

IMPOSSIBLE MEMORY ARCHITECTURES:
NARRATIVE SUBJECTIVITIES IN *L'ANNÉE DERNIÈRE À MARIENBAD*

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“...POUR TOUJOURS, DANS LA NUIT TRANQUILLE, SEULE AVEC MOI.”

Alain Resnais, L'Année Dernière à Marienbad, 1961

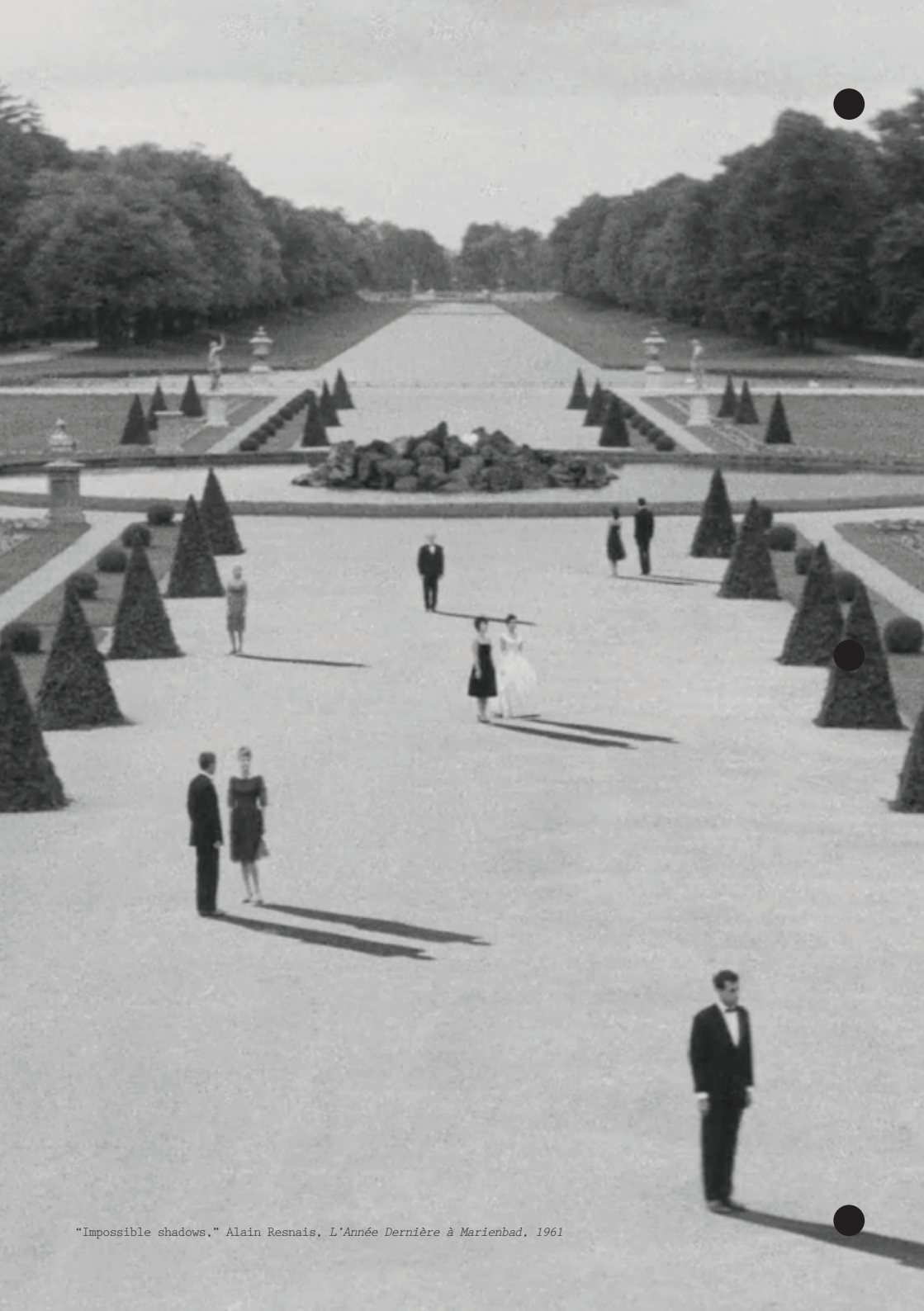
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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"Impossible shadows," Alain Resnais, *L'Année Dernière à Marienbad*, 1961

ABSTRACT

01

Certain spaces inhabit our consciousness in the form of memories, often detached from chronology or corporeality. They tend to appear entirely subjective, even uncanny, if reconstructed or exteriorized, making it almost impossible to accurately represent an objective 'truth' which correlates to the spatial qualities in which a memory lives. This research work explores how the film medium is used to construct 'impossible' architectures that otherwise exist only in memory, and analyses filmic and narrative representations of subjective ambiguity. It does so by analysing the 'glitches' or misrepresentations of physical reality that leak out of consciousness and into the movie screen in Alain Resnais & Robbe-Grillet's *L'Année Dernière à Marienbad*, 1961. The film is deconstructed through psychoanalytic, narrative, gendered media, and memory architecture frameworks that investigate its architecturally-driven cinematographic tools inside the Baroque hotel typology.

INTRODUCTION

During a summer spent in Mexico City, my father took me to see my childhood home for what would be the last time before it was sold, a house I hadn't returned to for more than 10 years.

The journey there felt exactly as it had so many times before, entering the metal gates to the cluster of apartments, driving around the fountain, making our way from the parking lot and into the entrance door at street-level. But once we crossed that door, all of the images of being in that space flooded my vision, and I began to experience some physical discomfort. The floors had been changed, the curtains removed, the tiles in the kitchen and bathrooms redone, and, naturally, none of the furniture I grew up with was there. Strangely, the space and its layout looked exactly as I remembered, and yet felt completely separate from the place I once called home. My father excitedly showed me all the renovations he had spent months overseeing, and I tried to react enthusiastically, even while facing this strange internal turmoil. Once we reached the door that I knew would lead to my bedroom, I felt my body stop, unable to continue, not wanting to see a distorted version of a place I so often revisit in dreams, in recollections, in memory. I do remember entering, quickly glancing around, and exiting, but I have no memory of what I saw, I simply couldn't allow that place I see in my mind to be clouded by its real, physical, but somehow wrong, existence. What I experienced that day troubled me, it made me want to forever avoid revisiting places that I have strong mental images of, made me want to mentally block what I had seen and happily return to the version(s) of that home I have formed over years of remembering it.

02 It did, however, spark an interest in memory architecture, into the mysteries and theories surrounding these spaces constructed by our minds, so often completely different from their 'real' manifestations. This research acted almost as a form of solace, of reassurance, as I began to see how historians, architects, and philosophers have pondered these questions and dealt with these feelings of unease for much longer than I had. It led me to wonder if there is ever a way to materialize these places of memory in a true form, or if that truth is bound to remain tethered to our mental state, our circumstances, our changing emotions. It led me to investigate the one medium which I believe to be capable of reconstructing these spaces of memory without ignoring the subjectivity that creates them: cinema. Using film, particularly from the French New Wave, as a tool to explore these concepts felt not only relevant, but inevitable, as it is not afraid to expand, contract, invert, and distort reality with every shot, and situates its emotional narrative in space within every frame.

Using theoretical frameworks grounded in memory as a tool for historical collection, psychoanalysis, narrative structures, architecture, cinematic space, gendered media theory, and film sequence analysis, this thesis explores how the film medium can be used to construct 'impossible' or 'imagined' architectures that otherwise exist only in memory. It does so by analysing the 'glitches' or misrepresentations of physical reality that leak out of consciousness and into the movie screen, through a deconstruction of narrative and cinematographic tools found in *L'Année Dernière à Marienbad*, a formative work of the French New Wave from 1961, written by Alain Robbe-Grillet, directed by Alain Resnais.

As a disclaimer for readers, some of the topics of this work describe or allude to sexual assault and rape, and although no graphic content is shown, discretion is advised.

METHODOLOGIES

Several methodologies were employed during the development of the thesis, involving theoretical research and literature reviews, coupled with other hands-on and experimental approaches. Research was conducted with an understanding that media can, and should be, explored through different lenses and in different capacities; while literature served as a great research tool in regards to theoretical framing and criticisms, other practical and firsthand methods allowed for the exploration of more contemporary and isolated ideas and questions. The cross-over of the different methodologies also corresponds with the thesis' thematic discussion around the interconnectedness of practices such as architecture, film, media studies, psychoanalysis, and literature, among others mentioned.

The primary methods involved:

Film Case Study: In-depth examination of a specific film and director/writer, forming part of a particular literary movement to explore their artistic contributions, thematic concerns, and how this may apply to contemporary contexts. In the case of this thesis, *L'Année Dernière à Marienbad*, 1961, a formative work of the Nouveau Roman and the French New Wave, written by Alain Robbe-Grillet, directed by Alain Resnais.

03

Film Sequence Analysis: Breakdown of a particular scene to explore its technical composition as well as its narrative deconstructions of the themes explored in the research. This includes close examination and visual note-taking of script passages and of individual camera shots, paying close attention to the movement of the character's bodies, their gaze, and the camera (the audience).

Architectural Analysis: Investigation of narrative ambiguities in an effort to reconstruct spaces presented on screen to exemplify their contradictions and architectural incongruencies. Reconstruction of filmic space in the form of floorplans was derived through scene re-watching and scripted descriptions.

Audience Study: Discursive research through an organized public screening and discussion to analyze audience interpretations, preferences, and responses to the film with a particular focus on its links to architecture theories and concepts.

Film Editing: Presentation of the thesis through the manipulation of the original film in order to exemplify and compile cinematic tools and narrative developments relevant to the work; overlaying images and original content (such as film clips, images, passages from the script, and architectural drawings) to demonstrate the concepts discussed. The method also serves as an avenue to question and explore alternative narratives and significations dissected once edited in a different order or to create new montages.

THEORIES IN MEMORY, ARCHITECTURE, AND CINEMATIC SPACE

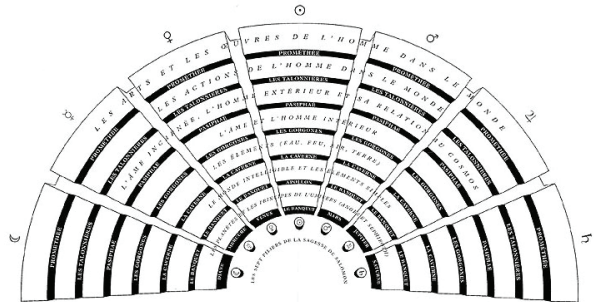
A BRIEF HISTORY OF MEMORY AS TOOL FOR RECOLLECTION AND IDENTIFICATION

Memory takes on different meanings: neurological foundations, cognitive and emotional recollections, narrative formations, and how these relate to collective accounts of a shared human history.

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In *The Art of Memory*, Frances Yates explores the evolution of mnemonic techniques, beginning with the Greeks' invention of an art that "seeks to memorise through a technique of impressing 'places' and 'images' on memory." She recounts Cicero's description in *De Oratore*, where Simonides developed a method by which individuals could "select places and form mental images of the things they wish to remember," storing them sequentially in these places, or *loci*. This practice, central to rhetoric, enabled orators to deliver speeches with "unfailing accuracy" by visualizing architectural spaces like houses or churches. "The clearest description of the process is that given by Quintilian. In order to form a series of places in memory, he says, a building is to be remembered, as spacious and varied as possible, the forecourt, the living room, bedrooms, and parlours, not omitting statues and other ornaments with which the rooms are decorated. We have to think of the ancient orator as moving in imagination through his memory building whilst he is making his speech, drawing from the memorised places the images he has placed on them." Aristotle, Yates notes, believed "the soul never thinks without a mental picture," distinguishing between memory as the retention of impressions, and recollection as the active search for them. Medieval practitioners sculpted mnemonic systems into church architecture, embedding lessons of salvation and vice. In the Renaissance, memory techniques expanded into imaginative constructs like Giulio Camillo's *Theatre of Memory*, which aimed to "store the eternal nature of all things" by unifying knowledge spatially. "The classical theatre, as described by Vitruvius, reflects the proportions of the world ... This was the Vitruvian type of theatre which Camillo had in mind, but which he distorted by decorating with images, not the five doors of the stage, but his imaginary gates in the seven gangways of the auditorium. But though he distorts the Vitruvian theatre for his mnemonic purposes, Camillo was certainly aware of the astrological theory underlying it."¹

¹Yates, *The Art of Memory*.



