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## **Out in the Open: An Investigation Into the Crystal-Image's Resistance to Control**

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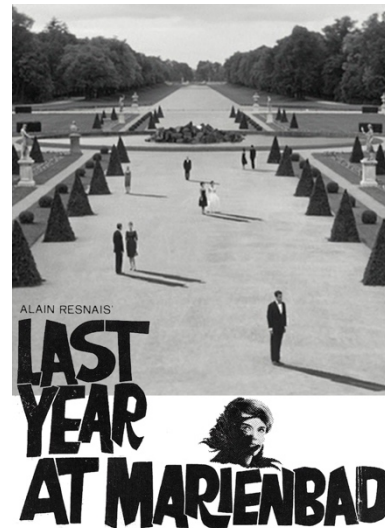
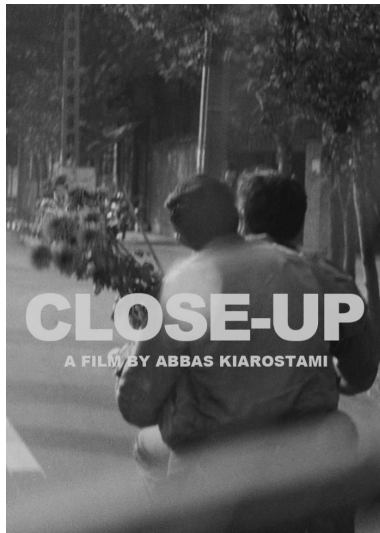
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## OUT IN THE OPEN

### *AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE CRYSTAL-IMAGE'S RESISTANCE TO CONTROL*



MA Thesis

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Our ability to resist control, or our submission to it, has to be assessed at the level of our every move. We need both creativity and a people.

— GILLES DELEUZE,  
*“Control and Becoming”*

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## Introduction

Few films have the capacity to fascinate the mind limitlessly, they speak to you, they touch you, and they change you. They are able to make you see things *anew*, thereby taking you out of a worldview you thought was unshakeable and that you were deeply entrenched in. One of such films for me is Abbas Kiarostami's *Close-Up* (1990). Although this story might not seem very spectacular, following the trial of a man impersonating famous Iranian filmmaker Mohsen Makhmalbaf, Kiarostami in this film achieves a particular feat in filmmaking that is unequalled. Throughout the film, the events the trial is about are reenacted with the actual people involved in the case playing themselves. These reenactments are then oscillated with what seem to be registrations of the trial itself. What *Close-Up* achieves, is a dazzling interplay between documentary and fiction that is able to dig into themes such as identity, class, as well as the porous border between art and reality.

Another of such films that is very dear to me is *L'Année dernière à Marienbad* (1961), Alain Resnais' and Alain Robbe-Grillet's nouvelle vague masterpiece. Its simple premise—that of a man asking a woman if she remembers their meeting in Marienbad the year before—results in an awfully confusing, ongoing sequence of cleverly edited possible scenarios of what could have happened last year at Marienbad. Although the two films seem radically different from one another, both in content and cultural context, they give me a very similar feeling that touches me deeply. It is disturbing in the sense that these films make me anxious as it feels as if they plunge me into a void where the ground is taken away under my feet. But at the same time, I find it truly beautiful, I am struck by an intensity originating from these films that opens me up and introduces me to entirely new ways of thinking. Nonetheless, I am touched by these films in a particular way that I have been unable to localise.

One similarity between the two films is that they play with the mixing of fact and fiction, yet each in their own way. *Close-Up* plays this game on the level of genre, playing with the expectations of very specific aesthetic tendencies through its oscillation—and sometimes even a concurrence—between documentary and fiction. *L'Année dernière à Marienbad* (*Marienbad*) on the other hand does so through an investigation of memory, delving into questions about the production of memories as well as their correspondence to objective reality. Although this similarity between the two films could provide a starting point for an inquiry into what about these films touches me so deeply, I feel like an inquiry into the relation between fact and fiction—or real and staged for that matter—has already been exhausted. These categories, and more specifically their amalgamation, bear to me a postmodern connotation that makes me feel

like the endpoint of such an inquiry is already limited from the start. It makes me think of films like *The Truman Show* (1998), *The Matrix* (1999), and *Total Recall* (1990), which may even be some of the better ones to deploy this trope. Nevertheless, the categories of fact and fiction to me signify an exhausted trope in which reveals such as: “It was all a dream!” and “None of this is real!” have attained a rather parodic character.

Therefore, I want to approach the tension in these films from a different perspective that might be able break through the stalemate of a fact-fiction dichotomy. What binds these films together, is that the tension present in both films is connected to a temporal problem. In both films there is a desire to revisit the past. In *Close-Up* it is revisited by means of reenactments to answer the question of what happened, whereas in *Marienbad* the past is sought for by both the man and the woman to answer the very same question: what did occur? What memory do we or do we not share? Moreover, the position the past takes within these films is closely related to what would otherwise be indicated as the *fictions* that starts to intervene with reality. In *Close-Up* on the one hand, the reenactments come to exert real influence on the trial and the relation between the multiple images is thereby made diffuse. In *Marienbad*, on the other hand, it seems that the factuality of the past is of no concern, as both characters’ memories of it are malleable, resulting in possibly fictitious memories coming to inform the characters’ presents.

I would like to take both films’ entanglement with time as a starting point of my analyses of them, as their entanglement with time prompted me to think of the distinction between *actual* and *virtual* as used by philosopher Gilles Deleuze. Whereas the actual refers to the material present, virtuality includes both the past and future of that present, as well as the infinite range of unactualised presents, in which the virtual is as real as the actual (Deleuze, “Bergsonism” 58). Not only do these terms allow me to move beyond the real-not real separation, but they also allow me to think beyond the possible. That is because the virtual is not bounded by the givenness of the actual. Although Deleuze borrows them from Henri Bergson, it is Deleuze who used these terms to think about the relation between time and cinema. Not only is this analogous to my fascination, but I am also particularly fascinated by a specific concept he puts forth, namely the *crystal-image*, a specific manifestation of a cinematographic image in which the actual and virtual coalesce to the point that they become indiscernible (Deleuze, “Cinema II” 82). I am interested in this concept, for I believe it to be relevant to what both *Close-Up* and *Marienbad* do.

Furthermore, approaching these films through actual and virtual is fruitful in another way. This concept of virtuality triggers something within me that makes me think about our current political climate. It was Fredric Jameson who once wrote that it is easier to imagine the end of the

world than the end of capitalism (xii).<sup>1</sup> In light of what has been called ‘left melancholy’—that is, the inability of the left to come up with a compelling alternative to the existing order of things (Brown W 26)—I keep thinking of the way virtuality comes to play a role in our inability to come up with a compelling alternative to capitalism’s impending destruction of the planet. Virtuality must play a role in breaking through this blockade, for if an alternative is so far away from what is possible that we cannot think of it, we must think beyond the possible.

However, to what is this inability due? How come the world has progressed in such a way that it has become systematically impossible to think of alternatives? Towards the end of his life, Deleuze concerned himself with what he called *control*, a new form of governance that is oriented on the regulation of populations through controlling movement. Although the mechanisms of control are not necessarily visible, they shape the circumstances in which events can emerge so that the event’s possible undesirable effects are nullified in advance (Deleuze, “Control” 3-7). Given that control and its emergence is inseparable from the dominance of capitalism (Deleuze, “Control” 6), we can say that these mechanisms of control have systematically deprived us of the possibility of an alternative to the current state of things. It is therefore that I believe that virtuality is a crucial concept to think about ways of circumventing the ever-growing reach of the systems of control. Moreover, I believe that these films, in the complex relations between actual and virtual they put forth, provide us with tools for resistance against this system. Hence, what I want to investigate in this thesis, is the way in which the crystal-images that emerge in *Close-Up* and *Marienbad* are able to provide resistance against the new form of governance that is control. Not only does both film’s embracement of virtuality make them circumvent the limits of the possible as determined by control, but I also believe that the diffusion of virtuality with the actual disrupts the praxis of control to such an extent that it is able to evade it. Through this endeavour, I not only hope to uncover a dimension of these films that has been overlooked hitherto, but also to find an explicit connection within Deleuze’s work between the crystal-image as put forward in *Cinema II*, and the notion of control, as developed in “Postscript on the Societies of Control.”

I will proceed this inquiry in threefold. In the first chapter, I will analyse the temporal tensions present in both films through a series of close readings of a number of scenes. I will focus on the tension between the actual and the virtual throughout these films by pinpointing specific instances where the two intersect, or even coalesce. I will connect my findings to Deleuze’s concept of the crystal-image, as the coalescence of actual and virtual produces the temporal tension in these films. However, whereas Deleuze does not necessarily explain how the

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Jameson, Fredric. “Future City.” *New Left Review*, no. 21, May/June 2003, 76. Cf. Fisher, Mark. *Capitalist Realism*. Zero Books, 2012.

crystal-image emerges, I will argue it to be a strictly relational product. The crystal-images of both *Close-Up* and *Marienbad* emerge through their relation to other images. To indicate this relationality, I will use the metaphor of contamination to show that when certain images enter relations with others, they contaminate them with the virtual so that the crystal-image can emerge. Hence, I will put an emphasis on the practice of montage, for it is montage that orders images and allows them to enter relations with one another. Finally, I will argue that there is a retrospectivity to the emergence of *Close-Up*'s and *Marienbad*'s crystals. For it requires time for the relationship to form, meaning that one is only able to indicate the crystal retroactively.

In chapter two, I will build upon the findings of chapter one with regards to the crystal-image. I will address various additional effects and instances in both films that are a direct result of the crystal-images and that contribute to their profundity, but that Deleuze's definition of the crystal-image, nor my argument on montage, did not cover. To unveil them, I will centralise two concepts: *noise*, which I will approach through authors such as Jacques Attali, Michel Serres, and Niall Martin; and *(in)compossibility*, a concept developed by Gottfried Leibniz, which Deleuze also refers to in *Cinema II*. I will use these notions to get a firmer grasp on the complex set of mutual relations between multiple images in both films and conversely, their effect on the crystal-image. The analysis through the concept of *noise* will have a slight tendency in focus towards *Close-Up*, whereas the analysis through *(in)compossibility* will focus more on *Marienbad*.

Finally, in the third chapter, I will first indicate the specific instances where control is visible in these films. I will then situate these instances against the theoretical framework of control through Deleuze's short text "Postscript on the Societies of Control." Although Deleuze's text will function as the overarching thread running through the exposition on control, I will support his claims with help of authors such as Michel Foucault, and Frederik Tygstrup. Subsequently, I will weave the analyses presented in the previous two chapters together with the exposition on control. Although until then the analyses have foregrounded the artistic elements of both films, the third chapter aims to uncover the political dimension contained within these films and my subsequent analyses of them.

## Chapter I: Montage and the Crystal-Image

History is the subject of a structure whose site is not homogeneous, empty time, but time filled by the presence of the now.

— WALTER BENJAMIN, “Theses on the Philosophy of History.”

In terms of montage, *Marienbad* and *Close-Up* operate very similarly. The order in which the images are sequenced in relation to each other, makes that the images start to affect each other’s status, making way for a perpetual guessing on the spectator’s behalf. Is the image real or imaginary? Present or past? Actual or virtual? These oppositions are but a few of the ones Gilles Deleuze uses when he addresses a specific manifestation of the time-image; the crystal-image. Although he formally defines the crystal-image as: “when the actual optical image crystallizes with its own virtual image.” (Deleuze, “Cinema II” 69) it generally points to an image in which actual and virtual coalesce in such a manner that they become indiscernible (Deleuze, “Cinema II” 69). This is precisely what is occurring in both *Close-Up* and *Marienbad*. Through montage, the images come to affect one another so that virtuality is allowed to enter the films, leading to the obscuring of the actual. In this chapter, I will analyse a number of scenes from both *Close-Up* and *Marienbad* to indicate the practice of montage that both films deploy. I will argue that through the sequencing of images that is montage, relations between the various images emerge that contribute to the coalescence of actual and virtual. Subsequently, I will interpret the emergence of such relations in light of the crystal-image as set out by Deleuze. In other words, through a series of close-readings, I will indicate a relationality that emerges through the practice of montage that underlies the formation of the crystal-image. Moreover, I will highlight the retroactivity of this process, as the unfolding of the relations between images over time, makes that one is only able to indicate the crystal-image in hindsight. Finally, by referring to what Chaudhuri and Finn call ‘the open-image’ (52-55), I will argue that the radically ambiguous character of *Close-Up* and *Marienbad*’s crystals in fact go beyond the crystal-image as Deleuze defined it.

### Making Past Present Again

*Close-Up* follows the trial of Hossein Sabzian, a man arrested for impersonating famous Iranian filmmaker Mohsen Makhmalbaf to allegedly swindle the middle-class Ahankhah family.



Throughout the film, we see the events of the case play out through a series of reenactments—in which those involved play themselves—which oscillate with what seem to be courtroom registrations captured during the trial itself.<sup>2</sup> We see reconstructions of Sabzian's initial meeting with Mrs. Ahankhah, where Sabzian introduces himself as Makhmalbaf. We see Sabzian's arrest being reconstructed from inside the Ahankhah house, and also from the perspective of the police coming to the Ahankhah residence. These reconstructions are interrupted by scenes depicting the trial in the form of registrations, resulting in a productive dialogue between the two *types* of images. As the film plays out, Sabzian explains he did what he did in search of recognition. He noticed that once he became Makhmalbaf, people started to appreciate him, something that did not happen to him while he was being his own self. However, as the reenactments—which by definition are staged—come to interact with the courtroom registrations, one starts to doubt Sabzian's honesty once more. Because in the reenactments he *plays* a version of himself, one starts to suspect that maybe he is also doing so during the trial. What is happening is that the relation between past and present—the past of the events depicted in the reenactments and the present of the trial itself—is problematised. More specifically, the ambiguity of the past starts to interfere in the present and makes it ambiguous too. We can grasp the relation between past and present in this film by approaching it through the cinematographic method that *Close-Up* deploys. Moreover, this relation between past and present is analogous to the crystal-image as Deleuze puts forth. I will arrive at the crystal-image later however, after I have approached the matter from the object itself.

Not only does a tension arise in the interplay between past and present through the relation between the reenactments and the registrations, but it is also already contained within the reenactments themselves. Because the people involved in the case play themselves in the reenactments, the past is literally recollected, retrieved even. That is because the past comes to coincide with the present as everyone involved relives it. Besides, given that there is a court case at stake in these reconstructions, the past is completely recollected insofar each actor that was involved in this past has an interest in its *truthful* retrieval.

What gives *Close-Up* its affective power is the fact that the reach of the reconstructions starts to extend beyond themselves and into the registrations. The reconstructions start to affect and infect the scenes that were presumed not to be reconstructions. That is, the reconstructions have a certain performativity with regards to the registrations in the sense that the reconstructions' mere presence affects our judgments of the registrations retroactively. I say retroactively because initially *Close-Up*'s documentary-like style makes the spectator believe that

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<sup>2</sup> I will use the terms 'reenactments' and 'reconstructions' interchangeably.

there is a rigid distinction between the *artifice* of the reconstructions and the supposed unmediated reality of the courtroom registrations. However, it is due to the specific sequencing of images, their organisation, that their status is diffused. This is seen in the example where the reconstructions cause one to believe that Sabzian is in fact acting during the trial. But moreover, because the temporal relation between the images is not disclosed, no certain conclusion can be drawn whether or not the registrations are in fact staged too. Hence, this diffusion of the image is not so much the result of the images' inherent qualities—although it is with the reconstructions—but it is the result of montage. Every cut pulls something into the film: an absence, an ellipsis, a temporal disjunction, which causes the mutual relations between the images to become diffuse. This allows the temporal ambiguity, that the reenactments achieve through the coinciding of past and present, to transmit to the registrations, thereby infecting them with the same ambiguity. I will try to specify this even further.

