

5 Peaks of present and sheets of past: fourth commentary on Bergson

I

The crystal reveals a direct time-image, and no longer an indirect image of time deriving from movement. It does not abstract time; it does better: it reverses its subordination in relation to movement. The crystal is like a *ratio cognoscendi* of time, while time, conversely, is *ratio essendi*.^{1*} What the crystal reveals or makes visible is the hidden ground of time, that is, its differentiation into two flows, that of presents which pass and that of pasts which are preserved. Time simultaneously makes the present pass and preserves the past in itself. There are, therefore, already, two possible time-images, one grounded in the past, the other in the present. Each is complex and is valid for time as a whole.

We have seen that Bergson gave an assured status to the first image. This is the model of the inverse cone. The past is not to be confused with the mental existence of recollection-images which actualize it in us. It is preserved in time: it is the virtual element into which we penetrate to look for the 'pure recollection' which will become actual in a 'recollection-image'. The latter would have no trace of the past if we had not been to look for its seed in the past. It is the same as with perception: just as we perceive things where they are present, in space, we remember where they have passed, in time, and we go out of ourselves just as much in each case. Memory is not in us; it is we who move in a Being-memory, a world-memory. In short, the past appears as the most general form of an already-there, a pre-existence in general, which our recollections presuppose, even our first recollection if there was one, and which our perceptions, even the first, make use of. From this point of view the present itself exists only as an infinitely contracted past which is constituted at the extreme point of the already-there. The present would not pass on without this condition. It would not pass on if it was not the most contracted degree of the past. In fact it is striking that the successive is not the past but the present which is passing. The past appears, in

contrast, as the coexistence of circles which are more or less dilated or contracted, each one of which contains everything at the same time and the present of which is the extreme limit (the smallest circuit that contains all the past). Between the past as pre-existence in general and the present as infinitely contracted past there are, therefore, all the circles of the past constituting so many stretched or shrunk *regions, strata, and sheets*: each region with its own characteristics, its 'tones', its 'aspects', its 'singularities', its 'shining points' and its 'dominant' themes. Depending on the nature of the recollection that we are looking for, we have to jump into a particular circle. It is true that these regions (my childhood, my adolescence, my adult life, etc.), appear to succeed each other. But they succeed each other only from the point of view of former presents which marked the limit of each of them. They coexist, in contrast, from the point of view of the actual present which each time represents their common limit or the most contracted of them. What Fellini says is Bergsonian: 'We are constructed in memory; we are *simultaneously* childhood, adolescence, old age and maturity.' What happens when we search for a recollection? We have to put ourselves into the past in general, then we have to choose between the regions: in which one do we think that the recollection is hidden, huddled up waiting for us and evading us? (It is a friend from childhood or youth, from school or the army. . . ?) We have to jump into a chosen region, even if we have to return to the present in order to make another jump, if the recollection sought for gives no response and does not realize itself in a recollection-image. These are the paradoxical characteristics of a non-chronological time: the pre-existence of a past in general; the coexistence of all the sheets of past; and the existence of a most contracted degree.² It is a conception that can be found in the first great film of a cinema of time, Welles's *Citizen Kane*.

And, with Bergson, this time-image extends naturally into a language-image, and a thought-image. What the past is to time, sense is to language and idea to thought. Sense as past of language is the form of its pre-existence, that which we place ourselves in at once in order to understand images of sentences, to distinguish the images of words and even phonemes that we hear. It is therefore organized in coexisting circles, sheets, or regions, between which we choose according to actual auditory signs which are grasped in a confused way. Similarly, we place ourselves initially in the idea; we jump into one of its circles in

order to form images which correspond to the actual quest. Thus chronosigns are continually extended into lectosigns and noosigns.

But, to approach it in a different way, can the present in turn stand for the whole of time? Yes, perhaps, if we manage to separate it from its own actual quality, in the same way that we distinguish the past from the recollection-image which actualized it. If the present is actually distinguishable from the future and the past, it is because it is presence of something, which precisely stops being present when it is replaced by *something else*. It is in relation to the present of something else that the past and future are said of a thing. We are, then, passing along different events, in accordance with an explicit time or a form of succession which entails that a variety of things fill the present one after another. It is quite different if we are established inside one single event; if we plunge into an event that is in preparation, arrives and is over; if for a longitudinal, pragmatic view we substitute a vision which is purely optical, vertical, or, rather, one in depth. The event is no longer confused with the space which serves as its place, nor with the actual present which is passing: 'the time of the event comes to an end before the event does, so the event will start again at another time . . . the whole event is as it were in the time where nothing happens', and it is in empty time that we anticipate recollection, break up what is actual and locate the recollection once it is formed.³ On this occasion there is no longer a future, present and past in succession, in accordance with the explicit passage of presents which we make out. Adopting St Augustine's fine formulation, there is *a present of the future, a present of the present and a present of the past*, all implicated in the event, rolled up in the event, and thus simultaneous and inexplicable. From affect to time: a time is revealed inside the event, which is made from the simultaneity of these three implicated presents, from these de-actualized *peaks of present*. It is the possibility of treating the world or life, or simply a life or an episode, as one single event which provides the basis for the implication of presents. An accident is about to happen, it happens, it has happened; but equally it is at the same time that it will take place, has already taken place and is in the process of taking place; so that, before taking place, it has not taken place, and, taking place, will not take place . . . etc. This is the paradox of Josephine the mouse in Kafka: is she singing, did she sing, will she sing, or none of these, even though it all produces inexplicable differences in the

collective present of mice?⁴ At the same time someone no longer has the key (that is, used to have it), still has it (had not lost it), and finds it (that is, will have it and did not have it). Two people know each other, but already knew each other and do not yet know each other. Betrayal happens, it never happened, and yet has happened and will happen, sometimes one betraying the other and sometimes the other betraying the first – all at the same time. We find ourselves here in a direct time-image of a different kind from the previous one: no longer the coexistence of sheets of past, but the simultaneity of peaks of present. We therefore have two kinds of chronosigns: the first are *aspects* (regions, layers), the second *accents* (peaks of view [*pointes de vue*]).

