

CONTROL AND DESIGN IN IMPROVISED CONVERSATIONS.

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This essay, is an investigation and interest in approaching a method used in the moving image, film; The improvised conversation. For years improvised conversations have mostly been used in independent films, which have a different focus and storyline then a traditional Hollywood movie. It is often noticeable to the viewer when a conversation is improvised; a specific atmosphere appears in which the random is made possible in a controlled environment; fiction becomes infiltrated by reality. A director works in a different way, when using an improvised conversation. Instead of following a strict storyboard the director designs a setting that allows the actors to improvise within restricted environments.

This essay will focus on 3 very different filmmakers, Jean-Luc Godard, Jim Jarmusch and Werner Herzog. They all use the improvised conversation in very specific, but different ways.

I will take a scene from each their films and look at the setting in relation to design, the conversation itself and the editorial work.

I would like to investigate how the design in a moving image, and the control of the setting influences the construction of an improvised conversation?

The films are a purely fiction film by Jean-Luc Godard *Breathless* (1960), a mix between fiction and documentary by Jim Jarmusch *Coffee and Cigarettes: Somewhere in California* (1993) and a documentary by Werner Herzog *The land of Silence and Darkness* (1971)

The films use improvised conversation. The examples will be of a specific setting, from each film. I intend to examine how this setting influences the conversation, by looking at the visual language based upon Erving Goffman's theory of 'Frontstage' and 'Backstage' and to Gilles Deleuze's theory of 'becoming'. These terms and theory will be explained in the chapters.

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INTRODUCTION

Godard, Jarmusch and Herzog are all three independent filmmakers from the 20th century. They are still current filmmakers, and even though the films have a variation of 30 years, they are all part of a movement within cinematic history: Godard was one of the founders from the French New Wave movement, Herzog was part of the New German Film, and Jarmusch is called a minimalist in relation to film.

They are very different in subject as well as visual, but they all 3 have in common a method of using the improvised conversation.

Herzog's *Land of Silence and Darkness*. (HW. 06:08)

This film, is a documentary from 1971 of a blind and deaf woman, Fini Straubinger. Most of Herzog's documentaries are constructed of observations with the camera, in combination with interviews. He finds the observance of his subjects important for the story, and deliberately prefers not to interfere. His mother describes Herzog:

"When he was in school, Werner never learned anything. He never read the books he was suppose to read, he never studied, he never knew what he was suppose to know, it seemed. But in reality Werner always knew everything. His senses were remarkable. But he is absolutely unable to explain anything. He knows, he sees, he understands, but he cannot explain. That is not his nature. Everything goes into him If it comes out, it is transformed." (Cronin, p.Introduction)

This quote, emphasises how Herzog observes his participants, and therefore often relies on the happening between the subjects he portrays.

Godard's *Breathless* (GJ.27:10)

Breathless is a drama fiction film, but is made upon an improvised loose script, which Godard changed through out the filming of the feature.(Andrew p. 27) Godard mentions how he always worked with improvisation as a method. "Improvisation is deliberating and honest, but at the same time tiring and almost killing." (Milne p. 174)

With Breathless Godard's professional era started, as well as the New Wave Cinema. All the New Wave French film directors had a certain influence on the New Wave movement. Godard influenced this movement by "Volatile

Concoction" (Andrew, p.4) Emotions were strong and rapid, and he used a lot of mixed ingredients. This statement underlines the importance that he did not write the full script, and changed from day to day what was happening. Everything was more or less based on feeling, which broke conventional filmmaking at the time, and became a method for Godard through periods of his career. (p.27)

Jarmusch's *Coffee and Cigarettes: Somewhere in California*. (JJ.12:24)
This movie is made over a decade of years. And in 2003 it was made as a feature film, including all the short films together. The one I will look at is made in 1993 with Iggy Pop and Tom Waits. All 13 short films, are made with the same setup; always two people, sitting in a cafe, public place. Jarmusch's movies often have very little speech, and he focusses on the atmosphere, and setting to describe his films. *Coffee and Cigarettes* deals the best with the simple and effective setup. He describes how important the design is to let the improvisation happen. The strict setting allows a free improvisation to occur. Because of this Jarmusch investigates the relation between design, and control:

