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SAVING THE IMAGE *ART AFTER FILM*

Zapruder, 1995

John Waters

Dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y, 1995-9

Johan Grimonpre

TOTAL TERROR
from
Outer Space

INSERT
COMMERCIAL
HERE

Atlantic (Versions Multiples, GB/F/D), 1997
Pierre Huyghe

On board S.S. "ATLANTIC."

Mon chéri,

Après-demain, nous arriverons
York après une traversée
ite sans le moindre incident.
resté bien sagement dans
cabine, n'en sortant que
les repas et pendant tout

On board S.S. "ATLANTIC."

Dearest,

The day after tomorrow, New York.
The journey is like a dream, so
unreal, so beautiful. The sea is
perfectly calm — only it whispers
quite softly as I whisper to you,
that I love you — only you —
I know no one here on board.
I want to know no one

On board S.S. "ATLANTIC."

Das Meer ist ganz

hier an Bord

Multi-language versions first appeared in 1929, at the beginning of talking pictures. These films were made before the technique of dubbing was developed. While silent movies could be exported without any language barrier, the rise of the talkies made things more difficult. Elated at first about these new pictures, the American film industry soon began to have misgivings, more out of economics than out of technical reasons. In fact, the talkies were a menace to Hollywood's supremacy. In 1931, the major companies invented a system to overcome the language barrier that might have hindered the expansion of their distribution. To get around the problem they decided to import actors and directors from various countries where they planned to distribute their films. Thus began a particular kind of immigration, a story of languages imported and exported like commodities, passing in transit through the dominant narration. The sets of the time were crowded with immigrant actors waiting their turn to play, and each scene was repeated in the various languages. The same scene, that is, was shot several times with the actors from the various countries speaking their own language. Each foreign language version could then be sent to the corresponding country. The interpretations might differ according to the specific aspects of each country, but the narrative structure remained the same. Arrangements were long and costly, but had to be carried out just once. Faced with the language problem, Hollywood thus applied to film-making Taylor's system of parceling and repeating tasks in order to exploit working time more efficiently. Taken together, the three versions tell the story of a group of people during the last three hours preceding the shipwreck of the Titanic. More than telling a story, the reunion of these three versions of E.A. Dupont's film *Atlantic* (1929) re-creates the conditions surrounding the production of the images.

Pierre Huyghe

Saving the Image: Art After Film

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Saving the Image: Art After Film

Edited by Tanya Leighton and Pavel Büchler

CENTRE FOR CONTEMPORARY ARTS, GLASGOW

MANCHESTER METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

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Foreword

Saving the Image (a title gratefully borrowed from Raymond Bellour) is a development from an exhibition and conference, *When Worlds Collide*, at the Centre for Contemporary Arts, Glasgow, 1998. While the original project brought together three examples of artists' interest in the perpetration of disaster culture and the representation of catastrophe in film and television—*Dial H-I-S-TO-R-Y*, by Johan Grimonprez, *Atlantic (Versions Multiples GB/F/D)* by Pierre Huyghe, and *Zapruder* by John Waters—the present collection extends to such issues as the identity and self-identification of film as art, the impact of institutions and technologies, the threat of obsolescence, the relationship of the still and the moving image, and the psychology of the audience experience. Rather than being a belated document or a conclusion, this publication is an attempt to continue the discussion on the positions and influences of the cinematic and the televisual in contemporary art and culture beyond the immediate focus and the necessarily restricted scope of a single gallery event. It has been inspired by what took place and was said five years ago, but it hopes, above all, to inspire new arguments, insights, and responses.

Of the texts included, those by Chrissie Iles and Jim Harold were presented at the conference, and Raymond Bellour's, Johan Grimonprez's, and Christine van Assche's resonate with the spirit of their conference contributions. Pavel Büchler, the conference chair, had to cut short his introductory remarks during the conference (to save not the image, but time) and has taken here the opportunity to accompany his original notes by a contemporary reflection. François Bucher, Pierre Huyghe, Laura Mulvey, Jean-Christophe Royoux, John Waters, and Thomas Zummer have added their voices and their points of view recently. As with all the participants, their presence here is a measure of their generosity.

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We are indebted to Bill Horrigan, Curator of Media Arts, and Sarah Rogers, former Director of Exhibitions, at the Wexner Center for the Arts, The Ohio State University, Columbus, for the permission to publish the interview with John Waters, and Bill Horrigan's attention to this new edit. We are likewise grateful to Galerie Marian Goodman and to American Fine Arts and their staff, particularly Katell Jaffrës and Daniel McDonald, who provided invaluable information and support; to Daragh Reeves, Rony Vissers, and Cendrine du Welz for their help with the work of Johan Grimonprez; and to Tracey Frey, John Waters's assistant.

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Pavel Büchler and Tanya Leighton

Introduction

Reality is the work of imagination.
—Jim Dodge

Is art the ultimate destiny of film? Is it the space where film is finally living up to its promise? Is it the last line of resistance to the technological and aesthetic obsolescence of film? Or a zone of transition? How does art make cinema face its past and its yet to be articulated possibilities? How does it transform the modes of reception of the moving image—film and its diverse hybrid progeny—at the time of technological and conceptual revolutions? How does the persistence of the cinematic in contemporary art reflect the determining condition of the screen media in all visual experience today? What challenges does it pose to the understanding of media culture or the conventions of spectatorship and participation? What is art *after* film?

Too many questions—and all of them, as always, beg so many more. If we are witnessing the "death of cinema," then it may be too late to address our inquiry to the art of film. And if, indeed, film is "verging on obsolescence," if it has "lost the battle," if its values are "rapidly disappearing," then the most urgent question may be how to reinvent it so that we (and it) may continue to pose questions.

Raymond Bellour's passionately expressed commitment to "saving the image"—a metaphor for expanding the range of inquiry beyond the academic analysis of film as an aesthetic form onto a broader exploration of images and their complex relations in a changing image culture—offers an apposite background for the variety of contributions gathered here. For Bellour, the task implies a need to come to terms with new ways of seeing and new forms of participation. In his model, the interplay among diverse orders of images, structures, and organisations provides new resources for imagination as well as for a new ideology and new politics of the image. Bellour's basic theoretical premise, developed in the mid-1960s following the critical methodology of Christian Metz, lies in the recognition of the "still." To "arrest" the image, to halt the motion in order to unravel film's intricacy frame by frame, makes films open to the critical means that have long been applied to still images. It functions, in the words of Jean-Christophe Royoux, as a "strike action upon meaning" with profound implications for how we perceive and negotiate the tensions and exchanges between looking and thinking, fascination and reflection, or critical spectatorship and creative speculation from which art proceeds.

Laura Mulvey discusses "stillness as a property of celluloid" from the perspective opened up by the free control over the viewing process that is characteristic of the new electronic and digital technologies of the moving image. The power to slow down or freeze the pace of film, once reserved for experts and professionals of the celluloid era, now brings to the focus of the inquisitive, "curious" spectator the "presence of time itself behind the mask of storytelling." The still photographic image can be recovered under the new technological conditions as a site for a critical distinction between the conflicting temporalities of the inscription of the film's own history and the progression of the narrative. The paradox, Mulvey points out, is in the ability of the technologies of a higher order to reveal in retrospect the material complexity, and thus to enhance the spectatorial experience, of the historic cinema through a "displacement that breaks the bond of specificity."

This "bond of specificity" was integral to the structuralist concepts of film as a composite or "differentiated" medium and the idea of a compound unity among the mechanical, optical, chemical, physiological, and psychological aspects of the cinema "apparatus." In a narrower sense, it is perhaps akin to the experience of "the subjective formative virtues of the camera" that Rudolf Arnheim put at the centre of his analysis of film as art in the 1930s. The realisation of the artistic potential of film, for Arnheim, demanded as much from the maker as it did from the spectator: they both had to accept, and indeed insist upon, the visible "imperfections" unique to film, the fundamental constraints of its form. Yet, sixty

years on, when artists ("curious spectators" par excellence) succeed in experimenting with the possibilities of film—as a source of material, as a reference, as an image, or as a vehicle—the "bond of specificity" is often affirmed precisely as it is being displaced in the newer art form of video or in multimedia installation (as a successor to the traditional cinema performance). The fascination with film is mediated in many of these works through explorations of the instant-time properties of video, such that the exclusively cinematic is not merely evoked or re-created, but brought to the fore of the viewing experience for an intense scrutiny.

Mulvey's paradox also applies, to some extent, to the examples of recent work by Tony Oursler, Bill Viola, Chantal Akerman, Christian Boltanski, and Terry Gilliam discussed by Bellour in the five short texts repetitively titled "Saving the Image." In every instance, the attempt "to save the image" involves displacement: Akerman experiments with "the destiny of cinematic projection and *beyond*"; Viola and Boltanski occupy with their installations, spaces, and contextual positions "*somewhere between*"—"between a museum room and a film theatre," "between the conventions of visual arts and those of film and theatre"—while Gilliam tries (perhaps unsuccesfully) "to maintain the spectator somewhere between enigma and reason"; and Oursler achieves a sense of "beyond-the-grave and future world." Every time, the strategy forces the image to rescue itself by escaping from itself.

Where Arnheim envisaged the future of film as "a great art of painting in motion," an art of probing, self-aware investigations

of the conceptual and material prerequisites of the image, there Bellour sees its development as a symptom of the crisis of the art of "great painting"—a crisis tacitly aided by the camera. He identifies a solution, or a promise, in those artistic strategies that seem to *animate* not the immobile tableau of classical painting, but the act of viewing itself (to literally *populate* the image). "You simply have to be in the tableau," Bellour writes about Viola's work, "enter into the image projection," as he suggests about the presentation of Akerman artists' films, or "constantly reinvent your stance" among a group of photographs by Boltanski, so "terribly alike" that they can perhaps be thought of as frames from an imaginary film.

One saving device, as it were, is "circulation." For Bellour, it is the circulation of the visitors-spectators in the multiple rooms of three of the installations, their progression from one space to another, or across the vast open expanse of the gallery in the fourth work. For Christine van Assche, it is the circulation of the image itself. "It is in the movement that the story is told," she insists, alluding to both the transference of the work across a variety of media and formats and the equivalence among the various available systems and economies of distribution. Tracing the developments of artists' fascination with fiction film, along several trajectories from experimental cinema to installation art, she notes that, in the process, the ties that bind films to the linear literary conventions of the screenplay have been replaced by spatial narrative forms that can only be fully realised in the field of the visual arts—or more generally, in the context of the visual arts as a constantly

expanding field. This expansion once again seems to "break the bond of specificity." As art persistently invades "nonartistic" channels and destinations, as it frequently becomes complicit with the generalised culture of the image, it is increasingly confronted by a changed social and cultural environment in which the habits of consumption are being enforced by the heterogeneity and global reach of the new electronic media and the ubiquity of the monitor. Can these conditions sustain the specific modes of attention that differentiate the filmic from the televisual, the printed or projected image from the transmitted one, the analogue from the digital and the cybernetic, or even the visible from the visual?

To say that "cinema is dead" may be the same as saying that such distinctions are no longer psychologically available or aesthetically relevant. Today, a visit to a film screening may be distinguishable from other "active" leisure pursuits as a social experience, but may no longer call upon any authentically visual aesthetic consideration, as if cinema had become another of the performing arts. But even in the days of silent "motion pictures," the identity of film as a visual art did not seem simple (identities seldom are). Even as Arnheim formulated his analogy between film and animated painting, Erwin Panofsky saw the cinematic as "a visual experience" closer to the contemplation of fluid and variable spatial relationships in three dimensions as the spectator's "eye identifies with the lens of the camera," and Theo van Doesburg spoke of "dynamic light architecture," as well as "optical poetry" and "music." For Susan Sontag, writing in 1966, "films resemble books," and, by

extension, they may be something like an interface between the language-centred "culture of concepts" supported by print and a new "visual culture," a notion introduced by Béla Balázs in the early 1920s to be re-cast by Marshall McLuhan four decades later as the "media culture" dominated by the "tactile powers" of television. Only Jean-Luc Godard maintained that a film is "just a film."

Early video art and, to a degree, the practices of expanded cinema in the 1970s can be understood as attempts to articulate the aesthetics of the moving image outside or against the specifically cinematic—in the former case, through an association with the immediacy of performance as a branch of the visual arts; in the latter, through the idea of breaking down genre distinctions in a quest for a perceptual synthesis. Video installation initially combined elements of both in a pursuit of similar goals. Much critical and curatorial attention however, has been in the last few years devoted to work which is reclaiming the cinematic as a departure from such strategies "towards a more internal, psychological experience." Chrissie Iles, for one, argues that the shift from the sculptural priorities of the 1980's "multi-screen clusters of monitors" to those approaches that draw upon and highlight the language, qualities, and values of the single large-scale projected image in space, or from an emphasis on the three-dimensional object (the "box") and an essentially theatrical use of the physical environment to the illusory dissolution of the boundary between the viewing subject and the projection screen, opens up a new psychological space for a more inclusive sensory involvement. Not only does the new

cinematic aesthetic make "video" as a nominal category of artistic practice superfluous, but it also disrupts the associations between artists' use of video and the forms of our conventional encounters with electronic images. Here, "saving the image" entails the "disappearance of the more traditional experience of the visual." It is now the aesthetic mimicry of the cinematic by the electronic and the fusion of the "tactile power" of the electronic media with the powers of the filmic attributes of the image that transform the image into a site for a complete sensory immersion.

Television culture frames the various competing discourses of the moving image and the diverse positions within them, not least those contemporary practices of art that, being the technologically closest, strive the most for emancipation. Our quotidian experience of television and its continuity with video (and increasingly the Internet) both inform and disinform the reception of "video art" (for want of a better denomination), temper, contaminate, and inhibit its codes and its performance. Just as Andy Warhol was quick to realise that the enterprise of "movie-making" can be a pure aesthetic gesture in itself, so Vito Acconci was probably the first to notice that with video it is "hard to work in a single key." The face-to-face intimacy "muddies the plot." The domestic familiarity of the image, which shares its physical site with television, and the relationship of a "personal distance" (a term coined by Edward Hall in the 1970s) between the action and the viewer, reduce dramatic genres or narrative models into a regime of minor variations. On the television screen every image is a closeup, so to speak, and

everything is equidistant, almost here (and almost now). As the principal standard of the media, television dissolves events into the simultaneity of multi-channel broadcast, turns identities into appearances, and transforms the existential awareness of the continuous present into an endless repetition of symbolic routines (and "continuity" itself into a virtual continuum of programmed interruptions). As a technology of seeing, of *vision*, television seems to provide no particular vantage points and no perspective; as an image-generating apparatus it produces an impression of perpetual flicker: it seems to absorb images even as they are being formed (in this sense, all television is *closed-circuit* television).

The adoption of a film language—and, indeed, of the authoritative voice of the cinema—is one line of creative resistance, or at least a symbolic reaction, as Iles claims, to the universal murmur of pixels and the all-transforming, all-embracing "cybernetic force-field." It is one way of trying "to save the image." The current upsurge of interest among artist and curators in documentary-style practices that seem to recover some of the original premises (and narcissism) of video art is perhaps another. But more direct and determined strategies of dissent are needed to redeem the act of critical looking from the sanitised mode of "monitoring"—to "see" television rather than "view" it, as François Bucher demands. Perhaps, we sit just too close to the screen to recognise the features of our own reflection in it, or too far from other solitary watchers to see what Bucher calls the "common sense of television," the "ideological machine at work" right "behind our backs." This is nowhere more clear than in

the mediation of tragedy, catastrophe, disaster, atrocity, and death for the bemusement of the media consumer.

The recovery of a critical distance is a key part of Johan Grimonprez's project. In his film, *Dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y*, aeroplane hijackings become a metaphor for the appropriation of media footage, advert blips, science fiction clips, home video, and other found images. This, in turn, can be seen as a symbolic act of interference with the ways in which the image itself has been hijacked from history, as a resource of common reference, and we ourselves are held hostage by a culture in which "remote control" is a less fitting term for a universal tool of participation and choice than it is a most appropriate description of the effectiveness of the "ideological machine at work." As John Berger put it, "terrorists are reduced to bombs and hijacking."

Every television viewer, Grimponprez reminds us, suffers from a "kind of schizophrenia," induced by the domesticated "catastrophe culture." Talking of his use of familiar media images of terror and disaster, he feels that their assimilation gives rise to an individual claim: "they belong to me as if I had filmed them." He adds, "this is how memory works." A similar sentiment is at play in much of John Waters's photographic work, often traumatic pictures taken off the television screen.

In *Zapruder*, a sequence of rephotographed frames from his own remake of the fuzzy footage by Abraham Zapruder of John F. Kennedy's assassination in 1963, Waters turns recollection and recognition against each other to incite the shock of disbelief. The

endlessly repeated suggestion that "we all remember where" the news of the assassination first reached us (attributed to Harold Evans, former picture editor of the *Times*) has taught us to regard the grainy pictures from the hand-held 8mm cine-camera as a part of our repertoire of personal memories. If Waters feels that his photographic fiction takes on the emotional quality of the original document, "the real, amateur Zapruder film," it may be because, after more than twenty years from the Dallas tragedy, it so improbably reconstructs an event for an image already irreversibly absorbed in a consciousness saturated by repetition, replays, and flashbacks. This is what we saw and did not recognise; this is what we recognise and did not see. Oliver Stone's version in *JFK*, historically faithful in comparison, may inspire doubt, but Waters's obviously staged collision between the historically false and personally true succeeds in recovering the moments in our homes, in front of the television screen.

Jim Harold calls the lasting emotional allegiance demanded by the impression of a momentous reality a "sedimentary process," "an ossification of the event into image," a kind of delayed blurring effect, characteristic of certain images of crowds. As he interweaves an analysis of the depiction of spectacle in painting, photography, and television, from Poussin and Atget, and from Rembrandt to the televised images of mourners at the Ayatollah Khomeini's funeral, Harold uncovers single moments of temporal suspension that bring the distant events and their dislocated solitary observers together in a metaphorical community of "silent witnesses."

With television, says Harold, "virtual proximity has become more real than the physically local." François Bucher rephrases that observation: television's essential promise, "what is seen here is elsewhere," is a tactical deceit. It is a ploy to construct "an unreachable 'beyond'" where disasters take place, or are rehearsed as preformulated scenarios, safely away from political and commercial interests of (the ostensibly global) "home." From this perspective, 1963 Dallas or 2001 Downtown Manhattan are the same distant land at our doorstep, an entry to which is guarded by an infallible ideological "image-machine that produces social control by its sole presence." For Bucher, the television viewer is in every sense the subject of television. The sovereign power of television over the viewers faced with images of their own neutralised fears and desires can perhaps no longer be successfully challenged from within the networked, self-perpetuating system. It must be resisted by "giving discourse back to the body"—a metaphor borrowed by Bucher from Gilles Deleuze's theories on film—by "attaining the body" that may face itself, as a subject, articulate itself in its relation to television, discover itself in the context of a "paradoxical third body" always present in the moving image.

To illustrate the paradox (discovered by Jorge Luis Borges in 1945 in the "perverse artifice of dubbing," creating "monsters that combine the features of Greta Garbo with the voice of Aldonza Lorenzo"), and to register his belief in art's capacity to "recover the body," Bucher cites Pierre Huyghe's work *Blanche-Neige Lucie*. The same work, an interview with Lucie Dolène, the original "voice" of

Disney's *Snow White*, serves Jean-Christophe Royoux as an example of the artist's interest in the processes and codes that bind and separate the personal and functional/fictional identities of the subject in cinematic and media representation. The property battle between Dolène and the Disney corporation over a voice that, for the spectator, "belongs" to a cartoon character may be understood here as an emblem for Huyghe's broader concerns with decomposing and countering the models of contemporary experience characteristic of the economic logic and social performance of what Royoux terms "free-time industries." Dominated by television and incorporating cinema as well as art, this extended concept of the culture industry is centred on an inverse synchronicity of programmed leisure and work time, where television "programming is the negative (copy) of a typical day in the life of the average worker," and on the consequent colonisation of social space, both physical and symbolic, by modes of subjectivation adapted from mass-produced culture of the post-industrial era.

In principle, Huyghe's project is one of unfinishing representations by literally re-presenting representation as an open-ended activity, a "work in progress." As with Waters, a film director, for whom "re-directing" appropriated cinematic material also implies leading viewers to "re-edit the movie in their mind," so with Huyghe's work there is a constant invitation to the spectator to partake in a perpetually unfolding narrative. In one sense, this strategy, again, seeks "to save the image." By the simple means of inversion, displacement, reproduction, remake, or recycling, the

work constructs situations that bring to the fore the interchangeability between the interpreter and interpretation in what Royoux calls the "karaoke principle"—a circular relationship between the character as a disinvested mediator of the story, a "free-time worker," and the spectator-interpreter. This, in turn opens up opportunities for developing alternative models of socialisation and emancipated learning in which film, as an archive of collective memory and a collective practice, becomes a concrete form of "the sharing of liberated time and a rearticulation of social space." In this process, art is not merely a catalyst, nor an external index of possibility, but an active source of know-how derived from artist's vocation as a "free-time worker." If art "can have some sort of relevance through investing in new collective territories of subjectivation," Royoux concludes, "it is because of its familiarity with inventing uses that confirm and contest other existing uses in the struggle of codes for hegemony."

The promise of television, "what is seen here is elsewhere," is the old promise of film brought into a sustained and persistent actuality. Or rather, it is the old claim of film as a pretext for *cinema*. Hollis Frampton at the end of the 1960s defined film as a "confined space, only a rectangle of white light" into which a shadow of a pre-existent inanimate thing, the film footage, for instance, is introduced as something of an obstruction. For Thomas Zummer, cinema is defined in almost the opposite terms: a permeable, open, variable situation, backed by the invisible operations of the apparatus, which must be invested with the presence of the spectator. Cinema is, above all, an effect: "without

a spectator, cinema does not take place." The cinematic promise, as Zummer shows, has been naturalised as a "*phantasmatic*" dimension of the experience of the moving image, "presence deferred to an impossible proximity, but not lost entirely," contingent upon "a complex interplay of simulation and dissimulation," and engaging all at once an array of physiological, psychological, social, technological, and ideological determinants of perception, belief, cognition, memory, desire, and pleasure.

"The sense that we have of the boundaries, ends or completeness of media artifacts is a social and unconscious construct," writes Zummer, "and there are certain irreducible attributes of the cinematic artifact which are repressed in order to stabilise the consumption of images." To make these visible and to address the tacit possibilities they contain, Zummer identifies a range of examples, from the Lumière brothers to Quicktime movies, from Carl-Theodor Dreyer's *Vampyr* to the recently copyrighted image of the Chrysler Building, and from contemporary art to the television coverage of the events of 11 September 2001, and uncovers "a new politics, and ethics, of the image" in "a radical change in form, address, access and transmission." As the consequences of the media claims upon reality and the "phantasmatic disposition of the subject" of, and to, the media spectacle nevertheless remain the defining conditions of almost every aspect of our everyday experience, including the incomprehension of the reality of human experience elsewhere, the call to "save the image" becomes evermore urgent.

Pavel Büchler

Some Notes on Art as Film as Art

The cinematograph is a vehicle. It is a product of the same euphoric impulse that gave us the modern engine-driven means of transport and travel—the car, the train, and above all the aeroplane. But unlike the invention of the automobile, intent on disproving the received wisdom concerning the merits of the relative arrangements of the cart and the horse, or unlike the design of the plane, rising above pedestrian arguments to the challenge of gravity, the cinematograph had little to prove. Some suggest that the cinematograph is a vehicle for the image—but images have always been in motion. The desire to halt their movement, capture their unsteady essence, had prompted the invention of photography, and, paradoxically perhaps, it is only since the "motion picture" restored something of the pre-photographic conditions of looking that we have come to believe that images can be still. Others have it that the cinematograph moves the imagination itself, as if the imagination were a passenger in the train of thought. But then again, it has often been observed that imagination runs ahead of the contemplation of passing events, that it tends to travel in the direction of the future, of the yet unseen and unthought. What

use could it have for a vehicle which, by its photographic nature, takes us invariably into the past before it takes us anywhere else? In these detours and returns, perhaps, lies the challenge for another invention: film as art.

In his article, "The Thoughts That Made the Picture Move," written for an encyclopaedia of the cinema in 1933, Rudolf Arnheim gives an account of a pioneering discovery which, later on, "led to the development of film as art."[1] In 1896, the cinematographer M. A. Promio made what seems like an obvious observation. Traveling by boat along the canals of Venice, watching the palazzos "moving by," he realised that "the film camera, which could take pictures of moving things while it was standing still, perhaps could take immobile things while it was moving itself."[2] The effect produced by Promio's early experiment was by no means new. The image of a scenery sliding across the field of vision had belonged to the oldest tricks in the trade of optical illusionists and experimenters at least since the seventeenth-century invention of the Laterna Magica. The representation of movement by the parallel movement of a painted or printed "slide" within the projecting or viewing contraption, which is itself stationary, attests to the principle of relativity involved in our comprehension of visible phenomena. It does imply, even if falsely, that the image had been recorded in passing, from a continuously shifting viewpoint. The magical effect is founded in an experiential reversal: the image moves while we sit still, like the view of a landscape seen from the window of a moving car. The illusion "works" precisely because it reproduces an illusion.

The idea that the camera itself can generate the experience of motion by an active participation in the recorded action, through recording its own movements, has different consequences where film is considered not as reproduction, but as a self-defining reality. However basic its technological principle, the magic of the magic lantern had, of course, similar aspirations. Magic is only magical when it seems to be real. But the "realistic" effect of the illusionistic show depends on the surprise presence of an animated apparition within the viewing situation, embedded somehow in the viewer's reality. Film does not act on our world in quite the same way. The matter of crowds reportedly fleeing the early movie theatres to escape locomotives approaching from the screen notwithstanding, the experience of film, at least in its conventional mode, is an experience of the "subjective formative virtues of the camera," in Arnheim's words, through which an independent reality beyond illusion comes into existence. It is an experience of a change of state: of "production," of film at work, of camera in "action" (as in the film director's call). As a mechanical recording device, the film camera produces images of movement; it evokes movement. As an active agent of the moving image, it sets in motion, provokes, events whose temporal unfolding does not have to conform to the continuum of time or chronology of moments, and which do not have to obey the physical laws or respect the spatial relations on which the experience of movement depends on what we call the real world. Or in other words, the camera lets the real world quite literally pass by.

For Arnheim, "film in the true meaning of the term" was an exclusively visual medium, a moving picture, an "animated photograph"—two-dimensional, silent shadow play constrained by the rectangular format of the projected image. It was only as a "separate and complete structural form" that the moving image on the cinematic screen could provide viable resources for art—and only by consciously stressing "the peculiarities of his medium," with an emphasis on the only partial resemblance of the photographic material to reality, "the film artist may create a work of art." The intelligent and imaginative exploration of the restrictions of the cinematic form, of its "abstract" qualities and the constraints of its fundamental aesthetic codes was, Arnheim believed, "the beginnings of what someday will be the great art of painting in motion."

Even if Arnheim saw the artistic potential of film in terms that were probably ripe for correction already in the 1930s; even if he identified it with many of those features and cinematographic techniques that subsequent technological innovation has transformed, diminished, or eliminated ("film is, to me," he wrote in 1957, "a unique experiment in the visual arts which took place in the first three decades of this century"); and even if he failed to foresee and acknowledge the potential of the "progressive spirit" of film well recognised by his more radical contemporaries (Béla Balázs, from whom Arnheim learned, for one, or Walter Benjamin, who in turn learned much from Arnheim, for instance), Arnheim seems to have been right to associate

the artistic potential of film with the acceptance of its visible imperfection.

Together with the reduction of depth, the absence of colour (in Arnheim's days), and "the non-visual world of the senses," a prominent condition of film as a visual art medium is the delimitation of the image. The frame, with its strictly horizontal and vertical edges, which photography had inherited from the practical conventions of the painting canvas and the sketch book, as much as from the architectural traditions of the window and the theatre proscenium, became fully justified by the invention of the roll film. The efficiencies of the use of a strip of celluloid of uniform width in the camera/projector technology added an "economic" rationale for the rectangle beyond the mere convenience of traditional pictorial organisation and the opportunities it offers to spatial and narrative composition.[3] The rectangular frame is then less a technological necessity than a manifestation of a "natural" tendency of film, even the essence of film as art.

Film is what takes place on the projection screen. This self-evident fact holds the more firmly, the harder we try to find a place for film somewhere outside the frame. Hollis Frampton, an extraordinarily eloquent advocate and practitioner of film as art—who, incidentally, saw film as "verging upon obsolescence" in 1975—corroborates the point. In his late 1960s text/performance, *A Lecture*, he declares that "film is, first, a confined space. . . . It is only a rectangle of white light."[4] This space is created at the mere flick of an electrical switch—or two switches, to be precise:

one to turn off the lights in the auditorium; the other to turn on the projector. Any attempt to investigate the internal economics and dynamics of film, as art should do, must proceed from this illuminated rectangle. "In fact it is, in the end, all we have. That is one of the limits of the art of film."

"Films," Frampton says, "are made out of footage, not out of the world at large." They are made, usually, though not always, out of pieces of exposed photographic material that came out of the camera to be processed, cut, and glued together. As Frampton puts it, "the art of film consists in devising things to put into our projector." These things are inanimate physical objects—one of the notes in Frampton's text instructs the lecturer/performer to insert a pipe cleaner into the projector gate to demonstrate this. Whatever their status in the world, their sole purpose for the art of film is to cast shadows.

Can this be all? A better question may be: is this enough? This is the question at the heart of the art of film. To find the answer we must let the film run and see what happens.

May 2002

The above paragraphs have been salvaged from my unfinished draft for an introduction to an afternoon of discussion on film and art five years ago, to the best of my ability to decipher the cryptic style of the notes and guess the significance of the yellow Post-It stickers that have remained attached as bookmarks to the pages of my copy of Arnheim's *Film as Art*. They are presented here unrehearsed, as it

were: not only, for technical reasons, did I have to forgo the chance to put them to test on that afternoon, but also, for no good reason at all, I have not given much thought to the topic since.

Perhaps, I should have thrown my old notes away and started again. But then, where would I start from? Things change all the time. We hear less about art forms and more about practices, less about film and more about the cinema. Film seems to have become history—and it is as history that it seems to provide material for art. Or even less than that: it may be that for the art of the moving image today, film is no more than a footnote.

Or perhaps, I should have thrown away Arnheim and started with (or against) Vilém Flusser, whose insightful analysis of the camera condition, *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*, has since been saved from obscurity by a new English edition.[5] Where would his persuasive argument leave me? Could his observations of a never-ceasing evolutionary feedback between what the camera can do and what we do, or say we do, with it dispel the melancholy of obsolescence and turn my attention from the formal and conceptual restrictions of filmmaking to the expanding possibilities for artists' use of film? For Flusser, too, photographers, like Frampton's film artists, pursue their work "not out there in the world, since for them the world is only a pretext for the states of things [photographs] to be produced, but within the possibilities contained within the camera's program." But the "program" is nothing less than the sum of the continually developing structural norms of the "apparatus"—not only the "subjective formative

virtues of the camera," but also the functioning of the entire industries of photography, information, or culture. What happens when the things that photographers pursue within this vast range of possibility change state again, as they are "put into our projector" to become film? Flusser does not tell, but it seems a safe assumption that when Flusser's "states of things" become Frampton's "footage," the material for Arnheim's "film as art," the question will once again need to be framed within the rectangle of projected light.

Or, finally, it may be that I could have started with what is closest at hand, what is right here, in front of me, at my fingertips. As I stare into the backlit screen of the word processor, I can no longer be sure that there still is such a thing as film.

The pressure of "new technologies" on the inventions of the mechanical era becomes most apparent when I run my spell check. The computer had never heard of the Laterna Magica but volunteers an alternative: Latrine Magic.

NOTES

1 Rudolf Arnheim: *Film as Art* (London: Faber & Faber, 1971). Further Arnheim references are to this edition.

2 Paul Virilio interprets the same story in *Looking Back at the End of the World* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1986) as the introduction of the "first static vehicle." He adds: "From now on everything will happen without our even moving, without our even having to set out."

