance de la lumière […] chacune [night] pouvait être appelée *le*
> *temps* de sa *durée* (my emphasis 99-101).[15]

This beautiful passage brings together what I have been arguing of Duras's images both

on screen and off screen – the materialization of atmosphere and light which become

tangible through sensations, through the mimesis of *touch:* the sky's *cold* fusions of

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[14] Image-makers like this time of day precisely because the quality of the light is so good.
[15] Note how the "brouillard" is echoed by the narrator's foggy memory: "je me souviens mal."

"épaisseurs" palpitate in our hands; light liquefies into cataracts. All fuses into one uniform fog, which "pouvait être appel[é] le temps." Not only does Duras choose to emphasize weather over other description, like we saw in *L'Amour,* but she also represents these conditions in a manner that is as vaporous as possible – qualities that, as we said, are associated with the conditions of the imagination. Not satisfied with filming the ground and beach deserted and submerged in fog and haze, Duras films fog, haze, and clouds in close-up, filling and overflowing the screen.

Agatha   *Son nom de Venise dans Calcutta désert*
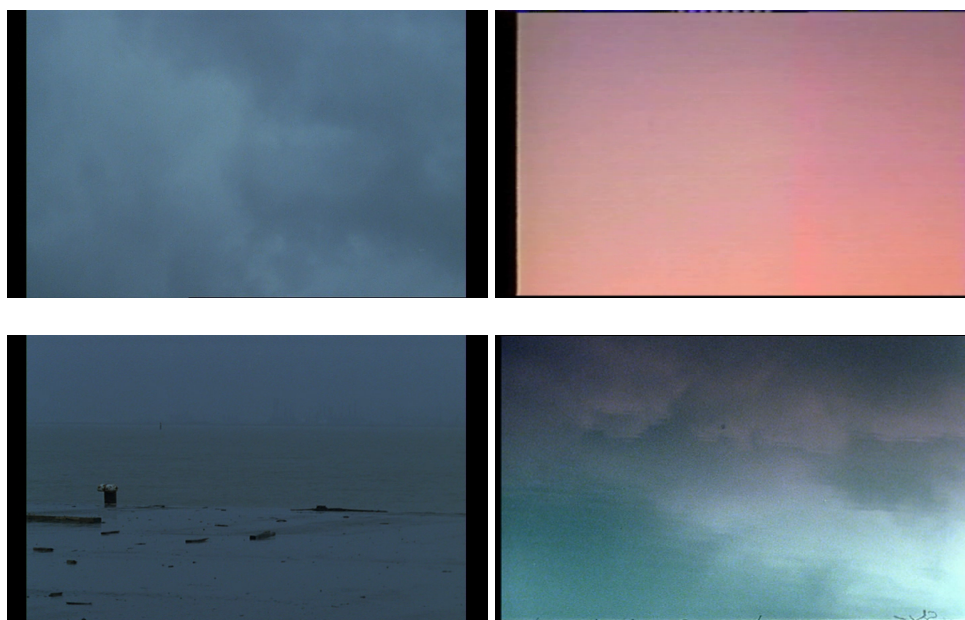
The camera frequently pans over the clouded sky and it becomes difficult to tell what is sky, what is water, or even if the image is upside down. Sea and sky merge and once again, "La terre (stabilité) est absente, le ciel présent" (Ciacoiu, *Orient(s)* 113). Although the spaces are deserted, the image is physically, materially saturated. Duras vaporizes the physical image, and perhaps in some cases, sublimates it. Indeterminate, these very physical images and objects approach the textured conditions of the imagination.

Abstraction of figures

When the filmmaker does provide a solid object instead of a liquid gaseous image, as we saw in *L'Amour*, Duras vaporizes these objects. Even the most concrete do not resist: in *Césarée* the statues are absorbed by a haze that also conquers the Louvre.

Césarée   *Le Navire Night*
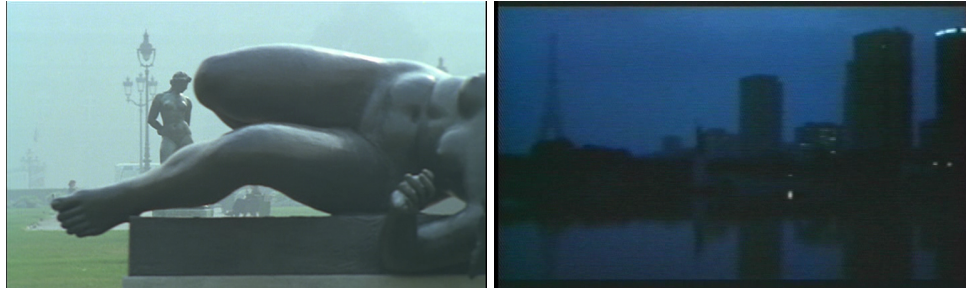
The camera pans horizontally over the park, flowing across the moist, glistening surface of the figures suspended in flight. In the first image, the figure overflows its base, appearing to fall. While Scarry would argue the massive hardness of the sculpture is emphasized by the mist brushing over it and glistening, here, the heavy statues, grounded on their pedestals, end up swimming, unanchored and weightlessly floating in the vapor. And the Louvre, entirely absorbed by the mist, is de-solidified and becomes completely two-dimensional.

Weather takes overly familiar locations such as Paris, the *Tuileries* garden, and the Eiffel Tower out of context. A misty white light veils the Louvre, transporting the spectator to the virtual "*terre de Césarée*." Coupled with the dissociation of sound and

image as the soundtrack discusses the far-off land of *Cesarée*, the oneiric nature of this atmosphere abstracts familiar objects from their referent: they acquire "another reality," they become *autre*, unfamiliar in relation to the reflexively conditioned familiar. Dissolved by vapor, the Louvre palace is no longer recognizable (is it even the Louvre?). The spectator-reader undergoes a feeling of *unheimlich*, in contrary to what is familiar, "heimlich."[16]

Nor are Duras's characters in her films exceptions to this process of absorption and abstraction, a "circulation fluide" according to Buignet, which "à la force de ces ondes […] imprègnent tout ce qu'elles traversent, entraînent une forme de désubstantialisation des lieux et des corps, les ouvrant à une certaine impersonnalité, les rendant interdépendants" (Buignet, *Orient(s)* 211). If the image is fragile, so too are the characters in this environment. Reinforced by atmospheric conditions that create an indeterminable space, the characters (including the voices), are taken out of and abstracted from their milieu. Buignet writes that the repetition of aquatic and atmospheric lexicon in Duras, such as "le fleuve, les fleuves, le Gange, le Mékong, les embouchures, le Delta, les îles, la mer, l'océan, le large, la plage, les eaux, la pluie, les pluies, l'orage, les orages, la mousson, la chaleur," renders bodies porous: "'La chaleur fait bouillir la tête.'[17] Les corps semblent rendus poreux par l'atmosphère dans laquelle ils baignent" (211). In this example from *Détruire dit-elle*, in their "vêtements sombres," the figures melt into the darkness that encircles them, their faces barely escaping complete absorption by the surrounding blackness.

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[16] I use the dictionary definition instead of the translation "the uncanny" to avoid unintended Freudian interpretations.

[17] *India Song* shot 31.
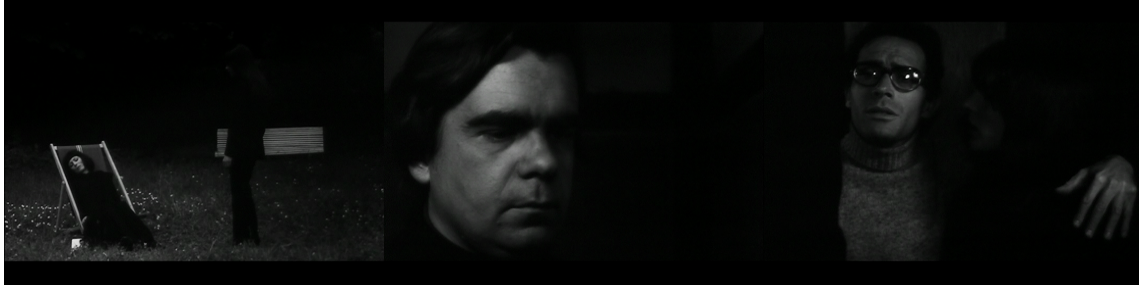
Limam-Tnani affirms this process in Duras's texts: "Les conjonctions espace-personnages, les connexions et interférences entre les lieux et les corps confèrent un pouvoir de projection et de mutation aux différents éléments qui composent l'œuvre" (131*)*. The black of their clothing becomes one with the technical darkness of the black-and-white image; in other words, the subject of the image is confused with the texture of the image (the filmed subject at the service of the film object?). The contours of forms become hazy and start to erase themselves, attesting to the fragility of the characters' identities. To return to Chapter one, their figure breaks down into sensation.

Yann Mevel writes of characters' sensorial experiences in *Un Barrage contre le Pacifique* and *L'Amant de la Chine du Nord*, "Les sensations témoignent ici de la difficulté du sujet à s'ancrer dans le monde […] expérience paradoxale, qui fusionne lumière et obscurité, brouille les limites du corps et de l'esprit 'l'enfant se détourne vers le dehors […] L'air tremble de chaleur'" (*Orient(s)* 162*)*. If Duras's atmosphere in her texts produces sensations in her characters, the same is also true for her images: these conditions produce a haptic image and sensorial experience in the spectator-reader. In the example below from *India Song,* Duras films the skin in close-up, and for an entire 28 seconds, the spectator watches the body's respiration as coagulated beads of sweat glisten on her skin.
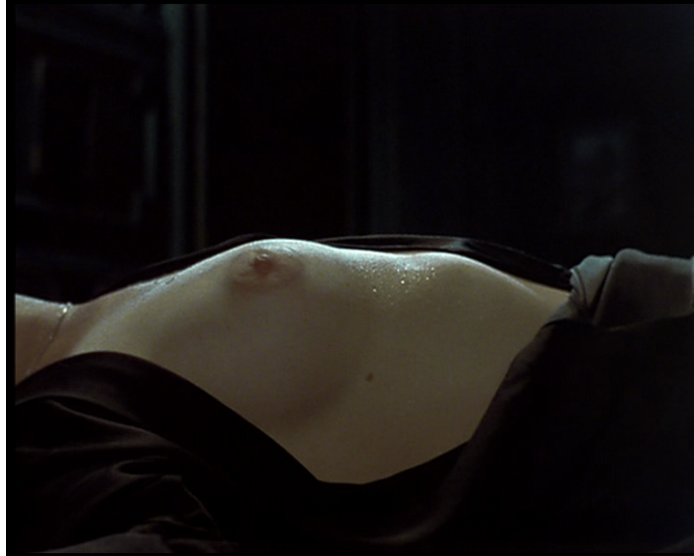
According to Deleuze, the close-up shot constitutes affect.[18] Here, the rest of the figure's body is absorbed into darkness, while what remains is one breathing and feeling organ; the figure *is* affect, sensation.[19]

If the indeterminate atmosphere and milieu aren't enough, the characters' disorientation and fragility is further reinforced by certain "angles rares," to use Metz's term. One image in *Détruire* stands out. In *contre-jour* and *contre-plongé*, Alissa's figure is placed between the camera and the sunlight, thus letting a series of light refractions appear on the lens (cf. Chapter 1). These luminous spots erase her face in the same way a painter's brush might end up deforming the human subject by applying over the charcoal-gray figure the echoed sky-gray of the background masked by the silhouette.

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[18] See Deleuze's chapter on *"affection-images"* in *L'Image-mouvement*.
[19] See Chapter one for more on Deleuze's *figure* in *Logique de la sensation*.

This brief image, completely out of context, shocks the spectator; sunlight strikes the camera, littering the image with spots of light that obfuscate Alissa's wavering figure. The atmospheric conditions absorb the characters, disorient the figures, and cause lapses in memory, in time. Similar to the narrator's foggy memory in *L'Amant* (previously quoted), Max Thor says, "Il y a ici quelque chose qui me trouble et qui me retient. Je reconnais mal ce qui m'arrive. Je ne cherche pas à comprendre tu vois, je ne cherche pas. Il s'agit peut-être d'un désir ancien de rêves d'enfance" (*Détruire*).[20] Janice Morgan observes three characteristics of Duras's writing: a static foreground situation and disturbing background event; atmosphere to convey the psychological dimension experienced by the characters; and the Durassian tempo ("Caméra-stylo"). Similarly, an image like this one suggests various phenomena. First, the sky regains its primary importance by the invasion of the light gray color of the background; Duras makes the force of these atmospheric conditions felt. Next, light – this invisible, impalpable element – solidifies itself upon the image; these splotches result in a texture of the light. Finally, this process instructs the character's erasure and the narrative potential for an object-subject relationship. In other words, the narrative aspect becomes less important to the

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[20] Curiously, after the narrator's initial setting of the atmosphere, he/she does not remark on it quite as much as at the beginning, reducing his/her description to "jour" and "soleil." The atmosphere seems to have been absorbed by the characters who henceforth evoke this uncertain atmosphere.

profit of the affective aspect of the images, and this privileged affect is best translated by the intervention of atmospheric conditions offered as texture.

Synesthetic Screens

With Duras, light always factors into the textured atmosphere: "lumière crépusculaire; bouillante et livide, bouillante et pâle qui véhiculent les sèmes de la chaleur (bouillante) et attribuent à la lumière ce caractère incertain qu'elle a au lever du jour et à la tombée de la nuit," describes Limam-Tnani (64). Duras textures light. She often uses the diffusing and diffracting power of dust to make light *felt*, and in doing so invites the spectator-reader to feel the touches of light like deposits of dust that we want to brush off our skin with a finger. In *Cesarée,* we witnessed how the sculptures were rendered illusory by the dusty white light that powders the Louvre; in this "terre de Césarée," "il ne reste que l'histoire/ Le tout…Cette poussière." In *Son Nom de Venise,* certain images evoke the opening passage of *Les Impudents* where the "rumeur" is metamorphosed into light and a dusty aquatic haze, while the spectator hears the voices whisper: "Cette *rumeur*, le Gange…? Cette *lumière*?...La mousson…aucun vent …Cette *poussière.*"

Son nom de Venise

Elena Ciacoiu describes how light functions in *L'Amant*: there is a correspondence between "une 'lumière éblouissante," "la lumière limoneuse du fleuve," and "cette lumière de brume et de chaleur" (114). She explains:

> Lumière adoucie, presque *caressante* qui est associée avec "une *surdité*" très légère aussi, un *brouillard* […] 'la somptueuse douceur' de la *peau* des amants (49). La lumière, et l'eau de la pluie dont le "parfum arrive dans la chambre" des amants, contribuent à la création d'une atmosphère intime, transformant la distance qui sépare les lecteurs de cet ailleurs en proximité (my emphasis *Orient(s)* 114).

If, as Scarry writes, "solidity relies on touch to provide access not just to material surfaces but to deep haptic experience as well," so too can we can *feel* light, the cold or heat, the water in the air, the haze, the mist. We feel the "peau de la pluie" (Duras, *L'Amant* 149). In the film *Aurélia Steiner Melbourne*, the voice of Duras narrates "la surface était purement illusoire, une chair sans peau, une déchirure ouverte, une soie d'air glacé," for which Michelle Royer concludes, "la mer devient alors le corps charnel," and the beaches, "stériles, fixes, désertiques, elles sont pure matière, texture" (*Écran* 92; 94).[21] Before such images we experience what Laura Marks calls a "haptic visuality," a tactile visioning whereby the viewer enters into contact with the surface texture of filmic images. Thus, these haptic images that do not follow a linear narrative create an embodied relationship between viewer and film (Marks, *The Skin of the Film* "Preface"). The textured atmosphere allows for an easy amorphous transfer and passing between bodies, between inside and outside, between states, between personas, times, seasons, milieu, and locations, abstracting narrative from representation.

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[21] Royer's analysis stops short on this point. Royer uses sensation or sensory experience in relationship to desire, the "manque" produced by the images creating desire: "Sensualité et désir se mêlent sur l'image du va-et-vient des vagues" (*Écran* 92).

From the very first image of *India Song,* the dusty haze, reinforced by the granular texture of the filmic image itself, functions to *affect* the spectator more than it does to narrate.

Duras prefaces in the text *India Song (IS): "*all references to physical, human and political geography are incorrect"; "Nothing moves, nothing except the fan, which moves with nightmare *unreality,"* from which Guers-Villate draws the conclusion that, "we no longer have, in *India Song,* the story of a particular man and woman meeting in a specific time and place as was the case in *Hiroshima* […] Whereas *Hiroshima* was rooted in reality, *India Song* is rooted in virtuality and the resulting atmosphere is one of ritualistic commemoration" (63). In light of what we have seen, I argue that it is not the atmosphere that *results*, but the climatic conditions themselves that *produce* the resulting atmosphere or affect.

These affective images can sometime take progressive control over the film and its narrative power. In *Nathalie Granger,* for example, the image becomes more and more abstracted as the film progresses: the fog becomes more and more dense (or is it the smoke from the fire that invades the screen in shot 61?).

Shot 21   *Shot 60*

Shot 210   *Shot 61*

As the mist and smoke thickens, the film becomes progressively non-representational.

Duras best realizes and culminates her atmospheric project in her final film,

L'Homme Atlantique.[22]

[22] I discuss this film more extensively in Chapter 5.

These images can be best explained using Duras's colored and textured writing:

> Devant moi il y a la mer. Aujourd'hui, elle est plate, lourde, de la densité du fer dirait-on et sans plus de forces pour se mouvoir. Les voiliers sont immobiles, scellées à la mer de fer (film *Aurélia Steiner (Vancouver)* page 139 in text).

> La mer devient transparente d'une luisance, d'une brillance d'organes nocturnes, on dirait non d'émeraude, mais voyez, non de phosphore, mais de chair. L'eau n'est plus un élément amorphe animé d'un bercement rassurant, elle devient un monde charnel et coloré (film page *Aurélia Steiner (Vancouver)* page 141 in text).

and finally,

> Le bleu était plus loin que le ciel, il était derrière toutes les épaisseurs […] Le ciel, pour moi, c'était cette traînée de pure brillance qui traverse le bleu, cette *fusion froide* au-delà de toute couleur […] la lumière tombait du ciel dans *des cataractes de pure transparence*, dans des trombes de *silence et d'immobilité*. L'air était bleu, on le *prenait dans la main*. *Bleu*. Le ciel était cette *palpitation* continue de la brillance de la lumière […] chacune [night] pouvait être appelée *le temps* de sa *durée* (my emphasis, *L'Amant* 99-101).

In the images of *HA*, the environment outside the window is completely hazy and blurry such that one wonders if the figure, as he gazes outside, would be completely vaporized were it not for the window separating outside from inside. The man's figure takes on a virtual nature, especially in the third image where his profile is literally absorbed by Blue, as suggested by the two words of the title "L'homme" and "Atlantique." Limam-Tnani describes this fluidity of substances:

> Les vitres, l'eau, les murs retrouvent leur nature spéculaire et collaborent par leur miroitements simultanés ou désaccordés à brouiller les éléments de l'image et à jeter le trouble chez le spectateur […] À travers la confusion des fenêtres et des miroirs, c'est le mécanisme même de la réflexion qui se trouve démantelé : la transparence ne se distingue plus du reflet, ni le dehors du dedans; pas d'origine à l'image, des images seulement, c'est-à-dire des formes et des traces (46-47).

But the same can also be said for Duras's black shots.

What happens when the image is abstracted to the point where it passes into the void, to the point where there is nothing left on the screen but Black? What is left if there

is no image? Is a black image even an image? Is a haptic visuality of a black screen even possible? The film *L'Homme Atlantique* provides answers to these questions. Here is what Duras has to say about the "noir Atlantique," what she calls the "noir couleur":

> Le noir peut se rayer, s'abîmer, comme l'image. Et ce qu'il a, que l'image n'a pas, c'est qu'il peut refléter les ombres qui passent devant lui, comme l'eau, la vitre. Ce qu'on voit parfois survenir sur le noir ce sont des lueurs, des formes, des gens qui passent dans la cabine, des appareils oubliés dans les fenêtres de la cabine, et des formes non identifiables, purement oculaires, surgies de l'immensité du repos des yeux par le noir, ou bien au contraire, de l'épouvante qui devrait venir à certains quand on leur propose de regarder sans leur proposer d'objet à voir (*Outside* 371-2).

The darkness of the black shots here is not a void but a material presence, like water, like windows; forms appear in it.[23] In *L'Homme Atlantique*, the spectator feels the material itself of the strip of film, the *pellicule,* from the latin root for skin (Marks, *The Skin of the Film)*. Its surface is littered with spots of light (recall the "rare angle" from *Détruire*). The materiality of the film made visible in this way, the black screen is no longer just darkness; *Black* is felt and makes itself felt. In the black shot, Duras literally "makes visible" the *hors-cadre* – the mechanisms of the cinematographic apparatus – of the film, of cinema. In the same way as Proust and his Golo, Duras exploits the "occlusion *ciné*tique" that we discussed – projecting over a surface her magic cinema.[24]

The filmed image has definitely passed into an imaginary realm, but the paradox is that in doing so, Duras instructs us to see the *actual* screen and cinema itself, like in these images below that mimic the screen in a theater, or the film strip that gradually unrolls (I superimpose two shots below to highlight what Duras represents in a single shot).

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[23] I fully develop Duras's black in Chapter 5.

[24] *L'Homme Atlantique* is a culmination of the Durassian characteristics we have addresses up to this point. We will return in more depth to all of these points – these virtual and haptic images and the cinematographic apparatus in Chapter 5.

"Je dirais […] Que c'est un homme, que c'est un film, que c'est un film de cinéma, et

peut-être même encore plus, plus encore une espèce de cinéma qu'un film donné, oui, et

peut-être le cinéma," responds Duras when asked the question, what is *L'Homme

Atlantique*? (*Yeux Verts* 224).

In addition to the textured images, Duras's voice produces sensation; her melodic

words flow together, allowing the mind to lose itself to the body. Michelle Royer

explains the use of rhyme in *India Song* in the following way:

> Odeur – fleur – cœur – pleure – meurt – fraîcheur – chaleur – peur – splendeur –
> heure – maigreur – pâleur – bonheur – horreur – malheur – couleur – douleur –
> douceur – lenteur – terreur – blancheur […] Dans *India Song* il n'y a plus de
> signifiés. Les mots tombent dans le silence, c'est pour cette raison que chaque
> mot résonne et fait surgir des échos […] Et puis, il y a aussi des points de
> suspension qui révèlent une sorte de malaise dans les paroles des personnages et
> font circuler silencieusement le leitmotiv prosodique en "eur" (*Écran* 111).

But where Royer sees silence ("*India Song* est un texte 'silencieux,' les dialogues se font

dans le silence autour d'eux, ils tombent dans le silence à cause des espaces blancs qui

envahissent des pages"), I "see" or feel the sound of the words. In *L'Homme Atlantique*,

repetitions intertwine in alliterations producing a hazy hum due to the fricative and

bilabial syllables, in addition to Duras's already granular, raspy voice:

> Ce que vous serez en train de voir là, ce que vous êtes en train de voir là, la *m*er,
> les *v*itres, le *m*ur, la *m*er derrière les *v*itres, les *v*itres dans les *m*urs […] *v*ous
> longerez les *v*itres et la *m*er, la *m*er derrière les *v*itres, les *v*itres dans les *m*urs, la
> *m*ouette, et le *v*ent […]

Like the exterior atmosphere that visually absorbs and materializes with the windows,

through Duras's *mur-mur*ing, the wall of the window becomes the sea in a flow of

substances, evocative of Proust's memorable Vivonne passage.[25] Mével explains the

synesthetic and haptic interaction between the visual and the auditory in *L'Amant*:

> L'interaction de l'auditif et du visuel est sans doute plus digne d'intérêt, 'Au bout de
> la rue, cette lumière jaune des lampes tempête, cette joie, ces appels, ces chats, ces
> rires, c'est en effet le fleuve. Le Mékong.' 'Les yeux fermés, elle touchait cette
> douceur, elle touchait la couleur dorée, la voix.' (*Orient(s)* 169*)*.

Through a synesthetic sublimation, equilibrium between outside and inside is obtained.

Maritchik argues that Duras's repetition, as exemplified in the "mur" citation, functions

to name in order to make the object visible:

> Il ne s'agit ni d'expliquer ni de décrire, mais de montrer et de nommer ; de plus,
> "lorsque l'objet est nommé […], le lecteur le voit." Ces conclusions rejoignent les
> arguments lancés par B. Alazet et S. Detlefsen. Les deux chercheurs concluent
> que l'utilisation et la répétition des phrases nominales ("Le sol" dans *Césarée*)
> contribuent à la "monstration," donnent à voir l'objet du discours, visent "l'effet

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[25] "Je m'amusais à regarder les carafes que les gamins mettaient dans la Vivonne pour prendre les petits poissons, et qui, remplies par la rivière, où elles sont à leur tour encloses, à la fois *"contenant"* aux flancs transparents comme une *eau durcie*, et *"contenu"* plongé dans un plus grand contenant de *cristal liquide* et courant, évoquaient l'image de la fraîcheur d'une façon plus délicieuse et plus irritante qu'elles n'eussent fait sur une table servie, en ne la montrant qu'en fuite dans cette *allitération perpétuelle* entre l'eau sans consistance où *les mains* ne pouvaient la capter et le verre sans fluidité où le palais ne pourrait en jouir […] J'en jetais dans la Vivonne des boulettes qui semblaient suffire pour y provoquer un phénomène de *sursaturation*, car *l'eau se solidifiait* aussitôt autour d'elles en grappes ovoïdes de têtards inanitiés qu'elle tenait sans doute jusque-là en dissolution, invisibles, tout près d'être en voie de *cristallisation*" (http://alarecherchedutempsperdu.org/marcelproust/039). We will return to this point in the next Chapter 3 on l'oscillation between exterior and interior space, between the "contenant" and "contenu."

de l'image au sens pictural du terme." Grâce aux répétitions le mot devient la chose imaginée, vue par le lecteur (93).[26]

I suggest the contrary: that it is a question of sensation and atmosphere which creates an affect precisely due to the repetition and blending of words. The first section demonstrated that Duras's vaporized writing *prevents* the production of a solid, vivid mental image. Coupled with the opaqueness of the image, the utterances themselves are materialized in the atmosphere, much like Rabelais' "paroles gelées" that Pantagruel and Panurge try to trap with their hands, and that, when they begin to thaw, provoke a destabilizing, nonsensical cacophonous sensation.

The film *Le Navire Night* also functions on this thawing of words that works in counterpoint with the image projected on the screen:

Je vous avais dit qu'il fallait voir.
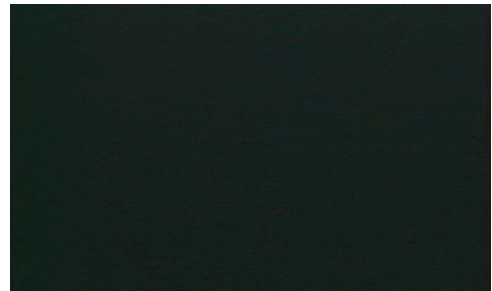
Que vers midi le silence qui se fait sur Athènes est tel…avec la chaleur qui grandit…La ville se vide à l'heure de la sieste, tout ferme comme la nuit…qu'il fallait assister à la montée du silence…

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[26] The critic continues to argue that the word becomes a word-image, "le texte vise à présentifier l'objet du discours, dans une volonté de faire voir qui prend la forme d'un constat, actualisé par les formes nominales ou elliptiques. Sans doute, la répétition d'un mot peut-elle favoriser l'épanouissement d'une image mentale" (9).

Je me souviens, je vous ai dit: peu à peu on se demande ce qui arrive, cette disparition du son avec la monté du soleil…
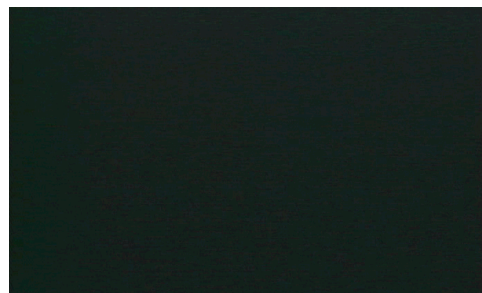
C'est là que cette peur arrive. Pas celle de la nuit, mais comme une peur de la nuit dans la clarté. Le silence de la nuit en plein soleil. Le soleil au zénith et le silence de la nuit. Le silence au centre du ciel et le silence de la nuit.

Here, the alliteration of [s] hisses the heavy Athenian heat: "Le *s*ilence de la nuit en plein *s*oleil. Le *s*oleil au *z*énith et le *s*ilence de la nuit. Le *s*ilence au *c*entre du *c*iel et le *s*ilence de la nuit." The physical presence of the image (even if a black screen) actually serves another function. Instead of representing the narrative as we saw above, the poetic alliteration and friction creates a melodic, harmonic counterpoint through the rhythm of the image. Elena Ciacoiu describes how sound functions in *L'Amant* to evoke the sensible: the synesthetic experience of

> 'Bruits mêlés aux odeurs' affranchie de tout souci d'organisation verbale, déliée de toute recherche d'une articulation logique entre les phrases, et refusant toute forme de caractérisation qui alourdit l'évocation des éléments constitutifs du paysage ; l'écriture dénude ici les mots qui les désigne et tente ainsi ; dans la résonnance du silence, d'en faire retenir la puissance imaginaire et sensible, non plus *représentant* mais *présentant* le paysage dans une forme d'évidence qui s'impose […] L'émotion très physique qui saisit l'enfant s'inscrit dans la construction rythmique et sonore du texte (original emphasis, *Orient(s)* 129*)*.

The dissonance between heard and seen is there to make an *impression* on the spectator-reader, and it is through this dissonance that sound and image harmonize. The voices discuss the heat while the images are chilly. The spectator finds him/herself in an uneasy

in-between state. Impressions take over a primary function, while the sense or meaning of the images and words continues to shift and metamorphose according to the atmospheric conditions: silence becomes sun, sun becomes night, and night noon. The "silence" infiltrates the image as the image emanates silence. Through the rhythmic and poetic sentences and the subtle linking of "seeing" and "hearing" (or lack thereof), the atmospheric conditions described and represented on the screen subconsciously merge into one aesthetic experience, one "affective-sense" for the spectator-reader. To summarize, on one hand, Duras primarily shows atmospheric conditions and makes them felt. On the other hand, Duras asks the spectator to superimpose impressions and images – to pass over the image projected on the screen the sensation that the image produces, the two coinciding in the imaginary. Instead of signifying, instead of representing, the granular voices, aural alliterations, and uncorresponding shifts in meaning fuction to produce affect. Duras abstracts narrative from re-presentation in order to instead return to the *present* – the temporal present of the spectator-reader.

Atmosphere then makes *present* conditions possible. Ishaghpour affirms, "'il fait un mauvais été à Paris, de la brume,' dit Duras pour conclure. Irruption du hors-champ dans le film qui marque la distance par rapport au mythe et renvoie au présent, terre de toute expérience mystique" (292). As we saw in *L'Homme Atlantique*, the suggestion of an *hors-champ* seeks "outside" the spatio-temporal confinements to return to the present of the spectator-reader. Duras states in *L'Amant de la Chine du Nord*, "je vois ces images comme un dehors qu'aurait le film, un 'pays,' celui de ces gens du livre, la contrée du film" (243). For Elena Ciacoiu, it constitues an "altérité spatiale comme cadre extérieur de l'action, topographie, végétation, bestiaire et lumière; altérité temporelle en tant que

refuge dans le passé" (*Orient(s)* 110). Christophe Meurée also confirms the

"spatialisation de la temporalité": " Duras s'ingénie à nous donner à voir le temps, à le

matérialiser autant que faire se peut, afin de pouvoir l'habiter, c'est-à-dire de glisser d'un

espace virtuel à un autre" ("Habiter le temps qui s'écoule" 56). Because Duras's weather

blurs *le temps* and *le temps,* her atmospheric images make time visible:[27]

> Il s'agirait, selon Deleuze, d'une nouvelle image-temps, dans laquelle la visibilité ne serait possible qu'en vertu d'une disjonction entre le visuel et le sonore. La fêlure originelle venue du dehors se trouve désormais réintroduite dans le dedans de l'image, qui proposerait ainsi une forme de visibilité de l'invisible lui-même (Ropars-Wuilleumier, "Pensée du dehors" 17).

What the spectator-reader is left with in the end is an image based on feeling, not

necessarily an image that was evoked or represented by the writing and words

themselves, but moreso the *impression* of the image, of the *feeling* that the writing

evoked. Duras is not concerned with "representation," to make something sensed appear

again (Aristotle, "De anima"), but *presentation*. In this manner, the spectator-reader

becomes active not only because he must contribute to the meaning in interpreting or

reading in between the lines, but active in the sense that he/she is constructing an image

based on impressions that could turn out to be entirely different from the ones left by the

writing itself, something that was not there at all - imagined, or entirely confected. In this

way, Duras passes beyond sense and logic into the realm of intuition. The spectator-

reader's aesthetic experience is double: he/she experiences an "imaginary" that he in part

constructed. The spectator-reader becomes spectator-reader-creator, and this experience,

this act of creation calls upon the logic of sensation. In filming weather, Duras at once

abstracts the image and renders it both tangible and textured. In the end, the spectator-

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[27] See Chapter 4.

reader is left suspended in this in-between state where the image, while being haptic, resists taking form, defies solidity, and remains in an undefined, gaseous state. In translating the vaporized atmosphere in her images and not the narrative, Duras evokes and produces sensations, thus conserving the essential aspect of her work, the tone, which is invested in atmospheric conditions.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have seen how Duras insists on weather in her texts and films in order to explore the larger question of the nature of the "image." Scholarship on Duras's films has focused on meaning, on naming, on technical functions of Duras's images that serve these ends. I hope to have demonstrated however, building upon Chapter 1, that through the lens of affect created by the atmosphere, Duras's form *resists* meaning, resists the figurative, and instead invites us to interrogate how we are affected by the form and content of her images – both physical and mental – and reflect on the sensorial, aesthetic experience: moving toward the *figural*. Weather functions in Duras to produce sensations that allow for a material flow of substances between exterior and interior: abstracting the image (physical and imaginary), abstracting figures and their environment, and abstracting time. The next chapter on narrative layering delves deeper into Duras's cinematographic spatio-temporal problematic, and further explores the outside/inside, container/contained relationship.

Chapter 3
Hors-champ? Hors-cadre? Durassian Space-Time
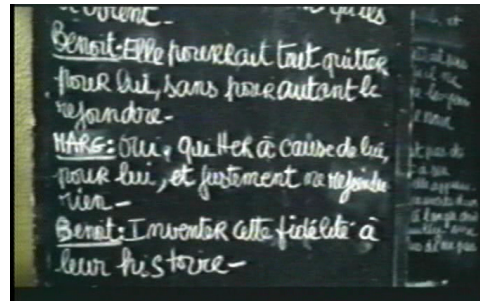
In cinematographic terms, the *hors-cadre* refers to elements that do not exist in the diegetic universe of the film, namely, the systems of production: for example, the camera team, the lights, the physical script. The *hors-cadre* constitutes an outside world of the film. What, then, if this "Outside" is inserted into the film?[1] In Marguerite Duras's *Le Navire Night (NN)*, this is precisely what happens. The seventh shot of the film opens with a disorienting image; what seems to be a mirror reflects the outside night sky. A production light radiates its white light onto an open door. Putting these pieces together, the open door on the left and the mirror reflecting the outside, the spectator can conclude that the camera must be placed at an entrance.

The camera then begins to travel backwards, over the walls and windows of a house while the voice of Marguerite Duras sets the stage for the story she announces is about to be told in this film: "C'est un samedi…l'homme du film, il travaille…et puis, voici./ La

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[1] Duras, Marguerite. *Outside*. Paris: P.O.L., 1984. Print.

[l'histoire] voici."[2] A silence follows and then, "On est en 1973" coincides with the emergence of light, story-like music, indicating with this move that the diegetic universe of the film has now entered into the narrative being told by the voice. The camera continues to travel left to the rhythm of the music, when, through another doorway the spectator discovers a man playing a piano, and most probably this very music. He, too, is illuminated by a tall, blinding production light.

These elements from the extradiegetic world – the outside – have inserted themselves into the diegesis—into the narrative world of the film. Extradiegetic music, hors-champ, and hors-cadre are now definitively intradiegetic.

Similarly, the film, *Le Navire Night,* inserts itself into the text, *Le Navire Night,* published the same year as the film (1979): " - Vous aviez parlé d'un film aussi. / - Oui…le film…le film n'a pas été tourné…" (78). And the text also incurs in the film: "le texte des voix dit les yeux fermés." This peculiar inclusion of the *hors-cadre* and referral to the other medium – extreme outsides of the text and film – is more than a mere wink *à la* New Wave to remind the spectator that what he/she is watching (or reading) is a film. This connundrum begs us to re-investigate not only the structure of the two *Navire*

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[2] In typical Duras fashion, the referent "la" is ambiguous in this quotation. Only through a careful reading of this paragraph in the text can one know that the article in "la voici" refers back to a previous mention of "l'histoire" – a clarification that only invites more questions: "l'histoire" of what? Of the text, of the film, of these people's story in general?

*Night*s, one of Duras's most complicated text-film pairs, but also the reciprocal

relationship between text and film in Duras's work.

In *Figures III*, Genette classifies four different possible narrative moods. First, the

narrator is a character in the story and gives internal analysis of events: the main

character tells the story. Second, the narrator is a character in the story, but gives outside

observation of events: a minor character tells the main character's story. Third, the

narrator is not a character in the story but gives internal analysis of events: an analytic or

omniscient author tells the story. Fourth, the narrator is not a character in the story and

gives outside observation of events: the author tells the story as observer. With Duras it is

impossible to tell into which category her "narrator"(s) fits in her texts and films.[3] "Qui

parle? Qui est ce narrateur? Quel rôle joue-t-il dans cette histoire? Quelle incidence

prolonge-t-il dans l'histoire à résoudre?" asks Vogt of Duras's *Le Ravissement* (156). The

scholar asserts: "Le narrateur s'efface […] personnages et narrateurs s'abreuvent de la

virginité du texte et de l'image creusée par le brouillage des instances narratrices (179).

Ropars-Wuilleumier characterizes Duras's narrator(s) as a "personnage anthropomorphe"

and "la narration, figure abstraite et polymorphe" (*Écraniques* 27). Narrative threads are

woven together and fold in on one anther like multiple melodies of a musical partition.

Duras is trying to find a means to go beyond the spatio-temporal limits of text and

film. To do so, Duras's text-film pairs are multi-layered, not only by the "instances

narratrices" or temporal layers, but also by visual layers in her films through geographic

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[3] This includes the ambiguous Voices of her films. In conventional cinema voice-overs narrate or comment on what transpires in the film. Chalonge writes about *LFDG*, the film where Duras fully experiments with the separation of what Duras calls the "film des voix" and the "film de l'image": "Par leur dialgoue, les deux Voix reproduisent la situation de communication qui, au cinéma, couple la voix *off* avec le spectateur. Silencieux et passif, celui qui d'ordinaire suit patiemment les explications d'une voix-guide est cette fois […] 'dérouté' […] C'est que Duras n'a pas voulu que les Voix soient celles du silmple 'commentaire' ; au contraire, par des échanges qui 'troublent' le 'déroulement' paisible du film, elles se distinguent de banales voix *off*" (*Pléiade II*, "Notice" 1854).

stratification and in her texts through their layout. In her text-film pairs, Duras complicates the notions of *in* and *off,* intradiegetic or extradiegetic components: "Le narrateur et le narrataire sont des intrus dans l'univers diégétique. Le personnage l'est dans l'univers extradiégétique" (Vogt 178). As this chapter will demonstrate, although Duras may present images that insist on a separation between outside and inside space, "ce qui se passe au-dehors du cinéma rejoint ce qui se passe au dedans" (Vogt 179).

This chapter is divided into two parts. As the layers in narrative become increasingly complicated, I will first (re)consider the complex layering of two of Duras's most intricate text-film pairs: *La femme du Gange* (*LFDG),* and *Le Navire Night*.[4] Understanding how Duras structures her work is critical to understanding Duras's project of representing space and time.[5] Duras's works are structured by multiple layers of narrative, only to be confounded so that levels separate or exterior to one another insert themselves into others: "à la frontière de représentations produites à la fois par le personnage, le narrateur, l'auteur voire le spectateur […] [l]es différents niveaux de narration sont intégrés les uns dans les autres" (Vogt 180). The second part of this chapter therefore considers the oscillation between interior and exterior in *LFDG* and *Le Navire Night*. In places where, at an initial, surface glance it appears as if a clear separation is established between interior and exterior in the text and/or film, we will see that this distinction disappears. Duras establishes three types of separations: separations between

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[4] I say reconsider because other critics have performed structural analysis of Duras's narratives. See Alazet's *Écrire l'effacement* on *Le Navire Night*, also detailed below. To my knowledge no critic has performed a dissection of the narrative layering of *LFDG,* and certainly not one that takes into account both text and film together. Critics have considered the structure of Duras's "re-writings" as cyclical or a mise-en-abyme (see Limam-Tnani and Ropars-Wuilleumier).

[5] Limam-Tnani offers a similar method of analysis for her reading of Duras's texts *Hiroshima mon amour* and *Le Vice-Consul:* "Nous considérons successivement le fonctionnement de la structure, de l'espace et du temps dans le roman et dans le film de l'auteur, cherchant, à travers cette analyse, à dégager la vision qui domine et sustente sa création" (14).

interior and exterior visual space, between sound and image, and finally between the film's narrative and the text's narrative. Studying the interdependent relationship that appears between the text and the film will allow us to propose a new understating of the spatio-temporal construction of Duras's narratives, one which takes into account the "outside" presence that each medium introduces into the other: "Le narrateur, le narrataire, sont aussi des lecteurs, des spectateurs. Le hors-champ devient l'Autre présent, la matérialité absente de la figure d'énallage du personnage principal. Le contenu est invisible, présent des représentations mentales, substitut verbal de l'image du contenant à l'écran" (Vogt 178). I show how independent parts "touch," when sound and image, text and film connect like a musical partition when multiple melodies collide. The more distant the parts, the more dissociation there is between "outside" and "inside," the more they are blurred and confounded as the spectator-reader pieces them together. Instead of a separation between inside and outside, space functions in a Klein bottle-like manner where it is impossible to distinguish container and contained. [6]

I. Spatio-temporal layering: *La Femme du Gange*[7]

La femme du Gange, first a film then a text, was shot from a thirty-page script inspired by the text *L'Amour* – a text that Duras originally conceived as a film project.[8]

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[6] Here is how one can be constructed:
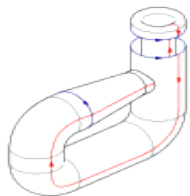
[7] In an attempt to be as clear as possible, when I cite *LFDG,* the citation is true for both text and film, unless I cite images or if I specify text or film.

[8] Indeed *L'Amour* must factor into the text-film pair *LFDG;* Duras calls *LFDG* a "film du livre" (Chalonge, "Notice" 1853). *LFDG* was published in the same book as *Nathalie Granger, Nathalie Granger* suivie de

La femme du Gange falls into what is called Duras's "*India Cycle*": *Le Ravissement de Lol. V. Stein* (*roman*, 1964), *Le Vice-Consul* (*roman*, 1965), *L'Amour* (text, 1971), *La Femme du Gange, (*text [1973] and film [1974]), *India Song* (*texte, théâtre, film* 1975), *India Song* (film, 1975), and finally *Son nom de Venise dans Calcutta Désert* (film, 1976).[9] The cycle centers on the principal figures of Lol V. Stein, Michael Richardson, and Anne-Marie Stretter and the original event – the critical *bal* at S. Thala where Lol undergoes a "ravissement" watching her fiancé, Michael Richardson, dance with Anne-Marie Stretter. The narratives of the "India Cycle" are structured around the retelling or reconstruction of this cataclysmic event.

