

James Kendall

London Film School / London Metropolitan University (London)

Interpretative strategies in Film Studies: The case of Luis Buñuel's Un Chien Andalou

Abstract

The following article frames a particular case study: the role of interpretative strategies within the realm of film studies. It will examine the diverse levels (cultural, linguistic and semiotic) at which interpreting operates, including transposition, transcreation, and adaptation. It will look at a specific film, one that jettisons classical interpretative approaches: Luis Bunuel's Un Chien Andalou. The analysis that follows will entail a close examination of the film text. The corpus of this article in fact will dwell upon a whole matrix of formal features (editing, camera movement, framing) and how such aspects of mise-en-scène open up interpretative possibilities on an ontological as well as an epistemological level.

Keywords: *film interpretation, aesthetics, film studies, textual analysis, Surrealism, Buñuel*

UN CHIEN ANDALOU AS A *LANDMARK IN FILM HISTORY*

“Our only rule was very simple: No idea or image that might lend itself to a rational explanation of any kind would be accepted.”¹

Un Chien Andalou, made by Luis Buñuel in 1929 in collaboration with Salvador Dalí, is one of the most analysed films in film history, studied by an enormous amount of critics and specialists from different schools and cultural backgrounds. Buñuel’s short film has been considered as the avatar of American independent film (1968, 56), the initiator of the surrealist model in commercial film (1970, 44) and of modern American cinema in general (1969, 66). The list of critics and enthusiasts of the film is endless; Noel Burch sees *Un Chien Andalou* as the first film capable of making aggression towards cinema’s basic structural elements (1990, 54): Octavio Paz considered it as exemplary of the interconnectedness between film and poetry (Kyrou, A ed, 1963, 23) while Alessandro Cappabianca regarded it as the moment when antirealism begins in cinema (1972, 60).

The implication of such statements is not so much a drive to interpretation, rather instead a sort of mystification/recuperation of Buñuel’s first work. Dudley Andrew perfectly highlights this point when he remarks that “the institution of film proceeds not

¹ Luis Buñuel, *My Last Sigh*, trans. Abigail Israel (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983), 104.

by the routine application of rules but by a tension between rules and a force of discourse trying to say something” (1983, 72). What he is arguing here is that every filmic text is characterized by its own set of codes and conventions and by the necessity/desire to tell something through the use of those “rules”. Applying Andrew’s model to *Un Chien Andalou*, one immediately acknowledges that the discursive form of Buñuel’s film might correspond to a questioning of the need to interpret or to unravel meaning through the investigation of its textual layers. Not only is Buñuel’s picture open to an enormous plethora of interpretations, but it has also been turned into a sort of canonical model for its subversiveness and powerful deviations from a norm - Classical Hollywood Cinema — that had never been questioned as much before. Such a statement ideally dovetails with Michael Turvey’s claim that *Un Chien Andalou* provides the spectator with an “objective gaze free of artistic and other subjective distortions to perceive [nature] in all its strangeness.”²

The point of this essay then is to read *Un Chien Andalou* in the light of its intrinsic complexities (both formal and thematic), trying to see how the film actually “makes meaning” and contextualizing it in the web of interpretations already advanced. The following analysis will highlight how Buñuel’s text both resists interpretations and is simultaneously open to textual readings. In this respect, I shall thoroughly engage with the filmic text, both in terms of narrative structure and mise-en-scène, attempting to clarify its relentless complexity through the tools of interpretation and textual analysis.

² Malcolm Turvey, *The Filming of Modern Life: European Avant-Garde Film of the 1920s* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2011), 113.