It is certain that some scenes are reconstructions based on the way these scenes are captured, as well as from their context. For instance, the scene where Sabzian is arrested must necessarily be a reconstruction, given that Kiarostami only stumbled upon the case after Sabzian was arrested. Additionally, the camera's positioning in scenes like this betrays the staged nature of the images. Instead of being captured in a more *cinema-verité* style, the camera often pre-dates the character's actions. In the opening scene for instance, we see a number of characters from a distance, whose identity we do not know at that point, exiting a building. They walk towards a parked car and enter it, after which the next shot is captured by a camera being mounted to the hood of the car. If this scene was captured as if the event was occurring spontaneously, the camera would not already have the knowledge that it should position itself on the car's hood for the next shot. Such stylistic choices give clues as to decipher what is staged and what supposedly is not. Since the camera's position in the courtroom registrations is fixed and the characters seem to be aware of its presence, the stylistic choices here affirm the documentary-like quality. Thus, on the one hand the cut separates two images, both temporally and stylistically. But on the other hand, the cut conjoins them too, thereby infecting the *supposed* courtroom registrations with suspicion. We can no longer be sure whether the courtroom registrations are in fact carefully disguised reconstructions as well. We can no longer distinguish what is real and what is staged, if all is past or if some remains present, it is obscured by montage.

In *L'Année dernière à Marienbad*, the same principle is at work with regards to montage. Like in *Close-Up*, the images start to infect one another through montage, thereby turning this deceptively simple story—of a man trying to recollect a shared past with a former lover—into an enigma that ultimately comes with no solution. Following the man's question about the previous

year at Marienbad, the film proceeds in presenting a number of scenarios that have possibly taken place. Since the woman (A) claims not to know the man (X), X starts to recite his various to their meeting trying to prove it to her, thereby setting in motion a sequence of images accompanied by X's voice-over depicting these recitations. Although the voice-over does not correspond to the images, meaning they are detached, they represent the same events. Their ordering is only different from each other, resulting in images that correspond to a memory X had recited half an hour earlier, and vice versa. Not only does this result in the diffusion of the underlying relationships between the various images and memories, which result in the complete loss of temporal orientation, but it also is a form of montage itself. The discontinuity between image and sound creates yet another relation between past and present—or present and future if regarded from the other side—where its diffusion is the direct result of the ordering of image and sound.

Here *Marienbad* starts to differ from *Close-Up*. Whereas the cut attained a double function in *Close-Up*, both separating and conjoining the images, it only becomes significant in relation to the two types of images—the reconstructions and the registrations. In *Marienbad* however, the working of the cut is much more complex. Its function is not only meaningful when conjoining two separate scenes. In *Marienbad* every single cut becomes suspicious, potentially being what Deleuze calls an “irrational cut,” that is the false continuity between shots (“Cinema II” 181). The irrational cut diffuses the temporal coordinates between two images (Deleuze, “Cinema II” 181), thereby posing problems for disclosing the mutual temporal relationship between them. Although *Close-Up* features irrational cuts as well, they trouble the temporal coordinates only when it conjoins the two types of images—reconstruction to registration and vice versa. In *Marienbad* however, the irrational cut leaves its trace in every single cut. Here, montage and its consequential interplay of images make it impossible to situate each image in a chronological timeline.

But when is a cut irrational? Because the scenarios follow each other rapidly, every single cut becomes suspicious at some point. Even a seemingly innocent shot-reverse-shot sequence suggests at times that we have plunged into a different time (and/or place). Like the scene where X and A walk through a corridor, with a cut transporting them to a different space, while their conversation continues seamlessly. Or earlier, when they are standing in the hotel's garden. It shows A rejecting X's slightly inappropriate advances, which is followed by a cut to a reverse shot showing X's reaction. He commences yet another monologue, but we see that A's mood has completely changed, listening carefully to X's words. The strange nature of this interaction does not really stand out, as the entire film is full of such strange conversations and interactions. But if one looks closely, one can see that each cut brings with it yet another turn in the interaction. It is

strong enough a basis to assume that with each cut, we might have possibly plunged into a different past, or a different present that corresponds with a different memory. In any case, it is a cut that is irrational, further problematising the temporal relations across the film until every point of reference is lost. That is its main difference with *Close-Up*, where one always retains the reenactments as a point of departure from which one can start making sense of the film. With *Marienbad*, even the present where the man approaches the woman is lost in the end through montage.

These temporal relations, although diffuse, are essential to the point *Marienbad* is making. They are important insofar the relation of the present to the previous year at Marienbad—and vice versa—is determinate for the relationship between the man and the woman. It matters whether they are lovers or strangers, but the film, however, does not provide a conclusive answer. Instead, it seems to comment on the fragility of memory itself and its susceptibility to being moulded. This is commented upon by Richard Rushton, who writes that: “If X [man] and A [woman] can discover a new past together, they can also forge a new future together” (Rushton 99).<sup>3</sup> We see that it is not necessarily about factuality or not, but about the possibility of X and A being, or becoming lovers. *Marienbad* is therefore not about facts, but about the complementary, possible scenarios that facilitate the coming forth of facts. *Marienbad* therefore is not about the actual, but about virtuality. I will elaborate now on what these concepts mean, and their coalescence in what Deleuze calls the ‘crystal-image.’

## Actual and Virtual

The fact that Deleuze argues that these notions can coalesce, means that they are initially distinct, even when they do become indiscernible (“Cinema II” 70). Despite their distinctness however, their definitions are already entangled. The terms actuality and virtuality are taken from the work of Henri Bergson. Bergson, when conceiving his ideas on *duration* [*durée*], *intuition*, and *memory*, uses actuality and virtuality to conceptualise time. To shed light on these notions, I will relate them to the concept of duration as developed by Bergson. Bergson defines duration as the subjective, flowing experience of time (“Time and Free Will” 100-101).<sup>4</sup> Contrary to duration

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<sup>3</sup> Although this quotation may insinuate that the affair definitely did not take place, I do not think Rushton means to argue this. He gives an example of how one’s memory of an event can genuinely evade you. The *new* past that Rushton writes about is then a memory retrieved—yet renewed by the other’s interpretation of it—rather than the creation, or better yet *fabulation*, of it.

<sup>4</sup> This was Bergson’s resistance against an ever-progressing development of systemising time in terms of public time. Public time refers to the instalment of a clock that was common. For the first time in history, large parts of the world were homogenised in terms of time.

there is an approach to time that partitions it into segments: hours, minutes, seconds. In this view time is considered a scale so that it can be separated into quantifiable segments with which it becomes calculable, measurable, in short, workable. For Bergson, and in turn Deleuze, this view of time is fallacious (“Cinema II” xi). In this segmented view of time, it is subordinated to “the cardinal points,” that is, seconds, minutes, hours, “through which the periodical movements that it measures pass” (Deleuze, “Kant” vii). It becomes a spatial metaphor insofar it can only be thought of in terms of a timeline. Time thus becomes a product of movement, whereas Deleuze (and Bergson) believe that time needs to be freed, so that movement instead is subordinated to time (“Cinema II” 106).

Time’s liberation from its subordination to movement is accomplished by approaching time in terms of duration according to Bergson and Deleuze. Duration is non-chronological, contrary to the segmented view of time which treats every moment as separate—as quantifiable past, present and future (Deleuze, “Cinema II” 82). Within duration, past, present and future take on more immediate identities inasmuch as the past is always preserved in the present, enduring in the form of memory as well as in difference. As Deleuze writes: “[...] duration is that which differs or that which changes nature, quality, heterogeneity, what differs from itself.” (Deleuze, “Bergson, 1859-1941” 26) What he means is that duration’s persistence over time comes with the constant becoming past of the present. The present constantly differentiates into past and with that, duration comes to continuously differentiate from what it was at a former present, because with each present becoming past, an additional slice of past is preserved in coalescence with the newly arrived present. This self-differentiation Deleuze defines as the perpetual actualisation of the virtual (Deleuze, “Bergsonism” 42-43). This might suggest that the virtual is merely the past and the actual the present—which is true for the latter. However, the virtual extends beyond a mere past that is preserved in the present. But I will elaborate on this shortly.

Nonetheless do we start to see the distinction between actual and virtual here. The actual is the present, that which is real *and* present simultaneously (Deleuze, “Bergsonism” 58). This does not mean however, that the virtual is the actual’s opposite, given that the actual is in fact *a* virtual which is actualised (Deleuze, “Bergsonism” 42-43). For both Bergson and Deleuze the virtual is as real as the actual,<sup>5</sup> because they coexist (Deleuze, “Bergsonism” 29, 59). To understand this, we ought to look at a diagram Bergson uses in *Matter and Memory* (211) of a cone [figure 1] that helps us conceiving of the coexistence of actual and virtual. If we consider point S to be the present, then the subsequent sections A”B”, A’B’, and AB represent the virtual *sheets* of past that are coexistent with it. If the present S is subject X walking into his former classmate Y

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<sup>5</sup> And arguably as present too, with present in the sense that is contrary to absent.

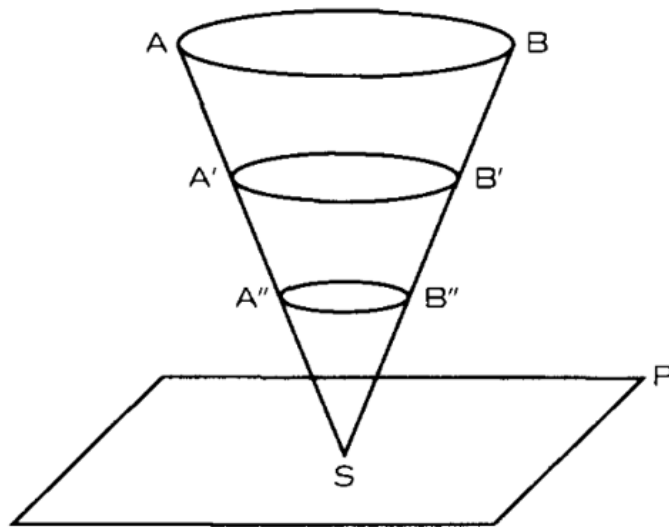


Figure 1

comes to stand for the *pure* past that funnels down to the present. The pure past here refers to the past that extends beyond the mere past that these people share, but its embeddedness in a larger past that comprises the entire world. The point is, that although each section (A''B'', A'B', AB) has moved from present to past—and has hence become virtual—it is preserved and still comes to interfere with a different actualised present (Deleuze, “Bergsonism” 59-60). Moreover, this relation works the other way as well. If we regard A''B'' to be the present, then S is the virtual future attached to, and facilitated by that present. Important to know however is that the interference of the past into the present Bergson and Deleuze write of, does not consist of the mere recollection of a memory. Instead, it pertains to a *world-memory*, a collective past that we are all part of, and which is preserved as such: “Memory is not in us; it is we who move in a Being-memory, a world-memory” (Deleuze, “Cinema II” 98).<sup>6</sup> Past, present, and future thus do not assume separate identities. There is no absolute distinction between them because time at every moment breaks into two heterogeneous directions: from the present towards another future present, and from the present into a past that once was present (Bergson, “Mind—Energy” 130).

This dynamic between actual and virtual can be seen in *Close-Up*'s opening scene, which shows reporter Hossain Farazmand getting into a taxi together with some officers to drive to the Ahankhah house to arrest Sabzian. Farazmand, like Kiarostami, has stumbled upon the case and sees potential for a breaking story in it. Although the goal of this drive—Sabzian's arrest—is only revealed towards the end of the scene, the way the scene is shot presents a temporal tension that brings actual and virtual into contact with one another. As a result of the camera being mounted onto the hood of the taxi, the car's window starts to obscure the character's visibility. Especially

on the street, then X's recollection of Y is informed by a virtual past A''B'' of the week before, where they had also ran into each other. This section A''B'' then is a past that once was present and therefore coexists with S. In turn section A''B'' is informed by section A'B'—another past, let us say that they have been in class with each other since they were four years old—which is informed by AB and so on to the point that AB

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Mullarkey, John. “Deleuze's Kinematic Philosophy.” *Refractions of Reality: Philosophy and the Moving Image*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, pp. 78-109.

in the shots of Farazmand, the light glancing the window causes it to reflect the surroundings the characters are driving through and towards, resulting in a superimposition of images that start to interact with one another. Although Deleuze does not write on car windows, he does—though indirectly—write on reflection, namely in the form of mirrors. He writes: “the mirror-image is virtual in relation to the actual character that the mirror catches, but it is actual in the mirror which now leaves the character with only a virtuality and pushes him back out-of-field” (Deleuze, “Cinema II” 70). In similar fashion, the reflection on the window in *Close-Up* actualises a virtuality, because something that is located outside the frame is pulled within it—the tree branches hanging over the road—that had otherwise remained *out-of-field* and thus virtual.

More specifically, it is the direct future of the car that is being pulled into the frame. Given that the reflection we see in the car’s window shows that which the taxi approaches, as the reflection shows that which is in front of the taxi, the reflection shows the immediate future present—that is, the virtual. The result is that multiple temporalities come to coexist in the same frame, which are each other’s respective past and future. This is a form of montage, because through very specific cinematographic decisions, like the camera being mounted to the car’s hood, two images are overlaid and thereby conjoined. Although this is another form of conjunction than the cut is, what happens here is that the cut is pulled into the image itself. By the superimposition of images, the actual present and the virtual present come to coexist in the same image.

Albeit that these images have nothing to do with the events that unfold in the course of the film, I insist that there is in fact something very significant happening here. As the temporal relation between the superimpositioned images is explicable in both ways—the reflection being the future of the car’s present or the car being the reflection’s past—the image here invites us to think about the ambiguous relationship between actual and virtual. What is happening in this image is that the hierarchy between the planes of meaning is flattened. Whereas we tend to focus on the actual, the reflection in these images acquires a prophetic function insofar it shows a future that is yet to arrive in the actual. The reflection then becomes all the more significant when taken into account that it is only five minutes into the scene that some exteriors are directly shown. The image has flipped, and we understand that what had been important all along, was to have attended to the exteriors that were already present earlier in the scene disguised as a virtual future present. The significance of this image, in relation to what is to come in this film, is that the film here introduces a particular approach to time through its treatment of the actual and virtual that becomes central to the way it will tell its story. We notice that what will happen in the

relation between the reenactments and the registrations is in fact similar to what has happened in this image. Namely, that multiple temporal frames come to exist within the same image.