This second type of time-image is to be found in Robbe-Grillet, in a kind of Augustinianism. In his work there is never a succession of passing presents, but a simultaneity of a present of past, a present of present and a present of future, which make time frightening and inexplicable. The encounter in *Last Year in Marienbad*, the accident in *L'immortelle*, the key in *Trans-Europe Express*, the betrayal in *The Man Who Lies*: the three implicated presents are constantly revived, contradicted, obliterated, substituted, re-created, fork and return. This is a powerful time-image. This does not mean to say, however, that it suppresses all narration. But, much more importantly, it gives narration a new value, because it abstracts it from all successive action, as far as it replaces the movement-image with a genuine time-image. Thus narration will consist of the distribution of different presents to different characters, so that each forms a combination that is plausible and possible in itself, but where all of them together are 'impossible', and where the inexplicable is thereby maintained and created. In *Last Year . . .*, it is X who knew A (so A does not remember or is lying), and it is A who does not know X (so X is mistaken or playing a trick on her). Ultimately, the three characters correspond to the three different presents, but in such a way as to 'complicate' the inexplicable instead of throwing light on it; in such a way as to bring about its existence instead of suppressing it: what X lives in a present of past, A lives in a present of future, so that the difference exudes or assumes a present of present (the third, the husband), all implicated in each other. The repetition distributes its variations on the three presents. In *The Man Who Lies*, the two characters are not simply the same: their difference arises only in making the betrayal inexplicable, because this is attributed differently, but simultaneously, to each of

them as identical to the other. In *Le jeu avec le feu* the kidnapping of the girl has to be the means of warding it off but equally the means of warding it off must be the kidnapping itself, so that she has never been kidnapped at the moment when she is and will be, and kidnaps herself at the moment when she has not been. However, this new mode of narration still remains human, even though it constitutes a lofty form of non-sense. It does not yet tell us the essential point. The essential point rather appears if we think of an earthly event which is assumed to be transmitted to different planets, one of which would receive it at the same time (at the speed of light), but the second more quickly, and the third less quickly, hence before it happened and after. The latter would not yet have received it, the second would already have received it, the first would be receiving it, in three simultaneous presents bound into the same universe. This would be a sidereal time, a system of relativity, where the characters would be not so much human as planetary, and the accents not so much subjective as astronomical, in a plurality of worlds constituting the universe.⁵ It would be a pluralist cosmology, where there are not only different worlds (as in Minnelli), but where one and the same event is played out in these different worlds, in incompatible versions.

Subjecting the image to a power of repetition-variation was already Buñuel's contribution, and a way of setting time free, of reversing its subordination to movement. Although we have seen that in most of Buñuel's work time remained a cyclical time, where sometimes forgetfulness (*The Devil and the Flesh*), sometimes exact repetition (*The Exterminating Angel*), marked the end of one cycle and the possible beginning of another, in a cosmos which was still unique. Influence, then, perhaps reversed in Buñuel's last period, where he adapts an inspiration which has come from Robbe-Grillet for his own ends. It has been noted that the regime of dream or fantasy was changing in this last period.^{6*} But it is less a question of a state of the imaginary than of a deepening of the problem of time. In *Belle de jour*, the husband's final paralysis does and does not take place (he suddenly gets up to talk about holidays with his wife); *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie* shows less a cycle of interrupted meals than different versions of the same meal in irreducible modes and worlds. In *The Phantom of Liberty*, the postcards are truly pornographic, even though they represent only monuments stripped of all ambiguity; and the little girl is lost, even though she has never stopped

being there and will be found again. And in *That Obscure Object of Desire* there blossoms one of Buñuel's finest inventions: instead of having one character play different roles, casting two characters, and two actresses, as one person. It is as if Buñuel's naturalist cosmology, based on the cycle and the succession of cycles, gives way to a plurality of simultaneous worlds; to a simultaneity of presents in different worlds. These are not subjective (imaginary) points of view in one and the same world, but one and the same event in different objective worlds, all implicated in the event, inexplicable universe. Buñuel achieves here a direct time-image which was previously impossible for him because of his naturalist and cyclical point of view.

Still more instructive is the confrontation between Robbe-Grillet and Resnais in *Last Year in Marienbad*. What seems extraordinary in this collaboration is that two authors (for Robbe-Grillet was not just scriptwriter) produced so coherent a work while approaching it in such different and almost opposite ways. They perhaps reveal in this way the truth about all real collaboration, where the work is not simply understood but constructed according to quite different creative procedures which marry to make a success that is repeatable but each time unique. This confrontation between Resnais and Robbe-Grillet is complex, blurred by their extremely amicable statements, and may be considered on three different levels. First, there is a level of 'modern' cinema, marked by the crises of the action-image. *Last Year . . .* was itself an important point in this crisis: the failure of sensory-motor models, the wandering of characters, the rise of clichés and postcards were a constant inspiration in Robbe-Grillet's work. And in his work the bonds of the captive woman do not just have erotic and sadistic value, they are the simplest way to stop the movement.⁷ But in Resnais too, wanderings, immobilizations, petrifications and repetitions are constant evidence of a general dissolution of the action-image. The second level is that of the real and the imaginary: it has been noted that, for Resnais, there is always something real which persists, and notably spatio-temporal co-ordinates maintaining their reality, even though they come into conflict with the imaginary. It is in this way that Resnais maintains that something actually did happen 'Last Year . . .', and, in his subsequent films, establishes a topography and a chronology which are all the more rigorous because what happens in them is imaginary or mental.⁸ While in Robbe-Grillet everything happens 'in the head' of the characters, or, better, of

the viewer himself. Yet this difference exhibited by Robbe-Grillet is hardly the point. Nothing happens in the viewer's head which does not derive from the character of the image. We have seen that, in the image, a distinction is always made between the real and the imaginary, the objective and the subjective, the physical and the mental, and the actual and the virtual, but that this distinction becomes reversible, and in that sense indiscernible. *Distinct and yet indiscernible* – these are the characteristics of the imaginary and the real in each of the two authors. So that the difference between the two can only appear in other ways. It would present itself rather in the manner identified by Mireille Latil: large continuums of real and imaginary in Resnais, in contrast to Robbe-Grillet's discontinuous blocs or 'shocks'. But this new criterion seems incapable of development at the level of the imaginary-real pair; a third level must necessarily intervene – this is time.⁹

Robbe-Grillet himself suggests that the difference between himself and Resnais must ultimately be sought at the level of time. The dissolution of the action-image, and the indiscernibility which results, sometimes take place in favour of an 'architecture of time' (this would be the case with Resnais), sometimes in favour of a 'perpetual present' cut off from its temporality, that is, of a structure stripped of time (the case of Robbe-Grillet himself).¹⁰ Nevertheless, here again we should not rush into thinking that a perpetual present implies less time-image than an eternal past. The present belongs no less to time than the pure past. The difference is thus in the nature of the time-image, which is plastic in one case and architectural in the other. For Resnais conceived *Last Year* . . . like his other films, in the form of sheets or regions of past, while Robbe-Grillet sees time in the form of points of present. If *Last Year* . . . could be divided, the man X might be said to be closer to Resnais, and the woman A closer to Robbe-Grillet. The man basically tries to envelop the woman with continuous sheets of which the present is the narrowest, like the advance of a wave, whilst the woman, at times wary, at times stiff, at times almost convinced, jumps from one bloc to another, continually crossing an abyss between two points, two simultaneous presents. In any event, the two authors, we shall see, are no longer in the domain of the real and the imaginary but in time, in the even more alarming domain of the true and the false. Of course the real and the imaginary continue their circuit, but only as the base of a higher figure. This is no longer, or no longer only, the

indiscernible becoming of distinct images; it is *undecidable alternatives* between circles of past, *inextricable differences* between peaks of present. With Resnais and Robbe-Grillet, an understanding occurs, all the stronger for being based on two opposed conceptions of time which crashed into each other. The coexistence of sheets of virtual past, and the simultaneity of peaks of de-actualized present, are the two direct signs of time itself.

