Cultural Intertexts
Year XII Volume 15 (2025)

The Nouveau Roman and Cinema: The Problem of Representation

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Abstract
This paper reexamines the potential of the film medium to depict what cannot be seen or represented by established visual and narrative conventions by analysing the relationship between the French Nouveau Roman and the emergence of innovative cinematic strategies in French cinema during the late 1950s and early 1960s. It argues that both collective and individual trauma serve as sites from which the world can be reimagined and reconstructed according to new aesthetic and epistemological rules. The Nouveau Roman is marked by a symptomatic interrogation of realistic – or illusionistic – conventions, which it redefines through denarrativization, dedramatization, and depsychologization. The paper contends that members of the informal group of Left Bank writers and filmmakers, including Nouveau Roman authors, developed some of the most radical formal solutions for representing postwar reality – one shaped by the traumatic legacy of the Holocaust and the atomic bomb. Their works depart from conventional realism and engage reflexively with the act of representation itself, revealing its fundamentally illusionistic nature. Special attention is given to the first two feature films by Alain Resnais: Hiroshima, Mon Amour *(1959), with a screenplay by Marguerite Duras, and* Last Year at Marienbad *(1961), written by Alain Robbe–Grillet – both key figures of the Nouveau Roman. These films reflect the mid–twentieth–century intellectual shift in the humanities and sciences, which increasingly viewed reality as a subjective construct. Through their formal experimentation, they systematically deconstruct the codes of realism in representing the present and the past, as well as internal and external experiences of reality.*

Keywords: *Nouveau Roman, realism, film modernism, representation, reality*.

Introduction

The mid–twentieth century marks a fundamental rupture in aesthetic and epistemological frameworks, as the representational capacities of literature and cinema were called into question by the historical trauma of the Holocaust and the atomic bomb. In this context, the very notion of realism—long tethered to mimetic fidelity and linear narrative coherence—was destabilized, revealing its complicity in modes of perception no longer adequate to the altered conditions of postwar subjectivity and historical consciousness. This paper examines how the French cinema of the late 1950s and early 1960s, in close dialogue with the literary experimentation of the *Nouveau Roman*, articulates a

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formal response to this crisis of representation. Through a close analysis of Alain Resnais's *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* (1959) and *Last Year at Marienbad* (1961) – collaborations with *Nouveau Roman* authors Marguerite Duras and Alain Robbe–Grillet – this study argues that trauma operates not only as a thematic concern but as a structuring absence that demands new aesthetic strategies. These films do not merely depict trauma; they embody its effects through formal disjunction, narrative fragmentation, and temporal indeterminacy, thus staging a critical interrogation of representation itself as a historically and ideologically situated practice.

The *Nouveau Roman* (French for "new novel") emerged as a literary movement in France during the 1950s. However, by 1961, its intellectual originator, Alain Robbe–Grillet, had already expressed concern that the term had become entangled in myths and misinterpretations. In his essay "The Nouveau Roman, the New Man," he laments that the concept had been diluted and misread (1965: 133). Despite this, the movement's core figures – Nathalie Sarraute, Claude Simon, Michel Butor, Marguerite Duras, and Robbe–Grillet himself – were united in the 1950s under the aegis of the Parisian publishing house Éditions de Minuit (Ostowska 2008: 3). Robbe–Grillet's *For a New Novel* (1963), a collection of programmatic essays, sets out the group's aesthetic agenda. There, he calls for a fundamental rethinking of narrative form: the rejection of psychological interiority and traditional plot in favour of pure perception, where detailed description takes precedence over character development, and consciousness asserts primacy over objective reality (Robbe–Grillet, 1965).

Yet the concept of the *Nouveau Roman* is, in a sense, tautological. Every significant work of art is "new" at the moment of its creation. Historically, each era has produced novels that were considered new in their time – *Don Quixote* and *The Princess of Clèves* in the 17th century; *Moll Flanders*, *Tristram Shandy*, and *Jacques the Fatalist and His Master* in the 18th. The novel form has always been shaped by a dynamic tension between realism and imagination, between depicting the world as it is and reimagining it. In this sense, the demand for novelty in narrative art reflects deeper ontological questions: What do we mean by "reality"? And to what extent is that reality both constructed and represented through fiction?