*INTERPRETATION IN THE REALM OF AESTHETICS AND
FILM STUDIES*

Before moving to the core of the essay and focus entirely on the film, I shall firstly introduce the notion of interpretation in the realm of aesthetics (first) and film studies (secondly). This step is necessary because of *Un Chien Andalou's* overall radicalism and rejection of traditional cinematic norms (namely Classical Hollywood Cinema). To approach *Un Chien Andalou* therefore implies not only dealing with a specific text, but above all reflecting and reformulating what reading / interpreting a text means. To interpret something (be it a literary text or a film) is to ascribe implicit or symptomatic meanings to it. The interpreter aims to present a novel and plausible interpretation. The task is accomplished by assigning one or more semantic fields to the text. Such fields are distinguished by external features (contexts, critical frameworks) and by internal structures (clusters, themes, codes and signs). Operating with assumptions and hypotheses, the interpreter maps semantic fields which she/he judges pertinent onto cues identified in the work (Sontag 1989, 256). Conceiving a text in this way is first of all a process of domestication. The critic/interpreter who finds a text to be original or contradictory is pulling that text into the field of the known. Secondly it becomes a process of differentiation, the "reshaping of the known". By showing the applicability of existing conceptual schemes to a fresh case, the interpreter is often obliged to discriminate certain aspects of those schemes in favor of others. Thus, both domestication and differentiation serve to reaffirm existing conventions, but they do so by demonstrating their range, power and subtlety.

In this light, according to a strictly Sontagian approach, "interpretation" becomes a way to subsume a text to our

conceptual schemes and thus to master them more fully. Simply put, interpretation becomes a process of understanding or better phrased, the medium through which we potentially familiarize ourselves with a text.

It would seem here that interpretation becomes a necessity if it is to make sense (and even appreciate) a specific work. But there is also a downside to this argument, which regards interpretation as a forceful strategy that impoverishes the work. The standard conceptualization is that every ratiocative act “reduces” the work, since we cannot know the work without the mediation of certain conceptual schemes. It is exactly in this context of “reductionism” that one can place Susan Sontag’s work on interpretation.

In her seminal essay “Against Interpretation”, Sontag analyses the role of interpretation in relation to art and especially content. She argues that Western consciousness and reflection upon art has remained within the confines shaped by the polarization between “form” and “content” and the well-intentioned move which makes content essential and form accessory. This overemphasis on the idea of content entails what Sontag calls the “perennial, never consummated project of interpretation” (Sontag, 13). It is exactly the whole notion of interpretation (that is the habit of approaching works of art in order to interpret them) that legitimizes the presence of such a thing as the “content” of a work of art. With the term “interpretation” Sontag refers to a conscious act of the mind which plucks a set of elements from the whole work. Once this process of externalization has been completed, the task of interpretation becomes one of translation. The interpreter “transforms” the work into what it “supposedly” means.

The modern style of interpretation (as opposed to interpretation in classical antiquity) excavates, digs “behind” the text in order to find a subtext or latent content that is supposed to be the true one. Sontag thus sees modern interpretation as a way of destroying the integrity and ontology of a work of art. By not leaving the work of art alone, interpretation reduces it to its content and thus tames it. Understanding and thus interpreting art makes it more manageable and comfortable. On the other hand, Sontag argues that the true function of interpretation is to show “how it is what it is” rather than to show what it *means*, emphasizing the importance of style and stylization (i.e. how the content is presented and conveyed). The poignancy and strength of this argument lies in its general applicability. Keeping in mind in fact Sontag’s critical spectrum, I shall briefly investigate interpretation in the field of film studies.

From its very birth, film theory has always tried to put an emphasis on the task of film interpretation. Often hailed as the royal road of film inquiry, film interpretation has become over the passing of years a debatable space for film critics and academics. Bordwell’s text *Making Meaning*, Perkins’s *Film as Film* and Noel Carroll’s *Interpreting the Movie Image* (just to name a few) have provided an ideal critical framework to encapsulate debates around film interpretation. Though most of these texts point out that there is no reason to argue for the primacy of interpretation as the tool par excellence in the understanding of film texts, interpretation still has a justifiable function, that is nobody denies that there is still a point to film interpretation.

According to David Bordwell interpretation is a form of explanation. Interpreting a feature of a film is to offer an account of why that feature is present in the film. To interpret a

film is a matter of explaining the presence of its features and the various interrelationships among them (1989, 275).

For Bordwell (but also for Carrol) film interpretation becomes a form of “explicatory criticism”. But while Bordwell identifies the goal of explicatory criticism with the ascription of implicit meanings of the film, Perkins’s view is wider. Perkins’s description of interpretation is not restricted to the discovery of implicit meanings. For Perkins, interpretation is the explanation of the presence of a feature or a set of features in a film, whether such explanation is thematic or functional or even casual. It is in this rejection of “allegorical criticism” (one that seeks to unravel the hidden meanings of a film) that one can find a strong parallelism between Perkins’s and Sontag’s agendas. They both claim that interpretation is not an attempt to clarify what has obscured in the picture. In addition, because films are actually “filmed” and thus overtly display their intrinsic aspects, the film critic/interpreter in Perkins’s view, should resist the temptation to dig into the text to find latent meanings.