The film

I identify 11 spatio-temporal levels in the film. These layers are first divided between what Duras calls "le film de l'image" and "le film des Voix." The director's voice prefaces the film over a black screen:

> *La femme du Gange* c'est en quelque sorte deux films. Parallèlement au film qui se déroule en image se déroule un film purement vocal non accompagné d'image. Pour éviter toute méprise nous voudrions prévenir le spectateur que les deux voix *off* des femmes n'appartiennent aucunement aux personnages qui apparaissent dans l'image. On peut ajouter que les personnages qui sont vus sur l'image ignorent totalement l'existence des deux femmes dont l'histoire se manifeste uniquement par le dialogue qu'elles entretiennent.

Although Duras insists that the voices and the image are completely autonomous, the first words uttered by the voices, "Quelqu'un le voit?/ Oui. *Ces* hommes de la plage./ Qui

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La femme du Gange, originally in the collection "Blanche" printed in 1973. See Chalonge "Notice" for *L'Amour* (1823), and "Note sur le texte" for both *Nathalie Granger* and *La Femme du Gange* (*Pléiade II* 1847-1851).
[9] See Florence de Chalonge's critical study of the "India Cycle," *Espace et récit de fiction: le **cycle indien** de Marguerite Duras*.

encore?/ Cette femme [shot 5, cut to shot 6] habillée de noir," coincide perfectly with the

images.[10]

Shot 5   Shot 6

Shot 7

In typical Duras fashion, the film opens with a puzzle regarding the act of seeing: a voice

asks, "Quelqu'un *le* voit?" "Le" seems to refer to the man walking in the image, which

means the voices must "see" him. The question strangely appears then to refer to the

voices themselves. Are they watching action take place or are they narrating a film

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[10] Duras further insists in the text's "Avant-Propos": "La Femme du Gange, *c'est deux films: le* film de l'image *et le* film des Voix. […] *Maintenant les deux films sont là, d'une totale autonomie, liés seulement, mais inexorablement, par une concomitance matérielle: ils sont tous les deux écrits sur la même pellicule et se voient en même temps* […] ELLES SE PARLENT. ELLES IGNORENT LA PRÉSENCE DU SPECTATEUR. *Il ne s'agit donc pas d'un* commentaire. *Si les Voix sont à S. Thala comme les autres voix du film, elles ne sont liées à elles d'aucune manière. Ce ne sont pas non plus des Voix off, dans l'acception habituelle du mot: elles ne facilitent pas le déroulement du film, au contraire, elles l'entravent, le troublent. On ne devrait pas les raccrocher au film de l'image* […] *Et aussi elles auraient pu sans doute arriver vers un tout autre film que celui-ci. A condition qu'il fût vacant, pauvre, fait avec des trous"* (1431).

playing before them?[11] Duras defies the spectator to trust what he/she hears and sees. She explains the Voices' function in the text: "elles ne facilitent pas le déroulement du film, au contraire, elle l'entravent, le troublent" (*LFDG* 103). When the voice says, "Cette femme" the film cuts to an image of a woman who is, as the voice utters, "habillée de noir." The voices now appear to control the film's *déroulement.* The coincidence of sound track and image track questions the truth value of the director's preface and questions the reliability not only of the voices' function as narrators, but also this authorial narrative voice that speaks to the viewer, voiced by the writer-filmmaker herself, so that "we do not believe Marguerite Duras's statement about *La femme du Gange*: the two images would be linked only by a 'concomitance matérielle,' both written on the same film stock and being seen at the same time," as Deleuze describes in his chapter on *La femme du Gange* in the *Time-image* (253). Deleuze continues:

> It is a humorous or provocative pronouncement, which moreover proclaims what it claims to deny, because it attributes to each of the two images the power of the other. The heautonomy of the two images does not suppress but reinforces the audio-visual nature of the image, it strengthens the victory of the audio-visual (253).[12]

"Le film de l'image" and "le film des voix" must not be confused, however, with soundtrack and image track. To be sure, the soundtrack is composed of other elements: a woman hums, hammering is heard in the background, and dialogue occurs between the characters in the "film de l'image." In fact, sound and image coincide prior to the fifth

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[11] See Chapter 1 and compare with my analysis of the opening passage of *Détruire dit-elle*. For more on Duras's voices see Ropars-Wuilleumier's studies and Van Wert's, "Sound and Voice in a Closed Room." For more specifically on the Voices in *La Femme du Gange*, see Chalonge's "Notice" in the *Pléiade*.

[12] In *Afterimages of Gilles Deleuze's Film Philosophy*, David Rodowick provides the following note for Deleuze's use of the word, "heautonomy": "*Heautonomy* is Kant's neologism to denote the complex self-legislation of aesthetic reflective judgment, and reflection in general […] Deleuze uses the term *heautonomous* to denote the mutually distinctive and reflective relationship between visual and sound images in time-image cinema" (69).

shot through a transfer of movement and sound. During the opening credits (the title of the film written in black over a yellowed blank page) a hammering sound begins.

After the credits, the hammering shifts to the cadence of the man's steps, which in turn flows to the rhythm of a woman humming. This incessant beating pervades over the film as the voices and characters seek to rebuild the past – this mythical ball at S. Thala evoked by the voices and contained by this beach and looming hotel. Duras does not reveal the source of this beating, and the characters seem to be unaware of its disturbing presence. Or are they (we will come back to this shortly)?

To summarize, six narrative situations can already be distinguished in the first few minutes of the film, taking into consideration the separation between the "film des voix" and the "film de l'image":

Bande-Image
1) Duras's presence as director: presentation of the film; images exterior to the "film de l'image"'s diegesis
2) "Le film de l'image:" action happening in the images (a man walks, people watch)

Bande-Sonore
(1 bis.) Duras as director establishes the conditions of the film
3) "Le film des voix": voices discuss either what is happening in the image or other actions that the spectator does not see.
4) Other extra/intradiegetic sound: the hammering, humming, and music[13]

Audio-Visual ensemble

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[13] The sole instrumental music of the film is in fact the same piano music of Duras's previous film, *Nathalie Granger*, whose text is published co-materially with *La Femme du Gange*.

5) The situations of coincidence between the voices and the image, connections that are produced both in and by the film ("Cette femme [cut] habillée de noir] and by the spectator-reader.
6) Dialogue and interaction between the figures

Now, within the "film de l'image" and the "film des voix" we can distinguish further layers.

"Le film de l'image"

LFDG (1973), Duras's fourth film, is 100 minutes in length and made up of only 152 fixed shots/frames. Duras specifies in the text's opening, "il n'y a rigoureusement aucun mouvement de caméra." Duras casts her usual actors: Catherine Sellers (the woman in black who corresponds to Tatiana, and the woman in red, Michael Richardson's wife); Nicole Hiss (Lol); Dionys Mascolo (Michael Richardson); and Gérard Depardieu ("Le Fou").[14] The shots are fixed and long, the filmed space empty, and the action very little. The film's minimal style thus places an acute importance on the frames' composition (angles, lines of movement, lighting, the direction of the figures' gazes). The action, or rather, the movements that take place, mainly consists of characters looking and walking with an empty gaze as they enter and exit the frame. Now and again they address one another to inquire about who and where they are, what is happening. They have no memory: the characters repeat "nous n'avons pas de mémoire." The

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[14] The characters' names are not given but suggested by the narration. Lol is named only at the end and Michael Richardson's name is only evoked a few times (the figures are not named at all in *L'Amour*). A woman in red and her two children come to take Michael Richardson away from S. Thala. The figure of Anne-Marie Stretter is typically linked with the color red and thus an illusion to this character. Yet, if we follow the chronology of the "India Cycle" it would be impossible for this woman to be Anne-Marie as it is suggested that she dies at the end of *Le Vice-Consul*. Then again, we can consider all of the figures in the "India Cycle" after *Le Vice-Consul* as re-incarnated phantoms.

"action" takes place in two main locations: outside, on the deserted beach of S. Thala, and inside the hotel. [15]

Within the images alone I distinguish three temporal layers. Let us begin with the past and present of S. Thala (that we can call levels 2.1 and 2.2 respectively). We could consider the action that takes place in the film (the characters talking and walking) as in the present of the film's narration. And this shot, for example, of the remains of a party evokes the "bal mort de S. Thala."

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[15] The actual site is Trouville and the well-known Roches Noires hotel, famous for its illustrious *hall* – an inspiration for the site of Balbec of Marcel Proust's *Recherche*. Indeed, Duras seems to wink at Proust at various moments (See Chalonge's "Notice). For more on Proust and Duras, see Stéphane Chaudier, "Duras et Proust: une archéologie poétique."

Yet "past" and "present" are not as clear-cut upon closer investigation. [16] Van Wert

asserts:

> The same, unchanged "present" visuals become the "past." Duras's use of repeated
> visuals enhances the easy slippages between time frames: walking down the corridor,
> looking up at the hotel from outside, walking on the beach. Duras even allows an
> ironic protest on the part of the visuals ("Sound and Voice" 6).

For example, certain sequences of shots that are book-ended by images of empty space

cast doubt on the figures' *presence*. This series of three vacant shots bear witness to no

one being on the beach (an intuition that the voices confirm: "Il y a des gens on

dirait…Non…c'est seulement le sable…la mer…Ce n'est rien…")

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[16] Duras's comments on the film confirm the problematic notion of time: "Quand se passe ce récit? Sans
doute dans un futur, proche ou lointain, on ne sait pas […] Ces quatres personnages, appelés *les fous*, sont
sans doute les derniers transfuges d'un monde mort" (*Pléiade* 1513). Chalonge adds in the "Notice" "*La
Femme du Gange* réutilise 'l'argument' que Duras résume comme la 'coïncidence' de la rencontre 'd'une
femme connue avant, dans un AVANT indéfini', et de 'la mort'" (1853).
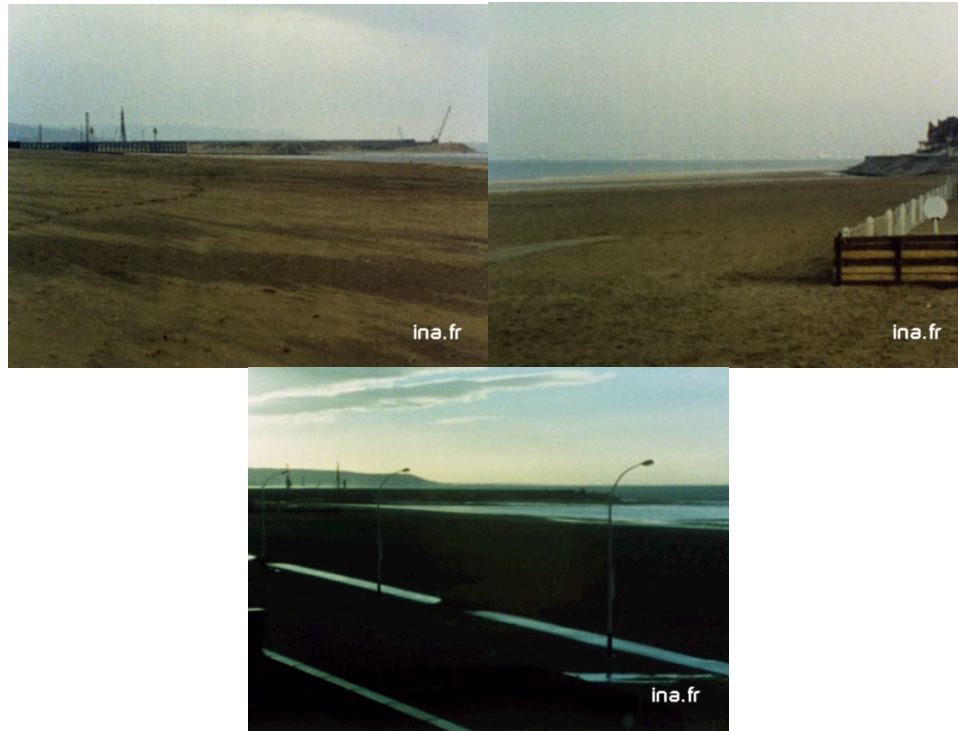
According to André Bazin, "Quand un personnage sort du champ de la caméra, nous admettons qu'il échappe au champ visuel, mais il continue d'exister, identique à lui-même, en un autre point du décor, qui nous est caché" ("Qu'est-ce que le cinéma" 160). Yet in the voided space of *LFDG*'s fixed frames, the spectator cannot be certain of his/her existence; exiting the frame means passing into the void, a notion more closely echoed by Louis Seuguin who challenges Bazin. In "Louis Seguin et la question du hors-champ: une cartographie de l'espace du cinéma," Leo Ramseyer explains:

> Plus l'espace se rapproche du cadre (entendu comme limite), plus il se contorsionne, se cambre et se replie sur lui-même […] les personnages naissent et meurent dans un incessant mouvement de résurrection. Les personnages, les décors, la nature s'enfoncent et émergent de ce néant […] Lorsque ce qui est vu disparaît, il n'est pas mis en réserve dans les limbes d'un quelconque hors-champ, il est privé d'existence, de présence, il meurt, il s'engouffre dans l'épaisseur insaisissable de cette zone frontière (9).

These shots negate the figures' "*actual,*" physical presence. Duras writes: "A leur tour ils disparaissent du champ. L'endroit est redevenu vide *comme avant* l'arrivée du Voyageur.

Ce vide, facteur de liaison, restera la charnière selon laquelle, sans cesse, s'articulera le film" (Duras's italics, *LFDG* 1440). Duras initiates a game of presence and absence. We cannot be sure if when "un personnage sort du champ de la caméra […] il continue d'exister." The figures, then, suspended in the gap, are both there and not "*là*," to use Duras's ubiquitous spatio-temporal adverb.[17] Whether we call it "past" or "present" the vacant images evoke a situation independent from the shots with figures in them.

A further "outside" presence is suggested (layer 2.3).[18] Sometimes the camera lingers on nothing but the ocean, sometimes on an overall view of the city at night. This outside presence is also that of the few "rare angles" of the film (we will return to this point later).

These images, contrasted with the long, empty shots strike the spectator and make him/her aware of another outside presence, analogous to what Gilles Deleuze considers "un dehors plus lointain" (*L'Image-temps* 363).[19] According to Pascal Bonitzer, "le gros

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[17] For more on the ontological reprocussions of this adverb, see Philippe Pansiot's forthcoming article, "L'Être et le « là » dans *Le Ravissement de Lol V. Stein*."

[18] The *Pléiade* "Notice" confirms this perceived *difference*: "En réalité, il semble bien que Trouville ait été le sujet premier du film […] la commande d'un documentaire portant sur la ville avait été faite au printemps à l'auteur par le service de la recherche de l'O.R.T.F. Mais du 'Trouville document,' du 'Trouville bondé', vivant du tourisme et des loisirs, Duras est revenue à son univers, et c'est le scénario d'un 'Trouville vidé,' faisant passer le sujet 'de la sociologie de la foule à la poésie du vide,' que reçoit un Schaeffer déconcerté" (1852).

[19] I return to the insertion of photographs shortly (photos of the actress, Nicole Hiss, young); their importance is underscored by Duras's commentary on them in the text. Incidentally, the inclusion of these

plan introduit une différance absolue" (31). It constitues an "arrière-monde de la perspective" (*Décadrages* 58).

The images' form and content are inextricably linked. The film's re*build*ing of the past is evoked by Duras's insistence on physical architecture, making up a third of the film's images. The beach, divided by sand, water, and horizon represent the coexisting and enfolding of layers of time.

photos is even more interesting in hindsight when we think of the notorious "image-absolue" that opens *L'Amant* – the *absent* photograph that was never taken: "je pense souvent à cette image que je suis seule à voir et dont je n'ai jamais parlé" (*Pléiade III* 1456). Vogt interprets the image as belonging "au monde intérieur de l'auteur." See Philippe Pansiot's entry in the *Dictionnaire Duras* (forthcoming) on photography.

These "stratigraphic" images exemplify the words of Gilles Deleuze in the *Time-Image:*

> It is as if, speech having withdrawn from the image to become founding act, the image, for its part, raised the foundations of space, the 'strata', those silent powers of before or after speech, before or after man. The visual image becomes *archaeological, stratigraphic, tectonic*. Not that we are taken back to prehistory (there is an archaeology of the present), but to the deserted layers of our time which bury our own phantoms; to the lacunary layers which we juxtaposed according to variable orientations and connections (*Time-Image* 243).

As the *temps* (time) and *temps* (weather) change, so too do the horizons between sand, water and sky. Walking across these strata imprinted on the sand – "l'espace des sables," or S. Thala, in which they are trapped– the figures perform a physical hopscotching in time.[20]

The *film de l'image* does not *represent* the story that the Voices recount. Instead, the images and voices evoke a dead past – "le bal mort de S. Thala" – that lingers in the present space-time. Having accounted for the images separately, we can now consider the layers of the soundtrack and the "film des voix."

"Le film des voix"

The narrative layering of the voices' dialogue is more clearly definable than for the images. I distinguish four.

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[20] In this regard, we can consider these images and the S. Thala beach as a Deleuzian "plane of immanence," immanent meaning present *within*.

3.1 The voices comment on what is happening in the "film de l'image" (despite Duras's statement in the preface to the text that "il ne s'agit donc pas d'un *commentaire*"): "Quelqu'un le voit […] Cette femme habillée de noir."

3.2 The present situation between the two voices; they discuss themselves: "Ce matin il y avait un chien mort"; "Comme je vous desire"; "Venez près de moi" "Comme il fait froid… J'ai fait du feu… Approchez vous."

3.3. The voices reconstruct the past, Lol's story and the ball of S. Thala: "Où s'étaient-ils rencontrés? J'ai oublié/ Un matin. Au tennis. Ici à S. Thala […] Puis il y a eu ce bal […] Ce bal…Quel amour c'était…"

3.4. Finally memories – or Memory – invade and take over the voices.[21] For example the statements, "Comme vous êtes belle… habillée de blanc… quelle surprise […] Comme je vous aime" and "Quel âge avez-vous/Dix huit ans" evoke Michael Richardson and Lol. The voices even acklowledge: "Quelquefois aussi, je me souviens de choses que je n'ai pas connues […] Moi aussi, il me vient quelquefois une autre mémoire;" "il y avait d'autres…" Chalonge clarifies:

> Effectivement, comprendre, plus ou moins, ou se souvenir, sans se rappeler l'avoir su, c'est de cette manière que les Voix procèdent pour prendre peu à peu possesion d'un passé qui n'est pas le leur. Si elles y accèdent, c'est parce que le lieu a chez Duras l'étonnant pouvoir de contenir les faits qu'il a abrités […] Il faut dire qu'à S. Thala, tous ont plus on moins 'perdu la mémoire' (1854).

Furthermore, Chalonge notes that in the original script Duras had written after "il y avait d'autres," "Il y avait Michael Richardson… puis Anne-Marie Stretter, et Lol V. Stein…

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[21] This layer of memory is further confirmed by Duras in the "Résumé du film": "Les voix *off* essaient de se souvenir du passé. Des noms reviennent à la surface de la mémoire. Quelques renseignements sur les diverses existences vécues à S. Thala également. Les voix parlent aussi du présent, d'un chien mort [..] Elles évoquent aussi l'amour des amants de S. Thala. De tous les amants […] Ce mélange forme un tout, devient le passé de tous et celui de chacun à la fois: le passé même. Et la mémoire des amours devient celle de l'amour même… Bien entendu, il est problable que certains spectateurs découvriront à travers ce film l'allégorie d'une autre mémoire, celle d'une société [..] Vidés de la mémoire de cette ancienne société ou n'en conservant que des traces de mémoire […] les fous des sables attendent sans doute celle à venir (1514).

et Tatiana Karl, et Élisabeth Alione, et tous les autres, le Vice-consul, ces fêtes, ces

bals…Ah…" The critic concludes, "Comme emportée par son élan, Duras mêlait dans

cette version aux personnages du "cycle indien" ceux de *Détruire*" (1865). What is past,

present, or future? We cannot know: "Quand se passe ce récit? Sans doute dans un futur,

proche ou lointain, on ne sait pas" (Duras, "Résumé" 1513). The layers of the film

detailed above are also represented in the text, *LFDG,* published after the film, but as we

will see these layers become further confused.

The Text

From the outset, the text appears to be a published script; "Générique" heads the

second page. But this is not a conventional film script. [22] A reader who has read her other

texts such as *L'Amour* or *Détruire* will recognize on the third page a familiar style very

similar to these two texts (analyzed in the previous chapter). Nor is this text a published

script that Duras wrote prior to shooting the film. Duras adds in elements that are not

found in the film. For example, the "Avant-Propos" as written in the text does not follow

exactly what Duras's voice says in the film. The text states: "*Le film dit*: le film des Voix

n'a pas été prévu. Il est arrivé une fois le film de l'image monté, terminé. Il est arrivé de

loin, d'où? Il s'est jeté sur l'image, a pénétré dans son lieu, est resté" (my underline,

LFDG 1431). My previous transcription of the spoken "Avant-Propos" in the film shows

that the film does not say what the text claims "*Le film dit.*" Chalonge explains in the

"Notice":

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[22] As previously stated, our concern is not generic description or nomination of Duras's writing style, whether it be called "écriture cinématographique," or other. Chalonge details the reception of the book's publication in the "Notice": "La critique commente peu toutefois l'association des deux œuvres, sinon pour célébrer, comme Raymond Jean dans *Le Monde*, l'avènement chez Duras d'une véritable "écriture cinématographique" (1852). With *LFDG* "écriture cinématographique" could mean many things.

> Le livre pour sa part, ne se contente pas d'être l'un de ces scénarios dont les indications scéniques, à la manière des didascalies au théâtre, soutiennent le dialogue. Il augmente le film. En caractères plus petits, un commentaire de l'auteur y figure. Tout comme le dialogue des Voix, il convoque le passé en prenant appui tantôt sur l'image (celle de la ville, de la nuit), tantôt sur le son (sur un cri, un rire ou un silence appuyé), pour faire émerger à l'horizon de S. Thala les mondes défunts du *Ravissement de Lol V. Stein* (1855).

Ropars-Wuilleumier argues that it is a reading of her film that Duras proposes (*Ecraniques* 63). Yet a "reading" of her film is just one layer of narration. Duras not only comments, but she also proposes a viewing of her film, espousing the spectator-reader's point of view, thus adding yet another layer of commentary – that of a spectator-reader of the text-film in what Ropars-Wuilleumier considers a "système d'écriture-lecture qui assure la circulation défective de ses textes" (*Ecraniques* 63).[23] Let us see how this transpires.

Just from the visual layout of the book, the spectator-reader remarks a narrative stratification physically executed on the page.

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[23] Julie Beaulieu has argued for Duras's *L'Amant de la Chine du Nord* that this style represents not an "incursion du filmique dans le littéraire" but a "prolifération du filmique dans le littéraire": "Elle prépare, dans le texte, le film à faire […] ce genre de détails, qui participe davantage d'un style littéraire, ponctue une écriture consacrée à l'image, à ce qu'il faut voir. Elle est d'ailleurs rédigée dans un style beaucoup plus près du cinéma […] Ce n'est donc pas tant l'incursion du filmique dans le littéraire qui prime ici, mais plutôt une prolifération du filmique dans le littéraire. Ceci m'amène à penser que l'image - le filmique - a toujours été présente dans les écrits […] pour ensuite en arriver à 'avaler' presque tout entier le littéraire […] c'est-à-dire une pénétration de plus en plus forte et décisive du visuel, et ce faisant du filmique, sans pour autant que la voix, la parole durassienne, perde de son importance" (137). Dissatisfied with Jean Jacques Annaud's *L'Amant*, Duras wrote *L'Amant de la Chine du Nord* to serve as a scenario for how the film *L'Amant*, should have been filmed.
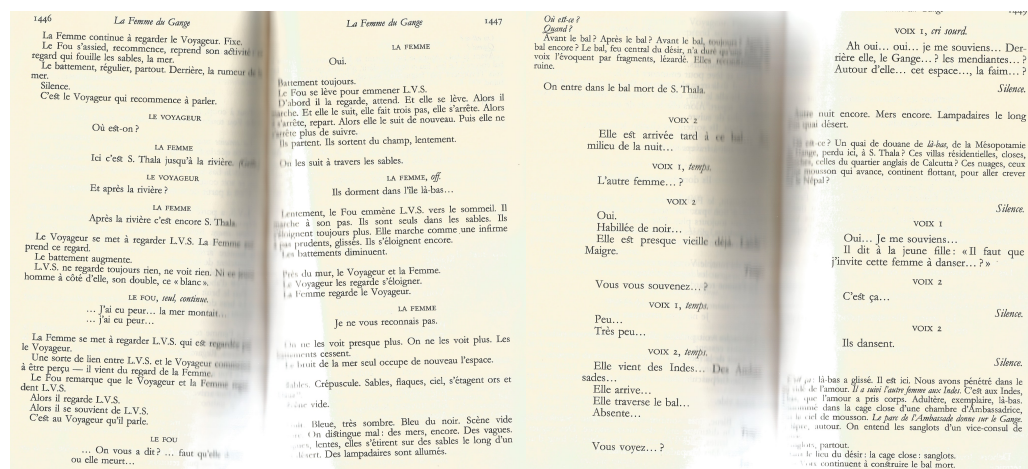
We discern first, the voices' dialogue, written in large font (corresponding to layer 3 of the film). Second, the characters' dialogue also appears, indented (cf. layer 6). Third, written in the same typeset as the characters' dialogue, there is description of action: "Près du mur, le Voyageur et la Femme"; "On ne les voit presque plus. On ne les voit plus. Les battements cessent. Le bruit de la mer seul occupe de nouveau l'espace./ [blank space] Sables. Crépuscule. Sables, flaques, ciel, s'étagent ors et bleus./ Scène vide." Then, a peculiar change occurs. The spectator reads a series of questions in smaller font and sometimes in italics, "*Où est-ce ?/ Quand ?/* Avant le bal ? Après le bal ?" and further down, "*C'est ça* : là-bas a glissé. Il est ici […] On entend les sanglots d'un vice-consul de France" (1438).

Like the different "moi" of Proust's narrator in *La Recherche,* these different levels of enunciation represent the "multiplicité qu'on porte en soi," as Duras explains of the Voices in *LFDG* (*Les Lieux* 102).[24] Multiple voices can be distinguished. First, Duras writes the text as a film script (cf. layer 1). These could be stage directions in italic font, for example, "*off*" "*temps*," "silence" "*La femme montre le sol d'un geste large*" But as

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[24] In her dissertation, "Performativité dans l'œuvre de Duras entre littérature et cinéma: l'image sonore," Vogt analyzes "la construction fragmentée du moi de l'auteur" in Duras's œuvre (14).

we already saw, the text is to be read as a *récit* with a narrator: "On ne les voit. Presque plus. On ne les voit plus." Duras describes and comments on what is happening in the images as if from the point on view of the camera —i.e. if the camera were to talk, this is what it would say (cf. layer 2)." Julie Beaulieu confirms for *L'Amant de la Chine du Nord* that Duras's nous or "on" is the camera (123). However, prescribing this voice to the camera's objective point of view does not always hold true.

This camera's "voice" does not simply present action objectively, but it also espouses the point of view of the spectator-reader (which includes Duras) and of the voices, thus adding a layer of commentary. A "spectator" that distinguishes itself from the camera must be added (layer 8). After the "Avant-Propos," the next page titled, "Le Film des Voix," confirms, "On les voit yeux fermés: elles sont dans cet espace noir – périmètre illimité – entre l'image et <u>son spectateur</u>, perchées, formes blanches mais détournées, visages inaccessibles tournés vers l'image regardée, d'une autonomie marine, irradiante./ NOUS IGNORENT./ NE SAVENT PAS ETRE ENTENDUES" (my underline). Duras inserts the spectator-reader, which includes herself, even emphasizing in capital letters "NOUS IGNORENT" (1431).

Yet designating an ambiguous spectator-reader poses a problem as this role resembles Voice's function, for they too are spectators of the film: "Par leur dialogue, les deux Voix reproduisent la situation de communication qui, au cinéma, couple la voix off avec le spectateur" (Chalonge, "Notice" 1854). Yet again, they also have an authorial position: "les voix écrivent l'histoire, la réécrivent, l'inventent, d'où le lieu de l'écriture dans l'acte de parole (Vogt 158)." In other words, Duras creates a position that espouses spectator, reader, and creator. She declares in an interview that the Voices, "c'est moi

[…] les deux femmes, mais moi je ne suis pas plurielle" (*Les Lieux* 102). Therefore at times the perspectives of the Voices, of the camera, of us, spectator-readers, and of Duras may all merge in a manner similar to what we saw in layer 5 of the film. Vogt confirms: "Le narrateur, le narrataire, sont aussi des lecteurs, des spectateurs. Le hors-champ devient l'Autre present" (178).

Thus, one type of commentary is that of a narrator recounting the film as if it is playing in front of him/her/us, with commentary: for example, "Le regard du groupe s'arrête. Le voyageur *a dû* arriver au terme de sa marche"; "Le Voyageur s'est-il tué?" (Duras, *LFDG* 156). This voice may take the form of notes read as the director's explanation: for example, the collision of the supposedly separate "film des voix" and the "film de l'image," (cf. layer 5 of the film) – a touch that occurs in the text:

> La réponse précédente a été faite <u>sur l'image</u> […] Les voix se sont tues pour toujours. Il est probable que l'ultime demande [to be killed] a été exécutée. / Le désir exprimé par la Voix brulée <u>est le seul moment de jonction entre le film de l'image et le film des Voix</u>. Le film de l'image *touche* ici le film des Voix. Cela dure le temps d'une phrase. Mais ce contact *provoque la mort*. Le film des Voix est également tué" (my underline, Duras's italics 183).

And if the text were not already complicated enough, there is the commentary indicated in smaller font (the questions and answers strangely recall the voices' dialogue):

> Est-elle <u>bien</u> morte, celle qui traversa S. Thala […] ? est-elle bien inoffensive, bien enfermée dans son trou de terre indienne? <u>Oui.</u> […] <u>Non, il doit</u> s'agir de quelqu'un d'autre, d'une mendiante du Delta […] Oui, ce doit être celle [-là] […] Ou peut-être s'agit-il d'un *envers* de celle enterrée là-bas, dans le périmètre de la lèpre sur laquelle elle pleura, sous le même ciel, dans une pestilence commune. […] [L]e courant du récit ici en cours […] est la preuve qu'entre elles un échange s'opéra dans l'espace mental d'un *tiers* ici présent à S. Thala: la "voix" n1. (my underline, Duras's emphasis, *LFDG* 160).

In other words, Duras easily slips and slides in and out of voices and functions: Vogt acutly articulates for *L'Homme Atlantique,* "Le récit fonctionne par contagion dans l'esprit du lecteur, du spectateur, de l'auteur au personnage" (197).

In this way, we must therefore also account for the "outside" presence of Duras's authorial voice as writer-reader of her own work, a voice not necessarily based on a difference in the font of the text. This level is similar to the "au-delà" "Outside" presence previously discussed in the "film de l'image" (cf. layer 2.3), and similar to the moments of audio-visual coincidence between the "film de l'image" and the "film des voix" (layer 5 from the film). It is a simultaneous present moment of: viewing (the film); reading (of not only her own text, the one she is in the process of writing, but readings of previous texts: i.e. *L'Amour*); and writing of *LFDG*. For example, Duras may put in italics references to other texts: in this quote, "*La certaine image des sables*. Celle décrite précédemment. C'est ce que le Fou regarde," refers back to *L'Amour* (my underline, original italics, *LFDG* 119). Vogt offers the following explanation regarding *La Vie Tranquille,* "Le mouvement des énoncés coïncide entre moment d'énonciation et moment de lecture. La présence du narrateur se retrouve, aux côtés du lecteur, dans la vivacité des sentiments exprimés au présent d'énonciation dans un récit au passé" (113). Sometimes these instances are short, sometimes they take on lengthy parentheses, as if Duras is getting carried away in her writing, "comme emportée par son élan" (Chalonge 1865). We can also account for the author, Duras, through style. For example, the *récit* begins in a manner very similar to *L'Amour* and *Détruire*; the first line is simply, "Jour." The reader also remarks the characteristic blank spaces of *L'Amour*. Moreover, Duras writes, "C'est *le voyageur*" (Duras's italics), providing no explanation for her readers who *le*

voyageur is. One must be familiar with her work to know that the "Voyageur" is from *L'Amour*, whom we can associate with Michael Richardson, but only if one has read *Le Ravissement*. Duras-writer inserts quotations from other texts (*Le Ravissement* or *L'Amour*), other intertextual references, and even goes as far as providing commentary on moments from these previous texts. For example, this voice comments on the moment of Lol's *ravissement*: "*Avant:* si Michael Richardson et Anne-Marie Stretter avaient entendu l'appel, les cris de Lola Valérie Stein […] Ils ne l'ont pas entendue crier parce qu'*ils n'en étaient plus capables* […] *Maintenant:* Là aussi se situait le désir chez les Voix. *Voyeuses* elles aussi" (Duras's italics 185).[25] There is also an interior intertextual reference to the text-film *Nathalie Granger* (published in the same book as *LFDG)*. Lastly an ambiguous filmic object (a film to come?) incurs on page 189: "Le film est-il terminé? Oui./ Ce qui suit se passe après le film."[26] For Ropars-Wuilleumier,

> Si le film a pu être constitué en opérateur de lecture pour le texte, c'est par la capacité de disjonction dans la synthèse que lui confère un dispositif de montage hétérogène. La relation « critique » instaurée entre l'image et le son filmiques, indissociables et pourtant inassimilables, donne à lire la crise textuelle qui vient ébranler le modèle unitaire de la représentation comme de la narration qu'elle suppose : on ne touche pas à l'une sans faire vaciller l'autre *(Écraniques* 80).

To summarize, in this section we have seen how these multiple intra/extra diegetic temporal layers of text and film, multiple voices, multiple perspectives are distinct but fold in on and revolve around one another in a circuit of indiscernibility. In the next part we will see how this Durassian space-time is further expressed in terms of "inside" and "outside."

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[25] Incidentally, this moment comes after announcing "la mort du film des Voix"! Duras declares in the text that the utterance that provokes "la mort des voix" is "le seul moment de jonction entre le film de l'image et le film des Voix."

[26] This statement is not true if it is supposed to refer to the film *LFDG*; "ce qui suit" in the text also transpires in the film.

Part II: Inside or Outside

La Femme du Gange

      The cinematographic image is inseparable from the notion of space: "l'image est d'abord celle d'un espace, elle en émane, avant de pouvoir s'en détacher, libre et produire son espace propre" (Ishaghpour 233). And space in Duras's work is "en trop" (Ishaghpour 233).[27] When space in an image is rarified, emptied, what remains is a notion of inside or outside because there is nothing else left to look at, therefore, the boundaries of the container become at issue. In *LFDG*, static images juxtaposing looming buildings and a blank beach impose upon the spectator the opposition of inside and outside space.[28] Despite this stark contrast, however, Duras creates a fluid spatio-temporal oscillation between exterior and interior.[29]

    Outside on the beach, the characters perambulate throughout the voided space of S. Thala, dominated by looming buildings: "impénétrable[s]," "hôtel[s] fermé[s]" (*LFDG* multiple pages).

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[27] This comment returns to the question of the Durassian imaginary discussed in Chapter 2.

[28] Duras's directions in a manuscript of a script further confirm this contrast. Chalonge notes in the "Notice," "Peu corrigé, ce document est aussi fort peu technique. Il totalise 33 plans introduits par une double mention de temps ('Jour' ou 'Nuit') et d'espace ('Int[érieur]' ou 'Ext[érieur]')" ("Notice" 1861).

[29] Limam-Tnani describes for the film *India Song*, "la transgression des limites s'achève dans une délimitation stricte des lieux," ultimately resulting in an "absorption du dehors par le dedans" (120). Page 120 provides a nice diagram of a diegetic chiasmus, or *mise en abyme*, where closed and open spaces are reversed.

These haunting structures occupy the majority of the image, even to the point where the

"façade occupe tout l'écran" (*LFDG* 115). Their hermetic walls establish a separation

between outside and inside. Like any forbidden space, these images beg us to transgress

the boundary, as is suggested by Bonitzer in *Le Champ Aveugle:* "le champ visuel, au

cinéma, se double donc d'un champ aveugle. L'écran est un cache et la vision partielle"

(96). The feeling of emptiness produced by the film's deserted images, vacant beaches,

and the ghost-like figures' blank stares suggest a vacuum inside these containers; the

hotel is described in *LFDG* as, "Ancien palace désaffecté. Blockhaus creux aux fenêtres

fermées" (109). For Christine Buignet, "la superficialité de contenants vides […] suscite l'imaginaire, menant le spectateur au seuil d'un autre champ" (208). The spectator-reader wonders: What is lurking behind these walls?

Confinements are a leitmotif in Duras's *œuvre*; her characters are often "enfermé[s];" the Fou is "prisonnier" (incidentally, he is also "gardien de la mémoire")*.* Limam-Tnani notes for the novel *Le Vice-Consul,* over 20 occurrences of the fence, for which the critic offers: "figure, dans sa forme matérielle et symbolique […] [qui] s'interpose entre l'univers des blancs et l'espace externe" (118*).* But Duras's confinements serve a double function. If they imprison the characters, the scholar continues, they are also "une représentation intérieure du personnage" (Limam-Tnani 19*).* In *LFDG,* buildings are containers of the characters' memory (or Memory)[30] for they themselves have no memory: the phrase "ils n'ont pas de mémoire" is repeated in the text and film. Memory, or the past, is not internal to the characters but internalized within these buildings.[31] Inside, "le temps, dans le hall, n'arrive pas à passer […] Hall de gare. Hall d'attente" (*LFDG* 148). Imprisoned in these structures are not the characters, but the suspended past, the "bal mort de S. Thala" that the voices recount. The "film de l'image" explicitly depicts the suspended past at two moments: in the second image below, the note reads, "S. Thala/ Toujours/ Toujours là."

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[30] Duras writes in the "Résumé du film," "Ce mélange [of different pasts and presents] forme *un tout*, devient le passé de tous et celui de chacun à la fois: le passé même […] Bien entendu, il est probable que certains spectateurs découvriront à travers ce film l'allégorie d'une autre mémoire, celle d'une société […] (my emphasis 1514).
[31] Critics have discussed the house as a prison, a "maison-prison" according to Royer referencing namely the film *Nathalie Granger* and drawing from Duras's description of the house as a feminine residence in *Les Lieux*. See Royer for more on the feminine/masculine; interior/exterior; maternal/social; imprisonment/liberation; mother/child relationship (*L'Écran)*.
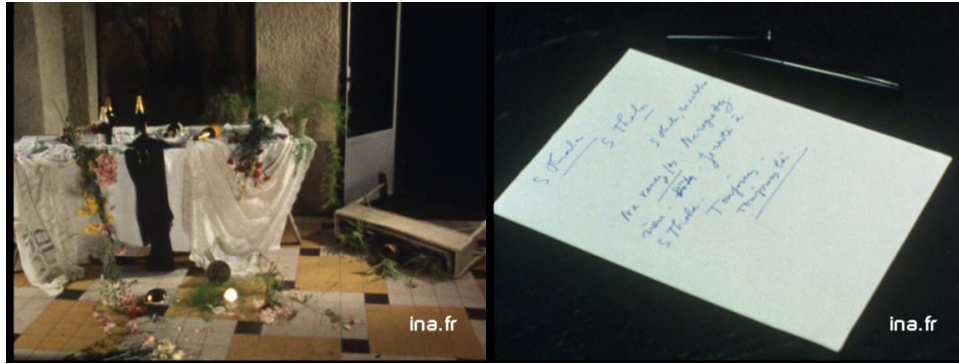
The buildings are unquestionably closed off to the figures imprisoned on the beach. At a distance, they stare at the buildings but hesitate to enter. It is thus a significant moment then when the Woman in black and the "Fou" manage to penetrate their walls (Duras, *LFDG* 139). A force seizes their beings; they are invaded by the past, the *air* of S. Thala, of the *bal* evoked by the voices.[32] When the Fou penetrates the lobby he looks around. Suddenly he begins to dance and sing as if seized by an invisible force.

Duras describes this event in the text: "Le temps, dans le hall, n'arrive pas à passer […] Le Fou, *la forme creuse* du Fou est traversée par la mémoire de tous. *La tête-passoire traversée* par la mémoire du tout, ici *incorporée aux murs* […] Le Fou est foudroyé par la mémoire pendant quelques secondes" (my emphasis, *LFDG* 150). The woman in black also undergoes this same invasion: "Elle chante l'air de S. Thala à *tue-tête*, de façon

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[32] This "air" will become "India Song."

mécanique, imbécile. Elle *se bat, elle lutte contre cet air, veut se déloger du bal, le*

désincruster de la mort" (*LFDG* 135).

An "outside" force – memory, or the past – penetrates these figures' interior – a force

which is contained *inside* this building.

Duras draws a parallel between these figures' empty bodies and the hollow hotel:

"Deux paradigmes se construisent parallèlement: il s'agit du paradigme du corps et du

paradigme de l'espace," explains Limam-Tnani for *Moderato Cantabile* (109*).* These

containers of the past act as bodies, embodying the memory that is absent from these

"creux" figures who perambulate with empty stares and "la tête explosée" (*LFDG* 152).

Duras employs the same language for these two vessels – body and building. In this

quotation, Duras describes Lol's body being invaded by the past when she enters the

hotel:

> Comme le corps du Fou, le corps de L.V.S. *reconstruit*, mais avec les pas. La tête ne chantera pas, le corps ne dansera pas. Le corps est beaucoup plus loin dans l'ankylose que celui du Fou, sa stagnation à S. Thala a été plus longue. Le corps de L.V.S. est opaque, *fermé*. Le corps du Fou est *creux*. Le corps de L.V.S. n'est plus traversé par rien, il est *porté tout entier dans le lieu*, par le chant, mais il est *impénétrable* désormais. Fini. (my emphasis, 163).

The adjectives "fermé"; "impénétrable"; and empty, "creux" evoke the hotel. The body,

like a physical structure and like memory, is to be (re)constructed with each step across

space-time, like the Voyageur's steps reproduced in the incessant *hammering* sound – an aural metaphor for the reconstruction of the past (we will return to this point shortly).

If we move outside, we find that the beach is also a "container" of the past, for it is the prison in which the figures are trapped (recall in *L'Amour* the "Fou" is called "Le Prisonnier"). Suspended in their own vaporized memory ("Ils ont perdu la mémoire? Oui. Leur mémoire est maintenant *dehors*"), phantoms of S. Thala, they cannot die: "On va vous tuer./ Nous ne pouvons pas mourir." *LFDG's* images reinforce their suspended state; we witness them immobile, walking blankly on the sand, or stuck against walls.[33]

In Chapter two we observed how Duras's figures are absorbed by the abstraction of the surrounding environment: *"Les objets et les lieux ne représentent plus une extériorité spatiale mais s'imposent, petit à petit, comme la métaphore de l'intériorité corporelle,"* explains Limam-Tnani for Duras's early novel, *Moderato Cantabile* (155*)*. Duras goes

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[33] The sea as backdrop in Duras is also a wall, or screen as we will see in Chapter 5: "le mur de la mer" as Duras will call it in *L'Homme Atlantique*, the sea wall (*Un barrage contre le Pacifique?*).

further in *LFDG*; exploded outside space, reinforced by the immobile shots to *frame*

space, becomes container: "L'Immensité qui se ferme"; "L'Inde se referme" (114; 145).

Duras describes the beach as "L'espace des sables qui <u>contient</u> l'*accident"* (my

underline, Duras's italics, *LFDG* 110). And this accident, we will shortly see, is the

resurfacing of memory.