From this example, we see that virtuality in relation to duration can be defined as a real absence, a preserved past and a contained future that persists in each actualised present. However, the notion of the virtual extends beyond duration too, beyond the lived endurance of an individual being. It refers to a past as such, the entire history of the world and its future history as well. The virtual pertains to the *Whole [tout]*, and thus extends beyond the possible. This is important with regards to the theme of control that will come to play a more significant role further on in this thesis. That is because the virtual pertains to each and every 'pre-individuated' present and thus to *possibility* when nothing is given (Deleuze, "Bergsonism" 97-98). Deleuze gives the example of white light hitting a prism. When the light hits the prism, it is diffracted and actualises into varieties of coloured light: red; blue; green, etc. ("Bergson, 1859-1941" 25). If we regard white light as the Whole, then it contains, as virtualities, every conceivable colour of light within it, waiting to be actualised. Thus, the virtual equals the Whole (Deleuze, "Bergson, 1859-1941" 30): it is the total sum of all possibility. The virtual contains everything insofar it is bounded by nothing. Thus, the virtual extends beyond the possible because the possible is determined by what is already given (Deleuze, "Bergsonism" 97-98), with each given closing off possibilities.<sup>7</sup>

In *Marienbad*, the relation between actual and virtual is seen more explicitly through montage, at least more explicitly than in the example of the window's reflection in *Close-Up*. At one point in the film X and A are standing by the bar in what looks like a ballroom. X, as ever, is talking about the affair they may or may not have had. As he says that one night, he went to her room to meet her, a crosscut sequence commences, showing the woman in her room interrupting the two's conversation. Effectively for the first time in the film, we see *a* past, presumably *the* past, yet certainly the virtual, flashing by in a direct relation to the actual present. Not only does the crosscutting imply simultaneity, thereby realising the coexistence of actual and virtual Deleuze and Bergson so fervently sought after. But the lack of focalisation in this scene makes it impossible to preclude if this past we see is an imaginary mental image belonging to either X or A. Instead, the lack of focalisation seems to imply something else here. It seems to imply that what interferes with the actual image is the *pure* recollection of the past, a slice of world-memory that re-actualises, and which does not belong to either X or A, but to them as such.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> We could then say that virtuality is entangled with control insofar control is about managing the virtual. Rather than intervening when something threatens to go wrong, the aim of control is to eliminate the virtual possibility of something going wrong. Therefore, control aims to eliminate risk.

<sup>8</sup> According to Deleuze pure recollection is the absolute recollection of the past (of the virtual) "in accordance with the actual present of which it is the past, absolutely and simultaneously" ("Cinema II" 79). You can compare it to



## The Crystal-Image

If we now return to the definition Deleuze provides of the crystal-image—namely, the indiscernibility of the actual and *its* virtual image—we come to see that it is in fact time that the crystal-image represents. Important to note is Deleuze’s use of the word ‘*its*’ when referring to the relation between the actual image and the virtual image. However, the notion of duration has clarified this relation. In Bergson’s cone it is A”B” that would be the virtual past that is directly preserved in the actual present S. The crystal-image would thus render indiscernible whether the image is representing A”B” or S, or would make it indiscernible whether A”B” *or* S is actual. Let me unpack the following quote:

“[...] the virtual image in the pure state is defined, not in accordance with a new present in relation to which it would be (relatively) past, but in accordance with the actual present *of which* it is the past, absolutely and simultaneously [...] As pure virtuality, it does not have to be actualized, since it is strictly correlative with the actual image with which it forms the smallest circuit which serves as base or point for all the others. It is the virtual image which corresponds to a particular actual image, instead of being actualized, of having to be actualized in a *different* actual image. It is an actual-virtual circuit on the spot, and not an actualization of the virtual in accordance with a shifting actual. It is a crystal-image, and not an organic image.” (Deleuze, “Cinema II” 79-80)

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involuntary memory in Proust. There is a scene in *Sodom and Gomorrah*, the fourth book of *In Search of Lost Time*, in which the narrator leans over to take off his boots. Right as he touches his boot his “chest swell[s], filled with an unknown, a divine presence” (Proust 172). It is the pure recollection of his grandmother who passed away, presenting herself fully as vividly as possible as if *she were still there*. Although similar to the more famous *Madeleine* passage, I prefer the passage from *Sodom and Gomorrah* in this context because here it seems that what is retrieved is a past as such, rather than the narrator being transported into a past that he directly lived—which would insinuate that the involuntary recollection of the past is still a past belonging to the character himself. Moreover, I am aware that in the novel, this recollection of his grandmother’s face ultimately makes him realise that “she was dead . . . that I had lost her forever,” (Proust 173-174), this realisation only comes after the moment had ceased to be. However, in that moment, there was a perfect recollection of the grandmother. Cf. Deleuze, Gilles. *Proust & Signs*. Translated by Richard Howard, University of Minnesota Press, 2003. ——— Roland Barthes also refers to this passage in *Camera Lucida*, when he has a similar experience with a picture of his mother. I see his words as a poignant description of what pure recollection is. He writes: “[...] just as Proust experienced it one day when, leaning over to take off his boots, there suddenly came to him his grandmother’s true face, “whose living reality I was experiencing for the first time, in an involuntary and complete memory.” [...] I could not express this accord except by an infinite series of adjectives, which I omit, convinced however that this photograph collected all the possible predicates from which my mother’s being was constituted and whose suppression or partial alteration, conversely, had sent me back to these photographs of her which had left me so unsatisfied” (70). We see here that pure recollection extends beyond what one can linguistically pronounce (an infinite series of adjectives, which I omit) and hence does no longer only pertain to a memory that belongs to Barthes only, but to a world-memory preserving the pure past itself in which he has merely taken part.

There is a direct connection between the virtual, and the actual present of which the virtual is the past, or future. The indiscernibility of actual and virtual pertains to their connection, because the oscillation between the two—in cinema oscillation between images usually happens by means of a cut—makes them exchange their identities. Let me provide a filmic example to clarify what I aim to explain. In Krzysztof Zanussi's *The Structure of Crystal* (1969)<sup>9</sup>, there is a moment at which the successful physician Marek asks his friend turned meteorologist Janek the question: “What do you fill your days with?” But before Janek can answer, the image cuts to a sequence of shots of Janek lifting water from a well, him and his wife baking bread, and them performing playful chemistry experiments among other things.<sup>10</sup> Although Marek can be identified within the image as well, as a viewer, we immediately recognise this montage as Janek's answer to Marek's question. This scene puts forth crystal-images because the relation between these images is that the sequence is the virtual image corresponding with the actual image of the question. That is, the sequence showing Janek going about his day is indicative of both the days he has spent (his past) and the days he will spend (his future). Because there is a temporal ambiguity in these shots—as they pertain to both his past as well as his future (as indicated by Marek's presence), the relation between Marek's question and the sequence continuously exchange identities. Their relation can be interpreted from both directions, as the chronological order between the images is not disclosed, because we cannot certainly determine whether the sequence is either past or future in relation to the question. All we know is that this sequence's relation to the question is that between actual and virtual, where their identities are dependent on whether you consider the question or sequence to be actual. The ambiguity as to whether the sequence is past or future in relation to Marek's question is what distinguishes this scene from the example of the cross-cut sequence in *Marienbad*. There, it was clear that the images, that interrupted the conversation between X and A, were that of a past—presumably last year—that is attached to the present regardless of whether it is true or not. Nonetheless, both ways of ordering images are closer to the durational approach to time, as it indicates the coexistence of past, present, and future, of the actual and the virtual. We see here in this scene that although actual and virtual remain distinct, their direct relation makes them continually start “running behind each other and referring back to each other around a point of indiscernibility” (Deleuze, “Cinema II” 69).

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<sup>9</sup> In the chapter on the crystal-image, Deleuze also refers to this film.

<sup>10</sup> This scene can be watched with the following URL between 19:42 – 20:52:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITNt8GEjJ4c>.

## The Relationality of the Crystal-Image

The example from *The Structure of Crystal* demonstrates how montage plays an important role in the emergence of the crystal-image. Whereas the cut can be defined as a severance—the actual image being severed from its subsequent actualisation—it is also a mode of conjunction, an ideogram producing meaning *in between* two images (Eisenstein 28-44).<sup>11</sup> Hence, montage conjoins the actual and *its* virtual image by means of the cut. In the crystal-images I will discuss, they come about in a strictly relational manner: multiple separate images enter a relation that turns them crystal-images, meaning it is the image's embeddedness in a series of other images that facilitates the emergence of the crystal-image. And given that montage is the means by which the organisation of images proceeds, it is the cinematographic act—montage—that facilitates the crystal-image.

Moreover, the retroactivity I hinted towards earlier is foregrounded here, as the conjoining of multiple images through the cinematographic act is something temporal. That is, the conjoining of multiple images unfolds over a temporal frame. There is thus a performative function to each image as their presence in relation to the other images performs a function with regards to the status of those images. Hence, not only does it require duration to unfold, but it also makes that the crystal-image can only be identified retroactively, or *nachträglich*.<sup>12</sup> The temporal relations contained in the dynamics of the crystal-image are thus reaffirmed by the retroactivity that is the result of montage, because the duration required for the conjunction of images to occur comes to mimic the temporality that is contained in the crystal-image.

## Shattering Space

In light of the crystal-image and its forthcoming through montage—more specifically the irrational cut—*Marienbad* presents us a dynamic between actual and virtual that is nothing but dazzling. What we see in this film, is an exploration of the virtual (past) in relation to the actual

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<sup>11</sup> In “The Cinematic Principle and the Ideogram,” Eisenstein comes up with a theory of montage that localises the emergence of meaning in between images. In other words, within the act of montage. To demonstrate this, Eisenstein extensively refers to Japanese *haikus*, of which he argues they are in fact cinematic by nature because they operate by conjoining multiple images: “[...] a dog + a mouth = “to bark”; a mouth + a child = “to scream”; a mouth + a bird = “to sing”; a knife + a heart = “sorrow,” and so on. But this is-montage!” (30). The principle is that an additional concept emerges from the conjunction of two different concepts, but which emerges *in the plus sign*.

<sup>12</sup> *Nachträglichkeit*, usually translated as ‘Afterwardsness,’ is a concept by Sigmund Freud to indicate the belated, or retroactive ability to understand the meaning of certain events. The clearest example is trauma, where it is only after the trauma has been suffered that it can be understood or even realised that the trauma has been suffered. Cf. Freud, Sigmund. “From the History of an Infantile Neurosis [The ‘Wolfman’].” *The Penguin Freud Reader*, edited by Adam Phillips, translated by Louise Adey Huish, Penguin Books, 2006, pp. 196-309.

(present) that makes way for other virtualities (future)—that is, the splitting of the present into two heterogeneous directions (Deleuze, “Cinema II” 81).<sup>13</sup> Similar to *Close-Up*, the cut starts to infect the images in *Marienbad*, thereby diffusing the images’ status. But additionally, in *Marienbad* the image starts to affect the cut as well. As noted, there is a lack of focalisation in the majority of *Marienbad*’s scenes, which causes much of its alienating effect. Rarely does the image reside with the same character for multiple shots. It therefore becomes difficult to situate the rapid succession of (supposed) flashbacks we are presented with. We can never be absolutely sure whether it is a memory we are looking at—which would make the image the product of a character’s focalisation—whether it is a virtual past (world-memory), or a pure virtuality; that is, a virtual that is not immediately tied to the film’s actual present.

Let me indicate a number of instances where the crystal-image comes about, starting with the film’s opening scene, where we are shown the corridors and spaces of the hotel. These corridors remain empty however, the people are missing. Although it feels useless to look at a scene where effectively nothing happens, it is precisely the absence that is significant, and which makes the opening strangely similar to that of *Close-Up*. In *Close-Up*, the reflection in the car’s window announces an inversion of the hierarchy of the images, just like in this case. This scene is not intended as an establishing shot to introduce the spaces of the hotel—its spatial relations remain unknown throughout the film—but the absence that looms over these spaces points to virtuality itself. Similar to the white light, the hotel is the virtual containing the Whole yet to be actualised. In that sense it is interesting what Deleuze writes as well about this film that “the entire Marienbad hotel is a pure crystal” (“Cinema II” 76). What he means is that it is time itself we encounter through the corridors of the hotel, which is peculiar given that he opposes the rendering of time in spatial dimensions. For Deleuze, time is rendered spatially insofar an *organic description* is substituted for a *crystalline description* (Deleuze, “Cinema II” 126). The difference between the two is that an organic description “assumes the independence of its object” (Deleuze, “Cinema II” 126), whereas the other “stands for its object, replaces it, both creates and erases it” (Deleuze, “Cinema II” 126). In other words, whereas an organic description captures a *pre-existent* reality, merely gazes upon it, a crystalline description is complicit to the production of that reality.<sup>14</sup> These two descriptions can be clarified in accordance with their approach to time.

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. Bergson, Henri. *Mind—Energy*, translated by H. Wildon Carr, Macmillan, 1920, pp. 130.

<sup>14</sup> Deleuze gives the example of Ingrid Bergman’s character in Rossellini’s *Europa ’51*, where in one scene she walks past a factory and exclaims: “I thought I was seeing convicts”—an exclaim Harun Farocki later used as the title of one of his films as a reference to Deleuze. Deleuze’s point is that this scene gives a crystalline description. The image shows what Bergman’s character sees. It is not that the factory reminds her of a prison, she literally sees one. This scene provides a crystalline description because it makes us see reality in a way we have not hitherto. Such descriptions are, according to Deleuze, characteristic of the cinema of the time-image (“Cinema II” 2). As Deleuze writes: “This is a cinema of the seer and no longer of the agent [*de voyant, non plus d’actant*]” (“Cinema II” 2).

The organic description shows time as being subordinated to movement, that is, as segmented intervals. A crystalline description meanwhile frees time and thereby subordinates movement to it, in other words, it shows duration. Hence, it is immediately understood that the crystalline regime is inseparably connected to the crystal-image. Moreover, a crucial point is that the crystalline regime “will fracture the complementarity of a lived hodological space and a represented Euclidean space” (Deleuze, “Cinema II” 128). That is, the combination of a cognitive orientation of space (hodological) and mathematically coordinated space (Euclidean) that makes it calculable. For Deleuze, the crystalline regime shatters space as we understand it. It deprives it of the characteristics we ascribe to it and makes it a function of time, thereby “losing in turn the legal connections and laws of extremum which governed it [space]” (Deleuze, “Cinema II” 129). This last quote is crucial, as it not only ascribes an epistemological quality to spatiality that is lost with the crystalline regime—and thus the crystal-image—but Deleuze here also foregrounds a legal function of space that is problematised with the crystal-image that will be of importance in chapter three when I will write about control. With regards to the hotel itself being a crystal, we understand that the hotel’s empty spaces are virtuality itself; the virtual Whole; the white light before hitting the prism; a topology of a virtual world-memory that is yet to be actualised.

The frequent use of mirror-images affirm the shattering of space to make it crystalline. As discussed in the context of *Close-Up*, the mirror-image pulls the virtual out-of-field into the image and actualises it. There is a particular scene in which the man and the woman seem to look directly into the past. From a garden bench they are gazing into the out-of-field while talking about an episode of their supposed affair. The following image shows a bedroom, suggesting it was the bedroom that they were looking at. The very next shot does exactly the same. X talks about something that had occurred in A’s bedroom while they are gazing out-of-field. The following shot shows the bedroom again implying it was that scene that they were looking at. This suggests that the hotel (a crystal) is in fact a topology of time in which the common conception of space is shattered and substituted by time to make it a rendering of coexistent actuals and virtuals. However, the realisation that the hotel is in fact a crystal only arrives retroactively. Only once the opening scene has entered into relations with the other images, one is to understand the virtuality that is at hand here.