3 Interviewed by Sylvère Lotringer in the *Schizo-culture* issue of *Semiotext(e)* in 1978, the filmmaker Jack Smith pointed out that because it is easy to manufacture, the rectangle "is the preferred shape of capitalism."

4 HOLLIS FRAMPTON: *Circles of Confusion: Film, Photography, Video: Texts, 1968–1980* (Rochester, N.Y.: Visual Studies Workshop Press, 1983). Further Frampton references are to this edition.

5 VILÉM FLUSSER: *Towards a Philosophy of Photography* (London: Reaktion, 2000).

Saving the Image

Raymond Bellour

Tony Oursler

In the corner farthest from the entrance, at the back of the immense industrial bay converted into an exhibition space, we see, or rather, as we approach, we *hear*, something so small as to be barely raised off the floor—a creature crying out or imploring interminably in a heart-rending voice: "Oh no! Oh no!" The visitor must bend down to see the tiny cloth body bound to a metal bar. Its head is enormous in proportion, and what animates it is no more than the vibration of an image. The spectator is powerfully affected by that soft face, whose expression is impossible to describe: so close to horror and revulsion, although it also has neutral moments that might be interpreted as close to ecstasy. In the setting of this place, this is probably the last of the eight scenes that visitors will come upon before going back around the whole show in their own preferred order; but this is, without a doubt, the one they will remember most intensely.*

* The exhibition *Tony Oursler* was presented at the Centre d'Art Contemporain in Geneva from 21 January to 21 May 1995.

From his very first works in the late seventies, Tony Oursler has used video as a catalyst for the creation of worlds that painting and sculpture could not adequately conceive, and for which film proved too exterior. Only video, pulling behind it like a comet's tail the television from which it evolved, and from which, for so many American artists, reality itself is continually reborn, had this binding character of transition capable of launching into orbit Oursler's fragmented worlds, reconstructed as a patchwork. Both in his videos and in his installations, which tend to be authentic environments, video not only performs the habitual functions of recording and projection, but is also the paste that glues together all the different elements and makes the game work, with a surprisingly lively dose of freedom and ingenuity. In his single-channel videotapes, Oursler always introduces scraps of universe; in his installations, which he has been using for some time now as a platform for his videos, he tells stories, infinite segments of stories, with an obstinate narrative sense, picaresque and childlike, and with a passion as inventive as it is mocking of word-play. A circus of partial objects drawn together by a strange energy generated by a kind of trash Caligarism conceived as a kind of cut-up of all the possible materials of pop culture: in this way Oursler's work very soon came to the fore in the American scene, with its mixing of fragments of real bodies and fictitious bodies, drawn, modeled, patched, perpetually represented/disfigured.

For a number of years now, however, Oursler's work has been traversed by three connected movements (all of which relate to the

installations, which, in his work, as in that of other artists, have come to be the most imaginative area of videomaking). The first movement consists in working with real places, windows, rooms, or houses (or their fictive equivalents in the museum) to produce a distortion of the sense of habitation, of simulacra of behaviours. The second consists in an increasingly intensified search for the relations between the different elements within a given installation; but this coherence has been prepared in such a way as to facilitate a whole range of conjunctions with other elements, making it possible to stage, when the opportunity presents itself, mime-dramas overflowing with worlds. The third movement is the method that makes it possible to people these worlds: the alliance of a sculpted form and a projected image engenders an individualised population of dummies or dolls.

Four pillars divide the entire length of the space devoted to Oursler's work. To the right, the tiny confined doll composes, with two other elements, a pre-existing installation. We can disregard the relative autonomy of this installation, considering that its three elements link up with the five entities dispersed through the space on the other side of the pillars, but *System for Dramatic Feedback* conserves a strength of its own, a strength directed at contaminating the whole group. Projected on the wall opposite the corner with the wailing doll is a gigantic image: the image of a cinema audience with its eyes raised towards an imaginary film whose soundtrack reaches us mixed with the noises coming from the theatre. Opposite this screen, halfway

along the route leading to the doll, stands a monstrous pile of objects several metres high. This pyramidal universe, made up of a motley assortment of fabrics, pieces of clothing, cushions, and knotted canvases of every shape and colour, is a chaos penetrated by the eye; this is what we might call a "body-habitat," a sensual and decaying social space, occupied by creatures who have made their refuge in it—creatures whose confused identities, pinned to their automaton mechanisms, we perceive as we circle around the heap. We see the hand that slaps a bending rear; the man in a state of erection and repose; the pregnant woman with her child kicking inside her belly; the enormous androgynous head resting on the floor, the tongue sticking out between the teeth, which fills us with fear and the urge to kick it. The shocking impotence of these bodies consists in their being split between the immutable destiny of the puppet and the ungraspable life of the image that regards us. The flash of the image evidently calls to mind the phantom projection taking place in front of it; but its indecisive and morbid flickering is more like that of the television set that each of the creatures seems to have incorporated into it for the exclusive purpose of eternally showing its own image. Between the cinema audience gently captivated by its fictitious film screen and this space in mutation (*Mutation* is the title of the heap of rags and bodies), an impossible field/counter-field is created. And this has its outer limits, just as every society has its excluded: the tiny doll and its senseless shrill suffering. I have never seen an image that cried like this before. In the intense and minimal solitude of

abandonment, it is an image striving to control itself in order to manifest its pain once again.

The power of this looped drama extends ideally to the other figures in the installation, in response to their virtuality. At either end of the second of the two areas delimited by the pillars are two groups that mirror or echo one another. Four large dolls loom out of the darkness, each one endowed with its own wild and mocking singularity; they present themselves in line, marked by the solipsism imposed by the separation between the standing bodies and their image-faces, animated by the painful expressiveness of actors who suffer in the elliptical image that makes them oscillate between individuation and stereotype. We will see this more clearly when we get to the end, in front of a pair of tall figures caught in a looped dialogue whose style is reminiscent of television series, soft porn, and the despairing conversations of Bergman's *Scenes of Married Life*: the woman wants to sleep, the man takes her by force, which hurts her, but the pain seems to be mixed with pleasure. The population of dolls thus extends infinitely, as a catalogue of beings who suffer, open to all kinds of situations, to all kinds of setups: a new humanity that draws, for example, on the characters of Beckett or Giacometti, opening itself up to the vague but wounding condition of those more and more broken bodies. This capacity for metamorphosis and remodeling also extends to nature. Some years ago Oursler decided to re-appropriate certain aspects of painting, reworking some of his favourite objects from that tradition: *the cloud*. He projected moving silhouettes onto small blocks of synthetic

cotton hung from the ceiling on threads, which, at the limits of the impalpable, animated the floating masses they penetrated. These materials-cum-objects are evanescent sculptures that mix in their very vagueness the contrasted motifs of classical painting: figures and clouds. And here we find two of those "clouds" vibrating to the slightest breath of air. In this way, he sketches a world, an amusing parody of a world, inside this large, dark, low-ceilinged space, this mutant social space in which the effects of distance and the accretions of reality are organized in some strange fashion, somewhere between the horrific and the ironic. And so I actually thought that some weary visitor had sat down with her back against one of the pillars, when I walked rather quickly past a figure wearing a suit slumped on the floor, like one of the homeless without a face. With a perverse art of counterpoint and a firm perception of the image's capacity for contagion, this time Oursler has chosen to project, with a to-and-fro movement that illuminates the man's crotch, the image of a naked woman modeled by the creases of the trousers.

Here we find sculpture, painting, and film—video imposes itself once again as the means of bringing these mediums together—joining forces in an innovative form of spectacle that borders on the living. To achieve this sense of a beyond-the-grave and future world, Oursler has especially adapted to his purposes a technique with which film lends its services to the wax museums that had prefigured it since the late eighteenth century: the animation of a modeled face by means of a projection (American museums love this effect: one of the best-known examples has

Lincoln delivering his famous address in memorial of the Gettysburg dead). The image never ceases to tremble and weep inside this space, and with the personal resources of a work that is as technologically simple as it is surprising, to seek a way out of this trembling and this sorrow. And it is in pushing the image beyond what it was thought it could or should be that it is once again and always an attempt to save the image, or to save at least something of the image and the world of which the image claims to be a sublimated presentation, when quite clearly it is no more than its inconstant mirror and its sickly skin.

In Venice, one morning during the Biennale, a handful of polyglot spectators had gathered around some installations in a little experimental theatre by the edge of the lagoon. A variety of different strategies converged there, each with an explicit commitment to extreme treatments of the image. For example, Robert Smithson and the video documentation of his *Spiral Jetty*, modeling the sculpture into landscape architecture; flies magnified by being projected inside a glass fishbowl; faces in exaggerated closeup that in the course of the slide sequence took on the antique appearance of Roman frescos, thanks to the rough material texture of the brick wall. On the first floor, in the dark, opposite a video projection by Douglas Gordon, in which a man could be seen continually trying to stand up in the picture plane, giving the impression of supporting the image of his desperate efforts, I suddenly heard the heart-wrenching cry of one of Oursler's dolls: "Oh no! Oh no!" I

watched people cluster around that little face gesticulating down there in the dark, in front of the mini-video projector, and I had the sensation that we were gathered together in that place to try to save the image.

Bill Viola

There has been an idea in circulation for a while now, one that has traveled from one war to another, from Elie Faure to Jean-Georges Auriol, and has likened cinema to a kind of animation of painting: great painting, classical and romantic painting. According to this idea, cinema was a way of continuing to experience painting's splendour without being impeded by the image crisis foreshadowed by Balzac in *The Unknown Masterpiece*, before painting incarnated the drama to the point where it seemed to no longer know to which cause to devote itself. Godard, historian if ever there was one, conceived of an explanation from the instant it seemed clear that cinema was running a risk analogous to the one that finally destroyed painting: it was to be found in *Passion*, where *tableaux vivants* seemed like an attempt, with their passionate desire for flesh and mixed images, to animate these same immobile masterpieces in order to project cinema into its great incarnational adventure. But the self-perpetuation of this driven image would require an obsession with exact lighting and the use of a real story if there was to be any chance of escaping the chaos it was confronting with unparalleled determination.

The solution imagined by Bill Viola, in the last of the works that compose *Buried Secrets*, his large installation in the American pavilion at the Venice Biennale, is simpler, less tragic, and more extreme: one simply has to create the painting, be in the painting. To remake a painting, projected onto a wall within a space that the image itself manages to sufficiently light with a gentle twilight glow in a transitory situation somewhere between a museum gallery and a film theatre. To find, thanks to the use of video, a position somewhere precisely between painting and cinema, Viola suggested a fiction involving one or two possible stories and allowed them a specific time frame in which to develop. The time here is a perfect intermediary, since it was obtained by slowing down a forty-five-second event into a virtuality extended to ten minutes. It is through this rhythm that we are able, as Pascal Bonitzer suggested in *Décadrages*, to see how much less cinema (extended here to video) yields to movement than we thought and how much more movement is actually involved in painting.

But Viola did not give himself too easy a task with this installation, which could have simply consisted of an interior animation of a straightforward action, captured in a single frame. As vertical as a painting can be, this screen is as much a concealer as it is a frame, since it is projected towards a field outside the frame from which the event begins to modulate: two very preoccupied women, as we can we ascertain from their gestures, seen in extreme slow motion, are waiting for a third. Are the first two women surprised as the third appears from the left to bring them some news? The

mystery remains, because the dialogue the young newcomer murmurs into the ear of the elder of the two women suddenly gives way to a more specific rumour, a grumbling that becomes more violent and clear within the scope of the continuous muffled sounds that Viola has been filling his tapes and installations with for so long. One can imagine (I wasn't the only one to think so) that this triumphant woman has just announced she is pregnant. That would be "The Greeting" and the wishes referred to in the title. But here the enigma that history painting managed to clear up (and only to a limited degree) through the information supplied by titles, as well as the erudite nature of the iconography, remains in Viola's work. For example, the extraordinary time lengthening of the movements, which accelerate only a little with the arrival of the young woman, prevent any true psychological perspective on the women's expressions, which remain uncertain and develop an indecisive range of emotions according to the evolution of facial movements: from concern to surprise, from delight to terror. Better yet, these expressions are never, in one sense, anything but transitional and floating, like the continuous folding, unfolding, and billowing of the women's loose-fitting clothing, whose colours oscillate between orange-reds, blues, and gray-blacks. These variations create textures amazingly similar to those found in painting—textures achieved, among other ways, by the influence of a light wind that suddenly blows across the scene. All the pleats and folds of clothing, so intimately linked to body postures in paintings, to their intimate dramatic energy,

are present here. One is reminded of Poussin, since *The Greeting* looks as if it might have been a reinvention of his painting, *Eliezer and Rebecca*, with those three admirable women regrouped on the right, while Eliezer, in the center, advances, holding her arms out to Rebecca, with a gesture reminiscent of the one made by the young woman in red who enters the scene in Viola's work. Viola opted for a skillful compromise in his use of costumes, which evoke both ancient robes and Californian New Age (the three women are wearing sandals). Spectators regarding this scene, even if they remain in the fictional positions of cinema spectators, cannot help themselves from considering that this kind of image in perpetual movement and constantly transitional approaches the effect produced by the incessant eye scanning of all passionate viewers of paintings, where the sweeping of captivated glances produces a kind of hallucination.

Finally, Viola arranged in the background of this street setting under blue skies—scenery created in the studio, where the impossible perspective evokes at leisure the constructivist artifice of so many paintings since the Renaissance—a second action that we can choose, or not, to connect to the first scene. It was inserted within a small square opening that veers obliquely between the colors white and blue (a blue very similar to that of the sky), where two minuscule silhouettes are involved in an enigmatic back and forth. This opening is undeniably reminiscent of the open door revealing the man in the background of *Las Meninas* (or rather, one of the many reinterpretations: in Picasso's series, *Les Ménines*

de Vélasquez, commented Michel Leiris, the body is reduced to a silhouette-sign). We cannot know what these creatures are really doing or even who they truly are—the destiny characteristic of so many tiny figures in the backgrounds of paintings—and they will be almost entirely hidden by the arrival of the heroine. But while these two women wait, those background figures end up attracting much of our attention as well, to the point that we cannot really follow the two separate actions together—especially when a tiny, violent, luminous, and unexplained patch inserts itself between the two minuscule and closely linked bodies, suggesting both banal action, as well as the crystallization of a desire, but signaling at any rate this sudden, insistently elliptical point of escape, like a point of pure light.

The Greeting is the end of a journey. The visitor previously had to enter four other rooms that mimed as many states of image and sound. The first one, *Hall of Whispers*, is a hallway lined with projections of ghostly, gagged faces (ten in all, men and women), and these images haunt the walls from which they seem to emanate. The second installation, *Interval*, organized as a progressive acceleration, creates an almost impossible distinction between two images—a calm action, then a sequence of violent states—alternately projected on two opposing walls, realizing in this fashion an illusory, but physically very real unity on a spatialized field-counter-field. The third, *Presence*, is a purely sonic experience achieved by hanging separate lines from the ceiling from which are heard whispered phrases. In the fourth, *The Veiling*, Viola

set up two projections using mirrors to refract images through a multiplicity of veils, composing as many translucent screens, among which the visitor can circulate and be tempted to capture, by viewing and by touching, impossible-to-capture images. These are, first and foremost, uncertain image states, connected by both impossible distances and positions, thus becoming even more purely mental through their excess of physicality. Confronted by these states that make the viewer more of a visitor than a spectator, *The Greeting* restores a kind of serenity. The image is no longer something that disturbs, eludes, attacks, and tenses up the body by pressures essentially unknown. It re-assembles itself, so to speak, into one single image whose mysterious ending—the physical impression produced—finds itself suddenly guaranteed by two recognisable forces. The first is the presence of a story, a fictional one, but so minimal that the tradition of art and idea still stands here in all its former legitimacy. The second force is born from the reality of a position: the projection, whose position, although relative here, is no less undeniable and assures us, while the scene lasts, of a partial identity, thanks to which the irreversible mutation of the image, which is accomplished here and there, can also remain our safeguard.

Chantal Akerman

Why is Chantal Akerman's installation *Bordering on Fiction: D'Est*, shown in 1995 at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis and at the Jeu de Paume in Paris, such an exemplary work? Because it

experiments for the first time, in such a clear way, with the destiny of cinematic projection and beyond.

The first of the installation's three rooms is a film theatre. Not a real theatre, but a museum cinema built for the occasion that we can enter and leave at will, where we can sit on real theatre seats in the dark and follow a 107-minute projection from beginning to end if we choose. *D'Est* (From the East) is one of Akerman's *films à dispositif*, like *Hotel Monterey* or *News From Home*, in which the power of the camera eye is fully released and exercises a subtle pressure on objects, creating a documentary force from captured reality that is even sharper than we realise, for we feel it being penetrated by a fiction that is actually rooted in personal life, experience, and memory of self. A young woman, in voluntary exile, facing a New York she is in the process of discovering, reads her mother's letters from Belgium while filming these letters that are left unanswered. Through off-screen commentary and the power of the camera eye alone, we hear the echo of a Belgian Jew from Central Europe rediscovering the necessity of a native country. By the skillfully hierarchical alternation of insistent fixed shots and long tracking shots, mostly of the streets of Moscow, and by an unexpected treatment of direct sounds edited and expanded on over the course of the sequences, thereby creating a procession-like effect of images, Akerman conveys with sensitive, shattering evidence the shock of historical and social change that affected postcommunist Russia. We feel the example speaking for all the chilling events that have reshaped the human species.

And such is the projection in the second room, in which the projection of the film is fractured at the viewer's eye level into eight rows of three monitors each, a space in which the film is submitted to intense circulation. This grouping creates a complex circuit of sequences or moments drawn from the film. By approaching, retreating, stopping, or starting, viewers are exposed through purely physical movement to an infinite number of reprojections without true beginnings or ends. One becomes a party, to varying degrees, according to each individual (therein lies the interest in the way each person chooses to move), to a memory effect almost impossible to master through film, here exhibited through the renewed exchange created by eye movement and the concept of the work. The most moving parts of the installation are found in the alternate ways that the same scenes are replayed, animated from within by varying gestures (I think of the scene of that woman compulsively cutting sausage, which is repeated in diverse combinations with other scenes), and in the long tracking shots of crowds and frozen beings. One finds oneself captured by a double flow of action: that of an attentive, anxious, and loving camera, constantly renewing its distance from the object, but in such a way as to question the meaning of this distance; and that of our own unknown body learning a lesson from this other eye.

A title announces the third space, a more modest, sober room: *La vingt-cinquième image* (The Twenty-Fifth Image). In the first room, spectators sit down to enter into the image projection. In the second, they freely circulate among the images.

In the third, they are given the option of sitting on an ordinary bench and entering into a different rapport with the image, somewhere between transmission and reflection. The twenty-fifth image is the one that video adds to the film: the television image. It subtly opposes itself to the twenty-four film images still being reshuffled on the monitors in the second room. This television image is played out in one single long shot, sliding imperceptibly from uncertain representation (a street lined with lights radiating a yellow glow) to almost complete abstraction (when this light, shown in extreme close-up, is overtaken by the "snow" on the video image). It takes about ten minutes for this image to live and then completely dissolve within a monitor placed on the ground, while the voice-over does the essential work, reverberating through two separate loud speakers. Akerman's voice speaks to us while this transformation of a possible television image into an experimental video image ensues. First she reads us an extract in Hebrew from Exodus, which she pursues after a point in French, broaching on the Jewish commandment against idol and image worship. In a hushed, confiding tone, she tells us about the history and the project, the sensations produced by this film, *D'Est*, which could have also been a letter addressed to a father, touching on what was accomplished during the voyage from Belgium to Russia through Germany and Poland. She announces the images to come in this film in words she had to write down first in order to reply to the images surging up in her: current images, past images, and those to come, images of "people for whom history doesn't even

have an 'H' anymore, but who get hit by history nevertheless." She then adds, with a touching simplicity: "There is nothing to be done, it's obsessing and it obsesses me. In spite of the cello, in spite of cinema." In spite of the beautiful cello solo played by Sonia Wieder-Altherton underneath Akerman's words. In spite of the film that is rolling, so close and yet suddenly so far, in the first room.

And here we are, after the initial projection and crowd circulation appropriate to the installation, in a place created as a kind of meditation room within the installation. A place to think—under the effect of a counter-transmission of the television image that finally leads us to writing and the book—about the relationship between the projection and circulation of images that is undeniably accomplished through this dual project of film and installation, which are connected and use the other as a pretext.* When Akerman transformed her title *D'Est* by supplementing it with ***Bordering on Fiction***, she was measuring, or at least letting us imagine, the overflow that results from a "documentary style bordering on fiction," opening the way to the idea of a fiction whose edges we can only glimpse: the fiction of a cinema saving itself

* The genesis of the project is outlined in the text by Kathy Halbreich and Bruce Jenkins that introduces the beautiful catalogue dedicated to the installation. There are also two essays from Catherine David and Michael Tarentino, in addition to a kind of travelogue by Akerman, "A propos de *D'Est*" (About *From the East*), where we read about how the film took shape.

as much as escaping from itself, thanks to the metamorphoses to which it is submitted.

Christian Boltanski

A *dispositif* is an act of the mind. Each new *dispositif* is a thought form made concrete and thereby enhanced. In the enormous, stark chambre envisioned by Christian Boltanski in *Les Concessions*, on display at Galerie Yvon Lambert, the invention is the result of two separate but equally forceful elements. Placed at different angles on the floor in the middle of the room are eight double-sided frames, human-scale in height. Laid out in three irregular rows on the walls are sixty-eight black cloth rectangles or squares, each one concealing an image: a photograph. Four fans hanging from the ceiling cause these cloths to rise and fall at random, revealing the images to one degree or another; on the bottom and most accessible row, visitors may choose the images they want to unveil. Although each one is unique, they are alike in that they all show faces and bodies mutilated by pain, torture, violence, and death. These enlarged photographs were extracted from a Spanish newspaper, *El Caso*, which is similar to our own *Détective*, and bear the imprint of the dot screen, which sometimes renders facial features and bodily forms into troubling abstractions. What one sees—or almost sees—is at any rate reflected in the serial horror of what we do *not* see, represented by these black cloths that vibrate like announcements that have retained the trembling of the hands that sealed them.

This anonymous and seemingly limitless representation largely draws its force from the images on the frames set up in the middle of the room. These images, also photographs, but much more enigmatic, amplify the resonance of the images on the walls. The upper part of the frames are intensely lit by a fluorescent light hidden underneath the same sheet that covers the photographs and falls to the floor, leaving recognisable forms attracted to the bottom of the frame, where they dissolve into a neutral space. In one frame, we view the radiant face of a dark-haired adolescent, her slightly crude charm exposed in a hair stylist's advertisement; in another, we see a glittering, wide-open eye; and in another, we find the terrifying sight of a man's head, or simply nothing but an incoherent mass of uncertain folds and features. Could we guess for ourselves what the chambre is hinting at by this willful absence of all press information? These faces and bodies are those of both murderers and victims, and all derive from newspaper photographs. Imagine these images back to back, eight times over on the eight frames. The staging of these paradoxical shots/counter-shots illuminated by a common light is effective: we forget as we move from one side of a frame to the other the image-memory formed from the previous side; simultaneously, each time we shift places, and hence perspectives, in the room, we also discover other sets of instants-to-instants that come to us from the wild, wan images surrounding us. These silent images also tremble from currents of air that vibrate the sheets—both their screens and their veils.

Boltanski incorporates three principles into this work that demonstrate the extent to which installation art has become an unsettling, increasingly undeniable presence somewhere between the conventions of the visual arts and those of theatre and film. The first of these principles is virtuality. Virtuality affects the two series of images in different ways, but also holds them together, all of them being interchangeable in terms of three resonant elements: the evidentiary, the monstrously sublime, and the statistical. The second principle involves a perceptual uncertainty that operates differently in each of the two series, but is mutually supported by them, as well as through the combination of two important modes of image elaboration. First, there is the uncertain balance between representation and disfiguration, and then there is the interaction between stillness and movement. It is striking to see how much these highly singular frames resonate with recently produced images for video installations, such as Gary Hill's *Tall Ships* or two episodes of Bill Viola's *Buried Secrets*, *Hall of Whispers* and *The Veiling*, each of which plays with "veiled" images as well. From the moment the spectators enter the room, their very movements produce the variations that affect other spectators and absorb their attention at will. But how exactly? All possibilities are present, including the sense of being a witness to, or maybe a victim and possibly even perpetrator of, this horror surrounding them. The political or at least ethical sense of this intervention is achieved through the skillful application of the *dispositif* in question: determined by their own strong responses to the spectacle—increasingly necessary as a means of

opposing the spectacular flow of the unrepresentable—visitors must constantly reinvent their stance by crossing into the territory itself.

Upon leaving the room, visitors fall upon three reliquaries at the entrance. These metal coffins are placed on bases and secured to the wall with fine wire mesh. We also see two photographs of children's faces, and a third one of a child lying down, in a bed or a real coffin. At the foot of the base, a rumpled white sheet reminds us of the translucent screen-veils draped on the upright images and the black cloths over the other images. One's mind is unceasingly atoning with its memory duties, the duty to conceive a counter-staging.

Terry Gilliam

How does Boltanski's installation provide us with the impetus to understand the effect produced by the false-true remake of Chris Marker's *La Jetée*, *Twelve Monkeys*? In *Twelve Monkeys*, the photograph is not questioned. Its role is infinitessimal. It forms the wall of images that the heroine-psychiatrist uses to illustrate her book on the future visionaries, and in which she suddenly notices the photograph of the hero as a soldier in the First World War, just as she was trying to understand the "insanity" of this man during the most consistent—and most present—time frame (shortly before the end of the twentieth century) among the various times depicted in the film. A true indicator of the temporal paradox, the photograph incarnates nothing here. It contributes to the notion of another world in *Blade Runner*, becoming both troubled image

matter (in the photographic blowup sequence) and virtual indicator (the packet of photographs of the heroine, woman or replicant). It was even employed as a slightly abstract concept by screenwriters who were both fans of Philip Dick and fascinated by *La Jetée*, and might have left Marker something to hope for: if not a possible image of what he had dared, at least the use of the photograph as one of those shift anticipators that the big American machines sometimes have the genius of employing to capture the future of their time and to precipitate variations of the image's destiny (in *Terminator*, for example—even in the second one with its attempts at synthesis—or in *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?*, as it was in the past with *The Wizard of Oz*).

Thirty-three years ago, the age of Christ, after *Nuit et brouillard* (Night and Fog) and *Hiroshima mon amour*, after *A bout de souffle* (Breathless) and *Les quatre cent coups* (The Four Hundred Blows), with its final freeze-frame of Jean-Pierre Léaud running with his back to the sea, *La Jetée* was to define once and for all a new order of things involving the irreversible nonreturn of the image placed into the category of frozen-forever-in-time. After the camp, after the bomb, after cinema falling for the first time into its own past. *Vertigo*, with its eye-hair spiral and the sequoia cross-section whose concentric circles represented, to the terrified eyes of the couple, the abstraction of time, was the melancholy referent and elective sign of cinema's passage towards itself, thus entering into its own transformation. The hero of *La Jetée*, imprisoned among others by a population of conquerors and buried like rats underground in

Chaillot (where Langlois, during the war, had saved many films banned by the Nazis, and where the Cinémathèque Française had just opened its doors in 1963, the same year Marker's film was released), receives an explanation of the new genre from the head of the camp's labour division: "The human race was now condemned. Space was now closed to them, and the only possible link to survival was through Time." In this film, the "story of a man marked by a childhood image" is developed through four different time frames. The first is the time of his childhood, the time of an image glimpsed on the Orly jetty. The second time frame is the underground camp period, after the Third World War and the destruction of Paris. The third time frame—the clearest of the film—is the Past, where the camp authorities first send their prisoner–guinea pig to create "a hole in Time." The fourth time frame is the Future, which is also called upon in vain to rescue the present. And it is through its original image that the film's paradox is resolved and completed; this image from childhood that absorbs all of the past unto itself alone and makes sure "that we were not trying to escape Time and the instant that he witnessed as a child that continued to obsess him, was the instant of his own death."

What remains of all this in Terry Gilliam's film? Almost nothing. Only what can be drawn from "a film inspired by the film written by Chris Marker." The necessary lapsus in the generic version speaks volumes. *La Jetée* is a film-nonfilm that borrows a strong, although insipid, idea (to all sci-fi amateurs, of which Marker is one): the story of a man projected into a past to save humanity

from the effects of its own self-destruction. There are also four separate time frames in *Twelve Monkeys.* The year 2035 is the present, following the catastrophe that must be overcome. The year 1991 is where the hero is first sent (the essential part of the film unfolds in a psychiatric institute). The First World War is where he finds himself in the trenches. And then there is the year 1996, when the virus that must be destroyed to render the Earth habitable once more first begins to spread. This is the clearest time frame of the film, when the rapport between the psychiatrist-heroine and the hero–guinea pig is established, up until the end, where we witness the scene, which has already been elliptically inserted several times, of the hero's death as seen from the eyes of a child. The four time frames are, of course, interspersed with linking images of a baroque intricacy, images refined at leisure by screenwriters in order to maintain the spectator somewhere between enigma and reason. But the film's weakness can be measured by the fact that two of these returns into the past are simply navigational errors, in relation to a false present that becomes in spite of it all the "real" one needed as a scene to answer the story's action, images of this action, an image-action that is the logical result of these time interplays, but still able to stand completely on its own—certainly not like these melodramatically charged slow motion scenes that were supposed to equate the matrix-image of Marker's film. But this image is not the subject of this spectacular film, which is neither worse, nor better than others by which American cinema continues to systematically ensure its empire. In Marker's film, everything depended on

the fact that this image was a photograph, or rather photography, and that the photograph be not out of context in a film that derives from it, a photograph that is continually reanimated by the editing, the music, and a commentary that becomes living theory of a shift occurring in another time that held the promise of cinema.

This is how Gilliam was able to substitute—to believe that this substitution could be made believable: logic of loans, logic of empires—an absolute masterpiece of image-time for a pure movement-film. This movement-film, at once soft and hard, is propelled by all the ceaseless, hysterical shots of movements, bodies, gestures, looks—all actions that work in favor of the film's success, thanks to the actors, the male hero, especially, who is strong enough to keep the viewer wondering for a long time if all of this might well be an internal projection, his own increasing insanity. But whereas *Vertigo* inspired *La Jetée* with its use of obsessive fear, its incarnation of the theme of "impossible memory, insane memory," re-created once more by Marker in *Sans Soleil*, the memory of cinema calling on its past to help a future yet to be invented, this is not the case with Gilliam's film, which aligns itself with Hitchcock's through the use of actual scenes from *Vertigo*. *Twelve Monkeys* drew little from its source of inspiration and is nothing more than a cinematic offering to the filmmaking duo destined to recycle the medium's own past for the purposes of cinematic spectacle.

Laura Mulvey

Stillness in the Moving Image:
Ways of Visualising Time and Its Passing

My opening proposition—that electronic and digital technologies have recently had a significant impact on celluloid-based cinema—is obvious to the point of banality. My hope here is, first of all, to bring out some of the implications for film criticism and film history that might lie behind the obviousness. My hope is also to concentrate particularly on how new technologies have given a new visibility to stillness as a property of celluloid. I say "celluloid" advisedly, as my interest, in the first instance, has been on the interaction between the old, mechanical technology associated with cinema and the new, electronic or digital: that is, how the images produced by a cinema that was *not* conscious of the implications of a future new technology might be affected, even enhanced, by refraction through the new. I have been trying to imagine a dialectical relationship here, where the old and the new react with each other to create innovative ways of thinking about the language of cinema and its significance at the present moment of time/history.