JJ: "The intention was to shoot short films that can exist as shorts independently, but when I put them all together, there are things that echo through them like the dialogue repeats; the situation is always the same, the way they're shot is very simple and the same - I have a master shot, if there's two characters, a two shot, singles on each, and an over-the-table overhead shot which I can use to edit their dialogue. So they're very simple and because the design of how they're shot is worked out already, it gives complete freedom to play; they're like cartoons almost to me. And it's a relief from making a feature film where everything has to be more carefully mapped out. So I like doing them and they're ridiculous and the actors can improvise a lot, and they don't have to be really realistic characters that hit a very specific tone as in a feature film." (Article "Jim Jarmusch")

USAGE OF THE SETUP

Goffman; clarification of theory.

Erving Goffman is a micro sociologist. His theories are focused on the situational aspect of human interactivisme. He studied performances in theatre and found relations to human behaviour in reality. He explained the differences in human behaviour by the terms of ones 'Frontstage' and 'Backstage'

Frontstage; is the performance of participants in a social setting. The interaction of the participants depends on the social environment: Are they in a public or a private setting, is it a large group of people or a more intimate atmosphere and what props are available to them?

To be able to project ones frontstage character the performer is depended on the signifiers and situation.

Goffman uses a term; Sign-equipment. Besides from the fixed setting the performers move physically into and is geographically set. There is as well equipment we move with and have in specific settings to indicate, ones persona, sex, age and social status. It performs as equipment of 'us.' This typically is in western countried, where 'equipment' often defines who we are, and our front character.

We assemble "sign-equipment" in our settings of interaction and our projection of impression may be turned on and off according to the setting. (Goffman, p.33)

Backstage; is when the participants let go of the frontstage character, and act out of the context of the setting. However when performers are in the back stage, they are nonetheless in another performance. Backstage character is a relative term, it exists only in regards to a specific audience: where two or more people are present, there will almost never be a true 'back region' Goffman mentions many examples, but often they refer to a situation where you are trying to hide or avoid a confrontation. He uses an example when neighbors now about each other but avoid talking about what they know. (Goffman, p. 122)

Goffman's theory questions how much freedom there is in a conversation when the setup is controlled.

What relations are visible between the frontstage/backstage and the setting?
What design structures are used in the setup?

All three conversations are chosen with focus on being in a 'normal' conversation, so for example not an interview where the director asks questions. The conversation's differences in designing the setup and their editorial structures creates very different outcomes.

Herzog's conditions differ from the other two conversations, and therefore I will introduce Herzog and include him in the discussion.

Herzog

The scene I have chosen to look at takes place in an airplane. It is a conversation between Straubinger, her friend and her translator/helper. The camera angles are close ups, because of the airplane's size. You see the camera changing back and forth between the two women and their helper.



This scene is the only scene in the film which doesn't have a subtitle to it. You don't know what they are saying to each other. It becomes an observance of a conversation on a more visual level for the audience. Werner Herzog chose on purpose only to show the act of the conversation and the way they communicate through the atmosphere of the visual communication. He is portraying them, without interference. Goffman explains how one acts according to the setting you are in. E.g. if you are in a living room or in a plane, they both create different outcomes of behaviours. (Goffman, p.32) Herzog gives the two women an experience in a plane. They can't see or hear and we, as the audience, do not know what they are writing each other in their hands. But visually the conversation is directly translated because of their expressions and the setting, that it becomes irrelevant what they are writing. By choosing this setup, there is made a clear distinction between us, the audience, and them, the participants. This example can only be approached on a visual level, but can be discussed how much control the setting has over the two women and their experience, and therefore it becomes an interesting example.

Godard.

The scene is a conversation between a man and a woman. The man, Michel, is a French, nonchalant, womaniser and young "hotshot" whom is in love with the woman Patricia. Patricia is a Strong, independent, feminine American who plays hard to get. The scene itself lasts one third of the film, and is shot in real time, without interruptions. (Andrew, p.11) It has its own course and the actors get a long time to interact with each other. Besides from the improvised conversation, the camera navigation is improvised, and follows the actors around the room. This is indicated when the person is talking or showing something that is outside the frame. (GJ. ex; 41:15)

The scene is held in a bedroom of a hotel, where Patricia is staying while she is in Paris. The setting is created around a lot of space to walk, sit and stand. There is a bed, a desk, a cupboard, a window, a bathroom and some floor space next to, and around the bed.