Finally, film interpretation is also a form of film appreciation, in the first instance, and subsequently a guide to others about the ways in which they too can come to appreciate the value of the films in question. In this respect, it becomes necessary when one seeks to evaluate a given film. Thus interpretation becomes a primary medium of film appreciation/evaluation.

Having provided a rather detailed critical backdrop to the investigation of the notion of interpretation and its applications, I shall now move to the analysis of Buñuel’s “*Un Chien Andalou*”.

UN CHIEN ANDALOU AND CLASSICAL HOLLYWOOD
CINEMA

At first viewing, *Un Chien Andalou* would seem as a text that strongly resists interpretation. Its “abstract” nature (which as I shall prove later is not at all casual) would seem to be an attempt to have no content and thus, following Sontag’s analysis, no interpretation. In this respect, Elza Adamowicz, notes that *Un Chien Andalou*’s “coherent unfolding of a storyline is constantly impeded by apparently random images, visual tricks and gags; elements that disrupt and displace the narrative and disorient the viewer”³. Such an impression derives from the fact that *Un Chien Andalou* is, as already pointed out, a radical work that bases its subversive practice on poetical discourse. In this way every attempt to interpret Buñuel’s picture has to see it in opposition to Classical Hollywood Cinema and Institutional Mode of Representation (IMR). I will thus offer an account of how *Un Chien Andalou* nurtures its poetical discourse. In this way I shall use the classical model as a point of contrast.

In classical narratives, the articulation of events takes place within a logic that makes them believable. Such believability is based on the displacement of temporality toward causality (the so-called cause-effect structure). Moreover, the characters of the story embody the logic of causality of the narrative: they are constructed as psychologically motivated and marked by specific goals. Finally, in narrative discourse the spatiotemporal dimensions represent the space and time of the events in the narrative chain and are therefore subordinated to the time and space of the narrated story. Both space and time are subservient

³ Elza Adamaowicz, *Un Chien Andalou* (London: I.B. Tauris and Co Ltd, 2010), 31.

to the logic of causality (1985, 76). *Un Chien Andalou* perfectly disrupts the sense of unity and organization provided by traditional narrative discourses. Time, space, characters have no apparent function in the film, if not that of clouding the spectator's ability to see any overall intelligibility. The first consequence of this modus operandi is the new function that the spectator comes to assume in the film (but this point can be extended to all poetical discourse. It would be sufficient to compare Buñuel's picture with other "poetical" films such as Dreyer's works - especially *The Passion of Jeanne of Arc* - and Bresson's "transcendental" style). And it is exactly this new spectatorial function that provides the first key to interpreting Buñuel's picture. As I shall point out in the analysis of the film's prologue, the construction of a new spectatorial figure becomes not only the primal goal of the film but also relates to Buñuel's conception of cinema as a subversive practice. If the spectatorial function in narrative discourse is a merely intellectual and passive presence, in poetic discourse, it is also a sensitive and active presence. The spectator that *Un Chien Andalou* addresses is a figure of construction, someone who has the freedom/task to recognize. It is exactly this rejection of pre-established codes that entails the power of subversion in the film. Buñuel's picture has often been defined as a "desperate, passionate call to crime" because of its revolutionary attitude to the medium of cinema, but subversion here has to be intended in a specific way, relating it to Buñuel's figure as auteur. It is common knowledge that all Buñuel's pictures are subversive. Subversiveness is not seen here as transgression. Janero Talens argues that Buñuel's subversive practice challenges and pits itself against the classical system, not by attempting to flout its laws and conventions, as transgression does, but by disrupting those laws

within the very system that engenders them (1993, 71). Thus the motor of subversiveness for Buñuel becomes the desire to expose the falsity of the canonized system and has to be seen consequently as a form of provocation. Hence the second key to interpret *Un Chien Andalou* is the desire to provoke and shock the spectator. The film in fact proceeds in a perfect alternation between attraction and repulsion: provoking the spectator and thus conditioning his viewing experience is also a way of attracting his attention and participation. The very peculiarity of the film thus lies in its ability to deconstruct classical rules while simultaneously working within that system. The combination of classical paradigms together with poetical discourse thus speaks for the overall complexity of the film. This juxtaposition would also legitimate the fact that Buñuel's picture is not the description of a dream. On the contrary, the characters and environments are of a realistic type.