If it has not already become clear, despite the impressive visual opposition

between exterior and interior space, Duras complicates what is really "outside" or

"inside," what is container or contained: "le contenu échappe à toutes formes, qu'il est

mouvement à travers formes, formes de lieux, formes d'acteurs" (Duras, *Marguerite par*

Marguerite 36).[34] The past of S. Thala is both, Limam-Tnani reiterates: "L'espace se

transforme ici en un espace-temps qui *contient* l'homme mais qui, tout à la fois, est

contenu par lui" (my emphasis, 109). In *LFDG* Duras metaphysically exteriorizes

memory and physically interiorizes it. What the spectator-reader witnesses, then, is not a

separation between interior and exterior space, but a permeable exchange between

outside and inside:

> Dans les œuvres de M. Duras, les corps et les lieux sont intégrés dans un jeu de
> déplacements, de substitutions et d'interférences qui établit, entre eux, un échange
> permanent, et permet d'imprégner l'espace de significations corporelles et
> d'attribuer au corps une valeur spatiale (Limam-Tnani 104).[35]

Durassian space-time is like a Klein bottle. Roland Bogue explains how one functions:

"Inside and outside communicate with one another in a topological space like that of a

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[34] The context of this citation is around Duras's disincarnated women. Limam-Tnani writes: "nous décelons
chez les femmes durassiennes une prédisposition à la désincarnation et l'immatérialité. L'élimination de
l'image de la mendiante dans *India Song*, le traitement d'Anne-Marie Stretter en corps-objet, corps souvent
immobile et parfois même encombrant, concrétisent dans le film l'effacement de la femme, amorcé dans le
roman, et montrent que celle-ci ne constitue pas une présence, mais une présence-absence" (104*).*
[35] Ishaghpour similarly claims, "L'aspiration […] ne peut rien garder parce que rien ne peut la satisfaire,
instaure des distances; tournée vers l'intérieur, elle chemine constamment à l'extérieur, et parce que toute
manifestation extérieure de l'âme est […] abstraite, tout peut […] devenir âme. C'est pourquoi la pauvreté
essentielle de l'image ramène au monde débordant des choses" (291).

Klein bottle, a three-dimensional version of a Mobius strip with an inside and an outside

that form one continuous domain" (177).

Now that we have determined that space is neither simply "outside" nor "inside"

– "les lieux à la fois intérieur et extérieur (Royer, *L'Écran* 36)" –- let us see how Duras

navigates between the two in *LFDG*, how intra/extradiegetic spatio-temporal layers fold

in on one another. I will refer to "touches" as the coincidence between outside and inside,

the penetration of an "outside" layer inside (or vice versa), the coincidence between

separate spatio-temporal layers. These touches, or "*accidents,*" are critical moments in

the text-film.

The spectator-reader first discerns an ambiguity of outside and inside with the

voices. Duras assures us that the voices are "*d'une totale autonomie*" and exist "outside"

the "film de l'image." They came from afar (from where? It appears the writer-filmmaker

herself does not know as she asks the question in the text's "Avant-Propos": *"Il [the*

"film des voix"] est arrivé de loin, d'où?"), penetrating the film: "Il s'est jeté sur l'image,

a pénétré dans son lieu."[36] As we saw earlier, both intra and extradiegetic – "Les Voix

parlent dans le même lieu que celui du tournage du film de l'image" – they are not

conventional voice-overs. They cohabit S. Thala ("[elles] sont à S. Thala comme les

autres voix du film"), insert themselves into the film de l'image ("arrivent vers l'image"),

and "troublent" "le déroulement du film" (103). Although *off*, these two female voices

haunt the hotel: "Quel désert autour de nous certains jours… Cet hôtel est si grand…

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[36] In fact, toward the end Duras executes a complete reversal; the voices are completely absorbed by the "film de l'image" at the end of *LFDG*. Ropars-Wuilleumier describes for *India Song* an "absorption du dehors par le dedans" (*Texte divisé* 181). Indeed, the voices disappear but in turn, the figures' dialogue then passes off-screen in voice over, and their dialogue mimics that of the voices as if the voices, like Memory, invade the figures; they take over the function of the voices: "LA FEMME, *continue, off*. Ici…à S. Thala…un bal…c'était d'autres endroits…avant […] LE VOYAGEUR, *off, temps long*. Elle avait dix-huit ans. / LA FEMME, *off*. Ah." (192).

Nous sommes seules…" (a statement which calls into question the figures' actual presence). We may even get a glimpse of the Voices:

The text provides the following comment for what corresponds to the above image: "Des *ombres traversent* cette lumière, puis disparaissent […] Sommes-nous près de la région des Voix? Peut-être" (my emphasis, *LFDG* 133). This dubious off-screen nature of the invisible voices makes it difficult to place the voices "outside" or "inside." Like the figures, they are also invaded by memories exterior to themselves: "Quelquefois aussi, je me souviens de choses que je n'ai pas connues. […] Moi aussi, il me vient quelquefois *une autre mémoire*…" Also like the figures, they are suspended in an in-between state in space-time: "elles sont dans cet espace noir – périmètre illimité – entre l'image et son spectateur" (*LFDG* 105). They too reconstruct the past, floating extradiegetically and intradiegetically between outside and inside space, past and present: "Traversantes, circulantes, se coulent dans le corps du film, l'épousent, le noient dans leur chair, le recouvrent, en meurent" (*LFDG* 105).

The hammering sound is also troubling; its source never revealed, it is unclear whether it is extradiegetic or intradiegetic. For Christan Metz, in cinema "le son est à la fois 'dans' l'écran, devant, derrière, autour, dans toute la salle de cinéma" (*Essais*

sémiotiques 157).[37] Duras describes the hammering as "Un battement, comme un pilonnage du sol, d'intensité variable, mais régulier – battement cardiaque, souterrain – commence à s'emparer de l'espace. Tout se met à battre derrière le bruit de la mer" (*LFDG* 115). This metronomic "martèlement" moves the film; it takes over the figures' movements, oscillating between outside and inside. It starts off as a "battement de l'espace," but then coincides with the Voyageur's steps to reconstruct the space-time S. Thala. Duras writes in *L'Amour,* "On entend le martèlement de son pas sur la piste de planches […] On entend: le pas s'*espace*" (my emphasis, *L'Amour* 11). Then, a curious touch transpires in shot 28 between the hammering sound, the voices, and the image. In this shot, the hammering coincides at first with the Fou's steps. He exits the frame, the hammering continues, and the woman in black enters. She stops and suddenly inexplicably looks in the other direction as if she perceived something. At that moment, the Voices ask "Qu'est-ce qu'on entend?" while the hammering continues to beat. This suggests that both the voices and the woman in black hear the hammering sound. The next shot reveals what the woman felt – Michael Richardson's steady steps in the hotel hallway:

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[37] Duras goes further in *Le Navire Night,* discussed in the next section, where she does reveal the source of the extradiegetic music, the *hors-cadre*.

This sequence is narrated in the following way in the text:

> Voici, elle s'arrête, se retourne. Elle a entendu quelque chose. Ou vu. Tête dressée, elle *suit* des yeux. Regard perçant : elle a noté un mouvement dans le calme du tout./ Tournée vers nous […] Le Fou, la Femme, toujours arrêtés, regardent ce que nous ne voyons pas. [blank space] Couloir de l'hôtel. A pas lents, mesurés, le Voyageur le parcourt. Ce qui était regardé par la Femme et le Fou c'était lui. Regardé à travers les murs […] Battement, toujours, ici assourdi par les murs (*LFDG* 116).[38]

And previously noted, the force that permeates through bodies, even through walls, is time. The incessant rhythmic hammering aurally represents the construction of space-time, like the figures' steps ("le pas s'*espa*[s]*ce*"), like the voices (re)construct the past, the past (the *air* of S. Thala) that invades the figures' empty bodies in a spatio-temporal meandering: "Le bruit de la mer, réfléchi entre les murs, creuse encore l'espace ouvert et fermé […] Elle [the woman in black] avance, elle va vers le chant, vers le poids sonore perdu dans l'hôtel vide […] *elle va, traverse le temps*. Elle sait, traverse le savoir" (my emphasis, *LFDG* 149). Duras writes in the text at the end of the entire ball sequence (when the Woman in black and the Fou penetrate the hall of the hotel, and the Voices recount the ball scene), "Dernier battement de l'Inde." Christophe Meurée similarly analyzes the construction of space-time in *Dix heures et demie du soir en été*:

> L'espace devient battement, déploiement (comme ces fleurs de papier japonaises qui fascinaient tant Proust) […] 'Cet intervalle se constituant, se divisant dynamiquement, c'est ce qu'on peut appeler *espacement*, devenir-espace du temps ou devenir-temps de l'espace (*temporisation*)' (Derrida) ("Habiter le temps qui s'écoule," *Orient(s)* 46).

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[38] The permeability of sound between walls is a characteristic of Duras's *œuvre*. She writes in *L'Amant de la Chine du Nord:* "Dans le premier livre [*L'Amant*] elle avait dit que le bruit de la ville était si proche qu'on entendait son frottement contre les persiennes comme si des gens traversaient la chambre […] exposés là, ***dans ce passage du dehors dans la chambre*** […] On pourrait dire là aussi qu'on reste dans « l'ouvert » de la chambre aux bruits du dehors qui cognent aux volets, aux murs, au frottement des gens contre le bois des persiennes. Ceux des rires. Des courses et des cris d'enfants. Des appels des marchands de glaces, de pastèque, de thé." (Duras's bold and italics, 81-82). Yann Mével considers this passing between walls as "la porosité de l'espace, la porosité de l'être" (*Orient(s)* "Poétique des sensations" 172).

Layers of time fold into one another, like the different types of narration, like the two sides of the strip of film: "Intérieur et extérieur, les deux bandes évoquant simultanément des lieux différents" (Royer, *L'Écran* 36*)*. In an audio-visual manner, sound will fuse with light in the critical "accident" as the "battement de l'espace" turns into the "battement de la lumière," the "bruit de la lumière" – in other words, memory, the membrane that makes the outside and the inside present to each other:

> It [memory] is no longer the faculty of having recollections: it is the membrane which, in most varied ways (continuity, discontinuity, envelopment, etc.), makes sheets of past and layers of reality correspond, the first emanating from an inside which is always already there, the second arriving from an outside always to come, the two gnawing at the present which is now only their encounter (Deleuze *Time-Image* 207).

An "accident" in Duras's work represents a resurfacing of memory, a "coup de mémoire":

> Le Fou le regarde pour *la première fois :* il ne reconnaît pas le Voyageur du récit en cours. Il reconnaît quelqu'un en-deçà du présent, coupé du présent. Le Voyageur est arrivé près de lui. Ils se regardent. Le Fou est foudroyé par la mémoire pendant quelques secondes. (150)
> Le Fou la [the woman in black] regardant oublie le « coup » de mémoire. Il reste interdit, encore hagard de l'accident dont il a été l'objet. Mais il ne sait déjà plus qu'il vient de lui arriver cet accident. Ne saurait en aucun cas le nommer. S'en sépare […] Le Fou remue, se tourne, regarde vers les sables noirs, voit et parle :
> LE FOU
> Elle me cherche… elle a vu la lumière… elle vient (my underline, Duras's italics, *LFDG* 151)

An accident constitutes an audio-visual, spatio-temporal, "outside" to "inside" touch.[39]

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[39] The "accident" resurfaces in different forms throughout Duras's work. To my knowledge no Duras critic has explored the Durassian *accident,* neither as it appears in *L'Amour* and *LFDG,* nor the term in general. I will continue to explore the accident in Chapter 5. The moment of "*l'accident"* in *LFDG* merges two similar consecutive accidents in *L'Amour.* According to Chalonge, in her note to the moment in *LFDG* when the sound stops, "Là où le son est ici 'coupé,' dans *L'Amour*, le voyageur poussait un cri, et, au lieu du 'geste d'épouvante,' la femme avait 'relevé légèrement son bras dans un geste d'enfant'" (1863). This is partly incorrect. In *L'Amour,* the cry does coincide with light ("Le cri a été proféré et on l'a entendu dans l'espace tout entier, occupé ou vide. Il a lacéré la lumière obscure, la lenteur"), but it is not yet *the* moment of the accident in *LFDG*. The accident in *LFDG* takes place in *L'Amour* after the "cri." Duras also gives instruction here for silence; this is the sound cut in *LFDG*, thus not replacing the cry. In *L'Amour,* Duras

The beach also contains the past and in particular, the "accident"– a "*certaine image* des sables," a certain memory that surfaces at various intervals: "[L]'Espace des sables qui contient l'*accident*" (Duras italicizes to distinguish it from other accidents, *LFDG* 110). What Duras calls *l'accident* is a pivotal moment in *L'Amour/LFDG* and launches the rest of the action (shots 34-39). With it, "L'histoire. Elle commence" (*L'Amour* 14). The spectator witnesses these deadened figures being affected by perceptions. By forces – "force arrêtée, déplacée vers l'absence," describes Duras (*L'Amour* 12) – that are entirely *hors-champ* (and possibly even *hors-cadre*).[40]

"Le Fou" perceives something. He says, "la lumière, qu'est-ce qui se passe? La lumière s'est arrêtée. Il va se passer quelque chose, c'est [sic] pas possible" (119).[41] At that

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writes, "Il [the fou] découvre à nouveau l'arrêt de la lumière." He says, "Quelque chose va arriver, ce n'est pas possible,' after which Duras indicates, "Silence: avec la lumière le bruit s'est arrêté aussi, celui de la mer." If the accident in *LFDG* does not entirely replace the moment of the cry, it does merge the two moments in *L'Amour*. Sound (the cry) is replaced with silence, the stopping of sound, also the stopping of light, which in turn is not an *absence* of light but an emergence of light! Furthermore, Duras describes space at this moment in *L'Amour* as being filled by sound, *but* "tout entier, occupé ou vide" (my underline). The cry-accident makes different temporal layers, different texts converge: "Le cri apparaît, dans les deux romans, comme le lieu de la convergence: il est, ainsi que nous l'avons déjà annoncé, impliqué dans un jeu d'échos, son évocation est toujours soit une anticipation soit un rappel" (Limam-Tnani 65*)*.

[40] For more on this free-floating perception see Chapter one.

[41] The Fou is similar to the figure of the Vice-Consul, who Christine Buignet describes as, "prisonnière de cette souffrance […] une lèpre du cœur, comme si les symptômes extérieurs de la maladie de peau avait

moment all sound stops ("Tout à coup, plongée brutale dans le silence," *LFDG* 119). Lol,

seated, shades her eyes as if blinded by a light while a deafening silence ensues. What

does the Fou see? No visible change in the light seems to have taken place. The woman

in black looks to the right as if to locate the source – nothing. When the camera returns to

the woman, she looks at Michael Richardson. His eyes are closed and his head turned

towards Lol, suggesting that it was he who somehow in looking at Lol produced this

event. The text provides the following comment: "Seul, le Voyageur n'a rien remarqué,

semblerait-il, de l'accident de la lumière arrêtée – tout comme s'il était le moteur

inconscient de cet arrêt […] La Femme remue, se retourne. N'a pas encore oublié la

lumière arrêtée. Regarde le Voyageur, « celui qui a arrêté la lumière »" (my underline,

Duras's quotations, *LFDG* 119). The sound returns ("l'accident se résout, le bruit revient;

« le bruit de la lumière » "), the tension subsides, and the situation seems to have returned

to normal. The next frame, however, tells us that a change did in fact take place. Le Fou

says, "j'ai eu peur… la mer *montait*…" Yet the tide has actually significantly receded

compared to before the accident, and only now do we witness an augmentation in light.

The new situation contains a presence of light. This light, memory, is now *made visible*

on the beach. Layers of light stratify the beach as Lol pursues the Fou across the "espace

des sables" (…"qui contient l'accident"), traversing space-time. To summarize, the

"event" does not conventionally transpire, that is to say by a perception from something

in the environment, provoking a reaction, after which a new situation emerges. The film

does not show a bright light coming into the frame to blind the characters. Instead, the

characters perceive something, or rather, are affected by an invisible inner/outer force

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atteint le plus intime de l'être. L'intérieur reçoit de plein fouet la violence extérieure, pendant que le V-C
'ri[t] en pleurant'" (216).

(thought) that does not come from the exterior world of the film, and it is this force, this event - the *perception* of the movement of light stopping - that provoked a change in the environment. In other words, it was not external percept affecting internal state but inside affecting outside.

For an inattentive spectator it would appear as if nothing much happens, but upon closer investigation, Duras probes the relationship between interior and exterior, perception and affection. Like the past that invades the figures inside the hotel, the accident, the exteriorized memory on the beach resurges within the characters. Ropars-Wuilleumier explains the conflict between interior and exterior:

> Le dehors empêche l'intériorité du dedans et il soustrait l'extériorité elle-même à tout ancrage spatial. Non seulement il n'y a pas de jonction (fût-elle disjointe) entre dehors et dedans, mais le dehors n'a pas de lieu pour être, puisqu'il est emporté par sa propre extériorisation" ("Pensée du dehors" 19).

The light-memory-"accident" is the incursion of the exterior into the interior. Ropars-Wuilleumier explains this Blanchotian *dehors* or Thought of/from the outside: "C'est ce *temps* du dehors, sans commencement ni fin, que Blanchot nomme 'vertige de l'*espacement*.' Il affecte ici la visibilité du film, parce qu'à la limite il soumet la saisie de l'image à la seule mémoire de soi, où elle s'oublie" ("Pensée du dehors" 19). Ishaghpour announces that in Duras, in order to "dépouiller le visible et la vision […] il faut fermer les yeux parce qu'on ne peut voir la vision." I suggest, however, with this "invisible" accident, the spectator-reader witnesses perception, vision, taking place: "L'histoire. Elle commence. Elle a commencé avant la marche au bord de la mer, le cri […] le mouvement de la lumière. Mais elle devient maintenant visible. C'est sur le sable que déjà elle

s'implate, sur la mer" (Duras, *L'Amour* 1272*).* [42] Suspended and moving in-between

sound and image, outside and inside, Duras creates a new form of visibility.[43]

Now that we have seen how Duras's *montage* produces spatio-temporal

oscillation between exterior and interior, let us turn to how thought oscillates between

outside and inside, between bodies, even through walls. As *LFDG* suggests a spatio-

temporal state of suspension (reinforced by the visual static frames and lack of

movement), the action or movement that takes place occurs relationally, in-between

shots, *hors-champ*. Cinema always refers to an *hors-champ*. Pascal Bonitzer claims,

"[U]ne fonction essentielle de l'espace filmique, l'espace off, l'espace hors-champ […]

est liée à la structure de l'écran. Il y a toujours du 'caché' dans l'espace du film. Le

spectateur est pris dans les chicanes du montage et de la prise de vues, il est déjà dans le

labyrinthe (*Champ aveugle* 80). The spectator must enter into the circuit of relations

produced by the *montage: "*L'usage du hors-champ modifie les relations du spectateur au

film, détermine une réciprocité et une circulation entre ces deux espaces et permet au

spectateur d'agir sur l'œuvre et de la récréer" (Bonitzer, *Champ* 80). In *LFDG,* the

"action" never fully occurs within the frame itself. Characters' gazes are always directed

elsewhere and directly refer to an out-of-frame that is inside the hotel, physically

impossible for them to "see," visually. A curious sequence occurs between shots 14-20.

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[42] I refer back to the opening sequence of *Le Navire Night* detailed in the introduction of this chapter: "C'est un samedi…l'homme du film, il travaille…et puis, voici./ La [l'histoire] voici."

[43] See Ropars-Wuilleumier's "Pensée du dehors": "le dehors a trouvé une place, même si elle est *entre* les places, et il se situe désormais à la limite de l'invisible et du visible […] La fêlure originelle venue du *dehors* se trouve désormais réintroduite dans le dedans de l'image, qui proposerait ainsi une forme de visibilité de l'invisible lui-même" (16-17)

Compelled by an invisible force, the woman in black and two men approach the

foreground from opposite sides of the frame (the lines of their movement form a triangle)

and arrive at the point where "Lol" is seated, staring into the void. They look up at the

facade of the building that, in the next shot, occupies the entire screen as if their gaze

penetrates beyond the walls. Michael Richardson walks down the hallway. In the next

shot, the figures' heads appear to follow his trajectory. He reaches his room thus

concluding his movement. At this point the characters slowly and confusedly disperse, as

if awakening from a trance.[44]

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[44] Here is how this sequence is described in the text: "Les trois habitants, les fous, rassemblés, silencieux, regardent… Le Voyageur arrête dans le hall de l'hôtel. Il regarde le groupe en contrebas. Regard jusqu'ici contenu qui éclate, fixe, bouleversé. Ce regard *reconnaît*. Tandis que les regards des fous voient sans connaissance. Le regard du groupe a recommencé à suivre des yeux, à "accompagner" un déplacement qu'on ne voit pas. Long couloir sombre. Tapis. Glaces. C'est un couloir de grand hôtel, large. Bruit de pas. C'est le Voyageur qui parcourt le couloir. C'est lui que le groupe a suivi des yeux *à travers* les murs. Le Voyageur arrive devant une porte, l'ouvre, disparaît dans l'obscurité (plan abandonné). Le regard du groupe s'arrête. Le Voyageur a dû arriver au terme de sa marche… Dehors, le regard cesse. Le groupe se

The shot/countershot editing suggests that the inside shots come from the figures'

perspective; their gaze accompanies the Voyageur's movements. The spectator witnesses

the figures experiencing a form of interior perception derived from an affective "outside"

force: the movement of Michael Richardson who is *inside* the hotel. In this way, Duras

does something different from Eisenstein's notion of montage – the relations created by

the spectator by his/her suturing of shots, what Deleuze defines by "thirdness" or

relation-image (*Time-image)*. The "relations" or thought produced by the film not only

takes place in the spectator but also in the figures themselves. Duras represents a free-

flowing perception, one of affect that merges the figures' point of view with that of the

voices and the spectator-reader (including Duras's as she read-writes in the text *LFDG*).

The Durassian perception-movement that passes between walls between outside and

inside can be illuminated by Deleuze's "spiritual automaton":

> The spiritual automaton is in the viewer. But the free indirect seeing and thinking of the spiritual automaton is also *in the images* on the screen. The spiritual automaton is thus both inside and outside, inside the viewer and outside in the images. But within the image world as well there is no clear differentiation of inside and outside, between thought and image. The way of seeing and thinking manifest in the image belongs to no localizable or discretely identifiable mind; instead, mind is, as it were, immanent within the images, dispersed, a-centered, multiple. Inside and outside communicate with one another in a topological space like that of a Klein bottle (Bogue 178).

The process in the following sequences (shots 99-111 and 56-60) is similar to the

previous example, but with the addition of a peculiar insertion.

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défait. Silencieusement ils se dispersent: (Le Voyageur est arrivé dans sa chambre)" (Duras's italics, 111). Interestingly the shot for "Le Voyageur […] regarde le groupe en contrebas" is not in the film, as evidenced in the above images. This remark thus constitutes a narrative insertion by the voice of Duras, director. Yet while Duras does not indicate here that this shot was abandoned, she does for the "shot" " Le Voyageur arrive devant une porte": "plan abandoné." Why specify for one and not the other, leading the reader to think something did or did not occur in the film? Duras simultenously writes a reading-viewing, reproducing this same stratification that we have seen within the film not only narratively but also formally in the text *LFDG*. The different paragraphs create not only a visible formal layering of the physical text as these strata are printed in different sized font, but also temporal palimpsestic layering similar to the spatio-temporal folding that occurs in the film.

Shots 99-111:

Shots 56-60:

Again, we witness the figures perceiving what is happening on the inside of the hotel

from outside on the beach. The photos (the only two in the film), however, come out of

nowhere and take the spectator by surprise. The "real" quality of the photos, their idexical

relationship with reality – Barthes' "ça a été [*là*]" (*Chambre claire)* – is troubling. Metz

explains:

> When we look at a still photograph, we do not see a presence "being there" for this
> definition is too loose and can be applied to any copy - but a presence that "has been
> there." We therefore have a new category of space-time: place present but time past -
> so that in still photography there is an illogical conjunction of here and then (*Film
> Language* 5).

The reason the photo is so troubling is because the spectator-reader's notion of the past

for the film is now divided in a way; the universe of "film de l'image" was already a

suspended past – a was <u>and</u> *is still* here.[45] Rare angles, the photos represent an outside

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[45] Raymond Bellour notably explores the temporal problem with photographs in film in his important essay
"Le spectateur pensif": "Entre elle [the photo] et le film dont elle surgit, toujours, inextricablement, deux
temps se mêlent, mais ne se confondent jamais. En cela, la photo a un privilège sur tous les effets grâce
auxquels le spectateur de cinéma, ce spectateur pressé, devient aussi un spectateur pensif (80) […] [E]lles
expriment le passage du temps. Pourtant, ces photos semblent aussi résister au temps. Ce n'est pas
seulement, comme on pourrait le croire, parce qu'elles le symbolisent. Elles ouvrent en fait un autre temps:

presence, an extreme *hors-champ,* and *hors-cadre* both in the text-film; they make us

aware of Duras's presence and our own presence as spectator-reader: "Le point de vue de

la caméra est celui du cinéaste, de l'auteur du film. Nous avons tendance à l'oublier, sauf

si le cinéaste introduit une singularité (cadrage insolite, angle rare). Il se rappelle alors à

nous" (Metz, *Signifiant Imaginaire* 69). Duras's insertion of these outsides into the film,

in turn attempt to insert us, the spectator, into the film. We are also terrified; but why? Do

we see ourselves? Are we also ravished? Raymond Bellour notably asks in his critical

essay, "Le spectateur pensif":

> Qu'arrive-t-il lorsque le spectateur de cinéma rencontre la photographie ? […] [L]a
> présence de la photo sur un écran produit un trouble très particulier […] créant chez
> le spectateur un recul qui va de pair avec un accroissement de fascination […] Le
> cinéma, qui reproduit tout, reproduit aussi l'emprise que la photo a sur nous (120).

These close-up images of emotion, of affect as if seized by terror – "Terrible

Terrorisante," describes Duras – contrast with L.V.S.'s empty gaze and shock the

spectator-reader. "Ils *nous* regardent" (Bellour 120).
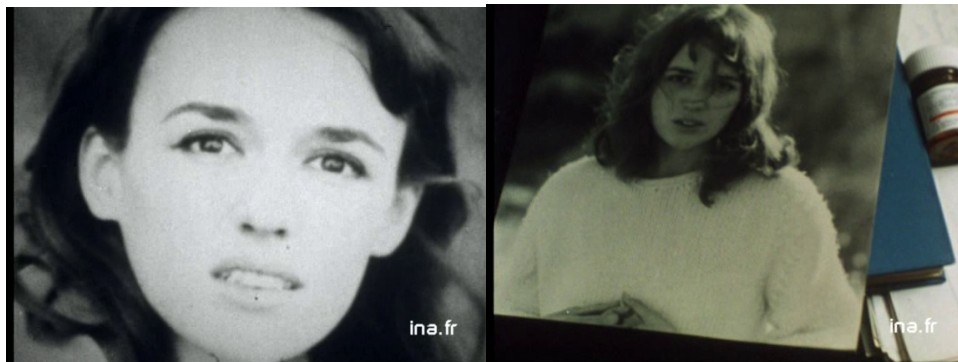
But what is terrifying Lol in these images? Like the well-known image of *La Jetée,* they

beg the question: What did she see?

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un passé du passé. Un temps second et différent. Ainsi elles fixent un instant le temps du film; nous
arrachant à son déroulement, elles nous situent par rapport à lui" (76).

Solving the puzzle of these photos requires some intertextual suturing.

Duras comments on the first photo: "Photographie blanche et noire./ Terrible Terrorisante:/ L.V.S. dix-huit ans./ Elle regarde les amants du bal de S. Thala" (136).[46] At this moment in *Le Ravissement*, Lol, as subject, disappears – "elle n'est personne" (*Le Ravissement* 48) –, her presence negated.[47] For our purposes, this moment of Lol's *ravissement* coincides with an emergence of light, "cette *aurore"*:

> Elle vient d'apercevoir cette aurore […] A cet instant précis *une chose*, mais laquelle? *aurait dû être tentée* qui ne l'a pas été. A cet instant précis Lol se tient, déchirée […] Il ne reste de cette minute que *son temps pur* […] (my italics, Duras, *Le Ravissement* 48).

What is this thing that "aurait dû être tentée"? What does this *ravissement* – the emergence of light that causes Lol's figure to disappear, as if exploded, turning or being written into light – reproduce if none other than the mechanism of photography? In other words, *accidents* – the movement of light stopping (a cine-photo-graphie?); a "coup de mémoire" and a *coup du present,* where past, present, and future are contracted in *"*son temps pur." I repeat Deleuze:

> It [memory] is the membrane which, in most varied ways (continuity, discontinuity, envelopment, etc.), makes sheets of past and layers of reality correspond, the first emanating from an inside which is always already there, the

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[46] Interestingly, where we would expect the voices to utter, as they often do, "Quelle douleur" or "Quel désir," they provide no comment on these photos. Instead, it is Duras that refers to another outside moment from *Le Ravissement*.
[47] See Lacan's "Hommage.*"*

second arriving from an outside always to come, the two gnawing at the present which is now only their encounter (*Time-Image* 207). [48]

In *L'Amour,* Duras writes this cinémato-photo-graphic accident in the following way:

"Elle est dans la lumière obscure, encastrée dans le mur […] Visage blanc. Mains à moitié enfouies dans le sable, immobiles comme le corps. *Force arrêtée, déplacée vers l'absence. Arrêtée dans son mouvement de fuite*" (my emphasis, *L'Amour* 14). [49] Indeed, stragely the text-film *L'Amour/LFDG* already seems to be present in *Le Ravissement:*

> L'approche de Lol n'existe pas. On ne peut pas se rapprocher ou s'éloigner d'elle. Il faut attendre qu'elle vienne *vous* chercher […] Elle veut […] être rencontrée par moi et vue par moi dans *un certain espace* […] *Lequel?* [the "certaine image des sables"?] Est-il *peuplé des fantômes de T. Beach* […] piégé de faux-semblants (emphasis added, 105).

These photos "vienne[nt] [n]ous chercher," we spectator-readers, *hors-champ* and *hors-cadre,* at our present space-time, thus inserting a temporal fourth dimension. The spectator-reader becomes the "hors-champ […] l'Autre présent" (Vogt 178): "la matérialité absente de la figure d'énallage du personnage principal […] Le narrateur et le narrataire sont des intrus dans l'univers diégétique. Le personnage l'est dans l'univers extradiégétique" (Vogt 178). [50] For Limam-Tnani, it is a question of introducing "le hors-champ dans le champ, et de nous faire entrevoir ce qui, par définition, doit nous demeurer caché, participe à 'crever les parois de la scène' et à donner à l'espace une pluri-

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[48] Duras writes in other "present" accidents towards the very end of the text: "Des petits accidents sonores ou visuels surviennent" (*LFDG* 192).

[49] While many Duras critics have analyzed one of Duras's catch phrases in *Le Ravissement*, "le cinéma de Lol V. Stein" (see Snauwaert's article, "Le cinéma de Lol V. Stein"), Sarah Gaspari has been the only other Duras critic to make the correlation between Lol's "ravissement" and photography in her article "Du 'paradoxe' de l'absence de genre. *L'Amour* de Marguerite Duras" (I executed my original analysis before discovering this article). Gaspari draws this parallel however for different purposes: "Cette femme, *jamais guérie* et usée par un regard fixé sur le passé, serait donc Lol V. Stein abandonnée à sa folie et immobilisée par un désir qui la surpasse et la rend désormais insensible à toute mémoire. Sa pose est alors figée à l'instar d'un arrêt sur image, ce qui oblige le texte, qui présente aussi des phases dynamiques, à s'arrêter et à avancer comme par reprises" (143). Interesting Gaspari does not reference Bellour with phrase "arrêt sur image."

[50] For Vogt, it is a question of the spectator-reader's imaginary, mental representations: "Le contenu est invisible, présent des représentations mentales, substitut verbal de l'image du contenant à l'écran" (178).

dimensionnalité (129). In oscillating between interior/exterior Duras demonstrates a new

type of cinematographic visibility. The "certaine image des sables" made visible in the

final image of the "accident" sequence is the image of Time, its coexisting layers: "Ainsi

le dédoublement temporel, ou plus justement la simultanéité du passé et du présent se

retrouve au niveau narratif et formel" (Royer, *Écran* 36).[51] For Deleuze, "The present is

immediately *double*, an actual present perception [the *film de l'image* perceived by the

voices as spectators] *and* a virtual memory of the present [the *film des voix*], a mobile

mirror [the celluloid, the "concomitance matérielle"] that *is* the ongoing splitting and

coexistence of the actual and virtual, physical and mental, present and past" (119). In

other words, time constantly tends in two directions, one toward the past and one towards

the future. We can thus consider sound and image tracks like an audio-visual Mobius

strip in which each side of the film strip is like the two sides of time, one actual and one

virtual, each distinct but indistinguishable one from the other.[52] Duras skirts along the

spatio-temporal Mobius strip – the membrane (*pellicule)* that makes the outside and the

inside present to each other: "[the] Mobius strip's outer surface is continuous with its

inner surface: it envelops the entire word, and makes that which is inside be on the

outside and vice versa. Passing from reality to dream, from bodies to the incorporeal; it is

by skirting on the surface, or the border that one passes to the other side, by virtue of the

strip" (*Logic of Sense* 11).

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[51] The conclusion Michelle Royer draws for this temporal doubling is the impossibility of representation:
"Or, c'est dans ce temps de la mémoire, dans cet itinéraire du retour des souvenirs à la conscience que le
film entier se place. Par le décalage entre la bande son et la bande visuelle est maintenu le flottement
temporel du souvenir, mais aussi son évanescence, son irréalité et donc l'impossibilité de le représenter"
(36).
[52] I treat the actual and virtual in the next chapter.

But is it possible to have a memory of the present? Is it cinematographically possible to film a memory of the present?[53] In *LFDG* layers of time touch, but Duras has only begun her interrogation of pushing the spatio-temporal limits of the cinematographic apparatus: "L'image absente du film, c'est le film. Ce qui se passe au-dehors du cinéma rejoint ce qui se passe au dedans. L'image est double: absente mais présente à la fois, dans un rapport mystérieux" (Vogt 179). With *Le Navire Night* Duras goes one step further, another step *outside* as she inserts the *hors-cadre,* which includes the text into the film and vice versa.

Le Navire Night: between hors-champ, hors-cadre, text, and film

We began this chapter with the puzzling conundrum that the disorienting image from *Le Navire Night* poses to a spectator of the film: a mirror reflecting the exterior clouded night sky; the bright production lamp that bathes the doorway making it difficult to discern what is outside or inside. [54]

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[53] See Chapter 5.

[54] Ishaghpour argues for this shot that Duras wishes to convey "'ceci est un nuage,' rien d'autre" (269). But Ishaghpour seems to forget that it is *not* a cloud that Duras films but the image of its reflection in a mirror, thus a representation of a cloud's image. Limam-Tnani interprets the *mise en abyme*-like phenomenon in *Moderato Cantabile* in the following way: "Ce phénomène dépasse le procédé de la mise en abîme et le pervertit: la valeur synecdochique qui définit celle-ci et permet selon Lucien Dallenbach de distinguer avec précision le contenant et le contenu, l'imitant et l'imité, est dans *Moderato Cantabile* minée" (38). She continues, now speaking of *India Song*, "telle qu'elle est conçue, l'image perd cette fonction représentative et cette valeur cognitive qui, au cinéma, lui sont pourtant inhérentes; elle devient donc une combinaison de figures. La fonction cognitive des images [...] est ici neutralisée par le jeu de la réflexion: difficulté de distinguer la chose de son reflet, difficulté d'attribuer un sens précis aux images" (47).

I will outline in this case study of the text-film pair *Le Navire Night,* Duras does not seek to destroy cinema by revealing its *hors-cadre,* she brings the *hors-cadre*, the film – "l'image absente du film, c'est le film" – into the film.

In his critical book on the text, *Le Navire Night*, Bernard Alazet defines four narrative levels: the narrative situation between Duras and Benoît Jacquot (whose dialogue constitutes the text); Duras speaks of her trip in Greece; Duras relates the story that a certain J.M. told her about his telephonic relationship with F.; what J.M actually said. There exist many more layers: namely the film inside the text and the text inside the film.

Critics see the text, *Le Navire Night,* as a dialogue between the two voices of Duras and Jacquot (Maritchick, Alazet, Royer). Yet closer analysis reveals problems with this designation. It is not entirely certain in the text that there are two speakers, nor who the speakers are, nor who is speaking when; a reader would only know this from having seen the film. But, if we take into account the voices in the film, a new situation appears between two additional non identified male and female voices that seem to double the voices of Duras and Jacquot: shot 13, 14'39: "[Jacquot] Neuilly sans fin autour d'elle./ - [Duras] Autour d'elle l'image noire./ [a different man's voice] Neuilly sans fin autour d'elle./ - [a different woman's voice] Autour d'elle l'image noire." The doubt raised to characterizing this system of voices as a dialogue between two people, evidenced by this one example, can be further reinforced when we consider other conventional markers of voice. If we just look at the text, how is a reader to tell from the first sentence, "– Je vous avais dit […]," that this "vous" is really Jacquot? A reader familiar with Duras's work knows that sometimes a narrator will address him/herself to a "vous" not present and ask

and answer his/her own questions.[55] One can also remark that alternation between

speakers suggested by a preceding dash does not always correspond when we listen to the

film's dialogue: sometimes there is no change in voice for an "utterance" preceded by a

dash, and inversely, sometimes the voice changes in the film without any typographical

change in the text (pages 24-26). Furthermore, the *mise en page,* consisting of short

paragraphs and short lines separated by an abundance of blank space, suggests that this

layout on the page has more to do with a visual affect, the rhythm of the text, and the play

of voice and silence, than it does with ordering a dialogue.
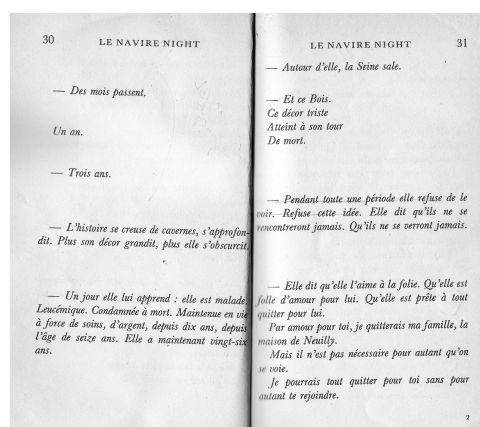
Similarly, if we try to generalize the blank space as punctuating a cut in the film, this also

proves unpredictable.

The only other typographical indicator is a change from roman font to italics. This

change suggests a passage to the embedded narrative of J.M.[56] Yet even this designation

is inconsistent. One enunciation preceded by a "–" begins, "*Elle dit qu'elle l'aime à la*

folie […]," but then a curious repetition follows in the text. A section on the next page

duplicates the preceding passage in <u>unitalicized</u> font. Two asterisks explain: for the

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[55] For example, *Aurélia Steiner* (1979) and *Détruire dit-elle* (1969).
[56] For more on the typography particularly in *Le Navire Night* see Youlia Maritchik's dissertation, "Les Formes hybrides de l'écriture dans le roman contemporain."

italicized passage, "* Texte dit," and for the repeated passage, "** Texte lu sur un tableau noir" (32). These two indications correspond, in fact, to an insertion of a *hors-cadre* into the film, which in turn implies an intrusion of the film into the text.
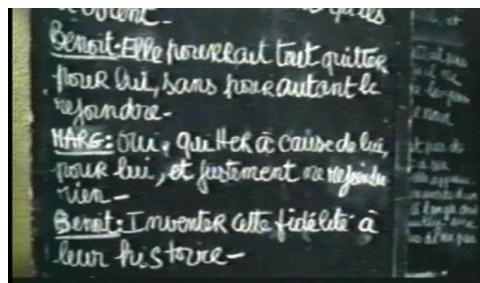
We must therefore add other additional layers to Alazet's four categories in order to take into account, in the text itself, the intrusion of the film itself:

> – *Ce territoire de Paris la nuit, insomniaque, c'est la mer sur laquelle passe le Night. Ce film. Cette dérive qu'on a appelée ainsi: le Navire Night.*
> *Rien dans le jour ne se voit de la nuit ce passage.*
> *[...]*
> *Les mouvements du Navire Night devraient témoigner d'autres mouvements qui se produiraient ailleurs et qui seraient de nature différente* (my underline, 32).

Either the film *Le Navire Night,* mentioned here in this quotation, inserts itself into the text, or the text we are reading called *Le Navire Night* has turned into the film (indicated by "*ce* film," which is negated in the end: " - Vous aviez parlé d'un film aussi. / - Oui…le film…le film n'a pas été tourné…").[57] On one hand, the film precedes the book's publication, but on the other, the film necessitates a script, thus a text before or during shooting the film (indicated by the image of a script written on the blackboard). Chicken or egg, text or film? Ropars-Wuilleumier offers: "L'avant sera après, l'après était avant,

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[57] As the title *Écrire l'effacement* suggests, Alazet deals with erasure, negation and repetition in the text (but does not address the film). It is an interesting topic, but because it has been extensively written about elsewhere, I will not further pursue the point, focusing more instead on how the text and film intersect and work together, rather than "destroying" or "negating" the other. For more on Duras's films as repetition, rewriting, destruction, etc. See also Julie Beaulieu's dissertation, "L'Entrécriture dans l'œuvre de Marguerite Duras: Texte, théâtre, film," and Joan Copjec's article on *India Song*: "*India Song/Son Nom de Venise Dans Calcutta Désert*: The Compulsion to Repeat."

mais on ne le sait qu'après coup. Le film ne peut se voir au présent qu'en se revoyant

comme déjà passé, donc dans le souvenir-effacement d'un passage par définition hors de

soi" ("La pensée du dehors" 26). Text and film turn simultaneously one around the other

and interweave in a circuit of indiscernibility. Adding to this supplementary layer of the

film in the text, we must, if we are to believe the text, add another level, one "d'autres

mouvements qui se produiraient ailleurs." This esoteric passage blurs coexisting layers:

> *Le texte des voix dit les yeux fermés.*
>
> *Aucune image sur le texte du désir?*
>
> *Laquelle?*
>
> *Je ne vois pas laquelle.*
>
> *Alors il n'y a rien à voir.*
>
> *Rien. Aucune image.*
> *Le Navire Night est face à la nuit des temps.*
>
> *Aveugle, avance.*
> *Sur la mer d'encre noire.*
>
> *Le Navire Night vient d'entrer dans son histoire* (28).[58]

What is *Le Navire Night?* Whose "histoire" is it entering into? Its own? The story J.M

and F. who never meet, hence "aucune image"? The story of the text or the "texte des

voix" where there is no image? The story of the film that does not represent J.M. and F.?

Now taking into consideration only the film, five levels can be added.[59] The first one

concerns an interior of a house, which shows the film's shooting: the actor's makeup; the

set; the lighting; a man sitting at a piano that could be playing the extradigetic music; the

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[58] Incidentally, with "Rien. Aucune Image," the actress Bulle Ogier closes her eyes.
[59] I set aside the voices as their exchange reproduces the words printed in the text. For these quotations, I include the page number where they are found in the text.

blackboard where the script is written (but not said or read out loud by the voices); blank screens.
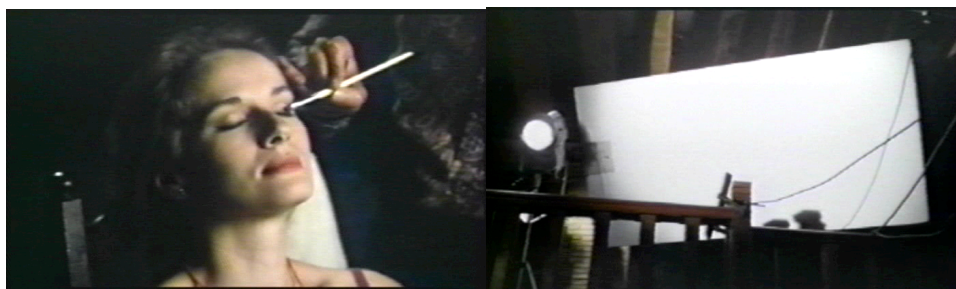
Ishaghpour reads these images and the black shot in the following way:

> L'image noire renvoie au processus interne du film, à son devenir, comme œuvre d'art: passage du lyrisme pur à l'ironie. Cette dimension ironique est d'ailleurs « exposée » comme les autres éléments du *Navire Night*, elle renvoie immédiatement au matériau. Il n'y a pas de simulacre, de figuration seconde comme effet de matériau, mais l'exposition du matériau comme absence de figuration (*La Parole* 278). [60]

My analysis will show, however, that in fact, Duras fictionalizes the filming of the film by interweaving these narrative themes. Duras's representation of the *hors-champ/hors-cadre* is not so much a game she plays with the spectator. Instead, the shooting of the film*,* this outside narrative layer, becomes absorbed into and interwoven into the *histoire* of *Le Navire Night*.