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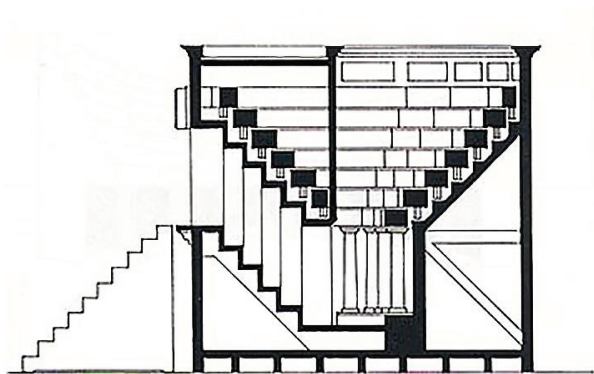


Figure 1. Fabrizi, *Plan and Section of the Theatre of Memory*

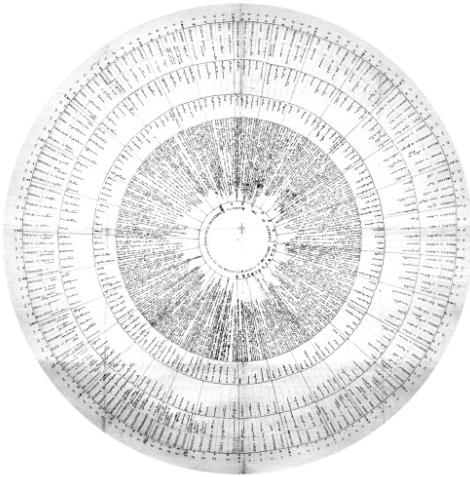


Figure 2. Yates, *Memory System* from Giordano Bruno's
De umbris idearum (Shadows), 1582

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Camillo's theatre aimed to locate and organize all of human knowledge, which "would have been archived on the different levels of the half-circle, referring to a projection of the human mind and could have been retrieved through mental associations with images and symbols,"² perhaps a predecessor to the encyclopedia, or the internet. Comparatively, "[Giordano] Bruno presents an architectural memory system of terrible complexity ... using sequences of memory rooms in each of which memory images are to be placed. A very much simpler use of classical architectural memory adapted to a Renaissance use is to be discerned in Campanella's ... *City of the Sun*, which is a Utopian city based on an astral religion ... It is much simpler than Bruno's systems because static in a City (as Camillo's system is static in a Theatre) and does not attempt Bruno's awful complexities."³

Later thinkers, like Ramus and Fludd, abandoned vivid imagery for logical order, and opposed the use of imaginary buildings in mnemonic techniques. "'Real' places are real buildings of any kind used for forming places in the normal way in the mnemotechnic ... Fludd is very much against the use of 'fictitious' buildings in the square art. These confuse memory and add to its task. One must always use real places in real buildings."⁴ Despite its decline with the advent of print, Yates argues the art of memory profoundly influenced cultural identity, asserting, "memory was the basis of culture," shaping disciplines from architecture to psychology. Through this lens, memory is not only a neurological occurrence, but rather a tool that can therefore be explored, reinterpreted, and dissected.

²Fabrizi, "Spatializing Knowledge."

³Yates, *The Art of Memory*.

⁴Yates.

IDENTITY OF PLACE

Genius Loci—the spirit of place—was originally a Roman concept denoting that every being has a *genius*, or spirit, which determines its identity and character. It can be analysed as formative in the creation of a collective understanding (and eventually) memory of place. “To gain an existential foothold man has to be able to orientate himself; he has to know where he is. But he also has to identify himself with the environment, that is, he has to know how he is a certain place.”⁵ Phenomenology emphasizes the lived experience of space and place, focusing on how environments are perceived, felt, and understood in relation to human existence. “Phenomenology was conceived as a ‘return to things,’ as opposed to abstractions and mental constructions ... it tells us that every situation is local as well as general [by making] the general ‘visible’ as a concrete, local situation.” Heidegger describes a “place [as a] qualitative, ‘total’ phenomenon, which we cannot reduce to any of its properties, such as spatial relationships, without losing its concrete nature out of sight ... In general, nature forms an extended comprehensive totality, a ‘place,’ which according to local circumstances has a particular identity...The basic property of man-made places is therefore concentration and enclosure...The boundaries of a built space are known as floor, wall, and ceiling. The boundaries of a landscape are structurally similar, and consist of ground, horizon, and sky...The existential purpose of building (architecture) is therefore to make a site become a place, that is, to uncover the meanings potentially present in the given environment.”⁶

Philosopher Edward S. Casey defines a “place” as a physical location where memories can be contained and preserved. “[A] place is ‘full of protuberant features and forceful vectors—and distinct externally from other places ... We observe this when an indifferent building lot, easily confused with other empty lots, is transformed into a memorable place by the erection of a distinctive house upon it ... the transformation of a space into a place is a two-way process. Erecting a structure enables the space to contain memories, and the installation of memories turns that structure into a place...Donlyn Lyndon explains, ‘Place, as I understand it, refers to spaces that can be remembered, that we can imagine, hold in the mind, and consider.’”⁷

As an extension, Marc Augé’s *From Places to Non-Places* discusses how “if a place can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place ... Space, for [Michel de Certeau], is a ‘frequented place,’ ‘an intersection of moving bodies:’ it is the pedestrians who transform a street (geometrically defined as a place by town planners) into a space...[and as for] Merleau-Ponty who, in his *Phénoménologie de la perception*, draws a distinction between ‘geometric’ space and ‘anthropological space’ in the sense of ‘existential’ space, the scene of an experience of relations with the world on the part of a being essentially situated ‘in relation to a milieu.’”⁸ In architecture and urban studies, “[Aldo] Rossi argues the city is the locus of collective memory, and by this means that the city acts as a wax tablet that gathers up the traces of lived experience in order to create its monuments;” Peter Eisenman, in his introduction to Rossi’s work, “defines the idea of type as understood within the psychological construct of collective memory. Time as collective memory leads Rossi to his particular transformation of the idea of time. With the introduction of memory into the object, the object comes to embody both an idea of itself and a memory of a former self.”⁹

⁵Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture*.

⁶Norberg-Schulz.

⁷Rich, “The Architecture of Memory.”

⁸Augé, *Non-Places*.

⁹Jo, “Aldo Rossi.”

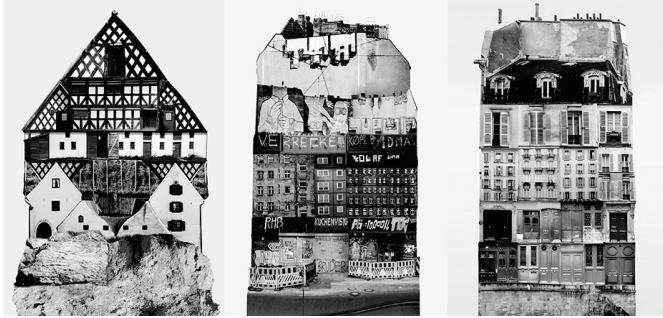


Figure 3. Chigvinadze, Anastasia Savinova's artwork: *Genius Loci*

The concept of an amalgamated image of place through its architecture has been explored not only by architects and urban planners, but by others who seek to emanate the emotional ties identity can give to a place. For instance, Anastasia Savinova, a visual artist who created a "series of artworks [that] represent the identity of a particular city and its own atmosphere, through the connection of several photos. Each collage is composed of many buildings typical for a city or a country, in order to express the spirit of this place."¹⁰

FROM COLLECTIVE TO SUBJECTIVE

Architectural memory has generally been studied in terms of the collective, of the city, framing urban developments and histories. But even to thinkers like Rossi, "architectonic structure can be always reinterpreted, for in this world there seems to be no longer any universal truths, but rather a constant reinterpretation of memory, the continuous juxtaposition of the fragments from one to other fragments, the constant alteration of typology which invests the monument with its ability to hold a discourse with the city."¹¹

It is rather understood that, "...we remember only what we have encoded, and what we encode depends on who we are."¹² We can therefore observe a differentiation between collective (objective), and individual (subjective) memory. Even in terms of subjective memory, theorists also identify differences between "the memories of space derived from personal and lived experiences ... Body Memory, which are directly imprinted or encoded in our bodies [and] memories of learned spaces [or Mind Memory] referring to indirect memories of space, narrated experiences that have been passed down to us through our family, friends, and community."¹³ Through these two distinct types of subjective memory, we can better understand what we perceive as the world around us. In what is perhaps the first spatial memory, that of the childhood home, Gaston Bachelard acknowledges the blurriness between memory and fiction, dream and reality: "If we have retained an element of dream in our memories, if we have gone beyond merely assembling exact recollections, bit by bit the house that was lost in the mists of time will appear from out the shadow. We do nothing to reorganize it; with intimacy it recovers its entity, in the mellowness and imprecision of the inner life. It is as though something fluid had collected our memories and we ourselves were dissolved in this fluid of the past. Rilke, who experienced this intimacy of fusion, speaks of the fusion of being with the lost house: 'I never saw this strange dwelling again. Indeed, as I see it now, the way it appeared to my child's eye, it is not a building, but it is quite dissolved and distributed inside me: here one room, there another, and here a bit of corridor which, however, does not connect the two rooms, but is conserved to me in fragmentary form. Thus the whole thing is scattered about inside me, the rooms, the stairs, that descended with such ceremonious slowness, others, narrow cages that mounted in a spiral movement, in the darkness of which we advanced like the blood in our veins.'"¹⁴ "Freud compared the process of fantasy formation to a chemical process of decomposition and composition, which in the case of the fantasy distorts and amalgamates memory through fragmentation and consequent breakup of chronological relations. 'A fragment of the visual scene then combines with a fragment of the auditory one into the fantasy, while the fragment set free links up with something else... symptoms appeared when the fantasy, previously 'set up in front' of the scene, became so intense as to emerge into consciousness."¹⁵ In Heidegger's terms, "time is affected not by some being but by itself, and so change occurs at every moment of this self-referentiality, and subjecthood must be understood to be an exclusively retrospective alterity."¹⁶ "Merleau-Ponty espouses the Heideggerian position that we find the meaning of subjectivity in and through time and that temporality in turn reveals the ontological structure of Being. Strictly speaking, the subject does not reflect temporality; instead, the subject is temporality. As Merleau-Ponty suggests, 'Time remains the same (constant and unified) because ... there is at the core of time a gaze (un regard) or ... someone.'"¹⁷

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¹¹Jo, "Aldo Rossi."

¹²Ozak and Gokmen, "Spatial Memory."

¹³Ozak and Gokmen.

¹⁴Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*.

¹⁵Vidler, *Warped Space: Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture*.

¹⁶Angerer, *Ecology of Affect: Intensive Milieus and Contingent Encounters*.

¹⁷Tomasulo, "The Intentionality of Consciousness Subjectivity in Last Year at Marienbad."

ARCHITECTURAL NARRATIVE

In this sense, memories, and thus the distortion of them, are directly dependent on stories, those that are told to us, as well as those we tell ourselves. Our reality is then formed by subjective recollections and what we choose to do with them.

Space then stands as a physical expression of narrative, it engulfs those looking to 'read' it, to understand it, or simply to feel it. "Architecture is then nothing but the space of representation. As soon as it is distinguished from the simple building, it represents something other than itself: the social structure, the power of the King, the idea of God, and so on."¹⁸ Compared to the oral and written traditions of storytelling, architectural narration exists as a sensorially immersive experience; it bases itself in how the body moves through it and uses this journey to convey its meaning. "Space narrative traditionally was built similarly to other types of narrative, based on the classical three-act structure, which is translated in space as: beginning (entrance), culmination (centre), and conclusion (exit)."¹⁹ The architect then serves the function of conductor, choreographer, or director.

"A classic example in architecture history that connects human perception with the design of space is the architectural promenade shaped by Le Corbusier, in Villa Savoye. The architectural promenade is a physical route in which the user walks through. Le Corbusier frames the space and defines it by using a series of space sequences, ramps, scales, passages from light to dark etc.. all architectural means that generate a complete embodied experience..."²⁰ "The promenade enables the visitor to make new and individual sense of the information presented by the building."²¹ Sergei Eisenstein's architectural thinking continuously ponders that "if the spectator cannot move, he has to gather in one unique point the elements of that which is dispersed in reality, unseizable to a single gaze, scattered about, but which the author must absolutely juxtapose, for it is in taking in all these elements that the spectator will obtain an impression of the object or-moreover-the impression which the author wishes to induce in transforming the relationships of reality, that which he wants to inscribe for the perception. Cinematographic montage is, too, a means to 'link' in one point-the screen-various elements (fragments) of a phenomenon filmed in diverse dimensions, from diverse points of view and side."²² Eisenstein and Le Corbusier admired each other's work and shared common ground in many ways, as the architect once acknowledged in an interview. In it, he claims that "'architecture and film are the only two arts of our time...in my own work I seem to think as Eisenstein does in his films.'" "²³

¹⁸Tachumi, "Architecture and Disjunction."

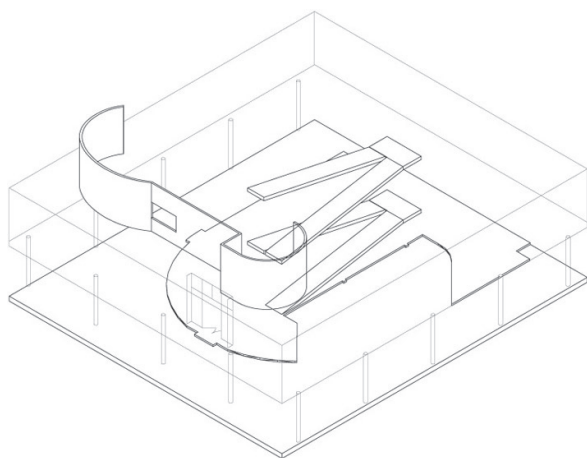
¹⁹Ikonomi, "3.3 NARRATIVE AND ARCHITECTURE."