In an animated film, *Chronopolis*, Piotr Kamler fashioned time out of two elements, small balls manipulated with pointed instruments, and supple sheets covering the balls. The two elements formed moments, polished and crystal spheres, but these quickly darkened, unless . . . (we shall see the sequel of this animated story later).

2

It is a mistake to think of the cinematographic image as being by nature in the present. Yet Robbe-Grillet on occasion assumes this attitude for his own purposes, in a strategic or mocking way: after all, why would he devote so much care to achieving present-images if this were a given of the image? And the first occasion on which a direct time-image was seen in the cinema was not in the (even implicit) mode of the present but, on the contrary, in the form of sheets of past, with Welles's *Citizen Kane*. Here time became out of joint and reversed its dependent relation to movement; temporality showed itself as it really was for the first time, but in the form of a coexistence of large regions to be explored. The scheme of *Citizen Kane* may appear simple: Kane being dead, witnesses who offer their recollection-images in a series of subjective flashbacks are questioned. But it is more complex than this. The investigation is focused on 'Rosebud' (what is it? or what does this word mean?). And the investigator carries out soundings; each of the witnesses questioned will be equivalent to a slice of Kane's life, a circle or sheet of virtual past, a continuum. And each time the question is: is it in this continuum, is it in this sheet, that lies the thing (the being) called Rosebud? It is true that these regions of past have a chronological course which is that of the former presents to which they refer. But if this course can easily be upset it is precisely because in themselves, and in relation to the actual present where the quest begins (Kane

dead), they are all coexistent, each containing the whole of Kane's life in one form or another. Each has what Bergson calls 'shining points', singularities, but each collects around these points the totality of Kane or his life as a whole as a 'vague nebulosity'.¹¹ Of course, it is on these sheets that the witnesses will draw to evoke the recollection-images, that is, to reconstitute the former presents. But they are themselves as different from the recollection-images which actualize them as the pure past may be from the former present which it was. Each witness jumps into the past in general and at once installs himself in one or another coexisting region, before embodying certain points of the region in a recollection-image.

What shows that unity does not lie in the recollection-image is that the latter bursts out in two directions. It induces two kinds of very distinct images, and *Citizen Kane's* famous montage determines the continuity of the relations between the two (rhythm). The first kind of image reconstitutes motor-series of former presents, 'events' [*actualités*] or habits. These are the cross-cutting *shot-reaction shots*, the succession of which shows Kane's habits as a married man, bleak days and idle periods. It is the short overall shots whose superimpression shows the cumulative effect of a desire on Kane's part (to make Susan a singer). Sartre saw in this the equivalent of the frequentative in English, the tense of habit or the passing present. But what happens when Susan's accumulated efforts emerge into a scene in long shot and depth of field, her suicide attempt? This time, the image moves to a true exploration of a sheet of past. The images in depth express regions of past as such, each with its own accents or potentials, and mark critical moments in Kane's will to power. The hero acts, walks and moves; but it is the past that he plunges himself into and moves in: time is no longer subordinated to movement, but movement to time. Hence in the great scene where Kane catches up in depth with the friend he will break with, it is in the past that he himself moves; this movement *was* the break with the friend. And, at the beginning of *Mr Arkadin*, the adventurer who advances in the great court re-emerges from a past whose zones he will make us explore.¹² In short, in the second case the recollection-image does not pass on in a succession of former presents which it reconstitutes but goes beyond itself into regions of coexisting past which make it possible. This is the function of depth of field: to explore each time a region of past, a continuum.

Do we have to reconsider the problems of depth of field that

Bazin was able to propose and resolve by inventing the notion of 'sequence shot'? The first problem concerned the novelty of the process. And it seems true, in this respect, that depth reigned supreme in the image from the beginning of the cinema, as long as there was neither montage nor cutting, nor camera mobility, and while the different spatial shots were necessarily given all together. Nor does it come to an end even when shots become really distinct but can be joined together in a new whole which relates each to itself. There are already two forms of depth here which do not allow themselves to become confused in the cinema, any more than in painting. They have in common, however, the fact that they constitute a depth in the image or field and not yet a depth of field, or a depth of image. If we think of sixteenth-century painting, we can see a clear distinction, but one which takes place in parallel and successive planes [*plans*], each autonomous, defined by characters or elements side by side, while they all contribute to the whole. But each plane, especially the first, performs its own task and stands only for itself in the grand business of the painting which harmonizes them. It will be a novel change, and crucial, in the seventeenth century, when an element of a plane refers directly to an element of a different plane, when characters address each other directly from one plane to another, in an organization of the picture along the diagonal, or through a gap which thus privileges the background and brings it into immediate touch with the foreground. The picture 'is internally hollowed out'. At this moment, depth becomes depth of field, whilst the dimensions of the foreground take on an abnormal size, and those of the background are reduced, in a violent perspective which does even more to unite the near and the faraway.¹³

The same story runs through the cinema. For a long time, depth was produced by a simple juxtaposition of independent shots [*plans*], a succession of parallel planes [*plans*] in the image: the conquest of Babylon in Griffith's *Intolerance*, for instance, shows the lines of defence of the besieged in depth, from foreground to background, each with its own importance and connecting neighbouring elements into a harmonious whole. Welles invents a depth of field, in a very different way, along a diagonal or gap crossing all planes, making elements from each interact with the rest, and in particular having the background in direct contact with the foreground (as in the suicide scene where Kane bursts in through the door at the back, tiny, while Susan is

dying in the shadow in mid-shot and the large mirror is seen in close-up. Diagonals like this will be seen in Wyler, as in *The Best Years of Our Life*, when a character is busy in a secondary, but picturesque, scene in the foreground while another character makes a crucial telephone call in the background: the first watches the second along a diagonal which joins the back to the front, and makes them react. Before Welles, the only precursors in depth of field seem to have been Renoir, with *La règle du jeu*, and Stroheim, particularly in *Greed*. Increasing depth by the use of wide angles, Welles obtains gigantic dimensions in the foreground connected to reductions of size in the background, which becomes all the more powerful; the light-centre is at the back, while masses of shadow are allowed to take up the foreground and the whole is scored with stark contrasts; ceilings inevitably become apparent, whether in the placing of a height which is itself enormous, or, in contrast, in a crushing which follows the perspective. The volume of each body overflows any given plane [*plan*], plunging into or emerging from shadow and expressing the relationship of this body with the others located in front or behind: an art of masses. The term 'baroque' or neo-expressionism is literally appropriate. In this freeing of depth which now subordinates all other dimensions we should see not only the conquest of a continuum but the temporal nature of this continuum: it is a continuity of duration which means that the unbridled depth is of time and no longer of space.¹⁴ It is irreducible to the dimensions of space. As long as depth remained caught in the simple succession of parallel planes, it already represented time, but in an indirect way which kept it subordinate to space and movement. The new depth, in contrast, directly forms a region of time, a region of past which is defined by optical aspects or elements borrowed from interacting planes.¹⁵ It is a set of non-localizable connections, always from one plane to another, which constitutes the region of past or the continuum of duration.