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[60] See also Pascal Bonitzer, *Le Champ Aveugle* who explains for films that remind the spectator that what he/she is watching is a just a film*:* "Dans de tels films, le cinéma se retourne sur lui-même, comme s'il essayait de saisir l'objet-cause de son désir, qui est le regard imaginé au champ absent. De diverses manières il fait exister ce regard comme un personnage en plus: la caméra elle-même peut devenir un personnage... l'espace du film alors ne devient pas plus 'réaliste' ou plus 'matérialiste' pour autant, au contraire, il en devient d'autant plus métaphysique et fantastique... Alors le regard, le regard qui vient du champ absent - cet éternel Absent du champ qui disparaît dans la collure du champ-contrechamp...au lieu de jouer comme l'élément caché...devient l'objet même du jeu cinématographique. L'espace du cinéma s'y avère troué de part en part. Qu'est-ce qui revient, qu'est-ce qui fait retour par ces 'trous' du réalisme technique, à la faveur de la désaturation du champ filmique? Des fantômes: les fantômes du regard et de la voix qui hantent et hallucinent les bords de l'image" (106). He continues: "Le cinéma est donc ici pris comme un espace de faux-semblants, de trompe-l'œil en tous genres. L'aveuglement du public aux ressorts secrets de la machinerie devient le prétexte d'un jeu, non seulement avec la perspective, comme cela a pu être le cas en peinture, mais avec tout l'espace du cinéma, y compris l'espace sonore, y compris l'espace off, le hors-champ où prennent racine toutes les équivoques, toutes les inquiétudes, tous les désirs que le cinéma anime" (113).

Directly opposed to interior shots that frame the *hors-cadre,* are exterior shots that we can group in three levels: extreme long shots of Paris; museum buildings; parks and streets.[61]

Indeed these different types of shots are autonomous because no narrative link is established between them, whether it be, for example, between a museum and a pan over a park, or between an image of an empty street and an extreme long shot of Paris. These different levels do interact, however, when we bring in the soundtrack and the voices: the images of museums evoke the trip to Athens; the camera's pans over parks and streets evoke J.M.'s searching for F..[62]

Sound and voice may thus link these images, but just as often sound and image do not harmonize, or if they do, it is in a contradictory manner. At the beginning of the film, over a black screen Duras's voice says: "Je vous avait dit qu'il fallait voir," creating a

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[61] The outside images do not represent any character or person.

[62] Pascal Bonitzer reminds us of Koulechov's findings: "Les expériences de Koulechov sont célèbres pour avoir mis en évidence les automatismes de la perception des spectateurs, au niveau du montage des plans... Bref, l'effet Koulechov fait apparaître que c'est le spectateur qui fait spontanément le raccord et postule la contiguïté, l'homogénéité des bouts hétérogènes montés ensemble" (100).

conflict and injunction of seeing and the fact that there is precisely "nothing" to see. Ishaghpour remarks, "s'il 'faut voir,' c'est aussi d'un voir spécifiquement cinématographique qu'il s'agit" (285). This command is, however, in the imperfect: the black image that the film shows is thus not necessarily dysphoric but illustrates another temporality where a "vous" – possibly the spectator-reader – was not seeing.

In yet another way, Duras manages to reconnect in the spectator-reader's perception what she at first had appeared to disconnect. The images of a cloudy Paris certainly do not correspond to a sunny Athens that Duras's voice discusses:

> Que vers *midi le silence* qui se fait sur Athènes est tel…avec *la chaleur* qui grandit…
> La ville *se vide* à l'heure de la sieste, tout ferme comme *la nuit*…
> …qu'il fallait assister à la montée du *silence*…
>
> Je me souviens, je vous ai dit: peu à peu on se demande ce qui arrive, cette *disparition du son* avec la montée du *soleil*…

In reality, this "vide," this "disparition du son," this "silence" and "nuit" can absolutely be incarnated by the black image that precedes the long shot over Paris, provoking yet another disjunction of temporal order. Then, from the spectator's memory, for the following image of Paris, the black image could superimpose itself upon this image of Paris, thus relinking what was initially disjointed. Moreover, to this view of Paris another black image follows, confirming in a way the spectator's superimposition: the black image, in effect, replaces the view of Paris. Finally, another view of Paris comes, where

this time the obscure sky dominates, thus progressively illustrating "la montée du silence" that Duras's voice spoke of over the first image of Paris, while this time another text is spoken: "C'est *là* que cette peur arrive. Pas celle de la *nuit*, mais comme une peur de la *nuit dans la clarté*. *Le silence de la nuit en plein soleil*. Le *soleil* au zénith et le *silence de la nuit*. Le *silence* au centre du *ciel* et le *silence de la nuit*."

We can understand that the ensemble of these images illustrates this "peur de la nuit dans la clarté." Duras operates a series of progressive slippages, visual and temporal shifts that she even carries out in her text: in the last citation the alliteration of [s] interlaces "silence," "ciel," "soleil," and recomposes a space-time where sun, night, silence, light, and noon are confused, an effect that a simple image of an Athens at noon would have been able to illustrate. Through this lyrical displacement and Duras's tranquilizing voice, the image no longer seems disconnected from the statement. Silence infiltrates the image at the same time as the image emanates from the silence. Through the rhythmic and poetic sentences and the subtle linking of sight and sound (or their lack), what is represented in the image fuses into one esthetic experience in the spectator-reader.

The spectator-reader thus executes a dynamic crossing between sound, image, text and film, a meta-level that "devrai[t] témoigner d'autres mouvements qui se produiraient ailleurs et […] serai[t] de nature différente": in other words, a perceptive summation, inqualifiable and perpetually changing, a sort of triangulation with multiple triangles,

between the spectator-reader and other elements (for example, the triangle

image/text/spectator-reader with the blackboard, or sound/film/spectator-reader in the

case of a voice over a black image, etc). In the first Parisian image described above, a

triangle is formed, whose apex out of frame makes us, spectator-reader, this *hors-cadre*

participating in the triangular experience of *Le Navire Night* upon which we embark.[63]

The film leads outside the film to the actual present space-time of the spectator-reader;

Ishaghpour asserts, "'il fait un mauvais été à Paris, de la brume,' dit Duras pour conclure.

Irruption du hors-champ dans le film qui marque la distance par rapport au mythe et

renvoie au présent, terre de toute expérience mystique" (288).

These contrapuntal touches form throughout the film. At one point the voice states

"c'est la nuit qu'elle appelle," while the image on the screen is at night; "autour

d'elle…ce bois" while the camera pans over a forest; they speak of F.'s "maison de

Neuilly," and the camera looks upon a house from afar; the voices describe J.M's "la

solitude": "Il arrive chez lui. S'engouffre dans le couloir de l'immeuble," while the image

represents the male actor sitting in darkness in a hallway.

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[63] The triangular structure is one that frequently appears in her films and critics have also posited the triangular relationship of desire between characters in her texts. See Marie-Claire Ropars-Wuilleumier's study of *India Song* in *Le Texte Divisé* (1981*)* and *Écraniques* (1990).

Towards the end (after all three actors have finished getting made-up), while not acting, the actors assume properties of the story of J.M. and F. Through an open door, the spectator perceives Bulle Ogier lying bare-breasted while the voices recount how F. left her windows open so that "son lit est ainsi ouvert à tous les regards."

Yet we hear, "il dit maintenant qu'il *aurait pu* trouver la maison de Neuilly s'il *avait voulu voir*," which is followed by a *coupe franche* – thus a virtual representation and simulacra of what he did not see.

If the interior images start becoming the film of the voices, so too does the story of the voices take on properties of the story of the film, *becoming* the film.[64] The characters themselves seem to become confused with us: "Dit-il avoir menti? / – Non. Il dit avoir confondu les moments, les jours, les lieux, ne pas avoir de chronologie [...] / Qu'elle de même, de même que lui, n'aurait pas su si elle était celle de l'histoire ou celle, en *dehors,* qui *regardait* l'histoire" (my emphasis, page 75 of the text). What does this recount if not what constitutes *Le Navire Night*? "Celle qui regardait l'histoire" is not

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[64] Many critics have discussed this state of becoming in Duras's work. Alazet also considers this Nietzschean becoming of the text, *Le Navire Night*.

only Bulle with her eyes closed and open staring into the void, but also none other than the spectator-reader. And we, spectator-readers, situated in front of the screen watching the film, become confused in them, these figures: "On les aurait découverts ici, plongés dans une réflexion commune, très absorbante." This con*fusion* reigns to the point where the reality of the film could be negated: "– Vous aviez parlé d'un film aussi./ – Oui…le film…le film n'a pas été tourné…" punctuated by the final annihilation of the black screen.

This *Navire* [space] *Night* [time] is thus an original cinematographic proposition of space-time, a proposition of disjunction-conjunction, and instead of a filming, according to critics, "l'impossible," the Durassian experience is one of the "incompossible." For Eisenstein, "the essential basic principle of the existence of every work of art is conflict: being as a *constant evolution* from the *interaction* between two *contradictory opposites*. Synthesis that *evolves* from the opposition between thesis and anti-thesis" (161). For Gilles Deleuze, the de-synchronization of the audio and the visual in Duras, "l'héautonomie des deux images *ne supprime pas,* mais renforce la nature audio-visuelle de l'image, elle affermit la conquête de l'audio-visuel" (emphasis added, *L'Image-temps* 330).

Conclusion

In the previous chapter we saw how atmosphere served to abstract narrative from representation: as the narrative became more and more abstract, so did the images. This chapter analyzed in more detail Duras's construction of space-time, the spatio-temporal layering and enfolding of space-time. Duras challenges cinema as a fundamentally linear

medium. She is trying to find a means to get cinema to express four-dimensional space-time. As Duras blurs and interweaves narrative layers, time folds in on itself. As we shall see, throughout her project, space and time are indissociable (a connection that is explicit in phrases such as "leur mémoire est maintenant *dehors*"), and spatial exploration of architectural elements such as walls, corridors, and other in-between places is metaphorically linked to the spaces between still images that moving images are made of (as we will see in the next chapter on *Agatha)*. One by one, Duras's films return to the possibility of evoking the very architecture of cinema—the temporal element that makes it different from photography—by pushing the boundaries of the limited audiovisual means the apparatus affords her.

LFDG is a film that stays in the past, even when in the present. In oscillating between interior and exterior, skirting along the membrane and suspended in-between, Duras reveals the gap, the interval. We will continue to explore the interval in the next two chapters. Duras will continue to push the Klein bottle circuit of outside and inside established here, which will be carried out to the actual-virtual circuit and indeterminate space in *Agatha* and *HA.* In *LFDG,* the space-time is clear, we are in S. Thala. In *Agatha,* though filmed in the exact same location (Trouville), in the same hotel, on the same beach, we are no longer in a "S. Thala" but an any-space-whatever. In *Agatha* we are no longer concerned with a *separation* of interior and exterior, nor of their reversal and Klein bottle sameness of container and contained, but the interval, the in-between space, a zone of indetermination, which Deleuze refers to as *l'espace quelconque*. It is this interval and the potential contained within it that most fully realizes the project of

providing an abstract representation of time and consequently, also realizes the full

potential of cinema as an art form.

Chapter 4
The Paradox of the Image: The In-between or Coalescence of Actual and Virtual

The film *Agatha et les lectures illimitées* (1981) opens with the reading of a text.
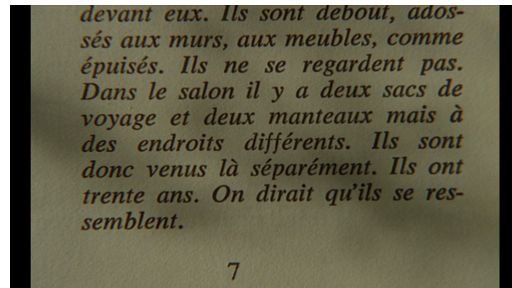
The material text, dappled by various shadows, scrolls vertically upward across the screen, showing what appear to be stage directions: "C'est un salon. […] On entend le bruit de la mer. […] Il y a là un homme et une femme. […] Ils sont très étrangers au fait de notre présence devant eux. […] Ils sont venus donc là séparément. Ils ont trente ans. On dirait qu'ils se ressemblent." The on-screen text is the first page from Duras's publication, *Agatha* (1981). Duras highlights the text's importance by physically incorporating it in the first image of the film: "Le texte dit tout. La totalité du potentiel cinématographique contient le texte, est dit par lui, par le texte. […] Tout ce que je fais, c'est accompagner le texte, par l'image," Duras declares in an interview for a press conference on *Agatha* (*Pléiade III* 1153). Nevertheless, instead of following the image of this text with images that illustrate the scene described by the words, Duras cuts to black and then to an obscure corridor framed by a closed double door leading to the sea.
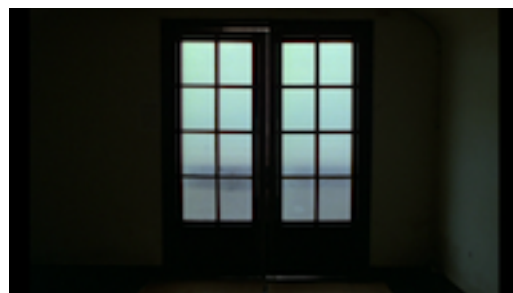
With this move, instead of fulfilling the expectation to set spectator-readers in a scene, Duras refuses to include the expected image, effectively negating the primacy of the text, its ability to represent. Although the recurring adverb *là* in the text's opening insists on an actual present time and place, *là* becomes emptied of meaning because the image refuses to represent the implied place. [1] Much as she does in the films analyzed up to this point, Duras once again begins this film with an insertion of a foreign, outside presence – in this case, the text – that jeopardizes the nature of the image on the screen and destabilizes the spectator-reader's perception: "Où est-on?/ Dans un hôtel, par exemple" (*Détruire*, chapter one*)*; the atmospheric image (chapter two); the *hors-cadre* filmed in *Le Navire Night* (chapter three); "Vous ne regarderez pas la caméra" (*L'Homme Atlantique*, chapter five*)*. *Agatha et les lectures illimitées* is no exception. In the above example, instead of aligning its referent with the referent of the text, the image's referent is the text itself.

In the film *Agatha,* we are confronted with a film that opens with an image of the first page of the text and yet does not represent what the text says, with spatial and temporal discontinuity, with characters who do not appear to perceive or remember as conventional people do. As we have witnessed throughout Duras's corpus, it is thus perhaps unnecessary to state, as Michelle Royer does, that "*Agatha* dénonce l'illusion réaliste" (*L'Écran* 70). Presented with disconnected shots and fragmented space, the spectator finds himself unable to tie the pieces together and construct a coherent impression of the ensemble; what remains are intervals, the in-betweens. It is my contention in this chapter that the above conundrum cannot be fully explained by the idea

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[1] The *Trésor de la Langue Française* states: "Adverbe de lieu (plus rarement de temps) marquant le lieu où se trouve le locuteur ou un lieu plus ou moins éloigné de lui. *Là* se réfère au dire en tant que tel et désigne le lieu où se passe l'acte d'énonciation, où se trouve le locuteur. À l'endroit (point ou espace circonscrit dont l'étendue peut être variable) où se trouve le locuteur" (emphasis added). It also provides the definition, "Être physiquement ou spirituellement présent."

of negation between image and text or a destruction of the text, as the title of Catherine

Dhavernas's article indicates, "Cinema and the destruction of the text in the work of

Marguerite Duras." Durassian critics such as Sarah Gaspari and Bernard Alazet have seen

Duras's "réécritures" as a relationship of construction/destruction (Gaspari) or erasure

(Alazet). Though Duras's abundant use of a language of negation – "Tu n'as rien vu à

Hiroshima. Rien" or the title *Détruire dit-elle* – easily invites this direction of analysis,

these conclusions do not go to the heart of Duras's cinematographic project to reach "la

totalité du potentiel cinématographique" which, certainly, "contient le texte" – a before

that is not *là* – and which also includes the spectator-reader – an after that is not *there*

either. I would argue that Duras is trying to escape the constraints of text and film, and of

time. The author is attempting to find a cinematic form of expression of time in order to

resolve one of the great questions of cinema. Instead of the negation of text by image, I

suggest we consider the notion of in-betweenness central to Duras's work and a strategy

Duras uses to arrive at this goal.[2]

In her *œuvre*, Duras constructs places and times that lack internal continuity (they

are disconnected from one another within the diegesis). In *Agatha* specifically, Duras

shows the in-between places, the gap, the interval, and it is in the interval that she

constructs an abstract representation of Time. By filming the in-between itself – intervals,

interstices, corridors – Duras makes it impossible with these disconnections to distinguish

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[2] Ishaghpour puts forth a similar argument for Duras's film *Aurélia Steiner Vancouver*: "Il ne s'agit pas d'un retour épiphanique à l'être-là ici et maintenant, mais de la piété envers le passé et les trépassées et de la tension vers l'avenir spécifique du 'non-être-ici'" (*La Parole* 296) – in other words, the in-between.

the before and after, the present and the past, or the actual and the virtual. [3] Ultimately,

her interest in intervals here is part of her broader project to re-conceive cinematic time.

As I will demonstrate in this chapter, the reasons behind Duras's dissociated

images in *Agatha* come into clear focus when viewed in light of Gilles Deleuze's "any-

space-whatever," and Raymond Bellour's description of the "entre-images." *Agatha's*

indefinite, in-between images allow Duras to escape certain conceptual constraints of

classical cinema. Bellour describes the *entre-images* in a way that makes clear the

connection between the spatial interval between images and the temporal nature of

cinema:

> L'entre-images est ainsi (virtuellement) l'espace de tous ces passages. Un lieu
> physique et mental, multiple. A la fois très visible et secrètement immergé dans
> les œuvres remodelant notre corps intérieur pour lui prescrire de nouvelles
> positions, il opère entre les images, au sens très général et toujours singulier du
> terme. Flottant entre deux photogrammes comme entre deux écrans, entre deux
> épaisseurs de matière comme entre deux vitesses, il est peu assignable: il est la
> variation et la dispersion même. C'est ainsi que les images désormais nous
> parviennent, l'espace dans lequel il faut décider quelles sont les vraies images,
> c'est-à-dire une réalité du monde aussi virtuelle et abstraite soit-elle, une réalité
> d'une image comme monde possible. (12*)*

For Bellour, the spaces between images are those of possibility and pure potential,

intervals that closely resemble what Deleuze calls the *espace quelconque*: "l'espace n'est

plus tel ou tel espace déterminé, il est devenu *espace quelconque*" (*L'Image-mouvement*

151). This indeterminate space, full of potential, is the result of the indiscernibility of

actual images and virtual images. For the purposes of this chapter on cinematographic

time, I understand the "actual" as the state of being in the temporal "present" and the

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[3] To fully take into account what Duras could envision by total potentiality, it is necessary to factor in the other film shot simultaneously alongside *Agatha*, *Duras filme*, which documents the shooting of *Agatha* and where the spectator bears witness to Duras as director, as actor, and also as spectator-reader: "C'est moi la caméra," Duras cries. For more on *Duras filme*, see Joëlle Pagès-Pindon, *Le Livre Dit*. *Le Livre Dit* is a transcription and commentary on the outtakes, also called "les rushes," of *Duras filme*. Pagès-Pindon's publication derives from her discovery of these "rushes" and an unedited manuscript for a book project Duras herself had envisioned from these "rushes," entitled *Le Livre Dit*.

"virtual" as that which evokes other moments in space-time (an image of the past, a flashback, an imagined or dreamed image, a future image, or simply a reflection).[4] However, the two are not, as Deleuze points out, necessarily mutually exclusive, and, in fact, the actual image, when incorporated in the virtual or vice versa, forms a circuit of indiscernibility. Duras, with her cinematic space-time, makes explicit the indiscernibility of actual and virtual images in order to realize her project of bringing cinema to its full potential; as actual and virtual correspond to diegetic present and past, respectively, then indiscernibility between them concerns moments in which time folds in on itself. In *Agatha,* Duras constructs a space that functions like an any-space-whatever which constitutes the conditions whereby time escapes the mechanical linear unfolding of images to give a direct image of time.

Faced with Duras's texts and films that present complex and poetic structures, critics tend to stop short in their conclusions: "Anti-réaliste comme nous l'avons dit, il [the film, *Agatha*] est anti-narratif, en ce sens qu'il empêche délibérément l'interprétation logique d'une histoire" (Royer, *L'Écran* 72). The "any-space-whatever" concept is important because it offers a new way to understand what Duras is trying to achieve. The logical organization of the chapter moves from an analysis of space in *Agatha* as an any-space-whatever to its consequences. I will first define "l'espace quelconque" and the reasons why this notion applies to the film *Agatha*. In an analysis of the filmic space (framing and colors), the figures that haunt it, and the sound-image relationship, we can read *Agatha* as an any-space whatever. We will see examples of how space is

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[4] Deleuze never explicitly provides a strict definition of these terms that resurface throughout his corpus. My definitions stem from Deleuze's exploration of "time-images" in cinema (*L'Image-temps*). See also his essay "L'Actuel et le virtuel" in *Dialogues,* 1996. For further explanation of Deleuze's conceptualization of time and cinema see, for example, David Norman, *Gilles Deleuze's Time Machine;* Roland Bogue, *Deleuze on Cinema;* or Dork Zabunyan, *Gilles Deleuze: Voir, parler, penser au risque du cinéma*.

disconnected (spatio-temporally) and how these figures (they are no longer "characters") are disconnected. Space is both divided physically and removed from any context. Non-totalizable, it remains indiscernible. As a result, the spectator-reader cannot create linkages; there is a breakdown in the sensory-motor sequence. Duras's images remain in an undefined in-between state and thus render a direct representation of Time.

Agatha et "**l'espace quelconque**"

As the title of the film – *Agatha et les lectures illimitées* – suggests, its images resist any determination; everything is disconnected (images from one other, sound from image, fragmented space, fragmented dialogue, etc.): the emptied beach, the deserted hotel, the immense sea, and the phantom-like figures that haunt these spaces. To borrow Gilles Deleuze's words: "l'espace n'est plus tel ou tel espace déterminé, il est devenu *espace quelconque*" (*L'Image-mouvement* 151). How, then, can one approach an analysis of these disjointed, static, slow images, images that the viewer sees, but that also become themselves perceiving subjects? Michelle Royer asks:

> A quoi donc peuvent s'identifier les spectateurs qui se trouvent face à l'image de ce corps démembré? Incapables de s'identifier à un corps unifié, ils sont entraînés à effectuer à rebours la traversée du miroir et se retrouvent dans un état de confusion, de dispersion, de décentrement. (*L'Écran* 81*)*

Yet to respond to the question, Royer associates the problem to "la phase pré-symbolique, pendant laquelle l'enfant ne peut encore délimiter son corps de celui de sa mère" (*L'Écran* 81*).* As previously stated, I do not discredit previous Lacanian readings of Duras, but wish to propose a different lens other than psychoanalysis through which we can approach Duras's images.

Little exists in Duras criticism on *Agatha* (for the text and even less for the film). Scholars have mainly searched for meaning through the gender and incest issues in the narrative. Indeed, *Agatha* is inspired by Robert Musil's opus *L'Homme sans qualités,* a strong intertext for *Agatha* (perhaps so is Duras's next text-film pair *L'Homme Atlantique,* suggestive of Musil's title, which was conceived of contemporaneously with *Agatha*). Michelle Royer has analyzed *Agatha's* silence and blanks (*L'Écran*). For her, silence functions to disorient, to fragment. In a manner similar to Marie-Claire Ropars-Wuilleumier (Royer's title is evocative of the film theorist's critical work *L'Écran de la mémoire),* Royer ends up passing by way of cinema to arrive at the text: "Exemple typique d'écriture durassienne, aux segments courts et indépendants. Ils se suivent sans coordination comme une suite de plans fixes" (64). But what does Duras's construction of these "plans fixes" tell us? What do the images have to say? To study these illusory images, Deleuze provides the means and taxonomy to perform such a study.

Spatial Discontinuity

Disconnected geographical space

"La première forme de l'espace quelconque [est l']espace déconnecté," declares Deleuze (*Image-Temps* 16). The basic questions "where" and "when" are impossible to answer in an any-space-whatever: "l'espace n'est plus […] déterminé, il est devenu espace quelconque." In the film *Agatha,* various localities are certainly shown (a hotel, a city, a beach), but it is unclear where the film's diegesis is situated in time and/or space.[5]

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[5] Deleuze affirms that he uses Pascal Augé's term (*Movement-Image* 109), but does not provide a reference, leading to misinterpretations among scholars of Deleuze's term and Augé's. To be clear, as Deleuze defines it in *The Movement-Image*, it is not a non-place; neither is it an "abstract universal, in all times, in all places" (*Movement-Image* 109). "[I]t is a perfectly singular space, which has merely lost its homogeneity, that is,

In her section on *Moderato Cantabile,* Najet Limam-Tnani attests to "l'indétermination

géographique" in Duras's work:

> L'illusion référentielle est étouffée et déjouée par le refus du vraisemblable
> l'incohérence de l'espace, et le refus de l'ancrage géographique […] L'image et
> les mots, matériaux respectifs du cinéma et du roman, induisent deux manières
> distinctes et même opposées d'appréhender l'espace : l'une synthétique et
> globale, et l'autre analytique et fragmentaire (86*)*.

The critic continues to describe for Duras's films "l'objet sans environnement," "l'image

fixe," "le champ vide." Indeed, in *Agatha*, places are empty, voided. Even when a human

presence is in the image, this person appears absent. Vacuity itself becomes a power and

force in the film, as evidenced by the images below.

The naked beach and the immense deserted landscape make it impossible to tell where

the "river" leads and ends: "En contraste avec la mer, les plages ne sont animées d'aucun

mouvement. Stériles, fixes, désertiques, elles sont pure matière. […] Mais, partout, elles

évoquent le manque" (Royer, *L'Écran* 94*)*.[6] In other words, "The any-space-whatever

[…] achieved a second form: empty or deserted space" (*Time-Image* 9*)*. The vacant city,

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the principle of its metric relations or the connection of its own parts, so that the linkages can be made in an
infinite number of ways. It is a space of virtual conjunction, grasped as pure locus of the possible"
(*Movement-Image* 109).

[6] Royer, like other critics, sees the river as a metaphor for both the passage of time and the writing process
itself: "Le fleuve traditionnellement apte à représenter le lent écoulement du temps, le voyage de la vie, son
symbolisme s'accorde de surcroît chez Duras avec les thèmes de l'errance et de l'exploration des méandres
de la mémoire […] Le fleuve annonce la mer" (*L'Écran* 93*)*.

the close-ups of sand, shells, and sky, and the black frames further disconnect

geographical space from spatial reference points.

The black screens expose the void and, intercalated as they always are by an irrational

cut, seek to undo space, to divide it, and break with temporal coordinates, destroying any

hope of temporal continuity. Film theorist Jean-Louis Baudry was the first to point out

that the specificity of the filmic medium lies in creating the illusion of continuity ("Le

Dispositif"). The black frame in Duras, however, breaks this illusion, according to

Michelle Royer. She argues:

> [Le plan noir] rappelle que le cinéma vit de la différence niée (la différence est
> nécessaire à sa vie, mais il vit de sa négation). Casser la continuité de la bande
> visuelle c'est marquer la différence entre les plans et donc mettre en lumière la
> fragmentation originelle du film. C'est rappeler que la bande visuelle est formée
> de séries d'images distinctes qui sont artificiellement découpées, jointes, collées
> pour créer le sens. (*L'Écran* 79)

But Duras's interstitial frames cannot be "collées pour créer le sens." In the any-space-

whatever, "visual framing is now defined less by the choice of a pre-existing side of the

visible object than by the invention of a point of view which disconnects the sides, or

establishes a void between them, in such a way as to extract a pure space, an any-space-

whatever, from the space given in objects" (Deleuze, *Time-Image* 251*).*

On the geographic level, through framing and montage, Duras divides space into sections that are curiously symmetrical. The first image of the lobby shows us two windows separated by a row of pillars. These pillars, due to the angle at which the image is framed, create a diagonal line. A jump cut interrupts the shot and is followed by an image framed as if it were an exact reflection of the previous shot.
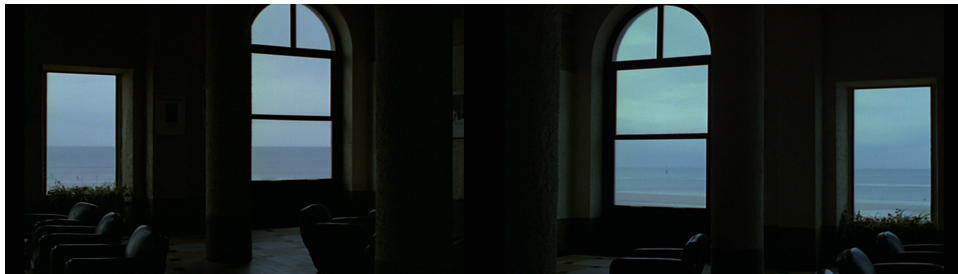
The camera begins to pan left, which would conventionally serve to create a comprehension of the space and a spatial fluidity, but such is not the case. In fact, it reminds the spectator of the fact that, as Bonitzer informs us in *Le Champ aveugle*, "un travelling est un ensemble de plans successifs (chaque image ou presque correspondant à un point de vue différent), tout comme un cercle est une succession de lignes droites" (20).[7] The pan concludes by framing a pillar in the center of the image, and the lobby appears to continue farther to another set of mirrors, exactly like the ones from the beginning of the shot. The pillar interrupts the image in such a way that the spectator is

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[7] Janice Morgan similarly argues for Duras's film *Nathalie Granger* in "The Caméra-stylo of Marguerite Duras: The Translation of a Literary Aesthetic into Film," "In conjunction with this tracking motion, the frequent use of mirror-images produces startling symmetries within the frame, often disorienting our sense of spatial unity. These kinds of subtle motions and dislocations give the film a penetrating, probing quality – one that rejects surface, conventional meanings and searches for connection and meaning on another level" (37). Michelle Royer sees Duras's tracking shots, again like the river, as a metaphor for the writing process: "Si le travelling tient une telle place dans un grand nombre des films de Duras, c'est peut-être qu'il est lui-même particulièrement apte à mimer le geste scriptural" (*L'Écran* 101). In *India Song*, "Le panoramique semble donc prendre l'écriture sur le vif, accompagner le geste scriptural. La caresse de la caméra sur la carte de chair rose striée de lignes noires retrace l'exploration d'une géographie de l'inconscient par l'écriture" (*L'Écran* 101*).*

not aware that there is in fact a mirror along the wall, rendering the impression of the extended lobby, a move which, in addition to the disjointed pan, puts Bonitzer's statement about depth-of-field in a new light: "la profondeur du champ met en question l'unité du plan" (*Le Champ aveugle* 21). Interestingly, this pillar divides the frame in two halves, producing a repetition – a suturing of the previous shot and the beginning of this one below.

Christine Buignet explains that for *India Song*:

> Le grand miroir, d'abord invisible, contribue à multiplier dédoublements et profondeurs, déréalisant la logique spatiale et troublant les directions de regard des personnages. […] Ces détournements – et bien d'autres –, démultipliant les niveaux de récit, déstabilisent la réception, amplifiant encore la disjonction première entre bande image et bande son (208).

The following seven shots alternate between static shots of framed windows and black frames. In this fashion, Duras will present the different spaces of the film.

Outside the hotel, the spectator is confronted with the same geographic disorientation through various framing and editing techniques. Duras presents us portions of the surrounding exterior in static intervals.

These unconnected shots fragment space; the spectator finds him/herself unable to tie the

pieces together and construct a coherent impression of the ensemble. Images of walls and

windows, due to their hybrid nature, place the spectator in a liminal space where he/she is

constantly directed *hors-champs*, daring the viewer to seek behind the wall, frame, and

screen to try to invent a rational set of *hors-champs* that would tie all these pieces

together in a coherent floor plan. Royer describes space in *Agatha* as follows:

> Nous pensions être dehors, nous sommes dedans. Changement de lieu,
> changement complet d'univers mental . . . Duras se joue souvent ainsi de notre
> naïveté de spectateur. Elle semble vouloir nous rappeler sans cesse que nous
> sommes au cinéma, que le cinéma ne cesse de manipuler nos perceptions et que
> nous devons assumer notre responsabilité dans la construction de la fiction en
> adoptant une position imaginaire par rapport à l'espace du film. (*L'Écran* 70*)*

Images of the sea –which Duras frequently calls a *gouffre* – suggest the vast and seemingly infinite range of the "gouffre," and yet the sea is only a horizontal strip, disturbingly confined by the limits of the screen.

Interestingly, Duras further couches the images of the sea within another frame, in a *mise en abyme* (to which we will return shortly). The image is divided into layers between sand, sea, and sky, always varyingly stratified based on the climatic conditions.

At times the respective layers are distinct, while at other times the layers are blurred; sea and sky mix together.

We can understand these layered images in terms of the layers representing layers of time (as I will explain in more detail later). Royer describes "des couches de réel" in Duras's work (but fails to make the connection between these layers and Duras's stratigraphic images):

> Des couches de réel. C'est comme si une première couche de réel était partie et qu'une deuxième couche apparaisse dans le film, et qu'il faille la lire, la décrypter. Décryptage métaphorisé par les jeux de lumière et d'obscurité et le mouvement de la caméra fouillant parmi les décombres, à la recherche des vestiges d'un passé très lointain. C'est à la façon de l'archéologue que Duras s'acharne à toujours gratter de nouvelle couches de réel afin de dénicher dans les zones obscures de la mémoire, qui seules la fascinent, les traces enfouies d'événements oubliés, pour enfin les détruire par la lumière qu'elle portera sur elles. (*L'Écran* 87)

Yet *Agatha* presents us with disjointed pieces and layers which are disconnected from any referent to "reality," as Ishaghpour argues for *LFDG,* "Ainsi, malgré le plein de la surface de l'écran, toute chose est projetée dans le non-lieu, le non-temps et l'entre-deux des images. Ce qui vient du miroir vient d'un autre temps, d'un autre lieu, il vient à la rencontre ou s'en va vers le fond" (243). Instead, like the river running diagonally towards the sea, where it is impossible to distinguish where the one begins and the other ends, Duras "gliss[e] d'un espace virtuel à un autre" (Meurée, "Habiter le temps qui s'écoule" 56). The author blurs *le temps* in both its meteorological and temporal senses, to use the words of Christophe Meurée in his article on how weather functions in Duras's novel *Dix heures et demie du soir en été,* "Duras s'ingénie à nous donner à voir le temps,

à le matérialiser" ("Habiter" 56). While Duras figuratively achieves this in the text *Dix heures*, in the images of *Agatha,* as we will continue to see in this chapter, Duras literally "nous donn[e] à voir le temps" (emphasis added) as she materializes time in these direct images of time.

In short, for these spaces – the lobby, the villa, the city and sea, the hall of mirrors, and the images that create diagonal lines to give the visual impression of infinity – the spectator cannot connect together the individual pieces and create some understanding of the filmed space, a complete comprehension of the whole. It would require a considerable effort of the imagination:

> Le spectateur ne peut plus parfaitement "suturer" l'espace en suppléant par l'imagination ce que la caméra ne montre pas. L'espace imaginaire dans lequel il doit se placer pour saisir la scène qui s'offre à lui devient instable, voire indéterminable. Où suis-je? Qu'est-ce que je regarde? et qui est « je » qui regarde ? […] Totale incertitude de point de vue…Anti-réaliste comme nous l'avons dit, il est anti-narratif, en ce sens qu'il empêche délibérément l'interprétation logique d'une histoire. (Royer, *L'Ecran* 72)

Unable to be totaled – "Que vous diriez: illimit[é]*?"* (*Agatha* 63*)* – the any-space-whatever is never actualized and therefore constitutes a pure potentiality.[8]

Disconnected space from action

Another characteristic of the any-space-whatever is the space's disconnection from the action and context of the film. Indeed, in *Agatha*, besides certain displacements of the actors, there is no real discernible action; the spectator cannot link these spaces to an index.[9] Conventionally, text at the opening of a film serves as an authorial voice to

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[8] Unless specified as either text or film, my citations from *Agatha* can be found in both text and film, and I include a page number to where the quotation can be found in the text.

[9] Although the opening shot of the film presents a text that could establish a referent or context for the film (like the well-known opening of *Jeux Interdits),* a spectator unfamiliar with Duras would not know that this text is in fact *Agatha*. What is of more consequence is that a text is shown before anything else, which calls the film's temporality into question. It suggests an *avant,* a time before the film that the spectator is watching.

establish the narrative. Why, then, present this text that includes contextual information,

if it is then immediately negated, establishing in effect a "virtual" film to follow, which

will in turn virtualize the text as other insertions of text periodically appear? Furthermore,

over the fourth shot of a lobby two voices emerge. Expecting a parallel to Duras's other

films, one would assume that these voice-overs would take over the role of narration that

was initiated by the text. However, in contrast to her other films, instead of "narrating"

the film unfolding before us (like the voices in *LFDG*; see Chapter 3*)*, these voices

discuss their own memories and the present situation: "Nous avons toujours parlé de

partir," utters the voice of Duras. The fourth image of a lobby could very well represent

the lobby to which the text had referred and where the spectator could expect to find

corporeal counterparts to these voices. Yet the atmosphere created suggests either an

ultimate end or beginning of the world (as in the biblical *Genesis* and *Revelations*), so

that the voices come from an indeterminable space, no longer connected to a "S. Thala"

but to an any-space-whatever.

The images evoke a time before and a time after, for even before presenting an

actor on the screen, Duras films close-ups of traces in the sand indicating a previous

presence, a presence that is no longer and, like a ghost, lingers behind.

It is not until shots 21 and 22 that a woman and a man are shown respectively in the

image for the first time. Yet these figures do not seem to occupy the same space-time.

Separate, they never speak, only gaze emptily, apparently unaware of the other's physical presence. Maybe these figures are already dead; maybe they are not even there. One cannot be certain that the two bodies inhabit the hotel at the same time. In the three shots where they are present "together," Duras films them in such a way that they seem to occupy different dimensions.

In the images of their barely perceptible bodies encrusted against the rock wall like statues, a column divides the image into two.[10] Even in the only shot where they appear in the lobby together (shot 92 shown above), their separation is evident. In each of these images one could draw a vertical line down the center of the image directly over the one that already figures in the image.

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[10] We can liken these figures here to statues – commonly filmed by Duras – as they even blend into the stone pillars. Ishaghpour remarks, "Si les pierres et les arbres deviennent des êtres humains, l'être humain aussi devient pierre et arbre et accède ainsi à sa véritable humanité en devenant substance sans nom" (296). Duras's interest in statues and sculptures in her work (*in lieu* of actual people as characters) has yet to be explored in Duras scholarship, save one article (see Catherine Rodgers and Gabriel Jacobs, "Par-delà l'ancien et le moderne: l'intertextualité visuelle et musicale de *Césarée*" in *Les Lectures de Marguerite Duras*. This is a subject I wish to explore in the future, but is out of the scope of this project.

In narrative cinema, "The action-image presupposes a space in which ends, obstacles, means, subordinations, the principle and the secondary […]: a whole space which can be called 'hodological'" (Deleuze, *Time-Image* 203). In the emptied image where characters are absent, have disappeared, or passed into the void, or "le gouffre," to use Duras's word, space is no longer hodological. Linkages to an index, a context, or an action, either within the film or those that a spectator could create, are not possible for there are no longer any spatio-temporal coordinates. All that remains is an amorphous collection of intervals and interstices, independent of time as the images have neither spatial continuity nor narrative continuity.

Disconnected point of view

Without a center, disconnected and idle, figures in an any-space-whatever, Deleuze tells us, do not know how to react. These figures are further removed from the characters in Duras's previous films. Even in *LFDG* where the figures were *creuses* and had no memory, they still had an identity. In *Le Navire Night,* we saw that the story of the film's shooting inside the house with actors who do not act ended up taking on properties or *becoming* the story told by the voices. In *Agatha,* these bodies are even more voided and have no properties. They are presented either staring into the void, or slowly walking throughout the lobby.

In an any-space-whatever, "the characters were objectively emptied: they are suffering less from the absence of another than from their absence from themselves" (Deleuze *Time-Image* 9). *Homme[s] sans qualités*, they are condemned to an endless state of wandering, wait, and weariness, their bodies becoming a developer of time.[11]

In other words, instead of physical movements, we are dealing with displacements in time. The absent body, bearing witness to a before and an after constitutes the Proustian dimension whereby "les personnages et les objets occupent dans le temps une place incommensurable à celle qu'ils tiennent dans l'espace" (Deleuze, *L'Image-temps* 56). As Bulle wanders in the lobby, between two mirrored walls placed at opposite ends of the room infinitely prolonging the perceptible space, her body is impulsively pulled towards these non-walls against which she can support herself from the destabilizing emptied center of the lobby. The voices included, these figures are condemned to ambulate in the interval, in time.

Unaware of each other, of the voices, or of anything, these bodies are in a pure optical and sonorous situation caused by the any-space-whatever; they are all Deleuzian *seers* and *hearers:* "in these any-spaces-whatever a new race of characters was stirring, kind of mutant: they saw rather than acted, they were seers" (Tomlinson, *Time-Image* xi)*.* The voices too frequently repeat "vous voyez," "regardez," "je te vois," etc. In the text *Agatha,* the words "regard," "voir," "yeux," and their grammatical variations are used over 150 times. That being so, two very basic questions are raised at this point: who is looking and at what?

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[11] As we have witnessed in previous chapters, waiting is the quintessential idiosyncratic Durassian condition.

The spatial and hodological disconnection brings us to the final characteristic of the any-space-whatever – the notion of indiscernibility of point of view. As the first shot of a text promises a human presence (“*Il y a là un homme et une femme”),* the spectator waits for a character to appear, but then voices emerge. One could consider the voices to pertain to the indicated characters, but the spectator is doubtful: the text specifies that the characters are in their thirties while the woman’s voice is clearly that of an older woman (Duras’s unmistakable raspy voice). The point of view of the opening shots cannot, therefore, be of the voices nor of the characters indicated by the on-screen text because they should be in a lobby and the next image presents us with a dark hallway. Be that as it may, the woman’s voice (unidentified, indicated by ELLE in the text *Agatha*) says: “Vingt-trois ans, je crois me souvenir. La mer est comme endormie. Il n’y a aucun vent. Il n’y a personne. La plage est lisse comme en hiver. Je vous y vois encore” (9), while the screen shows a winterly image of a smooth sea. Perhaps this is an imagined image, a “recollection-image” as Deleuze calls it, given from the point of view of the voices that evoke this memory. If such were the case, one could understand the interruption by the black intercalated shots to represent the process of memory with all of its jumps, holes, and ellipses. Then we arrive at the first shot of Bulle whose eyes are closed; perhaps the previous images then are subjective images or this woman’s own mental, dreamed images. Perhaps she even imagines the voices. Her eyes begin to open wide with desire, begging the spectator to penetrate her gaze, which incidentally coincides perfectly with the voices that utter, “regarde, je vous regarde” – a “touch” between sound and image. Duras suddenly cuts to Yann standing outside the door of the hallway, the same one that was previously vacant. This sudden cut after a long shot of the woman gazing suggests

that she "sees" this man. Or could it be that now, due to our knowledge of his presence,

images from that location represent his perspective? Or is there another separate outside

eye – that of the camera – as we noticed in her previous films? As a result of the any-

space-whatever, "la distinction du subjectif et de l'objectif, elle tend aussi à perdre de son

importance" (Deleuze, *L'Image-temps* 15). We have moved beyond the

objective/subjective distinction and the question "who." It would be a vain and

impossible undertaking to distinguish the objective from the subjective, the physical from

the mental, the actual from the virtual, the past from the present; all the above – the

possibility of a memory image or a dream-image – instead challenge the notion of time.