Besides the space, there are a lot of smaller props, which they use, such as toilet supplies, reading material, clothing and cigarettes.



Telephone



Cigarettes



Passport



Clothing



Records



Book



Radio



Sunglasses



Poster



Brush

The private bedroom and bathroom indicates automatically a more intimate conversation to happen. In the visual images of the props above, it is clear how an expression and act is created around it. Godard gives his participants lots of space, time and objects. They are able to use props to avoid or refer to in their performance. The examples of the props illustrates the diversity and play there is throughout the conversation.

Goffman explains that the setting and props are the constructions of the performance, they help the performers frontstage characters.

The combination of personal sign-equipment and the physical sign-equipment directly relates to the temporarily setting and environments humans are in.

“‘Setting’ refers to the scenic parts of expressive equipment.

“Personal front” refers to the other items of expressive equipment, the items that we most intimately identify with the performer himself and that we naturally expect will follow the performer wherever he goes. The personal front includes insignia of office or rank; clothing; sex, age and racial characteristics; size and looks; posture; speech patterns; facial expressions; bodily gesture and the like.” (Goffman; p.34)

Jarmusch

Compared to Godard's setting, Jarmusch's is more restricted and simple. They are all shot in black and white. There are 3 camera angles he switches between.



The conversations all at one point mention coffee and cigarettes. These are as well the props they have while sitting and talking.

Jarmusch makes a confrontation between his participants across the table. This differs from Godard's setup, because it automatically forces them to interact more directly to each other and face to face. They only have the coffee and cigarettes as props, which creates the focus Jarmusch wants. It emphasises the importance and simplicity of the setup. The focus of the camera angle above the table, is a very clear design decision which implies again that the action of drinking and smoking in relation to a conversation about coffee and cigarettes is part of the story he wishes to portray.

As earlier stated Goffman explains the interaction between the performers depend on the social context, props and situation. Both Godard's and Jarmusch's films show various examples of frontstage and backstage characters. The backstage of their performance is difficult to see as it is

hidden behind the frontstage performance. We do not know the participants and can therefore not know their backstage characters. However in film with improvised conversation one can assume a backstage character when interpreting the effect of improvisation, according to the roles the actors are playing.

In *Breathless* Michel hides his agenda from Patricia.

“It is stupid to lie. It is like poker if you tell the truth people think you are bluffing, and you win.” (GJ.34:35)

This is a direct frontstage behaviour trying to hide his backstage intentions. Michel is constantly avoiding to tell the truth to Patricia throughout the film. Jarmusch's character Waits is throughout the whole conversation performing in a frontstage character of arrogance, by constantly offending Pop. It is only in the end he allows his backstage to be visible; by saying that Pop is not on the jukebox either, after Pop has left the cafe. He had earlier acted as if he did not care about that and therefore held on to his frontstage image. (JJ. 17:37) Goffman argues, that our frontstage characters are depended on the temporarily setting we are in, and only little lets our true backstage characters to appear. However a backstage appearance often happens in the routine of our everyday lives. In improvisation the performer can only re-act on each other, because one doesn't know what the other is going to do next. Therefore one could say that the backstage persona appears in all 3 conversation because of the improvisation and freedom the performers have. The routine of ones frontstage implies fragments of the backstage persona. (Goffman, p. 40) The setting becomes a guiding tool for the performers.

There is a dual language going on in a visualised conversation; the body and the spoken language. Individuals emphasise what they are saying by showing an interaction with their body. To be able to find these examples where one can see a connection, contradiction or different relations between gesture and words, I edited the conversation taking away all the speech. I separated the two languages as a method to investigate the relation between the body and speech. This became a method to analyse the conversations. Godard's visual storyline without speech showed a clear play between

Michel and Patricia in the space and an interaction with the props. Whereas Jarmusch's visual storyline showed more moments of facial expressions and long silence in between the talk.

In *Breathless* because of the props and décor of the setting, there is a dynamic movement between/through the conversation. Patricia often turns around, or picks something up to change the subject.