The second problem concerns the function of this depth of field. We know that Bazin gave it a function of reality, since the viewer had to organize his perception himself in the image instead of receiving it ready-made. Mitry denied this, seeing in depth of field a no less restrictive organization which forces the viewer to follow the diagonal or gap. Bazin's position was nevertheless complex: he showed that this gain in reality could be achieved only through an 'excess of theatricality' as we saw in *La*

règle du jeu.¹⁶ But neither a function of theatricality nor one of reality seems to exhaust this complicated problem. We suggest that depth of field has many functions, and that they all come together in a direct time-image. The special quality of depth of field would be to reverse time's subordination to movement and show time for itself. We are not saying that depth of field has the exclusive rights to the time-image. For there are many other kinds of direct time-images. There are time-images which are formed through suppression of depth (depth in the field as well as depth of field) and this case of the planitude of the image itself has a number of forms; it is a varied concept of time since the processes are not the same in Dreyer, Robbe-Grillet, Syberberg . . . Our point is that depth of field creates a certain type of direct time-image that can be defined by memory, virtual regions of past, the aspects of each region. This would be less a function of reality than a function of remembering, of temporalization: not exactly a recollection but 'an invitation to recollect . . .'

We must note the fact before trying to explain it: most of the occasions where depth of field appears wholly necessary are in connection with memory. And here again cinema is Bergsonian: it is not a case of a psychological memory, made up of recollection-images, as the flashback can conventionally represent it. It is not a case of a succession of presents passing according to chronological time. It is a case *either* of an attempt to evoke, produced in an actual present, and preceding the formation of recollection-images, *or* of the exploration of a sheet of past from which these recollection-images will later arise. It is an on-this-side-of and a beyond of psychological memory: the two poles of a metaphysics of memory. These two extremes of memory are presented by Bergson as follows: the extension of sheets of past and the contraction of the actual present.¹⁷ And the two are connected, since to evoke recollection is to jump into a region of past where one assumes that it is lying in a virtual state, all the sheets or regions coexisting in relation to the contracted actual present from which the evocation proceeds (whilst they follow each other psychologically in relation to the presents that they were). What must be noted is that depth of field sometimes shows us evocation in the act of occurring and sometimes virtual sheets of past that we explore in order to find the recollection sought. The first case, contraction, often appears in *Citizen Kane*: a high-angle shot, for instance, bears down on an alcoholic Susan lost in the big room at the club in such a way as to force her to

evoke. In another case, in *The Magnificent Ambersons*, a whole scene maintained in depth is justified because the young boy wants, without appearing to want, to force his aunt to remember a recollection that is crucial for him.¹⁸ And similarly, in *The Trial*, the low-angle shot at the beginning marks the starting-point of the hero's efforts as he searches at all costs for what the law is charging him with. The second case can be seen in most of the scenes in transverse depth in *Citizen Kane*, where each corresponds to a sheet of past of which it is asked: is it here that the virtual secret, Rosebud, is lying? And in *Mr Arkadin*, where the successive characters are sheets of past, stages towards other sheets, all coexisting in relation to the contracted initial effort. It is quite clear that the recollection-image is of little interest in itself, but that it presupposes two things which go beyond it: a variation in the sheets of pure past where it can be found and a contraction of the actual present which is the starting-point of the continually renewed search. Depth of field will go from one to the other, from extreme contraction to large sheets and vice versa. Welles 'deforms space and time simultaneously; dilating and contracting them in turn, he dominates or gets deep inside a situation'.¹⁹ The high- and low-angle shots form contractions, just as oblique and lateral tracking shots form sheets. Depth of field feeds on these two sources of memory. Not the recollection-image (or flashback) but the actual effort of evocation, to summon this up, and the exploration of virtual zones of past, to find, choose and bring it back.

Many critics today consider depth of field to be a technical procedure which is in danger of hiding from us still more important innovations on Welles's part. These innovations indeed exist. But depth retains its full importance, beyond a technique, if we take it as a function of remembering, that is, a figure of temporalization. It then gives rise to all kinds of adventures of the memory, which are not so much psychological accidents as misadventures of time, disturbances of its constitution. Welles's films develop these problems according to a rigorous progression. Bergson distinguished two main instances: the past recollection may still be evoked in an image, but the latter is now useless, because the present from which the evocation set off has lost its motor-extension which would make the image usable; or, secondly, the recollection can no longer be evoked in an image, although it persists in a region of past, but the actual present can no longer reach it. In one case recollections 'are still

evoked but can no longer be applied to corresponding perceptions', in the other 'evocation of recollections is itself prevented'.²⁰ We find the dramatic equivalent of these instances in Welles's films where temporalization operates through memory.

It all begins with *Citizen Kane*. It has often been said that depth internalized montage in the scene, in the *mise-en-scène*, but this is only partly correct. The sequence shot is clearly a sheet of past, with its nebulae and shining points which will feed the recollection-image and determine what it retains from a former present. But montage persists in its own right under three other aspects: the relation between the sequence shots or sheets of past and the short shots of passing presents; the relation of the sheets between themselves, each with the others (as Burch remarked, the longer a shot is, the more important it is to know where and how to end it); the relation of the sheets to the contracted actual present which evokes them. In this respect, each witness in *Citizen Kane* makes his effort to evoke, which corresponds to the sheet of past to which he is committed. But all of these efforts coincide in the actuality of 'Kane has just died, Kane is dead' which constitutes a kind of given, fixed point from the outset (similarly in *Mr Arkadin* and *Othello*). And it is in relation to death as a fixed point where all the sheets of past coexist; childhood, youth, the adult and the old man. If montage, therefore, remains the cinematographic act *par excellence* in Welles it none the less changes its meaning: instead of producing an indirect image of time on the basis of movement, it will organize the order of non-chronological coexistences or relations in the direct time-image. Diverse sheets of past will be evoked and will embody their aspects in recollection-images. And, on each occasion, it is on the theme: is it here that the pure recollection 'Rosebud' lies? Rosebud will not be found in any of the regions explored, even though it is in one of them, in that of childhood, but so deeply buried that it is overlooked. Moreover, when Rosebud becomes embodied from its own movement in an image it is strictly *for nobody*, in the hearth where the discarded sledge burns. Not only could Rosebud have been anything; in so far as it is something, it goes down into an image which burns independently, is totally pointless and of interest to no one.²¹ It thereby casts suspicion on all the sheets of past which have been evoked by the various characters, even the ones who were interested: the images to which they gave rise were perhaps useless in turn, since there is no

longer a present to welcome them, and because Kane died alone, recognizing the emptiness of his whole life, the sterility of all his sheets.