In the aftermath of the Second World War – and the unprecedented trauma of Auschwitz and Hiroshima – the *Nouveau Roman* registers a widespread need to rethink the very premises of representation, particularly those associated with realism. As Roland Barthes argued in "The Reality Effect" (1968), the realism of realist literature is neither stable nor natural: it is fragmented, detail–oriented, and often constructed through paradoxically unrealistic means (1989: 147–148). This crisis of realism was addressed across various postwar artistic movements – from abstract expressionism and

musique concrète to epic theater and Italian neorealism in film. The *Nouveau Roman*, too, offered a radical challenge to illusionism, marked by its tendencies toward denarrativization, dedramatization, and depsychologization. Traditional structures of plot, character, and conflict were dismantled to better reflect the fragmented, often incoherent experience of modern reality – whether internal or external, subjective or objective.

In the theoretical writings of the *Nouveau Roman*, particular emphasis is placed on description – no longer as a means to represent the world, but as an autonomous act of perception that might replace the object it describes. As Robbe–Grillet writes in "Time and Description in Contemporary Fiction," description "does not progress, it contradicts itself, it moves in a circle"; it "destroys all trust in the things it describes" (1965: 155). The goal, then, becomes not to represent reality but to foreground the process of representation itself. In doing so, the text opens an endless chain of signification, where meaning remains suspended in a state of permanent fluctuation.

The New Cinema

Italian neorealism is widely regarded as one of the foundational movements in the development of film modernism (cf. Bálint Kovács 2007; Deleuze 2010, 2012). Yet, its formal principles remain closely aligned with the realist conventions that dominated the first half–century of cinema – a period in which classical narrative style and representational codes were firmly consolidated. While acknowledging neorealism's pivotal role in shaping modernist cinema, Andreas Bálint Kovács notes that it lacks certain defining features of modernism, namely a sustained emphasis on subjectivity and reflexivity (2007: 255). Gilles Deleuze likewise distinguishes neorealism from earlier cinematic modes by emphasizing its focus on "purely optical situations (and auditory, where synchronous sound was initially absent)," which stand in contrast to the sensory-motor logic of classical action-image cinema (2012: 7).

A clear shift in representational strategy becomes visible when comparing Roberto Rossellini's *Journey to Italy* (*Viaggio in Italia*, 1954) – often viewed as a bridge between neorealism and modernism – with Alain Resnais's groundbreaking debut *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* (1959). While the two films may share thematic concerns, particularly in their portrayal of love, memory, and alienation, their formal approaches diverge significantly. *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* marks a decisive departure from neorealist conventions, moving toward a reflexive mode of representation in which the act of representing becomes a self–conscious process. In this shift, realism is no longer taken as a transparent medium but as an illusionistic construct to be deconstructed and interrogated.

Resnais's film was scripted by Marguerite Duras, who—despite her resistance to categorization – was frequently associated with the *Nouveau Roman* in the late 1950s. The collaboration between Resnais and Duras was deeply integrated: Duras not only co–wrote the screenplay but also authored a prose supplement elaborating on the protagonists' fragmented memories through a lyrical, associative narrative (Duras 1960: 125–155). Following the film's premiere at the Cannes Film Festival, Jean–Luc Godard famously remarked: "The impression of watching a film unimaginable based on what was known to the viewer from the history of cinema. I saw something I did not expect at all" (Hillier 1985: 59–60). From today's perspective, Resnais's formal experimentation – often grouped under the umbrella of the French New Wave—may appear less radical than that of other contemporaries. Yet within the context of the late 1950s, especially in relation to the writers and filmmakers linked to the *Nouveau Roman*, the innovation displayed in *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* was unmistakably profound. Godard's astonishment was thus entirely justified.

Since his early work in documentary, Resnais – alongside figures such as Chris Marker—pursued a rigorous exploration of new cinematic forms. This search for formal and narrative innovation was shared by other members of the Left Bank group, particularly Agnès Varda. Her debut feature, *La Pointe Courte* (1955), edited by Resnais, is frequently cited as a foundational work of the French New Wave. Film historian Georges Sadoul even referred to it as the movement's true point of origin (Vincendeau, 2008).