I started writing about the cinema and thinking about it theoretically in the early 1970s, so a juxtaposition between "old" and "new" must also refer to my own attitudes and approaches. Using

new technology as a "new horizon" to look back at the cinema of the past has pushed me also to return to, and to attempt to reconfigure, the main theoretical structures that have influenced my thought. This process has been like an experiment, trying out, in changed conditions, the theories that I have been applying to film for so long. There are three points of departure. First, spectatorship. Radical changes in the material, physical ways in which the cinema is consumed necessarily demand that theories of spectatorship should be reconfigured. Second, the indexical sign. The fact that the digital can mimic, as well as doctor, analogue images gives a new significance to the indexical sign. And finally, narrative. Theoretical analysis that assumes that narrative is essentially linear, dependent on cause and effect and on closure, shifts with nonlinear viewing. All these inflections depend, above all, on the viewer's new command over viewing technology and, most of all, the freedom given by the technology over the pace and order of a film. As narrative coherence fragments, as the indexical moment suddenly finds visibility in the slowed or stilled image, so spectatorship finds new forms.

When I first started writing about cinema, films had always been seen in darkened rooms, projected at twenty-four (or thereabouts) frames a second. Only professionals, directors and editors, had easy access to the flatbed editing tables that broke down the speed needed to create the illusion of natural movement. Then, I was preoccupied by Hollywood's ability to construct the female star as ultimate spectacle, the emblem and guarantee of its fascination and

power. Now, I am more interested in the way that those moments of spectacle were also moments of narrative halt, near stillness, that figure the halt and stillness inherent in the structure of celluloid itself. Then, I was concerned with the way Hollywood eroticised the pleasure of looking, inscribing a sanitised voyeurism into its style and narrative conventions. Now, I am more interested in the ways in which the presence of time itself can be discovered behind the mask of storytelling.

The paradox: new technologies are able to reveal the beauty of the cinema, but through a displacement that breaks the bond of specificity so important to my generation of filmmakers and theorists. Furthermore, particularly through access to the cinema's essential stillness, new technologies allow the spectator time to stop, look, and think. This process opens up the possibility of a link that takes the kind of theoretical reflection developed for an analysis of the still photograph to a new relevance for the moving image. I want to try to lead to these theoretical implications through a short summary of some aspects of the fraught, but also productive, relationship between still and moving images in the cinema.

First, the problem. Does the property of indexicality, so easily and consciously attributed to the still, tend to get lost in the moving image? And then, if stillness does appear in the moving image, does the cinema's indexicality find a new kind of visibility? These questions involve a return to familiar ground for photographic theory and to some of the most well-known sites of its discussion and

elaboration. But these reflections might now have new relevance for cinematic theory.

Roland Barthes, unsurprisingly, provides a point of departure. *Camera Lucida* establishes key attributes of the still photograph's relation to time. Most particularly, Barthes suggests that as the photographic image embalms a moment of time, it also embalms an image of life halted, which eventually, with the actual passing of time, will become an image of life after death. In numerous passages, he associates the photographic image with death. But he denies that this presence can appear in cinema. Not only does the cinema have no *punctum*, but it both loses and disguises its relation to the temporality characteristic of the still photograph because of its movement:

> In the cinema, whose raw material is photographic, the image does not, however, have this completeness (which is fortunate for the cinema). Why? Because the photograph, taken in flux, is impelled, ceaselessly drawn toward other views; in the cinema, no doubt, there is always a photographic referent, but this referent shifts, it does not make a claim in favor of its reality, it does not protest its former existence; it does not cling to me: it is not a *specter*.[1]

Furthermore, "The cinema participates in the domestication of Photography—at least the fictional cinema, precisely the one said to be the seventh art; a film can be mad by artifice, can present the cultural signs of madness, it is never mad by nature (by iconic

status); it is always the very opposite of an hallucination; it is simply an illusion; its vision is oneiric, not ecmnesic."[2]

There are two factors here: first, the movement inherent to the cinematographic technology as the celluloid travels through the machine, enhanced by the camera's own ability to move; second, the conceptual and ideological properties of storytelling. Between the two exists the "objective alliance" that links cinema's mechanical forward movement, the illusion of movement and the movement of narrative. This obsession with movement has dominated cinema from its origins (although avant-garde movements have continually rebelled against it), and it is beginning to blur as celluloid is displaced onto technologies that allow access to an illusion of its inherent stillness.

Raymond Bellour paraphrases Barthes's distinction between the photograph and the cinema: "On one side, there is movement, the present, presence; on the other, immobility, the past, a certain absence. On one side, the consent of illusion; on the other, a quest for hallucination. Here, a fleeting image, one that seizes us in its flight; there, a completely still image that cannot be fully grasped. On this side, time doubles life; on that, time returns to us brushed by death."[3]

The question of fiction is central here and leads directly to the film fiction's "double temporality." Creating a contradiction or a fundamental duality, conflicting temporalities lie at the heart of narrative cinema:

1. There is the moment of registration, the moment when the image in

front of the lens was inscribed by light onto photosensitive material passing behind the lens. This inscription gives the cinematic sign its indexical aspect, which, in turn, draws attention to the sign's temporal attribute giving it, in common with the still photograph, its characteristic "there-and-then-ness."

2. Just as the still frame is absorbed into the illusion of movement of narrative, so does "then-ness," the presence of the moment of registration associated with the aesthetics of still photography, have to lose itself in the temporality of the narrative and its fictional world. There is a presence, a "here-and-now-ness," that the cinema asserts through its "objective alliance" with storytelling that downplays, even represses, the aesthetic attributes it may share with the photograph.

Christian Metz also points out that the immobility and silence of the still photograph, with its connotation of death, disappears in the moving image. To repeat: narrative asserts its own temporality.

But, Bellour goes on to point out that even if the spectator is unable to halt time in the cinema, films can, and indeed often do, refer to stillness by direct reference to photography within a given story:

> What happens when the spectator of film is confronted with a photograph? . . . [T]he presence of a photo on the screen gives rise to a very particular trouble. Without ceasing to advance its own rhythm, the film seems to freeze, to suspend itself, inspiring in the spectator a recoil from the image that goes hand in hand with a growing fascination. . . .

> The photo subtracts me from the fiction of the cinema even as it forms a part of the film, even if it adds to it. Creating a distance, another time, the photograph permits me to reflect on cinema. Permits me, that is, to reflect that I am at the cinema.[4]

He then ends by writing:

> As soon as you stop the film, you begin to find time to add to the image. You start to reflect differently on film, on cinema. You are led toward the photogram—which is itself a step further in the direction of the photograph. In the frozen film (or photogram), the presence of the photograph bursts forth, while other means exploited by the *mise-en-scène* to work against time tend to vanish. The photo thus becomes a stop within a stop, a freeze-frame within a freeze-frame; between it and the film from which it emerges, two kinds of time blend together, always and inextricable, but without becoming confused. In this, the photograph enjoys a privilege over all other effects that make the spectator of cinema, this hurried spectator, a pensive one as well.[5]

Here, Bellour makes an important connection between the halting of narrative: the eruption of the still and a shift in the nature of spectatorship. With the arrival of new technologies giving the spectator control of the viewing process, this kind of radical break can be experienced by anyone with the simple touch of a button. The still image both makes the moment of registration comparatively visible and creates a new space of time for the

"pensive" spectator to reflect and experience the kind of reverie that Barthes had associated only with the photograph.

For a cinematic story to be credible in its own terms, it asserts the power of its own story time over the simple photographic time when its images were registered. Now, by stilling or slowing movie images, the time of the film's original moment of registration suddenly bursts through its artificial, narrative surface. Another moment of time, behind the fictional time of the story, emerges through this fragmentation and excavation of a sequence or film fragment. Even in a Hollywood movie, beyond the story is the indexical imprint of the pro-filmic scene: the set, the stars, the extras take on the immediacy and presence of a document, and the fascination of time fossilised can overwhelm and halt the fascination of narrative progression. The nowness of story time gives way to the then-ness of the movie's own moment in history.

The fragmentation of narrative has its own critical history that pre-dates new technology. It was the critical practice of textual analysis that first systematically fragmented narrative film. Textual analysis generated a tension between the coherent narrative "whole" and the desire, as it were, to capture the cinema in the process of its own coming into being. The segment received privileged attention; a fragment was extracted from the overall narrative structure of a film's horizontal and linear drive of narrative.

But in the celluloid era, textual analysis was extremely difficult to put into practice, and only the very fortunate had access

(generally limited) to 16 or 35mm flatbed editing tables. Annette Michelson has described the "heady delights of the editing table": "the sense of control, of repetition, acceleration, deceleration, arrest in freeze-frame, release, and reversal of movement is inseparable from the thrill of power."[6]

Returns

Both spectatorship, my longstanding theoretical point of engagement with cinema, and textual analysis, a key method of critical practice for my generation, have been radically transformed by new forms of film consumption. My concept of the voyeuristic spectator depended in the first instance on certain material conditions of cinema exhibition: darkness, the projector beam lighting up the screen, the procession of images that imposed their own rhythm on the spectator's attention. And, of course, the particular structure of spectacle the Hollywood studios refined so perfectly. In counter-distinction, I later tried to evolve an alternative spectator, who was driven by curiosity and the desire to decipher the screen. The curious spectator was, perhaps, an intellectual, informed by feminism and the avant-garde. The idea of curiosity as a drive to see, but also to know, however, still marked a utopian space in the cinema that might answer to the human mind's longstanding interest in puzzles and riddles. This spectator may be the ancestor of the one formed by new modes of consumption that open up the pleasures of the hidden cinema to anyone who cares to experiment with the equipment available.

I have, in the first instance, attempted to adapt Bellour's concept of the pensive spectator to evoke the thoughtful reflection on the film image now possible by seeing into the screen's images, stretching them into new dimensions of time and space. The pleasure in the fragment leads to the pleasure in the still itself. Here, the pensive spectator can confront the film's original moment of registration, revealed once the narrative's ornament has been stripped away. With the hybrid relation between the celluloid original and its new electronic carrier, there is time to reflect on time itself and on the presence of the past and on the then-ness of the photographic process. On the other hand, however, this spectator is also "fetishistic." The slowing down and stilling process opens up new areas of fascination especially with the human figure. Certain privileged moments can become fetishised moments for endless and obsessive repetition, while looks or gestures can suddenly acquire a further dimension of fascination once freed from their subordination to narrative. This new, freely accessible stillness, extracted from the moving image, is a product of the paradoxical relation between celluloid and new technology. It is primarily the historic cinema of celluloid that can blossom into new significance and beauty when its original stillness, its material existence in the photogramme, is revealed in this way. The cinema has always been a medium of revelation and, once again, there is a paradox here. The magic of cinema has been identified, through its history, with its ability to simulate movement. In very early film demonstrations, this element of revelation could be built into the

staging of the show. The projection might start with a stilled image, a projected photograph. Suddenly, the image would come to life and the magic of cinema would infuse the screen. Now, perhaps, the magical moment, perversely and paradoxically, comes with a reversal of direction: a new fascination comes into being when the moving image is stilled. The new, from this perspective, allows a fresh and unfamiliar insight into the old. Just as the early theorists of film celebrated the way that the camera could reveal more of the world than was perceptible to the naked eye, now the pensive spectator can discover more in the celluloid image than could be seen at twenty-four frames per second.

NOTES

1 Roland Barthes: *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill & Wang, 1993), 89.

2 Ibid., 117.

3 Raymond Bellour: "The Pensive Spectator," *Wide Angle* 9, no. 1 (1987): 6.

4 Ibid., 6–7.

5 Ibid., 10.

6 Annette Michelson: "The Kinetic Icon in the Work of Mourning: Prolegomena to the Analysis of a Textual System," *October*, no. 52 (Spring 1990), 22.

Christine van Assche

The State of Things

Contemporary art is used to transgressing and surpassing limits, whether material, corporeal, or conceptual. What cinema's excess or shortfall with respect to contemporary art means in reality is this: can it participate in this thought process, or is it somewhere else? By the same token one could ask: does it even belong to the field of art? Thus contemporary art questions cinema, forcing it to take a position.
—François Albéra[1]

Another Process of Artistic Creation

Recent years have seen the important development of audiovisual production as a process of artistic creation, giving rise to works that have been acknowledged and embraced by both the history and criticism of art and by museums, which now include such works in national and international collections and exhibitions.

Here in France, painters were the first to be attracted by cinema, a mode of expression linked to another domain—show business

and the entertainment spectacle. In English-speaking countries, by contrast, performance artists took advantage of film and video to record their ephemeral actions for the future before conceiving narratives specifically for these media. In the 1960s and 1970s, Marina Abramovic, Vito Acconci, Lygia Clark, Jochen Gerz, Robert Morris, Bruce Nauman, Gina Pane, and Robert Smithson were among the first visual artists to use film and video in their work. In the 1980s, visual artists were tempted by the fiction film and took on the risks of production and distribution outside the circuits conventionally labeled as "artistic." They had varying success. In commercial cinema theatres, we were able to see fiction films directed by Cindy Sherman, Roberto Longo, Julian Schnabel, and others. Their fantasy of cinema led them to experiment with a different artistic form and a mode of distribution far from the gallery and museum circuit to which they were accustomed.

It is worthwhile to recall that a fiction film is above all founded on a screenplay, a mode of composition, a language, a set of codes. When certain visual artists began to take up the fiction film in the 1960s and 1970s, they believed they could avoid the shift from one system of codes to another, and they engaged in a purely "pictorial" narration that fell short of any metaphorical reference. According to Pierre Huyghe, these artists were fascinated by an idea of the cinema without seeking any real knowledge of its system of codes. The aura around cinema in those years was strong enough to make them want to create their own films. These artists seemed to be interested in the medium's processes—in questions

of time, editing, and narration. Film became raw material, like paint, text, or photography.

Also in the 1960s and 1970s, another type of shift toward cinema was brilliantly carried out via literature. Filmmakers such as Jean-Luc Godard, Chris Marker, and Pier Paolo Pasolini, to name only a few, were fascinated by cinema but did not follow its classical narrative: they effected a transition from written language towards the language of the image. Because the montage of images is underwritten by a textual base and a set of meaningful codes, these filmmakers were able to succeed in the shift from one register to another, moved as they were by exceptional imagination and sensibility.

Marker made the film *La Jetée* in 1962 using a highly particular technique—a succession of photographic images rhythmically punctuated by text. Today, this film forms part of the register of the visual arts, much like the works of James Coleman. It is not a matter of a classical narration carried out according to the laws of the genre, nor even of an experimental film dealing with the characteristics of the medium.

Godard made *Histoire(s) du cinéma* from 1989 to 1996 as a hypertext in which the images, themselves coded, enter continually into resonance with the text at different levels of meaning. Language, both oral and written, is far from a limitation in his films. On the contrary, it serves as a springboard for the image, which enters into a tension with this initial language. The image is obviously far from being an illustration and yet cannot exist alone.

In the 1990s, working out of a concern to reactualise the fiction film, Matthew Barney began to make a series of films in an attempt to inscribe this mode of creation in the heart of the visual arts. Thus, in his films, a fantasy-scenario brings together shots of a pictorial order, as in paintings or *tableaux vivants*. These involve professional modes of filming, with actors, walk-ons, highly trained crews, costumes, and decors. Each film is accompanied by photographs and installations that present sets or elements of decor. Barney's films still partake of a prelinguistic symbolic order and do not integrate the codes of poststructuralist narration. Nonetheless, an interesting aesthetic material is developed in this intermediate space between the films, on the one hand, and the objects or installations that refer to the films, on the other.

Transition to Installation

The film or video installation, a spatial development of images and sounds on one or several screens, involves the spectator. It appeared when the model of writing as the basic structure of a work began to fade and to be replaced by spatial narrative—the activation of the spectator no longer within a written narrative, but within a three-dimensional volume. Thus, installation responds to a psychosocial demand; it gives the spectator an active role to play in a work in which he or she becomes one of the parameters.

This form of art, as Jean Fisher explains, "implied a move away from the object as a self-contained and pre-given reality, towards an art as a context in relation to which the spectator introjects

and reconstructs its own reality; that is, the work becomes itself a 'theater' in which the spectator is 'co-performer.' . . . The work sets up a kind of semipermeable 'membrane' and everything that overflows the frame of the image its mechanisms and production and interpretation (the spectator) contributes as much to its signifying powers as what appears naturally inherent to it: its content and point of 'origin' (the creator)."[2]

Vito Acconci and Thierry Kuntzel are poets and writers. Both discovered the image, film or video, at the moment they were leaving writing behind, or at least pushing it into the background. They conceived works that drew on structuralist thinking. Thus, it would seem that the spatialisation of the narrative, the physical and psychological involvement of the spectator, the practice of montage in space, are all developed along that line of thought. *Bodybuilding in the Great North-West* (1975–93) is one of Acconci's early installations. It brings several types of images into relation in space, against a background of spoken text that Acconci himself delivers by means of a videotape. The spectator circulates in, on, and through the images, which are associated in a somewhat random way, but are powerfully knitted together by the litany of the artist. The result is an incredible tension: "The mechanism of association is accompanied by the always singular construction of a mobile, unmappable place of the spectator. The representation is no longer the guarantee of a stabilised presence to the world; on the contrary, it implies an activity which dissolves any definition or a priori positioning of the subject."[3]

Marcel Broodthaers long ago accustomed us to associating fragments of discourse and three-dimensional spatial elements in the work, cycling through various modes of relations between environments and montages of objects and texts. He was one of the first artists to spatialise the narrative. Neither cinema, nor literature, can realise these types of relations to space. Only in the visual arts can they take place.

James Coleman is a precursor. Emerging from a literary tradition, educated in the Irish context, he elaborated all the paradigms of a reflection on narration and on the relation between image and text, from the late 1960s onward. On the basis of concrete poetry, not writing, he invented a process of successive images, the projection of slides in particular rhythms, which places cinematographic narration, along with photography, in a situation of abyssal self-reflection and offers the spectator a possibility for mental participation.

Bruce Nauman, a poet, sculptor, musician, and mathematician, naturally turned toward the spatial deployment of the work. In the 1970s, his closed-circuit video installations made use of three-dimensional spaces that involved the spectator physically and mentally. In the 1980s, he created installations that brought images, sounds, and texts into relation within specifically conceived volumes, deliberately generating a rhythm, a tension, a precise narrative structure close to a musical composition.

After the experiments of many other artists over the last thirty years, installation has developed certain parameters and

a characteristic vocabulary. For some ten years, we have been witnessing a real interest among visual artists for the cinema as a mode of thinking, often combined with other modes, such as music. Artists such as Eija-Liisa Ahtila, Doug Aiken, Pierre Bismuth, Stan Douglas, Douglas Gordon, Joachim Koester, Sharon Lockhart, Mark Lewis, and Gillian Wearing examine, inventory, deconstruct, shift, reinterpret, isolate, or stretch out the cinema and its constituent elements, including scenarios, dialogues, places, and characters.[4]

That which lies outside of the image, however, can be conceived as a more mental terrain and remains to be explored. The idea is to move through a text within which one can make choices, but constructing the spectator as an actor and interpreter has its limits. Nevertheless, there are reasons to continue exploring, and today the explorations involve different types of formats. A work can appear beneath the form of a book, a film, an advertisement, a magazine. It is not so much the object that is important; it is the object's movement, its vector, that tells the story. It is not so much the image and the immediate "off-screen" dimension of the story one is telling that counts, but its circulation: the story is told in the movement. These objects form part of a set, a chain, and are no longer fixed on one point. The displacement is carried out in different frameworks, each with a different status.

Just like visual artists, filmmakers have often been tempted by the museum or exhibition space, where they seek to develop narrations of another type, dispersals in space, alternative experiments,

or simply installations close to what film decors can be. Thus, in 1990, with *Zapping Zone (Proposals for an Imaginary Television)*, Marker proposed an alternative to broadcast television. Inside the museum, he set into motion his own universe, formed of associations between images and texts, free from all constraints and limits. He also rendered possible direct contact with the visitor—the partner whom he does not normally meet.

Far different was the trajectory of Godard's *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, installed without his consultation at Documenta X in Kassel in Dan Graham's *Interior Design Space for Showing Videos* (1986). These works could have existed naturally in the realm of the visual arts through their postmodern composition, hypertextual structure, and relations with other experiments by visual artists.

The interest for the dispersal of works in space was initially sparked by actors, dancers, and performance artists, such as Robert Morris and Graham, who explored the relations between spectator, space, and environment. *Two-Way Mirror Cylinder Inside Cube and Video Salon* (1989–91), conceived by Graham for the roof of the Dia Center for the Arts in New York, is the "culminating" work of this type. It demonstrates the diverse possibilities of relations between spectators and space in an atypical environment: the rooftops of New York.

In a paradoxical reversal of this movement, filmmakers are taking an increasing interest in the spatialisation of narrative within the fiction film. In Brian de Palma's film *Snake Eyes* (1998), for example, through the device of a screenplay calling for seven

cameras within a scene, the film set itself, the narration is mainly constructed around the characters' movements as they are filmed by one of the seven cameras, according to the principle of a supersubjective eye. This device recalls the work of artists such as Graham and Nauman, who use surveillance cameras in their installations.

The Process of Production

Andy Warhol enriched the possibilities of visual artists' experimentation with film by expanding the narrative field and by reconceiving the modes of production and distribution. After Warhol, every artist could make films without having mastery over the "tricks of the trade." Some artists who work with film choose to appropriate existing films or fragments of films—disturbing them, slowing them down, cutting them up, splicing them together differently—according to a method of mixing known as "sampling." This is the same method that many musicians use today. These artists deconstruct and reconstruct the fiction films that form part of our culture. Some, nevertheless, adopt more classical processes of filmmaking, such as scriptwriting, shooting, editing, and mixing.

During the recent past, the roles of production were interchangeable and reversible in the sense that more or less anyone could shoot and edit. Today, however, we see a need for work more specific to the profession of film or television. Artists put together crews consisting of a production director, a director of

photography, a camera operator, a sound engineer, and an editor and communicate with the crew in a specialized language. The artist is still responsible for the screenplay, but also for the crew, which he or she must inspire, direct, and guide. The responsibility for the work is shared, as in the process of creating a film. Indeed, the artist becomes involved in a different type of economy—the budgets required for the production of short films, which are much higher than those for the recording of performances, for example. This working process demands a long period of preparation: documentary research, screenplay writing, meetings, coordination with other specialised crews and the actors, editing, and mixing—not to mention the time spent on budgeting and continuously adapting to circumstances.

This working process is on the verge of changing considerably in the near future, however, thanks to the availability of new tools: the minicamera, Avid editing, and various computer programs, along with the possibilities offered by the networks. We have already been able to observe the new processes in Johan Grimonprez's *Dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y* (1995–97)—a single-channel videotape made from archival films and broadcasts that the artist appropriated, reedited, and remixed in alternation with original sequences. Such works are realised within a reasonable time thanks to the new technologies. We are clearly witnessing a mutation of the modes by which images are apprehended and rendered—modes close to those being used by musicians. Filmmakers no longer need a crew of specialists, technicians, producers, or distributors, for

we now have at our disposal a process of individualised creation within a reasonable economy.

The Process of Distribution

We have seen the emergence of different modes of distribution for these works: installations in museums and galleries; television broadcasts; screenings in cinema theatres. An installation is often considered a unique work, but it can also exist in numbered editions. A film, existing autonomously as such, can then be shown in a theatre or on television. For *Feature Film* (1998), based on the music of Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958), Douglas Gordon proposed a double version of the work: a looped video installation for museums and a film version for theatres. Gordon conceived two different cuts for these two contexts, respecting the film's original score and the continuity of the fiction.

Godard first presented *Histoire(s) du cinéma* at festivals, before broadcasting it on television and distributing it on videocassette. In this way, he exploited the entire chain of possibilities for the distribution of reproducible "multiples." These works fully retain their status as artworks: multiplication in no way modifies their essence. Only their distribution, linked to the evolution of habits of consumption, changes. *Histoire(s) du cinéma* has its place alongside postconceptual works in a museum, as well as in a home library, among films, books, or the CDs of postmodern musicians.

Similarly, Grimonprez kept the context of distribution in mind when he conceived *Dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y* for broad distribution: it

was available for consultation in museums or other public spaces, as well as on a website. David Lynch created a television series around the film *Twin Peaks* (1990), and both were distributed on videocassettes; he also published the diary of the heroine, Laura Palmer, for sale in bookstores. And with *The Third Memory* (1999), Pierre Huyghe marked a new phase in the shift to the installation that offers fresh inspiration for research and experimentation with other modes of distribution.

NOTES

1 FRANÇOIS ALBÉRA: *Art Press*, special cinema issue, 1993.

2 JEAN FISHER: *James Coleman*, exh. cat. (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1996).

3 JEAN-CHRISTOPHE ROYOUX: "Le démon de l'analogie: enquête sur les formes d'exposition," seminar project, Paris, 1993 (unpublished).

4 All these artists are not to be classed within the same movement or school, as is done too often. Rather, one should try to establish the differences and nuances between the intentions, aesthetics, and ways of thinking that characterise their works.

Bill Horrigan and Sarah Rogers

An Interview With John Waters

EDITOR'S NOTE: The exhibition *When Worlds Collide* at the Centre for Contemporary Arts, Glasgow (1998) presented a number of John Waters's photographs, including *Zapruder* (1995). *Zapruder* consists of twenty-four black-and-white "stills" from his film *Eat Your Makeup* (1966) in which Divine imagines himself as Jackie Kennedy on November 22, 1963, when President John F. Kennedy was assassinated as his motorcade proceeded through downtown Dallas. In Waters's reenactment suburban Baltimore was substituted for Dallas. Waters's reconstruction highlights the way in which film and television images are absorbed in our minds and the media produces a shared public memory of events and stories. Moreover, his attempt to reenact the assassination acknowledges this deep impact on the popular psyche and explores the relationship of documentary to fictional filmmaking. The series of "stills" from the film that Waters made thirty-two years later expands this inquiry.

Extracted and recombined from the film itself, *Zapruder's* "stills" are collaged, "redirected," to produce a series of photographs that encourage viewers "to re-edit [the] movie in their mind." In an interview with Colin de Land, director of American Fine Arts in New York, Waters commented on whether he studied the original Zapruder film and whether his reenactment was an attempt to replicate the original exactly: "I knew it already; the image of Jackie's pink suit and pillbox

hat was so strong in my mind, especially right after the assassination. Our film is in black-and-white, but Divine's outfit really was pink. We had to film out in the street—I mean, I lived at home with my parents and my parents' neighbors would look out and say, 'What the hell is that on a Sunday morning?' and see the Kennedy assassination cavalcade coming down this suburban street. The picture of Divine crawling over the back of that blood-covered car really baited people at that time. We showed the movie then, and people were really horrified, but it didn't work; the movie wasn't good enough to really catch on because it was so artlessly filmed. But now, seeing it re-photographed twenty years later, it inadvertently takes on the quality of the real, amateur Zapruder film."

The following interview, conducted by Bill Horrigan, Curator of Media Arts, and Sarah Rogers, former Director of Exhibitions, at the Wexner Center for the Arts, Ohio State University, Columbus, is an edited version of a conversation that took place on the occasion of the Wexner's exhibition *John Waters: Photographs*, 7 July–22 August 1999.

HORRIGAN

I believe you started showing your photos in 1992.

WATERS

I started doing the photos in 1992, but I didn't tell anyone about them for about two years. I was obsessed because I was trying to create unit photography that wasn't on each

movie—"stills" that I wanted to keep to remember my favourite movies the way I wanted to remember them, even if that's not what the director had in mind. So, it really started with one of my own movies. There was a shot from *Multiple Maniacs*, where Divine has just been raped by a transsexual. The second before the Infant of Prague appears to her in a miracle, to me, is probably the most . . .—truly the word *divine* and what it meant in Catholic school: the one moment of surreal bliss that Divine had in that movie. And, many years later, I realised that there was no still of that, and I thought, "How can I do this?" I never digitally freeze images; I take them like an excited fan. Sometimes I even miss, and you can see part of the TV in the shot. And, as we all know, mistakes are what contemporary art is about. So, that's how it started. And then I wanted to do *Cliff Notes* of movies (really high concept). Sometimes in the movie, there was only one thing that I liked; the rest didn't matter. Or credits, the way I think the people should have been credited, out of order and in different order. Or maybe only the dress designer, not the director, because the dresses were better than the direction. So, I'm trying to take everybody else's movies, and, like all control freaks that directors are, make them my own.

HORRIGAN

And so it's really coming from the aesthetic of a fan?

WATERS

It's coming from a fan, and a unit photographer. And also a

publicity person. And more than anything, an editor. Because that's what they are about: editing.

HORRIGAN

You also have an interest in the art world and following what's going on in galleries.

WATERS

I did in the sixties, and then I got away from it for a while, and then again in the nineties I started going to the galleries. I'll take you "arting" with me in New York, but you have to go on my route, which is thirty galleries in the exact order in which I have them written down. And I can do them in a day. I don't want to go to one other one that's not on my list. You can't come with me unless you want to do it my way. And I go every two weeks, so I see most everything in New York. That is how I relax. To me, that's the one thing where I get away from the movie world, and I collect what I can afford. I really liked this one gallery, American Fine Arts. The dealer, Colin de Land, said to me, "Do you paint?" "Well, no, but I have these little pictures." "What do you mean?" So he came down, and I had this whole show already, but I hadn't shown them to anyone, except my assistant. And so he gave me a show. And that's kind of how it started.

HORRIGAN

So if Colin hadn't done that, do you think you would have shown the work?

WATERS

I don't know. Eventually I think I would have, because I was

really getting into it. And I had enough for one show. But then he said yes, and I did a lot more work. I didn't show some of it. It's just like making a movie: you have to do way more work than what you really show. And it's in development. I have some works that are just certain things, and then they turn into something else. It's like making a movie, but, as I said in my book about it, no one tells you to dumb it up, like they do in movies. And the art world is so hilarious to me, because it's the exact opposite of the film world, where you have to play in Peoria. In the art world, if it plays in Peoria, it stinks.

HORRIGAN

Have you shown your artwork in Peoria?

WATERS

No, but at the end of *Pink Flamingos*, they go to Boise to be the filthiest people alive. My movies still do well in Boise. The distributor of *Pecker* said to me, "I don't know why the Boise gross was really high." And I said, "I know why." It's because there are still people there who remember that I said that, and they come to see all my movies. He said, "I don't know why, in Boise, we always do terribly, but *Pecker* did well." That is why.

HORRIGAN

I know you're in preproduction on a new feature, and that's a massive undertaking. At the same time, you have five shows up now. Do you find it hard to keep these kinds of separate things distinct in your head?

WATERS

From the beginning, I have kept the photo career and the movie career very separate. Here at the Wexner Center is the only time I've done them together. In Europe, it doesn't matter. I think it does matter here. I don't find it hard to keep them separate. I still have a whole "in development" drawer for my art ideas, and one for my movie ideas. I have a studio; I go there. I don't ever think about my movies in there. I go there, and no one knows that phone number. So I can look through all my little notes and start playing around, and I have stuff from the last one, and new ideas. It's all just about ideas, really. Anyone can take pictures off the TV screen. Although it's impossible to get the same photograph again. Because it's chance. And its twenty-four frames a second, and I don't like to use a tripod. Sometimes I do, but it's better if I just make it a little arty, accidentally, which means bad.

HORRIGAN

"Jack Pierson" blurry?

WATERS

Well, I like his work, but I don't try to do it purposely blurry. Certainly, in contemporary art, the rules are about breaking the rules, about being out of focus, badly framed, all that. In all my work, I do that. It was at first like the beginning of my films—artless. But my worst films technically do the best in my art world photographs. Pictures from *Serial Mom* don't work. They only work from the technically bad movies I made

a long time ago. Because they're taken in a completely different context. And they look artier, in the right kind of way.

HORRIGAN

You don't show some of your earlier films anymore, is that right?

WATERS

I never show them. You're talking about *Hag in a Black Leather Jacket*, *Roman Candles*, and *Eat Your Makeup*. *Hag in a Black Leather Jacket* is black and white 8mm—not even Super 8—with synchronised tapes, music on an old-fashioned reel-to-reel tape recorder. Same with *Roman Candle*—with tape splices, there's not even a print. I did put it on video once. It's in my house. As soon as it goes out of my house, it would be over. *Eat Your Makeup* was 16mm, but the silent speed—sixteen frames a second. Why, I don't know—because I didn't know what I was doing. And, with closely synchronised music, for forty minutes on a tape. So I always have to stop the film, and go like that [stop and start gesture]. So it is almost impossible to watch them.