Patricia gets up and walks to the window, showing her back to the camera.

At the same time she is saying to Michel she doesn't want to talk to him. She directly uses the space and movement to connect with what she says. (GJ. 33:01)



After a moment of silence Michel asks;

“Do you ever think about death?” (Pause)

“I do all the time” he continues.

Patricia turns around and asks;

“Michel say something nice to me.”

He asks “What?”

She says “I don't know.”

He answers “Then neither do I”

She moves out of the frame and takes an ashtray, which she shows to him and says; “I like your ashtray”

Within the setting and props, the speech and body language interacts and emphasises each other. Opposite the above example it can also contradict

each other, which then creates a dual storyline between speech and body.
(ex.GJ. 35:32)

Patricia is hanging up a poster in the bathroom, Michel is looking at her. Michel starts caressing her buttocks. Patricia doesn't react to it, but continues to hang her poster.

Patricia;



They are silent



Michel replies;



Patricia asks:



When a clash between gesture and speech appears it emphasises the importance of the visibility in the conversation.

Throughout the conversation, there are small actions like the two examples above. The examples suggest the improvisation. These examples Goffman calls misguidances in a performance. He explains that this can be an overall method for the performance, as the contradictions in body and speech evokes the audience's attention, and they search for clues to understand and find meaning. (Goffman, p.59,66) Michel keeps returning to the questions he

wants answers too; Why Patricia won't sleep with him again? He mentions this several times. She flirtatiously keeps answering his questions with indirect answers or just ignores it, while she moves around and talks about other things. Their flirt and play towards each other becomes incorporated into the setting. Or opposite the play is created because of the setting. If Patricia and Michel are placed in the setting of Jarmusch a different flirt and intensity would appear, and the anthropological light feeling of the two characters play with back- and frontstage performances would change. Waits and Pop are placed over the table setting, this works for the awkward misunderstandings which appear throughout the conversation. (JJ. ex: 14:49)



Pop: "I ordered you Coffee"



Waits offended;
"You ordered for me?"



Pop confused. "Is that okay?"



For a moment they look away
from each other. Making faces.



Then Pop pours the coffee. Saying "Coffee it is" positively.



Because their frontstage characters are acting towards each other the tension between them is emphasised, and the conversation almost becomes a competition between them. One could say that Pop and Waits play in between their front- and backstage characters. We know Iggy Pop and Tom Waits as public figures, which is then their frontstages, and their private personalities, are their backstage. They are asked to perform with these public figures, and automatically they begin to act within their own personalities. The camera angles and switch of zoom-in on their faces, creates a more visible exposed act, between them. There are a lot of moments when facial expression and repetition of a word becomes dominant in their body gestures throughout the conversation. When they talk about having quit smoking they repeat the word 'quit' three to four times by using different 'Sign- equipment' to illustrate the word 'Quit'. (JJ. 15:40)



This indicates a variety of gestures for one single word.

One could say that the settings strict control and small space catches the feeling of the two frontstage characters observing each others reactions and performances. They push the act further, which creates the feeling of improvisation. Jarmusch often shows the opposite person of whom is speaking. By doing this you see the reaction of the listener, and sometimes you have a feeling of observing the reactions of their backstage personas. When Waits walks in and starts telling Pop that he has saved lives the whole morning. This shows a clear frontstage character and act, because we know that Waits is not a doctor. Pop gets confused and doubts if that is true. For a small moment you see Pop doesn't know what he should do, and then he starts acting. (JJ. 13:24)



The focus of the camera on Pop, allows the audience to see a gap in Pop's frontstage character. All their expressions creates the visual storyline between them when I removed the speech. The relation between body and speech in an improvisation, can be a tool for the performer to convince the audience as well as the performers, of his role he is playing. When improvising it is however hard to contradict the body from the speech. In *Breathless* there are examples where Michel and Patricia play with the connection of body and spoken language. (GJ. e.g. 31:51)

M: "I'm not a coward"

P: "How do you know?"

M: "If a girl says she's not scared, then can't even light her cigarette, it means she is scared of something. I don't know what, but she's scared."