Narrative Discontinuity

     If we read *Agatha* as an any-space-whatever, we see that Duras has produced a

film in which narrativity has broken down. If space is disconnected, what remains are

intervals released by irrational cuts. *Agatha* is a film comprised solely of irrational cuts as

in this sequence of independent images (shots 25-33):

In this state, Deleuze declares, "the question is: where do these cuts occur, and what do they consist of?" (*Time-Image* 249).

The voices' dialogue also reflects these irrational cuts. Often, their narration of a memory is interrupted: for example, ELLE recounts her memory when her brother was coming out of the ocean when LUI replies: "Vous savez, je ne peux pas supporter l'idée de ce départ." Here, perception or memory is interrupted; the subject jumps to the present departure. Something brings the narration back to the present, producing an irrational cut.

Interestingly, the voices' incapacity to remember and thus continue narration also corresponds to an inability to *see*: "je ne sais pas," "je crois, je ne sais plus très bien," "je crois aussi, je ne sais plus très bien, je ne suis plus sûre de rien"; "je me souviens de tout ce que vous venez de dire. Je ne me souviens pas l'avoir vu,*"* "tout est si obscur." Interestingly, after ELLE says, "tout est si obscure," a black frame intervenes, evocative of gaps in memory.

While critics interpret Duras's black shots as meaning silence, the void, or destruction, what is more interesting is *how* the black shots function. In *Agatha,* they divide space, cut off perception, and finally divide time. Take, for example, this sequence of shots, 57-63. Bulle walks towards the mirror, considers her image, and turns her head to look at the sea. An alternation follows: black shot; sea; black shot; Bulle back in front of the mirror. She then walks to the window and gazes towards the beach, leaning against the window. Another *plan noir* intervenes. We are next presented with the first image of

a river. In short, we are no longer dealing with a simple jump cut. The black frame,

separating any ties between the preceding or following frames takes on its own

independence, freeing itself, and in freeing itself, it liberates the other frames: "The cut

no longer forms part of one or the other image, of one or the other sequence that it

separates and divides. […] The interval is set free, the interstice becomes irreducible and

stands on its own" (Deleuze, *Time-Image* 278). Each shot is henceforth independent, a

separate interstice, in order to show the interval, the *in-between*.

Images of Time

The Interval: Actual and Virtual images

Taken together, this visual and narrative treatment draws attention to the temporal

nature of cinema, the fact that cinema is made up of still images with spaces between

them. The interval is the first step in illustrating time. It is no longer a question of

overcoming or crossing the black frames, the voids, because the interval no longer has

anything to do with what comes before or after. In fact, all we have in *Agatha* are

intervals. Time being amputated in this way escapes through the interval, and thus, by the

interval revealing itself, is crystallized:

> In these any-spaces-whatever […] what tends to collapse, or at least to lose its
> position, is the sensory-motor schema which constituted the action-image of the
> old cinema. And thanks to this loosening of the sensory-motor linkage, it is time,
> 'a little time in the pure state,' which rises up to the surface of the screen. Time
> ceases to be derived from the movement, it appears in itself. (Tomlinson, *Time-*
> *Image* "Preface" xi)

Take, for example, these curious sequences where Duras presents an image of the

sea followed by a black shot, followed by an image similar to the one before the inserted

cut (shots 26 and 28; 43 and 45; 48 and 50).
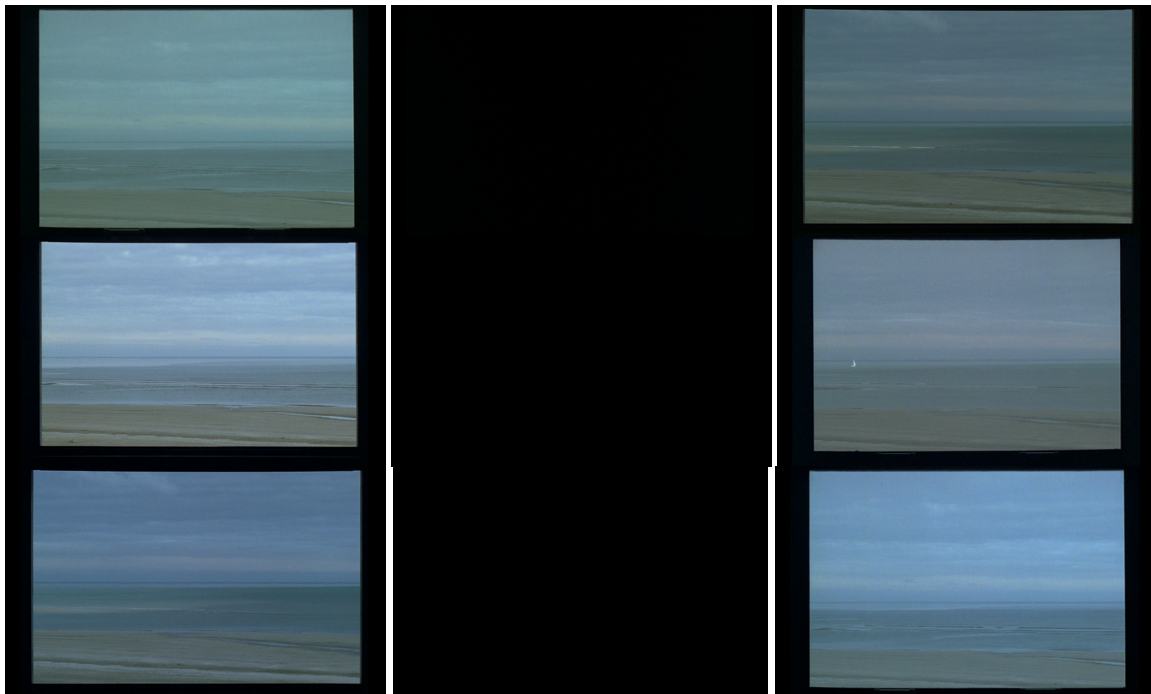
Considering the images before and after the irrational cut now side-by-side, a miniscule

difference is discernible, but this change is barely perceptible to a spectator watching the

film due to the separation by the black frame. The colors have slightly changed, the

atmosphere has altered, and it becomes impossible to situate these images in a temporal

relationship. The images manifest themselves as temporal fragments; an abstract notion

of time is thus revealed. Duras performs a visual play on words: a temporal *image-temps*

and a meteorological *image-temps.* The blurring of the atmospheric conditions *(le temps)*

is directly related to the indiscernibility of time *(le* temps).

In narrative cinema one can easily distinguish the present from the past, the actual

from the virtual, but this is impossible in *Agatha* and in the any-space-whatever where we

are only dealing with intervals. Instead of present or past, Duras achieves a representation

of time that envisions the fundamental operation of time – the simultaneity of the past

(virtual) in the present (actual): "le passé ne se constitue pas après le présent qu'il a été,

mais en même temps, il faut que le temps se dédouble à chaque instant en présent et passé

[…] en deux directions hétérogènes, dont l'une s'élance vers l'avenir et l'autre tombe

dans le passé" (Deleuze, *L'Image-temps* 106).

Duras achieves this in *Agatha* by presenting the spectator with ambiguous images

where it is difficult to discern what we are looking at, what is "real" or imaginary, what is

actual (or present) and what is not. Christophe Meurée recalls:

> "Cet intervalle se constituant, se divisant dynamiquement, c'est ce qu'on peut
> appeler *espacement*, devenir-espace du temps ou devenir-temps de l'espace
> (*temporisation*)." Dans une telle perspective, le présent devient "trace et
> effacement de la trace" et non plus le renvoi ultime; la constante actualisation de
> la narration durassienne correspond bien à cette définition du présent: plusieurs
> possibles sont envisagés à partir d'un même instant, d'un même *shi*, et seules les
> actualisations suivantes distingueront le réel du virtuel. ("Habiter" 53)[12]

Actual and virtual become one and the same, indiscernible: "l'union d'une image

actuelle et d'une image virtuelle au point où on ne peut plus les distinguer," in other

words, "le présent […] et son passé contemporain, l'image en miroir" (Deleuze,

L'Image-temps 106). Shot 90 provides us with a perfect example. Bulle looks out the

window, her silhouette enveloped in light.

She walks towards the camera and stops, then turns towards the left in profile. The

camera begins to pan left, leaving Bulle, and suddenly, without a cut, we find her now

facing us, making it impossible to tell that this is a reflection.

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[12] Meurée quotes Derrida, *Marges de la philosophie*.

This "virtual" image has turned into the actual image.[13] In this light, the reason for all of these symmetries in her images comes into focus; *Agatha* is littered with images of in-between spaces. In other words, not only is the film composed of independent disconnected shots, interstices, intervals, the in-between, but the images themselves represent in-between spaces.

Duras frequently divides the frame in two, where each side is a reflection of the other and films the zone between two symmetrical parts – doors, windows, passages, and pathways:

These in-between spaces form a fault line, the fissure through which we can see the time-image in the coalescence of the actual and the virtual. They are directed towards and lead

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[13] Royer explains Duras's originality: "Il est possible de filmer à l'intérieur du cadre du miroir sans en montrer les bords, l'image filmique se confondant avec le reflet du miroir; dans ce cas, le leurre serait insoupçonnable. […] [N]ous croyions voir l'image d'un objet (et parfois naïvement l'objet lui-même) alors que nous ne voyions que l'image de son reflet. Le plan dans le miroir, c'est l'image d'une image" (*L'Écran* 71). I will return to the mirror in more detail shortly.

to an exterior, an outside, but this "Outside" is not a confusing off-screen space as in

LFDG. As everything remains *in-between,* the notion of "outside" or "inside" is not

posed: "There is no more out-of-field. The outside of the image is replaced by the

interstice between the two frames in the image" (Deleuze, *Time-Image* 181*)*. Instead, it is

a question of contact between the exterior and the interior:

> The direct time-image effectively has […] the absolute contact between non-totalizable, asymmetrical outside and inside […] the outside and the inside are the two sides of the limit as irrational cut [the limit or interstice], and because the latter, no longer forming part of any sequence, itself appears as an autonomous outside which necessarily provides itself with an inside. (Deleuze, *Time-Image* 278)

We can understand these pathways by analogy to the Deleuzian membrane:

> Cette membrane qui rend le dehors et le dedans présents l'un à l'autre s'appelle Mémoire […] qui fait correspondre les nappes de passé et les couches de réalité, les uns émanant d'un dedans toujours là [le passé], et les autres advenant d'un dehors toujours à venir [le futur] tout deux rongeant le présent qui n'est plus que leur seule rencontre. (*L'Image-Temps* 269)

Duras's passageways represent this membrane, this "bande de la mémoire." In this

regard, similar to *LFDG*, where the celluloid that makes two discreet temporal elements –

sound and image – coexist, with *Agatha,* we witness Deleuze's theory that:

> The screen itself is the cerebral membrane where immediate and direct confrontations take place between the past and the future, the inside and the outside, at a distance impossible to determine, independent of any fixed point […] The image no longer has space and movement as its primary characteristics but topology and time. (*Time-Image* 125)

It is not a question of a *separation* between exterior and interior, but of the *confrontation*

between the two, the insertion, the *mise en abyme* of the exterior (the future) into the

interior (the past), the present being the strip where the two unite. The in-between strip is

where actual and virtual enter into contact and interact. Beaulieu similarly informs her

reading of Duras's *Le Camion* with Deleuze's *Dialogues,* "Deleuze affirme […] que les

images virtuelles ne peuvent être séparées de l'objet actuel, et vice-versa […] l'actuel est

le complément ou le produit, l'objet de l'actualisation, mais celle-ci n'a pour sujet que le

virtuel" (92).

The same is applicable for the disorienting and confounding shot 51.

The image seems to have no end; two lines lead into the image's infinite depth of field.

While the physical explanation for the illusion of this endless hallway is of course that

two mirrors make up the walls at each end of the room, this is not at all apparent. The

figure (the cameraman) we perceive in the image is, in fact, a reflection. Only with much

scrutiny does one distinguish that the background consists of a mirror on a wall: thus,

only the chairs and column in the foreground are real, the rest is a reflection. The term

given to the illusion of an endless reflection of one image in another is a *mise en abyme*,

but Duras frames the image in such a way that masks the illusion. We do not distinguish

any exact reproduction or copy of an image like in the notable example from George

Perec's *Un Cabinet d'amateur.*

The cameraman's figure blocks further reflections; the image is framed at an angle so that

a shift and reduction is executed with each reflection such that, to borrow Deleuze's

notion of the *mise en abyme*, "la mise en abyme ne redouble pas l'unité […] en tant que

miroitement interne, elle ne peut jamais que la dédoubler, et la soumettre à la relance

infinie de scissions toujours nouvelles," "le miroir qui réfléchit sans cesse la perception

en souvenir" (*L'Image-temps* 109). Duras's original use of the mirror in *India Song* has

fascinated many critics. [14] Van Wert writes:

> Duras has stated that the mirror moments are the only moments in the film that
> constitute "present" time, while all else, and especially the shots of the ruins,
> constitutes the "past." And the rectangular shape of the mirror calls into doubt
> even the "present" of the images and reflected images. And yet the mirror
> sequences are fascinating both in terms of doubled time and reflected point of
> view. (27)

Ishaghpour also articulates the spatio-temporal conflict caused by Duras's mirror shots in

India Song: *"*Ainsi, malgré le plein de la surface de l'écran, toute chose est projetée dans

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[14] Indeed, Royer explains that beginning with *Détruire*, to *Nathalie Granger*, to *India Song*, "le miroir commence à prendre une certaine autonomie" and with *India Song*, *Agatha*, and *L'Homme Atlantique*, "le miroir sera un point focal du film, un véritable point de repère en même temps qu'une surface sur laquelle se reflètent ou se jouent la plupart des scènes" (*L'Écran* 71*)*.

le non-lieu, le non-temps et l'entre-deux des images. Ce qui vient du miroir vient d'un autre temps, d'un autre lieu, il vient à la rencontre ou s'en va vers le fond" (243). While Ishaghpour use of the term "l'entre-deux" may resonate with my discussion, as we have seen, the any-space-whatever is not a non-place or a non-time, but a space where actual and virtual present and past are indiscernible. While in *India Song* the mirror is distinguishable (the spectator is aware of reflections), in *Agatha* the mirror occupies the entire wall, so that the mirror disappears, and when filmed up close, it is impossible to discern if the image represents a reflection or not.

The same effect also occurs in Duras's curious re-framings. We previously remarked how Duras sometimes inserts the black shot in between two different shots of the beach, but sometimes, the image before the black shot will be the same as the one after, only the second one is further framed. Why repeat a similar shot, but with a subtle reframing? Compare these two sets of images:

<u>Unframed</u>   vs.   <u>Framed</u>
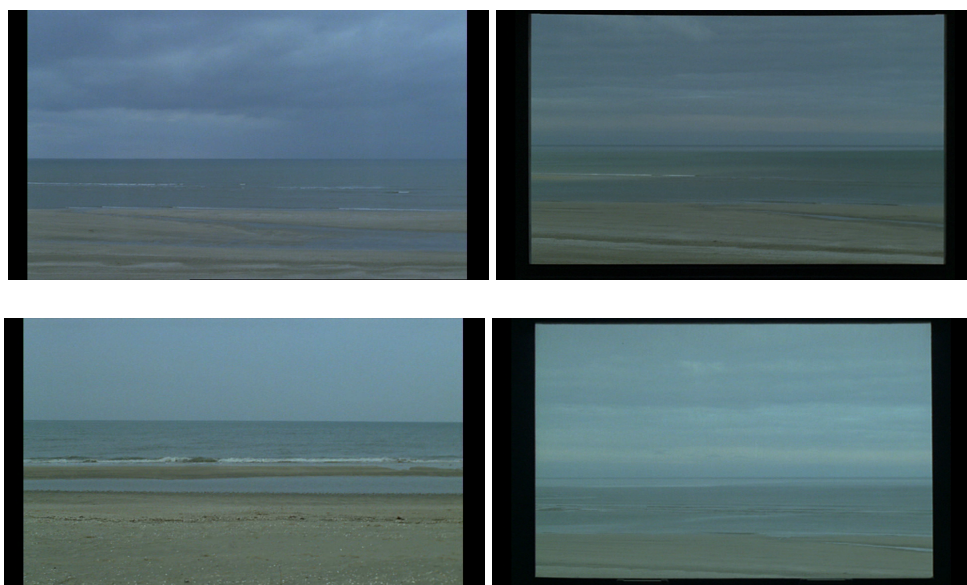
Without the border, it appears as if the camera shoots the beach from the exterior. In the

next shot, a slight alteration in the nature of the image occurs. Surrounded by a dark

boarder, the image seems to be taken from an *inside* and takes on a virtual quality (in

fact, as we will see in the next chapter, it resembles a cinema screen, creating a further

mise en abyme as it inserts the spectator inside the film). The re-framed images become

virtual images, but are indistinguishable from the unframed images – the difference

between actual and virtual, again, indistinct. The sequences that present the sea (the

immense swallowing abyss), followed by a similar but re-framed shot, represent the *mise*

en abyme par excellence (in fact, the act of "putting into the abyss" constitutes *Agatha*'s

story itself, her "engloutissement" by the sea). The engulfment, the black frames, and the

abyss all constitute voids. Each in-between image draws itself from the void only to fall

back into it:

> The whole was thus [in classical cinema] being continually made, in cinema, by
> internalizing the images and externalizing itself in the images, following a double
> attraction […] When we say "the whole is the outside," the point is quite
> different. In the first place, the question is no longer that of the association or
> attraction of images. What counts is on the contrary the interstice between images,

between two images: a spacing which means that each image is plucked from the void and falls back into it. (*Time-Image* 179)

Only intervals remain, perpetual framings and re-framings; all the elements from incommensurable shots coexist in a direct representation of time:

Instead of one image after the other, there is one image plus another, and each shot is deframed in relation to the framing of the following shot . . . The cut may now be extended and appear in its own right, as the black screen, the white screen and their derivatives and combinations: hence the great blue image of night . . . the cinematographic image becomes a direct presentation of time. (*Time-Image* 214*)*

The topographic, stratified image and coexisting layers of time

I have considered the ways in which intervals in *Agatha* materialize and present us with a direct representation of time – "nous donne à voir le temps" (Meurée) – which fundamentally includes multiple layers.[15] If we accept, therefore, that the images in *Agatha* are actually images of time, we can read the visual strata that are present in many of the images as further complications of this image of time, as temporal layers rendered visible in space, as if the past and the present were actually visible in the image at the same time. This element reinforces the project of visualizing the folding of time.

The image becomes stratified, Deleuze tells us, as a consequence of the any-space-whatever, illustrated in these below images from *Agatha*:

The visual image becomes archaeological, stratigraphic, and tectonic. Not that we are taken back to prehistory (there is an archaeology of the present), but to the deserted layers of our time which bury our own phantoms; to the lacunary layers which we juxtaposed according to variable orientations and connections. (*Time-Image* 279)

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[15] For Michelle Royer, they are "des couches de réel" (*L'Écran* 87).
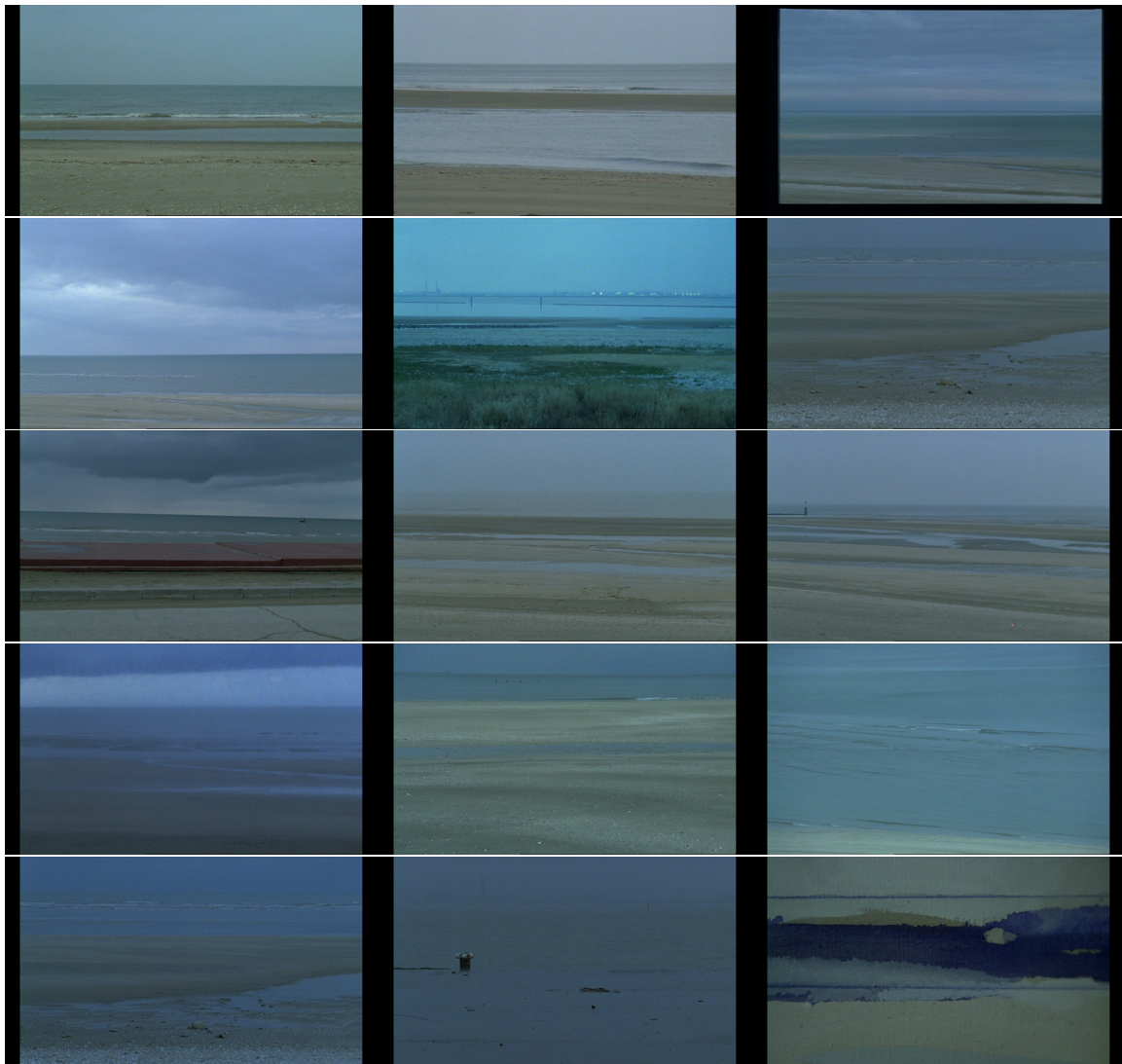
With her camera, Duras paints layers upon layers, sometimes clear distinct layers, sometimes blurred ones, bombarding the spectator with images that acquire a new power.[16] The image no longer relating to any context refers to space and time in and of themselves. Deleuze explains this stratified image as follows: "l'image n'a plus pour caractères premiers l'espace et le mouvement, mais la topologie et le temps" (Deleuze, *L'Image-temps* 164). Having observed the stratified topology of the images, it is therefore

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[16] In Deleuze's discussion of stratified images in cinema, he draws an interesting pictorial parallel with Cézanne: "The aesthetic of the visual image therefore takes on a new character: its pictorial or sculptural qualities depend on a geological, tectonic power as in Cezanne's mountains." (*Time-Image* 246)

possible to consider this structure of the images in terms of a juxtaposition of layers of time.

This layering also transpires for the sound-image. When recalling a memory, the voices often superimpose different times. One second ELLE is 18, and then she is 23: "Je vois que vous avez quinze ans, que vous avez dix-huit ans"; "vous aviez cinq ans, sept ans, douze ans." Each layer, each horizon, each division connects these layers. Like the visual image where horizons are blurred, sometimes the layers overlap to the point where the divisions are no longer distinguishable: "avant ce matin-là sur la plage […] après ce matin-là près du fleuve, je sais mal ce qui est arrivé de moi." It is noteworthy that in shot 42 the layers repeat themselves as if reflected; we are dealing not only with a juxtaposition of layers, but with a doubling of this superposition.

After all, in Duras's work, everything always starts over again: the images (the end of film returns to the first shots), the stories, the inevitable departure and return – like the comings and goings of the sea. Deleuze illuminates these recurring themes. For example, in the passage below, elements from different layers communicate. I have added emphasis in places where in the narrative elements from different times infiltrate other strata. The numbers indicate different moments, and each underlined term indicates a common element that Duras folds into each temporal layer: again, the piano, the houses, the rivers:

237

[1] C'était il y a longtemps maintenant, vous viviez encore avec nous, nous étions ensemble dans la villa Agatha pendant ces années-là durant les vacances *(temps)*. Il y avait ce piano noir qui était dans cette sorte de salon face à la plage […] [2] Après, ce piano a été vendu […] C'était après votre départ […] [3] Et puis ensuite, longtemps après ces premières années, cela s'est trouvé ailleurs, en quelque sorte cela s'est déplacé ailleurs, dans une autre chambre face à un autre fleuve. [4] Ce n'était pas ce fleuve colonial de notre enfance, non, c'était après […] *(temps)* Oui […] je crois que nous avions fait un pique-nique […] c'était vers ce fleuve que je vous disais n'est-ce pas, c'était en France, ce n'était pas loin de la villa Agatha. Et après […] nous sommes partis nous sommes allés au fleuve justement pour voir, et puis nous avons trouvé cet hôtel. *(temps)* C'était une longue maison grise sur la berge du fleuve […] J'avais vers quinze ans et vous dix-neuf ans, je crois […] Dans cet hôtel il y avait aussi un piano noir. J'ai dit que c'était le piano de la villa Agatha. L'hôtel était ouvert, toutes les portes étaient ouvertes, il n'y avait personne, le piano était ouvert. (*temps*) Nous avons traversé l'hôtel et nous nous sommes trouvés sur la berge du fleuve […] Après l'hôtel, il y avait un tournant du fleuve et on le perdait de vue. Vous avez dit : « C'est la Loire, elle est si large, regarde, la mer ne doit pas être loin. » Vous avez dit qu'il n'en paraissait rien mais que c'était un fleuve dangereux, vous avez expliqué les trous d'eau et les vertiges et les tourbillons qui s'emparaient du corps des enfants l'été et les enfouissaient dans les sables des fonds. (emphasis added)

Osamu Hayashi has noticed how Duras makes two distinct times and locations coexist: "Réduits à leurs propre matérialité, [Duras] parvien[t] enfin à faire coexister Hiroshima et Nevers […] En ce sens, l'ubiquité d'Aurélia Steiner à Vancouver, à Melbourne et à Paris serait aussi interprétable comme la variabilité infinie du lieu" (*Orient(s)* 146). The different events in *Agatha*, both text and film – the two episodes by the sea, the picnic, the piano, Brahms, the hotel, the *siestes,* "et puis le matin sur la plage où tout recommence" – these are the coexisting layers that traverse one another and repeat like the infinite hallway of mirrors in a direct representation of time: "au lieu d'une addition d'objets distincts sur un même plan, voilà maintenant que l'objet reste *le même* mais passe par différents plans" (Deleuze, *L'Image-temps* 62). The piano, the river, the villa serve as Proustian objects that float around in time, objects that "occupent une place

incommensurable avec le temps" (Deleuze, *L'Image-temps* 56). Limam-Tnani articulates

the progressive exploration of places and objects in Duras:

> Cette exploration progressive des lieux et des objets déjoue la présence et l'unité de ces éléments et intègre ceux-ci dans un rythme temporel, signe d'une durée intérieure. […] Dans un commentaire sur *IS* publié dans *Sight and Sound* le critique Carlos Clarens confirme qu'il n'y a pas de trajectoire spatiale dans le film, simplement un itinéraire *of mind and Memory* [in other words, time] (155*)*.[17]

If we accept the stratified images as representations of time folding in on itself,

then we can derive new readings of otherwise puzzling or mundane images in the film,

such as the diagonals (roads, rivers, etc.), which we can read as connections across

different layers of time – and the mirrors, which we can read as a superimpression of

different layers of time (actual/virtual, present/past) within one image. These lines act as

a diagonal clothing bias, extending into space-time through the depth of field to traverse

these layers of time (like the example we saw in *LFDG*). Deleuze explains that depth is

"une continuité de durée qui fait que la profondeur déchaînée est du temps, non plus de

l'espace […] C'est un ensemble de liaisons non-localisables, toujours d'un plan à un

autre, qui constitue la région de passé ou le continuum de durée" (*L'Image-temps* 141).

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[17] For this critic, the main point is that time acquires an oneiric quality that exists in a dream: "La translation parfois insensible des plans […] rendent souvent fragiles les frontières entre intérieur et extérieur, entre la chose et son double, entre le double et son double, attribuent à l'image une fluidité, une polyvalence, et aux personnages une ubiquité oniriques. Le temps perd alors tout aspect objectif, et se charge de cette compacité et de cette épaisseur qu'il a dans le rêve" (155).

In an image of time, what we think of as depth of field, depth in the image, what we gaze into is the depths of time. The diagonal bias is also the river that runs through the middle of the desert-like beach, crossing and connecting the different strata, like the median strip that links the before and after and makes outside and inside, past and present converge: to borrow the words of Ropars-Wuilleumier as she explains the Deleuzian *devenir*, "'qui creuse l'intervalle dans le moment lui-même' […] qui traverse toutes les images-temps et rend insaisissable la présence du présent dans l'image présente" ("Dehors" 22).

As the spectator-reader gazes into the depths of time, the river that runs across the image seeks to re-link the separate, independent parts, similar to the sky that passes over everything – "et ce sera le meme ciel," Duras writes in *Agatha* – and traverses the ages.

Finally, this new reading of *Agatha* as an image of folded time allows us to see how it furthers Duras's larger project of text-film interaction, building and developing the ways in which insides and outsides of space and time, of text and film can fold into and back on one another. In so doing, this analysis shows how *Agatha* is the most fully realized of Duras's experiments yet on the pure potential of cinema.

In a non-Durassian world, that is to say, in a rational Cartesian world, we situate ourselves in relation to the past and future in the present, and in the spaces we occupy. The world that Duras proposes no longer has spatio-temporal connections. Without links, "je est un autre," declares Deleuze, quoting Rimbaud. For Duras, "l'autre est toujours un autre de l'autre," Chalonge confirms (*Orient(s)* 29). Towards the end of *Agatha*, the spectator-reader discovers that this story is nothing but another, another before and after, another *mise en abyme*. After all, who and what are LUI and ELLE, Agatha, also the name of the villa, who is revealed at the end to come from yet another source, from Musil's text *L'Homme sans qualities*?

> ELLE - Ce n'est pas mon nom. Je lui ai dit m'appeler d'un autre prénom, de celui de Diotima…
>
> LUI – Que lui dites-vous d'Agatha ?
>
> ELLE – Que c'était le nom que me donnait un amant du nom de Ulrich Heimer.

At this point, we have entered an ultimate exterior dimension inserted into the film – like the painting at the end that re-frames once more, re-virtualizes the stratified sea and river.
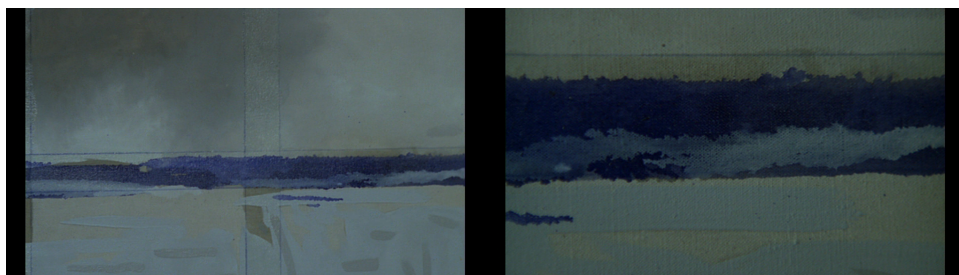
The spectator-reader can no longer discern what story he/she is dealing with, each one only being a reflection of the other: "Je est un autre." We come full circle back to the any-space-whatever, to the lobby of mirrors that infinitely reflect: "Que vous diriez: illimitées?" From the smallest circuit – the mirror image – to the sound and visual

images, text and image, to the largest circuit involving Duras's other intertexual stories and texts, one is always another, and always present *in* the other.

In *Agatha,* the physical text is inserted in the film and the *film* in the text. The filmed text is in essence a virtual image (the text is never actualized) and the textualized film ([le film] "dit par lui, par le texte") is none other than a virtual representation of the text. Duras does not envision a "hybrid" *œuvre* – "Non […] Encore ces fameux textes hybrides!" exclaims Duras in an interview (Narboni 57), but rather seeks beyond text and film, an any-space whatever, an in-between. If there is any unity in *Agatha,* it is the before and after, the incommensurable and coexistent text and film (perhaps also the text-film *L'Homme Atlantique*, the project Duras conceived at the same time as filming *Agatha* which in fact uses its outtakes*)*, reflected in ELLE and LUI's incestuous story. If *Agatha* is about incest and relates the story of an incestuous relationship between brother and sister – an *impossible* desire –, in a way the relationship between text and film is similarly incestuous; its union – the actual image – can only be realized in the spectator-reader, in-between the two.

Conclusion

In *Agatha,* there are only linkages and re-linkages, "ré-enchaînements" of these sections and addition of independent layers. Deleuze writes, "on ne croit plus aux liens, mais aux ruptures"; "au lieu d'une image après l'autre, il y a une image plus une autre" (*L'Image-temps* 279). And it is in this sense that the image must be "read," declares Deleuze, but not simply in the sense of any imaginary, mental images that the spectator-reader may produce. It would be simplistic to conclude that through her film Duras only gives us a reading, that Duras forces us to read, that "l'image effective sollicite une image

virtuelle, image mentale du spectateur, et s'engage avec elle dans une course-poursuite 'autour d'un point d'indistinction du réel et de l'imaginaire'" (Limam-Tnani 159). Such a claim would ignore the meticulous work of each individual image and of the montage with all its black frames, by which the representation of a direct image of time emerges. With *Agatha,* Duras does something different from the inclusion of the spectator in the film soliciting his/her mental, imaginary, virtual connections that we discussed in the previous chapter. If *Agatha* makes the image read, it is in the sense of the stratified image, like the semi-precious stone agate (*agate/agathe*).
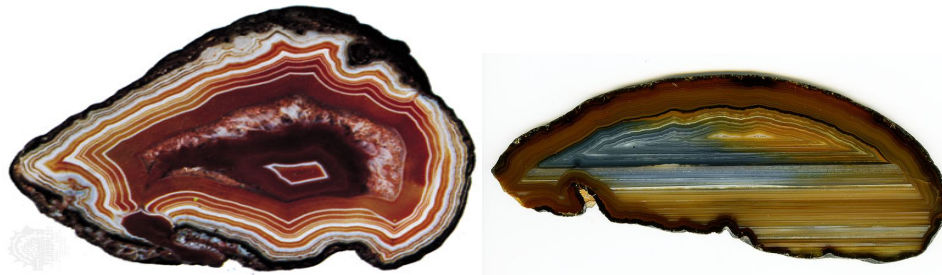
The stratified image is the very essence of the text itself: thus, the reason for the curious insertions of images of a text with its horizontal *mise en page* of lines – a layered or stratified image *par excellence.*
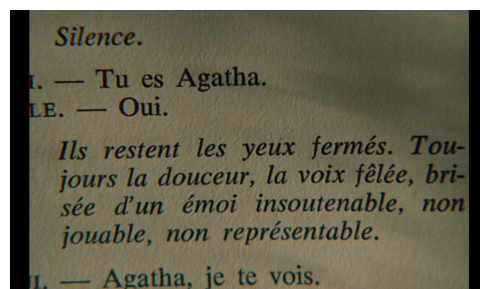
This analysis of time in *Agatha* suggests a more satisfying explanation for the interconnection between Duras's texts and her films than what has previously been proposed. The conclusion that must be drawn should not rest solely on the fact that the void exists, that these in-betweens and these readings exist, but on the perception of both

text and film as intervals, distinct and indeterminable, each one both *outside* and *inside*

the other, both actual and virtual. It is not a question therefore of a *destruction* of text or

image, but of the creation of a new classification or genre of space. We, the spectator-

readers, are also in the in-between (and, as we will see in the next chapter, we are actually

inserted into the image). In essence, the rupture of this shock to the spectator produced by

the dissonance between sound and image, by these disjointed images, tirelessly

reproduces the painful injury of a sting by the present – the *actual* image before the eyes

of someone who, for a moment, was elsewhere. In the next chapter on *L'Homme*

Atlantique, a virtual text-film pair, I will argue that Duras once again tries to push the

spatio-temporal constraints of the cinematographic apparatus because her "magic lantern"

in essence films us, the spectator-readers.

Chapter 5

> *On atteint là [...] un paradoxe essentiel du cinéma.*
> *C'est par le manque qu'on dit les choses [...] Le*
> *paradoxe, la contradiction, montrer ce qui n'est pas*
> *montrable, essayer de montrer ce qui existe* (Duras
> filme)

The Paradox of Cinema: *L'Homme Atlantique*, a Virtual Film?

> *Je voulais vous dire: le cinéma croit pouvoir* <u>*consigner*</u> *ce que vous faites* <u>*en ce*</u>
> <u>*moment.*</u> *Mais vous, de là où vous* <u>*serez*</u> *[...] vous vous rendrez compte que* <u>*le*</u>
> <u>*cinéma ne peut pas.*</u>
>
> (my underline, *L'Homme Atlantique* 1161)[1]

In *L'Homme Atlantique,* Duras transforms the screen into camera. During its

projection, the shooting of the film continues in the presence of the director – and

spectator – Duras, by the intermediary of the voice-over in particular. The black shot, this

screen from which the director addresses the spectator directly – "Vous ne regarderez pas

la caméra" – not only shows the film in the process of being made, but it also *films the*

spectator in the process of watching the film in the process of being made – with the

spectator, and perhaps from the spectator.[2] And yet, paradoxically, Duras affirms even

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[1] Unless it is evident from the context or specifically specified only text or film, when I write *L'Homme Atlantique* I refer to the entity that is the text-film pair, *L'Homme Atlantique* (*HA*). The text was published after, but the same year as the film was released. It follows, save a few minor changes (see note 5), the text that is read in the film. I provide the page number for where my quotations from the film can be found in the text.

[2] A process Velazquez painted (if we replace "films" with "paints") some 350 years ago in *Las Meninas*. Some video installation artists have experimented with this process. See John G. Handardt's article, "The Passion for Perceiving: Expanded Forms of Film and Video Art." Psychoanalytic or transcendental interpretation aside, this process is not without evoking Lacan's well-known formula, "Le tableau, certes, est dans mon œil. Mais moi, je suis dans le tableau." See also Raymond Bellour's section on Bill Viola in his final chapter, "Autoportraits" in *L'Entre-images*: "Trois temps se succèdent et se superposent dans l'expérience de Viola: le « temps réel », partagé entre celui de sa perception proprement dite et celui de la caméra qui la double et en focalise l'image sur le moniteur (« la caméra est toujours en marche, il y a toujours une image »); le temps d'enregistrement, qui opère une sélection dans ce temps continu; le temps du montage final, qui cherche à produire l'illusion que le second temps possèderait la continuité du premier. Il y a cependant un quatrième temps dont on ignore tout mais dont on pressent la présence, et qui explique seul le trouble si profond qui émane des œuvres. Ce temps traverse les trois temps jusqu'au temps de

within the film itself, already shot, the impossibility of filming the future spectator

wherever he/she is (see epigraph): "J'aimerais bien faire un film sur le public. Un film

qui viendrait chercher l'histoire, le film, dans la salle," Duras declared in an interview

after the release of *Le Camion* (Bonnet 28) – a film that stars Duras reading the script of

the film that "aurait été un film."[3] How can we understand this paradox that touches the

essence, that is to say the *potential*, of the cinematographic apparatus, and of a cinema

that "ne peut pas" film *you* and at the same time can *réalise* you <u>as cinema</u>, "Vous [qui]

êtes *L'Homme Atlantique.* Vous [qui] l'ignorez"?[4]

As the above conundrum suggests, in *L'Homme Atlantique* (1981) Duras directly

questions the very ontological essence, or the *potential,* of cinema, of the

cinematographic apparatus. In telling the spectator-reader that he/she will realize that

cinema "ne peut pas," Duras requires the spectator-reader to reflect on what it is exactly

that cinema can and cannot do. As if the writer-filmmaker is speaking to us from the past,

in implicating the spectator-reader's participation and present time of reading-viewing,

"ce que vous faites *en ce moment,*" she destabilizes any notion of temporality; she blurs

the time of filming, the time of writing, and the time of potential readings (in an *any-*

instant-whatever, to borrow Deleuze's term from *L'Image-movement* [13]).[5] This chapter

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perception auquel il s'accroche et ouvre en deçà un temps personnel sans visage dont nous ne savons rien"
(325).

[3] As I have previously noted, most critics who have written on Duras's films state how they illicit the
spectator's imaginary (virtual) images, as expressed by Larouche: "Les films se bouclent eux-mêmes par le
bouclage du spectateur dans l'œuvre" ("La place singulière des films de Marguerite Duras au sein du
cinéma expérimentale" 21). What I am suggesting here is different.

[4] This citation (the last sentence of the film!) does not figure in the book *L'Homme Atlantique*. Among the
rare differences between the book's text and the film's spoken text, I remark also a suppression in the
published text of the second sentence in this citation extracted from the film (underlined here): "Ce que
vous serez en train de regarder là. <u>Ce que vous *êtes* en train de regarder là</u>" (my emphasis)." The use of the
present tense in the film, after the future, supports my argument.

[5] Borrowing the term *l'instant quelconque*, I wish to evoke the previous chapter on *l'espace quelconque*.
Indeed in an interview with Pascal Auger, Deleuze acknowledges that the notion of any-instant-whatever is
what gave rise to the any-space-whatever (http://www.actu-philosophia.com/spip.php?article316). Duras's

will show how Duras pushes the boundaries of cinema to obtain its full potential, what is

implied if cinema cannot register "ce que vous faites en ce moment," and why Duras

dares make such a statement at this moment in one of her most abstract and paradoxical

text-film pairs.

Critics have repeated it time and time again: Duras films the void; her use of the

black shot, or the *noir atlantique* of Duras's *L'Homme Atlantique*, a film invaded by

blackness, represents absence, destruction; Duras films the impossible and "death of

cinema," according to critics who draw from Duras's often-cited remark, "Je suis dans un

rapport du meurtre avec le cinéma" (*Yeux Verts* 93).[6] Yet despite the progressive

increasing incursions of the black shot in Duras's cinematographic career and in this film,

up until the final fifteen minutes of total blackness in *L'Homme Atlantique* (*HA),* other

images still exist. There is much more to *HA* than a black screen – notably twenty

minutes' worth of images*.* If *LFDG* oscillates between inside and outside space, first

revealing the gap, and *Agatha* is a film in-between, *HA* is a virtual film, a film that

remains in a purely potential state.[7] Duras constructs a space-time in *LFDG*, an "any-

space-whatever" in *Agatha,* but in *HA,* space-time is virtualized, potentialized. *HA* is a

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full quotation, as follows, links the any-space-whatever and the any-instant-whatever: "Je voulais vous dire: le cinéma croit pouvoir consigner ce que vous faites en ce moment. Mais vous, de là où vous serez, où que ce soit, que vous ayez partie liée avec le sable, ou le vent, ou la mer, ou le mur, ou l'oiseau, ou le chien, vous vous rendrez compte que le cinéma ne peut pas" (*HA* 13).