²⁰Ikonomi.

²¹Samuel and Coombs, "Architectural Promenades through the Villa Savoye."

²²Eisenstein, Bois, and Glenn, "Montage and Architecture."

²³Bruno, *Atlas of Emotion*.



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Figure 4. Samuel and Coombs, *Diagram of the promenade in Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye*

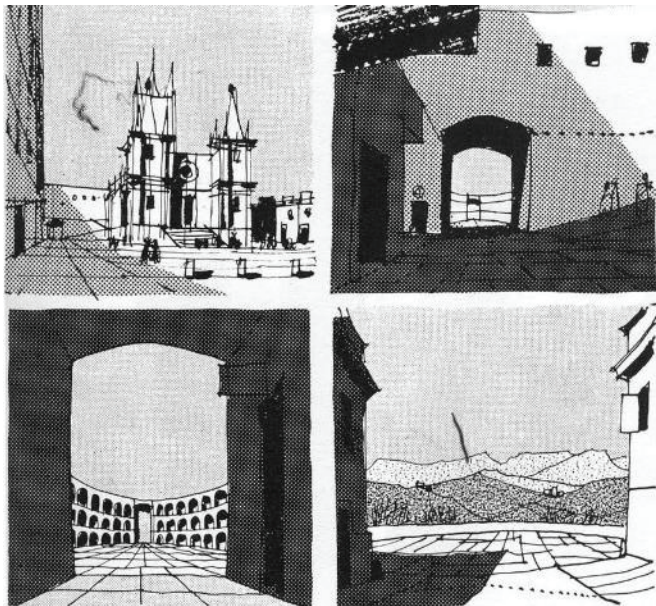


Figure 5. Ikonimi, Gordon Cullen's cinematic urban space representation

Gordon Cullen employs a similar method through the concept of serial visions. "In the serial vision, the urban form perceived in movement is seen in continuous transformation as a series of framed spatial experiences ... represent[ed] as a storyboard, shot by shot. The visual frames of a walking character can be compared to the shots of a movie camera in movement."²⁴

²⁴Ikonimi, "3.3 NARRATIVE AND ARCHITECTURE."



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Figure 6. Rowe and Koetter, *Wiesbaden*, c.1900. figure-ground plan

This linearity, however, is later contested by architectural historian "Colin Rowe in *Collage City* [which] pointed out 'the composite and ambiguous character of buildings which create a disintegrated and fragmented image of the city,'"²³ and employed by architects such as Bernard Tschumi and Rem Koolhaas, who again turn to the idea of dynamic and fragmented montages to deliver architectural meaning.

²³Rowe and Koetter, *Collage City*.

"[B]efore being anything else, a film is a light projection on a screen, opening a space for us and making our body sense a certain volume of void..."²⁶ Thus, cinematic spaces are experienced kinaesthetically just as much as they are framed by the camera, similar to the phenomenological reading of architectural space. This inextricable link between architecture and film has been formed over decades of back and forth between the two practices. "The obvious role of architecture in the construction of sets, and the equally obvious ability of film to 'construct' its own architecture in light and shade, scale and movement, from the outset allowed for a mutual intersection of these two 'spatial arts'... Modern architecture does not only serve the cinematographic set [décor], but imprints its stamp on the staging [mise-en-scène], it breaks out of its frame."²⁷

Architects, as well as architectural theorists, recognize cinema as a testing ground for architectural ideas that would otherwise be impossible to achieve in reality. According to Anthony Vidler, "films have served as a laboratory for architecture, for the exploration of the built environment and architecture from the very beginning." Similarly, Bernard Tschumi "emphasizes the importance of mental interpretation in cinema beyond the dimensions of time and space, [as] the completion of the images on the screen by all the images formed in the memory gain meaning in the direction of what the images evoke in the person's mind."²⁸

²⁶Gaudin, "The Viewer's Embodiment into Cinematic Space. Notes on a Space-Image Cinema."

²⁷Vidler, *Warped Space: Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture*.

²⁸Erdogan and Akarsu, "An Evaluation Set Proposal on the Interaction of Cinema Architecture for Improving the Creative and Aesthetic Dimensions in Architectural Art and Education."

Film writer Jacques Aumont highlights three tools used in cinematographic narration:

1. Multiple of viewpoints.
2. The variation of the scale of the plane.
3. Playing with the viewer's gazes.

"Multiple viewpoints allow for the manipulation of the frames and the creation of plane hierarchy in terms of scale, duration, and composition."²⁹ The very nature of the cinematic apparatus is that of the creation of image within the confines of a rectangular space. By framing, and thus subjectively manipulating, the cinematic image, we are "cutting off most of the visual field, [which] entails that our sense of these spaces is constructed from glimpses, that is, by means of synecdoche and metonymy. But for these tropes to succeed, we presume that the audience must have abstract ideas of these spaces in order for gestalt closure to work."³⁰ The architect and the filmmaker then "dwell side by side in this transience between reality and representation; where buildings are facilitative, vehicles by which stories are orchestrated and/or where lives are lived ... An architectural programme can also be an imagining of narrative, the fiction of the imagined life. In filmmaking, the narrative could be the plotline, the tempo at which the story is unraveled and the way in which it does so."³¹

²⁹Aumont, *Aesthetics of Film*.

³⁰Al-Saati, Botts, and Woodbury, "Depictions of Architectural Spaces in Film."

³¹Barton, "The Grey Area between Reality and Representation: The Practices of Architects and Film-Makers."

Filmmakers such as Hitchcock found that "...screen buildings are not only constructed by the architectural practices of production design. The art of framing characters ... also creates architecture through the camera. In the process of creating cinematic space, phenomena such as lighting, sound, editing, camera positions, and camera movements can and should be interpreted as architectonic practices...his point-of-view shots in *Rear Window* or *Vertigo* freeze the characters into tableaux that turn the actors into 'architectural' components. His sophisticated editing, moreover, fragments and manipulates cinematic space."³²

Hitchcockian architectural spaces have also been examined through the architectural lens, given that the filmmaker paid close attention to how the mise-en-scène related to the narrative and characters in his stories. Particularly in two cases explored in Steven Jacobs' *The Wrong House: The Architecture Of Alfred Hitchcock*, Hitchcock was not afraid to distort cinematic spaces, and to use this as a narrative or deception tool. In the Manderley house portrayed in the film *Rebecca*, "[the] mental, psychological and often also physical inability to discern the structure of the house can be attributed, to a certain extent, to a spatial determinism: the irregular layout of the architecture encourages a disorientation of the kind ... The reconstruction drawing of its floor plan demonstrates that Manderley is first and foremost conceived as a concatenation of different volumes."³³

³²Jacobs, *The Wrong House: The Architecture Of Alfred Hitchcock*.

³³Jacobs.

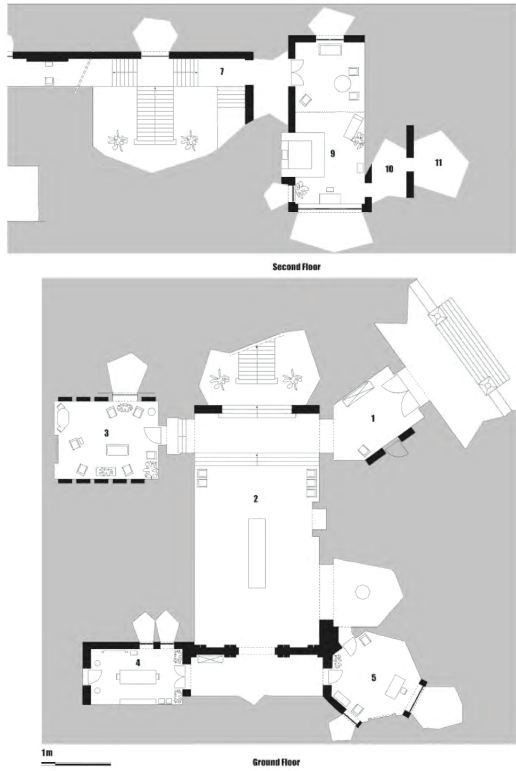
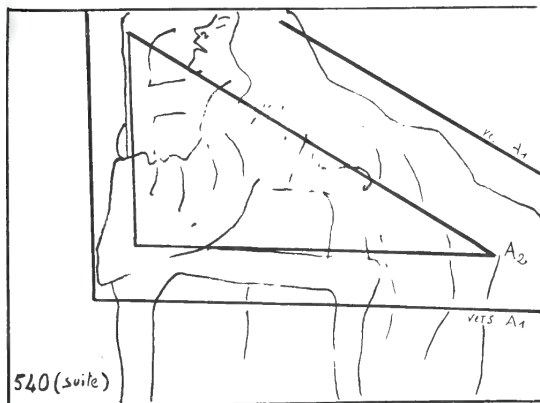
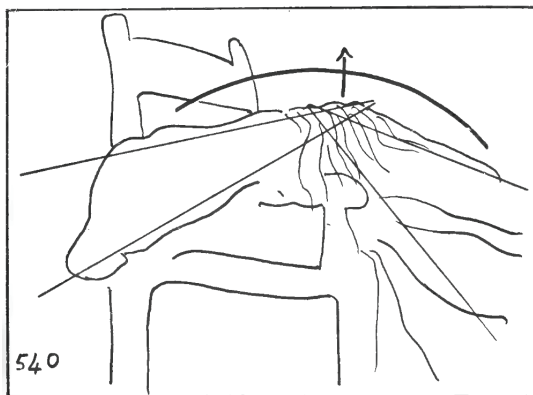


Figure 7. Jacobs, *Reconstructed Floorplans for the Manderlay House*,
Drawn by Linde Vertriest

Writing under the name Michel Schérer, filmmaker Éric Rohmer discusses the technical and philosophical developments in influential films, which we can see both in other classical examples and in modern applications. He praises the works of directors like Orson Welles, William Wyler, and Alfred Hitchcock for their precise use of space to add emotional and narrative depth, as masters of manipulating the “spatial universe, [in which] gestures whose meaning appeared to us as contingent: the dilation of the lips in laughter, the raising of the arm in threat, the tensing of the face in anger are enriched with a new meaning that can even deprive them of their direct emotional power and leave them only their pure character of fascination.”³⁴

Particularly F.W. Murnau’s *Nosferatu*, is explored as a crucial example of spatial manipulation to evoke psychological and metaphysical themes, even within fixed shots. The elements framed by the camera later presented on-screen represent philosophies and ideas far beyond the cinematic apparatus. Rohmer’s understanding of narrative significations entangled into visual representations serve as some of the groundwork for analyzing *L’Année Dernière à Marienbad* in later chapters, as his examinations showcased the immense meaning hidden behind details such as movement (of body in space and within body), screen placement, frame composition, and camera manipulation.

³⁴Schérer, “Du Cinéma, Art de Réel Qui Débord l’espace.”



CASE STUDY: L'ANNÉE DERNIÈRE À MARIENBAD, 1961

FILM'S RELEVANCE AND KEY THEMATIC ELEMENTS

Cinema, amidst other art forms, has the unique power to encapsulate matters of the mind that seem to exist beyond language, image, or sound alone; it can be used as a mirror of reality, as well as a vessel to break and reinvent it. Films can show the depths of the human condition while still existing in their simplest physical, audio-visual form, one that can be entered, dissected, reinterpreted again and again. The film, *L'Année Dernière à Marienbad*, 1961 (referred to as *Marienbad* from now on), exists as a particular case in film history which, even after half a century, continues to confuse, deceive, expand and contract, presenting audiences with the seemingly simple premise of ambiguity in narrative, while containing multitudes of ever-changing meaning. A film with no real 'solution' to its mystery, no clear chronology or definitive version of truth, no objective record of what did or did not happen last year in a place that may or may not be Marienbad. In particular to the aforementioned typologies of both memory and hotel films, *Marienbad* was chosen as a case study for its continuous contribution to these frames of thinking, and because its ambiguity offers an open field for discursive processes akin to those of phenomenological and metaphysical architectural theory.

L'ANNÉE DERNIÈRE A MARIENBAD

Figure 9. "Title sequence," Alain Resnais, *L'Année Dernière à Marienbad*, 1961

The premise is simple: "In a strange and isolated chateau, a man becomes acquainted with a woman and insists that they have met before."³⁵ Described by Robbe-Grillet as a story of persuasion "this surreal fever dream, or nightmare, gorgeously fuses the past with the present in telling its ambiguous tale of a man and a woman (Giorgio Albertazzi and Delphine Seyrig) who may or may not have met a year ago, perhaps at the very same cathedral-like, mirror-filled chateau they now find themselves wandering. Unforgettable in both its confounding details (gilded ceilings, diabolical parlor games, a loaded gun) and haunting scope, Resnais' investigation into the nature of memory is disturbing, romantic, and maybe even a ghost story." As part of its eternal interpretations, Deleuze reads Resnais' direction as that which "highlights an 'architecture of time' in which the past is eternal, whilst Robbe-Grillet's text focuses on the structure of an 'eternal present' that is 'stripped out of time.'"³⁶

Marienbad presents us with a choreography between space and film observed through the camera's frames, manipulated and played with to direct our eye meaningfully: "With the close-up, space expands; with slow motion, movement is extended ... The camera introduces us to unconscious optics as does psychoanalysis to unconscious impulses."³⁷ It is what Eisenstein described as the power of the montage: "In themselves, the pictures, the phases, the elements of the whole are innocent and indecipherable. The blow is struck only when the elements are juxtaposed into a sequential image,"³⁸ he compares it "with the sensation of moving through an architectural space. He refers to the sensation of entering the Acropolis and walking among its buildings posed asymmetrically."³⁹ This is similar to Tschumi's ideas of how we experience architectural narratives: "Examining architecture 'frame by frame' as through a film-editing machine. Frames are both the framing device-conforming, regular, solid-and the framed material-the questioning, distorting, and displacing ... The frame permits the extreme formal manipulations of the sequence, for the content of congenial frames can be mixed, superimposed, dissolved, or cut up, giving endless possibilities to the narrative sequence ... Fragments of architecture (bits of walls, of rooms, of streets, of ideas) are all one actually sees. These fragments are like beginnings without ends. There is always a split between fragments that are real and fragments that are virtual, between memory and fantasy. These splits have no existence other than being the passage from one fragment to another. They are relays rather than signs. They are traces. They are in-between."⁴⁰

³⁵L'Année Dernière à Marienbad.