Michel reflects on how Patricia is acting, compared to what she says. He mentions her frontstage appearance, and that he knows that is not the case, because she seems scared with her body. As mentioned before this is what Goffman calls a misguidance between body and speech. Because the conversation is improvised, one could assume that Michel and Patricia have more room to observe each other then they would have if the dialogue was scripted. The Performers backstage personas are not visually easy to point out, but because the body and spoken language follow each other, the performers are obliged to intervene their personal identities into the characters so the performance is convincing. As soon as they do not have the specific language written out for them one can assume that they automatically connect to what they think the character is about and in that way show their interpretations and backstage character. (Goffman, p.122)

Michel and Patricia's performance is subtle and long. Whereas Waits and Pop, builds up a tension, in a way they act more in their frontstage characters then Michel and Patricia do. Maybe because they are playing their backstage identities and therefore automatically emphasise and exaggerate their performance.

The above analysis emphasises the control the directors can have within their design and editorial decisions, when constructing an improvised conversation.

- Herzog controls that his performers will relate to his setting and makes the conversation the context of the scene. He wants us to observe the conversation as a topic.
- Jarmusch controls that the props and topic are directly related and therefore the two characters guide each other towards this subject.
- Godard controls via the freedom in camera, speech and time that the topics important for the film will come out eventually. And that the props and space gives the flow and movement for the scene.

By creating a setting they are as well influencing and designing the context for the participants frontstage characters, and how they will interact and interpret the situation with their backstage personas and knowledge.

With the frontstage characters the participants directly interact with the physical props they have around them in a more temporarily setting;

"The setting of décor physicality in space." (Goffman; p.32-33)

The topics discussed become part of the setting and the props and creates the storyline for both the language of the body and the speech. As well the backstage influences the frontstage because of the unknown of the improvisation within the setting.

The analysis indicates a visual control the directors have of us the audience as well as a control of the actors but at the same time they pursue the natural improvised feeling of the conversation and body as a method for their feature and documentary.

THE LANGUAGE

Deleuze; clarification of theory.

Goffman is relevant for the analysis of the setting and what follows within it, whereas Deleuze's theory reflects more directly to what happens between two in a conversation, on a more philosophical level and in relation to the moment of an improvisation, reacting and interacting. His theory emphasizes the importance for the improvisation in the conversations.

Deleuze was a modern contemporary philosopher. His theories have had a big influence in subjects as art, literature, sociology, media- and communication-theory and philosophy. Deleuze was a free thinker who always tried to find the liberating aspects in what he used as topics. In his book about conversation, he discusses the interaction between two people in a conversation, and what happens. His focus lies upon the differences between inner languages and spoken language. One can be a foreigner in our own language. There is a difference in what one says and how another would perceive it and vice versa. He finds these differences and perceptions of language, creates beautiful moments, which he describes as "becoming's"

'becoming's is an in-detachable thing which cannot be explained, copied or interpreted. Becomings is described as there is no either or, in a conversation, nor is there a right or wrong, but only a 'becoming' between two. But most importantly that you cannot separate the one from the other, they are one within their interaction. (Deleuze; p.2)

What is it we are watching and perceiving by viewing a conversation which is improvised?

In *Coffee and Cigarettes*, one could assume Tom Waits would not be as offensive if it was not his musical friend and competition in front of him. And likewise Michel would not be so nice to Patricia if it was not because he wanted to be together with her. (You see other places in the film, him interacting differently with other women.) So the conversations and characters front and backstages are only visible within the context of the conversation. Deleuze is talking about the language, more than the setting, but in a way he is referring to the same conditions or consequences as Goffman is, of an interaction. Individuals are individuals, but in the moment of an interaction they cannot be viewed as separated figures, instead they are creating a "becoming" They are connected to each other, the space, the moment and the topic they are in.

This emphasises that, if the filmmakers were to script the conversation, then they would remove the 'becoming' between the two which are having the conversation. If a conversation is scripted you lose the misinterpretations, the mistranslations, the moments of wondering and the 'non important' considerations. Deleuze refers to a quote by the French writer Marcel Proust in explaining a 'becoming':

"Great literature is written in a sort of foreign language. to each sentence we attach a meaning, or at any rate a mental image, which is often a mistranslation. But in great literature all our mistranslations result in great beauty." (Deleuze; p.4)

It is interesting to see how two people interact and think in relation to their surrounding and context. The setting becomes an editorial tool to interact in. By using Goffman's visual theory of interpreting a conversation within a setting, Deleuze has interesting considerations towards the actual words spoken and how they effect the setting and furthermore how they effect us as the audience.