[6] See, for example, Michelle Royer's analyses in her various articles and book chapters (*L'Écran,* and "Voix off et plans noirs: Représentations de la scène de l'écriture dans les films de Marguerite Duras." Royer states in *L'Écran*: "Le plan noir annonce la mort du cinéma […] *L'Homme Atlantique* avec ses 25 min. de noir total et ses 20 minutes d'image, ne figure pas la destruction totale, mais plutôt une mise en images du processus de la destruction" (77). See also Wendy Everett, "Destructive Directing : The Film Language of Marguerite Duras," and Rafael Garcia, "*L'Homme Atlantique* de Duras: un signifiant noir pour un texte."

[7] I recall that in Deleuze's *L'Image-mouvement* the any-space-whatever is introduced in the chapter on affect and affection-images, images of potential or qualities (Deleuze gives the example of Godard's notable formula: "It's not blood, it's red"). The affection-image represents an in-between moment in the sensory motor sequence, and thus un-actualized, it remains in a potential, virtual state. Having liberated the interval with *Agatha*, we are now dealing with the virtual in *HA*.

"virtual film" in the sense that it reveals and seeks to realize the full potential of the cinematographic apparatus, of cinema, and of cinematographic time.[8]

This chapter is organized in the following manner. First, some background will be included in order to help us interpret the liminary quotation and define *HA*. After establishing *HA*'s lineage, we will then consider the nature of the film's images and their qualities and textures that make it so that they remain in a virtual state; following this, I will show in which ways in particular the black image is in fact an image and not a lack of or voided image, as previous critics have suggested: Cottenet-Hage states, for example, "In terms of colors, black *is* the total absence of color, and the black screen becomes *either* an empty rectangle or a space made into an obstacle to further perception totally there/not-there" ("Ideal Image" 92). I will demonstrate that in Duras's work black is not an absence of color but is itself a color, as painters such as Pierre Soulages have proven. Next, we will see how the images reveal the components of the cinematographic apparatus. It will thus be first necessary to define its components and what constitutes the durassian cinematographic apparatus, a subject that necessarily requires engagement with Jean-Louis Baudry's critical work "Le dispositif." In dialogue with Baudry's notion of the *dispositif cinématographique* and what is known as apparatus theory, a certain critical school of thought that became popular in the 1970s—around the same time Duras was experimenting with revolutionizing cinema – we will see how in *HA*, Duras enters into this conversation and is once again paradoxical; she goes *contra* the *doxa*. Duras's

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[8] I distinguish my understanding of a virtual film (as this chapter will define) from critics who have considered her texts and cinematographic writing as "non-films" or in other words "virtual films." See, for example, Michelle Royer's analysis of *L'Amant de la Chine du Nord*, as a "film virtuel" whereby "Le livre se constitue d'un défilé d'images, comme un film virtuel" (*L'Écran* 116). Maritchick similarly writes, "L'écriture devient un film virtuel qui contient un nombre infini d'images" (185). See also Maïté Snauwaert, "Le Cinéma de Lol V. Stein."

cinematic apparatus can more closely be described by what Raymond Bellour analyzes as *l'appareil filmique* in his critical study *L'Entre-images,* borrowing Thierry Kuntzel's concept of the "filmic apparatus." For Bellour it is a question of the in-between, "l'entre-images," which is why his thought resonates so closely with Duras's cinema and our propos. At every moment in the film, Duras evokes the medium, pushing and challenging the full potential of the filmic apparatus, which includes the spectator. I will then explore the manner in which such images reconfigure the temporality of the film. We will explore the ways in which Duras questions the notions of before and after, as is suggested in the epigram. Finally, we will see what the consequence of this "virtuality" means for Duras's cinematographic project and her interrogation of the cinematic apparatus. What does Duras mean when she declares that *L'Homme Atlantique* is a film "de cinéma" as Duras says in *Les Yeux Verts,* an entire issue of the *Cahiers de Cinéma* Duras penned in 1980 (224)?

I. Background

Definition of virtual as potential

This chapter will explore *L'Homme Atlantique* as a virtual film and what this suggests for Duras's cinematographic project as a whole. Therefore, before proceeding any further, it will be helpful to clearly define the term virtual (as opposed to actual). Most Durassian critics use the term virtual in contrast with the "real" or "reality" and speak of the imaginary or mental image (see OED definition two below). This meaning only reaches one surface level understanding of the word. While we will see that the images of

HA are certainly illusory, they are virtual in other ways as well. I will mainly be using the term in both its strict definition and also in the Bergsonian-Deleuzian sense.

The OED provides the following definitions (my emphasis):

Senses relating to particular qualities or virtues; Inherently *powerful* or effective owing to particular natural *qualities*; Senses relating to *essential*, as opposed to *physical* or *actual*, existence; That is such, in essence, *potentiality*, or effect, although not in form or actuality; *supposed, imagined*; Of an *image*: such that the light forming it appears to diverge from a point beyond the refracting or reflecting surface; designating the focus from which such light appears to diverge. Contrasted with real; Of a *particle*: unable to be directly detected and occurring over a very short interval of time and space, having (as a result of the uncertainty principle) a correspondingly *indefinite energy* and momentum which are not necessarily conserved over the time involved" (my emphasis).[9]

While the English definition places the etymological sense first (virtual deriving from virtue) and the physical sense second, interestingly, in French, the philosophical and linguistic usages, which are entirely absent from the English entry, come first.

CNRTL provides many more usages: in the philosophical sense, "potentiel, en puissance; anton. actuel"; "latent"; "Qui est à l'état de simple possibilité ou d'éventualité. Synon. Possible"; and of an image specifically:

Image virtuelle. Ce qui est en puissance. "Le possible, le probable et le virtuel. Être cause, [c'est] (...) accomplir les possibilités de l'univers, substituer partout l'actuel au virtuel, conférer à ce qui est déjà toute l'extension dont il est capable et qui lui est

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[9] Also included in the definition:

1. Senses relating to particular qualities or virtues.
- Inherently *powerful* or effective owing to particular natural *qualities*.
- Producing, or capable of producing, a particular result; effective.
- Designating a notional property, dimension, etc., of a thing which would produce an observed effect if counteracting factors such as friction are not allowed for.

2. Senses relating to *essential*, as opposed to *physical* or *actual*, existence.
- That is such, in essence, *potentiality*, or effect, although not in form or actuality. In later use also: *supposed, imagined*.
- Of an *image*: such that the light forming it appears to diverge from a point beyond the refracting or reflecting surface; designating the focus from which such light appears to diverge. Contrasted with real.
- Of a *particle*: unable to be directly detected and occurring over a very short interval of time and space, having (as a result of the uncertainty principle) a correspondingly *indefinite energy* and momentum which are not necessarily conserved over the time involved."

possible; d'un mot, c'est servir d'instrument à l'œuvre créatrice (...) et c'est aider l'univers du devenir qui en résulte à se réaliser" (GILSON, *Espr. philos. médiév.*, 1931, p. 150).[10]

To summarize, what both the French and English definitions have in common across various usages is the sense of *Potential,* that which is not *actualized*. It is unsurprising that the French definition ranks the philosophical definition first; Gilles Deleuze and Henri Bergson were prominent thinkers of virtuality, and often in criticism when we speak in French of *le virtuel,* we do so in reference to them. In agreement with the dictionaries' definitions, Deleuze conceives of the virtual in contrast with the *actual* (but not necessarily in contrast with the "real"; a virtual image is still "real," it exists) specifically in terms of time and duration ("L'Actuel et le virtuel," *Dialogues*). The virtual is potential insofar as it is in movement towards its actualization–the mirror image is the best example of a virtual image. In *The Logic of Sense,* Deleuze also uses "virtual" in the "latent" sense, as defined above: the meaning, or sense, of a proposition that is not a *material* aspect of that proposition (whether written or spoken) but is nonetheless an attribute of that proposition. In Deleuze's cinema books, the actual image is in the present

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[10]Also included in the definition:

1. *PHIL*. Qui possède, contient toutes les conditions essentielles à son actualization. Synon. *potentiel, en puissance*; anton. *actuel*. "Cette aperception actuelle, et non pas seulement virtuelle, de subdivisions dans l'indivisé est précisément ce que nous appelons objectivité" (BERGSON, *Essai donn. imm.*, 1889, p. 73).

2. *LING*. [P. réf. à l'oppos. saussurienne entre langue et parole] Qui n'est pas actualisé, qui relève de la langue. La linguistique post-saussurienne se donnera pour tâche d'induire, à partir d'un corpus (actuel) de faits de parole, la langue (virtuelle) qui les sous-tend (*Ling*. 1972).

3. *En partic*. Qui existe sans se manifester. Synon. *latent*. "La naissance n'est que le passage de l'état latent ou virtuel, de l'état d'essence, de l'état d'être sans manifestation (...), à l'état de manifestation, à l'état phénoménal, à l'état de nature, comme dit Apollonius. La mort n'est que le retour de l'état de manifestation à l'état latent" (P. LEROUX, *Humanité*, 1840, p. 435).

4. Qui est à l'état de simple *possibilité* ou d'*éventualité*. Synon. *possible*.

5. *INFORMAT*. Se dit des éléments (terminaux, mémoire…) d'un système informatique considérés comme ayant des propriétés différentes de leurs caractéristiques physiques. "La mémoire virtuelle simule une mémoire plus grande que la mémoire existante" (FREEDMAN-SAUTEUR, *Micro*, 1985).

6. *PHYSIQUE*. Travail que produirait un mobile se déplaçant d'une quantité infiniment petite à un moment donné.

7. Transition quantique réelle d'émission suivie de *réabsorption* ou d'absorption suivie de *réémission*, ne respectant pas la conservation de l'énergie.

of the narrative, and the virtual image is of another time, the past, a memory, or an image projecting the future. Nevertheless, as Deleuze points out, sometimes the two cannot always be distinguished (as we saw in *Agatha,* for example).

L'Homme Atlantique's origins:

> "*Un événement considérable est survenu avec* l'Homme Atlantique*. Je n'avais pas assez de chutes d'*Agatha *pour le remplir d'images*" (Duras, *Yeux Verts*)

Some preliminary background about *HA* will immediately bring into focus what we mean by the "virtual" as potential, un-actualized. *L'Homme Atlantique* is a 42-minute film comprised of 35 shots, made in July 1981 (released simultaneously with *Agatha et les lectures illimitées*). The visual track is composed in part from the outtakes of *Agatha*, filmed that winter at the Roches Noirs hotel in Trouville. Black shots make up the rest of the film. We know from interviews that during the filming of *Agatha*, Duras and Yann Andrea already had in mind the project of another film that was to become *L'Homme Atlantique* (*Pléiade III,* "Notice"'s for *Agatha* and *HA*). The images from the filming of *Agatha* include shots of a man, Yann Andrea, doing nothing but looking and walking in the lobby, and framed shots of the ocean filmed from the window inside the lobby of the hotel. For the soundtrack, Duras's idiosyncratic voice addresses a "vous" and gives directions in the future tense: "Vous ne regarderez pas la caméra." Interwoven between these commands, *HA* also recounts the story of a departure.[11] The text *L'Homme*

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[11] In *HA*, we are dealing with a departure that has already taken place (we know from Duras's letters to Yann about *L'Homme Atlantique* that biographically, it is the supposed departure of Yann Andrea…And yet, it is precisely the woman – Duras? Agatha? – that is *absent* from the images!). Is this the same departure that is the subject of *Agatha*, a *future* departure that was always imminent: "LUI: Vous aviez toujours parlé de ce voyage. Toujours. Vous avez toujours dit qu'un jour ou l'autre l'un de nous deux devrait partir[…] Vous savez, je ne peux pas supporter l'idée de ce départ" (*Agatha* 1139-1141) ? For more

Atlantique, which follows the film almost exactly, except for a few minor changes, was then published by Minuit the following January.[12] Once again, in Durassian temporality, the before and after cannot truly be established. To summarize, Duras wrote a text-script for images already shot, and the montage was subsequently conducted using these shots intermixed with blank frames. The text was then published a year later. The text is written in large part in the form of directions to an actor. In regard to these "directions" – "vous avancerez"; "vous marcherez à droite"; "vous tournerez vers le mur"– it is noteworthy that Duras was filmed, during the making of *Agatha,* by Jean-Marc Turine and Jérôme Beaujour for their documentary *Duras filme*. In this documentary we see Duras in her role as director, giving commands to the cameraman, and notably to Yann Andrea, in a strikingly similar fashion to those in *L'Homme Atlantique*.[13] One could argue that Duras was not only directing and filming *Agatha,* but that in this performance, another work, another text-film—in essence a virtual film—was simultaneously being written, created. Now that we have detailed the intricate complexities surrounding the history of *HA*, the question remains: What, then, is *L'Homme Atlantique*?

> Si vous me demandez: *L'H.A.* ne serait-il pas aussi un homme? Je dirais que oui, c'est aussi un homme, mais que ce n'est pas le premier homme parce que le premier homme n'existe pas. Serait-il un homme au sortir des eaux de la mer et qui porterait encore ce nom, Atlantique. Ou serait-ce un film de ce nom-là ? Je dirais oui à tout, à toutes les questions. Que c'est un homme, que c'est un film,

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on the background on the narrativity of these two texts, see Joëlle Pagès-Pindon on what she calls "le cycle Atlantique" (as opposed to Duras's "Indian cycle").

[12] "Quatre jours après la sortie du film, Jérôme Lindon, son éditeur, presse Duras d'en tirer un livre: « C'est un texte absolument magnifique et c'est aussi un acte follement courageux. Décidément, Marguerite vous êtes bien la seule au monde à écrire d'aussi beaux textes et à nous donner des œuvres aussi…je dirais culottées, qu'est *L'Homme Atlantique*. Je comprends fort bien que vous n'ayez pas voulu voir paraître le livre avec le film. Mais il me semble que la publication en librairie est maintenant non seulement possible mais nécessaire »" (Chloé Chouen-Ollier, "Notice" 1792; Archives Jean Mascolo).

[13] The archives also hold the outtakes from this documentary known as "les rushes." Parts of these "rushes" were transcribed and published by Joelle Pagès-Pindon in *Le Livre Dit: Entretiens de* Duras Filme. The critic explains how during her research she discovered a notebook of Duras's entitled, *Le Livre Dit*, in which Duras had in fact begun transcribing these outtakes from the documentary, suggesting that Duras herself envisioned a book project from these *rushes*.

que c'est un film de cinéma, et peut-être même encore plus, plus encore une espèce de cinéma qu'un film donné, oui, et peut-être *le cinéma* (my emphasis, *Yeux Verts* 778).

II. The Virtual

Taking as a point of departure the term virtual as the possible, potential, not entirely actualized, "owing to particular qualities," and of an image, *"Ce qui est en puissance"*: "'Le possible, le probable […] les possibilités de l'univers, substituer partout l'actuel au virtuel, conférer à ce qui est déjà toute l'extension dont il est capable et qui lui est possible; d'un mot, c'est servir d'instrument à l'œuvre créatrice (...) et c'est aider l'univers du devenir qui en résulte à se réaliser" (*CNRTL)* – this chapter will demonstrate two movements: the sounds and images that evoke a state of not yet being "actualized," and the sounds and images that seek the potential of the cinematographic apparatus.

Description of images as virtual

We can group the types of images into five categories:

Blue window   *Beach framed by window*

Interior illuminated by exterior light   *Seated Yann*

and *Black shots.*
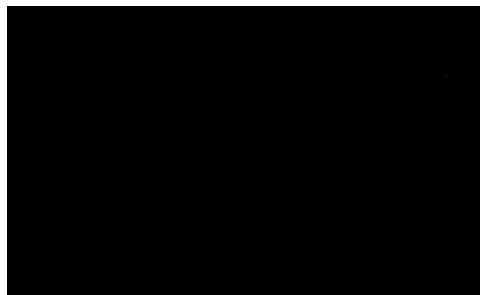
L'Homme Atlantique uses the outtakes of *Agatha,* that is to say the virtual images of

Agatha – virtual because they remain in a state of potentiality (they will never be used in

Agatha). Interestingly, the background of the blue window shot closely resembles this

peculiar and out-of-place image in the text *LFDG,* which Duras calls "plan dit

'schwartz," as shown below on the right (1466).
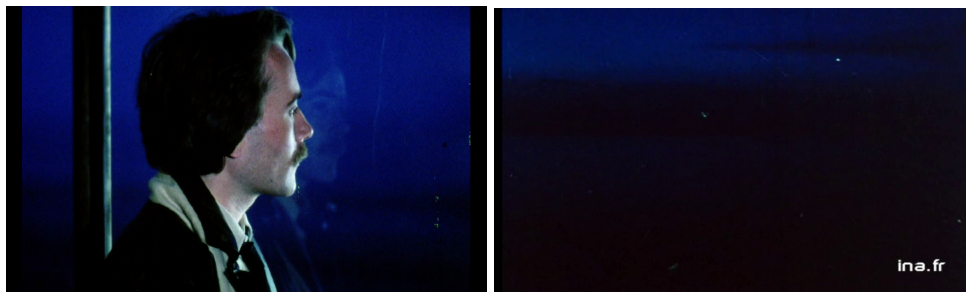
The "Schwartz" image is described as follows: "Plan raté, ici utilisé. C'est un espace

illisible, indéfinissable, sans *accident* de formes. Ce doit être quand même la mer, le ciel,

la nuit, ces *épaisseurs* d'un *grain* à peine différencié. Les voix sont là, dans ces altitudes

brouillées, cette *transparence cotonneuse*, louche" (my emphasis, *LFDG* 143). The

reason for my emphasis of the words "accident," "épaisseur," and "grain" will be made

clear in this chapter. The resemblance between these two images (one from *HA,* the other,

the "plan dit 'schwartz'" from *LFDG)* is striking: not only is the composition of the

image the same, but so too is Duras's recycling of "failed" images; *HA* is entirely made

up of "failed" images. Cottenet-Hage writes of Duras's "reluctance to discard unused

footage":

> Using material from *Navire Night* to make *Les Mains Négatives* and *Césarée* and
> footage from *Agatha* to make *L'Homme Atlantique* suggests, among other things,
> an attachment to images once they have been brought into existence […] Perhaps,
> as we shall see later, Duras believes that some meaning is "revealed" on the
> celluloid, waiting to be deciphered, much like the Surrealists believed that
> messages could be read in chance images, that any image can mean something in
> some context, somewhere, everywhere, nowhere (91).

The images, yet to take on form – "sans accident de formes," – along with their quality of

being "failed," "indéfinissable," remain in a state of potential. Duras's voice directs the

spectator, "vous regarderez…ce mur, à cette mer *qui ne s'est jamais produite encore*"

(my emphasis, *HA* 1160). In other words, the images, the wall, the sea, the sky, etc.

remain in a purely potential, virtual state. "L'individuation des choses s'efface" declares

Christine Buignet who cites *Eloge de la fadeur* ("Images durassiennes d'un orient

hybride," *Orient(s)* 213):

> Le mérite de la fadeur est de nous faire accéder à ce fond indifférencié des choses
> […] En nous conduisant à la limite du sensible, là où celui-ci s'efface et se
> résorbe, la fadeur nous fait éprouver un 'au-delà'. Mais ce dépassement ne
> débouche pas sur un autre monde à statut métaphysique, coupé de la sensation. Il
> déploie seulement celui-ci (le seul) – mais décanté de son opacité, redevenu
> virtuel, rendu disponible – sans fin – à la jouissance" (Jullien 19)

> Once again, Duras complicates the relationship between the outside and inside.

While these are all *interior* images, at each moment the attention is always directed

ailleurs towards the out of frame*, towards the *outside*. At the same time, the male figure's relationship to the outside takes on a peculiar quality, as if he is "[e]ntour[é] d'un *brouillard* d'images virtuelles" (my emphasis, Deleuze, "L'actuel et le virtuel").[14] Indeed, the nature of light and color, and the opaque, cottony texture and quality of the image are striking and differ from Duras's other films. The outside image appears ambiguous, fuzzy, rendered abstract, and as I suggest, virtual: to recall one definition provided by the OED, "Of an *image*: such that the light forming it appears to diverge from a point beyond the refracting or reflecting surface; designating the focus from which such light appears to diverge. Contrasted with real."

The lighting is not, photographically speaking, well executed (in *contre-jour*) – which is probably why these shots were not used in *Agatha*. Moreover, a curious development transpires towards the end of certain shots of the beach framed by the window.

<div align="center">

Shot 16   *Shot 12*

</div>

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[14] I emphasize "brouillard" to return to and build upon the "atmospheric image" introduced in Chapter 2.

Without a cut, the color and quality of the image changes to even further re-virtualize the image. The image, lit from the exterior, forcibly envelopes the interior in darkness. The contrast between the obscure interior and the illuminated window crystallizes the framed image in the window, rendering it ambiguous to the point where it is not clear whether or not we are in fact looking through a window. Limam-Tnani explains this virtualizing effect produced by Duras's lighting in *Son nom de Venise*:

> La lumière, toujours subtile et artificielle, qui éclaire les images et souvent les métamorphose, soutient le montage dans cette tentative d'intériorisation de l'image […] [E]lle *auréole* les objets et les lieux représentés d'un halo subjectif et les fait pressentir comme des *éléments immatériels*, des émanations de l'esprit. Les mouvements de la caméra collaborent activement eux aussi à la création d'un *cheminement mental* dans le film. Tantôt figée, tantôt soumise à un mouvement anarchique qui souvent l'engouffre dans le noir et la réduit parfois à une apparition instantanée et brève, l'image est sans cesse assimilée à *une hallucination*, et soumise à un parcours *fantaisiste* (my emphasis, 155).

As if we are looking at a framed painting, the window and image outside becomes its own solid, materialized image and not a transparent view of the exterior reality; it becomes its own *tableau* and not a "window to the world," as the saying goes. Like in Magritte's *Human Condition* series, it raises the question: What exactly are we looking at? – to borrow the painter's formula, *Ceci n'est pas [une fenêtre];* or even, *ceci est bien un écran*.

"Impression de réalité ou réel, plus-que-réel ?" asks Jean-Louis Baudry ("Dispositif" 56).

Are we dealing with a transparent window looking onto the outside, or an opaque wall, or

even a screen?

Indeed, *HA* uncovers cinema's screen. The next section will demonstrate how *HA* reveals

the components of the cinematographic apparatus.

The Cinematographic Apparatus

Definition

In order to understand what Duras means when she says that *HA* is a film "du

cinéma," it is important to first determine what the cinematic apparatus, device, or

machine entails, and then define its components. Jean-Louis Baudry, one of the main

voices of apparatus theory, defines the *dispositif* as thus:

> D'une façon générale, nous distinguons *appareil de base*, qui concerne
> l'ensemble de l'appareillage et des opérations nécessaires à la production d'un
> film et à sa projection, du *dispositif*, qui concerne uniquement la projection et
> dans lequel le sujet à qui s'adresse la projection est inclus. Ainsi l'*appareil de
> base* comporte aussi bien la pellicule, la caméra, le développement, le montage
> envisagé dans son aspect technique, etc. que le dispositif de la projection. Il y a
> loin de l'appareil de base à la seule caméra à laquelle on a voulu (on se demande
> pourquoi, pour servir quel mauvais procès) que je le limite" (58).

Baudry distinguishes between the "appareil de base" and the "dispositif," between the

system of production and the system of projection, the primary element of the latter

including and ultimately residing with the spectator. The distinction boils down to the

longstanding debate of materialism vs. idealism – a debate into which, as this chapter has already evoked, Duras enters. But why make this distinction, especially when Baudry himself appears to group them together? For Duras, the concept of what cinema *is* includes all of the above, both material and ideal, for, as the director stated, "Donner à voir au public comment c'est fait le cinéma, c'est du cinéma (*Duras filme*)." As I will demonstrate, Duras challenges the conventional conception of the cinematic apparatus and of Baudry's passive spectator: Isa Beller said to Duras, "*Quand on lit, on se retrouve, et quand on va au cinéma, on se perd.' Et quand on va voir tes films, on ne se perd pas. C'est dans le noir qu'on se retrouve"* – a statement which will take on even more meaning in my analysis of Duras's black shots (*Yeux Verts* 114). Duras challenges this notion of how the spectator experiences cinema. Indeed, Duras's cinematic career came at the time when the role of the spectator and theories regarding the cinematic apparatus were flourishing (Metz, Mulvey, Baudry and Althusser). She exposes the apparatus precisely in order to rework the entire notion itself, proving to be once again paradoxical, against the grain, *contra la doxa*.

We saw in Chapter three that in *Le Navire Night,* Duras films the entire *hors cadre.* Duras's *dispositif* incorporates both the *appareil de base* and the *dispositif de la projection*. To give an idea, it includes: the camera, the celluloid, the film reel, the projector, the screen, the cinema theater, the room, the spectator, and the film, as well as the actors/characters in the film, the director, the narrative, and the script.[15] The Durassian cinematographic apparatus necessarily then involves different levels of time: the time of writing, time of filming, time of editing, and the time of viewing. In fact, what is more critical than the distinction between materialism and idealism—a distinction

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[15] This list is by no means exhaustive.

Duras does not make and one that already becomes confused in apparatus theory—is the notion of Time and how, by exposing the apparatus, Duras seeks to break the spatio-temporal constraints of cinema to reach its full potential. This section will deal with the following aspects of the cinematic apparatus as we see it in *HA* and as Duras defines it: the screen, the celluloid including the individual cell unit or image on the celluloid, the room of the movie theater, the camera, the light particles coming from the projector, and finally, the spectator.

Why re-frame the window and border it with darkness that is indistinguishable from the obscurity of the rest of the room surrounding the spectator? Why not have the image in the window occupy the entire screen?

This *mise en abyme* is not a coincidence. The reframing and opacity of the image in the window – the window's non-transparency – mimics a screen. The black space surrounding this framed window makes it appear as if it is a *mise en abyme*, calling our attention to the dark space surrounding the screen that is the cinema room, thus transforming the windowed image into a screen, thus making the screen itself visible. What are the characteristics of a cinema screen? a delimited space and an opaque, non-transparent surface on which an image appears? Limam-Tnani confirms for Duras's textual work that:

> La fenêtre et ses variantes […] balcon terrasse, baie vitrée, espaces frontalières […] la grille est pourvue, dans le roman, d'un caractère contradictoire: elle est

souvent ressentie comme une sorte d'écran […] Les vitres, l'eau, les murs retrouvent leur nature spéculaire et collaborent par leurs miroitements simultanés ou désaccordés à brouiller les éléments de l'image et à jeter le trouble chez le spectateur […] à travers la confusion des fenêtres et des miroirs, c'est le mécanisme même de la réflexion qui se trouve démantelé: la transparence ne se distingue plus du reflet, ni le dehors du dedans; pas d'origine à l'image, des images seulement, c'est-à-dire des formes et des traces (122-123).

The lit surface across which the man's darkened silhouette passes in effect turns into a screen – a screen in a cinema theater, or also the sheet in a *théâtre des ombres* (which in turn makes the shadowed figure passing in front of the screen also a spectator of the film present in the room).

As Limam-Tnani puts it: "La clarté et l'obscurité revoient sans cesse à la lumière comme essence du cinéma, fondement de la vision et de l'existence de l'image" (177).

This *mise en abyme* renders visible cinema's screen, and thereby complicates the relationship between exterior reality, representation, and simulacra. If Ishaghpour writes of the image of the reflected outside sky in *Le Navire Night*, "'ceci est un nuage,' rien d'autre" ("La parole" 268), these images say to the spectator "'ceci est l'écran,' rien d'autre."[16] Ishaghpour continues to discuss for *India Song* that:

Il ne s'agit pas de faire violence à la vile mécanique, d'attaquer l'image au nom du réel, mais au contraire d'en augmenter l'effet de simulacre. Pour maintenir l'écran ouvert au réel comme à un impossible qui marque l'image de son manque, *India Song* se situe entre la surface de l'image et la profondeur du miroir: le miroir est montré pour que paraisse l'écran, l'écran est tendu devant le spectateur pour lui interdire le miroir où il ne cesse pas d'être attiré (243).

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[16] See Chapter 3 for my commentary on this statement by Ishaghpour.

Limam-Tnani similarly argues that Duras's use of the mirror in her films is "une

équivoque qui incommode le spectateur et lui rappelle sans arrêt ceci: ce qu'on lui donne

à voir n'est qu'un simulacre" (144). The metaphor of the mirror holds a particular place

in film theory; it is a metaphor for cinema "parce qu'il visualise cette distance qui sépare

le spectateur du film et effectue une mise en doute des éléments représentés. Le miroir est

chargé de rendre perceptible la nature spéculaire et par conséquent cinématographique du

spectacle que nous voyons sur l'écran" (48).[17] Ishaghpour expounds:

> Comme l'image en miroir, l'image cinématographique renvoie à quelque chose
> […] Ce sont deux modes de non-être: l'une, l'actualité inaccessible, l'autre la
> fixité d'une disparition. La coïncidence et la non-coïncidence des cadres de miroir
> et d'écran suspendent toute possibilité d'affirmation ontologique. Ainsi, malgré le
> plein de la surface de l'écran, toute chose est projetée dans le non-lieu, le non-
> temps et l'entre-deux des images. Ce qui vient du miroir vient d'un autre temps,
> d'un autre lieu, il vient à la rencontre ou s'en va vers le fond. (243)

But what if the image on the screen refers to the screen itself of cinema? In *HA,* we are no

longer dealing with a mirror. In turning the window image into screen, drawing attention

to the very screen before the spectator-viewer, the actual image becomes the screen

itself,[18] for the screen before the spectator is not a simulacrum. The black shot also

returns to the actual, physical screen.

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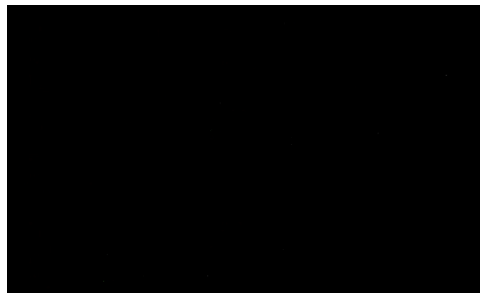
[17] Baudry and Laura Mulvey have put in evidence the spectator's situation in front of the screen-mirror as it relates to psychoanalytic theory.
[18] We will return to the notion of the wall-screen shortly.

When there is no other image projected onto the screen but a black surface speckled with spots of light from the projector, what the spectator perceives is the physical material of the screen made visible. To put it another way, if conventionally the screen is always virtualized by the image that "renvoie à […] le non-lieu," now, as the re-virtualized image reveals the screen, the virtual object becomes actual – the screen as object of the image and the image as the screen following the actual-virtual circuit whereby, according to Deleuze:

> Objet et image sont ici tous deux virtuels, et constituent le plan d'immanence où se dissout l'objet actuel. Mais l'actuel est passé alors dans un processus d'actualisation qui affecte l'image autant que l'objet […] Aussi y a-t-il coalescence et scission, ou plutôt oscillation, perpétuel échange entre l'objet actuel et son image virtuelle: l'image virtuelle ne cesse de devenir actuelle… objet devenu virtuel et image devenue actuelle, ce sont les figures qui apparaissent déjà dans l'optique élémentaire… Le rapport de l'actuel et du virtuel constitue toujours un circuit, mais de deux manières: tantôt l'actuel renvoie à des virtuels comme à d'autres choses dans de vastes circuits, où le virtuel s'actualise, tantôt l'actuel renvoie au virtuel comme à son propre virtuel, dans les plus petits circuits où le virtuel cristallise avec l'actuel ("L'Actuel et le virtuel").

The screen itself, no longer "hidden" by another image (the screen no longer a "cache"),[19] the "image" becomes the actual screen itself. It also reveals the material fact that the screen is not transparent because the image of the window has been removed. Now, the spectator cannot see out; as a result, the screen that was just a window now becomes clearly, *not* a window. In fact, in her article on "L'Homme Atlantique" in *Les Yeux Verts*, Duras highlights the importance of the screen as she tells us she specifically chose the theater where *HA* was to be shown to the public, precisely because of its screen:

> Je dois dire encore ceci, c'est que j'ai choisi la salle de l'Escurial contre les salles mouroirs à mini-écran, les salles "supermarché" qui envahissent la France entière,

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[19] André Bazin, "Qu'est-ce que le cinéma," (98-100) and Pascal Bonitzer, *Le Champ aveugle* (115). Bonitzer writes, "Nous savons depuis André Bazin que l'écran de cinéma ne fonctionne pas comme le cadre d'un tableau, mais comme un *cache* qui ne montre qu'une partie de l'événement" (115).

parce que le noir de *L'Homme Atlantique* doit pouvoir être vu et regardé sur la surface d'un véritable écran de cinéma (777).

If Duras insists that *HA,* the black of *HA,* be seen on the surface of a real screen, it is because the screen itself must also be seen.

Next, the black space surrounding this framed window also calls our attention to the dark space surrounding the screen that is the cinema room. It seems as if the image is a filmed image of a screen from inside the theater where the spectator-reader resides. The voice of Duras refers directly to the spectator's position currently in the theater, the dark room, the "chambre noire": "Vous allez regarder tous les spectateurs dans la salle, un par un et chacun pour soi./ Rappelez-vous bien ceci : la salle, elle est à elle seule le monde entier de même que vous, vous l'êtes, vous, à vous seul[…]Ne cherchez pas à comprendre ce phénomène photographique, la vie" (*HA*). Cinema seems to have turned in on itself in a way. While Baudry reminds us of the "dispositif," "Il s'agit toujours de la scène de la caverne: effet de réel ou impression de réalité. Copie, simulacre, et même simulacre, et même simulacre de simulacre. Impression de réalité ou réel, plus-que-réel ?" (56), is it then possible for the cinema room to turn into the *camera obscura,* for the spectator to be inside the *camera obscura* (we will arrive at this point shortly)?

The celluloid also appears in the black frames.

Starting with the opening shot, the film's material is made visible; the image is speckled with spots of light, recalling the projector's light that rolls over the film strip, which in a way solidifies (to return to Elaine Scarry's article discussed in Chapter two – the phenomenon of kinetic occlusion, the projection of Duras's magic lantern/cinema over one surface) both the screen and the celluloid. Like the cottony, granular texture of the non-black images, the spectator watches the grains of "chaque particule de ces milliards du déferlement continu" (Duras, *HA)*. "Perhaps," to re-take Cottenet's phrase, as previously cited, the "meaning […] 'revealed' on the celluloid, waiting to be deciphered" is none other than the celluloid, the material of cinema itself.

Duras also reveals the celluloid with the framed window images which mimic the individual cell – the basic unit of cinema – on the film strip.

This image shows the bottom of another framed image at the top, the two frames
separated by a perforated black gap, and on the sides, a visible porous border gives the
impression that the strip of film is suspended in its projection and movement of
unwinding (I superimpose two images below to demonstrate):

For what are the ambiguous "ces disparitions successives" and "le déferlement continue"
that Duras's voice speaks of in *HA,* if not the individual photograms that pass at 24
images per second—"la vérité 24 fois par seconde" says Godard (*Le Petit Soldat)*—to
produce the impression of continuous movement, the "déferlement continue?" Ironically,
in another reversal of the apparatus, where in actual practice the strip of film would be
moving and the photogram would be the frozen image from reality, in this "static" shot

we glimpse the subtle movement of the waves. I take a quote from Kuntzel's notion of

the "appareil filmique," whose words accurately depict this peculiar effect:

> Le filmique dont il sera question dans l'analyse filmique ne sera donc ni du côté
> de la mouvance ni du côté de la fixité, mais entre les deux, dans l'engendrement
> du film-projection par le film-pellicule, dans la négation de ce film-pellicule par
> le film-projection ("Le défilement" 110).[20]

If movement is not really in the images, as Deleuze reminds us in *L'Image-mouvement*

and *L'Image-temps*, but rather occurs in the gap, in the in-between, Duras literally "fait

voir" – to borrow the formula often employed by Duras critics to refer to the evocation of

the spectator's imagination – the illusion, the ultimate paradox of cinema. While the

persistence of vision is commonly considered the reason for motion illusion, it is in fact

only the reason why the *black spaces* that come between each "real" movie frame are *not*

perceived—they are virtual. The "phi phenomenon" is the true reason for motion illusion,

that is, the optical illusion of perceiving continuous motion between separate objects

viewed rapidly in succession. Duras exposes this interstice and liberates the gap normally

hidden by other images and the illusion of movement. With the black shots, Duras

reverses the "gap" or the in-between and image; the gap itself becomes the image. If in

Agatha the interval is released, in *HA* and with the black shots, these "virtual" images

become the "real" images.

The "Noir Atlantique"

But can we even consider a black image an image? Without a doubt, the black shot is,

as Snauwaert states, "ce que Marguerite Duras considère peut-être comme sa découverte

maximale au cinéma, c'est le « noir couleur », inventé avec *L'Homme Atlantique* (82).

Accordingly, its troubling presence fascinates. Critics have written of Duras's black shots

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[20] The context of this quote is a discussion of the spectator's involvement in the "appareil filmique" or
"l'autre film." We will return to the filmic apparatus shortly.

as virtual in terms of absence or the void and the possibilities that it holds. Ropars-Wuilleumier sees the "montée de l'écran noir" as the "page blanche du cinéma" (*Ecraniques* 83).[21] Most critics have understood the black shot as "a multiplicity of virtual meanings" (Cottenet-Hage), a "universalité (Ishaghpour), and a limitless potential of imaginary, virtual images to be produced by the spectator. Cottenet-Hage writes: "For Bazin, the film image stands in relation to the real world as a mediator of meaning […] For Duras, it seems to float freely, waiting for an anchoring into sound and sense that never quite happens" (92). For Cottenet-Hage, it constitutes an "ideal image."[22] The "ideal image," the critic continues, "bears a strong kinship to the 'absolute photography' which was to have served as a title to *L'Amant*. It exists only as a virtuality which never was and never will be. And its very absence enables a tale to be told in the spaces left void" (96). Snauwaert similarly offers for Duras's black shots:

> Ce noir favorise le mouvement ininterrompu d'un voir qui, n'étant pas arrêté par un objet, peut se confondre avec ce qu'il regarde, "illimiter" sa vision en se fondant à elle […] Dans ce registre la vision est un geste d'interprétation; non le résultat d'une "imagicité" perceptuelle qui serait *donnée à voir*. Par le "noir couleur," Duras montre que toute vision est hautement médiatisée; mais que plus cette médiation est neutre, plus elle en appelle au travail de l'imaginaire, à sa responsabilité, à sa liberté (82).

As we have seen throughout this dissertation, Duras certainly troubles perception and what constitutes "voir," leading critics to interpret the black shot in terms of a "non-voir ou un non-regarder" (Snauwaert 84). Nevertheless, it does not change the fact that a spectator still *looks* at a screen. I wish to push the discussion further: What happens when we consider the black shot, *as an image* in and of itself?

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[21] She continues: "La disparition finale d'un 'je' dont le dernier énoncé s'abolit dans le 'vous' - celui de l'acteur absent que peut seul suppléer le spectateur invisible. « Vous êtes l'homme atlantique. Vous l'ignorez ». En ce *vous* se fonde et se perd la voix de *je*, qui n'émerge jamais que dans l'atteinte d'une autre voix et ne peut que se taire en son absence – cette ignorance, ou cet oubli" (*Écraniques* 83).

[22] Cottenet-Hage's "ideal image" stems from Duras's "image passe–partout," a term used by the director in an interview to define she was searching for.

Duras writes in a short essay about this blackness, what she calls the "noir Atlantique" or the "noir couleur":

> Le noir peut se rayer, s'abîmer, comme l'image. Et ce qu'il a, que l'image [the conventional image in cinema] n'a pas, c'est qu'il peut *refléter* les *ombres* qui passent *devant* lui, *comme l'eau, la vitre*. Ce qu'on voit parfois survenir *sur* le noir ce sont des *lueurs*, des *formes*, des gens qui passent dans la cabine, des appareils oubliés dans les fenêtres de la cabine, et des *formes non identifiables, purement oculaires, surgies de l'immensité du repos des yeux par le noir*, ou bien au contraire, de l'épouvante qui devrait venir à certains quand on leur propose de regarder sans leur proposer d'objet à voir (my emphasis, *Outside 2* 371-2).

Impossible for a reproduction here to demonstrate what is found in these black movement-images, for as Duras indicates, the spectator still witnesses forms within the black shot. To be clear, the black shot is not an image of *nothing*. Indeed, many spectators who have seen the film give testimony to seeing shadows, "des lueurs, des formes, des gens qui passent […] et des formes non identifiables."[23] In watching the black shot, the spectator discerns black matter in motion: at one point, the camera appears to be executing a pan, at another waves roll across the screen; in the depths a form can be discerned. Whether they are "real" or not, these forms are certainly *là*. While the black shot could be virgin celluloid, it could also be that Duras has filmed black, a technique she used in previous films (*Son nom de Venise* and *Agatha.)* That is to say, these forms

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[23] Jöelle Pages-Pindon, among other critics, has remarked upon this fact during various colloquia.

may be objectively present in the image. Certain shots in *Agatha,* for example, are just very dark filmed images; when the spectator thinks the darkness is just another black shot, the eye still perceives movement taking place within the darkness until the camera slowly pans out of darkness into light (shot 74).
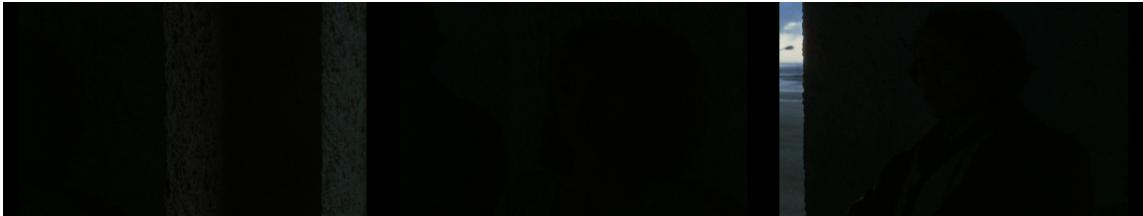
It may also be that the inherent movement of cinema coupled with the black produces a *trompe l'œil* so that the spectator's eye is tricked into seeing shapes; our eye and imagination cannot help in darkness but to try to discern forms: "des *formes non identifiables, purement oculaires, surgies de l'immensité du repos des yeux par le noir*" (*Outside 2* 371*)*. Because we are not just *seeing* beings but *thinking* beings, the brain *has* to make sense of the visual data the eye provides to construct a coherent picture of "reality."[24] It is in this sense that I argue the black shots belong to a purely potential, virtual state. Perhaps the spectator perceives waves in the darkness as a residual effect from the previous screen. Even still, this ocular residual effect is one of the original principles that led to the invention of cinema—the persistence of visual phenomena and the principle of flipbooks whereby an afterimage is thought to persist on the retina. Whatever the case may be, *something* remains in the black shot, and it is in this "something" that "black" is *rendered visible*; in blackness, its quality or potential is materialized.

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[24] In this regard it would be interesting to explore the existential relationship with Herzog's film *The Land of Silence and Darkness*.