This point about the shattering of space, which foregrounds time as the most important focal point is then reflected in the scenes I indicated at the start of this chapter. The suspicion that starts to surround every cut in *Marienbad* is due to this shattering. After all, if space no longer works like we understand it to be, then why should time do? I argued that by means of the

irrational cut, the temporal coordinates between images were diffused. Whereas speaking of temporal coordinates adheres to the spatialisation of time, the shattering of hodological-Euclidean space contributes to the liberation of time that occurs in the crystal-image. Furthermore, we encounter this in the aforementioned scene, in which every cut in the shot-reverse shot sequence seems to plunge us into a different time, becomes more and more plausible through this reading. It means that every cut starts to operate on itself, as it is no longer bounded by an orientation of hodological space. Instead, with every cut we are transported across time, into a different past, a different present, which corresponds with a different memory. Moreover, they crystallise to the point where actual and virtual become so intertwined, that their distinctness recedes into the background.

### ***Close-Up's Crystals***

Likewise, the ambiguous relation between the reenactments and the registrations in *Close-Up* can retroactively be explained with help of the crystal-image. The reenactments present us crystals because the actual and the virtual coalesce insofar the past and the present coincide as do the present and its future present. In *Close-Up*, the virtual re-actualises, because on the one hand, the past is made present once more, while on the other hand the present is re-actualised in the future—that is, the moment of the reenactments. In doing so, it makes everyone that was part of that virtuality complicit in its re-actualisation. The crystals of the reenactments then come to infect the registrations with their transmittance through montage.

Similarly, the reflections in the taxi's window in the opening scene become crystals. Because the reflection shows us the immediate future of that which the taxi is approaching, the image shown in the reflection is also the actual of which the scene in the car is its immediate virtual past. Hence, the reflection on the window in *Close-Up* actualises a virtuality—the tree branches hanging over the road—in the image that had otherwise remained *out-of-field* and thus virtual. The result is that through reflection, the actual and the virtual become diffuse and coexist within the same image.

Kiarostami's cinema has more frequently been linked to the crystal-image. For instance, by Shohini Chaudhuri and Howard Finn, who refer to the use of the crystal-image in Kiarostami's films as the *open image*, designating a particularly ambiguous image (Chaudhuri and Finn 52-55). Although Chaudhuri and Finn understand the crystal-image in a more political

dimension (56-57)<sup>15</sup>, to which I will return in the third chapter, Richard Rushton points out about the open image that it is “a crystal-image which foregrounds its ambiguity and lack of resolution” (154). In the case of *Close-Up*, this is exactly what the crystal-image foregrounds, an ambiguity towards time that makes it diffuse what can be concluded from these images with certainty. With regards to the temporal frames that start to coexist through montage—be it in the image itself or between them—it makes it impossible to disclose the relations the film establishes. As it comes to the reenactments and the registrations, *Close-Up*’s crystals become double. First, they emerge by grace of the nature of the reenactments, that provide a re-actualisation of the virtual by its coincidence of two separate temporalities. Additionally, they emerge through the relation between the reconstructions and the registrations that is established through montage. Here, they form a circuit where the images become virtual in relation to the other’s actuality. Moreover, in the registrations, the crystallisation of actual and virtual moves beyond the conception put forth by Deleuze, where actual and virtual are indiscernible, yet remain distinct (“Cinema II” 104). In the registrations however, the double function of the crystal coalesces and produces crystals that—like the ones in *Marienbad*—are no longer distinct, but where actual and virtual become one and the same. Whereas the reenactments can never attain the status of registration, the registration inhabits an ambiguous position where it is both a registration and a reenactment simultaneously. This means we can no longer indicate a distinction between actual and virtual, because the image is no longer made up of actual and virtual components, but instead it fully coincides with the both of them. Hence, the actual and virtual no longer coexist, nor do they merely coalesce in the registrations, but they wholly coincide, making for a new type of crystal, a crystal that is open. The claim that these films provide crystal-images that do more than what Deleuze points out, will be substantiated in the following chapter when I will introduce the concept of *noise* and *impossibility* to analyse *Close-Up* and *L’Année dernière à Marienbad* with respectively.

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<sup>15</sup> For Chaudhuri and Finn, the ambiguity of Iranian cinema’s open images is a means of circumventing the censorship apparatus of the Iranian state. Censorship circumvents censorship insofar it includes a “plurality of truth” (57), thereby making it susceptible to a reading that is conform to the censorship guidelines. This will be interesting with regards to control in chapter three, because the relation between actual and virtual is deployed here as a means of resisting an authoritative intervention—a desire to *control* the virtual potentialities of such films by the Iranian government.

## Chapter II: Noise and Impossibility

This is a world without a past, a world which is self-sufficient at every moment and which obliterates itself as it proceeds.

— ALAIN ROBBE-GRILLET,  
“For a New Novel.”

The notion of the crystal-image has pointed to the complexity of the interplay between actual and virtual at work in both *Close-Up* and *L'Année dernière à Marienbad*. While I posited montage as essential for the formation of both film's crystals, there are nonetheless effects and instances in both films that are unaccounted for when approached merely through the lens of montage. However, these effects and instances, I will argue, do contribute to the profundity of the crystals in both films. To unveil them, I will centralise two concepts in this chapter: *noise*, which I will approach through authors such as Michel Serres, Niall Martin, and Jacques Attali; and *(in)compossibility*, a concept developed by Gottfried Leibniz, which Deleuze also refers to in *Cinema II* when discussing the *false* (101; 130-131). I will use these notions to get a firmer grasp on the complex set of mutual relations between multiple images and within distinct images of both *Close-Up* and *Marienbad*, as these relations contribute to the overall effect of the crystal-image. The analysis through the concept of *noise* will have a slight tendency in focus towards *Close-Up*, while the analysis through *(in)compossibility* will focus more on *Marienbad*. However, I will ultimately argue that these two notions are not as distinct as they might initially seem. Through the overarching concept of complementarity, their relation to virtuality will be approached. It will foreground their resemblances and conversely, their relevance as an addition to the observations that followed from the crystal-image in the previous chapter.

### Noise and the Limits of Representation in *Close-Up*

Besides montage, a great deal of *Close-Up*'s crystals is due to its documentary aesthetics. As I have noted in the previous chapter, *Close-Up* plays with certain tropes and stylistic devices that are characteristic of the documentary genre in its interplay between reconstruction and registration. This 'aesthetic play' contributes to the diffusion of fact and fiction, and, as argued, to the diffusion of the actual and the virtual.



The premise of the film already implies its documentary character, as it becomes clear that Kiarostami had read about Sabzian's impersonation of Makhmalbaf and his subsequent arrest, thus framing the film itself as a contingency that Kiarostami happened to stumble upon. The film is then setup as both a documentation of the trial as well as an investigation of *what happened*.

The film employs documentary aesthetics in the way it presents the alleged court room registrations. In these scenes there are less cuts, and most of the shots are static, implying that the circumstances in which the shots are taken are more bounded than those of the reenactments. This is true because if these scenes, as they imply, are shot inside the courtroom, then it means that Kiarostami and his crew ought to abide to the conditions set by the judge and therefore ought to remain passive and seated in one and the same position. Moreover, these shots imply that they are authentic through the change of resolution that occurs within the courtroom *registrations*. These scenes have a lower resolution than the reconstructions, which allegedly is the result of Kiarostami being unable to bring in all sorts of fancy film equipment into a live trial. Although the use of such stylistic devices distinguishes these scenes from the reconstructions, their employment does not guarantee that such scenes are not also reconstructions—as I have tried to point out in the previous chapter.

However, *Close-Up*'s documentary aesthetics are only characteristic of the registrations. The reenactments, besides their higher resolution, make use of different stylistic devices that depart from the registrations' documentary aesthetics. For instance, the camera's positioning in the reenactments gives away that there is no longer a 'spontaneity' to the camera's actions—I pointed this out in the previous chapter. Although there is continuity between the shot showing Farazmand and the officers getting in the taxi and the subsequent shot of them in it, there is however a discontinuity in perspectives. Here the immediacy, that characterises the aesthetics of documentary filmmaking, is broken, as the camera's position is no longer physically bounded to an agent who is present in the scene, in other words, a cameraman. Instead, moments like these reveal that we are dealing with a staged scene, a sequence of (reenacted) fiction, where the camera 'predates' the event instead of experiencing them as they occur.

This invokes Judith Butler's idea that cameras produce the events that they capture, meaning the camera is complicit in the occurrence of the event before it captures it (958). They write about embedded reporting, a form of war journalism that is granted access to capture such conflicts from up close, usually while being under the protection of a party involved in the conflict (Butler 951-952). Where war journalism is often thought to be 'spontaneous,' Butler argues that in such cases the camera in fact *predates* the event, meaning it is already present before it occurs. This then contributes to the production of the event insofar as the camera decides the

moment it captures, thereby becoming responsible for the visibility, and commemoration of the event (958-959). Hence, the camera “becomes crucial to its production, its legibility, its illegibility, and its very status as reality” (Butler 958). Although the context is very different with *Close-Up*, the camera techniques in *Close-Up*'s reenactments have a similar tendency in the sense that the camera's positions give away that the scenes are staged, and that the camera is thus complicit to the scene.

The complex dynamics between fiction- and documentary aesthetics that are displayed in *Close-Up*, reach their epitome in the final scene, where Kiarostami has seemingly orchestrated a meeting between Sabzian and the real Makhmalbaf. Filmed from a distance, it shows Sabzian breaking into tears at the sight of Makhmalbaf, knowing he met his hero. Then, they jump on a motorcycle and buy some flowers, and proceed to drive to the Ahankhah house for Sabzian to apologise to them once more. This particular scene brings all the film's layers together in an eight-minute sequence that provides the sharpest crystal of the entire film. To understand what is at stake, I would like to refer to Hamid Dabashi's description of the layers *Close-Up* builds up. He writes:

The spectator is thus put in the bizarrest of situations, a succession of fact and fantasy, in which one knows one is watching a fiction (Kiarostami's *Close-Up*) that is based on fact (Sabzian's real story) that is based on fiction (Sabzian pretending to be Makhmalbaf) that is based on fact (Makhmalbaf as a leading Iranian filmmaker) that is based on fiction (Makhmalbaf making fictional stories in film) that is based on fact (the reality Makhmalbaf transforms into fiction). (67)

Although I do not agree with Dabashi's claim that “one knows one is watching a fiction,” this quote is indicative of the complex interaction of all *Close-Up*'s layers. This scene adds one more layer to those mentioned by Dabashi, namely that the motorcycle ride is another factual fiction that was already thought of by Sabzian as an idea for a potential film he wanted to make with the Ahankhah's.<sup>16</sup>

The scene is captured in documentary style, with Kiarostami and his crew filming from a distance, chasing the two by car, and talking over the scene, stating that they only have one chance to capture the shot properly. By making Makhmalbaf and Sabzian perform the scene together, all the film's factual and fictional layers are brought together. However, the scene not

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<sup>16</sup> This is mentioned by one of the Ahankhah's during the trial. He says that Sabzian—while posing as Makhmalbaf—had an idea of doing a film where two people ride a motorcycle while one has forgotten his wallet.

only actualises the virtual idea that Sabzian had in mind, but it also simultaneously retains its virtuality by the ambiguous character it possesses. Is what we are watching real, as the documentary style suggests? Or is it staged? Is the scene in fact a production led by Sabzian to grant him his film dream? We do not know. It is impossible to determine whether the film here fictionalises reality, or that it realises fiction, resulting in a crystal where it is no longer possible to identify to what virtual this scene is its actual or to what actual it is its virtual.

Furthermore, there is another peculiar aspect to this scene. Throughout the scene, the sound equipment, which is very old according to Kiarostami and his crew, keeps failing. The sound works on and off until at one point, when Makhmalbaf and Sabzian are on the motorcycle, the faltering sound is replaced by a piece of music. It is not only the first time that there is music in this film, but also the first time that an extradiegetic *message* is transmitted. The music is placed there by Kiarostami *after* the image was captured, why? To make up for the faltering sound? Maybe. To emphasise the emotional tension of this particular scene? Probably, but we cannot be certain. In this scene, the director assumes a function different from the one he had up until that point. Although Kiarostami has been present the entire film—although mostly out-of-field—the nature of his presence changes at this point. Contrary to the rest of film, where we can see and hear Kiarostami's directing being captured within the film's diegesis, here his directing becomes extradiegetic. This points us at a something unconventional *Close-Up* was doing all along. Normally, the director almost always positions himself extradiegetic, rarely making himself visible. In *Close-Up* however, this is inversed, as Kiarostami can be seen or heard in many of the film's scenes. It is therefore that this moment is extra conspicuous, because although the extradiegetic position is in fact a very common position to take for a director, here it breaks with the pattern the film set up. Because of this, his motivations for the insertion of music remain unknown precisely because he no longer assumes a referential position within the film.

This stylistic choice is peculiar in more than one aspect. Although within the complex web of ambiguous and crystal intricacies that *Close-Up* presents, it is the clearest interpellative message the film transmits onto its spectator—extradiegetic already implies an intentionality addressed at those gazing upon this diegetic world. Within the relation the film sets up between the whole and its parts, this message presents itself as an interruption of the diegetic world. Conventionally speaking, this moment would apply as the clearest message the film sends, as it is most explicitly aimed at the spectator. In this film however, it presents itself as *noise*. It is noise insofar it interrupts the structure, or the system, the film had built up until then. It halts this structure, disbands it. Noise thus becomes a relational concept, dependent on which perspective you approach it from.

The application of the concept of noise to this particular scene of *Close-Up* raises questions about what is meant with noise, as it is generally associated with static, clamour, racket, in other words, unpleasant sounds that contrast refined pieces of for instance music. However, I would like to draw attention to a definition of noise that does not foreground its repulsive sensation, but instead its function as a relational and structuring concept.

The first connotation of noise pertains to sound. In his book *Noise: the Political Economy of Music*, Jacques Attali comes up with a conception of noise as inherent and complementary to our understanding of music (5). For him, it is noise that structures music, as it provides the categorical identity on the basis of which its distinction from music can be made (19). The presupposition here is that noise is that which is external to music, but thereby complementary to its coming into being. Moreover, Attali comes up with a rather original idea of noise in which it is also the progressive force in the development of music. He argues that noise can gradually enter the codes that structure music and thereby in the long run alter these very structures. Each variation to a fixed structure in that sense allows some noise to enter the structure, and once this is repeated enough it become subsumed by this very structure. Hence, it is noise that heralds change.