The Nouveau Roman and the New Cinema of the 1950s: a response to the post–war reality

Both the *Nouveau Roman* and the new wave cinema of the 1950s – as developed by filmmakers such as Agnès Varda, Chris Marker, and Alain Resnais – emerged as aesthetic responses to a transformed reality marked by the Holocaust and the atomic bomb. Within this historical and ethical context, Resnais directed the short documentary *Night and Fog* (*Nuit et brouillard*, 1955), based on a screenplay by Jean Cayrol, a writer sometimes linked to the *Nouveau Roman* (cf. Ostrowska 2008: 3). The film's formal strategies exemplify a new relationship between cinema and reality, grounded in the persistent interrogation of representational processes. From its opening long horizontal shots of the now–empty meadows where concentration camps once stood, *Night and Fog* foregrounds the instability of meaning within the cinematic image. Through the interplay of narration and image, the film continually reminds the viewer of the inherent ambivalence and complexity of representation. The meadow is never merely a meadow; and even the word "death," in Resnais's hands, becomes paradoxically generative – a source of memory and a form of resistance against historical erasure.

In his modernist trilogy of love–themed films – *Hiroshima Mon Amour* (1959), *Last Year at Marienbad* (*L'année dernière à Marienbad*, 1961), and *Muriel, or The Time of Return* (*Muriel ou le temps d'un retour*, 1963) – Resnais expands this interrogation into broader philosophical and epistemological terrain. These films reflect a worldview, shaped by twentieth–century humanism and science alike, that understands reality as a subjective and constructed phenomenon. By systematically dismantling conventional codes of narrative, temporality, and spatial continuity, Resnais explores both the internal and external dimensions of reality as unstable, mediated, and fragmented. Although each film revolves around a failed or impossible love, they equally stage the modernist polarizations of reflection and fantasy, and foreground a key premise of this worldview: that perception is governed not by objective truth but by the structures of individual subjectivity. The result is a cinematic form in which reality itself dissolves into temporal disjunction and sensory fragmentation.

Resnais's debut feature, *Hiroshima Mon Amour*, introduces a tension that would become central to the *Nouveau Roman*: the dialectic between subjectivity and objectivity. Written by Marguerite Duras – an author frequently associated with the *Nouveau Roman* despite her own reservations – the screenplay entwines a love story with the trauma of war. Trauma is figured doubly: through the Japanese male protagonist's experience of Hiroshima and the French female protagonist's memories of occupied France. The film poses urgent questions about the relationship between words and images, and whether language can adequately mediate or erase traumatic memory. The images themselves remain deeply ambiguous; their provenance – whether from collective or individual memory – cannot be conclusively determined. The boundaries between personal and historical consciousness are blurred.

This ambiguity is encapsulated in one of the film's most iconic lines, spoken by the male protagonist: "You saw nothing in Hiroshima." Through this statement, Duras and Resnais articulate a central concern of both the film and the *Nouveau Roman* more broadly: the possibility – or impossibility – of representing the unrepresentable. *Hiroshima Mon Amour* does not merely depict trauma; it treats trauma as a generative space from which the world might be reimagined. In doing so, it exemplifies a new kind of cinema – emerging in tandem with the *Nouveau Roman* – that seeks not to reproduce reality but to reconstruct it according to new, radically subjective principles.

The discipline of uncertainty: the collaboration between Alain Resnais and Alain Robbe-Grillet

Following his successful collaboration with Marguerite Duras, Alain Resnais embarked on his next project in partnership with Alain Robbe–Grillet, marking one of the most fruitful artistic collaborations in cinema history. Initially, Robbe–Grillet proposed four concepts to Resnais, all of which were embraced,

but the final choice centered on what was then simply titled *Last Year at Marienbad*. Unlike a traditional screenplay, Robbe–Grillet provided a "shooting book" that meticulously detailed the film scene by scene, encompassing descriptions of images, sounds, costumes, editing techniques, and camera movements. This text was published in 1961 under the film's title, subtitled as a "cinematic novel." It included 48 stills from the film (Schmid, 2011: 24). In the preface, Robbe–Grillet emphasized the deep alignment between his vision and Resnais' independent interventions: "Alain Resnais and I could not have collaborated if we had not seen the film in the same way from the very beginning; not only in broad outlines but precisely, in the architecture of the whole and in the construction of the smallest details. It was as if he had already been thinking about what I had written, and what he added during filming was precisely what I would have written" (2004: 6).