In *HA,* Duras paints the screen black. The celluloid made visible by the light

passing over the filmed black shots makes what Francis Bacon describes in an interview

with Duras as "matière jetée sur le mur" (*Outside* 1075). We can compare her black shots

to the black paintings of Pierre Soulages, Rothko, Aki Kuroda (who Duras herself

analyses in "Les Ténèbres" in *Outside*), or to the black paintings of one of Duras's

favorite painters, Goya, upon whom Duras had in fact based an earlier title for *HA*–

Pascal et Goya."[25] Duras and Bacon discuss this effect of the master: "M.D: *Goya est*

surnaturel. F.B : […] Il a conjugué les formes avec l'air. Il semble que ses peintures sont

faites avec la matière de l'air. " Indeed, the black shots are not one-dimensional or flat.

The thickness of the black is felt, essentially materializing air, like in Goya's black

paintings.

Moreover, in the black viscosity, Time is also rendered visible. Duras declares in

an essay on the black paintings of Aki Kuroda that the spectator can see on the canvas'

surface, "l'épaisseur de temps qu'il lui fait amasser" (*Outside* 260). Pinthon thus argues

in her article on the relationship between Duras and Kuroda, "Aki Kuroda a réussi à

rendre perceptible, dans la toile achevée, cette dimension temporelle, à la matérialiser:

sur la surface du tableau." In *Agatha* we saw how the interval liberated time and gives a

direct representation of time: the coexistence of past, present, and future. In *HA* the black

image reveals the gap – and thus time – in the sense that it returns to the spectator's

actual presence in the here and now. If Duras's images reveal the cinematographic

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[25] See the "Notice" in the *Pléiade:* "Le document que nous reproduisons, quatrième dossier du
dactylogramme […] nous apprend que Duras a eu l'idée de 'variations' autour du film *du cinéma,* la
quatrième version montrant une conception radicale du cinéma ("noir total pendant 41 mn."). Il existe à
l'IMEC […] un dossier intitulé 'Pascal Goya Synopsis' […] Duras aurait eu comme projet de faire un film
avec une voix récitant sur un fond noir des extraits de Pascal en alternance avec des images du peintre
Goya et de sa famille" ("Notice" 1794).

apparatus, it is to break the spatio-temporal constraints to include the "virtual" absent

spectator in the film. The two remaining aspects of the cinematographic apparatus left to

be addressed as we defined it are the spectator and the camera.

The Spectator

> *"Continuer à oublier, à ignorer et le devenir de*
> *tout ceci et celui de vous-même"* (*HA*)

Duras declared in an interview after the opening screening of her film *Le Camion,*

"J'aimerais bien *faire* un film *sur* le public" (my emphasis, Bonnet 28). This quote will

take on new meaning as we work through the spectator's involvement in the film. First,

the voice of Duras implicates the spectator at every moment, from the very beginning of

the film by addressing "vous." Secondly, the image as screen creates a spatio-temporal

continuity with the spectator's here and now and overcomes the spatio-temporal

confinements of the image as being restricted to the frame of the screen. There is no

longer a break between the *cadrage* of the image and the *cadrage* of the screen or a

"délimitation d'un champ" as Pascal Bonitzer argues:

> Il paraît impossible de filmer sans faire des plans. Dès qu'il y a cadrage, il y a
> délimitation d'un champ et (au moins) d'un plan. Tout film semble se composer et
> se décomposer en une série de plans, et le plan, qui est autre chose que l'image,
> apparaît ainsi comme ce qui donne à chaque image son unité différentielle"
> (*Champ aveugle* 16).

Michelle Royer similarly points out the inherent fragmentary nature of cinema:

> Baudry a souligné que la spécificité du médium filmique consiste en la création
> d'une illusion de continuité. Le plan noir rappelle que le cinéma vit de la
> différence niée […] Casser la continuité de la bande visuelle c'est marquer la
> différence entre les plans et donc mettre en lumière la fragmentation originelle du
> film. C'est rappeler que la bande visuelle est formée de séries d'images distinctes
> qui sont artificiellement découpées, jointes, collées pour créer le sens (*Écran* 79).

Royer's conclusion does not fully reach the heart of Duras's originality. If Baudry underlined the specificity of the filmic medium as its creation of an illusion of continuity, what is more interesting with *HA* is that Duras exploits this "spécificité du medium filmique" and does not *break* the illusion of continuity, but *creates* spatio-temporal continuity – the black border surrounding the window image/screen continues to run into the wall of the room thus merging the image with the actual screen before the spectator.

Furthermore, if the window becomes a screen, the screen in the cinema theater, the shadowed figure in the image is but another virtualized spectator:

The contre-jour light abstracts interior and exterior "reality," casting Yann's figure into a complete silhouette. This shadow potentializes his body into any other spectator who would walk in front of the screen in the cinema theater, the dark room, in this "phénomène photographique, la vie" (*HA*) – a *camera obscura*. Duras describes in the text-film pair *Le Camion* the figures of the man and woman (who are played in the film by Gérard Depardieu and Marguerite Duras): *"je les vois enfermés dans la cabine, comme menacés par la lumière extérieur"* (*Le Camion* 41). Julie Beaulieu describes this virtual space in the film *Le Camion* as a "lieu transitoire, la chambre noire du *Camion* (comme la salle obscure, lieu de projection) sert la conception d'une forme d'écriture filmique en devenir qui se fait ailleurs, déborde du cadre: une écriture qui voyage (104). In *HA,* the spectator is inside the *camera obscura.* The spectator is told to watch first

him/herself, and next his current presence in the actual room where he/she sits, this presence that is the photographical phenomenon:

> Regardez la caméra. / La caméra va maintenant capter votre réapparition dans la *glace parallèle à celle dans laquelle elle se voit* […] vous allez réapparaître dans l'image […] Rappelez-vous bien ceci : la salle, elle est à elle seule le monde entier de même que vous, vous l'êtes, vous, à vous seul […] Ne cherchez pas à comprendre ce phénomène photographique, la vie. […] Regardez autour de vous […] ces vallées du *cinéma, elles se regardent, elles* [the "vallées du cinéma": the screen, the camera, the specator] *se font face (HA)*.

What the spectator sees in the black shot, the "*formes*, des gens qui passent dans la cabine" is his/her own presence.

The spectator's participation *in* the film immediately raises two problems, two impossibilities that I will argue in this next section Duras seeks to overcome –both are a question of time. The first problem I will address is that of the spectator's perception: Duras states in an interview, "La caméra ne remplace jamais le regard. Elle le filme, elle le regard, elle regarde le regard mais elle ne peut pas le remplacer" (Duras and Gauthier, *Les Parleuses* 993); or to borrow Youssef Ishaghpour's statement discussed in Chapter one "On ne peut pas voir la vision" (*La Parole* 232). In the previous chapters of this dissertation I analyzed how Duras's other films represent perception taking place in the films' characters (see Chapter one); here, we will explore how Duras tries to film perception. In *HA* our own perception as spectator is literally *mise-en-scène*. The second impossibility is the spectator's absence from the film's material –impossible, for example, for the future spectator to assist in the shooting of the film, in its production: to return to the opening quote, "le cinéma croit pouvoir *consigner* ce que vous faites *en ce moment*. Mais vous, de là où vous *serez* […] vous vous rendrez compte que *le cinéma ne peut pas*."

Film critics and theorists have long theorized on "cette double impossibilité:

représenter vraiment, ne pas représenter" (Bellour, *L'Entre-images* 31). Jacques Aumont

notably states in *L'Esthétique du film*:

> Le spectateur a beau savoir [...] que ce n'est pas lui qui assiste sans médiation à
> cette scène, qu'une caméra l'a enregistrée au préalable pour lui, le contraignant en
> quelque sorte à cette place-là, que cette image plate, ces teintes-là ne sont pas
> réelles mais un simulacre à deux dimensions inscrit chimiquement sur une
> pellicule et projeté sur un écran, l'identification primaire fait néanmoins qu'il
> s'identifie au sujet de la vision, à l'œil unique de la caméra qui a vu cette scène
> avant lui et en a organisé la représentation pour lui, de cette façon-là et de ce point
> de vue privilégié (186).

Duras critics continue to underscore the leitmotif of this seemingly insurmountable

impossibility. They resolve the problem by concluding that Duras elicits the spectator's

imagination and his/her production of infinite virtual images. Snaweurt argues in "Le

Cinéma de Lol V. Stein":

> Le *cinéma* – appareil de représentation imaginaire – naît donc en lieu et place
> d'un impossible *regarder,* d'une vision directe, empirique et perceptive […] Ce
> que *Le Ravissement de Lol V. Stein* invite à penser, c'est que devant le cinéma
> d'images filmées y compris, chacun a le loisir de se faire son propre cinéma […]
> Ce qui s'appelle *cinéma,* alors, par distinction du filmique et par opposition à ce
> cinéma commercial, c'est cette mise en route de l'imaginaire de l'homme, de sa
> lecture créatrice de l'univers […] (85).

The critic continues that in the black frame, the "mediation" of the spectator's gaze is

neutralized and opens up to an infinite vision, "illimité":

> Ce noir favorise le mouvement ininterrompu d'un voir qui, n'étant pas arrêté par
> un objet, peut se confondre avec ce qu'il regarde, « illimiter » sa vision en se
> fondant à elle […] Dans ce registre la vision est un geste d'interprétation ; non le
> résultat d'une « imagicité » perceptuelle qui serait *donnée à voir.* Par le « noir
> couleur », Duras montre que toute vision est hautement médiatisée ; mais que plus
> cette médiation est neutre, plus elle en appelle au travail de l'imaginaire, à sa
> responsabilité, à sa liberté (82).

Duras's work addresses this "désir insensé," or to borrow Bellour's words, this desire that

perception and representation are the same, without mediation. This *desire* – to film the

spectator, his/her vision – is what Duras films, or in the director's own words: "je pense

qu'un film doit plonger dans le désir complètement, et dans le *tournage* et dans le fond,

dans la forme et dans le fond, et dans *le traitement du sujet*, et dans la technique, aussi

bien il doit plonger dans une même dimension du désir, de la passion" (my emphasis,

Duras, *Véra Baxter* 1976).[26] I will now show how *L'Homme Atlantique* responds to this

desire and achieves a process analogous to what Bellour describes in his analysis of

Thierry Kuntzel's *dispositif:*

> Ainsi s'invente une image qui répond à cette *double impossibilité : représenter vraiment, ne pas représenter*. Elle naît au tournage d'une attention extrême portée à la lumière […] 'Quelque chose comme ce *désir insensé*, rendre visible la lumière,' entendons la lumière comme condition d'apparition de la forme dans l'expérience visuelle modelée par la production continue du *flux mental*. Comme s'il y avait une lumière psychique et que sous nos yeux, elle devenait perception parce que la perception en serait-elle-même qu'une *projection de lumière interne* (*L'Entre-images* 31).

This "double impossibility" is what Duras means when her voice says "le cinéma croit

pouvoir *consigner* ce que *vous faites en ce moment* […] Mais vous, de là où vous

serez…le cinéma ne peut pas" (*HA).* Duras attempts to *capture,* to show, to project this

impossibility in cinema through the constraints of time in order to represent what is *in* the

spectators eyes—the "cristal liquide de vos yeux" —the double perception of a projection

that is itself the projection from the interior light.

What, then, if the screen becomes the camera? The voice of Duras instructs us,

the spectators, over a black screen, "Regardez la caméra. / La caméra va maintenant

capter votre réapparition dans la glace parallèle à celle dans laquelle elle se voit […] vous

allez réapparaître dans l'image" (*HA).* Film theory commonly considers the screen as a

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[26] For more on desire and passion in general terms in Duras's texts and films, see Michelle Royer *L'Écran de la passion*.

mirror (Lacan, Mulvey). Accordingly, Durassian critics have analyzed Duras's use of

mirrors and play of reflections in *India Song:*

> Dans ce long métrage de caractère expérimental, la réalité filmée devient un reflet
> de cette réalité alors que des voix intemporelles opèrent une distanciation du
> représenté: une glace s'interpose entre ce qui est filmé et le reflet capté par la
> caméra, puis montré à l'écran. Le jeu des miroirs, allégorie expérimentale de la
> représentation filmique, fonctionne comme une mise en abîme de l'expérience
> cinématographique que vit le spectateur, lorsque plongé dans la salle obscure de
> cinéma. Ce faisant, le jeu des miroirs d'*India Song* revoie à l'idée selon laquelle
> l'expérience immédiate du monde est toujours médiatisée par un regard, une
> perception, et ainsi ne porte pas sur la réalité mais son reflet, c'est-à-dire l'idée
> que le spectateur se fait de cette réalité. Perception et subterfuge sont ainsi liés
> (Beaulieu 56).

In return, critics like Van Wert have argued that this "'wall' that reflects everything [the

screen as mirror and wall] also suggests that the filming camera is but another mirror,

itself" (28). If the screen is a mirror, and the camera is also a mirror, by the common

denominator of the mirror, the screen thus becomes the camera – the screen as a literal

surface that records, a "surface d'enregistrement" to borrow the words of Pascal

Bonitzer:

> C'est que l'écran n'a pas d'horizons […] L'écran n'est pas une fenêtre ouverte sur le
> monde, mais une *surface d'enregistrement*. La profondeur de champ n'est pas un
> horizon ouvert, c'est un agencement de plans (my emphasis, *Le Champ aveugle*
> 118).[27]

If the screen "n'a pas d'horizons," and if it is a "surface d'enregistrement," this statement

seems to suggest the possibility of the impossibility of Duras's opening statement that "le

cinéma croit pouvoir consigner ce que vous faites en ce moment." In turning the image

into the screen-camera (instead of the "écran-miroir"), Duras films the spectator in the

cinema. We return to the proverbial screen-mirror but now in a new light: the spectator

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[27] Nevertheless, the theorist concludes, "Le regard croit s'y enfoncer, il croit parcourir un espace ouvert et
libre...mais il ne fait en réalité que balayer une surface limitée - celle de l'écran - à partir d'un point de vue
rigide et bloqué" (118).

no longer only *identifies* in a process of voyeurism with the character in the film and with the camera (see Chapter 3). Rather, the spectator's eyes are the screen-camera-projector, which in turn are also reflected by the actual screen (also projector-camera). The process then is one of a simultaneous vision of perception coming from the exterior and a "*projection de lumière interne"* (Bellour 31), a simultaneous confrontation between exterior and interior between "la masse physique" (exterior) and "l'épaisseur psychique de son défilement" (interior) (Bellour 28) – in other words, a Durassian "accident."[28]

L'accident

> "J'attends ce que j'appelle 'l'accident'… On ne peut pas comprendre l'accident… It's basically the technical imagination [sic]" ("Bacon" *Outside*).

The notion of the "accident" can help us understand what Duras is getting at in *HA* in terms of the cinematographic apparatus that seeks to overcome these physical spatio-temporal impossibilities. We can consider the "formes non identifiables, purement oculaires, surgies de l'immensité du repos des yeux par le noir*"* found amidst the darkness of *HA*'s black shots, the brushstrokes in movement on the screen as "accidents," or the event (like the "événement dans les sables" in *LFDG*). In an interview with Francis Bacon, Duras discusses the accident and event: "M.D.: *Revenons aux taches de couleur* […] *Ce sont les taches qui partent les premières?* F.B.: Presque toujours. Elles sont 'les événements qui m'arrivent,' mais qui arrivent par moi, par mon système nerveux qui a été créé au moment de ma conception" (*Outside* 1072*)*. Duras similarly describes what occurs in Aki Kuroda's black paintings, his "Ténèbres": "Autre chose arrive, se voit, oui,

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[28] See my analysis in Chapter three of how Duras represents the "accident" taking place in *LFDG*.

déjà *les irrégularités*, des *mouvements*, des *accidents à peine visibles* qui surviennent et

ensuite se répètent régulièrement" (*Outside* 1067*)*. And in a remarkably similar manner,

Duras describes what transpires in her own black shot-paintings:

> *Le noir couleur*, inversement, est plus vaste, plus profond que *l'image de la couleur*. On le regarde davantage. Il défile tout entier comme un fleuve. Il ne s'agit pas d'une matière arrêtée, mais d'une *matière en mouvement* […] Le noir peut se rayer, s'abîmer, comme l'image. Et ce qu'il a, que l'image n'a pas, c'est qu'il peut refléter les ombres qui passent devant lui, comme l'eau, la vitre. Ce qu'on voit parfois survenir sur le noir ce sont des lueurs, des formes, des gens qui passent dans la cabine, des appareils oubliées dans le fenêtres de la cabine, et des formes non identifiables, purement oculaires, surgies de l'immensité du repos des yeux par le noir, ou bien au contraire, de l'épouvante qui devrait venir à certains quand on leur propose de regarder sans leur proposer d'objet à voir. Tout cela, la couleur ne peut pas le capter. Les cours d'eau, les lacs, les océans ont la puissance des images noires. Comme elles, ils vont. Nous étions plusieurs dans la salle de montage et jamais le manque d'images ne s'est fait sentir ("Le noir atlantique," *Le monde extérieur* 15).

The forms found in this "matter in movement," the "accidents" are truly *there*, but, as

Francis Bacon – who also uses the color black in an original manner[29] –points out: "Ce

qui arrive après [l'accident] c'est l'imagination technique." The artist at first needs to be

an open receptacle, a spectator of sorts to the accident, the "evénément," the first stroke.[30]

Duras finds this same type of "passivity" in the black paintings of Aki Kuroda. Monique

Pinthon analyzes Duras's essay on Kuroda in "Tout est littérature: Marguerite Duras et le

peintre Aki Kuroda"; the two artists work in similar manners:

> Dans l'acte de peindre, Aki Kuroda se laisse déborder par la peinture, il devient passif, de cette passivité si souvent revendiquée par Marguerite Duras: ce mouvement de dépossession cet état de réceptivité, de *porosité* à l'égard des êtres et des choses, est le fondement même de l'écriture durassienne. Lorsqu'elle écrit, elle devient 'un lieu hanté' par son passé, sa famille, les lieux où elle a vécu, les gens qu'elle a connus, aimés. Elle se laisse envahir par le *dehors*. Il lui faut mourir à soi pour naître

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[29] For more on Bacon's use of black in his paintings see Deleuze on Bacon in *The Logic of Sensation*.
[30] This process is not without evoking Duras's categorical (and often-cited) "ombre interne" that Duras envisions for herself. Duras criticism considers her term, "l'ombre interne," as a metaphor for the writing process (See Royer *L'Écran*). Critics have drawn the parallel between her "ombre interne" and her "chambre noire" (a term first coined in Duras's text and film *Le Camion*). This has led critics like Michelle Royer to liken Duras's process of making films and her black shots in particular to the writing process.

à l'écriture, comme le rappelle Maurice Blanchot: "s'il y a rapport entre écriture et passivité, c'est que l'une et l'autre supposent l'effacement, l'exténuation du sujet" (29). De la même façon devant la toile, la pensée rationnelle se soumet aux "frémissements de la main peignante"; Kuroda peint sans savoir quoi, et "A la fin les faisceaux des <u>accidents</u> de *l'épaisseur noire* produisent une direction" (260) […] La passivité est porosité, l'artiste devient forme creuse, réceptacle, il se laisse envahir par le dehors, il rejoint lui-même le dehors, il est "outside." Ce mouvement de dépossession aboutit à la fusion avec le monde […] Plus que d'une comparaison, il s'agit d'ailleurs d'une véritable assimilation (emphasis added, 47).

In turn, for Duras's black shots, the spectator-reader must employ his/her own

"imagination technique," and thus effectively becomes an artist-creator. Duras continues

to explore this process with Bacon:

– *On a souvent parlé ensemble de "l'accident."*
– Je ne peux pas le définir. On ne peut que parler "autour."
– *Essayer de l'extérieur*.
– Voilà : si on prenait de la matière et qu'on la jette contre un mur ou sur la toile on trouverait tout de suite les traits du personnage qu'on voudrait retenir. Ce serait fait sans volonté. On arriverait à un état immédiat du personnage et cela *hors* de l'illustration du sujet. […] Les expressionnistes abstraits américains ont essayé de peindre de cette façon, seulement avec la <u>force de la matiè</u>*re*. Ce n'est pas assez. C'est encore de la décoration. La force ne doit pas être, n'est pas dans la force de jeter la matière. La force doit être entièrement congelée <u>dans le sujet</u>. La matière jetée sur le mur, ce serait peut-être *l'accident*, vous voyez. Ce qui arrive après c'est l'imagination technique […] Je ne dessine pas. Je commence à faire toutes sortes de taches. <u>J'attends ce que j'appelle "l'accident</u>: la tache à partir de laquelle va partir le tableau. La tache c'est l'accident. Mais si on s'en tient à l'accident, si on croit qu'on comprend l'accident, on va faire encore de l'illustration, car la tache <u>ressemble toujours à quelque chose</u>. On ne peut pas comprendre l'accident. Si on pouvait le comprendre on comprendrait aussi la façon avec laquelle on va agir. Or cette façon avec laquelle on va agir, c'est l'imprévu, on ne peut jamais la comprendre: "*It's basically the technical imagination*": "l'imagination technique." J'ai beaucoup cherché comment appeler cette façon imprévisible avec laquelle on va agir. Je n'ai jamais trouvé que ces mots-là: imagination technique (my underline, *Outside* 1075*)*.

The event, the accident, arrives from the outside and works with the inside. Ropars-

Wuilleumier's explanation of a Deleuzian force from the outside articulates this process:

Nous avons donc ici affaire à un nouvel événement, qui double de l'intérieur l'événement du dehors […] l'ensemble d'un dispositif où le présent ferait toujours défaut, si l'image n'en garantissait la présence en ramenant l'extériorité vers

l'intimité, cristalline ou fissurée, de la visibilité elle-même ("Pensée du dehors" 18).

Duras is in effect painting the screen with the camera—*la caméra-pinceau*? – but so too is the spectator-reader. In Chapter three I analyzed how Duras represented the event or the "accident" take place in *LFDG;* now the spectator him/herself must become the open receptacle and experience *l'accident* of the black shots, and must then continue to paint with his/her "imagination technique" to distinguish the forms therein. In these forms, the accident is *là,* both actually and virtually, and if it transpires in the spectator, working from outside to inside, the spectator also finds him/herself in the image, one of these "gens qui passent" before and in the screen. In a simultaneous perception-projection and confrontation between the "masse physique" and "l'épaisseur psychique" (Bellour 27) what the spectator sees is the process of his/her own perception. In the screen becoming the camera that, in turn, the spectator identifies with, and the accident transpiring in the black shot, what the spectator *sees* is in fact his vision. What the spectator sees in the black shots is his own perception in the "cristal liquide de vos yeux."

A brief analysis of a passage where Duras obscurely discusses spectator-readership will shed light on the function of the screen in *HA*. We are reminded of Mallarmé, "cette blancheur rigide" of the blank page, before the "plume solitaire éperdue" of the spectator-reader-poet that incites an "angoisse ce minuit" ("Un coup de dés"). The poet and the spectator-reader must be an open-receptacle, open to receive the "Salut" in a manner similar to what Duras calls "*le mur nu du livre*" ("Le Noir Atlantique" 929).[31] Duras writes about the "*le noir*" of *L'Homme Atlantique* in an article

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[31] I borrow the term *le salut* from Claire Lyu. Claire Lyu has put forth original scholarship on the gesture of salutation, *"le salut,"* in poetry and in particular the "enigma of Mallarmé's *blanc*" ("Blank Phenomenality").

published in *Le Monde extérieur* entitled "Le Noir Atlantique" that the black has always

been there in all her films. She explains:

> Devant l'écrit, il y a *le mur nu* du livre, cette frontière infranchissable, invisible, de la lecture. C'est le noir du livre, toujours là, à chaque ligne, à chaque mot. *Le film est ouvert, public, on peut voir comment il est fait, comment il est vu,* on a l'illusion d'assister à la vérification *de sa création* (my emphasis 929).

The "frontière infranchissable, invisible, de la lecture," is indeed the spectator-reader,

his/her "*reading*" or rather experience of the book, or in other words, his/her perception

or vision of the book that the book itself cannot penetrate. "Le noir du livre, toujours là, à

chaque ligne, à chaque mot" is the negative space of the book, a space similar to cinema's

fourth (or perhaps fifth) wall, the *potential* spectator-reader being always there, the

"incompossible" presence (to return to Deleuze's term discussed in Chapter 4) of the

actual spectator's reading. The voice of Duras tells us in *HA:*

> Vous penserez que le miracle n'est pas dans l'apparent similitude entre chaque particule de ces milliards du déferlement irréductible qui les sépare, qui sépare les hommes des chiens […] du cristal liquide de vos yeux de celui blessant des sables […] de chaque mot de chaque phrase, de chaque ligne de chaque livre, de chaque jour et de chaque siècle et de chaque éternité passée ou à venir et de vous et de moi (*HA).*

In the negative space *between* each line, *between* each word, this "wall" is this virtual in-

between space of potentiality. A description by Raymond Bellour of Thierry Kuntzel's

"dispositif" resonates with what Duras works through in *HA*: "l'entre-espace, ou l'entre-

temps, formé de la disjonction-conjonction entre représentation mentale et perception,

surface et profondeur, envers et endroits, présent et passé, conscient et inconscient" (38).

This type of potential space, as we saw in the accident, would be the spectator's

participation at the moment of creation of the work in a collision between exterior and

interior. If the dark matter is the spectator-reader – this black, the same black that was

always there in her writings: "C'est la première fois que je filme du noir couleur, je veux dire que j'écris des textes entiers sur du noir couleur" – when Duras states that this is the first time she has filmed *noir*, we can infer that she is filming the spectator, the spectator assisting in its creation, verifying the film's creation in a way as the director affirms: "*Le film est ouvert, public, on peut voir comment il est fait, comment il est vu,* on a l'illusion d'*assister* à la vérification *de sa création"* (emphasis added, "Noir Atlantique" 929).[32] This wall is the screen, the *plan noir*, and the camera that films the spectator. The spectator must assist in the production of the cinematographic object: "Pour Duras, le processus de filmer égale la projection d'un film déjà tourné (Maritchick 61). Critics like Julie Beaulieu have written on "[l']écriture en train de se faire": "l'irreprésentable du *Camion*, c'est le mouvement même de l'écriture en train de se faire ici et maintenant [...] Le mouvement des énoncées coïncide entre moment d'énonciation et moment de lecture. La présence du narrateur se retrouve, aux côtés du lecteur, dans la vivacité des sentiments exprimés au présent d'énonciation dans un récit au passé" (113). In *HA,* Duras tries to film and realize a film "en train de se faire" with the spectator.

In *Le Navire Night*, we saw how Duras films the *hors-cadre*, how the outside is inserted into the inside, how the actors in the film do not act but are themselves spectators. Outside *becomes* the *film des voix* and the *film des voix* in turn *becomes* the *film de* l'image. We also saw how Duras invokes the spectator, towards whom the triangle's apex leads outwards from the screen where text and film, sound and image come together. In *HA,* the spectator is not only active in the sense that he/she must participate in the creation of a new image, an in-between, but also that his/her role is now

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[32] Incidentally, text is the opposite of film, writing with black on white as opposed to writing with light (white) on black.

implicated in the actual shooting of the film (and moreover, in the writing of the text

itself since the filming of the film is the subject of the text that precedes it). Many critics

have remarked for Duras's cinema that "Duras se joue souvent ainsi de notre naïveté de

spectateur. Elle semble vouloir nous rappeler sans cesse que nous sommes au cinéma"

(Royer, *L'Écran* 70). But where Royer concludes "que le cinéma ne cesse de manipuler

nos perceptions et que nous devons assumer notre responsabilité dans la construction de

la fiction en adoptant une position imaginaire par rapport à l'espace du film" (70), I wish

to suggest that Duras is in fact doing something different with this film; that, following

the actual-virtual circuit of indiscernibility, that it is not an imaginary or virtual position

"par rapport à l'espace du film" but rather the "espace du film" *is* spectator's *actual*

position. Not a non-lieu, not the imaginary, but the here and the now– the present. Vogt

affirms: "Ce n'est pas tant la réalité en elle-même que Duras met en jeu; mais la

perception qu'en a le lecteur/spectateur, l'homme *hic et nunc*" (21). While Snauwaert

argues "Dans ce régime, le 'voir' n'est pas une co-présence, une instantanéité ou une

immédiateté, mais au contraire une forme de connexion, de médiation vers un imaginaire

illimité" ("Le Cinéma de Lol" 73), I wish to suggest, however, that in showing the

apparatus, evoking the spectator's here and now, *HA* creates a *voir* that is co-present with

the film. Duras's image-screen-theater-camera modifies and reconfigures the spectator's

space-time.

The suggestion of filming the future spectator brings us to the impossibility of the

absent, virtual spectator in the past at a prior shooting of the film; Duras's voice

addresses spectators:

> Vous êtes resté dans l'état d'être parti. Et j'ai fait un film de votre absence./
> [blank] Vous allez repasser de nouveau devant la caméra. Cette fois vous allez la

regarder./ Regarder la caméra./ La caméra va maintenant capter votre réapparition dans la glace parallèle à celle dans laquelle elle se voit./ Ne bougez pas. Attendez. Ne soyez pas surpris. Je vais vous dire ceci : vous allez réapparaître dans l'image. Non, je ne vous avais pas prévenu. Oui, ça va recommencer. Déjà vous avez derrière vous un passé, un plan. […] Déjà vous êtes en danger. Le plus grand danger que vous encourez maintenant c'est de vous ressembler, de ressembler à celui du premier plan tourné il y a une heure. […] Vous allez regarder tous les spectateurs dans la salle, un par un et chacun pour soi./ Rappelez-vous bien ceci: la salle, elle est à elle seule le monde entier de même que vous, vous l'êtes, vous, à vous seul […] Ne cherchez pas à comprendre ce phénomène photographique, la vie. Cette fois-ci, vous allez mourir à votre propre vue./ Vous regarderez l'appareil comme vous regardiez la mer, comme vous regardiez la mer et les vitres […] / Au bout du voyage, c'est la caméra qui aura décidé de ce que vous aurez regardé. Regardez. La caméra ne mentira pas. Mais regardez-la comme un objet de prédilection désigné par vous […] Faites comme si vous aviez compris à ce moment-là, lorsque vous la teniez dans votre regard, que c'était elle, la caméra, qui la première avait voulu vous tuer. / Regardez autour de vous. À perte de vue vous reconnaîtrez […] ces vallées du cinéma, elles se regardent, elles se font face.

The figure of the spectator of *HA* is no longer the same figure from *Agatha,* where time is shown in a layering of indiscernible present/past. This quotation suggests a virtualization of the spectator; Duras brings the future in coincidence with the present/past. The text suggests the filming of the film, the instructions for a film *to come*, and the instructions in the future, are therefore still virtual. The future tense disturbs the entire film, and even the present tense is brought to its performative potential:

Vous ne regarderez pas la caméra. […] Écoutez. Je crois aussi que si vous ne regardiez pas ce qui se présente à vous, cela se verrait à l'écran. Et que l'écran se viderait (*HA)*.

The present leads to the conditional; everything is based on a system of a "possibility to become," including the spectator-reader whose own presence, whose own essence *d'être là* is called into question: "Ce que vous serez en train de voir là, [ce que vous êtes en train de voir là]." What is in brackets represents what is said in the film but is *not* in the text. The repetition of the phrase with the subtle change to the present tense for only the film is significant to our discussion. While the text keeps only the future tense for the time of

reading, the film conserves the two incompossible times: on the one hand, the future of the potential spectator of the film, on the other, the present of the actual spectator, which thus makes the two coexist for the film.

The paradox, then, is that even in the image when Yann is present, he is purely imaginary, absent (like us, spectators). It is a game of presence and absence.[33] Duras writes: "Vous êtes resté dans l'état d'être parti. Et j'ai fait un film de votre absence./ [blank] Vous allez repasser de nouveau devant la caméra. Cette fois vous allez la regarder. / Regardez la caméra […] Éloignez-vous de ce détail, le cinéma./ Le film restera ainsi. Terminé. Vous êtes à la fois caché et présent." Chloé Chouen-Ollier explains:

> Les antithèses, très fréquentes, soulignent la dualité d'un homme "à la fois caché et présent" […] comme on écrit au bord de l'écrit, dans un paradoxe qui rappelle à chaque mot un peu plus à quel point l'absence présentifie le désir. Et interroge de ce fait le lecteur-spectateur, qui, regardant le noir du film en même temps que le blanc de l'écrit, se mire, comme dans une mise en abyme : *Vous êtes l'homme atlantique indéfiniment à venir.*"[34] C'est depuis ce futur que se forment l'imaginaire, depuis ce vide de l'image que le lecteur est invité à appréhender l'imagination comme "désituation" ("Notice" 1792).

The fact of being absent while present and vice versa is a question of time, which thus brings together all temporalities with use of the future tense; even before a spectator's viewing of the film, he/she is *already* in the film *HA*. Duras incorporates the spectator-reader in the time of creation, which turns into the moment of the reading-viewing. To state it another way: I am in the cinema watching the film in 2014. I was obviously not involved with the filming of the film; I was absent, even though my presence is

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[33] See my analysis in Chapter three of the figures' presence-absence represented in the film *LFDG*.

[34] That is to say in a purely potential state. Certainly, this is not without evoking Deleuze's or Nietzsche's *devenir*. While one could certainly execute an entirely Deleuzian reading of the *devenir* of this film, this is not my purpose. I prefer to understand "indéfiniment à venir" in the more literal sense, as I have defined above, as the potential or virtual.

implicated in the film that I am watching: "Vous êtes sorti du champ de la caméra. Vous êtes absent." On the other hand, I am indeed actually in the cinema, watching this film, and yet the film is evoking my actual presence here and now. How can that be? Duras is not here with me. I am not with Duras at this moment, yet she is telling me that I am. She is informing me that I am absent, all the while aware of my *actual* presence. Duras demands that the spectator become virtual: "*Passez outre* […] Vous verrez, tout viendra à partir de votre déplacement le long de la mer, après les piliers du hall, du déplacement de votre corps dont vous aurez pensez jusqu'à cet instant-ci qu'il était naturel." As such, I, as spectator-reader, identify with the virtual figure, *L'Homme Atlantique,* that I am watching, whose presence albeit on the screen is entirely absent.

> Avec votre départ votre absence est survenue, elle a été photographiée comme tout à l'heure votre présence. […] Vous n'êtes plus nulle part précisément […] Plus rien de vous n'est là que cette absence flottante, ambulante, qui remplit l'écran, qui peuple à elle seule […] Continuez à oublier, à ignorer et le *devenir* de tout ceci et celui de vous-même.

The spectator must remain in an in-between state of potential, "le *devenir* de tout ceci et celui de vous-même"; Ropars-Wuilleumier reminds us: "Le devenir n'est que force, le dehors deleuzien qui lui succède oscille entre forme et force. L'avant sera après, l'après était avant, mais on ne le sait qu'après coup. Le film ne peut se voir au présent qu'en se revoyant comme déjà passé, donc dans le souvenir-effacement d'un passage par définition hors de soi" ("La Pensée du dehors" 24). The spectator-reader is in a time travel state, "passez *outre,"* as Duras instructs. The time travel happens in the viewing of the film, this "déferlement continu," of the film and what the spectator sees in the film is the gap, the in-between, the time crystal, "du cristal liquide de vos yeux," visible in the screen/wall/sea, reflected in—or projected from—the spectator's eyes. The screen, and

the spectator's eyes as screen, become the camera-capturing-projector mechanism. All of

the devices, the material and the ideal, merge into one body-apparatus, one film-camera-

screen-projector-celluloid-spectator.

III. The Durassian Cinematographic Apparatus

> "*Il s'agit toujours de la scène de la caverne: effet de réel ou impression de réalité. Copie, simulacre, et même simulacre, et même simulacre de simulacre. Impression de réalité ou réel, plus-que-réel?*" (Baudry).

The spectator must fuse into one body with the film, like the man's figure is

absorbed into the window-wall-screen.

The "blue image" is framed by a blackness and opaqueness that creates his silhouette,

giving the impression that the surrounding out-of-frame is dark, while an unknown light

source illuminates only his face. We notice the man's reflection in the window. While the

reflected image is clear, the rest of the background is fuzzy; a dense blueness occupies

the opaque window, drowning the man's reflection in a sea of blue.[35] The blue window,

due to this fuzzy, textured quality, appears *painted* and not a transparent outlook onto the

outside scene that the gaze seeks to perceive:

> Ce que vous serez en train de voir là, ce que vous êtes en train de voir là, la mer, les vitres, le mur, la mer derrière les vitres, les vitres dans les murs […] vous

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[35] Return to Chapter two for my analysis of the absorption of Duras's figures by their surrounding environment.

longerez les vitres et la mer, la mer derrière les vitres, les vitres dans les murs[…].[36]

As the above quotation demonstrates through the melodic displacement and alliteration of "mer" and "mur," sea, wall, and window all merge. Now, the spectator-reader melts and fuses into the screen-sea-wall. It becomes a sea-wall (*The Sea Wall? Un barrage contre le Pacifique?*). Limam-Tnani explains: "Les vitres, l'eau, les murs retrouvent leur nature spéculaire et collaborent par leurs miroitements simultanés ou désaccordés à brouiller les éléments de l'image et à jeter le trouble chez le spectateur" so that "à travers la confusion des fenêtres et des miroirs, c'est le mécanisme même de la réflexion qui se trouve démantelé: la transparence ne se distingue plus du reflet, ni le dehors du dedans; pas d'origine à l'image, des images seulement, c'est-à-dire des formes et des traces" (46-47*).* For this critic, in this "aspect Mallarméen, jeu de formes," this *"*réalité nébuleuse, non achevée" (in other words virtual), Duras *"*donn[e] forme à l'absence" (200).

If the image on the screen reflects the consciousness of the spectator, the spectator's mental image, the spectator witnesses both the apparatus, its material, including the spectator-reader and his/her mental image that is part of and fuses with the screen. Baudry describes this desire of the "dispositif":

Le caractère hallucinatoire, l'indistinction représentation/perception — représentation donnée comme perception qui conditionne la croyance en la réalité du rêve, serait en correspondance avec l'indistinction actif/passif, agir/subir, non-

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[36] It is important to point out that although sound and image are dissociated—the film does not *represent* the text *per se,* this demonstration shows that Duras does conserve the *form* of the text in the images, the *Couleur des mots* to borrow the title of a documentary around Duras's cinema: "Tu te souviens du visage de Delphine, les yeux clairs, elle regarde une couleur, elle dit le nom d'une couleur: violette. C'est la lumière du Delta...Tu vois pour moi, c'est le cinéma ça. Tu montres un visage très rose, beau, les yeux clairs, clairs, presque blancs, nacrés, tu vois, et tu dis qu'elle regarde une couleur 'violette.' Alors le mot 'violet' envahit tout. Et c'est la couleur du plan. La couleur du plan, c'est la couleur du mot." (*La Couleur des mots)*. Limam-Tnani similarly notes for the form of Duras's voice, "dans certaines métaphores sonores, présentées dans *MC*, et *VC*, nous voyons s'accomplir une adéquation du sens et de la forme. Ces figures révèlent les capacités mimétique du langage et font ressurgir cette vision cratyléenne du signe" (198*).*

distinction des limites du corps […] fondé[e] sur une perméabilité, une *fusion de l'intérieur* et de *l'extérieur*. D'autre part […] l'ensemble écran du rêve *images projetées* pourrait manifester un conflit entre des *motions contradictoires*, un état effectivement d'indistinction entre un vœu hallucinatoire, signe d'une satisfaction et un désir de perception, de contact au réel. On conçoit alors que quelque chose se dessine […] d'un désir unissant *perception* et *représentation*, soit que *la représentation se donne comme perception* — auquel cas on se rapprocherait de l'hallucination —, soit que la perception se donne aussi *comme représentation perçue* (emphasis added, 67).

Duras's fusion of the spectator with the body of the film realizes the full potential of the cinematographic apparatus, "l'appareil filmique" according to Bellour:

> Ainsi se constitue le concept d'appareil filmique. Concept-clé tout différent de "l'appareil de base" ou des "dispositifs" de Baudry et de Metz. Le film, dans l'entre-deux de sa masse physique et de l'épaisseur psychique de son défilement, devient lui-même l'appareil (*L'Entre-images* 27).

It is ultimately in the thickness of the black shot, in the accident that we see into the depths of the "masse physique et l'épaisseur psychique," the "lumière interne." Duras reveals the gap, the in-between, in-between exterior and interior, and it is this fusion of the elements of the filmic apparatus into one virtual body (one affective-perceptive Deleuzian body-without-organs to return to Chapter one) that constitutes the virtual film, "l'autre-film," the Durassian cinematographic apparatus. Bellour elaborates on the "appareil filmique," and goes on to define the "virtual film":

> […] Dans ce *miroitement* de machines, tandis que le système perception–conscience est soumis à un effet-écran, l'inconscient ne pourrait-il pas, à travers le film projeté, appréhender *un autre espace un autre temps,* un autre logique – le film-pellicule dont il est structurellement proche? […] *comme un film virtuel,* le film-sous-le-film, *l'autre film* […] un film délivré des *contraintes temporelles*, où tous les éléments seraient présents en même temps, c'est–à-dire sans nul effet de présence – effet-écran – mais se renvoyant les uns aux autres sans relâche, se recoupant, se recouvrant, se regroupant en configurations "jamais" vues ni entendues dans l'ordre du défilement (emphasis added, *L'Entre-images* 28).

Duras instructs us to see the screen behind the screen that she has virtualized, the "other screen" – "La paroi, l'autre scène. L'autre scène?" (Baudry) –, or "l'autre film" that

"apparaît, entre le film-pellicule et le film-projection, celui qu'on ne voit pas et celui qu'on voit ou croit voir" (Bellour 27).

We saw how Duras showed the in-between in the individual cell on the celluloid and how the black shot also reveals the interstice between images as well as the accident or the in-between interior and exterior collision. The particles that appear materialized and actualized on the screen also show the virtual in-between state of the image and of the spectator. They evoke the light particles coming from the projector over the head of the spectator – the image in its potential state before these particles converge on the screen to make up the image the spectator perceives, between projection and apparition on the screen; the voice of Duras tells us: "Vous penserez que le miracle n'est pas dans l'apparente similitude entre chaque particule de ces milliards du déferlement continu, mais dans la différence irréductible qui les sépare."
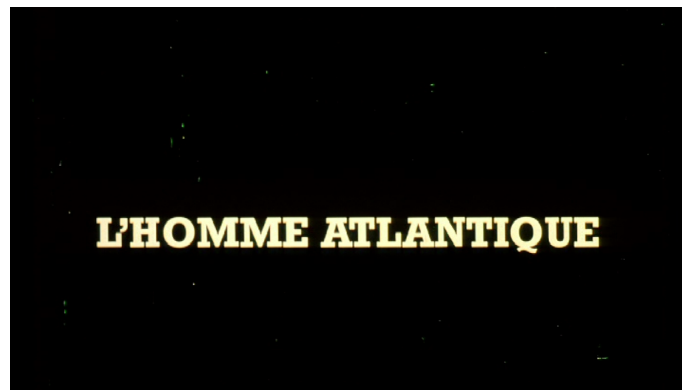
Deleuze analyses these in his section in *L'Image-temps* entitled "Cinéma, Corps et Cerveau, Pensée" these very similar images by Alain Resnais in *L'Amour à Mort* that seems to represent on the screen the matter in movement of "chaque particule de ces milliards du déferlement continu" (*HA).

Deleuze writes:

> La coupure peut alors s'étendre et se manifester en soi, comme l'écran noir, l'écran blanc et leurs dérivés, leurs combinaisons: ainsi la grande image bleu de nuit, ou volettent de petites plumes ou des corpuscules à vitesse et répartition variables, qui ne cesse de revenir dans *L'Amour à mort* de Resnais. D'une part, l'image cinématographique devient une présentation directe du temps […] D'autre part, cette image-temps met la pensée en rapport avec un impensé […] Même le cinéma abstrait ou éidétique témoignerait leurs enchaînements et transformations dans une matière-mouvement […] C'est le dedans absolu et le dehors absolu qui entrent en contact, un dedans plus profond que toutes les nappes de passé, un dehors plus lointain que toutes les couches de réalité extérieure. Entre les deux, dans l'entre-deux […] Resnais tient à préserver […] un demi-monde de spectres destiné à s'inscrire un moment dans notre univers mental (*Image-temps* 279).

