

Against Post-cinema

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Abstract

This essay contests one version of the post-cinema thesis, namely, that the cinema is no longer a distinct medium because it has merged with other media into a monomedium of digital code or software due to digital technology. The cinema remains a distinct medium, the authors argue, identified and individuated in much the same way as before the digital era. Proponents of the 'monomedium' version of the post-cinema thesis arrive at their unwarranted conclusions, the authors show, because they are 'medium materialists', defining a medium by way of its materials. Hence, because digital materials have replaced celluloid-based ones in filmmaking, and other media use these digital materials, monomedium advocates conclude that the medium of cinema has been subsumed into a digital monomedium. However, a medium cannot be individuated by its materials, but is instead defined, in part, by the practice of using materials. Hence, a transformation in the artistic medium of cinema would require a revolution in the practices governing the use of materials in the cinema. Yet if we examine those practices, as the authors do in this essay, there is no evidence that the artistic medium of cinema has been subsumed into a monomedium by digital technologies.

It has become something of a cliché to argue that we live in a post-cinematic age due to the advent of digital technology. 'Cinema', we are repeatedly told, 'is no longer what it used to be [...] *for what has changed with digital formats* are not the films, nor every film, nor every part of a film, *but first and foremost cinema itself*'.¹ There are at least two often overlapping but conceptually distinct versions of the post-cinema thesis. The first holds that the replacement of celluloid-based by digital technologies in the production, distribution, and exhibition of movies has fundamentally transformed the cinema. Digital cinema, according to this view, is a new medium.

¹ André Gaudreault and Philippe Marion, *The End of Cinema? A Medium in Crisis in the Digital Age*, trans. by Timothy Barnard (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), p. 8 [emphasis in the original]

For many this is because, in the absence of celluloid, the cinematic image has lost an essential attribute, namely, its putatively 'indexical' relation to reality. 'Cinema is the art of the index', claims Lev Manovich, whereas digital cinema 'is no longer an indexical media technology'.² 'An emphasis upon film's chemical, photographic base', writes Mary-Ann Doane, 'now serves to differentiate the cinema from digital media and repeatedly invokes indexicality as the guarantee of a privileged relation to the real, to referentiality, and to materiality'.³ 'Comparing computer-generated images with film', maintains D. N. Rodowick, 'reaffirms that photography's principal powers are those of analogy and indexicality'.⁴ Others couch this change in terms of a gain rather than a loss. Berys Gaut contends that digital cinema is a 'new artistic medium' because it can 'create artistic effects [...] that are either impossible or prohibitively difficult in other media', such as photorealistic animation and genuine interactivity.⁵ Manovich, too, singles out increased photorealism as something made possible by digital technology, even declaring that digital images can be 'too real'.⁶

The second version of the post-cinema thesis argues not just that the cinema has been radically altered by digital technology, but that it is no longer a distinct medium because it has been subsumed by another medium. It has been dissolved into a broader medium in the digital era. Indeed, some proponents of this view intimate that digital technology has rendered the concept of a distinct medium obsolete, at least in the digital realm. As long ago as 1987 Friedrich Kittler was predicting that 'The general digitalization of information and channels erases the difference between individual media [...] and] the notion of the medium itself'.⁷ Manovich initially proposed that the greater photorealism enabled by digital animation means that the 'cinema can no longer be clearly distinguished from animation'.⁸ André Gaudreault and Philippe Marion concur, asserting that 'animation is returning to take its place as [cinema's] primary structuring principle'.⁹ Others believe that it is 'digital code' that has incorporated cinema, along with every other medium that has been digitized. 'The digital arts render all expressions as identical since they are all ultimately reducible to the same computational notation', volunteers Rodowick.¹⁰ 'The digital seems to move beyond previous media by incorporating them all [...] and by proffering the vision (or nightmare) of a medium without materiality, of pure abstraction incarnated as a

² Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), p. 295.

³ Mary-Ann Doane, 'The Indexical and the Concept of Medium-Specificity', *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, 18.1 (2007), 128–52 (p. 132).

⁴ D. N. Rodowick, *The Virtual Life of Film* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), p. 9.

⁵ Berys Gaut, 'Digital Cinema', in *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy and Film*, ed. by Paisley Livingston and Carl Plantinga (New York: Routledge, 2009), pp. 75–85 (pp. 77–78).

