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**On an Endless Sea:**

**Derridean “Play” and Possibilities in Mamoru Oshii’s *Angel’s Egg***

Perhaps the cinematic arts are more open to Jacques Derrida’s ideas on the instability of singular meaning and the existence of boundless interpretations in a “play” that is unlimited by the traditional Western insistence of presence and centrality. More so than words, it can be argued, an image holds more potential for open interpretation due to its uniqueness in regards to the formation of a *sign*.

De Saussure's (whom Jacques Derrida draws his assumptions about language from) conception of the *sign* is a combination of a *concept* and a *sound-image*, or what he terms the *signified* and *signifier* respectively. We need both in order to form a *sign*, even as De Saussure states that the relationship between the two is arbitrary. This is because, according to him, the *signifier* has no natural connection with the *signified* regardless of how their apparent connection has been established within the linguistic community (such that, despite the nonexistence of a “natural” connotation, one cannot substitute just any *signifier* for a given *signified.* (Leitch et al 964-966)*.* We can call a rabbit a “smeerp” all we want, but nobody else is going to understand what we mean; even if, in some alternate universe, the opposite could well be true in that “rabbit” is the strange word. While this holds true in regards to words, the same becomes more complicated when one speaks of pure images. While images certainly have their place in the conception of the sign, they do so as only one facet of the *signifier.* De Saussure’s concept of the *signifier* and the value oflanguage states that apart from the sign in its totality, both the *signifier* and the *signified* are completely differential and without an inherent conception of value. It is only when concepts are combined with sound-images that true value (what we can term “the potential for meaning”) is generated. Otherwise, both concepts and sound-images are values that are governed by their relationships to other values, creating the notion of “distinctness” but not much else in regards to the assignment of linguistic value. We know that the word “hot” is different from the word “cold”, but as mere words without the concepts of temperature, they remain merely sounds. Two different sounds, but merely sounds nonetheless. When one is dealing with communication with words, we can see how this notion of value holds true. When dealing with different forms of communication, however, we can see that the idea of the *signifier* being absolutely differential without a given *signified* becomes possible. In cinema, the primary *signifier* in cinematic language is not the word, but the image. Although words and dialogue do have a large place in cinema, it is possible to make a movie without words (and it is even more possible to make a film where words serve a secondary importance to imagery as the primary communicator). It would not be possible, on the other hand, to make a movie without images (as that would be something else entirely, such as a radio drama). When we consider images as the *signifier* in filmic language, we realize that we are not equipped with a given paired *signified* to create “inherent” value in any given image. In whatever literature we may read, regardless perhaps of its adherence to post-structuralism, we immediately give an initial meaning to the vast majority of the *signifiers* we come across because of agreed meaning within a certain linguistic community, in that the positive nature of a combination of the *signifier* and *signified,* ensures that difference does not function to allow a natural destabilization of meaning in any given word (Leitch et al 965, 973). When we speak of imagery within a film however, no such agreed meaning exists when we watch a film for the first time. There is no “dictionary of cinematic images”.[[1]](#footnote-1) Our semblance of value in a cinematic film relies on difference in the same way that a *signifier* alone does. The process of drawing meaning from this value lies solely in the interpretation of shots in a given context rather than in any given shot naturally having a meaning that can be determined outside of its contextual use within a film. In addition, several additional elements of film are used in tangent with shot contextuality in order to determine meaning. These include dialogue, sound, themes etc. However, as we established before, one does not specifically need all of these elements besides the image in order to create a sufficient work of cinematic art that communicates to its viewers. There exist films that accomplish this wonderfully; although they are commonly termed “experimental” (although this has more to do with their deviance from commercially established trends rather than inherent rebellions against the inherent nature of the cinematic language). Within these films, we see image take precedence above all else in the communication of concepts and ideas. The question of a lack of socially agreed meaning still remains however. What are we to make of films that rely so heavily on a form of communication whose *signifiers* do not adhere to any “universally agreed” (and I use this term with an eye to its own impossibility when taken seriously) *signified*? In cinematic language, the notion of any semblance of the “absolute” meaning comes into focus much sharper than it does in literary language because of imagery’s inherent “instability” in the process of signification. It only forms a part of the sign due to the lack of any concept to “ground” it. While when we talk of words, any such word that detaches itself from meaning becomes meaningless noise, the same is not true for an image. When we talk of images as *signifiers* we see that, unlike words, any attempt to form a sign has no or little grounding in any socially accepted structure (as determined by a linguistic community).