Deleuze considers the 'becoming's in a conversation as a creator for beautiful obscure images, when we allow an improvisation.

In *Coffee and Cigarettes*, one can discuss if there is a visible 'becoming', in

terms of what Deleuze explains. The subjects Waits and Pop's conversation revolves around are rather short, and are quickly closed off for further explanation or discussion.

The whole conversation between Pop and Waits, is about proving their frontstages towards each other. Because they are playing themselves, it creates a tension between them. Waits keeps offending Pop or gets offended him self, which can explain, why the flow of the conversation is often cut off and why long silent moments appear in between the subjects. Waits, performs as an arrogant, and egocentric character. Pop keeps trying to get the conversation going between them, but when he is misunderstood by Waits he gives up, and changes the subject.

The conversations can be divided into small themes:

“Doctor/musician”

“Cigarettes and coffee”

“The type of character in certain social settings”

“The drummer”

The first 'becoming' appears in the example where Waits starts telling Pop about saving lives. When Pop questions that, and doesn't understand why Waits is telling him about it, Waits makes a consideration of how to convince Pop that he is a doctor. (JJ. e.g.14:08)

TW; “My thing is combining the two, and living in that place where they overlap.”

(Iggy Pop considers it)

TW continues; “A lot of people say it shows up in the music.”

IP; “Well yeah okay..... yeah okay.”

To avoid a conflict Pop decides to believe Waits or not comment further on it. In this example Waits creates a 'becoming' with two things, music and medicine, which normally isn't connected. It doesn't matter so much if it is true or not, the weird atmosphere, and beautiful conclusion is what makes their meeting odd, and therefore it becomes interesting for us as the audience. The simplicity, and stupidity of their conversation creates strong

simple 'becoming's.

Furthermore all the topics of conversation, mentioned above, relates to them misunderstanding each other, but not questioning each other. They close off the conversation instead.

Deleuze mentions, the stupidity of a question;

“Every time somebody puts an objection on me I want to say;

“Okay okay, lets move on to something else”” (Deleuze. p.1)

This is a very clear description of what happens in the conversation between Pop and Waits. Pop is constantly giving in, and playing a frontstage of his own character, backstage, as overbearing and avoiding a conflict.

Whereas Waits plays a frontstage as a seeker of conflict. He is constantly misunderstanding Pop's questions, and they misinterpret each other through out the conversation.

Deleuze explains that a 'becoming' is not something you can ask where it is. It is rather 'imperceptible' but it happens all the time in between the questions, or the answers. The general picture of the misunderstanding is rather the 'becoming'. He further explains;

“'becoming's are not phenomena of imitation or assimilation, but of a double capture, of non-parallel evolution, of nuptials between two reigns. Nuptials are always against nature. Nuptials are the opposite of a couple.” (Deleuze p.2)

This explains a rather clear point why the improvisation is important for what the directors wish to portray. And this conflict of question, misunderstanding and perceiving each other in their frontstages, but as well in their backstages, is very clear in Jarmusch's conversation.

In every topic Pop is the one that starts talking. Waits provokes and offends him. Then a silent moment appears where you see their strong expressions, and how Pop starts talking again about something else.

Godard's conversation relates to the language in a different approach, he has taken different levels of language clashes; He uses an American and a French actor which results in a direct difference of expressing language. Besides that he describes the characters as:

“The American, Patricia, is on a psychological level, whereas the guy, Michel, is on a poetic level. They use words - the same words

- but they don't have the same meaning." (Andrew, p. 165)

This directly refers to what Deleuze describes as "'becoming's' and the fact that he creates this scenario, influences how the conversation between the two proceeds. They are told this about their characters, which creates their frontstages. (GJ. e.g.42:42)

P: "You know, you said I was afraid Michel...

It's true. I am afraid because I want you to love me... And at the same time I want you not to love me anymore. I'm very independent you know."