The third key of analysis and interpretation is one of contextualization. In order to make sense of the film's relentless radicalism, one has to place it within its aesthetic context, that of Surrealism. This choice is paramount for two main reasons: on the one hand, it clarifies Buñuel's position as *auteur* and his collaboration with Dalí and the effects of this relationship in the film; on the other, it helps to elucidate certain choices within the *mise-en-scène* that would otherwise appear extremely radical. Buñuel's project must be situated in the context of the relationship established by Buñuel and Dalí with the Paris avant-garde of the late 1920s. Of particular importance was Buñuel's adherence to the aesthetic principles of Surrealism. The film indeed answers the general principle of the Surrealist school, which defines Surrealism as an "unconscious, psychic automatism, able to return to the mind its real function, outside

of all control exercised by reason, morality or aesthetics” (Talens 1971, 8). The reliance of Surrealism on oneiric elements (i.e. its dreamlike quality) in order to reveal the unconscious becomes an extremely important feature of the film, the source indeed of much of its lasting value. Though the film does not narrate a dream, it takes advantage of mechanisms analogous to those of dreams. Thus Buñuel’s film becomes the ideal vehicle to convey the Surrealist precepts, their ideas being perfectly compatible with the director’s intentions.

Keeping in mind these three keys of interpretation, the peculiar spectatorial address, the desire to provoke the spectator, and the context of Surrealism (which are all interconnectable), I shall move to the analysis of the film’s structure.

IN-DEPTH TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF UN CHIEN ANDALOU

The story that *Un Chien Andalou* seems to narrate centres on the relationship between a man and a woman. Interestingly neither of the characters has a name. This de-emphasis of the characters’ persona represents the first deviation from the classical model. Moreover, the way their story is narrated does not accommodate a classical analytical model. The film’s continuous rupture of the logic of the events and of the relationship between sequences, the constant mixing of the different points of view of the characters, the non-linearity of the editing all speak for the powerful eccentricities of the text and implicitly advocate a desire for interpretation.

Despite the presence of this anti-traditional *mise-en-scène*, or what Philip Drummond calls a “*mise-en-scène* that negates the film’s explicit meaning” (1977, 55), the film’s material is distributed into three large unities.

The first part is defined by the presence of the man with the razor and comprises the text's prologue. The second part focuses its narrative line on the two main characters, the man and the woman. The third part instead comprises the epilogue consisting of only one shot, the final freeze frame. In this way, the narrative's structure is characterized by a tension between vagueness and concrete patterns, which speaks for the co-presence of classical paradigms with the film's surrealist sensibility. In the following analysis, I shall focus primarily on the prologue as a form of contextualization for the entire film, then briefly outline the aesthetic dynamics of the central section of the narrative and finally read the conclusion of the film. My drive to interpretation will be similar to Sontag's agenda, leaving aside the gamut of interpretations already advanced and focusing on aspects of *mise-en-scène* and the cinematic apparatus. This choice will exclude psychoanalytical/Freudian readings (epitomized by the work of Laura Mulvey and Christian Metz) in favor of textual analysis. In addition, by structuring my interpretation in such a way, I shall make a further assessment for a general evaluation of the text itself.

Un Chien Andalou opens with one of the most disturbing sequences in film history. A title on the screen suggests the commencement of a fairy tale "Once Upon a Time". The mood is enhanced by a shot of a man looking out through the window at the moon in an almost cloudless sky and by the face in close-up of a young, wide-eyed girl. Then in a series of alternating shots the fairy-tale mood is totally disrupted. A cloud moves towards the moon, while simultaneously a razor moves towards an eye. As the cloud slices the moon, the razor slits the eye. How can we interpret this sequence and what is its relation to the rest of the film? In order to make sense of the sequence one

has to bear in mind the importance of spectatorial address in Buñuel's text. One could actually interpret the sequence as Buñuel's declaration of cinema. The director in fact, taking the part of the man with the razor, compels us to pay attention to it, shattering our comfortable illusions and destroying our accustomed way of looking at things. The images that the opening sequence displays seem to realize what Artaud had called for: "[...] We have yet to achieve a film with purely visual situations whose drama would come from a shock designed for the eyes, a shock drawn, so to speak, from the very substance of our vision and not from the psychological circumlocutions of a discursive nature which are merely the visual equivalent of a text"⁴.