⁶ Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, p. 204.

⁷ Friedrich Kittler, 'Gramophone, Film, Typewriter', *October*, 41 (1987), 101–18 (p. 102).

⁸ Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, p. 295.

⁹ Gaudreault and Marion, p. 159.

¹⁰ Rodowick, p. 10.

series of 0s and 1s, sheer presence and absence, the code', worries Doane.¹¹ She goes on to ask: 'Is the digital really a medium, or even a collection of media? Isn't its specificity, rather, the annihilation of the concept of a medium?'¹² Manovich, too, now thinks that digital, or what he refers to sometimes as the 'monomedium' of software, has obviated the need for the concept of a distinct medium, but for the opposite reason: 'The problem is not that multiple mediums converge into one "monomedium"— they do not. The problem is exactly the opposite: they multiply to such extent that the term loses its usefulness'.¹³ And although Noël Carroll does not connect his claim to the advent of digital technology per se, he also locates the cinema within a broader category he calls the moving image, which includes 'kinescopes, video, broadcast TV, CGI, and technologies not yet even imagined'.¹⁴ 'We might fruitfully abandon [the notion of the medium] completely, at least in terms of the ways in which it is standardly deployed by aestheticians', he remarks, enjoining us to 'Forget the medium!'.¹⁵

In this article, we contest the second version of the post-cinema thesis. Not only, we show, does the concept of a medium, suitably defined, continue to play a crucial role in our practices with art, but the cinema remains a distinct medium, identified and individuated in much the same way as before the digital era. The cinema has not, in other words, merged with other media into some kind of monomedium due to digital technology.¹⁶ But before doing so, we want to point to one reason why, we suspect, so many commentators reach the opposite conclusion to us. We think that, at least in some cases, they confuse two distinct senses of the concept of a medium.

As the philosopher Joseph Margolis notes, we often 'speak at one and the same time of the physical medium in which an art work is embodied, and of the artistic medium in which the emergent work is actually formed. Thus, a painting is embodied in the medium of colored pigments applied to canvas; but, also, a painting emerges as a purposive system of brushstrokes'.¹⁷ By 'physical medium', Margolis means the materials that 'mediate [...] the transmission of the content of an art work to a receiver', such as the substance out of which the art work is made, as well as the tools employed to make it.¹⁸ Not all material media, howe-

¹¹ Doane, p. 142.

¹² Ivi, p. 143.

¹³ Lev Manovich, *Software Takes Command* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 233.

¹⁴ Noël Carroll, *The Philosophy of Motion Pictures* (Malden: Blackwell, 2008), p. 3.

¹⁵ Noël Carroll, 'Defining the Moving Image', in *Theorizing the Moving Image* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 49-74 (p. 51); Noël Carroll, 'Forget the Medium!', in *Engaging the Moving Image* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), pp. 1-9.

¹⁶ We are also skeptical of the first version of the post-cinema thesis. While digital technologies have undoubtedly occasioned some important changes in the cinema, in our view none warrant the assertion that digital cinema is a new medium. Others, however, we have already challenged this version of the thesis, which is why we only address it tangentially.

¹⁷ Joseph Margolis, *Art and Philosophy* (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1980), pp. 41-42.

¹⁸ David Davies, 'Medium in Art', in *Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*, ed. by Jerrold Levinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 181-91 (p. 181).

ver, are physical, for if they were, software and digital code would not be media. Rather, as David Davies points out, materials can also be symbolic, such as the lexical signs used in literature and poetry.¹⁹ By ‘artistic medium’ is meant the *particular uses* of materials. ‘The medium is constituted by the set of practices that govern the use of the material’, argues Gaut following Richard Wollheim. ‘These [practices] determine which physical materials can realize’ the medium.²⁰ One reason we distinguish between material and artistic media is that a variety of materials can be used to make works in the same artistic medium. Sculptors have availed themselves of all sorts of substances and tools to create sculptures, including celluloid film stock. Yet, a new artistic medium is not invented every time a sculptor utilizes a novel material medium. Nor do artistic media merge together just because they employ the same material media. Both theater and film rely heavily on the spoken word, the performances of actors, sets, artificial lights, costumes, make-up, and much else, but this does not mean we have trouble distinguishing between a movie and a play. Moreover, unless a material medium is used in a way constitutive of an artistic medium, it remains merely a material. A reel of undeveloped film in a canister is not a movie until it is employed in a manner characteristic of the artistic medium of cinema.