³⁶Deleuze, *Cinéma 2, L'Image-Temps*.

³⁷Vidler, *Warped Space: Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture*.

³⁸Eisenstein, Bois, and Glenn, "Montage and Architecture."

³⁹Tkononi, "3.3 NARRATIVE AND ARCHITECTURE."

⁴⁰Tschumi, "Architecture and Disjunction."



Figure 10. "X and A on the stairwell." Alain Resnais, *L'Année Dernière à Marienbad*, 1961





Figure 11. "Stills from Ballroom/Bedroom montage." Alain Resnais, *L'Année Dernière à Marienbad*, 1961

In this method, alternative narratives, perhaps memories or perhaps fantasies, are presented to the audience through the words spoken by X. True in both film and screenplay, “‘the past’ figures in X’s narration. But whether this past is real, fabricated, misremembered, hallucinated, and so on is not settled in either.”⁴¹ “X’s stitching-together of a past offered to A as a continuum of identity is something more than an allegorical treatment of filmic editing; the intervention of the cinematic apparatus as a technology of memory is fully complicit and indeed necessary for the emergence of subjectivity.”⁴² “In a sense the voice objectifies in the same way that the camera objectifies the rooms, objects and eventually the people in the chateau. This objectification of the world by image and sound could be a demonstration in miniature of what cinema does. It presents everything in the world as objects to be viewed. It imposes and selectively reveals only a few of the many facets of an object or person as they can be seen or experienced in our ‘real’ world.”⁴³

⁴¹Sandis. “No Theory at Marienbad.”

⁴²Ruby. “The Impossible Love of Images.”

⁴³Schofer. “A Close Reading of L’Année Dernière à Marienbad by Alain Robbe-Grillet.”



Figure 12. "X commanding the filmic apparatus through the spoken word."
Alain Resnais, *L'Année Dernière à Marienbad*, 1961

In *Marienbad*, “this is a reality that the hero creates by his own vision, by his own word. And if his stubbornness, his secret conviction, eventually wins out, it is in the midst of what a maze of false leads, variations, failures, repetitions!”⁴⁴ As stated by Marc Augé, “certain places exist only through the words that evoke them, and in this sense they are non-places, or rather, imaginary places: banal utopias, clichés.”⁴⁵

Our unreliable narrator, then, both creates and manipulates space, birthing a new reality through the male gaze as “cinematic codes create a gaze, a world, and an object, thereby producing an illusion cut to the measure of desire ... Woman then stands in patriarchal culture as signifier of the male other, bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his phantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of woman still tied to her place as bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning.”⁴⁶ But even when X isn’t speaking, the images we see frame A as the object of X’s imposed narration, X then exerts control over her movements, bodily placements, actions, and feelings.

⁴⁴“L’Année Dernière à Marienbad.”

⁴⁵Augé, *Non-Places*.

⁴⁶Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema.”



Figure 13. "A changing poses after X's description."
Alain Resnais, *L'Année Dernière à Marienbad*, 1961

FILM BACKGROUND

The film is adapted from *The Invention of Morel*, a 1940 novel exploring an obsession with superimposed metaphysical representations of reality. "X's actions toward A [here] can be read as a reproduction of Morel's actions toward Faustine: X, through his speech and its ability to provisionally control the cinematic apparatus, constructs a fantasy in which he himself participates. As such, his actions in the film ask to be read as attempts to break out of the movements and rituals inscribed in the atmosphere of the hotel."⁴⁷ Both A and Faustine exist in a reality constructed entirely by the masculine desires directed at them, "in the Lacanian elaboration of the phallic drama, these female characters are the phallus and act as the site of the male requisition to have the phallus that is the condition of their masculine identity."⁴⁸

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Its adapted screenplay, written by Alain Robbe-Grillet, follows the literary structure of the Nouveau Roman or "New Novel" movement in criticism of the 19th century Balzacian novel convention. Described as "the adventure of a writing and not the writing of an adventure," and as "building a reality that the writer does not know in advance, but that he invents as he writes ... no longer perceived as a transcription of the world, but rather as its construction," the Nouveau Roman "... established [a tacit convention] between the reader and the author; the latter will pretend to believe in what he is telling, the former will forget that everything is invented ... the novelistic description is always subjective, having nothing in common with reality itself ... constantly described through the perspective of a character ... cinema and new novels live in a perpetual present, no longer being subject to the calendar and the clock: as soon as the film goes out, the characters no longer exist."⁴⁹ A relationship to existential phenomenology can be seen through the conjuncture of the Nouveau Roman with French New Wave and early 1960s French film theory, bringing to light the increasingly present discussions of spectatorship and subjectivity in "the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s...(1) defining subjectivity in broader terms to include authors, narrators, characters, and spectators, and (2) reexamining the methodology of phenomenology, in some interdisciplinary form, with an eye toward reconciling the divergent and contradictory positions of ongoing concern to film critics and theorists."⁵⁰ *Marienbad* is also not Resnais' first encounter with the Nouveau Roman, as his earlier film *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* (1959) was written by Robbe-Grillet's fellow novelist Marguerite Duras. The film similarly follows a symbolic reconstruction of events and places, both in memory and present throughout the Japanese city, struck by terror and grief. "Both films tell apparently a little story about a woman and her sequential two lovers. But more important, both focally concern something in the past that one doesn't want to face."⁵¹

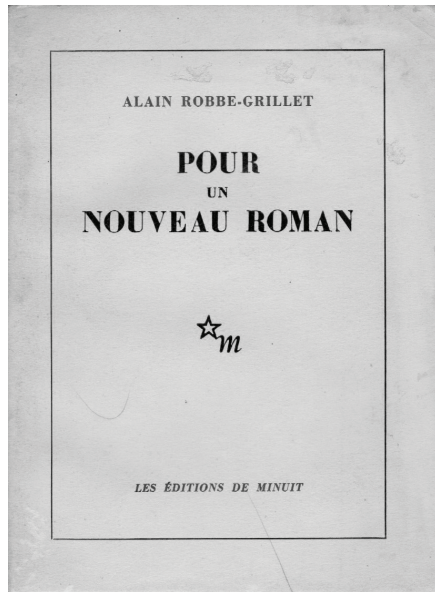
⁴⁷Ruby, "The Impossible Love of Images."

⁴⁸Ruby.

⁴⁹Robbe-Grillet, *Four un Nouveau Roman*.

⁵⁰Tomasulo, "The Intentionality of Consciousness Subjectivity in Last Year at Marienbad."

⁵¹Read, *A Film: Philosophy of Ecology and Enlightenment*.

Figure 14. Robbe-Grillet, *Pour un Nouveau Roman*

Robbe-Grillet found writing *Mariénbad* as “an endeavour to construct space and time in purely mental terms - those of dream, perhaps, or of memory, those of affective life - without over-much concern for the traditional links of cause and effect or for a rigid time-scheme for the narrative ... our temperament in fact moves more quickly - or on occasion more slowly. Its gait is more varied, more rich and less reassuring: it jumps certain passages, it preserves an exact record of trivial details, it repeats and doubles back on itself. And this mental time, with its mysteries, its gaps, its obsessions, its obscure areas, is the one that interests us, since it is the tempo of our emotions, of our life.”⁵² “These things must be happening in someone’s mind. But whose? The narrator-hero’s? Or the hypnotized heroine’s? Or else, by a constant exchange of images between them, in the minds of both, together? It would be better to admit a solution of another order: just as the only time which matters is that of the film itself, the only important “character” is the spectator; in his mind unfolds the whole story, which is precisely imagined by him.”⁵³ Through its subjectivity, the film can be interpreted as an exploration of human consciousness framed through X’s experience, as “according to the epistemological premises of both Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, perceptual consciousness and its structures are our first route of access to being and truth ... Consciousness must be consciousness of something outside itself to avoid the trap of solipsism (the notion that the self can know only itself because it is the only existent); hence consciousness cannot exist alone.”⁵⁴ In this sense, X needs A - and us, the audience - to bring his story, and thus his own existence, into being.

⁵²Robbe-Grillet, “Robbe-Grillet on Last Year at Mariénbad.”

⁵³Robbe-Grillet, *Pour un Nouveau Roman*.

⁵⁴Tomasulo, “The Intentionality of Consciousness Subjectivity in Last Year at Mariénbad.”

CONSTRUCTING MARIENBAD

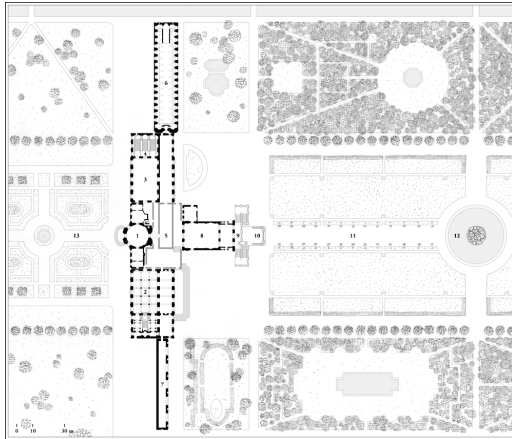


Figure 15. Sgolacchia, *Interpretative plan of the film location*

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Setting was of crucial importance to Robbe-Grillet and Resnais' vision, it would eventually "beget the characters, their postures. Thus it is that the curve of A's neck and shoulder echoes the twisting of the banister against which she stands."⁵⁵ Even then, *Marienbad*, itself as a location, is never critical to the narrative and is often confused or equated to other similar spa hotels. It does, however, hold different possible readings and symbolisms, as "it is there that, in the spring of 1936, Jacques Lacan first outlined his account of the mirror stage, at the Fourteenth Congress of the International Psychoanalytical Association ... By the time that Alain Resnais and Alain Robbe-Grillet's divisive film was released a quarter of a century later, Lacan no longer thought of the 'le stade du miroir' as a developmental event involving either a toddler or a mirror. It instead now symbolized the libidinal phenomenon thought to permeate a dual structure of human subjectivity, one that is permanently conflicted between the Ego and the body, the imaginary and the real."⁵⁶ But apart from this association to mental constructions, there still exists a physical realm in which *Marienbad* takes place.

Thus, when we speak of "constructing *Marienbad*," we speak of the fact that: "...the set was [physically] constructed out of "interlocking spaces that create the illusion of an entire building whereas it was actually composed of several unconnected sets constructed on sound stages ... There is no actual *Marienbad* ... only a memory of last year, remembered in another, unnamed place. And there is no single, specific place on screen, since the hotel filmed is a composite of actual locales (the Bavarian palaces Schleissheim, Nymphenburg and Amalienburg) and studio constructions."⁵⁷

⁵⁵Leutrat, *L'Année Dernière à Marienbad*.

⁵⁶Sandis, "No Theory at Marienbad."

⁵⁷Clarke, Pfannhauser, and Doel, *Moving Pictures/Stopping Places*.



Figure 16. "A's body posture as part of architectural composition,"
Alain Resnais, *L'Année Dernière à Marienbad*, 1961

"The studio sets included, according to [set designer] Jacques Saulnier, 'a sixty-metre-long corridor, which we were able to construct by joining two stages together, other shorter corridors, intersecting, and the bedroom—to begin with, there were two of these—in different states of decoration. [...] Sylvie Baudrot, the script supervisor has a telling anecdote: 'In *Marienbad*, for example, there was a very long scene in which Delphine Seyrig and Albertazzi walk side by side down a corridor. We shot it in three different corridors, and to make things even more complicated, it was intended to be a continuity scene for the dialogue as well as for the rhythm ... We'd put potted plants so that the continuity between the potted plants might disguise the passage from one section of corridor to another, but Resnais didn't want to hide the fact that three different corridors were involved.'"⁵⁸

It was recounted that the director was actively striving to depict a setting that undergoes transformation and modulation, that "shape-shifts" unreliably, akin to the mind's attempts at reconstructing images from memory or imagination. "This is why a camera movement can begin with a character and re-encounter him/her at the end of the shot dressed differently, or doing something else, since transformation and modulation affect both characters and objects: the *Marienbad* game is played with cards, matchsticks, dominoes, or photographic images."⁵⁹

⁵⁸Read, *A Film-Philosophy of Ecology and Enlightenment*.