Before I continue, I want to draw attention to this notion of complementarity, as it is central to this discussion of noise, and conversely, its appraisal. Moreover, it is complementarity that is the overarching theme in this chapter, and which I aim to indicate as an attribute of the crystal-image that will be of importance in the remainder of this thesis. The notion was originally developed by Niels Bohr to designate “the features that are mutually exclusive but equally necessary for a comprehensive, complete, description and analysis of all quantum processes” (Plotnitsky 5). However, perhaps it is easier to explain what Jacques Derrida does with it, although it is similar to Bohr’s understanding. Derrida wanted to circumvent the Hegelian dialectical thinking that had become prominent in continental philosophy—in for example the Frankfurt School, psychoanalysis (Lacan), and through Kojève and Hyppolite in France.<sup>17</sup> Whereas in dialectics the two conditioning forces necessarily have to produce a third, Derrida argued that this does not have to be the case with complementarity. The presence-absence tension Derrida frequently employs, can be explained in these terms, with presence being distinct from absence, whereas its possibility is simultaneously facilitated by absence. Complementarity

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<sup>17</sup> Alexandre Kojève and Jean Hyppolite were the first to introduce Hegelian thought into France. Between 1933 and 1939, Kojève gave a series of seminars on Hegel that, retroactively, can be regarded a defining moment in the history of French philosophy. Among those following the seminars were Jacques Lacan, Georges Bataille, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Speculations concerning the importance of these seminars go as far as to say that the rise of poststructuralism in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in France would not have been possible, were it not for Kojève (Kendall 8).

frequently takes on a hierarchical structure, where something that is valued is complemented by something exterior to it, and which is often regarded undesirable.<sup>18</sup> Similarly noise, although distinct from information and even detrimental to it, complements information insofar it performs a facilitating function to it.

A productive understanding of the concept of noise, which Attali advocates, is continued in Michel Serres' *The Parasite*. Serres pulls the notion of noise out of the context of music and situates it in the sphere of information, where he conceives of a notion of noise that is informed by a "parasitic chain" (4). Serres opens with a parable of a country rat being invited by a city rat to feast off the leftovers of a dinner of a tax farmer. The rats, because they did not produce anything, parasite off the tax farmer, who in turn is a parasite of those he collects taxes from and who produced his food. But then, while the rats are enjoying their feast, Serres writes: "The two companions scurry off when they hear a noise at the door. It was only a noise, but it was also a message, a bit of information producing panic: an interruption, a corruption, a rupture of information. Was the noise really a message? Wasn't it, rather, static, a parasite? A parasite who has the last word, who produces disorder and who generates a different order" (3). In the chain of parasites—the country rat on the city rat, the city rat on the tax farmer, the tax farmer on the one who produces, and the one who produces on the land itself—Serres argues it is in fact the noise, situated at the end of the chain, that has the capacity to disrupt, and to intercept (11). Noise is parasitic itself for Serres, as it performs this similar function as the parasite.<sup>19</sup> Although Serres conceives this parasitic chain as a series of "one-way relations" (5), his hypothesis is that these one-way relations eventually fold back onto themselves, forming a topology of parasitic relations that can be regarded a system. But because noise is interruptive to this system, noise can give rise to a new system, an interruption that consolidates itself into the order it interrupts (Serres 14)—which resonates with Attali's model in which noise is the progressive force of music. Noise threatens order and is that which "leads me to other actions," (Serres 8), as with the rats in the parable.

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<sup>18</sup> In his conception of complementarity, Derrida was heavily inspired by Georges Bataille and his conception of general economy. He distinguishes general economy from the field of economics—which he calls 'restricted economy' (25). He argues that general economy is characterised by an economy dominated by excessive behaviour, that is, the squandering of wealth is in fact necessary and facilitating to ensure the productive functioning of an economy. Although it is deemed undesirable, Bataille problematises our conception of what we find repulsive by arguing it is in fact complementary to our society. Cf. Derrida, Jacques. "From Restricted to General Economy: A Hegelianism Without Reserve." *Writing and Difference*. Translated by Alan Bass, Routledge, 2010, pp. 317–350. Cf. Plotnitsky, Arkady. "General Economy I: Bataille." and "General Economy 2: Derrida." *Complementarity: Anti-Epistemology after Bohr and Derrida*. Duke University Press, 1994, pp. 17-36; 37-64.

<sup>19</sup> Note that 'parasite' has an additional meaning in French: (1) a biological sense and (2) a social sense, but it also means (3) static (Serres 8), a meaning that is not contained in the English word parasite.

But a more poignant analysis of noise comes from Niall Martin, who, building on Serres, applies such conceptions of noise to film. In his analysis of Nick Broomfield's *Ghosts* (2006)—a documentary about the Morecambe Bay cockling disaster, where 23 undocumented Chinese nationals drowned (Martin 244)—Martin includes the concept of noise to discuss the visibility of precarious labour through mediated accounts. I will return to this notion of precarity in the next chapter. He argues that through the deployment of similar documentary aesthetics as *Close-Up*, *Ghosts* reveals the precarity of labour by allowing noise into the technological apparatus that the film itself is composed of (Martin 248). Martin foregrounds a form of diegetic noise in *Ghosts* that pertains to *Close-Up* as well, namely the noise which marks the limits of representation (247). Although documentary aesthetics lay claim on a sense of naturalism, it is noise produced by those very aesthetics that makes this claim ultimately fail according to Martin (252). In other words, noise “marks the limits of representation by reminding us of the presence of the medium” (Martin 247). In *Ghosts*, it is the splashing of water on the camera's lens that highlights this limit for Martin, as it points to the material of glass as both a transparent, yet separating material (257-258). This is the same in *Close-Up*, in the courtroom scene where the resolution of the image is lower, with the grainy footage reminding the spectator of the intermediary between him and the captured reality. Or in the scooter scene, where the music is inserted in an attempt to bridge the gap between the limit of representation and the questions *Close-Up* aims to answer: what happened? why did Sabzian do what he did?

Noise thus takes on a complementary function with regards to music; information; and reality. It bears a structuring function but, if we look closely, it also possesses a strictly relational character. Noise structures that which is valued and is itself structured in return. In other words, the identity of noise is determined by that to which it has a structuring function, meaning that it becomes dependent on what is considered to be dependent on it. Looking back at the message Kiarostami sent in the scooter scene, it becomes clear that the noisy character of the music in this scene is structured by the diegetic nature of all the other messages in the film. Similarly, we could also say that the ambiguity of the film's documentary aesthetics is noisy to the music, which then becomes the clearest message the film contains. Hence, it is a matter of perspective from which the identity of noise is determined. The scene invites us to think about the relations this film sets up, similar to what I argued in the previous chapter, where the perpetual reflection in the taxi's window in *Close-Up*'s opening scene marked an inversion of the hierarchy between different planes of meaning. This relation also takes up a similar one to noise and that which it is attached to. *Close-Up* invites us to rethink the meaning we give to noise, highlighting the relational and complementary character of this concept in general.

There is another particular moment in *Close-Up* where the complementarity of noise is emphasised. Once Farazmand and the officers reach the Ahankhah house, first Farazmand and later the officers go into the house. The camera, however, remains outside the house's premises with the taxi driver. Not only does the event that is significant, namely Sabzian's arrest, remain out-of-field and thus virtual, but the action comes to a halt altogether. While the taxi driver is waiting, he kicks an empty spray can down the hill and the camera tends by this moment unnecessarily long. This image, showing the neighbourhood surrounding the Ahankhah house as the can rolls down the hill, is once again a crystal-image.<sup>20</sup> There is something peculiar about this shot that gives rise to a strange tension. On the one hand, its long duration invokes a feeling of boredom, as it is unclear why we are looking at this for so long. While on the other hand, there is something truly spectacular about this shot. Hamid Dabashi writes about such moments in Kiarostami's cinema. For him, they show "an aesthetics of the real, a countermetaphysics of the factual. It is there to filter the world and thus strip it of all its cultures, narrativities, authorities, and ideologies" (Dabashi 54). In other words, the world here is deprived of certain characteristics that make it appear different from the way in which we would normally perceive it. It is, as discussed in the previous chapter, a crystalline description. There is a crystal element to this shot as the mere presence of the world starts pointing to a virtual world beyond the film itself. What we see here is duration that presents itself as noise. That is, the action of the film completely comes to a halt, thereby seeming to interrupt. Yet, in just showing the endurance of the world "through the succession of changing states" (Deleuze, "Cinema II" 17), we get a glimpse of the necessary conditions that facilitate the taking place of the film itself. This is emphasised even more because of the documentary aesthetics that *Close-Up* deploys, thus explicitly situating the film *in* reality. This shot is significant because it, through the noisiness of the crystal-image, points at the world's complementarity to the film's taking place. Hence, the film here invites us to think about the complementary function of noise, insofar its foregrounding points at the conditions that facilitate the film's occurrence.

Thus, we see here that through the complementary character of noise, we are able to address the relation that actual and virtual in the crystal-image take on as well. Similar to noise, their indiscernibility rests on a distribution of identities that structure each other, and that

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<sup>20</sup> Moreover, it is also a characteristic image for a broader corpus of Iranian cinema. In the opening of Jafar Panahi's *The White Balloon* (1995), we similarly see a busy Tehran market, filled with people and objects interacting. However, for a long time, it is unclear who or what the object of focus is. Only at the end of the shot, the camera starts to follow one of the people who turns out to be the protagonist. Additionally, Panahi is often considered to be Kiarostami's 'stylistic heir.' Besides the fact that Panahi exhibits a continuation of the themes of Kiarostami's films, Panahi also was Kiarostami's assistant director for *Through the Olive Trees* (1994), the third instalment of the 'Koker Trilogy.'

conversely, adapt accordingly to the perspectives taken on in their relation. The power of the crystal-images in *Close-Up*—and as I will demonstrate further on in *Marienbad* as well—resides in the interruptive, quality they possess. There is a noisiness to the crystal-image that prevents us from drawing any sort of definitive conclusion from it. Through this, it becomes counter-informative, a function that I will foreground in the following chapter where I will argue that the counter-informative quality of the crystal-image's noisiness allows it to interrupt the tendencies of the systems of control.

### **Exceeding the Possible: The Impossible Worlds of *L'Année dernière à Marienbad***

The discussion of noise that has formed the common thread through this chapter hitherto, is not present to the same extent in *Marienbad*. Although noise in *Close-Up* is primarily informed by the documentary aesthetics it deploys, such aesthetics are absent in *Marienbad*. Nonetheless, there are undoubtedly noisy components to *Marienbad*, but they are manifested differently.

I concluded from the previous chapter that in *Marienbad*, actual and virtual continue to chase after each other in such a way that their distinction dissolves. This is partly due to montage, as the images are ordered in such a way that there is no longer any reference point as to what the underlying relation between the multiple images is. The actual with which the film starts—that is, the man asking the woman whether she remembers him or not—is at first thought to be a point of reference from which the spectator can start to 'puzzle' with all the other images the film presents us. As the film progresses however, the dazzling interplay of images covers the actual, invests it with its virtual counterpart so that this original reference point is lost and impossible to retrace. For instance, as the man has continuously talked us through multiple scenarios of what has occurred the year before, there is never a moment where the woman and the man collectively reflect on these scenarios in the actual we departed from. At least, there is no moment in which they do so where image and sound are synchronised. In other words, we never arrive back in the actual, but instead the actual and all the virtual scenarios the man has told start to intermingle, and this initial actual is scattered somewhere across the virtual.

Moreover, not all these scenarios align. There is a moment where the woman is shot dead and another where the man dies. We might recognise this as the end of the story in which the chronological order is altered, but the impossibility of these moments is that at the same time, the images of their deaths are narrated by the 'other.' And besides, this narration is in fact addressed at the character who can be seen dying within the image. In other words, there is an impossibility about such moments, an irresolvable contradiction. But there are other moments as well that are



contradictive, like the man's descriptions of the woman's room that alter from time to time, or which are contradicted by the woman. For instance, he describes her room as having a mirror over a fireplace, but whereas the woman says that this was not the case, the later scene which depicts the story shows the mirror over the fireplace as an objective quality of the room. Something is not right, the room either has a mirror over a fireplace or it has not, and if it has, it is either her room or it is not, but it cannot be both.

The same goes for the scene where the man is recounting them discussing their escape plan. As he progresses, he keeps remembering new details that pop up in his memory as he speaks. The scene takes place in the garden initially, at the place where the photograph the man claims to have taken, was made. This photograph is important, because as it stands, it is the only indexical proof of a certain past actual in which the two were in *Marienbad*. The man gives the woman the photograph, which implies that his possession of it is because he took it. The images we see in this scene correspond to the voice-over telling what has happened, but, as he progresses, he realises his memory is false. "No, you weren't laughing," after which we see a different version of the same interaction where she is not laughing but the same scene plays out. "That's not it. Yes, we were in your room," the man says. As he has allegedly regained this time that was lost in his memory, the image keeps us showing them in the garden. Thus, the image is severed from the narration. This is peculiar, because it not only implies that what *truly happened* remains out of sight, it thereby also implies that the image is, by definition, false. It seems to show something different, something that does not correspond with the scenario that supposedly took place. And that is if it took place at all of course. There are two ways of looking at such scenes. Firstly, we might conclude that the film is lying to us by showing us images that are *false*, causing the spectator to be suspicious.<sup>21</sup> This would be the non-Deleuzian way of approaching this film however, as it would only account for the *true* actual. In such an approach, the virtual would only have value if it would be a de-actualised virtual, implying a linear relation between these temporal 'points.' Nevertheless, such an approach would not attribute any value to virtuality as such, in which an unactualised virtual could also be meaningful. As Deleuze notes the characters in *Marienbad* "correspond to the three different presents, but in such a way as to 'complicate' the inexplicable instead of throwing light on it" ("Cinema II" 101). What he means is not that the three presents are situated somewhere differently on the same timeline, but they are inhabiting presents that contradict each other. What we should ask ourselves is not: what is true?

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<sup>21</sup> This would incidentally coincide with a common definition of documentary film, namely: that films can lie to us, and that truth is what distinguishes documentary from fiction film. Cf. Nichols, Bill. "How Can We Define Documentary Film?" *Introduction to Documentary*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Indiana University Press, 2017, 11. Cf. Fox, Broderick. *Documentary Media: History, Theory, Practice*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Routledge, 2018, 7-8.

but instead; which present are we looking at? To come back to the scene from *Marienbad*, it is not about which scenario is true, but to think about the relations between presents and the implications the possibility of each present has for the others.

To think about this, I would like to refer to a concept Deleuze mentions in the sixth chapter of *Cinema II* that to me, addresses the situations *Marienbad* presents us. Borrowed from Leibniz, this concept I am referring to is *compossibility* (Deleuze, “Cinema II” 130). Leibniz originally introduced this concept to think of ‘contingent futures’ as making up a “pyramid of crystal” as Deleuze says (“Cinema II” 303) from which one of those contingent futures *actualises*. To demonstrate what it entails, I would like to refer to an example Deleuze himself gives:

If it is *true* that a naval battle *may* take place tomorrow, how are we to avoid one of the true following consequences: either the impossible proceeds from the possible (since, if the battle takes place, it is no longer possible that it may not take place), or the past is not necessarily true (since the battle could not have taken place). [...] Leibniz says that the naval battle may or may not take place, but that this is not in the same world: it takes place in one world and does not take place in a different world, and these two worlds are possible, but are not ‘compossible’ with each other. (“Cinema II” 130)

Leibniz’ concept originally flows into a theological argument where the possibility of multiple worlds forms the ground on which Leibniz can famously conclude that *we live in the best of all possible worlds* (372). The argument being that if God is omnipotent and of good will, the world we inhabit must be the one with a maximal “set of mutually compossible complete individual concepts.” (Brown G 173). In that sense, compossibility becomes a moral concept for Leibniz in which each set of variables that characterise different worlds are assessed by their justness, with the one where the compossibility of these variables is optimised being the most morally justifiable one and thus the best one.