In *Last Year at Marienbad*, the motifs of love and trauma persist, though the explicit historical context is deliberately omitted. The film constructs a self–contained, autonomous world whose spatial and temporal logic diverges from the conventions of realistic representation. Reality becomes a form of illusion, continuously prompting viewers to question the very foundations of visual and verbal representation. Like its predecessor, the film uses narration to destabilise the image; yet it also employs the image to undermine the reliability of storytelling itself. Gilles Deleuze observes: "In the image, the difference is always established between the real and the imaginary, the objective and the subjective, the physical and the mental, the actual and the virtual, but this difference also becomes reversible, and in this sense, imperceptible." He concludes that, for Resnais and Robbe–Grillet, the real and the imaginary are "distinct yet imperceptible" (2012: 135).

The narrative foundation of *Last Year at Marienbad* revolves around a chance encounter between a man (Giorgio Albertazzi) and a woman (Delphine Seyrig) at a baroque castle functioning as a hotel for the idle and privileged. The woman is accompanied by another man (Sascha Pitoëff), whose relationship to her—whether husband, brother, or lover – remains ambiguous. The man insists they met the previous year in Marienbad and attempts to persuade her to flee with him. In the screenplay, the characters are identified only as X (the man), A (the woman), and M (her companion); in the film, all remain nameless. The film opens with X's off–screen narration as the camera glides elegantly through the castle's decorated yet empty corridors. His words begin to repeat with slight variations, in contrast to the camera's steady, measured movement, which methodically traverses images on the walls.

This opening sequence functions as a visual metaphor for memory work – a navigation through the labyrinth of consciousness in search of a significant place to inhabit once again. The camera ultimately halts on a theatrical performance in one of the castle's halls. The actress's lines respond

directly to X's narration: "No, that hope – that hope is now irrelevant. The fear of losing such a connection, such a prison, such a deception is over. This entire story is now already in the past. It is finished – just a few seconds..." Complicating matters, she shares the stage with an actor whose reply echoes X's earlier monologue. This staging reveals that the memory sought in the hallways of consciousness – embodied by the play – is necessarily a construct.

Presenting the film's central relationship initially as a performance serves as a manifesto on the performative nature of the narrative between X and A. By complicating layers of representation, the film destabilises any stable ground for the viewer's interpretation, inviting an understanding of all events as performance – even beyond the theatrical space, extending into cinematic imagery. Here, the love game is modernist performance, a perpetuation of archetypal patterns through which characters experience and resolve emotions – patterns inherited and produced through artistic tradition. Resnais further explores this phenomenon in *My American Uncle* (Mon oncle d'Amérique, 1980), intercutting scenes of characters experiencing intense emotions with shots of famous actors expressing similar feelings.

The core motif of *Last Year at Marienbad* is persuasion – or manipulation – as X endeavours to validate his version of the past to secure a shared future with A. If his account is true (and the film persistently denies any singular truth), A would presumably submit to him, leaving the castle to face an uncertain future. Yet A holds her own version of the past, in which their alleged encounter never occurred. This raises the fundamental question – one that critics repeatedly posed after the film's Venice premiere, where it won the Golden Lion – whether they truly met. Resnais and Robbe–Grillet offered contradictory answers, remaining faithful to the film's spirit, which deepens the mystery of the past on the level of imagery. X's narration is revealed as an attempt to shape his subjective reality, a necessarily singular perspective: what happened for him may not have happened for her, and countless alternative possibilities may exist.

Shortly after the premiere, critic Jacques Brunius titled his essay "Every Year at Marienbad or the Discipline of Uncertainty," emphasising the film's cyclical structure and its relativistic treatment of testimony and memory (cf. Brunius 1961–62). Through editing and sound design, the film halts at the recognition of the subject's cognitive impotence in reaching objective truth, fixating instead on validating a singular, sensory–subjective version of reality. X persistently constructs his past and attempts to convince A – or compel her – to accept it. Yet this narration is an arbitrary process by which the subject attempts to impose order on the world through personally acceptable patterns. Resnais explores this theme's ultimate consequences in *Love to Death* (L'amour à mort, 1984), which Deleuze hailed as one of cinema's most ambitious films. There, a woman's refusal to accept her husband's death is rendered as her

subjective reality, wherein he returns from the dead. The film blurs imagined and real levels, intersected only by abstract, snow–like sequences floating through space.