While this may, to someone who insists on order, look like chaos, this inherent “instability” of the cinematic image actually lends itself well to an example of Jacques Derrida’s ideas on the lack of a center. In fact, his ideas are almost surely drawn from De Saussure’s conception of a *signifier* that is characterized purely by difference in the face of the absence of a *signified* when he states that:

in the absence of a center or origin, everything became discourse […] that is to say, when everything became a system where the central signified, the original or transcendental signified, is never absolutely present outside a system of differences. The absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the interplay of signification ad infinitum. (Derrida 2)

When we combine this with our discussion on the cinematic image being a *signifier* characterized purely by difference in regards to other images (when we speak of “inherent” value), we can start to see cinema as a medium of communication that is well suited to realizing Derrida’s idea of “Play”. Before we move on however, we must take a page out of Derrida’s book and stop to clarify that the lack of any **given** *signified* in regards to cinematic imagery does not preclude a lack of any potential *signified* in cinema. If that were so, movies would be incomprehensible and would not be very fun to watch otherwise. Derrida likens this to the whole concept of the sign becoming untenable, as *concepts* would not exist anymore (which is an inherent impossibility unless we were willing to dismiss philosophy, communication, and language itself) (3). In fact, Derrida’s philosophy is precisely a *deconstruction* and not a *destruction.* It aims to “play” and not to “destroy”. With the free-floating nature of a cinematic image, we can see how Derrida’s concepts of decenteringand the absence of any defining structure in a free-play of *signifiers* and *signified* can be seen within the exercise of film interpretation; and perhaps a film that will serve to demonstrate this well for our purposes would be Mamoru Oshii’s *Angel’s Egg.*

Released in 1985, *Angel’s Egg* was an enigma even from a director known for creating enigmas. While Mamoru Oshii is more immediately associated with his more well-known works such as *Ghost in the Shell* (1995) and *Patlabor 2: The Movie* (1993), *Angel’s Egg* remains considered his most personal film and is emblematic of his style and themes. Though this may seem counter-intuitive, we will show later on how the decentered nature of cinematic imagery and the “free-play” of possibilities in this film’s interpretation make it possible to deconstruct what might have been his own notions as the “author” of the work. This exploration into the film will primarily be about how Derridean concepts show up in the interpretation of the work rather than in trying to come up with an original analysis of our own. Through the examination of different interpretations of the film, we shall establish notions of Derrida’s thought in the “conflict” between interpretations as well as in our own cursory examination of the nature of the film’s construction in how it naturally lends itself to a decentering of meaning and a plethora of reader-responses and interpretations.

Oshii’s *Angel’s Egg* has a seemingly simplistic plot: in what appears to be a post-apocalyptic setting, a man watches a massive orb covered with statues descend into the sea. Meanwhile, a little girl roams a barren wasteland collecting jars of water while also caring for a large egg that she treats almost as dearly as if it where her own child. Later on, they meet and roam the wasteland together. As they continue their journey, the man continuously asks the girl what is inside the egg, to which she replies that she thinks that a massive angel/bird is inside the egg and that she awaits the moment of its birth. Later on, after relentlessly questioning the girl as to the contents of her egg (with the man’s suggestion that there is nothing inside it being ignored by the insistence of the girl that she can her the bird’s breathing and wings), he smashes the egg while the girl is asleep. She awakens later to find the cracked eggshell, with nothing inside. In despair, she tries to run after the man only to fall off of a cliff and into a river. Her last act before drowning is to release a cloud of bubbles from her mouth that float to the surface as hundreds and hundreds of eggs. As the man watches from the beach, the giant orb resurfaces and ascends into the heavens, except this time containing a statue of the little girl amongst its various other statues. As the film ends, the wasteland is revealed to be nothing more than a small island in the middle of a vast black sea. From the outset, the surrealist nature of the film’s plot clues us in to the difficulty of establishing any interpretation outright. The film seems to eschew all the traditional conventions of cinematic narrative and grammar that we would otherwise use to draw meaning from a film. In addition to this, the film is almost entirely lacking in dialogue, with only perhaps a total of two minutes out of its seventy minute runtime being devoted to the characters speaking. In this sense, the film’s construction itself forces us to rely on the imagery and the themes and ideas they evoke in order to form our interpretations.