HORRIGAN

But isn't there an interest in having them seen?

WATERS

There might be an interest in others, but there's not a big interest for me in showing them, because they're not very good. Certainly *Eat Your Makeup*. I didn't know about editing at that time. When I made my first movie, I thought

that what came out of the camera was the movie. I didn't know you were supposed to edit it. You see, I really learned from doing it. I got thrown out of every school. And even if I had not been thrown out of film school, they would have never allowed me to make those kinds of movies. Today, you could make a snuff film and get an "A." Then, you would fail. You were not allowed. That was wrong; you could not do that. Things are so different now. I saw *American Pie* last night, a big Hollywood teenage movie, where the lead character drinks a glass of beer with sperm. And another character has sex with a pie. I think this is the kind of movie that the Hays Office is rolling around in its grave about. I'm not promoting this movie, except showing how things have so radically changed in the thirty years since I began.

HORRIGAN

It's funny, during some of the Monica Lewinsky editorial commentary, people would talk about how the bad taste of reality has reached and surpassed the standard you had set.

WATERS

Somebody will make a porno movie about Monica Lewinsky. *Oval Orifice* is what I would call it! Still, it isn't so shocking anymore. I was glad when that happened, when I heard my mother talk about oral sex. I never heard my mother talk about that before. Ever. This made every household in America talking about blow jobs. Something good came of it.

HORRIGAN

Does that put any pressure on you?

WATERS

No. It made my life easier in a lot of ways. I told Cameron Diaz when we met, "You've made my life a lot easier." Because now when I pitch a movie, and I say there's teabagging, they don't say, "You can't have that." They say, "Good. Put more of that stuff in." So it hasn't hurt me. My competition is my past—that's the main thing I will always have to compete with for the rest of my life. I know that, but that's the hardest. I actually get good reviews because of *There's Something About Mary*. In articles about *There's Something About Mary* and *American Pie* and *South Park*, I get mentioned favorably, which is funny to me that somehow I am always dragged in it, in the right kind of way, though. And I still think my movies are filthier than any of them, like *Pink Flamingos*, because it was for real. And I've said this before, and it's true, because no matter what they do, it's fake. So my crown of filth is firmly in place.

HORRIGAN

Have you ever thought about doing an installation?

WATERS

Yes, I have thought about doing an installation. I have a couple in my mind that I'm going to do someday. I don't want to reveal them, but yes.

ROGERS

It was interesting, when you were talking about the photographs,

and your relationship to them as an editor, because when I first looked at them, they made me think about Robert Frank and his "The Americans" series. And yours is this other side of "The Americans." In that series, the body of work changes depending on how you reorder and edit it. Is that something you have thought about?

WATERS

I think you read them left to right. They're like storyboards. That was what I was trying to do—a joke on storyboards, something I rarely do. I do them in action sequences. But generally to have a storyboard, a souvenir of some kind of a movie that you liked, even if it's for totally the wrong reasons. I love every movie I've ever done a piece about. But none of them are hits. They are always a little bit off, or not that star's most renowned movie. Or mostly what I like to do is take three different movies and put them together. Images in a new narrative that's a Waters movie. There's one where Elizabeth Taylor gets a facelift, and she turns into me. It's called *Facelift*. Because the scars on her face in the movie begin to look like my mustache, so I found all these closeups of my mustache from TV shows, and her scars from the movie, and put them together. And sometimes they go around the room. I think that's like an epic. Some of them are short subjects. Some of the frames are overblown, some of them are too long, which the Zapruder one was—practically every second of it. And it went all the way around the room; it was a corner piece. So basically they are different kinds of film stories.

Some of them are very arty. But my guilty pleasure is art films, anyway. We hardly even have them anymore. There's no such thing as that anymore.

HORRIGAN

It's funny because of how deeply premised most of them are on a certain notion of really basic American pop culture. Do you feel that they are read differently in Europe? Do people get the references?

WATERS

The photographs? No. But I think they get them very well here. Most of the reviews I received understood them completely. It was very flattering to me. Mostly artists and dealers bought them, which is always the best. That's when you really feel good. I think my whole career, no matter what element of it, has been very understood in America. I don't feel misunderstood. The press has been pretty good to me over the years. I don't take it seriously. I use the press, they use me. I'm a participant. I get 125 magazines a month. I'm a media junkie. So I might as well play the game with it, and if you can have fun with it, it's cheaper than advertising.

HORRIGAN

But it did occur to me when I was reading the gallery guide to the Brussels show. It was a very appreciative text, but it was very theoretical and very Euro.

WATERS

I love art talk anyway. It makes me laugh. Like serious art talk,

when they're saying some of these things. It's hilarious to me. Because, first of all, it really pisses off regular people who can't understand it. And it is a vocabulary that you have to learn. But I like even the most high-falutin' serious talk, where you think, "Oh my God" when you read it. I love that. But you know, I like the art world, because sometimes it shocks me. And a lot of times people don't think it's funny. *Witty*, not funny like "ha ha ha," but certainly in an amusing way. The kind of art I like is always the type that *60 Minutes* did that whole show about—the "worst" contemporary art. That's my favourite art. I love that. They're making fun of it. That's my favourite kind, the kind that at first makes me a little mad. My father comes to my house and looks at the work I buy and says, "You bought that? They saw you comin', boy." And my cleaning lady's the best. She said to me, "Did you buy that?" I said yes. She said, "Well, you'd better write it down because if you die, they'll throw it out." It's a beautiful Richard Tuttle piece. And she just didn't get it, which I get. I probably didn't get it either the very first time I saw it. But that's the point. So, the kind of artwork I like is the same kind of films I like, usually: work that makes you see something in a different way, and you don't know quite how to react, at first.

HORRIGAN

What contemporary photographers do you like?

WATERS

I like Nan Goldin and Jack Pierson, and all the ones that

everybody thought *Pecker* was about. But it wasn't. Really *Pecker* was about Diane Arbus, because I always wondered, "Does that kid with the hand grenade, does he have that picture hanging in his house today at fifty years old?" No one's ever done an article about "Find the People in Contemporary Photography Who Are Subject Matter" and see what they think of it and where they are today. How do they feel when they read in Sotheby's that the work sells for $60,000? Are they happy? Are they mad? That is what *Pecker* is about, really. So, I've never read an article like that. I've seen a movie kind of like that called *Beefcake*. It's really good. They find all the old soft-core porno pinup boys and interview them. And it's amazing because it's fifty years later. How they look and how they look back on it is very touching.

HORRIGAN

I don't know if it is fiction or nonfiction, but there's a story about the famous picture of the little boy in the Warsaw Ghetto. It's about tracing that boy.

WATERS

There is also the photograph of the kiss after World War II—that famous shot, which turned out to be fake. It was set up, the whole thing, which just made people insane. All these years, they thought it was this perfect catching of the spirit of the end of the war. But it was two models, and it was not completely spontaneous.

HORRIGAN

But, the art world, in general, loved *Pecker*, right?

WATERS

Well, I don't want to say "loved." They were very supportive of it, yes. They were not angry about it. Most of the people I know say, "Well, you knew what you were talking about." And I do like the art world, so I'm part of it at least in that way. I was making fun of something I love, which is what I usually do in movies. I think if you make fun of something you hate, the movie is usually not much fun to watch. It's too mean-spirited, without ever being funny. Not always. I think *Happiness* was a great movie. It was the feel-bad comedy of the decade.

HORRIGAN

A lot of critical commentary makes the comparison, which I see in an obvious way, but I don't think it's interesting or profoundly true, comparing you to Warhol and the Factory aesthetic.

WATERS

Well, certainly there were influences, God knows. Andy was so brilliant to put homosexuality and drugs together for the first time, which was a really good idea! Like shooting *Sleep* for six hours. They were press stunts really, but good ones. Brilliant ones. So I liked his work very much. And he certainly influenced me in making your friends stars, very much so. The difference was that I wrote all of mine, and they were ad-libbed a lot. I think Paul Morrissey came up with a lot of the ideas, and I liked those movies very much. And Andy was very helpful to me. He took Fellini to see *Pink Flamingos*. He put Divine on the cover of *Interview*. He was always supportive of me.

HORRIGAN

But in terms of the photo work?

WATERS

Oh, the photo work, no. To me, the photo work, if anybody were an influence, it would be Richard Prince, who rephotographed other photographs. That would really be the one you could certainly say was an influence, and I'm certainly a fan of his.

An Interview with Johan Grimonprez

Beware! In playing the phantom, you become one

EDITOR'S NOTE: This text consists of edited extracts from an interview with Johan Grimonprez, Pierre Bal-Blanc, and Mathieu Marguerin, originally published in French in *Blocnotes* (Paris), no. 15 (Summer 1998).[1] The interview takes *Beware! In playing the phantom, you become one* (1995–97)—a mobile video library conceived by Grimonprez and Herman Asselberghs—and *Dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y* (1995–97)—a film by Grimonprez—as the starting point for a discussion of how the media shapes culture, history, and the perceptions of reality.

Beware! was initially compiled for the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, and Documenta X, Kassel, in 1997. It provided visitors with a history of television in a space where a critical distance to mainstream media could be established: the library as living room as site of resistance. Since its inception, the project has been modified to suit different occasions and contexts—not only museums and galleries, but homes (a house on the former east-west border in Berlin, Büro Friedrich), businesses (a hotel, the Hôtel du Rhône, Geneva), and institutions (a prison, Tegelprison, Germany).

Dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y intercuts media footage of aeroplane hijackings, advertising blips, science fiction clips, home video, and other found footage, capturing moments of aeroplane hijacking throughout the twentieth century. The fictional narrative soundtrack, inspired by Don DeLillo's novels *White Noise* (1985) and

Mao II (1991) highlights the role of the spectacular in the culture of catastrophe. The work critiques media spectacle, the obsession with disaster, as it attempts to investigate how the media shapes public opinion and explores the impact of catastrophic imagery on the viewer.

Is Dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y *intended as a demonstration of a way of appropriating and linking sources on the basis of an arbitrarily chosen subject—hijacking—or did the subject come first?*

There are several entries into the project. The theme of hijacking planes, for example, can be read as a metaphor for the "hijacking" of images out of their original contexts.[2] It is an aesthetic strategy on which the film is based, as well as an iconoclastic pleasure accessible to the viewer—the kind of pleasure one experiences by reading mainstream media against the grain, giving it one's personal, often critical, spin. On the one hand, there are images I "hijack" to arouse debate. On the other, there are the events themselves. I specify the places and dates, but, like CNN, I change the context where the narration is transformed into soap opera or where advertisements are to be inserted. This shows the complicity between history and television in terms of a specific timeline: the evolution of the way in which hijackings have been represented. That's why I started the film with the first live televised hijacking in July 1970. Finally, there

are two levels of commentary on the images: a fictional narration based on extracts from Don DeLillo's novels *White Noise* and *Mao II* and a more critical personal commentary.

But the film is not just compiled from archival footage. I filmed some sequences with my camcorder—intimate scenes, rooms where I've lived, my travel experiences. The point of departure was a personal story, the idea of saying goodbye, which I confronted within a broader political frame. The theme of hijacking is a metaphor that allows me to talk about something else. *Dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y* is, in fact, an analysis of plane hijackings and terrorism, but there is also the underlying theme of home, of belonging.

When Leila Khaled renames the plane she has just hijacked the "Independent State of Palestine," she is symbolically claiming a home for an entire people. This is also the recurrent theme in *The Wizard of Oz*, where the tornado carries Dorothy's house over the rainbow. Khaled stated in an interview that because there was no Palestinian territory, war had to be fought in a plane; the plane is claimed as home, in a state of nowhere. Hence, the recurring image of the flying house, appropriated from *The Wizard of Oz*. The tornado that carries Dorothy's house over the rainbow into the land of Oz parallels the hijacking of a plane across a violent border towards a political utopia. In the video library at Büro Friedrich in Berlin, I developed the same theme differently.

Both Khaled's act of naming and Dorothy's flying house illustrate the transgression across a violent border into the land of utopia. The home, the meeting place of the family, is totally absorbed, one

could even say "hijacked"—by the television set, which has become a permanent member of the family. Catastrophe culture has taken the home over the rainbow. In 1939, *The Wizard of Oz* was made as a demonstration of the first film in technicolor; that same year, the first television antenna was placed on top of the Empire State Building. It is this intimate relationship with television that I wish to investigate. As far as I am concerned, I assimilated these images, and they belong to me as if I had filmed them. This kind of schizophrenia is within every viewer caught between a critical approach towards the catastrophic image that can remove us from this mindset, on the one hand, and its seduction, on the other. As I wanted to demonstrate with the video library, we are always on the inside and on the outside. There is no distance in the way in which we look at images. This is how memory functions.

Some of the images in Dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y *are among the most spectacular we have ever seen on television. The crash of an Air France Airbus during a demonstration flight in 1988, for example, is part of our visual repertory. You remind us that there are a number of ways of looking at the facts.*

Indeed, these images form part of a common perspective, but also belong to us individually. In this relationship between the individual and the image, we must also take account of television's changing appearance: the speeding up of the flow of images, the shift from film to video in the 1970s, and later the arrival of

news-around-the-clock, drop-in-style, on CNN. Our relationship with history and reality has consequently changed, and also our relationship with death and its representation.

With *Dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y* it was important to explore the phenomena of identification and seduction, to encourage the viewer to adopt a critical distance, while at the same time involving him and incorporating his own voyeurism. A voyeurism of voyeurism. The desire we have for the ultimate disaster is one aspect of our relationship with death. In this relationship, the media have become key players, totally exacerbating the terrorist spectacle. The final sequence of the film demonstrates television's complicity with death. A reporter pushes a microphone into the face of a hostage-taker in Leningrad. The man has been shot in the stomach, cannot answer the reporter's question, and dies on the spot. At the end, the media is left with only itself: it is a "post-cynical" statement.

Your way of hijacking images is virtually a fiction, linking such protagonists as Fidel Castro, Bill Clinton, Leila Khaled, just like the media manipulates reality.

Television and cinema exchange aesthetic strategies. The news has taken over the codes used by the fiction film, just as Hollywood has appropriated jumping images and trembling cameras to show an earthquake or military attack to produce a realistic effect. CNN and the other channels now use music to dramatise their subjects, and the editing of television news is based on this fictionalisation.

It is no coincidence that both CNN (1980) and MTV (1981) were both launched at the beginning of the 1980s. Conversely, dramatic events we experience in real life lose credibility because there is no violin or dramatic angle to highlight the event. Or the opposite occurs: real events seem to resemble Hollywood.

Does the title Dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y *illustrate an invitation to rewrite and reinterpret history?*

We are increasingly involved in a game of viewing history in real terms: "push-button" history. Maybe one day we'll be able to order a chapter of history and choose a different ending, interactive Web and CD–ROM–style. In the film *Wag the Dog* (1998), for example, fiction anticipates real events in the story of a president who invents a war to distract media attention from his private life. Hollywood was faster than life. Saddam Hussein took it a step farther and had parts of *Wag the Dog* broadcast on Iraqi national television.

My film mirrors this strategy. It also reflects the ideology of zapping, which can be an extreme form of poetry, going much further than collage. The way in which images were spliced together during the Gulf War was a huge source of inspiration: war cut with strawberry ice cream turned television into a surreal shopping zone. It was a real show, with images of death being served up with ketchup. How can images of death be interspersed with advertisements? Only the laugh tracks and the applause are

missing. Sometimes I don't even know if we are still in the middle of the commercial break or whether the film has started. Soon we'll mistake reality for a commercial break.

CNN has turned news into a commodity. In my film, there is the image of a man being pushed out of an IranAir plane on the runway at Larnaca, Cyprus, and then the words "INSERT COMMERCIAL HERE" suddenly appear on a black screen. I took this sequence as it stood. It is a breakdown in meaning, like something Brecht might have produced. It reflects the combination of two traditions: on the one hand, the fictionalisation and the dramatisation of history, as in Sergei Eisenstein, and on the other, the presentation of the context of how the image is constructed through showing, for example, the presence of the camera in the image, as in Dziga Vertov.

Is there a link between the figure of the terrorist and that of the artist, insofar as both represent a commitment to defending ideas?

I do not wish to disregard the meaning of terrorism in political terms. In saying that "What terrorists gain novelists lose," DeLillo compares the position of the terrorist in public life to that of the writer. DeLillo is suggesting this is particularly so because terrorists know how to manipulate the media. Their actions are provocations, but must be presented in a contextual way, not abstractly. Terrorism in Palestine and terrorism among extreme right-wing groups in the United States do not have the same meaning.

At certain moments, you seem to take a definite stance on political, social, and cultural differences, which make the West clash head-on with peoples elsewhere.

Yes, but the word *terrorist* has become devoid of meaning in its relationship with the media. It has been appropriated by the global power game. There was an enormous amount of information on the death of one American in Beirut on a TWA flight in June 1986, but silence on the Reagan administration's actions in Central America, where thousands of people were killed. Political power has largely taken over the spectacle of terrorism, and the spectacle is used to disguise the hypocrisy and the big shit underneath.

The game is played in both directions. The terrorists use it to capture media attention and become visible.

At the start, terrorism had names and faces: Ulrike Meinhof, Leila Khaled, Kozo Okamoto, Mouna Abdel Maid. They made primetime in the mass media. Then we moved on from plane hijackings to anonymous bombs in suitcases, which were not claimed by anyone. The big political powers appropriated these attacks to propagate their causes. It is becoming more and more of a media game in which anyone can be involved. The image of the terrorist is replaced by the flow of crowds. DeLillo wonders about the necessity of writing and the fate of the individual at a time when history has been swallowed up by disaster culture. For instance, look at the honeymooners, who, by chance, filmed a hijacked Boeing 767 crashing into the sea off the coast of Comoros in 1996.

They immediately appeared on CNN. The spectator has become the hero, and political issues are simply reduced to explanations about how to operate a camcorder. Nowadays, with the camcorder revolution, viewers can record their own little catastrophes and be part of the media game. The protagonists are no longer the terrorists, but the viewers, or even the image itself. The relationship with history is cancelled in favour of the image. Paul Virilio wrote that each new technology invents its own disaster. With the emergence of television, a new relationship to death and disaster has been invented. In the Gulf War, the distance between the event and the camera, mounted on top of a missile, seemed as close to death as it could be. This spectacle replaced critical distance and obscured the fact that the war was launched to sell the technology of surgical war and to boost the American dollar. What the media is selling is history itself.

NOTES

1 The text was translated into English and published in *We Must Be Over the Rainbow!*, exh. cat. (Santiago de Compostela: C.G.A.C., 1998).

2 "Hijacking" in the sense of "detouring." In French, the word *détournement* refers literally to the hijacking of a plane, but also to the Situationist strategy of intervening in mainstream imagery—by means of *détournement*.

Chrissie Iles

Issues in the New Cinematic Aesthetic in Video

Most of the historically important functions of the human eye are being supplanted by practices in which visual images no longer have any reference to the position of an observer in a "real," optically perceived world. If these images can be said to refer to anything, it is to millions of bits of electronic mathematical data. Increasingly, visuality will be situated on a cybernetic and electromagnetic terrain where abstract visual and linguistic elements coincide and are consumed, circulated, and exchanged globally.
—Jonathan Crary[1]

The transformation by new technology of our familiar experiences of the visual into the cybernetic terrain described by Crary, and predicted in the 1960s by Marshall McLuhan, has triggered an unprecedented sea change in video installation. First of all, a crossover, or even merging, has taken place between the languages of video and film. This is, in part, a result of the widespread use of video projection, which has liberated the video image from the

spatial restrictions of the monitor and magnified it hundreds of times, creating a movie-sized image that relates not to the object, but to the surrounding architectural space. This physical shift has, in turn, detached the video image from its associations with the "democratic," everyday, documentary/dramatic narrative language of television.

There is an inherent dichotomy contained within this situation. In spite of this independence from television, the spatial inclusiveness of the new cinematic video installation derives specifically from the integrating properties of the new electronic media, including television, as well as the Internet, which has overtaken television as the uniting global tool, rather than from the more old-fashioned medium of film.

And yet, I would argue that many younger artists, such as Douglas Gordon, Diana Thater, Sadie Benning, Stan Douglas, and others, have turned to the familiar, reassuring language of the older moving image technology of Hollywood film to make the rapidly disappearing, obsolescent values it represents more visible again. They have done so as a reaction to the traumatic effect of the sweeping power with which new technology has transformed our social and cultural environment into an all-embracing, interconnected, cybernetic force-field.

The cinematic aesthetic in much current video installation is a hybrid of old and new technology. The relationship of the video image to physical space has changed. The small electronic image/s, in often awkward dialogue with monitors and other

sculptural objects by which they were contained, have been replaced by large-scale two-dimensional images that position the viewer in a direct dialogue with architectural space. This, paradoxically, returns the viewer to the "Cyclops" gaze of television. The multiscreen clusters of monitors, frequently in stacks, blocks, or rows, or the often complex constructions that characterised sculptural video installations during the 1980s, took the eye away from the mesmerising pull of the single image. The body moved around a more classical Euclidian space, experiencing recognisable boundaries between physical objects, the interiority of the electronic images, and the architectural surroundings, often articulated in theatrically constructed environments.

The new cinematic form of video installation envelops the viewer in a more inclusive sensory experience that recalls both the multiscreen expanded cinema works of artists like Paul Sharits and Tony Conrad, and the perceptual experiments of Peter Campus and Dan Graham. A major shift has taken place, away from the object and towards a more internal, psychological experience, in which space is no longer tangible and theatrical, but illusory and filmic.

This new aesthetic was first developed in the instant feedback, performative, perceptual experiments with the camera by artists such as Campus, Graham, and also Bruce Nauman, David Hall, Les Levine, Frank Gillette, and Ira Schneider, which formed the content of much late 1960s and early 1970s video. Campus's use of projection was especially relevant to the current two-dimensional

aesthetic. His work was to have an important influence on Viola's own later use of projection.

Campus presented the viewer with his/her own ghostly, life-size, unframed image, recorded on a closed-circuit camera and projected onto a large screen in a darkened room, in an enveloping self-confrontation involving both a psychological, as well as a physical, space. The release of the video image from the monitor began to dissolve the space between the viewer and technology. In the resulting heightening of sensory participation, the viewer became an active constituent of the work; indeed, without the viewer, the work would not exist.

This level of involvement was possible because of what McLuhan has described as television's and video's tactile power. McLuhan argued that, unlike film and photography, television and video are not primarily visual media, but an extension of touch rather than of sight.[2] Since the video image is low definition and does not give detailed information of objects, but a diffused outline through an electronic mosaic of horizontal lines and dots, the viewer fills in the spaces and completes the picture, which induces a more intense involvement with the screen. This tactility, or extension of our nervous systems, results in a kind of osmosis—what McLuhan describes as a tattooing of the technology's message directly onto our skin. If all media can be argued to be an extension of our physical and psychic selves, electronic media create the most all-embracing effect, a kind of total field awareness, or simultaneity.

The possibility of a reversed fusion, of the body onto technology rather than vice versa, was achieved in Hall's *Vidicon Inscriptions* (1975), a radical experiment in video in which the viewer's image becomes imprinted onto the fabric of the video monitor. Nam June Paik had already broken through the membrane between the monitor and the outside world in works such as *Magnet TV* (1965), in which he distorted the television image by applying a strong magnet to the monitor.

Hall took this movement a stage further in *Vidicon Inscriptions* by exposing the monitor's vidicon tube to a strong light, triggered by the viewer's approach to the monitor along a corridor. Filmed by a closed-circuit camera, in a process almost like flash photography, the viewer triggered a light to flash, causing her image to be burned onto the vidicon tube and to appear on the screen as a ghostly static image, layered over images of previous viewers. This fusion of the viewer's image with the technology collapsed the space between viewer and image. Such encounters had also been previously explored in physical terms by artists such as Campus, for instance, in *Interface* (1972).

Vidicon Inscriptions is one of the earliest demonstrations of the profound intrusiveness of the camera, and of the gradual interpenetration of technology and the human body and psyche. The results of this penetration are depicted in Tony Oursler's work, the central concern of which is the violence, sexual disturbance, and general psychological trauma visited by the individual's inescapable envelopment by mass media and technology. In Oursler's

installations, the image has become separated from the monitor or screen. The monitor has disappeared, and the body, symbolised by rag dolls, becomes the screen onto which action is projected. The video projector is made visible, positioned close up to the body. It operates, as Silvia Eibelmayer has remarked, as a sinister, intruding presence, an anthropomorphic aggressor "at [which] the dummies scream back . . . in fright . . . and . . . impotent anger." The projector's relentless stare also evokes a filmic metaphor stretching back as far as the *Kino-glaz* of Dziga Vertov: the lens as all-seeing eye. Once understood primarily in religious terms as a spiritual presence, the omnipotent authority of the eye is translated here into an invisible electronic presence that saturates both our body and soul, with disastrous consequences.

If the projection of video images onto objects separated the physical object from the source of projection, in Oursler's *Organ Play* (1994), technology has apparently fused with the body completely. The organ in the jar speaks words projected by the video projector, recalling McLuhan's remark that man's relationship with electronic technology is total and inclusive: "Man is beginning to wear his brains outside his skull and his nerves outside his skin; new technology breeds new man. . . . Man is being transformed into technology."[3] The boundary between the physical object and the projected image has disappeared.

The sculptural depiction of the body using groups of monitors placed in anthropomorphic stacks or clusters seems, by comparison, old-fashionedly concerned with the body's physical

presence. In two classic examples, Marina Abramovic's *Cleaning the Mirror* (1995) and Gary Hill's *Inasmuch as it is always already taking place* (1990), the bodies seem not so much to be fused with technology, as to be contained by it. Their fragmentation in both works is formal, recalling both the erotic montages of Surrealism and the taxonomic seriality of nineteenth-century photography, including the newly discovered X-ray, through which the body's internal substance and structure could be observed. Yet, our eye is still called upon to complete the picture suggested by the electronic fragments. Stuart Marshall has argued that the separation of different parts of the body into video fragments contained within a larger formal physical structure refers not only to classical Freudian theory, but also to the Lacanian cycle of anxiety and relief as depicted in the Victorian music hall act of sawing the lady in half, only later to discover her intact after all.

The body appears intact and without physical frame or substance in both Hill's *Tall Ships* (1992) and Viola's *The Crossing* (1996). The format of the darkened corridor in *Tall Ships* evokes Nauman's early corridor structures. At the same time, its darkness moves the viewer into a different kind of physical and psychological orientation in space, similar to that experienced in Viola's installation *Tiny Deaths* (1993). The interactivity of the images in the space of *Tall Ships* suggests an inclusive, sensory viewer participation of a truly McLuhanesque kind, whilst at the same time revealing the impossibility of real fusion with the Other.

Artists such as Hill, Viola, Thater, and Gordon have all merged real-time video psychology with the dreamlike fantasy psychology of film to create a new cinematic experience of the projected image in space. Viola's shift to a less sculptural use of space can be seen in *The Greeting* (1995), and other recent works, in which the monitor has disappeared completely and images appear in large-scale projections, or projected onto objects. In Viola's most recent work, the single, towering portrait-format projection increasingly dominates, taking on the painterly presence of large-scale religious painting. Cinematic references are still present, however, partly in the predominance of the large single figure, which evokes the close-up images of cinema.

The cinematic can also be traced in Viola's use of the filmic technique of slow motion, which he adopted as soon as video projection became a dominant feature of his work, unquestionably influenced by the slow-motion techniques of avant-garde American filmmaking, which he had studied in school. The degree of slow motion used in *The Greeting*—a forty-five-second shot slowed down to twelve minutes—is only possible to achieve with film (*The Greeting* was made using 35mm film). The video image would quickly have disintegrated at anything approaching such extremely slow speed. The extremity of the slow motion lends the sequence a cinematic quality, recalling the filmmaker Maya Deren's description of slow motion as a "time microscope."

Douglas Gordon's video projections address a psychological space that marks a turning point in video installation's shift to

the two-dimensional. In his work, a debt owed to the 1970s and Warhol has been transformed by a sensibility informed by 1980s television, cheap video, and advertising. It also epitomises the new preoccupation of video with film. His slowing down of Hitchcock's classic film *Psycho* to twenty-four hours in his video projection *24 Hour Psycho* (1993) was directly inspired by using the slow-rewind button whilst watching old movies on his VCR at home. The result of this simple device, enlarged to film scale, is a radical alteration of our perception of real time, as the viewer is caught between two experiences of time: the imagined original speed of the film footage and the visual reality of the slowed-down video image.

The cinematic scale of Gordon's video image further complicates our reading of the image, since the size of the screen deceptively suggests a cinematic experience which is then undermined by the image's mediation through the instant, present-time quality of video, blown up to a monumental scale. The screens in Gordon's large-scale video projections are always freestanding, inviting us to view the image from either side. This device recalls film pieces from the early 1970s, in particular Michael Snow's *Two Sides to Every Story* (1974), in which a 16mm film loop is projected onto both sides of an aluminium screen using a switching device. The double-sided screen device has also been used in recent works by Douglas and Viola.

Gordon transforms his double-sided image into two separate projections in his work, *Between Darkness and Light (After William*

Blake) (1997) made for the Münster Sculptur Projekt. Like Thater's *Broken Circle* (1997), also made for Münster, Gordon's work is a site-specific project that uses the particular spatial characteristics of the chosen site. A large single screen bisects the underground passage of a pedestrian subway. On each side two Hollywood films of opposing philosophies are projected: *The Exorcist* (colour, 1973) on one, and *The Song of Bernadette* (black and white, 1943) on the other. Each represents the struggle between the opposing poles of good and evil. Imagery from each film bleeds into the other. The subway space functions as a metaphorical purgatory, in which the struggle is played out. Gordon's work is cinematic in both content and format. The languages of video and film have become completely intertwined, but it is film which predominates in the end. Yet, the viewer is also returned to the all-absorbing "Cyclops" TV–type viewing of the single-screen image, here writ large, and operating somewhere between the living room, the cinema, and the street.

Diana Thater's video installation *Broken Circle*, made specifically for the Buddenturm, a medieval tower in the city of Münster, displays a similar transformation of the language of Hollywood in a spatial format which both evokes and critiques that of classical cinema. Thater installed a 360-degree filmed sequence of film-trained and wild horses in progressive panoramic shots on the four floors of the tower. She explained that the single shot that makes up the piece can be easily recognised as one taken from a John Ford or Akira Kurasawa film—the kind of second unit shot

in which horses gallop towards and past a still camera. The work plays itself out like a movie within the winding spaces of the tower. The first floor shows the credit sequence—a clear distancing of the piece from its own technology, which is acknowledged only in the use of the separated-out colours of the video spectrum—and an embracing of the Hollywood film format. The remaining three floors display a narrative of wide shots of galloping horses moving around the walls at increasing speed, culminating in a fixed shot of the herd disappearing into the distance on the fourth floor. As with Gordon's, Thater's images engage with the architecture of the space, and the viewer's experience of the piece is determined by this relationship.

In both form and content, video is now mimicking the qualities that had always pertained exclusively to film. The use of the word *video* as a defining term for a particular area of contemporary art no longer appears to be either necessary or relevant. Furthermore, the disappearance of the object from video installation returns the viewer to that state of sensory inclusiveness, in which the possibility of extending consciousness into the technological realm has emerged. But the disappearance of the more traditional experience of the visual from video is not necessarily a negative prospect, as Viola has remarked:

> Art has always been a whole-body, physical experience. This sensuality is the basis of its true conceptual and intellectual nature, and is inseparable from it . . . . In my work, the visual is always

subservient to the *field*, the total system of perception/cognition at work. The five senses are not individual things but, integrated with the mind, they form a total system and create this *field*, an experiential field which is the basis of conscious awareness. This is the only true whole *image*.[4]

NOTES

1 Jonathan Crary: *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990), 2.

2 Marshall McLuhan: *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: Mentor, 1964), 273.

3 Marshall McLuhan: in Eric McLuhan and Frank Zingrone, eds., *Essential McLuhan* (London: Routledge, 1995).

4 Bill Viola: in "Putting the Whole Back Together: In Collaboration With Otto Neumaier and Alexander Pühringer" (1992), in Viola, *Reasons for Knocking at an Empty House: Writings 1973–1994*, ed. Robert Violette in collaboration with the author (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995), 265, 268.