In *The Magnificent Ambersons*, it is no longer a suspicion induced by the singularity 'Rosebud' but a certainty which crashes headlong into the whole. The sheets of past can still be evoked and summoned: Isabelle's marriage of pride, George's childhood, his youth, the Amberson family . . . But the images that are drawn from these are now quite useless because they can no longer be inserted into a present which would extend them into action: the town has been so transformed, the new motivity of cars has replaced that of carriages, the present has changed so profoundly that the recollections can no longer be used. This is why the film does not begin with a death, but with a commentary which precedes any image, and which finds its conclusion at the moment when the fall of the family has taken place: 'It is done, but those who wanted to be present were dead, and those who were alive had forgotten the man and what they wanted.' The recollections have lost all extension, now being useless even to give pleasure to the prophets and vengeance-seekers. The infiltration of death is so complete that there is no longer a need for a death at the beginning. All the evocations coincide with deaths, and every death coincides with the sublime death of the major, in the course of the film: 'He knew that he had to prepare himself for entering an unknown region where he wasn't even sure of being recognized as an Amberson.' The recollections fall into the void because the present has hidden itself and goes elsewhere, withdrawing any possible insertion from them. Yet it is doubtful that Welles simply wishes to show the vanity of the past. If there is a nihilism in Welles, it is not here. Death as fixed point has a different meaning. What he is showing – already in *Citizen Kane* – is this: as soon as we reach the sheets of past it is as if we were carried away by the undulations of a great wave, time gets out of joint, and we enter into temporality as a state of *permanent crisis*.²²

A third step is taken with *The Lady from Shanghai*. Previously the sheets of past went beyond the recollection-images in all directions; but their evocation made them produce images of this kind even if these images were floating and had no other application but death. The new situation is very different: the sheets or regions of past are always there, and can still be distinguished, yet they can no longer be evoked and are now accompanied by no

recollection-image. But then how are they distinguished, since no recollection-image is responsible for them or draws its trademark from them? It is as if the past surfaces in itself but in the shape of personalities which are independent, alienated, off-balance, in some sense embryonic, strangely active fossils, radioactive, inexplicable in the present where they surface, and all the more harmful and autonomous. Not recollections but hallucinations. Madness, the split personality, now shows the past. The story of *The Lady from Shanghai* is that of an initially naïve hero caught in the past of others, captured, snapped up (there is a similarity here with Minnelli's subjects, without going so far as to talk of influence, which would not please Welles). We have three characters in turmoil, like three sheets of past who come and submerge the hero, without his being able to evoke anything of these sheets or even decide between them. There is Grisby, the man who appears like a spring-loaded devil; and on this sheet the hero finds himself hunted for murder, when what had been suggested to him was apparently a fake murder. There is the lawyer Bannister, with his cane, his paralysis and his outrageous limp, who wants to get him sentenced when he suggested to him a cast-iron defence. There is the woman, the lunatic queen of the Chinese quarter, by whom he is totally obsessed, whilst she makes use of his love, from the depth of an indecipherable Oriental past. The hero becomes all the more crazy because he can recognize nothing of these pasts which are realized in alienated personalities, and perhaps projections of his own past which have become independent.²³ And still the Others exist, have a reality and run the game in *The Lady from Shanghai*. A fourth step will be taken in *Mr Arkadin*: how to make *one's own* past incapable of being recalled? The hero will have to feign amnesia in order to send off an investigator who must locate the immature personalities emanating from the regions of this past, haunting different places which are now only stages in the exploration of time. These witnesses will be murdered one by one by Arkadin as he follows the trails of the investigation. He makes out that he is recouping all the splits in himself into a grandiose, paranoid unity which would know nothing but a present without memory, true amnesia at last. Welles's nihilism finds a way of being expressed which is inherited from Nietzsche: suppress your recollections, or suppress yourselves . . . The fact that everything begins and ends with the disappearance of Arkadin, as in *Citizen Kane*, does not stop the inexorable progress from one film to the next: Welles is

no longer content to show the pointlessness of an evocation of the past, in a permanent state of crisis of time; he shows the impossibility of any evocation, the becoming-impossible of evocation in a still more fundamental state of time. The regions of past will keep their secret, and the call to recollection remains empty. The investigator will not even tell what he knows, but, under the pressure of time, will only beg the girl to say that he has told her it.

The Trial links up with *Mr Arkadin*. In which sheet of past is the hero to look for the offence that he is guilty of? He can no longer recall anything about it, but the whole of it is hallucinatory. Characters fixed to the spot and a veiled statue. There is the region of women, there is the region of books, that of childhood and of little girls, that of art and that of religion. The present is no more than an empty door from where the past can no longer be recalled, since it has already left while it was being waited for. Each region of the past will be explored in these long shots of which Welles has the secret: for instance, the long race in a trellised walk whilst the hero is pursued by a crowd of shouting little girls (*The Lady from Shanghai* already showed a comparable race by the pseudo-murderer in a trellised space). But the regions of past no longer release recollection-images; they set free hallucinatory presences: women, books, little girls, homosexuality, paintings. Except, in all this, it is as if certain sheets have subsided, and others risen in such a way that here and there there are juxtapositions of one particular age with a different one, as in archaeology. *Nothing is decidable any more*: the coexisting sheets now juxtapose their segments. The most serious book is also a pornographic book; the most threatening adults are also children that you smack; women are at the disposition of justice, but justice is perhaps managed by little girls; and is the lawyer's secretary, with her webbed fingers, a woman, a little girl, a skimmed-through file? It is as if by breaking up and becoming unbalanced the regions of past have entered into the element of a superior justice which stirs them up; from a past in general where existences pay each other the price of their injustice (according to a pre-Socratic formulation). Welles's success in relation to Kafka is that he was able to show how spatially distant and chronologically separate regions were in touch with each other, at the bottom of a limitless time which made them contiguous: this is what depth of field is used for, the areas which are the furthest apart are in direct contact in the background.²⁴ But what is this background

common to all the sheets, from which they emerge and into which they go back on breaking up? What is this superior justice, which all the regions are merely secondary to?

The sheets of past exist, they are strata from where we draw our recollection-images. But either they are in any case unusable, because death is a permanent present, the most contracted region; or they can no longer be recalled because they are breaking up and becoming twisted, scattered in a non-stratified substance. And perhaps the two cases come together; perhaps we find the universal substance only at the contracted point of death. But there is no confusion in this; these are two different states of time, time as perpetual crisis and, at a deeper level, time as primary matter, immense and terrifying, like universal becoming. There is a passage in Herman Melville which seems specially intended for Welles: we go from bandage to bandage, from stratum to stratum at the heart of the pyramid, at the cost of terrible effort, and all that to discover that there is no one in the funeral chamber – unless it is here that 'the substance without stratification' begins.²⁵ This is definitely not a transcendent element; but it is an immanent justice, the earth, and its non-chronological order in so far as each of us is directly from it and not from parents: autochthony. It is in the earth that we die and atone for our birth. In Welles, the usual way of dying is flat on your stomach, the body already in the earth, dragging yourself, crawling. All the coexistent strata are in touch and adjacent to each other in a muddy vital medium. The earth as primordial time of the autochthonous. And this is what the cohort of Welles's great characters see: the hero of *Touch of Evil* who dies in the wet, blackish earth; the one in *Trial* who dies in the hole in the ground, and, earlier, Major Amberson in great pain, speaking with difficulty: '– and us, we came out of the earth . . . So in any case we ought to be in the earth . . .' The earth was able to sink beneath the waters in order to sustain its primitive monsters, as in the aquarium scene and the story of the sharks in *The Lady from Shanghai*. And *Macbeth*, especially *Macbeth*. It is here that Bazin was able to see the element of Welles's characters: 'This creosoted cardboard set, these barbarian Scotsmen, wearing animal-skins and brandishing a kind of lance-cross made of gnarled wood, these strange places tinkling with water and crowned by mists which prevent any hint of a sky that would probably not have any stars in it, literally constitute a universe of prehistory, not that of our ancestors the Gauls or the