From the outset, if one is familiar with the making of this film, one will immediately start to form in idea of what the film might truly be about. Most of the interpretations of the film draw upon the fact that Mamoru Oshii, a Japanese filmmaker who originally wanted to enter seminary, lost his faith in Christianity shortly before the film went into production (Suchenski). When one takes this into account, we can combine this information from what we know of Oshii’s cinematic style as a whole to form a rough sketch of the “central” idea of this film. Throughout his career, Oshii’s films can be interpreted as focusing on the lack of concrete identities. His most famous film *Ghost in the Shell* famously ends with what is interpreted as the main character forking her quest to discover the meaning of humanity by transcending the limits of her own previous existence instead. “[a] fruitless search for stable identity and stable values, seen in many of Oshii’s films […] seems to support the idea of epistemological nihilism.” (Pickett). While Oshii himself is infamous for choosing not to comment on his films, sometimes stating that he doesn’t know what they are about (Stuckman), we can use the theme of Oshii’s nihilist leanings to come up with the closest thing we can get to a “center” of interpretation in *Angel’s Egg.*  This is as follows:

The girl from Angel’s Egg is unable to cope with the loss of her stable values, when the egg is broken open and she discovers nothing inside to affirm her faith. She personifies, more than the despair of losing faith in Christianity, the existential despair of losing faith in values themselves. In this light the swordsman can be seen as a personification of epistemology-- the search for knowledge. Using epistemology we smash open the world’s oldest value systems and reveal their emptiness. (Pickett)

Several interpretations have been made of the film, but most of these interpretations do seem to center on the notion of faith; particularly on a *negative view* of faith. The imagery of the movie, despite it being complicated, seems to support this. In my mind, the girl evokes Marian imagery, not only because she is a picture of innocence and pregnancy at the same time (including her faith, in that her egg has an angel inside of it - something Mary is well known for) but because whenever we are given an image of her face in close proximity, she evokes that image of the serene face we see in images such as *Our Mother of Perpetual Help.* Thus, it seems thatthe girl is indeed meant to evoke a Marian figure, or at least a figure of innocence and faith? The man on the other hand, is generally seen as a figure of skepticism or the search for truth. It is in the imagery of the man, however, that we first come to a possible deconstruction of what we have assumed as the center of the film so far. This difference is never stated to us, but is one that we can draw from purely his image in the film. Although several interpretations do not draw attention to this, the soldier’s imagery is very Christ-like. He carries a “tool” on his back that is unmistakably shaped like a cross. Furthermore,his hands are bandaged, with some interpreting it as an allusion to the *stigmata* of Christ (Stuckmann). Despite this blatant imagery however, many have either not picked up on it (AH Brandon), dismissed it as something other than a cross (Pickett), read it as a phallic symbol instead of as a cross (Ruh) or even taken into account in their own interpretation (ScriptWeaver). ScriptWeaver’s conception of the reason for the Christlike imagery is notable because he views it not as directly alluding to Christ, but instead alluding to an idea of “divinity” contrasted with the “clouded mind” of the girl who represents man. The idea of divinity shattering faith, while also serving as an abstract notion of a “false reality” being broken by a godlike figure who represents not Christ, but epistemology and “truth” (namely the truth of nihilism) to ScriptWeaver, is also read by him as a poetic representation of how Oshii’s faith was paradoxically broken by Christianity itself rather than something from the outside (ScriptWeaver). Other interpretations add to this by stating that Oshii’s use of Christian imagery arises from a desire to subvert rather than to glorify (Pickett). At any rate, the man as a symbol for knowledge uncovering the fallacy of blind faith is repeated in the analyses of all of the sources I mentioned above. Lastly, to drive this interpretation home, an examination of the climax of the film (the scene of the girl dying after her egg is broken) will finish our discussion of the film as centered on the idea of the *fallacy of faith.*