However, Deleuze is merely interested in the implications Leibniz’ concept has for temporality. To understand what Deleuze is trying to get at here, Jose Luis Borges’ concept of *forking* is of great use. In the short story *The Garden of Forking Paths* Borges creates an analogy between a labyrinth and time. Just like the labyrinth’s path splits into multiple directions each time, time *forks* into multiple directions as well, flowing into different contingent futures. Hence, time splits into multiple possibles at each moment. Even though some of the possible contingent futures do not seem to become *present*, they merely do not do so in this world, but they do in others. Thus, as time continues to fork, it also retroactively creates different pasts. Here

complementarity again comes to play a role, as the impossible worlds in a way are complementary to the real world. In this view, the possibility of something different, although incongruous, becomes a facilitating condition for one possibility to actualise. Time “is also the line which forks and keeps on forking, passing through *impossible presents*, returning to *not-necessarily true pasts* (Deleuze, “Cinema II” 131), so that “in one of the possible pasts you are my enemy, in another, my friend” (Borges 13). Such a conception opens up an entirely new way of thinking, as the possible is no longer bounded by a given actual, but exceeds into the possibilities of contingent *virtual* futures—and in turn, contingent *virtual* pasts—that are impossible with the given actual, but remain real nonetheless.

It is important to keep in mind that the forked paths continue to exert influence on different worlds, although they do not become *present* in them. In Borges’ story, the narrator is chased by a spy who is coming to kill him. At one point, the narrator says: “I calculated that my pursuer, Richard Madden, could not arrive for at least an hour” (Borges 9). Here, the narrator considers the forked paths his pursuer might have taken, thereby taking into account the multiple impossible forked presents his pursuer might find himself in. If he takes the car, it becomes impossible for him to take the train, but although these scenarios are impossible, the narrator still takes both contingent presents into account. In other words, the virtual comes to exert influence on the actual, even though this virtual might not be directly attached to that actual.

This directly applies to *Marienbad*. The different presents Deleuze attributed to the different characters of *Marienbad*, each are plausible, as much as they are real. The lay-out of the woman’s room, whether it has a mirror over the fireplace or not, does not disregard the plausibility of the man’s story of a present that was. Similarly, his remarks of “No, you weren’t laughing,” and “That’s not it. Yes, we were in your room,” do not influence the credibility. Each of these are equally possible, but they become impossible with each other. This makes for a fascinating dynamic. In the latter example for instance, the photograph the man had taken is compossible with the initial version of the story, that turns out to be a false memory. What does that mean? How can the photograph’s truth on the one hand be compossible with a false memory? While impossible with the *true* memory the man recounts? The quote with which I opened this chapter might provide a way out. The words “This is a world without a past, a world which is self-sufficient at every moment and which obliterates itself as it proceeds” (152) by Robbe-Grillet, *Marienbad*’s screenwriter, refer to *Marienbad* itself. What these words designate is exactly the forking of time. Like a character in Borges’ story says as well: “I leave to the various futures” (11), *Marienbad* is exactly about the simultaneity of worlds that, although impossible

with each other, continue to individuate at each forking moment, generating itself along the way as much as the coherence is obliterated. *Marienbad* does not play out across a timeline, but it takes place within the virtual that spans across multiple, impossible worlds.

To close off this chapter, I want to unite the analyses of the two films. For although these two concepts, noise and (in)compossibility, seem to be unrelated and the respective analyses far apart, I will indicate the similarities in their dynamic. In *Marienbad*, the multiple impossible worlds become noisy to each other. If noise, as established earlier, is external to that which it is attached to, and interrupts it simultaneously, then each impossible world presents itself as noise to the world they are impossible with. Then again, being a relational concept, noise's identity is determined by the vantage point you are looking from. Thus, each impossible world could become noisy when it is regarded from another world it is impossible with. However, we must be careful with conflating these two concepts. In the theories set out by Attali, Serres, and Martin, noise is related to epistemology, as it is designated as a signifier that is in a complementary relationship to information, an epistemological object. Impossibility however pertains to ontology, the material existence of worlds and the possible conflicts that arise between them. Although their dynamic is similar, I do want to retain their difference.

Having said that, the point of relating the concepts of noise and (in)compossibility to these films, and by extension the crystal-image, has been to indicate a function of the crystal-image that makes it particularly fascinating in relation to control. As the analyses of these films have pointed out, the dynamics of their crystals allow a certain complementarity to be foregrounded, noise in *Close-Up* and the impossibility of worlds in *Marienbad*. These complementarities are inherent to the crystal-image, as they in both cases pertain to coalescence of the actual and the virtual. But approaching them through the lens of these concepts unveils a particular function of the crystal-image that has not been accounted for in the previous chapter—partly because the definition of the crystal-image does not directly address these functions. The complementarities that have been addressed through these analyses, touch upon something that is considered uncomfortable. They obstruct a *clear viewpoint* of both films and make it impossible to deduce any knowledge from them whatsoever. With knowledge I mean the certainties concerning the narrative of both films. I have touched upon this through the notion of counter-information. In *Close-Up*, we are prevented from seeing through the overlapping layers of reality and fiction because of their noisy character, whereas in *Marienbad* the impossibility of worlds prevents us from determining which world is the *real* one that is central to the progression of the narrative in conventional terms.

Here the significance of these analyses is uncovered. By not revealing themselves whatsoever, thereby obstructing the spectator from getting a thorough grasp on them through their respective noisiness and impossibility, they maintain a close relationship with the theme of control, against whose background this thesis is situated and on which I will elaborate in the following chapter. As hinted upon in the introduction, control is about virtuality, it aims to manage the virtual by eliminating some of its uncertainties and risks. The relationship between virtuality and control can be translated into that of (in)compossibility, as the elimination of risks by managing the virtual aims to create a world with which the realities of risks become impossible. Additionally, control aims to eliminate the complementarity of noise, in favour of perfect transparency in which no interruption whatsoever can occur. This is problematic however as it complicates the conditioning function of noise to what it structures. I will elaborate on these relationships in the following chapter where I will argue for the political significance of both *Close-Up* and *Marienbad* against the framework of control: how they can provide an outlet and resistance against the phenomenon of control.

### Chapter III: The People Are Missing: Control, Crystals, Complementarity, and the Power of the Virtual

Exactly what Paul Klee meant when he said: “You know, the people are missing.” The people are missing and at the same time, they are not missing. The people are missing means that the fundamental affinity between a work of art and a people that does not yet exist is not, will never be clear. There is no work of art that does not call on a people who does not yet exist.

— GILLES DELEUZE, “What is the Creative Act?”

Control is the name that Gilles Deleuze gives to a particular development he observes in predominantly Western and capitalist societies in which the models of discipline, as famously set out by Michel Foucault, are replaced (“Control” 3-4). Control is, as Deleuze writes, “a *modulation*, like a self-deforming cast that will continuously change from one moment to the other” (“Control” 4). Put bluntly, control aims to seamlessly regulate the potentially devastating effects of unpredictable behaviour. As I have announced in the introduction to this thesis, my analyses of both *Close-Up* and *Marienbad* are to be situated against this background of control. In this chapter I will aim to establish the connection between the analyses presented in the previous two chapters and this political context. To do so, I will first indicate the specific instances where control is visible in these films. I will then situate these instances against the theoretical framework of control through Deleuze’s short text “Postscript on the Societies of Control.” Although Deleuze’s text will function as the overarching thread running through the exposition on control, the shortness and density of this text requires me to elaborate on his concise claims with the support of authors such as Michel Foucault, and Frederik Tygstrup.

Moreover, I aim to weave the analyses presented in the previous two chapters together with the exposition on control. Although my analyses have foregrounded the artistic elements of both films hitherto, by weaving the two together I aim to reveal their relevance in light of this political climate. By doing so, I do not merely want to take the philosophical meditations on time, noise, and impossibility, that these films prompted me to, out of their theoretical sphere and situate them in a material and urgent context. But by doing so, I also aim to find an explicit connection within Deleuze’s work between the crystal-image as put forward in *Cinema II*, and the notion of control, as developed in “Postscript on the Societies of Control.”

## Fixing the Actual

In both *Close-Up* and *Marienbad* arguably the most important question running through the films is that of: what happened? In *Close-Up*, the reenactments ought to reveal, by showing what happened, why Sabzian did what he did, whereas in *Marienbad*, the question simply is ‘what happened last year at Marienbad?’ That question, ‘what happened?’ can be posed differently too, namely, as ‘what was actual?’ The uncertainty surrounding the past concerns the virtuality that envelopes it because its actuality has receded into the virtual past. In other words, the past has not only become virtual because it is no longer actual, but in becoming virtual, it is no longer as *absolute* as it was once it was actual. Thus, in its virtualisation, the past becomes conflated with other virtualities because it is lost as actual. This is the problem that is attempted to be solved in both films.

This problem touches upon control, because, as noted earlier, control aims to manage virtuality, to eliminate the virtual insofar as it finds it undesirable. We then see that there is an interest on behalf of the system of control to *fix* the past actual (virtual), to thereby channel the present actual, while not actively intervening in that actual. In *Close-Up*, the aim of the trial is to uncover, and thereby fix the motive of Sabzian’s actions so that its continuation into the present can be managed. The use of *Close-Up*’s documentary aesthetics the gains an additional dimension. Whereas there is a widely shared popular presupposition about documentary that it is a means of (retrieving) truth (Nichols 13), in this film, the pushing of the limits of the documentary praxis and the subsequent emergence of the crystal-image lead to the very obscuring of truth. Similarly, in *Marienbad* the fixing of the virtual past becomes determinate for the actual present. The relation between the man and woman as either lover or stranger determines, as noted before, the path their relation will take from that point on. Fixing the virtual thus results in the managing of the actual. Note the use of the verb *fix*, as control, as we will see, pertains to all the registers of this word—such as establish, determine, prepare, as well as manipulate. Moreover, although in these films only the past is approached retroactively from the actual, this relation between actual and virtual can be approached the other way around as well. As the fixing of the actual also becomes a way of channelling, of fixing the future.

Thus, although both films diffuse the relation between actual and virtual through the crystal-image, we see that in both films this diffusion is contrasted by an actor/party (the man in *Marienbad*, the judicial system in *Close-Up*), who has interest in eliminating virtuality to thereby demarcate the actual. This latter part ties into control as set out by Foucault and Deleuze, as control also aims to control the actual by managing virtuality. This naturally has political

implications too, as the delimitation of the virtual extends to the delimitation of resistance as well. Hence, these films contrast the crystal-image with control through their approaches to virtuality, which are diametrically opposed. In that sense these films are contra-control insofar as control abides by the elimination of virtuality to fix the actual, whereas with the emergence of the crystal-image, virtuality is embraced. I will proceed elaborate on the workings of control to situate the stances these films take with regards to control.

## Control

Foucault recognised the transience of the model of sovereignty into the model of discipline, so Deleuze writes in his text on control (3). Foucault is famous for conceptualising this development in multiple sectors of society that in turn become the model for the whole of society, such as the prison and the hospital. Discipline ultimately is about the “organization of vast spaces of enclosure” (Deleuze, “Control” 3) which the individual never ceases to pass through. The family, the school, the factory, they all function according to the hierarchical logic of the prison and the hospital, where one is constantly observed and *moulded* into a certain behaviour that is in accordance with the norm the seat of power pursues. However, as Deleuze argues, “*the societies of control* [...] are in the process of replacing the disciplinary societies” (“Control” 4). This indicates a qualitative difference within the mechanisms of power, thereby implying that Deleuze aims to move beyond Foucault. Although that is true, Foucault, in the later stages of his career, was also concerning himself with this development beyond discipline, into what Foucault calls *security* and Deleuze calls control (Foucault 7).<sup>22 23</sup> Therefore, I will start to outline Foucault’s vision on the notion of security, for I believe it to be analogous to what Deleuze calls control.

The biggest difference between discipline and security, for Foucault, is that “discipline is exercised on the bodies of individuals, and security is exercised over a whole population”

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. Foucault, Michel. *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979*. Edited by Michel Senellart, translated by Graham Burchell, Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. Moreover, there are more authors that concern themselves with a similar development. Think for instance about Marcuse’s *One-Dimensional Man*, in which the famous adage is that Western society is in fact totalitarian (3). This is because the possibility of a different political system is systematically being repressed through what Marcuse calls ‘technological rationality.’ Every form of resistance is being subsumed by the system through ‘repressive tolerance,’ a form of giving in to progressive demands in such a way as to nullify the aims of the initial critique. Furthermore, critiques of technological (instrumental) rationality have been proposed by many authors that were affiliated to the Frankfurt School, such as Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer—and to which Marcuse himself also belongs. Cf. Horkheimer, Max, and Theodor Adorno. *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*. Edited by Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, translated by Edmund Jephcott, Stanford University Press, 2002.

<sup>23</sup> Moreover, in an interview with Antonio Negri, Deleuze acknowledges that Foucault was already moving beyond discipline in the later part of his life (174). Cf. Negri, Antonio and Gilles Deleuze. “Control and Becoming.” *Negotiations 1972–1990*, translated by Martin Joughin, Columbia University Press, 1995, pp. 169–76.



(Foucault 11).<sup>24</sup> That is to say that discipline aims to enclose bodies within a space, thus focusing on individual bodies, whereas security focuses on masses. The fact that the focus is different in both models, makes that they employ different methods, and we will see that these methods and their consequences may seem slightly paradoxical. Whereas disciplinary societies tried to prevent the phenomena they were aimed at, the aim of security is never about prevention (Foucault 59). Instead, security is about organising *circulation* (Foucault 18), or in Deleuzian terms, movement. Hence, Foucault argues that there is an element of *laissez-faire* involved in security (Foucault 41), because it facilitates movement.<sup>25</sup> However, although security seems more lenient than discipline, security is, in its effects, more intrusive than discipline. As both models aim to protect society against the actualisation of risk, there is a restraining logic to both models that just manifests differently. Allow me to expand by setting out some fundamental mechanisms of security according to Foucault.

Firstly, there is circulation. As noted, circulation, or movement, is fundamental to the emergence of this new model. Foucault argues that the organisation of circulation consists of designing the spatial dimension of a situation (18). This involves making a distinction between what good circulation ought to be and what bad circulation is, to be able to diminish the bad elements of circulation and maximising the good ones. This is crucial, as the logic of control for both Foucault and Deleuze works according to the notion of movement, in other words a certain freedom. In another text called “What is the Creative Act?” where Deleuze touches upon control, he writes:

Control is not discipline. You do not confine people with a highway. But by making highways, you multiply the means of control. I am not saying this is the only aim of highways, but people can travel infinitely and “freely” without being confined while being perfectly controlled. That is our future. (“Creative Act” 322)

The point is that building infrastructure to facilitate movement is automatically determining the conditions in which that movement is to take place. Here we see the explicit working of control seep through, as adapting the spatial design fixes the conditions in which circulation can take place, thereby forcing people to pass through those certain infrastructures.

Furthermore, such distinctions between good and bad circulation can only be determined based on risk. Risk, in this sense, pertains to threat, something that is yet to arrive, but once it

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<sup>24</sup> I will use the terms *security* and *control* interchangeably.