The director thus prevents the spectator from continuing to look passively at the filmic text, launching a powerful attack to the "Institutional Mode of Representation" (IMR) and its reliance on the spectator's passivity. The conditioned reflex of preparing oneself for a new aggression physically forces the spectator to adopt an active attitude towards the screen. In addition, the subjective shot of the man looking into the camera places him in the same position as the spectator watching the film in the dark of the movie theater. They look in fact at the same film at the same time. The same process connects the spectator with the eye-splitting man again fostering identification and emphasizing the necessity of the spectator's scopical agency. Finally, the editing also determines the identification of the woman's position with that of the spectator. In this way, the spectator becomes the subject and the object of the action: someone looking at the slitting of an eye, someone

⁴ Artaud, A. "Cinema and Reality", 150-152. The original article was published in 1927.

whose eye is slit and someone who slits the eye. This interlocking web of associations and identifications gives the prologue a certain “sense”. The series of shots/counter shots establishes the connection between the events staged on-screen and the spectator’s point of view, inscribing it in the materiality of the screen. By blinding the spectator’s eye (and substituting it with the invisible eye of the camera) Buñuel determines not only what we watch but also at what time and from where. As Janero Talens points out, the consequence of the spectator’s blinding and its replacement by the camera’s eye draw attention to Buñuel’s intimate goal: the filmic discourse never reproduces reality, it reproduces it as someone’s interpretation (the director’s) through the use of a “speaking subject” (the camera and editing) (1993, 78). It is also interesting that Buñuel plays the part of the man slitting the eye, thus assuming the double function as spectator and performer of the event. Consequently, author and spectator carry out complementary roles. Not only does the man slitting the eye stage the narrative procedure of the film, but the act of slitting is also associated with the spectator’s position. As Buñuel is the story’s active narrator, likewise the spectator is compelled to participate to the narrative, fostering his own potential understanding of the images on-screen.

To interpret this prologue in terms of an “allegory of vision” is thus the product of a de-contextualization of an ensemble of shots. Such interpretation relies both on the symbolic status of the images and on the reasons behind their presence. But this is not the only way to analyse the prologue. Linda Williams offers an interesting interpretation in this respect. She reads the prologue in fact as a sort of metaphor of “surrealist cinema” (Talens ed 1993, 100). In its illogicality, its dissolves and its shifting focus, the prologue has too the character of dream and

of the unconscious that will distinguish the film as a whole. In terms of cinematic techniques, dissolves, transitions and changes of focus constantly suggest the fluid, shifting uncertain and irrational character of dream and fantasy: hence the third mode of interpretation, the surrealist key if you wish. The cinematic apparatus is thus driven to capture the fluidity of mental processes and their intrinsic dynamics. As Henri Bergson points out in his analysis of the stream of consciousness, “mental processes are not stable or linear, they are instead fragmented and complex” (1965, p 45). The eccentric *mise-en-scène* of *Un Chien Andalou* can thus be fully appreciated in this final light, responding to specific necessities and so being entirely “logical”.

Not wanting to dwell on the psychoanalytical reading of the prologue which would be both an endless task and sometimes a forceful treatment of the text, I shall briefly scrutinize the central section of the film.

As already stressed, the prologue had the function of preparing the viewer for the following events, introducing the main thematic strands of the film. Not only the woman of the prologue is the same woman who will appear in the rest of the film (without the signs of her terrible disfigurement), but the issues of voyeurism and erotic sublimation are carried further.

The first thing to note when comparing the central section with the prologue is that the film's content and development are very far from resembling what one expects from a narrative that begins so explicitly with “Once upon a time”. This sense of surprise increases when the apparent protagonist (the man on the bicycle) plays two other roles: the man whose hands crawl with ants and the “double” that he murders. All these figures coexist within the same diegetic world. The spectator's bewilderment

seems to increase as the male character is presented throughout the narrative: ants crawl out of his hands, he carries pianos, dead donkeys and Marist brothers (a clearly Buñuelian satirical representation), he transforms school objects into deadly weapons. The elements that fill the screen thus produce a strong sense of disconcertedness for the spectator, constantly puzzled and apparently incapable of “making sense”. Moreover, the soundtrack alternates tango music with Wagner in a slightly contradictory way, breaking the descriptive function assigned it by the classical syntax.