Although post-cinema theorists often acknowledge these two different meanings of the concept of a medium, they nevertheless tend to confuse them in practice, arguing that an artistic medium is individuated by a material medium rather than its use. Call this view ‘medium materialism’. Now, if you are a medium materialist, it is easy to see why you might think that digital cinema is a new artistic medium. Given that the digital materials used to make and exhibit movies are very different from celluloid-based ones, you will naturally conclude that they have fundamentally altered the artistic medium of cinema because you identify an artistic medium with a material medium. Moreover, because at least one of these digital materials, viz., code or software, is also used in other digital media, you will further conclude that the artistic medium of cinema has been subsumed into a monomedium of digital code or software. Many post-cinema theorists are medium materialists. Rodowick initially distinguishes between cinema and celluloid film, yet ends up identifying the former with the latter: ‘By “cinema”’, he writes, ‘I mean the projection of a photographically recorded filmstrip in a theatrical setting’.²¹ Doane, who warns that ‘it is ultimately impossible [...] to reduce the concept of medium to materiality’, nevertheless seems to do precisely that in contending that ‘An emphasis upon film’s chemical, photographic base now serves to differentiate the cinema from digital media’.²² Gaudreault and Marion also caution against identifying a medium with its materials.

¹⁹ Ivi, p. 190.

²⁰ Berys Gaut, *A Philosophy of Cinematic Art* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 288.

²¹ Rodowick, p. 26.

²² Doane, pp. 131–32.

Yet, as evidence for their claim that ‘it is difficult to assert that there has been no major rupture’ between digital cinema and its predecessors, they point to new digital material media such as ‘motion capture technology’.²³ And Manovich, following a long disquisition about different meanings of the term medium, reverts to medium materialism in making the case for the obsolescence of the concept of a distinct medium:

Most large art museums and art schools usually have between four and six departments which supposedly correspond to different mediums [...] and this is OK. We can still use unique names for different mediums if we increase their number to a couple of dozens. But what to do if the number goes into thousands and tens of thousands? [...] Consider [...] the development of new types of computer-based and network enabled media devices (game platforms, mobile phones, cameras, e-book readers, media players, GPS units, digital frames, etc.) [...] Do we get a new medium every time a new representational, expressive, interaction or communication functionality is added, or is a new combination of already existing functions created?²⁴

In this characteristic passage, Manovich slips from using the term medium in the artistic sense to medium in the material sense, describing all the new digital substances and tools, both physical and symbolic, that can be used for communicative and expressive purposes in the digital era. Hence, he concludes that the proliferation of digital materials means that we can no longer distinguish between artistic media because there are now too many of them. However, this would only be true if each of these new digital material media had given rise to a new artistic medium, which is far from the case. Indeed, rather than undermining artistic media, most of these digital materials, such as cameras and e-book readers, are used to instantiate works in traditional artistic media like photography and literature.

If Gaut and others are right that it is the practices governing the use of materials that, in part, individuate an artistic medium, then post-cinema theorists are profoundly mistaken in claiming that the artistic medium of cinema has been transformed, or subsumed by another medium, just because it employs new digital material media such as motion capture technology and code. For this to happen, these new digital materials would have to occasion a revolution in the practices governing the use of materials in the cinema.

Yet if we examine those practices, we find that there is no evidence that the artistic medium of cinema has been subsumed into a monomedium by digital technologies. Rather, artistic media, including cinema, are still identified and individuated in the same ways as they were immediately before the advent of the digital. This claim is underpinned by our rejection of medium materialism. It gets traction from the idea that media are identified and individuated not only by

²³ Gaudreault and Marion, p. 4.

²⁴ Manovich, *Software Takes Command*, pp. 233–34.

materials but by what we do with those materials — that is, by our artistic and appreciative practices.

Artistic practices are of especial importance because it is plausible that artists and other artisans have a special kind of privilege with regard to their creations. Specifically, their successfully realized intentions to make something of a particular kind are determinate of the kind of thing they create.²⁵ Borrowing Jerrold Levinson's work, we can also observe that such intentions — call them *categorical intentions* — logically extend to how a particular artifact is to be used or approached.²⁶ Here is a simple hypothetical example: I have an autographed ice hockey puck on my desk. While on study leave, I loan my office to a student who has no knowledge of ice hockey. She uses the puck as a paperweight. It works well for her purpose, but her appropriation of the object does not change the kind of thing it is; the artifact's identity is determined by (relevant) makers.