M: "And so what? Me I love you, and not like you believe."

P: "How?"

M: "Not like you believe."

P: "You don't know what I believe."

M: "Yes I do."

P: "You don't know what I think"

M: "Yes I do."

P: "No, it's impossible..."

This bit of text deals with language barriers, and when you see the conversation you have this feeling they are being separated. When she changes the word believe to think, she emphasizes the differences in the words, which has a meaning for her inner language, but not necessarily for Michel. Godard often works with these language clashes. And has always been interested in language and interpretation. Deleuze refers to him;

"Compare Godard's formula; not a correct image, just an image [pas une image juste, juste une image]. It is the same philosophy as in film or a song: no correct ideas, just ideas... this is the encounter, the 'becoming', the theft and the nuptials, this 'between-two' of solitudes." (Deleuze; p.7)

Everybody, forms groups, and encounters each other. But our languages have barriers. As stated we are only solitudes in a group. Godard wants to create an image of them the actors, who creates the 'becoming'. He is the

production of it, but the image is only a 'becoming' and cannot be referred to as one thing, somebody's image. The image is the whole, and it is neither correct or wrong. This is why the design becomes their tool, and control, instead of the more traditional working method of a film director.

Jarmusch's setup confirms this, by mixing the ingredients, the personalities; a language appears, and in his setting the tension between Waits and Pop, creates barriers which form the image. Jarmusch and Godard wants to create the setup, the image, they are the designers in form and image. But the happening happens outside their control and suggests an image, a beautiful 'becoming' which includes more than one opinion. It includes more than a conversation. It is the expressions of the participants wondering, it is the act of them relating and the power of them trying.

DISCUSSION

How can one say something about the design in a moving image, and the construction of an improvised conversation?

The portrayal in both Godard's and Jarmusch's conversations deal with a barrier of conflict.

Every topic Pop and Waits starts conversing about ends shortly in a misunderstanding and the tension is build up between them.

Michel and Patricia have barriers more in their backstages. Opposed to Pop and Waits, Patricia and Michel tries to relate to each other, they want to be together. Through the setting this happens. But there is constantly barriers happening in their conversation, their body language, and their misinterpretations of each other. They flirt with the barriers.

In my analysis I discuss the relation between Jarmusch and Godard. But in my discussion I find it relevant to include Herzog's documentary, which shows a different method of a setup. In Jarmusch's film there is a strict clear setup, which allows him to control the simplicity of the action in the conversation.

In Godard's setting there is not at strict and simple setup, as stated both the space and props are diverse and many, but results in a dynamic movement and switch which makes the characters relate the bigger subjects to the surrounding they are in. But within both of their conversations and settings, a discussion appears of language, between the space, setting, characters and design. Whereas Herzog has a different approach towards his setting. He removes the language, and only shows us the visual body language, we can interpret. The setting is so clearly explained, that the conversation is not important anymore. Or rather the setting becomes the conversation.

Herzog's setting differs from the other two; It is a documentary, and therefor portraying as much the 'real' as possible. Further it is dealing with two blind and deaf women, whom cannot relate to the setting in a visual way. Their frontstages are not depended or reacting on each other in a visual way.

There is however a paradox, because the whole scene only shows a visual language, as we are not able to know what they are talking about.

However the setting, and context of the scene is so clearly designed and edited that it's context is specific. It allows us to understand right away

what they are talking about. Their reactions are improvised, but in a way less surprising, as they deal on a one to one translation of an experience.

These two women are flying for the first time. They are writing in each others hands, the translator/helper writes in Fini Straubinger's hand and she continues to her friends hand. Because of their excitement, and the title of the scene is "The first time flying" you automatically believe that they are writing the experience to each other. Their body language is very clearly imposing what they feel.

It could be the most honest of the settings, as their reactions are visible, but at the same time the setting creates quite strictly what reactions will happen, which indicates a performance directly relating to the setting, as Goffman explains it. They are reacting naturally to the setting they are put in. It would be different if what they write to each other would be about how hungry they are or if they told each other about more intimate subjects such as toilet hygiene or personal considerations.