This sequence we shall deal with requires some contextualization. We see the man and the girl, sitting together and talking about the nature of the egg. The girl insists despite everything the man says that the angel/bird lies inside her egg, waiting to hatch and that she can hear its breathing and wingbeat (despite the main telling her that what she hears is simply her own breathing and the wind outside). As soon as she goes to sleep and loosens her hold on the egg, however, the man takes the egg and drives his cross-like tool onto it, crushing it. After a short aside where we see water slowly start to flood the desolate city because of rain, we see the girl awaken to discover the crushed egg. She screams and weeps over the remains of her egg before she runs out of her home. We see her home, a broken ruin, covered in the entwining roots of a tree holding aloft a giant egg, as she runs from it, searching for the man. When she sees him, she runs for him, but suddenly falls into a ravine. As she nears the water however, she notices that the reflection racing towards her is not that of a little girl, but a grown woman. In slow motion, the girl and her reflection as a woman meet, their lips touching together, while ripples spread from this first point of impact. Without a splash, we see the girl, now a woman, sink slowly into the water. She clutches her stomach and her hands move up her body until they grasp at her neck, as if something is emerging from her. She releases a cloud of bubbles from her mouth that quickly rise towards the surface, emerging as hundreds of different eggs. We are suddenly shown images of trees with giant bird eggs in their branches growing all around the city, starting from the water where the girl drowned. These are new trees, as they are shown growing in some places where the main and girl walked before. Now we see here that the surreal nature of this climactic sequence opens itself to a plethora of possible interpretations, but when we aim to stick to the “center” of the film being about the *fallacy of blind faith*, we get an interpretation of the events as such. Going from ScriptWeaver’s interpretation of the man smashing the egg as being divinity/knowledge killing faith, despite the girl’s belief and insistence, we come to the scene in the river. The most obvious sort of interpretation that comes to mind would be to say that the loss of faith and the revelation of the girl’s reality as meaningless would result in both a figurative death, but also a maturity. Brian Ruh likens it to the destruction of innocence in general when he says that “water is an often employed symbol of femininity in Japanese culture, and it is into water that the girl falls after her egg has been destroyed. As she sinks deeper into the flooded ravine, the girl becomes older and begins to look more mature, symbolizing her loss of both spiritual and sexual innocence” (Ruh). ScriptWeaver’s interpretation of the emergence of numerous eggs is similar to Derrida’s conception of the emergence of play after the removal of the idea of the center, in that the scene represents the death of Oshii’s original faith in Christianity and the birth of many new “faiths” or possibilities. This also ties into Oshii’s own ideas in that the embrace of the meaninglessness of life precludes true freedom. “Once you have discarded stable values, the creative possibilities are endless” (Pickett). As for the interpretation of the image of the girl as a statue amongst the various other statues on the orb, Brian Ruh seems to hold with Kalia Pickett’s interpretation of Oshii’s use of Christian imagery as subvertive. Ruh states that a possibility is to see the egg as a symbol of rebirth, noting that its use as a symbol of rebirth stretches back to its use in the Easter liturgy and other Christian religious ceremonies. He even notes that in some Germanic tribes, it was believed that breaking the egg was necessary so that the blessing of Easter might come in. Ruh then suggests that a way to read the breaking of the egg and the girl’s death is to read it as the girl’s rebirth. Through the egg being broken by figure not of evil, but of the pursuit of knowledge, the girl’s faith is broken, but she is reborn in a transcendent state; as part of the giant orb that lifts her high above the dark and abandoned world (Ruh). As the image of the girl’s statue is evocative of the images of saints, this may yet be another way that Oshii subverts Christianity in that rather than being raised to “sainthood” by faith, the breaking of faith and the embrace of the new is what elevates you. All in all, a common thread we can draw from different readings engaging in play dictated by the center of the *fallacy of faith* is that the breaking of the egg resulted in a sudden shift for the girl, where her old self is broken and a new self, transcendent and enlightened, emerges, with many new “faiths” arising where the old faith was broken.

Despite the fact that we can end our interpretation here, Derrida would state that our search for “meaning” in fact is not over. In fact, due to the our previous discussion on how cinematic imagery by itself naturally escapes the formation of concrete signs due to its inherent lack of centralized meaning (whether inherent or constructed), we can say that any attempt to truly read this film with a goal for finality is an exercise in futility. Even if one were to take into account Oshii’s primary style and attempt to use it as the “center” it demonstrates precisely why Derrida claims that the center as an absolute is untenable. For the history of Western thought, Derrida claims that the whole history of the concept of structure “must be thought of as a series of substitutions of center for center, as a linked chain of determinations of the center […] the center receives different forms or names” (2). According to Derrida, this substitutional process in order to establish centers goes against the very idea of a center because of its nature as something that is inherently “outside” that which it tries to center. The substitution of a center negates its existence as a center (2). When applied to cinema, one can imagine it as being similar, in that any semblance of a center cannot naturally be founded on the elements of the film itself, and thus becomes self-negating as the “center of the film”. To try to define something as central in a film, by which everything must be oriented, is to impose upon it from the outside, and thus introduce something foreign into the equation that does not arise from the components of the being you are trying to analyze. To introduce the concept of the director’s intent for example, is to impose something that does not belong to the fundamental components of the film itself: the imagery existing as free-floating *signifiers* that escape all attempts at universal *sign* formation and the imposition of meaning by any linguistic community. The possibility of this happening with words is what leads people to continue to argue for “centers” in regards to words, no such argument is tenable for cinematic images. Since the images themselves cannot, by themselves, complete any sense of meaning or value defined by De Saussure (earlier in our paper), we cannot accept any notion of the center as truly the universal center. Any center is merely *a* center, by which we *may* orient our reading of the film. The decentering of authorial intent (or anything in regards to interpretation) however leaves open the possibility for many more interpretations. Once the old center is removed (by, ironically, going along with Oshii’s advice and ignoring his own thoughts), we see that what previously seemed structured and clear now becomes unstable, prone to new and different interpretations. For an example of how this loss of a center makes deconstruction (and thus the “free-play” of new ideas) possible, we shall examine YouTuber Chris Stuckmann’s interpretation of the ending.