but a prehistory of consciousness at the birth of time and sin, when sky and earth, water and fire, good and evil are not yet clearly separated.²⁶

3

Resnais is perhaps closest to Welles, his most independent and creative disciple, who transforms the whole problem. For, in Welles, a fixed point persists, even if it is in contact with the earth (low-angle shot). It is a present offered to our view, someone's death, sometimes given from the start, sometimes prefigured. It is also a sound-present, the story-teller's voice, the voice-off, which constitutes a radiophonic centre whose role is essential in Welles.²⁷ And it is in relation to this fixed point that all the strata or sheets of past coexist and confront each other. Now the first novelty in Resnais is the disappearance of the centre or fixed point. Death does not fix an actual present, so numerous are the dead who haunt the sheets of past ('9 million dead haunt this landscape', '200,000 dead in 9 seconds . . .'). The voice-off is no longer central, either because it enters into relationships of dissonance with the visual image or because it is divided or multiplied (the different voices which say 'I was born . . .' in *My American Uncle*). As a general rule, the present begins to float, struck with uncertainty, dispersed in the characters' comings and goings or already absorbed by the past.²⁸ Even in the machine for going back in time (*Je t'aime je t'aime*) the present defined by the four minutes of decompression required does not have the time to become fixed, to be counted, but will send the guinea-pig back to levels that are always different. In *Muriel*, the new Boulogne has no centre, any more than the flat with the provisional furniture: none of the people has a present, except perhaps the last who finds only emptiness. In short, the confrontation between sheets of past take place directly, each capable of being present in relation to the next: for the woman, Hiroshima will be the present of Nevers, but for the man, Nevers will be the present of Hiroshima. Resnais had begun with a collective memory, that of the Nazi concentration camps, that of Guernica, that of the Bibliothèque Nationale. But he discovers the paradox of a memory for two people, or a memory for several: the different levels of past no longer relate to a single character, a single family,

or a single group, but to quite different characters as to unconnected places which make up a world-memory. He attains a generalized relativity, and takes to its conclusion what was only a direction in Welles: constructing *undecidable alternatives* between sheets of past. In this way we can also understand his antagonism to Robbe-Grillet, and the productive ambiguity of the two authors' collaboration: an architecture of the memory such that it explains or develops the coexistent levels of past rather than an art of peaks which implies simultaneous presents. In both cases there is a disappearance of the centre or fixed point, but in opposite ways.²⁹

Let us try to make some data sheets which would indicate an order of progress in certain of Resnais' films, rather than a dialectic and oppositions. *Je t'aime je t'aime*: despite the apparatus of science fiction, this is the simplest figure of time, because here memory concerns only one character. It is true that the memory-machine does not consist in recollecting but in reliving a precise moment of the past. However, what is possible for the animal, the mouse, is impossible for the man. For the man the past moment is like a shining point which belongs to a sheet and cannot be detached from it. An ambiguous moment can take part in two sheets, love for Catrine and the decline of this love.³⁰ So that the hero will only be able to relive it by crossing these sheets again, and by, from that moment, crossing many others (before he knew Catrine, after Catrine's death . . .) All kinds of regions are thus stirred up in the memory of a man jumping from one to the other, and seem to emerge one after another from an original swamp, universal lapping embodied by the eternal nature of Catrine ('You are still, you are a swamp, of night, of mud . . . You smell of low tide . . .'). *Last Year in Marienbad* is a more complex figure, because here the memory is for two characters. But it is a memory which is still shared, since it refers to the same givens, affirmed by one of them and refused or denied by the other. What happens is that the character X revolves in a circuit of past which includes A as shining point, as 'aspect', whilst A is in regions which do not include X or do so only in a nebulous way. Will A allow herself to be attracted into X's sheet, or will the latter be shattered and unhinged by A's resistances which are rolled up in her own sheets? *Hiroshima mon amour* complicates matters still more. There are two characters, but each has his or her own memory which is foreign to the other. There is no longer anything at all in common. It is like two incommensurable regions

of past, Hiroshima and Nevers. And while the Japanese refuses the woman entry into his own region ('I've seen everything . . . everything . . . You've seen nothing in Hiroshima, nothing . . .'), the woman draws the Japanese into hers, willingly and with his consent, up to a certain point. Is this not a way for each of them to forget his or her own memory, and make a memory for two, as if memory was now becoming world, detaching itself from their persons? *Muriel*: there are two memories again, each marked by a war, Boulogne and Algeria. But this time each one includes several sheets or regions of past which refer to the different characters: three levels concerning the letter from Boulogne (the man who has written the letter, the man who has or has not sent it and the woman who has not received it); two levels concerning the Algerian war (the young soldier and the hotel-owner). This is a memory world, for several people, and at several levels, who contradict, accuse and grab each other. *La guerre est finie* does not, it seems to us, signal a mutation, a return to the present, but a deepening of the same problem. For the hero's present is itself no more than an 'age', a certain age of Spain which is never given as present. There is the age of the civil war, in which the committee in exile remains fixed. There is the new age of the young radical terrorists. And the present of the hero, an 'official' [*permanent*] of the organization, is itself only an age of Spain, a level which is distinct from that of the civil war no less than from the young generation who have not experienced it. What appeared as past, present and future is just as much three ages of Spain, so that something new is produced, whether in the deciding between them or at the edge of undecidability. The idea of age tends to become distinct, to take on an autonomous political, historical, or archaeological range. *My American Uncle* will continue this exploration of ages: three characters each of whom has several levels and several ages. There are constants: each age, each sheet, will be defined by a territory, lines of flight and blockages of these lines; these are the topological and cartological limits proposed by Laborit. But the distribution varies from one age to another and from one character to another. The ages become ages of the world, in their variations, because they concern animals as such (man and mouse rediscover a common fate, contrary to what happened in *Je t'aime je t'aime*), but also because they concern a superhuman cosmos, the island and its treasure. It is in this sense that Bergson spoke of durations which are inferior and superior to man, all coexisting. *Life is a Bed of Roses* finally develops the idea

of three ages in its own right; three ages of the world, three ages of the château, three coexisting ages related to the human, but each possessing and absorbing its own characters rather than all relating to given people: the age of the Ancient, and utopia; the age of the Modern, and the conference, the techno-democratic organization; the age of Childhood, and legend. Throughout Resnais' work we plunge into a memory which overflows the conditions of psychology, memory for two, memory for several, memory-world, memory-ages of the world.