Jim Harold

Witnessing the Momentous: Crowds, Stones, and Images, Silent Witnesses

A Snake

In Nicolas Poussin's painting *Landscape With a Man Killed by a Snake* (1648), we are the external observers of a moment and, by extension, of a possible sequence of events that follow the death of a young man. The man's body can be seen, still held in the coils of a murderous snake, but shrouded by shadow in the dark left foreground. In the brighter sunlit area to the right, literally foregrounded by the light, another man, who has apparently witnessed the actual event, panics and runs with news of the disaster. In the centre middle distance, a woman starts up in response to this witness's exaggerated movements, and perhaps to his cries.

Further back in the space and time of the painting, and increasingly beyond earshot, two separate groups of people go about their daily lives. One group, to the left, consists of two men reclining on the grass. Like the dead man, they are nearly lost to sight in the shadows. One of these men apparently peers vaguely and questioningly towards the foreground. The other group is a party of three fishermen, steadying their boat in readiness to pull in their catch of fish. News of the event has not yet reached them. Deeper still into

Nicolas Poussin, *Landscape With a Man Killed by a Snake*, 1648

the scene, an apparent tranquillity reigns across the glassy, still lake and past the distant town to the picturesque mountains beyond. At this distant point, it is as if we enter an eternity of time symbolised by the apparent permanence and endurance of the mountains, and by the infinity of the painting's own vanishing point.

Only the ragged areas of grey cloud hint that the land itself may have registered the tremour of loss at the heart of this timely or untimely moment. The event, which begins by affecting only one man directly—by his sudden and unpredicted death from a snake bite—then ripples out to affect other lives as the sequence of actions unfolds across the canvas. People are variously awakened from their reveries or labours by the news and, ultimately, like ourselves as we view the painting, are forced to meditate on the momentous and shocking moment of a sudden death.

Although commentators have argued that there are no mythological references in this painting, "the theme of a serpent lurking in the grass to prey upon unsuspecting humanity occurs in a number of classical sources, including the Iliad, and the Aeneid. It also appears in Dante's Inferno."[1] Whilst such outside references are of importance, the painting's own theme is clear: the lurking presence of sudden death and evil, which Poussin perceived could reveal itself most powerfully within the idyll of a seemingly tranquil nature. The work analyses the effects of rupture and shock as they ripple out and away from the centre of the event in such a way that the viewer is able to witness both the passage of time and of reportage. The event—death, and the fear or horror that follows

in its aftermath—locates and binds humans not only into time but into a community. A community not just made up of those who have shared or are shaped through actual experience, but one that may extend to include those who will respond as audiences to repeated accounts and images of trauma.

As time unfolds before our eyes in *Landscape With a Man Killed by a Snake*, made evident through the actions of those who comprise this small community of witnesses or those affected by news of the event, the dead man creates a pallid and silent scar on the surface of both time and the canvas. Death is the one event that reminds us of time by cutting through time itself. The young man's race through Poussin's landscape will in the course of time bring him to the gates of the city, which provides the physical locus for the community. There he will, no doubt, recount in graphic detail the event he has just witnessed. His story will transmit the horror and shock he brings with him, and it will be allowed to penetrate through the city's protective walls and gates to enter the hearts of all who listen.

The Judgement

Although we can only speculate on the number of the people who might have surrounded the man to listen to his news, or on their reactions, one characteristic of the crowd is evident in Rembrandt's oil sketch, *Ecce Homo* (1634). Where Poussin foregrounds the witness as both a conduit and an alarm, Rembrandt by contrast places his crowd in the background to assert their role

Rembrandt, *Ecce Homo*, 1634

as both witness and insidious power base. This work, intended as a preparatory sketch for a commercially published etching, was based on the section in St. John's Gospel where Christ is brought before Pilate for judgement. Rembrandt has attempted to visualise the last moments of the tripartite power struggle between Pilate, Christ, and the silent will of the people.

The biblical account relates that Pilate's desire was to discover the truth or otherwise of Christ's claim to be the son of God. He was, however, caught in an impossible dilemma. If Pilate was to maintain order, he had also to bow to the will of a greater fate and truth. In the sketch, he is shown as if he were attempting to be conciliatory whilst the priests plead for a judgement that can only be passed via the Roman civil law. The painted scene is one of great tension and of the moment; time, registered literally by the inclusion of a large town clock in the composition, is held in a state of suspension just before the inevitable decision is made.

The role and place of the crowd in this work, whilst visually in the background, pushed to the lower right, allow speculation on a matter that may not have been in the artist's mind, but that has a significant effect on the work's overall dynamic. The people are not presented as individuals, but rather seem to coalesce as a mass, a tumbling weight of vague figurative impressions. Furthermore, they not only appear to take on the same graphic character as the stone walls just behind their backs, but blur and fuse into that same surface. They seem to petrify, to metamorphose into their silent and enduring counterpart, to take on the weight and

characteristics of the deep historical record of rock and geology. It is this tension between the temporal natures of crowd and event, and that of the stones' apparent enduring qualities, that seem to lie at the work's very heart.

Rembrandt recognised that the crowd gathers to see, to bear witness, and, by so doing, to become a part of the defining moment: to be seen. It is not that the individuals who constitute a crowd need to be given singular identity; rather, it is a matter of acknowledging that people are drawn together, through fascination, towards the dramatic occurrence that acts as a powerful punctuation mark in the line of other, less clearly defined moments. One need only think of the media images of the people who flocked to witness the departure of the British troops from Portsmouth and Southampton just prior to the events that became the Falklands War.

A Funeral

In *L'Eclipse, avril 1912*, Eugène Atget presents a contact-printed photograph of a small crowd that has apparently gathered on a Paris street corner to witness the 1912 solar eclipse. Each member of the crowd is holding a card with a small hole, strangely reminiscent of the aperture of a camera lens. The crowd, itself an event in this image, is temporal. Yet, the nature of the cosmic event reminds the viewer of a geological time so immense as to be almost classifiable in terms of the infinite. In this photograph, however, we experience a mix of sensations, which suggests the shift of reading

Eugène Atget, *L'Eclipse, avril 1912*

such a moment from awe, bounding upon fear, towards a more contemporary observation of the spectacle. This crowd's reactions may still, in part, be infused with a sense of apprehension in the face of this uncertain and otherworldly occurrence. The material world to which they and the photograph are anchored, however, seems to render the astronomical and the phenomenological in a strangely absurd and wonderfully prosaic way.

The group's gaze is intense and, apart from one young woman who stares directly at the photographer, the focus of their attention is away from the cameraman up into the sky and towards the top left. By a sleight of photographic hand, the eclipse appears within the frame as the vignetted top corners of the photograph—a mechanical accident caused when the frame's pure rectangle is shaded by the camera bellows, here accepted by the photographer as a part of the medium's own limitations.

Partly because of the muteness of the medium itself, the crowd is presented as a group of silent, static observers. They are witnesses to the spectacle of light and dark, a territory natural to the photograph—and, in the broader sense of the idea of spectacle, a world into which the photograph will increasingly come to find its place. The silence of Atget's crowd is also the silence of the medium—the muteness of the eternally still, still image. This is different from the "moving" television image, which exists in relation to both time and the viewer in a different way. The photograph is a slice of history. A frozen frame, frozen like the stones, the rock.

A Funeral

So what of this need to observe and to be a part of a community through the act of observing? The novelist Don DeLillo alludes to this very question in a 1991 British television documentary. On screen in a darkened room, two women watch news footage of the events leading up to the first and aborted attempt in Tehran to bury the then newly dead Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini as a voice says: "I keep thinking, without too much supporting evidence, that images have something to do with crowds. An image is a crowd in a way, a smear of impressions. Images tend to draw people together, create mass identity."[2]

DeLillo is talking of the news reportage of international events (terrorist activities, bombings, and so on) in the media generally. But particularly of the distant, apparently solitary observer, sitting before the television screen alone, but now rendered a part of a community of distant but like individuals. Brought together by the image of death, of fear. One might also say that this community appears within the space of the cinema crowd. But particularly through the television screen, these images of trauma or event now function as our real contact with the world—the "other" against which we view our everyday life.

Atget's silent and static observers of the spectacle make way some seventy-seven years later for the television images of the funeral of the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini in Tehran.[3] While hundreds of thousands attended the event, even more people watched the faceless blurs and surges hovering in the electronic

lines of the television relay. The image of the mass, which penetrated the safety of homes across the world, draws the viewers into a community (a new community) of solitary watchers, who privately experience and share public emotions. Or in the case of the actual crowd, publicly share private emotions, witnessed not only in the case of the Ayatollah, but also with Princess Diana's funeral.

What focuses our sense of the crowd in these television images of Khomeini's funeral? The faceless, surging mass; the sea of observing heads; the silent and fixed gaze; the upturned and expectant face with the fixity of the seeming endurance of stone? Here, the crossover between contemporary television reportage and Rembrandt's *Ecce Homo* is most poignant. Rembrandt's crowd blurs into the stone background of the city, both protagonist and witness to the dramatic moment or event. The peoples' heads and their memories become like the stone, a geological referent—a silent witness and still more silent storyteller. Similarly, the crowd of mourners in Tehran resembles the rock-strewn desert landscape as the helicopter-mounted camera moves back and away from the event and up into the air. Perspective and vanishing point seem to diverge. It is as if *we* become the vanishing point, whilst the image remains two-dimensional and fixed. With this image, the temporal becomes the infinite, and the circle begins to complete itself. We return, also, to Atget's photograph as a mute witness of that most potent of images: the eclipse. A moment of suspense or awe as the sun's light is

shuttered out. Giving us a glimpse of the incomprehensible scale of cosmological and geological time. Witnessing the universal.

Through the camera, details of individuals blur, and the crowd breaks down into the grain of the photographic image. Through the frozen moment, each individual is calcified and returned to his or her mineral state. The image appears to us as a record of this truth and evidence of the sedimentary processes fixed onto the surface of the photographic paper. Through this ossification of event into image, this freezing of the rapid movement of events into an apparently static thing, the image is a cut through time.

Time and space are disrupted again in a world of instantaneous electronic transmission. Here, the "static" image comprises flashing, pulsating pixels of coloured light that record and transmit images of distant realities. A world made global, where near events are no longer of such defining importance. Virtual proximity has become more real than the physically local. Our defining horizon, based on the quattrocento's mathematical and optical perspective, has given way to the apparently unlimited space and immediate time of information technologies. This has brought with it a disorientation that affects our linear relation to time, whether finite or infinite. The significance of the local event has lost its veracity in the light of global space and time. It is the distant accident, disaster, or temporal event and its relayed image that becomes the all-important and essential moment that creates a consensus of meaning and forms a metaphoric community or crowd.

Through focusing on a distant reality, or view, the viewer loses the sight of his or her own physical and imminent self or truth. Meaning is formed somewhere "out there" through the moving image and through spectacle. The accident or catastrophe penetrates the walls of the city and the refuge of the home and focuses the moment (in time). In so doing, it paradoxically pushes back the horizon again towards the infinite: thereby strangely returning us to that disturbing, but reassuring, relation we have with the infinite and enduring time. Like Poussin's dead man in the landscape, the real and the infinite fuse with the symbolic and the temporal.

NOTES

1 RICHARD VERDI: *Nicolas Poussin, 1594–1665*, exh. cat. (London: Royal Academy of Arts/Zwemmers, 1995).

2 DON DELILLO: in "The Word, the Image, and the Gun," *Omnibus*, television series, BBC, broadcast 27 September 1991.

3 Whilst the significance of this event may appear to have lost its edge because of the softening processes of time, the actual newsreel footage of the Ayatollah Khomeini's funeral, viewed at the time, was used to bring a very real fear into the hearts of Europeans and Anglo-Americans as the all-too-real vision of an uncontrollable mass of people.

François Bucher

Attaining the Body

Television is an attribute of superheroes. It is a false promise when made to the body of mortals. Once this promise is accepted as true, everything else is confused. The possibility of "television" does not exist amongst humans. A "television viewer" is a tautological entity, a being that watches itself watching, or, as Paul Valéry said, "watches itself watching itself." In watching itself watching itself, this paradoxical being, this fictional construct—the television viewer—exerts control over itself and mediates the power of the state and its economic subsidiaries. The model of the subject of sovereign power is the television viewer. To resist television, or to decline the offer to be a "television viewer" (to be, rather, the "television reader," or the "television seer") may be, today, a powerful act of resistance.

The "long error of metaphysics" has led to the television viewer. Television is one of the imaginary animals in Metaphysics's cabinet of wonders. It is the dogmatic belief in the existence of a solid fact, past the mouth of the cavern, behind our backs, of which we are seeing a faraway shadow. The television viewer is a being that observes, in the sense of "viewing" and "abiding by," the abstract

condition of *tele* vision—that of seeing what is elsewhere. This condition, or rather, the overseeing of this condition, is at the core of the very successful efforts of social control that are in place in modern nation-states. To understand the implications of this reckless promise may be crucial in recovering our body; we are still, as a culture, in the same stage as the boy who, in the 1950s, tried to fly like Superman after having been delivered the promise of television. And although this may be a metaphor, it is through that metaphor that we can find a way to break the glassy surface of a discourse that remains invisible. Following the image to its last consequence, we may find the paradoxical body of the actor who impersonated Superman in the movies and who is now confined to a wheelchair.

At the age of ten, another boy sits for a whole afternoon in front of his television set "somewhere in South America."[1] This takes place in the mid-1980s, which means that he will watch *The Dukes of Hazzard* at 3 p.m., then something like *WKRP in Cincinnati* at 4, followed by a sitcom such as the late 1960s *That Girl*, reheated and dubbed for the Latin American market. At 6, he will watch the long-awaited *Love Boat*, dubbed in a false, neutralised Mexican Spanish. The program, which in its original form had prerecorded laugh tracks, is transformed, in its new context, from light comedy to romantic adventure at sea. But cultural translation is not the point of this text. Nor are the Third World vicissitudes of the "perverse artifice" called dubbing. Its point is coded in that which takes place in the mind of the boy on that Saturday afternoon

when he recognises the voice of the suave, jet-setty captain of the Love Boat as being the same voice as the rural Southern separatist Uncle Jesse in *The Dukes of Hazzard* (the mystery lingers . . . is it also the same voice as the lethargic New Yorker Archie Bunkers'? and for that matter, those of all the dubbed American television characters past the age of fifty?). The moment of the recognition of a third body (in a Third World) floating like a ghost in time over Saturday afternoon is also the site where the body of the boy in question is attained. The massive influx of American culture, almost infallible in its wholeness, develops, all of a sudden, a crack, a dissociation . . . and thought takes place.

Body/Text

"Attaining the body" is an abbreviated description of the practice of Zen Buddhism. It is the question that we should be concerned with when facing television. Precisely so that we may be facing it and not be faced by it. Because the only possible belief left is a belief in the body—not a belief in a transformed world where a moral, open, interactive, or democratic television would exist, but a belief in a body that can face the problem of its own existence, in front of its own images. One that can see the threshold of the screen. One that senses continuously where its limits lie with regard to the image cast into the living room, which casts him or her for good onto the shipwrecked beach of the cigarette commercial.

A body that may be ready to problematise itself over and over, one that does not give into the sense that something was already

established. A body that can *see* television, its degree zero, traverse the reference, the figuration, and *see* the ideological machine at work. A body that does not find a permanent foundation, a common sense of which it is a part, but which experiences a fracture, a dissociation in a discourse whose very nature is to claim an appearance as whole. A viewer who does not believe in the pause or in the continuum, or in any hierarchical positioning of images—one prepared to expose television just as readily as television is set to continually expose a neutralised version of it. This is the body that can resist the subjection of television. The questions might then be: Why focus on television? Why consider it the problem? What is particular to it?

Jean-Luc Godard puts it very clearly in his dialogue with Anne-Marie Mieville in *Soft and Hard*: "We receive television, we're subjected by it, like the subjects of a king. Which is why when I watch television, I feel like the French resistance in front of the Germans."[2] He claims that cinema has a usurper, television, and that we are its accomplices: "Others like us." Mieville inquires about his disproportionate respect for cinema. Why respect it?

Because it is an image of myself, the only way to know myself, to be able to hear what is said about me and to make the Other exist. Otherwise the relation is too direct. . . . The subject is he who says "I"; projects himself towards the other or towards the world. The cinema understood its projective sense, even more than painting and other arts. The "I" could be lost, but it could be recovered; there was a kind of metaphor. Television doesn't project; it projects

us. We don't know where the subject is anymore. With cinema there was a screen and a projection.[3]

The argument is articulated in such a way that we can conclude that even if there is "bad" cinema, it remains the site of a possibility for thought to take place, for a subject to be born and to grow. The fact of a distance, a possible dissociation where the limit of the body is established, where the body finds its position, is what divorces it, as an ideological machine, from television. Television is like the image of the law in the biopolitical horizon, a force that has a hold on the body, an image in the position of pure potentiality (over the body) without significance. It is ultimately an image-machine that produces social control by its sole presence.

Franz Kafka's *In the Penal Colony* is a story of a machine, an archaic machine that engraves letters on the backs of guilty men, "piling up the ornaments to the point where the back of the guilty man becomes clairvoyant and is able to decipher the writing from which he must derive the nature of his unknown guilt."[4] As Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guatari wrote in their book about Kafka, "the law as a pure and empty form without content, the object of which remains unknowable: thus the law can be expressed only through a sentence, and the sentence can be learned only through a punishment."[5] And just as a paraphrase of Kant in the same book reads, "the law no longer depends on a preexistent Good that would give it a materiality; it is a pure form on which the good such as it is depends,"[6] so we can perform a conceptual reversal with television: Television does not depend on a preexistent image of a people that

would give it a materiality: it is a pure form on which the image, such as it is, depends.

On the one hand, the discourse of cinema (the one that died or is always on the verge of dying) posits a place *outside*, a projection. Outside of the body (behind closed doors)—the subject chooses to go to the image, and the image bears its source. In television's discourse, on the other hand, no matter what is presented on the screen, there is something/someone with a power over it, a source that is not visible. The image is negotiated behind our backs. The "monopolised word" that television produces is shaped, in the example of the news, from the anchor to the reporter, from the reporter to the witness in the site of the event, creating a truth confirmed by its own depth. Its strategies are elemental, the kind of operation where someone points out something unreal in a context of pure unreality; then everything else acquires a degree of reality.

Television delivers the fiction of a "television viewer" who readily accepts an image of him-or herself, because the viewer is that which is being *pictured*, so to speak, and he or she has been trained to *watch* the image, not to *see* television at work. The body of the television viewer cannot think itself; it is dictated an experience that it can no longer have. Lost in a labyrinth of shifting mirrors, it is body mediated to itself. "As seen on TV" is a common attractor for the consumer in America. The phrase implies that the individual is to refer back to the moment when one's *self* and one's desire for the product had been fully articulated, so that one does not need to confront one's image in the void. One

will have been spared the difficulty of having a body, spared the difficulty of the world.

"What forces us to think is the 'inpower of thought' (*impouvoir*) (Artaud), the figure of nothingness, the inexistence of a whole which could be thought":[7] "Television" stands for a conversation that has never taken place, for a truncated dialogue where nothing is received back from the body (except in the case of the third body in the Third World). All is given to it; it is marinated, softened, tendered, ready to be consumed, paradoxically, as a consumer of products. Television is a discourse of passivity, pacification, the passing of time, abandon. The body that has been taught to be the "television viewer" sinks into the sofa. It cannot read television; if anything, it expects to be read. It expects that the event be elsewhere, it postpones the experience, it postpones thought, suspends it, and attends the normalising word of television.

Home

In Upper Manhattan, in November or December 2001, there was a bloody street fight on a weekday morning between a group of Irish and Mexican construction workers over a disputed area. The street fight, which left blood on the pavement and one dead Mexican worker, was an outrage in that part of the city where "these things don't happen." It seems that the fight was caused by "Hispanics" underselling their services in an area traditionally dominated by Irish workers. When interviewed about the event, a resident repeated many times, "This is just too close to home." She was

without any doubt reciting the credo of television: what you watch is elsewhere, it will not touch your body, it will exist as a spectacle. Three or four months earlier, the September 11 attacks had made downtown Manhattan look like downtown Beirut at its worst. They had reduced uptown Manhattan's physical distance from the "real" and made the tacit frontier between uptown and downtown acquire new meaning. Uptown residents tried, unsuccessfully, to make downtown appear in their minds as a foreign country. They were assisted by their television sets, which confirmed that it was all happening in another land.

Likewise, anchors and reporters talked over the events, improvising the same epithets over and over, rehearsing the same adjectives, and producing, in record time, a heading in shiny block letters, with multiple variations, that gave the events a full narrative, and the sensation that it had already been thought over, that the story was complete and understood in the mind of television. The tactic was never to stop narrating, never to let the image exist in its powerful dimension as a break in the symbolic order of the world. The shiny, monumentalised block letters read, "America Under Attack," like a historical truth that had replaced the fallen buildings and that could tame the anxiety of their void. And soon the same megalithic font would spell, "America Strikes Back," as in a narrative that opens up, revealing a conflict, suspends the mind over it, and finally offers a satisfactory closure, a "whole." With that precedent, the woman who was interviewed was addressing her legitimate complaint to television's essential promise that what

is seen *here* is *elsewhere*, that the body of the Mexican worker will not be seen on 96th Street, but watched on a faraway street on the television screen. Unfortunately for her, the inequities of an open market economy have brought that body from the global south too close to her body. But that is another story.

Law

In his book *Homo sacer*, Giorgio Agamben recounts the distinction between *zoe* and *bios* in place in ancient Greece. It was unthinkable to relate *zoe* with the political realm because *zoe* stood for bare life, the "natural sweetness" of bare life. Therefore, "the entry of zoe into the field of politics—the politization of bare life as such—constitutes the decisive event of modernity and signals a radical transformation of the political-philosophical categories of classical thought."[8] Agamben quotes Aristotle's phrase, "born with regards to life but existing essentially with regard to the good life"[9] —the "good life" being the one that is considered and taken into account in politics. He traces and retraces throughout his book the need to find this threshold again, where the law may cease to be this "being in force without significance." The reflection is linked to Kafka's allegory *Before the Law*, where we witness the paradoxical triumph of "the man from the country," who, after a lifetime of being in front of the open doors of the law, which he nevertheless cannot traverse, manages to pose the right question to the guard: "So how does it happen that for all these many years no one but myself has ever begged for admittance?" He gets his answer: "No

one else could ever be admitted here, since this gate was made only for you. I am now going to shut it."[10]

The allegory signals a moment where a "before" can be sought, where the law ceases to be linked to metaphysical truth, where politics ceases to be "the decision concerning the unpolitical."[11] If we translate, again, to the problem of "that hopeless little screen,"[12] this is the moment when the body may see the machine at work. One hopes there could be a body that is not on the verge of death when it experiences this truth.

Before

What comes before the law? Godard asks this question in the scenario for the film *Passion*: "I didn't write the scenario. I wanted to see it."[13] He recounts how the script came to be in force, the script being the law of the image. The question is: "Does Moses see the law before he writes it? Can one see the law? Was the law first of all written or seen and then written by Moses? The first writings were from merchants—he says—3 kilograms of carrots, etc. Then writing evolved to something else. And cinema, which comes from life, and which represents life, has the same story. There were no scripts to begin with: someone played the cop, two others played the lovers, etc. But soon the person in charge of the money had to account for the money that had been spent. He/she had to invent a list, a budget. So you had 1 cop = 100 francs; 2 lovers = 200 francs, etc. In short, the scenario came from accounting."[14]

To see the law before the law exists is to open the possibility of a

world: "The camera will take that possible and make it a probable. To see the invisible if it were visible."[15] This is the kind of cinema that lost the battle. It is what leads Godard to say in the same video that he is exiled from the film world with others, like "Chantal [Akerman] and Wim [Wenders]." And to lament, in the conclusion of *Soft and Hard*, the fate of the moving image: "Where did it go, this project of growing up and becoming subjects?"[16]

Television, the usurper, is the antithesis of a project of "growing up and becoming subjects"; it is scripted at all possible levels, too close for us to be able to see it. There is nothing in it that has not been preformulated. The lengths of the commercial, talk show, soap opera, and so on are all determined by a single all-powerful cause: economics. Perception is outlined by money. The improvisation of the reporter on the scene of a catastrophe is far from being an improvisation: it is the exercise of a craft—that of giving the impression of spontaneity while adjusting tightly to the rule of a hegemonic decree; the all-encompassing *common sense* of television. It is all scripted to the degree that it seems that there is no critical angle beyond television's critical angle.

Television is not a reflection of the real: it is the reality of a certain reflection, the main organ of sovereign power in modern democracies. It is the "doctrinal system," as Noam Chomsky called it in his lecture *Propaganda and the Media War*. What is crucial to understand is that whatever progressive, politically pointed, revolutionary image exists in its force field, it is always, in a very real sense, neutralised, unless it fully considers the medium in which it

is presented. This is why Godard's thoughts on the moving image are still unavoidable, because he was able to make of this emphasis the rationale for his whole career. When, in the 1970s, in an interview with *L'Express*, a journalist asked him if in his position as a militant he should not target immediate efficacy and sacrifice the search for new forms, Godard responded that he was not searching for new forms, but looking for new relations. And in reviewing the film *Pravda*, he pointed out how "we discover that what has been made is a political film, instead of making a film politically."[17]

Translated to the problem of television, this entails that whatever exists within the language of television, whatever address does not consider in its very conception the meta-address of television (its ideological apparatus), will be caught in a paradoxical site where it will be drained of all its power. A "political film" is like a quadriplegic superhero. It is the site where the word *political* signals a genre and not an active force of contestation. "Giving discourse to the body," Deleuze writes, to "reach the body before discourses, before things are named: the 'first name' and even before the first name."[18] To be in the threshold of thought, to understand that thinking may be a constant discovery, over and again, of the fact that thought itself, especially regarding the image, has not yet started.

"What did Joseph and Mary say to each other, what did they say before? Give the words back to the body, to the flesh."[19] Godard's motivation to revisit the centerfold of Christianity in *Hail Mary* is to go to that place, past the threshold of the institutionalised image, where the birth of the image can be seen. Not as if there

were a moment *before* in a strictly chronological sense, but in the sense of a tension that is always present, between the event and its entrance, as an image, to the symbolic order. The undoing of a strictly chronological conception of this event is analogical to Agamben's revisiting of Thomas Hobbes's social contract. Here we do not have a society that passes from a natural law to a juridical order in a historical sense, but a conception of sovereignty that is always on that threshold, between an outside and an inside: "All representations of the originary political act as a contract or convention marking the passage from nature to the State in a discrete and definite way must be left wholly behind. Here there is, instead, a much more complicated zone of indiscernability between *nomos* and *physis*, in which the State tie, having the form of a ban, is always already also non-State and pseudo-nature and in which nature always already appears as *nomos* and the state of exception."[20]

The failure to understand this notion of atemporality can be seen as one of the reasons that Godard's efforts were unfruitful in the Mozambique television project of the 1970s. Mozambique's newly installed revolutionary Marxist government commissioned Godard and Mieville to advise on the implementation of an entire television infrastructure from scratch. They suggested that Mozambique take advantage of its audiovisual situation to understand television before it existed, before it had taken over the country's entire social and geographical fabric. By this, they meant searching for the image, especially the desire for the image, the desire to remember, "to make recollection a starting or finishing

point, a line of conduct, a moral or political guide, with one single objective in view, that of independence."[21] This meant studying this quest of the image and how to transmit it. "Studying production before distribution arrived on the scene to take it over. Studying programs before fixing them in a mould, and also including in the frame the viewers, who would have no idea that they were behind the television (drawn into it) and not, as they thought, facing it."[22] They suggested to Mozambique the production of a film to be entitled *Birth of the Image of a Nation*. It would recount the history of all these relations between a country still without television and a European television crew: the birth of a new memory for the people of Mozambique.

Godard and Mieville's idea of picturing Mozambique as an "I" that would utter its first words in a kind of prelapsarian innocence had to fall into the inevitable trap of anthropology, into a kind of caricature of Rousseau's "noble savage" society. But aside from this familiar diagram, which ensures that there is no jumping over the shadow of being European when taking into account the sociopolitical history of Europe and Africa, the greater problem was to read the situation as a linear chronology projecting an unfolding narrative, instead of understanding the issue as an ongoing one, always already present in the imaging of a culture. The intention, utopian to the last, was clearly that of creating a culture that had a ground from which to stand and present an incomplete, unachieved, dismembered, uncomfortably negotiated image of its desire before it was replaced by television's ***image of desire*** in its

perfect wholeness, which is always necessarily outside of the body and finally also outside of desire itself.

The place of an *outside* or a *before* is the place of thought that is the detection of the "unthinkable in thought," which would be both its beginning and its barrier. Television delivers precisely the opposite, the illusion of a whole that is ready and available, a whole whose continuity and comprehension is undeterred and which has already thought the answers to its own epistemological questions.

War

Recently, the Israeli army performed an operation whose symbolic content is so strong and brutally pointed that probably no artist dealing with television has ever been as successful in speaking about the medium. Their brutal performance could be a third step in Paul Virilio's account of the relationship of the weapon and the image-making apparatus: "Great importance was attached to pictorial representation in the Oriental military sects. The warrior's hand readily passing from brush to sword. Similarly, a pilot's hand trips the camera shutter with the same gesture that releases the weapon."[23]

The action, performed around the same time that one of their soldiers had shitted on a photocopier in Ramallah ("someone even managed to defecate into the photocopier"), denotes a very sophisticated understanding of the psycho–sexual and military powers of the televisual image. A kind of imagistic enlightenment that was used in the most obscure way imaginable: "Soldiers occupied the offices of three local television and radio stations on Saturday

morning, and started broadcasting porn clips intermittently on Saturday afternoon on the Al-Watan, Ammwaj, and Al-Sharaq channels, the residents said."[24]

It must be added that this act occurred during a curfew—the paradoxical state of exception, as Agamben explains, in which the person who goes out for a walk is breaking the law as much as the soldier who shoots him or her. The Israeli army did not choose to broadcast pro-Israeli propaganda: this would have made them less effective by far. Their operation was much more complex, much more sophisticated in its understanding of the ground on which they stood. Their operation revealed the supreme violence of the curfew—especially a curfew imposed by a foreign state. On the one hand, it neatly drew the diagram of power and on the other, it opened an endless game of perverse possibilities in the space in which it was cast. Yet, these possibilities were not tied to the fact of having the television set on or off. It was not the televisual image that was screened: it was the *image* of television that was being subliminally broadcast. So the degeneration of minors, or the mythological concept of the diminished strength of the young fighter seduced by the sirens, or the conflict that arises in the family regarding this modern apple of discord—the television set's on/off switch—are not even the issue. They are extras. The intensity of the operation was ciphered in the reiteration of the penetration of a people, both on the diegetic and the extra-diegetic level, like one perverse metaphor mounted on another. On a different level, another paradox appeared: the timeless subject

of censorship—explicit sex and nudity—was now acting as a censoring device itself, covering or screening the information it wanted to suppress.

The shrewd consideration of the curfew as a site for image action, and of the curfew-ridden population as a literally captive audience, is analogical, without being too far-fetched, with the consideration of *site* that the young tradition of *site-specificity* carries out. Television was considered at its most fundamental level—as that which can enter the home, the organ of power that can penetrate intimacy. The medium itself was addressed via the broadcast of a generic product (pornography) in a generic situation (the curfew).

There is yet another paradox: the fact that the kind of complexity that the Israeli army was setting forth regarding television, which addresses the body of the viewer itself in its brutal, literal captivity (no longer solely symbolic), was in a sense a fulfillment of what art's purpose in front of the television viewer could be: to recover the body, to expose the formation of that body that lies inert, unable to speak, unable to address itself, because it has been securely addressed by television's intricate cables. By the overwhelming "you" that television assigns it.