Stuckmann’s analysis is notable in that while he acknowledges Oshii’s crisis of faith as important in the analysis of the film, he doesn’t seem to put as much weight on Oshii’s answers in the same way that other interpretations do. While he acknowledges the center of the film to be “faith”, he doesn’t seem automatically assign a negative view of faith as the central idea to pursue, though he does touch upon the idea later on. Of all the reviews I’ve seen, Stuckmann’s is the only one to unequivocally center upon the man as being a Christ-figure, mentioning the cross and the stigmata bandages on his hands as proof of this. Also starting from the reading that the girl and her egg are a symbol of faith, Stuckmann characterizes her relationship with the man in a unique way: as a test of faith rather than as a battle between skepticism and faith. To him, the entire situation seems similar to events in the Bible where a test of faith was accompanied by a period of great confusion and suffering (such as the affliction of Job, the command for Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, or even the Passion). In order to do this, he draws attention in his review to the fact that the girl never once (at least until the very end) seems to question her faith and actions in regards to the egg (despite the numerous attempts of the man to do question her faith). Moreover, Stuckmann supports this notion further by delving into an exploration of the man as a Christ-figure, or even as Christ Himself, reincarnated into the setting of the film. He supports this reading by calling attention to a scene in the film where the man voices his doubt as to what he should be doing in the world, before realizing that he has memories of a large tree that is depicted in a mural where the girl lives (implied to be the biblical Tree of Life). In addition to this, Stuckmann says that the man’s shared dialogue with the girl during this scene seems reminiscent of a notion of him having been in this situation before. Finally, Stuckmann supports his reading by calling attention to a scene in the film where the man, upon noticing the skeleton of giant angel-like creature on a wall, seems to undergo some form of awakening (symbolized by him showing emotion - surprise - for the first time in the entire film), where he seems to realize something. This, Stuckmann implies, in both the visual imagery and the thematic callbacks to biblical themes, evokes the baptism in the river Jordan where Christ, after being baptized, witnesses the Holy Spirit descend in the form of a dove, signaling the beginning of His mission on earth. Stockman notes that its also no coincidence that the man had to wade through water to get to the area where he sees the angelic skeleton. In this case (and continuing our reading) the Christ-figure’s mission would be to break the girl’s egg as the final step in her test of faith. The man has become (in our reading) a sort of agent of God symbolized, according to Stuckmann, by the checkered board he stands on (as a pawn?) at the beginning of the film as he watches the giant orb (perhaps God?) descend into the ocean. In his breaking of the egg, the girl’s faith is violated as she realizes that there was nothing inside the egg after all, despite her never wavering in her faith prior to this. Despite the paradoxical nature of this as it relates to an affirmation of faith, we see the Christian theme of intense suffering and true brokenness being something that is part of a test of faith rather than a failure of it. We see this reflected in ideas such as St. John of the Cross’s “Dark Night of the Soul”, or in the teaching of the flesh being sacrificed in a *kenosis* or self-emptying, such that one may be filled with the Spirit instead. It is this mindset and awareness that Stuckmann seems to bring to his analysis, as he also notes the woman maturing in “death” as being released from the test, with the emergence of hundreds of eggs from within her being akin to her “reaping her faith a hundredfold”. To drive this point home, Stuckmann seems to be the only person amongst the interpretations that I’ve read that specifically notes the presence of the trees with giant bird eggs within them suddenly being shown directly after the emergence of the eggs. Unlike the girl’s egg, we can clearly see the presence of large bird-like creatures within the transparent shells of these eggs. Stuckmann interprets this entire sequence as one of both the death of the self, and the rewarding of the girl’s faith both by the hundredfold return of her faith (rather than the “many new faiths” proposed by ScriptWeaver) and by the clear affirmation of what she believed in due to the unmistakable presence of birds within these new eggs. Stuckmann finishes his reading by interpreting the image of the girl’s statue on the giant orb as her being in a place of honor, a reward for her faith.