Despite this constant disruption of the narrative logic, the syntactic order of the shots is nonetheless scrupulously respected. Editing, what Philip Drummond calls “the real speaking subject” of the film, seems to create a direct almost causal relation between the events and the characters' gaze. The camera in fact is totally “subservient” to the figures on-screen. Whatever the characters look at, we see.

Moreover, as Michel Marie points out, there is a sense, while the film progresses, of a more or less coherent story with a beginning, a development and an end in a process that is “apparently” logical (Talens ed, 1993, 70). The story following the initial “Once upon a time” would correspond in fact to the fulfilling of the expectations raised by the narrative.

If there is then, as I have tried to argue, a potential drive within the *mise-en-scène* to narrative coherence, what is to make then of the many disturbing and insidious images that flow on-screen? How can one interpret them without forcing the text and thus reducing its power? Instead of assigning specific Freudian meanings to what happens on screen, it is sufficient to say that these images have no imposed significance. Coherently with what I defined before in terms of poetic discourse, Buñuel's film

does not impose meanings, it offers proposals for making sense. It should be noted here, as many critics have argued, that the images are nothing but neutral marks that refer to nothing and evoke nothing; that is they do not signify because they do not represent.

They do not suggest anything by themselves but only through their recurrence in the filmic text. It is through the numerous close-ups and obsessive attention given to the images, that they are turned into elements capable of producing sense. Instead of offering a comfortable position of understanding to the viewer, Buñuel lays out a series of events which, paraphrasing Janero Talens, “have no communicable meaning but can be seen as proposals for possible senses” (1993, 89). According in fact to Gwynne Edwards, the radical novelty of Buñuel’s work lies exactly in its offering potential interpretations to the viewer who is consequently compelled to actively interact with the text (1982, 25).

Edward’s statement would directly legitimize Raymond Durnat’s point that all the interpretations that one can advance approaching *Un Chien Andalou* are not mutually exclusive, for, “in the global terms of the unconscious each formulation is an aspect of another, each applies to a different sphere of experience” (1967, 38).

Finally, the film’s third act closes the narrative by referring back to the prologue as totality. It is not at all casual that this part consists of only one freeze frame. As the couple (the man and the woman) walk on a beach, words appear in the sky: “In the Spring”. Like the opening title of the film - “once upon a time”- they evoke a kind of fairy-tale. But, as in the prologue, the optimism stemming from the images is totally disrupted. The idyllic beach has become an endless desert. The couple who

walked happily on the sand are buried in it, blind and devoured by insects. The dream of love has thus become a nightmare. Then the film ends as it began, with mutilated eyes and the freeze frame that captures the ever-present shock of the spectator and the inescapable sense of logic that is engendered by the circularity of the narrative.

CONCLUSION

The implication of the overall analysis of Buñuel's work does not entail "total" interpretation. Interpretation is one of the ways in which it is possible to approach *Un Chien Andalou*. Its function is not to render the text more comfortable to the viewer (which would, as already stressed, imply a form of reductionism) but to show how the eccentricity and radicalism of the work are encapsulated under a narrative umbrella that ultimately is entirely logical, one which rewards the spectator's mental fatigue throughout the film.

Ado Kyrou indeed has remarked that a constant feature in Buñuel's filmic texts is the structuring of three highly organized different stages: an opening sequence designed as a prologue where the rules of the game are laid down; a middle part, where the story develops in a more or less complete way; and an epilogue, usually brief and unexpected, which surprises the viewer by its ability to logically condense in one or more images the overall complexity of the film (1963, 44-45). *Un Chien Andalou* ideally foreruns such strategy conceiving the viewer as an integral and fundamental part of the filmic process as such - someone who constructs the sense of the film and at the same time is constructed by that very process of sense construction/production.

Therefore, as Janero Talens observes, *Un Chien Andalou* does not present us with the search for an aesthetic dimension of art, because what Buñuel means to question is the very notion of art as institutionalized discourse (1993, 98). What thus makes *Un Chien Andalou* such a milestone in film history is not its denial of the dominant mode of representation, rather instead its subversive practice working within the established logic of common modes of representation. Consequently every form of interpretation and thus evaluation that wants to give justice to the text (without altering it) should not strive from the rubric we have proposed.

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