The point to be extracted from this example is that the categorical intentions of artists are determine of the kind of work they make. So, one way to investigate the identification and individuation of media is to study and analyze the categorical intentions of artists: what *sort* of artworks do artists *think* they are making? Artists often verify their categorical intentions in artist's statements and the like. Sometimes such statements can be misleading. For example, David Simon used to describe *The Wire* as a novel.²⁷ Yet in most cases, categorical intentions are manifest in the completed work. Categorical intentions are distinct from intentions about work-meaning in this way: although artists sometimes (perhaps frequently) fail in their attempts to ensure accurate 'uptake' of their intentions by audiences, they rarely fail to realize their categorical intentions. Rarely, for example, does one genuinely attempt to create a poem and end up with a photograph. In media production, where the financial stakes are much higher, it seems hard to imagine a case in which artists were unsuccessful in their attempts to make particular *kind* of work — a work in various categories, including in a particular medium.

It seems plausible that, if we were to exhaustively survey the categorical intentions of media artists, we would find that they are creating works in familiar 'pre-digital' media: cinema, television, photography, and so forth. This claim does not, by the way, rule out the possibility of artists attempting to create mixed-media works. Importantly, this is an empirical claim that could be tested and, perhaps, falsified. But it seems *prima facie* plausible.

For the moment, however, the question to ask is whether there are cases in

²⁵ Amie L. Thomasson, 'Artifacts and Human Concepts', in *Creations of the Mind: Theories of Artifacts and Their Representations*, ed. by Eric Margolis and Stephen Laurence (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 52–73.

²⁶ Jerrold Levinson, 'Intention and Interpretation in Literature', in *The Pleasures of Aesthetics: Philosophical Essays* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), pp. 175–213 (pp. 188–89).

²⁷ Margaret Talbot, 'Stealing Life: The Crusader Behind "The Wire"', *The New Yorker*, 22 October 2007, <<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2007/10/22/stealing-life>> [accessed 17 February 2016].

which artists *appear* to successfully realize a categorical intention to create, say, a standard cinematic work, but actually, and unbeknownst to them, create a work of animation or an instance of computer notation. Now, because categories of art can nest,²⁸ one could, in principle, advance such a claim without denying that the artists have *also* successfully realized their intention to create a cinematic work. But in practical terms, it is not clear this suggestion makes much sense: Is it really plausible that there is a kind of monomedium like animation, in which artists regularly work without any knowledge of it? If the above argument regarding the artist's categorical intentions and privilege with regard to her creations is sound, then we have reasons to reject this picture of artists working in ignorance of the 'real' (mono)medium of their work. In any case, this option clearly is not open to monomedium advocates, who tacitly embrace a kind of 'error theory' according to which people who think they are making works of cinema must be wrong because there no longer is a medium of cinema. But the 'error theory' runs into just the same problem: we have already seen that there are good *prima facie* reasons to suppose that artists' categorical intentions determine the kind of thing they make — including the medium in which it is embodied.

Let us briefly return to one earlier point about how categorical intentions encompass intentions about how a work is to be approached by its audience. Here is another way in which the actual categorical intentions of artists jar with the proposal that in the 'post-cinematic' era, there are no distinct media. Documentary filmmakers and television producers continue to create works that purport to truthfully assert facts about pro-filmic states of affairs. That is, documentary films are (still), in Carl Plantinga's terms, 'asserted veridical representations'.²⁹ Now, recent work has compellingly rebutted 'trace accounts', such as the one advanced by Gregory Currie, according to which documentaries are defined in virtue of the photographic medium's ability to make belief-independent recordings of pro-filmic states of affairs.³⁰ However, Currie's view, and those like it, point to something important about documentaries that should not be forgotten: documentary film's special epistemic status *partly* depends upon the belief-independent nature of the cinematic medium. That is, part of the reason that filmmakers can create 'asserted veridical representations' that audiences readily accept as, in fact, veridical is the shared knowledge that: 1) typically, such asserted veridical representations make central use of belief-independent recordings of images and sounds, and 2) typically, filmmakers can be trusted to not manipulate those recordings in such a way that would undermine their veridicality.³¹

The point here is that if the creators of (purported) documentary films were

²⁸ Gaut, p. 19.