The interesting thing about Stuckmann’s reading is that it seems to primarily stem from the notion of religious symbolism used without irony. Stuckmann sees the Christ-figure as a Christ figure and he pursues the implications of his interpretation of the imagery to their logical conclusions. He puts no mind to the possibility of irony or disassociation, and instead creates a reading that uses this religious imagery without subversion (which, if we remove any semblance of “Oshii’s intent” from the picture in our attempt to decenter the film, becomes tenable). In the same way, Stuckmann uses the saint-like imagery of the girl’s statue form in the same way. Rather than using the religious imagery as a subversion, which is what one does when we interpret “using Oshii”, we see that the girl has indeed been honored and “canonized” for her unwavering faith, instead of merely “enlightened” or “reborn”. In fact, Stuckmann’s insistence on seeing the imagery for what it is instead of as a subversion is what rounds out his reading. He states that even though he acknowledged the possibility of the “negative ending” in regards to faith, he states that to him “[what seems clear is that] she is now in a position of honor”. For Stuckmann, though he acknowledges the exploration of faith as a guiding principle, does not rely on the center of the *fallacy of faith* when doing his reading. His reading instead seems to be formed by a different center, that of *the exploration of faith.* It’s a wider center, but still a center nonetheless. What is interesting however is its sheer juxtaposition to the other readings, despite using the same film with the same imagery as starting points.

It is with this juxtaposition that we see Derrida’s notion of “play” at work. Play is defined as that state that can exist with the absence of a transcendental signified; a “central center”. It is a state of flux that exists when these “centers” (as we recall Derrida does not believe that the concept of *a* center can ever be done away with) are recognized as not absolute; as freely interchangeable and created with either an awareness of their transitory nature or a lack of pretension to suggest that any one “center” is *the* center. Rather than seeing this in a *Rousseauist*  light as something to be regretted, Derrida says that this recognition of the lack of a center should be celebrated. Rather than being stuck on “an ethic of presence” or an “ethic of nostalgia for origins”, Derrida seems to advocate for the acceptance of the “other side” of the notion of decentering: the Nietzschean *affirmation*; the joyous affirmation of the freeplay of the world and without truth, without origin, offered to an active interpretation. This affirmation, according to Derrida, sees the loss of the center as other than a *loss* of the center, but the gaining of many new ones. New possibilities.

The other, which is no longer turned toward the origin, affirms freeplay and tries to pass beyond man and humanism [man being he who] has dreamed of full presence, the reassuring foundation, the origin and the end of the game (Derrida 12)

If we were limited to “play” only within the center of interpreting the film according to Oshii’s own interaction with the Christianity (the *fallacy of faith*) we would not get to hear of Chris Stuckmann’s view on the film as an affirmation of faith (or at the very least, as an exploration of faith). The film thus wouldn’t be open to a large number of people who may have drawn from this specific interpretation (or others like it). On the other hand however, if one were to see the positive exploration of faith as the film’s center, then we would be deprived of the other interpretations and their possibilities and potentialities as well. As a whole, this freedom of interpretations is what Derrida seems to aim for when he discusses play. The notion of decentering providing opportunities for a near infinite amount of interpretation that serve to satisfy people with a near infinite amount of viewpoints, perspectives and starting points. We also see how film as a whole seems to embody this possibility for play because of how its *signifiers* naturally lend themselves to play due to their inherent decenteredness. Though we have given juxtaposing viewpoints on the film *Angel’s Egg* in order to demonstrate how natural film lends itself to a freeplay of *signifiers* and *signifieds*, the film can also be seen in a great many different viewpoints than those we have just discussed. Perhaps the notion of “faith” and “religious symbolism” as the centers of interpretation can be replaced with something else, for example. The possibilities are infinite.

Words: 5,792

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De Saussure Norton

1. It is true that in regards to cinematic *form*, there exists a cinematic grammar (such as a montage communicating passage of time), but for our purposes we recognize that as a whole, the cinematic *image* as it shows itself in millions of different forms throughout the history of cinema has no established communication. We can liken this to dealing with the meaning of individual words rather than grammar when talking of written language. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)