In *Last Year at Marienbad*, the tension between subjective reality and reality–in–itself plays out as an opposition between language and image, but also language and language, and image and image. X's narration often contradicts what we see on screen, and his statements shift, diverging from A's perception. The film's images themselves vary, challenging their own authority and reliability; repeated scenes appear in multiple visual versions.

Three particularly emblematic moments stand out. First, the famous shot of people casting shadows in a hotel garden – but the surrounding ornamental shrubs cast none. This disrupts conventional perceptual logic, signaling that images can deceive, often more so than the narrator. Paradoxically, this unreliable image may be closest to the truth, aligning with the observer's subjectivity. Second, when X presents a photograph purportedly taken during their encounter, A retorts that it could have been taken anytime, anywhere. This calls attention to film editing's reliance on viewers' willing suspension of disbelief – that sequential images share spatiotemporal continuity, despite objective discontinuities. Finally, a scene in which X and A examine sculptures on the hotel terrace reveals they are mere imitations of the stylistic period they supposedly belong to. This reinforces that what we see is not necessarily what we believe or wish to see. The diegetic world's logic resides between dreams and riddles, leaving consciousness unable to discern reality from illusion.

The gap between subjective and objective perspectives peaks near the seventy–minute mark, where Resnais dramatically diverges from Robbe–Grillet's screenplay. In this scene, X narrates a rape, asserting it was not violent, but the film presents the act in fragmented form, omitting explicit depiction except for a single shot. The violent act becomes a "performance of a performance," stylized through rapid, dynamic shots culminating in the heroine's arms spread wide as the image overexposes and fades into light. Desire – the narrative's driving force – is thus rendered a stylization, its true nature, the secret of X and A's relationship, remaining inaccessible to representational codes. The possibility that their encounter was violent is only one of many open interpretations, reinforcing the film's refusal to privilege any single viewpoint or consciousness.

Readable films, viewable books

After their collaborations with Resnais, both Marguerite Duras and Alain Robbe-Grillet embarked on directing careers of their own, discovering in film a medium through which they could deepen their formal investigations. In 1963, Robbe–Grillet directed his first feature film, *Immortal*, based on his own

screenplay. Here, he again used a love story to explore the interplay between the subjective and objective, as well as cinema's ability to create a new kind of reality—one where the objective and subjective, past and future, real and imagined, are inextricably intertwined. Gilles Deleuze summarizes Robbe–Grillet's cinematic approach by noting: "Throughout his entire body of work, Robbe–Grillet initiates a new asynchrony in which speech and visual elements no longer align, no longer correspond, but contradict and oppose each other, without either being given 'the right': something is undecidable between them (and as Gardies observes, the visual has no privilege of authenticity, containing as many improbabilities as speech)" (2012: 332).

Meanwhile, Duras continued writing screenplays – such as *Moderato Cantabile* by Peter Brook and *After a Long Absence* by Henri Colpi (both 1960) – and from 1967 began directing independently. A decade later, she entered the main competition at Cannes with her masterpiece *The Truck* (*Le Camion*, 1977). In this film, she pushes to their furthest limits the ideas Robbe–Grillet explored in his essays on the Nouveau Roman. According to Robbe–Grillet, realism is an ideology under which competing factions fight to prove that they alone hold the true representation of reality (1963: 157). Against this, Duras seeks to create a filmic reality that is a priori unrepresentational. Robbe–Grillet writes that classicists believe reality is classical, romantics believe it is romantic, while surrealists understand it as surreal (1965: 157). The reality in *The Truck* is ambiguous, inaccessible, and self–refuting.

The film centers on a man and a woman – played by Duras herself and Gérard Depardieu – who sit at a table reading a script for a film we never see, about a woman hitchhiking and entering a truck, where she has a long conversation with the driver. The scenes of Duras and Depardieu reading and commenting on the script alternate with shots of a blue truck driving through the French countryside. *The Truck* indirectly responds to the emerging historical context of the late 1960s, particularly the collapse of the ideals of 1968. It is a film about the lost future of the "declassed," a word repeatedly used by the unseen protagonist to describe herself.