²⁹ Carl Plantinga, 'What a Documentary Is, After All', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 63.2 (Spring 2005), 105–17.

³⁰ Gregory Currie, 'Visible Traces: Documentary and the Contents of Photographs', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 57.3 (1999), 285–97.

³¹ See Scott Walden, 'Photography and Knowledge', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 70.1 (2012), 139–49.

actually working in a monomedium of animation or digital code, their ability to create asserted veridical representations would be significantly vitiated. This isn't to deny that there are animated documentaries or that sometimes traditional documentaries manipulate footage in ways that undermine their veridicality. Rather it is to insist upon the possibility of creating documentary films as dependent upon medium-specific features — again, where 'medium' is conceived as involving both materials and practices — which neither animation nor digital code possess. In other words, the possibility of animated documentary is parasitic upon prototypical documentary; documentaries could not possibly have the special epistemic status that they do if they were all *just* ones and zeroes.

Consider passport photographs, for example. Needless to say passport photographs have a special epistemic warrant; they attest to identity. It is true that most passport photographs are now taken digitally, yet they have not lost that epistemic privilege. Why not? Because even though the material is now 'just' ones and zeroes, the photographs are still, as a matter of empirical fact, generated in a belief-independent process (unless of course they are forged.) And as Tom Gunning and others have pointed out, photographs were always susceptible to manipulation; it was never simply their 'indexical' nature that subtended their epistemic warrant.³² The important point is that passport photographs are not *just* ones and zeroes: if they were, they would regularly be created from scratch with digital animation tools and, as a result, lose their epistemic privilege. Here we see clearly that it is the continuity of our practices, despite changes in materials, that underpin the continuity of the medium. The point applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to cinema and television. Practitioners are able to continue to use documentary as a means to assert the veridicality of their stories (because, of course, neither documentary nor truth is opposed to narrative) precisely because their creations are neither just animation nor just digital code; they are still works of film and television.

This is a good segue to a discussion of what our *appreciative* practices can reveal about the identification and individuation of media. First, one point to round out the above discussion: to be clear, we do not mean to deny that changes in the materials of a medium can be significant. We accept that sometimes substantive changes in materials can result in a medium that is qualitatively different if not numerically different. We also accept that sometimes substantive changes in materials can precipitate changes in our practices that, together, result in a numerically different medium. For example, at the advent of digital photography, many critics and scholars worried about the possibility that our practices might be so transformed that the epistemic warrant of photographs could be extirpated. We agree that this is an ongoing possibility. If the BBC, PBS, the ABC, CNN, and so forth started to regularly doctor the audiovisual media in

³² Tom Gunning, 'What's the Point of an Index? Or, Faking Photographs', *Nordicom Review*, 1-2 (2004), 39–49.

their news reports, and major newspapers did likewise in print and on the web, we could quickly have a situation in which the concept of photography was so transformed that we needed to distinguish between ‘traditional photography’ and some related, but numerically distinct concept. However, we maintain there is compelling evidence to deny this has happened or, even, that such a change is imminent.

Among the other points that could be made about what our appreciative practices can tell us about the identification and individuation of media, we will, in the little space remaining, focus upon just one: evaluation. There are two, distinct but related points to be made here. First, given the relatively non-controversial assumption that a proper appreciation of artworks partly involves attending to what obstacles creators surmount, finer-grained distinctions between media are live and relevant insofar as different sorts of artistic media afford different possibilities and present different challenges. That is to say, the monomedium version of the post-cinema thesis lacks the means to adequately distinguish among various kinds and magnitudes of artistic achievement because on such accounts everyone is just working in animation or in digital code. In this sense, such proposals are really not descriptive, as they purport to be, but prescriptive and revisionary. For the fact is that we *do* make finer grained distinctions in our appreciative practices.