⁵⁹Leutrat, *L'Année Dernière à Marienbad*.



Figure 17. "One of many corridors, may or may not be a composite,"
Alain Resnais, *L'Année Dernière à Marienbad*, 1961

This method is in-line with the architectural thinking that "cinematic products that reconstruct spaces can sometimes create unrealistic, degenerated, or exaggerated environments that do not accurately represent reality. The objective is to narrate the story most effectively."⁶⁰ The architecture exists not as a set-piece, but rather as a mental reconstruction fabricated by the words Robbe-Grillet expressed onto paper, and that X now narrates to A and to us, the unknowing audience. "It is through architecture that Resnais expresses emotions. The architectural space created...acts as a device to deconstruct the logic of reality and stimulate the unconscious in the mind of the viewer. By watching the film, one is engaged in a retroactive reconstruction of [the] mental spatial configurations in his dual role of director and 'architect.'"⁶¹

Architecture consists not only of physical elements, but also of the freezing bodies of the guests: "Bodies carve all sorts of new and unexpected spaces, through fluid or erratic motions. Architecture, then, is only an organism engaged in constant intercourse with users, whose bodies rush against the carefully established rules of architectural thought..."⁶² In *Marienbad*, "[t]he characters seem to move through these spaces without any of the physical strain which normally accompanies human locomotion. Their arms do not sway, their heads do not bob. They move as though conveyed on a dolly, without apparent volition, without purpose. A is the only character whose body occasionally expresses psychological strain or desire, and even her movement is for the most part emblematic: she either sways or freezes into discrete formulations of emotion."⁶³

"Erdoğan and Akarsu, "An Evaluation Set Proposal on the Interaction of Cinema Architecture for Improving the Creative and Aesthetic Dimensions in Architectural Art and Education."

"Sgolacchia, "Deconstruction of the Filmic Space - L'Année dernière à Marienbad (Alain Resnais, 1961)."

"Tschumi, "Architecture and Disjunction."

"Dittmar, "Structures of Metaphor in Robbe-Grillet's."



Figure 18. "A moving through freezing bodies."
Alain Resnais, *L'Année Dernière à Marienbad*, 1961

From the original script, the hotel plays an important role in the construction of the narrative, "...a world of marble and stucco, columns, mouldings, gilded ceilings, statues; a world of servants frozen stiffly in their places."⁶⁴ The film's "'structure of illusion,' as its narrator calls it, constructs a spatiotemporal schema around the edifice of a humongous hotel that affirms the homologous relationship between the workings of consciousness and the cinematic experience through the mediation of subjectivities."⁶⁵ "Jean-Louis Bory has remarked: 'Mouldings, dadoses, friezes, cornices, astragals and festoons ... the baroque sensuality of the interior architecture and decoration of the grand hotel-palace contrasts with the exterior Cartesianism of the formal gardens - or rather, there is a play between them ...[Marienbad] is based on the kind of play which opposes, to the Cartesianism of conscious life, the baroque nature of our memory and our affective life."⁶⁶

Throughout film history, the hotel typology has been used as a non-place that holds domesticity only temporarily: "The hotel room itself is of course a pre-eminent example of an evanescent space."⁶⁷ With even its door acting as a "border that represents the mysterious contrasts and conflicts of human nature ... The only alone and troubled one is not the guest, but the room itself; the room spreads a sticky, contagious, and repressive aura over newcomers. This may manifest a time-space, space-reality, and time-reality confusion..."⁶⁸

In *Marienbad*, "...the room where A is hosted has initially little furniture and is extremely bright, but later appears with more and more decoration and furniture, assuming the image of a real hotel room more closely. Also, movable walls were used to expand the size of the room. The transformation of the room is a physical translation of A's mental state as she probably starts to remember the affair with X, shifting from delirium to the awareness of reality."⁶⁹ Achieved both through design and filmic impressions of temporality, "hotel rooms are almost the same ... No matter how splendid the decor of the room, the excited impression that the room makes on the visitor soon turns into one of ordinariness. Staying longer than a week in a hotel room, or even in a royal suite, becomes a tiresome banality."⁷⁰

⁶⁴Robbe-Grillet, "Robbe-Grillet on Last Year at Marienbad."

⁶⁵Tomasulo, "The Intentionality of Consciousness Subjectivity in Last Year at Marienbad."

⁶⁶Leutrat, *L'Année Dernière à Marienbad*.

⁶⁷Clarke, Pfannhauser, and Doel, *Moving Pictures/Stopping Places*.

⁶⁸Demir, "Cine-Anthology of Hotels as a Place of Time and Death."

⁶⁹Sgolacchia, "Deconstruction of the Filmic Space - L'Année dernière à Marienbad (Alain Resnais, 1961)."

⁷⁰Demir, "Cine-Anthology of Hotels as a Place of Time and Death."



Figure 19. "Tracking shots of ceiling and wall details,"
Alain Resnais, *L'Année Dernière à Marienbad*, 1961





Figure 20. "A's room in two states of decoration," Alain Resnais, *L'Année Dernière à Marienbad*, 1961

It is through the generic and repeatable nature of hotel spaces that make the very construction of *Marienbad* possible, with X referring to other similar resorts in which his narrative could've taken place ("in Karlstadt, Marienbad, or Baden-Salsa"): "Those frame boxes are the synecdoche of the dozens of identical rooms, arranged in neat rows and stacked on top of one another ... Those frame boxes represent both spaces of the imaginary (think of all the things happening in the private rooms of a large hotel at the very moment when someone is checking in) and spaces of transparency ... If we consider the structure of the hotel—a structure with the communal space of the lobby, then individual rooms connected via walls and a corridor—we are already presented with the framework of parallel worlds."⁷¹ This notion works in-line with the theory of memory suggesting that it is spaces out of our ordinary are more readily remembered. "When we see in every day life things that are petty, ordinary, and banal, we generally fail to remember them, because the mind is not being stirred by anything novel or marvellous. But if we see or hear something exceptionally base, dishonourable, unusual, great, unbelievable, or ridiculous, that we are likely to remember for a long time."⁷²

⁷¹Clarke, Pfannhauser, and Doel, *Moving Pictures/Stopping Places*.

⁷²Yates, *The Art of Memory*.



Figure 21. "Tracking shot of identical hotel room doors,"
Alain Resnais, *L'Année Dernière à Marienbad*, 1961

The film uses the interiors and garden spaces that contain the narrative in inventive ways; not one shot is exactly the same, even when the words used to describe it repeat, seemingly endlessly.

In particular, mirrors are used throughout to create a crystal representing the fragments and refractions of the mind's different realities: "[they] do more than just show the other side of what we are looking at. They remind us...that we are not really there. Our absence from the filmic mirror jolts us as spectators into an awareness that our identifications with narratives are fictitious. Mirror sequences like these do not just serve as *trompe-l'oeil*, tricking our eye into thwarted expectations; they serve as *trompe-désir*, taunting us that we cannot get here what our bodies lurch after through space."⁷³ "The experience of the liar paradox is like standing between two mirrors, its meaning infinitely reflected [which] constitutes a void... In architecture, between the mirrors of ideal space and real space, the same thing happens."⁷⁴

We see paralleled images between the paintings and the hotel grounds, which in turn create another layer to the sense of illusion. And lastly, "Frescos [and] murals...populate the images, with forced perspectives that momentarily disorient, creating false surroundings and warping one's experience of space and dimensionality."⁷⁵

⁷³Clarke, Pfannhauser, and Doel, *Moving Pictures/Stopping Places*.

⁷⁴Tschumi, "Architecture and Disjunction."

⁷⁵Isaak, "Sobre La Memoria y La Arquitectura."



Figure 22. "Composite shot of A through facing mirrors."
Alain Resnais, *L'Année Dernière à Marienbad*, 1961

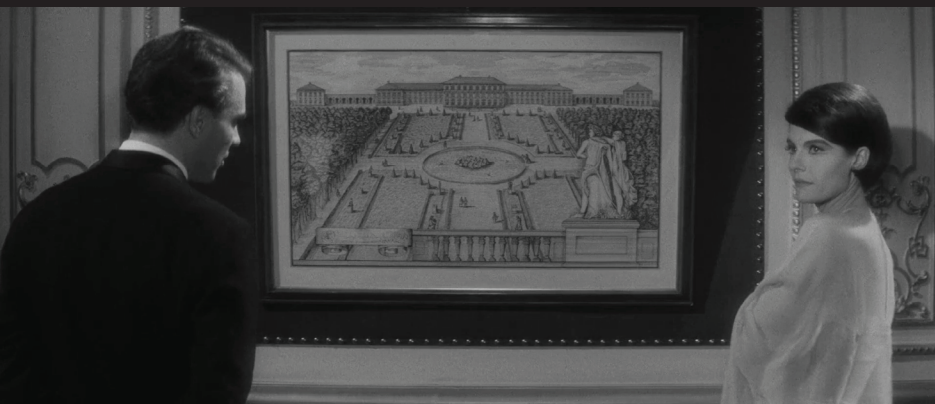


Figure 23. "Painting of hotel grounds."
Alain Resnais, *L'Année Dernière à Marienbad*, 1961

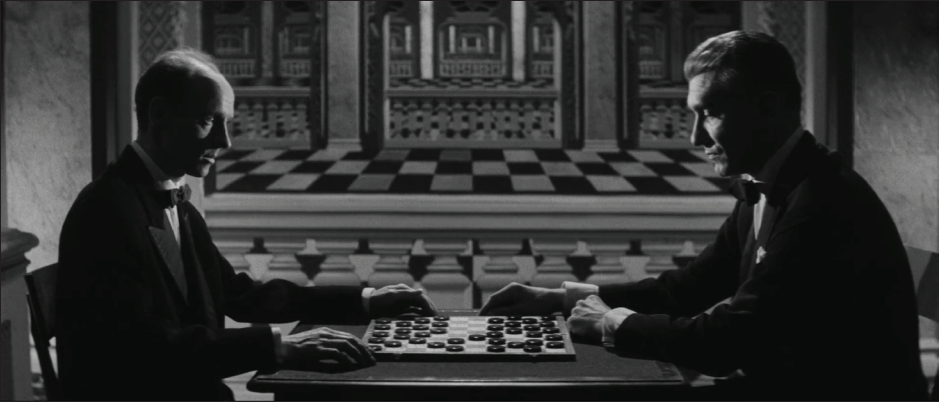


Figure 24. "Checkers players with forced perspective,"
Alain Resnais, *L'Année Dernière à Marienbad*, 1961

FILM SEQUENCE ANALYSIS: "NIGHTMARE SCENE"

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Although the whole of *Marienbad* offers plenty of ground for speculation and discussion, there is one particular sequence through which all of the elements culminate, referred to here as the "Nightmare Scene." Not only is this scene rich in character and plot development, but also serves as prime example of how the memory architectures of *Marienbad* are riddled with impossibilities that hint toward a subjective narrative representation of consciousness that cannot be isolated from the psychological state of both characters, particularly A as the subject of the gaze through which the audience experiences the film.

The main set is A's bedroom; the only two spaces outside are the grand staircase and one of the many hotel corridors, but these are both used in their connection and relation to the room, both physically and symbolically. It would be difficult to ignore the "resemblance between the nature of prostitution and the nature of the hotel room," as portrayed in numerous films. Although the narratives around



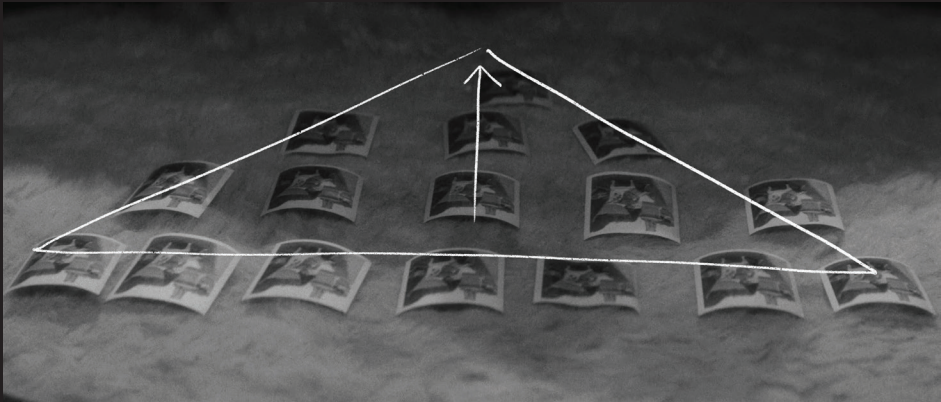
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prostitution are not relevant to our analysis of *Muriel, My Love*, there is still an association of "the room, which is formulated mainly around men's desires and fantasies, [as] a gendered space."⁷⁶ A's room, then, serves as a space for interaction between the male and female bodies that occupy it in the sequence. The sequence explores an interaction between A and X at a climactic point in the film, and is curiously one of the only sequences that changes greatly between Robbe-Grillet's script and Resnais direction, and thus final outcome.