<sup>25</sup> The notion of ‘*laissez-faire*’ also ties the logic of security/control to that of liberalism, an aspect that I will return to later.

does, has negative effects on that which you try to secure. It could pertain to anything, ranging from epidemics to natural disasters and from stealing to resistance. Risk is determined through an estimation of probabilities that are used to reduce risk to an economic function. It is merely about the relation “between the cost of repression and the cost of delinquency,” as Foucault writes (9). Additionally, Deleuze argues that control is inseparable from capitalism, as for him it is the logic of money that determines risk (“Control” 5-6).

Moreover, security operates through obedience. As Foucault notes, because security designs the circumstances in which movement can occur, it naturally filters out that which it finds undesirable. The mechanisms of security operate through a nullification of undesirable effects (66). He writes:

These mechanisms do not tend to a nullification of phenomena in the form of the prohibition, “you will not do this,” nor even, “this will not happen,” but in the form of a progressive self-cancellation of phenomena by the phenomena themselves. In a way, they involve the delimitation of phenomena within acceptable limits, rather than the imposition of a law that says no to them. (66)

Hence, security requires less and less violent intervention. Because the effects are nullified, physical suppression of the body by a state apparatus is no longer necessary. We see this happening with vaccination, where the effects of a certain disease are already cancelled out before it has been contracted. We see this as well in the transition from cash to credit, where it becomes easier to control tax evasion, and money laundering.<sup>26</sup> This alters the relationship between power and subject, because the subject is no longer actively governed. Instead, through the design of the

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<sup>26</sup> I also want to refer to a rather recent event, where on the 16<sup>th</sup> of May, a Pro-Palestinian demonstration was to take place on the premises of the EUR campus in Rotterdam. In the week before, there had been disturbances at other such protests, like the ones at UvA in Amsterdam where some properties of the UvA were damaged—be it by the protesters, be it by the disproportionate interventions by the police. Because of these events the week before, the EUR board was extra cautious in anticipation of this protest. They for instance announced the day before that all the buildings on campus would be closed during the protest. On the morning of this protest, it was called off by the organisers. What turned out is that overnight, they had installed all sorts of barricades, security cameras, and more to ensure that the same disturbances as those at UvA could not take place. Here we see the logic of control in optima forma, as the protest was not prohibited, but it was to take place within the circumstances that were already determined by the authorities against whom the protest was aimed. These circumstances were designed in such a way that potential effects of the protest were nullified in advance. For example, through the instalment of barricades and security cameras the space had been redesigned in such a way as to delimit the virtual emergence of affectivity. Affectivity is an important component of the effectiveness of protest as it can shape collectives and give those involved a sense of belonging. The delimitation of the emergence of affect by a form of affective policing, thus nullified the possible effects of the protest in advance. (Cf. Kluitenberg, Eric. “(Re-)Designing Affect Space.” *Open! Platform for Art and Culture in the Public Domain*, 2017, pp. 1-15.) Moreover, it also redesigned the space in such a way that once the authorities deemed the protest to be out of hand, the policing apparatuses could intervene swiftly, almost immediately and without any obstruction whatsoever.

circumstances in which the subject finds himself, power ensure the subject's passive obedience. This is what makes security/control seem to be less intrusive than discipline, as the visibility of power's operations moves to the background.

The interventions of control thus do not lie in the direct address of the body through a physical encounter, but control intervenes on a *pre-individual* level—that is, before the individual is allowed to be an individual (Simondon 9). This pre-individual aspect is emphasised by Frederik Tygstrup in his discussion of the collection of personal data by tech companies in light of control. To talk about this, he takes a concept from Deleuze's text on control, that of the *dividual*. In the societies of control, "individuals have become "*dividuals*," and masses, samples, data" (Deleuze, "Control" 5). The individual is 'divided' into a set of data points that in this new logic of control come to represent the individual's identity. This is also the case in the collection of data, Tygstrup argues (17). He stresses that the categories used to collect and sort that data not only provide "a relatively limited view of the objects to which it relates" (16), but that the collection of data inverts the relation between the data and its referent (15). Whereas usually the conception is that data are a trace of the individual whom they are collected off, here the data produce the individual, insofar as the data "give only a very limited and 'dividualised' representation of the individual object" (Tygstrup 17), thereby producing an object that is qualitatively different from its referent. Through the collection of data, a representation of identity is produced that is based on dividual points of information that you share with others. Hence, data operates on a pre-individual level, as it does not allow the particularities that make you an individual to be foregrounded. The benefit of this for those collecting data is that it becomes useful to create a plausible future image of the dividual that can be speculated on, as well as modulated, to once again diminish risk (Tygstrup 20-21). Data therefore "does not denote an object or property of an object, but a temporality: the speculative relationship between the object's present future and its future present" (Tygstrup 19). In other words, the pre-individual invasiveness of control in fact actively produces a certain subject that is deprived of its particularities, as the categories through which data is collected come interfere with reality. Instead of merely 'objectively' collecting data, the result is that subjects are already produced on a pre-individual level determined by the range of variables in which data is collected, thereby determining the possible identities the (in)dividual can take on.

*Close-Up* concerns itself with this point quite evidently. As noted before, Sabzian claims to have posed as Makhmalbaf in search of recognition. He was suddenly appreciated once he became Makhmalbaf, which was not the case while being himself. We see here the dividual logic of control at work, because arguably, the lack of recognition Sabzian enjoyed was due to his

socio-economic position being reduced to individual points of information. Perhaps people were not keen on talking to him because all they saw was a poor, scruffy bearded male, instead of the bright and humble young man who clearly knows a lot about cinema among other things. Perhaps this lack of recognition was due to fact that his individuality was not allowed to be foregrounded, and instead was written off pre-individually.

Furthermore, control is characterised by an inherently conservative element that is due to its approach to norms. This becomes evident from control's attitude towards norms in relation to that of discipline. As Foucault writes:

In the disciplines one started from a norm, and it was in relation to the training carried out with reference to the norm that the normal could be distinguished from the abnormal. Here, instead, we have a plotting of the normal and the abnormal, of different curves of normality, and the operation of normalization consists in establishing an interplay between these different distributions of normality and [in] acting to bring the most unfavorable in line with the more favorable. (Foucault 63)

In other words, whereas disciplinary societies aimed to instil a norm through a certain ideal, meaning that it works towards a certain progression, control bases its norms on sets of data it collects. Similarly, Brian Massumi notes that in control societies, normality has become free-standing, becoming “synonymous with collective visibility and social operativity—with living itself” (57). The norm is thus based on a distribution of ‘normality’ that is produced through and determined by the categories deployed to indicate that ‘normality.’ This means that there is an inherently conservative element to control as its norms are produced according to an already existent distribution of ‘normality.’ Assuming such norms results in a preservation of the status quo. Control in that sense is worse than discipline, because whereas discipline pursued an ideal, thus containing a form of progression, control instead retains an already existent equilibrium.

The method to accomplish the preservation of the status quo is not fixed, however. According to Deleuze, it works according to the aforementioned praxis of *modulation* (“Control” 4). With that, he means that there is not a universal method to address people with. *Surfing* instead has become the new logic, which consists of adapting the particular situation each time. Deleuze gives the example of salaries, whereas salaries used to be fixed according to an economic equilibrium, they now work according to merit (“Control” 4-5), it surfs the fluctuating waves of a metastable equilibrium where people who work less hard are rewarded less to optimise the relation between cost and revenue. Similarly, the gold standard as a leading determinant of money's value

has been replaced by the “floating rates of exchange,” which are “modulated according to a rate established by a set of standard currencies” (Deleuze, “Control” 5).

We then understand why the notion of risk becomes so important in the framework of control, because risk is situated in the of the virtual. This is precisely the aim of control; it aims to manage the virtual insofar the elimination of risk is to delimit the circumstances in which phenomena can emerge. Hence, the elimination of risk boils down to the delimitation of the virtual. So, although this control is exerted under the guise of *security*, its interventions, as we have seen, move beyond mere security and aim to already fix the future. To do so, it requires the modulation of subjects that are deprived of posing any risk whatsoever.

Even though this system of control has hitherto only been related to an economic tendency, with the calculation of risk in monetary value being emblematic, control extends to politics too. The aim of control is to preserve the status quo in which the current political situation coincides with the facilitation of these economic interests. The delimitation of the virtual, that occurs through modulation, thus extends to the delimitation of resistance as well. After all, when approached from the status quo, resistance poses a threat. Therefore, while security might appear as having the best intentions, its goal is political stagnation that preserves the current state of affairs in order to secure the interests of those in/with power.<sup>27</sup> It is in that light that control takes on a totalitarian character, as in the long run the circumstances will be designed in such a manner that the effects of political opposition will be nullified. Thus, we should actively oppose this mechanism by understanding how it is affecting us pre-individually, that is, without us being aware of it. It is against this background that my analyses of *Close-Up* and *Marienbad* are situated and that I aim to demonstrate, through my analyses, how these films both disrupt this framework and how they possibly offer a way out of this system of control. I will devote the rest of this chapter to proving this connection.

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<sup>27</sup> This might explain the sentiment that Mark Fisher tries to convey in the chapter “The Slow Cancellation of the Future” from his book *Ghosts of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures*. Fisher here argues that from a phenomenological standpoint, it feels as if there is a stagnation of duration. “[T]he 21<sup>st</sup> century is oppressed by a crushing sense of finitude and exhaustion. It doesn’t feel like the future” (8). For him, the present has become haunted by the lost glory of the past, while we have simultaneously lost the future, because the present is characterised by a perpetual repetition of the same. Although for him this pertains mostly to culture, there is a political component to this as well. As his other, more famous work *Capitalist Realism*, has demonstrated—similarly to *One-Dimensional Man*—we have become incapable of overthrowing the capitalist system, to the point that it has become literally impossible. One of the chapters from this book is called “It’s easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism,” a phrase I have already referred to in the introduction. Although it does not lie within the scope of this thesis, this sentiment can easily be connected to control, as it is this mechanism that explicitly aims to cancel the possibility of a different future.

## The Crystal-image Contra Control

I have touched upon the mutual relation with the virtual of both the crystal-image and control. Although their entanglement with the notion of virtuality forms the first point on which their connection can be made, their connections are diametrically opposed to one another. With control, as I have noted, the virtual is what needs to be managed by keeping out its actualisations, it wants to subdue the virtual by delimiting its manifestations. The relation of the crystal-image to the virtual however is, contrary to that of control, a productive one. In the crystal-image the virtual is embraced insofar as its effects are due to the intrusion of the virtual. In the crystal-image the virtual enters in the very way that the system of control opposes or tries to manage it. In the crystal-image, the virtual interrupts the actual inasmuch as their identities become indiscernible, an uncertainty that control wants to eliminate. In their relation to the virtual emerges an opposition between the two which, in light of this thesis, provides a productive basis for further analysis.

Additionally, the crystal-image's uncertainty makes it resistant to control. As Tygstrup showed, control ideally needs data, or more broadly, information to function. Likewise, Benjamin Bratton argues that control's "primary means and interests are [...] the calculation of all the world's information and of the world itself as information" (8). There is thus a presupposition that there is a relation between information and reality. It presupposes that information is extractable from reality, and thus, from the actual. In that regard the crystal-image is resistant to this logic, because the actual here becomes indiscernible from the virtual. No longer can information be extracted from the crystal-image as its identity, its ontological status is diffuse. Or let me be more precise: no information that is of use for the mechanism of control can be extracted. I want to invoke here a very specific definition of information as proposed by Deleuze "What is the Creative Act?" He writes that the idea is not on the order of communication (320). He continues that:

communication is the transmission and propagation of information [...] Information is a set of imperatives, slogans, directions—order words. When you are informed, you are told what you are supposed to believe. In other words, informing means circulating an order-word [...] And outside these orders and their transmission, there is no information, no communication. This is the same thing as saying that information is exactly the system of control. (Deleuze, "Creative Act" 320-321)

The idea—or the creative act—thus exceeds control insofar it is situated in a different order than communication and information. If information is control, the creative act forms a resistance against it by being “counter-information” (Deleuze, “Creative Act” 322).<sup>28</sup> Through the ontological diffusion that occurs because of the actual and virtual’s indiscernibility, the crystal-image becomes counter-information. That is because it makes the ‘dividualised’ categories that the epistemological mechanism of control deploys impotent. Hence, in the way the cinematographic apparatus in these films refers to *a* reality—be it a real one or a fictional one—they display a discursive tendency that is counter-control by being counter-informative. This is because their crystals disrupt conventional media strategies by representing their worlds in such a way that the points of reference have recalibrated. Whereas this is partly the reason why these films are so confusing, the investing of the image with the power of the false is what mobilises it politically. Like Deleuze writes: “What is opposed to fiction is not the real; [...] it is the story-telling function of the poor, in so far as it gives the false the power which makes it into a memory, a legend, a monster” (“Cinema II” 150). Hence, it invites the spectator to take a different approach to these films, that breaks through the logic of control by substituting actuality for virtuality and thus, working against the system of control. Ultimately, it means that we as spectators have no control over the images in these films, as they constitute an uncertain picture.

Furthermore, the relationality of the crystal-image in these films—that is, its emergence through a set of conjoined images through montage and the complementarity of noise—is crucial in the becoming uncertain of the images. With montage, the relation between the images becomes situated in between the images, as Eisenstein already showed (30). Hence, the relationality of the crystal-image makes that the relation between actual and virtual becomes localisable yet impossible to indicate, as it remains invisible. Actual and virtual become situated within the (irrational) cut itself, thereby withdrawing themselves from the image itself, receded into the out-of-field. This analogy of visibility forms the heart of the argument, in that these films put forth virtuality that cannot be registered by the dividualised categories that control deploys. Hence, they convey something that cannot be expressed in terms of information, but merely as an idea that emerges through relations, a crystal-image that ultimately addresses *us* as individuals, beyond the dividual logic of control. It addresses, as Deleuze would say, a “people who are missing” (“Cinema II” 221).

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<sup>28</sup> In the original French, ‘counter-information’ is written as “*contre information*,” which translates more to ‘against information.’ Counter-information then does not mean to provide counter information as to debunk false information. Instead, it means against information insofar it completely abandons its techniques and tendencies. In other words, it abandons the praxis of information.

The phrase ‘the people are missing’ refers to Paul Klee’s conception of painting, for whom, as Deleuze argues “to bring together all the parts of its ‘great work’, [it] needed a ‘final force’, the people who were still missing” (“Cinema II” 217). It means that the people are missing inasmuch as they are becoming-other. The artwork interpellates a people by making them the people the artwork aims to address; it contributes to the invention of these people. For Deleuze, this phrase indicates a form of cinema that is highly political. (“Cinema II” 220). That is because in such cinema, the political is depicted in such a way that it comes to merge with private life, whereas in classical cinema the boundary between the two is preserved (Deleuze, “Cinema II” 218). Deleuze therefore calls this *minor cinema*, because for minorities, the boundary between private and political is never there, as “the private affair was immediately political and ‘entailed a verdict of life or death’” (Deleuze, “Cinema II” 218).<sup>29</sup> The logic of minor cinema disrupts that of classical cinema, where the people already exist as a given, which through the course of the film merely needs to become a coherent unity by ‘becoming-conscious’ of class relations and social contradictions (Deleuze, “Cinema II” 216). What is missing then in minor cinema, is “the formation of a collective which is indebted to its simulated existence on the cinema screen. Thus, minor cinema is a cinema of becoming, or more precisely of ‘becoming-other’ and not of becoming-conscious as in classical political cinema” (Javid 108). This logic of *minor cinema* will pose a resistance against the system of control, as I will demonstrate.