In *The Truck*, verbal description becomes the film itself, while the filmic image is freed from the need to describe anything, opening itself to the pure production of the imaginary – much like literature. Duras addresses the relationship between literary and filmic creation in her book *Green Eyes*, writing:

> The work of the author in film – without delving into the technical issues of equipment that hinder and prolong his work – begins at a different moment than the writer's work on a book. Before shooting, the film author must pass through a book that will never be written, but which has the value of a written work in terms of its position in the creative process. He passes through this book and ends up in the space of his own reading, more precisely in the space

> of the viewer himself. Look at certain films more carefully: they are readable, the thread of writing can be followed. The phase of shadowed writing, whether conscious or not, remains visible, its space, its transition can be seen. (Of course, we are not talking here about commercial films made from recipes, which are the opposite of writing.) In this phase of creation, the film author is in the opposite position to that of the writer in relation to the book. Can we say that in film we write backward? I think we can. The film author sees and reads his own film precisely from the seat of the viewer, while the writer remains in the darkness that no reading can uncover, unrecognizable to anyone who undertakes it. (Duras, 1990: 98–99)

For Duras, reading and writing are two sides of the same activity, a continuous dialogue between the world as it is and the consciousness approaching it to bring it into language and image.

In *The Truck*, the constant movement of the truck through a faceless, impoverished French landscape embodies our insatiable need for words and images to represent and signify something. By depicting this very desire to depict, the film frees itself from established conventions and shapes a new kind of reality—one that would later be called postmodern by those inclined to historical–stylistic labels. In the introduction to *Conversations*, where Duras and Jean–Luc Godard discuss *The Truck*, Cyril Béghin writes: "In *The Truck*, the truck with its trailer represents the physical metaphor of 'words crossing into images'; the way film star Gérard Depardieu is forced into a performance reduced to minimal movements and words, as well as the film's use of the past conditional, testify to shared concerns about the relationships between text and image, working with actors, and the idea of the work as an accomplished impossibility." (Duras and Godard, 2019: 12)

Nearly twenty years later, Godard, in *Deux Fois Cinquante Ans de Cinéma Français* (1995), quotes a line from *The Truck*: "Would it be a film? Yes, it's a film"

Whether romantic, classical, modernist, or postmodern, the reality constructed by film is constantly engaged in a dynamic dialogue with an external reality – a dialogue that is continually reformulated. Art functions as a process of discovering the real, and this discovery demands a constant transformation of the artistic form, the "optics" through which reality is approached. For filmmakers and writers like Marguerite Duras, Jean–Luc Godard, Alain Resnais, and Alain Robbe–Grillet, this perpetual transformation is the only constant. Their work resists fixed viewpoints—formal or thematic—and instead explores new modes of engaging with the world.

The French New Wave and the New Novel articulate the tension between the imagined and the real, challenging the assumption that the filmic image – or narrative – is a transparent window onto an objective reality. Drawing on Michel Foucault's reading of René Magritte's *This Is Not a Pipe*, the

filmic or literary image becomes a signifier within a chain of signification grounded in imagination and construction rather than direct representation. The New Novel replaces the world with its own descriptive system, while New Wave cinema innovates spatiotemporal structures that disrupt continuity, thereby exposing the instability of "reality" itself and opening space for imagining worlds that are, paradoxically, more real than reality.

Roland Barthes' concept of the *death of the author* and the *readerly* versus *writerly* text further illuminates this process. In New Wave cinema and the New Novel, meaning is not dictated by a singular authoritative voice but generated through the active engagement of the spectator or reader. The filmic image ceases to be a stable signifier and instead becomes a site of polysemy, inviting multiple interpretations and revealing the constructed nature of meaning. Thus, representation is a performative act rather than a mimetic one.

Jean Baudrillard's theory of simulation and hyperreality complicates the relationship between film and reality. For Baudrillard, contemporary media do not merely represent reality but produce simulations that replace or exceed reality. The New Wave's fragmentation of narrative and image can be seen as anticipating this collapse, as films like *The Truck* or *Last Year at Marienbad* blur distinctions between appearance and reality, image and referent. In this context, representation becomes a simulacrum—a copy without an original—where the filmic text creates autonomous worlds that both reflect and undermine the notion of a singular "real."

Gilles Deleuze's *Cinema 1* and *Cinema 2* offer a further philosophical framework, distinguishing between the "movement–image" and the "time–image." New Wave films often embody the "time–image," characterized by a disruption of linear causality and a focus on temporal experience, memory, and subjectivity. This shift foregrounds the problem of representation as one of expressing time and experience rather than simply reproducing spatial reality. Deleuze's notion of the crystal–image, where actual and virtual coexist and intertwine, resonates deeply with the New Wave's play of memory and reality, reinforcing cinema's potential to reconfigure the very notion of reality.