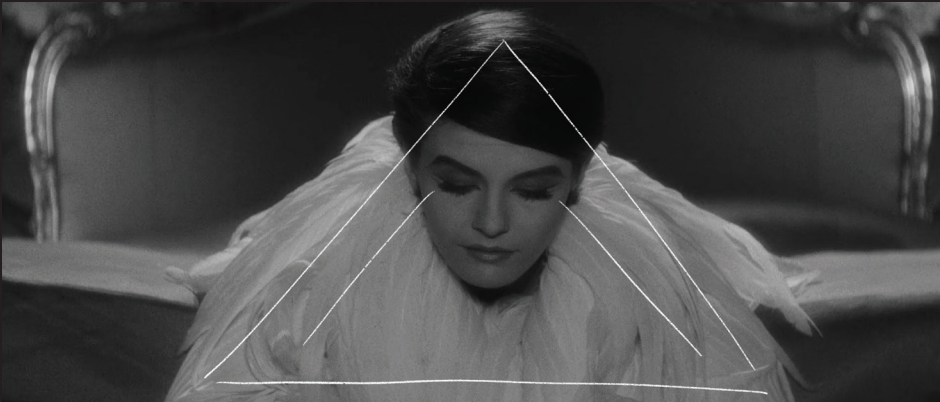
Shot, as the rest of *Muriel, My Love*, using a CinemaScope anamorphic lens in a 2.35:1 ratio, the sequence lasts 1 minute, 48 seconds. It appears at 1:19:51, towards the end of the film's runtime, once the characters and premise have been established. At this point in the film, A's tribulation regarding X's persuasion begins to manifest itself psychologically, which can be observed in her facial expressions and bodily movements.

⁷⁶Demir, "Cine-Anthology of Hotels as a Place of Time and Death."

To begin the sequence, we see a series of photographs of A in the garden placed in the carpet in a triangle formation, reminiscent of the parlor games seen in the previous scene.



A is established as lying in her bed, examining these photographs. Her placement in the frame also resembles this triangle, and her gaze is down towards the floor. Through these first establishing close-up shots, it appears that she is calm, pensative.



We zoom back to a wide-shot, with A right in the middle, slightly below the true middle point of the frame; we still see the photograph triangle seemingly also guiding our eyes toward A. It now becomes clear that her room is in a darker, more heavily decorated state than from the earlier, brighter and emptier scenes.



Int. Bedroom, Wide shot of A on the bed



We are momentarily brought outside, to the grand staircase, in which X is making his way up, which can be read through both the movements of his body and fixed gaze on what lies above (presumably the floor hosting A's room), as well as through the framing of the staircase, which extends beyond the shot's frame and thus suggests its continuation. Similarly employed "in Hitchcock's films, staircases lead to trouble since they accompany the cognitive hubris of the characters. Inquisitiveness drives characters upstairs or downstairs... each step advances but also delays the denouement."⁷⁷

⁷⁷Jacobs, *The Wrong House: The Architecture Of Alfred Hitchcock*.





Back in A's room, through a mirror wide-shot, we see as A becomes startled by something (still imperceptible to the audience), as if she senses some danger approaching. For now, she remains still lying on the bed with only her head moving, first with her gaze toward the floor, then toward the wall (which we see, slightly distorted, through the mirror), and finally forwards toward the bedroom door.



Having considered the game at length, X signals that he will begin; the others all fall silent and X speaks, addressing Mr.

X: Please, start.

M: With pleasure... Which one do you want me to take?

X then looks at M, as if to see if he is serious, then he looks at the game again and points to the last domino in the row of 7 (this is the row on M's side, the isolated domino being towards X).

X: This one.

M: Perfect.

So M takes one of the 7s, X takes two of the 5s, M takes five of the 7s, X thinks for a second and takes two of the 3s, M takes the three remaining in the row of 5s. That leaves three isolated dominoes. X reaches out to one of them and pulls it back after a few seconds, without taking anything, realizing that he has lost. The game was quick and silent.

X: Well, I lost.

He begins, slowly, thinking about what he should have done, putting the pieces back in place for a new game of the same game, as the device approaches him.

SCENE BEGINS

A slight hubbub of conversation develops, to become more pronounced during a rather slow fade-in transition, and to remain on the next shot. It is the room again, identical to what it was the last time, overloaded with furniture and decoration. A, in the same white muslin outfit, is now

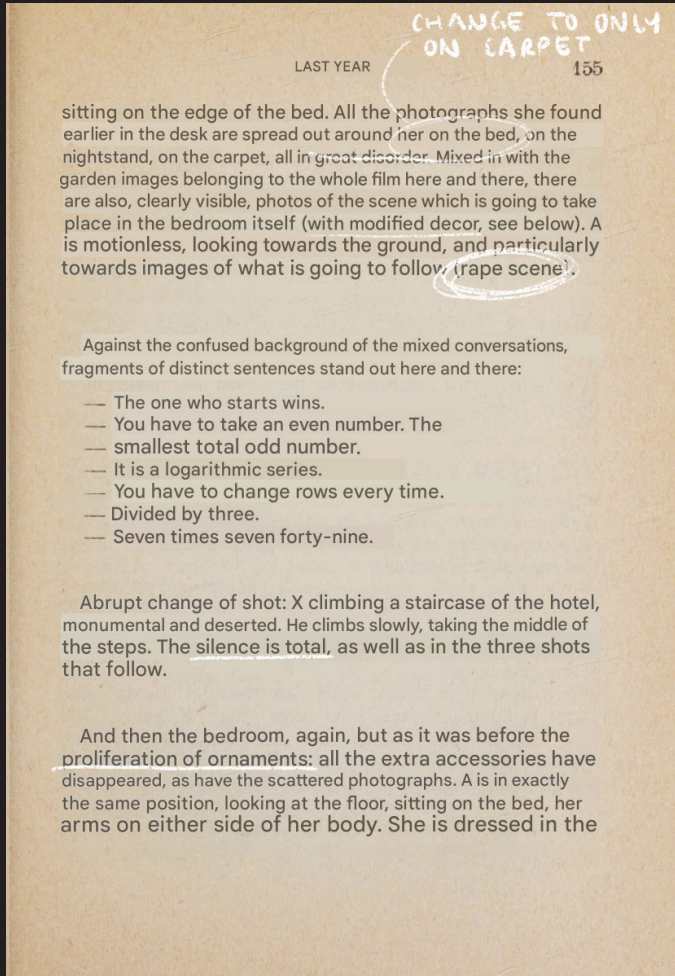
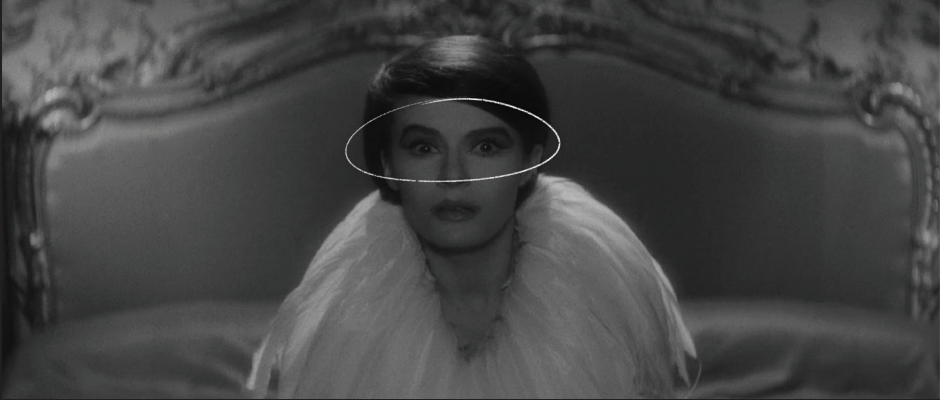


Figure 25. Robbe-Grillet, *Scripted mention of a "rape scene"*

Her calm expression is replaced with a shocked one, which we see through a close-up of her face, her lips slightly parted, her eyes filled with terror.



We now see A sitting up on the bed, perplexed. It is worth noting that the photographs are no longer on the floor, and the carpet has been shifted slightly to the side. Otherwise, the room remains dark and heavily decorated.



Int. Bedroom, Wide shot of A on bed

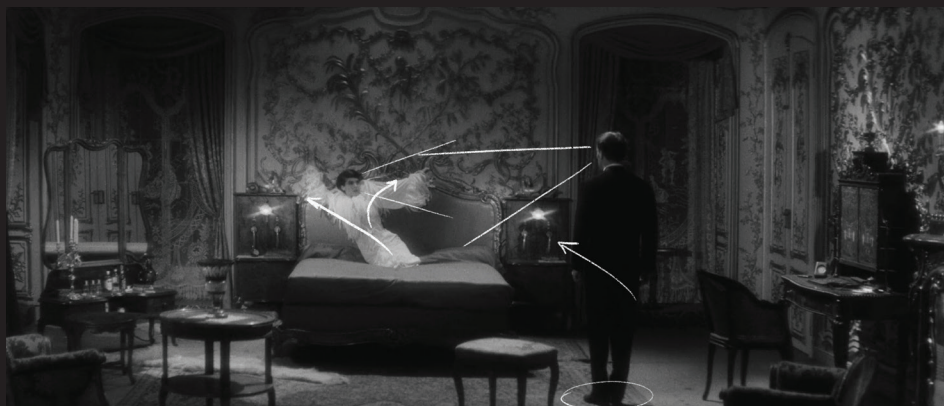
Suddenly, X enters A's room. There is a moment of stillness framed in an over-the-shoulder shot, with X's silhouette facing A on her bed. We see two instances of A's body, one on the bed directly in front of us, and one of her reflection in the mirror.



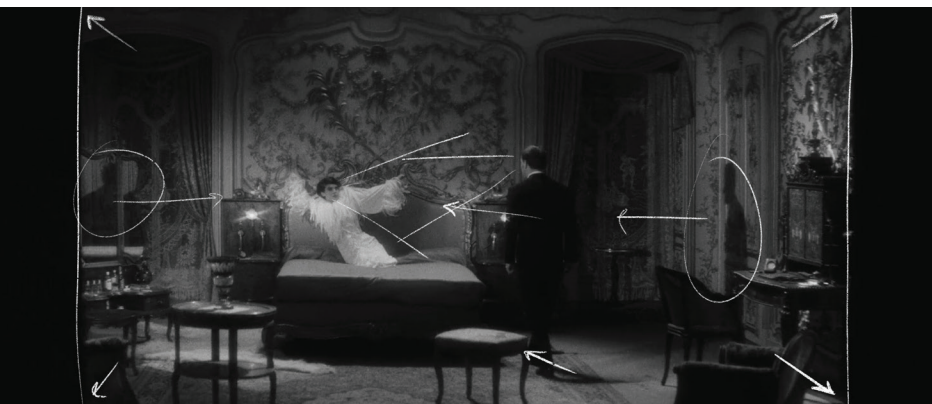
Int. Bedroom, Over the shoulder shot, A on bed and through the mirror, X enters the room



X eventually begins to move towards her with his gaze fixed on her, which she responds to by moving back in terror; she moves slowly at first, then rather hurriedly, as far back as the wall will allow her. She splays her arms open, seemingly blending now into the elaborate wall reliefs.



Int. Bedroom, Wide shot, X approaches A and she retracts



For a moment, the scene is frozen with A in her distressed position and X standing right by the foot of the bed in stillness. The camera only begins to move backward when X's feet begin to lunge himself toward her. But right at the point when we are about to see what will follow, originally scripted as a "a rather quick and brutal rape scene,"⁷⁸ the camera backs us away from the room into the darkness of the corridor. We can also sense the presence of X through the repetition of his shadow (as seen on the wall and reflected through the mirror), giving the illusion of now three bodies moving steadily toward A.

⁷⁸Robbe-Grillet, "Robbe-Grillet on Last Year at Marienbad."



Int. Bedroom, Backward tracking shot, X approaches A and she retracts

There is a moment where we seem to turn out from the bedroom corridor and into the hallway. With a steady forward tracking shot, we make our way through the entire length of the corridor, with the music progressively intensifying. Moving through it the words are spoken: "No, no, no! It's not true, it wasn't by force..."⁷⁹

*"L'Année Dernière à
Marienbad."*



Int. Corridor, Long-take forward tracking shot, composite of shots in sequence

same way white vaporous negligee. The shot is fixed; we do not see A directly but in the mirror which is above the chest of drawers, the camera being quite far from this mirror. After a few seconds, A raises his face towards the mirror, his gaze fixing on the camera through the mirror. Suddenly anguished face.

The shot immediately changes to A, still in the same posture and the same setting, but seen without the intermediary of the mirror, from the bedroom door, and turned towards this door, looking straight ahead with a distraught face (by terror, or by what?). Brief shot.

A jump of the camera: the image is this time taken from very close. Same setting. A, in the same posture, looking towards the camera which is now right in front of her. A raises her arms in an uncertain gesture of defense, only half.

X appears in the foreground, seen from behind. A rather quick and brutal rape scene. A is tilted backwards, X holding her wrists (with one hand) under her waist and slightly to the side, so her torso is not resting flat on her back. A struggles, but to no avail. She opens her mouth as if to scream; but X, leaning over her, immediately inserts into her mouth, as a gag, a small piece of fine lingerie that he was holding in the other hand. X's movements are precise and rather slow, A's are disordered: she turns her head once or twice, from right to left, then looks again, eyes wide, at X who leans over a little more

LAST YEAR

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she... The victim's hair spread out and her costume in disarray.