But the question as a whole remains: what are the sheets of past in the cinema of Resnais, whether levels of a single memory, regions of several memories, creation of a memory-world, or demonstration of the ages of the world? We must distinguish several aspects here. In the first place, each sheet of past is a continuum. If Resnais' tracking shots are famous it is because they define, or rather construct, continuums, circuits of variable speed, following the shelving in the Bibliothèque Nationale, becoming immersed in the paintings of some period of Van Gogh. But it seems to be a characteristic of each continuum, within one type, to be pliable. This is what mathematicians call 'the Brouwer transformation': a square may be pulled into a rectangle whose two halves will form a new square, with the result that the total surface is redistributed with each transformation. If we take the smallest imaginable region of this surface, two infinitely close points will end up being separated, each allocated to one half, at the end of a certain number of transformations.³¹ Each transformation has an 'internal age', and we may think of a coexistence of sheets or continuums of different ages. This coexistence or these transformations form a topology. For instance, the different sections correspond to each of the characters in *My American Uncle*, or the various periods of *Van Gogh*: so many strata. In *Last Year in Marienbad*, we are in a situation for two characters, A and X, such that X settles on a sheet where he is very close to A, whilst A is on a sheet of a different age where she is on the contrary distant and separated from X. These are not simply accentuated geometric figures; it is the third character, M, who is witness here of the transformation of a single continuum. The question of knowing if two continuums of a different type, each having a 'middle age', can in turn be assimilated to the transformation of a single one surfaces with *Hiroshima mon amour*, in such a way that one is a modification of the other in all its regions: Hiroshima – Nevers (or from one character to the other in *My*

American Uncle). It is in this way that the notion of age, ages of the world and ages of memory, is profoundly justified in Resnais' cinema: events do not just succeed each other or simply follow a chronological course; they are constantly being rearranged according to whether they belong to a particular sheet of past, a particular continuum of age, all of which coexist. Did X know A or not? Did Ridder kill Catrine, or was it an accident, in *Je t'aime je t'aime*? Was the letter in *Muriel* sent and not received, and who wrote it? These are undecidable alternatives between sheets of past, because their transformations are strictly probabilistic from the point of view of the coexistence of ages. Everything depends on which sheet you are located on. And this is always the difference that we find between Resnais and Robbe-Grillet: what one gets through discontinuity of peaks of present (leaps), the other obtains by transformation of continuous sheets of past. There is a statistical probabilism in Resnais which is completely different from the indeterminism of the 'quantum' type in Robbe-Grillet.

Yet Resnais has subdued the discontinuous as much as Robbe-Grillet has subdued continuity. This is the second aspect which we see in Resnais, deriving from the first. What happens is that the transformations or new distributions of a continuum consistently and inevitably end in a fragmentation: a region, no matter how small, will be fragmented, at the same time as its closest points will each move into a half; every region of a continuum 'may begin by changing shape in a continuous way but will end up being cut in two, and its parts will in turn be fragmented' (Stengers). *Muriel*, and especially *Je t'aime je t'aime*, exhibit this inevitable fragmentation of sheets of past to the highest degree. But before them *Van Gogh* created a coexistence of periods the last of which, the one in Provence, speeds up the tracking shots across the canvases, and also multiplies the cutting shots and extends the dissolves into black, in a 'hacked montage' [*montage haché*] which ends in deep blackness.³² In short, the continuums or strata continually fragment at the same time as they become rearranged, from one age to another. In *Je t'aime je t'aime*, a perpetual stirring will make what was faraway close and what was close faraway. The continuum continually fragments, to give a different continuum, itself in course of fragmentation. The fragmentations are inseparable from the topology, that is, from the transformation of a continuum. We see here a technical stress which is essential in the cinema. Just as with Welles, as we shall see, short montage is not

opposed to wide shots or tracking shots: montage is in strict correlation with these, and marks the age of their transformation. As Godard remarked, Resnais sometimes does a tracking shot with two fixed shots, but he also produces a fragmentation by tracking, for instance from the Japanese river to the banks of the Loire.³³ It is perhaps in *Providence* that cut and continuum attain the highest unity: the one brings together states of body (organic rattlings), states of world (storm and thunder), states of history (bursts of machine-gun fire, bombs exploding), whilst the other carries out the redistributions and transformations of these states. As in mathematics, cuts no longer indicate continuity solutions but variable distributions between the points of a continuum.

In the third place, Resnais has never disguised his liking, in his preparatory works, for a complete biography of the characters, a detailed cartography of the places they go to and their itineraries, an establishment of diagrams in a true sense: even *Last Year . . .* is caught up in this requirement of his. For biographies already allow him to delimit the different 'ages' of each character. But, in addition, a map corresponds to each age, that is, to a continuum or a sheet of past. And the diagram is the set of transformations of the continuum, the piling-up of strata or the superimposing of coexistent sheets. The maps and diagrams survive, then, as integral parts of the film. The maps appear, first, as descriptions of objects, places and landscapes: series of objects are used as witnesses from *Van Gogh*, to *Muriel* and to *My American Uncle*.³⁴ But these objects are above all functional, and function in Resnais is not the simple use of the object but the mental function or level of thought which corresponds to it: 'Resnais conceives of cinema not as an instrument for representing reality but as the best way of approaching the way the mind functions.'³⁵ *Van Gogh* already set out to deal with painted things as real objects whose functions would be the artist's 'internal world'. And what makes *Night and Fog* so overpowering is that Resnais succeeds in showing, by means of things and victims, not only the functioning of the camp but also the mental functions, which are cold, diabolical, almost impossible to understand, which preside over its organization. In the Bibliothèque Nationale the books, trolleys, shelving, stairs, lifts and corridors constitute the elements and levels of a gigantic memory where men themselves are only mental functions, or 'neuronic messengers'.³⁶ As a result of this functionalism, cartography is essentially mental, cerebral, and Resnais has always said

that what interested him was the brain, the brain as world, as memory, as 'memory of the world'. It is in the most concrete way that Resnais attains a cinema, creates a cinema which has only one single character, Thought. Each map is in this sense a mental continuum, that is, a sheet of past which makes a distribution of functions correspond to a distribution of objects. The cartographical method and coexistence of maps in Resnais may be distinguished from the photographic method in Robbe-Grillet, and his simultaneity of snapshots, even when the two methods result in a common product. In Resnais, the diagram will be a superimposing of maps which define a set of transformations from sheet to sheet, with redistributions of functions and fragmentations of objects: the superimposed ages of Auschwitz. *My American Uncle* will be a grand attempt at diagrammatic mental cartography, where maps are superimposed and transformed, in a single character and from one character to the next.