The paradox, again, is that if art's sense could be to reverse the body's subordination to television and to show television for itself, so that there may be a subject ready to think him-or herself in relation to it, the Israeli soldiers did precisely this but to reveal the subjection of the Palestinian body to themselves.

Their act performed the metaphor of penetration and inversely metaphorised the military occupation.

So the paradox entails that the same understanding of the body leads on the one hand to a powerful re-ignition of it (to a certain emancipation), while, on the other, the same complexity opens the possibility for a more effective attack on the body. It is a mystery that the war machine and artistic practice touch intimately, but there is a solution to the mystery in the notion that art's desire is to attain the body. That is clearly the bullet's same desire.

Paradoxical Body

In 1945, Jorge Luis Borges wrote in an article published in the magazine *SUR*:

> The possibilities for the art of combination are not infinite, but they are apt to be frightening. The Greeks engendered the chimera, a monster with the head of a lion, the head of a dragon, and the head of a goat; the theologians of the second century, the Trinity, in which the father, the son, and the Holy Ghost are inextricably linked; the Chinese zoologists, the *ti-yiang*, a bright red, supernatural bird equipped with six feet and six wings but neither face nor eyes; the geometrists of the nineteenth century, the hypercube, a four-dimensional figure that encloses an infinite number of cubes and is bounded by eight cubes of twenty-four squares. Hollywood has just enriched this frivolous, teratological museum: by means of a perverse artifice they call dubbing, they offer monsters that combine

> the well-known features of Greta Garbo with the voice of Aldonza Lorenzo. How can we fail to proclaim our admiration for this distressing prodigy, for these ingenious audio-visual anomalies?[25]

The audiovisual anomalies that Borges mentions are a crucial site of thought. It is interesting to receive this kind of film analysis from a time when "film analysis" was not in place as a genre. And to receive these fresh observations from an author who, in 1945, was clear-sighted enough to see the paradoxical bodies that audio-vision was forming (like the Third World boy discovering the ghost of a third body on a Saturday afternoon in the mid-1980s). These paradoxical bodies can lead us to a provisional conclusion.

To attain the body may be to understand that the 9-11 catastrophe as seen on television is not to be linked with the Hollywood 35mm catastrophe epic genre, as so many did, but, to be more precise, to feel the path, by way of the memory of the body, to an HBO/Cinemax program aired in the mid-1980s called *Behind the Scenes, Beyond the Screen.* This program featured video shot by a peripheral camcorder of the explosions, stunts, and dialogues that would find their *real* place of existence in the 35mm print. What the television viewer saw on the screen on September 11 was an event that was not happening: it was in an unreachable "beyond"; the format of its *real* existence, the 35mm film, was unavailable.[26] The reality that we could not attain lies forever in the 35mm film, the film of the collapsing towers that was not filmed. And perhaps the whole event (and nonevent) entered the symbolic order in

that manner. The real did not take place, since the public was behind the scenes, beyond the screen.

In the same way, to attain the body may be to see the assassination of John F. Kennedy as a Super 8 assassination; to be like a detective, never to oversee the camera with which the president is shot, again and again. To feel the bodily difference of that material and the 1980s video 8 camcorder footage of Ronald Reagan's assassination attempt, and to feel, finally without guilt, our body's deep desire for the image of the catastrophe.

To dissociate the image, to reveal its unwholeness, to undress the paradoxical bodies of the moving image—as Pierre Huyghe does in *Blanche-Neige Lucie* (Snow White Lucie), where the face of the voice of Snow White returns from a deep sleep to reveal its life-long dispossession. Huyghe reveals, again, the third body that lingers like a phantom. Lucie's body is the paradoxical body of the voice of Snow White, the body that was supposed to remain hidden, the body whose very visibility is a site of thought. But the paradoxical body is not only found in the "perverse artifice" of dubbing. It is in our experience of our own body when we recover, over and over, the paradoxical sense of the moving image, the sense of being taken over by its spell. Our childhood Snow White falls from her metaphysical cartoon world when we are "faced" with the fact that her voice was negotiated like merchandise. We attain our body in the pendulum of a suspension and an always shifting, self-grounding. And this ground needs to be dismantled over and over, like an ever-present threshold—or like a paradoxical

body, like the body of Grace Kelly, "fantasy of the screen, princess of the real."

Common sense tells us that cinema is one image after another. Godard writes that "cinema is not an image after another, it is an image to which another is added forming a third one, the third being formed by the spectator in the moment when he sees the film."[27] Common sense (the common sense of television) tells us that the image of the commercial is a pause amidst the important matter of the news—that the latest BMW riding towards a blood red sunset is not in contact with the image of the massacre that it succeeded. And this is precisely why and how we are the subjects of the most effective form of social control. But it is in the body that we find the other answer—that what took place was not the passing of one image after another, but the formation of a third image, absolutely contingent to the body and its position in time and space, a site of thought.

An essay on television may be given the license to reach its conclusion in the land of photography and painting. Giulio Paolini, an Arte Povera artist, photographed and reframed a face painted in the sixteenth century by Lorenzo Lotto. He renamed the image, whose original title was *Portrait of a Young Man* (1505), *Young Man Looking at Lorenzo Lotto* (1967). In this act of renaming, he transferred to the viewer the vibrations of a third body—that of the man who stood in front of his painting, that of the painter who stood in front of his subject. The paradox stares at the viewer in the present (now). In the same stroke, he is also made aware of his own body. For one instant and, in a few words, he manages to attain the body.

NOTES

1 A phrase used on the morning of that same day in the voiceover of the Hall of Justice cartoons.

2 JEAN-LUC GODARD: *Soft and Hard (A Soft Conversation on Hard Subjects)* (1985).

3 Ibid.

4 WALTER BENJAMIN: *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt and trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1968), 133.

5 GILLES DELEUZE and FÉLIX GUATTARI: *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 43.

6 Ibid.

7 GILLES DELEUZE: *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (London: Athlone Press, 1989), 168.

8 GIORGIO AGAMBEN: *Homo sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 4.

9 Ibid., 7.

10 FRANZ KAFKA: "Before the Law," in *The Penal Colony: Stories and Short Pieces*, trans. Willa and Edwin Muir (New York: Schocken, 1961).

11 AGAMBEN: 173.

12 LEONARD COHEN: "Democracy" (Stranger Music, Inc., 1997).

13 JEAN-LUC GODARD with ANNE-MARIE MIEVILLE, J. BERNARD MENOUD, and PIERRE BINGGELI: *Scenario du film Passion* (1982).

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

16 GODARD: *Soft and Hard*.

17 JEAN-LUC GODARD: *Godard par Godard: Des années Mao aux années 80* (Paris: Flammarion, 1991), 71.

18 DELEUZE: *Cinema 2*, 172.

19 Ibid., 173.

20 AGAMBEN: 109.

21 NÉSTOR GARCÍA CANCLINI: Policies for Cultural Creativity, kvc.minbuza.nl/uk/archive/commentary/canclini.html.

22 Ibid.

23 PAUL VIRILIO: *War and Cinema*, trans. Patrick Camiller (London: Verso, 1989).

24 AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE: *Porn Run on Seized TV Channels, Say Residents*, 1. April, 2002, www.smh.com.au/articles/2002/04/011017206174636.html.

25 JORGE LUIS BORGES: *Borges in/and/on Film*, ed. Edgardo Cozarinsky and trans. Gloria Waldman and Ronald Christ (New York: Lumen, c. 1988), 62.

26 To complicate matters, there is a lucid exemplification of how the difference in cost between film and video (from the point of view of a maker) should not be overlooked. Alfred Guzzetti, a filmmaker (now "visiting the land of video"), stated in a conversation that the fact that film costs more makes for a completely different relation to its image. Guzzetti stated the problem in this way: "What would psychoanalysis be if you didn't pay for it? You would always be in psychoanalysis or you would never be in psychoanalysis." This reiterates that it may be in the monetary exchange where the very existence of an event is sanctioned.

27 JEAN-LUC GODARD: *Histoire(s) du cinema* (1989).

Jean-Christophe Royoux

Free-Time Workers and the Reconfiguration of Public Space: Several Hypotheses on the Work of Pierre Huyghe

What is a character? It is said that in a narrative work, a character is the "normative crossroads" *par excellence.* "The character-subject," writes Philippe Hamon, "an anthropomorphic prop for a certain number of semantic 'effects,' is an ideal setting for the emergence of ideologies and their normative systems: there cannot be norms except where a 'subject' is brought into play."[1] To go against this trend, formalist and structuralist approaches—called "immanentist,"[2] meaning that they refuse all other reality than the textual amongst the elements of a text—make of the character a "paper being." Nonetheless, "verbal work always leads to something other than the verbal."[3] At the very least, the character points to a veritable knot where a work meets the person whom it addresses; a character is the crystallization point of all transfers and conversions. I wish to examine, in the work of Pierre Huyghe, the disembodied remains of the character—a simple, interchangeable "employee" in the underlying construction of a new mode of "narrative," a character that most often resembles an anti-actor, who is passive or whose true identity is unmasked.

1.

The question of the character or actor in Huyghe's work evolves at the intersection of two series of gestures: daily gestures, more or less menial, that we can see on the 4x3 posters he produced early in his career and cinematographic gestures, from films by Alfred Hitchcock or Andy Warhol, for example. Most of the time, Huyghe's characters are devoid of all psychology that would give them a minimal substance of identity. Instead, they are actors in the literal sense of the word; their presence in the image is justified by their execution of a singular gesture, if only a speech act. One of the principal effects of these gestures is to suggest an activation or activity of representation. In other words, they present representation not as a "finished product," but as a work in progress. It is putting the representation to work, or in work, that interests the artist. And, as the matter of interest here is artistic representation that sometimes refers to the entertainment industry, these characters can be defined as "free-time workers." The activities in which they are actors have no other meaning than to incite us, spectators, during a lapse of time in which, for example, freed from professional work, we can devote a bit of attention to works of contemporary art.

If we take the first image in the series of 4x3 posters, entitled *Barbès-Rochechouart* (1994), however, it might seem paradoxical that this activity takes the form of a frozen image that at first glance seems to deny by freezing it in the moment in which it is framed, the work-site it represents. Similarly, the television technicians of *Motion Study* (1999) carry out a transfer: from actors performing

a necessary activity, conditioning the appearance of televised representation, they become actors in this same activity of staging, which, however, is depicted according to a rule of appearance and disappearance of the image's constituent elements, meticulously well-ordered. If we are attentive to this paradox, we can identify one of the many little landslides whereby the singularity of Huyghe's writing is expressed. Contrary to appearances, the *Barbès* work-site, staged by amateur interpreters, transferred into images, and presented in the form of an advertisement in the very place it was recorded, is not simply a representation of a work-site. It functions as a *metaphor* for work of another sort—work of association, displacement, inversion, and recomposition—of which the poster is the result, and which is typical of the activity of interpretation. *Chantier Permanent* (1993), a series of photographs of skeletal architecture, devoid of facades, anchored in the transitory, typical of the Mediterranean basin—images of a perpetual process of becoming that depends upon constructive users—is perhaps the most literal metaphor of this "interpretation work-site."

2.

A second way of envisaging these stagings of activities is to consider them as straightforward descriptions, faithful to an original that is followed "stupidly," pace for pace, as the character of the public writer demonstrates in the exhibition *The Use of the Interpreter* (1995).[4] The writer retranscribes, live, in writing—as the scanner in *Two Conversations* (1996) captured nearby telephone

communications, but according to an inside-to-outside movement in reverse—all it sees and hears during the opening of the show. In a way, all characters in novels or films can be defined as writers. And as we know, it is quite common in a work for a character to manifest the delegated presence of the writer or director himself. The character is the writer of our lives, available for the narrative of all existences. He is, as they say of those characters one sees in the edges of old paintings, an "admonitor": a hinge element between the "narrative" being written and the spectators who are, in this case, at the exhibition opening, also the real actors of this narrative being played in the representation. The character is a *third party*, a mediator. But unlike the character, the interpreter is involved in a radical distancing from the role—in the dramatic sense of the word—he is supposed to embody. In Huyghe's work, we are confronted less with actors than with workers, employees whose alienation from their tasks is reminiscent of Rudolf Arnheim's and Walter Benjamin's first analyses of the actor's status in film before the appearance of the "star" phenomenon. Film stars were merely the sublimation of their essential status of alienated worker. The interpreter, on the contrary, insists on the present tense of doing, on the work of representation in progress, and what in it arises from an artificial construction. A disinvested copyist, says Huyghe, the interpreter "feels nothing, he recopies. . . . I said to them: you are mouths that talk and bodies that move in space."[5]

Sticking to the example of *Remake* (1995), a literal refilming, in video, of Hitchcock's *Rear Window* (1954), Pierre Huyghe's version

represents in a singular way, in relation to the original work, that same work marked by a loss, an emptying, an absence. Hence, *Remake* shows us the fold by which we may become aware of the existence of a copy and an original henceforth designated as a matrix, a "score." No doubt this is the first meaning of *Remake*: to produce this distancing effect, exhibit the original while at the same time keeping it in the background. Thus, *Remake* designates itself not only as a copy, but as a carrier of another discourse—though without this other discourse becoming distinct from the original "language" it reproduces, except through the aforementioned distancing effects.

Remake is the most typical example we can identify of the logic of the fold, right from the 4x3 poster series: there, the work presents itself as empty, absent, not only in the sense that it refers to a reproduction, a remake—for example, a video reproduction of a cinematographic work that already exists—but also in the sense that this reproduction does not seek to mask the effect of waste and disinvestment in relation to the original. The reproduction of the original produces no other meaning. It functions as a simple transfer of the meaning constructed by the original filmic narrative towards a dimension, a shot of reality, that radically modifies its effects.

3.

In the movement of transfer from original to copy, everything happens as if the interpretative activity of the characters were

occurring at the level of the spectator himself, to become a possible characteristic of his specific work in relation to the representation. In other words, more than just a film to see, *Remake* is a film that presents a series of situations to replay, which, while respecting the articulation and length of the original film, seem disassociated from each other and are offered to spectators as so many pretexts for them to try out their own acting skills. By seeking to produce the conditions of a permanent passing-back-and-forth between character-interpreter and spectator, *Remake* rediscovers a status and definition for the work of art as matrix for the work of producing interpretations for which it is merely a starting point, whose origins we can trace back to certain postconceptual offerings of the early 1970s, I think of works such of James Coleman's *Slide-Piece*, for example. This reversibility of interpreter and interpretation, which could be characterised as a principle of "audiovisual karaoke," this circularity of roles between the characters in the work and the spectator, is central to all of Huyghe's propositions. He said, referring to the posters: "we never know whether the people working (in front of the poster) are interpreting the image, or vice versa."[6] *Remake* takes us from the original work, as matrix of a second work, to the constitution of this second work as matrix of an interpretative activity, theoretically infinite, which presents the true finality of the work. Thus, the interpreter truly appears as a third party enabling passage between the two sides of representation. He enables the spectator to enter into the image, inhabit the narrative. By making it possible to emancipate the interpreter in

relation to the character, *Remake* constructs a mode of relationship with the spectator not based on an identification between actor and spectator, but on what I have called the "karaoke principle," of a *contest of interpretation*, which may upon occasion free itself from the film medium that gave birth to it, to be transposed and practised from multiple matrices. This increased interest in issues surrounding the figure of the interpreter, beyond the mistrust of the psychologically constructed subject, enables us to rediscover the dialogical, communicational function of language, indissociable from the constitution of a *scene* of representation.

4.

The interpreter is an ubiquitous figure. Whatever position he may occupy with regard to the representation, be it interpreter-employee or spectator-interpreter—although indeed, as we have just seen, Huyghe's propositions endeavour to combine the two so as to make them interchangeable—the interpreter is prone to multiplicity. He is constituted, by definition, by a potential multitude of actor functions (or, to refer to Michel Foucault's terminology, of author functions).[7] This disconnection, however, from both person and character, from the real individual in relation to the functions he interprets or, more simply, executes, is not merely the source of original arrangements, playful and creative, for the subject. It is also, today, the source of a reality he must endure. In other words, via the question of the interpreter and the concrete devices he operates, the question being asked is about the "human," as

opposed to thematic, status of the subject of the representation. In Huyghe's work, nothing so much as the little filmed interview with Lucie Dolène, who sang the original music for *Snow White* (1937), so explicitly questions the property relation of self as "one's own." Roland Barthes magnificently demonstrated how the grain of the voice that manifests in the gap between what is being stated and what or who is stating it reveals the irreducibly singular part of the subject in language. In Huyghe's film, Dolène, who plays herself, shows the opposite—that is, how strange it can be to recognise one's own voice while feeling it does not belong to us but to the character and the "story." Emotionally, symbolically, politically, Dolène reveals the problematic nature of the "property" for which she concretely and legally fought against the multinational Walt Disney company, which accorded it little value. In doing so, the *Snow White* device is revealed as an exemplary space for questioning the processes that constitute what Samuel Beckett called "the unnameable last person I."

5.

Far from neutral, indifferent, or insignificant, the language forms in which or by which these interpreter-bodies operate bear the seal of reification: whether it is the solitary, anonymous walker of *Parcours* (1992), whose movements are limited by the narrow rail of the moving sidewalk within an aluminum and glass envelope that protects and illuminates him from a truck driving randomly through the city; or the reduction of public communication space

to the simple interactions of the first video game (*Pong Movement*, 1999); or, among many others, the karaoke paradigm, which limits the possibilities of invention to reproduction alone. Moreover, if reification means the transformation of reality into fiction, an enterprise transforming reality into spectacle, is this not also what we are confronted with in Huyghe's 4x3 pseudo-advertising posters, in relation to the micro-events they represent, actualising the definition of simulacrum proposed by Jean Baudrillard some twenty years ago, whereby events are "preceded by the model with which their process merely coincides?"[8] This, indeed, is what seems to be confirmed by the blurring of relations between an event, its cinematographic image, and media commentary, characterised by *The Third Memory* (1999), produced by the Centre Georges Pompidou. Thus, Huyghe's initial problematic—how to inhabit the narrative—must be restated and developed, borrowing, for example, one of Benjamin H. D. Buchloh's formulations, initially intended as a summary of Marcel Broodthaers's main question: "how to constitute subjectivity within a reified system of language?"[9]

6.

Huyghe's first propositions, such as *Huyghe à l'envers* (Huyghe Inside Out, 1993)—a slide image of the artist against a background of advertising signs—exemplify this concern. The globalised world symbolised by these signs, a world of economic and financial circuits, of commerce and businesses of the postindustrial era,

synthesise in an image what the public domain has become in the era of globalised advertising. The principle behind Huyghe's gesture, playing with the double-sided exposure made possible by the slide—thus re-actualising a principle reminiscent of Piero Manzoni's *Socle du monde* (Base of the World, 1961)—is a refusal to authorise a synchronous reading of the figure and the background. To "read" the figure, the artist himself, on which his name is printed, means that we can no longer read the logos on the illuminated signs the right way around, and vice versa. It is as if the artist's project involved searching for an order incompatible with the world of corporations and the standardisation of existence by capital.

The following year, *Dévoler* (Unsteal, 1994), a film modeled on the sort of demonstration video found in large department stores, re-adopted this same relation (right way around/backwards). Rather than vaunting the merits of such and such a product, this film, which runs only a few seconds and is meant to be viewed on the same monitors as the videos that inspired it, shows a person returning to a store shelf a used article for which he has no further use. *Dévoler*, a first staging of an interpreter's encounter with a world of merchandise and advertising, develops pragmatically through the idea of recycling, the logic of inversion already introduced in *Huyghe à l'envers*. *Dévoler* is a concrete gesture that aims to invert the logic of the reification of needs into products.

Functioning as a reverse advertisement, an appeal to cease consuming, the film's inspiration is pursued in later years with the 4x3 series of anti-advertising posters. By advertising an absent

event or uneventful events, Huyghe's posters also overturn the logic of consumption: they literally cover advertising placards while employing the same formal economy to reverse their effects. This creates an effect of one-upsmanship that interrupts a moment of illusion; a deprogramming or freeze-frame that functions as a strike action upon meaning, and which, in referring back to the here and now of the presentation, makes it possible to reappropriate the consciousness of self of the viewer/passerby/customer included in the place where the image is presented.

The idea of recycling also introduces a principle of responsibility,[10] a minimal rule for the constitution of common living space. The photographs of *Daily Events* (1994), actions on the street which, although menial (plugging a hole in the asphalt, tidying public flower boxes, cleaning a terrace made unuseable by clutter and dirt, etc.), all aim to bring about a concrete improvement, however minimal, to common living space and are direct outgrowths of that principle of responsibility.

From the start, Huyghe's choice of places and tools for artistic intervention seem to be dictated by a concern for the consideration of, or rather settling into, laying foundations in places that have become synonymous with common space. Today's public space, however, although it has more than ever to do with the materiality of a territory, a *local* here-and-now, defines a space in which the concrete dimension of the territory take less and less account of those places where the imaginary and the real intersect, compose, and decompose to produce spaces of common reference.

The power of cinema lies in the fact that it has, for a long time, helped nourish this space with representations. As Jean-Luc Godard recently demonstrated, film is above all a huge public archive. Directly or indirectly, all films contribute to the construction of collective imagination by seeping into the mental space of individuals. In this sense, film is less a time frame than a space—common, urban—which more than any other brings us together through a series of reiterated projections, a bundle of reference points that constitute a subjective/objective identity card. A decoder and promoter of behaviours adapted to the transformation of lifestyles in industrial and postindustrial societies, film has popularised characters played by actors. As Serge Daney says, differently from the actor, "the character only exists when he seems to have always existed (even before he appears), and that continues in scenes where he is not present. We join Godard in speaking ill of filmmakers who sacrifice their characters to the needs of the script, and about the fact that the only possible characters are those provided, once and for all, by religious or political mythologies."[11]

But for a long time, cinema has ceased to have a monopoly on scripts that give us a mirror image of our lives. It has been overtaken not only by the rise of all kinds of media, but by the progressive affirmation of other types of representation that also involve the production of characters—music, fashion, or design—and whose modes of consumption bring new forms of appropriation. Now the film character is nothing but a metaphor for a relation to reality that will readily function from now on in

our lives as customers-consumers: something borrowed, a copy, an adjustment of mass-produced models, activated or reactivated on the basis of many different situations. If, however, in relation to the multiplication of "history supports" since the invention of film, the cinema remains a special reference point, it is because it was the first to make credible the possibility of producing an almost exact stand-in for the real time of life, measured out by work. The relation between film and reality is, in its very contradictions, the entire history of cinema. It is from this tension that all cinematographic aesthetics were born, proposing different *models* for the reconstruction of reality.

Warhol was not the least of those filmmakers fascinated by the idea of "lining." *Sleep*, in 1963, sought the perfect coincidence of film and anti-film by making it last, without cutting, for the entire eight hours of a sleeper's sleep. And the reference to Warhol goes even further. It introduces, in all its ambiguity, a key reflection on the advent of what people were starting to call "leisure society," with its immediate corollary, free time. Film did not simply introduce the possibility of double reality; it also gave birth to a second time frame, parallel to the first, like his inverse double: free time, the lining or flip side of work time. Reaching maturity, however, film revealed its own contradiction: while destined to satisfy a demand for mass entertainment, its economy, techniques, and protocol appear to be as many exact copies of the rationalisation of industrial work. Godard often insisted on the historical, economic, and aesthetic coincidences between lines of images and assembly

lines theorised by Charles Taylor. On the other hand, Warhol's allegory of sleep could easily be considered a figure of boycott and inversion, a symbol of resistance and assertion of counter-time, a liberated time that refuses to bend to the injunctions of work society. True, it could also be read as a more pessimistic statement on how apathy resulting from the development of the culture industry affects the desire for emancipation. Today, television has prolonged and accentuated this lining effect by producing a time of continuous representation whose programming is the negative (copy) of a typical day in the life of the average worker. As a dominant model of the staging of the real, the programming of free time seems more than ever to be based on the model of work time. This idea of lining is a component of Huyghe's interest in television. It is by means of representations intended to nourish the tight, continuous flow of this second time that the self-images or narratives of societies take form. This is why the invention of counter-models of occupation or liberation of different forms of free-time programming is indispensable to the decolonisation and reappropriation of public space.

7.

Film, however, has not simply reproduced the assembly line. As I said before, it has given birth to an "actor" individual whose behaviour in relation to the story he helps to tell, though without mastering its construction, is comparable and emblematic, in its very alienation, of the gap denounced by Marx, between the

mechanical task performed by the worker and the finality of his work.[12] In *Les apparitions* (The Appearances, 1996-99), the process of recording the presence of actors on screen is compared to a timekeeper. The reification of the actor, through the suppression or strict limitation of possible modalities to his acting, has been widely used in modern film, such as Robert Bresson's work in the 1970s, in which actors are considered as mere "human material,"[13] extras who less embody characters than functions. With the film actor and all the personnel required for the making and distribution of films is born the prototype of the free-time worker, a veritable emblem of the condition of modern man. It is through the figure of the free-time worker, as we have seen with Lucie Dolène, for example, that identity conflicts faced by modern subjectivities are revealed to their full extent. Torn between a desire for self-assertion and the conditions that negate it, the free-time worker reveals the sort of contradiction he is required to surpass. Voice workers, dubbers, are of particular interest to Huyghe (*Dubbing, Blanche Neige Lucie*); they are exposed in an extreme manner, as is demonstrated by the court case initiated by Dolène to protect the use of her voice. In another way, the artist is also an obvious embodiment of the free-time worker. Historically a figure of emancipation from the traditional forms of relation to time and space, the modern (avant-garde) artist has a special responsibility that engages his credibility, in the imagining of forms of deprogramming or reprogramming of ways to structure time that configure the possibilities for inhabiting public space today.

8.

The question of how to inhabit public space today must be reformulated in terms of the increasing importance of leisure activities as opposed to work-centred activities, until now hegemonic in subjectivity-defining processes. Thus, the reconstitution of a use value for public space in Huyghe's work, "formatted" by free-time industries, appears as a project equivalent to that of validating the act of stating in relation to what is being stated, the interpretation in relation to the original score. With the 4x3 posters, we saw how in Huyghe's work this reflection was pursued through the elaboration of a scene of representation that cancelled out the customer relation to create an effect of absence, of empty availability, such as the poster created during a student strike at the Université Paul Valéry in Montpellier, which from a distance shows a circle of young people sitting on a lawn, enabling the passerby/spectator to resume possession of the space he or she is crossing. With *Remake*, the issue at hand is a reappropriation of public space defined by the film memory or, rather, a first concrete act of reappropriation of film as an archive that constitutes collective memory. The initial idea of *Remake* was to give a sum of money to a group of people to make films themselves, right where they were, like the organisation of the Festival du Temps Libre which, beyond any notion of failure or success, endeavoured to make amateur film production an opportunity to gather a community around the reopening of a disaffected cinema, and clearly shows the importance, in Huyghe's work, of the idea of film as a model

for the sharing of liberated time and a rearticulation of social space.

The project *Suzanne Boorman* (1997), produced in Denmark as part of L'École temporaire, is also characteristic of the endeavour to redefine filmmaking practice as a collective practice. Whereas a film usually tells a story about imagined relations between several characters, in this case several real people contribute to the definition of a single character. For two or three days, ten young women attempt to invent a character (her life, behaviour, emotional relationships, psychology, etc.) and do a documentary on her imagined life. In the film, each participant speaks in the first person, speaks herself through this character, becomes the character for a moment, creating crosscuts and intersections between the various interpretations. The idea that the use of film can bring about a renewal in collective practices is also the basis of local television projects carried out by the artist.[14] This is also, literally, the objective of the artist's lightship project for the Association des Temps Libérés, entitled *House or Home?* (architecture or dwelling?) (1995) created after the first Mobile TV experiment in Villerbanne and a meeting with a number of people who were asked their reasons for belonging to a series of local associations. With the project of designing a house whose formal characteristics would be less important than the behaviours and situations it may initiate, here again it is a matter of giving precedence to the construction of a situation favouring the subjective experience of collective states of being. "Basically," says Huyghe, "this house is a possible form of socialisation, a state

of mind. It's the process, the transitory, the becoming inscribed in the time frame, that interests me most." Similarly, the Ecole Temporaire project—structured around a collection of texts and images, an "open bible" on all possibilities—is intended above all as a means of learning about the association itself, an opportunity to reflect upon what it is possible to do together, or, even more, on what the fact of being together makes possible. To what degree can know-how, the characteristic processes of "art," serve as a model for new forms of learning and sharing? We have seen that if art—at least, that which inherits or seeks to inherit from its most radical modern formulation, always searching for redefinition while attempting to contribute to and redefine the great parameters of contemporary experience—can have some sort of relevance through investing in new collective territories of subjectivation, it is because of its familiarity with inventing uses that confirm and contest other existing uses in the struggle of codes for hegemony; a definition of what Pierre Huyghe calls *incivility*.

NOTES

This text is an abridged version, partially rewritten, of a longer unpublished essay from 1999 that deals with Huyghe's complete works and their development. For a descriptive introduction of his propositions, see *Pierre Huyghe: The Trial*, exh. cat. (Munich: Kunstverein München, 2000).

1 PHILIPPE HAMON: *Texte et idéologie: Valeurs, hierachies et évaluations dans l'oeuvre littéraire* (Paris: PUF, 1984), 104. See also, by the same author, "Introduction: Pour une théorie du personnage," in *Le personnel du roman* (Paris: Droz, 1992 [1983]).

2 Inaugurated by the theorists of the *nouveau roman*, from Nathalie Sarraute to Alain Robbe-Grillet, who titled a chapter of *Pour un nouveau roman*, "Sur quelques notions périmées—Le personnage" (On a Few Outdated Notions: The Character) (Paris: Gallimard, 1963).

3 VINCENT JOUVE: *L'effet-personnage* (Paris: PUF, 1992), 50.

4 *Exposition Pierre Huyghe* (Montpellier: Frac Languedoc-Roussillon, 1995).

5 DOMINIQUE GONZALEZ-FOERSTER AND PIERRE HUYGHE (Interview): *L'état de chantier permanent*, PURPLE PROSE: no. 9 (Summer 1995), 121.

6 FRANÇOISE CHALOIN: *Pierre Huyghe. Des Scénarios pour les temps libres*, DOCUMENTS SUR L'ART: no. 9 (Summer 1996), 22.

7 MICHEL FOUCAULT: *"What Is an Author?"* in *The Foucault Reader* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984).

8 JEAN BAUDRILLARD: *Simulacra and Simulation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994).

9 BENJAMIN H. D. BUCHLOH: *Contemplating Publicity: Marcel Broodthaers' Section Publicité*, exh. cat. (New York: Galerie Marian Goodman, 1995).

10 HANS JONAS: *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an*

Ethics for the Technological Age (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

11 SERGE DANEY: *L'exercice a été profitable, Monsieur* (Paris: P.O.L., 1993), 254.

12 For further details, please see my text "Expanded Spectatorship: Narrative Strategies in the Work of James Coleman," in *James Coleman*, exh. cat. (Barcelona: Fondation Tapiès and Brussels: Palais des Beaux-Arts, 1999), no. 21.

13 An expression of Daney's from *L'exercice a été profitable, Monsieur*, 253.

14 JEAN-CHRISTOPHE ROYOUX: "LE LOCAL: UN PARADIGME POUR UNE APPROPRIATION ARTISTIQUE DE LA TELEVISION. Quelques remarques à partir de trois propositions récentes," in *Homo Zapiens*, exh. cat. (Rennes: Galerie d'art et d'essai, Université Rennes, 1998.) Excerpt appeared in *Compilation*, exh. cat. (Dijon: Le consortium and Paris: Galeries contemporaines du Centre Georges Pompidou, 1999).