Fini is rather busy with communicating between the two of them. At one point you see the helper, trying to give Fini's hand to her friend, and she takes it away before she can grab it. This is not a linguistic misunderstanding. But in a way it is a linguistic gesture, which shows the helper guiding Fini to tell her friend the same, as he just told her.

There is in this conversation another way of trust between the participants because they have to rely on the truth in what is said. They do not know if the other is happy while writing or not. As Michel suggest that Patricia is scared cause she cannot light her cigarette. Or as Waits convinces Pop by his expressions, of arrogance which results in Pop giving up, towards Waits.

From the above we can conclude that their setting, design and method differs within all 3 conversations.

Godard's setup is created to capture subjects. His setup is the most improvised in design and control. This we know because of the camera improvisation(ex. 41:15), the day to day written script. (Andrew; p.27), the natural lighting(Andrew; p.28), and original sound.(ex. 42:10) I believe that Godard is more focussed on the subjects and interaction, then the design as a method. Which makes his way of design in setup a method for his context. His free design opens up for them continuing their interaction.

His setting is clear in subject between the two actors and what he wanted from them, what they should perform of his ideas and what they should perform of themselves. The space and props creates the switch of movement which indicates this shifts of fluctuation between the two characters. These two characters are purely fiction, presenting a frontstage, but perform with their body language quite natural, and via. the improvisation of the conversation, fragments of their backstages, appear. If the films were scripted it would loose the strong natural feeling towards it. In *Breathless's* remake by Jim McBride (1983) the scripted directions become extremely dramatic and overplayed. The natural play between Michel and Patricia makes the original stunning and the remake a Hollywood copy with non of the original values or methods.

Because of Jarmusch's strict, clear and designed setup within camera and props, *Coffee and Cigarettes*, is the strongest of expressing what is being said. The translation of words to gestures is so strong, that when the speech is removed the images show quite clearly the context of their conversation. On the other hand, them playing themselves, makes them exaggerate, so the belief in the realness disappears, this has do with them performing their frontstages, with their own characters. They seem the most like they are performing an act.

Silence and Darkness is the most truthful because it is a documentary, but the expressions and body language seems much more controlled by the setting then the others. There is not much freedom in this setting, as it is the closest to reality, but Herzog's intention is not meant for them to make something else from it. He wants to be the fly on the wall observing their experience. I included this example because of the paradox in visual language, and them not being able to see the visual setting.

What the participants show us is a frontstage because of the fact that it is a performance. But there is happening different dynamics in their frontstages towards each other. And this is directed with in the design of the settings and the editorial structures, the Directors gave them. These dynamics, result in an improvised, moment which cannot be repeated again with the same

intensity and convincing realness which we are able to see behind the “acts.” Therefore the settings and conversations creates strong beautiful ‘Becomings’ The examples I have pointed out shows how different improvised moments can be triggered. All 3 directors are giving us small micro-politics, negotiations between: two situations, two individuals, and between them and the space they are in. Everything happens between them, the setting, the languages and the context - an image of a becoming.

There is a play between language and object, when using an improvised conversation. Creating a setup the design of what an objects refers to creates the topics of discussion between the participants. The individuals can incorporate the setting into the conversation, and move within the framework of the setting, they can move out of the setting and include thoughts. But in reality the setting and the moment, are strong contributors which creates definitions for language and performance of ones frontstage and backstage. When a moment of thought, or mistranslation occurs they automatically refer back to the setting they are in, both by movement and speech.

This is a clear observation of what one can expect and perform when using an improvised conversation.

The design and decisions before the conversations takes place, indicates how crucial one can control what one wants. The directors gain a notion of becomings, which they could not explain the participants, or translate into a script. The mix of fiction and reality, of known situations and estranged situations, the moments of misinterpretations is all created with in the design, and editorial aspects.

What is suggested in this essay, is the method for a film director, and how they are placed in between the professions of a designer and director.

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GJ: Godard, Jean-Luc (1960) *À bout de souffle* (english translation; Breathless)
Feature film

JJ: Jarmusch, Jim (2003) *Coffee and Cigarettes* (collection of 11 short films to one feature film) *Somewhere in California* Short from 1993

HW: Herzog, Werner (1971) *Land of Silence and Darkness*, Documentary.

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