Consider, for example, a technical cinematic feat like shooting a long take. A proper appreciation of the artistic achievement of a film like *Russian Ark* (*Russkiy Kovcheg*, Aleksandr Sokurov, 2002), which is shot in a single take, depends upon comprehending the challenge of harmoniously orchestrating the pro-filmic events in such a way that they are captured by the production crew in real time. Of course, shooting a feature length film in a single long take is only possible thanks to digital cameras. But this hardly means that *Russian Ark* — or other digitally shot films that make extensive use of the long take, such as *Birdman* (Alejandro González Iñárritu, 2014) — can be properly appreciated as instances of animation or digital code. For animators and digital artists could, in principle, construct the entire work from scratch, obviating the need to carefully orchestrate the recording of the pro-filmic- indeed, averting the pro-filmic altogether. However, in this sort of case, we would have a very different *kind* of artistic achievement.

The differences are not only technological. The cinematographer’s long take and the animator’s ‘long take’ are also only properly appreciated against the art-historical background and context in which they are embedded. The long take, of course, has an important place in the history of cinema, so the innovation and success of contemporary long takes can only be properly appreciated with the background knowledge of the prior achievements of say, Renoir, Welles or Hitchcock — think of the opening shot of *The Player* (Robert Altman, 1992), which directly references *Touch of Evil* (Orson Welles, 1958) and indirectly references *Rope* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1948). But this history wouldn’t be relevant in the same way to our appreciation of the animator’s ‘long take’. Again, we see

the importance of not mistaking the medium with bare materials. The proper appreciation of the artistic achievements of an artwork like a film demands an understanding of what particular challenges the artist(s) overcome in working in the medium. But it also requires an understanding of the art-historical context in which the artists' technical accomplishment takes on particular aesthetic features such as being innovative, being derivative, being an homage, and so forth. This is one reason we continue to evaluate films *as* films and why it makes sense to do so.

The second point, which will be brief, is that our appreciative practices also indicate media are identified and individuated more finely than the monomedium version of the post-cinematic proposal suggests in this way: tacit in our appreciative practices are certain assumptions about what features are, to use Kendall Walton's terms, standard, variable, or contra-standard for a particular category.³³ Furthermore, there are reasons to think that the relevant categories here are media. Let us make this more specific: nobody goes to the cinema and leaves early, frustrated that the work for which they purchased a ticket was not interactive. Nobody begins playing a videogame only to give up, disappointed that the imagery was moving rather than still. And, to use Walton's example, nobody criticizes a photograph for not moving. Why not? Such actions would reveal category mistakes on the part of the agents involved: if you criticized a movie for not being interactive, you'd be approaching the movie in the wrong sort of way. What sort of categories would be involved in such mistakes? *Prima facie*, the categories are none other than media, identified and individuated as they were immediately before the advent of the digital. In any case, monomedium proponents have no more plausible account at their disposal for their view simply flattens these distinctions.

Let us sum up: our central aim in this paper has been to refute one especially prominent version of the claim that we have entered a 'post-cinematic' era. We have called this particular formulation of the post-cinema thesis 'the monomedium version' because it involves the further claim that digital technology has dissolved the medium of cinema into some *other* medium that now comprises what used to be cinema and much else. For some scholars this monomedium is animation, for others it is 'the moving image', for others it is binary code, and so forth. We have argued that the monomedium version of the post-cinema thesis is unsound. Specifically, it depends upon a conceptual confusion of two different senses of 'medium' — medium as a collection of materials and medium as a cluster of practices governing the use of particular materials. Our objection is that cinema's transition from analogue to digital materials is insufficient to warrant the conclusion that the medium of cinema no longer exists (or has been subsumed by a monomedium). It is insufficient because it does not show that the change in materials has affected the *practices* that also partly constitute the medium's identity. Moreover, we have argued, using documentary film and the

³³ Kendall Walton, 'Categories of Art', *Philosophical Review*, 79.3 (1970), 334–67.

Against Post-cinema

long take technique as examples, that a number of practices that are central to the identity of the cinematic medium have remained stable despite the fact that the transition to digital *could have* (and still *could*) radically alter them in such a way that did in fact result in a numerically distinct medium. Our conclusion, then, is that there are good conceptual reasons to think that the medium of cinema — suitably understood as involving a cluster of practices governing the use of particular materials — has persisted or retained its numeric identity since the transition to digital even though its identity has changed qualitatively. In conjunction, there are good pragmatic considerations supporting our conclusion: film culture — comprising traditions of filmmaking, film viewing, and film reviewing — is still alive and well.