Thomas Zummer

Variables: Notations on Stability, Permeability, and Plurality in Media Artifacts

In Syria, around 1912, there was a man who traveled from village to village carrying an old projector, a reflecting lantern, and a single reel of film. He made a regular circuit, putting on his cinematic spectacles, projecting the silent reel, and telling stories about the exotic people who appeared as flickering shadows on walls or makeshift screens in the various communities he visited. The film would occasionally break, and he would fix it with any adhesive readily at hand. This was a continual problem, and there was a high attrition rate, as the film became more and more worn and damaged. Sometimes the repair became a tacit edit, and shots or scenes fell out of sequence or were lost entirely. Moreover, as the man made his rounds, the various townspeople tired of hearing the same stories over and over again, so that something very like a traditional oral epic began to develop. After a while the man was telling stories not of the people who remained on the screen, but complicated extended narratives of their relatives, or children, or friends and acquaintances, who were not present within the frame, but resided somewhere else, outside the image, in a sort of evolving virtual off-screen space.

The story may be apocryphal, but there are certain aspects—repetition and plurality, variability, permeability, commutability, virtuality—that remain endemic to the entire register of the cinematic and to subsequent media artifacts. While certain of these basic structural and technological attributes have on occasion been refined and deployed as aesthetic, theoretical, or even political tactics in the critical transformation of media, for the most part they have persisted in the public sphere of popular media as tacit conditions of possibility, where they are usually precluded or suppressed by conventional habits of consumption. There is, in fact, a good deal of anxiety about the containment of media representation, and a sophisticated culture of apprehension surrounds the introduction of new works, new forms, and new technologies. But with profound changes in contemporary technologies, in forms of access, transmission, and delivery, there comes—albeit somewhat more slowly—a transformation of the forms of apprehension and consumption as well.

I. SUBSTRATES: TECHNICAL, COGNITIVE, SOMATIC

. . . the living system we are a part of is clearly both organic and machinic . . .
—Chris Hables Gray

Strangely, cinema secures our attention; we have an abiding fascination with visual experience: the act of looking is reflexive;

the gaze, recognised and sustained, is folded back into itself as pleasure. We have an interest in novelty, in the revelations of desire, sexuality, and death, and in scenes of violence, aggression, and the exotic. We have a peculiar *curiositas* in the very phenomena of motion and duration, color, and form. Disregarding the synthetic origin of the persistence and retention of traces that produce an illusion of motion, we invest ourselves in the claims of the cinematic. Our cognitive involvement in its technical/aesthetic *topoi* forms a complex and enduring pattern of relations between perception, reference, medium, and memory. The perceiving body has been inscribed into a register of instrumentation, engaged in prosthetic perceptions indistinguishable from, and a supplement to, its own sensations. Such inscription has a history, and there are technical substrates of unconscious memory that persist and permeate our relations to the instruments we devise, writing us into the writing of light and movement, shaping and delimiting the forms of attention and modes of address which, in their interaction with specific machinery, re-cognise the specular as intimately linked with the *real.*

In 1923, Ivan Pavlov describes the reflexive "orienting response" of human test subjects to sudden noises or shifts in the relative luminosity of objects. The pupils dilate, the brain's alpha activity diminishes, and there is a constriction of the small capillaries: attention is drawn to novelty in the perceptual environment. It is not surprising that cinematic strategies of sound/image composition, editing, and *mise-en-scène* also operate in this register. The

human visual system, recognising a change in luminosity as a change in form, gives unconscious credence to our investment in the fidelity of cinema's flickering *sensibilia.* We have already reacted to a moving image, the trace of a person, for example, as if he or she were present. We presume the deferred presence of somebody as having been, at some time, present before the camera such that it (the device, unintentionally)—or someone else behind the camera (intentionally)—has observed and faithfully secured the image of the person or event represented. But the camera itself does not see;[1] it has been prosthetically inserted between the original subject and the (intending) eye of the person operating the camera, so that it circumscribes and subsumes the space of the spectator, a "camera-eye" that holds place for—*simulates*—the presence of the eye of the spectator, such that there is a presumed coextension—identification—between the apparatus, the originary operator, and the present spectator, which serves as an evidentiary trace of photographic verisimilitude, a technically reproducible access to the real. It is an instance of the camera's penetration into human re/cognition, as happens when we look at a photograph of some person or watch an actor/character in a movie. As the film unfolds before us, there are moments of sympathy or dislike, times when our hearts may race, or our breathing become shallow, hairs stand on end, and we become aroused, or terrified, or burst into laughter almost before we know it, as if the shadows before us have some privileged link to a present that has *not* passed away, but which, *once having taken place*—arrested in

the trace of the image—is present at *every* moment, and persists, holding place for the potential recuperation of the real. Cinema is promissory: there is a strange prolepsis (anticipation) concerning technical reproducibility in this very social configuration, a presumption that the *repetition* of the real constitutes a privileged access to the originary act or event—a strange, and modern, spatial conceit that locates the deferred and absent trace in some recoverable elsewhere. A conceit that readily breaks down when subject to close scrutiny.

While the figures on the screen may be insubstantial phantoms easily distinguishable from corporeal reality, the experience of motion in the cinema, at a physiological level, cannot be distinguished from the experience of real motion. As Christian Metz notes, there is a perceptual basis for the assertion that motion in the cinema is not a re-presentation, but a presentation, not the re-experience but the experience of motion, since the very same perceptual mechanisms that process real motion and apparent motion are brought into play in both cases.[2] Those same mechanisms for discerning the real enable our investments in the play of shadows, and there is an uncanny commutability between one register, the physiological, and another, the phantasmatic, such that there is a real engagement, and investment, in the illusion of the specular.

II. REPETITION AND PHANTASM

Many riddles might be solved by mere image, but redeemed only through the word.
—Walter Benjamin

In an essay that is perhaps read too often, and too quickly, Walter Benjamin marks a distinction between the camera's optics and human perception, noting the camera's intervention into the human visual arena, via the substitution of a nonconscious instrumentality in the place of our own regard,[3] that is, at a remove, in a deferral that institutes an *aporia* in perception via certain intercessionary technologies—photography, cinema, digital media—that is difficult to discern or to avoid. For all of its increasing sophistication, the camera remains an instrument of citation, a "writing in/of movement and light" that secures only the most minute movement as it flashes by (*Aufblitzendes*). Still, when we see what the camera has recorded, it nonetheless engages a reflex, hardwired within us, that perceives movement, and even reflection, as substance, and which compels us to seek recognition in/for/as response to an other, seen as having appeared either within the frame of the image or operating at its presumed point of origin. Facial recognition, for example, is one of our earliest unconscious accomplishments; the camera intervenes in that, and presents a technically reproducible shadow, an apparition of presence, one that operates at the same time as an index of loss. For Benjamin, it is through the instrumentality of the

camera that "an unconsciously penetrated space is substituted for a space consciously explored," where the naturalisation of prosthetic perception via the camera "introduces us to unconscious optics as does psychoanalysis to unconscious impulses"[4] —that is, at a remove, outside the image or scene, with a compulsion to repetition and the promise of recuperation. There is an uncanny doubling of the camera's unconscious optics with our own impulses, a technico-philosophical sleight of hand that purports to secure the whole of the real. Cinematic perception is folded back into our own experience, an artificial memory which, naturalised and subsumed, holds forth the proleptic promise of recall, even as it circumscribes a doubled site of loss.

In general people's appearance does not show that they are anything, even less what they are.
—Sigmund Freud

Even if one has a general knowledge of the way people walk, one knows nothing of a person's posture during the fractional second of a stride.
—Walter Benjamin

What we thought were sensations have become ghosts,[5] transfixed in a flash, mere afterimages. There is a phantasmatic aspect in the naturalisation of cinema: we are *haunted* by images, traces of an elsewhere that we have made our own, domesticated fragments that we have compelled to enter into strange and familiar relations,

different economies of sense. Presence deferred to an impossible proximity, but not lost entirely. The patterns of deferred presences may be considered a species of allusion, and it is within the space of allusion that a complex interplay of simulation and dissimulation occurs, through which we recognise, engage with, and consume images. Our presumption of the verisimilitude of the camera—of its "objectivity" and its tacit claim to the truth of human presence—is related, and has persisted as an index to the photographic apparatus since its origins.

Thomas Y. Levin argues persuasively that "the epistemology of the 'realism' of the 'effect of the real' produced by classical continuity editing in film is fundamentally based on the referential surplus value of photo-chemical indexicality. The history of "[6] our apprehension of the material basis of the photographic artifact as depicting an image of *something* has secured for the photograph—and for all subsequent photographic media—a powerful, if problematic, signifying presence. Levin goes on to discuss a certain era in the reception of photography where such artifacts could be unproblematically introduced as, for example, evidence of culpability or innocence in a court of law, or convincing proof of events or phenomena, and he points out that today no such claim to evidentiary verisimilitude can be presumed, as the consequences of an increasingly widespread recognition of the photographic surface as a complex and hybrid construct are rendered pressingly salient in our digital milieu, tracing the hitherto hidden contours of a constantly renegotiated and "generalized

pedagogy of verisimilitude," wherein our perceptual regard and consumption of images are shaped and constrained into a register of habits.[7]

"Machines for seeing modify perception," as Paul Virilio notes, but they do so invisibly.[8] Cinema is a complex intertwining of architecture and memory, technology, perception, unconscious habit, and bodily disposition.[9] It is a "lived technology" whose prosthetic perceptions are naturalised as our own, and whose *aura* of objectivity underwrites our investment in its phantasmatic registers. Inside the cinematic proscenium, we are linked to a specular machinery where habitual behaviour modifies, and is modified by, instruments that interactively construct experience, and our perception of the real is grounded in and by historically contingent technical substrates of unconscious memory—relations to specific forms of the specular—so that we respond as if the play of light and shadow were the present-perfect tracings of (human) presence. There is, at a deep level, the integration of our own subject-position into the specular apparatus, as if its "perceptions" were our own, and while we may recognise the simultaneous portrayal of an actor and the character played, it is nonetheless as if they, too, once having been so, are still present. This is also the case with the imagined presence of the operator of the camera, and holds true even when that presence is only potential, as in the case of automatic surveillance systems. The body's engagement with other (imagined) bodies persists as a common and inextricable component of the apparatus, and our familiar everyday perceptions are linked to a history of

cinematic artifacts, memories, and behaviours in diverse, complex, ways—so much so that even our recognition of their artifice is a culturally mediated form, a naturalisation of the phantasmatic nature of such intercessionary technologies, which renders them invisible.

There is a great deal about the cinema that is invisible, that depends upon the invisible; and the sense that we have of the boundaries, ends, or completeness of media artifacts is also a social (and unconscious) construct. Cinema does not resist desire but accommodates it, and there are certain irreducible attributes of the cinematic artifact—permeability, repetition, variability, plurality—that are repressed in order to stabilise the consumption of images.

In the utterance, discourse fails as realized structure; in the enunciation, it is always infinite, unfinished.
—Luce Irigaray

The analogy drawn between language and mediation derives from current psychoanalytic/linguistic studies: as is the case in language, the subject (of media) is never a substantive, but is actively constructed within a field of relations, which are constant and incompletable.[10] In terms of the possibility of potential relations, the subject-positions engendered in cinema, in similar fashion, are similarly incomplete. In our attendance to the cinema we, as subjects, do not really carry out an action, contemplate a spectacle,

or articulate a discourse; we are included within the spectacle, within discourse. So, too, we do not designate an act of enunciation, but operate in the place of enunciation itself. This is the site of the *phantasm*. Whether of the nature of delirium or dream, hallucination, misprision, or artifice, we—who are always marked by anterior and exterior discourses—are not substantialised within this frame, but situated in a system of relations that constrain the realisation of discourse, as an unstable signification, to the most irreducible sort of phantasm. In other words, for all of our strain, it is still "only a movie."

The trace of ourselves as speaking subjects within the cinematic enunciation is therefore negative, an act of inverse ventriloquism, something acted upon us, even as a subvocalisation, or a scare is induced. Recognition of the productive subject-positions within cinema occurs then as a reflection, exterior to one's investment in the illusory, excised or cut off from the relations engendered by parasitic speech, less a subject of, than to, mediation.

There are certain works, commercial and artistic media artifacts, that involve, on the one hand, an auto-deconstruction of the phantasmatic dispositions of the subject (those that have been demanded by certain historically contingent types of enunciation and established as a general *habitus* in the pleasurable consumption of images), and there are also works wherein the stable configurations of media artifacts are cast into question and problematised, such that questions of form are shown to exceed the conventional armature and involve a recasting—in light of questions of technical/digital

reproducibility, virtuality, ownership, and distribution systems—of notions of innovation, continuity, progress, and decline. Moreover, there are many examples throughout the history of nineteenth and twentieth century media technologies that may serve as an appropriate point of departure to a discussion about "saving the image." In the following sections, I will briefly address a range of specific works where the consequences of the deconstruction of the subject of media, and of forms of mediation within which the persistence of the phantasmatic is preserved, are bringing about a radical and unexpected change in form, address, access, and transmission—in short, a new politics, and ethics, of the image.

III. STABILITY AND VARIABILITY

. . . . reproducibility has always reproduced itself, but never in an identical manner.

—Eduardo Cadava

***Démolition d'un mur*, Auguste and Louis Lumière, 1896.**

Technical reproducibility is not an empirical fact of modernity so much as a structural possibility within the work of art. In 1896, the film *Démolition d'un mur* by Auguste and Louis Lumière begins with three figures standing in front of two perpendicular

walls, structures that must have been at some time the walls of a house. One of the walls extends from the foreground left into the background, and the other connects with it in the background and extends from there into the right side of the screen. One man, whom we take to be the foreman, sends the other two men off-frame, one to the right, and the other to the left. The foreman remains in the center of the frame, while the other men disappear. After a moment one of the men reappears in the small space between the wall and the left terminal edge of the frame. Seconds later the left wall collapses and the two men rush to the pile of stones remaining near the center of the frame; as the dust clears we begin to see, in perspective, the space that the wall had masked. There are two salient points here: the scene is composed in such a way that the two walls create a cubic space within the projected frame, so that the left wall is coextensive with the frame of the image, an attribution underscored by the reappearance of the man from off-screen, just behind the wall. His appearance serves to demonstrate the structural similarity between two aspects of frame and wall—a contiguity of real and imagined spatiality—since both subject him to similar sorts of appearance and disappearance. The tumbling wall is a spectacle based entirely on the effects of movement on these conventions of traditional perspective, and the cinematic frame is here revealed, figured, as an omnipresent mask or window over a coherent physical space. The production of a coherent and logical "off-screen space" is an effect of the presumption of a preferential contiguity connecting spaces

of appearance and disappearance. Moreover, *Démolition d'un mur* was a very popular film, and it was often projected over and over again, forward and backward, as the audience sat transfixed, caught up in the play between *mise-en-scène* (casting or putting things in place) and *mise-en-abyme* (casting them into the abyss). That one state could be (constantly) transformed into the other, and back, suggests a dynamic (and phantasmatic) recuperation of time.[11] In *Démolition d'un mur,* the trace of history, even of such a local nature, is rendered salient only through an "arrestment of the image," satisfied by repetition, exceeding the limits of its representation (the event has, after all, passed away) into its inverse. It is not so much that Lumière's wall disappears, but that it threatens to disappear, and that this threat is rhythmically reproduced, over and over, forward and back, preserving itself through the cinematic arrestment as being always on the verge of disappearing. This is perhaps most true at the moment it reappears. It is, as Benjamin might say, an arrestment that causes itself to appear in the present *as* a history or, to put it more precisely, as a trace of the possibility of history. The possibility of history, figured in a trace, the survival—through arrestment and repetition—of a trace of what has passed away, is bound to our capacity to read these traces *as* traces. The "now-time" (*jetztzeit*) of the image stands for, in the place of, what has passed away, the absent event survived by its mere trace: the photo-chemical index of cinema's verisimilitude.[12]

What are the terminal boundaries of something like *Démolition d'un mur*? If we take it to be an artifact coextensive with the event

of its projection, then the sense of the singular instantiation of the artifact passes away, repetition renders cessation indeterminate. Is an artifact permeable to itself, so that projection and its inversion serve as irreducibly linked topologies/tropologies in a coherent specular event? Are there necessary or contingent limits on duration, attention, consumption? How has it come about that we consider the finitude of media artifacts to be of an unproblematic nature?

***Vampyr*, Carl-Theodor Dreyer (1931).**

There is a strange plurality to a work such as Carl-Theodor Dreyer's *Vampyr*: there are several versions of this film, and, except for one major divergence, in most cases the differences are very slight. Nonetheless, all attest to the variability of the surface of the image, and the tacit commensurabilities of montage employed in the address of the spectator. *Vampyr* was released in the 1930s, within the constellation of nascent Fascism and National Socialism, where it was modified to conform to the presumed sensibilities of its "proper" audiences. For example, Baron Nicolas de Gunzburg, alias Julian West, portrays protagonist David Gray in the "original" version, and *Alan* Gray in the Aryan version shown in Germany, where such Semitic names as "David" were excised. A number of prints of both variants are still extant, and each print differs from the others in minor ways. In some cases, the film has been re-edited into a shorter, more ascetic form; some prints have a different configuration of intertitles, recounting

subtly different narratives. On occasion certain shots are repeated. None of these practices are unique; neither are they particularly unusual. Rather, they present a particularly clear example of the primary indeterminacy of the cinematic/media artifact, not only in terms of context, situation, and public sphere, but also in terms of the mutability engendered by multiple interests and variable replications. The question of an original "text" is problematised within this plurality—the sense, one might say, lies in the variation—even when the artifact is exactly the same, as when one views the same print over and over or on different occasions. There is an indeterminate boundary enframing of the cinematic artifact; it remains incompletable even, perhaps especially, as it admits the interpenetration of the world. The notion of the definitive may well be a modern, even positivist, conceit. No such determination is possible with cinema. Annotations, scripts, screenplays, memoirs operate on the margin of legitimate reflection, a supplement to multiple, often variant, prints. Negatives, workprints, and conformed master prints have similar instabilities.

IV. PERMEABILITY AND MUTATION

A screen . . . is more like a permeable membrane than an impenetrable wall; it does not simply divide but also joins by simultaneously keeping out and letting through. As such, a screen is something like a mesh or net forming the site of passage through which elusive differences slip and slide by crossing and

criss-crossing. But a screen is also a surface on which images, words, and things can be displayed. Every surface is actually a screen that hides while showing and shows while hiding. This duplicity of the screen is captured in the verb: to screen means both to conceal and to show. Enacting what it designates, screen implies that concealing is showing and showing is concealing. Screen, screening, screenings: noun/verb, hide/show, conceal/reveal, absence/presence, pollution/purity, darkness/light. . . . Forever oscillating between differences it joins without uniting, the *meaning of* screen *remains undecideable.*
—Mark C. Taylor

Whether it is employed as a noun or verb, *screen* is a strange word, one in which multiple meanings pass through each other without losing definition. For example, a *screen* may designate a moveable device, or framed construction, used to divide, conceal, or protect; it may be a mesh or sieve used for sifting or sorting out fine particles, or it may establish a hierarchy or taxonomy; it may refer to a process of selection and appraisal; *screen* may designate a forged banknote, or an architectural element, situated to keep out sun, rain, or insects. A screen may be a surface upon which an image is projected, or the phosphorescent surface upon which an image forms in a cathode ray tube. As a verb, *screen* means to conceal from view, to hide, protect, shield, or guard; *to screen* is to separate, examine, or qualify, or to show, represent, or depict, as occurs in a motion picture. All of the diverse references deriving from the term *screen* are coextensive to an indeterminable degree. I will suggest as well that *screenings*—projective and transmission events—are

similarly indeterminate, and that their presumed terminal boundaries are in fact permeable and unstable. I will also suggest that the various determinations of media artifacts as a singular object, device, projection, transmission, delivery system, screen, spectacle, or event are equally soluble, that such determinations permeate each other, and that their resolution as a specific and concrete instantiation is largely a matter of habit, interest, or taste.

There is a certain reflexive disposition harboured within our technological modernity that has proven impossible to evacuate or circumscribe. It has generated typologies and formalisms, critical accountabilities and positive interventions, forms of nihilism, essentialism, or fundamentalism, all in an effort to take measure of our relation to others and to the world via the instruments we have devised. It is in the margins of this instrumentality, where things hesitate, break down, or no longer work, that familiar patterns shift, paradigms mutate, and an unexpected reflection enters our most accepted traits and expectation. It is a difference in mediation arising out of mediation. I will suggest that there is another history of innovation in reflexive technologies, one that is perhaps coextensive with, but certainly irreducible to, notions of an avant-garde, or of progressive, popular, commercially viable, or critical forms of media. I will further suggest that through certain more or less conscious strategies or tactics, one might recognise new and salient differences in the way that media and environment organise each other, and that these may not be isomorphic to accepted notions of discrete artifacts, sets of artifacts, signal

events, or related tendencies, but may suffuse and permeate the mediate sphere in plural or partial configurations. Mediation and environment, subject and referent interact, shape, and operate upon each other, preserving continuities, generating innovation. There are myriad sites where such transformations take place.

Videogramme einer Revolution, **Harun Farocki and Andrej Ujica, 1992.**

There is no such thing as documentary—*whether the term designates a category of material, a genre, an approach, or a set of techniques.*
—Trinh T. Minh-ha

1989. Bucharest, Romania: 35mm, S-8, 16mm film, betacam, 2-inch VTR, VHS: "The revolution, an unforeseen and unusual event, comes into the camera's field of vision. Behind the pictures of the revolution another image shines through, that of a foreseeable and everyday world, a world the camera equipment was designed to record." Images of images, images within images. The fall of the government of Nicolai Ceaucescu takes place in public, in *media*, the focus of multiple vectors of surveillance. Cameras are everywhere on the morning of 22 December, 1989, interspersed throughout the crowd milling in front of the Central Committee Building. Cameras of all sorts—private, personal, commercial, official—focus on the balcony as Ceaucescu appears, speaks, and then disappears, all caught from a multitude of perspectives

and points of view. The "event" in the square is saturated with recording devices, and yet there is a curious incapacity to grasp what has happened before one's various "eyes." There are gaps and *lacunae*, shards and fragments of the "real," a disturbing lack of the containment of representation as a coherent sense or narration. Harun Farocki and Andrej Ujica collected some 125 hours of disparate media in an attempt to "reconstruct" history, a material chronology of the "event" that appears as a phantasmatic trace in so many perspectives. There is a certain rhetorical stance in their efforts—an *irony*—that informs the resulting drama. *Videogramme einer Revolution* is a compilation film,[13] a transformation and ordering of previously recorded data through editing procedures, classificatory conventions, and narrations; the irony resides in Farocki's and Ujica's placing an apparent trust in the material, photo-chemical index of the mediated real in contrast to the synthetic apprehension of events secured not only through editing but also residing in the reflexes and habits of consuming visual data on the part of spectators. Much of the architecture of the film, in voiceovers, and constellations of image-traces, operates against these conventions, in a critically reflexive auto-deconstruction tempering the mediated claims upon the *real.* This is a very interesting strategy: in one sense, there is a diminuation of the *image* as a privileged link to the real. At the same time, within this form of skepticism, the image as an irreducible evidentiary trace of the real is preserved. What has happened is that the place and status of the image as a document has changed. Take an

example from medicine: in medical imaging processes, which are teleologically linked to a precise goal—diagnosis—the status of any of a wide variety of images is minimal and provisional.[14] A final operative diagnosis may be achieved through the comparison of several heterogenous processes focusing on the same site: X-ray, CAT-scans, MRI, sonograms, and digital simulation may operate in concert to construct an image of a condition, tacitly constructing an hypothesis of address. Such images are compared to a taxonomic database of other such related medical data, and the "picture" becomes a bit more clear. Any subsequent surgical procedures are recorded. The shape of the medical imaging procedure may be something like this:

[somatic condition] > image-artifacts > index/heterogenous technics > database > confirmation/diagnosis > [procedure]

Videogramme einer Revolution performs, by analogy, a similar sort of diagnostics upon the claims of instrumentation in the securing of the shadows of history. For all of the vast accumulations of the photographic/cinematographic/medial/digital archives, there are only flashes, *aufblitzendes*, of the most minute and ethereal sort, over and over again.

You don't have to search for new images, ones never seen before, but you do have to utilize the existing ones in such a way that they become new.
—Harun Farocki

Je Tu Il Elle, Chantal Akerman, 1974.

Writing is a communication with the absent.
—Augustine of Hippo

Chantal Akerman, appearing as a woman named Julie, stays in a bare, ascetic room where she constantly writes (rewrites?) a long letter. The minimal tensions of this epistolary scene are traced and enacted over a period of several weeks. Julie is always alone, a solitary figure traversing the screen, shifting positions, moving a mattress from the floor to an upright position propped against a wall (is it perhaps a sad and ironic reference to an early cinematic illusion?). Julie eats an entire bag of sugar. [Section 1 ends.] Outside: Julie hitches a ride on the highway outside Brussels; she is picked up by a truckdriver. They talk about family life, and she indifferently addresses his sexual needs. They part in a public bathroom. [Section 2 ends.] Julie arrives at the apartment of her former lover, who initially forbids her to stay, but relents and makes her something to eat. They make love, tenderly and strenuously, and the next morning Julie silently leaves. [Section 3 ends.]

The disposition of voice in the bare room marks itself as both detached and complicit with the events taking place on the screen, in the fashion of the classical cinematic voiceover. But it is a strangely dislocutionary presence, sometimes coinciding with an event as it unfolds, sometimes speaking in the present tense about occurrences we have just witnessed, or that have passed

away, or that we have not had access to; at times we recognise an event as following its verbal description. Sometimes voice, narration, and image seem to coincide and echo, doubling. The systematic displacement of image and phonic trace, and the deictic play with reference and temporality, are inherent structural possibilities within the medium. Akerman uses the separation and deferral of the sound and image tracks to tamper with reference to contemporaneity (synchronised sound/image event), memory, and anticipation, and to the past or the future of a represented narratological event, to induce a species of "auto-deconstruction" of cinema's prosthetic memory. It does so by breaking the bounds of identification, producing a rupture that reinscribes the subject-position of spectatorship into an unstable configuration, even as one retains the referential trailings of an intermittent and phantasmatic suture (identification with character or situation), wherein one *does* constantly recover the narrative trace, the balance of character, and even a sort of scopophilic pleasure within the index of spectatorial labour.

***Peggy and Fred in Hell*, Leslie Thornton, 1986-2002.**

. . . displaced from increasingly precise measurements of time and space onto the immeasurable excesses of an instant without duration and without dimension . . .
—Paul Virilio

Leslie Thornton's adaptive and proleptic *Peggy and Fred in Hell* is one of the most extreme attempts at tracing the dynamic contours of cinematic incompletability. It is, in a sense, a kind of *perpetuum mobile*, a self-organising generative machine. The story is minimal, ascetic: something has happened; two children survive and are observed traversing a ruined, apocalyptic terrain, interacting with the traces of technologies, the detritus of sense. Somehow television is always on, at least somewhere, and Peggy and Fred mimic and cajole, embody and enunciate traces of the world. Not necessarily their world, but ours. Seen through their eyes—is their pretense directed or improvised, their reaction spontaneous or studied?—everything is strange and uncanny. Like when they pretend to be adults: their only guide is media, they can have had no possible experience of adulthood, and so they produce a strangely and profoundly distorted map of human being, a phantasmatic imposture which is both extra- and intra-cinematic. Other things happen—interruptions, edits, transmissions, recursions. The relationships between technology, society, identity, and subjectivity that underpin contemporary media culture no longer pertain here, though they persist as enduring shadows and afterimages. Form and convention are equally under duress. There is a palpable sense of the interactive, as narrative collapses under the strain of excess labour necessary to its preservation. Regardless, we are swept along, and a new order of recognitions begins to operate. Thornton tampers, at a fundamental level, with media's deictic structures—its spatio-temporal configurations—and duration,

extent, effect, and causality are mobilised and redirected. *Peggy and Fred in Hell* may be one of the most sustainedly proleptic (anticipatory, suspenseful) works ever conceived, a hypnotic and consuming anti-narrative about narrative.

In concrete terms, *Peggy and Fred in Hell* is a continual work-in-progress. There are eleven "episodes" so far, which operate within and range across different media: film, video, architecture, radio, digital media. Some sections involve simultaneous projection and transmission, and the "episodes" are notoriously interchangeable. In a recent media installation in Bordeaux, three registers (precisely edited loops of footage from or related to the episodic works) were "mixed," producing a remarkable and resonant three-month-long para-narrative film.[15] Three loops of different durations were finely ordered and set to play in a randomised phase pattern so that no repetitions would occur over the course of the exhibition. It was a tacitly self-editing work, an "artificial intelligence" allegorising itself.

In *Have a Nice Day Alone* (another intermittent section of *Peggy and Fred in Hell*), the entire spatial field of the film is activated by a technological "nervous twitch," a bizarrely beautiful and hypnotic pulsing of the surface. The image shrinks, flows, collapses, seeming to follow some strange and hidden agenda. Intermittently there is a text about speech on screen, visible through the pulse. In the background, extreme forms of vocalisation—yodeling and macabre laughter—punctuate the visual space. As the image flutters, a robotic voice speaks about various

conditions of speech: silence, rhythm. Language is dislocated as one finds oneself subvocalising the texts that appear on screen, sometimes before, or slightly later than, the "voiceover." It is unclear whether the voice mimics or generates the text, as it becomes more energetic. Finally, a small child (Fred) emerges and "calms down" the mechanomorphic entity. The mode of address shifts from the position of a voiceover to that of a subject or character within the film as the child interrogates the voice. No longer authoritative and exterior, the voice is engaged within the *mise-en-scène*, interacting with the child, and then withdraws into an almost reflective repose, talking to itself. It is once again a palpable experience of an "artificial intelligence"—one that is both complicit with us and utterly alien.

With *Have a Nice Day Alone,* the phantasmatic space of the screen, the familiar field within which we are accustomed to imagine ourselves, has been rendered exceedingly strange, and our capacity to invest our desires, expectations, and belief in what happens is enervated and compromised. It is as if we are carried away, swept into the uncanny fold of the work, as it punctuates extra-cinematic (off-screen) space and recursively collapses in on itself, like a—momentarily—standing wave. *Have a Nice Day Alone* tampers with some of the more unusual, and overlooked, aspects of common media: it plays upon the Z-axis, revealing lateral dimensions of cinematic/temporal articulation (like special effects, of which it is undoubtedly some rare species, where the layers of manipulation are compressed into a palimpsest of effects

that are conventionally intended *not* to be seen; where composite images are taken for a single surface supporting the mythology of the camera's verisimilitude; even when one doesn't buy it, one accepts spectacle in place of realism, the negative trace of credibility). For Thornton, this negativity is doubled, a switchback into cinema's phenomenality that takes up different issues of pleasure. The surface of the cinematic illusion is punctured by another illusion, and then another, so that the repetition and doubling of the phantasmatic causes its collapse and return. Thornton's work is a *deontology*—a negative theology—of cinema. *Have a Nice Day Alone* operates by revealing that the cinematic screen is a kind of "hole," a negative space (*mise-en-abyme*) around which various discourses and desires are organised and articulated. Media's *mise-en-scène* (literally "casting into place") is symmetrically bonded to this invisible *mise-en-abyme* (a "casting into the abyss" of signs and representations). It is only via the arrestment of these phantasmatic images by the engaged presence of a spectator that cinema exists. Cinema is an art of memory: turn on the apparatus in a dark, empty room, and all of the seductions, tropes, and forms of address play out, in a form of automatic solipsism; without a spectator the subject-positions engendered by the apparatus remain empty, and *cinema* does not take place. Leslie Thornton's works, by re-problematising the screen where these strange cartographies take place, do their part to deconstruct the media image of the world, not to show you where the "world" really is, but to reveal that it is not at all where you think.