The problem of representation, as explored by these artists, is resolved not by direct mimicry but by translating reality into a language external to it—one that nonetheless enables it to "speak." This is evident in films like *The Truck*, where language and image resist seamless integration, underscoring the mediated nature of representation and questioning the authority of the cinematic image. Here, representation is self–reflexive and fragmented, emphasizing how film constructs rather than transparently reflects reality.

This radical approach to representation underscores the broader New Wave project: disrupting conventional perceptions of reality to allow for more imaginative and unconventional modes of interaction with the world. The works of Duras, Resnais, and Robbe–Grillet exemplify a profound shift away

from linear narrative and traditional realism toward a fragmented, fluid engagement with memory, identity, and truth. Their films collapse the binaries of objective/subjective and verbal/visual, presenting cinema as a medium that reinvents reality rather than reproducing it. This ongoing negotiation between medium and audience reveals new possibilities for portraying subjective experience and reframes representation as a generative act.

The philosophical and stylistic ruptures introduced by these filmmakers laid the groundwork for contemporary cinema's experimental tendencies. Their interrogation of time, space, and narrative has influenced a lineage of directors who continue to challenge cinema's mimetic functions. Several key features characterize this legacy:

1. Disruption of Linear Narrative: Nonlinear, fragmented storytelling foregrounds internal subjectivity over external causality. *The Truck* exemplifies this through its elliptical structure and emphasis on characters' interiority rather than external action, a strategy widely adopted by modern filmmakers.
2. Blurring Reality and Fiction: Films like *The Truck* and *Last Year at Marienbad* dissolve the boundary between the real and the imagined, demanding audience skepticism toward the presumed transparency of images and narratives. Contemporary films continue this exploration by foregrounding constructed realities and self–awareness.
3. Deconstruction of the Image: The New Wave's interrogation of the cinematic image as a mutable, unstable signifier reverberates in contemporary cinema's examination of media artificiality.
4. Film as Metatext: Self–reflexivity – where films comment on their own status as constructed texts – is a direct inheritance from New Wave filmmakers.
5. Visual and Auditory Abstraction: Building on modernist and postmodernist tendencies, films continue to experiment with fragmented soundscapes and surreal imagery.
6. Alienated Anti–Heroes: Complex, morally ambiguous protagonists trace their roots to existential and fragmented subjectivities, reflecting the postmodern deconstruction of coherent identity.

In sum, the French New Wave and the New Novel reconfigured cinema's approach to representation, destabilizing traditional narrative and visual codes and enabling cinema to enact a continual reimagining of reality. Through the lenses of thinkers such as Baudrillard and Deleuze, this legacy challenges contemporary filmmakers and audiences alike to engage with the constructedness of images and stories, recognizing representation not as transparent reflection but as a generative, transformative practice that shapes our understanding of the world. n conclusion, the works of Marguerite Duras, Alain Resnais, Jean–Luc Godard, and Alain Robbe–Grillet exemplify a radical

rethinking of cinematic representation that destabilizes traditional realist frameworks. By interrogating the ontological status of images and language, these auteurs demonstrate that film does not merely reflect reality but actively constructs it through mutable artistic forms that refract and transform the external world. Drawing on semiotic and philosophical insights, particularly those of Foucault, this investigation has shown how New Wave cinema and the Nouveau Roman generate a productive tension between subjective and objective registers, disrupting linear temporality and spatial coherence to challenge the spectator's epistemic certitude. Films such as *The Truck* and *Last Year at Marienbad* embody a metatextual self–reflexivity that foregrounds cinema's constructedness, marking a shift from mimesis to poiesis and positioning the medium as a site of imaginative world–making. These formal and narrative innovations not only problematize conventional boundaries between reality, fiction, and representation but also continue to exert a profound influence on contemporary cinematic practices. By embracing fragmentation, abstraction, and metanarrative strategies, contemporary filmmakers inherit and expand upon this legacy, further complicating the dialogue between image, language, and reality. Ultimately, this body of work underscores cinema's inherent capacity not simply to mirror the world but to envision and produce new realities, challenging and enriching our understanding of both reality and its representations.

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