Introduction

- Those who love surrealism tend to defend it enthusiastically without careful and close analysis. Therefore, it is implied that “Surrealism is by definition that which cannot be analyzed.” (xiii)
- *Un Chien Andalou* and *L’Age d’or* are the only “pure” examples of Surrealist film
- Surrealism ultimately works against the viewer’s attempt to identify oneself with an image

Chapter One: The Image

The Image In Pre-surrealistic Poetic Theory
- Montage is used to connect realities to create a coherent image
- Chaplin’s usage of natural settings and contexts that are then transformed by the game of the action represents an advancement into the subtle ways that film can be used to create a surprise “on the level of textual expectations” rather than in regards to working in relation to the laws of the real world
- Societes des amis de Fantomas = a group of artists
- “Esprit Nouveau” = “new spirit”, refers to the movement and magazine which showcased a conflict in art that occurred as a result of those wanting a return to order and rationality after WWI and those of the avant-garde
- *La Brehatine* = screenplay by Guillaume Apollinaire that went unproduced; fuses the imaginary and reality together within the mind of the character (rather than audience, which later surrealism attempts to do)
- Freudian term: “perceptual identity” = “a process in which a subject repeats various visual perceptions that have been linked to the satisfaction of needs in the past
- Freudian term: “screen memories” = “false recollections that mix with and condense a great many childhood memories”, reformulations of actual memories, these reformulations serve to support unconscious fantasies/desires
- Surrealism works in the same way that the human mind works (in accordance to Freudian theories) as it superimposes the imaginary with reality *think about this superimposition as reformulation*
- “The startling power of the cinematic image considered not in its capacity for imitation but in its capacity to create an alternative reality.” (9), surrealists had been intrigued by using film as a medium for this reason
- Surrealists interested in how film has the ability to reflect reality rather than being interested in the way it doesn’t reflect what actually is (going back to the idea of cinema’s ability to create alternate realities)

The Surrealist Image
- Freudian term: “free association” = psychoanalytic technique in which the subject reports all passing thoughts without reservation
- Disorientations resulting from the process of recombination (think back to montage and displacement) is typical to Surrealist art
- Surrealists sought to “research on the irrational knowledge of the object” through these strange games that they would play, surrealism seeks to tap into this irrational (subconscious) knowledge by separating actual objects from their natural context
- Surrealist art in respect to space: objects are rearranged in space in a way that they had not existed before
- Surrealist art in respect to time: creates an illogical succession of images
- This deconstruction of space and time explains how surrealism connects to dreams
- Surrealism seeks to imitate the form/structure of the unconscious rather than the actual content that lies there
- Typical view of surrealism: its goal is to simply allow absolute freedom of expression
- Linda Williams’ view: its goal is to reveal desires through a structural process rather than content-subject examination
- Latent = described to exist but not seen
- Surrealist film must be ambiguous to imitate a dream’s latent content; if it used clues in its manifest content then it would violate the irrationality associated with the unconscious; the unconscious is irrational to us because it is made up of latent content (i.e. unknown desires and fears)
- Dreams in film: typically overly symbolic
- Surrealism: it is purposefully illogical like a dream

Goudal, Artaud, and Desnos In Search Of The “Language” Of Dreams
- Spoken/written language is logical because images are born from the words that express them, whereas cinema can be illogical as images are born onscreen without reason yet they are accepted by the audience (similar to how we accept the images of our dreams however illogical they appear to be)
- Surrealism benefits from cinema’s ability to get people to accept illogical images
- Dreams and Film: both involve images of the real world that are actually artificial; they are similar in content by the way that they are both hallucinatory; they are similar in
terms of their language by the way their images appear to be real, but literally unreal at the same time

- **Surrealism focuses less on getting you to believe in the fiction of the artificial images that films present, it doesn’t want you to believe that the image is real** (which is contrary to what cinema is known for doing)

- Oeuvre = regarding the works of an artist collectively

- Metz’s film Theory: film is an *imaginary signifier* = it is the most perceptual art because all it portrays is an illusion *** connection to nightclub scene in *Mulholland Dr*: the club creates the illusion of people singing and playing instruments onstage, however, it is revealed to the protagonists that what they are hearing is actually pre recorded and that the people are just lip/play-syncing = similar to how film shows you something and uses sound to imitate the real senses of that image, yet in reality it is all just an illusion; **film tries to connect an image to the perceived reality of that image to inspire belief in the audience**

- **Surrealism tries to have images directly take meaning in the mind rather than have the mind derive meaning from images through the context that they are placed in**

- **Surrealism seeks to answer the question: What does this image mean to you without context?**

- **Surrealism separates context from the image** (back to the idea of recombination and disorientation)

- Film theory: film (like dreams) functions to ideally fulfill the wishes that are repressed

- Opposing views on surrealism’s goals: 1. **Free people from the control of reasoning** (using context to make sense of images), 2. **Free people to simply express themselves** (express their unconscious desires) **in any form**

- Summarizing these goals: 1. Surrealism tries to have an image take meaning directly to the mind without context in order to subtly reveal the unconscious repressed thoughts by having the unconscious assign meaning to the image, 2. Surrealism tries to give people direct access to their repressed desires

- Surrealist cinema: Artaud and Goudal believe it tries to imitate the structure of a dream, whereas Desnos believes that it focuses more on the content of dreams which involves wish-fulfillment

- A characteristic of surrealism is that **subtle images later take over the narrative**; in *Minuit a quatorze heures* subtle “all-engulfing round shapes” shatters the viewer’s belief in the film reality when they literally takes over the narrative, ***are these “round shapes” a motif in surrealist films? (think opening of Un Chien Andalou), “The ball interrupts the progress of the narrative in much the same way unconscious desires shape the ordinary thoughts and memories of the preconscious and conscious in dreams: one incomprehensible but insistent level of “meaning” intrudes upon and takes over another.”** (28)
- **Surrealism is paradoxical in the way it celebrates film’s ability to make things seem real by seeking to expose its actual falseness**
- Lacan’s Theory on the unconscious: paradoxically, it identifies images with the use of language (content) but meanwhile the images’ symbolism (identification) is already rooted in language
- **Surrealist film serves to make people conscious of how film is constructing a reality**
- Surrealism tries to imitate a dream’s form, not just its content (i.e. a dream’s processes of displacement and condensation)

Freud, Lacan, and The Unconscious
- Surrealism uses the dream model to assess the unconscious because **Freud believed the unconscious was revealed in dreams**
- Exegesis = explanation of a text
- Images in dreams **lack the rigid codification/interpretation of images in normal language**, thus they become **open to association** with whatever it comes to contact or associates with in the subconscious- its meaning becomes whatever desire associates it with
- Freud’s psych apparatus:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Processes (the unconscious)</th>
<th>Secondary Processes (the preconscious and conscious)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dreams and Fantasies</td>
<td>Waking Thought and Memory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most direct to satisfaction, more immediate</td>
<td>Deters urge for immediate satisfaction, governed by reality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Dreams:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Displacement</th>
<th>Condensation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Latent content displaced on insignificant/indifferent elements (moving object to an unnatural state)</td>
<td>Several associated ideas condensed into one representation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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- Language: every utterance implies the preexistence of a system, which makes the utterance possible; Lacan = Imaginary (primary processes) are already structured by the Secondary; Freud = Primary and Secondary are separate

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