V. PLURALITY AND EXCESS

The abject is edged with the sublime.
—Julia Kristeva

***The Parables*, Alan Sondheim (2001).**
Phantasy may take up residence in any portion of the frame, partially, entirely, multiply. Sondheim's incessant—one might fairly say obsessive and compulsive—tampering with one precise register of mediated subjectivity—the sexual—is both disturbing and remarkably fertile. It may be that it is via the proximate gap, the distance between creativity and repetition, that these works are most unsettling. For one thing, there is a vast amount of material, so much that one might be tempted to discount it as mere fetish were it not for an inescapable, and deep, poetics that is also at work throughout. Even if one considers it at the level of a symptomatology, an embodied *idée fixe*, its effect is not compromised. Sondheim's works are often astonishingly beautiful and moving. Just as often they are irritating and disturbing. This is an important configuration. Sondheim introduces terms for rejection or dismissal within the work itself, sometimes as a direct confrontation, at other times through sheer magnitude, the threat of an irredeemable and inconsumable mass. This is not a trivial point: Sondheim reflexively tampers with notions of spectatorship, authority, consumption, and coherence. His fondness for visual and theoretical eclecticism produces a close playing on the

margins of sense and the senseless with some startling effects. In *The Parables* (2001), a series of short, intense Quicktime™ movies done with Azure Carter and dancer Foofwa d'Immobilité, the body functions as both image and reflexive operator, constructing its own myth of presence within a network of technical mediations, both in the "present-tense" of media, and as a fissure or scar within the multiple phonic and textual overlays which, *a posteriori,* attempt—unsuccessfully—to suppress its irruption as a problematic element of the image. The impossibility of this mediated body is at times recuperated through humour—Sondheim and Carter can be disarmingly hilarious—though it most often remains a raw and inconsumable trait, a puncturing of media's phantasmatic desire. In certain works, there is an abject sexuality bereft of even the promise of pornography's packaged erotic charge; in others, the body appears as enigmatically at odds with its own motivations. It is perhaps not so surprising that the chosen vectors for distribution of these works do not follow established convention. Most are available online, or on CD–ROM or DVD. Screenings often involve live manipulation of various degrees of "live" transmission and mixing, sometimes resulting in a dense codicil of images and texts, a palimpsest of traces and trailings, the conclusion of the work marked only by a curiously unsatisfying return to the performative body, stripped of all its fictions—or at least most of them—standing presumably present before you. Such tactics at the same time unveil or lay bare the minimal performative disposition of the "spectator," an aspect that is

usually suppressed. One finds oneself compromised, embarrassed, momentarily arrested and uncomfortably "put on the spot" by Sondheim's media work. That there are undeniable pleasures to be derived—Sondheim has an unerring cinematic eye—only makes the difficulty of these works more pronounced.

The subject is always bound to figurative systems; media's commutative principles distinguish but do not abnegate prosthetic perceptions, cognitions, and pleasures. In the perpetual motion of the cinematic *mise-en-scène* and the spectator's oscillating points of identification, and in the endless chain of cultural associations that the spectator brings to bear on elaborating those engagements, there is no arrival at a point of origin either in the "world" or in the "subject." The subject emerges in the negotiation of the realm of representations—a symbolic order whose form, function, and authority are at least partially organised and reproduced through the operation of an original, and historical, *phantasm*. In psychoanalytic terms, cinematic artifacts interact with technical substrates of unconscious memory in the construction of a psychic reality that bears the imprint of Oedipal configurations. These configurations, too, are historically modified, and bound to context and tradition. At the same time, as Jean-François Lyotard suggests, the "world" remains an ungraspability to which we only bear witness.[16]

The obliteration of any separation, the realization of the desire which in itself obliterates a limit . . .

—Hélène Cixous

VI. PRETEXT, CONTEXT, PARATEXT

[transmission]

There is a curious form of paratext that one often sees on the screens of contemporary television broadcasts, a word all the more curious for its degree of familiarity: the word *live* residing somewhere on the surface of an image, simultaneously outside and inside the visual field. One may see this image/text configuration many times over, always indicating that it is a "live transmission." What is going on here? What precisely is being indicated? It is useful to note that the term *live* arose as the dominion of uncontested naturalness of presence (life) diminished, entering into mediation. In early radio broadcasting, the term *live* was invoked in an effort to sever the connection between death and distance, between the past and present of events, people, and things. *Live* is the prosthetic form of life, something that announces its authenticity against potentially deceptive substitutes; the fundamental sense of *live* was therefore contrastive: "live" means "not dead." By the end of the 1920s, *live* had come to mean "simultaneous broadcasting," where the "live" performances or events were coextensive with their technical transmission. The notion of "dead air" is interesting in this respect, almost like a kind of Turing test for broadcast media. In today's mediated public sphere, *live* has come to mean something quite different: *live* means something like "present = having-been-present"—a present-tense of media

that seeks to reassert an authoritative authenticity by a claim to presence having been in front of the camera at some point. The shifting contours, attenuating boundaries of the specular event, are thereby pluralised, abstract. A live broadcast

> *. . . does not transmit 'dead' material as does the phonograph, but present and 'living' events. . . .*
>
> —E.W. Burgess

in a generalised space of "having-been-present"—i.e., as a virtual and continuous *presence.* Between radio and phonographic recording, the explicit equation of simultaneity with life, and recording with death, is propounded and exemplified, over and over again. Television is figured as an explicitly "live" medium; the signal is "live" whether what is transmitted is currently unfolding or has been previously recorded. There is in television, within its carefully wrought artifice of intimate familiarity, an irruption of the uncanny that occurs with the displacement and repetition of live images. As familiar as furniture, the television screen is still a dangerous membrane with the possibility of overturning its domesticity at any moment. Why else would so much energy be expended in circumscribing its use as an appliance, containing it as a live medium? The capacity to discern whether or not an image is a live image, or even whether that might matter, is evacuated in an architecture of evidentiary invisibility, to be relocated—in fact, domesticated and repressed—only in the most conventional manner, and via the

most minimally intrusive paratextual elements: as captions, titles, notes, attributions: "LIVE."

With every new technology, space and time have appeared to collapse. The interval is attenuated, and, paradoxically, extended *ad infinitum*. But it is the very *appearance* of collapse, one might suspect, that gives away the foundational slip, the elision, the phenomenological sleight of hand, wherein at the moment of its greatest weakness—the recuperation of these categories as forms of life—that the loss is most profound. Consider again that most common paratext, found now, almost everywhere, the term *LIVE* inscribed on the surface of a screen, indexed to a transmission, literally written into an event, a textual marker that something is taking place *now* (and, tacitly, *here*), at this very moment. Event and transmission are coextensive, and the question of origin has apparently been recuperated—snatched at the last moment—from an inaccessible real. Despite its deictic distance (its remoteness from a terminal spectator), this now phantom event has become, in its mediality, both document and event, sense and memory, at the same time. Perhaps it was this sort of spatio-temporal aporia that Heidegger refers to, asking himself

What is nearness if, along with its failure to appear, remoteness also remains absent? [17]

The remote as a mediated suspicion: "LIVE" as a deictic marker that is no longer bound by the constraints of sense, marking and

indicating time, to be sure, but of what sort? Not the present as such, which passes away, but a present-perfect, which persists. Sense returns, arrested. Once having been, the presence of what has transpired before the camera is always accessible. But this deixis also marks another form of loss: the photo-chemical index of the photographic linkage to the real vanishes, just as the hope of recuperation takes up residence in the word: *LIVE.*

The *image* passes before us, in its real time, just as it does, we suppose, as we see it. There are only flashes, *Aufblitzendes*, arrested and fixed to the continuity of their endless passage: a persistence of vision. It is not that they have ended as fast as one sees them, but rather that their continuity has been parsed so that they no longer (re)attach to any subsequence (history), but only to other consequences (representations). This may be what Benjamin implies by considering History as photographic. The *place* of the image has been changed, and there are certain governances to such modifications. Point a camera into the sky, for example, and an anxiety suffuses the live image, especially now, when the sky has recently transported so many terrors, such that there is a gravity in the image of an empty sky that more readily maps itself to a reference—whether it is in Kosovo or Manhattan, Israel or Iraq—which subsumes it as a reference to a certain, precise event, almost by default—more readily than to any other. One might consider that the forms of *interest* in the allocation of images have become a tacit and governing hermeneutic, one that transfixes and transforms the evidentiary into the lived, in a vast phenomenological mix of

specularity and consumption. What has happened is the inverse of what we have been induced to fear: time and space have not collapsed at all, but appear everywhere, at every moment, pluralising and infusing everything, a surplus of presence, entirely too much, all around.

VII. CONTROLLED VISIBILITY, COMMUTABILITY, AND THE PERMEABILITY OF THE WORLD

One might describe the cinema as a kind of interstitial, or intercessionary, technology, one that purports a certain commutability with the world via the traces and shadows that it captures and represents. This tacit ontology takes root in the incunabula of medial technologies, from the camera obscura to the PDA, from staged artifice to contemporary telepresence. The voice you hear on the telephone, for example, is not a voice at all, but a transmission—a modulated signal transfer and restitution—a phonic artifact that is coextensive and coterminal—but not identical—with its originary vocal emission. Such phenomena are more or less readily naturalised, so much so that to address the artifactual register of a medium is often quite labor-intensive (regardless that there is another order of pleasure to be had). There are many examples in the history of the cinema. Raymond Fielding points out the compatibility of cinematic perception and that of railway travel.[18] In the early twentieth

century, exhibitions such as *Hale's Tours and Scenes of the World* took the form of an artificial railway car, the operation of which involved combined auditory, tactile, visual, and ambulatory sensations to provide a convincingly realistic illusion of railway travel. Spectators were seated in a stationary train car as motion-pictures, which had been previously shot from the cowcatcher of a moving train, were projected onto a screen at the front of the car. Sound effects, an artificially produced rush of air, and a rhythmic swaying of the car were mechanically reproduced. Spectators reviewed a variety of popular American tourist spots: Niagara Falls, Pike's Peak, Chicago, the Black Hills, as well as foreign scenes, of Switzerland or Argentina. *Hale's Tours* ran from approximately 1904 to 1906, and internationally up to about 1912.[19] Theatres and proscenia, dioramas and panoramas all traded upon dislocutions of the real, filling the world with mediate experiences, a world remapping itself via technologies of reproduction and reflection.

[The Chrysler Building as image]

The Chrysler Building in New York City was, upon its most recent sale, copyrighted by the legal team of its new corporate owners. It was copyrighted as an *image*, casting into a legal framework a practice concerning the ownership of images that is, in fact, already tacit and pervasive. One has to pay, sometimes a considerable amount, if one wants to depict a building in a movie, for example. These costs have soared in recent years, and there has been a

migration on the part of directors and production companies to smaller, less expensive cities—Toronto, parts of Pittsburgh—which look enough like, which simulate onscreen, the ambience of Manhattan.[20] There is also a good deal of model-making, manual and digital, to evade these stiff fees. What is remarkable in the case of the copyrighted image of the Chrysler Building is that a convincing *simulation* of that structure—the *image* of the Chrysler Building—violates copyright, the rights of the owners of the image, and there are, by law, some very real sanctions. This is not to say that this is not a contested terrain, a very problematic grey area that will, at some point in the future, have to be resolved. If, for example, one wants to depict the skyline of Manhattan: is there a certain proximity, a certain and specified distance from the site, where the laws of copyright fall away and notions or reportage, citation, or fair use reassert themselves? It is too early to tell. But one might imagine the art that would ensue in the aftermath of the determination of objects, sites, and situations as already-virtual images, lawsuits *in potentia*.

[Times Square]

The spectator is an irreducible element of the cinematic/medial apparatus, a tropology that extends to every subsequent formation of media. Even the wrap-around digital signage in Times Square, on the Reuters or NASDAQ buildings, for its part arrests, momentarily, the subject of its gaze, even if its seductions take

place in a fraction of a second, and only then in our peripheral vision. This architectural/digital phantasmatic is more and more a constant within our environment, a "background condition," less on the order of a direct address than a constant and probabalistic conditional: always ready to be there. It is a variant of what Baudrillard has called the *hyperreal*, a precession of signs before, or without, referents, or even a concatenation of conflicting and absent referents adduced from the seductive collusion of sign-effects.[21] Unlike the cinema, to which they are nonetheless related, architectural projections do not impose a form of present-tense direct address; they operate in the marginal space of peripheral vision, as something almost already past, its import lying in *having been*, in enframing rather than engaging. Cinema's forms of address, whether one is present or not, are always directed as if to "you," the phantasmatic/structural subject-position mitigated by the consensual suturing of ourselves into the specular apparatus. The architectural progression of images claims only to have taken place; "you" are not its subject-position. Like delirium, a dream, an impression, it addresses the peripheral, the unconscious, in a reflexive marking—like a flash or an afterimage—of the body in its passage. This is the territory of our contemporary mediascape, our cities, our theatres, our stadiums, our homes. It is a world where everything is always already an image, where reflection and phenomenality occupy the sort of position formerly circumscribed by the notion of a "soul," where the referent is inscribed into the field of signs as a questionable and dangerous evidentiary trace. For

all its familiarity, the (mediated) world is an exceedingly strange place, and, *contra* Heidegger, it is not shrinking, and distance is *not* abolished, to be replaced by the monotone proximity of the *screen.* The world is as vast and as strange as ever, and more invisible. A common trope of globalisation is to mistake temporal simultaneity for spatial proximity, so that the interstitial deictic configurations (spatio-temporal markers and indicators in discourse) appear to vanish.

[9.11.01]
At the very moment of an event, there is a gap between perception and cognition, where pure perception has not yet made itself into the world, not yet entered into a relation with the possibility of knowing—when it is attenuated, momentarily absolved from a commitment to the horror—it is perhaps then that we are closest to the event. And for the rush of language that inundates that space, how much of it is cliché, familiar tropes, truisms that order not the event itself—something that *cannot* be domesticated—or our relation *to* it, or even our protection *from* it? Such recuperations are made afterward, in memory, and in the evidentiary traces we construct and preserve. Even as the first aircraft hit, it was captured within multiple vectors of unintentional surveillance, and the event was broadcast almost immediately. Young children in one of the schools closest to the site cheered and laughed, applauding this incredible image—how could they not? The only

precedent for such an image was in cinema or on television, where everyone tacitly knows that, with all of the weapons fired, all of the explosions, and violences, no one is really killed.

On the other hand, is it possible, within the framework of this intentional act of terrorism, that the composition of the event—a plane flying down 5th Avenue into the first tower, with a second plane, from another direction, hitting the second tower half an hour later—was also intentional, constructed so as to have produced the clearest images of terror, an active form of propaganda? New York City is already composed as an image, so that in a sense there is something already cinematic from the start. Perhaps terror always composes itself as an image, and this was an opportunistic instance of that reflex. How many times did we hear that it was "like a movie," or a "special effect"? And how was that the case in the very moments that it unfolded? It is astonishing to think of the vast network of people, stationary, fixed, in whatever proximity to the event, in front of their television sets. It *was* a movie, one coextensive with the horrors of its actuality, a film or covering membrane, something with which one *could* think, because any closer and thought disappears. The question of the precessionary comes up here. We have not only found ourselves within a presumed and probabilistic total war, where unspeakable things can happen anywhere, anytime, but we are compelled to recognise that we, and everyone, may have been within such a probabilistic war for some time now. Adorno's chilling question, how does one write lyric poetry after

Auschwitz?, which so haunted the latter part of the last century, has not passed away, but persists as an arrested and sustained instant, "without duration." In "Discussion, or how do you phrase 'after Auschwitz?'" Lyotard had written that it is in the phrases that circulate around negation that the work lies.[22] Communication, discussion, *dialektiké*, is the ground for community, and it is within communities that the phrasing of events takes place, where we take up the tasks of mourning. Phrases are mediated; one has only to reflect on the order of repetitions of images, statements, recordings, to see an emergent pattern, a possible, and perhaps at times opportunistic, form of public persuasion. We must be careful of an opportunism that merely and so readily determines other targets and agendas. Politics organises language; language orders perceptions, perceptions organise images. The image of American citizens *detourned*, used as living bombs against other citizens, has wrought an agony of signs and phrases, mapped and remapped into the contours of private and public anxieties. Constructed and transmitted as a mediated event *as* it occurred, within a global public sphere, the events of 11 September persist, continuously reshaped and deployed, analysed, propagated, and revised, a continuous signification, serving the perceived requirement of its symmetrical inversion, a commensurate response, accomplishing the preservation of terror. Language shapes response; response reflects interest; interest grounds the *image*. The anguish that remains, here and throughout the world, is unassailable.[23]

VIII. A PERSONAL APPENDIX TO *THE BATTLE OF ALGIERS*

La Bataille d'Alger *est un film de fiction.*
—Gillo Pontecorvo

Cinema penetrates the world in strange and unexpected ways. In 1991, my wife and I visited Algeria for the first time. In Algiers we stayed in an old and worn, but magnificent, hotel in the center of town near Abdel Kader Square. I was working on a study of rhetoric and popular culture in the Arabic tradition. We had friends living there at the time, and one evening we went to dinner at another friend's house. This was a man called "Malik," who was one of the *pieds noirs* who had fought for Algeria's independence in the early sixties, and was now a cardio-pulmonary surgeon. Conversation inevitably drifted towards the revolution, and his experiences of that time. At one point it was revealed that Gillo Pontecorvo's *Battle of Algiers* still plays, every night, to capacity crowds in a small cinémathèque very near to where the events portrayed on screen actually occurred. Malik and I made plans to meet in a nearby café the next day, to go to the movie and then to wander around the area where the depicted events had happened. As we walked around the city, two narrative strands were woven together: Malik spoke about what he had seen and done, and where events took place during the fighting, and he spoke about the differences and similarities in Pontecorvo's film. In *The Battle of Algiers,* there are no major actors,[24] very few actors at all, since

most of the people who appear on screen were living in Algiers. Some people, such as Yacef Saadi, played themselves; Ali la Pointe was played by a homeless peasant who looked somewhat like Ali, but, more importantly, looked like what Pontecorvo thought Ali should have looked like. Crowds on the street were just that. We took another coffee in one of the cafés that had been bombed, met a woman who had been nearby as a young girl, and then continued our walk up to Abdel Kader Square. "You can imagine," Malik said at one point, "the consternation of people who, a very short time after the revolution, once again saw French tanks and soldiers on the streets of their city!" In fact, the tanks had been purchased from Czechoslovakia after the revolution, the soldier's armaments were incorrect, and various other details were misregistered. Some locations were changed or ignored, as a new topography of events was mapped onto the urban geography, and a palimpsest of memories was inscribed. Pontecorvo shot with a single Arriflex camera most of the time, often waiting for the appropriate evening light, so there were often no overt clues that there was a movie being shot. Many of those *pieds noirs* and FLN who had participated in the events represented now participated in the representation of those events. Some were uncomfortable conducting a mimicry of their own actions, and there were some tensions between the sense of importance given to certain events by those who participated in them, and the relative import of these events in an overall narrative trajectory envisioned by Pontecorvo and written by Franco Solinas. Memory became a kind of "no man's land" permeated by

both orders of events, a landscape overwritten by the simulated movements of a re-presented past: cinema. *The Battle of Algiers* has taken up residence in the city. It is a social armature, a palimpsest of images, memories, speculations, and conversations. Even now, as Algeria experiences more than ten years of violence and civil strife, the sentiments of resistance and revolution are a reference point for opposing factions and combatants. I can't help but wondering if *The Battle of Algiers* still plays every night in the city of Algiers.

NOTES

1 See WALTER BENJAMIN: "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," section XIII, in *Illuminations* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968), 230. See also Samuel Weber, *Mass Mediauras: Form Technics Media* (Sydney: Power Publications, 1996).

2 Christian Metz, cited in JOSEPH & BARBARA ANDERSON: "Motion Perception in Motion Pictures," in *The Cinematic Apparatus*, ed. Teresa de Lauritis and Stephen Heath (London: The MacMillan Press, 1980). See also CHRISTIAN METZ: *Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974).

3 See NICOLAS RASMUSSEN: *Picture Control: The Electron Microscope and the Transformation of Biology in America, 1940–1960* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), for a sustained

and technical discussion of the naturalisation of perception via instrumentation. See also THOMAS L. HANKINS & ROBERT J. SILVERMAN: *Instruments and the Imagination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

4 Walter Benjamin's remarks concerning an "unconscious optics" have had considerable influence on the development of contemporary visual studies. Among the more interesting works, see PATRICIA TICINETO CLOUGH: *Autoaffection: Unconscious Thought in the Age of Teletechnology* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000); CATHERINE LIU: *Copying Machines: Taking Notes for the Automaton* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000); SCOTT MCQUIRE: *Visions of Modernity: Representation, Memory, Time, and Space in the Age of the Camera* (London: Sage Publications, 1998); GERHARD RICHTER: ed., *Benjamin's Ghosts: Interventions in Contemporary Literary and Cultural Theory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002).

5 The discussions of phantasm, spectrality, and technology derive principally from the works of Jacques Derrida, Bernard Stiegler, and Giorgio Agamben. For Derrida, see "La danse des fantômes: Entrevue avec Jacques Derrida/Ghost Dance: An Interview With Jacques Derrida," by Mark Lewis and Andrew Payne in *Public 2: The Lunatic of One Idea*, (1989); see also *Specters of Marx* (New York: Routledge, 1994); *Mal d'Archive: Une impression freudienne* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1995); *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995–96), and JACQUES DERRIDA & BERNARD STIEGLER:

Échographies de la télévision (Paris: Éditions Galilée–INA,1996). For Stiegler, see *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus*, trans. R. Beardsworth and G. Collins (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998); *La technique et le temps 1: La faute d'Epiméthée* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1994); *La technique et le temps 2: La désorientation* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1996). For Agamben, see *Stanzas: Word and Phantasm in Western Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); *The Man Without Content*, trans. Georgia Albert (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999); *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (New York: Zone Books, 1999).

6 THOMAS Y. LEVIN: "Rhetoric of the Temporal Index: Surveillant Narration and the Cinema of 'Real Time,'" in *CTRLSPACE: Rhetorics of Surveillance From Bentham to Big Brother*, eds. Thomas Y. Levin, Ursula Frohne, and Peter Weibel (Karlsruhe: ZKM/Center for Art and Media/Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002).

7 Levin's argument is persuasive and brilliant, and he goes on to describe the rearticulation of the reappearance of the documentary "image" as *style*—that is, as an index of the evidentiary, so that the surveillant look of the photo-chemical trace, hand-held or automatic camera movement, or technical glitches or infelicities trades its claim to verisimilitude for a rhetoric of spatio-temporal configurations in the service of narrative progress or closure.

8 PAUL VIRILIO: *Guerre et cinéma 1: Logistique de la perception* (Paris: Cahiers du cinéma/Éditions de l'Etoile, 1984); PAUL

VIRILIO: *War and Cinema: The Logistics of Perception*, trans. Patrick Camiller (New York: Verso Books, 1989).

9 See THOMAS ZUMMER: "Projection and Dis/embodiment: Genealogies of the Virtual," in Chrissie Iles, *Into the Light: The Projected Image in American Art 1964–1977*, exh. cat. (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 2001).

10 See LUCE IRIGARAY: *To Speak Is Never Neutral* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

11 The pleasures involved in the play of repetition, appearance, and disappearance are described in Sigmund Freud's famous account of his grandson's game of throwing a spool tied to a string over the edge of the bed, and delightedly vocalizing *fort/da* (gone!/here!). See *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 18, ed. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1963). For background material on Lumière, see JACQUES RITTAUD-HUTINET: *Auguste et Louis Lumière: Les 1000 premiers films* (Paris: Philippe Sers Éditeur, 1990). The translations of *mise-en-scène* and *mise-en-abyme* are literal; see SUSAN STEWART: *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 12, 63–64, 68, for a brilliant and suggestive consideration of rhythm.

12 For discussions of the the temporality of the image, on flash, shock, and so on, see: WALTER BENJAMIN: "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" and "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, and trans.

Harry Zohn (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968).

13 On the compilation film, see JAY LEYDA: *Films Beget Films: A Study of the Compilation Film* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1964). See also HARUN FAROCKI: *Nachdruck/Imprint: Texte/Writings* (New York: Lukas & Sternberg/Berlin:Verlag Vorwerk 8, 2001).

14 See LISA CARTWRIGHT: *Screening the Body: Tracing Medicine's Visual Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).

15 Leslie Thornton's media installation *Quickly, Yet Too Slowly* was exhibited at the capc Musée d'art contemporain de Bordeaux from June to October 2000, in a show entitled *Présumés innocents: L'art contemporain et l'enfance.* It consisted of three registers of projections/transmissions: a series of looped rear-projections on panels forming the low sides of a triangular platform (of ducks constantly running back and forth); three television monitors on which fragments of episodes from Thornton's ongoing epic cycle *Peggy and Fred in Hell* appeared, and a series of large background projections of (possible) atmospheric, spatial, or environmental configurations. Each level was a loop, and each was of a different duration. Each level of footage was precisely and minutely edited to slip into "resonance" with other levels, and programmed to run continuously for the duration of the exhibition. There were no repetitions, and *Quickly, Yet Too Slowly* was for all intents and purposes, a three-month-long projection.

16 There are many contemporary works which bear witness

to the ineffable, within which an auto-deconstruction of traditional forms and conceits of media are well underway. Some of the proper names are: Peggy Ahwesh, Martin Arnold, Abigail Child, Anouk de Clercq, Jane Gang, Johan Grimonprez, Pierre Huyghe, Chris Marker, Bill Morrison, Seth Price, Keith Sanborn, Trinh Minh-ha, John Waters, Grahame Weinbren.

17 See MARTIN HEIDEGGER: "The Thing," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstader (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), and MARTIN HEIDEGGER: *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper & Row, 1977). I cannot help but recall André Bazin's remarks on "mummification" in "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," in *What is Cinema?* vol. 1, essays selected and translated by Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967). For a comprehensive and brilliant analysis of the notion of paratext, see: GERARD GENETTE: *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

18 See LYNNE KIRBY: *Parallel Tracks: The Railroad and Silent Cinema* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997). See also WOLFGANG SCHIVELBUSCH: *The Railway Journey: Trains and Travel in the 19th Century*, trans. Anselm Hollo (New York: Urizen Press, 1977).

19 See RAYMOND FIELDING: "Hale's Tours: Ultrarealism in the Pre-1910 Motion Picture," *Cinema Journal* 10, no. 1 (Fall 1970). See also MARY ANN DOANE: "'...when the direction of

the force acting on the body is changed': The Moving Image," *Wide Angle*, vol. 7, no. 1 & 2, *Cinema Histories/Cinema Practices II* (1985).

20 This was uncovered while doing research for the pre-production of Francis Ford Coppola's *Megalopolis*. I worked as the lead illustrator/resident scholar for that early phase of the project, and one of my assignments was to redesign the Chrysler Building so as to avoid prosecution by digitally dropping it in over the actual building.

21 See JEAN BAUDRILLARD: "The Precession of Simulacra," in *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994).

22 See JEAN-FRANÇOIS LYOTARD: "Discussions, or Phrasing 'after Auschwitz,'" in *The Lyotard Reader*, ed. Andrew Benjamin (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989).

23 Fragments of this section have been adapted from an essay published online at various sites in the immediate aftermath of the attacks. The original text, "Some Notes on the Unspeakable, 09.11.001," was written after having witnessed the collapse of the two World Trade Towers from the roof of my home.

24 See the interviews with Gillo Pontecorvo in *Gillo Pontecorvo's* The Battle of Algiers: *The Complete Screenplay*, ed. Pier Nico Solinas (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973).

CONTRIBUTORS

RAYMOND BELLOUR is a researcher and writer. He is Director of Research at C.N.R.S., Paris. His interest in romantic and contemporary literature has resulted in, among others, the publications *Les Brontë: Ecrits de jeunesse* (Pauvert, 1972; Laffont, 1992); *Mademoiselle Guillotine: Cagliostro, Dumas, Oedipe et la Révolution française* (La Différence, 1990); *Henri Michaux* (Gallimard, 1965; "Folio," 1986). His publications on film include *Le Western* (10/18, 1966; Gallimard, "Tel," 1996); *The Analysis of Film* (Albatros, 1979; Calmann-Lévy, 1996). Above all, he is interested in "dissolves and passages;" mixed image regimes—painting, photography, film, video, virtual images; and the relationship between words and images. Publications in this field include *Passages de l'image* (Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, 1989); *L'Entre-Images* (La Différence, 1990); *Jean-Luc Godard: Son + Image, 1974–1991* (The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1992); *L'Entre-Images 2* (P.O.L., 1999). In 1991 he participated in the creation of the film magazine *Trafic*, along with Serge Daney.

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JIM HAROLD is an artist, curator, and teacher. From 1994 to 1998, he lectured at Glasgow School of Art and headed the Sculpture Department. He is currently Senior Lecturer and Researcher in Contemporary Photographic Practice at Northumbria University, Newcastle. He works between sculpture and photography, and much of his current research focuses on the nature of landscape, in particular marginal landscapes or border territories. Publications include *Desert* (John Hansard Gallery, 1996).

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CHRISSIE ILES has been Curator of Film and Video at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, since 1997. She organised the film and video series for *The American Century: Art and Culture, 1950–2000* (1999); *Flashing Into the Shadows: The Artist's Film in America, 1966–1976* (2001); the film and video series for the *Whitney Biennial 2002*; *Jack Goldstein: Films and Performance* (2002). She also organised the exhibition *Into the Light: The Projected Image in American Art 1964–77* (2001). She was formerly Head of Exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art, Oxford, where her exhibitions included surveys of work by Louise Bourgeois, Sol LeWitt, Donald Judd, Gary Hill, and Yoko Ono.

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LAURA MULVEY is Professor of Film and Media Studies at Birkbeck College, University of London and Director of the AHRB Centre for British Film and Television Studies. She has been writing about film and film theory since the mid-1970s. Publications include *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Macmillan, 1989), *Fetishism and Curiosity* (British Film Institute, 1996), and *Citizen Kane* (BFI Classics, 1996). In the late 1970s and early 1980s, she co-directed six films with Peter Wollen, including *Riddles of the Sphinx*, *Frida Kahlo*, and *Tina Modotti*. In 1991, she made a documentary with the artist/filmmaker Mark Lewis, *Disgraced Monuments*, which was broadcast on Channel Four in 1994.

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Your Makeup (1967), *Mondo Trasho* (1969), and *Multiple Maniacs* (1970). In 1972, Waters created *Pink Flamingos*, which would become the most "notorious" film in the American independent cinema of the 1970s. Films that followed include *Female Trouble* (1974), *Desperate Living* (1977), *Polyester* (1981), *Cry-Baby* (1990), *Serial Mom* (1994), *Pecker* (1998), and *Cecil B. Demented* (2000). In addition to writing and directing feature films, Waters is the author of four books: *Shock Value: A Tasteful Book About Bad Taste* (Dell, 1981); *Crackpot: The Obsessions of John Waters* (Macmillan, 1986); *Trash Trio: Three Screenplays* (Vintage, 1988); *Director's Cut* (Scalo, 1997). He has exhibited his artwork in numerous exhibitions internationally.

THOMAS ZUMMER is an artist, scholar, writer, and curator. Recent publications include "Projection and Dis/embodiment: Genealogies of the Virtual," a catalogue essay for *Into the Light: The Projected Image in American Art 1964–1977* (Whitney Museum/Abrams, 2001); *CRASH: Nostalgia for the Absence of Cyberspace*, with Robert Reynolds (Thread Waxing Space Press, 1994); *"What the Hell Is That?"* (Beehive Microtitles #1, 2000), a digital e-book on cinema and the taxonomy of monsters. He is currently completing a book, *Intercessionary Technologies: Archive/Database/Interface*, on the early history of reference systems. His works have been shown worldwide, with recent exhibitions at TENT/Witte de With Museum, Rotterdam; Marcel Sitcoske Gallery, San Francisco; White Box and Angel/Orensanz, New York. He is a frequent lecturer on philosophy and the history of technology and currently teaches in the Critical Studies Department at New York University.

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SAVING THE IMAGE ART AFTER FILM

TANYA LEIGHTON AND PAVEL BÜCHLER, EDITORS

Is art the final destiny of film? Is it the space where film is finally living up to its promise? Is it a zone of resistance to the technological and aesthetic obsolescence of film? Or a zone of transition? How does art make the cinema face its past and its yet to be articulated possibilities? How does it transform the modes of participation and the reception of the moving image at the time of technological and conceptual revolutions? How does the persistence of the cinematic in contemporary art reflect the determining condition of the screen media in all visual experience today? What challenges does it pose to the understanding of media culture? What is art after film?

RAYMOND BELLOUR

FRANÇOIS BUCHER

PAVEL BÜCHLER

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