But, in the fourth place, it is the accent on memory which seems to create a problem. It is obvious that, if memory is reduced to the recollection-image and flashback, Resnais makes no special provision for it and has little to do with it. It is not difficult to show that dreams and nightmares, fantasies, hypotheses and anticipations, all forms of the imaginary, are more important than flashbacks.³⁷ It is true that there are some well-known ones in *Hiroshima mon amour*, but in *Last Year in Marienbad* we can no longer tell what is flashback and what is not; and in *Muriel* there are none, likewise with *Je t'aime je t'aime* ('There are absolutely no flashbacks or anything of the sort,' says Resnais). *Night and Fog* could even be thought of as the sum of all the ways of escaping from the flashback, and the false piety of the recollection-image. But in this way we are not going beyond an observation that holds good for all the great film-makers of time: the flashback is just a useful convention which, when it is employed, must always be justified from elsewhere. In Resnais' case, however, this inadequacy of the flashback does not stop his work as a whole being based on the coexistence of sheets of past, the present no longer even intervening as centre of evocation. The machine of *Je t'aime je t'aime* stirs up and fragments sheets of past in which the character is totally caught up and relives. *Night and Fog* sets out to invent a memory which is all the more alive for no longer passing through recollection-image. How can we explain such an apparently paradoxical situation?

We must go back to the Bergsonian distinction between the

'pure recollection', which is always virtual, and 'the recollection-image', which makes it actual only in relation to a present. In a crucial passage, Bergson says that pure recollection should definitely not be confused with the recollection-image which derives from it; it remains a 'magnetizer' behind the hallucinations which it prompts.³⁸ On each occasion, pure recollection is in a sheet or continuum which is preserved in time. Each sheet of past has its distribution, its fragmentation, its shining points, its nebulae, in short an age. When I take up position on such a sheet, two things can happen: either I discover there the point I was looking for, which will thus be actualized in a recollection-image, but it is clear that the latter does not possess in itself the mark of the past which it only inherits; or I do not discover the point, because it is on a different sheet which is inaccessible to me, belonging to a different age. *Last Year in Marienbad* is precisely a story of magnetism, hypnotism, in which we might say that X has recollection-images and that A does not, or only very vague ones, because they are not on the same sheet.³⁹ But a third case can arise: we constitute a continuum with fragments of different ages; we make use of transformations which take place between two sheets to constitute a sheet of transformation. For instance, in a dream, there is no longer one recollection-image which embodies one particular point of a given sheet; there are a number of images which are embodied within each other, each referring to a different point of the sheet. Perhaps, when we read a book, watch a show, or look at a painting, and especially when we are ourselves the author, an analogous process can be triggered: we constitute a sheet of transformation which invents a kind of transverse continuity or communication between several sheets, and weaves a network of non-localizable relations between them. In this way we extract non-chronological time. We draw out a sheet which, across all the rest, catches and extends the trajectory of points, the evolution of regions. This is evidently a task which runs the risk of failure: sometimes we only produce an incoherent dust made out of juxtaposed borrowings; sometimes we only form generalities which retain mere resemblances. All this is the territory of false recollections with which we trick ourselves or try to trick others (*Muriel*). But it is possible for the work of art to succeed in inventing these paradoxical hypnotic and hallucinatory sheets whose property is to be at once a past and always to come. It is a third possibility which was suggested for *Marienbad*: M would be the dramatist-storyteller of whom X and

A would be simply the characters, or better the two sheets from which he will draw out a transverse one. It is above all in *Providence*, one of Resnais' finest films, that we witness these redistributions, fragmentations and transformations which go continually from one sheet to another, so creating a new one which takes them all away, goes back to the animal and extends to the edges of the world. There are many difficulties and failures in this work of the drunken old story-teller: for instance, three terraces borrowed from three ages, and the footballer, which sheet has he come from, and should he keep it? Benayoun goes to the heart of the matter when he says: 'The absence of the childhood-adolescence-adult age succession in Resnais . . . perhaps pushes him to reconstitute a synthesis of the life-cycle on the creative plane, starting with birth and perhaps foetal age, up to death and its preceding experiences, even if he combines them all on occasion in the same character.'⁴⁰ The work of art crosses coexistent ages, unless it is prevented from doing so, fixed on an exhausted sheet, in a mortified fragmentation (*Les statues meurent aussi*). Success appears when the artist, like Van Gogh, reaches that excess which transforms the ages of memory or the world: a 'magnetic' operation, and this operation explains the 'montage' rather than the other way round.

No author is less bound up in the past. It is a cinema which, in an endeavour to sketch the present, prevents the past from being debased into recollection. Each sheet of past, each age calls up all the mental functions simultaneously: recollection, but equally forgetting, false recollection, imagination, planning, judgement . . . What is loaded with all these functions, each time, is feeling. *Life is a Bed of Roses* begins with 'love, love'. It is feeling which stretches out on a sheet and is modified according to its fragmentation. Resnais has often declared that it is not characters that interest him but the feelings that they could extract from them like their shadows, depending on which regions of past they are placed in. Characters are of the present, but feelings plunge into the past. Feelings become characters, as in the painted shadows in the sunless park (*Last Year in Marienbad*). This is where music becomes specially important. Resnais may therefore sometimes think that he is going beyond psychology, sometimes that he is remaining within it, depending on whether we are talking about a psychology of characters or a psychology of pure feelings. And feeling is that which is in continual exchange, circulating from one sheet to another according to what transformations

occur. But when transformations themselves form a sheet which crosses all the others it is as if feelings set free the consciousness or thought with which they were loaded: a becoming conscious according to which shadows are the living realities of a mental theatre and feelings the true figures in a 'cerebral game' which is very concrete. It is hypnosis which reveals thought to itself. In a single movement, Resnais goes beyond characters towards feelings, and beyond feelings towards the thought of which they are the characters. This is why Resnais is always saying that he is interested only in what happens in the brain, in cerebral mechanisms – monstrous, chaotic, or creative mechanisms.⁴¹ If feelings are ages of the world, thought is the non-chronological time which corresponds to them. If feelings are sheets of past, thought, the brain, is the set of non-localizable relations between all these sheets, the continuity which rolls them up and unrolls them like so many lobes, preventing them from halting and becoming fixed in a death-position. According to the novelist Belyi, 'we are the unrolling of a cinematographic film subject to the minute action of occult forces: should the film stop, we will be fixed for ever in an artificial pose of terror'.⁴² In cinema, Resnais says, something ought to happen 'around the image, behind the image and even inside the image'. This is what happens when the image becomes time-image. The world has become memory, brain, superimposition of ages or lobes, but the brain itself has become consciousness, continuation of ages, creation or growth of ever new lobes, re-creation of matter as with styrene. The screen itself is the cerebral membrane where immediate and direct confrontations take place between the past and the future, the inside and the outside, at a distance impossible to determine, independent of any fixed point (which is perhaps what creates the strangeness of *Stavisky*). The image no longer has space and movement as its primary characteristics but topology and time.