### ***L’Année dernière à Marienbad’s Resistance to Control***

In light of this minor cinema, it is interesting that Deleuze calls Resnais, *Marienbad’s* director, the most political filmmaker of the modern cinema, as he, like no other, knows how “to show how the people are what is missing, what is not there” (“Cinema II” 215-216). Whereas films like *Hiroshima mon amour* (1959) and *La guerre est finie* (1966) bear a more explicit political dimension, I argue that *Marienbad* contains this dimension as well. Let me refer to its opening scene, where I argued that the empty corridors of the hotel pointed to the virtual Whole that had yet to be actualised and that moreover, the hotel is a spatial rendering of time insofar it moves beyond the confines of hodological-Euclidean space. What gives *Marienbad* its political dimension is that it literally presents us the Deleuzian maxim. Whereas I connected the beginning of the film to virtuality, this scene literally shows us that the people are missing, that they still have to be invented. The idea that the crystals of *Marienbad*—and *Close-Up* as well—can only be grasped

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<sup>29</sup> There is continuity between what Deleuze calls here *minor cinema* and *minor literature*, a concept which Deleuze and Félix Guattari develop in their book on Kafka. Cf. Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari. *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*. Translated by Dana Polan, University of Minnesota Press, 1986.



retroactively [*nachträglich*], becomes analogous to the invention of the people who were missing initially. It is only towards at the end of the film that the spectator grasps how to read the hotel itself and additionally, the crystals that emerge. Through the openness of the crystals, and the different spectatorial approach they require, the spectator *becomes* during the film. The political dimension of *Marienbad* and conversely, its relation to control, thus emerge through the crystal-image and its conjunction of virtuality, which itself is contra-control, with the interpellation of a missing people. This thus means that *Marienbad*'s crystals have the potential to break through the stagnation of the actual that the system of control desires. Hence, *Marienbad* responds to what Deleuze claims in that: "Art, and especially cinematographic art, must take part in this task: not that of addressing a people, which is presupposed already there, but of contributing to the invention of a people. [...] the missing people are a becoming" ("Cinema II" 217).

Moreover, *Marienbad* is political insofar it responds to control through the character of the man. As noted earlier, his interest in fixing the past, is that it determines the present and in turn, the future. Regardless of whether it is true or not what he says, with each part of the past they can agree on, the present is gradually determined. This is also evident from the way he talks about detail. In a scene where he talks of a meeting in the woman's room, he recounts: "You were all in white, white slippers too, wearing this ring." The woman initially denies, and he continues: "I remember that you were lying on the bed among white feathers." The woman then reacts visibly startled, implying a glimpse of recognition in what the man says. Although she does not confirm, it provides a reason for the man to assume a shared past between them, which forms a common ground on which a shared present can be built. That is because by agreeing upon bits and bits of past, step by step, a world in which they are strangers becomes gradually impossible. Whatever the man's goal is does not matter. What we recognise is the logic of control at work, that similarly aims to make worlds impossible by managing the virtual. However, as concluded, the virtual is complementary to the actual (and vice versa) because the 'possibility' of the virtual forms a necessary condition for the actual to get its actuality, and in turn to flow into another actual. The deliberate attempts by the man—and in turn control—to make worlds impossible, points to a denial of the complementarity of these worlds to the actual. They are complementary insofar they make us understand the contingencies of the present and hence, to attribute a moral, or political weight to the material conditions that have come to be. Through the man's attempt to mould a world that is impossible with a range of virtualities, *Marienbad* then points us to the necessity of refusing the overdetermination of the actual.<sup>30</sup> In that way the

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<sup>30</sup> Overdetermination is a Marxist concept developed by Louis Althusser that criticises a particular approach to the dialectic that is the driving force to history in historical materialism. In (Hegelian) dialectics, one needs to attend to the contradiction that keeps developing into new articulations. Althusser's concept however points to a particular

complementarity is resistant to the logic of control, as it draws attention to the complementary function of virtuality to the actual, whereas control aims to deny this complementarity.

### **The Politics of *Close-Up***

Although *Marienbad* demonstrates the crystal-image's resistance to control, *Close-Up* is perhaps more explicitly situated in a *minor* context that is politically laden (Maimon 333). As noted, similarly to *Marienbad*, there is an attempt to fix the past so the present becomes manageable. With help of the notion of precarity that was mentioned in the previous chapter, the political intricacies in this film can be uncovered more explicitly. In *Ghosts*, but also in *Close-Up*, noise becomes the aesthetic rendering of precarity, because it draws attention to the precarious conditions in which visibility, or communication, becomes possible (257-258). Precarity is characterised by an indeterminacy, an inability to imagine a coherent future, mostly due to socio-economic conditions (Martin 245). In *Close-Up*, it is Sabzian himself who finds himself in a precarious position, being a poor printer who therefore finds himself socially and economically isolated. This precarity is then mimicked by the precarious aesthetics Martin writes of. To indicate these precarious conditions, he refers to the image of glass, which has a double function. It is both a tool of transparency, but also an obstruction as it mediates between the event and the spectator which is made visible through noise (Martin 257-258). The frequent use of close-up shots of Sabzian in the courtroom attest to this, as they become noisy because much remains out-of-field. The limited visibility in such shots point to the very conditions that facilitate vision.

In the parallel between Sabzian's precarity and the precarious aesthetics of the film, a peculiar relation to control emerges. Precarity is ambiguous in relation to control, as it is produced by this very system to secure cheap labour to protect high revenues. But on behalf of the precarious body, it leads to an uncertain relation to time. Its pathway into the future is uncertain and not fixed, because of which it is against control. Toward the trial's end, Sabzian gives his final plea, from which it becomes clear that he genuinely cannot be bothered whether he is convicted or not. Presumably he does not care because, bluntly stated, he has nothing to be out for. This is interesting because his precarious circumstances make that the judicial system has no handle on him. The impending punishment that he faces has no effect on him. Of course, this system can

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approach that, by attending only to one of the two opposing forces in the dialectical contradiction, denies the contradiction altogether (101). He is suspicious of such approaches because it denies the conditioning factor of the overdetermined side of the contradiction. Funnily, thinkers like Derrida introduced the concept of complementarity to circumvent the dialectical method. Nonetheless, in the context of the concept of complementarity, especially with regards to control, the notion of overdetermination is equally applicable, as in this sense, there is an overdetermination to the actual with control that denies the virtual.

detain him, therefore controlling his whereabouts, but the damage has already been done, Sabzian has already committed his *crime*.

I want to underline this invocation of precarity, as it becomes a metaphor for the resistance I aim to uncover in these films. That is because the temporal uncertainty of precarity is explicitly entangled with a wide range of virtualities that is paradoxically simultaneously bounded and unbounded by the system of control. Precarity provides a contradiction to control and liberates itself from it insofar it bears with it a complementary uncertainty that is purely virtual and which makes it a site for (political) potential. In *Close-Up*, this complementary uncertainty works to Sabzian's benefit. And at the same time, by means of its noisy aesthetics, it is rendered as a political weapon through its crystals.

Here the connection between the crystal-image as put forth by me and the political dimension of what Chaudhuri and Finn call the "open image" (55) is attained, but there remains a difference. They ascribe a political function to the open image because it circumvents the disciplining apparatus of censorship in Iran (57). The idea being that by rendering the image ambiguous, it contains a plurality of meanings that disallows the regime's censorship apparatus to prohibit the image. Yet, the open image here is still considered with regards to a disciplinary mechanism because censorship works via prohibition. However, the crystal-image I put forth goes further; it does not only remain ambiguous, but through its precarious and noisy aesthetics, it is purely virtual insofar it embraces uncertainty to make it a site for (political) potential. Hence, it is aimed against control instead of discipline. Through its precarious aesthetics, *Close-Up* becomes resistant to control because it is a cinema which is minor. Similar to *Marienbad*, *Close-Up* calls for a missing people. A people that is missing because they are yet to actualise by the open crystals that emerge through its noisy, precarious aesthetics, and whose paths are against control by being not already fixed and instead, indeterminate.

## Conclusion

For every second of time was the strait gate  
through which the Messiah might enter.

— WALTER BENJAMIN, “Theses  
on the Philosophy of History.”

Through *Close-Up* and *Marienbad*, I have presented a plea to embrace virtuality and conversely, the crystal-image, to wield it as a political weapon against systems of control. Because of its uncertain character, I have propounded it as a means of disrupting control’s overdetermination towards the actual. The crystal-image embraces virtuality insofar it is counter-informative, diffusing the identities of actual and virtual to the point that the methods of control become impotent in getting a grasp on it. Moreover, the crystal-image’s embracement of virtuality extends to its call on a missing people. That is, *Close-Up*’s and *Marienbad*’s crystals interpellate a spectator who is yet to become and who, through the emerging web of relations in these films, are to take on the task of resisting control.

To arrive at this conclusion, I have taken several steps. Firstly, I have pointed out that the temporal tensions that emerge in *Close-Up* and *Marienbad* are due to the coalescence of actual and virtual. Hence, I connected them to Deleuze’s concept of the crystal-image. I argued that these films’ crystal-images emerge because of relations that develop between multiple images because of their conjunction through montage. Through the relations between images that montage conjoins, the images come to affect one another so that virtuality is allowed to enter the films, leading to the obscuring of the actual. In *Close-Up*, the fictionalised nature of the reenactments came to coincide with the past of those involved in the case, as they literally revisited their past. The retroactivity of the reenactments in general, in turn led to the diffusion of the registrations. As the underlying temporal relations between the various images became unclear, it became diffuse whether the registrations were in fact reenactments too. With this diffusion came a coalescence of actual and virtual, because the registration came to inhabit a position in between them. Since the relation between the reenactments and the registrations were established through montage, the crystal-image is facilitated by the praxis of montage. As a result, the reenactments come to infect the courtroom registrations. Moreover, the infection of the registration led to a crystal-image that moved beyond Deleuze’s definition. Whereas for him actual and virtual remain distinct while indiscernible, they do not remain distinct in the courtroom registrations. Instead, the relations between the multiple images reach a point in which the registration coincides wholly

with both actual *and* virtual, thereby dissolving their distinction. In *Marienbad*, this dynamic is also present yet in a more complex way. Whereas in *Close-Up* the *infection* only worked one way, from reenactment to registration, in *Marienbad* each and every image is affected by it. The rapid succession of virtual scenarios and their conjunction through montage, make it impossible to tell whether the film presents us either the actual, its virtual image, or the virtual as such.

Consequently, the actual is obscured through its diffusion with the virtual. Not only do we not find out what happened last year at Marienbad, but through montage, the actual is also lost in the process, becoming scattered around the overlapping sheets of virtual that the film presents. In doing so, *Marienbad* likewise presents us crystals in which the image coincides wholly with actual and virtual simultaneously. Important too however, is that there is a retroactivity to this process, because the relations between images that emerge through montage, require duration to unfold. Hence, the crystal-image can only be indicated retroactively.

In chapter two I subsequently identified a number of instances in both films that contribute to the crystal-images' effect, but which are not uncovered by the observations presented in the first chapter. In *Close-Up* those pertained to the ambivalent relation the film has to the concept of noise and its complementarity to *information*. I identified noise as a productive concept based on the film's final scene, where the structure the film had built up until then is interrupted. This interruption is perceived as noise, which, while having a structuring function to information, is also detrimental to the transmittance of that information. Conversely, the film invites us to think of the meaning we give to noise, highlighting the relational and complementary character of this concept in the process. Additionally, there appeared an analogy between noise and virtuality that is productive, as the virtual can also be said to structure the actual and thus to be complementary to it. As a result, I concluded that the indiscernibility of actual and virtual rests on a distribution of identities that—like noise and information—structure each other, and that conversely, adapt accordingly to the perspectives taken on in their relation. Therefore, I argued noise to be a component of the crystal-image, as it contributes to the obscuring of the actual. Moreover, the way in which noise is presented in these films makes that they are able to resist control, as noise's interruptive character makes it complicit to the obscuring of information. The power of the crystal-images in *Close-Up* resides in this interruptive quality. Hence, their noisy character is crucial in understanding the crystal-image's political function, as it becomes counter-informative. Likewise, through the impossible worlds it foregrounds, *Marienbad* emphasises a complementarity that is directly attached to virtuality. What the impossible worlds in this film tell us, is that these worlds, although they remain virtual in relation to other worlds, remain as real as the actual world. That is because they continue to exert influence on the actual world as a

virtuality, even though they do not become *present* in them. The virtuality of impossible worlds point us to the conditions for the actual to attain its actuality, and in turn its capacity to flow into another actual. Hence, impossible worlds are complementary to the actual insofar they make us understand the contingencies of the present, by which we can attribute a moral, or political weight to the material conditions that have come to be. *Marienbad* then points us to the necessity of refusing the overdetermination of the actual, because such an overdetermination would deny the complementarity of the virtual. It is in that way that the impossible worlds *Marienbad* presents us disturb the logic of control. While they obscure the actual, they draw attention to the complementary function of virtuality to the actual, whereas control aims to deny this complementarity.

I then united these points with the theoretical discourse surrounding control. I have tried to show that both *Close-Up* and *Marienbad*, though each in their own way, are entangled with control. They each demonstrate a conflict between multiple approaches to virtuality that are diametrically opposed, but which reflect the respective stances towards virtuality of the crystal-image and control. On the one hand, the crystal-image embraces virtuality, while on the other hand, there are actors who, like the system of control, want to eliminate virtuality to thereby demarcate the present. In *Close-Up*, this is the aim of the trial. It aims to fix the virtual to channel the present's path into the future. In *Marienbad*, it is the man who attempts to fix the past so that likewise the present and its subsequent path into the future are channelled. However, in both films the virtual triumphs over control, leaving the past, and in turn, the present, open to a range of virtualities. This triumph is accomplished through the counter-informative quality of the crystal-image's precarious aesthetics. Where control abides by the extraction of information from reality, the crystal-image is counter-informative. Through the crystal-images' ontological diffusion, the 'dividualised' categories that the epistemological mechanism of control deploys become impotent. Hence, the political potential of virtuality unfolds, as well as the crystal-image's capacity to offer resistance against control.

With this thesis, I have wanted to accomplish several things. For one, I have wanted to give words to the way these films touched me affectively, in which I have succeeded through the Deleuzian approach I deployed. Not only have I been able to pinpoint the specific mechanism at work in these films that is responsible for giving me that initial feeling. But more importantly, I also attempted to think about the possible political implications of those specific praxes. That is, I have attempted to connect the crystal-image to the theme of control, and to indicate the ways in which the crystal-image can be wielded against the totalitarian tendencies of this mechanism. Additionally, by highlighting both the noisy and complementary character of virtuality, I have

found a way to mobilise the crystal-image, which may lay a groundwork for the emergence of new media strategies that are able to offer resistance to control's tendencies. As Deleuze writes: "There is no need to fear or hope, but only to look for new weapons" ("Control" 4). I have tried to provide such a weapon, and I hope it is not in vain.

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## Filmography

*L'Année dernière à Marienbad*. Directed by Alain Resnais, Cocinor, 1961.

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*Europa '51*. Directed by Roberto Rossellini, I.F.E. Releasing Corporation, 1952.

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