Change of shot by fade transition. It is now a long deserted corridor, where the camera advances at a fairly rapid pace. The lighting is strange: very weak overall, with lines and various details violently accentuated by bright light effects.

Long labyrinthine route, continuous or at least giving the impression of continuity. Same darkness, same lighting effects. There is no one left in the entire hotel. (Perhaps we should introduce a short fragment of the long gallery that begins the film, this time arriving at the empty performance hall, empty stage, empty seats arranged, etc.) The voice-over has resumed, from the beginning of the shot.

VOICE OF X: No, no. no! (Violently:) It's not ... true!...
 (Calmer:) It wasn't by force... Remember... For days and days, every night... All the rooms look the same... But that room, for me, was like no other... There were no more doors, no more corridors, no more hotel, no more garden... There was no more, not even, a garden.

Finally the route opens up into the night garden, and continues there in the same way. Moving along a wide, straight path, the camera arrives at X, who is standing at the end of this path, in profile, perhaps leaning against the base of a statue.

The camera stops when X is clearly visible: in



When we turn the corner, we are somehow back in A's room, although this time she is right at the door, spectre-like. The bedroom is now bright, over-exposed even, with the curtains drawn open.



Int. Bedroom, Forward tracking shot. A stands at bedroom's entrance

We close in on her until her body fills the frame. She is opening her arms to greet us in what may seem as an embrace, but which contains another layer of subliminal connotation.



What follows is a series of repeated, short, tracking shots moving toward A. The screen is filled with her over-exposed body, holding her embrace but shifting ever so slightly with each take. Visually, the shots are disturbing, yet too perplexing for the audience to look away. There is an undertone of violence, with A's eyes open wide and her smile fixed unnaturally. Symbolically, "the camera re-enacts the motifs of rape and lovers' union. It penetrates A's room in a hastening, pulsating movement, and the film becomes over-exposed as though in response to the passion it records."⁸⁰

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This aligns with the critique that argues for the existence of *Marienbad* as a form of alibi, which would explain X's motivation for speaking these events (whether in memory or in imagination) into existence, and for a graphic scene as the one described to be omitted by Resnais: "...such a scene [of rape] is not needed. Quite to the contrary, it is the way this absence/presence is orchestrated that gives *Marienbad* its postmodern resonance. And it is the absence of any rape event in the film that shifts the emphasis to discursive processes, furnishing a motive for X's narration. It is in this sense that the entire film can be seen as an alibi: not as reference to a hidden past truth, but as the creation of a story in the present—a story that excludes another story while inscribing it nonetheless... it is X's insistence on last year that serves as an alibi: his desperate and repeated efforts to turn the discussion to a 'formerly' and an 'elsewhere'—last year, perhaps in Frederiksbad or Baden-Salsa—avert attention from the discursive crime that is happening before our eyes: the reinscription of rape as a love story."⁸¹

The trope of sexual assault would also serve as explanation for A having no recollection of being at *Marienbad* the previous year. Even in its original advertisement, *Marienbad* was framed as a story of persuasion. "...Freud concluded that his patients fantasized childhood seductions ... Freud too revised the narrative of rape to call it seduction (romance, "persuasion") and then fantasy..." Freud's Oedipus complex theories describe many cases of "repressed memories" of sexual trauma as symbolic representations or unconscious fantasies: "Some of the memory pictures are surely falsified and incomplete, or displaced in point of time and place."⁸² Contemporary psychology, however, distinguishes between repressed and false memories, recognizing that while traumatic memories can sometimes be repressed, they can also be misremembered or influenced by external factors. Feminists pose the narratives of psychoanalysis as themselves a sort of hysterical discourse, seeking the feminine perspective that has been repressed."⁸³ Even in Freudian terms, it became understood that "...the patients do not perhaps have the same control of these as of their other memories of life."⁸⁴

⁸⁰Ditmar, "Structures of Metaphor in Robbe-Grillet's."

⁸¹Higgins, "Screen/Memory: Rape and Its Alibis in Last Year at *Marienbad*."

⁸²Freud, "Psychopathology of Everyday Life."

⁸³Higgins.

⁸⁴Breuer and Freud, *Studies In Hysteria*.



Int. Bedroom, Repeated forward tracking shot, A repeatedly opens her arms

ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS

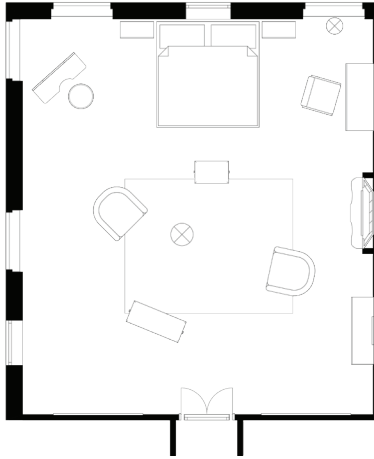


Figure 27. A's room layout during "Nightmare Scene", 1:20

The heightened psychotic state of the sequence can be distilled into spatial fragments that point to the misrepresentation of or incongruency in architecture. A's bedroom appears as scripted, heavily decorated and dark, pointing to the overwhelming or suffocating emotional state during the events that unfold. We may notice, only upon further investigation, how the entrance and exit from the corridor lead us to the same room, something that would be architecturally impossible, unless one of the rooms is imagined, remembered, or existing on a parallel reality plane.

It is especially through this corridor sequence (which we now know composed of "a sixty-metre-long corridor, which [they] were able to construct by joining two stages together, other shorter corridors, intersecting..."⁸⁵), that we find the impossibility of the architecture hidden behind the film editing of the emotional intensity generated by the jarring imagery coupled with a crescendo in the score, escalated by X's screaming dialogue. It cannot be ignored, however, that the impossibility uncovered through architectural analysis could be an indication of a disjunct reconstruction from a shared memory (likely X's as he is retelling it to A, interrupted by moments of A's recollection), which would point to a negotiation between two subjective versions of a remembered moment, neither fully accurate, neither fully true.

Marienbad's persuasion is based on this back and forth, on this constant shifting between two consciousnesses, and what continues to make its narrative physically impossible for audiences to ever fully grasp in Cartesian terms.

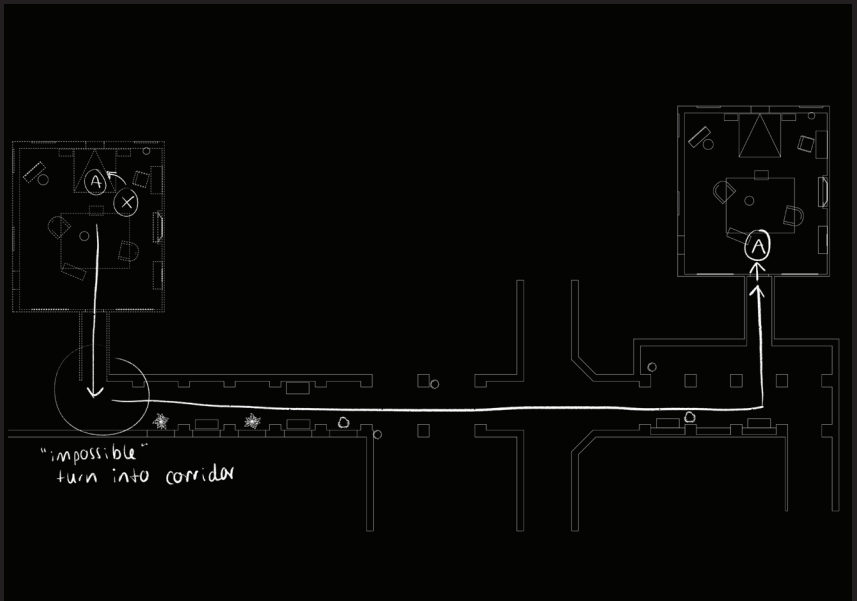


Figure 28. Reconstructed plan of 'Impossible Corridor', 1:75

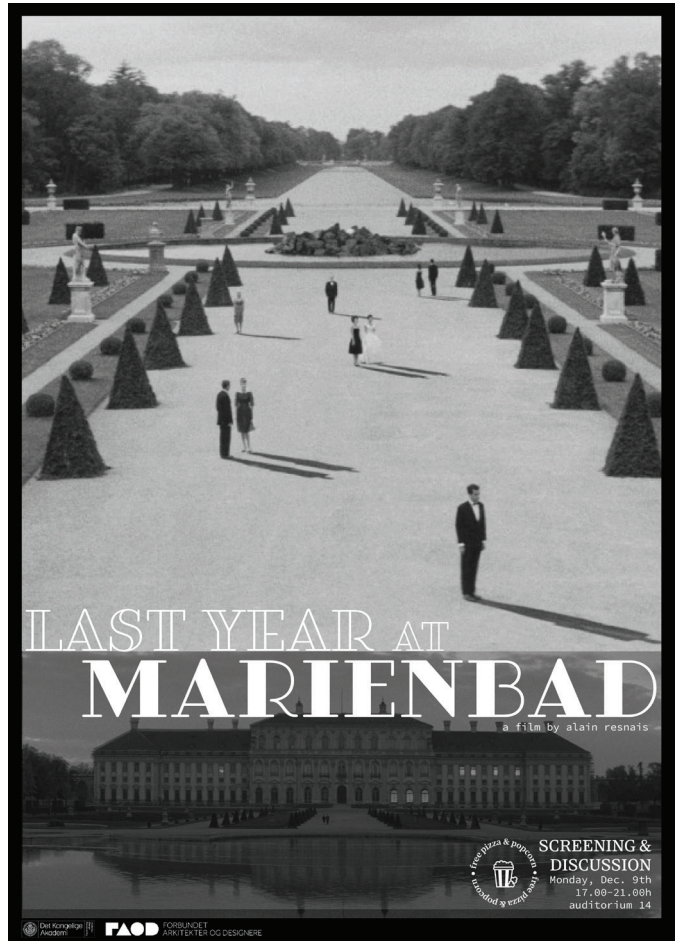
AUDIENCE STUDY

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In an effort to externalize the impressions left by *Marienbad*, a film screening and discussion was organized for a small audience. The screening took place in a projection room at the Royal Danish Academy in Copenhagen, Denmark. The 10 students present were predominantly Master's students from the Spatial Design program at the Academy, but others came from Strategic Design and programs in Architecture and Conservation, and from other institutions. Although the thesis work itself did not receive any amount of funding, a grant of 2,000 DKK (approximately 250.- CHF) was obtained through The Union of Architects and Designers (FAOD), an organization focused on funding student-led initiatives in Denmark,⁸⁶ and with the help of fellow Spatial Design student Peter Anton Borring Balle. The money was used to purchase an English-subtitled copy of the film, print posters to advertise the screening, as well as to provide pizza and snacks for the evening.

This audience study allowed for a transfer of knowledge through conversation and debate on the several issues the film presents and how they continue to influence architecture discourse today, namely those of the depiction of memory, fantasy, reality, and spatial impossibility. The following sections discuss some of the most interesting findings from the study, pointing to specific quotes by the anonymous speakers. The full transcript from the discussion can be found in Appendix 1 on page 96.

⁸⁶FAOD, "FAOD in English."



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Figure 29. Poster for screening event

Through the starting questions: *What did you perceive as past/present or memory/fantasy in the film? Is there such a distinction?; What role did the hotel architecture play in the narrative?; and Would you like to share a personal experience where a space was drastically different from how you remembered, or your recollection of a space was completely different from someone else's?*, the audience members formed interesting theories around the cinematic tools that may have been used in *Marienbad*. These included those used to represent scenes set in 'last year' or perhaps in dream:

Speaker 9

I felt that when she was wearing the feather [costume], it's a piece more to the memory or fantasy.

Speaker 5

I think the scenes when nobody else was moving. It was maybe more of the image that you would use for a memory. I don't know. For me, it has this connotation of a memory;

or on how the architecture was used either as a tool to convey this aspect of the story:

Speaker 8

Also through the repetition. Like the same thing happening over and over and over again, like the architecture was also just repetition.

Speaker 1

Also the way he describes the memory to her. Like 'the room we got and the steps...' like a lot of the things he would say were specifically architectural elements. It's funny that they cannot figure out what kind of hotel they were at, like they all look pretty similar with that baroque architecture, it all resembles something.

Speaker 3

I found it quite weird to use a baroque hotel for memory. Like when I think about memories it's not like the clearest picture of something I remember. It's more specific things I can remember... when you have a super detailed, over-the-top, completely packed scene, I don't know, it was a bit...

Speaker 5

But maybe that's what makes it perfect for it, to show that even then it doesn't matter... to show that these kinds of detailing that could make a room super specific, where every piece of wall is ornamented and very individualized, or seems to be individualized, but in the memory they still can't figure out the specific room.

They also formed interesting links to concepts in architecture, from Piranesi's "dreams of antiquity [which] so often surpassed reality, from his earliest etchings of architectural fantasies"⁸⁷ as seen in his 18th century map of Rome "on which he painted buildings of the 15th and 16th centuries, moved some of the buildings and invented others,"⁸⁸ to contemporary practices, like Forensic Architecture, a practice

⁸⁷Thompson, "Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720-1778) | Essay | The Metropolitan Museum of Art | Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History."