What is "inscrit chimiquement sur une pellicule et projeté sur un écran" is the spectator's vision in an impossible before, for in order for something to be "projeté sur un écran" a camera necessarily "a vu cette scène avant lui et en a organisé la représentation pour lui" but this is also happening in the spectator's here and now. For Noguez, "voir" means to be there and not to be there at once: "*Voir* comme substitut d'une impossible être, voir comment retirement, retraite" (*Duras* 63). Julie Beaulieu argues in the same vein: "Voir se rapporte aussi à la rencontre: rencontre entre les êtres, les corps, les voix, dialogue, intersection, croisement (59). The particular screen of *HA renders visible* the screen itself; it simultaneously *is* the screen, and hides what it pretends to "consigner."

In a way, Cinema, the combined set of elements that constitutes the "dispositif cinémtographique" cannot be *realized* or actualized in its entirety as it necessarily evokes

incompossible temporalities—a virtual film whose form is absence. Even if the spectator-reader lets him/herself fall into the trap of believing that there is a complete coincidence, that the virtual has ceded its place to the actual, that for example the image of the sea is really "à votre gauche *en ce moment*," to the left of the figure when the voice-over says this, Duras has foreseen this and harshly reminds us of the illusion:

> Je voulais vous dire: le cinéma croit pouvoir consigner ce que vous faîtes *en ce moment.* Mais vous, de là où vous serez, où que ce soit, que vous ayez partie liée avec le sable, ou le vent, ou la mer, ou le mur, ou l'oiseau, ou le chien, vous vous rendrez compte que le cinéma ne peut pas (my emphasis).

We must move past the prejudice of representation; "il faut en finir avec le préjugé de la représentation," Duras declares in *Duras filme*. We must bring light into the proverbial cave: "Dans la grotte, les prisonniers-spectateurs sont assis, immobiles, prisonniers parce qu'immobilisés: empêchés de se mouvoir, contrainte ou paralysie?" (Baudry 58). Indeed, the rocky-textured surface surrounding the windowed images resembles the walls of the cave. We are reminded of the Durassian leitmotif of the cave, that of "la Mendiante," the cave from *Les Mains Négatives:*

> *Devant l'océan*
> *sous la falaise*
> *sur la paroi de granit*
> *ces mains*
> *ouvertes*
> *Bleues*
> *Et noires*
> *Du bleu de l'eau*
> *Du noir de la nuit* […]
> *L'homme seul dans la grotte a regardé*
> *dans le bruit*
> *dans le bruit de la mer*
> *l'immensité des choses*
> *Et il a crié* […]
> *Je suis celui qui appelait qui criait il y a trente mille ans* […]
> *La réfraction de la lumière sur la mer fait frémir la paroi de pierre*

Je suis quelqu'un je suis celui qui appelait qui criait dans cette lumière blanche […] *Depuis trente mille ans je crie devant la mer le spectre blanc.*

The cave man is *L'Homme Atlantique.*

HA is a film about the cinematographic apparatus, a film "*du cinéma,*" states Duras:

Il faut en finir avec le préjugé de la représentation. Si on montre une scène on peut aussi bien montrer comment elle est filmée, comment une caméra filme cette scène. C'est autant du cinéma que la scène filmée par la caméra. Donner à voir au public comment c'est fait le cinéma, c'est du cinéma (*Duras filme*).

In fact, previous titles Duras had envisioned for the film explicitly attest to this fact.

Chloé Chouen-Ollier informs in the *Pléiad*e "Notice" to *HA*:

Duras ébauche un scenario et monte, quelques mois plus tard, un film qui, au départ, peine à recevoir un titre: sur les manuscrits préparatoires, plusieurs sont en effet évoqués: "Vous oublierez," "Le Vent atlantique," "Vous avancerez," "L'Objet atlantique," mais aussi […] "Dieu," "Le Cinéma," "La Caméra," "L'Image" ou "L'Écran blanc." Les deux titres au futur et la mention du vent atteste l'importance du déplacement, de l'échappée, comme si filmer un homme le long de la mer revenait avant tout à tenter de saisir l'évanescence, "la poursuite du vent" (1788).

Duras confirms the film's eligibility in regards to cinema and its essence:

Si vous me demandez: *L'H.A.* ne serait-il pas aussi un homme? Je dirais que oui, c'est aussi un homme, mais que ce n'est pas le premier homme parce que le premier homme n'existe pas. Serait-il un homme au sortir des eaux de la mer et qui porterait encore ce nom, Atlantique. Ou serait-ce un film de ce nom-là? Je dirais oui à tout, à toutes les questions. Que c'est un homme, que c'est un film, que c'est un film de cinéma, et peut-être même encore plus, plus encore une espèce de cinéma qu'un film donné, oui, et peut-être le cinéma (*Yeux Verts* 224).

We, spectator-readers, are cinema, are *l'Homme Atlantique*, as Duras tells us in the final phrase of the film:

"*Vous êtes l'homme Atlantique…Vous l'ignorez.*"[37]

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[37] This final line does not appear in the text, which confirms our hypothesis of *HA* as a film *du cinema* and of the cinematographic apparatus.

Conclusion

 … "Il faut en finir avec le préjugé de la représentation," declared Duras (*Duras filme*). And yet, two years later, the filmmaker who "destroyed cinema" returned to the proverbial "silver screen," to narrative, representational cinema with a comedy, *Les Enfants (*1984). Ernesto*, a 7 year-old portrayed by a 30 year-old, announces one day to his parents that he will not be returning to school because "à l'école, on m'apprend des choses que je ne sais pas."

It appears as if Duras came full circle, back to the absurd humor of *Détruire dit-elle.* Perhaps, after pushing the limits of cinematographic representation to an extreme, with 15 minutes of a black screen in *L'Homme Atlantique,* Duras comes back to "cinema" per se as if to say, using Ernesto's repeated line in the film, "ce n'est pas la peine." No matter how many critiques she had of cinema, Duras needed the medium, as filmmaker Benoît Jacquot, who worked alongside Duras on most of her films, recounts in an interview: "Elle adorait [le cinéma] en même temps qu'elle [le] méprisait copieusement" (Douhaire).[1] She needed the medium, and above all else needed an image on-screen to tell a story.

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[1] Cléder points out "Ce qui est amusant, c'est que l'organe officiel de la cinéphilie [*Cahiers*] a accueilli Marguerite Duras pour qu'elle dise tout le mal qu'elle pense du cinéma [in the context of dominant commercial productions]: 'le maquereautage phénoménal du cinéma par le capitalisme dès après sa

This *desire* for an image is not surprising; it is how we situate ourselves in the world as perceiving beings. We are constantly negotiating between audio-visual input or "images" from the outside world (for a large part ocular if we go about our everyday lives able to see, and aural if we hear) and input or "images" that are also generated from within.[2] Such was Duras's creative cinematographic enterprise: "j'ai envie de voir et d'entendre dehors ce que je voyais et ce que j'entendais dedans. Je voulais voir si c'était communicable" (Adler 642).[3] Duras had much to say about cinema, and previous studies on her cinema have taken her notable sayings ("je suis dans un rapport de meurtre avec le cinéma"; "à la recherche de l'image passe-partout"; "le cinéma arrête le texte: l'imaginaire"; "le paradoxe est […] c'est par le manque qu'on dit les choses"; etc.) as points of departure and support for their analysis. This is probably due in part to the fact that Duras's "different" films uproot established means of approaching the filmic object. She defies us to put a label on her cinema. Her films go past a rational understanding; we try to extricate rational meaning and signification but, as Ernesto would say, "ce n'est pas la peine." Christiane Blot-Labarrère astutely remarks of Duras's texts: "Il s'agit d'une

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naissance a formé quatre à six générations de spectateurs et nous nous trouvons devant un HIMALAYA d'images qui constitue sans doute le plus grand sottisier historique moderne'" (*Trajectoires* 88).

[2] Ocular input from the outside raises the question of deaf and blind people whose capabilities to receive this input are hindered, nullified perhaps. Helen Keller notably wrote to the New York Symphony Orchestra after their playing of Beethoven's "Ninth Symphony" was broadcasted over the radio: "I have the joy of being able to tell you that, though deaf and blind, I spent a glorious hour last night listening over the radio to Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*. I do not mean to say that I 'heard' the music in the sense that other people heard it; and I do not know whether I can make you understand how it was possible for me to derive pleasure from the symphony. It was a great surprise to myself. I had been reading in my magazine for the blind of the happiness that the radio was bringing to the sightless everywhere. I was delighted to know that the blind had gained a new source of enjoyment; but I did not dream that I could have any part in their joy. Last night, when the family was listening to your wonderful rendering of the immortal symphony someone suggested that I put my hand on the receiver and see if I could get any of the vibrations. He unscrewed the cap, and I lightly touched the sensitive diaphragm. What was my amazement to discover that I could feel, not only the vibrations, but also the impassioned rhythm, the throb and the urge of the music! […] I could actually distinguish the cornets, the roll of the drums, deep-toned violas and violins singing in exquisite unison" ("Letters of Note").

[3] Adler's reference comes from the IMEC archives.

violence sémantique qui se joue des contradictions ou les assume, qui privilégie le sensible sur l'intelligible, qui préfère le désordre, l'instinct à la froide raison" (*Trajectoires* 17). What I have argued is that Duras's films invite us to think about how we perceive and *experience* films on a non-rational level, on a level of intuition that cannot be understood but *felt* – a *logique de la sensation* (Deleuze).

This dissertation has demonstrated the progression of Duras's conception of cinematographic perception throughout her career. Chapter one exposed her production in her early films of a free-flowing perception– what Duras called a "glissement" – a vibration of forces that slipped seamlessly in and out of the characters on-screen (Narboni 57). In *Détruire* and *JLS*, Duras had already moved away from the representational, from figuration, towards the *figural*.

Les rires ont fait cesser les cris.
— David.
La voix est grise, la voilà : la colère était feinte, la voix est bien celle de Gringo.
— Je vais parler au nom de notre grand Parti. Je ferai mon devoir.
Le rire repart, fou, il est irrépressible, enfantin, il se mêle aux hurlements des chiens, il frappe le discours, l'ordre, le sens, de sa lumière. Il est un rire de joie.
— Avant notre prise en main   mauvais élément mauvais ouvrier   il avait volé dans les entrepôts de Staadt   ouvrier indigne sans conscience de classe sans formation professionnelle valable sans même de morale individuelle sans avenir   sauvé de l'École technique de Staadt   parti de tous les chantiers de la région   un coup de tête   dilettantisme criminel   l'arrivée du juif du traître pour la première fois de sa vie   avait gardé son emploi   David bien entouré progressait   deux ans oui deux ans   esprit d'anarchie et d'insoumission qui faisaient le malheur de David surmontés. Deux ans d'efforts d'accord   le résultat valait la peine.

All the while insisting on the gaze, the *regard,* Duras's early films trouble the act of seeing; something else is involved with perception – a corporal experience of forces, sensations that vibrates through bodies, as Jacques Rivette perceptively notices in *Détruire*:

> Mais ça ne joue pas seulement sur les personnages, ça joue sur les objets […] – ça joue sur le rôle de la caméra, ça joue sur le regard qui glisse d'un personnage à l'autre, lui aussi – et qui est regard de je ne sais plus quoi. *Ou qui n'est plus regard…* (emphasis added, Narboni 57-58).

In this way Duras allows for a seeing "qui n'est plus regard," a perception that surpasses simply seeing or hearing, "which is more profound than vision, audition, etc. […] 'A logic of the senses,' Cézanne said, 'that is non-rational, non-cerebral'" (Deleuze *Sensation* 42). To borrow Barbara Kennedy's words: "In this way, the I SEE and the I HEAR are actually subsumed across the concept of the I FEEL in the affect" (*Deleuze and Cinema: The Aesthetics of Sensation* 103).

Chapter two further advanced Duras's concern for affect and sensation in particular through her insistence on atmospheric conditions that invite a haptic viewing experience in the spectator. Duras's construction of atmosphere abstracts images, both physical, on-screen images and mental images.
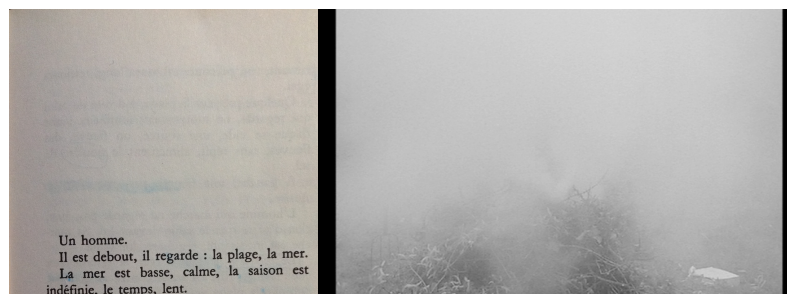
While critics have placed emphasis on her words over the image, I have shown that Duras works through parallel problems in both her cinematographic images and texts. Affect rises to the surface of the page, exteriorized in the formal visible level of the texts. Duras

seeks to find a ground of indistinguishability between imaginary and physical images, and does not seem to separate between interior and exterior, but constantly swings between the inside and outside. The question becomes a spatio-temporal one.

In Chapter 3, I demonstrated how Duras carries out this oscillation not only in the folding in of intra and extradiegetic layers, inserting layers "outside" or "inside" into the other, but also in showing physical architectural structures in the images on-screen. Duras pushes the limits of "on-screen" and "off-screen," ultimately inserting the *hors-cadre* into the film.
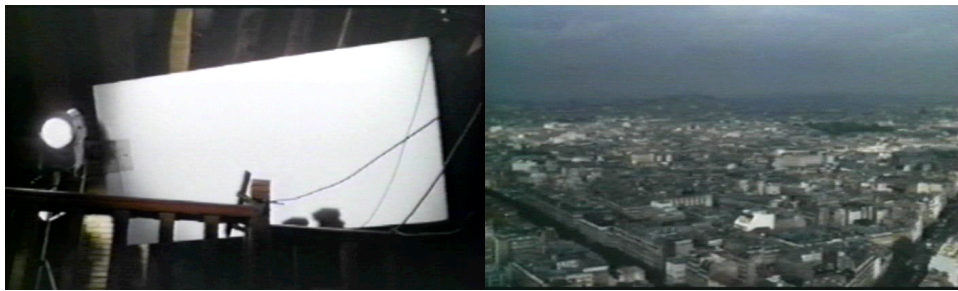
Taking as a point of departure non-representation immediately bypasses questions of "real" or "unreal," questions that critics have tended to treat, but in my opinion do not allow for other avenues of meaningful debate. As early on as *Détruire,* Duras renders impossible any attempt to distinguish "real"(objective or "outside")/"unreal"(subjective or "inside"). If Duras reverses exterior reality – the film being made – and the illusion of reality that is cinema by turning the filming of the film into the film, thus fictionalizing it, it was more to push the temporal constraints of cinema, to create a cinema that contracted past, present, and future.

Duras carries this out, as we saw in Chapter 4, by creating an *any-space-whatever* in *Agatha,* through showing the in-between, liberating the interval that produced

indistinguishability of actual and virtual images. Space is dissociated from geographical
coordinates, disconnected from any context.

The interval, the in-between, becomes visible in and of itself. The past or present, virtual
or actual no longer able to be determined, these images show a direct representation of
time: the coexistence of past, present, and future.

Finally, in *L'Homme Atlantique,* Duras further reduces the spatio-temporal gap
between past, present, and future, between the time of creation or production and the time
of reading and viewing, to incorporate the "virtual" spectator *in* the film. The "real"
window is virtualized to the extent that it becomes the screen. While Bazin, Bonitzer tells
us, conceived of cinema singularly as a "cadre qui nous cache (*de* la réalité)," Bonitzer
argued that cinema went "au-delà des bords de l'écran-fenêtre," suggesting a "*continuité*,
l'homogénéité du réel, de la nature" (*Regard* 11). In *HA*, Duras creates a spatio-temporal
continuity with the spectator's here and now, bringing the cinematographic apparatus to
include the film's spectator *in* the film, a *material* concomitance:

Chapter 5 revealed how Duras inserts the spectator into the film and brings the film into the present of the time of viewing; the film's creation continues at the moment of its projection. Duras reverses the "camera's eye" – limitation of the cinematographic apparatus – to make perception *visible*, to *realize* "vision," the event or "accident" that is this negotiation between interior and exterior. If Duras paints images with the color black with her *caméra-pinceau*, so too does the spectator.

I have argued that Duras pushes the spectator into active participation in the production of the work. If the figures in the film are affected by imperceptible forces, sensations, so too are spectators-readers. Duras thus moves towards a creative-generative form of perception. Duras's films work with the spectator's own created perceptions: the creation of his/her mental images that emanate from *within* rather than being imposed by the screen. In this regard, her films differ from other "intellectual" films that require the "active" participation of the spectator to shape meaning from the images. Duras not only invites the spectator to think and to "read," in the sense of establishing relations and producing imaginary images, but reaches outside the spatio-temporal constraints of cinema, moves *outside* the perceptive universe of the film to include the spectator-reader's experience as part of the film who becomes at once spectator-reader-camera-author-creator. Duras experiments with cinematographic conventions in a new way, complicating the standard passive voyeurism. By challenging the spectator to try to *see* where, for example, there is no image, to create associations where there is no narrative link, Duras inserts the spectator into the film. The spectator thus not only enters into a relationship of identification with the film, but participates in the creative process rather than a destructive loss: "*'Quand on lit, on se retrouve, et quand on va au cinéma, on se*

perd.' Et quand on va voir tes films, on ne se perd pas. C'est dans le noir qu'on se retrouve" (*Yeux Verts* 114). [4]

Duras's works were made to be at once read, viewed, and performed. If the writer-filmmaker initially displaced genre labeling with *India Song* "texte-théâtre-film, and later opens *L'Amant de la Chine du Nord* by stating "C'est un livre./ C'est un film./ C'est la nuit" (595), in a way we can speak of all of her texts as films and all her films as texts. Duras criticism has tended to be one directional: critics have focused predominantly on how Duras's cinema is literary; a few studies have considered how her texts are "filmic" or "cinematographic." Putting these questions aside, I have suggested that Duras's texts and films also demonstrate similar preoccupations with the spectator-readers' experience of a work of art on a variety of levels, preoccupations that touch upon the ontology of the cinematographic apparatus.

Duras's films are certainly "different." She not only challenges conventional cinema, but she was also a producer of new kinds of images: Duras *thought* cinema and the possibilities of the medium. Noguez testifies that Duras constantly challenged the conventional *règles du jeu*: "On lui disait: 'ça c'est techniquement impossible,' elle disait: 'on le fait quand même,' et à plusieurs reprises elle a des coups de génie qui viennent d'un refus de se laisser contraindre par de prétendues règles des écoles de cinéma, et elle a fait un certaine nombre de choses qui sont de véritables inventions"(*Trajectoires* 105). Duras was indeed a cineaste.[5]

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[4] Duras quotes Isa Beller *à propos* of Duras's films.

[5] Dominique Noguez expounds: "Je dirais […] que Duras est une cinéaste; elle a ce génie de faire confiance à des inconnus, à Bruno Nuytten, qui n'était pas encore un opérateur très connu. Elle a fait confiance à un certain nombre de gens, et elle ne voulait pas s'en laisser conter" (*Trajectoires* 105).

Duras certainly left her mark on cinema, revolutionizing the medium by razing it completely, and yet all the while manipulating the very fundamental aspects that makes cinema cinema. What remains to be seen is how Duras's revolutionary intermedial approach that transcends genres and mediums influenced and continues to influence contemporary art and artists.[6] For example, another medium that Duras often worked in was theater (an area that would have overreached the scope of this project whose purpose is to delve more deeply into Duras's cinematographic work). How does Duras's notion of the cinematographic apparatus play out on stage? What about painting – another medium that intensely interested Duras, as I evoked throughout this dissertation? In the pages that follow I provide a few examples concerning theater and the visual arts to give an idea of the breadth of work to be done and what can be gained when opening Duras's work up to the realm of intermediality.

Perhaps today's theater best bears witness to Duras's influence, a medium that is often more readily open to new means of experimentation. Her works are continually adapted on stage, and more and more directors are incorporating video and cinema into theater. A good example is a recent representation of *HA* by the director Viviane Théophilidès (April, 2015). As Chapter 5 demonstrated, *HA* is a (text)-film "de cinéma." How, then, can one go about adapting, or re-presenting as it were, a voice, a virtual spectator, a black screen, a "virtual film" – "ce phénomène photographique, la vie" (*HA*) – on the stage? This film poses a problem for a potential play, while the medium of

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[6] Or perhaps, also interesting, would be to consider why it has *not* impacted some filmmakers who continue to adapt her texts on-screen in flagrantly commercial, conventional films. I began chapter one with a discussion on Duras's dissatisfaction with other directors' adaptations of her work, which would be the chief reason why Duras began making films in the first place. Fabrice Camion recent and very liberal adaptation of Duras's *Dix heures et demie du soir en été* is glaringly, abusively non-durassien. If one is content to see the film open with a storm – the image is silent, watery, blurry; Duras's *atmosphere* is conserved – *Orage* (2015) later gives way to a *Fast & Furious*-style high-speed pursuit.

theater that relies on the spectator's actual *hic et nunc* could open up interesting

possibilities for *HA* and take in interesting directions. Théophilidès says in an interview

with Théâtre Artistic Athévains "je me suis inventé un partenaire qui est l'absent qui est

signifié par un énorme projecteur, un vieux projecteur de cinéma. C'est juste cette

référence au film parce que ça parle aussi du cinéma" ("Interview"). The play's

description provides the following details: "**L'espace d'un regard.** Histoire d'un

abandon, d'une perte, d'une absence. Marguerite se confie à Duras […] Ce récit tardif se

situe dans l'espace du regard, mais qui regarde? Qui est regardé dans ce jeu de miroir? La

caméra dont il est question, n'est-ce pas l'œil de Duras qui brouille les pistes du temps?"

(Théâtre Artistic Athévains). While, as we have seen, Duras certainly clouds layers of

time, the film also breaks cinema's fourth (or fifth?) wall, and yet in Théophilidès'

representation, theater's fourth wall remains an obstacle as the director presents herself

on-screen reading the text that in the film was conducted in voice-over. Although the

inclusion of the projector onstage was a fair gesture (and perhaps only a gesture), it

would be interesting to consider its implications and potential meanings in the vein that I

have developed.

Two other plays currently being performed are also worth noting. The first is

"Duras/Pivot: Apostrophes." The play "translates" (the term used in the play's

description) the well-known interview between Duras and Bernard Pivot that aired

September 28, 1984. In their interview, Pivot, one of France's most experienced

interviewers questions Duras after her recent Prix Goncourt for *L'Amant.* It is Pivot who

finds himself destabilized. One may ask the question: What is the interest in staging a

filmed interview (one that is probably also filmed and will be able to be found online)[7]

instead of watching the original interview (also found online)? In a way, it is perhaps a

very Durassian gesture: Why go to the movie theater if only to watch a black screen and

listen to Duras's voice? In light of this project's discussion of how Duras challenges

conventional notions of "image," creates an affective experience, and reconfigures the

audio-visual experience, a current representation of *Hiroshima mon amour* strikes my

attention – the play is in sign language. The International Visual Theater provides the

following description:

> Hors champ, les voix off en français suivent le moindre geste des acteurs qui
> évoluent de la langue des signes à la danse, dans un texte sur le lien des amants, la
> mémoire, l'oubli. Tout autour d'eux, une scénographie lumière et vidéo
> dynamique qui rythme les signes comme un montage cinématographique.
> « Tu me tues. Tu me fais du bien ».
> La langue de Duras si évanescente prend corps dans la chair des signes.[8]

What I find most interesting in this description is the equivalence of a corporeal

cinematographic montage.

Duras blurred space-time and blurred notions of vision or image, which reaches

into the other plastic and visual arts. Another medium that I have evoked throughout this

dissertation and with which Duras was in dialogue, is painting. As mentioned in Chapter

5, Duras often evoked painters (Goya) and wrote about certain artists (Bacon and

Kuroda). A few scholars have begun to examine Duras's writings on painters (Cécile

Hanania, Monique Pinthon). Although these studies have started to pave the way for a

discourse on Duras and painting, these scholars have not yet asked how Duras also puts

into practice what she discusses in these painters (see my explanation of Goya and

"l'accident" that Duras discusses with Bacon). Furthermore, while Duras's still images of

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[7] The trailer can be found here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LFN-wOEOAuU.
[8] The trailer can be viewed at the following address: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CjX8nR1upLQ.

landscapes easily invite connections with painting, one has yet to consider her images as *plans-tableaux*, to borrow Bonitzer's term (*Peinture et cinéma)*. For example, I find strong and highly suggestive resonances between images from *Agatha* and James Whistler's tonal paintings (evoked in Chapters 2 and 3). Consider the following comparison of Whistler's paintings and images from *La Femme du Gange* and *Agatha.*

Nocturne in Gray and Silver (Whistler, 1873)   *La Femme du Gange*
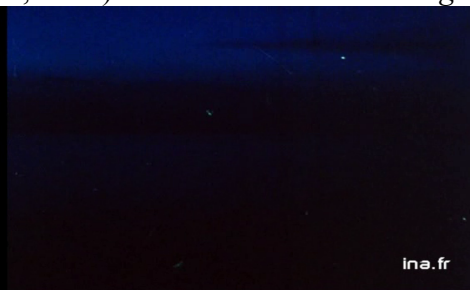
Nocturne in Blue and Silver (1871) and *Nocturne in Grey and Silver: the Thames* (1875)
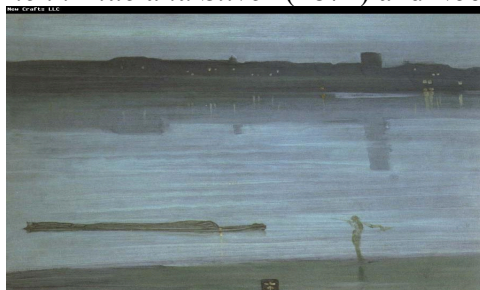
Agatha

Like Whistler's tonal paintings, in her images, Duras worked with the matter of *color* and light (which traditionally speaking, is optically absent in text – black on white).

It is my belief (and intention for future research) that the relationship between Duras's images and painting would be a highly fruitful avenue of exploration, not only

for studies on Duras but also on the larger scale of film studies in general. Indeed, film studies could also greatly benefit from further exploring cinema's connection to its visual sister medium. While to date, few studies exist on the topic (I think namely of Pascal Bonitzer's *Décadrages,* Alain Bonfand's *Essai sur les relations de la peinture et des images en mouvement,* and Angela Dalle Vache, *The Visual Turn*), a number exist on filmmakers' use of actual paintings within their images[9] –André Bazin was perhaps the first, dedicating an essay to Resnais's shorts of actual paintings (*Guernica* and *Van Gogh).* Throughout the history of cinema, filmmakers have evoked the medium to enrich the meaning of their work: a early shot in *Un Chien Andalou* focuses on a book opened to a reproduction of Vermeer's "Lace maker." In Godard's films, paintings of Picasso and Renoir for example can very often be found hanging on walls; Godard even went as far as recreating and filming actual scenes from famous paintings in *Passion* (1982)*.*

La petite odalisque (1827)   Godard, *Passion* (1982)
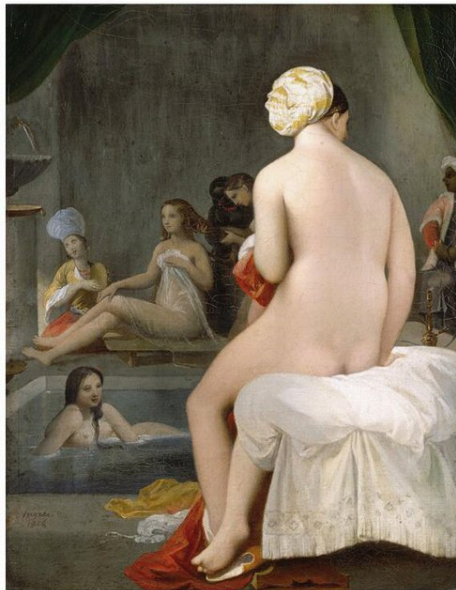
[9] See specifically Angela Dalle Vacche, *Cinema and Painting: How Art Is Used in Film*.

Five years before Godard, Duras similarly seems to have winked at Ingres in this

categorical rare angle shot that unexpectedly briefly inserts itself in *Vera Baxter*.

 Baxter, Vera Baxter (1977)   Ingres, *Odalisque Dormante* (1820)

And what is this long, highly composed shot (below) from *India Song* where characters

barely move during the entire 10 minutes if none other than a tableau vivant?

As the forgoing examples show, Duras's cinema reaches across mediums and it is my

belief that current explorations in intermedial studies and approaches could be greatly

informed by Duras.

　　　This dissertation begins to fill the gap in scholarship on Duras's cinema.

Scholarship on her cinema has focused on a few films (namely *India Song, Le Camion,*

and *Nathalie Granger),* leaving many largely ignored. The films treated here are ones

that have been addressed barely or not at all by scholars. Nevertheless, *La Musica, Baxter*

Vera Baxter, Des Journées Entières dans les Arbres, Dialogue de Rome, and *Son nom de*

Venise dans Calcutta Désert still remain virtually untouched.[10] Finally, while I have been careful not to speak of the textual counterparts in these text-film pairs as "scripts," Duras did write a "script" more or less for her films. These exist in manuscript versions in archives. What would these scripts reveal further about temporal layering, about the simultaneous "virtual" film at once already created and in the process of being created, remaining in a suspended, state of potential, in-between? Duras was not just a writer and a filmmaker (and certainly not "a writer who just happened to also make films"), she thought, felt, and lived cinema – "ce phénomène [cinématographique], la vie."

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[10] These are films I had initially envisioned including but were ultimately not within the scope of this project. However, *Dialogue de Rome* and *Son nom de Venise dans Calcutta Désert* could reveal profound meanings if treated using the approach I have proposed here (in terms of the figural and sensation), as the interesting particularity of these two films is that no people are filmed, only statues and sculptures.

<u>**Appendix I**</u>
The Works of Marguerite Duras[1]

A – Written works

Donnadieu [Duras], Marguerite and Philippe. *L'Empire français*. Paris: Nouvelle
        Revue Française (Problèmes et documents), 1940.
Les Impudents. Paris: Librairie Plon, 1943.
La Vie tranquille. Paris: Gallimard (La Nouvelle Revue Française), 1944.
Un Barrage contre le Pacifique. Paris: Gallimard (NRF), 1950.
Le Marin de Gibraltar. Paris: Gallimard (Blanche), 1952.
Les Petits Chevaux de Tarquinia. Paris: Gallimard (NRF), 1953.
Des journées entières dans les arbres. Roman. Paris: Gallimard (NRF), 1954.
Le Square. Paris: Gallimard (NRF), 1955.
Moderato cantabile. Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1958.
Les Viaducs de la Seine-et-Oise. Paris: Gallimard (Le Manteau d'Arlequin), 1959.
Dix heures et demie du soir en été. Paris: Gallimard (Blanche), 1960.
Hiroshima mon amour. Scénario et dialogue. Paris: Gallimard (NRF), 1960.
Une aussi longue absence. Scénario et dialogues [avec Gérard Jarlot]. Paris: Gallimard
(Blanche), 1961.
L'Après-midi de Monsieur Andesmas. Paris: Gallimard (NRF), 1962.
Le Ravissement de Lol V. Stein. Paris: Gallimard (NRF), 1964.
Des journées entières dans les arbres. Pièce en trois actes. Paris: L'Avant-Scène, 1966.
Le Vice-Consul. Paris: Gallimard (Soleil), 1966.
L'Amante anglaise. Paris: Gallimard (Blanche), 1967.
L'Amante anglaise. Paris: Cahiers du Théâtre national populaire, 1969.
*Théâtre II. Suzanna Andler – Des journées entières dans les arbres – Yes, peut-être – Le
Shaga – Un homme est venu me voir*. Paris: Gallimard, 1968.
Détruire, dit-elle. Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1969.
Abahn, Sabana, David. Paris: Gallimard (Blanche), 1970.
Les Papiers d'Aspern, de Michael Redgrave, d'après une nouvelle de Henry James.
Adaptation de Marguerite Duras et Robert Antelme. *Paris-Théâtre*: 1970, nº 172, pp. 15-
54.
L'Amour. Paris: Gallimard (Blanche), 1971.
Ah! Ernesto. Boissy Saint-Léger, François Ruy-Vidal et Harlin-Quist (Un Livre d'Harlin
Quist), 1972. 23 p. [Contes pour enfants. Images de Bernard Bonhomme. « Interdit aux
plus de 18 ans ».]
Nathalie Granger, suivi de La Femme du Gange. Paris: Gallimard (Blanche), 1973.
Home, de David Storey. Adaptation française de Marguerite Duras. Paris: Gallimard
(Théâtre du monde entier), 1973.
Les Parleuses. Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1974.
Le Camion, suivi des Entretiens avec Michelle Porte. Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1977.
L'Éden cinéma. Paris: Mercure de France, 1977, 1986.

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[1] This list includes her printed texts. For a complete bibliography of all her writings (essays, interviews,
articles, etc.) and for a complete and constantly-updated bibliography of publishings on Duras, see Hélène
Volat's online bibliography: http://hvolat.netai.net/Duras/Duras_Bibliographie.html.

Les Lieux de Marguerite Duras, en collaboration avec Michelle Porte. Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1977.

India Song. Son Nom de Venise dans Calcutta désert. Paris: L'Avant-Scène (L'Avant Scène Cinéma), 1979.

Le Navire Night – Césarée – Les Mains négatives – Aurélia Steiner – Aurélia Steiner – Aurélia Steiner. Paris: Mercure de France, 1979.

L'Été 80. Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1980.

L'homme assis dans le couloir. Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1980, 1984, 1985.

Vera Baxter, ou les plages de l'Atlantique. Paris: Albatros (Ça/Cinéma, 23), 1980.

Les Yeux verts. Paris: *Les Cahiers du Cinéma* nº 312-313, juin 1980.

Agatha. Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1981.

Outside. Papiers d'un jour. Paris: P.O.L., 1984.

L'Homme atlantique. Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1982.

La Maladie de la mort. Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1982.

Savannah Bay. Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1983, 1984.

L'Amant. Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1984, 1991.

Théâtre III. Adaptations de La Bête dans la jungle – Les Papiers d'Aspern – La Danse de mort. Paris: Gallimard, 1984.

La Douleur. Paris: P.O.L., 1985.

La Mouette de Tchekhov. Paris: Gallimard (Blanche), 1985.

La Musica deuxième. Théâtre. Paris: Gallimard, 1985.

La Pute de la côte normande. Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1986.

Emily L. Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1987.

La Vie matérielle. Marguerite Duras parle à Jérôme Beaujour. Paris: P.O.L., 1987.

Les Yeux verts (nouvelle édition). Paris: Les Cahiers du Cinéma, 1987.

Éden cinéma (version scénique). Paris: Actes Sud (Papiers), 1988.

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B – Filmography

1. Scripts

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Une aussi longue absence. Henri Colpi, 1961.

Sans merveille. In collaboration with Gérard Jarlot. Dir. Michel Mitrani, 1964.

Nuit noire, Calcutta. Marin Karmitz, 1964.

Les rideaux blancs. Georges Franju, 1965.
La voleuse. Jean Chapot, 1966.

2. Films

***La Musica* (1966)**

Director	Marguerite Duras and Paul Seban
Music	Franz Schubert
Production	Les Films R.P. [Raoul Ploquin]
Distribution	Artistes Associés
Performers	Delphine Seyrig, Robert Hossein and Julie Dassin
Format	DVD (René Chateau Vidéo)
Duration	80 min.

***Détruire, dit-elle* (1969)**

Music	Jean-Sébastien Bach
Montage	Henri Colpi
Production	Ancinex, Madeleine Films
Distribution	S.M.E.P.A.
Performers	Catherine Sellers, Nicole Hiss, Henri Garcin, Michael Lonsdale and Daniel Gélin
Format	DVD (Éditions Benoît Jacob)
Duration	90 min.

***Jaune le soleil* (1971)**

Photography	Ricardo Aronovitch
Production	Albina Productions
Distribution	Films Molière
Performers	Samy Frey, Catherine Sellers, Michael Lonsdale, Gérard Desarthe and Dionys Mascolo
Duration	95 min.

***Nathalie Granger* (1972)**

Assistant Directors	Benoît Jacquot, Rémy Duchemin, Ghislain Cloquet, Bruno Nuytten and Jean-Michel Carré
Production	Luc Moullet & Cie
Distribution	Films Molière
Performers	Lucia Bose, Jeanne Moreau, Gérard Depardieu, Luce Garcia-Ville, Dionys Mascolo, Valérie Mascolo, and Nathalie Bourgeois
Format	DVD

Duration   80 min.

La Femme du Gange (1973)

Assistant Director   Benoît Jacquot
Photography   Bruno Nuytten, Nguyen Van-Dom and
                           Jean Mascolo
Performers   Catherine Sellers, Nicole Hiss, Gérard Depardieu,
                           Christian Baltauss, Dionys Mascolo, Robert
                           Bonneau, Rodolphe and Véronique Alepuz
Voice-over   Nicole Hiss and Françoise Lebrun
Production   Service de la Recherche de l'O.R.T.F.
Format   DVD (INA)
Duration   90 min.

India Song (1974)

Assistant Directors   Benoît Jacquot and Jean Mascolo
Photography   Bruno Nuytten
Music   Carlos d'Alessio
Performers   Delphine Seyrig, Michael Lonsdale,
                           Mathieu Carrière, Claude Mann,
                           Vernon Dobtcheff, Didier Flamand and Claude Juan
Voice of the "mendiante"   Satasinh Manila
Voice-overs   Nicole Hiss, Monique Somonet,
                           Viviane Forrester, Dionys Mascolo and Marguerite
                           Duras
Voice-overs (reception)   Françoise Lebrun, Benoît Jacquot, Nicole-
                           Lise Bernheim, Kevork Kutudjan, Daniel Dobbels,
                           Jean-Claude Biette, Marie-Odile Briot, Pascal Kané
                           and others
Coproduction   Sunchild, Les Films Armorial, S. Damiani et A.
                           Valio Cavaglione
Distribution   Les Films Armorial
Format   DVD
Duration   120 min.

Baxter, Vera Baxter (1976)

Music   Carlos d'Alessio
Performers   Claudine Gabay, Delphine Seyrig,
                           Gérard Depardieu, Noëlle Châtelet, Claude Anfort
                           and Nathalie Nell
Voice   François Périer
Production   Stella Quef (Sunchild), I.N.A.
Distribution   N.E.F. Diffusion

| Format | DVD (INA) |
| Duration | 90 min |

Des journées entières dans les arbres (1976)

Photography	Nestor Almendros and Jean Mascolo
Music	Carlos d'Alessio
Performers	Madeleine Renaud, Jean-Pierre Aumont, Bulle Ogier, and Yves Gasq
Coproduction	Jean Baudot (Théâtre d'Orsay), Duras Film, Antenne 2, S.F.P.
Distribution	Gaumont
Format	DVD (INA)
Duration	95 min.
	Prix Jean Cocteau 1976

Son nom de Venise dans Calcutta désert (1976)

Photography	Bruno Nuytten, Joël Quentin, Jean Mascolo and Louis Bihi
Performers	Delphine Seyrig, Nicole Hiss, Marie-Pierre Thiébault and Sylvie Nuytten
Coproduction	Cinéma 9 PIPA, Éditions Albatros
Distribution	Cinéma 9
Format	VHS (Éditions Benoît Jacob)
Duration	120 min.

Le Camion (1977)

Photography	Bruno Nuytten, Joël Quentin and Eric Adjani
Performers	Marguerite Duras et Gérard Depardieu
Coproduction	Cinéma 9 (Pierre et François Barat) and Auditel
Distribution	Films Molière
Format	DVD (Éditions Benoît Jacob)
Duration	80 min.

Le Navire Night (1978)

Performers	Bulle Ogier, Dominique Sanda and Matthieu Carrière
Voice-over	Marguerite Duras and Benoît Jacquot
Coproduction	MK2, Gaumont, Les Films du Losange
Distribution	Les Films du Losange
Duration	94 min.

Aurélia Steiner, dit Aurélia Melbourne **(1979)**

Voice-over	Marguerite Duras
Coproduction	Les Films Paris-Audiovisuel
Distribution	Les Films Paris-Audiovisuel
Format	DVD (Éditions Benoît Jacob)
Duration	35 min.

Aurelia Steiner, dit Aurelia Vancouver **(1979)**

Voice-over	Marguerite Duras
Coproduction	Les Films du Losange
Distribution	Les Films du Losange
Format	DVD (Éditions Benoît Jacob)
Duration	48 min.

Césarée **(1979)**

Voice-over	Marguerite Duras
Coproduction	Les Films du Losange
Distribution	Les Films du Losange
Format	DVD (Éditions Benoît Jacob)
Duration	11 min.

Les Mains négatives **(1979)**

Voice-over	Marguerite Duras
Coproduction	Les Films du Losange
Distribution	Les Films du Losange
Format	DVD (Éditions Benoît Jacob)
Duration	18 min.

*Agatha ou les lectures illimitées (*1981)

Music	Valses de Brahms
Performers	Bulle Ogier and Yann Andréa.
Voice-over	Marguerite Duras and Yann Andréa
Coproduction	Berthemont, I.N.A., Des femmes filment
Distribution	Hors Champ Diffusion
Format	DVD (Éditions Benoît Jacob)
Duration	90 min.

L'Homme atlantique **(1981)**

Music	Valses de Brahms
Performer	Yann Andréa

Voice-over	Marguerite Duras
Coproduction	Berthemont, I.N.A., Des femmes filment
Distribution	Hors Champ Diffusion
Duration	42 min.

*Dialogue de Rome (*1982)

Voice-over	Marguerite Duras
Production	Lunga Gittata RAI
Duration	62 min.

*Les Enfants (*1984)

Directors	Marguerite Duras, Jean Mascolo and Jean Marc Turine
Photography	Bruno Nuytten
Music	Carlos d'Alessio
Performers	Axel Bogousslavski, Tatiana Moukhine, Daniel Gélin, André Dussolier, Pierre Arditi and Martine Chevalier
Coproduction	Berthemont, Ministère de la Culture
Distribution	Les Films sans frontières
Format	DVD (Éditions Benoît Jacob)
Duration	90 min.

3. Adaptations

Un Barrage contre le Pacifique, René Clément, 1958.
Hiroshima monaAmour. Alain Resnais, 1959.
Moderato Cantabile, Peter Brook, 1960.
Une Aussi longue absence. Henri Colpi, 1961.
Dix heures et demie du soir en été. Jules Dassin, 1967.
Le Marin de Gibraltar. Tony Richardson, 1967.
En Rachâchant. Jean-Marie Straub and Danielle Huillet. After the story *Ah ! Enersto (*1971), 1982.
La Maladie de la mort (Die Krankheit Tod). Peter Handke, 1985.
L'Amant. Jean-Jacques Annaud. Prod. Claude Berri, 1992.
H Story. Nobuhiro Suwa. After the film *Hiroshima mon amour,* 2001.
L'Après-midi de monsieur Andesmas. Michelle Porte, 2004
Un Barrage contre le Pacifique. Rithy Panh, 2008.
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Marguerite Duras, à propos de Détruire dit-elle. Jean-Claude Bergeret et
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Les Lieux de Marguerite Duras. Michelle Porte. Prod. INA, 1976.

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Savannah Bay, c'est toi. Michelle Porte. Prod. INA, 1084.

Apostrophes. Jean Cazenave. Prod. Antenne 2, 1984.

Godard-Duras. Jean-Didier Verhaeghe. Prod. *Océaniques,* 1987.

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