⁸⁸Remizova, "ARCHITECTURAL MEMORY AND FORMS OF ITS EXISTENCE."

"focusing on evidential methods for environmental violence,"⁸⁹ using situated testimonies as a method to uncover truths in state violence and human rights violations.

Speaker 2

[Forensic Architecture] is connecting architecture and spaces to crime scenes, and that maybe by exploring the architecture they test the statements of the witnesses, because the space is objective but they have to patch it together...

Speaker 3

But it's so interesting because witness testimony is the worst piece of evidence you can have because it's not objective, it's all subjective.

Uncovering truth in victim testimonies has also been crucial in mass justice efforts such as those of the MeToo movement, which "centers individual and community healing and transformation, empowerment through empathy, shifting cultural narratives and practices and advancing a global survivor-led movement to end sexual violence."⁹⁰ These contemporary efforts depend entirely on a collective agreement to believe victims, thus establishing a truth that, although still subjective, embodies a common mission to change current narratives of oppression and violence.

Audience members also opened up to their own experiences, and were themselves surprised to find that not everyone shared the same perspective on spaces they've returned to. Some of the personal reflections on false or distorted memory architectures inspired a debate due to these varying perspectives and experiences, again emphasizing the role of subjectivity in the creation and reproduction of memory architecture.

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Speaker 8

I feel like my childhood home, I can remember every room accurately except for my bedroom. It was much smaller than I remembered. But everything else is the exact same.

Speaker 3

Crazy. For me it's completely different. When I visit spaces I've been with my grandparents like 20 years ago now, everything seems so small... of course I was smaller but it's so crazy how big the impact of this perspective can be.

They even remarked on the spatial qualities of the room in which the screening took place, as there were cars passing by outside and windows through which their headlights flooded in, often complementing the dreamscape of *Marienbad* seen on screen.

Speaker 6

I really thought, when I heard the steps up there and the movie was on, I thought that it was part of it... And the cars coming here and the lights coming through the window...

...

We are going to dream very strange dreams tonight...

⁸⁹Forensic Architecture, "About Us."

⁹⁰Me too. Movement, "Get To Know Us | Our Vision & Theory of Change."



Figure 30. Setting up screening in projection room at the Royal Danish Academy



Figure 31. Audience watching the film during screening

FURTHER REFLECTIONS

Audiences, both those at initial screenings of the film in 1961 as well as those today, still grapple with the simple, but often infuriating, fact that *Marienbad* provides no clear answers to any of the questions it raises. If attempted to be understood in Cartesian terms, it will indeed leave spectators just as confused and disappointed as it has for over half a century. If we, however, embrace its ambiguities and incongruencies, we may experience that which Robbe-Grillet and Resnais both set out to do, and find a story which reflects the ever-evolving and often failed attempt to understand and harness human memory. We may then give in to the seduction of its endless corridors and disjunct room doors, and find a narrative which supersedes the dichotomies of right and wrong, reality and dream, life and death. Outside of *Marienbad*, these spaces and what they represent inhabit our consciousness in the form of memories, our internal mind cinemas, also often detached from chronology or corporeality. They tend to appear entirely subjective, even uncanny, if reconstructed or exteriorized, making it almost impossible to accurately represent an objective 'truth' which correlates to the spatial qualities in which a memory lives. *Marienbad*, then, poses whether truth and fiction matter, or even exist, when dealing with spaces reconstructed from memory. We must not only inquire about whose memory it is we are leaning into and

the forces and experiences that shaped it, but also accept that there is nothing memory architecture can do to escape its subjectivity.

We must instead find instances where this subjectivity aids in the reconstruction of a narrative with the power to release the mind of the trappings of unconscious spatial repression, or to uncover new realities to make sense of complex events. As does Forensic Architecture, or the statutory proceedings of witness testimonies often linked to cases of sexual violence. In this frame of thinking, what if there were a new version of *Marienbad* in which we instead enter A's subjective reconstruction of the space? Her retelling of this encounter, of this architectural body, one in which she moves and exists out of her own volition, that she gets to occupy. We may find an altogether different story. We may as well find another year, another place, but still with its infinite incongruencies, labyrinths, and fragments. It still wouldn't necessarily be an objective framing of 'truth,' but rather would perhaps instill a balance in the power dynamic between the two characters, maybe even between film and audience. This narrative exists, as do all of our collective *Marienbads*, which our body and mind memories inhabit.



The development of this thesis has allowed not only for an investigation into the interplay between memory, memory architecture, psychoanalysis, and cinema, but for a constant questioning and re-framing of 'truth.' It also showcased how architecture has been and continues to be used as a tool to remember, from ancient Greek mnemonic techniques, as a way to the collective memory of the city, through film construction and analysis, to contemporary practices. Architecture is then more than physical space, even more than its phenomenological theories, it becomes part of core functions of the brain, working hand-in-hand with psychology and aesthetic philosophy. An interior architecture refers not only to what exists within physical walls, but that which lives inside of our own minds, that we can roam in daydreams, in fantasy. Subliminal messages inhabit not only the media we consume, but the occurrences of our own lives, manifested in the spaces we physically occupy, as well as those we construct mentally, internally. Exteriorizing this interior space also involves more than breaking physical porous boundaries between inside and outside, but also those that exist entirely inside of us. These architectures then become integral to our collective and individual journey towards an understanding of self, a merging of fantasy and reality as one, forever entangled within our own memories and impossible to separate from entirely; doing so would only render us incomplete.





APPENDIX 1. AUDIENCE STUDY TRANSCRIPT

Speaker 1

It was really good. Actually, I really enjoyed the movie, even though it was so confusing, but I guess because it was confusing, it keeps you interested. You don't know what's going on.

Speaker 2

I also think the landscape is super weird in this garden.

Speaker 3

It's very baroque. Yeah, but it's funny as you told or as you said that they made a collage out of these... Or they built this non-existing castle with their... With their memories. With their memories in different places and constructed something that doesn't exist. I think in reality, it's the same, isn't it?

Speaker 5

Yeah. They were structured like a memory that doesn't exist.

Speaker 6

I mean, it's like a collage. Also all the repetitive things, the broken heel and that play with all those either paths or the photos. There was a lot of things that...

Speaker 3

But always slightly different.

Speaker 7

Yeah. That's interesting. You say that because that's something that was missing in the translation. A lot of the time, the translation was saying the same sentence two times. But in reality, what was said was completely different, but it just told for one word that would change, like anything, that would change the complete signification of this. The translation was very literal.

Speaker 0

It's interesting. Sometimes also going from... Because going from the script to what you see is almost exactly... They took it almost exactly as the script was written. I a lot of that dialog that keeps repeating or this thing is all there. But it's interesting that there's another layer when you translate another layer when the pacing of the subtitles, even that kind of thing.

Speaker 8

Before we found out that it was her husband, I kept thinking that tall, skinny guy was supposed to be death. He just kept coming up.

Speaker 0

He does have that face.

Speaker 3

He was always winning. Yeah, exactly.

Speaker 1

I was like, Oh, yeah. Another thing with memory and architecture, because you just said it's like a collage of things. I don't know if you use it, but you know that guy Piranesi? The Italian guy who did the... What do you call the prison things? But he was also really famous, I understand, for doing those. They're doing a day or something, where they have... Because it was an emerging tourism at the time. Mostly people, rich people, came to Italy, and they would buy souvenir cards of Rome, but it wasn't the real Rome. It was just multiple of the big tourist spots, re-arranged in one card. It showed a fake. They were going to flex while other people couldn't afford to go to Rome. Maybe you can look into this. It's really interesting. It was this memory of architecture which never existed, just like in the movie, because they took different castles to make one set. It was like memory cannot face to nothing.

Speaker 8

I think the collage thing was also interesting because I feel like a lot of the talk was about artificial spaces and artificial reproduction of nature. That was what I was picking up on. To find out what is fake.

Question 1: What did you perceive as past/present or memory/fantasy in the film? Is there such a distinction?

Speaker 9

I felt that when she was wearing the feather, it's a piece more to the memory or fantasy. Then when she was also shot when she was wearing the white feather. Then when she was wearing the black feather, also she met someone in the garden, the other guy. But it looked also a little bit like not connected to the story before and after. I was really like, this dress is also a little bit different. I think if it's present or it's a memory.

Speaker 5

I think the scenes when nobody else was moving. It was maybe more of the image that you would use for a memory. I don't know. For me, it has this connotation of a memory. And yeah, there were a couple of them.

Speaker 9

They talked about Fredriksbad. They talked about Marienbad and Carl's Bed, and then Fredrik's Bed. I can find a Marine Bed and a Cars Bed in Czech, also in Czech. But Fredrik's Bed, I can't find in Czech, but there is one in Germany, Friedrich's Bed in Baden-Baden. I don't know. It's a bit strange.

Speaker 0

I think. I I think it's purposely confusing or not identifying the place, even though the movie itself is called, like last year at Marienbad. Throughout the movie, they made the point that maybe it wasn't even Marienbad. It could have been anywhere. It could have been any time. So it's a bit like that confusion again, maybe. Or that maybe it doesn't matter. They must go to

fancy hotels all the time or who knows...

Speaker 1

I also thought it was really weird that she... I don't know. Did she forget anything at all? Did she purposely forget it? I got the feeling that her life was so boring and everything feels the same. So she doesn't know when anything happens, like if you have an interesting life, when something happens you'd remember. But to her every day feels the same, it's all one big thing... she doesn't know if it was last year or the year before, because the only thing that happened was that she'd walk in the park.

Speaker 8

True, because also in the last scenes she did say "I'm not brave enough" saying all those things, so maybe she did purposely forget. But again with that confusion, like what did she actually remember?

Speaker 2

And also the woman's husband, when he told her that "the room will be empty tomorrow," I thought it meant that he's going to kill her. But actually, the woman runs away with the other man, right? At least that's what we are made to think...

Speaker 8

Did the director ever say like "this is exactly what I meant" or is it still kind of ..?

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Question 2: What role did the hotel architecture play in the narrative?

Speaker 2

First I think it was used to show the identity in the society. Maybe they are all high level or bourgeois.

Speaker 8

Also through the repetition. Like the same thing happening over and over and over again, like the architecture was also just repetition.

Speaker 1

Also the way he describes the memory to her. Like "the room we got and the steps..." like a lot of the things he would say were specifically architectural elements. It's funny that they cannot figure out what kind of hotel they were at, like they all look pretty similar with that baroque architecture, it all resembles something.

Speaker 3

I found it quite weird to use a baroque hotel for memory. Like when I think about memories it's not like the clearest picture of something I remember. It's more specific things I can remember... like in a museum I can remember the art but not the order of the walls or the ceiling details. For me it's a bit blurry around the objects. So then when you have a super detailed, over-the-top, completely packed scene, I don't know, it was a bit...

Speaker 5

But maybe that's what makes it perfect for it, to show that even then it doesn't matter... to show that these kinds of detailing that could make a room super specific, where every piece of wall is ornamented and very individualized, or seems to be individualized, but in the memory they still can't figure out the specific room. It's like this extreme of detailing..

Speaker 7

Yeah, because everything they describe is very superficial. Like all they describe is what's been added on, all the ornaments...

Question 3: Would you like to share a personal experience where a space was drastically different from how you remembered, or your recollection of a space was completely different from someone else's?

Speaker 8

I feel like my childhood home, I can remember every room accurately except for my bedroom. It was much smaller than I remembered. But everything else is the exact same.

Speaker 3

Crazy. For me it's completely different. When I visit spaces I've been with my grandparents like 20 years ago now, everything seems so small. I went back to this hotel on Lake Constance last year in the summer, and I remember I was so small, and I had this feeling often when I visit places I visited as a child, so of course I was smaller but it's so crazy how big the impact of this perspective can be.

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Speaker 1

There's this episode that talks about memory and how it works, and it talks about people having twisted memories of how they saw 9/11 or where they were during 9/11 that was twisted or a false memory. Like they saw it from so-and-so perspective that didn't even exist. It's weird that memory is this kind of puzzle, and the pieces are put together from pieces...

Speaker 5

[Forensic Architecture] is connecting architecture and spaces to crime scenes, and that maybe by exploring the architecture they test the statements of the witnesses, because the space is objective but they have to patch it together.

Speaker 3

But it's so interesting because witness testimony is the worst piece of evidence you can have because it's not objective, it's all subjective. There was one work of them [Forensic Architecture] where they were reconstructing a refugee camp in Turkey from refugees that went to Greece and there was one story of this one guy, a Greek citizen, who lost his passport and got deported back to Turkey and he fled back to Greece and then it happened again, so he had two chances to see this camp, and together with Forensic Architecture so through his memory but also with

satellite images they could figure out the place where he went but there was still a big difference between his memory and the real locations. He remembered the structure of it, but if they had just used his memory I don't know if they would've found the same information.

Speaker 6

I really thought, when I heard the steps up there and the movie was on, I thought that it was part of it... And the cars coming here and the lights coming through the window...

Speaker 1

[Referring to the "rape" scene] I thought about the rape thing, because this would make sense for her wanting to forget the trauma. And him pressuring her, like the whole "we were in love," this was such a weird part of the movie I didn't understand.

Speaker 6

We are going to dream very strange dreams tonight...

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